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**PhD THESIS**

**The Public Management and the sustainable development of the local  
communities through the attraction and implementation of the European funds**  
**PhD Thesis Abstract**

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Key words: management, sustainable development, local communities, European funds, European Union, public institutions, citizens

# 1. Research purpose and objectives

This paper aims to treat the local community from the perspective of sustainable development through the use of qualitative management.

We have tried to approach the theoretical concepts of the management from diverse and as recent as possible bibliographical sources. Subsequently, we have approached the subject of the mechanisms of European funds by studying the bibliography necessary to present how the money made available by the European Commission can be accessed by the local communities, intermediary bodies or agencies overseeing the process. We have also considered it necessary to address the subject of the sustainable development of the local communities by studying the bibliography and statistical data available up to the date.

The main purpose of the investigative approach was to present how the management can help the sustainable development of the local community.

The **general research objective** of the PhD thesis is to identify the relationship between the existence of an efficient public management and the sustainable development of the community by accessing and implementing the European funds.

In line with this general objective we have set the following specific objectives:

- SO 1: The study of the management and the related theories of it.
- SO 2: The identification of the way in which the EU funding works.
- SO 3: The assessment of the situation in Romania since 2008 up to the date, from the perspective of the sustainable development by studying the 17 assumed objectives.
- SO 4: Analyzing the effects of attracting the non-reimbursable funds in the case of the Carei municipality.
- SO 5: Analyzing the indicators that were achieved through the implementation of projects in the municipality of Carei from the perspective of the assumed objectives in terms of sustainable development.
- SO 6: Formulating the conclusions and the recommendations in order to improve the quality of life in what concerns the citizens of Carei.

The research objectives were based on the general assumption that the management, in particular the public management, can have a major effect on the way certain local communities develop with the help of non-reimbursable European funds accessed by local public administration authorities.

Given the subject of this paper, we considered it appropriate to use the following research methods:

1. quantitative research methods: a document analysis using the document analysis grid as an instrument and an opinion survey using the questionnaire as an instrument;
2. a qualitative research method using an interview. The research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide.

The establishment of these research tools was preceded by 2 important aspects:

- Reviewing the literature on the subject under study, some documents elaborated by local, national and international institutions/organizations, respectively other studies that aimed to identify the relationship between management, local community and its development through the projects accessed.
- Analyzing the legislation about the functioning of institutions of public interest.



## 2. Thesis structure and content

The structure of this doctoral thesis comprises the following:

- 6 chapters dedicated to scientific approaches;
- 2 annexes;
- 18 pages of bibliographical references.

The structure of the chapters is based on a logical approach following a certain procedure. The initial part is represented by the bibliographical study, the review of the main theories and theoretical elements, the research methodology and then the conclusions and recommendations resulting from this methodology.

The first chapter of the thesis, Chapter 1 Research Methodology, deals with the established research direction and is based on the use of 2 research methods: quantitative and qualitative. In the case of the quantitative research method, we relied on the document analysis and on a survey. For the qualitative research method, we used a semi-structured interview.

Therefore, this first chapter aims to present the situation we are trying to understand, based on our investigative approach, that is, the attempt to prove whether the general presumption mentioned in the introductory part is true or not.

After that, we set the research objectives, hypotheses and research questions.

The second chapter, Local Community Management, deals with the main theories of management and their links or implications in the managerial process in the local communities. Therefore, we studied the specialized literature where we mentioned the concept of management seen as an art and as a science, we have also presented the main exponents of the different currents (Max Weber, Chester Barnard, Herbert Simon, Elton Mayo, Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Wiliam Ouchi), but especially the legislative framework applicable in the public administration in Romania (OUG 57/2019, Law 215/2001 and their principles). In the last part of chapter 2, we presented the conclusions that emerged from the study.

The third chapter, the European Funds Mechanism, presents in the first part the concrete steps that were taken immediately after 1945, or after the Second World War, by certain actors in the European environment towards the realization of the European Union.

