

# THE IMPLICATIONS OF MANAGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SAPARD PROGRAM IN CLUJ COUNTY

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## **Abstract**

Starting with the importance of allocation of the SAPARD funds (Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development) before Romania's adherence to the European Union and the conclusions drawn from the implementation of this program in the county of Cluj, this paper examines the correlation between the territorial distribution and the conditions required from villages components for the countryside development.

The development conditions were assessed through 12 indicators, organized in 4 groups of factors („demographics”, „isolation”, „economy”, „infrastructure” and other „social factors”) evaluated on a 100 points scale synthesized in a „Global index of the development conditions” for each commune in part.

The distribution of funds, of their projects and their value, both overall and on the various components measures were examined in the 75 communes of Cluj County, grouped in three main areas of rural realm: the deeply rural, intermediate rural and suburban rural.

The resulting disparities led to the formulation of possible improving measures for the implementation of funds such as SAPARD, that continue to be allocated in the period after the integration.

## 1. Introduction

The SAPARD program, together with PHARE (Poland and Hungary Aid for the Reconstruction of Economy) and ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession) is one of the three basic financial instruments for the adherence created by the European Union, that provide assistance for countries of Central and Eastern Europe in order to prepare and facilitate the integration of their economies within the Community economy.

SAPARD (Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development) is a special program for agriculture and rural development which provides an important financial contribution to the European Community primarily for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the *Acquis Communautaire*, reducing the disparities between EU countries and preparing the candidate countries for the integration.

The SAPARD program in Romania was adopted by the European Commission in December 2000 based on the National Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (NPARD), developed for this occasion. The conditions and the general administrative, legislative and technical framework for the implementation of NPARD have been established under The European Council Regulation no.1268/1999 by signing in February 2001 the Multi-Financing Agreement for 2000-2006 for the SAPARD program between the Government of Romania and the European Commission (Official Journal of the European Communities, 1999).

The fundamental structural element of the SAPARD Program is represented by “the measure”. Out of the 15 eligible measures stipulated in the CE Regulation, NPARD stipulated the implementation of 11 intervention measures, giving up four of them among which was also “The Preparation and updating of land records”. The 11 measures chosen were:

- investment in agricultural holdings;
- the improvement of processing and the commercialization of agricultural products and fisheries;
- the improvement of quality control structures, of veterinary and plant health control, food quality and consumer protection;
- agricultural production methods designed to protect and maintain the environment and maintain the countryside landscape;
- the development and diversification of economic activities in order to create multiple activities and alternative income;
- the establishment of groups of manufacturers;
- improvement of professional development;
- the development and improvement of rural infrastructure;
- the management of water for agriculture resources;
- forestry and technical assistance for the foreseen measures.

The measures are concentrated expressions of the Program’s objectives, structured on different areas. They are subdivided as sub-measures. The Funds are accessed on

the basis of projects submitted by the final beneficiaries. The allocation of funds was different depending on the type of the measures or “sub-measures” etc., as a whole and as provenience: EU funds, funds of local public bodies, contributions of the recipient. The projects were submitted until 2006 inclusively, in different rhythms, analyzed and approved in sessions scheduled at the national level.

## **2. The research subject**

Cluj County is located in the Northern-Western part of Transylvania having a surface of 6674 square km and a population of 689,523 inhabitants (we refer to the year 2006) (Anuarul statistic al României, 2007).

The relief of Cluj county is very stormed, preponderant hilly, ordered on a great amplitude of altitudes from 1836m (Peak Vlădeasa, Apuseni Mountains) up to 227m (Surduc locality at the exist of county of the Someș river), being distinguished three natural dominant units: the mountains (South-West), The Someș Plateau (North-West) and part of the so called Transylvania Plain (East), each having less than 1/3 of the county, which adds to the meadows created by the two major rivers that cross it: The Someș and Arieș (Pop, 2007).

The population of the county is located in 434 settlements (2006). 6 of them are towns, among which three have a population of over 30,000 inhabitants (Cluj excelling with 305,620 people), 428 villages, eight of which are included in the composition of the cities. The remaining 420 villages are grouped into 75 communes.

Toward the average country values, Cluj County has a higher population density (103.3 place/square km compared to 90.5/square km) and a higher degree of urbanization (urban population share is 66.5% compared to 55.2%).

