

STUDY REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT DEGREE OF  
THE WESTERN REGION

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**Abstract:** Being one of the most important regions of Romania The Western Region is our object of study from this paper. In Western Region there are 1327 villages, the urbanization degree of the region (63.6%) being much higher than the one at the national level, the largest agricultural areas are in the counties with predominantly plain relief, Timis (80.6% of the county area) and Arad (66% of the county area). The economic dynamics of the Western Region is the result of a whole complex of factors, of which the most important are the higher level of labor force qualification, the cosmopolitan mentality and the multiligvism that characterize an important segment of the population of the region, the proximity to the western markets and the important resources, existing in the region.

**Key words:** Western Region, development, urban area, rural area

INTRODUCTION

The Western Region, subjected under study, has an area of 32,034 Km<sup>2</sup> (13.4% of the country's surface) and is composed from 42 cities (of which 12 municipalities) and 276 communes (318 territorial administrative units), grouped into four counties: Arad, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara and Timis. The Western Development Region was constituted with governmental approval on October 28, 1998. Historically speaking, the region comprises the province of Banat, a Romanian historical province with an earlier and stronger economic development compared to other provinces from the country. The Western Region is part of the Danube -Cris-Mures-Tisa (DCMT) Euro region, which involves the four Western Region counties, three Hungarian counties and the autonomous region of Vojvodina from Serbia.

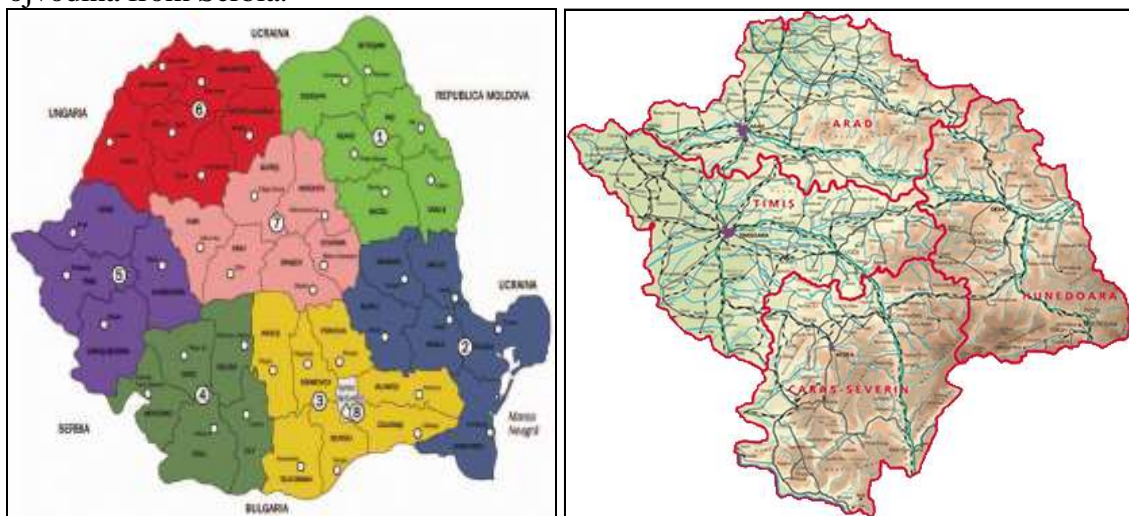


Figure 1. Location of Western Region on Romania's map

Source: <http://www.adrvest.ro/index.php?page=domain&did=48>

The urbanization degree of the region (63.6%) is much higher than the national value (54.9%).

