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# RURAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION MEASURES

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## ABSTRACT

The study wants to show methods for evaluating rural development in Romania, in the context of joining the European Union. The methodologies used are analysis and synthesis and they are useful for private and public sector in helping them find new ways to improve rural life with European funds.

The current interest in global and regional development is determined by the need to address and solve within national economic policies some new difficulties, generated in the context of the restructuring and reform processes triggered in the central and eastern regions of the continent. According to the Territorial Development Strategy of Romania 2035, the evaluation activities compare the achievements from certain moments of the implementation of the strategy with the previously proposed targets, including the way of implementing specific policies.

Accession to the European Union was the strongest pressure factor for the rapid reform of the Romanian rural economy, given the need to integrate into the European rural economy, the European model being based on a competitive, market-oriented sector, performing public functions, such as: protecting the environment, offering more convenient residential settlements for the rural population, as well as the integration of agriculture with the environment and forestry.

The general research hypothesis of the study consists in the assumption that the study of the rural space in Romania, in the context of the implementation of programs with European funds, will lead to a clearer identification of the problems and to finding better solutions for the development of the rural environment.

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The Strategic Concept for Territorial Development of Romania (CSDTR), according to Law 151/1998 and the regional (cohesion) policy of the European Union post-2020, has 9 guidelines:

1. capitalizing on peripherality by assuming the identity of connector and relay at continental and intercontinental level;

2. the connection to the European network of territorial development poles and corridors;

3. structuring and balanced development of the network of urban localities;

4. affirmation of urban-rural solidarity;

5. adequate development of different categories of territories;

6. rural development;

7. consolidation and development of interregional links as a support for regional development;

8. increasing territorial competitiveness;

9. the protection, development and valorization of the natural and cultural heritage, the year 2007, the date of Romania's accession to the EU, marking a new era in rural development.

In this context, Romania had to quickly adapt its agricultural and rural development economy, to prepare its institutions that will apply the CAP in order to be able to integrate into the EU internal market and fully adopt the CAP, which for over 50 for years the most important EU policy of

partnership between agriculture and society, common to all EU countries, managed and financed at European level from the resources of the EU budget, shifting the focus from direct subsidies granted to agriculture (pillar I CAP) to the integrated development of rural economy and to protect the environment (pillar II of the PAC).

The first steps towards the integration of Romania into the EU aimed at the opening of the 31 negotiation chapters, including Chapter 7 Agriculture, the negotiations focused on the state of agriculture and the rural economy: the rural area dominated by agriculture and an infrastructure (transportation, communications, social and commercial) mostly outdated and deficient; agriculture with outdated technologies to a large extent, with low technical and economic performances compared to the EU average; the very low incomes of Romanian farmers, with a negative impact on the entire rural area, all these aspects creating a vicious circle of underdevelopment in agriculture. Against this background, it was expected that the support for private investments in agricultural holdings would benefit from the link between the economic development of the agricultural sector and rural development.

Table 1. Stages of creation of European Funds

Funds allocated to Romania by the EU during the pre-accession period, 2002-2007	
The SAPARD program (Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development) – is intended to support the accession preparations of Central and Eastern European countries	
Funds allocated to Romania by the EU in the post-accession period, 2007-2013	
FEGA - European Agricultural Guarantee Fund	
EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) – focuses on solving problems specific to rural areas in the EU	
The funds allocated to Romania in the period 2014-2020	
ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) - promotes balanced development in EU regions	
ESF (European Social Fund) – supports employment-related projects across Europe and invests in EU human capital	
EAFRD - European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development	
FC (Cohesion Fund) – finances transport and environmental projects in countries with gross national income per capita below 90% of the EU average (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary)	
FEPAM (European Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Fund) – encourages fishermen to adopt sustainable practices and helps coastal communities to diversify their activities for a better livelihood.	
Projects after 2020	
Multiannual Financial Framework of the European Union 2021-2027	

According to the Position Document, Chapter 21, 8 development regions without legal personality were established by association, which represent implementation units of the policy of regional development at the territorial level (Table 2).

Table 2. Development regions (Regional development policy implementation units at the territorial level) [1]

Development regions	COUNTY
1. North - East	Bacau, Botoșani, Iasi, Neamț, Suceava, Vaslui
2. South - East	Brăila, Buzău, Constanta, Galati, Tulcea, Vrancea
3. South Muntenia	Argeș, Calarasi, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu, Ialomița, Prahova, Teleorman
4. South - West	Oltenia: Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinți, Olt, Vâlcea
5. Vest	Arad, Caraș-Severin, Hunedoara, Timiș
6. North - West	Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureș, Satu - Mare, Sălaj
7. Center	Alba, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Mureș, Sibiu
8. Bucharest - Ilfov	Bucharest Municipality, Ilfov

The extent to which agriculture is linked to the wider economy in regions is an important determinant of the links rural development finance might be expected to have with regional characteristics [2]. Analyze [3] shows that there is no universally accepted measure of rural development

assessment that reflects the multidimensional character of the state of the rural space, each assessment method being used according to the purpose of the measurement, and the assessment of rural development going through a substantial process of definition and systematization, including strong standardization across different programming period [4]. European Rural Development (ERD) policies, introduced in the second half of the 1980s as part of the reform of European structural policies, dedicated to farm competitiveness and sustainable growth in rural areas [5 - 8], with the adoption of the LEADER approach [9], combines the territorial strategic vision with the integrated participation at the local level [10, 11] and continues to support farmers for a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector, entering from June 2018 a new period of rural development programming aimed at making it more responsive to challenges [12, 13], and from October 2020 - in the final stage of the approval process, the so-called trilogue process, which places the first and second pillars of the CAP in a single framework, proposes a new delivery model (NDM), representing the implementation mechanism for improving the transition from the compliance-based system to the performance-based system [14], thus the National Strategic Plan (NSP) [15] appears as a tool to simplify the implementation of the CAP, especially where the regionalized model is applied. We mention that only in the period 2014-2020 a common monitoring and evaluation framework covers the entire CAP, the different approaches to the concept assuming responsibility for pillar II at the level of the Member States, and for pillar I - EC. Analysis of studies [16, 17] allows a general picture of the evolution of the evaluation of the European rural development policy. Thus, throughout the different programming periods of rural development, the approaches and requests for evaluation [18 - 20] they have sometimes changed radically, demonstrating a relationship between rural development policy approaches and standards [21 - 23] of evaluation, evaluation becoming a central element and tool [24 - 27] fundamental in the programming and implementation processes of the interventions [28, 29, synchronized with the program cycle.

