

Lot 3 - Evaluation of ROP Interventions 2014 -2020

Evaluation Report

PRIORITY AXIS 9 -

Supporting the Economic and Social Regeneration of Disadvantaged Communities in the Urban Environment

August 2019

Evaluation of ROP Interventions 2014 -2020

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Evaluation Report

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DISCLAIMER

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The opinions expressed belong to the consortium and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Contracting Authority, respectively of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, nor of the Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020.

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Abbreviations

MA	Managing Authority
AcP	Partnership Agreement
PA	Priority Axis
WB	World Bank
CCSL	Joint Enlarged Selection Committee
CCSR	Joint Selection Committee Restricted
ToR	Terms of Reference
DLRC	Local Development under Community Responsibility
FEDR	European Fund for Regional Development
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESF	European Social Fund
IB	Intermediate body
LAG	Local Action Group
GA	Guide for applicants
MDRAP	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration
MEF	Ministry of European Funds
SO	Specific Objective
NPRD	National Program for Rural Development
HCOP	Human Capital Operational Program
ROP	Regional Operational Program
IR	Initial Report
LDS	Local Development Strategy
MS	Member State
EU	European Union
FUZ	Functional Urban Area
MUZ	Marginalized Urban Area

Executive summary

The report presents an analysis that highlights the progress and the performances in the management and implementation of the interventions financed by the PRIORITY AXA 9 - Supporting the economic and social regeneration of the disadvantaged communities in the urban area of the Regional Operational Program (ROP) 2014-2020.

I. Community animation and the elaboration of LDS

A. Main findings

- The process of creating the LAG was conceived according to the DLRC methodology, as a bottom-up type, and its implementation was significantly influenced by the local context, the lack of a culture of public participation, the absence of community leaders. For this reason, in many cases the creation of the LAG was initiated and led by the local public administration, not by MUZ members. This approach was an important factor for the involvement of other community actors, even outside the respective localities within the LAG. Community animation has attracted new members to the LAG, increasing their number of debates / meetings at local level.
- The consulting firms contributed to the achievement of 70% of the 37 LDSs analyzed. Short period of time, the complexity of the documentation and the process of developing the LDS required the involvement of the consulting firms that helped in the elaboration of the documents, in some cases these becoming even members of the LAG.
- LDS only includes the projects eligible for funding through PA 9 ROP and PA 5 HCOP, any other projects considered community priority were included only if at the time of strategy development the source of funding could be identified. In most cases, the projects financed by the ATU on the territory of the LDS were included in the LDS, which in the small and medium municipalities is equivalent to the whole locality, the average ratio of inhabitants between MUZ and LDS populations being 1:9.
- From 95 urban localities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, according to the Atlas of the marginalized areas of 2014 they comprise 605 MUZ, only 49 cities and municipalities have prepared the LDS, being approved for financing 37 of them, which provide interventions financed from PA 9 ROP and PA 5 HCOP for a number of 132 MUZ.
- The causes of delays in the contracting procedures of the projects included in the LDS are bureaucratic in nature, due to the insufficient preparation of the entire process. For example, in July 2018, at the date of publication for consultation of GS PA 9 ROP, ROP 2014-2020 was being modified including regarding PA 9, in parallel and PA 5 HCOP required changes to accommodate

the procedures of the program with SDL, so that 18 months after the approval of the LDS, no project calls were launched.

B. Main conclusions

- Targeting investments in urban infrastructure, housing, education and social services in the marginalized areas of cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants is a beneficial initiative, while using the DLRC tool to identify and prioritize eligible projects can lead to the sustainability of the planned interventions. Generally, the marginalized areas of the cities benefited to a lesser extent from public interventions compared to the rest of the territory;
- In the absence of projects and the operating budget, the capacity of the LAG to manage the interventions (organizing the selection and monitoring of complementarity of the ROP - HCOP) was not strengthened, some of the LAG managers and facilitators employed in September 2017 for the development of the LDS leaving these structures. Also, the contact with the marginalized communities was reduced, with the risk of generating a feeling of apathy and discouragement among the residents who participated in the public consultations organized by the LAG;
- The interventions envisaged in the LDS are addressed to a population that, in some cases, covers the entire territory of the localities. Removing poverty from a number of people through complementary measures ROP-HCOP would involve interventions focused on a smaller numerical target group and not the entire population of the city. From this perspective, the 9:1 ratio between the LDS population and the MUZ population can be considered relatively high.

C. Main recommendations

- The introduction of the LDS elaborated by the LAG as a section within the Strategy for urban development of urban localities with over 20,000 inhabitants. Thus, SDL, assumed by the local actors, would gain greater visibility and relevance at the local level, the risk of segregation could be avoided and greater sustainability of the interventions would be ensured.
- In general, for the development of an SDL it takes an average of 12 months, which is subject to public consultation in multiple sessions organized both with citizens and with companies, NGOs, academia, cultural etc. This elaboration term ensures the rigorous analysis of the target groups in MUZ as well as the integration of the necessary investment projects. The representative reference study at the population level in the LDS territory will remain a precondition for correctly identifying the needs of the population in these areas and the measures that are required. Thus, the development of the LDS requires careful planning by the managing authorities regarding the implementation stages, avoiding the false demobilizing expectations in the community. This would also allow campaigns to inform and raise awareness of the community in MUZ before organizing meetings to identify needs and other residents. Attracting the media in this process is necessary;

- Develop a flexible LDS procedure for changes in the targeted territories, with a focus on the target groups in MUZ (significant migration / demographic fluctuations in the target group - temporary or permanent migration of part of the target group is between 5 and 25%);
- In order to increase the efficiency, quality and relevance of LDS development, greater flexibility of the LAG is recommended: 1) in employing human resources, without constraints regarding the minimum number and type of experts involved; 2) in choosing the animation activities according to the local specificity and the target group or those of data collection to substantiate the needs; 3) in drawing up the list of intervention priorities that are not limited to those provided in the HCOP or ROP, even without indicating the sources of financing, in order to ensure a better representativeness of the needs and their integration at local level;
- Conducting a survey among the approximately 50 localities with over 20,000 inhabitants that did not elaborate and submit the LDS within the PA 9 POR - PA 5 HCOP in order to understand and adjust the elaboration and selection criteria, so that in the future, to participate as many as possible municipalities. The survey could also be extended for urban areas with a population between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, which are included in the Atlas of marginalized urban areas and could not apply, since they were below the minimum threshold set by the guide.

II. LDS Implementations through integrated mechanism

A. Main findings

- The implementation of the DLRC mechanism in Romania has been prepared since 2014 by the elaboration of working tools by the ROP: Atlas of marginalized urban areas and integrated intervention tool. Strategies for integrating marginalized urban communities. The atlas defines the marginalized urban areas, establishes the criteria for identifying the MUZ and identifies them based on the NSI data from the 2011 Population and Housing Census and the qualitative research data in these MUZ. The integrated intervention instrument operationalizes the DLRC mechanism in Romania. These documents were used in the elaboration of the applicant's guides for the implementation of PA 5 HCOP and PA 9 ROP and were the starting point of the documents that regulate the elaboration of the LDSs (National Guidelines);
- However, only in April 2017 was published by AP5 HCOP, the Specific Guide "Preparatory support for the elaboration of Local Development Strategies", which established the main benchmarks of using the DLRC tool in the fight against poverty in cities / towns with population of more than 20,000 inhabitants, the procedure of contracting by the LAG of the preparatory support for the elaboration of the LDS is officially launched, process concluded in December 2017 by the approval of 37 LDSs;
- In June 2019, the Joint Selection Committee was set up to verify and approve the LAG procedures for the selection of project files and to monitor the complementarity of the ROP - HCOP interventions. The procedures for contracting the ROP and HCOP projects remain distinct

even in MySMIS, and for the PA 9 ROP projects, the LAG carries out the selection of project files, and their validation will be at the level of the CCSR / PA 9 ROP;

- The integrated mechanism has been implemented to a very small extent by the date of this report, most of the measures being carried out by HCOP, the functioning of the LAG, also being fully ensured through HCOP. Only the LDS evaluation was jointly carried out by PA 9 ROP and PA 5 HCOP through CCSL, which ceased its existence once the evaluation of the 49 submitted LDSs was completed.

B. Main conclusions

- The integrated mechanism HCOP - ROP is positively appreciated in terms of the complementary character of the interventions at the local level, the ability to stimulate and involve community members in the problem solving process and the involvement of the whole community in the decision-making process on community problems;
- For the first time in the current programming period, the use of the DLRC tool in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants was foreseen. It is worth noting that, at EU level, there is a dispersion of the implementation models, without "success stories" yet. Some states have chosen the financing variant of the single-fund DLRC, others have set up a multi-fund management authority for projects dedicated to the inclusion of these urban centers;
- The result indicators for the two axes, PA9 ROP and PA 5 HCOP, are specific to each type of fund, the ERDF and the ESF, without harmonizing with each other and without aiming at increasing the quality of life of MUZ residents. The lack of specific outcome indicators for the DLRC mechanism, which take into account its characteristics, makes the intervention of the two funds not seem complementary, but rather different.

C. Main recommendations

- Developing a strict timetable for the development of the mechanism and announcing it from the beginning of the process, clearly establishing the responsibilities of all the involved institutions (RDA, OIR, MA HCOP, MA ROP), elaborating and launching all GS (not sequentially for differences over 2 years) to quickly start the procedures for project development at local level and to simplify the procedures for evaluation, selection, contracting and eventual implementation and payments;
- Increasing the administrative capacity of management through constant financing of the functioning of the LAG structures, national and international cooperation for the exchange of experience, lessons learned, problem solving, training courses for LAG employees on project monitoring and evaluation, staffing. with experience and appropriate remuneration, dissemination of good practices, monitoring and consultancy by the managing authorities;

- Adaptation of the result indicators to the specificities of the DLRC, reflecting the integration/complementarity of the measures in the area of LDS and especially from MUZ. The present result indicators aim, globally, to marginalize a certain number of people, without pursuing aspects related to the increase of the quality of life of the persons from MUZ, such as housing, employment, education, health. Creation of specific outcome indicators DLRC that take into account its characteristics and aim to increase the quality of life of people in MUZ. These indicators could target the characteristics of DLRC, such as local government and how it has improved as a result of LAG partnership, innovation, use of local resources, community cooperation and relationships, capacity building at the community level (not just adult qualification). At the same time, quality of life indicators must be objective and subjective and target various dimensions - housing, human capital (education and health), employment, social relations, trust in institutions, quality of public services;
- Analyze the opportunity of setting up a single Managing Authority dedicated to inclusion through the use of urban DLRC with multi-fund financing. This would avoid delays inherent in the synchronization of the functioning of two managing authorities that are guided by different procedures and follow different performance and outcome indicators.

III. Lessons learned

- The key message for the LAG and the authorities is that local development strategies for the inclusion of urban marginalized areas should be determined by local needs and not just respond to the funding opportunities available from European funds. The strategies should include other projects that can be financed through the PA 9 ROP - AP5 HCOP mechanism and from local budgets. They should reflect both the needs of the local community and where the community wants to reach a certain time horizon, not just take on the outcome indicators imposed by the funders.
- The interaction between the LAG and the local communities should be permanent, guaranteeing the successful implementation of the projects included in the LDS. Through community animating activities, the LAG should become the linking factor between disadvantaged communities and local authorities. At the same time, central authorities should be more responsive to the needs of local communities, especially marginalized ones.
- The complexity of the LDS elaboration process requires a minimum period of 6 months for implementation and rigorous time planning by the managing authorities to be respected so that no false expectations can be created in the community which may eventually lead to demobilization. Thus, it is necessary that the next programming period for the LDS elaboration process be assigned a period of at least 6 months. This larger period of LDS development would allow a campaign to inform and raise awareness of the MUZ community before organizing meetings to identify needs and other residents in order to avoid reluctant attitudes. Attracting the media in this process is necessary.

1. Existing situation

AP9 ROP "Supporting the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in the urban area ROP 2014-2020", has as its theme social inclusion and poverty alleviation through the DLRC, this being a territorial development tool proposed by the European Commission for the 2014-2020 programming period in the vision to fight poverty and social exclusion in urban areas. Essentially, DLRC involves mobilizing disadvantaged communities and local organizations to actively participate in identifying and implementing projects designed to lead to the development of marginalized areas. The DLRC implies the formation of a local partnership - the Local Action Group and the implementation of some Local Development Strategies adopted through participatory methods.

AP9 is foreseen to be implemented through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, which aims to finance complementary projects "hard" and "soft", as well as integrated measures "soft" in a territory delimited by LDS elaborated by the LAG using the DLRC tool in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants. In this way, complementary interventions will be ensured "respectively the combination of the social housing construction action with the employment dimension, community labor force qualification, the connection with the accessibility of the community services (sanitary, educational, cultural, etc.)", the latter funded by ESF measures.

AP9 ROP finances the infrastructure projects included in the LDS approved for financing, eligible being exclusively the urban localities with over 20,000 inhabitants. The integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP is complementary to the LEADER financing instrument, which aims to support the local development of rural and urban localities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants. The interventions financed by both DLRC and LEADER instruments have the role of contributing to the achievement of Romania's goal aimed at reducing by 580,000 the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020, as well as the objectives assumed in the field of employment, education. and health

The DLRC implemented through the integrated financing mechanism AP 9 POR - AP 5 HCOP in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants, is coordinated by AM HCOP, being structured in three stages:

- I. The elaboration of the LDS - the stage was completed at the end of November 2017 by the LAG. This stage included: i) the establishment of the urban LAG / the adaptation of the LAG already established according to the requirements of the DLRC for the programming period 2014-2020; ii) the delimitation of MUZ and LDS territory; iii) encouraging local partners and mobilizing the marginalized community targeted by the LDS; iv) elaboration of the LDS and the indicative list of interventions by which the LAG considers that the objectives of the local development strategy will be achieved;

- II. The evaluation and selection of the LDS - the stage was completed by the Joint Enlarged Selection Committee (CCSL) of which ROP representatives were also members. The selection ended in December 2017 with the publication of the list of 37 LDS selected for funding through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, out of 49 strategies submitted;
- III. Selection and implementation of the projects related to the approved LDS - the stage is in the preparatory stage. In April a.c. the Document on Guidelines for the LAG was published in order to elaborate the selection procedures for project proposals / project sheets and for monitoring the projects financed through AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP. The projects selected by the LAGs will be endorsed by the Joint Selection Committee. At the same time, AM HCOP signed the financing contracts for the functioning of the LAG. The final guidelines AP9 POR, respectively AP5 HCOP were not published at the time of writing this report, only the 2018 versions submitted for public consultation are available. The LAG is in the process of developing and submitting to the CCSR the procedures for selecting and monitoring projects / project files included in the LDS. Thus, until the date of writing this report, no project call has been opened by the LAG within the AP9 ROP (the final version of the applicant's guide for PA9 ROP has not been published).

2. The stages of the study

2.1 Description of the methodology

The methodology used to carry out the research study for AP9, subscribed to the objectives established by CdS and adjusted by the Initial Report (RI), according to the current stage of implementation of AP9.

In this context, the following operational objectives of the present evaluation study have been established:

- i) Analysis of the community animation process at the local level, including in order to highlight the connection between the quality of animation activities and the quality of LDS;
- ii) Analysis of how to develop the LDS in order to provide recommendations regarding process improvement and avoidance of previous mistakes;
- iii) Analysis of the HCOP-ROP integrated mechanism for the implementation of the DLRC, in order to highlight the causes of the occurrences of blockages and to provide recommendations for improvement;
- iv) Identifying examples of good practice from EU countries in the field of DRLC;
- v) Analysis of the potential hard projects that could be financed by PA 9 starting from the 37 local development strategies selected for financing through the integrated ROP - HCOP mechanism;
- vi) Identification of the causes that explain the lack of contracts on PA 9 and of the appropriate solutions.

In accordance with these objectives, the following evaluation questions were defined:

- I. Local development strategies. How were the strategies underlying the projects financed by PA 9 ROP developed? What is it and what are the particularities of the strategy development process? How is community animation done? How can these processes be improved?
- II. Integrated financing mechanism HCOP-ROP. How does the integrated financing mechanism (HCOP-POR) work? What are the specificities of the institutional mechanisms involved in this integrated approach?

The set of research methods aimed at achieving the objectives of the evaluation included both quantitative and qualitative methods, as follows:

- For the data collection were used:

NR.	DATA COLLECTION METHOD / TECHNIQUE	Initial report	Final Report
1	Document analysis	Analysis of the entire set of relevant documents, at the level of specialized literature, program, project, context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents of the MA ROP, AM HCOP: programmatic documents, guides of the applicant, guidelines for the LAG. • Analysis of local development strategies submitted by LAG, 37 LDS studied.
2	Individual interviews	<p>During the PA 9 evaluation a number of 16 interviews will be carried out (total indicative), of which::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ at the central level: 6 interviews: MA ROP - Programming, MA HCOP, MA PNDR, MFE (CM member), LAG Federation. ■ at the regional level: 10 interviews: ADR members, beneficiary / potential LAG members, beneficiary AP 5 HCOP, UAT - member of the beneficiary LAG AP 5 HCOP, potential beneficiary of AP 9 POR, UAT which is not a member of the beneficiary LAG AP 5 HCOP, potential beneficiary of AP 9 ROP, citizens potential final beneficiaries of AP 9 ROP. 	<p>Total number of interviews 24 of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at central level - 6 in-depth interviews (MDRAP - AM POR, AM HCOP, MFE - Programming Director, MFE - member of CCSL, Federation of Urban LAGs, Romanian Cities Association) • at the regional level - 18 in-depth interviews: 5 with ADR, 5 with LAG beneficiaries of HCOP AP 5, 4 UAT members of LAG beneficiary of AP 5 HCOP, 4 potential citizens beneficiaries of PA 9.

NR.	DATA COLLECTION METHOD / TECHNIQUE	Initial report	Final Report
		<p>The number of interviews may vary depending on the geographical distribution of the 37 strategies funded by AP 5 HCOP. Interviews with potential final beneficiaries of AP 9 ROP will be conducted within the case study.</p>	
3	Focus groups	<p>4 focus groups will be organized at national / regional level depending on the frequency of strategies, with the participation of county councils, local / municipal councils, citizens, etc.</p> <p>A focus group to validate the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team, where possibly associations of LPA, ANOFM, relevant NGOs, etc. will participate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 regional focus groups (Bacău, Turda, Caracal, Bucharest) with 31 participants from institutions of county councils / local councils, LAG members, community members.
4	Questionnaire	<p>The survey will be conducted among the 37 selected LAGs, and the data will be used to analyze the specific issues related to the processes of setting up LAGs. The data will be obtained mainly through::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CAWI (computer assisted web interviewing) through the web without direct interaction with the interviewed subject who answers the questionnaire. <p>Face-to-face or telephone interviews can be conducted to supplement the results or increase the effective response rate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey with urban LAG members. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to all 37 urban LAGs and was intended for all LAG members. Invitations to complete were sent to 148 email addresses of the LAG members. • Number of replies: 57 completed questionnaires out of which 53 were validated. 42 questionnaires were completed in full. • Number of LAGs that responded: 26 (70% of the total number of LAGs).
5	Case Study	<p>Case studies will be conducted based on 4 cases represented by</p>	<p>4 case studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Urban Turda LAG

NR.	DATA COLLECTION METHOD / TECHNIQUE	Initial report	Final Report
		<p>the strategies realized within the AP 5 HCOP. The cases will be selected according to the territorial distribution of the strategies.</p>	<p>Association • LDS Association of LAG Bacau Innovation and Sustainable Development • LDS The Heart of the Romanian LAG Association • LDS LAG Association We Think and Act Local in Sector 4</p> <p>In the selection of cases, the territorial distribution of them and other criteria such as: size of the locality according to population, level of development of the locality, status of county residence, etc. were considered.</p>
6	Expert panel / Delphi analysis	A panel of experts / Delphi analysis will be conducted with the HCOP-POR Integrated Committee.	A DELPHI analysis was performed. There were 2 rounds of questionnaires sent for online completion. The first questionnaire was sent to 56 email addresses of their members to the Joint Selection Committee. Number of responses received: 15. Validated: 12. The questionnaire number 2 was sent to 32 email addresses from the institutions where the first wave respondents were. Answers received: 2. Validated: 0 because only the identification questions (institution and domain) were completed.
7	Benchmarking	Comparative analysis of integrated financing mechanisms:	2 case studies from other EU countries: Italy and Hungary (Annex 14) and comparative

NR.	DATA COLLECTION METHOD / TECHNIQUE	Initial report	Final Report
		Romania - Italy - Finland / Sweden.	analysis of urban DLRC funding in the EU (included in the RI).

