



MINISTERUL AGRICULTURII
ȘI INDUSTRIEI ALIMENTARE
AL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA



MOLDOVA RURAL LEADER PROJECT

Solidarity Fund PL in MD

September 2020 - August 2022

This material was developed within the "Moldova Rural LEADER Project", financed by the United States Agency for International Development - USAID, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, cooperation program for development - PolishAid. The Project is implemented by Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova, in partnership with the National LEADER Network in the Republic of Moldova. Strategic partner - Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova. The content is the responsibility of the author and does not necessarily reflect the point of view of USAID and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland.

About the LEADER approach



Patricia Varzari, Manager of the Development and Partnerships Unit, NLN. **Photo credit:** NLN

The LEADER approach – an acronym in French (liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale) meaning “Links between actions for the development of the rural economy”) is an European Union initiative to support rural development projects, initiated at the local level in order to revitalize rural areas.

The main actors are the so-called Local Action Groups (LAGs), which represent an institutionalized partnership between representatives of the public, civic and business sectors.

The Republic of Moldova is the first and currently the only non-EU country to implement the LEADER approach as a public policy tool for rural development.

The implementation of the LEADER approach began in 2016, when the first 8 LAGs were created, and later this mechanism was taken over as a rural development model solution to improve living conditions and ensure inclusive economic growth in the rural areas of the Republic Moldova. Today, 47 LAGs from 438 administrative-territorial units operate on the territory of the country, covering over 50% of the rural areas. In order to ensure the quality of the implementation process of the LEADER approach and the sustainability of this mechanism, in 2018 the National LEADER Network (NLN) was created, acting as a guarantor of the process. The large-scale implementation of local community projects by LAGs has revitalized rural regions and stimulated the development of a legal framework, which has enabled the adjustment of the LEADER approach to the local context and the launch in the summer of 2022 of the LEADER Program, administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova (MAFI).

Moldova Rural LEADER Project



Lazarev family, owners of the "Vatra Dumeniului" museum, beneficiaries of the "Plaiul Codrilor" LAG, at the launch of the LEADER Program. **Photo credit:** NLN

41

Local Action Groups

474

Rural areas

234

Local projects implemented

130

Local projects to be implemented

Moldova Rural LEADER Program is a joint initiative of USAID and Polish aid to contribute to the improvement of living conditions and inclusive economic growth in rural areas by expanding the LEADER approach as a model solution for effective local development in the Republic of Moldova. The project was launched in August 2020 and contributes to the development of the LEADER approach on a wider scale and the creation of a local development mechanism at national level, to increase competitiveness and living conditions in local communities and strengthen the alignment with EU best practices of rural development.

