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**TERRITORIAL STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTI-FUND  
SUPPORT FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

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***Abstract:** Territorial strategic planning in the context of multi-fund support for rural development actions is already happening in the European Union to a relative extensive scale. Two EU member states are still not employing its benefits among which Romania is one of them. The perspectives of the new National Strategic Plan and the programming of the next budgeting period of the EU allow the exercise of proposing a comprehensive and exhaustive planning based on multi-funding of the rural development actions potentially implemented by the Local Actions Groups within the framework of LEADER as part of the National Rural Development Programmes. The paper proposes the planning frame of the future Local Development Strategies taking into account all available funding programmes as support for the integrate territorial development.*

**Key words:** territorial strategic planning, multi-fund, rural development

### **INTRODUCTION**

The territorial rural strategic planning over the past two programming periods [2,3] was performed and implemented by the Local Action Groups (LAGs) as part of the LEADER approach. Until present the territorial planning and development of the rural areas was placed under the responsibility of the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) approach [1] as functional part of LEADER. To a certain extent, the local rural development including the present programming counted on multiple funding sources outside the strict frames of the National Rural Development Programmes [7,8]. In this respect, the European Fund for Fishery and Maritime Affairs supported the Fishery Local Action Groups, and the European Fund for Regional Development supported the urban LAGs, as replicas of the current traditional rural LAGs [11]. Although the clear success of the first two rounds of implementation, moreover as the soundest private-public partnership format until present, the needs and problems to solve in the LEADER territories were asking for more diversified input and support other than the NRDP framework [9,10]. Under a constant pressure to replicate the programme's structure, content and rules at the territorial scale [12] the LAGs retrieved the first attempt of multi-fund support yet managed separately and requiring two separate subsequent projects with the intervention for the rural social issues. Under this first and unprecedented approach the hard investments were supported from the NRDP while the soft completion of the intervention was secured by the Human Capital Operational Programme [5], as result of two separate applications and under the reserve of a successful selection and contracting phase. The projection of this paper avoids the consideration of such complicated and potentially fragmented interventions for the future programming period and operates with the unique management of the multi-fund approach as stated by EU regulations and already employed in other member states. The high demand for actions and interventions outside the support provided by the NRDP [13,14] are not only possible to meet yet highly recommended under the objective-oriented approach for the upcoming programming period leading to an integrated strategic planning and consolidated Local Development Strategies for the LAGs.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The method employed operates on the scenario-based analysis of realism, availability and suitability of the projected approach within the predefined conditions using the available official sources and documentary resources for the current programming period extrapolating the current needs and potential interventions at action level for the upcoming period.

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

Within the framework of a sustained and complementary series of sessions the Working Group of the LEADER Federation achieved the stage of compiling a set of transversal objectives and interventions within the frame of the multi-fund support. These elements are further structured and connected respecting the complementary support potentially provided by the different programmes. The base assumption is represented by the need assessment and the continuity of interventions, as nature, allowing the projection of the future objectives as derived from the present set of priorities. Table 1 below introduces the first of the seven defined transversal objectives the RURAL UPGRADE. Three national programmes supported by EU funding are contributing to provide the financial support for the specific actions namely the National Rural Development Programme, the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) [16] and the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) supplemented by an EU funded programme ERASMUS+.

**Table 1.**

**Transversal objective - rural upgrade**

OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	National Rural Development Programme	Regional Operational Programme	Human Capital Operational Programme	ERASMUS+
<b>B1. FOSTERING THE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND INNOVATION</b>	Specific actions for agriculture and forestry	Technological transfer for rural entrepreneurship (Hubs, Clusters etc)		
<b>A2. DEVELOPMENT OF NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSING OF AGRICULTURAL GOODS</b>	Start-ups and business investments in processing and non-agricultural activities		Training	
<b>C1. PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION</b>	Development of a hosting network for apprenticeship, training and practice		Training	Mobilities for practical stages

Source: own assessment

The three objectives of the LDSs circumscribed to the first transversal objective/intervention are: B1. Fostering the knowledge transfer and innovation, cross supported by the NRDP for Specific actions for agriculture and forestry and by ROP for Technological transfer for rural entrepreneurship; the objective A2. Development of non-agricultural activities and processing of agricultural goods for Start-ups and business investments in processing and non-agricultural activities from NRDP and Trainings from HCOP; the objective C1. Professional integration relays for support from NRDP for development of a hosting network for apprenticeship, training and practice, training from HCOP and mobilities for practical stages from ERASMUS+ (E+). This setup provides for a coherent and consistent Upgraded Rural where the stimulation of businesses outside agriculture are complemented with knowledge and technological transfer and fostered by professional integration.

