

COMPARISON OF THE DRAWDOWN OF SUBSIDIES FROM THE EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ROMANIAN AND HUNGARIAN COUNTIES BETWEEN 2007 AND 2013

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Abstract: Hungary and Romania rely on rural development support programs in order to alleviate the economic, social and environmental problems of rural areas, which would not be possible using only internal resources. It is worthwhile to analyse the results of these programs and their benefits for the recipient countries. The purpose of the study is to examine the 2007-2013 rural development programs in these two neighbouring countries, together with the application patterns relevant in this programming period. In the secondary research statistical methods are used to analyse the amount of support specific for the given regions and assess whether application activity is in line with the economic and social situation of these regions. In summary, Romania and Hungary have not exploited EU rural development resources fully. In the case of Romania, it made possible for LEADER action groups to learn and acquire experience and they have had significantly less latitude than member states with more experience with the program. The program resulted in the deepening of rural development cooperation between Romania and Hungary and the implementation of a large number of joint projects between 2007-2013.

Keywords: common support for rural development, Hungary, Romania, county distribution, factor and cluster analysis, 2007-2013's program period

Introduction

The convergence of the regional differences has been since the beginning one of the principles of the European Community (Rechnitzer and Smahó, 2011), but regional policy in its modern sense is the result of a long development process. Roberts and Springer (2001) stress that the feasibility of EU policies depends on the will of the Member States to make the policies achievable. The combination of the wishes and priorities of Member States can shape the design of policies and although the EU seeks consensus this may become more complicated with the accession of the new Member States which increased considerably economic and cultural differences, and created new problems to be solved. At the 1999 Berlin Forum the EU recognized that *in addition to regional policy it is also a necessity to think in terms of rural areas* and as part of the "Agenda 2000" – containing proposals from the Commission for the 15 Member States concerning the developments to be carried out in the period after 2000 – the Common Agricultural Policy was reformed, with rural

development as the second pillar. Glatz (2008, p. 33.) writes: "It has been realised that the countryside must be reinforced by business supporting, job-creating actions because of the prosperity of rural areas can only be achieved if there is work in the countryside".

There is no uniformly accepted definition to describe rural areas, although this is one of the important tasks of rural development. The exact definition of rural area is very difficult, since it is a very complex socio-economic and cultural concept. In most cases, the word 'rural' is coupled with negative values, as an opposite of the more developed urban areas or as the location of agricultural farming. Many of the approaches do not target the unambiguous and exclusive definition, but rather a kind of classification. (Tóth and Máté, 2013) The European Union does not give a description of what should be considered as rural area, each Member State must define this concept on the basis of their individual, specific characteristics, giving content to the definition. "Clarifying the concept of rural areas is essential so that the areas whose

development require methods, tools and measures that differ from the average can be outlined. The definition of rural areas may take place according to different criteria, depending on what point of view of rurality – geographical, social, economic or cultural – is considered” (Sarudi, 2003, p. 211.). According to the European Charter of Rural Communities (1995): rural areas are land, internal or coastal areas that typically include small towns and villages and the area is used for the following purposes: agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, fishing, economic and cultural activities of residents, non-urban recreation, conservation, and housing. In the decade prior to AGENDA 2000 rural areas corresponded to areas where population density at NUTS 5 level did not exceed 100 persons/km². The OECD criterion in the same period was 150 persons/km². Agenda 2000 contains a simplified concept for rural areas which are areas where population density is below 100 persons/km² and is declining, and where the proportion of people employed in agriculture is twice the EU average (Csete and Láng, 2009).

In Hungary, a rural region is a region which does not have town status or has the town status but with a population inferior to 10,000 inhabitants. The concept of rural areas is relatively new in Romania where the issue of rural development gained importance in the second half of the 1990s especially with the launching of the EU’s SAPARD Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development. In Romania the status of the settlements are determined by law, so there are rural areas with a population of over 10,000 and there are

towns with lower population (Kerekes et al., 2010). Villages with own local governments are considered rural settlements and several rural settlements form rural areas (Vincze, 2012).

