



# EUREGA Interreg Europe Action Plan for Sibiu County Council



SIBIU

May 2020



## Part I – General information

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**Project: EUREGA - Changes in the strategic focus of the public policy instrument**



**Partner organisation(s) concerned: Sibiu County Council - PP7**



**Country: Romania**

**NUTS2 region: Sibiu**



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Our region – Sibiu County in Transylvania - is, regarding gastronomy, a classic example of a territory with an abundance of own resources, which are not efficiently used. Although having a big variety of local products (both produced traditionally on small scale surfaces and in larger production sites), a lot of local knowledge regarding food (production and processing) as well as very good sales channels (the highest percentage per capita of restaurants in Romania and plenty of visitors in the region), gastronomy is still NOT a decisive development factor.

This fact, in our opinion, is determined by two main reasons. Firstly, the demand for local food is very weak because the consumption of locals was standardized supermarket food oriented in the last 30 years. On the other hand, the offer for local food is not consistent because it lacks various elements. We identified the following aspects that need to be improved: technical support, logistical solutions, quality criteria and labelling, good branding, and appropriate promotion.

Through this AP and the proposed changes in the public policy, we will substantially increase both the offer and the demand for local food. This will happen through a major change of focus in the policy and two main working instruments.



## Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

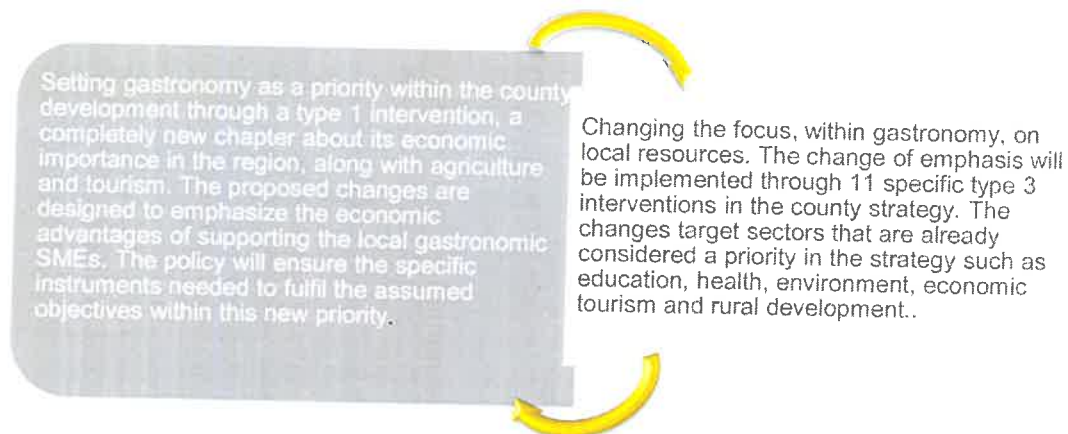


### Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:

Sibiu County Development Strategy 2010 - 2013 and the county development objectives for the period 2014 - 2020 and Sibiu County Development Strategy for the Period 2012 - 2020 (revised, updated and completed). The strategy includes, among the major economic development priorities, the tourism and the agriculture, but misses any kind of focus on gastronomy.

### Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instruments:

Our suggested changes in the public policy include (according to the Interreg Program manual):



At the same time, the Action Plan is conceived to assist, complete and communicate better the changes within the public policy:



### New structure

A new structure will be set up within the Sibiu County Council, to support local SMEs in the gastronomy sector. The structure is the result of a type 1 intervention in the strategy and its objective is to ensure that start-ups or active SMEs in Sibiu County, in the field of food production or food processing, can request assistance services.



### Supporting documents

Thus, two supporting documents were developed: a handbook for local gastronomic SMEs and a guide to a healthy lifestyle. Both documents will explain and communicate more easily the type 3 interventions in the strategy, namely, the focus on local resources in terms of local cuisine.



