

## EDIFICATIONS FROM THE LEADER PROGRAM BASED ON THE RESULTS OF A HUNGARIAN MICRO-REGION IV. NEW SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS

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### **Abstract**

*15 years ago Hungary joined the European Union. The first full financial period for the nation as a member of the European Community was 2007-2013. As a full member, Hungary gained access to many financial sources granted by the European Union. It is necessary to inspect the efficiency of how the sources have been spent on development, focusing on the LEADER program. The best way to do this is by selecting one of the poorer micro-regions and examining it using different methods. Within my research I used inspected different statistics, I looked into the traditional profession of shepherding which has a long history in the region and I interviewed the citizens of the Sárrét microregion. This multidisciplinary research gave more precise results and conclusions for my research. Suggestions made on the on the conclusions can provide a much more accurate help to decision makers in the periods that are ahead of us.*

**Keywords:** LEADER program, Hungary, Sárrét, development, shepherding

### **New scientific findings**

1. Projects in the area do not reflect the view that economic-type developments are longer-lasting, have a longer effect and serve the development of the area better than social and infrastructural investments in maintaining population (Bonfiglio et al., 2017). However, the gap in infrastructure in the region I performed my investigations is such that it has strongly motivated the population and managers to encourage developments in this area (Baranyi, 2008). Investments of this direction were also encouraged by the fact that neither the population nor the economy had been adequately prepared to exploit the potential of the program more effectively. Therefore, and as a result of the limited financial resources available, these projects as a whole could not bring about profound changes in the quality of life of the examined villages.

2. Since the long preparations for EU accession did not provide the necessary preparation for running projects and receiving resources efficiently, there was no equal opportunity in the "LEADER competition" for the different municipalities (Jávor, 2012). In the cases when there was an appropriate, dynamic entrepreneur in the community, a resident or a family with a willing, creative endeavour or even personal interest, and the management had sufficient agility and ability, then the settlement in

question was more likely to compete for projects and the success of implementation. The leader of the village has a role in shaping the work efficiency and overall experiences of the given settlement, i.e., in improving the selection, implementation and effectiveness of the project (Jávor et al. 2000).

3. As the previous political, economic and social system did not require the active participation of the population in decision-making and it could not go beyond a degree of autonomy, the approach that would have better served the effectiveness of the LEADER programs was missing (Udvardy, 2010a, 2010b). It would have been much more powerful and successful to activate the residents both in the implementation of the programs and in their emotional attachment to them. A new project needs to become more embedded in the life of a village, because success and efficiency increase activity. Effective investments are not just mood boosters that increase the ability and willingness of the population in a spiral manner to play a role in both decision-making and implementation.

4. It takes longer for the deeply embedded habits in these settlements after the political restructuring in 1989 to change in accordance with the position, task and role of each village in the life of the given micro-region. In general, there are communities and villages that play a role in employment, job creation, and the improvement of services, but in the case of other villages, only special and subdued functions develop (Fenyves et al., 2007).

5. The population of the area is clearly aging, with the exception of a village where a significant proportion of the population belongs to a minority ethnic group. This feature in itself gives a different perspective to the problem. In the case of Gypsies, it can be observed at the level of the whole society that there are more children and a higher rate of population growth. Thus, in the villages of the micro-region, it is necessary to prepare for the improvement of services that serve the elderly population, as well as to improve the network of nursery schools and kindergartens along with schools. In their case, it is expected that there will be further position losses in the region's development opportunities (Bakos et al., 2014; Jávor et al., 2017). If the population becomes more active and the appropriate means are found, there will be a greater chance of slowing down or possibly stopping the decline. However, in order to reverse the trend, the resources currently available in the micro-region are not sufficient, therefore, they need to be increased significantly.

6. The degree of cultivation of traditions and folk customs decreases in these settlements, which can further erode communities. Much more activity and intensity is needed to discover and preserve values in education

and in preserving traditions. It was also found that the past, values and thus the chances of the various villages in these areas were not the same.

7. Agricultural production in these areas is likely to remain dominant. At the same time, it can be stated that GDP and income from agriculture is higher, similarly to robotisation and digitalisation, which provides a better quality of life than at present, but this money will be sufficient for much less people due to the improvement in needs concerning the quality of life (Jávor and Jávor, 2018a). There is a need for those who cannot survive in agriculture to find income-generating activities which not only ensure the full livelihood of the micro-region's population, even in other villages, towns, but also constantly improve living conditions and quality of life (Jávor and Jávor 2018b). My findings are also supported by the results of my research in the sheep sector, according to which thousands of jobs could be lost nationwide and tens of jobs in the region (Jávor et al., 2019a; Jávor et al., 2019b). This entails the release of new, unskilled labour force, which is less suitable for retraining due to its age and education. Accordingly, there is a need to further develop rural policy and increase resources in order to prevent further development of the villages in the micro-region (Döbrönte and Vida, 2004; Szávu, 2013). This is also important because it can have a major drain effect due to competition from prosperous villages and towns. This in itself can be twofold, both positive and negative. The low population growth rate further reinforces this process.

8. The sources and economic conditions of the current system, considering its size, are not suitable for eliminating imbalances and differences. In many cases, given the current circumstances, it may even lead to greater differences between villages. This is underpinned by EU processes, with little change in the position, location and effectiveness of EU regions.

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