MANAGEMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. CONCLUSIONS REFERRING TO THE 2007 - 2013 STAGE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS IN THE 2014-2020 STRUCTURAL FUNDS ABSORPTION

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Abstract: European funding is the key element of debate and study of the last half-decade period starting with the year 2007 until today, if we discuss about agriculture, whether referring to the industrial or service sector. This paper presents aspects of rural development and project management guidelines on possibilities of absorption in this area, through a comparative analysis of the measures implemented in the period 2007 - 2013 compared to those proposed for the next stage of allocation of funds.

Key words: project management, agriculture, European funds, rural development

INTRODUCTION

Rural areas have undergone in the past half century to a transformation process that generated mostly negative order effects, occurring modifications in terms of activities, structure, organization. The first changes occurred during the communist regime, with the collectivization, urbanization, and industrialization.

One such area is rural economy in general and agriculture in particular area where there are resources, but they are insufficiently known.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In preparing this paper, the main instruments used were the statistics provided by official sources, also literature approach, in the attempt to illustrate with the greatest possible fidelity, the current situation in the Romanian rural areas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

European Union began to be increasingly concerned about the development of rural areas, offering aid and development funds, trying even to draw full recovery strategies for these regions.

Although we have a relatively low activity in the agricultural sector, employment in agriculture and forestry is considered to be "oversized compared with European standards." Thus, employment in this sector represents about 19% of the employed population in the of 2010, compared with EU values, about 4.7%.

Financial and fiscal support to agriculture is one of the objectives pursued in recent years in Romania. For there have been implemented specific financing schemes in order to facilitate the absorption of European funds. The latter have been allocated to Romania by EU funds for agriculture, rural development and fisheries. Moreover, we can also consider funding for cultural property protection projects and protected areas, the idea to preserve and protect these areas.

According to data provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Romania there are currently approximately 14.7 acres of land, most of which is represented by arable land (about 63%). Grasslands, on the other hand, account for around 22% of the total.

The cultivated area evolved negatively in the last period, registering a downfall, most landlords being many individuals who abandoned working the land.
The main operational programs through which the EU provides support are: PNDR, POP and even some measures of the POS for Environment and POR (Regional Operational Program).

In the PNDR, the thematic priority axes are:
- Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, whose main measures concern: training, information and diffusion of knowledge, Setting up of young farmers, farm modernization, Improving the economic value of forests, adding value to agricultural and forestry products, developing infrastructure related development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry, subsistence farm support, setting up producer groups, providing counseling services;
- Improving the environment and countryside, including support issues for certain disadvantaged areas, agro-environmental payments, the sustainable use of forest land;
- Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy, on the creation and development of micro, encouraging tourism activities, improving the quality of life in rural areas and development of villages.
- Leader Axis, which aims to implement projects of cooperation, local development strategies or construction of public - private partnerships.

One of programmatic documents on which it was possible to access European funds in the period 2007-2013 is represented by PNDR - National Rural Development Programme, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The value of this allocation was about 8,124 million euros, representing only the contribution of the European Union, not counting the contribution from the state budget. National Rural Development Programme was supporting primarily micro enterprises in rural areas, the largest projects being prepared Measure 312 "Support for creating or updating the micro”.

On the other hand, POP - Operational Programme for Fisheries is developing the fisheries sector, but also pays attention and the idea of sustainability, in order to improve the quality of life in those areas. European Fisheries Fund Operational Programme has allocated the total of 230.7 million, not counting the value contribution from the state budget.

The Payments and Intervention Agency for Agriculture - known under the acronym APIA, facilitates the receiving of financing, introduced a number of measures such as national program vineyards, providing support for dairy products in schools, support for producers fruit or vegetables, etc.

The situation regarding the absorption of funds allocated for rural development, agriculture and fisheries is presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Initial Projects</th>
<th>Approved Projects</th>
<th>Contracted Projects</th>
<th>Submitted payments (mil.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PNDR 2007-2013</td>
<td>139.747</td>
<td>68.115</td>
<td>64.819</td>
<td>19.891,89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POP</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>295,80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEGA</td>
<td>6.944.181</td>
<td>6.797.124</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.504,83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to agriculture, forestry or fisheries, also rural tourism development is possible, in recent years, this area of activity enjoying quite broad development by creating new accommodation structures in generally, pensions especially. Both qualitatively and quantitatively, these structures are considered to be good but not at maximum level. Similarly, investments in tourism are quite difficult to evaluate in the purpose of their recovery and data on tourist flows are not always available to official bodies in the field.