For the analysis and interpretation of the collected data were used:

- The data from the online survey were analyzed using the SPSS statistical analysis software
- Data from Delphi analysis were analyzed using SPSS statistical analysis software
- The interpretation of qualitative data was done by analyzing the information gathered through interviews and focus groups according to the evaluation questions proposed
- The LDS data were analyzed statistically, as a whole.

The activities regarding the completion of the research instruments and data collection were carried out between June 15 - July 8 this year, in parallel with the documentary analysis of the 37 LDS selected for financing through the integrated mechanism ROP - HCOP, these being preceded by preparatory activities that included taking consulting the proposals of the applicant's guides related to AP9 POR and AP5 HCOP, contacting the LAG in order to update the contact data, interviews.

The complementarity of the evaluation methods used has facilitated a better understanding of the animation processes carried out at the level of the marginalized urban areas, of the processes of elaboration of the local development strategies of the marginalized urban areas, of the integrated financing mechanism POR-HCOP and of the causes of the delays, as well as formulating recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the DLRC in the Romanian urban environment.

2.2 Published literature

The speciality literature consulted included:

- Applicant's guide: specific conditions - the call for project proposals no. 3/2015, "Preparatory support for community animation in cities with a population of over 20,000 inhabitants", stage I - preparatory support for the elaboration of the local development strategy (LDS) and for the establishment of the new LAG / adaptation of the LAG already established to the DLRC requirements for the period programming 2014-2020, PA 5 / PI 9.vi/OS 5.1 / preparatory support.
- Applicant's guide: specific conditions for accessing the funds, "Preparatory support for the development of local development strategies" - cities / municipalities with a population of over 20,000 inhabitants, PA 5 / PI 9.vi/OS 5.1. - Less developed regions.
- Guidelines for local action groups on the implementation of local development strategies in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants, stage III of the DLRC mechanism, October 2017.

- Applicant's guide: specific conditions for accessing the funds, "Support for the functioning of local action groups for implementing local development strategies in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants", stage III of the DLRC mechanism, AP 5 / PI 9.vi / OS 5.1.
- Applicant's guide: specific conditions for accessing funds within the calls for projects ROP / 2018/9 / 9.1 / 1/7 REGIONS, ROP / 2018/9 / 9.1 / 1 / BI and ROP / 2018/9 / 9.1 / 1 / SME , priority axis 9 - supporting the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in the urban environment, investment priority 9.1 - local development under community responsibility (DLRC).
- ROP 2014 - 2020 October 2018 version.
- HCOP 2014 - 2020.
- REGULATION (EU) NO. 1303/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 establishing common provisions for the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Fund, as well as establishing general provisions on the Fund European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, Cohesion Fund and European Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) no. 1083/2006 of the Council.
- Synthesis report, Diagnostic study and consultancy for policies to support Roma inclusion in Romania, World Bank, 28.02.2014.
- Development of strategies for integrating marginalized urban communities - "Atlas of marginalized urban areas in Romania".
- European Structural and Investment Funds, Guidance for Member States and Program Authorities, Guidance for Beneficiaries, Guidance on Community Led Local Development for Local Actors, May 2014.
- National strategy for social inclusion and poverty reduction for the period 2015-2020.
- The conclusions resulting from the study of the specialized literature can be found in the different sections of the present research report.

2.3 Data collection

2.3.1 Quantitative component

The quantitative component of the evaluation included an online survey addressed to the members of the local action groups and aimed to collect data on the animation process (activities carried out, community actors involved, the usefulness of the animation activities, the resources needed for the animation process, problems encountered, improvements. what should be brought), the process of developing the LDS (community involvement, the degree of coverage of the needs, the collaboration with the LAG members in the process of developing the LDS, problems in the process of developing the LDS) and the integrated mechanism of POR-HCOP implementation (the main ones problems of the mechanism, solutions to improve it). Survey Monkey software was used for data collection. Invitations to complete the online questionnaire (Appendix 1) were sent by e-mail to all LAGs whose LDS were selected by the CCSL and who

receive funding for the operation. The invitation was addressed to the LAG with the request to be distributed to the other members of the LAG in order to complete the questionnaire. The initial invitation was followed by three reminder emails and telephone contact from those who did not respond after the first two invitations.

Target population: members of the 37 urban LAGs.

Research tool: online questionnaire .

Number of responses received: 57, of which 53 were validated, and 42 were completed in full. 26 LAG members answered.

Position in the LAG of the respondents: 21 LAG founding members, 20 members in the LAG management structure, 12 members of the LAG steering committee.

Institutions represented by the respondents: 16 public institutions, 19 non-governmental organizations, 9 companies, 2 PFA, 7 natural persons.

2.3.2 Qualitative component

The qualitative component of the research consisted in conducting in-depth interviews with representatives of the MA POR / AM HCOP / MFE, of the regional bodies (ADR), of the Federation of urban LAGs, of the Romanian Cities Association and local actors (members of the urban LAGs, representatives of the UAT, representatives of the county institutions, members of the MUZ communities), focus groups with local actors involved in the process of LDS elaboration of the marginalized urban areas, the Delphi analysis with the CCSL members. Also, case studies of urban LAGs and their local development strategies were conducted. They were achieved:

- In-depth interviews with experts who participated in the design and / or implementation of the DLRC mechanism - ROP PA 9 (MRDPA - MA ROP, RDA), AP5 (MA HCOP) and MEF
 - Target population: MA ROP, RDA, MA HCOP members.
 - Research tool: semi-structured MA ROP interview, RDA semi-structured interview, semi-structured MA HCOP interview, semi-structured MEF interview (Annex 2).
 - Number of interviews conducted: 9 interviews - 1 MA ROP interview, 5 interviews with RDA representatives, 1 MA HCOP interview, 2 MEF interviews
- In-depth interview with a representative of the Urban LAG Federation
 - Target population : Urban LAG Federation.
 - Research tool: semi-structured interview (Annex 2)
 - Number of interviews: 1 interview
- In-depth interviews with PA5 HCOP beneficiaries (urban LAG members)
 - Target population : Urban LGA members.
 - Instrument de cercetare: interviu semi-structurat (Anexa 2)

- Numărul de interviuri realizate: 12 interviuri cu membrii GAL (4 reprezentanți ai UAT, 4 membrii ai comunităților, 4 manageri de GAL)

- In-depth interviews with TAU associations
 - Targeted population : TAU associations - Romanian Cities Association (Romanian Municipalities Association was not involved in the DLRC - LAG - LDS process)
 - Research tool: semi-structured interview (Annex 2)
 - Number of interviews: 1 interview with the Romanian Association of Cities

- Regional focus groups with LAG representatives, local and county actors
 - Targeted population: members of the urban LAG, local actors involved in LDS development, county actors involved in LDS development
 - Research tool: focus group guide (Annex 3)
 - Number of interviews conducted: 4 focus groups, 31 participants

- Delphi analysis - questionnaires applied to the CCSL expert panel. The Delphi analysis carried out involved conducting two rounds of consultation of the CCSL HCOP-POR experts on issues related to the participatory processes within the LDS development, the identification of the priority projects and the integrated ROP-HCOP mechanism.
 - Target population targeted: CCS members
 - Research tool: online questionnaire round 1, online questionnaire with open questions round 2 (Annex 4)
 - Number of respondents: 15 round 1 (of which 12 validated answers), 2 round 2 (of which 0 validated answers because only the data regarding the institutional affiliation and field of expertise were completed)

- The LDS case studies conducted
 - Research tools: case study protocol (Annex 5)
 - Number of case studies: 4
 - Criteria for the selection of case studies: geographical distribution (each case being from distinct development regions avoiding the localities with a mining past that will benefit from targeted support), the existence in the territory covered by the LDS at least of a MUZ with a majority Roma population (considering the emphasis placed on measures aimed at integrating the Roma population and increasing employment among the members of this community), the economic dimension of the locality, the residence status of the county, the location on transport routes / in the vicinity of urban centers of national scale.

2.3.3 Secondary data analysis

The documentary research activity mainly included the analysis of PA5 HCOP and PA9 POR guides, of other programmatic documents, of the various national strategies on combating social exclusion, of the 37 LDS approved for funding through the PA9 POR - PA5 HCOP integrated mechanism, reported at the requirements of the specific guides, to the objectives and

achievement indicators established by PA9 ROP and LDS. For each LDS, a record was drawn up that summarizes how to meet the selection criteria and the infrastructure investment projects included in the LDS, planned and approved for financing through the integrated mechanism PA9 ROP - PA5 HCOP.

The analysis of the secondary data took into account the programmatic documents elaborated by the managing authorities (MA ROP, MA HCOP), studies on MUZ and guides for the implementation of the DLRC mechanism in Romania, LDS approved for financing and the relevant public policy documents. For the LDS data of the marginalized urban areas, an administrative data sheet was drawn up which summarized the relevant information regarding: the number of inhabitants targeted by LDS, the number of inhabitants in MUZ, the budget allocation for ROP investments broken down according to the categories highlighted in the specific GS, HCOP and from other sources and the operating expenses of the LAG, the number of animation meetings, the number of participants in the animation meetings, the number of LAG members and the types of entities they represent, the budget of the projects previously carried out in the LDS territory.

2.4 Limitations of the methodology and limitations of the study

The mix of data collection methods used in the evaluation facilitated the obtaining of relevant information regarding the objectives initially set. There are, however, a number of limitations to the methodology used, of which we mention:

- The main limitation of this study was the lack of the projects contracted within PA 9, a situation that determined the modification and adaptation of the objectives and the evaluation questions to this situation, in consultation with the Beneficiary of the study.
- Lack of email addresses of all LAG members that did not allow the sending of a personalized and unique link to complete the questionnaire. There is thus a potential lack of coverage of all local actors. For this reason, the number of people who answered the online questionnaire was not very high, and the returns to completion made the number of valid questionnaires to be 53, and 42 were completed in full. At the same time, there may be suspicions regarding the quality of the data provided by them. On the other hand, in self-applied surveys the tendency to provide desirable answers is less common. Also, the respondent can answer questions at his own pace and even in multiple sessions.
- The lack of the interview operator (in the case of online research) can lead to difficulties in understanding certain questions from the respondents. To prevent this risk, additional information was provided to help facilitate the online questionnaire.
- Online questionnaires usually have lower response rates than telephone or personal ones, as well as higher break-offs. Thus the call to complete the questionnaire was completed by telephone contact of the representatives of the urban LAG. In this research the response rate is 26 LAGs out of a total of 37 (70% response rate).
- The inclusion in the analysis of respondents difficult to interview, from the point of view of access and availability (members of the Joint Selection Committee at the level of AM

HCOP, OIR, ADR), correlated with the institutional changes. The main effects of this limitation consisted of delays in collecting data from the initial programming and the impossibility of contacting those directly involved.

- The limited number of responses received in the first round of the Delphi analysis and the lack of answers that could be validated in the second round. To increase the response rate, 3 reminder emails were sent for the first round and 4 emails for the second round.

The limitations of the study result on the one hand from the specific of the evaluation methodology used, and on the other hand from:

Reduced availability of LAG members for participation in interviews, focus groups, provision of information through questionnaires or case studies, a situation possibly caused by a relative demobilization due to the slow advance of the operationalization of the integrated ROP-HCOP financing mechanism and the absence of projects started.

- ✓ Staff turnover, at the level of LAG managers, in the entities associated in the LAG as well as at the ADR level regarding the persons who were actually involved on the one hand, in the development of LDS and, on the other hand, in the evaluation and selection of LDS.
- ✓ The relative confusion between the LAG members regarding the effective functioning of the ROP-HCOP integrated mechanism.
- ✓ Incomplete LDS documentation, only the initial strategies transmitted by the LAG to the CCSL were analyzed, without access to the financing contracts and additional documents concluded by the LAG with PA5 HCOP and to the clarification requests made by the CCSL in the LDS evaluation process. .Analysis and interpretation

3. Analysis and interpretation

According to the provisions of PA5 HCOP, through the DLRC MUZ and FUZ LDS are identified using two criteria: i) The dimension with the following requirements regarding the targeted territory: a) to belong to a city / municipality with more than 20,000 inhabitants; b) to target a population of between 10,000 and 150,000 inhabitants; ii) The coherence specific to the LDS territory with the following requirements: c) to target urban areas that are economically, socially and physically coherent, by means of coherence being understood their "functionality" in order to support the LDS objectives.

The marginalized community refers to the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion from a territory covered by the interventions of the DLRC (LDS territory) covering one or more MUZs of which they belong. LDS territory can vary in form and demarcation, extending to the boundaries of a larger city. The related FUZ means the existing area around / in the vicinity of MUZ targeted by the LDS, having a unitary and functional character from a social, economic, demographic point of view. In order to ensure the integration of the MUZ, the territory covered by the LDS includes one or more MUZs together with the FUZ, in which the integration solutions

can be identified effectively, ie ensuring the access of the marginalized community to jobs or to employment, education, social assistance and / or medical etc.

According to AP5 HCOP guidelines, MUZ cannot overlap the entire population of a city / municipality with more than 20,000 inhabitants, but the territory covered by the LAG and LDS is possible to cover a large part of the population and the administrative territory of a medium-sized city / municipality. In large cities/ municipalities, it is possible to be able to delimit several territories that simultaneously: (a) fulfill the conditions imposed by size and coherence, (b) do not overlap and (c) can be targeted by separate LAGs and LDSs. Any territory covered by an LDS must contain one or more MUZs.

According to HCOP programmatic documents, MUZs are defined as areas within cities and municipalities that do not meet an appropriate standard on any of the three criteria, having a human capital deficit (population with poor health, old age, low education level, etc.), have a low level of formal employment (unemployed population, etc.), and offer unsuitable living conditions (overcrowded housing, unused to utilities, etc.).

Through GS, a time horizon for the LDS (the maximum period of implementation of the measures for financing from ROP and HCOP) has been foreseen until 2023, aiming at an indicative list of interventions whereby the LAG considers that the objectives of the strategy will be achieved, as well as an allocation guidance for each of the interventions to be financed through the integrated ROP-HCOP mechanism. According to the GS requirements, interventions in LDS not eligible for ROP / HCOP funding could be highlighted in the strategy only if the funding source was known at the time of its preparation.

The projects selected by the LAG for implementation will meet the following requirements: i) for the projects related to the indicative list of interventions included in the LDS, the financed investments must be made in the LDS territory and the persons included in the target group must have their domicile / live in the territory LDS; ii) for the HCOP projects related to the indicative list of interventions associated with the LDS, from the total of the target group supported (Roma and non-Roma), the persons residing / living in the MUZ must represent a percentage at least equal to the weight of the MUZ residents in the total population from LDS territory (MUZ and FUZ); iii) for ERDF projects aiming at the construction / equipping of the infrastructure of the social economy enterprises of insertion, the total amount of the de minimis aid will be of maximum 200,000 euros granted to a single company (these will be financed under an aid scheme).

3.1 Documentary analysis of LDS

During the call for projects launched in April 2017 by AP5 HCOP, 49 LDS were submitted, of which, following the evaluation and selection process carried out by CCSL during December 2017, a number of 37 strategies have crossed the minimum threshold of 70 of points obtained by scoring the criteria included in the measurement guide. All 37 LDS were approved, being selected for funding within the AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP integrated mechanism. Of these, 35 LDS

were developed for localities in less developed regions and 2 LDS for the more developed region Bucharest - Ilfov more precisely in Bucharest, sector 4 and sector 5.

The list of LAGs and LDSs selected for financing through the integrated mechanism POR - PO CU is presented in Annex 6. Since according to GS it was possible to set up several LAGs for the separate MUZ and FUZ in the same locality, there are municipalities that have applied with more such strategies, we exemplify with the municipality of Bucharest where 4 sectors were applied, of which sectors 2 and 3 were rejected on the grounds of partnership respectively of eligibility and sectors 4 and 5 that were selected and with the city of Timisoara where 2 LAGs were applied that applied each with an approved strategy. In addition, in the county of Timiș there is also the municipality of Lugoj which has applied through the local LAG with a selected strategy for financing.

In the country there are other counties with several urban LDS elaborated by DLRC approved for financing through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, respectively Cluj county, where the cities of Turda, Gherla and Dej are located, each having LDS selected, Bacau county represented by Bacau municipality and the city of Moinești, Prahova county with Ploiești and Câmpina municipalities, Brașov county with Codlea and Săcele municipalities, Alba county with Alba Iulia and Sebeș municipalities, Hunedoara county with Hunedoara and Vulcan municipalities. It should be noted that the municipality of Cluj also submitted the LDS which was not selected for funding for eligibility reasons although 3 other localities in the same county are on the list with approved LDS. Another municipality residing in the county that has submitted a strategy rejected also for reasons of eligibility is Satu Mare, the county residence with the same name.

Of the total of the 40 counties that make up the less developed regions of Romania, 26 are represented with at least one city of over 20,000 inhabitants, which has a strategy elaborated by the DLRC instrument, approved for financing through the integrated ROP-HCOP mechanism. Overall 26 counties are represented by 35 approved LDS, to which is added the city of Bucharest with 2 LDS approved respectively in sectors 4 and 5. The counties not represented by approved LDS are: Arad, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Brăila, Călărași, Dolj, Gorj, Harghita, Iași, Ilfov, Mehedinti, Neamț, Sălaj, Vâlcea.