In this sense, Regulation (EEC) 2052/88 can be considered an experimental phase of evaluation with very different levels of awareness about the utility and potential ASSESSMENT [30 - 32], without a common vision and coordination at both community and country level, as well as without a logical intervention framework as a central point of the assessment standardization process [33, 34]. Low quality of evaluation reports, poor use of evaluation results [35, 36], the poor contribution of evaluation to the development of better programs [37], the inability to address the specifics of rural development, led to the closure of structural policies and the conception of the new rural policy, between the CAP reform and the cohesion policy [38], as well as to the modification of the concept of evaluation of the impact of interventions [39].

The existence since 2000 of two different systems within the EU rural policy, the first - supported within the regional development policy (or cohesion policy), the second - supported within the CAP, was critical in determining the main differences between countries and regions in rural development strategies and objectives [40], having very strong implications for both programming approaches and methods and implementation procedures. Thus, the new rural development programming system presented several advantages in terms of spending efficiency and flexibility in the design and implementation of programming, generating positive effects on the quality of the approach to rural areas, especially in terms of: (i) spreading the participatory approach at the local level based on the experience of the Leader type, developed in the previous main programs; (ii) integration between measures or between sectors, when rural development within the guarantee system has only known limited experiences of this type, such as the "Contrat Territorial d'exploitation" (CTE) in France; (iii) design and preparation involving a wider economic and social partnership, when rural development under the guarantee system was often designed and developed largely by agricultural administrations and sectoral pressure groups [41].

Consolidation of the menu approach in formulating rural development programs [42] provided for 22 (26 extended) standard measures defining the interventions from which the Member State and the regions could choose in designing the program and building the operational strategy, in particular: agricultural investments, young farmers, training, early retirement, less favored areas, agri-environment, processing and marketing, afforestation, other forestry measures IV and measures for rural territories, other measures [43]. Some of the types of measures represent the set of different measures: for example, group IV represents all measures addressed to rural territories and diversification and include the list of eligible interventions (irrigation, rural villages, agritourism, rural tourism, rural infrastructures, etc.), which have a of 1/3 of the EU's programmed expenditures for the regions included in Objective 1 (Table 3) and which could be considered an indicator of the strategic importance given to the diversification of rural areas, at the same time confirming the sectoral vision still dominant within the national and regional strategies of rural development [44 - 47].

Table 3. Types of rural development programs in the EU-15 according to Agenda 2000 [48]

Eligible areas	Mainstream programs	Pilot and innovative programs
A. All regions outside Objective 1	Rural Development Plans (RDPs)	LEADER+ programs
B. Lagging regions (Objective 1)	Rural Development Plans (RDPs)	LEADER+ programs

The distribution of responsibilities assumed a model whereby the role of coordination, control and general evaluation of rural development policies co-financed by EU Funds falls to the European Commission (EC), while the Member States and regions gain the definition of programs and the implementation of measures, the EC services keeping a strong influence on the overall quality and strategy of the RDP in programming and implementation, bringing together different pre-existing structural and territorial measures under a common umbrella focused on: (i) the multifunctionality of agriculture, recognizing its varied role beyond food production and the range of services provided of farmers; (ii) multisectoral and integrated approach to the rural economy to diversify activities, create new sources of jobs and protect rural heritage; (iii) subsidiary aid, promoting decentralization, consultation at regional/local/partnership level; (iv) transparency in the development and management of programs based on simplified and more accessible legislation [49].

The changes in the evaluation of SF structural funds (Reg. (EC) No. 1260/99) [50] and rural development of the RD (Reg. (EC) No. 1257/99 [51]) in the period 2000–2006, based on questions, criteria and indicators from STAR VI/8865/99 [52] and STAR VI/12004/00 [53], in addition to ex ante and ex post evaluations, include an on-the-go evaluation with the aim of timely assisting the implementation of the RDP and the possible rescheduling [54] according to Regulation (EC) 950/96 [55] and 951/96 [56], the mandatory agri-environmental measures derived from the first pillar of the PAC, new territorial instruments and those from art. 33 of Reg. (EC) 1257/99 [57], so that the assessment guidelines and STAR 12204/00 [58] provides a systematic approach to evaluating interventions. At the same time, the management solutions of the evaluation process (e.g. coordination groups), with an active involvement of actors (local authorities, socioeconomic partnerships, the scientific community, e.g. Italy- Sistema Nazionale di Valutazione [59]) aim to share evaluation procedures and practices between evaluators and public administrations.

According to the Territorial Development Strategy of Romania 2035, the evaluation activities compare the achievements from certain moments of the implementation of the strategy with the previously proposed targets, including the way of implementing specific policies, the monitoring system comprising 3 main components:

- (i) monitoring of territorial dynamics;
- (ii) monitoring the degree of achievement of the measures, activities and projects established at the SDTR level;
- (iii) monitoring and evaluation of the territorial impact of investment programs on components: a) monitoring of national programs; b) monitoring of operational programs.

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