The second transversal objective, the COMPETITIVE RURAL, is relying on the same programmes NRDP, ROP, HCOP and Erasmus+ for the cross funding of its specific objectives of the LDSs (Tab.2).

**Table 2.**

**Transversal objective - competitive rural**

OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	National Rural Development Programme	Regional Operational Programme	Human Capital Operational Programme	ERASMUS+
<b>B2. INCREASING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE RURAL AREAS</b>	Farm modernisation. Diversification of agricultural activities. Agricultural start-ups.	Increasing the competitiveness of the non-agricultural sector. Rural start-ups.		
<b>A2. DEVELOPMENT OF NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSING OF AGRICULTURAL GOODS</b>	Start-ups and business investments in processing and non-agricultural activities		Training	
<b>C3. CIVIC DIGITAL INTEGRATION</b>	Equipment endowment		Training and dedicated software endowment	Mobilities for practical stages

Source: own assessment

The LDS objective B2. Increasing the competitiveness of the rural areas supports the farm modernisation, diversification of agricultural activities and agricultural start-ups from the NRDP and increasing the competitiveness of the non-agricultural sector and rural start-ups from the ROP. The objective A2. Development of non-agricultural activities and processing of agricultural goods, just like in the case of the first transversal objective, promotes and supports the start-ups and business investments in processing and non-agricultural activities as diversification of the rural economy from NRDP and trainings from ROP while the third objective C3. Civic digital integration supports the Equipment endowment from NRDP, the training and dedicated software endowment from ROP and the mobilities for practical stages from ERASMUS+.

**Table 3.**

**Transversal objective - rural essential**

OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	National Rural Development Programme	Regional Operational Programme	Human Capital Operational Programme	ERASMUS+
<b>B3. INCREASE OF THE ADDED VALUE IN AGRICULTURE</b>	Short food chains and local markets. Farmer cooperation. Local processing, conditioning, storage, etc	Development of processing/storage/distribution capacities for raw materials originating from third parties		
<b>C1. PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION</b>	Development of a hosting network for apprenticeship, training and practice		Training	Mobilities for practical stages
<b>C3. CIVIC DIGITAL INTEGRATION</b>	Equipment endowment		Training and dedicated software endowment	Mobilities
<b>C4. REDUCTION OF UNBALANCES AMONG AGE GROUPS IN RURAL AREA (CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY SOCIAL LIFE)</b>	Buildings construction and equipment endowment		Operationalisation of buildings and equipment	Mobilities
<b>A2. DEVELOPMENT OF NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSING OF AGRICULTURAL GOODS</b>	Start-ups and business investments in processing and non-agricultural activities		Training	

Source: own assessment

The RURAL ESSENTIAL as third transversal objective (Tab.3) compiles five objectives at the level of the LDSs, respectively: B3. Increase of the added value in agriculture, C1. Professional integration, C3. Civic digital integration, C4. Reduction of

unbalances among age groups in rural area (contribution to the community social life) and A2. Development of non-agricultural activities and processing of agricultural goods. The Increase of the added value in agriculture relies on the support for NRDP for the short food chains and local markets, farmer cooperation, local processing, conditioning and storage and the ROPs input for the Development of processing/storage/distribution capacities for raw materials originating from third parties. The following three objectives C3, C1 and C4 are backed by NRDP for development of a hosting network for apprenticing, training and practice, equipment endowment and buildings construction and equipment endowment, on HCOP for training and dedicated software endowment and operationalisation of buildings and equipment and the E+ supporting the mobilities for exchanges or practical stages.

