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Sustainable rural development: an assessment of citizens' perception regarding the role of the planning framework within the Romanian local communities

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Abstract. The development of local rural communities implies the creation of conditions for long-term economic development, while protecting the environment, as well as the preservation of traditional local culture. In order to ensure sustainable development at the local level, local public administration authorities must develop planning documents that are an effective tool to respond to some of the challenges they face. In this context, the purpose of this article is to carry out an assessment of the perception of the inhabitants of the Greci Municipality, located in Tulcea County, regarding the implementation of the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of the Greci Municipality. The analysis was carried out from the perspective of economic, social and environmental factors that must ensure the local sustainable rural development. The Sustainable Local Development Strategy creates an environment dedicated to strengthening the capacity of local authorities to implement projects for the development of the socio-economic sector that meet the needs of citizens.

Keywords: sustainable development, rural areas, local development strategy, Romania

1. Introduction

During the latest decades, the development of the humanity has led to an increasing growth within the climate change and socio-economic instability. Through their actions, people have had a negative impact on the environment and endangered the balance between the social factor and the economic factor, affecting the development of local communities. In order not to jeopardize the inheritance of future generations, it is necessary to adopt a new way of thinking-sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development is based on socio-economic development in accordance with the ecological constraints and on the redistribution of resources

and their usage potential, in the long term, in order to ensure that the present needs are fulfilled, without compromising the ability of the future generations to fulfill their own needs (UN, 1987).

Rural areas are places where traditions, cultural heritage and nature are elaborately linked in a fragile balance (Gobattoni et al., 2015), yet throughout time, they have undergone massive demographic, socio-economic, spatial and functional transformations (Sikorski et al., 2020). Therefore, the rural space is a particularly complex concept, which can be defined according to the notions that characterize it. It includes everything that is not urban (Dona, Dobre and Gergely, 2005) and which has varied, being influenced in its evolution by both the urban and the rural phenomena. Currently, rural areas face a whole series of challenges, from aging population and low incomes, to the growing digital gap and the impact of climate change (CoR, 2022). These challenges were accentuated in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic through the drastic measures taken by governments to limit and stop the spread of the disease (Stan, Rus and Tasește, 2020).

The development of local rural communities implies the creation of conditions for long-term economic development, while protecting the environment, as well as the preservation of traditional local culture.

Therefore, the sustainable development of the local community is a challenge and a priority at the same time. It is a challenge because a community must be responsive to external and internal transformations and changes that may affect it, adapting itself to these changes through local strategic actions. It is also a priority due to the manner the locality develops affects its present and future chances/opportunities. So, sustainable development means "Thinking globally and acting locally" (Mohammed and Osman, 2015).

2. Literature review

Sustainable development emerged and became a fundamental strategy to guide the socio-economic transformation of the world (Shi et al., 2019) and although it did not succeed in completely stopping the harmful effects of human activities, it largely permitted the environment to manage itself better (Brașoveanu, 2013).

The contemporary challenges of the sustainable development concept were reviewed through the approval of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN, 2015), a program of global action in the development field with a universal character and which promotes the balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental).

Rural development must take into account the concept of sustainable development, rural areas being crucial for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in terms of food security, poverty eradication, social equity, natural resource conservation and environmental protection (Hu et al., 2022).

The concept of sustainable development is based on the development concept, namely the socio-economic development in accordance with the ecological constraints (Klarin, 2018), it is known that the sustainability covers all areas and sectors in which development takes place (Petrisor, 2017; Petrisor, Susa and Petrisor, 2020).

Rural development accounts for all the activities aimed at improving the quality of life in the rural area, being defined as the set of actions aimed at trying to compensate for the imbalances between rural and urban areas (López-Penabad, Iglesias-Casal and Rey-Ares, 2022).

Sustainable rural development is a priority within the programs of the European Union, and Romania being next on its agenda - in terms of agriculture and rural development, the

principles of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The rural areas in Romania occupy 87% of the national territory, with the rural space presenting important gaps compared to the urban environment, but also within it, either depending on the location near the big cities, or on the economic performance of the region (MDLPA-DPS, 2020).

In Romania, the commune is the basic administrative-territorial unit, being the territory where the rural policy is implemented. The Romanian rural areas encompass all the activities that take place outside the urban space, having three essential components: administrative communities made up of relatively few members and who have mutual relations; pronounced dispersion of the population and collective services; the particular economic role of agriculture and forestry (Dona, Dobre and Gergely, 2005).

In order to ensure a local sustainable development of communities, the local public administrations have the responsibility to create the necessary conditions for the implementation of economic-social development programs and projects, the objective of sustainable development being based on the interaction between the four pillars of development (economic, human, environmental and technological) which are in a dynamic and flexible process of operation (Dincă and Dumitră, 2020).

Although the Romanian countryside is characterized by a strong social and economic heterogeneity between the different areas of the country, the territorial development in Romania must take into account the improvement of the quality of life for local communities so that they become much more attractive places to live, to spend their free time, to invest and to work. Thus, the balanced and sustainable territorial development aims to reduce the disparities between the urban and the rural environment, in terms of population demographics, resources, the economic-social environment, the environment, the physical and technical-urban infrastructure (Stan, 2021).