At the level of regions, the distribution of LDS approved for financing through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP is dominated by the Center region with 7 LDS, followed by the regions South Muntenia and West with 6 LDS, North East and North West by 5 LDS, South East with 4 and, equal to 2 LDS, the South West regions Oltenia and Bucharest - Ilfov. (Table 1)

Table 1. LDS distribution

Nr.crt	LDS Locality	Number of inhabitants ¹	County	Development Region
1	Sectorul 4- București	321.763	București	București Ilfov
2	Sectorul 5 - București	298.816	București	

¹ Source: NIS

Nr.crt	LDS Locality	Number of inhabitants ¹	County	Development Region	
3	Târgu Mureș	150.191	Mureș	Centru	
4	Alba Iulia	74.233	Alba		
5	Sfântu Gheorghe	65.080	Covasna		
6	Mediaș	58.571	Sibiu		
7	Săcele	36.028	Brașov		
8	Sebeș	32.531	Alba		
9	Codlea	26.068	Brașov		
10	Bacău	196.883	Bacău		Nord Est
11	Botoșani	122.311	Botoșani		
12	Rădăuți	33.169	Suceava		
13	Huși	30.484	Vaslui		
14	Moinești	24.684	Bacău		
15	Baia Mare	147.801	Maramureș	Nord Vest	
16	Turda	57.304	Cluj		
17	Dej	38.970	Cluj		
18	Carei	24.590	Satu Mare		
19	Gherla	23.235	Cluj		
20	Galați	304.340	Galați	Sud Est	
21	Focșani	94.408	Vrancea		
22	Medgidia	46.045	Constanța		
23	Ramnicu Sărat	40.821	Buzău		
24	Ploiești	233.663	Prahova	Sud Muntenia	
25	Târgoviște	93.563	Dâmbovița		
26	Giurgiu	69.051	Giurgiu		
27	Slobozia	53.085	Ialomița		
28	Câmpina	37.553	Prahova		
29	Turnu Măgurele	29.974	Teleorman		
30	Câmpulung	36.944	Argeș	Sud Vest Oltenia	
31	Caracal	35.207	Olt		
32	Timișoara	332.983	Timiș	Vest	
33	Timișoara	332.983	Timiș		
34	Reșița	88.533	Caraș Severin		
35	Hunedoara	74.142	Hunedoara		
36	Lugoj	47.702	Timiș		
37	Vulcan	28.927	Hunedoara		

Source: secondary analysis of LDS

The list of localities from which LDS originates selected for financing through the integrated mechanism ROP - OP CU includes several categories of municipalities and cities with a population between the minimum of 23,235 inhabitants in Gherla Cluj County and, almost on a

par, the maximum of 332,983 inhabitants in the city of Timisoara. respectively 321,763 inhabitants in sector 4 of Bucharest. It is followed at a short distance and also on an equal footing, the town of Galați with 304,340 inhabitants respectively sector 5 of Bucharest with 298,816 inhabitants. The next town from the point of view of the population and which closes the top of the cities with over 200,000 inhabitants who have submitted LDS selected for financing, is represented by the municipality of Ploiești with 233,663 inhabitants.

Table 2. LDS distribution - from cites over 200.000 inhabitants

No.	LDS locality- cities/Bucharest'sectors	Number of inhabitants	County
1	Timișoara	332.983	Timiș
2	Timișoara	332.983	Timiș
3	Sectorul 4- București	321.763	București
4	Galați	304.340	Galați
5	Sectorul 5 - București	298.816	București
6	Ploiești	233.663	Prahova

Source: secondary analysis of LDS

Another 4 municipalities with populations over 100,000 inhabitants: Bacău, Târgu Mureș, Baia Mare, Botoșani.

Table 3. LDS distribution - from cites over 100.000 inhabitants

No.	LDS locality	Number of inhabitants	County
1	Bacău	196.883	Bacău
2	Târgu Mureș	150.191	Mureș
3	Baia Mare	147.801	Maramureș
4	Botoșani	122.311	Botoșani

Source: secondary analysis of LDS

Regarding the localities with populations between 20,000 - 100,000 inhabitants who have submitted selected LDS, a first category is the municipalities of medium size county respectively Focșani, Târgoviște, Reșița, Alba Iulia, Giurgiu, Sfântu Gheorghe, Slobozia.

Table 4. LDS distribution - cites between 20.000 - 100.000 inhabitants, witch are county seat

No.	LDS locality	Number of inhabitants	County
1	Focșani	94.408	Vrancea
2	Târgoviște	93.563	Dâmbovița
3	Reșița	88.533	Caraș Severin
4	Alba Iulia	74.233	Alba
5	Giurgiu	69.051	Giurgiu
6	Sfântu Gheorghe	65.080	Covasna
7	Slobozia	53.085	Ialomița

Source: secondary analysis of LDS

A second category of urban localities with populations between 20,000 - 100,000 inhabitants with approved LDS is represented by municipalities and cities of small and medium size respectively Hunedoara, Mediaș, Turda, Lugoj, Medgidia, Râmnicu Sărat, Dej, Campina, Câmpulung, Săcele, Caracal, Rădăuți, Sebeș, Huși, Turnu Măgurele, Vulcan, Codlea, Moinești, Carei, Gherla

Table 5. LDS distribution - cites between 20.000 - 100.000 inhabitants, witch are not county seat

No.	Locality	Number of inhabitants	County	No.	Locality	Number of inhabitants	County
1	Hunedoara	74.142	Hunedoara	11	Caracal	35.207	Olt
2	Mediaș	58.571	Sibiu	12	Rădăuți	33.169	Suceava
3	Turda	57.304	Cluj	13	Sebeș	32.531	Alba
4	Lugoj	47.702	Timiș	14	Huși	30.484	Vaslui
5	Medgidia	46.045	Constanța	15	Turnu Măgurele	29.974	Teleorman
6	Ramnicu Sărat	40.821	Buzău	16	Vulcan	28.927	Hunedoara
7	Dej	38.970	Cluj	17	Codlea	26.068	Brașov
8	Câmpina	37.553	Prahova	18	Moinești	24.684	Bacău
9	Câmpulung	36.944	Argeș	19	Carei	24.590	Satu Mare
10	Săcele	36.028	Brașov	20	Gherla	23.235	Cluj

Source: secondary analysis of LDS

On the whole, we distinguish several categories of localities with LDS selected for financing through the integrated mechanism POR - HCOP geographically located in all seven less developed regions: i) very large municipalities county residence, category of which are Timisoara, Galați and, at the Ploiești border; ii) big municipalities residence of county, category of which Bacău, Târgu Mureș, Baia Mare, Botoșani belong; iii) the average workers of county residence, of which Focșani, Târgoviște, Reșița, Alba Iulia, Hunedoara, Giurgiu, Sfântu Gheorghe, Slobozia belong; and iv) the last category of municipalities and medium cities to small category of which Hunedoara, Mediaș, Turda, Lugoj, Medgidia, Râmnicu Sărat, Dej, Campina, Campulung, Săcele, Caracal, Rădăuți, Sebeș, Huși, Turnu Măgurele, Vulu, Codlea, Moinești, Carei, Gherla. To these are added the municipality of Bucharest from the more developed region Bucharest - Ilfov for which LDS sector 4 and LDS sector 5 were selected.

It can be observed that the geographical distribution of the localities with LDS approved for financing through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, covers the whole territory of the country (Annex 7). Moreover, there is also a numerical balance between the county residence cities in number of 15 in total from the less developed regions, to which is added the city of Bucharest with 2 LDS and the 20 cities that do not have this status and, consequently, no it benefits from the advantages enjoyed by the county residences, such as the concentration of county and local public institutions, university centers and high density of secondary and vocational education institutions, significantly more intense economic and financial activities, cultural activities, high degree of attractiveness for investments. domestic and foreign, more

advanced transport infrastructure, modernized system of utilities, a higher standard of living compared to the localities that do not have the quality of county residence.

And the category of urban localities that are not county residents, in its turn can be viewed from several points of view such as: i) geographical location in the proximity of major road / rail transport axes; ii) the geographical location in direct connection with the county residence municipalities of regional or national importance; iii) unfavorable geographical location, outside the main transport axes or insufficiently close to large municipalities capable of exerting a high attractiveness on these localities and offering increased employment opportunities in areas with high added value.

It is unanimously accepted that the improvement of the standard of living can take place through public interventions, meant to ensure a minimum level of basic and housing utilities, in conjunction with integrated measures aimed at increasing the occupancy rate among the members of the target group with the acquisition of skills and skills by the data subjects, as a way to ensure a sustainability of the public interventions and to gain self-respect for the inhabitants of the marginalized areas. Increasing employment means strengthening the links with FUZ and, in general, with the economic environment in the respective locality.

If, as a whole, the internal labor market is tense in the sense that, paradoxically, the number of vacancies exceeds the demand for jobs, at the same time with the existence of a record number of unemployed people, young people who are not included in the educational system but neither work (NEETs), the MUZ situations as described in the LDS show that the low level of employment is due, on the one hand, to the absence of the inhabitants of the respective areas of the skills required by the labor market and, on the other hand, to the low number of economic entities existing in the LDS target areas selected for funding.

Employment opportunities for MUZ residents would be realistic in anticipation that they might come from within or even close to marginalized areas, being more difficult to assume that, with limited skills, residents or employers would both be willing to travel significant distances in order to obtain a low value gain that would cover the costs associated with the shuttle.

Statistical research shows that, on average, the income per member in MUZ households represents less than 50% compared to the situation in the neighboring areas. In these conditions, the links that can be established, especially the economic ones, between MUZ and the adjacent areas become important, for this reason LDS aims at a wider territory, in some cases in the middle cities even the whole territory of the locality in order to facilitate the economic integration of MUZ. It thus appears as a powerful catalyst, the economic attractiveness of the city, its ability to absorb an additional workforce, initially with low qualifications, even by granting subsidies for creating new jobs, subsidies that can be supported through interventions integrated financed by AP5 HCOP.

In this context, as one of the requirements of the study was the realization of 4 case studies that reflect the results obtained from organizing focus groups and extended interviews with LAG members, in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the animation and elaboration processes of LDS, respectively of the functioning of the integrated financing mechanism POR -

HCOP, were selected localities that represent each category of the above presented based on the following criteria: i) very large cities, localities with a strong economic activity, social life - rich culture, local administrations with significant budgets in the territory of which exist bags of extreme poverty; ii) municipalities of county residence, of large size, with normal economic activity that managed to avoid the collapse of deindustrialization by developing a regional educational university pillar; iii) municipalities that do not have the quality of county residence, of medium size but which have the advantage of being located either on important modernized transport routes, or in the immediate vicinity of a large urban center and of national importance; iv) municipalities / cities of medium to small size, which are not located on important transport axes nor in the proximity of a national center of national scale, having as the only short and medium term alternative, only the own economy of the city, without natural resources (tourism, mining, energy, etc.).

Moreover, in order to select the four localities for carrying out detailed case studies, the criterion of balanced geographical distribution that represents distinct development regions was avoided, avoiding the localities with a mining past that will benefit from targeted support. Also, considering the emphasis placed on measures aimed at integrating the Roma population and increasing employment among the members of this community, the existence of at least one MUZ with a majority Roma population was also taken into account in the territory covered by the LDS.

Thus, from the list of very large municipalities, economic, administrative, university, cultural centers of national importance, was selected, from Bucharest, Timișoara, Galați and Ploiești, as a representative example of the municipality of Bucharest, LDS sector 4 (the most developed region of Bucharest - Ilfov) where there are poverty alleviation, especially in the proximity of the former industrial conglomerates, so-called blocks of non-families that have turned into ghettos over time, as well as some decommissioned production units that have become shelters for people in a state of severe material deprivation.

From the category of large-scale county residence, between Bacău, Târgu Mureș, Baia Mare and Botoșani, the municipality of Bacău, the county capital of the same name (North-East development region), was selected among the municipalities that managed to slow down the process. to deindustrialize and maintain certain activities with high added value (for example in the aeronautical industry), to attract foreign investment, to become a regional university center and to stop the demographic decline without having significant natural resources yet benefiting from being located on a national route transport.

Regarding the category of medium-sized urban settlements, out of the 20 municipalities and cities with approved LDS, presented above, were selected for the elaboration of detailed case studies, Turda municipality with 57,304 inhabitants, Cluj county (development region North - West), targeting through LDS approved and MUZ with a predominantly Roma population, respectively the Caracal municipality with 35,207 inhabitants, Dolj county (South-West Oltenia development region), located at a significant distance from Craiova municipality, the competitiveness pole of the south of the country, as well as insufficiently close to a major

transport route, with limited educational resources and an economic attractiveness based mainly on cheap labor.

The case studies for LDS Bacău elaborated by the LAG Association for Innovation and Sustainable Development Bacău, LDS Bucharest sector 4 elaborated by the LAG Association We think and act locally in sector 4, LDS Turda elaborated by the LAL Urban Turda Association and LDS Caracal elaborated by the LAG Heart Association, are presented in Annex 8.

Regarding the documentary analysis of the LDS approved for financing through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, a synthetic centralization sheet of the planned interventions was obtained by summing the values of the main parameters for each LDS (Annex 9). The following findings emerge from the analysis of these documents:

- The complete structure of the documentation related to the LDS was imposed through the call guide and complied ad literately by all the LAGs that developed and submitted the LDS. We notice the extremely short time frame in which LDS was developed, initially announced a period of 4 months, then restricted to 3 months in the interval sep. - nov. 2017, including the field research following which MUZ and FUZ were identified, the purpose being to evaluate the needs of the inhabitants of the marginalized areas included in the MUZ in order to establish the proposals for interventions financable through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP;
- According to GS requirements, the LDS framework model (Annex 10) was designed according to the provisions of Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013. The standard structure of the documentation related to the LDS also included a number of 30 annexes meant to clearly highlight certain aspects considered essential by GS. For example, we mention the plan with the delimitation of the territory covered by the LDS on the PUG model and relevant photographs from the targeted areas / marginalized communities, the package of interventions sheets from the indicative list proposed for financing, the LAL decision to assume the LDS, CV manager and facilitator GAL including job description and selection and employment procedure, LAG decision regarding the MUZ declaration, LAG constitution documents, identification and justification of the types of measures required to be taken in the MUZ, the list of projects carried out in the last 5 years in the LDS territory, etc. GS also provided a set of 14 mandatory supporting documents for the elaboration of the sections of the local development strategy, their list being presented in Annex 11.
- This resulted in LDS documentation drawn up by the LAG in the 3 months allocated to this activity of hundreds of pages, in some cases over one thousand pages including the annexes and the supporting documents, proving the actions taken in order to comply with the requirements established by GS (structure LDS and annexes) that reflect a laborious activity carried out for the purpose of elaborating the LDS related to MUZs characterized by improper living conditions, with a population having an extremely low level of employment and formal education that was called to identify their needs and to establish solutions to these in a participatory manner.

- The 37 LDS approved for financing through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, include a total of 132 marginalized areas out of a set of 605 identified in the 95 urban localities with over 20,000 inhabitants, specifying that the MUZ included in the LDS have have been re-evaluated during the field research conducted as a preparatory step to develop the strategy. Thus, there may be differences between the population census conducted in 2011, the marginalized areas established in 2014 through the study "Atlas of marginalized urban areas in Romania", and MUZ results from the field research conducted during October - November 2017, on the occasion of LDS elaboration. The differences could be in particular regarding the number of inhabitants of MUZ, considering the time interval of 6 years between the population census and the elaboration of LDS and their needs, especially in areas such as employment or training;
- From the point of view of the resident population, the total number of inhabitants in MUZ targeted by the interventions proposed for financing through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, amounts to about 145,000 people representing about 4% of the total population of the 37 localities where there are the 132 MUZ. However, the proposed interventions for ERDF-ESF integrated financing, target the wider territories and also the adjacent areas, in some cases the latter representing even the entire territory of the respective localities.
- By the appeal guide it was imposed as an eligibility criterion that the territory covered by the LDS should target a number of inhabitants in the range 10,000 - 150,000. For this reason, significant dispersions between strategies are recorded. Thus, the total number of inhabitants of the FUZ amounts to approx. 1.3 million (about 35% of the total population of selected urban settlements). It should be noted that even between comparable localities in terms of number of inhabitants and level of development, the differences are significant. For example, in the case of localities with over 200,000 inhabitants (including sectors 4 and 5 in Bucharest), the LDS territory varies between 31,000 - 105,912 inhabitants. As a whole LDS, the MUZ population represents 4% of the total number of inhabitants of the localities where MUZ is located while the territory covered by the LDS represents 35% of the total population.

Total population of localities with approved LDS	3.581.450
Total population of LDS territories	1.314.211
Total number of MUZ from LDS approved	132
Total MUZ population from LDS approved	143.217

- Regarding the establishment of the LAG through partnerships concluded between UAT and the interested entities, from a number of 269 founding members it was reached at the time of finalizing the elaboration of LDS to 646 of which: a) public institutions - 157; b) NGO - 157; c) companies and PFA - 130; d) individual members - 202. Thus, as a whole, a balanced mix between the 4 major categories of members, partners in the LAG is

observed. However, between the 37 LAGs there are major differences regarding the number of LAG members ranging from 5 members in some localities to a maximum of 33 members, indicating that LAG members are not necessarily entities in the locality. At the same time it can be noticed that not all LAG members come from the respective localities.

Total members of 37 LAGs	Total public institutions	Total NGOs	Total companies	Total Individual Members
646 (100%)	157 (24,3%)	157 (24,3%)	130 (20,2%)	202 (31,2%)

- Regarding the mobilization of LDS residents, through the call guide, a minimum number of 5 meetings was required during which, MUZ members discuss the needs of the community, strengths and weaknesses and identify with the help of LAG representatives feasible solutions leading to a time horizon of 3-5 years to improve the standard of living for MUZ residents. A minimum number of participants was also imposed, respectively 50 persons, of which at least 40% women and 20% young people under 29 years. The requirement was met at a level close to the minimum imposed by all LDS, 187 community meetings were organized as a whole, compared to the 37 LDS analyzed, an average of 5.05 meetings / LDS results. A number of 10,031 persons participated, which leads to an average of 54 persons / meeting, ie the minimum provided by the call guide as an eligibility criterion;

Total MUZ animation meetings for 37 LDS	187
Total number of MUZ animation meetings participants for 37 LDS	10.031

- Regarding the previous public interventions implemented including in the LDS territory, it is necessary to note that the call guide requested only the presentation of the main parameters of the respective projects and not an impact assessment that shows to what degree the measures carried out had beneficial effects in the meaning of improving the standard of living of the inhabitants of MUZ. The values of these projects mainly of the ESF and ERDF type are around 1.55 billion lei through 155 projects, some of which are being implemented being financed by FESI 2014 - 2020, resulting in an average of 10 million lei. on the project. The high average value is due to the inclusion in the reported projects and to the interventions in the public utilities and transport infrastructure, especially in the localities where the LDS territory covers practically the whole city.

Projects previously carried out in LDS territory	Total Budget (lei)
155	1.549.905.531,55

- In relation to the projects proposed for financing through the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, it can be noted in the LDS the extensive use of the terms "integrated projects", "integrated project package", "integrated mechanism", "integrated measures", "interventions complementary ", there are only in the call guides a definition regarding“

integrated measures "financed by AP5 HCOP, in the sense that HCOP projects must aim at integrated interventions - integrated packages of measures according to the needs of the target groups targeted. In the context of AP5 HCOP, according to the programmatic documents, "integrated packages mean the approach of at least two areas of intervention respectively education, employment, social services, social assistance, combating discrimination, etc."

