

IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS OF THE BILED COMMUNE, TIMIS COUNTY

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Abstract: This study analyzes the main strategic development directions of the Biled commune, Timiș county, aiming to identify priorities and local growth potential. The study aims to highlight the economic and social potential, which influences the evolution of the community, starting from the principles of sustainable development. The research is based on the analysis of existing strategic documents, on statistical data and on a SWOT assessment, which allows us to outline major directions of action. The results obtained emphasize the need for coherent planning and active collaboration between the local administration and the community, in order to ensure a balanced and sustainable development of the Biled commune.

Key words: Biled commune, development, economic potential, SWOT analysis, strategies

INTRODUCTION

Biled commune, located in Timiș county, offers a relevant example of a locality undergoing a modernization process, with significant agricultural, economic and social potential. The present study aims to analyze the current situation of the commune and to highlight the main strategic directions that can contribute to its long-term development [17].

The first attestation of the existence of a locality with the name Biled was found by Franz Klein in the history of the city of Velika Kikinda (Kikinda Mare) in which the name of the locality appears together with 31 other localities as being the property of the Hagymas de Berekszo/Berekzow family, during the period 1404-1463[17].

The commune is located in the Timiș Plain, about 23 km northwest of the city of Timișoara, on the national road DN6 Timișoara - Cenad customs.

Biled is part of the Banat Plain, the Mureș Plain group, the Vingă Plain subgroup. The Western Plain is the second largest agricultural region of the country and possesses numerous natural resources (oil, natural gas, construction rocks, thermal springs and minerals), which has favored the development of economic activities and implicitly of a strong urban network [18].



Figure 1. Biled commune - overview

Source: Wikipedia [17], <https://earth.google.com/web/search/%c8%98icula> [19]

The total area is 5511 ha, with a population of 4224 inhabitants at the end of 2024.

The Biled commune is accessible by the following roads:

- municipal road DC 473 Biled -Iecea Mare, 2.64 km long;
- municipal road DC 32, approximately 4.9 km long;
- county road DJ 693, 5 km long (Biled-Cărpiniș)[17,20].

The commune under analysis, as a functional type of rural settlement, is part of the category of settlements where the main activity is animal husbandry and agriculture with predominantly cereal-zootechnical functions. Of the total agricultural land of 4978.65 ha, the arable area is 4584.65 ha (2021). Biled commune is a positive example, benefiting from a much improved infrastructure compared to that of many communes in the county [12].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Both primary and secondary sources of information were used to carry out this work. Primary data were collected through direct observation of the socio-economic realities in the studied commune [4, 8].

Secondary sources included official documents such as the Local Development Strategy, statistical reports and materials published by county and national institutions [12, 13].

The analysis methodology consisted of applying strategic assessment tools, especially SWOT analysis, to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that characterize the commune. The collected data were interpreted comparatively and integrated into an analytical framework designed to highlight the major development directions of the locality [4].

RESEARCH RESULTS

Developing local development for a community is like planning a long journey in which a series of events occur [1].

Development is a tool at the disposal of local authorities, which aims to continuously improve the quality of life of local residents, increasing well-being for both present and future generations [3, 6].

A general objective of the strategy is the balanced and harmonious development of the locality by creating and supporting a competitive, stable and diversified economic and social environment, which ensures continuous economic growth and the quality of life of citizens [5,11].

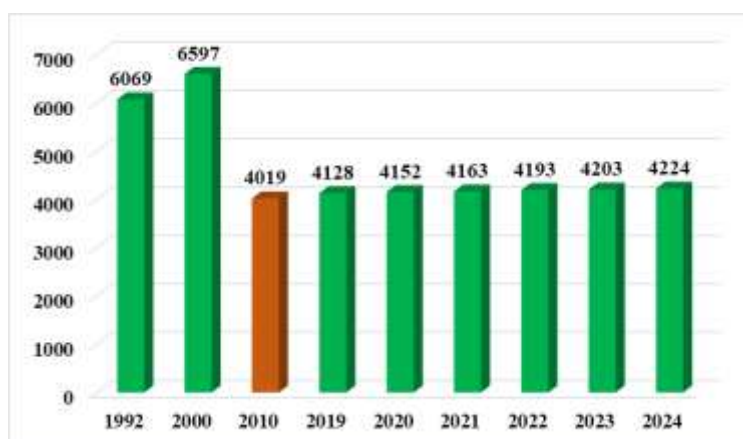


Figure 2. Situation of inhabitants in the commune (number)

Source: Own processing based on data from <http://statistici.insse.ro> [14]

Demographic evolution and trends represent major milestones that directly influence the entire local community. According to documentation, in 2010 the total stable population of the commune was 4019 inhabitants. According to data provided by the INS, in 2024, the population residing in the commune was 4224 inhabitants (Figure 2.) [14, 15].

