EXISTING DISCREPANCIES AND IDENTIFING SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AT REGIONAL LEVEL IN ROMANIA

DISCREPANȚE EXISTENTE ŞI IDENTIFICAREA DE SOLUȚII ÎN VEDEREA DEZVOLTĂRII DURABILE A MEDIULUI RURAL LA NIVEL REGIONAL ÎN ROMÂNIA

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Abstract: *Implementation of regional development policy of the European Union in our country required the establishment of eight regions, whose common goal is the economic, social and territorial cohesion. Socio-economic disparities between Romania's development regions are significant and those between rural and urban areas require identifying and implementing the best solutions to overcome existing difficulties. This article examines the regional situation in rural areas of Romania and the main measures to be undertaken to reduce existing disparities in socio-economic level and ensure sustainable rural development.*

Key words: *regional, rural development, sustainable, Romania*

INTRODUCTION

Romania's accession period to European Union noted in 1998 the creation of regional development regions, although regions have administrative powers, have a vital role in absorbing funds from the European Union, which is coordinating regional development projects. The eight areas of existing national development have become members of the Committee of Regions when it joined the European Union, a European institution in which Romania has 15 representatives and has a role in defending local and regional interests at European level.

Although irregular in terms of area or existing population, all regions have a common feature of regional development in terms of socio-

economic: there are large disparities between rural and urban areas, which require solutions to achieve a balance between these two areas to prevent long term adverse effects on rural areas.

There are also clear regional differences, and therefore must be pursued to achieve a balance between economic and social development levels of different areas.

To achieve this goal it is necessary to develop improved strategies and policies for regional development. For each of the eight regions was worked out its own development strategy for 2007-2013.

The most important program that aims to reduce economic and social development disparities between the more developed regions and less developed in Romania, ROP - REGIO is the main financial instrument that is designed to target the structural funds worth 4 billion euro by 2013 to these regions on the basis of calls for proposals. The main measures that can be accessed through this operational program to reduce existing disparities in socio-economic field and to ensure rural development, concern: the rehabilitation of county roads (Priority 2), improving social infrastructure (Priority 3), supporting business at regional and local levels (Priority 4) and sustainable development and tourism promotion (Priority 5).

Sustainable rural development in rural areas at regional level should be achieved so that the measures adopted to lead to improved competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, improve the environment and the countryside, and improve quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of rural economy.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The information that has been treated in this article are the result of the study of key documents such as National Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, which in June 2010 consolidated version incorporates principles of sustainable rural development; the regional development strategies developed for the all eight Development Regions and Regional Operational Programme – REGIO and Regulations adopted by the European Union concerning sustainable rural development.

Method used has involved the analysis and interpretation of statistical data and field study conducted for the project “Research On Actual Size Evaluation And The Perspective Of Sustainable Rural

Development Through The Elaboration Of SWOT Analysis, As Method Of Strategic Planning For The North-East Region Of Romania", under a financial scheme supported by Romanian National Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education (Grant no 114/28.07.2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUTIONS

A brief analysis of current regional situation in Romania shows the North Eastern Region as having the largest population in rural areas (Table 1). A second region in terms representative of the rural population is the South Region" Muntenia". We can remark that agriculture in these regions has one of the greatest contributions to the regional gross domestic product, being situated above the national average (about 13%).

Taking into consideration the example of the North East region where the contribution of agriculture is about 15% from regional gross domestic product, but this is made in context of the highest rate of employment in agriculture, about 42%, this remains an important concern for the socio-economic future development in these rural areas.

Besides the regions where agriculture has a higher percentage (especially in the South) are the most exposed for rural sector, these recording positive economic development only in favourable years in terms of agriculture.