Subsequently, we studied the time milestones taken by the Romanian state authorities in the idea of Romania's accession to the European Union. After studying the specialized literature, we presented the main financial instruments used by the European Communities, then by the European Commission to try to help future member states to become part of the EU, but also the financial instruments used only in the case of states that are already EU members.

Afterwards, we have showed how the mechanism works in practice. We presented the strategic documents, the agencies, the actors from the bottom to the top, those actors that have a determining role in creating the strategy, attracting financial resources, spending them in order to achieve the objectives.

The last part of the chapter presents the corresponding conclusions on the functioning of the European funds.

The fourth chapter, Sustainable Development of the Local Communities, helps us to understand the steps taken this time, globally and not only at European level, by state and non-state actors in order to create an agenda that sets overarching goals for communities, regions and states, so that future generations are not affected by the decisions that the present generation makes, in other words: an agenda for the process of sustainable development. Therefore, we have pointed out the main meetings, conferences and goals that have taken place since the middle of the last century up to the present day that have dealt and are dealing with the

Subsequently, we presented the 17 goals assumed by the countries that have joined the 2030 Agenda and the situation of our country in this regard by 2023, 2024. In the last part of the chapter we have presented the related conclusions.

Chapter 5, Analyzing the effects of accessing and implementing the European funds in local communities. Case study: Carei municipality, Satu Mare County. This chapter represents the applied essence of the scientific study that provides the added value of this PhD thesis. In the first part of this chapter we have presented a brief history of the municipality of Carei and its geographical settlement in the county of Satu Mare and in Romania. Then we have presented the research methodology and the results obtained from the analysis of the official documents, the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire. In this chapter we tested 2 hypotheses and tried to answer 6 research questions. In the last part we have presented the conclusions and related recommendations.

Chapter 6, Conclusions and Recommendations, is based on a synthesis that encompasses the most important theoretical and practical aspects of the analyzed topic. These are aspects that concern the managerial field, the mechanism of operation of European funds, the field of sustainable development and the case study realized in the municipality of Carei. Practically, the persons representing the management at the level of the city hall have thought the necessary strategy for the development of the municipality of Carei. This fact has integrated the concept of sustainable development in the mechanism of the European funds, being a reference element for ensuring results and transparency but also citizens' satisfaction and not only in terms of post-

implementation of projects.

### 3. Research methodology

After the completion of the first stage, the study of the literature and the analysis of the legislation, we undertook activities of collecting and analyzing respectively updating the available data using 2 scientific research methods:

- a quantitative method that focused on document analysis. Then we designed and built a grid for analyzing the documents as a research tool, alternatively, we used an opinion poll through which we wanted to find out the opinion or perception not only of the inhabitants of the municipality of Carei, but especially the opinion or the perception of entities such as: the business environment, NGOs and representatives of the local public administration, regarding the activities undertaken by the management of local public authorities for the development of the municipality. In this part, we used as a research tool a questionnaire, presented in the appendix of this thesis;
- a qualitative method appropriate to the use of an interview. Naturally, the research instrument in this case was the interview guide. By means of it, we wanted to find out answers regarding the decision-making system in relation to the projects carried out for the development of the community, from the persons who were, or are part of the management of the Carei municipality.

#### **Research design**

This scientific paper presents a longitudinal temporal research design because the period that has been subjected to the research is relatively long (2007-2023 in the case of the data concerning the TAU Carei, respectively 2008-2024 for the other data referring to Romania or other EU Member States). The design also has a multi-method character, because as we have previously indicated, we used 2 research methods in the scientific approach.

The respondents who were part of the present study (opinion poll) had approximately the same percentage, if we refer to the fact that men were approximately equal in number to women.

We had 4 categories of respondents:

- representatives of the administrative environment (Carei municipality);
- citizens of Carei;
- business representatives from the town of Carei;
- representatives of non-governmental organizations from Carei.

We administered a total of 400 questionnaires out of which 379 were fully completed, so 21 questionnaires were incomplete. In this respect, the response rate is almost 95%, 94.75% more

specifically, while the non-response rate was 5.25%.