The evolution of the population in the studied commune highlights an oscillating demographic dynamics, marked by an initial increase followed by a significant decline and later by a period of stabilization. After 2000, a sharp reduction in the population is observed, up to 4019 inhabitants in 2010, most likely as a result of external migration and natural decline. In the following period, the data indicate a slight tendency of demographic recovery and stabilization, with a slow increase from 4019 to 4224 inhabitants, which suggests an attenuation of the depopulation processes and a relative balancing of the local demographic dynamics.

According to the most recent statistical data from INSSE Timiș, we can also highlight the situation of the commune's population by gender, as can be seen in the graph below (Figure 3.) [14].

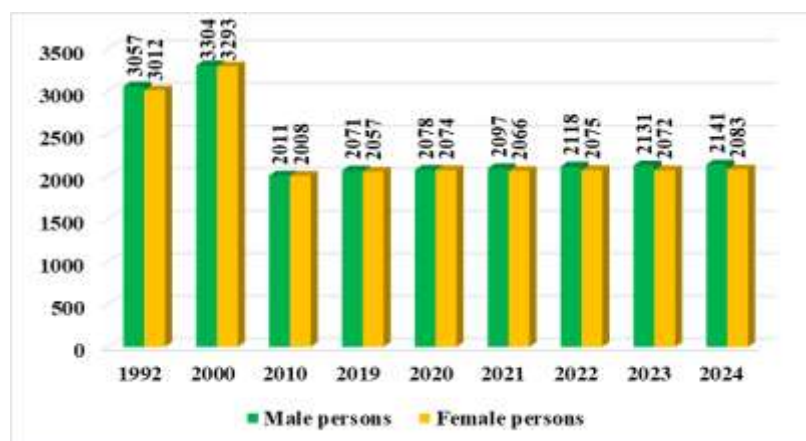


Figure 3. Population evolution by gender

Source: Own processing based on data from <http://statistici.insse.ro> [14]

The population structure of Biled commune by gender in the period 1992–2024 highlights a relatively constant balance between the male and female population, without significant differences in proportion. Overall, the share of the male population remained slightly higher than the female one, which indicates a balanced gender structure and relative demographic stability in the last decade, without the manifestation of major imbalances between the sexes.

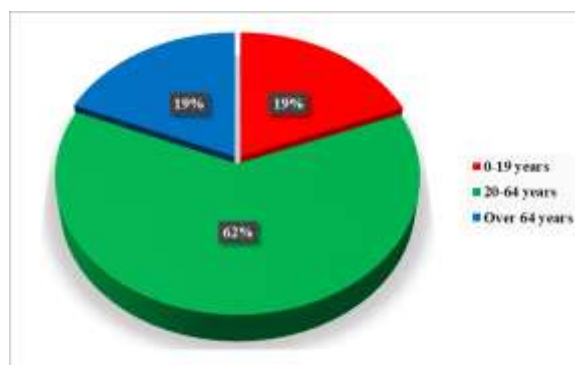


Figure 4. Population situation by age group (%), 2024)

Source: Own conception

Another very important aspect that needs to be analyzed refers to the variation by age group of the inhabitants of the commune.

Following the data centralized in Figure 4., it can be seen that, in the analyzed commune, the age group of people 0-19 years old (youth) and over 64 years old (pensioners) have an identical percentage of 19%. The group of people aged 20-64 years old (working age) is the most numerous, reaching a percentage of 62%.

The commune has a population made up of several ethnic groups. In 2002, the majority of the inhabitants were Romanian, numbering 5715. In 2021, their number decreased significantly to 2740. The same thing happened with the population of Hungarian, Roma and German ethnicity. At the commune level, the quality of the soils is found in classes I and II of fertility, more than 90% of the existing agricultural land area. Specific to the area is the brown forest chernozem, characteristic of the steppe with a temperate-continental climate and Mediterranean influences [9].