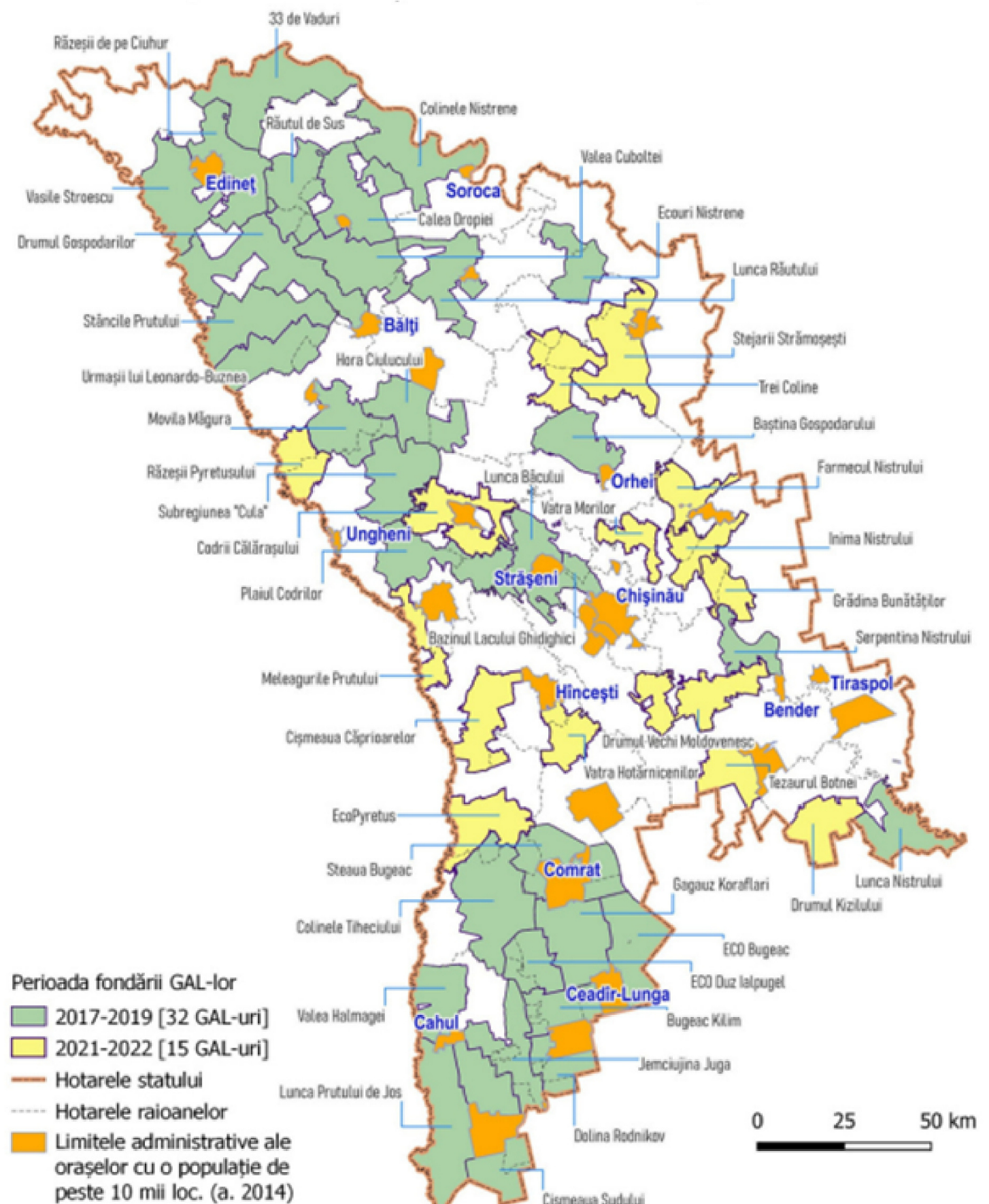
To date, the **Moldova Rural LEADER Program** is implemented in over 260 localities in the Republic of Moldova or **50% of the country's rural areas**, generating economic development opportunities for **more than 1 million people**. Within the project, **8 new LAGs** were created; **26** of the already existing LAGs benefited from financial support, and another 15 newly created LAGs are to receive financial support for the implementation of their Local Development Strategies (SDL).

Local Action Groups' Creation

During 2021, the National LEADER Network (NLN) facilitated the creation of 15 LAGs, 8 of which were established within the Moldova Rural LEADER Program.

The process of transforming a territorial initiative into an active LAG involved several stages and 9-10 working sessions per initiative, which were carried out with the support of 6 experts and facilitators. With the support of NLN, each of the newly-created LAGs have developed over a period of 10 months a Local Development Strategy (SDL), which they will further use to develop the territory in the next 7 years following the LAG's formation.

The map of Moldovan LAGs



As of October 2021, MAFI has adapted the LAGs' formation methodology to the local context, based on the Guide on LAG formation, which is managed by NLN. Thus, the 8 newly created LAGs are already registered as legal entities, in accordance with the Law no. 50 regarding Local Action Groups. They cover 115 rural localities, with a population of 144.6 thousand people.

LAGs contribute to the economic, demographic, educational and cultural development of the localities in the Republic of Moldova, implementing development strategies elaborated based on the needs determined by the residents, at the local level. On a practical level, LAGs determine the economic and social sectors that must be consolidated and developed through each call launched at the local level, based on some priorities from the Local Development Strategies (SDL). This fuels the development of micro-projects that contribute to the development of small businesses, improve the infrastructure in localities, create products and services that are missing on the local market and promote innovation in the territory.

LEADER-EU 2.0 Rural Development Fund

Launched in April 2021, the EU-LEADER Rural Development Fund (RDF) 2.0. provides co-financing in the amount of **20 million lei** for 26 LAGs from the Republic of Moldova. Co-financing takes place through two financial measures developed within the Fund: the LEADER Activation Measure and the LEADER Development Measure.