The fourth transversal objective, the GREEN RURAL combines the contribution of the NRDP, the ROP, the Competitiveness Operational Programme (COP) [4] and the Large Infrastructure Operational Programme (LIOP) [6]. Its three folded LDS objectives target: B4. Pollution reduction in rural areas, A3. Sustainable development of local communities and A1. Farmer support and preservation of labour places (Tab.4). The specific support from NRDP promotes the alternative energy sources for agriculture and the bioeconomy, the ROP finances the energy efficiency of the buildings and public utilities and the regeneration of degraded rural sites. Complementary the COP supports the pilot actions for reusing, reintroducing and recycling the wastes as a bio-attitude conduct while the large-scale interventions for waste management, biodiversity support, coping with the climatic changes, connection to the gas pipeline network, extension of the water/sewerage networks and the reduction of the Carbon footprint are financed by LIOP.

**Table 4.**

**Transversal objective - green rural**

OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	National Rural Development Programme	Regional Operational Programme	Competitiveness Operational Programme	Large Infrastructure Operational Programme
<b>B4. POLLUTION REDUCTION IN RURAL AREAS</b>	Alternative energy sources for agriculture. Bioeconomy.	Energy efficiency of the buildings and public utilities. Regeneration of degraded rural sites.		
<b>A3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>				Waste management. Biodiversity support. Coping with the climatic changes Connection to the gas pipeline network Extension of the water/sewerage networks
<b>A1. FARMER SUPPORT AND PRESERVATION OF LABOUR PLACES</b>			Bio-attitude - pilot actions for reusing, reintroducing and recycling the wastes	Reduction of the Carbon footprint

Source: own assessment

The SMART AND INCLUSIVE RURAL as the fifth transversal objective includes the LDS level objective B5. Social inclusion, education, digitalisation backed by NRDP for infrastructure development, services and public infrastructure for farmers, CIT investments in agricultural sector, demonstration farms and education programmes for pupils and ROP for infrastructure development for social inclusion, education and digitalisation of rural area (Tab.5). The C1. Professional integration objective, as mentioned earlier, promotes the development of a hosting network for apprenticing, training and practice from the NRDP, training from HCOP and mobilities for practical stages from E+. The objective C2. Increasing the efficiency of the administration in rural area targets the increase of the rural development competencies at municipality level by functional involvement of the LAGs

and the equipment endowment financed by NRDP while the digitalisation by training and dedicated software endowment is supported by HCOP.

**Table 5.**

**TRANSVERSAL OBJECTIVE - SMART AND INCLUSIVE RURAL**

<b>OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b>	<b>National Rural Development Programme</b>	<b>Regional Operational Programme</b>	<b>Human Capital Operational Programme</b>	<b>ERASMUS</b>	<b>Competitiveness Operational Programme</b>	<b>Large Infrastructure Operational Programme</b>
<b>B5. SOCIAL INCLUSION, EDUCATION, DIGITALISATION</b>	Infrastructure development Services and public infrastructure for farmers CIT investments in agricultural sector Demonstration farms and education programmes for pupils	Infrastructure development for social inclusion, education and digitalisation of rural area				
<b>C1. PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION</b>	Development of a hosting network for apprenticeship, training and practice		Training	Mobilities for practical stages		
<b>C2. INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATION IN RURAL AREA</b>	Increase of the rural development competencies at municipality level by functional involvement of the LAGs. Equipment endowment.		Training. Digitalisation: by training and dedicated software endowment.			
<b>C3. CIVIC DIGITAL INTEGRATION</b>	Equipment endowment		Training and dedicated software endowment	Mobilities		
<b>C5. INTEGRATION OF THE LESS FAVOURED AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITY CATEGORIES</b>	Entrepreneurships support. Mobilities by the 19.3 sub-measure for cooperation. Advice and accompanying.		Youngsters: inclusive approach for the youngsters with special needs together with vulnerable youngsters. Training, mentoring, coaching, accompanying. Adults (26 – 45 years): Training, mentoring, coaching, accompanying. Adults (46 – 64 years): Mentoring, coaching	Mobilities		
<b>A1. FARMER SUPPORT AND PRESERVATION OF LABOUR PLACES</b>					Bio-attitude - pilot actions for reusing, reintroducing and recycling the wastes	Reduction of the Carbon footprint
<b>OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b>	<b>National Rural Development Programme</b>	<b>Regional Operational Programme</b>	<b>Human Capital Operational Programme</b>	<b>ERASMUS</b>	<b>Competitiveness Operational Programme</b>	<b>Large Infrastructure Operational Programme</b>
<b>A3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>						Waste management. Biodiversity support. Coping with the climatic changes. E-governance. Digital services at municipality level. CIT for education Connection to the gas pipeline network Extension of the water/sewerage networks