- a) The handbook for local gastronomic SMEs is designed as a tool for gastronomic SMEs and a working tool for the new structure within the Sibiu County Council. The handbook will help to better direct SMEs to public and private institutions that can provide development support, but also better promotion based on the argument of the benefits of local consumption. The natural consequence of these actions is the significant increase in the local food supply
- b) The guide to a healthy lifestyle is oriented towards health and education and is intended to guide locals to consume food produced in the region and to change their eating habits. Therefore, this guide is intended to help increase the demand for local food.



## Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

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### **ACTION 1**

***Setting up a structure within the Sibiu County Council with the aim of sustainable development through gastronomy and assistance to local gastronomic SMEs***

1.

### **Relevance to the project**

During phase 1 of the EUREGA project, in the framework of the interregional experience exchange, it was found that a number of public or private institutions are already taking actions to support SMEs in the food production and processing sector, the regional benefits being obvious. These actions aim to support the regional economy by: providing jobs in rural areas, preserving the biodiversity of the territory, maintaining the traditional aspect of the rural environment (cultural landscape), developing less connected areas in the county, reducing labour migration - or supporting green industries, such as small-scale food production.

What Sibiu County lacks, in order to lead the regional economy through gastronomy, is a central coagulator, which could better animate, help, guide, support and promote SMEs in local gastronomy. As a result, it is suggested to set up a structure within the County Council, which aims to fulfil two major roles. Firstly, it will be a hub of information and resources for all those seeking guidance or lacking the necessary knowledge. Secondly, we propose that this structure play the role of pre-accelerator in gastronomy.

The inspiration came from a government supported accelerator programme - Food Works, in Ireland - which offers a wide range of tools provided by food and marketing experts and helps active businesses and start-ups grow their businesses. The Food Works program includes workshops, individual business counselling sessions, specialist consulting, support in promoting and developing a local brand, mentoring, research and guidance. Participants are also eligible to apply for a grant to benefit from this program. Food Works inspired us to take over the individual business counselling sessions and expert support sessions.



## 2. Nature of the action

The new compartment within the County Council will take the following actions in order to contribute to the incorporation of gastronomy as a priority area in the county development strategy and to create economic advantages for the region:

**a. Identify, support and assistance of local SMEs as follows:**

- Identifying start-ups with real development needs - two annual campaigns. The identification will be done with the support of local stakeholders involved in animating local communities. There will be a collaboration with the agricultural register office at the local administration level, thus coming into contact with those who intend to open a business in gastronomy.
- Identification of already active SMEs in need of development - two annual campaigns in the existing markets (Saturday's Farmers Market Transilvania, Cibir Market, Huet Market), including the local and rural or ad-hoc markets: CNM ASTRA Country Fair, Morii Fair, Răşinari Agri-Food Market etc.
- Organizing focus groups in order to identify potential beneficiaries of the counselling program, by involving local stakeholders: local action groups, other private entities or professional associations.

**b. Supporting SMEs and start-ups, identified by creating specific support scenarios, involving the related institutions, and implementing related scenarios according to applicants' requirements. Strategic questions will be asked, in order to identify the needs of SMEs in terms of the necessary authorizations, possible certifications, existing labels, as well as sales and promotion channels.**

- Assistance and advising SMEs for future development needs - on need / request - pre-acceleration work mode, with consulting sessions. The services provided will be free of charge.

**c. Promotion of local SMEs:**

- Collecting and maintaining up-to-date information on SMEs, through the methods mentioned above (a.)
- Updating and promoting the online Gastromap - Sibiu's Tastes platform (<https://gusturisibiene.ro/>) to the local and regional public (Sibiu county and neighbouring counties in southern Transylvania) on the communication channels of the Sibiu County Council. 1-2 regular SME promotion campaigns will be organized annually and will emphasize the establishment of a short supply chain and orientation towards local producers, which creates economic resilience and self-support in the region.

**d. Communication and dissemination actions**

- A series of meetings will be organized with public institutions, both in Sibiu and in the county, which will focus on disseminating information on gastronomy as a new priority, the importance of implementing the new regulations or changes, considering the need to use local resources.
- Working meetings will take place with representatives of the Sibiu County School Inspectorate and of the hospital units subordinated to the County Council.