Total funding amount:
20 million MDL

Activation Measure:
15 million MDL

Development Measure:
5 million MDL

750,000 MDL | suma medie de co-finanțare per GAL

107,000 MDL | suma medie per proiect finanțat

Within the Fund, the 26 LAGs supported the implementation of over **230 local projects**, **51% of them being implemented by women.**



Viorel Gherciu, Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry; Jānis Mažeiks, EU Ambassador; Kent D. Logsdon, U.S. Ambassador and Tomasz Kobzdej, Polish Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova at the launch of the LEADER Program. **Photo credit: NLN**

Structure of implemented projects (230)

Based on financial measures:

Development Measure
25 projects

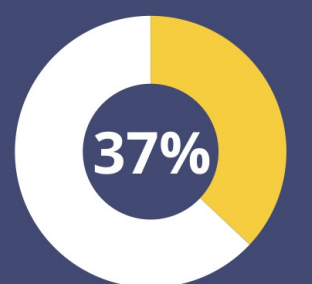
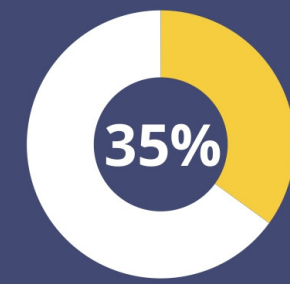
Activation Measure
205 projects



Per sector of activity:

131 projects

Business sector



69 projects

Public sector

20 projects

Civic sector

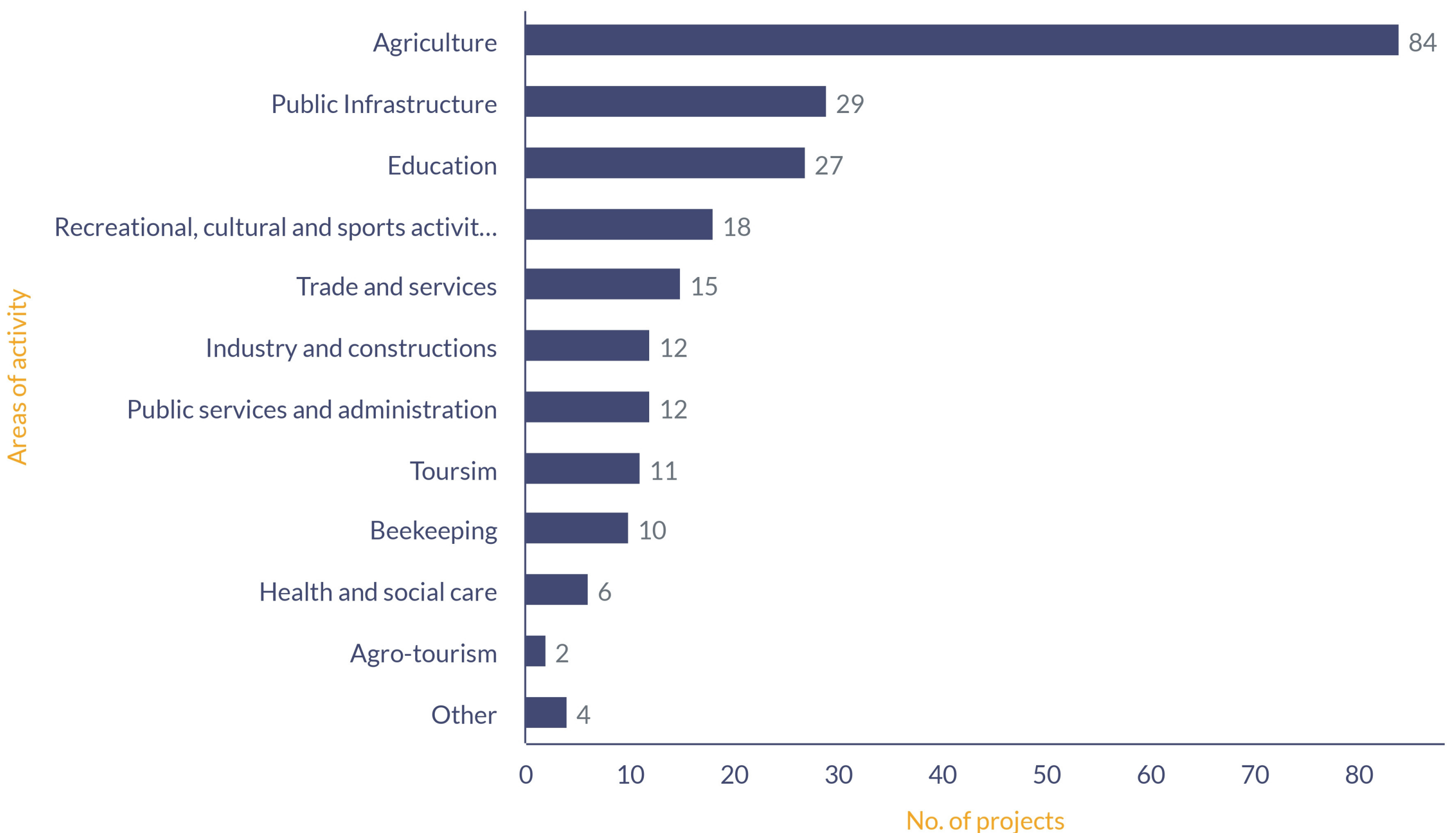
9 projects

Public-civic partnership

1 project

Public-business partnership

Per areas of activity (230 local projects):



Social projects for local communities

Equipping and renovating preschool institutions and schools



27 local projects

Renovation and arrangement of the sports field/playground/yard of the institution;

Furniture purchases;

Construction of water supply and sewage systems;

Change of windows;

Procurement and installation of surveillance systems;

Renovation of the medical office and the food block.

LAGs

Ecouri Nistrene, Dolina Rodnikov, Colinele Tigheciului, Lunca Ciuhurului, Calea Dropiei, Bugeac Kilim, Urmasii lui Leonardo, Valea Cuboltei, Drumul Gospodarilor, Vasile Stroescu, Plaiul Codrilor, Steaua Bugeac.

Developing social infrastructure



29 local projects

Arrangement and equipment of leisure and recreation spaces, parks and green spaces;

Street lighting.

LAGs

Calea Dropiei, Colinele Tigheciului, Lunca Prutului de Jos, Serpentina Nistrului, Lunca Ciuhurului.

The LAGs "**Rautul de Sus**" and "**Valea Cuboltei**" supported projects to equip and renovate social canteens, aimed at ensuring the sustainability of their operation and expanding access to services for people from vulnerable groups.

Local perspective projects

Beekeeping - an area of interest for LAG's residents

Total amount of the project:

159,000 MDL

▼ **LAG "Movila Magura"**
70,000 MDL

▼ **Personal contribution**
89,000 MDL

Until the implementation of the project, the beekeeper performed the uncapping process manually, but with the procurement of an automatic uncapping table, he will be able to process much larger volumes of honey, in a shorter time.

100 beehives and an automatic honey uncapping table were purchased within the project.

Pavel Crețu lives in the village of Scumpia, Fălești district, where he has been raising bees for several years together with his wife and two children. In the summer of 2021, encouraged by the managers of the "Movila Măgura" LAG and motivated to expand his business, Pavel has submitted an application form to the local call launched to finance small businesses.

The beekeeper sells his products on the local market and the one from the district's center. In the summer of 2021, he managed to collect 1 tone of honey, and for the summer season of 2022, he aims to double the amount produced. Moreover, by purchasing 100 modern polyurethane beehives equipped with plastic collecting bottoms, he will be able to collect other valuable bee derivatives such as pollen and royal jelly.

Pavel Crețu believes that the constant support from the LAG "Movila Măgura" during the implementation of the project was essential for the development of his business: "Without the support and encouragement of the LAG, that guided me during the development of the application form and the reporting period, I wouldn't have applied for funding". In addition, the funding received from the "Movila Măgura" LAG motivated Pavel to enrich his knowledge and develop new skills in the field of beekeeping.

Currently, the space intended for the processing of bee products is set up at Pavel Cretu's home. Thanks to the funding obtained from the LAG, he has been able to expand his activity and plans to identify a larger workspace outside his own household.

In the framework of RDF 2.0., 16 local actors expressed their desire to receive support in the development of businesses in the beekeeping field. 10 of them are supported in the implementation of projects aimed at (i) the application of modern treatments against diseases and mites in bees; (ii) streamlining the collection of honey and other beekeeping products intended for sale in the country and abroad; (iii) the purchase of inventory, beekeeping equipment and biological material for the expansion of the beekeeping activity, honey production, as well as the realization of these products on the local market.

Local perspective projects

A playground for children - a start of investment in preschool education



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We focus on children and their future. If we provide a favorable environment for young people to develop, they will no longer feel the need to leave the locality, but they will stay to continue their parents' businesses and invest in local development.

