

National Rural Development Program - source of funding for priority objectives for rural economy development

Cătălin LĂPĂDAT¹

¹University of Craiova
lapadat.catalin@gmail.com

Abstract. *The source of financing through which non-reimbursable funds are accessed from the European Union and the Government of Romania for the economic-social development of the rural area in Romania is the National Rural Development Program (NRDP). The article highlights the priority objectives for the development of the rural economy and how they can be achieved through the funding provided by the authorities through the NRDP, based on previous experience in using the funds. For this, analyzed the degree of access to funds from PNDR in the period 2014-2020 and made a comparison with accessing funds in the period 2007-2013.*

Keywords: non-reimbursable funds, rural economy, rural area.

JEL Classification: Q14, R11

1. Introduction

The contemporary village constitutes the main component of the rural space. The basic characteristic of the contemporary village is the humanization of land, which has gone through a series of changes over time, ranging from a mostly agricultural entity of local importance, to a multifunctional settlement, with strong ties to the entirety of the territory.

Romania expands over 238.391 km², divided into: 61,3% agricultural land (app. 14.6 mil. hectares, of which 64.2% is arable land, 32.9 % natural grassland and meadows, and 2.7% fruit trees and vines); 28.3% woods and other forested lands; 10.4% urban dwellings, waterways, roads, railroads and unproductive lands (INS Tempo Online, 2012).

In terms of surface, Romania is a medium-sized country in the European Union (accounting for 5.41% of the total surface thereof), covering 5 out of the 11 biogeographical regions in Europe (Steppic, Pontic, Pannonian, Continental and Alpine).

Approximately 87.1% of the entire surface of the country constitutes the rural space, consisting of communes, as territorial administrative units, along with their corresponding villages.

There is a fine balance in terms of geographical distribution: 33% plain area (up to 300 m altitude), 37% hill area (300-1000 m) and 30% mountainous area (over 1000 m altitude).

The contribution of the agricultural sector to Romania's economy (6.6 % of the raw added value) is one of the highest in the EU (over three times higher than the 1.7 % of the raw added value recorded in the EU).

According to data published by the European Commission in the Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for Romania, approximately one third of the total number of farms in the European Union, accounting for 3.9 million agricultural exploitation areas are located in Romania. The main challenges arising from the activity of such areas relate to increasing sector competitiveness and to supporting the

restructuring process. According to the same publication, agricultural structures are highly polarized – the big and medium-sized farms account for approximately 7 % of the entire amount of exploitation, but they encompass roughly 70% of the agricultural surface, with significant competitive potential. On the other hand, 93 % of the exploitation areas are less than 5 hectares wide – they are mainly subsistence and semi-subsistence exploitations, covering the remaining 30% of the agricultural surface. The average surface of the farms is much smaller than the EU average (3.4 ha in Romania, as compared to the EU average of 14.4 ha). Average productivity is low, respectively 30 % of the EU numbers, despite Romania's potential in this sector. The subsistence and semi-subsistence exploitations, poorly endowed with outdated, worn out pieces of equipment, give out low productivity, and cannot get involved in cooperative activities, that might otherwise support market integration. Hence, the difficulty of accessing financial and insurance service.

More than one fifth of agricultural lands are located in agricultural systems of significant natural value. One of the main challenges that arise in terms of environment protection and land management constitutes the double pressure exerted, on one hand, by the risk of forsaking the agricultural activities in certain areas, and, on the other hand, of intensifying such activities in other parts of the country. Extended agricultural lands are affected by soil degradation (erosion, landslides and desertification), which are believed to intensify due to climate changes. The existing irrigation systems are, for the most part, degraded and in a precarious functional state.

In exchange, some of the potential opportunities for the Romanian rural areas would be the recent ascending trend of agricultural exports, the high quality of land which may lead to increased production, a rich cultural heritage and biodiversity, as well as the extensive use of traditional land management practices.

In this research paper, the main method used involved the analysis of the existing literature, referring to the National Rural Development Program for the periods 2007 - 2013 and 2014 - 2020. In this sense, were used data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Managing Authority for NRDP, European Commission. We also researched European and national regulations on sustainable and rural development. In order to achieve the purpose of the research, we also used the comparison as a research method, in order to identify new elements introduced for the proper implementation of rural development measures.