In what concerns the interview, we applied a semi-structured interview guide to the following people:

- The Mayor of Carei;
- Secretary general of the Carei municipality;
- Chief Architect of the Carei City Hall;
- Executive Technical Director of the Carei City Hall;
- Service coordinator of projects, local development programs;
- Director of the Culture and Tourism Department of the Carei City Hall;
- The coordinator of the local taxes and fees service of Carei municipality.

### **Objectives, hypotheses and research questions.**

Starting from the general research objective, namely: to identify a relationship between the existence of an efficient public management and the sustainable development of a local community by accessing and implementing European funds, we considered 6 specific objectives (SO), 2 hypotheses (H), respectively 9 research questions (Q), as follows:

#### **Specific objectives:**

SO 1: The study of the management and its related theories.

SO 2: The identification of how the EU funds mechanism works.

SO 3: Assessment of the situation in Romania since 2008 up to the date from the perspective of the sustainable development by studying the 17 objectives that were assumed.

SO 4: Analyzing the effects of attracting non-reimbursable funds in the case of the Carei municipality.

SO 5: Analyzing the indicators achieved through the implementation of projects in the municipality of Carei from the perspective of the assumed objectives in terms of sustainable development.

SO 6: Formulating conclusions and recommendations for improving the quality of life of citizens in the municipality of Carei.

#### **Hypotheses:**

H1: The satisfaction with the citizens' standard of living is influenced by the increased economic impact, respectively, the increased quality of life, as a result of the implementation of EU-funded projects;

H2: The positive perception towards EU-funded projects implemented in the municipality of Carei

is influenced by the category of local actors;

**Research questions:**

Q1: What is management and how does it influence institutions and local communities. What are the main theories?

Q2: What is the mechanism of the European Funds and which authorities/bodies are part of it?

Q3: What is sustainable development and what has our country achieved so far?

Q4: What is the effect of EU funding in the municipality of Carei?

Q5: Have the managerial capacity and administrative efficiency changed through the implementation of projects in the TAU of Carei?

Q6: By which indicators of the projects implemented at TAU Carei was this evolution measured?

Q7: Which are the areas or sectors that have had a high impact among the respondents through the projects implemented at the TAU Carei?

Q8: Which EU-funded projects have had the most visible results among respondents?

Q9: Did the studied projects achieve indicators that correspond to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda?

In the attempt to achieve the general objective, then the specific objectives, hypothesis testing and last but not least, to answer the research questions, we have thought and applied in our scientific approach the following tools: literature review, document analysis, opinion survey and last but not least the semi-structured interview applied to the people in the management of the Carei municipality.

The first stage of the research, corresponding to **Chapter 1**, is of a conceptual-methodological nature and consisted in planning the direction we followed. This presented the research techniques and tools applied to the subject under our attention.

**The aim** of Chapter 2 was to survey the literature and identify the theories and trends that have been used from the beginnings of this field of work to the present.

Therefore, the objective that governs the essence of this chapter is the **specific objective OS 1**: Studying management and its associated theories, which we have achieved through the quantitative research method of **documents analysis** according to the problem under study.

In line with this objective, we considered the following research question Q1: What is

management and how does it influence institutions and local communities. What are the main theories?

**The aim** of Chapter 3 was to understand this mechanism, therefore the specific objective **SO2** was to identify how the mechanism of European funds works, which we achieved through the quantitative research method of **document analysis**.

**The research question** corresponding to this specific objective was **Q2**: What is the mechanism of the European Funds and which authorities/bodies are part of it?

**The aim** of Chapter 4 was to study the specialized literature, to read documents created by European institutions and not only but also by other bodies/organizations, in order to understand the emergence of the concept of sustainable development and the evolution recorded over the time as well as the recent situation.

For this chapter we have set as a specific objective, **SO3**: Assessment of the situation in Romania from 2008 to the present from the perspective of the sustainable development by studying 17 sustainable development goals, assumed by our country according to the Agenda 2030 action plan. This objective was achieved through the quantitative research method of **document analysis**.

According to the above-mentioned SO3, we formulated the following research question **Q3**: What is sustainable development and what are the results achieved so far by our country in this area?