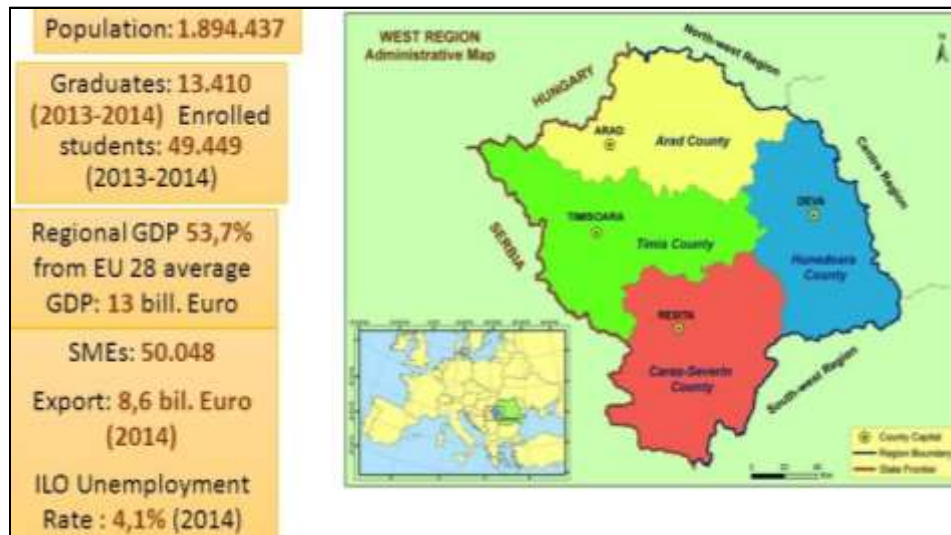
From the point of view of the administrative-territorial units, in Western Region there are 1327 villages. With small exceptions, in urban area of the West Region are relatively old cities that have undergone constant development. Unfortunately, the period of industrialization and the planned economy of the 1970s and 1980s has made its mark on the cities from the region, with monoindustrial localities, which have faced real adaptation problems [16].

**Table 1.**

**The number of rural localities from Western region by counties**

Development region	Number of villages	Number of communes
County	2851	12946
Romania	277	1327
Western Region	68	270
Arad	85	313
Timis	69	287
Caras-Severin	55	457

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 2014



**Figure 2. Administrative-territorial map of West Region**

Source: <http://www.adrvest.ro/index.php?page=domain&did=48>

From the total area of the Western Region, the largest agricultural areas are in the counties with predominantly plain relief, Timis (80.6% of the county area) and Arad (66% of the county area). In Hunedoara and Caras-Severin counties, the share of agricultural areas is much lower (39.7% and 46.7%).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The object pursue in this scientific paper is to expose and describe, succinct the development degree of Western Region of Romania, so in this regard:

- First we put accent on administrative-territorial location,
- Then we emphasis the number of rural localities from Western region by counties
- And we underline some of the effects on the economic and social life, way of living and the quality of housing, the economic dynamics;
- And finally we draw some conclusions.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The region is facing a process of demographic aging, its effects on the economic and social life will be felt, when in the working population will enter the generations, born after 1990, reduced numerically.

As regards the rural area, this is characterized from demographic point of view, by a low population density, demographic decline due to migration and aging of population, relatively high mortality rate and a low capacity for demographic renewal.

The workforce of the region represents the factor that has contributed the most to the socio-economic development, being motivated, flexible, innovative, but also with a high degree of specialization, thus contributing to the development of a dynamic entrepreneurial environment. Along with agriculture, the product processing, forestry with forest exploitation, wood industry, domestic industry, handicraft production, etc. come to complement the economy of rural area. The productive services related to the agricultural and forestry activity begin to take shape and bring a contribution in this field, to which is added the development of industries related to agriculture. Regarding the professions practiced in rural area, they are practical, manual, some requiring a degree of qualification and even professional polyqualification. The population employed in non-productive services, social-cultural activities has a small share in the number of inhabitants from rural communities. Also, during a year, a large part of the population working in non-agricultural activities with an unlimited employment contract carries out agricultural activities by helping their family members or supplementing their income with those from agricultural work provided to third parties. It can be said that it is a feature of work in rural areas that a person performs non-agricultural and agricultural work. This multi-activity has multiple consequences on the mood of the rural world in terms of food self-consumption [16, 15, 10].