2. An analysis of the National Rural Development Program (PNDR)

Access to non-reimbursable European funds leads to a more dynamic rural space, as it aims at achieving sustainable growth in order to ensure the economic and social welfare of the society. The promotion of the “European model” of rural development in Romania is supported by a constant concern with the implementation of various strategies of local development by the accessing of the financial resources made available by the European Union by means of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Fisheries Fund and the European Agriculture Guarantee Fund, aiming towards the accomplishment of the requirements of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The National Rural Development Program (NRDP) is implemented by the European Union and by the Romanian Government to grant non-reimbursable funds for the economic and social development of the national rural space. The National Program for Rural Development covers the entire Romanian territory and defines the financing directions for the achieving of Romania's priorities, by granting money from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The main institutions which enable the implementation of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) through the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) are:

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), through the General Directorate for Rural Development is the Managing Authority for the NPRD.
- The Agency for Rural Investment Financing (ARIF) acts as a Payment Authority ensuring the technical and financial implementation for every financial measure in the NPRD, except for those aimed at areas of natural constraints (ANC).
- The Agency for Payments and Interventions for Agriculture (APIA) is the Delegated Body.

The National Rural Development Program (NRDP) supports the requirements of the Romanian rural space identified following a social, economic and environmental analysis, in order to ensure the implementation of rural economic development.

The main priorities in terms of rural development, as identified in the rural development programs implemented by the Romanian state throughout the years have been:

- The modernization and increased reliability of agricultural exploitation areas, by means of consolidation, market orientation and produce processing;
- The encouraging of young people who are willing to settle in the agricultural field in view of rejuvenating farmers' generations;
- The development of basic rural infrastructure as a prerequisite for attracting investments in the rural areas and for creating new jobs that may lead to the development of the rural space;
- The supporting of a more varied rural economy by creating SME in the non-agricultural sectors in the rural areas;
- The promotion of pomiculture, as a specific sector, by means of a dedicated sub-program.

Rural economy is significantly differentiated in terms of regions and specific social, economic and demographical features. These differences become most obvious in relation with the degree of poverty in the rural areas of Romania, characterized by a low standard of living and lack of alternative sources of income.

Specific activities, other than those in the fields of agriculture and forestry, depend on the territorial distribution/ trade and other activities in the distribution chain. Thus, it can be inferred that the main activities depend on the local natural resources that are available in the area, as well as on the geographical features and traditions thereof.

Essential to the rural economy are agriculture, the food industry and silviculture, whereas the non-agricultural activities, mostly related to the primary sector, especially the harvesting and processing of natural resources, currently have an insignificant economic contribution.

In general, non-agricultural activities in the rural area include: mining, energy production and silviculture, food processing, small commercial activities, services and crafts.

Except for the mining and energy industries, non-agricultural activities are mostly conducted by very small, small and medium enterprises (SMEs). However, rural economy is still not very diverse and intensely relies on agricultural activities, resulting in low income for rural entrepreneurs.

The European Commission states in the Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for Romania that the Romanian Plan for rural development mainly focuses on 3 priority fields:

- ✓ Promoting competitiveness and restructuring within the ample agricultural sector in Romania;

- ✓ Protecting the environment and combating climate change;
- ✓ Stimulating economic development, creating jobs and improving the quality of life in Romanian villages, in order to soften the major differences between the national figures and the ones in the EU.

2.1. Who can benefit from NRDP funds?

Within the structure of the National Program for Rural Development, each measure/ sub measure implies various investment objectives that are eligible for financing, aiming towards clearly defined categories of beneficiaries. For instance, investments in the modernization of agricultural exploitations are strictly applicable to private beneficiaries (natural and legal persons), whereas investments in infrastructure, renovation and development can be made by public beneficiaries (the legal representatives of communes).

Thus, the applicant must identify the category of eligible beneficiaries they fall under, according to the measure/ sub measure which enables the respective non-reimbursable funding.

For investment in the increase of the standard of living in the rural area, non-reimbursable funding is granted to public beneficiaries, as follows:

- a) communes, cities, as well as state educational units and institutions in secondary education;
- b) intercommunity development associations;
- c) public law bodies – cultural institutions;
- d) local action groups (LAG) – local partnerships, concluded between the representatives of various public institutions and authorities, of the private sector and of the civil society;
- e) organizations and federations in the field of land improvements.