In the case of **Chapter 5**, which dealt with the case study of the municipality of Carei, the main **aim** was to assess the effects of EU funding on the municipality of Carei in terms of local development, respectively, to observe whether administrative efficiency and managerial capacity in attracting and implementing EU-funded projects have undergone positive or negative changes during the two funding cycles 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

The Specific Objective **SO4** set for this chapter was the following: to analyze the effects of attracting non-reimbursable funds in the case of Carei municipality.

For the document analysis research method, the research objectives were:

- Identification of indicators that can be used to quantify the degree of absorption of non-reimbursable European funds at the level of the Carei municipality.
- To analyze the position or the perception of the persons in management positions within the Carei City Hall, active participants in the management process directly responsible for creating development strategies.

For the interview research method, the research objectives were:

- Establishing a sufficient or insufficient number of projects implemented in the last 14 years so that we can say that we have a high quality of life in the municipality of Carei;
- Appointing such projects;
- Establish the success rate as the ratio of projects submitted and approved over the time in the studied period.

In the case of the opinion survey research method, the objective of the research was to find out the respondents' perceptions of the projects implemented by the municipality

The content of this chapter of the thesis was structured around 6 research questions (Q) and 2 hypotheses (H), as follows:

**Q4:** What is the effect of EU funding in the municipality of Carei?

**Q5:** Have the managerial capacity and administrative efficiency changed through the implementation of projects in the TAU of Carei?

**Q6:** By which indicators of the projects implemented at TAU Carei was this evolution measured?

**Q7:** Which are the areas or sectors that have had a high impact among the respondents through the projects implemented at the TAU Carei?

**Q8:** Which EU-funded projects have had the most visible results among respondents?

**Q9:** Did the studied projects achieve indicators that correspond to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda?

**H1:** The satisfaction with the citizens' standard of living is influenced by the increased economic impact, respectively, the increased quality of life, as a result of the implementation of EU-funded projects;

**H2:** The positive perception towards EU-funded projects implemented in the municipality of Carei is influenced by the category of local actors;

Another specific objective of this chapter was **SO 5:** To analyze the indicators achieved through the implementation of projects in the municipality of Carei from the perspective of the objectives assumed in terms of sustainable development.

Thus, within the quantitative research method we used both the document analysis where as



a research tool we designed and used a grid for the documents' analysis, respectively we used the opinion survey which had as a research tool the questionnaire.

Within the qualitative research method we used an interview. As a research instrument for this part we designed and applied an interview guide with 6 questions.

**The last chapter** of this thesis contains the conclusions that resulted from the study of the specific legislation of both the national and the European framework, the principles that dictate the aspects in the managerial field, the mechanism of European funds, sustainable development and last but not least the aspects that resulted from the quantitative and qualitative research that represented the practical part of the study.

The specific objective set for the last chapter of this thesis is SO 6: Formulation of conclusions and recommendations to improve the quality of life of the citizens of the municipality of Carei.

## 4. Conclusions

The **theoretical part** of the thesis attempted to answer the first 3 research questions, namely:

Q1: What is management and how does it influence institutions and local communities. What are the main theories?

Q2: What is the mechanism of the European Funds and which authorities/bodies are part of it?

Q3: What is sustainable development and what has our country achieved so far?

Therefore, we presented the main definitions of management, the evolution and the legislative framework.

Subsequently, we presented the financial instruments used by the European Commission in the framework of the policies applicable in the European Union, the institutions/bodies with an important role in the mechanism of these funds:

In the 2007-2013 period, 3 financial instruments were available to EU Member States: ERDF, ESF and CF. In our country, the most important document and with a special role in the Structural Funds policy during this period was the National Strategic Reference Framework or NSRF. Romania, as an EU Member State, benefited from 19.7 billion euros of funding in this cycle.

In the period 2014-2020, 5 financial instruments were available to Member States: the EMFF, EAFRD, CF, ESF, and ERDF. Documents of fundamental importance and with a particular role in the Structural Funds policy during this period were: the Partnership Agreement, the Common Strategic Framework and the Development Plan of the Regions.

