

STUDIES REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY LEADER AT THE "COLINELE OLTENIEI" LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

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Abstract

The Local Action Group (LAG) is represented by a form of partnership established in a rural territory that brings together representatives of the public, private and civil society sectors in that territory, created with the aim of implementing LEADER methods, receiving funding based on the Strategy of Local Development developed previously and authorized by the responsible Management Authority, the amount of the allocated amount being established according to the area of the LAG territory and the number of inhabitants. The Local Action Group "Colinele Oltenia" is located, from a geographical point of view, in the south-western part of Romania and is part, from an administrative point of view, of the South-West Oltenia Development Region and consists of a total of 17 localities. During the analyzed period, a number of 22 projects were submitted to the "Colinele Olteniei" LAG, with a total eligible value of 1,479,187.5 euros, of which only 16 projects were contracted with an eligible value a total of 993,944.14 euros, where the Agency for the Financing of Rural Investments paid to the beneficiaries 157,875 euros from the total sum of 993,944.14 euros, which represents the total support related to the projects declared eligible and for which financing contracts were signed.

Key words: LEADER, LAG, development, strategy, financing

INTRODUCTION

Funding the agricultural sector is a necessity and a future, reducing the CAP budget after 2020 is not a viable solution for this, which will lead to a decline in all aspects of the sector. (Dumitru et al. 2017). European funds are financial instruments created by the European Union, for member states, private and/or public sector, to develop certain areas, and to support countries to reach certain standards of economic, social or cultural development. Grants are non-reciprocal financial aid for many activities and investments (Vladu et al. 2018). The local action groups (LAG), the key element of the LEADER approach, are intended to

identify and implement, using the public-private partnership, a local development strategy that harmoniously combines the interests of all actors involved in the development of rural areas: residents, organizations, professional unions, local politicians, (Albu and Chi 2014) of environmental associations, cultural associations, and community service providers, mass media, etc. The involvement of LAGs in the decision-making process regarding the future of the rural region ensures the premises of a sustainable development in the rural environment, in accordance with its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental (Staic and Vladu 2021).

The studies show that there is no correlation between the level of development and the spatial distribution of LEADER funds, which reveals that the LEADER program is an inclusive rather than a selective tool for the development of Romanian rural communities, despite other examples researched in Western countries (Vladu and Savescu 2013). The results show that the LEADER program can have an influence in reducing rural disparities, but its effects are of little importance (Opria, Roșu, and Iațu 2021). Some studies show that the performance of LAGs is related to the size of their team, their experience and the involvement of their partners. However, not all LAGs have been able to generate significant multiplier effects, suggesting that they still lack the necessary experience to successfully implement the method in their territories (Olar and Jitea 2021). It is observed that the Romanian farms are starting to grow slowly and are trying to align themselves with the European standards found in the developed countries of the European Union. However, the process should be continued, which is why PNDR 2014-2020 continued the development direction of the Romanian village, placing more emphasis on the LEADER measure, which implies a more active involvement of local actors in the support and development of the Romanian village (Albu and Chi 2014). Following a study carried out, based on a series of questions sent to representatives of local action groups, questions related to territorial, financial and social aspects, it was found that: over 70% of LAGs are faced with an aging population and a lack of places of work, over 70% of the eligible territories being inhabited by the population aged between 40 and 50, territories where agriculture is the main source of income (100% of respondents). All respondents consider that LEADER funding is very important but also insufficient for the needs of the territory (over 85% of respondents) (Staic, Uliu, and Vladu 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this paper is to identify the current state of implementation of the Local Development Strategy, in the reference period 2016-2019.

The analysis of administrative data is a process of collecting and analyzing relevant information for the evaluation, from written sources, made available by the beneficiary in printed or electronic format, as well as the analysis of existing public data on websites, web pages, etc., belonging to the beneficiary.