For projects involving private investments, non-reimbursable funding is awarded to various categories of legal and natural persons, such as:

- farmers;
- agricultural producers;
- land owners;
- produce processors;
- certified legal persons conducting activities in the field of rural tourism.

The type of activities conducted by private beneficiaries can lead to the following division:

- certified natural persons – CNP / individual enterprises;
- certified family associations – CFA/ family enterprises;
- general partnerships – GP;
- limited partnerships – LP;
- corporations – Co;
- share limited partnerships – SLP;
- limited liability companies – LLC;
- private equity companies;
- agricultural companies;
- agricultural cooperatives;
- producers' groups, as long as the conducted investments benefit their own members;
- agricultural cooperatives, as long as the conducted investments benefit their own members;
- very small, small and medium-sized enterprises;

- enterprises other than very small, small and medium-sized enterprises employing less than 750 people, or the annual earnings are below the 200 million Euro threshold;

- agricultural cooperatives for produce processing;
- valuation cooperatives.

2.2. How to get NRDP funding?

Within the framework of the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) funding can be requested by any potential applicant intending to make an investment in Romania, in various fields related to rural economy, either in the public or in the private sector, while complying with the provisions of the relevant measure/ sub measure.

Thus, the applicant shall devise a standardized project, based on the information and documents made available by the Agency for Rural Investment Financing and in accordance with the provisions of the relevant measure/sub measure the investment falls under in order to receive financing.

After the project is drawn, it shall be submitted to the Regional/ County Office of the Agency for Rural Investment Financing in the county where the investment is located.

The project shall be verified for conformity in terms of documents, and then evaluated by the experts of the Agency for Rural Investment Financing in order to determine to which extent the project complies with the specific eligibility criteria.

Should the project comply with all the eligibility criteria and conditions, it shall be approved for financing, and the beneficiary shall be allowed to start investing. At a later stage, after part or the entire investment has been conducted, the beneficiary shall require the reimbursement of all prior expenses, until the project is completely implemented.

The basic principle behind non-reimbursable funding is the reimbursement of the beneficiary's prior expenses.

Which steps are needed to access funding within the framework of the National Program for Rural Development?

The documentation of the Financing Request (FR) consists of the financing request supported by the technical and administrative addendums, according to the requirements in the applicant's guide and implies the following stages:

- A. filling in the financing request;
- B. submitting the financing file;
- C. checking the conformity of the financing request;
- D. checking the eligibility of the financing request;
- E. field checking of the financing request;
- F. selecting projects;
- G. contracting funds;
- H. advance payments;
- I. acquisitions;
- J. payments.

2.3. The degree of access to funds through PNDR

Although some of the beneficiaries of funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) through the NRDP claim that it takes too long from the time the application is submitted to its approval (Raicov et al., 2018), these funding

certainly helps to create and develop a new business, thus supporting the growth of the rural economy (Rovinaru and Pop, 2013).

Despite the fact that some studies consider that payments made to increase the competitiveness of the agricultural sector do not have a negative or positive effect on increasing the quality of life of the Romanian rural population (Mack, Fîntîneru and Kohler, 2018), and some researchers have even shown inefficiency of funding of LAGs projects in promoting non-agricultural rural development (Pocol et al., 2017), it is necessary to conduct additional studies in order to identify all the effects of funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) through PNDR.

Conserving the traditional Romanian village in order to rediscover its resources and highlight its non-agricultural potential are part of the development paths that should be adapted to local needs in order to produce the expected effects of the National Rural Development Program (Popescu, 2015).

In a recent article (Maier et al., 2021) which analyzes the factors influencing the allocation of structural funds for rural development in Romania, two factors with a positive influence on the number and value of projects were identified: the abundance of agricultural land and their concentration, while the level of development of human capital is a factor that negatively influences.