In Romania and Hungary EU rural development programs contribute to a great extent to the development of rural areas and the increase of living standards, as national sources would not be sufficient to cover the costs of these developments. The aim of the study has been to analyse the efficiency of the use of the rural development grants financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the 2007 to 2013 program period in the case of the two countries. It was also examined whether there were significant regional differences in terms of retrieval of resources, at the county level. On the basis of the literature studied and other secondary information the following hypotheses were formulated tested by statistical methods:

H1: There is a significant relationship between the GDP of a given county and the amount of the approved grant requests

H2: The Romanian and the Hungarian counties may be ordered in clusters according to the spatial distribution of grants financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

H3: Romanian and Hungarian rural development show different trends in relation to the 2007-2013 grant specificities.

Material and Methods

The research was based on the compiled database containing the cumulative data of the

Table 1. Variables used in the factor- and cluster analysis

Romania	Hungary
Approved grant per one agricultural farm (EUR/farm)	
Approved grant per one farm employee (EUR/person)	
Approved grant per one inhabitant (EUR/person)	
Approved grant per one rural inhabitant (EUR/person)	-
Approved grant per one unemployed (EUR/person)	
Approved grant per one hectare of cultivated agricultural land (EUR/ha)	

Source: own secondary research (2013)

EAFRD financed Romanian and Hungarian approved grant applications. The database included data from 41 Romanian and 19 Hungarian counties excluding Bucharest and Budapest, as major urban cities. Data concerning Romania were extracted from the website of the Paying Agency for Rural Development and Fisheries (APDRP), while data concerning Hungary were extracted from the website of the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (ARDA). The data cover the period between 2007-08/29/2012 for Romania and 2007-14/10/2013 for Hungary. Data for Romania were available in Euro while data for Hungary were given in Forint. For the sake of comparison the latter were converted into Euro at the exchange rates applied by the European Investment Bank.

Besides to descriptive statistics, factor and cluster analysis were also used with the help of the SPSS software package. In order to ensure comparability between the countries and classification into groups on the basis of the granted rural development support, relative indicator values were calculated that were used in the factor and cluster analysis (Table 1). The indicators were derived from the databases of Eurostat, the KSH (Hungarian Central Statistical Office) and INSS (Romanian Statistical Office). The differences in euro were so considerable that it was not possible to use conjointly variables of the Romanian and Hungarian side (a separate cluster analysis was used for that). Nevertheless, trends in the application practices of the two countries can be observed.

For the factor and cluster analysis the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test was used first and as the obtained values for both countries were higher than 0.5 the factor analysis could be performed. The component matrix obtained during the factor analysis was rotated through the Varimax method and the cluster analysis was also performed by means of the Centroid weight centered method. The Sajtos and Mitev (2007) research and data analysis SPSS guidebook was very useful for the analysis.

With a view of a better understanding and in order to complete the results of the research, *professional interviews with five Romanian and five Hungarian farmers and entrepreneurs were carried out*. According to Malhotra (2001), this method helps researchers to have a better overview and become more familiar with certain problem areas. The interviews were focused on the applications for EU support and also on the possible experiences and opinions. The interviews were conducted between 19-23 August 2013.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 contains the relevant data and main variables of the two countries which are the subject of the study. The population of Romania is the double of that of Hungary, which is understandable by comparing the territory of the two countries. Despite the higher number of its population Romania is economically less developed since on purchasing power parity basis its GDP exceeded the Hungarian GDP by only EUR 85.674 million. According

Table 2. Main indicators of Romania and Hungary

Indicators	Romania	Hungary
Population (2012, people)	21 355 849	9 931 925
Population (2010, people)	21 462 186	10 014 324
GDP PPP (2010, million EUR)	244 507	158 833
Number of unemployment (2010, people)	626 960	474 757
Number of employees in agriculture (2010, people)	1 639 000	439 955
GVA created in agriculture (2010, EUR/capita)	5 200	8 100
SO created in agriculture (2010, EUR)	10 420 314 210	5 241 037 240

Source: own edition on the basis of AMÖ, KSH, INSSE, EUROSTAT

to Gross Value Added per capita in agriculture and Standard Output in agriculture (2010 data) the performance of Hungary is better compared to that of Romania.

48% of the Romanian population lives in rural areas and 67% plays an active role in agricultural activities. 30% of the rural population works in either totally or partially self-sufficient farms on 1.17-3.3 hectares. 97% of the farms are small scale farms.

