

Horezu, Romania Case Study.



Introduction

Partners Foundation for Local Development- FPDL agreed with UN HABITAT to organize the field test of the Training Manual "Local Economic Development – LED" in a Training of Trainers program held under the **Regional Program "Working Together"** frame, a Capacity Building Program for CEE/SEE countries financed by Local Government Initiative of the Open Society Institute, LGI/OSI.

Horezu was chosen to become the "live laboratory" of this field test, because is a small, manageable area (pop. 10,000) having many challenges brought by the political, social and economic changes, with little experience in strategic planning or economic development prior to the initiation of this project.

This case study includes a brief description of what FPDL consultants/facilitators and Horezu citizens did as they worked their way through the process. The Case Study is marked by the symbol of Horezu, the Horezu Rooster.

Horezu short description

The administrative district of Horezu, Romania, has a population of approximately 6,800 living on 118 square kilometres. The biggest part of the territory is covered by forests (56%) and it spreads northward up to the peaks of the Căpățâni Mountains, in the Southern Carpathian range. A total of 29% is pastures. The geography of the area includes valleys, terraces and hills. The climate is generally cool with annual average temperatures of 6° Celsius and abundant precipitation (800 – 1000 mm /year). The administrative territory includes a number of seven towns and villages, including the town of Horezu. All settlements are grouped in the southern part of the administrative territory of the town down the Luncavăț Valley.

Horezu is reputed as an ethnographic centre and as an age-old folk ceramics centre. Traditional occupations include fruit-growing, animal breeding (bovines, goats, sheep), ceramics, and wood-processing industry. Horezu is also a traditional commercial centre, a market area is located in the town for farming products and (household) utilities exchange. Finally, the name of Horezu is linked with the Monastery of Hurez, which is a monastic complex erected at the end of the XVII century, and which is short listed in the UN World Heritage Site.

Like other countries in CEE, Romania is in transition from a centralized economy to market economy. In Horezu, during the centralized economy, the town was a local products processing centre, as a result of investments made in several branches of furniture and food industries as well as in textiles. After 1990, during the process of transition, industrial and constructions activities witnessed a significant regress and the citizens had to go back to their traditional work. At present, the town economy is to a great extent dependent on these traditional activities as well as trade and tourist activities.

LED Strategic Planning Process

Getting Started

Get organized, Get commitment and Build trust

Horezu was identified early 2004, as a possible field-testing location by the FPD, as we had a local contact that could act as a “change agent” and the municipal government expressed interest in undertaking the new approach of elaborating a Local Economic Development strategy through a participatory process. Preliminary assessment also suggested that Horezu could benefit greatly from undertaking such a process. Never having undertaken a formal participatory planning process at the local level, the first month was a period of getting broader buy-in from elected officials and local leaders, building trust between all the stakeholders and the facilitators and transferring basic knowledge about both strategic planning and local economic development to these groups. Local champions were identified and the support of Mayor was secured.

To raise awareness about the LED process two other events were organized: A children contests with drawings about how they see their city when they will be grown up and a contest for the young generation about the best and more innovative business idea that uses and values local resources.

The children contest exhibition and an award ceremony was organized in the previous evening of the LED Planning Conference beginning. The awards for the contest for the best business ideas took place in the last day of the LED Planning Conference.

Form a core planning team

A core group was then formed which included FPD experts and consultants, municipal officials/staff (vice mayor, councilors, head of the tax department, head of the planning department), and local leaders (local bank executive, local high school official, local television executive). This group acted as the local catalysts for change. They were provided with more detailed training on participatory strategic planning and local economic development and were responsible for the ‘plan to plan.’

Determine where the “Local” is in LED, expand core team as needed

Although the economic and market boundaries exceeded the local administrative boundaries, the core group agreed that because this was a new process, starting small in an area that they had jurisdiction over and could achieve visible gains quickly was the most pragmatic way to identify the local area. The administrative district of Horezu was identified as the local area and the core group did not need to be expanded.

Identify stakeholders and involve them early in the process

First, the business community was targeted and a specific survey developed for this group. To incorporate the general public, a public meeting was organized. This was to both alert the public to the strategic planning process for LED and to solicit their input. Surveys were also developed that targeted the general public. This was the first time the community had been solicited for input on public policy and local development.