The area of the agricultural category is 4946 hectares in 2014, and in 2021 this area reaches 4978.65 hectares. The other agricultural categories have registered decreases in the analyzed years (Figure 5.) [12].

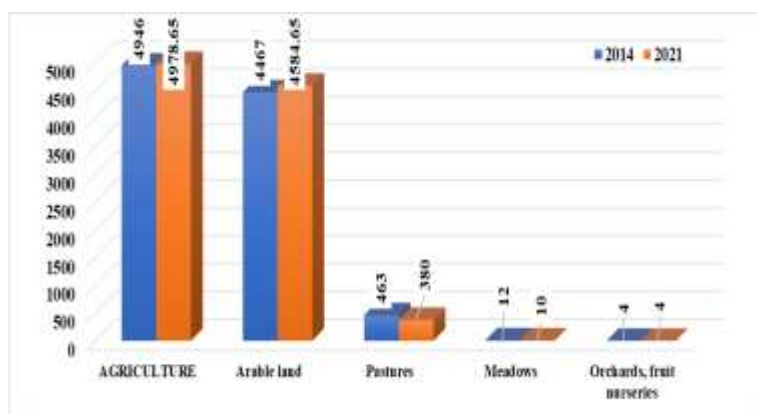


Figure 5. Analysis of areas included in the agricultural category (ha)

Source: Own processing according to the Local Development Strategy 2021-2030 and Tempo online [13, 14]

In the non-agricultural category, significant decreases can also be observed in the categories that make it up in the years analyzed. These data highlight the predominant agricultural character of the locality (Figure 6.).

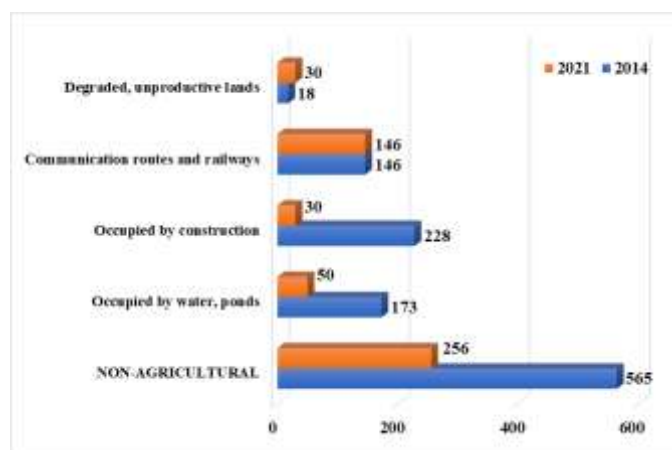


Figure 6. Situation of non-agricultural area (ha)

Source: Own processing according to the Local Development Strategy 2021-2030 and Tempo online [13, 14]

Data on the structure of agricultural land for 2021 highlight a clear predominance of arable land, totaling 4584.65 ha, representing the main component of the agricultural fund. Natural grasslands occupy an area of 380 ha, indicating a moderate use of land for grazing, while hayfields (10 ha) and vineyards and orchards (4 ha) have insignificant shares. This distribution reflects a predominant orientation of local agriculture towards vegetable crops, to the detriment of permanent uses related to animal husbandry or fruit growing (Figure 7.)[17].

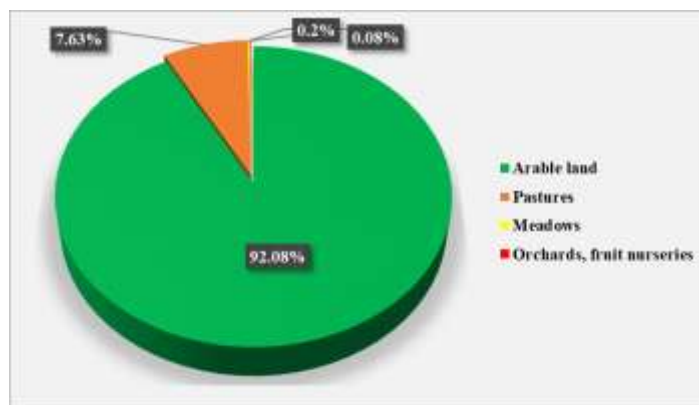


Figure 7. Situation of agricultural area (% ,2021)

Source: Own processing according to the Local Development Strategy 2021-2030 and Tempo online [13, 14]

The analysis of the evolution of cultivated areas in the period 2012–2020 reveals significant changes in the structure of agricultural crops, most likely determined by the adaptation of agricultural holdings to market requirements and agro-climatic conditions.