In Romania the average size of farms is 3.5 hectares, the average size of individual farms is 2.3 hectares, and the average size of commercial enterprises is 270.4 hectares. The share of agriculture in the GDP is the highest among European countries (6% in 2010). Romania is the second largest agricultural producer (after Poland) among the Central and Eastern European countries and the sixth among the EU27 countries (Tánczos, 2012).

Rural development in Romania and Hungary between 2007 and 2013

Between 2007 and 2013 Romania could spend EUR10 billion while Hungary could spend EUR5.3 billion on rural development including member state contributions (Table 3). In the period examined 61 855 grant applications for rural development were allocated to Romania representing 47% spending from the funds. Alba County has to be mentioned in relation to the number of successful grant applications

with the outstanding result of 4 561 effective applications. It was followed by Bistrița-Năsăud with 3 897 successful applications and Mehedinți with 2 803 applications. The three counties are among the ten counties that have won the largest amounts.

București and Ilfov Counties received the least amount of grants (10 and 188). There were much more winner applications in Hungary, but with fewer amounts than Romania. In the analysed period, 70% of spending from the rural development funds was represented by the 201 244 successful applications in Hungary. Regarding the number of grants, Bács-Kiskun county delivered remarkable results: 31 905 applications had won, followed by Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (25 732) and Hajdú-Bihar (23 928) counties. Right after Pest county they could take advantage of the rural development funds to the greatest extent. With 2 855 winning applications there is Komárom-Esztergom county at the end of the list.

As far as the scope of measures is concerned, the modernization of agricultural assets, as well as the increase in the added value of agricultural and forest products were crucial both in Hungary and Romania. In the former agricultural environmental protection payments, in the latter the modernization of villages were the major priorities. The smallest amount of subsidies went to the axis of LEADER (EUR 424 million in Romania

Table 3. The budget of the Romanian and Hungarian rural development (2007-2013)

Name	Romania	Hungary
Total grants, EUR (EAFRD+Member States contributions)	10 billion	5,3 billion
Number of successful applications	61 855	201 244
Contracted amounts of support, EUR	4 727 401 911	3 724 200 800
UTILISATION OF RESOURCES	47%	70%
Axis 1 (Competitiveness), EUR	2 545 400 451	2 256 681 782
Axis 2 (Environment protection), EUR	37 085 311	663 792 528
Axis 3 (Quality of life), EUR	2 097 806 221	669 555 268
Axis 4 (LEADER), EUR	47 109 928	134 171 222
Romanian data: 2007-2012.08.29., Hungarian data: 2007-2013.10.14.		

Source: own edition on the basis of APDRP.ro, MVH.hu (2007-2013)

and EUR 273 million in Hungary). 17% of LEADER funds was utilized in Hungary, while a scarce 2% was used in Romania during the investigation period. This can be explained by the 2.5 year delay (2009) in starting the first cycle of LEADER programme by Romania. There were no ministerial regulations on the work plan when task forces worked out their regional strategies: the documentation, the implementation of procedures and (as a result) the release of applications were considerably delayed. According to the head of the South Satu Mare Action Group (as one of the interviewees), in Romania, the LEADER is a way to decentralization by bringing decision-making down to local level. The Romanian Ministry provides a strong influence, because the Rural Development, Fisheries and Paying Agency only supplements the operation of LEADER. Romania will not lag behind in the 2014-2020 period and more funds will be available for bottom-up initiatives.

After the 2007 EU accession of Romania, the Romanian-Hungarian trade links and rural development cooperation intensified significantly. Between 2007 and 2013, EUR

with Hungarians Living Beyond the Borders national strategic programmes are also worth mentioning. The latter specifies the major goals and areas of Romanian-Hungarian co-operation during the 2014-2020 term, emphasizing the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The European Regional Associations, the LEADER programme, the co-operation and networking, the national strategic framework programs and professional cross-border co-operations are the proposed frameworks for implementation. (Vidékfejlesztési Minisztérium, 2012) It is obvious that the links between tourism and regional development are very complex including; the regionalisation type of the given country; the typologies of the different regions (outlying and remote, intermediate or economically integrated); and their economic development level and tourism potential. (Bujdosó et al. 2015/a) Although the microregions among the two countries can be considered as heterogeneous in terms of tourism and can be characterised by significant spatial disparities, the tourist potential of the Hungarian-Romanian border region is very important. (Bujdosó et al. 2015/b)

Table 4. The correlation between the effectiveness of the proposals counties and GDP (Pearson Correlation)