During this period, Romania, as an EU member country, attracted approximately 31 billion euros out of non-reimbursable European funds.

Organizations with an important role in the mechanism of European funds in Romania are:

- National Council for Regional Development or NCRD;
- Regional Development Council or RDC;
- Regional Development Agencies or RDA s;
- Regional Planning Committee or RPC.

As far as sustainable development is concerned, we can say that it began in 1972 with the issues discussed and analyzed at the Stockholm Conference. Afterwards, another important step was taken with the Brundtland Commission Report in 1987.

The term "sustainable development" used at the Rio Conference in 1992 was intended to draw attention to the need to protect the environment and to exemplify how the needs of a local community should be met today, without harming the needs of people in the future. The aim of the sustainable development is to link areas such as education, scientific research, the environment, political action or policy agendas in order to achieve a high degree of economic development while conserving resources and protecting the environment.

The next important step was taken in 2000 at the Millennium Summit. Work is now underway to achieve the goals of Agenda 2030, a strategic document adopted in 2015 at the UN General Assembly in New York. The previous 8 goals contained in the Millennium Summit have thus been replaced by 17 others, receiving the endorsement of no less than 193 countries, including Romania. As a result, our country developed a strategic document called: Romania's National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030.

The 17 goals formulated in the 2030 Agenda are also reflected in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030. They are the following:

- No poverty;
- Zero hunger;
- Health and well-being;
- Quality education;
- Gender equality;
- Clean water and sanitation;
- Clean and affordable energy;
- Decent work and economic growth;
- Resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization and innovation;
- Reduced inequalities;
- Sustainable cities and communities;
- Responsible consumption and production;
- Climate action;
- Aquatic life;
- Life on Earth;
- Peace, justice and effective institutions;
- Partnerships to achieve objectives.

The **practical part** of the thesis attempted to answer 6 research questions (Q):

Q4: What is the effect of EU funding in the municipality of Carei?

Q5: Have the managerial capacity and administrative efficiency changed through the implementation of projects at TAU Carei?

Q6: By which indicators of the projects implemented at TAU Carei was this evolution measured?

Q7: Which are the areas or sectors that have had a high impact among the respondents through the projects implemented at the TAU Carei?

Q8: Which EU-funded projects have had the most visible results among respondents?

Q9: Did the studied projects achieve indicators that correspond to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda?

Afterwards, we also followed in this part of the thesis to verify 2 hypotheses (H):

H1: The satisfaction with the citizens' standard of living is influenced by the increased economic impact, respectively, the increased quality of life, as a result of the implementation of EU-funded projects;

H2: The positive perception towards EU-funded projects implemented in the municipality of Carei is influenced by the category of local actors;

The documents studied included: chapters/sub-chapters of the income and expenditure budgets of the municipality of Carei for the period 2007-2023, the Integrated Urban Development Plan of the Municipality of Carei and the Local Development Strategy of the Municipality of Carei for the period 2014-2020, and last but not least, the progress reports of the financed projects implemented and finalized by the year 2013 and 2020.

In what concerns the research question **Q4**, the documents studied show that the EU non-reimbursable funds attracted during the 2007-2013 funding period amounted to about 28.600.000 lei. In 2013, the municipality of Carei was able to attract an amount of 10.371.878 lei, which was equivalent to about 19% of the total budget revenues of the Carei TAU in that year.

Another aspect to be mentioned is the fact that the total income of the Carei City Hall in 2007 was 25.805.885 lei and at the end of the financing cycle, to be more specific-2013, the income increased to 54.692.162 lei, a significant increase of 2.11 times in only 7 years.

The non-reimbursable European funds accessed by the municipality of Carei in the 2014-2020 funding period amounted to almost 50.000.000 lei, almost twice the amount accessed in the

2007-2013 period. The year in which the local budget received the largest amount of money in the second funding period that we studied, was 2020 with an amount of over 26.700.000 lei. The share of revenue from European non-reimbursable funds in the total budget revenue in 2020 was over 35%.