Table 1. Absorption of non-reimbursable funds through NRDP 2014 - 2020 as of December 30, 2021

Submeasure	Public contribution (million euro)	Submitted projects	Selected projects	Contracted projects	Contracted projects (million euro)	Contracting rate (%)	Payments made (million euro)	Payment rate (%)
1.1	5,91	478	257	102	6,66	112,69 %	5,49	92,89 %
1.2	0,36	53	52	5	0,36	100,00 %	0,30	83,33 %
2.1	3,67	-	-	7	3,42	93,19%	1,65	44,96 %
3.1	0,50	0	0	0	0,00	0,00%	0,00	0,00 %
3.2	10,58	0	0	0	0,00	0,00%	0,00	0,00 %
4.1	1.634,90	5978	1938	1825	969,84	59,32%	718,66	43,96 %
4.1a	424,38	1191	572	521	286,88	67,60%	180,62	42,56 %
4.2	634,35	1224	730	573	422,36	66,58%	271,41	42,79 %
4.2a	45,40	96	65	41	21,80	48,02%	9,61	21,17 %
4.3	775,91	1344	599	586	600,20	77,35%	477,10	61,49 %
5.1	28,45	409	304	286	21,55	75,75%	6,32	22,21 %
6.1	576,72	19653	12198	11240	463,25	80,32%	459,79	79,72 %
6.2	161,55	11158	1970	1910	112,94	69,91%	101,29	62,70 %
6.3	333,60	27259	15447	14083	211,00	63,25%	233,74	70,07 %

6.4	266,47	3756	1040	885	147,39	55,31%	130,61	49,01 %
6.5	0,01	22	3	3	0,00	50,00%	0,00	50,00 %
7.2	1.108,97	1972	1198	1143	1.076,00	97,03%	952,48	85,89 %
7.6	197,01	940	688	673	213,04	108,14 %	156,97	79,68 %
8.1	21,79	128	114	96	16,57	76,04%	3,36	15,42 %
9.1	21,84	90	38	38	14,02	64,19%	8,72	39,93 %
9.1a	3,20	6	5	4	1,68	52,50%	0,28	8,75 %
10	1.124,14	-	-	-	-	0,00%	834,56	74,24 %
11	479,35	-	-	-	-	0,00%	330,28	68,90 %
13	2.182,84	-	-	-	-	0,00%	1.751,49	80,24 %
14	1.066,08	-	-	-	-	0,00%	789,39	74,05 %
15.1	115,15	957	921	920	141,30	122,71 %	26,96	23,41 %
16.1	12,72	136	40	15	4,80	37,74%	0,24	1,89 %
16.1a	4,72	84	28	11	4,68	99,15%	0,07	1,48 %
16.4	50,39	316	126	99	9,13	18,12%	4,98	9,88 %
16.4a	13,53	90	41	37	3,55	26,24%	2,15	15,89 %
17.1	43,70	16312	10782	9285	18,11	41,44%	15,98	36,57 %
19.1	6,99	180	175	162	2,21	31,62%	1,98	28,33 %
19.2	595,64	8671	7732	7456	411,02	69,00%	348,72	58,55 %
19.3	16,99	123	106	142	6,09	35,84%	0,95	5,59 %
19.4	146,01	-	-	571	109,77	75,18%	87,27	59,77 %
20	307,34	-	-	202	24,38	7,93%	139,40	45,36 %
21	182,50	-	-	-	-	0,00%	180,28	98,78 %
Financial instruments	93,97	-	-	1	93,88	99,90%	93,88	99,90 %
Total	12.697,68	102596	57128	52922	5.417,66	42,67%	8.327,43	65,58 %

Source: Data processed from <https://www.pndr.ro/situatia-proiectelor-depuse-2014-2020.html>

Within the National Rural Development Program 2014 - 2020, until 30.12.2021, a number of 102.596 financing applications were submitted, being signed 52.922 financing

contracts worth 5,42 billion Euros, which represents a rate of 42,67% of the total value allocated to Romania for the period 2014 - 2020. The amount of payments made amounts to 8,33 billion Euros, the level being 65,58% of the allocations for the mentioned period.

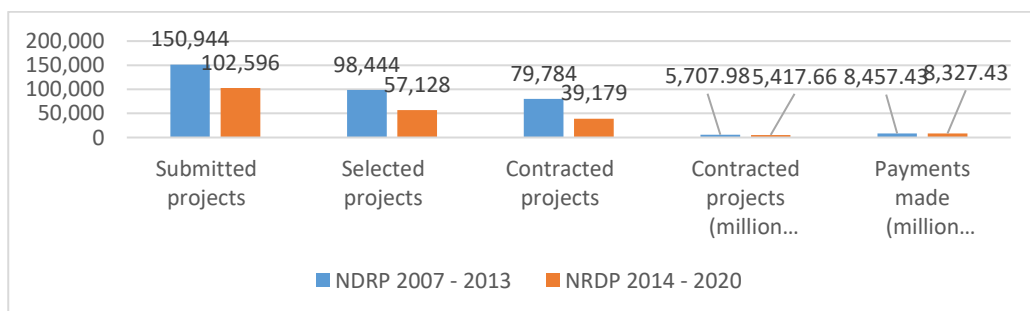
The total public value allocated to Romania through the National Rural Development Program 2014 - 2020 (following the approval of EU Reg. No. 2220/2020 establishing certain transitional provisions on EAFRD support in 2021 and 2022) was 12,70 billion Euros, projects worth 11,84 billion Euros were submitted.