- Regarding the "integrated project package" AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP, as mentioned in the ROP 2014 - 2020, there is no clear definition of this concept. However, according to the framework model of the LDS, the analysis of the proposed action plan for the LDS regarding the "integrated approach" was done from the perspective of: i) the integrated character at the level of the LDS territory; ii) the multisectoral character of the measures included; iii) the complementarity between investments in ERDF-type infrastructure and ESF-type software measures. With regard to the "integrated character at the level of the LDS territory" of the proposed interventions for financing ROP - HCOP, it should be noted that the LDS territory comprises for the whole of the 37 approved LDS, a population about 9 times larger compared to the number of inhabitants in the MUZ. From this perspective, the integrated character can be perceived as relatively blurred.
- The complementarity between investments in ERDF-type infrastructure and ESF-type software measures is explicitly assumed through the format of the project sheets proposed for approved LDS financing (Annex 12). In this regard, the project files were also drafted generically, following that through GS that will be elaborated by the LAG to request the submission of concrete project proposals leading to the implementation of complementary interventions ERDF / ESF according to the criteria highlighted in the project sheets. included in the approved LDS.
- Through the AP9 appeal guide for the ROP in public consultation since July 2018, it was established for the ROP / 2018/9 / 9.1 / 1/7 REGIONS and ROP / 2018/9 / 9.1 / 1 / BI calls at project level, value minimum for the eligible expenses of 30,000 euros, while at the strategy level, the maximum total value of the package of infrastructure projects (for each LDS) at 4,900,000 euros in the case of LDS, which do not have projects dedicated to the social economy enterprises of insertion and 4,300,000 euros in the case of LDS that have projects dedicated to the social economy enterprises of insertion.
- For the total of 37 LDS approved for financing, the total value of the proposed "hard" and "soft" projects amounts to approx. 270 million euros of which 4.77% (about 13 million euros) represent the running costs of the LAG executive structures for the implementation and monitoring of the projects included in the LDS, equivalent to 15% of the total HCOP funding. Of the total amount, 11% of the funds come from other sources of financing, usually the UAT budget, while approx. 53% constitute ROP funding through AP9 and 31% HCOP funding through AP5.

Total investment ROP (Euro)	Total investment HCOP (Euro)	Operating costs LAG (Euro)	Other sources of financing (Euro)	Overall total (Euro)
142.108.893	84.127.274	12.844.956	30.233.855	269.314.977
52,7%	31,24%	4,77% (15,2% din HCOP)	11,23%	100%

- Regarding the projects proposed to be financed through the ROP, it is necessary to specify that through GS related to LDS, Annex 10, Supporting documents of the LDS framework model, the document H has also been provided. "Examples of LDS selection criteria related to sustainability" (Annex 13), which takes stipulates in point (5) that "The most efficient way to improve the access of the population from the marginalized area to services is the creation of a multifunctional base (integrated community center) in the respective area.", while in point (7) there are specified " In order to increase the level of ownership and value of this multifunctional center as a landmark of community identity, projects for personalizing the interior and exterior of the building, developed with the participation of the community, under the guidance of NGOs or urban planners, will be encouraged and funded. / or architects. "
- Overall, the projects included in the financing in the 37 LDS approved from ERDF funds through AP9 ROP within the DLRC integrated mechanism in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, are mostly divided between investments in the modernization / development of urban space including utilities (32.61 %) and the construction / rehabilitation of social housing (32.23%) followed in order by the investment projects in the integrated centers providing health and social services (17.94%) and in the education infrastructure (16.17%)

Total Social housing (euro)	LDS Health and social services (euro)	Total LDS Health and social services (euro)	Total Education (Euro)	LDS Urban space including utilities (euros)	Total LDS Urban space including utilities (euros)	Total Social economy (euro)	LDS Total ERDF investments through PA9 ROP (euro)
45.105.185	25.496.443	22.974.200	42.469.064	6.064.000	142.108.893		

- The above classification of the investment projects proposed for ROP financing through approved LDS prepared according to the list of categories of eligible projects included in the GS related to AP9 ROP, the variant for public consultation, suffers from an accentuated relativity as the centers of integrated services provision are provided. in some LDS in the education infrastructure as extensions of existing centers to address all age categories with reference to children or are provided as new constructions, the beneficiaries would be only children. Also with regard to the rehabilitation of social housing, according to some LDS investments in the modernization of the utility infrastructure on the streets adjacent to them were considered as a package with the social housing, while other LDS considered them separately as part of the urban infrastructure. Also regarding the spaces for sports activities, their location is relative, indoors in the integrated service centers or other buildings or they are only intended for outdoor sports activities.
- All LDS with one exception provided for the establishment of a community center where integrated services will be provided to residents targeted by LDS planned interventions. There are also cases when the establishment of the community center is the only investment in LDS. Either it is about the rehabilitation of an existing building and its

operationalization through HCOP projects, or it is intended to construct new buildings with only indicative specification of the location of the objective. As for the nature of the services offered, the standard palette includes after-school and children's clubs, the possibility of carrying out sports and artistic activities, employment facilitation centers for the residents of MUZ and FUZ, rooms for adult / children training courses, including second chance programs.

- The total value of the investments in the community centers proposed for financing by LDS from the ERDF amounts to about 25.5 million euros, resulting in an average cost of 700,000 Euro / center only the part of the rehabilitation infrastructure of new building / construction. Regarding the investments in the educational infrastructure, these generally include the rehabilitation / construction of nurseries and kindergartens and the renovation of schools in the area of LDS coverage, for children from MUZ with free access and for children from FUZ.
- Through the investments in the urban space, the aim is to improve the access in the marginalized areas to and from FUZ, in order to facilitate the transit and commute of the MUZ inhabitants but also to the image of the marginalized areas and to diversify the way of spending leisure time for both adults and children by creating parks. , football fields, street lighting systems in order to increase the security in the area, the rehabilitation of roads and pedestrian alleys, the construction of parking lots, the establishment of bus stations etc. Thus a significant part of the expected investments in infrastructure is to be made throughout the LDS territory.
- Although as a percentage of the investments planned to improve the living conditions is one third of the total value of the expected investments, there are also 4 LDS out of the 37 approved, which do not foresee infrastructure projects in the field of housing in the MUZ.
- Regarding the operating costs of the 37 LAGs, they are capped at 15% of the AP5 HCOP allocation. It is important to note that the signing of the financing contract for the operating costs of the LAG took place mostly at the end of 2018, so that only after this date, the process of hiring the necessary personnel for the implementation of the LDS was started. No other financing sources are provided for the functioning of the LAG.
- Regarding other sources of financing, these are usually represented by the local budget of the TUA. In the standard documentation for GA for LDS elaboration, it was clearly specified that the LDS budget can exceed the funding available through AP9 POR and AP5 HCOP only if the sources of financing this difference are indicated. The total value of approx. 30 million euros (11% of the total amount) appears relatively artificially increased as LDS covers a large part of the territory of the respective cities, sometimes even the whole territory, so that in the respective project portfolio, the major projects financed from the strategy budget are included. the local budget, such as the rehabilitation of roads in the city, the thermal rehabilitation of blocks, without these LDS representing the development strategies of the respective localities. In conclusion, the LDS mostly comprise exclusively projects financed through ROP and HCOP within the limits set by GS, according to the imposed algorithm. There are exceptions, but limited, in the sense that the investment projects that exceed the financing threshold of POR -

HCOP of the type "hard" or "soft" are of small value and have as source of financing the local budget.

- Taking into account the requirements established by the respective DLRC programmatic documents: "i) The projects to be financed from the HCOP will concern integrated interventions (integrated packages of measures according to the needs of the target groups targeted), in the sense of approaching at least 2 areas of intervention (education, employment, social services, social assistance, combating discrimination, etc.); for the HCOP projects related to the indicative list of interventions associated with LDS, out of the total target group supported (Roma and non-Roma), the persons living / living in MUZ represent at least a percentage of the share of MUZ residents in the total population in the LDS territory (MUZ and FUZ); and, ii) ERDF interventions target at least 2 of the types of actions financed by the ROP 2014-2020. For the ROP projects related to the indicative list of interventions associated with the LDS, the persons included in the target group will have their domicile / to live in the LDS territory ". As the ratio of the number of inhabitants MUZ / LDS is 1: 9, it turns out that, on average, out of 9 beneficiaries of the measures financed by PA 5 HCOP, one person must come from MUZ, while all the inhabitants of the territory covered by LDS (in some cases the whole locality) can benefit from the investments financed by AP9 ROP.

3.2 Community animation and LDS development

Local development under the responsibility of the community involves its management by action groups that bring together various categories of public and private sector at local / community level, without the domination of public institutions so that community members can be involved real in solving their own needs. The resources of time, information, knowledge, material and financial resources put by local actors and other entities interested in solving the existing needs accumulated at the level of localities, within a common development strategy are the essence of DLRC-type programs. Unlike other approaches, DLRC is targeting a bottom-up change that involves mobilizing and actively involving disadvantaged communities in their development process. At the same time, the change is not only limited to one sector of the activity, but it has an intersectoral approach to solve in an integrated way the multiple problems existing at the level of these disadvantaged communities.

Ensuring the partnership between the local actors involved in the DLRC implies the existence of a quality participatory process both in the elaboration of the development strategy of the marginalized urban area / areas, as well as throughout its implementation. The quality of the participatory process is necessary to prevent situations where one or more of the actors involved intends to hijack the local development process. One of the main rules is that the members of the local action group represent different organizations, and those in the public sector should have no more than 49% of the voting right.

3.2.1 Establishment of local action groups

Started from 2015, the formation of local action groups in the urban environment is a process carried out in most cases in two stages. The first stage carried out starting in 2015 in most of the cases involved the association of a smaller number of members for constituting the associative form. As a result of the activities of animating the community carried out within the preparatory support for the process of elaborating the local development strategies, the number of members of these associative structures has increased significantly, in some cases doubling or even tripling, according to the minutes of the Assemblies general of LAGs.

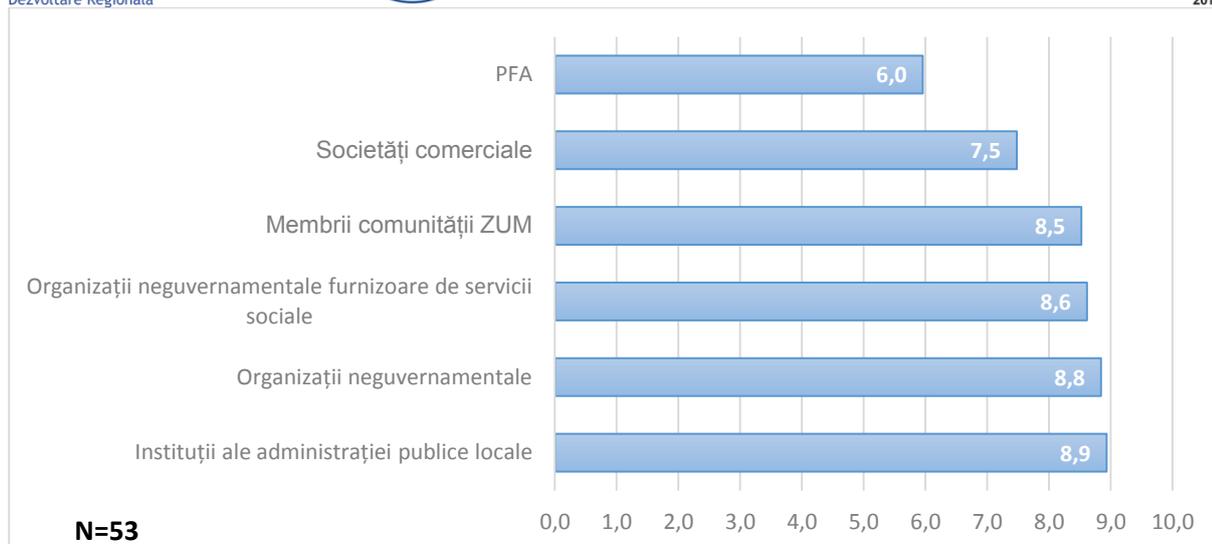
Starting from the principles of the DLRC, the activity of forming the local action groups in the urban environment implied the association of the relevant local actors for solving the problems in the marginalized urban areas: the territorial administrative units, public institutions (educational units, medical-sanitary units, assistance directions social organizations), nongovernmental organizations, economic agents and community members.

The existing practice has shown that there are two types of LAGs according to the initiators of the action: those in which the local public administration had the initiative of creating local action groups as a result of noticing the funding opportunity and those where the initiative belonged to the community and other interested local actors. In the second case, the experience in implementing the LEADER program previously carried out in rural and urban areas (small urban area of up to 10,000 inhabitants) financed through PNDR that some of the actors involved in setting up local action groups from marginalized urban areas have contributed to the success of this approach.

The 37 LAGs whose LDS have been approved for funding total 646 members, of which: 157 (25%) are public institutions, 157 (24%) are non-governmental organizations, 130 (20%) are economic agents, and 202 (31%) are individual members of the targeted communities.

The process of involving the local actors in the LAG was a long one and that involved a series of information and consultations with them to understand the importance of such an approach. The most receptive local actors invited for consultations regarding the involvement in the LAG were the public administration institutions, followed by the nongovernmental organizations and the members of the marginalized community. The local actors for whom more activities were needed to inform and explain the benefits of this approach were the economic agents. (*Figura 1*)

Figura 1. Perceptions regarding the receptivity of the local actors invited to consultations regarding the involvement in the LAG



Source: online survey of LAG members, N = 53, average

Often in attracting economic agents or other actors in the local action groups, a decisive role was played by the involvement and support of this approach by the local public authorities. Supporting this approach by decision makers at the level of local public administration has given greater credibility to the whole process and helped to co-interest local actors.

We had to develop a mechanism in which the presence of UAT weighed in bringing other local actors: public institutions, nongovernmental organizations, economic agents.

(LAG representative, Bacău interview)

The private environment has not been very open and when I see that nothing happens, it is demotivating.

(LAG representative, Bacău interview)

In the case of disadvantaged communities, an important role in attracting their members to become members in the LAG was played by local informal leaders. Their involvement in the animation process also increased their interest in being part of this process, and the community members were more confident to join the LAG.

It mattered a lot that I had the support of their leaders. Having convinced them it was much easier for the community to get involved. (community facilitator, Turda interview)

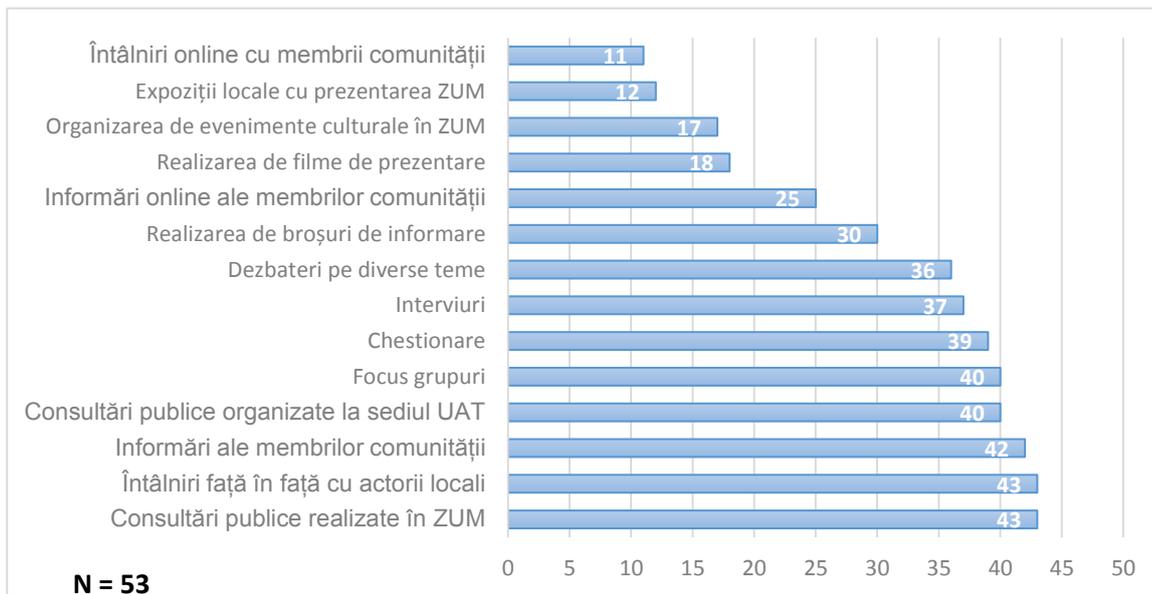
3.2.2 Community animation

Ensuring the participation of the community and the local actors in the process of elaboration and implementation of the common strategy for the development of the marginalized urban area implies the carrying out of animation activities. They have the role of

mobilizing, informing and involving the people from the marginalized community and the local actors in order to elaborate the local development strategies and the related action plans. The purpose of the animation activities was on the one hand to mobilize the members of the disadvantaged community to participate in the strategy development process by analyzing the local situation and identifying possible solutions and projects, and on the other hand to attract other local actors to get involved. involve in this endeavor. The 37 LAGs organized 187 community activities in which 10,031 people participated. The requirement for at least five meetings of the Steering Committee on the topics established by the HCOP Applicant's Guide was achieved by all the LAGs, some organizing even more meetings.

The range of community animation activities was diverse and was not limited to the conditions set out in the HCOP applicant's guide. These included public consultations either in the community or at the UAT headquarters, face-to-face meetings with community members, information, focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, debates on various topics, making information leaflets, organizing cultural meetings, online meetings. The animation activities used by most LAGs were public consultations conducted in disadvantaged communities (43 responses), face-to-face meetings with local actors (43), informing community members (42), public consultations at the UAT headquarters (40), focus groups (40). (Figure 2) Of these MUZ activities, the most efficient were considered public consultations organized in MUZ (37 gave 9 and 10 marks), face-to-face meetings with local actors (35 gave 9 and 10 marks).), questionnaires (31 gave 9 and 10 marks), informing community members (30 gave 9 and 10 marks).

Figure 2. Community animation activities carried out by the LAG



Source: LAG members online survey, N = 53

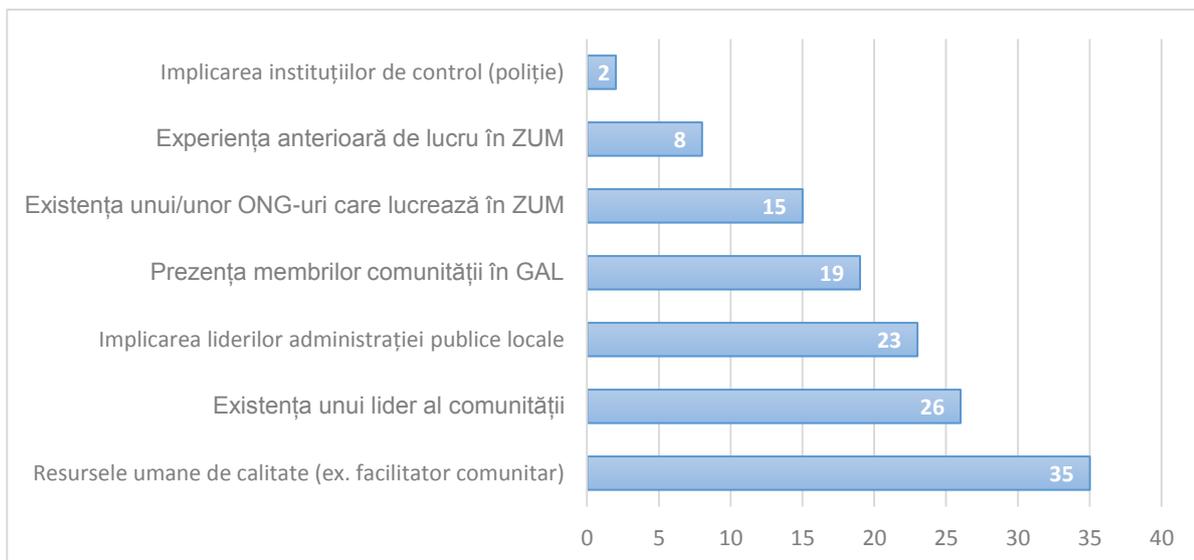
The main factors that ensure the success of an animation process, according to the interviewed LAG members, are the human resources involved and their experience in working with disadvantaged communities, the existence of community leaders and their involvement and local authorities in this process. The facilitator's experience in working with members of

disadvantaged communities, his previous relationships with the community and with its leaders are factors that make the difference in an animation process. Another important factor is the involvement of local public authorities and their participation in these meetings.