In what concerns the Carei City Hall's expenditures for the following sectors: development/investments, goods, services and culture, a view upon the City Hall's local budgets shows that in 2007 and 2008, the priority was given to the goods and services sector, and only then to the other two sectors with almost identical amounts. In 2009, the amounts allocated to development and investment sector increased almost four times compared to the previous year, but are slightly below the level allocated to goods and services sector. Expenditures for culture remain at almost the same level between 2007 and 2011, only in 2012, the allocated amount doubles to more than 3.000.000 lei. Out of the 3 sectors studied in terms of allocation of budgetary resources, the culture sector was allocated the smallest amount of money in 2012 and 2013, with considerable differences.

Between 2014 and 2020, the situation changes in the sense that all the amounts allocated to the 3 sectors show significant increases. More specifically, in 2015 and 2016, the culture sector was the second most important chapter for the municipality in terms of the allocation of budgetary resources, with considerably higher amounts allocated than for the development/investment sector. Between 2007 and 2020, a period overlapping the two European funding cycles, the amounts of money allocated to the development/investment and goods and services sectors reached their peak in 2020: more than 32.000.000 lei respectively more than 12.800.000 lei, while the culture sector was allocated just under 8.000.000 lei.

Regarding the research question **Q5**, according to the studied documents and the answers obtained following the application of the interview guide, we conclude that between 2007-2013, 6 projects were submitted for funding, out of which 6 were approved and 5 were implemented by the end of 2013.

Between 2014-2020, the number of projects proposed for funding was 17 out of which 16 were actually approved. However, by the end of 2020, only 3 projects were actually implemented, while most of these projects were still under implementation in mid-2022. The number of projects approved in the 2nd period of time that we studied, compared to the 2007-2013 period, practically tripled, and the amount of money obtained from the non-reimbursable European Union funding almost doubled, with the mention that the 13 projects were not finalized on time, so the amount at the end of the implementation was higher. These aspects indicate that there is a positive change in the managerial capacity and administrative efficiency in the process of accessing and implementing

projects with European funding.

Research question **Q6** refers to the project indicators by which the evolution or development of the municipality has been quantified.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the indicators compared before and after the project implementation were, for example, the following: number of visitors visiting the Károlyi Castle, forest restoration measured in hectares, tree replanting (number of them), number of rehabilitated households, estimated annual decrease of greenhouse gases, annual primary energy consumption per household measured in kwh/year, number of hospital units built/rehabilitated, number of their beneficiaries, green space relanscaped measured in square meters, pedestrian and bicycle paths measured in square meters, jobs created during project implementation, meals provided per day to socially assisted persons, increase in diversification of social services provided, increase in quality of social services provided, and other similar indicators.

With the help of research question Q7, which referred to the areas or sectors that, through the projects implemented in the municipality of Carei, had a high impact among the respondents, according to the information obtained from the questionnaire, we concluded that they were, in order: the cultural area or sector with an average of 4.136, green spaces with an average of 4.064 and education with an average of 3.840.

At the other end of the scale were the infrastructure and health domains or sectors with averages of 2.780 and 2.692.

According to the data obtained through the questionnaire, the answers to the research question **Q8** show the following ranking of the most important projects implemented in the municipality of Carei, from the respondents' perspective:

- „Renașterea Centrului Cultural Carei” – 4.33;
- „Reamenajarea parcului dendrologic” – 4.27;
- „Circuitul târgurilor medievale din Transilvania de Nord-Castelul Károlyi din Carei: Reabilitarea Castelului Károlyi” – 4.19.

The above values represent averages obtained by using a Likert-type scale, where 1 meant a very unimportant project and 5 a very important project.

In what concerns the question **Q9**: Did the studied projects achieve indicators that correspond to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda? For this question, the answer was affirmative.

**Hypothesis H1**: The satisfaction with the citizens' standard of living is influenced by the increased economic impact, respectively, the increased quality of life, as a result of the implementation of EU-funded projects, was tested by using Figures 70, 71 and 72. As for testing

this hypothesis, we found that the dependent variable, which in this case was the satisfaction with the standard of living, in proportion of 26.5%, due to the R-squared coefficient, was explained by the 2 independent variables: the increase in the standard of living and the economic growth. According to Figure 70, we can see that Anova shows that the linear regression model and the analysis performed in this case is statistically significant at Sig 0.000.

