Fighting depopulation in Apuseni Mountains area in Romania

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#RuralDepopulation
Apuseni Mountains area
key facts

- The most inhabited mountainous region of Romania
- Total area of 14.513 sq. km.
- 553.200 inhabitants
- 176 administrative units
- 6 counties
- Predominant rural area: only 17 urban administrative units
- Low population density: 38 inh. / sq. km vs 90 inh. / sq. km. national mean

Source: MARD 2018
Apuseni Mountains area main challenges

- The tendency of young people to leave the mountains area;
- Accelerated exit of farmers; farm and land abandonment;
- Poorly developed infrastructure
- Predominant rural area with reduced number of jobs and limited prospects for employment
- Agriculture based mainly on wood exploitation, grazing and livestock production
- High isolation degree
- Insufficient valorization of natural and cultural potential
- Existence of micro-zones with high degree of poverty that requires integrated pilot programs
## Apuseni Mountains area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smallholder farmers with low productivity</td>
<td>Traditional quality products</td>
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<td>Harsher and riskier agri-climatic conditions; climate change</td>
<td>Unique natural resources: high value pastures, medicinal plants and herbs, fruits and berries</td>
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<td>Weak developed transformation of primary products from farms</td>
<td>Mountainous pastoralism</td>
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<td>Weak logistic infrastructure</td>
<td>Cultural landscape</td>
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<td>Hindered access to markets</td>
<td>Potential of social innovation</td>
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<td>High-age structure of farmers</td>
<td>Low cost of farmland and real-estate</td>
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<td>Traditional know-how farming</td>
<td>Strong social cohesion and local cooperation</td>
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Apuseni Mountains area local initiative

- Intercommunity Development Association “Moții – Țara de piatră” was created
- 5 county councils: Alba, Cluj, Hunedoara, Arad, Bihor
- 86 mayors are members
- 746 localities represented
- Approx.. 450.000 inhabitants represented
- Bottom-up approach

Objectives for mountainous agriculture and higher level:
- Protection and conservation of natural resources;
- Ensuring a balanced density of population in mountainous areas;
- Creation and conservation of quality jobs;
- Creation and protection of access infrastructure;
- Putting in place a territorial strategy for catalyzing specific economic activities
- Implementation of an agriculture-centric economic development program, that will combine economic, social and environmental development Elements.
To achieve his stated objectives, the Intercommunity Association “Moții – Țara de piatră” is looking at a wide range of agriculture-centric on and off farm investments for:

- Improving produce handling / market access logistics;
- Improving quality and safety of agricultural products;
- Realizing community-based investments to enable economic rural infrastructure;
- Improving communal grasslands and pastures;
- Management, aggregation and processing of medicinal plants from mountainous forests;
- Other investments which can improve the rural economic dynamic in the Apuseni.

Use of the tools made available by EU, as ITI and CLLD, for 2021-2027 programing period, is the right path to follow for the Association.
Integrated Territorial Development:
where we are / next steps

- The Intercommunity Development Association is discussing with the World Bank to get support as Reimbursable Advisory Service (RAS) for strengthening the Association's capacity;
- RAS will support preparation for use of the ITI, CLLD and for the programming period 2021-2027
- An integrated program as a pilot is targeted

Proposal:

- For the 2021-2027 programming period DG Agri and DG Regio should ensure integrated ITI type dedicated funding for mountainous areas
- The Association is ready to proposes a pilot project for Apuseni mountains financed from the technical assistance of DG Agri & DG Regio
Thank you for your attention!