



# Feldru Commune in Bistrița-Năsăud County. Rural Development Model

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## Coordinates of the paper

In our paper we present the case of Feldru commune (constituted of two villages: Feldru and Nepos), having the largest number of inhabitants (as a commune) in Bistrița-Năsăud county, as an example of good practice for the actions of social and economic recovery, and for sustainable community development.

Our study focuses upon the evolution of the commune after 1989, especially after its inclusion in Rodna disadvantaged area, as a result of H.G.<sup>1</sup> no. 640 in August 11, 1999 (for a more detailed study see Ilovan, 2005). We analyse the natural and anthropic potential of the commune (e.g. the issue of more than a half of the labour force's emigration for work abroad, especially to Spain<sup>2</sup> and to France, to Ireland, to the USA, to Canada, and to Great Britain; the local development strategy etc.).

The second part of the paper is an analysis of the success of this commune in administrating itself.

The advantages offered by the community facilitator's activity and of that of the competent local administration were to be noticed (a) in fund attraction success for culture, medical care, social assistance, public administration, environment, and for the economic development of the community, as well as (b) in making the people aware of the importance of their active involvement in local development.

## Features of the population of Feldru Commune

Out of the total number of 7.819 inhabitants, the population of Feldru village was of 6.010 inhabitants and of Nepos village of 1.809 inhabitants. According to the data of the last century censuses (figure 1), the population of the commune had an ascending trend.

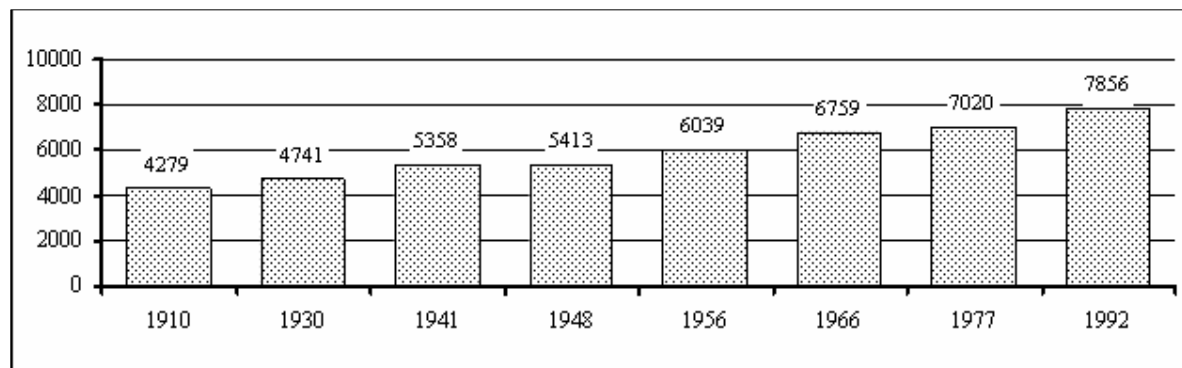


Figure 1. Population of Feldru commune at the XX<sup>th</sup> century censuses.

<sup>1</sup> Governmental decision.

<sup>2</sup> Almost 1,000 people from the commune work in Arganda del Rey, neighbouring Madrid city.

An exception to this “rule” appeared together with the data in 2002, when the number of inhabitants was smaller than that at the census before it (only 7.819 inhabitants according to „Strategia de dezvoltare...”<sup>3</sup>, Mureşan, 2003, pp. 22-23 –, as compared with 7.856 in 1992). According to the 2002 census, the population of the commune was of 7.865 inhabitants, thus registering only 9 inhabitants increase in a ten year period.

The population sex structure was balanced in 2002, in fact having this feature in the entire analysed period, from 1990 to 2003 (figure 2). On July 1, 2003, out of 7,824 inhabitants, 49,22% were women (an identical percent to that of the previous year, on the same day).

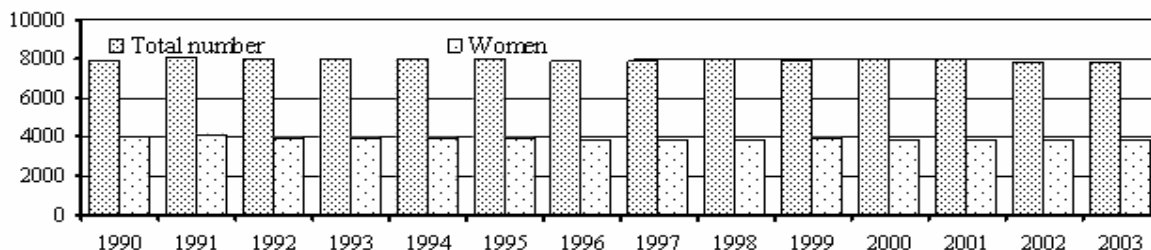


Figure 2. Population on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July during 1990-2003.

In 2002, the population density was 65 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, while the area of the commune was 119,75 km<sup>2</sup>. Population density had constantly grown up until 2002 census when a slight involution could be noticed as compared with 1992 (table 1) because of the decrease of the number of inhabitants.

Table 1. Population density in Feldru commune at the most recent censuses.