Name	Romania	Hungary
	Cumulative amount of aid approved (EUR)	
GDP purchasing power parity (million EUR)	0.391*	0.602**
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

Source: result of own research (2013)

248 million was provided to develop cross-border co-operation within the framework of Hungary-Romania Cross-border Co-operation Programme, partially financed from ERDF, as well from national funds. The programme – that will continue in the 2014-2020 period – aims to bring people, communities and actors closer in border regions, in order to promote the joint development of co-operating regions. The Carpathian Region Business Network and the Rural Development Cooperation

Contact Investigation

The first hypothesis, which presumes that the relationship between the GDP of a given county and the amount of approved grant requests is significant, was verified by Pearson correlation for both countries. In Hungary the positive correlation is much stronger than in Romania. Hence, it is statistically proved that the economically more developed counties received larger amounts of subsidies than the less developed ones (Table 4).

This is because the farmers and entrepreneurs in less developed counties often do not have enough deductibles for the applications (as it was also confirmed by the interviews). On either side of the border, almost each respondents had negative opinion about borrowing. The procedure of the requests for funds was diagnosed as bureaucratic and cumbersome, even by the successful candidates.

The factor analysis of the support indicators of the Romanian and Hungarian counties

As a result of factor analysis approx. the same two factor variables can be identified for both countries (Table 5-6). Because of its too big impact (and distortion of the results) the approved grant per one hectare of cultivated agricultural land (EUR/Ha) indicator was excluded from the analysis in the case of Romania.

The name of the first factor is ‘factor of grants for agricultural activity’, the second’s name is ‘factor of grants for inhabitants’, which means that these two theoretical factors were in the

factor analysis instead of the actual indicators, thereby eliminating the excessive weight of the multitude of variables that are strongly correlated with each other.

Clusters of the Romanian and Hungarian counties

By the two factor variables the counties of both states can be classified into five-five clusters. So, the second hypothesis (H2) which assumed that the Romanian and Hungarian counties can be arranged into clusters on the basis of the spatial distribution of grants financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development is herewith justified. The Romanian and Hungarian clusters and the corresponding counties are shown on Table 7.

The counties of the first cluster received the least subsidies for rural development related to the agricultural activity factor. On regional level, except for the administratively non-existing Székely Land, North East, South West and Ialomita, every county in the

Table 5. The correlation of the Romanian factors with the variables

Factor Components	Factors	
	1	2
<i>First factor (from three variables)</i>		
Approved grant per one farm employee (EUR/person)	0.906	0.358
Approved grant per one agricultural farm (EUR/farm)	0.877	0.452
Approved grant per one rural inhabitant (EUR/person)	0.811	0.505
<i>Second factor (from two variables)</i>		
Approved grant per one unemployed (EUR/person)	0.391	0.875
Approved grant per one inhabitant (EUR/person)	0.440	0.857

Source: result of own research (2013)

Table 6. The correlation of the Hungarian factors with the variables

Factor Components	Factors	
	1	2
<i>First factor (from three variables)</i>		
Approved grant per one inhabitant (EUR/person)	0.953	0.171
Approved grant per one unemployed (EUR/person)	0.889	-0.041
Approved grant per one farm employee (EUR/person)	0.696	0.668
<i>Second factor (from two variables)</i>		
Approved grant per one agricultural farm (EUR/farm)	-0.084	0.909
Approved grant per one hectare of cultivated agricultural land (EUR/ha)	0.635	0.688

Source: result of own research (2013)

Table 7. Clusters of the Romanian and Hungarian counties

	Romania	Hungary
Cluster 1	Argeş, Bacău, Botoşani, Buzău, Călăraşi, Covasna, Dâmboviţa, Dolj, Galaţi, Giurgiu, Gorj, Harghita, Iaşi, Ilfov, Maramureş, Mehedinţi, Mureş, Neamţ, Olt, Prahova, Suceava, Teleorman, Vâlcea, Vaslui, Vrancea	Békés, Csongrád, Fejér, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Somogy
Cluster 2	Alba, Arad, Bihor, Brăila, Caraş-Severin, Cluj, Ialomiţa, Timiş	Bács-Kiskun, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar, Pest, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg
Cluster 3	Bistriţa-Năsăud, Sălaj, Satu Mare, Tulcea;	Baranya, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Veszprém
Cluster 4	Constanţa, Huneadoara, Sibiu	Komárom-Esztergom, Nógrád, Vas
Cluster 5	Braşov	Tolna

Source: result of own calculation (2013)

statistical regions of South Romania were in an unfavourable situation considering the effectiveness of receiving funds. Brasov County was in the best position, and formed a separate cluster by itself. The other clusters performed at about the same level.