The most important factors for the success of the animation process were the facilitator and his experience in working with the community, previous relationships with community leaders, the people involved and the support of the mayor. (GAL member, focus group). The community facilitators and the existing practice of meeting with the community, with the decision-makers, counted a lot. (representative of public institution, interview).

Most of the LAG members participating in the opinion poll appreciate that the human resources involved are the main resource needed to ensure the success of an animation process, followed by the existence of a community leader and the involvement of the local public administration. (Figure 3)

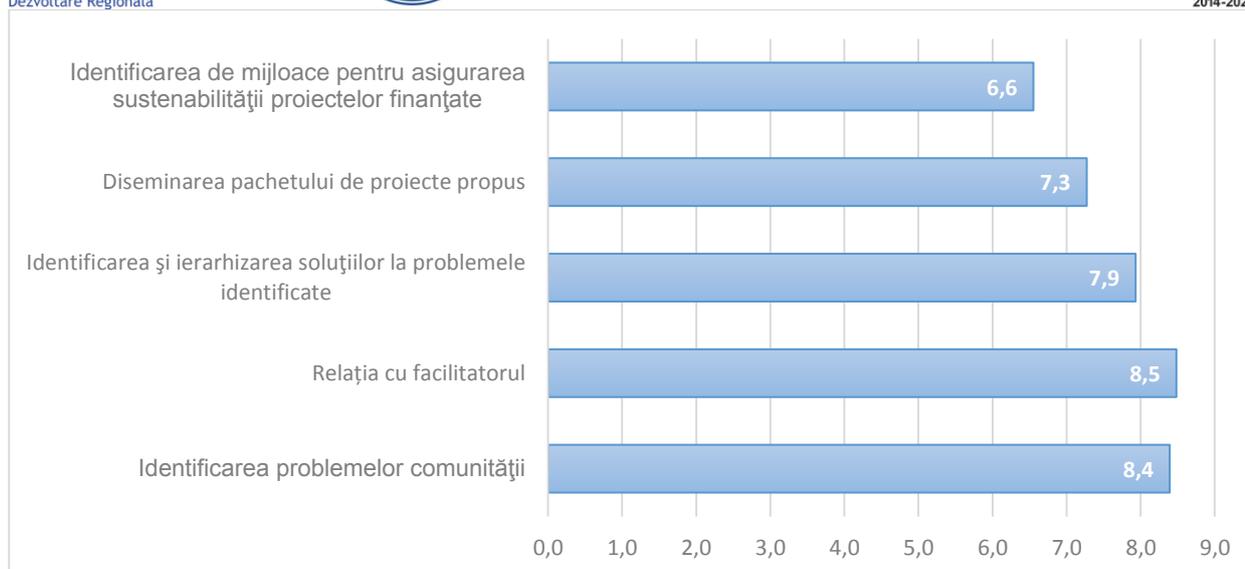
Figure 3. Resources needed to ensure a successful animation process



Source: LAG members online survey, N = 53, average

The members of the disadvantaged communities targeted by the intervention were involved as active partners, especially in the relationship with the facilitator and in the identification stage of local needs. Their involvement was reduced slightly in the stage of establishing solutions to local problems and further decreased in disseminating the package of measures proposed and identifying means to ensure the sustainability of the interventions. (Figure 4)

Figure 4. Perception of the involvement of community members in different stages of the animation process



Source: LAG members online survey, N = 53

Most of the experts included in the study consider that the procedure for selecting the intervention priorities within the LDS was a transparent one, based on the participation of the members of the MUZ communities and of the local actors. This participatory and consultative procedure is presented in the LDS, being part of the selection criteria of the LDS. The LAGs complied with the requirements of the applicant's guide regarding the participation of local actors and community members in identifying and selecting intervention priorities.

The LAGs organized focus groups and meetings with community members in which they consulted the community on LDS project files. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis) The selection of the priority projects within the LDS was carried out by the LAG members, through public meetings, discussions. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis) From the LDS selected by me (5 LDS) it turned out that the procedure of prioritizing the measures and interventions (not yet, "projects") that are to be financed was carried out in a participatory, consultative and transparent manner. In this sense, there is a chapter in the LDS dedicated to the way of prioritizing the interventions and measures. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

The procedure for identifying the needs of the communities in the marginalized urban areas was a complex one, which included meetings with community members and other local actors, collecting data through a questionnaire performed on a representative sample, focus groups, interviews. The transposition of these needs into priorities has been achieved in a participatory way by consulting community members and other local actors. However, the data from the Delphi analysis, as well as from the interviews with the LAG members, indicate that some needs could not be included in the list of priorities of the local development strategy either because of the lack of funding opportunities (they did not fit in eligible areas of the two programs - ROP and HCOP), either because the allocated amounts failed to cover all the identified needs. Another challenge for the realization of the local development strategies is the short implementation

time, considering the laborious and complex documentation that had to be realized. This is why some needs may not have been captured in the LDS.

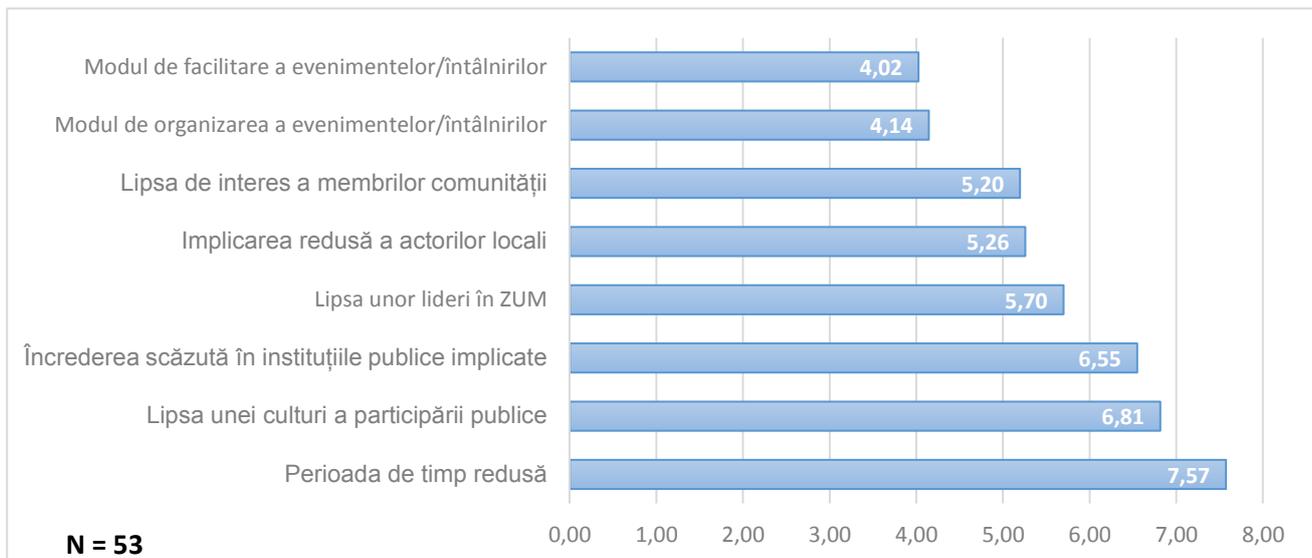
Part of the projects included in the LDS were chosen considering the activities eligible under the ROP / HCOP and less starting from the real needs. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

The priority projects included in the LDSs respond to the needs identified at the community level, because they were identified by displacement in the marginalized urban areas, concrete discussions were held with the people at risk of poverty, public meetings were organized, meetings were held with representatives / leaders of marginalized communities. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

The priority projects included in the LDS elaborated and adopted by the LAG are balanced as a share of POR-HCOP, being correlated with the needs identified at the level of the communities in the marginalized urban areas. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

The main challenges of the animation process were related to the short period of development before the development of the MUZ development strategy. Under the conditions of about 3 months for LDS animation and elaboration activities, very well prepared human resources were needed to overcome the reluctance and distrust of the members of these communities. At the same time, the low level of education of the members of these communities and the multitude of problems they face were aspects that had to be taken into account in the animation process. The interviewed LAG members and those who replied to the online questionnaire mentioned that the main problem of the animation process was its short time frame, followed by the lack of a culture of public participation and their low confidence in the public institutions involved. (Figure 5)

Figure 5. Perceptions on the main problems of the animation process



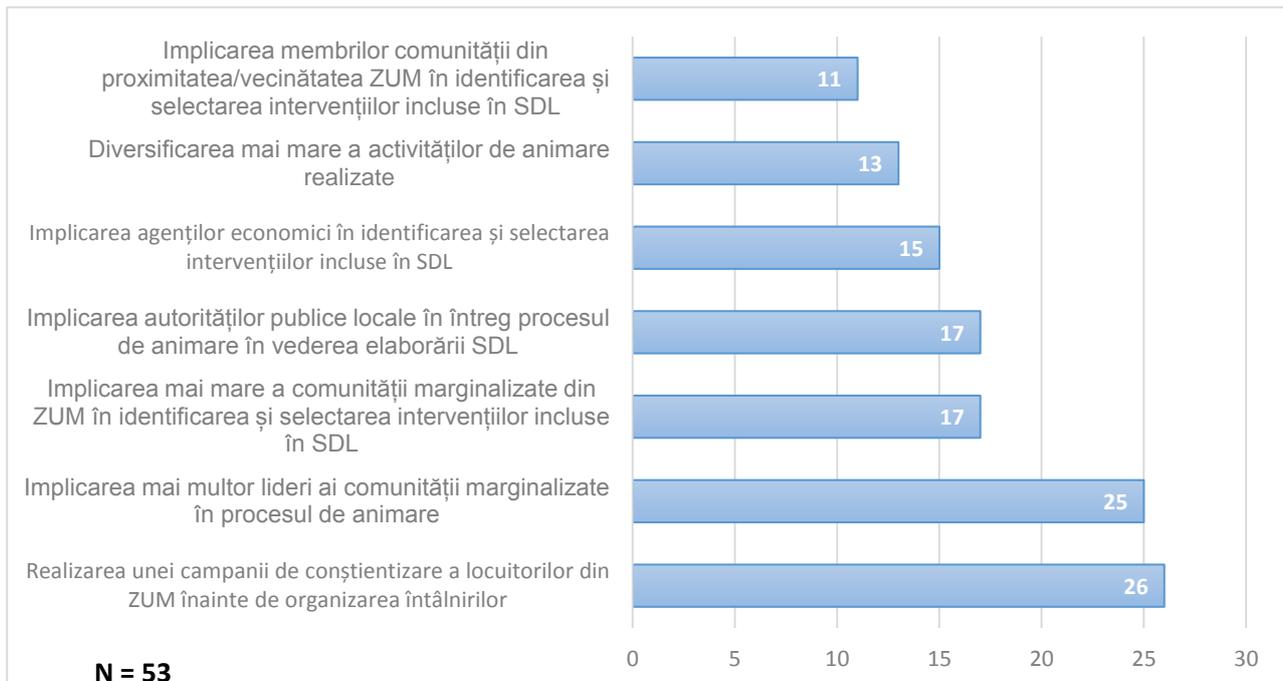
Source: online survey of LAG members, N = 53, average

The analysis of qualitative research data (interviews and focus group) indicated that the main challenges of the animation process were: the lack of education of the members of the marginalized communities, the seasonal migration of the people from these communities that make it difficult to get involved and mobilize, the attitude of the community members being to ask immediate results.

The main challenges of the animation process were: unpredictable behavior and lack of education of the marginalized community members, the complex mechanism of DLRC type and multifund HCOP - POR, in the first stage of implementation at the MUZ level, the seasonal migration of Roma people and the impossibility of consulting their high degree of illiteracy and inability to express themselves in writing to complete specific questionnaires. (LAG representative, interview) The biggest challenge was fighting the mentality of getting them out of a lifestyle that forces them to live on the brink of subsistence. Community members do not understand that any community development process involves a certain amount of time required for deployment, while they expect to see immediate results (LAG representative, interview)

Aspects that should be improved in the animation process. In addition to a larger period dedicated to animation activities before the development of the MUZ development strategies, the aspects that should be improved during the animation process are: conducting a community awareness and awareness campaign before organizing meetings and involving community leaders in the process animation. (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Aspects that would contribute to the improvement of animation processes



Source: LAG members online survey, N = 53

Data from interviews and focus groups indicated a number of other measures that should be

taken to ensure the success of a community animation process: ensuring greater freedom of the LAG to choose animation activities to be performed, a larger number of community facilitators especially if LDS has more than one MUZ, attracting the media as a partner in such efforts.

It should be left to the beneficiaries what animation activities to do and to build these animation activities on the type of community. Thus, if the time allocated is shorter, there is no longer a high pressure on human resources and you do not need to work with volunteers. (focus group LAG members and local and county actors) There should be more people as facilitators and there should be the possibility to choose the facilitator also from the UAT, community or LAG. This is not allowed now, and the facilitator must be external. (focus group LAG members and local and county actors) Attracting the media in the activities of animating marginalized communities. The role of the press is very important both in forming opinions and in educating the disadvantaged community and the rest of the population in the city. For this reason, any project with impact at the level of the areas, but also of the city as a whole, should have the media partner, not only in the sense of transmitting information, but rather of building positive messages. (representative of public institution member of the LAG)

3.2.3 Strategies for local development of marginalized urban areas

The LDS of the marginalized urban areas is an important stage of the DLRC mechanism. The development of these local strategies was the first stage in the DLRC process carried out in Romania and financed through HCOP. These strategies represent a document, but at the same time, a broader process whose quality is conditioned by:

- the activity of delimitation and validation of the territory covered by the LDS (which includes MUZ and FUZ) which implies: 1) the correct identification of the LDS territory based on the provisions of the General Urban Plan with respect to the criteria of size and coherence and 2) the elaboration of a grounded reference study on an appropriate sampling and research methodology that provides statistical data (including for substantiating the diagnostic analysis of the needs and problems of the LDS population) that allows the analysis of each distinct area of the LDS and indicates for each distinct area of the LDS at least the characteristics demographic and socio-economic, the needs of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the problems of the population related to infrastructure and housing, education (children and adults), access to services (public, social, medical, etc.), employment status, income and expenses household, organization and rel actions at community level, relations outside the community and public image of the area (according to GS "Preparatory support for the elaboration of Local Development Strategies" - cities / municipalities with a population of over 20,000 inhabitants, PA 5 / PI 9.vi/ OS 5.1., p. 15)

- the activity of animating the local partners and mobilizing the marginalized community targeted by the LDS, which will lead to a greater involvement of the members of the marginalized community, those from the related FUZ, as well as other community actors (economic agents, non-governmental organizations, public institutions) in the process of identifying the needs and of the solutions to solve them, as well as in the implementation of various projects aimed at increasing the quality of life of the inhabitants of these areas.

Due to the complexity of the LDS elaboration process, 70% of the LAGs participating in the study (16 of the 23 LAGs who participated in the online survey) state that they have been supported in this task by consultancy firms. The interview data show us that in some cases the experience of the consultants in the development of development strategies was the one that facilitated the realization of the final document in such a short time.

One factor that led to the completion of the laborious process of developing the LDS was the involvement of a consulting firm to help us with data collection and interpretation. The diagnostic study could not be done by anyone, but you needed some experience. They stayed here with us day and night to collect the data and then interpret it. (LAG representative, interview)

A strong point of the process was that one of the partners had experience on strategies. This is how we managed to complete it on time, given the short time and very complex documentation. We split the tasks between us so we could complete. (LAG representative, interview)

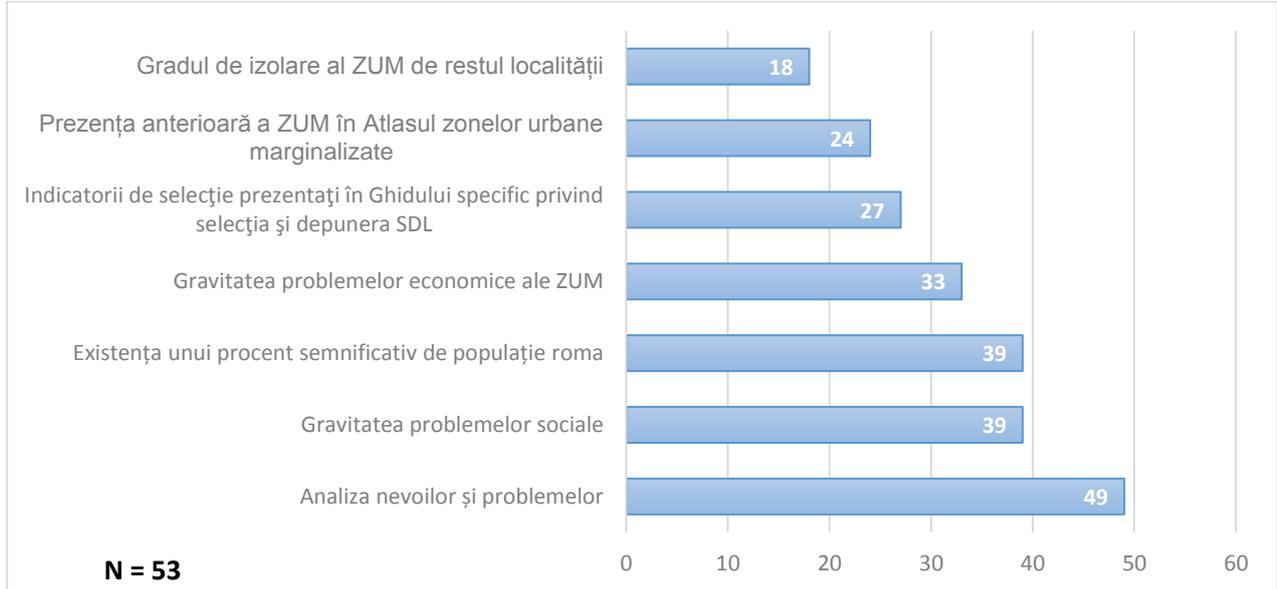
The selection of the marginalized urban areas left in most cases from the Atlas of the marginalized urban areas, but was supplemented by the analyzes carried out within the reference study. Although the Atlas of marginalized urban areas (2014) was a starting point in defining the MUZ, it was not the main criterion, however, because the diagnostic analysis of the needs and problems had to be carried out compulsory, even though the MUZ was already defined in the Atlas. The data used in the analysis of the territory had to be relevant and come from public institutions accredited for this purpose or collected by applying the research methodology and tools. A major problem was the obtaining of relevant statistical data for each area of the LDS territory from the National Institute of Statistics/ County Statistics Directorates.