Source: own assessment

The C3. Civic digital integration objective complements the equipment endowment of NRDP with the training and dedicated software endowment from HCOP and the mobilities from the E+. The C5. Integration of the less favoured and vulnerable community categories combines the input of NRDP by entrepreneurship support, mobilities by the 19.3 sub-measure for cooperation and advice and accompanying with the E+ mobilities and a structured HCOP intervention by age groups: youngsters - inclusive approach for the youngsters with special needs together with vulnerable youngsters, training, mentoring, coaching, accompanying; adults (26 – 45 years): training, mentoring, coaching, accompanying; adults (46 – 64 years): mentoring, coaching. The A1. Farmer support and preservation of labour places and A3 Sustainable development of local communities objectives are supported by COP for pilot actions for reusing, reintroducing and recycling the wastes and massively backed by LIOP for waste management, biodiversity support, coping with the climatic changes, e-governance, digital services at municipality level, CIT for education, connection to the gas pipeline network, extension of the water/sewerage networks and reduction of the Carbon footprint.

The ATTRACTIVE RURAL transversal objectives allow the LDSs to integrate the B6. Tourism and patrimony objective supporting the agrotourism and material rural patrimony and the touristic leisure from the NRDP and the tourism and the material patrimony from ROP. The objective A3. Sustainable development of local communities entirely backed by the LIOP and the objective C4. Reduction of unbalances among age groups in rural area couples the hard investments for Buildings construction and equipment endowment from NRDP with the soft actions of operationalisation of buildings and equipment from HCOP and the E+ mobilities.

**Table 6.**

**Transversal objective - attractive rural**

OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	National Rural Development Programme	Regional Operational Programme	Human Capital Operational Programme	ERASMUS	Large Infrastructure Operational Programme
<b>B6. TOURISM AND PATRIMONY</b>	Agrotourism and material rural patrimony. Touristic leisure.	Tourism and material patrimony.			
<b>C4. REDUCTION OF UNBALANCES AMONG AGE GROUPS IN RURAL AREA (CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY SOCIAL LIFE)</b>	Buildings construction and equipment endowment		Operationalisation of buildings and equipment	Mobilities	
<b>A3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>					Biodiversity support.

Source: own assessment

The seventh transversal objective, the INFORMED RURAL, calls for the Technical Assistance Operational Programme (TAOP) for specific information actions regarding the programmes across all other programmes, interventions and support. Considering the novelty of the integrated approach the specific efforts from the TAOP are expected to sustain a consistent involvement and volume of actions.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The integrated projected approach for the territorial strategic planning within a multi-fund frame allows both targeting and achieving complex goals that can be difficult to imagine accomplished within a compartmentalised approach such as in the present. The

broader benefit of the approach is the mix of people, business, innovation, environment and balanced and assumed development. Socially it integrates transversally covering all the needs and expectations in terms of interventions for all social categories from active people to youth or retired persons with an active involvement of the elderly rural population as a social form of assistance, in an inclusive manner involving people of all ages with special needs or being excluded, marginalised or vulnerable. Covers a balanced development with respect to the environment and resource employment, educates, train and transfer the knowledge and the technological progress and improves the capacity to cope with an increasing administrative burden by digitizing and enabling the clerks to operate with innovative techniques and tools to achieve higher level of results to the benefit of the rural end-users. The integrative approach of territorial strategic planning at the interface of LAGs with the rural people at one end and with all the programmes targeted and involved can only produce sound results if implemented by the leading authority, in this case by the NRDP management authority. Outside this administrative setup, letting the LAGs handle projects with separate MAs for each programme is hard to imagine and even harder to implement. The contributors and the authors are confident that the projected integrated frame can become more than a reflection content and contribute to the welfare of the rural people in Romania on medium and long term.

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