Given the research theme, rural has been approached as a territorial space (Kayser et al., 1994), being divided primarily based on the administrative criteria (Surd, 2001).

Moreover, in this way the county has been circumscribed in the National Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (The National Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development 2000-2006, 2000) which was the basis of the Agreement that established the SAPARD program in Romania; in the Chapter “The diagnosis of rural area” it was stipulated that “The rural area in Romania currently consists of the administrative area of the 2688 communes in the country...”.

From the table data results that Cluj County, a county with a higher degree of urbanization in the light of the urban population weight, has a rural area with a more pronounced specific features: a greater share of the rural area in the total county territory, low density of population, large communes and an lower average population per commune and especially with smaller villages and more of them as an average per commune.

The SAPARD fund received by the Cluj County in relation to the amounts allocated by the EU for Romania is illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 1.** The main features of the countryside of Cluj (2006)

Indicators	M.U.	Total country	Cluj County
Surface of rural area	Thousand square km	212,7	6,17
Rural area share in the total area	%	89,22	92,49
Rural population	Thousand inhabitants	9.670,43	230,69
Rural population share in the total	%	44,80	33,46
Rural population density	Inhabitants/square km	45,46	37,37
The number of communes	No. of communes	2854	75
Average surface of the communes	Square km	74,5	82,3
Average population on a commune	Persons	3388	3075
The number of the villages	No. of villages	12.951	420
The number of villages in a commune	No. of villages	4,5	5,6
The average number of inhabitants in a village	Inhabitants	747	549

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Romania, INS, Bucharest, 2007; National Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development, M.A.D.R., 2000; The Regional Statistics Bureau Cluj.

The volume of funds available in the county of Cluj, from the total amount given by EU for Romania was about 1.5 times smaller than the share of Cluj rural area surface (1.7 times) and of its population (1.4 times), compared to the surface area and the rural population of Romania. This was diminished by the number of projects, but even these remain with a share of about 1.2 times smaller than the share of the rural surface.

**Table 2.** The amounts received from the SAPARD fund in Cluj County in relation to the total allocations for Romania (2000-2006)

Indicators	M.U.	Total country	Cluj County
Total received funds	Million Euro	1.305,78	21,84
Number of projects	No. of projects	4.704	102
Average sum/project	Thousand euro	278	214
Share in total per country:			
Surface (rural)	%	100	2,90
Population(rural)	%	100	2,36
Projects	%	100	2,17
Funds	%	100	1,67
Average sum/project	%	100	76,98

Source: Annual Report on the implementation of SAPARD Program in Romania in 2006, The authority of management SAPARD Program, M.A.D.R., 2008.

### 3. Method of research

The study is based on the comparison between the allocation of SAPARD funds and the needs of the rural space of the county, given by the conditions the territory has due to its characteristics.

The structuring element of data, regarding the socio-economic conditions and the allocated funds was the commune, due the fact that it represents “the administrative and territorial base unit” of the rural space and on this level the initiative and the responsibilities of the Program are focused.

a) In determining what indicators reflect the conditions that each commune has we started with the accepted requirements for such a field (Băltătescu apud Zamfir and Stănescu, 2007), which should primarily be specifically measurable, sensitive, available, usable, etc. Thus, were accepted a number of 12 indicators, which show four groups of factors: demographic factors, the accessibility - namely the isolation (the location of the commune in the territory), economic factors and factors regarding the infrastructure and other social conditions.

The concrete empirical values of the indicators for the communes of the county have been ordered in a matrix. The factors were aggregated in a composite index for each commune on a scale with points from 0 to 100 for each indicator and summed up while pondering with the importance of the indicator, expressed through indicators, as it is presented in Table 3.

Confronted to other studies in the field, about the development level of some communities (Sandu, 2005), in terms of output, performance, welfare (versus poverty), in this study we have taken into account the input resources, conditions of development, its factors, giving priority to the essential indicator of the rural – “the population density” and accessibility (versus isolation), “the distance to the nearest city” that can provide administrative, social, economic, information services and other opportunities outside the community (Sandu, 2005).