There was a difference between the requested statistical information versus the existing information at the NIS level. Unfortunately, not all statistics are correlated and I had problems that the data obtained from different sources were not the same. (LAG representative, interview)

The main criterion for the selection of the MUZ was represented by the needs and problems analysis carried out within the LDS elaboration process, which provided valid information about the situation of the population in each area of the LDS territory. This needs and problems analysis included relevant data on the three defining dimensions of marginalized urban areas: human capital, employment and housing. All LAGs interviewed or who participated in the online survey stated that this was the main tool used in defining MUZ. Other criteria for selecting the

MUZ were the seriousness of the social problems in these areas and the existence of a significant percentage of the Roma population. (Figure 7)

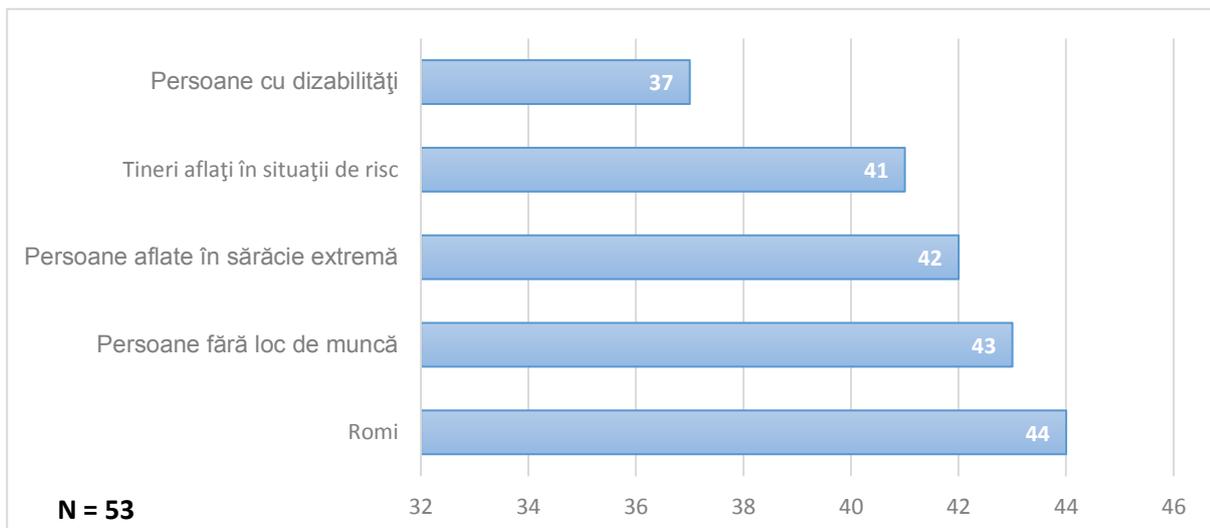
Figure 7. Criteria used in the selection of the marginalized urban area



Source: LAG members online survey, N = 53

The categories of vulnerable persons existing in the MUZ include in most cases Roma people, people without jobs, people in extreme poverty, but also young people at risk or people with disabilities. (Figure 8) In these categories, there were mentioned: children who are not included in a form of education or who are at risk of school dropout and women victims of domestic violence.

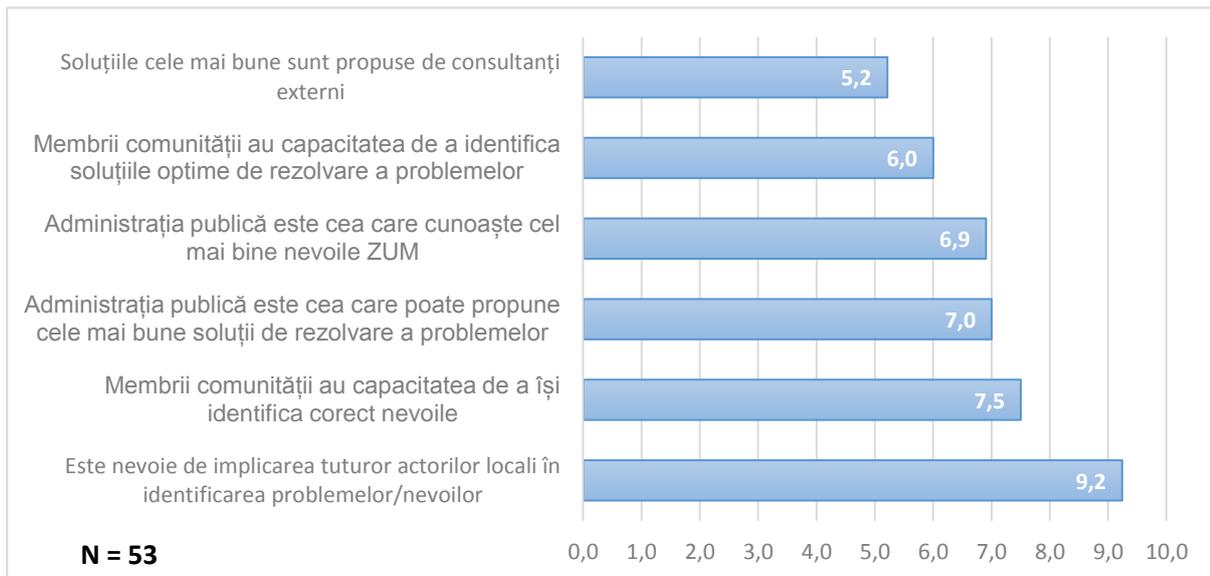
Figure 8. Categories of vulnerable persons present in the MUZ



Source: LAG members online survey, N = 53

The opinion of the LAG members regarding the capacity of the various actors involved in the process of identifying needs and problems MUZ points out that the vast majority considers that it is necessary to involve all community actors in this process in order to have the expected results and to ensure a correct representation of the existing problems. . The perception of the LAG members is that the members of the community must help in the process of identifying needs and problems and especially in establishing optimal solutions to solve them. Thus the average of the marks given regarding the capacity of the members of the community to identify their needs and problems is 7.5, while that of identifying the optimal solutions to solve problems is 6. The capacity of the public administration to propose optimal solutions to solve the problems of the communities from MUZ is rated as better than that of their members (average of 7 of the marks awarded). Even though many of the LAGs have benefited from the help of consultants in the development of LDS, their ability to propose the best solutions to the problems of the MUZ communities is not considered to be the best (average of 5.2 of the marks awarded). (Figure 9)

Figure 9. Perceptions about the capacity of the various actors involved in the process of identifying the needs



Source: online survey of LAG members, N = 53, average

The analysis of data from interviews and focus groups conducted with LAG members and other local and county actors shows that the main problem of achieving LDS is very short given the complexity of the process. Starting from this aspect, the analysis of the qualitative data reflects various opinions regarding the need for such a complex reference study and the requirements for its realization. On the one hand, there are members of the LAG who say that these analyzes were very necessary, that the procedure was not very complicated, and the conditions of implementation were reasonable, while others consider that greater freedom should be left to the LAG. to choose the methods to identify the problems and needs in the LDS territory. This freedom was all the more necessary as the data collection activity is laborious and involves a

great deal of human resources and time, and the period of accomplishment of this activity was extremely short.

There should be greater trust in communities and not everything pre-defined in the guide. This does nothing but bureaucratize everything and give flexibility to actions. (focus group LAG members and other local and county actors)

There were problems with the sampling conducted for the needs study. The selection steps of the people in the communities had to be redone because many were out of town and could not be found. The definition of MUZ was focused on researching needs through quantitative analysis and less on community decisions. (LAG representative, Interview)

The needs identified at the MUZ level during the meetings made during the drafting of the LDS are found in the final document, according to the LAG members. Needs that are not met according to their severity in LDS are health services (20 respondents appreciate this) and housing (13 respondents). The analysis of data from interviews and focus groups revealed that the reasons for not meeting all the needs in the local development strategies are related to: insufficient budget allocated for interventions on housing and road infrastructure, how to allocate the amounts for the two types of interventions (hard and soft), limitations in funding guides.

Insufficient budget at LDS level. Although the HCOP - ROP financial allocation of up to 7 million Euros may seem high, in these areas there are pressing needs, poverty is extreme and without other previous investments of LPA / other public funds. The amounts allocated to road infrastructure are small, as are those for utilities and housing. (LAG representative, interview)

All the needs are found but with insufficient amounts to be solved. The problem is that the authorities do not understand the LDS and the proposed project files do not allow the completion of the LDS own indicators but only the program ones. Then the authorities move very slowly with the Guidelines which are not consistent and with the verification of LAG procedures. The LAGs will enter the crisis of time and will not be able to implement anything. (LAG representative, interview)

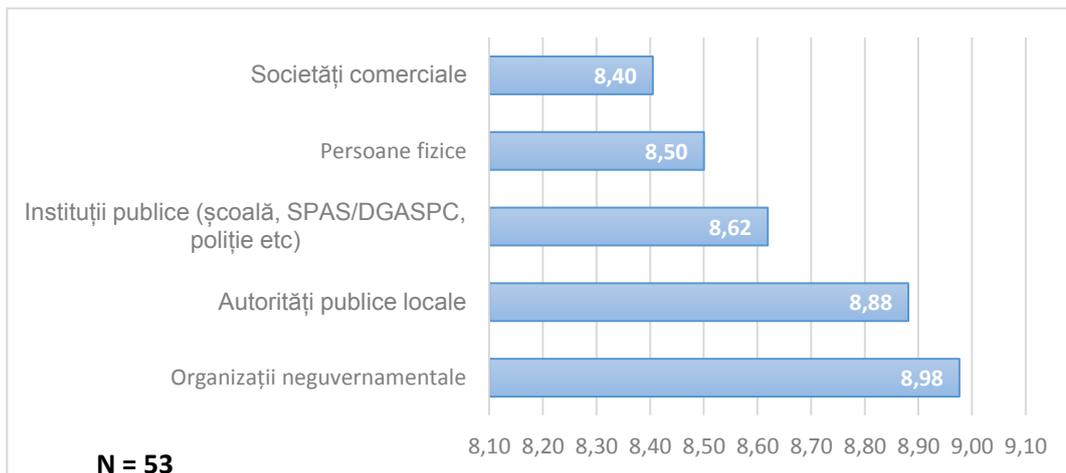
The way in which the criteria for allocating the amounts for the hard and soft interventions in relation to the maximum amount of the LDS and with the needs of an extremely poor community were not allowed does not allow the construction of social housing, although at national level this was the only source of funding where so interventions were eligible from European funds. (LAG representative, interview)

Not all the needs expressed by the MUZ population are included in the list of priorities because this depends and why it was ultimately selected as a result of the animation process. LDS included in particular the projects financed through ROP - HCOP. (representative of public institution, interview)

In the process of elaborating the LDS, the collaboration with the local actors was an essential element in the conditions in which it was necessary to participate all in identifying the

problems, but especially of the feasible solutions for solving them. The opinion poll conducted among the LAG members highlighted that they are satisfied with the collaboration with non-governmental organizations, local public authorities, public institutions, natural persons and economic agents. (Figure 10)

Figure 10. Satisfaction with the collaboration with local actors in the elaboration of LDS



Source: online survey of LAG members, N = 53, average

The main challenges in the elaboration of the LDS relate to the very short duration of implementation compared to the high level of complexity of the process, the quite strict requirements for identifying the needs, the lack of freedom at the level of the LAG to choose the methods used.

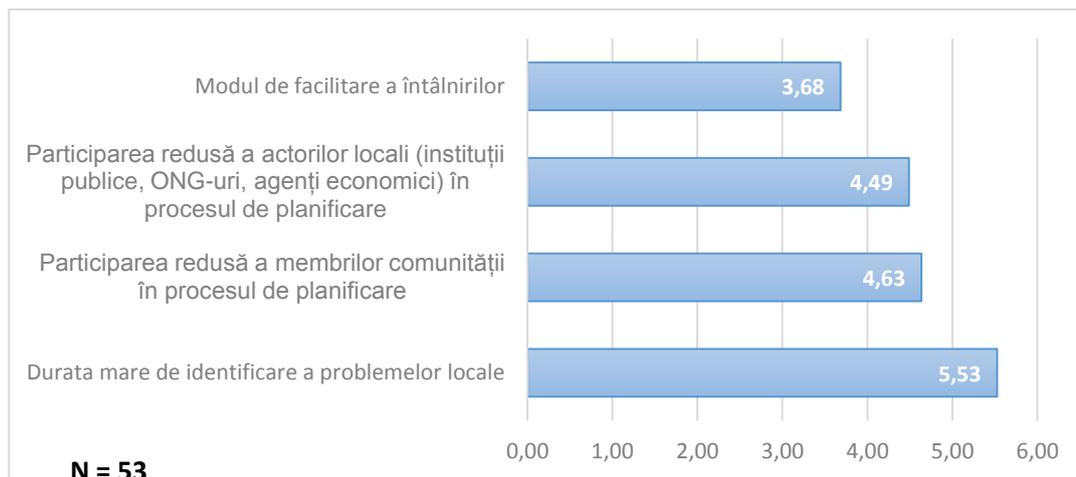
The very short time of elaboration of the LDS compared to the high level of complexity. The contract for implementing the preparatory support was conceived by the MA HCOP initially in 6 months, then in 4 months, and the actual implementation was realized in 2 months. However, the activities remained the ones initially planned, which is why it was very difficult to combine them. On the other hand, the data sources were diverse and complex, and the time allocated for correlating the practical information obtained through the MUZ reference study versus personalized statistical data was too short. (LAG representative, focus group)

Very short period of achievement of LDS. 6-month contracts were signed, after which they were reduced to 3 months. Basically, the effort and so great to realize a competitive strategy in 6 months has been doubled, even tripled by reducing the deadlines. (representative of the LAG associative structure)

The fact that the time of the project was reduced from 6 months to 3 months only to be able to report the distribution of funds on this axis in the EU at the end of the year involved a superhuman effort from all those involved in its execution and often led to the compromise of proper facilitation activities, which after all "community engagement" manuals should have been more extensive and longer lasting. (LAG representative, interview)

The opinion poll reflects as main problems in the process of LDS elaboration as those regarding the long duration of identification of local problems, participation of community members or local actors in the planning process. (Figure 11)

Figure 11. Perceptions regarding the main problems in the elaboration of LDS



Source: online survey of LAG members, N = 53, average

Aspects that should be improved in the process of developing the LDS. The main improvements that should be made to the LDS development process are in particular the allocation of an appropriate period of time and the better planning of these actions by the managing authority.

For future programming, a better time planning of LDS elaboration actions is needed, in order to maximize the positive effects of the community consultation and facilitation actions in the MUZ. In the same time, there is needed more flexibility for LAG in order to employ human resources without constraints regarding the number and type of involved experts. (LAG representative, interview)

More Community Facilitators would be needed, especially if there are more MUZs. It is difficult for a single person to do all the animation if there are more than 2 MUZ and the problems are complex. (LAG representative, focus group)

This flexibility should also be left to the animation activities to be performed or to the data collection to substantiate the needs. In addition, in the case of the diagnostic analysis it would be necessary to check the availability of the required data through the applicant's guide.

The process of elaboration of the LDS was strictly regulated by the Applicant's Guide but more flexible regulations would be needed to allow greater freedom of action for the developers. (LAG representative, interview)

The correlation of the compulsory statistical data sources through the LDS model with those actually existing at the INS level, before launching the LDS elaboration guide. (LAG representative, focus group)

The information activities should not only cover the territory of the LDS, but the entire locality in order to avoid hostile attitudes towards the authorities from other citizens.

It would also be necessary to inform the adjacent communities why this area is not necessarily chosen because others have similar problems and then all kinds of comments and suspicions regarding the mayor's activities appear. (LAG representative, online survey)

Greater flexibility is also required in terms of the list of intervention priorities that should no longer be limited to those set out in the HCOP or ROP.

The measures and interventions that may be included in the LDS are no longer limited (through the Applicant's Guide) to some similar ones included in the ROP and HCOP programs. (LAG representative, online survey)

It should be allowed to introduce in the LDS some measures and interventions customized to the specific and specific needs. (LAG representative, online survey)

The rules should not be so strict, but they should allow more freedom in defining their interventions, activities to be done, etc. (ADR representative, interview)

3.2.4 The main findings - community animation and LDS development

The process of developing strategies for local development and community animation is a first step in the process of local development under the responsibility of the community. The analysis of the data collected through the various evaluation methods used revealed the following aspects:

- The implementation of the DLRC mechanism in Romania has been prepared since 2014 by the elaboration of working tools by the ROP: Atlas of marginalized urban areas and Integrated intervention tool. Strategies for integrating marginalized urban communities. The Atlas of marginalized urban areas defines the marginalized urban areas, establishes the criteria for identifying the MUZ and identifies them based on the INS data from the 2011 Population and Housing Census and the qualitative research data in these MUZs. The integrated intervention instrument operationalizes the DLRC mechanism in Romania. These tools were used in the elaboration of the applicant's guides for the implementation of AP5 HCOP and AP9 POR and were the starting point in the achievement of the LDS.
- The LDS animation and elaboration process complied with the requirements of the applicant's guide Preparatory support for the elaboration of Local Development Strategies ”- cities / municipalities with a population of over 20,000 inhabitants elaborated by AM

HCOP on axis 5. Short period allocated to this process (maximum 3 months)), the great complexity of it and the limited understanding of the guide made the vast majority of the LAG choose and respect only the requirements of the guide, without trying to develop further - to introduce new priorities that were not included in the guide and could not be financed from ROP or HCOP, to bring social innovations different from those of the guide, to carry out innovative animation activities. Most LAGs were limited to realizing what was provided in the guide.

- The process of creating the LAG was conceived in the programmatic documents as a bottom-up type according to the DLRC methodology. Its implementation was also determined by the local context, the lack of a culture of public participation, the lack of community leaders. For this reason, in many cases the process of creating the LAG was initiated and led by the local public administration and was not generated by the MUZ members. The involvement of the ATU representatives in the process was an important factor for the involvement of other community actors, even outside the respective localities within the LAG. The community animation led to the attracting of new members in the LAGs, their number increasing after debates / meetings were held locally.
- Consultancy firms contributed to the achievement of LDS in 70% of cases. Many of the consultancy firms had experience in implementing the LEADER program and creating development strategies for rural LAGs. The short period of time and the complexity of the documentation and the process of elaboration of the LDS made in many cases the experience of the consulting firms necessary and extremely useful. These helped to develop the LDS according to the requirements, in some cases the consulting firms becoming members of the LAG.
- In the animation process, the main factors contributing to the success of such an approach were: the human resources involved and their experience in working with disadvantaged communities, the involvement of informal leaders of the MUZ communities, the previous experience of UAT / NGO / other institutions public in working with these MUZ communities and the involvement of UAT representatives in this process. 39 of the respondents to the online survey consider that quality human resources are the main element that ensures the success of such an approach.
- Animation activities of disadvantaged community members and other local actors were varied and included public consultations conducted in disadvantaged communities, face-to-face meetings with local actors, information of community members, public consultations at UAT headquarters, focus groups, activities with children and their parents in educational institutions, cultural activities, environmental protection, etc. The most effective of these activities were considered public consultations organized in MUZ and face-to-face meetings with local actors.
- The members of the MUZ community have been involved in all stages of LDS development, from identifying problems to establishing priorities for intervention and identifying the means of ensuring the sustainability of the funded projects. The participation and involvement of disadvantaged community members was much higher in the identification of needs (the average of perceptions regarding the involvement of

community embryos in identifying needs is 8.4), it was reduced slightly in the stage of establishing solutions and more in the identification phase. of the means of ensuring the sustainability of the projects (the average of perceptions regarding the involvement of the MUZ members in identifying the means of ensuring the sustainability is 6.5).

- The main challenges of the process of LDS development and community animation were: the reduced period of implementation of the whole process, its complexity and the lack of a participatory culture at the level of the community members.
- The aspects that should be improved in the process of developing the LDS according to the information obtained from the evaluation are: allocating an appropriate period of time, planning this activity considering its degree of complexity and ensuring the quality of the process, greater flexibility in choosing the animation methods / identifying needs and setting priorities at LAG level.