It is necessary to discuss the way of living and the quality of housing, within this criterion. The living area that returns per capita in Western Region is 16.56 m<sup>2</sup> in the rural area. Most communes are in the range of 15-17 m<sup>2</sup>/inhabitant. However, there are also communes with low housing densities per inhabitant, with areas of 14 m<sup>2</sup>/inhabitant. These communes are located in Timis, Arad and Caras-Severin counties.

From the point of view of building materials, in Western region there are two trends: one specific to the dwelling houses where sustainable building materials are used and one specific to the mountain areas where wood and stone are the main building materials. In the second case, the counties of Caras-Severin and Hunedoara fall. The homes of the last years are made of good construction materials from a qualitative point of view. After 1992, more houses were built in rural areas than in urban ones. In the period 1992-2002, 7.5% of all new homes were built in the rural area, returning 26 new homes to 1000 inhabitants.

Human communities from rural areas have some specific characteristics, namely, human relations are better and self-help is more frequent. The inhabitants know each other from all points of view and their hierarchy is made taking into account the behavior in the family and society [11, 1, 4, 5, 6].

If for the Romanians the Western Region means wealth, a level of development higher than the Romanian average and a lifestyle with strong influences from the German and central European area, for the foreign investors of the Western Region was highlighted as a promising investment space, where the substantial opportunities of an emerging market can be harnessed in a modern and civilized business environment. Thus, starting from a set of favorable circumstances and building on an impressive industrial tradition, in the post-communist period the Western Region registered a constant economic growth,

superior to the Romanian average and managed to attract an impressive volume of foreign investments, oriented towards economic sectors of the most diverse [17, 8, 9, 12, 14].

The economic dynamics of the Western Region is the result of a whole complex of factors, of which the most important are the higher level of labor force qualification, the cosmopolitan mentality and the multiligvism that characterize an important segment of the population of the region, the proximity to the western markets and the important resources, existing in the region.

Inheriting the important industrial tradition of the Banat, which was a pilot region for many innovative experiences in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Western Region was characterized in and before 1989 by a well-developed and diverse industrial infrastructure. The opportunities and challenges that appeared immediately after 1989, as well as the most recent ones, associated with Romania's integration into the European Union, constituted an essential stimulus for the diversification and consolidation of competitive regional economic structures, oriented to the demands of Western European markets. A key role in the structural transformation of the Western Region was played by foreign capital, which discovered in this emerging market mentalities and attitudes similar to those in the mature markets of Western Europe.

Undoubtedly, the cultural proximity of the Western Region to Europe is also an expression of the geographical proximity enjoyed by the region. Located at about the same distance from Vienna and Bucharest, as a location in Europe, Timisoara, the "capital" of the Western Region, has become in recent years, thanks to Timisoara Traian Vuia Airport, the largest regional airport within the Budapest-Bucharest-Belgrade triangle, a place where you can fly quickly to 20 destinations in Europe.

In the economic life of the region two areas stand out: on the one hand, the economic centers Arad and Timisoara have provided a relative economic activity, and on the other hand, the urban centers from Caras-Severin and Hunedoara counties that were destined for monoindustrial activities and have become reference centers of the industry due to the intensive exploitation of the raw materials and the productive activities related to their use. In Western Region there is an intense and dynamic activity of international trade, but there are large discrepancies between the counties of the region.

**Table 2.**

**Total land fund and property structure for Western Region, 2013-2014**

Indicator name	M.U.	Romania	Western Region	Share %
Total area	km <sup>2</sup>	238,390.71	32,033.17	13.44%
The agricultural surface, of which:		14,741,214	1,891,126	12.83%
Private property	ha	14,087,125	1,817,076	12.90%
Arable		9,420,205	1,088,809	11.56%
Pastures		3,364,041	553,383	16.45%
Rough		1,514,645	212,659	14.04%
Vineyard		224,082	8,736	3.90%
Orchards		218,241	27,539	12.62%
Forestry		6,742,825	19,8354	16.29%
Waters and ponds		841,394	45,442	5.40%
Other surfaces		1,513,638	16,8395	11.13%

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 2014*

From the total area of the Western Region 59% represents agricultural land, respectively 18911.26 km<sup>2</sup>, the largest agricultural areas are in the counties with predominantly plain relief, Timis (80.6% of the county area) and Arad (66% of the county area). In Hunedoara and Caras-Severin counties the share of agricultural areas is much lower (39.7% and 46.7%).