In order to ensure sustainable development at the local level, the local public administration authorities must develop planning documents that are an effective tool to respond to some of the challenges they face; there are three common and interconnected elements considered fundamental for local sustainable development: the territory, the strategic partnership and the development strategy. Together they are known as the "trinity" of local territorial development (ENRD, 2016). Thus, the Sustainable Local Development Strategy has a planning and implementation character, and it constitutes an instrument for the scheduling and distribution of financial, natural and human resources, through which the priorities of intervention in the life of communities are established for the realization of projects and programs. Together with the General Urban Plan, the Sustainable Local Development Strategy constitutes instruments for the regulation and monitoring of the implementation process of financial resources for the balanced development of the commune within the territory, the local development using the opportunities of European financial resources, diversification of local entrepreneurial activity, etc. As stipulated in art. 10 of Law no. 350/2001, the town planning has as its main purpose the stimulation of the complex evolution of localities, through elaborating and implementing strategies for spatial, sustainable and integrated development, in the short, medium and long term, through town planning documentation establishing the rules that have a direct application on localities and their parts.

The problem of rural development and planning is complex because rural areas have a high potential for development (Stan, Vintilă and Țenea, 2016), local partnerships are necessary when the public administration fails to deliver collective goods, such as sustainable development, and there is a need for asking the support of other sectors of society (Bjärstig and Sandström, 2017). Thus, local public administration authorities form local partnerships with

private entities, non-governmental organizations and citizens in order to implement the integrated development strategy, because solving the complex problems of localities requires the cooperation of public and private actors (Stan, 2014; Stan et al., 2021).

During the recent years, the decentralization process in Romania has increased the role of local authorities and it led to seeking alternatives for the economic growth at the level of rural settlements, a viable solution represented by the increase in the number and efficiency of small businesses (Frolova et al., 2020). Therefore, the new research context, determined by the pandemic conditions, has identified a tendency to improve the investments in infrastructure and within the specialist personnel, all the more so since Romania is a country with an emerging economy, where the fluctuations of the financial indicators can sometimes get unexpected valences (Aivaz, 2021a).

Therefore, the main objective of sustainable rural development is to improve the quality of life of its citizens by ensuring decent incomes, access to quality public services, modernization of the infrastructure and of the housing, technical-utility development, etc.

The Sustainable Local Development Strategy creates an environment dedicated to strengthening the capacity of local authorities to implement projects for the development of the socio-economic sector that support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, boost partnerships between the public and the private sectors and facilitate the creation of new places for work.

3. Methodology and data

The aim of this article is to evaluate the perception of the inhabitants of the Greci Municipality, Tulcea County regarding the implementation of the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of Greci Municipality. The analysis was carried out from economic, social and environmental perspectives that must ensure local sustainable rural development.

To achieve the purpose of the research, a questionnaire was created and applied online, on the research website pluscommunication.eu, between March and April 2022. The questionnaire was distributed on social media groups, relevant to the citizens of Greci commune, Tulcea county.

It included a number of 10 closed and open questions. A total of 73 people responded to this questionnaire, of which 58 were female and 15 were male. A percentage of 61.64% of them have higher education, 32.88% high school education and only 5.48% have secondary education. 68.49% of respondents under the age of 30, 27.40% are between the ages of 30 and 55, and a percentage of 4.11% were over the age of 55.

4. Results and discussion

Greci commune is located within the South-East Region, in Tulcea County. Tulcea County consists of 5 cities, 46 communes and 90 villages. Greci ranks fourth in terms of the population of the communes in the county, with a population of 5,194 inhabitants, according to the statistics, and it covers an area of 8,770 hectares, of which 483 hectares are urban territories.

The locality is organized according to economic, socio-cultural and geographical circumstances and it only consists of the locality of the same name. Greci is a commune that includes the oldest mountains in Europe.

From an economic point of view, the municipality of Greci relies on the sectors with the fastest growth, such as the textile sector, agriculture/animal husbandry, the investment sector and tourism. The most favorable factors for potential investors are represented by the short

distance between the commune of Greci and the cities of Brăila and Galați, with the completion of the bridge over the Danube constituting an even greater advantage.

In order to achieve an optimal level of development, the local public administration has implemented a series of projects in accordance with the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of the Municipality of Greci aimed at strengthening the sustainable development.

Starting from these considerations, in order to determine the residents' perception of the role of the planning framework in Greci commune, a survey was carried out through a questionnaire.

At Question no. 1: *What do you consider to be the main existing problems at the commune level?* several existing problems within the Greci commune were brought to the attention of the citizens, such as: the situation of children from disadvantaged families, school dropouts, poor diversification of economic sectors, job instability.