**Table 3.** The coefficients of the indicators’ importance

The Group of factors	Indicators	M.U.	The Coefficient of importance %
Demographic Factors ( 30)	The dimension of the villages	Inhabitants/village	9
	The density of the commune's population	Inhabitants/square km	21
Location (40) (Isolation)	The distance to a city with population over 30.000 inhabitants	Km	23
	The distance to the first railroad	Km	5
	The distance to a European road	Km	12
Economics (12)	Agricultural land per inhabitant	Ha	4
	The Share of arable land in the agricultural one	%	4
	Number of units big cattle (UVM)	Heads	3
	The presence of other non specific economic activities *	Employees/1000 inhabitants	3
Other factors (infrastructure, socio-cultural factors) (18)	The Length of distribution network of drinking water	Km	4
	The Length of distribution network of natural gases	Km	4
	Classrooms	Classrooms / 1000 inhabitants	4
	Number of teachers	Teachers/ 1000 inhabitants	3
	Number of doctors	Doctors / 1000 inhabitants	3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>100</b>

\*Construction, industry, transport

The expression of the concrete indicators values in aggregated values on the 0-100 scale taking into account the absolute share of each of them was conducted on the legal relations arising from “the theory of utility function” elaborated by Neumann-Morgenstern (Neumann and Morgenstern, 1953) used frequently in management regarding the decisions substantiation (Lazar, Mortan, Veres and Lazar, 2004).

**Table 4.** Matrix of the physical values of the indicators

Indicators The commune	I1 I2.....In
C1	a11 a12..... a1n
C2	a21 a22.....a2n
.	.
.	.
.	.
Cm	am1 am2.....amn
Kj	K1 K2.....Kn

Where: Ci - where i = 1, 2, 3,..., M - the, “m” communes;

Ij - where j = 1, 2, 3,..., N - the “n” indicators;

aij - the absolute values of the 12 indicators for the 75 communes;

Kn - the coefficients of importance of the indicators.

The formulas for conversion of the physical values into relative values by interpolation in the scale of 0-100 and their pondering by coefficients of importance looks as following:

$$p_{ij} = \left[ \frac{a_{ij} - a_{minj}}{a_{maxj} - a_{minj}} \times 100 \right] \times k_j - \text{indicators for “maximum”}$$

$$p_{ij} = \left[ \frac{a_{ij} - a_{maxj}}{a_{minj} - a_{maxj}} \times 100 \right] \times k_j - \text{indicators for “minimum”}$$

where:

p<sub>ij</sub> = the pondered values of the relative dimensions of the 12 indicators for the 75 communes;

k<sub>J</sub> = the importance coefficients of the “j” indicators.

Results a matrix like in Table 5, where “The index of the village development conditions”

$$(I_{CONDEVCOM}) = \sum_{j=1}^n p_{ij}$$

**Table 5.** Matrix of relative values pondered of the indicators

Indicators The commune	I1 I2.....I <sub>condevcom</sub>
C1	p11 p12..... Σp1n
C2	p21 p22..... Σp2n
.	.
.	.
.	.
Cm	am1 am2..... Σpmn

b) The data regarding accessing the funds from the SAPARD Program in Cluj County have been approached in terms of level and structure of validated and contracted projects, grouped by “measures”, funding sources and areas of countryside.

#### 4. The Results

“The CONDEVCOM index” shows perfectly the variation of development conditions for the communes, as a result of diversity of natural factors of relief in first place, the arrangement of urban centers of economic services, social administration etc. in the second place, as well as taking into account their role as a market and source in the daily life of the communes.

The amplitude of the index variation from 15.77 (the Mărgău commune) in the mountains, to 75.46 (the Florești commune, neighboring Cluj-Napoca city), with an increase of 4.8 times of its value, fully illustrates this fact.

Ourselves as well, we have considered as the most relevant way of structuring, the delineation of three types of rural (Kayser, 1990); we grouped the communes on equal segments of amplitude variation of the ICONDEVCOM, resulting in an obvious zonality (Figure 1).