Year	1930	1956	1966	1977	1992	2002
Feldru	39,6	50,4	56,4	58,6	65,6	65,27

The number of inhabitants was affected by the population’s natural movement and, after 1989, especially by its migration movement. The birth rate was characterised by a significant decline (table 2), obvious when taking into account the values of the last years and those between 1980 and 1990 (values above 22‰), but between 1991 and 2002, the values of the birth rate were fluctuant in the beginning (1991-1997) and descendant in the end (1998-2002). Although characterised by ups and downs, beginning with 1998, both birth rates and death rates were descendant (figure 3). The population natural growth was positive in the studied period, that was between 1990 and 2002 (1990: +15,1 and having lower values in the following years: 1995: +6,5; 1996: +8,2; 1997: +9,1; 1998: +5,1; 1999: +6,3; 2000: +5,9; 2001: +6,3; 2002: +2,9), lower with 1,92 ‰ for females and 1,97 ‰ for males, in comparison with 1991-2002 (Mureşan, 2003, p. 25).

Table 2. New borns and birth rate (new borns for 1000 inhabitants).

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Feldru	25,8	25,2	27,9	26,1	23,7	24,2	23,8	21,1	21,7	20,0	22,8
Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Feldru	17,5	20,6	15,8	16,3	16,4	16,5	18,9	15,6	15,3	14,0	13,5
Year	2002										
Feldru	12,2										

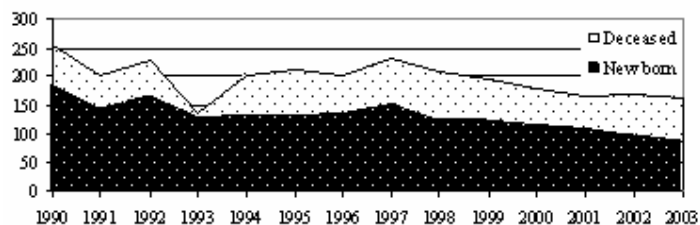


Figure 3. Trend of the new borns and of the deceased persons in Feldru commune between 1991 and 2002 (after data in Mureşan, Gr, 2003, p. 24).

Feldru was characterised by a constantly superior flux of departures

<sup>3</sup> The population of Feldru commune in 2002 according to the data processed after three different sources: the 2002 census, the agricultural registers of the mayorality, and the data at the mayorality (in Mureşan, 2003, p. 22).

than of arrivals (figure 4), with two significant growths of internal migration in 1990 and in 1992 (18,9‰ for both years) and with higher values than those of the any other commune within the Someșul Mare Valley (figure 5).

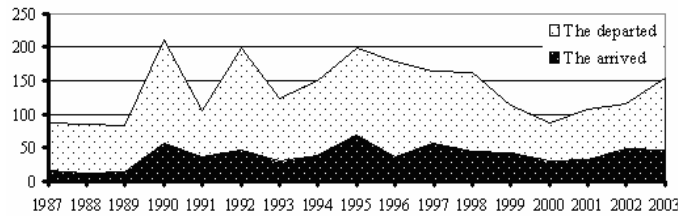


Figure 4. Feldru commune. Migrational fluxes between 1987 and 2003 (external migration not included).

Similarly to the situation of the county and of the Land of Năsăud, when comparing the data of the last two censuses, in Feldru commune, the number of the persons departed decreased too, when compared to the beginnings of the period (1992) (figure 4 and table 3). But, beginning with 2000, emigration (both internal and external) increased for all the communes in the Someșul Mare Valley (figure 5).

Table 3. Land of Năsăud and Bistrița-Năsăud County – the arrived, the departed and the migrational growth in 1992 and 2002.

Indicator	1992	2002	2002 – 1992 (‰)
<b>Persons arrived</b> (external migration not included)			
- county total	12,2	13,0	+ 0,8
- Land of Năsăud	8,1	9,1	+ 1,0
<b>Persons departed</b> (external migration not included)			
- county total	16,4	13,5	- 2,9
- Land of Năsăud	19,7	14,0	- 5,7
<b>Migrational growth</b>			
- county total	- 4,2	- 0,5	+ 3,7
- Land of Năsăud	- 11,6	- 4,9	+6,7

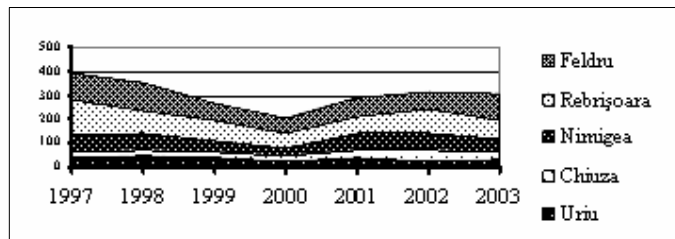


Figure 5. Emigration between 1997 and 2003. Comparative graph for the communes in the Corridor of the Someșul Mare.

According to the data in the “Strategia de dezvoltare a comunei Feldru” (Strategy for Development of Feldru Commune, Mureșan, 2003, p. 25), after 1989, only three persons had come in the commune (one from the urban area and two from the rural one, all of them being retired persons, arriving in Feldru during 2000-2002), while all of those leaving Feldru headed abroad exclusively: 2.234 persons (figure 6) (this number was valid for October 2003, when the mayor of the commune ran a local census for quantifying the number of those who had left – Mureșan, 2003, p. 25). For 2003, the total migration index was 28,5‰ (Mureșan, 2003, p. 25). Out of the departed, 1.780 were men and only 454 were women. That unbalanced situation was a characteristic for all the countries (figure 7).