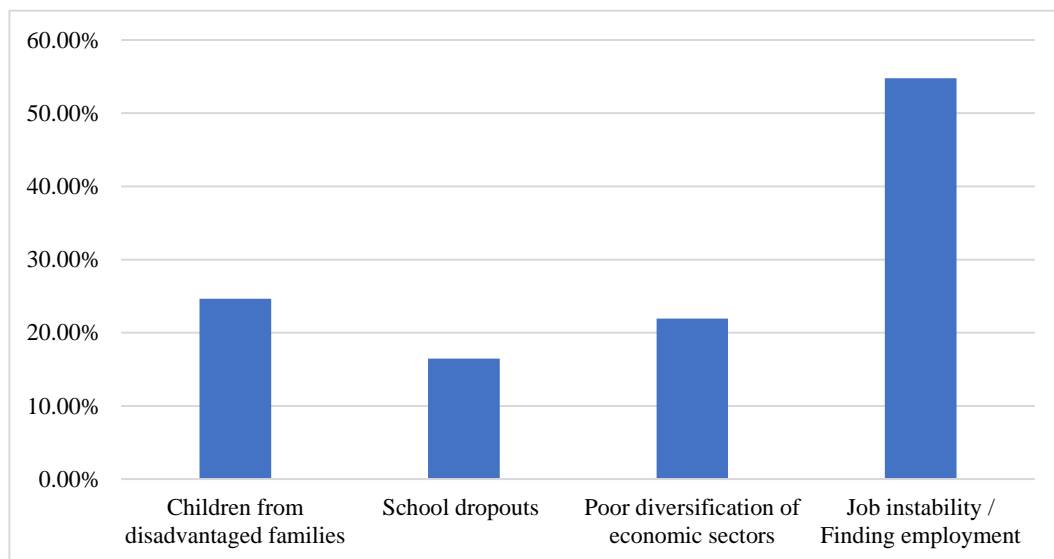


Figure 1. The main existing problems within the Greci commune (Source: author's work)

The citizens consider (Figure 1), in a percentage of 54.79%, that the biggest existing problem in the Greci commune is the job instability and finding employment, the only employment opportunities being the two textile factories, the bakery factory and the jobs within the agricultural sphere. In the South-East region, the employment rate of the working-age population (15-64 years) from the rural environment was 58.10%, according to a study carried out by the National Institute of Statistics (2021). Within this context, due to the fact that the sustainable development is a more and more frequently invoked topic in the current period, an analysis undertaken by Aivaz (2021b) on a diverse sample of companies which are oriented towards supporting other businesses, offered a series of innovative solutions for the professionalization of the existing workforce and for the effectiveness of the outsourced logistics services.

Children from disadvantaged families are considered by a percentage of 24.66% of the citizens as being a problem, and school dropouts in percentage of 16.44% - this is due to the fact that children are not sufficiently supported at the local level. The local public administration intends to include these children in social programs that support them and help them develop.

The rural environment can only develop through an integrated approach regarding the planned investments, which in the medium and long term will lead to improving the quality of life and slowing down or even stopping the demographic decline that characterizes villages and communes today (MDLPA-DPS, 2020).

At Question no. 2: *How do you perceive the usefulness of the following projects carried out in Greci commune?* the following aspects were questioned: the modernization of streets, the modernization and expansion of street lighting systems, the expansion of water supply and sewerage systems, the preservation of cultural heritage and the last successfully completed project, the gym. Figure 2 shows the percentages regarding the evaluation by the respondents, depending on the importance given. It can be observed; however, that most of the projects carried out at the level of the Greci commune are evaluated positively, the citizens being satisfied and very satisfied with the projects carried out by the Greci Municipality Town Hall.

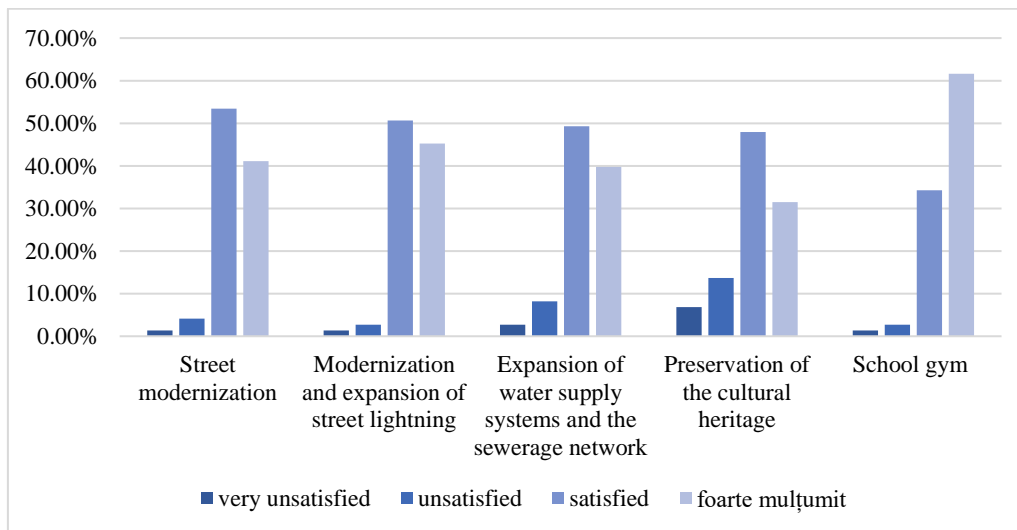


Figure 2. Projects carried out in recent years within the Greci commune Greci (Source: author's work)

Therefore, the perception of the respondents regarding the questioned aspects:

a) School gym

Looking at the school gym, it can be observed that a positive evaluation of the citizens prevails, 34.25% being satisfied and a percentage of 61.64% very satisfied. The results obtained are supported by the fact that the sports hall project called "Execution of construction works for the investment objective School sports hall, Greci commune, Tulcea county - Ivan Patzaichin sports hall" financed by the "National Investment Company" was completed in on March 3, 2022.