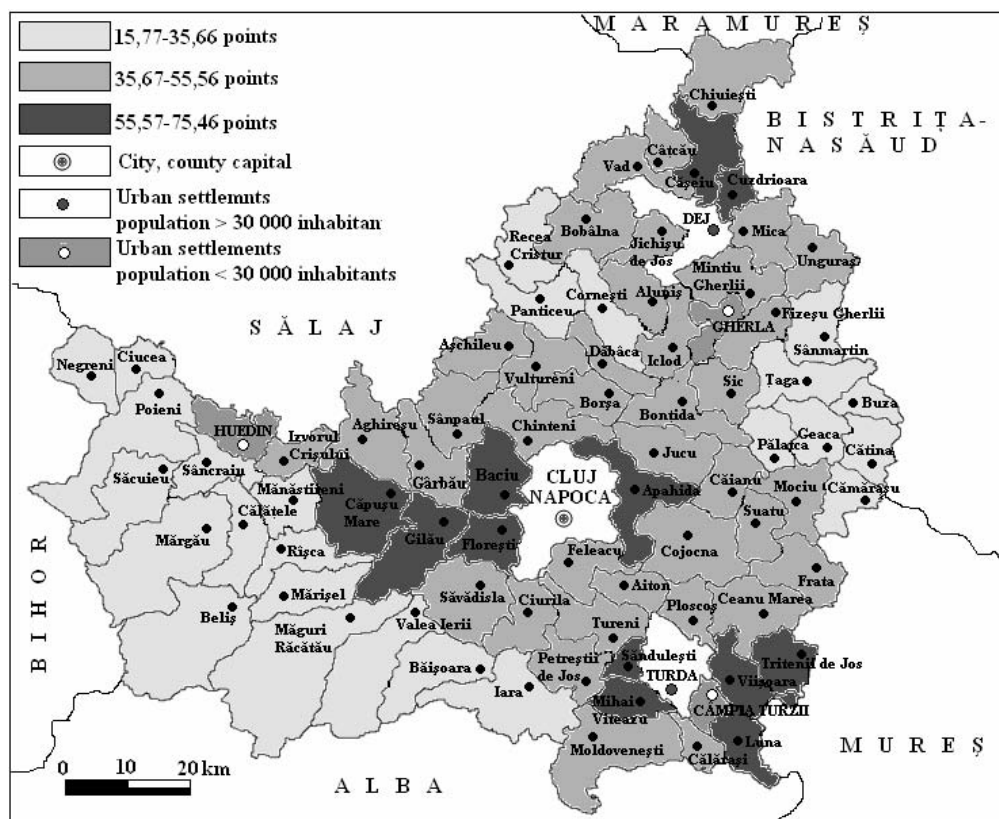


Figure 1. Zoning map (original)

**Zone I, “The profound rural”** also called “peripheral rural” (Sandu, 2005) comprises 25 communes with an index value of 15.77 (Mărgău) and 34.71 (Măguri Răcățău) arranged in three distinctive parts at the limit of the county: a mountain sub-area (South-West), one in the Transylvanian Plateau (North-West) and one in the Transylvania Plain (East), each of them neighboring similar areas from the other counties. Thus, sub-area communes from Transylvania Plain are part of a similar territory, a larger one, consisting of a number of 33 communes placed at the line of the counties Cluj, Bistrița-Năsăud and Mureș.

**Zone II, “The intermediate rural zone”** gathers the largest number of communes (39) with index values between 35.74 (Suatu) and 55.55 (Bonțida).

**Zone III, “The suburban rural zone”** also called “economically integrated” includes a number of 12 communes with index values between 55.97 (Cășei) and 75.46 (Florești) neighboring three big cities in the county (Cluj-Napoca, Turda, Dej).

The projects based on which the SAPARD funds were accessed, structured on the “measures” had as a support amounts coming from their own resources and government or, in very different proportions, according to law regulations. From this point of view, the global SAPARD projects in Cluj county situation is given in Table 6.

**Table 6.** The Number of SAPARD projects and their source of financing in Cluj County

The measurement code	Description of the measurement*	Number of projects	Total value (thousands lei)	Source (thousands lei)		
				U.E.	Govern	Own sources
1.1	Processing and marketing	11	37464	14049	4683	18732
1.2	Improvement of control structures	1	7331	5498	1833	-
2.1	Infrastructure	17	54114	40585	13529	-
3.1	Agriculture exploitation	34	28201	10576	3524	14101
3.2	Groups of producers	-	-	-	-	-
3.3	Agricultural environment	-	-	-	-	-
3.4	Diversification	34	20312	7617	2539	10156
3.5	Forestry	5	12500	9022	3007	471
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>159922</b>	<b>87347</b>	<b>29115</b>	<b>43460</b>

\* Short description

\*\* Measures 4.1(Professional qualification) and 4.2 (Technical assistance) can not be found at county level; they are allocated and handled directly by M.A.D.R.