A questionnaire<sup>4</sup> of the mayoralty highlighted that the families from the commune were usually numerous, most of them having more than six members, out of whom at least three were children. The answers related to the father’s work place showed that within the community, these work mainly for the local businessmen, for the state, or in agriculture, while working abroad was the men’s main occupation (Mureșan, 2003, pp. 87-88). Another interesting aspect was revealed by the answers to the question about the father’s age: usually they are between 31 and 60 years old, and most of those up to 40 worked abroad, in the private sector, or in agriculture, while those above 45 worked in the state-owned sector (Mureșan, 2003, p. 89).

The people went abroad in order to have success from a material point of view and because they had no well-enough paid jobs in their community so in order to have decent living conditions on a long term.

<sup>4</sup> The data are for 2003. 50 students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade that answered the questionnaire (Mureșan, 2003, pp. 84-89).

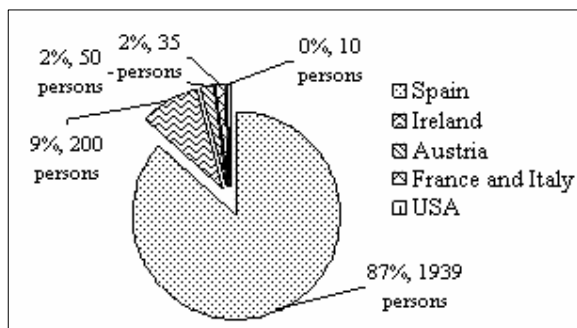


Figure 6. The number of inhabitants that went abroad by October 2003 (after data in Mureşan, Gr., 2003, p. 25).

The positive impact of the massive departures abroad for jobs was reflected in the people's investments in constructions, each year between 1996 and 2002, houses were finished and started to be lived in: 1996 – 3, 1997 – 7, 1998 – 19, 1999 – 7, 2000 – 3, 2001 – 5, 2002 – 6 (Anuarul statistic..., p. 165). A permanent increase of the number of houses was characteristic to this commune between 1990 and 2002, especially starting with 1998 (figure 8).

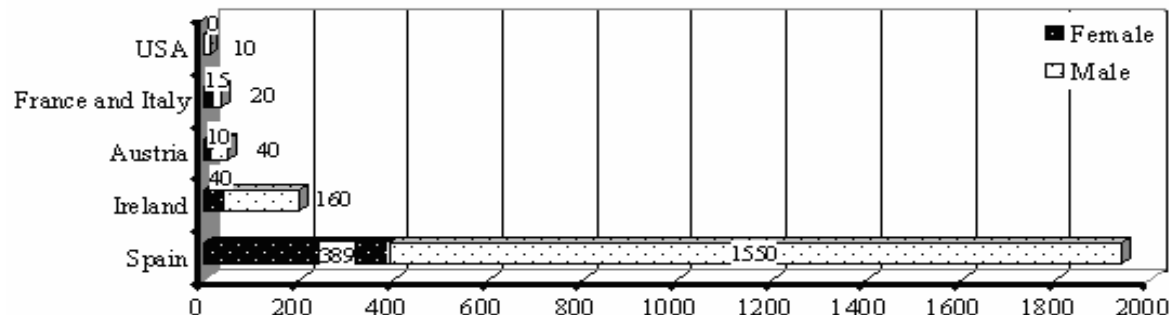


Figure 7. The number of inhabitants that went abroad until October 2003, on gender (after data in Mureşan, Gr., 2003, p. 25).

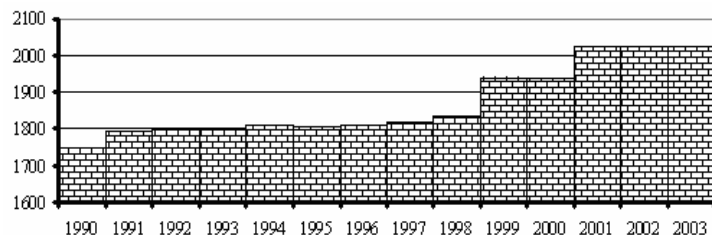


Figure 8. The existing households in Feldru commune between 1990 and 2003 (the statistical sheet for Feldru commune, 1990-2003).

For Feldru village the commuting phenomenon was insignificant in comparison to the external migration movement (the data available was not for the entire commune). The analysis enforces the higher attractiveness of the urban area and of the other economic branches than agriculture and industry for attracting the labour force of the village or in the village (table 5). The exchange of labour force with the neighbouring Nepos was very low.

Table 5. Commuters for Feldru village, in 2003 (after data in Mureşan, Gr., 2003, pp. 25-26).

Observations	Commuters		Observations
	Leave Feldru village	Come to Feldru village	
To Nepos	5	1	In agriculture
To other communes	35	5	In industry
To towns of the county	45	28	In other economic sectors
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Total</b>

The negative impact of the departures from Feldru commune was strong on (a) the labour force, (b) on the age groups, on the population ageing, and on the demographic dependency index, as well as on (c) the young's level of culture and on their observance of the traditional behaviour norms. (a) Although in 2002, the active population of the commune was of 5,488 persons, having in view that 2.234<sup>5</sup> of them went abroad; the remaining active persons of the commune were under 3.200, 65 and unemployed.

<sup>5</sup> Since August 1, when the Ordinance 28/2005 became valid, over 3.000 Romanians that came back have lost their passports because they stayed abroad more than they were allowed. This restriction affected the inhabitants of Feldru, too.