- A series of applied meetings will take place with at least 5 public schools in Sibiu and with representatives of local administrations in the county (at least 10 communes and 5 cities).
- The detailing of the recommendations to the private sector will be done by:
  - ✓ through meetings with local action groups (LAGs) - minimum 3
  - ✓ through at least 2 campaigns that will take place in local business clubs, or
  - ✓ through meetings with local stakeholders to disseminate information
- Participation in conferences or events, at national level, in order to promote the measures implemented by Sibiu County in the field of local gastronomy as a factor of sustainable development.

**e. Reducing the impact of COVID-19:**

- Initiate discussions with related institutions to identify easier authorization processes or online solutions to avoid excessive people-to-people contacts.
- Organizing promotion campaigns dedicated to local gastronomy, which exemplify the advantages of consuming local products, both for consumers and producers.

Proposals for indicators to be collected annually by the set-up structure and communicated to those responsible for evaluating the action plan (i.e. the EUREGA project team), to local stakeholders and to the general public:

1. number of identified start-ups / SMEs
2. number of start-ups / SMEs supported
3. number of start-ups / SMEs promoted
4. number of collaborating institutions
5. the number of products or services certified in one of the existing quality schemes as a result of the support / assistance provided by the new structure.

### 3. Stakeholders involved

- a. **Public institutions:** ASTRA Museum, Sibiu County Public Health Directorate, Sibiu Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Directorate, Sibiu County School Inspectorate through subordinate technical schools, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, local administrations etc. – all of them will be an active part of the pre-acceleration activity of the new structure and will provide important information so that start-ups and SMEs are up to date with the necessary information. Such public institutions may provide specific information on laws, regulations and bureaucratic measures to be taken at any stage of development.
- b. **Private or public-private entities:** Sibiu County Tourism Association, local business clubs, NGOs and professional associations, local action groups and other financiers, Sibiu Food Hub etc. – all of them will provide the necessary information for the new structure and will provide professional consulting sessions for local start-ups and SMEs, which already have technical knowledge in this field and practical expertise.



4.

## Timeframe

The implementation period of Action 1 is: 01.06.2020 - 31.05.2022 and has two components:

### 01.06.2020 - 31.05.2021

The first year includes: running two separate identification campaigns for start-ups and active SMEs, running pre-acceleration scenarios for a number of selected SMEs and organizing two promotion campaigns

### 01.06.2020 - 31.05.2022

Monitoring and evaluating the implementations of the changes brought to the development strategy of Sibiu County.

5.

## Costs

The new structure within the County Council will generate, in two years' time, implementation costs of approximately 160,000 euro (800,000 lei) including staff costs, travel costs and other organization costs calculated to monitor the implementation of changes to the strategy.

6.

## Funding sources

These expenses will be supported by the local budget of Sibiu County, for the year 2020 and will be included in the budget proposal for the year 2021, respectively the year 2022, on the following budget lines:

- Staff expenditure;
- Travel costs;
- Protocol and representation.





## **ACTION 2**

### **Monitoring and evaluating the impact of the development strategy of Sibiu County in the field of gastronomy**

The **Handbook for local gastronomic SMEs** and the **Healthy Lifestyle Guide** are the two supporting documents that summarize the work of this project. They contribute to the explanation of the reasons and arguments for the changes brought to the development strategy of the Sibiu County and aim to gain support in promoting the changes brought to the public policy document. At the same time, the mentioned documents show or indicate the solutions, so that the gastronomy becomes a major development factor in the economy of the Sibiu County.

1.

## **Relevance to the project**

The two documents each have two roles:

- a. to better communicate the importance of local gastronomy as a new priority by directing the attention of the local public to local resources.
- b. to explain and bring arguments for the changes brought to the local public policy, the Development Strategy of Sibiu County. We refer to type 3 interventions (structural changes and content changes) and type 1 intervention, a new content through a completely new sub-chapter added to the strategy.

