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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.

• 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.

• Material and method

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

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• Results and discussions

- The first transversal objective - RURAL UPGRADE is backed by the following LDS Objectives: B1. Fostering the knowledge transfer and innovation of non-agricultural activities and processing of agricultural goods C1. Professional integration and A2. Development of non-agricultural activities and processing of agricultural goods;
- The second transversal objective, the COMPETITIVE RURAL, is relying on the B2. Increasing the competitiveness of the rural areas, A2. Development of non-agricultural activities and processing of agricultural goods and C3 Civic digital integration;
- The RURAL ESSENTIAL as third transversal objective 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 fourth transversal objective, the GREEN RURAL combines B4. Pollution reduction in rural areas, A3. Sustainable development of local communities and A1. Farmer support and preservation of labour places;
- The SMART AND INCLUSIVE RURAL as the fifth transversal objective includes the LDS level objective B5. Social inclusion, education, digitalisation, C1. Professional integration, C2. Increasing the efficiency of the administration in rural area, C3 Civic digital integration, of the less favoured and vulnerable community categories, A1. Farmer support and preservation of labour places, A3. Sustainable development of local communities;
- The ATTRACTIVE RURAL as sixth transversal objectives allow the LDSs to integrate the B6 Tourism and patrimony, C4. Reduction of unbalances among age groups in rural area (contribution to the community social life), A3. Sustainable development of local communities;
- The seventh transversal objective, the INFORMED RURAL, calls for the Technical Assistance Operational Programme for specific information actions regarding the programmes across all other programmes, interventions and support

• Conclusions

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.