The data indicate a considerable expansion of the areas cultivated with corn, which recorded an increase from 550 ha in 2012 and 520 ha in 2014, to 1500 ha in 2020. This trend reflects the orientation of agricultural producers towards a crop with high productivity and constant market demand [17].

In contrast, the area occupied by wheat recorded a significant decrease, from 1533 ha in 2012 and 1590 ha in 2014, to only 1084.69 ha in 2020. The reduction indicates a possible decrease in the economic competitiveness of this crop or a strategic reorientation towards other species with higher added value.

In 2020, rapeseed (1200 ha) and sunflower (600 ha) crops appear for the first time, which were non-existent in previous years. This suggests a diversification of the crop structure, determined by the expansion of areas intended for oilseed crops, having both an economic and ecological role, through crop rotation and improving soil fertility [14].

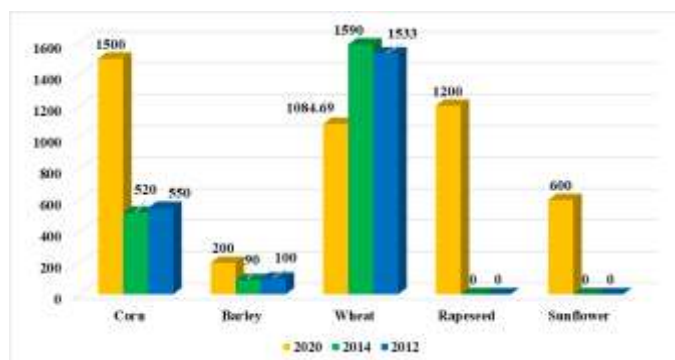


Figure 8. Variation of main cultivated areas (ha)

Source: Own processing according to the Local Development Strategy 2021-2030 and Tempo online [13, 14]

The areas cultivated with barley have experienced a moderate increase, from 100 ha in 2012 and 90 ha in 2014, to 200 ha in 2020, which denotes a trend of consolidation of secondary crops, possibly associated with the demand of the livestock sector. (Figure 8.)

Overall, the analyzed period highlights a restructuring of plant production, characterized by the reduction of the share of traditional cereals and the increase in the importance of technical and oilseed crops, as an expression of the process of modernization and adaptation of agriculture to the new economic and environmental conditions.

In order to outline the image of Biled commune as completely as possible from an economic perspective, it is important to mention some of the local entrepreneurs.

A community needs investments and investors, innovation and ambition, openness to the new, trials and successes on the long road of economic development [2].

Without their financial contribution, without their involvement in creating jobs for the local workforce, as well as without their contributions to the local and state budgets through taxes and duties, a considerable deficit would be recorded.

Without them, the much-desired budgetary self-financing and socio-economic development would no longer be possible [13].

The workforce in Biled commune is generally characterized by daily commuting. A significant number of people commute to neighboring towns and cities.

Many of the commune's residents work in the agro-zootechnical field (53%), while another part works in public administration (10%), education or in various local commercial companies. Details regarding the distribution of residents by field in 2020 are presented in the form of a graph in Figure 9.

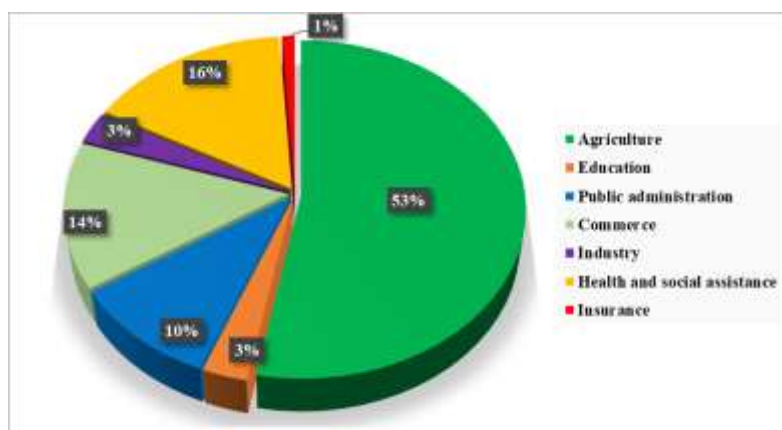


Figure 9. Employed population of Biled commune, by fields of activity in 2020

Source: Processing based on information from Biled City Hall [17]