(b) Studying the population age pyramids in Feldru commune, for the last censuses: 1977, 1992, and 2002, we noticed that the most important change appeared at the basis of the pyramids. In 1977, the age pyramid had the morphology of a bell for the five-year periods from 0 to 39 years, with a very good representation of the first three. The high birth rate of the previous period started between 1963 and 1967, having a high level in the 1980s. The five-year period of 0 to 4 years was represented by 400 males and by a similar number of females.

The age pyramid according to the 1992 census presented the first unbalanced situation, as the bell morphology was to be found only starting with the 10 to 14 years period. The decrease of the birth rate started between 1983 and 1987, with a little attenuation of the values, but from 1988 to 1992 a drastic decrease was the feature, in comparison with the previous period. The five-year age period from 0 to 4 was represented only by over 300 males and over 300 females. The age pyramid for 2002 made permanent the change perceived in 1992, with the decrease of the pyramid basis, and with only over 200 males and a similar number for females in the five-year period from 0 to 4. We noticed also the future entrance in the labour market of two well numerically represented five-year periods – from 10 to 14 and from 15 to 19 – in comparison to the previous ones (5-9 years and 10-14 years).

The demographic ageing index increased from the census of 1977 to that in 2002 (table 6), but the population of Feldru commune was still a young one, being situated under *the good number* (0,42), while the demographic dependency index had decreased (table 6), a possible explanation being the involution of the birth rate, especially between the last two censuses.

Table 6. Demographic ageing index and demographic dependency index – the most recent censuses.

Census	Demographic ageing index	Demographic dependency index (%)
1977	0,221	113,1
1992	0,24	99,6
2002	0,397	92,9

(c) The decrease of the youth's level of education and its "supplementing" with financial advantages was among the negative social effects of the inhabitants' going abroad. This unwanted effect was noticed for some of the youth during incidents of violent behaviour towards the representatives of the local authorities (for instance in Ilva Mică commune, young men from Feldru just returned from Spain aggressed the local representatives). So, this phenomenon of emigration for work and the return to the commune was also a source of social delinquency.

The social changes after 1989 had a major impact upon the population's religious structure, as the number of Neoprotestants increased (figure 9 – the percentage of population adhering to the main confessions). The religious relations were normal, without any tensions.

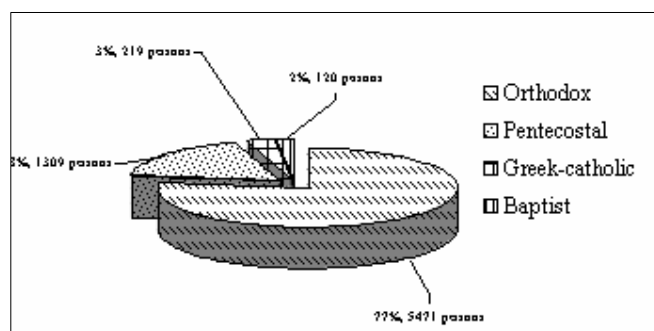


Figure 9. The religious structure of Feldru commune population, according to the data of the 2002 census.

We drew the conclusion that from the demographic perspective, Feldru commune had the same trend as most of the Romanian rural space. Considering population a resource for the sustainable development of the community, it was characterised by strengths, development

opportunities, weaknesses, and threats (see table 9).

### Features of the economy of Feldru Commune

The highest percentage of the average number of employees of Feldru commune belonged to the educated sector (57,48%), being approximately three times higher than the average values for the entire rural space of the county (21,24%). The following places belonged to those working in the medical field, in commerce, and in industry. A very small percentage was

represented by those that worked in agriculture, in commerce, and in transport and communication services (table 7). Comparing the data for Feldru commune with the mean values for the rural space of the county, the differences were obvious for the smaller number of employees in industry (the percent of Feldru was only half from that of the rural area), in constructions, in transport and communications (a mean value eight times smaller), and in agriculture. Higher values than the average one of the rural space were registered in commerce, in education, and in medical assistance. These features highlight an unbalanced economic profile, being obvious that life was possible due to working in agriculture (not necessarily being employed) and to working abroad.

Table 7. Mean number of employees in the national economy branches in 2002 (after the data in Anuarul statistic..., p. 164).

Commune	Total	Agriculture		Industry		Constructions		Commerce		Transport and communication		Education		Medical Assistance		Other	
		no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
County total	47.835	1.002	2,09	18.194	38,03	2.549	5,32	4.449	9,3	3.771	7,88	6.589	13,77	4.113	8,59	7.168	14,98
Urban total	35.479	515	1,45	15.763	44,42	2.056	5,79	3.583	10,09	2.675	7,53	3.964	11,17	3.003	8,46	3.920	11,04
Rural total	12.356	487	3,94	2.431	19,67	493	3,98	866	7,00	1.096	8,87	2.625	21,24	1.110	8,98	3.248	26,28
Feldru	207	5	2,41	17	8,21	3	1,44	21	10,14	2	0,96	119	57,48	23	11,11	17	8,21

Out of the total number of 2.236 agricultural households of the commune, a cumulative percentage of 94 were represented by the households that have less than five hectares of agricultural land. Out of this, according to the agricultural registers of the commune, more than 50% were pastures and hayfields (figure 11). This can be an explanation for the high number of inhabitants working in animal breeding. Then, out of the forested area, 90,67% was the property of the commune and the rest of it was private property.