b) Street modernization

Regarding street modernization, the over 94% of the respondents positively assessed the results of the projects implemented at the level of local public administration. During the recent years, funds have been accessed for asphaltting the main and secondary roads in the locality. Currently, the Greci Town Hall has completed the project for "Asphaltting and modernization of local roads, execution of asphaltting works for the investment objective - Modernization of local roads in Greci commune, Tulcea county" - project financed by the "National Local Development Program".

c) Expansion of water supply systems and the sewerage network

The vast majority of respondents are satisfied (49.31%) and very satisfied (39.73%) with the implementation of the project to expand the water network and the sewerage network in the commune. A small percentage of respondents show that they are dissatisfied with this aspect, but until the end of 2022, the project "Extension of water supply system and sewerage network in Greci commune, Tulcea county" financed by the "National Program" is ongoing. This project is financed by the "National Local Development Program".

Next, the administrative-territorial unit of the commune of Greci submitted other projects for the development and modernization of the commune, such as the execution of sewage and sewerage works for the investment objective "Extension and modernization of the sewerage and wastewater evaporation system of the commune of Greci, the county Tulcea", financed by the "Anghel Saligny National Investment Program", investment program that is coordinated by the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration.

d) Preservation of the cultural heritage

Regarding the preservation of the cultural heritage, the respondents positively appreciated the project completed by the local public administration, intended to preserve the cultural heritage of the locality so that future generations can learn the traditions of the commune.

e) Modernization and expansion of the street lighting system

Regarding the modernization and expansion of the street lighting system, the residents of the Greci municipality answered in a percentage of 45.21% that they are very satisfied, 50.68% satisfied and only 2.74% are unsatisfied, with 1.37% being very unsatisfied. This positive assessment is motivated by the fact that in Greci Commune the local public administration deals with/ is concerned with the street lightning. Thus, in June 2022 the "Modernization of public street lightning system in Greci commune, Tulcea county" Phase I, financed by A.F.M. was finalised. Phase II is ongoing.

For Question no. 3: *How would you rate the quality of the factors that describe the educational system?* the following aspects of the educational system were observed: classrooms, teaching materials, laboratories and the library, and the evaluation made by the respondents is represented in Figure 3.

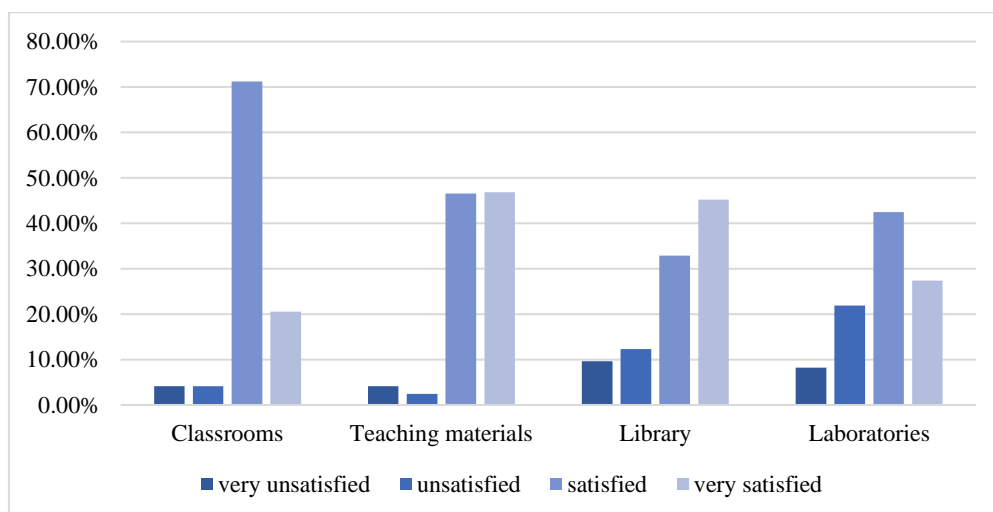


Figure 3. The quality of the educational system in Greci commune (Source: author's work)

Thus, the participants in the questionnaire were of the following opinions:

a) Laboratories

The majority of respondents (69.86%) positively appreciate the laboratories within the educational system in the locality: 42.47% are satisfied and 27.39% very satisfied with the quality and the equipment of the educational institutions with laboratories, these playing an important role in understanding the lessons, making them more attractive through experiments.

b) Classrooms

The classrooms have a positive evaluation from the respondents; for the most part the respondents are satisfied or very satisfied. Recently, the classrooms have gone through a process of modernization and were equipped according to European standards, with a projector and IT equipment. The Municipality of Greci currently has several ongoing projects within the education sector, which are in the implementation phase, among which: "Increasing the level of participation in early education and compulsory education, especially for children at high risk of leaving the education system early", financed by the "Regional Operational Program".

c) Teaching materials

Over 80% of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of the teaching materials within the educational establishment. The qualified teaching staff leave their mark on the social and educational development of the students, with the help of the teaching materials.

At the commune level, there is preschool, primary and secondary education. In 2021, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the help of the local public administration, secondary school students acquired a number of 236 school tablets with Internet subscription, intended to facilitate online classes. They were purchased through the "Competitiveness Operational Program" financed by European funds.