The analyzed figure (Figure 72) indicates a value of the standardized Beta coefficients of 0.307 respectively a statistical significance Sig 0.000 and reinforces the fact that the satisfaction with the standard of living is statistically explained to a medium to high extent by the independent variable: increase in quality of life. Increased quality of life is directly proportional to the satisfaction with the standard of living.

The analysis of the second independent variable is as follows: that economic growth resulting from the completion of the projects explains to a lesser extent the satisfaction with the standard of living compared to the increase in quality of life, since the association value of the Beta coefficient is 0.241 and the statistical significance Sig 0.011. However, an average association in terms of intensity and statistical significance still exists.

Therefore, having in mind the elements analyzed in Figures 70, 71 and 72, correlated with the information on the percentages in Figure 68 (Overall satisfaction with the current standard of living), where more than 70% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied, we conclude that there is a general satisfaction of the inhabitants of the municipality of Carei when we refer to the standard of living. The hypothesis is thus fully confirmed.

**H2:** The positive perception towards EU-funded projects implemented in the municipality of Carei is influenced by the category of local actors;

To verify hypothesis H2 we analyzed another figure (Figure 73). The analysis showed that more than 62% of respondents were satisfied and very satisfied with the implemented projects. Another figure (Figure 46) is also important for testing hypothesis H2 because its main purpose is to present the perception of the 4 categories of participants in this study regarding the impact of the European funds attracted by the Carei municipality. The respondents considered that these funds attracted in the local community have strongly advantaged the category of citizens (42.59%), while at the opposite pole was the category of NGO representatives with a score of only 12.13%. The second most advantaged group was local public administration with a score of about 32%. The economic environment was perceived as favored by 13.21% of respondents.

Another figure (Figure 75) shows that business representatives are among the most satisfied/very satisfied with a score of about 70%, being surpassed in this ranking only by the group of respondents from public administration (73%). The last analyzed figure in order to test the

hypothesis H2 (figure 76), shows the ranking of the cultural, green spaces and economic areas in the opinion of the respondents: places 1, 2 and 4 respectively with averages of 4.14; 4.06 and 3.70 respectively. Therefore, the representatives of the business environment can be considered as beneficiaries of the implemented projects in the respective areas/domains (due to the percentage obtained), while the representatives of the public administration are also very satisfied or satisfied in a percentage of approx. 73%, because they were able to achieve their objectives and successfully implemented the projects that actually aimed the local community development. Thus, hypothesis H2 is also confirmed.

The general presumption that the management, in particular the public management can have a major effect on the way in which certain local communities develop with the help of non-reimbursable European funds accessed by local public administration authorities is confirmed in the case of the Carei municipality.

As for the part of **recommendations**, for those responsible for the public management who create the development strategies and the guidelines for the local community development, we believe that it would be advisable to pay more attention to the last question in the questionnaire that was administered to the subjects participating in the study. These results express their willingness to solve other problems of the community through projects financed by non-reimbursable European funds. We have described in chapter 4 the most important achievements, the successfully implemented projects and the amounts of money attracted in the municipality of Carei by the local administration. However, the problems of the community members have not been fully solved and they have expressed their wish that the administration should give more importance to the following aspects or areas:

- infrastructure, local road network;
- modernizing streets and sidewalks;
- diversified and quality health services;
- improvement of the education system.

The citizens must also be aware that there are strategies, funding axes, non-reimbursable funds accessible under certain conditions stipulated in the funding guidelines and which must be respected.

Of course, "taking the pulse" of the members of the local community in Carei must be a priority for the representatives of the local administration and it would be advisable to commission public opinion polls at regular intervals, in order to monitor their perception of what has been implemented, how it has been implemented and what the inhabitants of the municipality of Carei



want to get in the short, medium and long term from the local administration. The City Hall should give its citizens their due importance, try as much as possible to give them an active role in identifying and solving local community problems, pay attention to their feedback in creating future development strategies for the municipality.

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