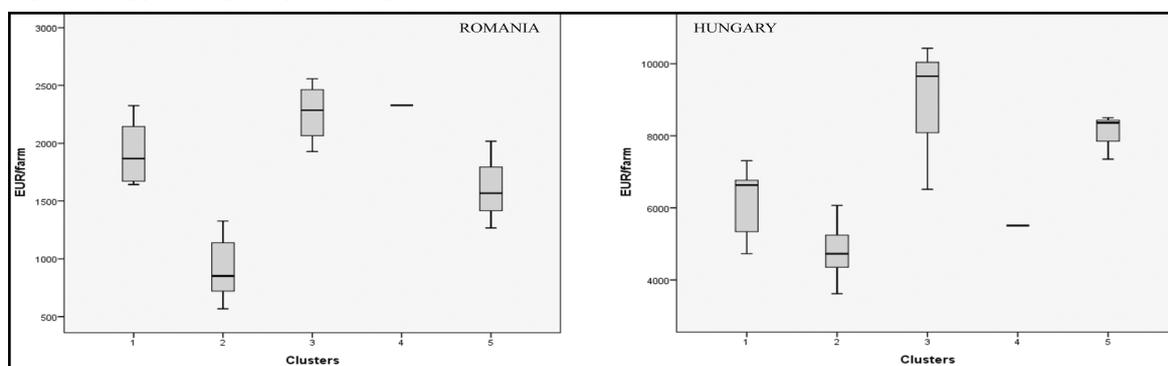
The counties of the Hungarian second cluster received the least amount of rural development subsidies, compared to the agricultural factor. In this regard the third cluster was in an unfavourable position as well. The value of the indicator is reasonably established in the first group's counties. Tolna county forms a separate cluster and regarding the received grants for agricultural activity it belongs to the top level, similarly to the fourth cluster. In contrast with Romania, the regions show an entirely diverse image. As it can be seen in Figure 1, there are counties in each region whose performance was worse while other

counties received subsidies more successfully. Based on the factor and cluster analysis the third hypothesis (H3) which states that the Romanian and Hungarian rural development displays different trends in terms of the 2007-2013 application features, can be partially accepted.

The characteristics of clusters by indicators

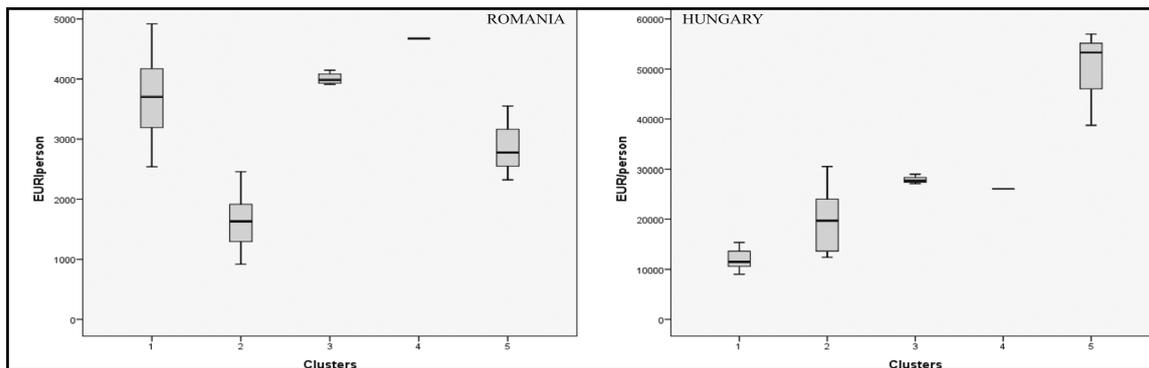
Further the characteristics and relative position of clusters are illustrated in boxdiagrams, where the boxes contain the standard deviation of half of the sample. The upper and lower sole of the box displays the minimum and maximum of a particular cluster. Based on the approved grant per one agricultural farm, with a EUR 2286 median, the Romanian Brasov county is followed by Bistriţa-Năsăud, Sălaj, Satu Mare and Tulcea from the third cluster. The value of this indicator was much larger in Hungary. Baranya, Győr-Moson-Sopron

Figure 1. Approved grant per one agricultural farm (EUR/farm, clusters)



Source: result of own calculation (2013)

Figure 2. Approved grant per one farm employee (EUR/person, clusters)



Source: result of own calculation (2013)

and Veszprém, the counties of the third cluster performed best with a EUR 9651 median. The results can be seen on Figure 1.