Funds allocation, their sources and the number of contracted projects have been different depending on the specific of the “measure”, as well as depending on the involvement of the public and private organizations. It is worth to be noticed for Cluj county the total lack of projects from two very important areas (3.2 and 3.3), these projects depend mostly on a specialized and administrative system, but also on the fact that all the “measures” pointed to agricultural exploitations 3.1 and 3.4 (those that

are the framework of the rural population existence) got more than 66% from the total amount of projects, but only 20.8% from EU funds contracted in the Cluj County.

This fact shows the notable discrepancy between the weight of project numbers and the average value of EU funds in comparison with the total values on country level. Also, we need to consider the fact that in the case of those two measures 3.1, 3.4 and also in the case of measure 1.1, the procedure of EU funds allocation imposed a contribution of 50% from own sources, unlike the measure 2.1 (Improvement of rural infrastructure) and 1.2 (Improvement of control structures) and partially 3.5 (Forestry) which did not required financial contribution from the beneficiary.

In Table 7 below we have constructed a comparison between projects contracted in Cluj and the projects from the whole country under the aspect of projects structured on measures.

**Table 7.** The structure of contracted projects

Measure Code	Measure Short description	Number of contracted projects				Total value				Average value (thousands lei)	
		Romania		Cluj county		Romania		Cluj county		Romania	Cluj County
		No.	%	No.	%	Mil lei	%	Mil lei	%		
1.1	Processing and marketing	485	10,34	11	10,79	2680	34,13	37,5	23,45	5,5	3,4
1.2	Improvement of control structures	20	0,43	1	0,98	13,5	1,72	7,3	4,56	6,8	7,3
2.1	Infrastructure	850	18,13	17	16,67	2413	30,73	54,1	33,83	2,8	3,2
3.1	Agricultural exploitations	2018	43,04	34	33,33	1780	22,67	28,2	17,64	0,9	0,8
3.2	Groups of producers	4	0,08	-	-	1	0,01	-	-	0,2	-
3.3	Agricultural environment	47	1,00	-	-	3	0,03	-	-	0,1	-
3.4	Diversification	1148	24,48	34	33,33	552	7,03	20,3	12,70	0,5	0,6
3.5	Forestry	117	2,50	5	4,90	289	3,68	12,5	7,82	2,5	2,5
<b>TOTAL (without 4.1 and 4.2)</b>		<b>4689</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7853</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159,9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,7</b>	<b>1,6</b>

Source: <http://www.sapard.ro/>

Without taking into consideration the projects for measures (4.1 and 4.2), of which funds were not distributed in the country, it can be seen that the structure of projects from Cluj is mostly the same with the structure of projects from Romania due to the fact that an uniform methodology was followed according to the allocation done by EU Commission.

Although it can be observed the total lack of projects for measures 3.2 and 3.3 as in the country their number is extremely low.

A higher weight in Cluj County compared to the rest of the country has the number of projects and also their value regarding "Diversity in economic activities" and "Forestry" which can be explained in a certain measure by the specific characteristics of the county.

Also it is worth to take into consideration the lower weight of investors in Agricultural exploitations also as number of projects and as value, especially since as an average these projects have small dimensions.

Examining the distribution of the projects contracted in Cluj rural sub zones we get the following situation:

**Table 8.** Allocation of projects in the rural sub zones in Cluj

Sub zone	Average value of ICONDEVCOM	Number of communes		Projects		Communes				Average no. of projects per commune
		Nr.	%	Nr.	%	With projects SAPARD		Without projects SAPARD		
						Nr.	%	Nr.	%	
Profound rural	25,24	25	33,33	30	29,41	13	52,00	12	48,00	1,2
Intermediate rural	45,64	38	50,67	30	29,41	20	52,63	18	47,37	0,8
Suburban rural	65,72	12	16,00	25	24,51	10	83,33	2	16,67	2,1
Urban	-	-	-	17	16,67	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	75	100	102	100	43	57,33	32	42,67	1,4

Even though the SAPARD methodology allows investments in urban areas for measure 1.1 in some cases for upgrading the existing capacity, we can consider as uncommon the number of 17 projects from 102 towns, from which 7 projects were in Cluj Napoca. These communes together with suburban area represent more than 41% from the total projects from the entire county. This implementation of programs is against the EU policy regarding the idea of balancing the equilibrium rural/urban, the rural inside itself and even the scope of this program.