The inspiration for the changes in the development strategy and for these two supporting documents is very consistent and comes from the examples of good practice assessed during the international exchange visits:

- a. The TAS program in Catalonia led to the inclusion of health and education elements in the supporting documents. From this program came the idea of incorporating an element of health in the gastronomy of the region and of educating locals on a model of healthy gastronomy, so that it has a social impact.
- b. The evaluation of the Gezond Dorp project in Noord-Brabant led to the drafting of the entire guide to a healthy lifestyle. The Gezond Dorp project led to the creation of such a guide for an entire community, which this way can be influenced.
- c. The Debrecen Apple Orchard project in Derecske presented the benefits of the link between gastronomy and tourism and provided additional clues for a new chapter on the importance of gastronomy in the local economy.
- d. Food Works in Ireland not only supported the drafting of the SME Support Manual, but also provided new information on the importance of gastronomy in the local economy.



The use of the two supporting documents by the Sibiu County Council, the subordinated institutions and the public authorities in the county and the monitoring of the implementation of the changes brought to the strategy of Sibiu County.

## 2. Nature of the action

- a. The team of the new structure within the Sibiu County Council will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of changes to the strategy of Sibiu County, by completing twice a year monitoring reports, following the indicators of Action 1. Applicability of the two supporting documents mentioned in Action 2, point number 1, will be pursued with the support of institutions subordinated to the County Council and teams that manage the financial involvement of the County Council in gastronomy, through public funding provided by the Cultural and Community Development Agenda, Sports and Youth Agenda etc.
- b. In order to ensure objectivity, the EUREGA project team will be responsible for evaluating the impact of the implementation of the development strategy of Sibiu County in the field of gastronomy by:
  - Anonymous evaluation questionnaires applied randomly to SMEs that received assistance (questionnaire completed by at least 20% of the beneficiaries of assistance).
  - Focus group with assisted SMEs and institutions subordinated to the Sibiu County Council to identify possible points for improvement.
  - Evaluation session in which the monitoring reports prepared by the team of the new structure, the results of the questionnaires, the results of the focus groups are analysed and the need for a review is established.
- c) Anti-COVID-19 measures:
  - In order to comply with the rules on social distancing, in order to avoid meetings in large groups that are considered a source of risk, at least 25% of the planned meetings, mentioned above, will take place online (webinars, Zoom meetings, Skype conferences etc.).

Proposed indicators for the implementation of Action 2:

1. the number of questionnaires applied to the SMEs that received assistance;
2. number of focus group meetings;
3. the number of hits to the two supporting documents on the website of the Sibiu County Council and Sibiu's Tastes;
4. the number of events organized with financial support from the Sibiu County Council in subordinated institutions and other public or private entities, at which the provisions of the two supporting documents were implemented.



3.

## Stakeholders involved

- a. **Public institutions:** institutions subordinated to the Sibiu County Council, town halls, Sibiu County Public Health Directorate, Sibiu Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Directorate, Sibiu County School Inspectorate, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu etc. – all of them will be active partners in implementing the recommendations included in the updated strategy and supporting documents.
- b. **Private or public-private entities:** Sibiu County Tourism Association, local business clubs, NGOs and professional associations, local action groups and other financiers, Sibiu Food Hub, etc. – all of them will support the implementation of the recommendations by adopting and promoting them in their fields of activity.

4.

## Timeframe

The implementation period of Action 2 is: 01.06.2020 - 31.05.2022

5.

## Costs

The organizational costs provided for Action 2 are estimated at **5,600 euros (28,000 lei)**.

6.

## Funding sources

These expenses will be supported by the local budget of Sibiu County, for the year 2020 and will be included in the budget proposal for the year 2021, respectively the year 2022, on the following budget lines:

- Travel costs;
- Protocol and representation.



**Date:** 18.05.2020

**Name of the organisation(s):**

Sibiu County Council

**Signatures of the relevant organisation(s):** Daniela Cîmpean

President of Sibiu County Council