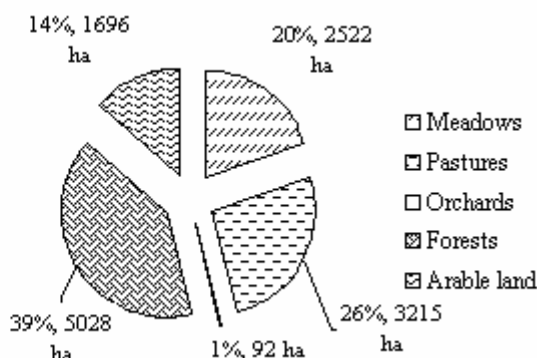
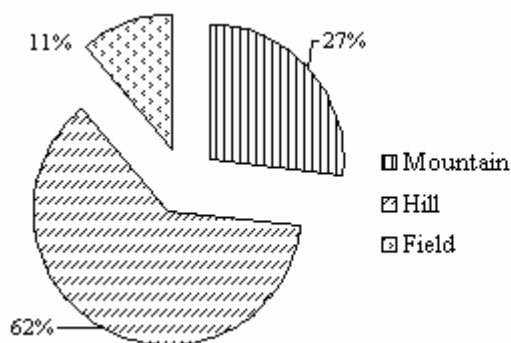


Figure 10. The percent of the landform units from the total area of the commune (after the data in Mureşan, 2003, p. 77).

Figure 11. The agricultural area of Feldru commune (after the data in Mureşan, 2003, p. 29).

The private property was fragmented. The households having less than one hectare of agricultural land were 22% (448 households) of the total number, those having between 1 and 2 hectares were 37% (827), and those having between 2 and 3 hectares of agricultural land represented 35% (785) of the total. Only 4% (82) of the households had between 3 and 5 hectares of agricultural land, and the households having between 5 and 10 hectares (32) and above 10 hectares (22) respectively, represented only 1% of the total number (Mureşan, 2003, p. 32). "Lack of association and subsistence agriculture" (Mureşan, 2003, p. 33) were quoted as main consequences of the restrictions imposed by the high slope of the relief and as causes of the traditional practice in agriculture: animal drive.

On the arable land (1.696 ha), in the two villages of Feldru commune, people cultivated mostly corn, potatoes, and oat – the plants best adapted to lower temperature. The percentage of the diverse plant cultures out of the arable land (July 1, 2002) was the following: corn – 51%, potatoes – 31%, wheat and rye – 12%, and vegetables – 6%. The census in 2002 characterises the agriculture of Feldru commune as one of animal breeding. This was supported by the large hilly and mountainous areas of the commune (figure 10), covered by pastures and hayfields.

62% of the total number of animals was represented by sheep, while the cattle, and the swine had each 14%. The situation of the number of animals, at the end of 2002, was the following: sheep – 5.512, swine – 1.750, cattle – 1.490, and chicken – 26.760. Apiculture was ensured by 445 bee families. Evidence of tradition in animal breeding were the four associations: Association for cattle breeding in Feldru (“Feldrihana”), Association for swine breeding in Feldru, Association for animal breeding in Feldru, and Association for cattle breeding in Nepos (Mureșan, 2003, p. 32, p. 73).

The specific agricultural food products were milk, and different types of cheese. At the same time, the specificity of agriculture was reflected in the intensely commercialised products: milk, cheese, honey, meat, and fruit (orchards occupied 1% of the arable land), potatoes, while vegetables (5% of the arable land – Mureșan, 2003, p. 30) and wheat (8%) were bought.

The processing industry related to the agricultural activities was represented by businesses focusing on meat processing, milling and panification, and milk collection and processing. Many of these businesses benefited from exemption from taxes due to the inclusion of the commune, in 1999, in Rodna disadvantaged area. In the hierarchy of the first one hundred businesses after their business figure, in 2002, on the fourteenth place, after thirteen businesses in Bistrița, was one in Feldru (S.C. INDUSCARN S.R.L. FELDRU<sup>6</sup>) having 10 employees (*Anuarul statistic...*, p. 150).

The position of Feldru commune was favourable both for access and transit due to the facilities offered by the technical infrastructure of the territory (Surd, Bold, Zotic, Chira, 2005), and as it was situated at 15 km distance to Năsăud and to Sângeorz-Băi. The railway had stations in both the villages, linking the commune to all its neighbouring areas and facilitating connection with Moldavia. It was important also for the transport of wood and wood products from Ilva communes (wood was intensely exploited also in Feldru commune). Car access was ensured by the paved national road DN 17, that crossed the centre of the commune for 15 km. The access to Internet service was ensured by the local Cafe-Net, while several households had their private Internet access.

### **Actions of the local administration for community development**

Feldru commune was a beneficiary, along with other three communes in Bistrița-Năsăud County (Teaca, Branișteea, and Șieu) and six in Cluj County (Cătina, Mărgău, Mihai Viteazu, Mociu, Săvădisla and Sic), of a pilot project targeted at forming community facilitators or development agents. These persons were integrated into the local public administration, one in each commune, with the purpose of helping it develop on a long term. 2003-2004<sup>7</sup> was a threshold period for the development of Feldru commune as a PHARE programme was launched: *Economic and Social Cohesion*. It was financed by Open Society Institute in Budapest and the European Union. Fundația Civitas pentru Societate Civilă<sup>8</sup> (Civitas Foundation for Civil Society) had the paternity of the theoretical model at the basis of the project. The project was entitled: “*Community Facilitator*”. “The specific objectives of the project: implementing the function of community facilitator in ten rural localities in Cluj and Bistrița-Năsăud counties in order to support and stimulate the rural development processes; creating a team of specialists in the field of rural development; Increasing professional and managerial capacity for the human resource in the public and private institutions in the rural space of Cluj and Bistrița-Năsăud counties; creating a system for the coordination and the support of the rural development process in the focused areas; turning to good account the non-reimbursement financing opportunities, stimulating the development initiatives in the rural space” (Mureșan, 2003, p.14).