From the analysis of the data processed in table no. 1, it can be seen that the most accessed sub-measure is sub-measure 6.3 "Support for the development of small farms" with a number of 27.259 projects submitted, a very large number of projects being submitted and sub-measure 6.1 "Support for the installation of young farmers" (19.653 projects). These two sub-measures have been the most accessed as they are meant to increase the capacity of small farms to identify new opportunities for capitalizing on their production.

The sub-measure with the highest contracted value is 7.2 "Investments in the creation and modernization of small-scale basic infrastructure", the total contracted value being 1.076 million Euros, followed by sub-measure 4.1 "Investments in agricultural holdings" with a contracted value of 969.84 million Euros. Sub-measure 7.2 had the highest contracted value because it includes projects for the development of road infrastructure, water supply and sewerage, as well as an educational component, these being major investments and sub-measure 4.1 involves the restructuring of small and medium-sized farms and their transformation into commercial farms.

The measure in which the highest payments were recorded is measure 13 - payments for areas facing natural constraints or other specific constraints from the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) 2014 - 2020, the total payments being in the amount of 1.751 million Euros. This sub-measure implemented by the Paying and Intervention Agency for Agriculture aims to compensate for the additional costs and loss of income that farmers incur due to natural and specific constraints that occur in areas with an influence on agricultural production.

Among the poorly accessed sub-measures and with a low public contribution are sub-measures 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1, one of the causes of these poor accesses being the inability of the Romanian market to provide necessary training services and specialists able to implement activities such as those required in these sub-measures.



Graph 1. NRDP comparative analysis 2007 - 2013 and 2014 - 2020

Source: Data processed from <https://www.pndr.ro/situatia-proiectelor-depuse-2007-2013.html> and <https://www.pndr.ro/situatia-proiectelor-depuse-2014-2020.html>

Compared to the financial programming 2007 - 2013, when 150.944 projects were submitted and 79.784 projects were contracted (a percentage of 52.86% of the total submitted projects), within the 2014-2020 programming there is a decrease in the

number of projects submitted to 102.596 projects and those contracted to 39.179 projects (38.19% of the total submitted projects).

For the period 2014-2020, the contracted value is lower, respectively 5.417,66 million Euros (42.67% of the allocated public contribution) compared to 5.707,98 million Euros in the period 2007-2013 (70,30% of the allocated public contribution).

The volume of payments is at a level close to the two schedules, namely 8.457 million euros for the period 2007-2013 and 8.327 million euros for the period 2014-2020.

Within the National Rural Development Program 2007 - 2013, a number of 27 measures and sub-measures were implemented, compared to the 2014-2020 programming, where 38 measures and sub-measures were foreseen.

In the National Rural Development Program 2007 - 2013, Romania's total financial allocation was 9,29 billion euros, of which European money was 8,1 billion euros, and for the National Rural Development Program 2014 - 2020 Romania had a financial allocation 9,5 billion euros, of which about 8,1 billion euros from the European Union budget. Given these allocations, the absorption rate was about 90% in the 2007-2013 programming, and for the 2014-2020 programming it is about 87% so far.

It should be mentioned that during the 2007-2013 programming there were contracted and unfinished projects, but these projects were not abandoned being transited within the National Rural Development Program 2014-2020 in order to be completed. It is a number of 19.034 projects with a public value of 0,42 billion Euros.

3. Conclusions

The development of the rural economy largely depends on the development of the administrative ability to implement projects, as well as on the ability of the local factors (people and institutions alike) to absorb the available European funds. We can therefore infer the existence of a shared effort, both from the public and from the community and farmers' part, to attract local and external resources in view of conducting the necessary investments leading to a more sustainable economic development in the rural area. The major objective must constitute the development of an effective type of agriculture, of a rural infrastructure that may support the agriculture and food processing sector, of a more industrialized rural area, as well as of ecological agriculture and other means of environmental protection.