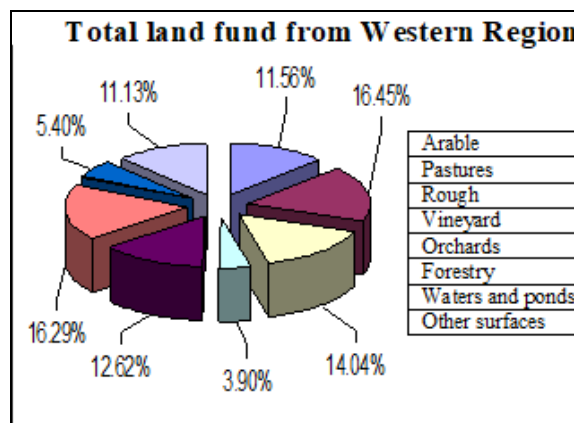


Figure 3. Total land fund and property structure from Western Region

Table 3.

The main indicators for Western Region agricultural sector, 2013-2014

Nr. crt.	Indicator name	U.M	Romania	Western Region	Share %
1.	Surface cultivated under exploitation regime, of which:	ha	8.467,892	908.639	10.73%
	In private property		8.267,693	899.363	10.88%
2.	Total agricultural production	One thousand lei current prices	46.539,540	4.828,241	10.37%
	Vegetable		27.958,975	3.139,890	11.23%
	Animal		18.185,748	1.651,774	9.08%
	Agricultural services		394.817	36.577	9.26%
3.	Average production per hectare	Kg/ha			
	Corn		3.952	4.272	108.10%
	Wheat		2.965	3.244	109.41%
	Barley		2.227	2.706	121.51%
	Textile plants		2.245	5.347	238.17%
	Sugar beet		28.932	33.678	116.40%

Source: ADR Vest, 2014

The arable land corresponds to those areas with high productivity, with fertile soils, suitable for plant cultivation. These are especially characteristic of the open spaces in the Western Plain, where the share of arable land in the agricultural total frequently exceeds 80% and in almost all situations 60%.

The general capacity to support agricultural production is medium, due to the high share of some types of soils with low natural fertility or affected by excess moisture, but compensated by the presence of good soils, with a remarkable share in the area of Sacalaz, Dumbravita and Sanmihaiu Roman.

As in case of other development regions, the territory of the Western Region, from Romania can be divided into two sub-regions, with distinct structural problems and different degree of development.

- The first one includes the territory of Caras-Severin and Hunedoara counties, to which is added the city of Nadrag and the area adjacent to it, located in Timis County. Here they developed early, since the 20th century, branches of the extractive, steel, metallurgical and related industries, such as the machine building industry. This large sub-region of the region entered a strong decline after 1990, and the restructuring process, which has been slow and with great difficulties, has generated very high unemployment. In

this large area, a particular feature is the situation of the economy of the Jiu Valley basin (Aninoasa, Petrosani, Uricani, Petrila, Lupeni, Vulcan), where the reduction of jobs caused repeated social convulsions, despite numerous programs to balance the situation.

- The second sub-region covers the territory of Timis and Arad counties. This sub-region with early, complex and diversified industrial development (light industry, car manufacturers, electro technics, etc.) is currently the favorite area of productive foreign investments in Romania. Against the background of the creation of numerous jobs that require a high-skilled population, and of the massive exodus of labor force in recent years (the emigration of the German population has accentuated this phenomenon), the sub-area faces an increasing lack of appropriate labor force. The new investments in this area are affected by the lack of the appropriate infrastructures for development (water supply and communication paths).

Hunedoara - Deva, Jiu Valley, Hateg - Calan, Deva corridor, the mining area in the south of Caras-Severin County and the mining area from north of Hunedoara County (Brad, Apuseni Mountains), as well as the former mining areas, require urgent infrastructure work for the reintroduction in the economic circuit and the ecological protection of the settlements massively affected by the residues of the mining activities (uranium, rare and colored metals).