This phenomenon was also facilitated by redefining the rural area, by two successive orders of the minister of agriculture<sup>1</sup>, other than what was stated in the National Plan that was the basis for the agreement with EU, ratified by the Law no. 316/2001<sup>2</sup>.

Besides that, while only 1/2 of rural communes that are part of the profound rural and intermediate rural had at least one contract, resulting a total average of 1.2 respectively 0.8 contracts per commune, in suburban rural 5/6 of the communes received contracts (two of them even 5), returning an average of 2.1 contracts per commune (an average of 2.8 SAPARD projects for each city).

<sup>1</sup> Decision no. 173/160/93 from 2004 of the ministry of agriculture, forests and rural development, of the ministry of administration and interior, and of the ministry of European integration regarding the notion of rural space, Official Monitor of Romania 323/14. IV. 2004; Decision no. 143/610 from 2005 of the ministry of agriculture, forests and rural development of the ministry of administration and interior, regarding the notion of rural space, Official Monitor of Romania 382/06 din 2005

<sup>2</sup> Law no. 316/2001, Official Monitor of Romania no. 362/2001.

The situation is more obvious through the projects values:

**Table 9.** The distribution of projects values grouped on Cluj rural zones

Zone	Dimension of the rural						Projects values					
	Surface		Population*		Communes		Total		Has:			
	Thous. ha	%	Thous. persons	%	No.	%	Mil. lei	%	Mil./ 100 ha	Mil./ 1000 loc.	Per commune	
											Total mil. lei	From which U.E funds (mil.lei)
Profound Rural	250,8	40,63	54,7	23,71	25	33,33	42,5	26,58	0,17	0,78	1,7	1,1
Intermediate	282,9	45,83	109,0	47,25	38	50,67	36,5	22,83	0,13	0,33	1,0	0,6
Suburban	83,6	13,54	67,0	29,04	12	16,00	54,3	33,96	0,65	0,81	4,5	2,1
Urban	-	-	-	-	-	-	26,6	16,63	-	-	(4,4**)	(2,1)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>617,3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>230,7</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159,9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0,26</b>	<b>0,69</b>	<b>2,1</b>	<b>1,2</b>

\*At 1st of July 2006

\*\* Average/city

The picture is similar, no more obvious by the fact that the correlation with the two ministerial orders, over half of the projects values were awarded to urban and suburban areas, resulting averages incomparably higher per commune, surface, per unit and capita.

Notably the fact that the profound rural exceeded the intermediate rural. This was due to the measure 3.4 (and especially to the rural tourism) and 3.5 (Forestry) mostly located in these communes).

Given the essential differences between the content and the methodology for applying each measures, the objectives and even its sub-measures is necessary to consider the structure and their distribution on areas, which is an illustration of the extent to which location in space has been taken into account the differences in territorial development (Table 10).

Based on the background of the importance of rural infrastructure, in terms of volume of funds available and projects size (Table 7) a relatively equal distribution in the territory can be observed. To this may be added the implementation of forestry projects in the communes from the mountain area, some of them (9 communes) with over 40% of surface covered by woods.

Not the same can be said about the rest of the measures where to cities were assigned a number of important projects to the detriment of the rural profound communes and intermediate ones: 45.5% for measure 1.1, 20.6% for measure 3.4 and measure 3.1 - 11.8%.

The measure 1.1 on "Improvement of processing and marketing agricultural products and fisheries" is interesting in particular since no project has been implemented in the profound area (25 communes), only 3 in every intermediate and suburban, and in 5 cities, 3 of them being situated in Cluj-Napoca.

**Table 10.** Distribution of different categories of projects by areas

Zones and sub zones	No. commune	Total projects		M 1.1	M 1.2	M 2.1	M 3.1	M 3.4	M 3.5
		Total	Per commune						
Profound Rural	25	30	1,2	0	0	5	7	14	4
Mountain sub zone	15	22	1,5	0	0	3	1	14	4
Someşan Plateau	3	1	0,3	0	0	1	0	0	0
Transylvania plain	7	7	1,0	0	0	1	6	0	0
Intermediate Rural	38	30	0,8	3	0	8	9	10	0
Suburban Rural	12	25	2,1	3	0	4	14	3	1
Urban	0	17	-	5	1	0	4	7	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>5</b>

Two of them belong to the sub-measure “milk and dairy products” as it targets one popular company in the area (SC Napolact SA), while the Transylvania Plain sub-area, which had a herd of about 7000 heads cattle with a density of 22.4 toward 20.9 per 100 ha agricultural land has not received any similar investment, as well as the other sub-area of the profound rural.

