



## Renewable energy and energy efficiency

# LEADER case study Local sustainable action with triple effects

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The Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach is popular across the 239 LEADER communities in Romania, demonstrating well that community-based decision making, stakeholder engagement and visioning are key to implementing innovative solutions in response to local needs.

In order to contribute more effectively to combating climate change, the Local Action Group (LAG) of Valea Baseului de Sus in the north east of Romania included energy adaptation and mitigation projects in its local development strategy. The intention was to focus on innovative and sustainable initiatives that could not be funded with other RDP measures and that would benefit the whole rural community. It was important that such an investment would be effective and had a fast rate of return to release the increasing budget pressure on local Councils regarding their energy bills.

The intention of the LAG was to link renewable energy production (small photovoltaic power plants) with energy efficiency projects (LED lighting) to maximise the potential savings for the local Councils.

While the idea was welcomed locally, the relevant laws for local Councils to build small-scale renewable power generators (up to 27 kW per hour) were not yet in place at the time when the LAG strategy was designed. Knowing that the Government was working on the new regulations, the LAG decided to maintain the idea and get prepared so that projects could come on stream as soon as the new laws were approved. As such, information and awareness raising events and the development of project applications started early. This foresight and vision paid off: when the new law was finally approved in 2018, the construction of the first photovoltaic power plant could start immediately. This power plant is the first of its kind funded by LEADER in Romania.

In total, LEADER and a number of other funds support three projects of this type as pilot actions:

- 1 county with a photovoltaic power plant: €68 000 (near completion) + 1 project of €25 000 Stradal LED lamps (in approval phase) (both funded by LEADER)
- 1 town with 1 project of Stradal LED lamps (€70 000 funded by LEADER) + 1 photovoltaic power plant funded by Norway Grants (in contracting phase)
- 1 county with 1 project of Stradal LED lamps (completed by Government funds) + 1 photovoltaic power plant (LEADER €30 000 plus local funds in design stage).



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It is estimated that each photovoltaic power plant will save the local Councils between 20 and 40% of their usual energy costs. This rises to around 50% per Council when combined with the LED initiatives. In addition, the local Councils can use the results of the projects for their CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets.

It is expected that the achieved savings will free up the financial capacity of the local Councils to fund important community projects instead. As such, the approach of the LAG represents an effective integrated approach that is achieving key environmental, financial and social benefits.

For the post-2020 programming period, it is hoped that the experience of this project will be used as a template for continuing community energy projects under LEADER. Ideally, this could be linked with Smart Villages. A relevant step-by-step manual is currently produced to share the project experience with other LAGs across Europe.

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