Due to the fact that the information technology is the pioneer of change and evolution within the societies, its use within the educational processes and within the focus upon raising the standards of living is extremely important. A series of studies show that the development of ICT companies through achieving positive economic results, not only contributes to the achievement of economic indicators that generate income within the local economy, but actively contributes to encouraging the population to use IT technologies and to increasing the peoples' interest in ICT education (Aivaz, 2021c; Tofan and Aivaz, 2022).

d) Library

The school library is located within the Cultural Home. It has a considerable number of books from different subjects, which both students and other interested persons can borrow to broaden their knowledge.

Question no. 4: *How do you rate the quality of the roads in the commune?* aims to find out the respondents' perspective about the quality of the roads in the commune of Greci, the main roads in the commune, the secondary roads in the commune, the pedestrian network and the state of the bridges (Figure 4).

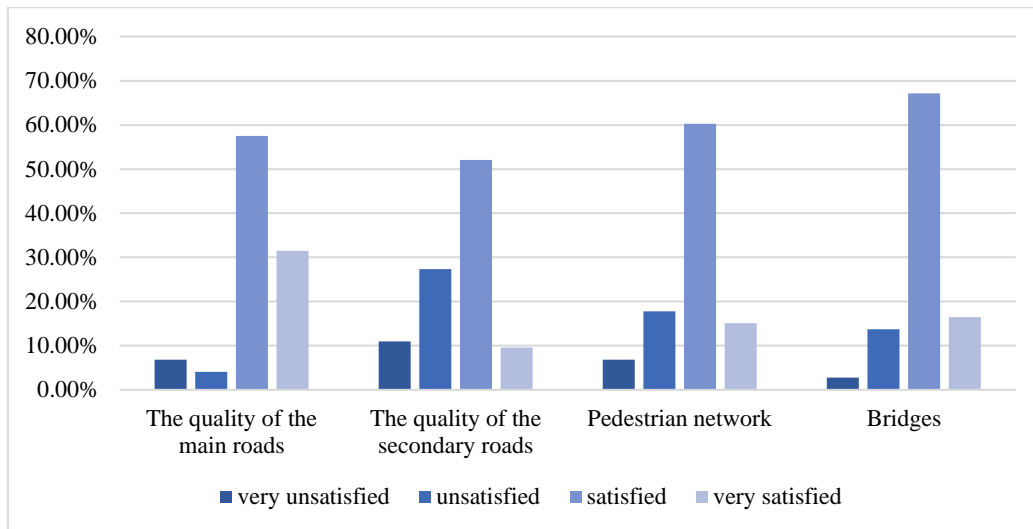


Figure 4. The road infrastructure in Greci commune (Source: author's work)

The perception of the inhabitants of Greci Municipality is:

a) The quality of the main roads

A percentage of 89.04% of the people surveyed regarding the quality of the main roads are satisfied (57.53%) and very satisfied (31.51%), this is due to the recent development and modernization process within the commune. A modernized infrastructure facilitates access to accommodation services for tourists in the commune.

b) The quality of the secondary roads

The quality of the secondary roads was evaluated by the respondents as good, with the respondents being satisfied in a percentage of 52.09%, however a percentage of 38.32% are unsatisfied with the state of the secondary roads. Currently, the Greci Town Hall is waiting for the approval of several projects to further modernize the secondary streets in the commune.

c) Bridges

The bridges over the Recea stream have recently gone through a process of modernization and consolidation, a fact that also emerges from the evaluation of the citizens, who are satisfied in a percentage of 67.12% and only 16.44% are very satisfied. There are also citizens unsatisfied with the bridge infrastructure in the locality. In the future, the local public administration will implement a project in which all the bridges over the Recea stream will be included and through which their infrastructure will be consolidated.

d) Pedestrian network

The pedestrian network in the locality is in a very good condition, most respondents (60.27%) being satisfied with its condition and only 17.81% unsatisfied. This aspect will be solved by the implementation of the project "Supporting the development of infrastructure and tourism for the investment objective - Green urban mobility - providing bike lanes", a project which is in the process of being submitted for approval and financed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

At Question no. 5: *In your opinion, how can the economic potential of the area develop?* 47% of respondents opted for attracting European funds to help the local economy develop.

Thus, by accessing European funds, entrepreneurs can create new jobs that will contribute to the economic development of the commune (Figure 5).