Even in case of the groups in least favourable situations, the approved grant per one farm employee is higher in Hungary than in Romania. The value of this indicator is the biggest in the third cluster's counties after Brasov in Romania, similarly to the previous indicator. In Hungary, with a EUR 53 292 median the highest value of this indicator belongs to the fifth cluster (Komárom-Esztergom, Nógrád, Vas). Mathematically, the number of agricultural employees has a growing potential in these counties (Figure 2).

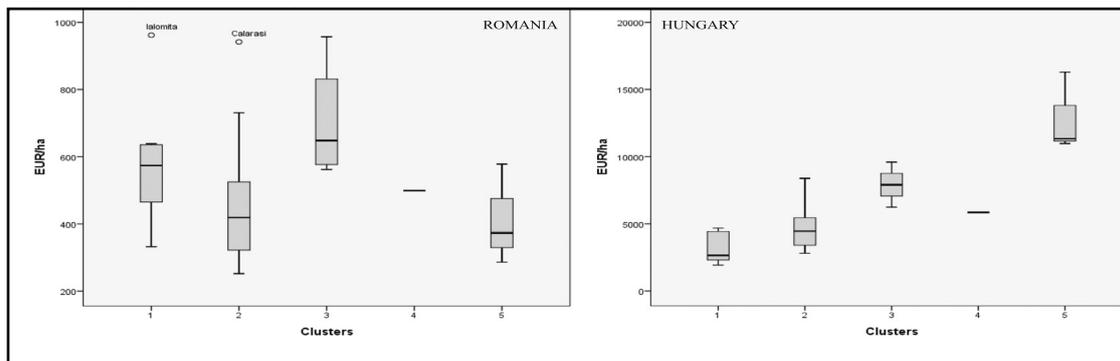
As stated by Schlett (2013), job seekers and agricultural entrepreneurs could be primarily targeted by the expansion of agricultural employment. In case of Romania, the approved grant per one hectare of cultivated agricultural land caused the smallest differences between

clusters. Based on the median, the counties of the third cluster are in the most favourable situation. In terms of this indicator, Ialomita county from the first cluster and Călărași county from the second cluster are in an outstanding position. The Hungarian index values outbid the values of Romania, and the best position is held by the counties of the fifth cluster with a EUR 11 337 median, as it can be seen in Figure 3.

Conclusion

The allocation of rural development fund took place in consideration of the characteristics of the rural areas and without favouritism but there are certain critical points. The economically more developed counties were more effective in their applications, especially in Hungary. Grant application activities in the economically underdeveloped counties could be encouraged in the 2014-2020 period by counselling within the framework of national

Figure 3. Approved grant per one hectare of cultivated agricultural land (EUR/ha, clusters)



Source: result of own calculation (2013)

programs and real program assistance based on actual intellectual capital. Rural development in Hungary between 2007 and 2013 was more diverse and more efficient than in Romania. There were more measures, a larger number and smaller projects won support and 70% of the grants were utilised compared to the 47% in Romania. The situation of the Hungarian clusters according to the indicators are much better than in Romania. The value of subsidies for the unemployed are significant both in Romania and in Hungary therefore support should primarily be given to job-creating investments. According to Schlett (2013) the primary target group for the expansion of employment in agriculture could be job seekers

and agricultural entrepreneurs. On the basis of the examined variables five-five clusters can be considered different types of counties. In both countries a greater emphasis should be placed on the LEADER program as bottom-up initiations are more likely to provide a solution to the old and new problems of the regions. It would be appropriate to create a standard and publicly available database on the utilisation of rural development funds. The research results may provide useful information for decision-makers involved in rural development and we believe that the results are indicative as to which areas and factors should be focussed on during the implementation of the 2014-2020 rural development program.

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