The mayoralty of Feldru commune was selected as a partner for Civitas Foundation running the project and thus it received one of the ten specialists. His role was to be reflected

<sup>6</sup> The local business men were perceived as having no interest in the welfare of the community, while the people's trust and hope for better was given to the mayor, to the doctor, to the priests, and to the teachers in the community (Mureșan, 2003, p. 88).

<sup>7</sup> The programme initiated by Fundația Civitas pentru Societatea Civilă (Civitas Foundation for Civil Society) in Cluj-Napoca in co-operation with ten mayoralties in Cluj and Bistrița-Năsăud counties: “Community Facilitator – Pilot Programme in Bistrița-Năsăud and Cluj Counties”.

<sup>8</sup> Fundația Civitas pentru Societatea Civilă (Foundation Civitas for Civil Society) was set up in October 1992 in order to answer the need of increasing the public administration capacity and to stimulate the people's involvement in making decisions in their local community. It also targeted the stimulation of local and regional development. Its declared purpose was that of facilitating “sustainable and equally distributed improvements” (Available at <http://www.ruralnet.ro/organizatii.php?lang=romanian&sectiune=detaliu&id=8>) and of supporting local initiatives.

into several concrete results: to elaborate the local development strategy for the commune and to ensure its implementation as a result of the managerial training he had benefited of; to elaborate several project proposals and to identify financing sources; to offer assistance to the local council; to create the web page of the commune (Available at: <http://www.rural-portal.ro/feldru>); to motivate the inhabitants in making efforts together for developing their own community. The community facilitator's major role, as a specialist in rural development, was to identify solutions for the problems of the local administration by means of promoting certain practices able to facilitate local development. So, community facilitator's target of his actions and of his interactions with the leaders of the rural community was the living standard increase in Feldru. Each community facilitator had a tutor during his year of activity. The community facilitator of Feldru commune was a sociologist, and during his professional training offered by Civitas Foundation, he had attended four seminars on: The organising and functioning of the local public administration in Romania, Local development strategies, Community development, Fundraising and project management, Local community management, Communication and institutional management (Mureşan, 2003, p. 15).

The rich activity of the community facilitator and of the mayor was to be seen in the high number (11) of possible development projects that were proposed for financing, as well as in the diversity of the fields approached (table 8).

**Table 8. Proposed development projects for Feldru commune** (processing after the data in Mureşan, 2003, pp. 63-71).

No.	The need it answers to	The proposed project	Field
1.	Needs identified in the field of social assistance, of jobs, and of population statistics, etc.	Counselling and information office for the inhabitants.	Institutional development – Local Public Administration sector
2.	No information was available in these fields.	Local development promotion office.	Local development
3.	No information was available in the area and many projects for community development failed to be accessed.	Information campaign about the institutions of the European Union.	Information and instruction
4.	Assistance for disadvantaged persons living in Feldru commune and in the neighbouring communes and not cared for in specialised institutions (these persons were disadvantaged from a medical, social, or educational point of view): especially children running the risk of being marginalised in their community. More than one rural community was to be involved into this approach for helping the disadvantaged children and old persons.	Day care centre for disadvantaged persons.	Social service
5.	Especially foreign tourists that did not have an organised lodging and eating environment within the community. The touristic potential of the commune and neighbouring space could be turned to a better account.	Agricultural touristic pension/board and lodging house.	Tourism
6.	Big community, many children and old people needing permanent and specialised medical assistance.	Finishing the building of the human health centre in Nepos village.	Infrastructure
7.	No micro-farm in the area despite potential.	Animal micro-farm	Economy
8.	Big community, big production of goods, insufficient transport facilities to other markets because of the distance and of the infrastructure of the territory. The creation of a profitable chain between production and market at the local level and in the micro-region: e.g. the area of the Ilva Mică, Ilva Mare etc. having no market.	Re-organisation of the market in Feldru village.	Economy Infrastructure
9.	Waste and gas pollution, etc.	Environmental protection within the community.	Environmental protection
10.	No adequate structure.	Providing equipment for the labs of the technical school.	Education
11.	The need expressed by the inhabitants of Nepos village.	Introducing cable TV in Nepos village.	Informational system



In most of the cases, for **the institution that answered for the development of the project** the mayoralty was mentioned while the openness for collaboration with an NGO was highlighted.