The structure of the employed population of Biled commune in 2020 highlights a predominantly agrarian economy, in which the agricultural sector holds the majority share (53%), representing the main source of employment. The service sector is represented by health and social assistance activities (16%), trade (14%) and public administration (10%), indicating a moderate diversification of economic activities, specific to rural areas with development trends. The fields of education (3%), industry (3%) and insurance (1%) have low shares, reflecting weak industrialization and limited development of specialized services. Overall, the occupational structure suggests a major dependence on the agricultural sector, but also the existence of a core of non-agricultural activities that can constitute the basis for a possible economic reconversion and sustainable development at the local level [17].

SWOT ANALYSIS. STRATEGIC PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This type of analysis was originally created as a tool for formulating strategies within enterprises. This tool allows a rapid assessment of essential strategic elements and supports the identification of strategic alternatives. Currently, SWOT analysis is also used in territorial assessment, becoming an important tool for facilitating participatory planning within public administrations [7].

In short, this type of analysis represents a complete and coherent framework, which people involved in the planning process can use to make more realistic choices.

This working method supports the identification and clear differentiation between problems, solutions and strategies. The analysis in the analyzed commune emphasizes that, regardless of the actions taken, the decision-making process must focus on: capitalizing on strengths, eliminating weaknesses, exploiting opportunities and minimizing threats[10].

Next, we will detail for the studied commune, the analysis of the most important aspects regarding strengths, weaknesses, but also disadvantages and possible opportunities. In the following figures, we have carried out an analysis of the main points that form the SWOT analysis.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <p>Favorable territorial location, road access High potential for practicing sustainable organic agriculture Local entrepreneurs carry out activities in various fields, such as construction, transport, agriculture, zootechnics, trade Existence of an extensive arable area at the commune level Existence of the potential for obtaining organic agricultural products Existence of a good educational, social, sports, medical infrastructure compared to other localities in the county High frequency of students in educational institutions Preserving and preserving local events and traditions Easy access to medical services Existence of a young, available workforce</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <p>Insufficient local financial resources, insufficient promotion of local SMEs High share of the population employed in agriculture and local public administration Low share of foreign investments Inadequate water treatment Low promotion of traditional locally produced food products Existence of limited natural resources Contamination of groundwater due to leakage from household septic tanks Soil pollution due to oil and gas extraction activities in the neighboring areas of the commune Decreasing trend in school population and teaching staff in rural areas Insufficient number of doctors and family medical offices</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p>Using European non-reimbursable funds for the development of SMEs Adapting the school curriculum to the demand on the labor market Providing support to livestock breeders Setting up a wholesale market for local producers Promoting the use of modern technologies, performance in economic activities and agriculture The possibility of practicing organic agriculture and tourism Developing the market for local organic agricultural products and developing traditional crafts Potential for the development of alternative energy sources Capitalizing on local holidays as cultural events.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <p>Existence of imports of agricultural products Accidental pollution of surface waters Practicing agriculture with physically worn-out machinery that has low productivity The high costs of medical services The continuation of the phenomenon of labor migration to more developed areas Insufficient financial resources in co-financing projects financed from non-reimbursable European funds Low interest of potential investors caused by the poor state of infrastructure Reduction in school population due to declining birth rate Increasing unemployment among high school graduates Possibility of practicing agriculture and ecological tourism; intensive exploitation of meadows; reduction of green space as a result of the economic development of the commune</p>

Figure 10. SWOT analysis (opportunities, threats)

Source: Own conception

As can be seen from the detailed analysis above, the commune has development potential in several directions.

Thus, we can outline a series of *strategic proposals* for the development of the analyzed commune.

