STUDY ON THE LAG APPROACH IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

The study analyses the implementation of the LEADER approach and Local Action Groups in Romania, in the European context, for the 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 programming periods, with an outlook on the 2021–2027 framework. Using a mixed methodology, the research integrated official statistical data, European Commission reports, and national evaluations, tracking financial allocations, expenditure structure, and performance indicators. The results show that Romania stood out for the speed of LAG approval, averaging five months, in contrast to delays of over two years in some Member States, and financial execution showed that over 77% of expenditure was directed towards local projects, with administrative costs at 22%, reflecting a balanced use of resources. However, cooperation projects accounted for less than 1% of the total, indicating limited integration into transnational networks. At European level, over two-thirds of LAGs used single fund financing, in particular the EAFRD, while only 24% applied the multi-fund model, including Romania. The comparative analysis showed that, although Romania exceeded the target for covering the rural population through local development strategies, it performed modestly in improving services and infrastructure, as well as in creating jobs. The conclusions suggest that the LEADER approach has contributed to mobilizing rural communities and strengthening local governance, but needs a stronger focus on measurable socio-economic impacts and inter-territorial cooperation in the current programming exercise.

Keywords: LEADER, Local Action Groups, rural development, European Union, Romania