Ludmila Golovatic

Director, LAG "Movila Măgura"

The kindergarten of Făleştii Noi commune has undergone a few changes over the years. It all started in the 1980s, when the kindergarten was equipped only with a simple sandbox and a slide, while some swings and gazebos were added later. Now, thanks to funding under the Rural Development Fund LEADER-EU 2.0, the kindergarten's playground has become much more attractive.

The playground is now equipped with new complexes (slides), tables, chairs and swings. Following the installation of the playground, the kindergartners enjoy outdoor activities, which help them to develop multilaterally.

"Before using the playground complex, we made sure to teach the children certain rules: not to bully other children, to wait their turn, to help each other if they are afraid to climb. The interaction on the playground teaches them to be friendly, to play as a team, to support each other", said Lidia Turturea, director of the kindergarten.

The kindergarten received financial support of 76,000 lei to equip the playground under the Rural Development Fund LEADER-EU 2.0, while the Mayorality of Făleşti commune provided co-funding of 33,000 lei.

Local perspective projects

Innovative technologies in agriculture

Maxim Sontea, the owner of the 'Şontea Maxim Mihail' farm in Cuhneşti commune, Glodeni district, has equipped his own cattle farm with a liquid manure tanker. This machine allows the farm owner to transport and spread the liquid waste from his farm on the fields and feed the farm animals with agricultural crops that have been fertilized with organic substances. The liquid manure tanker was purchased with the support of the Local Action Group 'Urmaşii lui Leonardo' as part of the "Innovative Technologies in Agriculture" project, funded within the Rural Development Fund LEADER-EU 2.0. As part of the project, the 'Şontea Maxim Mihail' farm received financial support in value of 80,000 lei, while co-financing 60,000 lei for the purchase of the liquid manure tanker, to ensure financial sustainability of the acquisition.

"In agriculture, we are always looking for opportunities to modernize our business. The liquid manure tanker is an expensive equipment and I felt really motivated to apply for this project," said Maxim Şontea.

The liquid manure tanker has a capacity of 5 tons and it is equipped with a spoon for spreading the manure over a diameter of about 15-20 meters, which also implies a much faster process. By using a vacuum pump, the manure is pumped directly from the sewer, avoiding waste and ensuring that the manure is spread evenly over the fields.



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With the help of liquid manure tanker, we ensure homogeneous and qualitative spreading of animal waste, which helps us to fertilize the soil with natural fertilizers and save money at the same time.

Maxim Şontea

Owner of the „Şontea Maxim Mihail” farm

What Is Next?



Victor Ciolacu, owner of the "Conacul Mierii", beneficiary of the LAG „Plaiul Codrilor”.

Photo credit: NLN

Implementation of the Rural Development Fund – Inception Fund:

- Providing **15 newly created LAGs** with funds to co-finance projects and local initiatives that contribute to the implementation of Local Development Strategies (LDSs). The total budget available for LAGs is over **8 million MDL**;
- Contribution to the institutional and operational development of the LAGs;
- Consolidation of the LEADER implementation experience in the Republic of Moldova.

Consolidation of LAGs as thematic development models within the Innovators Fund 2.0:

- Ensuring continuity for the consolidation of LAGs as thematic development models in sectors such as aromatic and medicinal plants (LAG "Vasile Stroescu"), circular economy (LAG "Valea Cuboltei"), circular tourism and the piloting the Destination Management Organization concept (LAG "Lunca Prutului de Jos"). The total budget available for LAGs is **2.06 million MDL**;
- Identification and piloting of new thematic development models within 4 LAGs in rural tourism, beekeeping, dairy industry or others, depending on the specificity and potential of the applying LAG. Within this fund, **LAGs can receive funding of up to 600,000 lei**;
- Establishing the methodology to support the development of the rural economy through thematic development of LAGs within the LEADER approach.

Consolidation of the LEADER approach at the national level:

- Supporting **4 initiatives** in the process of creating LAGs and revitalizing 6 existing LAGs;
- Organizing **2 study visits** to share the experience of implementing the LEADER approach;
- Equipping the LAGs with technical equipment;
- Content assistance for **37 LAGs** selected within the **LEADER Program** launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry;
- Trainings for the management of LAGs;
- Improving the internal processes of data recording, monitoring and structuring within the NLN and LAGs.