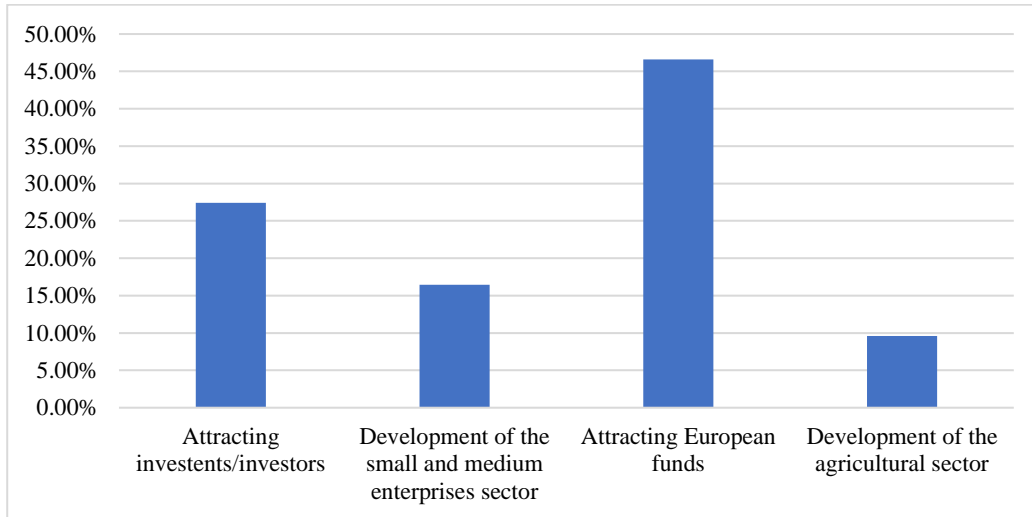


Figure 5. Potential sources of economic development at the level of Greci commune (Source: author's work)

A percentage of 27% of the respondents believe that by attracting investments/investors in the locality, the economic sector would develop. Greci commune experienced economic development within the agricultural sector, through the development of tourism in the area, which created many jobs. Also, 16% of the people surveyed believe that the development of the small and medium enterprises sector is necessary because it contributes to the economic development of the locality. Only 10% believe that the agricultural sector can contribute to the development of the economic potential of the locality because small farmers are only supported through European programs and through the subsidies offered by the Payments and Intervention Agency for Agriculture.

Question no. 6: *What problems do you think exist in the commune and which could be solved by updating the General Urban Plan?* aimed at analyzing and locating the town's urban problems. Thus, a percentage of 41% of the respondents believe that the problems related to urban functions (housing, trade, industry, green spaces) are the problems that must be solved because they contribute to the sustainable development of the locality (Figure 6).

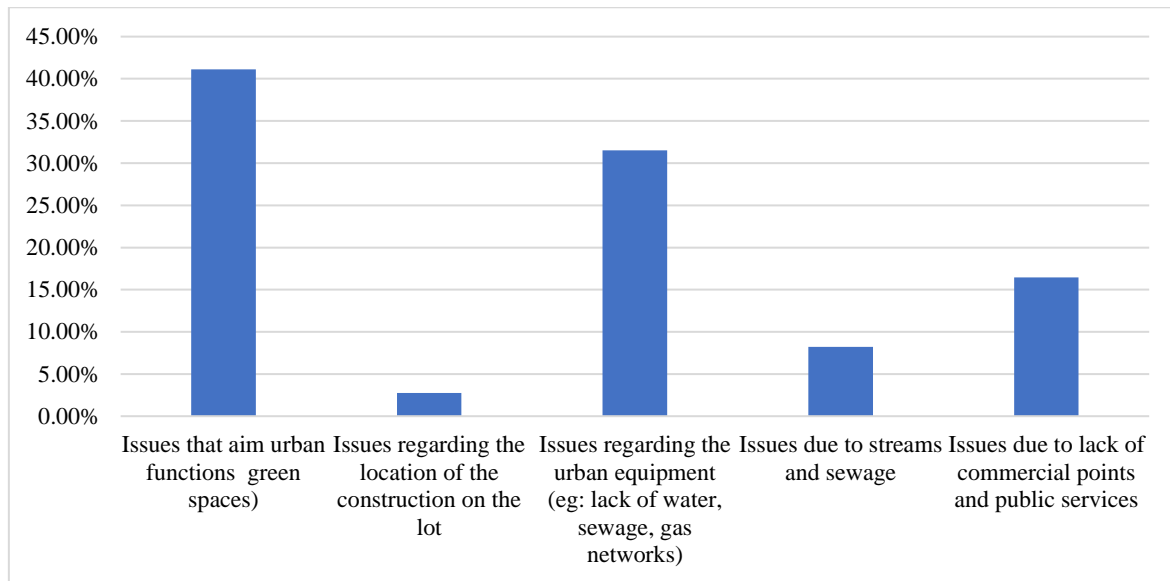


Figure 6. The issues that can be solved by updating the General Urban Plan at the Greci commune level (Source: author's work)

Ranked second, with a percentage of 32%, the lack of urban equipment is still a problem. The public administration institution, the town hall of Greci commune has in the execution phase a project for "Extending the water supply system and sewerage network in Greci commune, Tulcea county", a project which is financed by the National Rural Development Program.

At Question no. 7: *Which areas do you think should be given special importance in the development of the General Urban Plan?* the respondents evaluated the importance given to the areas in the locality according to the General Urban Plan (Figure 7). Citizens believe that special importance should be given to protected areas (32.88%), such as the protected area of the Măcin Mountains National Park. Within the National Park there are hundreds of species of plants and animals, specific to the Dobrudja area, on the verge of extinction.

Historical areas (23.29%) rank second in terms of importance in appreciation. Citizens consider historical and cultural areas as important within a community because they evoke the heritage of the local community. From this point of view, the local public administration is in the execution phase of the project "Preserving the cultural heritage in Greci commune", financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the National Program for Rural Development 2014-2020. 21.92% of those surveyed believe that the central area and functional reconversion areas should be given special importance when drawing up the General Urban Plan.