The analysis of the administrative data at the "Colinele Olteniei" LAG was carried out on the basis of the documents provided by the beneficiary, which come from the following three sources: (1) Monitoring reports of the LAG "Colinele Olteniei" (derived from mandatory reports of the LAG to the AM PNDR, as well as centralizations carried out by the AM PNDR and sent to the LAG); (2) Local Development Strategy of LAG "Colinele Olteniei"; (3) The beneficiary's website www.galcolineleolteniei.ro, from where information was taken regarding: evaluation reports, selection reports, session launch calendars as well as other relevant information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The financing plan of the "Colinele Olteniei" LAG Local Development Strategy is 2,217,628.31 euros, of which: 1,538,078 euros related to Component A, representing the summation of related values (territory 895.89 km² x 985.37 Euro/ km² = 882,783 Euro; population 33,029 inhabitants x 19.84 Euro/place = 655,295 Euro) and 679,550.31 Euro, the amount related to Component B, representing the bonus allocated by AM NRDP, calculated according to note 92,255/04.08.2016 – Note on the methodology calculation for determining

the value of a Bonus Unit (UB) related to the level of quality obtained following the selection process of the Local Development Strategies 2014-2020. According to this note, 1UB represents 226,516.77 euros, to the LAG "Colinele

Olteniei" going back 3UB, respectively $226,516.77 \times 3 = 679,550.31$ euros, bonus units obtained following the evaluation of SDL and its inclusion in bonus category I (Table 1).

Table 1

Budget of the Local Development Strategy of Colinele Oltenia LAG (Euro)

P2				P3		P6						Operating and entertainment expenses	
M5/2B		M6/2A		M4/3A		M1/6B		M2/6B		M3/6A			
Co. A	Co. B	Co. A	Co. B	Co. A	Co. B	Co. A	Co. B	Co. A	Co. B	Co. A	Co. B	Co. A	Co. B
50,000	0	30,000	35,337	200,000	88,342	570,463	419,961	200,000	0	180,000	0	307,615	135,910
50,000		65,337		288,342		990,425.31		200,000		180,000		443,525	
Total						Component A		1,538,078					
						Component B		679,550.31					
Total buget strategie 2,217,628.31													

Table 2

The numerical and value situation of the projects contracted through Intervention Measure M1/6B – "Supporting public utility investments for the economic and social development of the territory of the Colinele Oltenia LAG"

No.	Project title	Measure of intervention	Eligible Amount (Euro)
1	Modernization of Teilor street - the section from km 2+495 to km 3+405 - Predesti village, Predesti commune, Dolj county	M1/6B	82.288,14
2	The purchase of equipment for the voluntary service for emergency situations of the municipality of Sopot	M1/6B	116.085
3	Modernization of village road DS6, DJ561A - Camin Cultural, Bicles village, Bicles commune, Mehedinți county	M1/6B	56.661
4	Endowment of the Voluntary Service for Emergency Situations of Carpen Municipality, Dolj County	M1/6B	58.000
5	The purchase of equipment for the voluntary service for emergency situations - purchase of a bulldozer	M1/6B	77.000
6	Construction, arrangement of the agri-food market and communal fair in Scaesti village, Scaesti commune, Dolj County	M1/6B	58.739
7	Equipping the voluntary service for emergency situations with a bulldozer in Argetoia commune	M1/6B	52.704
8	Modernization of village roads in Gogosu commune, Dolj county	M1/6B	74.915
9	Construction of a mini-football field in the village of Rasicul Oghian, Cernatesti Commune, Dolj County	M1/6B	51.937
10	Construction of sports field in Almaj commune, Dolj county	M1/6B	53.531
11	Construction of Stancesti Cemetery street, Busu village, Grecesti commune, Dolj county	M1/6B	71.400
12	Construction of a bridge over the Urdinita stream at Dragoescu point in Botosesti-Paia commune, Dolj county	M1/6B	57.983
13	Purchase of equipment and accessories for equipping the SVSU of the Cotofenii commune in Dos, Dolj county	M1/6B	57.701
TOTAL			868.944,14

Table 2 shows the situation of the projects contracted through Intervention Measure M1/6B - "Supporting public utility investments for the economic and social development of the Colinele Olteniei LAG territory" is 13 projects, with an eligible value of 868,944.14 euros (period 2016 – 2019).