For the **possible financing sources**, the following were listed: the local budget, the European Union funds (e.g. Natura Life – a European programme for the preservation of the natural environment), the private investors such as private businesses (e.g. a small or medium-size industrial unit wishing to diversify its services), and individuals. The partnership of Feldru commune with a specialised NGO was mentioned in four of the eleven project proposals and we considered this an evidence of the plus of knowledge and information brought by the community facilitator. In two of the project proposals we noticed the local public authorities' awareness that Feldru commune could become a polarising centre for the neighbouring communes if it could achieve a functions surplus such as that offered by social services (see project proposal no. 4) and by the economic sector (see project proposal no. 8 – polarising of Ilva communes). The involvement of the local authorities in solving the problems of the rural community was obvious when several projects were won and developed. One of the projects was financed by the World Bank – 60 billion lei for water supply – and by SAPARD – 70 billion lei for sewerage. Among the latest projects won due to the community facilitator's contribution were the one related to the modernising of the local public administration<sup>9</sup> and the one on the setting up of a modern multifunctional centre for old people<sup>10</sup>. These projects were financed by the European Union and by the Ministry of Administration and the Interior with approximately 98,000 euros. Then a partnership was set up and "ProSomeș Intercommunal Association" was set up. It included 22 rural communities in the Someșul Mare Valley and they won and had to put in develop a project of 250.000 euros. The name of the project was "River-Environment-Europe" and two foreign associations were also collaborators in the project: SICALA from France and PSLAMONE from Italy (Mureșan, 2005, p. 18).

Among the successful actions of the local administration, the following were significant: an agricultural products market was set up in 2001 with the help of the mayoralty, and as a result of the collaboration with the foreign partners, the local authorities were able to achieve in 2003 a modern firemen car and an ambulance as a donation (the partnership was signed between Feldru commune and the Bavarian Red Cross). A new location of the mayoralty was under construction. The largest Orthodox cathedral in the Someșul Mare Valley was under construction also in Feldru village. Feldru commune was co-operating with two settlements from abroad as a result of a partnership agreement started in 2001: Vorey St. Vincent Commune in France and Lolleria Commune in Spain. In 2005, efforts were made for realising a similar partnership with Meco del Rey locality in Spain. Co-operation with people from abroad was facilitated through a presentation prospect of the traditions in Feldru commune, a CD with photographs, and a text, both in Romanian and English, as well as through an Internet site of the commune (Avaolable at <http://www.rural-portal.ro/feldru/index2.php?lang=ro&pg=1>).

The components discussed in the SWOT analysis attached to "Strategia de dezvoltare a comunei Feldru" ("Development Strategy for Feldru Commune") were: the natural resources, the technical infrastructure of the territory, the environment and environmental education, contemporary local development, investments, and tourism. In the table below (table 9), we present a selection of the most significant aspects registered under the four entries of the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). We completed and occasionally commented some of the entries.

Synthesising the results of the SWOT analysis, the strengths and the opportunities of Feldru commune were: good institutional infrastructure, local public administration involved into community development, tourism (according to the study realised by the mayoralty, the equality sign was put between tourism development and community development), animal breeding was the most important income source in agriculture (both development and subsistence agriculture), access to the agricultural products market, and Internet advertising. The weaknesses and the threats were: high migration for work to European Union states,

<sup>9</sup> At the end of 2004 Feldru received governmental funds from the Ministry of Administration and the Interior of 19,870 euros for a project entitled "Computerised Management of the Financial and Human Resources of the Local Public Administration". The implementation of the project started in 2005 and was to be accomplished in ten months (Mureșan, 2005, p. 18).

<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of 2004 a project for Social Services was accepted for financment at the Ministry of European Integration. The total value of the investment was of 5 billion lei, for ten months, and it was for the construction and equipping of a "Centre for the old people care and assistance" in Someșul Mare Valley (Mureșan, 2005, p. 18).

organisational and management problems in the territory of Nepos, demographical unbalance obvious through the analysis of the active population that still worked in the commune, and the ignorance of the youth living in the community of traditional social norms and moral norms.

Table 9. SWOT analysis of Feldru commune (processed after the data in Mureşan, 2003, pp. 45-55).

<b>HUMAN RESOURCE</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Numerous population and its permanence (many individual families). Secondary schools and kindergartens with many children. Good communication between local authorities and population.	Emigration of the local labour force abroad (excessive emigration either to other countries or to the urban areas). Birth rate decrease. No counselling and orientation centres for choosing a career or for the inhabitants of the commune. No consensus between the inhabitants of Feldru and of Nepos villages: referendum for separation (Feldru is the administrative centre and Nepos is a belonging village).
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Decrease of the young's professional qualification level. Permanent migration to the urban centres, especially to Bistriţa. No social cohesion. Unbalanced labour market because of over 50 years old redundant persons.	Changes in the mentality of the redundant persons (e.g. active attitude in the job market). Community development with funds from outside the commune (both from investors and other persons). Community facility programme Civitas 2003 having possibilities of extension at the micro-regional level.
<b>TERRITORIAL TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Extant water installations and drinking water wells. Extant studies and projects for drinking water and sewerage.	No drinking water network (but, in a decision of the County Council from February 16, 2005, the drinking water system was considered a priority for both villages of the commune and 1.548.575 \$ was directed from the county funds to the commune) (Available at <a href="http://www.cjbn.ro/popup/hot2005/hotararea%20nr.016/hotararea%20nr.16.doc">http://www.cjbn.ro/popup/hot2005/hotararea%20nr.016/hotararea%20nr.16.doc</a> ). No firemen unit. No sewerage, no water purifying station, no waste materials deposit. Insufficient local budget for infrastructure.
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Non eligible commune for different programmes because of the financier's imposed criteria.	Proximity to Năsăud and to Sângeorz-Băi towns. Funds for infrastructure development (ISPA, SAPARD FRDS PHARE). Local development agent's better strategies for funds meant for the modernising of the territorial infrastructure. Programmes for better infrastructure at the county level. Finishing the works for drinking water and sewerage from the World Bank and SAPARD funds. Creating a unit for firemen with the help of the local authorities. Extension and reorganization of the agricultural and food market in Feldru.
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Getting the local authorities aware of the environmental problems of the commune. Extant volunteer teams (students, teachers, other people) taking care of local cleaning.	Phreatic sheet was negatively affected by waste flow from the population' decantation aparata. Massive deforestation in certain unsupervised areas. Bad drinking water.
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
No programmes or resources targeting environmental protection. No installations or systems for preventing pollution or natural disasters. No control over deforestation.	Ecologic agricultural products with the possibility of adequate capitalising. Setting up of orchards. Salt water springs (the Carelor Valley) and sulphur water spring (the Dan's Valley) exploitation. Possibility of setting up an environmental association and of continuing in an organised framework the volunteer work. The possibility of setting up an administration for the forests of the commune.
<b>LOCAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Ecologic agricultural products. High animal breeding potential.	Bad drinking water. Few animal breeding associations.
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Excessive fragmenting of the	Setting up several centres for agricultural consultancy.