This area was not developed during the communist regime, as was the industry also, but if we talk about agriculture area, we can say that this field began recording a decline in the last twenty years deep into a louder real crisis.

It is worth mentioning that one of the main features of the Romanian rural environment is heterogeneous, both in terms of demographic and socio-economic development level.

Since this is a country where rural areas still holds an important percent, Romania is a jewel in the untapped rural tourism, with villages and natural parks or reservations. Rural development can be achieved not only through such companies in the agriculture and trade, but also by considering tourism as a driver of economic growth. Same program PNDR provides support for rural tourism through measure 313 "Encouragement of tourism activities".

Village environment characteristics can be best illustrated through tourism, a type of tourism that is becoming more practiced in recent years being agrotourism, through which rural residents can provide an additional source of income.

However, according to EU regulations, any proposed development project must take into account the principles established by the environmental law, there are some specific rules. This is because long-term environmental damage is a factor that determines the evolution of the economy. To this end, the EU has developed a set of measures and programs in order to ensure effective sustainable development.

One of these sets of programs addresses environmental issues from the perspective of sustainable development not only in terms of the environment, but also social and economic aspects.

In the field of environmental protection and nature, the European Union adopted a general tendency to impose universal standards and adhere to international conventions.

In the field of rural entrepreneurship, the main obstacle may consist of financing, money allocation efficiency in this sector lending facilities.

It is considered further funding for the period 2014 to 2020. Rural development, agriculture and fisheries are developing ways to which national institutions focus their attention, and these areas represent priority thematic objectives for that period.

The European Union has developed a policy of common and universal rural development, while setting priority goals for rural areas and their residents.

EU rural areas are an essential part of the whole Union taking into account that about 90% of the rural sector belongs to the Union. Both within the Union and in Romania, rural areas are not without problems. Many businesses fail to become active on a competitive market. In rural areas, incomes are much lower than in urban areas, the services sector is underdeveloped.

However, according to data from Eurostat and other official institutions, the European Union has developed a strategic ensemble of future rural development regions, taking into account also, and solving the problems faced by the regions concerned.

Although the European Union has made a common rural development policy, each Member State may apply its own rural development policy. Between them and the general
development policies at the national level there must be a match, the more that rural areas
differ in size and structure from one country to another. Policies developed by the
European Union have central EU-financing and partly national and regional budgets of the
Member States.

According to Regulation no. 1698/2005, rural development policy for 2007-2013
includes three "thematic axes" main (according to Eurostat):
• improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry;
• Improving the environment and the countryside;
• improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural
economy.

CONCLUSIONS

Romania's potential is outstanding, although in recent years has not given as much
attention to agriculture development in general and rural areas in particular. On the other
hand, the social role of rural areas is important, population density remaining constant over
time.

Rural areas represent a resource that is not enough exploited, they cover about 87%
of the country and approximately 45% of the total population. The general trend is a steady
decrease in the number of inhabitants in rural areas, but it is still continuing the expansion
of the urban environment.

Labor force allocated in agriculture and forestry, according to the latest data
provided by the National Institute of Statistics, represents about 19% of total employment,
while the European Union has much lower levels: 4.7% on average EU and the rest
ranging from 5.5% in Hungary to 14.7% in Bulgaria.

However, Romania's rural areas are characterized by an aging population, and also
a much lower education level compared to the urban areas. Poverty is high and the
vulnerability of these regions increases together with decreasing income levels, rising
unemployment and an aging population. Share of agriculture in the rural economy is about
60%, while rural economy is mainly a primary one. The share of agriculture in gross value
added in the EU Romania has the highest value in this category.

The development potential of Romania is an important one, which can be exploited
by applying appropriate strategies in areas identified as being cost effective and yet
underdeveloped.

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