A specific reference concerns measure 3.4 referring to “the development and diversification of economic activities” in which 85.3% of projects aimed at building tourist hostels, mostly belonging to the profound rural (14 out of 29). But this case has the same defect, as 3 projects regarding sub-measure “rural tourism” are implemented in 3 municipalities of the county (Cluj-Napoca, Gherla and Câmpia-Turzii).

Similar disparities also exist in the area of the profound rural in the 3 sub zones. The average number of projects per commune illustrates this fact. The mountain sub-area seems to be a priority due to the large number of investments in hostels. Such a priority could be considered also in the other sub-areas, especially in the West of the county (Transylvania Plain), famous due to a chain of anthropogenic lakes, suitable for such recovery. A particular problem that needs to be taken into account remains the one of the latter of profound zone from the Someş Plateau in rural sub-area.

## 5. Conclusions

SAPARD, as a special European program for EU pre-accession, has been for the agriculture and the rural county of Cluj an important means of supporting rural farms and the agricultural environment in general, aiming to reduce the disparities between EU countries, alleviating the imbalances between rural and urban environment, providing an important financial contribution for this purpose.

The SAPARD program in Romania took over 11 (and ultimately 10) of the 15 pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development for the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe. By not choosing the measures regarding “the preparation and updating of land records” absolutely necessary for accession, it has subsequently generated most of the difficulties which the APIA (Agency for Payments and Intervention for Agriculture) currently has in the management of the allocated funds.

In Cluj County, the funds accessed from the Community financial support under the SAPARD program, was much lower proportionally distributed than the share of rural Cluj throughout the countryside of Romania.

Distributing the projects on “measures” and to a great extent on their value, are close to its structure throughout the country. Totally neglected areas, such as “The formation of producer groups” and “The Environment Protection” are approximately on the same position and per country as well.

The distribution of SAPARD projects in the territory, both as a whole and on the various categories of “measures” has considerable gaps, related to the specific conditions of the county. Cluj County is characterized in essence by a greater degree of urbanization (66.9%) emphasized by the relationship of a primate city (Pascariu, 2007), capital of the county, of 5.3 and also by a broad range of demographic conditions, economic and territorial location (isolation), infrastructure etc., of the components communes, evaluated globally through ICONDEVCOM, whose dispersion in space illustrates a net area at the 3 major categories of rural areas: profound, intermediate and suburban.

Assigning the projects and the funds have been made by giving priority to the suburban area, where some communes have accessed even 5 projects, while in rural and intermediate rural more than half of the communes have not benefited from any project. To this is also added the fact that a large number of projects (around 17%) were attributed to the (often unjustified) municipalities, especially the residences of the counties. Over one half the projects value lies in suburban and urban area. Such a distribution is likely to reduce the disparities between urban and rural areas and inside the rural area.

The territorial imbalances inside the different “measures” in the methodological differences limits are greater as the beneficiaries are scratchy, and as the contribution with own sources of financing is higher, it creates favors for the stronger competitors.

Thus the field in which the distribution was the most balanced was measure 2.1 (The Improvement of rural infrastructure), which targeted significant investment, without requiring own financial contributions (sewer systems, supply water, roads), the competitors being local municipal councils and vice versa, as in case of the measure 3.1 (Investment in agricultural holdings), in which the competitors were very different units economically and potentially.

The need to balance the financial benefits of SAPARD program, means overcoming the dominant idea so popular these days, of accessing EU funds assuming any consequences, by these means neglecting the care for their rational distribution.

The support for public and private institutions from the areas most affected by excessive rurality should be especially increased in order to ensure a systemic development of the zones, as these areas are characterized by obvious resource deficits and authentic rural components.

It is necessary to guarantee a greater accountability from the public bodies, the specialized, consulting agencies (ANCA), guidance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Administration and Interior, and from local councils in developing the projects, preparing their documentation, obtaining finance in the process of accession to the Community funds.

And finally, should be considered an improvement of assessing the methodology of evaluating the projects and selecting them for funding, including primarily (1) reducing the bureaucracy, in all of its aspects and (2) taking into account to a greater extent, between the criteria, the favorable conditions for development and separation of the score depending on their degree.

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