3.3 LDS implementation through integrated mechanism

3.3.1 The ROP - HCOP integrated mechanism

The HCOP-POR integrated mechanism is positively appreciated by the research participants, regarding the integration of the interventions and the involvement requirements of the MUZ communities and of the local actors. However, the vast majority of those interviewed show that this mechanism cannot be evaluated only after the first stages that have been specially administered by the HCOP. Only after the effective implementation of the LDS can be started will the integrated ROP-HCOP mechanism be evaluated.

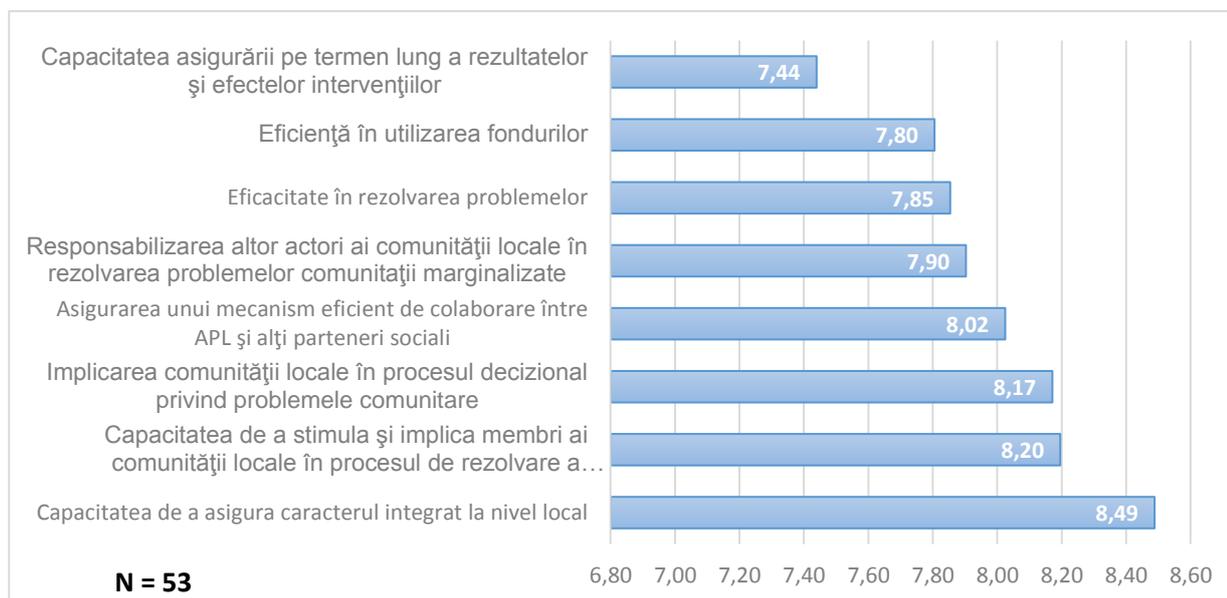
So far we can not say because it has not been released. All that was done was on HCOP and then we cannot comment until we know how they want to implement it. Unfortunately, bureaucracy on all operational programs is much larger than before, which affects implementation. (LAG representative, interview)

The mechanism works depending on how the AM axes launch. LDS reflects an interplay of ROP and HCOP. Unfortunately, they still grumble at AM level. It is a country experiment that will be missed if implementation is not started quickly. (focus group)

ROP and HCOP work differently. The integrated mechanism does not work because they did not release anything. It is urgent for the ROP to let go - to launch the lines and be able to submit projects. (LAG representative, interview)

The HCOP - ROP integrated mechanism is positively appreciated in terms of the ability to ensure the integrated character at the local level (8.49 average opinions), to stimulate and involve members of the local community in the problem solving process (8.20 average opinions) and the involvement of the local community in the decision-making process on community issues (8.17 average opinion). The satisfaction regarding the capacity of long-term insurance of the results and effects of the interventions is lower among the LAG members. (Figure 12)

Figure 12. Evaluation of the integrated mechanism HCOP - ROP



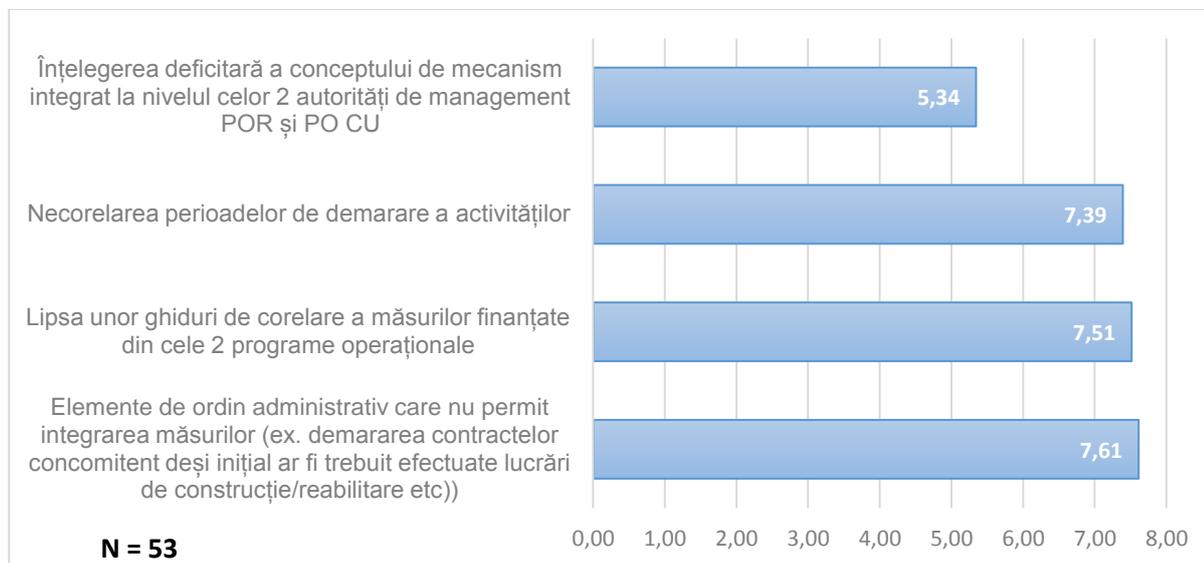
Source: online survey of LAG members, N = 53, average

The package of interventions included in the local development strategies developed and adopted by the urban LAGs has an integrated and complementary character, these being criteria for evaluating the LDS. The integrated and complementary character of the intervention measures is given by the correlation between the measures of creation / modernization of infrastructure (utilities, housing, social, education) and those of development and provision of services (social, educational, employment, health).

To a large extent, the interventions are integrated in nature, given the understanding of the need to efficiently use the infrastructure achieved through ROP measures. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis) The intervention package has an integrated character, which is one of the conditions for accepting the evaluated LDS. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

The main problems of the integrated mechanism ROP - HCOP are perceived to be those of administrative nature that do not allow the integration of measures (eg the start of contracts concurrently although initially construction / rehabilitation works should have been carried out, etc.), followed by the lack of guidelines for correlating the measures. financed by the two operational programs and by the non-correlation of the periods of starting the activities. (Figure 13)

Figure 13. Perceptions regarding the main problems of the ROP-HCOP integrated mechanism



Source: online survey of LAG members, N = 53, average

The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data reflects as main challenges in the implementation of the integrated mechanism ROP - HCOP the following: delays in the implementation of the measures and the non-observance of the timetables initially set, the bureaucracy quite reflected and in the reduced opening for measures that are not foreseen in the two operational programs (innovation it is considered quite limited), insufficient knowledge of the measures at the level of the regional bodies (IB/ RDA).

Delays of MA HCOP - MA ROP in developing and correlating their own procedures to be applied at the LAG level. The guides for public consultation were launched late, and the direct consultations with the LAG were few, and the regional authorities (ADR, OIR) were not involved. (representative of the LAG associative structure, interview)

There is no specific procedure for these projects. There are no POR - HCOP correlation measures. We are not informed about what we want from us, and the information is contradictory. (RDA representative)

The institutional mechanism of implementation is vast and has a greater slowness. (representative of public institution)

Lack of openness to atypical measures. Basically, instead of being permissive for projects that theoretically we could not finance through the big programs (HCOP / ROP), they forced through guides to take the general ROP/ HCOP interventions and to transpose them locally. Lack of related legislation: ex. Integrated Community Centers - compulsory to be stipulated in the LDS but which do not have legislation establishing this date! (LAG representative, interview)

Lack of knowledge on the level of the two MAs regarding this type of implementation, which is probably the main reason that in June 2019 no call has been launched at the LAG level, therefore, the potential beneficiaries and LAGs will not have 5 years of implementation, but only 3 - in the best case. Another problem is that of the financing applications for the functioning of the LAG: the assumed activities cannot be carried out, for the reason mentioned above. (LAG representative, interview)

The gap between the development of local development strategies (identifying needs and setting intervention priorities) and their implementation is quite large and is given by different institutional aspects at the level of the two managing authorities that administer this program. The novelty and the specificity of the program meant a better clarification of the responsibilities of the actors involved and the modification of the standard methodology of project evaluation existing at the MA HCOP level. All these aspects involved a longer period of time for consulting different institutions with management role and elaborating the documents related to the implementation of the mechanism. The modification of the evaluation methodology had to be carried out within the Monitoring Committee of the MA HCOP, which meets twice a year. Also the procedure of elaboration and implementation of the extremely laborious and complex LDS is one of the causes of the bottlenecks / delays in the implementation of the LDS.

The main challenges are related to the novelty and specificity of the DLRC. The responsibilities of each institution had to be clarified and the HCOP evaluation methodology modified which can only be done within the Monitoring Committee. (MA representative, interview)

AM HCOP has more rigid procedures. Unfortunately, axis 5 did not benefit from different evaluation criteria that are adapted to the specificity of the DLRC, and the process of modifying them has been prolonged. (representative of central public institution, interview)

There are delays in implementation due to institutional aspects of the two MAs. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis) I think that the very cumbersome procedure is the one that makes the LDS implementation difficult. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

The novelty of the mechanism has made it more difficult to understand by those responsible for its implementation at both central and regional level. For this reason, it was necessary to clarify the responsibilities of each actor. In addition, the relatively low financial allocation for the DLRC mechanism and the relatively little human resources made it a priority to be given to other, clearer programs that allowed easier absorption.

Unfortunately, the DLRC seemed too complicated, and the effort too much for the funding offered and for this reason some institutions with management role "ran away" from responsibility. (representative of central public institution, interview)

DLRC was started late. It had small financial allocations and was not a priority because everyone concentrated on those that allowed greater absorption. It was difficult to understand that LAGs make the selection of projects according to the provisions of regulation 1303. (representative of central public institution, interview)

The functioning of the financing mechanism for local development strategies is extremely important for the optimal implementation of all the measures provided for in the LDS. The main measures to be taken to ensure the optimal functioning of the financing mechanism of the LDS are: to develop a strict timetable for the implementation of the program to prevent the occurrence of other delays and its compliance with both managing authorities, to clearly establish the responsibilities of all the institutions involved (RDA, IB, MA HCOP, MA ROP), elaboration of the applicant's guides to quickly start the procedures for project development at local level and debirocratization in order to simplify the evaluation, selection, contracting and eventual implementation and payment procedures. Other proposed solutions aimed at: the future existence of a single management body for the DLRC regardless of the fund, the existence of transparent criteria for monitoring the annual LDSs, a greater predictability in the calendar for launching calls and working procedures, debirocratization .

Implementation of a strict timetable at the beginning of the programming period, to prevent major delays. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Clearer differentiation of responsibilities between the institutions involved. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Thorough planning / identification of needs, financing of sustainable projects over time, continuation of investments from various sources of financing (we should not expect financing only from the ROP). (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Elimination of problems arising from project delays caused by non-completion of the Applicant's Guide on HCOP in time. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Simplification of the evaluation, selection, contracting and possibly implementation procedures and payments. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Guides should be made that will lead to a much easier implementation. There should be only one implementation guide even if the projects are also endorsed by the ROP and the HCOP. (LAG representative, interview) There should be transparent criteria for evaluating / monitoring LDSs annually. Only this way you can update the LDS and funding and take timely action. (LAG representative, interview)

The ROP-HCOP secretariat on this program should be functional - we don't know who to turn to. (representative of the LAG's associative structure) This mechanism does not work. It is not clear what the requirements of ROP and HCOP are. It is very difficult for urban LAGs due to the lack of predictability between ROP and HCOP. There is no horizon for immediate absorption which creates frustration for the MUZ population and the amounts are too small. (LAG representative, focus group)

There should be clear monitoring procedures for the LAG. Predictability is needed for both procedures and funding. At this moment the money for the operation of the LAG does not come regularly (representative of the LAG's associative structure)

At the same time, the managing authorities consider that a much higher proactivity of the LAG is needed, given that only 23 of the 37 have submitted for approval the procedures for implementing the local development strategies at the level of June 2019.

LAGs should be more proactive, develop their own procedures, even have project calls ready. (representative of central public institution, interview)

LAGs are waiting too long for the authority to provide them with information, as detailed procedures as possible. It needs to come out of this approach and be more active, more creative. (representative of central public institution, interview)

The interview data, both from the LAG level, and from the representatives of the central and regional public authorities, show that for the proper functioning of a multi-fund mechanism it is necessary to create a joint program administered by a single entity. In this way, decisions would be easier to adopt and implement, and bureaucracy would be much reduced.

A multi-fund mechanism administered by a single entity for the DLRC would be prepared. If DLRC were to lead the ERDF fund it would be easier to implement because it would go on investment rules. The ESF has stricter rules that make the process more difficult. Ideally, it should be a multi-fund program for the DLRC, which will include the ERDF, ESF, FEAD and national funds. That is how you would see an integrated intervention. (representative of central public institution, interview)

It should have only one authority to implement the program if it is to be effective. (LAG representative, interview)

Another need signaled by the LAG is the updating of the needs and priorities included in the strategies, considering the long time elapsed between the elaboration of the reference study and the LDS and the effective implementation of the measures. Changes in the socio-economic context of the localities (migration, the emergence of new economic agents or the departure of some existing ones, new social / fiscal policies measures, etc.), the emergence of other financing lines are factors that influence the implementation of the measures provided for in the strategy. For this reason, the long period between the elaboration of the local development strategy of the MUZ and its effective implementation may to a greater or lesser extent change the problems / needs of the MUZ. Some of the local public authorities included in the study said they had started implementing some of the measures included in the LDS from other funds precisely because it was too long and there was the opportunity for other funding.

It should be allowed to redo the needs study because a long period has elapsed between its elaboration and the actual implementation. (LAG representative, interview)

The analyzes carried out in MUZ are no longer relevant. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

In order to facilitate the economic development of MUZ / FUZ, it is necessary to provide for measures to support existing entrepreneurs in the community. Currently, the measures are only for the creation of new entrepreneurs, without existing ones for the existing ones.

At this moment the measures are addressed to new entrepreneurs, who will be set up following the intervention. There are no levers to help existing entrepreneurs in the community and they are very much needed. (LAG representative, interview)

3.3.2 The administrative and management capacity of the local action groups

The implementation of the LDS and especially the monitoring of the interventions taking into account permanently considering their complementarity is a complex activity that requires the existence of specific competences at the level of the LAG. The qualitative data indicated that these competences are present to a lesser or greater extent at the level of each LAG, but in order to ensure an efficient and somewhat unitary implementation of the DLRC mechanism, activities to increase / consolidate these competences would be required.

The development of LAG working procedures to launch project calls and select project files is a first step in the LDS implementation process. These procedures were first requested in 2018 (the guidelines are from October 2017), but this year more detailed guidelines have been developed for carrying out these procedures that comply with the POR-HCOP requirements. Some LAGs have revised the procedures developed in 2018 and have redone them, others are in the process of completing them by employing specialized personnel. A number of 23 LAGs out of 37 have submitted LDS implementation procedures at the level of June 2019.

The main problems reported by the LAG related to their mechanism of operation refer to the lack of flexibility in the interventions carried out, the bureaucracy that is too large and the short period of time for LDS implementation.

There are LAGs who know what to do and others who do not know. It is expected that LAGs will have increased powers, they should function as a global granter, as in HCOP projects dedicated to start-ups or social economy enterprises. He should manage small projects on inclusion. There is a need for flexibility in modifying the intervention depending on the changes at the local level. (LAG representative, interview)

The big problem is the ability of UAT to implement projects in such a short time. (LAG representative, interview)

The LAG apparently has the skills of an IB: we prioritize project files, then launch call, but the applications are submitted in MySMIS. Normally the LAG should have a direct line with funding. Unfortunately, it is an over-bureaucracy that we do not know how much LAGs will allow to develop. (LAG representative, interview)

The implementation of the local development strategies depends to a large extent on the administrative capacity of the LAG. Given their role in monitoring the implementation of the strategies, ensuring the complementarity of the interventions and the pre-selection of the projects to be submitted for financing, it is necessary to increase this administrative capacity of the urban LAG. The main activities to increase the administrative capacity of the LAG concern: national and international cooperation for sharing experiences, lessons learned, solutions to solve various problems; training courses for LAG employees on project monitoring and evaluation; attracting experienced staff and their remuneration accordingly; dissemination of good practices; monitoring and consultancy by the managing authorities.

Networking, sharing of good experiences, lessons learned, mutual learning etc. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

There is a need for national and international cooperation to see what others have done and how they have solved certain problems. (LAG representative, interview)

More actions to disseminate good practices. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Involvement of individuals and organizations with proven experience in the implementation of projects (ex OI POR and HCOP). (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Close collaboration between LAG members, regular meetings, participation of these members in projects where similar, successful projects have been implemented (examples of good practice). (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

We need training for LAG members that it will be difficult to manage this process if we do not have the necessary skills. (LAG representative, interview)

Training courses for LAG employees. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

Training of specialists in the full implementation of LDS. (CCS expert, Delphi analysis)

It is necessary to carry out training actions for all LAGs by the managing authorities, especially for the way of monitoring and evaluating the LDS implementation. This will allow the same set of information to be transmitted to all participants and a unitary formation of them. The component of international cooperation is not yet envisaged for urban LAGs, and it would be all the more necessary since sharing similar experiences and learning from others' experience is extremely useful given the specificities of the target group.

Training assistance for LAGs should be made from technical assistance in order to speak the same language and the same information should be transmitted in a unitary way, especially on the evaluation and monitoring of LDS implementation. At the urban LAGs the cooperation component is suitable, but it has not yet been activated on the ESF. Cooperation is especially useful as it is necessary to see how others have worked in areas of ghettos / slums. (representative of central public institution, interview)

3.3.3 The main findings regarding LDS implementation through the integrated mechanism

The integrated mechanism is the essential element in the proper implementation of the LDS. The main findings from the analysis of the data obtained during the evaluation are:

- The integrated implementation mechanism recorded some delays / gaps caused by the novelty and complexity of using the DLRC instrument in urban localities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, which necessitated the existence of further clarifications regarding the role of the actors involved. These institutional mechanisms at the level of the managing authorities must follow strict procedures, which means that adopting and implementing measures to make the mechanism more efficient requires a longer period of time. Modifying the evaluation procedure so that it corresponds to the specificities of the DLRC at MA HCOP level has caused some delays in the elaboration of the LDS implementation guidelines and the financing of the LAG.
- The main problems in the functioning of the integrated mechanism are considered at the LAG level: the administrative ones, the lack of guidelines for correlating the measures financed by the 2 operational programs and for not correlating the periods of implementation of the activities.
- The recommendations resulting from the analysis of the evaluation data indicate: the need to develop a strict timetable for carrying out the program, to clearly establish the responsibilities of all those involved, to finalize the applicant's guides at the level of MA ROP and MA HCOP and debirocratization. At the same time, the majority of the LAG and the representatives of the managing authorities consider that the existence of a single entity managing the program would lead to a proper implementation of the DLRC at the urban level and to the achievement of the program result indicators.
- For the functioning of the LAG and the implementation of the LDS, there are appreciated as necessary activities to increase their management and monitoring and evaluation capacity: professional training, cooperation activities at national and international level.

4. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

I. Community animation and LDS development

A. Conclusions

- The DLRC instrument essentially involves a permanent participatory dimension of the communities targeted by the interventions planned through the LDS when implementing the projects identified as priority. This includes including a permanent interaction of LAG structures with community members. Given the syncopated financing of the functioning of the LAG by AP5 HCOP, the effectiveness of using this tool for the development of marginalized communities could be adversely affected.

- The LDS elaborated by the LAG does not represent a strategy within the meaning of the classic definition, as it not only does not include all the projects identified as necessary in the marginalized communities in order to improve the living conditions, but it does not address the entire population of the respective locality, although in many LDS territory covers the entire city. According to GA, the LDS includes only the interventions selected using the DLRC instrument, which can be financed from PA9 ROP and PA5 HCOP and those whose funding sources were already identified at the time of LDS elaboration (October - November 2017). From this perspective, LDS rather comprises project packages, one ROP-financed infrastructure, the other "soft" HCOP-funded, linked together under the LAG umbrella with virtual IB role. It will elaborate the GA and the pre-selection of the offers related to the project files included in the LDS and will monitor the complementarity of the interventions.
- The target group targeted by the public interventions included in the approved LDS (especially the one in the MUZ) could undergo major changes in the time period that has elapsed from identifying its needs (October 2017) until the completion of the projects proposed for funding (at the earliest at the end of 2021 for projects funded from AP9 ROP). From this perspective, it would be appropriate to re-evaluate the needs of the target group in order to validate the options included in the LDS in October 2017, but without going through the complex process that led to the elaboration and approval of the LDS.
- The approved LDS for financing ROP - HCOP, with one exception, included in the budget, the project aimed at opening a community center that provides integrated services of a predominantly social nature, especially to the inhabitants of MUZ, although in some cases the description of the marginalized areas shows situations of extreme poverty that are not necessarily addressed through the center. The field research showed that this type of project was recommended by the PA5 HCOP guidelines in order to reach the result indicators of the respective axis.
- The process of establishing the LAG, initiated at the level of the LPA, was carried out through the participation of the members of the disadvantaged community, of the local actors and even of entities outside the respective localities. An important role in mobilizing and involving members of disadvantaged communities in the process of setting up and operating the LAG was the informal local leaders. The interest of local actors to get involved in this process has varied greatly at national level and has been influenced by the degree of support shown by the local public administration for this process. The animation activities in MUZ and FUZ carried out have increased the number and diversity of LAG members.
- Ensuring the success of the animation activities of the LDS territory is determined by the human resources involved and their experience in working with disadvantaged communities (the experience of the facilitator in working with the disadvantaged community and with its leaders is extremely important), the existence of recognized community leaders (they must identify in the animation process by the community facilitator or other members of the LAG who are working in disadvantaged communities)

who support this process and the involvement of local public authorities (including the participation of decision makers in meetings).

- The extremely short period of implementation of the entire complex process of developing the LDS (reduced from 4 months to 2 months of effective work) is considered the biggest challenge that the LAG had. Although the implementation period has been shortened, the same has not happened with the requirements. The complexity of the DLRC mechanism and the process of drafting the LDS and the documents that had to be made to meet the required criteria was very high compared to the implementation period. This situation is also due to the difficulty of working with the members of these disadvantaged communities, the lack of a culture of public participation at local level, their low confidence in the public institutions involved, the rather high seasonal migration of these people.
- The relatively large bureaucracy in implementing the preparatory support for the achievement of LDS (the existence of predefined activities that had to be carried out, the minimum number of animation activities that had to be carried out, the determination of how to perform the needs analysis) made the lack of flexibility in choosing the activities of animation, identifying needs and problems or in the number and type of experts employed.
- One of the main difficulties in the elaboration of the LDS was the preparation of the database necessary for the definition of the territory, which had to be achieved by corroborating the data collected from the field with other relevant statistical data. A major problem was the obtaining of relevant statistical data for each area of the LDS territory from the National Institute of Statistics / County Statistics Directorates. Often these data did not correspond or were not current. This involved additional time consuming to identify the correct statistical data under the reduced LDS elaboration period.
- In the LDS, most needs identified at the MUZ level are found during the meetings made during the elaboration period, but not all of them were included in the list of intervention priorities. The reasons are related to: the limited funding granted for certain types of interventions (housing and road infrastructure), the limitation on the types of investments stipulated in the GS as eligible on the ROP and the HCOP, the prioritization of those that cannot be achieved through other financing and the most urgent.
- For the total of 37 LDS approved for financing, the total value of the proposed "hard" and "soft" projects amounts to approx. 270 million euros, of which about 13 million euros represent the running costs of the LAG executive structures for the implementation and monitoring of the projects included in the LDS, equivalent to 15% of the total HCOP funding (the maximum allowed by GS AP5 HCOP). Of the total amount, 11% of the funds come from the UAT budget, while approx. 53% constitute ROP funding through AP9 and 31% HCOP funding through AP5. Overall, the projects included in the financing are divided between the investments in the modernization / development of the urban space including utilities (32.61%) and the construction / rehabilitation of social housing (32.23%) followed by the investment projects in the integrated centers of service provision. social,

project recommended by GS AP5 HCOP (17.94%) and in the educational infrastructure (16.17%).

- In addition to insufficiently covered housing and road infrastructure, healthcare and support measures for existing FUZ businesses could not be covered. In the GS, the ROP component includes measures for social insertion companies, and on the HCOP for newly created businesses, but at the level of these communities support would be needed not only for the creation of new businesses, but also for the development of existing ones. In addition, the requirements for social enterprises for insertion are difficult to achieve by entrepreneurs, and the knowledge and understanding of the specifics of social affairs are limited.
- The development of the LDS involved a number of difficulties regarding the involvement of community members. The LDS documentation indicates that a laborious process has been completed in an extremely short period of time (3 months) involving i.a. including at least 5 meetings with residents from marginalized communities with the participation of at least 50 people in each debate organized by the LAG regarding the future of the community. From the case studies, it turned out that many of the respective persons have monthly incomes on households below 500 lei, have difficulties in paying rent and utilities, do not have heating, use improvised stoves, daily food is insufficient, they do not have water, consequently no washing machine etc., an equal weight have not been occupied for more than 5 years and the women are housewives. In these circumstances, the MUZ residents are more interested in the present than in the future, being unbelieving that, for their generation, something could be changed through bottom-up planning. From this point of view, the LDS elaboration process appears to be of relatively high complexity in relation to the reality in the field.
- As of January 2018, until the date of elaboration of this evaluation report from the point of view of the LAG and the communities concerned, no progress has been registered regarding the implementation of the approved LDS. As the LAG does not have its own financing, the budget allocated to the financing of the activities of these entities is the one allocated by AP5 HCOP, as the financing contracts for the operation of the LAG were signed more than a year after the approval of the LDS, part of the staff hired to elaborate the strategy (stages 1 and 2 DLRC) stopped working within the LAG (LAG managers/ facilitators). In these conditions, the interaction of the LAG with the communities concerned was diluted/ stopped, and this will be resumed once the financing contracts for the operation of the LAG have been signed by (re) hiring staff. There is a risk of a decline in the LAG's authority in marginalized communities, as through the animated meetings certain expectations were created among the MUZ residents who, after 18 months, have not yet materialized through projects started/ implemented in the marginalized communities.

B. Recommendations

- The LDS elaborated by the LAG using the DLRC tool aimed at the inclusion of the population in the urban MUZ, could become a mandatory section of the Urban Development Strategy of the respective locality which, as a rule, is prepared before the

next programming period with a duration of between 6 - 12 months being accompanied by sessions of public consultation and its validation by members of local communities. Thus, the minimum period of 6 months requested by the LAG is ensured in order to rigorously assess the needs of the target groups in the MUZ as well as the direct integration of the interventions planned with the investment projects identified as necessary throughout the locality.

- Between the activities of community animation it would be advisable to carry out a campaign of information and awareness of the community before organizing the meetings to identify the needs. This information and awareness-raising activity is necessary to attract people interested in meetings and to facilitate their realization. In addition, this information should be made throughout the locality in order to avoid reluctant and accusatory attitudes towards the local public administration. Attracting the media in this process is necessary.
- An easier community animation process may need to relax the conditions imposed by GA and a greater freedom of action to choose the animation activities, to employ more community facilitators, chosen if LDS has more than one MUZ.
- In order to carry out a relevant diagnostic analysis that meets the quality conditions required by GA, it would be advisable to check before the publication of GA the availability of the statistical data requested from INS / County Statistical Directorates.
- In addition to the longer duration and proper planning, in order to increase the efficiency, quality and relevance of the LDS development process, it may be appropriate: 1) greater flexibility left to the LAG to employ the necessary human resources, without any constraints. regarding the number and type of experts that may be involved; 2) flexibility in choosing the animation activities to be carried out or those for collecting data to substantiate the needs; 3) greater flexibility in drawing up the list of intervention priorities that should no longer be limited to those provided in the HCOP or ROP even without indicating the sources of funding.
- The long period of time between the elaboration of the LDS and its effective implementation contributes to the need to re-evaluate the problems / needs in MUZ and FUZ, given the socio-economic changes in the localities (migration, the emergence of new economic agents or the departure of some of the ones existing, measures of new social / fiscal policies, etc.) and the possibility of faster financing of some of the priorities on other financing lines / from other sources may influence the implementation of the measures envisaged. Also, since in some cases there are legal uncertainties regarding the housing situation in MUZ, it would be advisable to evaluate the risk of evacuation of the resident population given that some residents do not own land / housing documents and have not concluded rental contracts.

II. LDS implementation through integrated mechanism

A. Conclusions

- For the first time in the current programming period, the use of the DLRC tool has been foreseen in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants so that at EU level there is a dispersion of the implementation models, without "success stories" yet. Some states have chosen the single-fund DLRC financing option, others have set up a multi-fund management authority to finance projects dedicated to inclusion in urban centers with over 20,000 inhabitants.
- There is unanimity among those interviewed regarding the usefulness of financing investments through ROPs complementary to HCOP projects directed to MUZ, and generally to the disadvantaged areas in the middle cities. Usually when public investments are implemented, the marginal neighborhoods benefit from these projects to a lesser extent. However, it is noted that the LDS territory, by including FUZ, encompasses much larger areas as area and number of inhabitants compared to MUZ, in many cases even the entire territory of the locality, which could be likely to reduce the impact in the areas. marginalized investments included in LDS.
- The long period of initialization of the functioning of the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - the first GS regarding the constitution of the urban LAG and the elaboration of the LDS, at the date of the preparation of this report (July 2019) not yet published the final versions of the GS AP9 POR respectively AP5 HCOP by contrast with the time interval of 3 months allocated to the development of the LDS including the establishment of the LAG, carrying out the field research aimed at identifying MUZ and FUZ, delimiting the LDS territory and determining the complementary projects eligible for financing through AP9 POR and AP5 HCOP. In this period of time over 18 months there is a risk that for some approved projects other sources of funding have been identified and the needs of the target group have changed.
- The concrete situation shows that every 3 years, actions were carried out to review the population living in the MUZ territories using the field survey method by questioning without, after 8 years of such measurements, the situation on the ground had undergone major changes (disappearance / reduction of MUZ dimensions). These evaluations were not followed in the immediate period following the launch of interventions that respond to the identified needs, there being the risk that this situation could affect the implementation of the approved projects considering that, by their nature, the infrastructure investments supported by AP9 ROP have a duration of at least 2 years.
- The documentation related to the LDS shows that in all the LDS territories public interventions financed by the ERDF and the ESF have been implemented, without indicating their impact on the target group targeted by the LDS. Some ESF-funded projects are impressive through the achievement indicators - hundreds or even thousands of people trained in different fields - projects that have already been completed for a

number of years without assessing the impact they have had on the respective communities. On the one hand, these projects show that the LAG members have experience in managing the implementation of public interventions, on the other hand it is important to know for the LAG which categories of projects have had an impact in order to reach the result indicator proposed by the LDS, respectively the removal from poverty. of a certain number of people. Successful implementation of LDS through the integrated ROP-HCOP mechanism involves reaching the outcome indicators established through GA and assumed by the LAG.

- The achievement indicators pursued by the ROP through PA9 are the number of sqm built / rehabilitated, respectively the number of people benefiting from the interventions financed by the ROP, which could lead to the favoring of the investments in infrastructure towards those with high human traffic. This situation could be likely to dilute the impact on the target group, especially MUZ residents. At the same time, the relatively high ratio of 1: 9, between the number of inhabitants in MUZ and the one in the LDS territory, could diminish the impact of the planned interventions financed by ROP-HCOP on the degree of deprivation in MUZ.
- The performed field research showed that the delays in the operationalization of the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP were due to i.a. and the need to adapt the selection criteria of these programs to the specificity of the DLRC. Also, the harmonization of the procedures, the establishment and functioning of the CCSL and subsequently the CCSR led to the increase in the number of steps required to be completed by the projects included in the LDS from the proposal to the approval, contracting and implementation, at each stage being necessary the involvement of the 2 managing authorities, each with its own contracting, selection, implementation and monitoring procedures.
- The result indicators for the two axes, AP9 POR and AP5 HCOP, are specific to each type of fund, the ERDF and the ESF, without harmonizing with each other and aiming at increasing the quality of life of the inhabitants. The lack of specific outcome indicators for the DLRC mechanism makes the intervention of the two funds not seem complementary, but rather different. The result indicators need to be adapted to the specificities of the DLRC and reflect the integration / complementarity of measures in the LDS area and in particular the MUZ. The result indicators aim to eliminate marginalization in the case of HCOP and ROP, without however pursuing various aspects regarding the increase of the quality of life of the persons from MUZ. It is necessary to create specific outcome indicators specific to the DLRC mechanism aimed at increasing the quality of life of the people in MUZ
- The integrated mechanism HCOP - ROP is positively appreciated in terms of the ability to ensure the integrated character at the local level, to stimulate and involve members of the local community in the problem solving process and the involvement of the local community in the decision making process on community problems. However, it has been implemented to a very small extent by the date of this report, with most of the measures taken being HCOP's. Only the LDS evaluation was performed by HCOP-POR.

- The main aspects that have had a negative impact on the implementation of the integrated mechanism are the lack of guides to correlate the measures financed by the two operational programs, the non-correlation of the periods of starting the activities, delays in the implementation of the measures and the non-observance of the calendars initially set, the excessive bureaucracy reflected and the opening reduced for measures not provided for in the two operational programs, insufficient knowledge of the measures at the level of some regional bodies (IB/ RDA).
- The large gap between the development stage of the local development strategies (identifying the needs and setting the intervention priorities) and implementation is caused mainly by institutional aspects at the level of the two managing authorities involved and by the procedure of elaborating and implementing the extremely laborious LDS. and complex. Thus, at the AM HCOP level, additional sessions were needed to clarify the role of each actor involved in the DLRC, and the evaluation methodology had to be modified to adapt to the specificities of the DLRC, which could only be achieved after its adoption in the Monitoring Committee.
- The responsibilities of the LAG to develop guidelines for the applicant, to launch calls for project files, to carry out their selection procedures and to monitor the implementation of the LDS, in view of ensuring the complementarity of the interventions, make these structures work as intermediary bodies. virtual at the local level. In some LAGs there is the capacity and expertise needed to fulfill these responsibilities, but in others it needs to be increased, given that in the last year the LAGs have not, in fact, worked.

B. Recommendations

- The achievement of the program indicators and the implementation of the integrated measures at local level, can be done by the optimal functioning of the financing mechanism of the LDS, which would require: elaboration of a strict timetable for the program to prevent the occurrence of other delays and its compliance with both managing authorities and announcing it right from the beginning of the process, clearly establishing the responsibilities of all the involved institutions (ADR, OIR, AM HCOP, AM POR, CCSR, CCSL), elaborating the applicant's guides in order to quickly start the project elaboration procedures at the level local and debirocratization in the sense of simplifying as much as possible the procedures of evaluation, selection, contracting and possibly implementation and payments.
- Depending on the results obtained in practice after the operation of the integrated mechanism, one could opt for the establishment of a Managing Authority dedicated to multifund financing of urban DLRC, in order to reduce/ eliminate delays generated by different internal procedures of those two MAs involved.
- The functioning of the ROP-HCOP integrated mechanism and the effective implementation of the LDS are highly dependent on the administrative capacity of the LAG. The increase of this management capacity can be achieved through: cooperation at national and international level for sharing experiences, lessons learned, solutions for

solving various problems; training courses for LAG employees on project monitoring and evaluation; attracting experienced staff and their remuneration accordingly; dissemination of good practices; monitoring and consultancy by the managing authorities.

- It should also be taken into account that in 2021 the national census is scheduled in all EU MS which, from the perspective of the Europe 2020 strategy, could have the objective i.a. and measuring the degree of fulfillment of the commitments undertaken by the government regarding poverty reduction in Romania. This could also be a source of data for the integrated mechanism AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP regarding the impact of the implemented projects and the needs of the target group targeted. A possible correlation with the NIS to provide relevant data regarding the impact of the AP 9 POR and AP5 HCOP interventions for the MUZ / FUZ territories could be analyzed. At the same time, through the census MUZ can be identified, thus avoiding the situation from 2011 to 2017 when this exercise was repeated three times.

III. Lessons learned

- The key message for the LAG and authorities is that the local development strategies aimed at including the urban marginalized areas should be determined by the local needs and not only respond to the financing opportunities available from European funds. The strategies should not only cover projects that can be financed through the AP9 POR - AP5 HCOP mechanism and from local budgets. They should reflect both the needs of the local community and where the community wants to reach a certain time horizon, not just take on the outcome indicators imposed by the funders.
- The interaction between the LAG and the local communities should be permanent, guaranteeing the successful implementation of the projects included in the LDS. Through community animating activities, the LAG should become the linking factor between disadvantaged communities and local authorities. At the same time, the central authorities should be more responsive to the needs of the local communities, especially the marginalized ones, and not to impose certain standard formulas that are easier to manage for them.
- The complexity of the LDS elaboration process requires a minimum period of 6 months for implementation and rigorous time planning by the managing authorities to be respected so that no false expectations can be created in the community which may eventually lead to demobilization. Thus, it is necessary that the next programming period for the LDS elaboration process be assigned a period of at least 6 months. This larger period of LDS development would allow a campaign to inform and raise awareness of the MUZ community before organizing meetings to identify needs and other residents in order to avoid reluctant attitudes. Attracting the media in this process is necessary.

5. Annexes

Annex 1 - LAG Questionnaire

Annex 2 - Interview Guides

Annex 3 - Focus group Guide

Annex 4 - Delphi Questionnaire

Annex 5 - Case Study Protocol

Annex 6 - List of LAGs and LDS selected for funding through PA9 ROP and PA5 HCOP

Annex 7 - LDS geographical distribution

Annex 8 - LDS Case Study

Annex 9 - LDS centralization sheet and LDS individual sheets

Annex 10 - LDS framework model

Annex 11 - List of LDS support documents

Annex 12 - LDS support document - Guide of complementarity of interventions

Annex 13 - LDS Support Document - Integrated Center

Annex 14 - Case studies on the application of DLRC in other EU countries