Jiu Valley (Lupeni, Petrila, Uricani, Vulcan), Moldova Noua, Sasca, Oravita, Anina, Iron Ocna, Dognecea, Rusca Montana, Jiu Valley, Brad area, Teliuc-all are areas with a significant concentration of available labor force from the mining industry to be absorbed by other sectors. The investments in these areas must necessarily include the greening of the dumps and the rehabilitation of the decommissioned industrial surfaces, the greening of the whole area, the modernization of the sewerage network and drinking water.

The main development problems are concentrated in Caras-Severin and Hunedoara counties, with mono-industrial centers. In the counties of Hundoara and Caras-Severin two areas have been identified and promoted for financing under the Phare 2001 Program:

- The industrial area of the Mehedinti Plateau, respectively the town of Toplet from Caras-Severin County;

- The industrial area of the Southern Banat and the Petrosani Basin (Resita, Borsa, Otelu Rosu, Calan, Hundoara), characterized by an extremely high degree of technical concentration of enterprises and mining centers, the loss of markets, as well as of lack of job offer for the female population, which led to major problems in the process of economic restructuring, labile socio-cultural balance and destabilized ecological environment.

Also, the two counties benefited from funding through government programs for assisted areas and disadvantaged areas: Hunedoara, Rusca Montana, Bocsa, Moldova Noua, Valea Jiului (Petrosani, Vulcan, Lupeni, Petrila, Uricani), and Brad, who, through capitalizing on local potential and through investment programs can improve their economic, social and environmental problems [2, 3, 7, 13].

## CONCLUSIONS

The rural area from Romania represents a cardinal component of the overall evolution of the Romanian economy. Three rural resources give the true dimension of the need to restructure agriculture and rural development in our country:

- the useful agricultural area (14.8 million ha),
- the agricultural labor force (3.5 million) and
- the total area of the rural area (90% of the area country).

If, to these rural characteristics of Romania, we add that our country has recently joined the European Union, it is obvious that the rural need to be perceived as a

multistructural entity, and to ensure its multifunctionality, the need to become an economic and social system modern, efficient and dynamic. It must start from the fact that agriculture is not only an economic branch producing goods and profit, but it is also a way of life, and the rural area is not only a production space, but it is at the same time a social space and culture with complex implications on the overall state of a nation.

If we continue in a more optimistic way we can say that there are reasons to invest in the West Region:

1. The dynamism of an emerging regional economy manifested by:

- Constant and rapid growth of the GDP and the level of investments in the region;
- Continuous diversification of the structure of the regional economy;
- Consolidating a growing regional market;
- New sectors and emerging economic niches, which facilitate the achievement of high rates of profit in the short term.

2. The proximity to various large markets results from:

- The geographical positioning of the West Region is a favorable factor for investments that want to make a profit from arbitrage between different EU and non-EU markets;
- Due to the short distance to Central Europe, the Western Region can function as a major logistics hub for assemblers and importers of products for these final markets.

3. Qualified workforce at competitive costs:

- Unemployment rate stable in Romania;
- The unemployment rate is low compared to other regions of the European Union;
- Cost of labor and reduced hours compared to other Eastern European countries.

4. Infrastructure for vocational training and research-development-innovation:

- In the region there is an extensive training and research-development infrastructure, at all levels, capable of responding to all existing needs in the economy;
- The superior performance of universities in the region favors the development of economic activities with a high research-development component.

5. The favorable economic environment:

- Diversity of the economic branches existing on the market;
- Area with industrial tradition;
- Existence of industrial agglomerations (especially in the IT and automotive fields) that could act as nuclei of future cluster development processes;
- Favorable legal framework

6. Important natural resources:

- Fertile and compact agricultural land;
- Rich thermal and mineral water resources;
- Practicing tourism for all social categories and all age groups;
- Development of the wood exploitation and processing sector.

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