The National Rural Development Program (NRDP) enables the financing of the rural ecosystem, thus leading to the creation and development of the entities which activate in the rural economy, and the implementation of a significant number of projects in road infrastructure, education, society, water provision and sewage.

This article highlighted the fact that the implementation of the measures and sub-measures of the National Rural Development Program have a positive impact on rural areas in Romania, ensuring the restoration and development of farms, diversification of non-agricultural activities in rural areas, and job creation in this space.

Successful implementation of the National Rural Development Program for the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming creates favorable prospects for the transition to the National Strategic Plan 2023-2027. Thus, the experience gained between 2007-2021 will support the adoption of a National Strategic Plan to support the needs of the land and the national interest in agriculture, transposed into the fact that farmers and entrepreneurs in rural areas will be able to access European funds on the basis of much clearer and simplified guidelines.

References

- Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, A study on the social and economic potential for the development of rural areas, conducted within project C/511/1/1/S/12/00/02/S0 on 05.08.2014, <http://www.madr.ro/>.
- Bădîrcea, R.M., Dragan, C., Tanasie, A., Axinte, G., Radoi, M.I., Enescu, M., (2021) Cohesion Performance and Sustainable Development Progress in EU States, *REVISTA DE ECONOMIA MUNDIAL* Issue 57, Page 25-43, DOI 10.33776/rem.v0i57.3837.
- Bold, I., Buciuman, E., Drăghici, N., (2003). The rural space – definition, organization, development, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House, pg. 15-21 www.ccss.cz/rw/identif.pdf
- Fact sheet on the rural development program of Romania for the period 2014-2020 - February 2021, available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/rdp-factsheet-romania_en.pdf.
- Florea, N.M., Bădîrcea, R.M., Pirvu, R.C., Manta, A.G., Doran, M.D., Jianu, E., (2020). The impact of agriculture and renewable energy on climate change in Central and East European Countries, *Agricultural Economics*, 2020/66/10, WOS: WOS:000605082500002 <https://www.agriculturejournals.cz/web/agricecon>.
- Mack, G., Fîntîneru, G., & Kohler, A. (2018). Do Rural Development Measures Improve Vitality of Rural Areas in Romania? *AgroLife Scientific Journal*, 7(2).
- MARD – General Directorate for Rural Development, Annual progress report regarding the implementation of the National Program for Rural Development in Romania in 2014 and 2015.
- Maier, D.; Remete, A.-N.; Corda, A.-M.; Nastasoiu, I.-A.; Lazar, P.-S.; Pop, I.-A.; Luca, T.-I. (2022). Territorial Distribution of EU Funds Allocation for Developments of Rural Romania during 2014–2020. *Sustainability* 2022, 14, 506. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010506>
- NPRD Managing Authority, A social and economic analysis of rural development 2014-2020, December 2012.
- NPRD Managing Authority, A social and economic analysis of rural development 2014-2020, Draft III, July 2013.
- NPRD 2014-2020, available at http://www.madr.ro/docs/dezvoltare-rurala/programare-2014-2020/PNDR_2014_-_2020_01.07.2014.pdf.
- NPRD 2007-2013, available at https://www.madr.ro/docs/dezvoltare-rurala/PNDR_2007-2013_versiunea-septembrie2015.pdf.
- Pocol, C. B., Moldovan-Teselios, C., Cavicchioli, D., & Cordea, M. I. (2017). Has the Leader Programme Been Effective in Promoting Local Rural Development? An Evaluation on Two Romanian Regions. *AgroLife Scientific Journal*, 6(1), 201–211.
- Popescu, C. (2015). Association and Cooperation in Romanian Rural Areas - The Leader Experience. *Journal of Community Positive Practices*, XV(2), 28–42.
- Presidential Committee for Public Policies for Agricultural Development, within the National Strategic Framework for the Sustainable Growth of the Food Sector and of the Rural Space in the 2014 -2020 -2030 time interval.
- Raicov, M., Rujescu, C., Feher, A., & Merce, I. (2018). The determination and ranking of factors bearing an influence over the ability to absorb rural development funds in Timis County, Romania. *AIP Conference Proceedings*.
- Rovinaru, M., & Pop, L. (2013). Developing Rural Tourism through European Funds. *Studies in Business and Economics*, 8(3), 164–174.