Table 1 Distribution of The Romanian population by region in 2008

No.	Region	Total peoples	Total Urban	Total Rural	Male Rural	Women Rural	Peoples /Km^2
1.	Total	21504442	11835328	9669114	4819099	4850015	90,2
2.	North Vest	2722063	1450982	1271081	631641	639440	79,7
3.	Centre	2523510	1500085	1023425	512931	510494	74,0
4.	North - East	3823492	1663685	2159807	1084616	1075191	103,8
5.	South – East	2819565	1553115	1266450	634826	631624	78,8
6.	South - Muntenia	3284525	1359191	1925334	950881	974453	95,3
7.	Bucharest - Ilfov	2248026	2072828	175198	85392	89806	1234,5
8.	South - West Oltenia	2262274	1075425	1186849	589013	597836	77,4
9.	West	1925377	1215422	709955	349812	360143	60,1

Source: INSSE, Romania 2010

The Northeast Region is The Romanian region with the lowest GDP per capita, while the Bucharest Ilfov region is well situated above national average which was 19.315 lei/habitant in 2007. (Table 2)

Table 2 GDP evolution between 2000 and 2007

No	Region	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007
1.a	Total GDP (Millions lei in current prices)	80985	288955	344651	416007
1.b	GDP per capita	3609,7	13362,8	15967,6	19315,4
2.	North West Region				
2.a	Total GDP	9449	34323	40806	50724
2.b	GDP per capita	3322,3	12538,6	14946,6	18610,5
3.	Centre Region				
3.a	Total GDP	9854	33143	40291	49417
3.b	GDP per capita	3729,3	13097,6	15920,2	19579,5
4.	North East Region				
4.a	Total GDP	9593	33266	38430	45990
4.b	GDP per capita	2508,9	8907,6	10295,8	12340,9
5.	South – East Region				
5.a	Total GDP	9427	32852	38509	44273
5.b	GDP per capita	3212,5	11541,7	13569,8	15641,8
6.	South – Muntenia Region				
6.a	Total GDP	9902	36855	44301	52014
6.b	GDP per capita	2857,4	11068,5	13374,6	15757,8
7.	Bucharest – Ilfov Region				
7.a	Total GDP	17869	65307	77711	95798
7.b	GDP per capita	7821,3	29572,6	35012,1	43037,3
8.	South - West Oltenia Region				
8.a	Total GDP	7183	23921	28589	34420
8.b	GDP per capita	2993,0	10371,1	12463,2	15097,3
9.	West Region				
9.a	Total GDP	7600	29081	35789	42996
9.b	GDP per capita	3723,4	15064,7	18570,1	22341,9

Source: Selected dates from INSSE, Romania 2010

If in 2009-2010 global economic recession effects were felt strongly in the all regional development regions, it is expected that in the context of consumption revival and a good agricultural year in 2011, they will come back on a rising slope.

Identifying solutions for regional sustainable development in rural areas should have as a starting point doing analysis of development objectives set in each region-specific strategy for regional development.

These objectives should be linked to investment programs that can be accessed at the regional level, depending on the resources and the existing potential.

There are also necessary measures to identify and access additional sources of funding, in sustainability conditions, for the realization of infrastructure projects especially in rural areas; for the use of alternative energy sources, for environmental protection, for promotion of Romanian traditional products, and for a better quality of education, health and social services in rural areas.

Accessing structural funds is the optimum solution in financial terms that can be used especially for large investment objectives.

At households level have to be reduced dependence on agricultural activities, which can only ensure their survival and have to be promoted in exchange, the small business, craft activities or to be developed agro-tourism services in areas with high tourism and cultural potential.

CONCLUSIONS

The Regional development is an important issue, which implies financial support, solidarity and a powerful orientation for cohesion and economic integration.

Our national priority of regional policy is to bring living standards up to the European Union average as quickly as possible.

The implementation of regional policy in Romania should make regions more attractive for investments by improving accessibility, providing quality services and preserving environmental potential.

Developing sustainable solutions requires taking in consideration of all aspects involved in rural life: the social dimension, economic dimension, the political dimension, technical-scientific dimension, environmental and natural resources dimension.

There are significant differences in prosperity levels between the Romanian Region of development, and also between rural and urban areas.

Regional inequalities in the rural areas have various causes, but the new European Union policy have an important part of the funds allocated to

avoid migration of population from rural areas to the city, which may be a chance for the development of the poorest rural areas from Romania, for elimination of social deprivation, for improving quality of rural school, creating new jobs and improving infrastructures.

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