1. Economically, the commune has an active entrepreneurial environment, in which local enterprises operate in various sectors – from agriculture and animal husbandry, to construction and transport. Generous agricultural area, skilled workforce and well-developed communication networks are key resources that can support sustainable economic development initiatives. At the same time, the existence of raw materials necessary for the food industry and the growing interest in organic agricultural products strengthen the potential for capitalizing on local resources. The insufficient local budget reduces the capacity to implement infrastructure projects and support the business environment. Economic activity is mainly concentrated in food trade, and the degree of involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in local initiatives is low.

Also, the lack of entrepreneurial support structures, active promotion and access to information about European standards or sources of financing affects local economic development in the long term.

2. Using non-reimbursable financing programs from European and national funds that can support the emergence of new businesses, as well as the expansion of existing ones. Collaboration between local administration, educational institutions and the private sector can contribute to the integration of young people into the labor market, and "Start-up" initiatives can benefit from specialized counseling and support, by creating dedicated centers. Promoting traditional products, organizing markets for local producers, as well as supporting agricultural and craft trades can revitalize the commune's economy.

3. Establishing access to the European road. The lack of direct access to a European road reduces the potential for rapid connectivity. Also, the absence of a bypass belt leads to heavy vehicles passing through the center of the commune, affecting the quality of life and road safety. Pedestrian infrastructure is still deficient, the number of alleys and parking spaces being insufficient compared to the needs of the community.

4. Solving environmental problems. Environmental problems have begun to manifest themselves, especially through the contamination of the groundwater caused by septic tanks, but also through soil pollution following oil exploitation near the locality. These aspects require urgent remedial and preventive measures.

5. The use of non-reimbursable financing programs can be used to modernize road and municipal networks, and the support offered by government initiatives such as Prima Casă or those for energy efficiency brings hope in increasing the quality of housing infrastructure. Moreover, the development of alternative energy sources and public-private partnerships can open new perspectives for the sustainable development of the commune.

6. The axis of opportunities should also include attracting non-reimbursable funds through national and European programs aimed at professional retraining, developing entrepreneurial skills and stimulating employment among vulnerable categories. The possibility of establishing training centers for adults, including those with disabilities, as well as adapting the school curriculum to the requirements of the labor market, represent priority directions for the modernization of the local occupational sector. In this framework, public-private partnership and the active involvement of economic agents in social and educational projects can contribute to the consolidation of an inclusive and competitive economic ecosystem.

CONCLUSIONS

The Biled commune benefits from a favorable geographical positioning, being equidistant from the city of Timișoara and the borders with Hungary and Serbia. This strategic location offers significant potential for economic development and easy access to international trade and tourist routes. Road access is ensured through a varied network of national, county and municipal roads. The analyzed commune has a solid infrastructural base and multiple assets that can be capitalized on, but it needs strategic investments and a coherent vision to overcome weaknesses and transform risks into real development opportunities.

The population has undergone several changes. A slight predominance of men over the number of women is observed, but the difference is not very large. In general, the studied commune has recorded decreases in the inhabitants and in the age groups that were analyzed in the period 1992-2024. The part related to the commune's agriculture has also recorded decreases in the 2 categories of land, respectively in the groups that are included in the 2 categories of areas. In addition, a reduction was observed both in the areas used for various specific crops in the commune, but also in total production.

The migration of the active population, the use of outdated agricultural equipment and the poor professional training of the workforce are real challenges that can slow down the pace of development. At the same time, a low level of information and involvement in accessing non-reimbursable funds limits the community's ability to adapt to the requirements of the modern economy.

Also, the absence of a bypass belt leads to heavy vehicles passing through the center of the commune, affecting the quality of life and road safety. The sustainable development of a local community essentially requires the efficient use of available human resources.

The proposals for the development strategy of the Biled commune aim to achieve sustainable local development that will increase the standard of living of the population.

As a result of the implementation of the local development strategy, the aim is to transform the Biled commune into an attractive area from a tourist and cultural point of view, stable and viable for the private and investment environment, capable of offering its inhabitants decent living conditions and access to basic services as well as an adequate infrastructure.

The SWOT analysis highlights the existence of a young, relatively well-educated workforce, with a balanced gender distribution and a clear openness to occupational diversity. The favorable agro-economic context also constitutes a strategic advantage for stimulating entrepreneurial initiatives, especially in areas such as agriculture, services for the population and craft activities. These premises configure a functional framework conducive to local economic development, to the extent that they are complemented by adequate public policies and access to investment resources.

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