

SUMMARY

The research paper addresses a topical topic with major relevance for rural development policies in Romania: enhancing active and inclusive partnership relations to support the development of rural tourism. In a context marked by structural imbalances in rural areas – such as depopulation, lack of infrastructure or the fragility of local markets – local partnerships become essential tools for the economic and social revitalization of these communities.

The study focuses on the role of Local Action Groups (LAGs) in the implementation of the LEADER programme, a European mechanism that promotes participatory development adapted to local needs. The research proposes an in-depth analysis of how these partnerships contribute to increasing the capacity of rural communities to access resources, build cooperation networks and capitalise on local tourism potential.

Rural tourism is treated in this paper not only as an expanding economic sector, but as a true platform for integrating local products, services and values into a sustainable development vision. Starting from this premise, the research explores both the economic impact of projects supported by LAGs and the challenges encountered in strengthening a functional and competitive rural market.

By applying a mixed methodology – quantitative and qualitative – the paper provides a balanced and detailed picture of the functioning of local partnerships in Romania, highlighting good practices, lessons learned and strategic directions for action.

In conclusion, the paper supports the idea that active and inclusive partnerships, together with rural tourism well anchored in local realities, can play a decisive role in strengthening the rural economy and stimulating territorial cohesion. This perspective is supported by empirical data, critical analysis and concrete proposals for improvement, thus providing a relevant contribution to the field of sustainable rural development.

Keywords: active and inclusive partnership, Local Action Group, LEADER, rural tourism