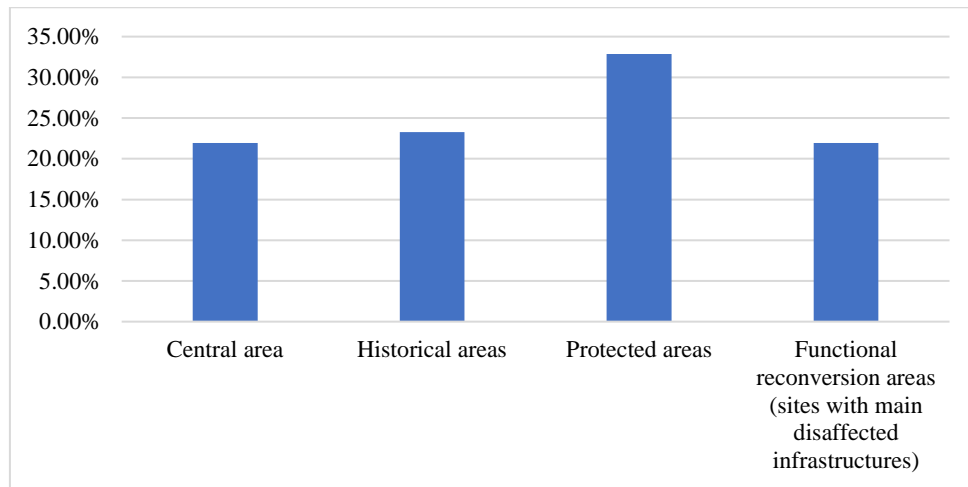


Figure 7. The importance of zoning in Greci commune (Source: author's work)

Question no. 8: *What do you consider to be the 3 most important resources that can support the future development of the commune?* was an open-ended question so that the respondents could indicate the most important resources of the municipality from their point of view and to make them aware of their importance within the sustainable development process of the municipality.

It can be therefore observed that tourism, agriculture and mining are the sustainable "pillars" that will lead to the economic growth of the area, the creation of new jobs and the sustainable development of the locality (Figure 8).

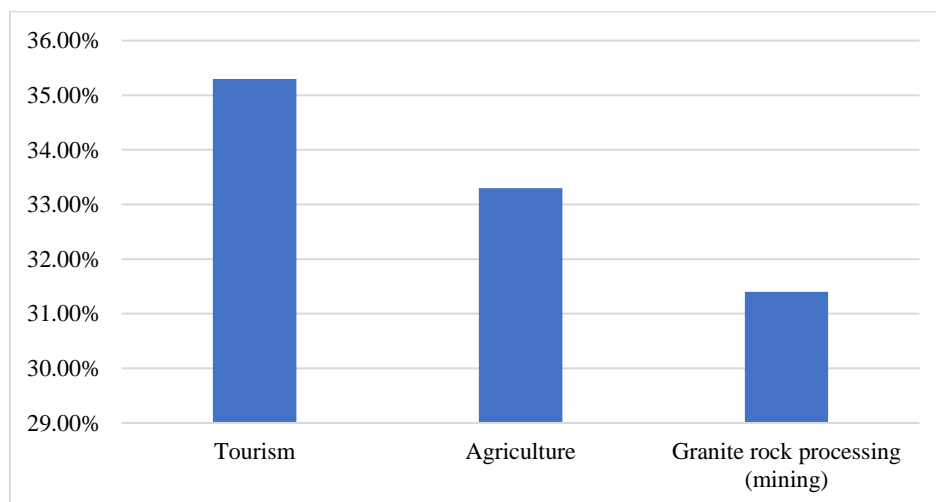


Figure 8. The most important resources of the Greci commune (Source: author's work)

Within the territory of Greci commune, the existence of the large Greci granite deposit is known, but most of it is made up of granodiorites, where granites are subordinately present. The possibility of exploiting the resource has economic importance for the area, the extracted rocks are used for road maintenance and construction, as raw or crushed stone/aggregates.

Approximately 3000 hectares of UAT Greci are part of the "Măcinului Mountains" National Park Reserve. The privileged location at the bottom of the Măcin Mountains has

recently determined the development of tourism, especially the ecological one, tourists being interested in visiting the natural attractions in the area.

Rural tourism is insufficiently capitalized, it therefore does not bring a sufficiently large contribution to the economy of rural areas, the implementation of sustainable rural tourism is given by the gap between the living standards of rural communities (Andrei et al., 2014) even though, it is desired to capitalize on the wealth of rural areas and knowledge of local traditions.

Question no. 9: *From your point of view, what do you consider to be the most serious environmental problems in the Greci commune?* aimed at identifying environmental problems within the commune.