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agricultural property. Lack of associative type attitudes and practice in agriculture. Commercialisation of the traditional art products within an organised environment was threatened to disappear because of lack of support or lack of knowledge on product advertising.	Infrastructure development. Social services development. The extension of the community facilitating programme. Setting up a local development and promotion Office sponsored from E.U. funds. Advertising and information on the Internet.
<b>INVESTMENT</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Support of the local authorities for beginning investments in the community. High investment potential in the animal breeding sector, in the wood processing activities, and in the food production sector.	Long distance to the administrative centre of the county (45 km). Low economic potential of the small and medium-size industrial units (no long term development plans).
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
No branch of any bank in the commune.	Fields with high absorption potential and modernisation (tourism, agriculture, traditional handcraft). Extant community facilitator able to coordinate certain activities, projects, and business plans. Extant major financial resources belonging to certain individuals in the community.
<b>TOURISM</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Rodna Mountains National Reserve Călimani-Bărgău Area. Households included into the agricultural-touristic circuit, equipped for all seasons. Local museum „Moștenire Vie-Casa Etnos” (“Living Legacy – Etnos House”).	No sustained promotion through advertising. Little promotion of the local legends.
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
No study for the area. Bad information of the local public administration for actions in this field.	Turning to good account the cultural and traditional events. Setting up an agricultural-touristic pension with the funds to come through SAPARD. Organising summer camps for the pupils, students and foreigners coming in a pleasant and unpolluted environment. Presenting the commune on a permanently updated Internet page. New partnerships with settlements in the European Union and the preservation of the old ones.

During the last period, the people's life was marked by two unforeseen events: landslides and the terrorist attacks in Madrid, Spain. On March 30 and 31, 2005, landslides<sup>11,12</sup> affected the Cip area, at the administrative limit between Feldru and Ilva Mică communes, and three houses from the first commune were destroyed. The rebuilding of these houses in a secure area was belated by the local and county administrative authorities' impossibility of buying terrain inside the constructed area of the commune, as the sums were of 2,000 de euro/are<sup>13</sup> - which is very expensive. Then, the devastating explosions during the terrorist attacks on March 11, 2005, in three trains in Madrid, got approximately 60 Romanians hurt, and out of them five were from Feldru commune (see above the high number of people from Feldru living in Arganda del Rey, near Madrid). According to the community facilitator assertions<sup>14</sup>, the local administration had advantages as a consequence of its involvement into the project run by Civitas Foundation. The former community facilitator for one year, continued his work in Feldru as a counselling-sociologist in the mayoralty. Taking into account its actions, the administration

<sup>11</sup> The cause was the heavy rainfall and snow melting.

<sup>12</sup> In January 2006, the Ministry of Transport, Constructions, and Tourism opened an auction for a cartographic product necessary to the local administration on a long term: *Risk Map for Landslides – Case Study: Feldru Commune, Bistrița-Năsăud County* (Available at [http://www.mt.ro/achizitii\\_publice/mtct\\_participare.html](http://www.mt.ro/achizitii_publice/mtct_participare.html)).

<sup>13</sup> The inhabitants of Feldru could invest in the real estate market of Năsăud as it was cheaper and more viable than that in their commune.

<sup>14</sup> "Acceptance of the facilitation programme led to concrete results in a very short time" (Mureșan, 2005, p. 16) was the opinion of the community facilitator in Feldru.

of Feldru commune proved to be informed<sup>15</sup>, efficient, and open to all co-operation and funds accession opportunities.

### Conclusions

In our paper we presented the experience of Feldru commune on the way towards development and we presented some good practice examples in its administration as it was done by the rural authorities.

We gave arguments of a model for rural life modernisation during the period of social and economic changes characteristic for the Romanian village after 1989. Its success was to be recognised in various fields: public administration, social assistance, environment and culture, evidence of the real opportunities of fund accessing, of co-operation, and of ensuring the future sustainable development of the community.

Realising the social and economic strategy for the community development ("Development Strategy for Feldru Commune") underlined the transition from monographic registering of information to the creation and putting into practice viable plans for sustainable development. The conclusion that could be drawn from the listing and analysis of the assumed opportunities for social, economic, and environmental recovery of Feldru commune, pointed out the opportunities that all Romanian rural communities had during the period of adjusting for integrating into the European Union.

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<sup>15</sup> The mayor of the commune was the only mayor in the rural space that was elected in the leadership committee of the North-West Development Region Agency.