Through the intervention measure M3/6A "Supporting the creation of new

non-agricultural economic activities", a single project was contracted with the title "Construire Agropensiune Roata", in the amount of 70,000 euros, in the period 2016 - 2019. Through the intervention measure M5/2B "Supporting young farmers", a single project was contracted with the title "Supporting DRM ANDREI LEGUMICULTURA SRL", with an eligible

value of 40,000 euros, in the period 2016 - 2019 (Table 3).

Table 3

The numerical and value situation of the projects contracted for the rest of the intervention measures at the "Colinele Olteniei" LAG, on 01.10.2018

No.	Project title	Measure of intervention	Eligible Amount (Euro)
1	BUILDING AGROPENSION "ROATA"	M3/6A	70.000
2	Support of DRM ANDREI LEGUMICULTURA SRL	M5/2B	40.000
3	Support for the development of the farm Budici Stelian PFA from Cotofenii din Dos commune, Dolj county	M6/2A	15.000
TOTAL			125.000

The last project contracted in this period is called "Support for the development of the farm Budici Stelian Authorized Natural Person from Cotofenii din dos commune, Dolj county", through intervention measure M6/2A "Supporting small farms" with an eligible value of 15,000 euros (Table 3).

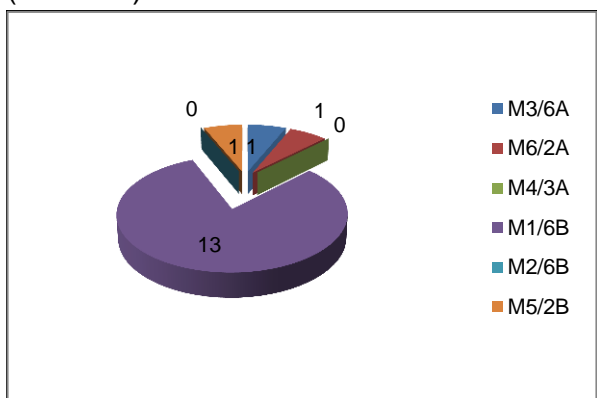


Figure 1. The number of projects related to each measure from the total number of contracted projects, until 2019

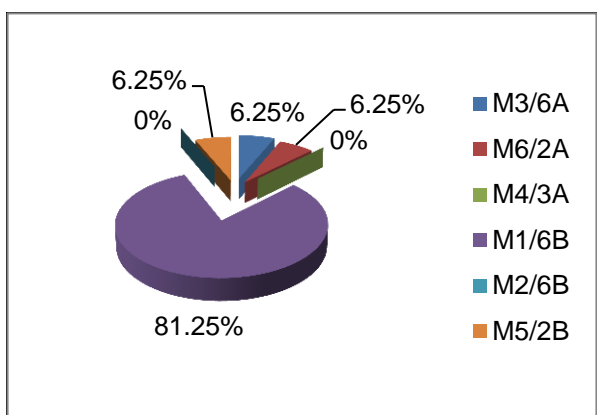


Figure 2. The percentage of each measure, in total contracted projects, until 2019