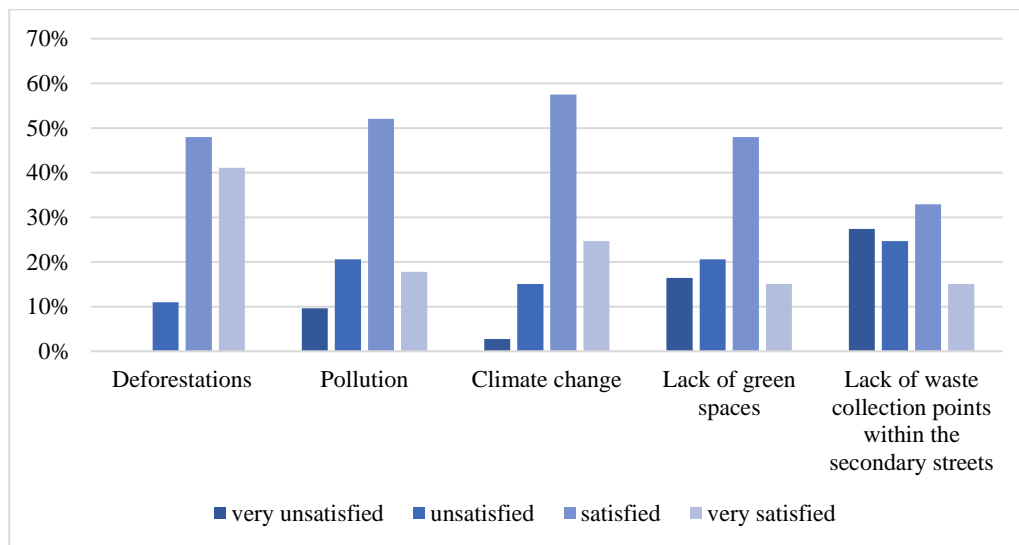


Figure 9. Environmental problems in Greci commune (Source: author's work)

As a result, the respondents' assessment (Figure 9) of the environmental problems in the Greci commune is:

a) Deforestation and pollution

The vast majority of respondents (47.94%) positively appreciate the fact that there is no deforestation in the Măcin Mountains. Being a protected area, the Măcin Mountains National Park has not undergone deforestation, and the citizens of the commune are very satisfied with this. Pollution does not represent a very big problem in the locality either, the vast majority of respondents being satisfied (52.05%) and very satisfied (17.81%) with this environmental aspect. Household waste is collected selectively and weekly, while for animal waste, a special storage place has been set up so that it does not disturb the citizens of the town or does not create pollution. The local public administration has European funds allocated for the environmental sector, for integrated waste management and for nature protection.

b) Lack of green spaces

The citizens of the Greci commune are satisfied (47.94%) with the number of green spaces. These are a place of relaxation and recreation for adults and a playground for children. But there are also a respondent (16.44%) whose assessment is negative, because currently there is only one playground for children, although the number of children is decreasing, compared to previous years. A recent study (Stan, 2022) evokes the fact that the presence of green spaces is one of the important factors to ensure a better quality of life for citizens.

c) Climate changes

As for climate changes, these occur due to the existing global situation. Citizens are largely satisfied (57.53%) with the type of climate present in the locality. A smaller percentage of respondents are unsatisfied (15.07%) with these climate changes, as the summer is becoming drier and the agricultural sector is experiencing damage. In the future, the local public administration wants to put an irrigation system into operation, with the aim of helping farmers.

The last question of the questionnaire, Question no. 10: *Do you consider that the Sustainable Development Strategy of the municipality of Greci is important for the sustainable development of the municipality?* scored 100% in terms of the importance and role of the document. Through the Local Development Strategy, the commune of Greci can access funding to develop on a socio-economic level, focusing on ensuring the harmonious and sustainable development of social, economic, ecological aspects and on the natural capital of the environment.

In conclusion, Greci commune has a multitude of strengths that favor the process of sustainable development, such as: a privileged location right next to the Măcin Mountains, various tourist attractions, protected areas, consolidated and modernized infrastructure, the possibility of generating labor, available land and spaces for the economic development of the commune, the dynamics of the business environment, the preservation and valorization of traditions. Establishing and applying a local development strategy is necessary for the rise of the commune's economy, for satisfying the needs of citizens and for favoring the urbanization process in the countryside.

Greci commune is a pole of continuous development at the Tulcea county level. Sustainable development requires the development of strategies and action plans appropriate to the characteristics of the municipality, so that such results are effective. From the analysis carried out through the questionnaire, it is found that the implementation of the Development Strategy is beneficial for the sustainable development of the commune. On one hand side, awareness of the problems facing the community will speed up finding optimal solutions to solve the problems. The action plans must be subject to the consultation of all social categories to guarantee that once adopted they will be put into practice because they represent the expression of the will of the majority of community members. This can be done by educating people, consulting and engaging their participation in the implementation of measures, creating partnerships and declaring progress in sustainable development (Stan et al., 2021). On the other hand side, the efforts of the local public administration must focus on achieving effective changes, both in the economic and social sector, as well as ensuring environmental protection.

5. Conclusions

Urban areas are becoming increasingly populated and polluted, and the process of migration from the urban environment to the rural environment is unavoidable. Consequently, it can also be appreciated that in the rural environment as well, the urbanization process must be approached from the perspective of sustainable development which can be considered a dimensional quintet (spatio-temporal, social, cultural, economic and ecological dimension) (Neaga, 2015), this because improving the quality life and economic well-being of rural areas seems crucial in order to reverse population decline (López-Penabad, Iglesias-Casal and Rey-Ares, 2022).

These processes can take place with the help of planning documents, documents intended to develop rural areas and the socio-economic sector. The purpose of a local development strategy is to promote the achievement and fulfillment of a symmetrical development, by maintaining the balance between the economic and social cohesion factors, by

reducing regional and local inequalities. In order for a locality to be sustainable, it must cumulatively fulfill the following: to develop from a socio-economic point of view, to support its cultural and educational values, to provide well-being and a high quality of life for its citizens.

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