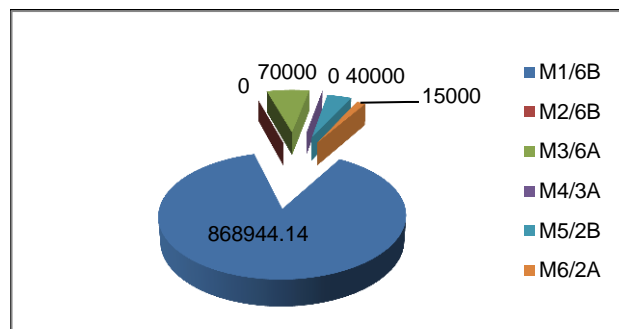


Figure 3. Breakdown of contracted value by measures, euros

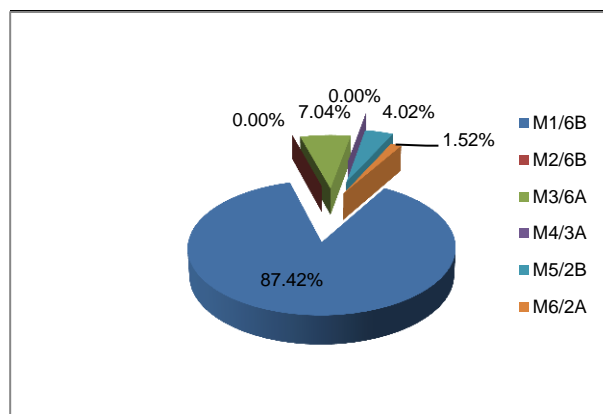


Figure 4. Share of allocated amounts, by measures

Of the 16 contracted projects, 13 are related to measure M1/6B, 1 related to measure M5/2B, 1 related to measure M3/6A and one related to measure M6/2A. Measure M1/6B is representative for the "Colinele Olteniei" LAG, as can be seen from the graphic representation below. This measure aims to contribute to the provision of the necessary infrastructure for the territory of the LAG, in order to improve the living environment as a whole, in order to motivate the citizens of the local organizations to seek opportunities for the development of this

area, such as ensuring access to basic services, of protecting the cultural, environmental and natural heritage at the locality level. Its specific objectives are: supporting the development of the territory of the COLINELE OLTENIEI LAG; supporting public utility investments; accessibility of local services (Figure 1).

As shown in the graphs presented in figures 2 and 3, of the total contracted support, 87.42% is allocated to projects related to measure M1/6B, in the total amount of 869944.14 euros, small percentages go to measures M3/6A, M5/6B, M6/2A and no amount towards measures M2/6B, M4/3A, until 2019.

Table 4

The situation of the amounts paid from the total value of the contracted projects of each intervention measure

Measure	Allocated amount (euro)	Contracted projects	Eligible value of contracted projects (euro)	Amounts paid (euro)
M1/6B	990.425,31	13	868.944,14	78.875
M2/6B	200.000	0	0	0
M3/6A	180.000	1	70.000	49.000
M4/3A	288.342	0	0	0
M5/2B	50.000	1	40.000	30.000
M6/2A	65.337	1	15.000	0
Total	1.774.104,31	16	993.944,14	157.875

As can be seen in table 4, until the end of the analyzed period, only a small part of the amount related to the contracted eligible projects was paid. This denotes the fact that the beneficiaries' projects are

CONCLUSIONS

During the analyzed period, 22 projects were submitted to the "Colinele Olteniei" LAG, between 2016 and 2019, with a total eligible value of 1,479,187.5 euros, of which only 16 projects were contracted with a total eligible value of 993,944.14 euros.

The status of the projects contracted through Intervention Measure M1/6B - "Supporting public utility investments for the economic and social development of the territory of the Colinele Olteniei LAG" is 13 projects, with an eligible value of 868,944.14 euros (period 2016 - 2019). Through the intervention measure M3/6A "Supporting the creation of new non-agricultural economic activities", a single project was contracted with the title "Construire Agropensiune Roata", in the amount of 70,000 euros, (period 2016 - 2019). Through the intervention measure M5/2B "Supporting young farmers", a single project was contracted with the title

being implemented, and the representatives of the LAG will supervise the implementation process until the beneficiaries receive the full support from A.F.I.R.

"Supporting DRM ANDREI LEGUMICULTURA SRL", with an eligible value of 40,000 euros (period 2016 - 2019). The last project contracted in this period is called "Support for the development of the farm Budici Stelian Authorized Physical Person from Cotofenii din dos commune, Dolj county", through intervention measure M6/2A "Supporting small farms" with an eligible value of 15,000 euros.

Until 2019, A.F.I.R paid to the beneficiaries 157,875 euros out of the total amount of 993,944.14 euros, which represents the total support related to the projects declared eligible and for which financing contracts were signed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of Luxita Georgiana STAIC was supported by the project "PROINVENT", Contract no. 62487/03.06.2022 - POCU/993/6/13 -

Code 153299, financed by The Human Capital Operational Programme 2014–2020 (POCU), Romania.

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