Working with the local schools, more creative approaches were employed to involve youth and children. Children were engaged in a painting competition. Each painting reflected the children’s vision of Horezu economically developed in the future. The youth of Horezu

engaged in an entrepreneurial business ideas competition. The youth that came up with the most creative and practical local business ideas were given awards. The awards ceremony was integrated into the LED Planning Conference.

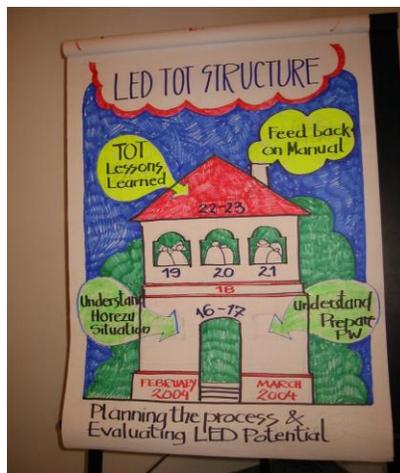
Establish the stakeholder partnership group

For the three-day planning conference to be held in April more detailed stakeholder analysis was undertaken and the process to form a "Partnership Group" was initiated. Effort was made to identify for the four main activity areas (public administration, agriculture and forestry, traditional crafts and tourism, commerce and industry) the leaders from all these sectors (in the end, over 40 leaders from all stakeholder groups were represented at the April planning conference).

Plan the planning process

A two-month plan was developed with the core group. First, a stakeholder analysis was conducted, followed by broader participation by local citizens and the business community. At the same time, a Study on Horezu economic potential was undertaken. The main activity of the planning stage was a three-day LED Planning Conference in April 2004, part of the Training of Trainers program.

FPDL consultants/facilitators designed the LED Planning Conference process. Trainers from 5 CEE countries were involved, as well as representatives of LGI and UN HABITAT, as part of the LED Training of Trainers event.



LED CONFERENCE AGENDA

 LED Conference DAY 1		 LED Conference DAY 2	
9.00 – 10.30	Opening speeches, agenda introduction, Where are We? Horezu Economic Potential Evaluation Study Presentation	9.00 – 10.30	Synthesis of Day 1 results: list of clustered problems and opportunities Discussion and agreement, groups are formed based on interest
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee Break	10.30 – 11.00	Coffee Break
11.00 – 12.30	Where are we going? Vision for Horezu LED Group work and plenary	11.00 – 12.30	How do we get there? Developing strategies based on solving main priority problems and exploiting main priority opportunities – group work
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch Break	12.30 – 14.00	Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.00	Agreement of vision statement Problems and Opportunities for achieving the vision - Group work	14.00 – 15.00	Developing strategies continued...
15.00 – 15.30	Coffee Break	15.00 – 15.30	Coffee Break
15.30 – 16.30	Plenary presentation	15.30 – 16.30	Plenary presentation
17.00 – 20.30	<i>Facilitators synthesize group ideas for next day, clustering them on main strategic objectives based on vision structure</i>	17.00 – 20.30	<i>Facilitators synthesize group ideas for the next day</i>
 LED Conference DAY 3			
09.00 – 10.30	How do we get there? Time and responsibilities for proposed activities – group work		
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee Break		
11:00 – 12.30	Plenary presentation		
12.30 - 13.30	Awarding ceremony for youth contest on business ideas Conclusions and Evaluation		
13.30 – 15.00	Closing Lunch		

Situation Assessment

A team of experts in urban planning and economic development from the University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest, was contracted to work with FPDL and the City of Horezu to produce a situation assessment on Horezu potential for economic development. The results were compiled in a report (Romanian and English) and shared prior the LED Planning Conference with members of the Partnership Group (as well as with the group of 10 trainers who were selected to attend the LED TOT). A summary of the results was also presented during Day 1 of the planning conference to set the context.

The data collection included the following steps:

- Collect and review already existing documents, data, statistics, researches
- Conduct assessments and analyses:
 - Business and local resident attitude survey including perceived problems and opportunities.
 - Competition and collaboration analysis
 - Existent local resources and their potential
 - SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

Horezu SWOT Analysis was developed by the core planning team members, as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
A positive and famous image on national level	Lack of promoting materials for Horezu
Urban centre with inter-communal services	The town has an unattractive overall aspect (cleanliness, houses exterior aspect, flowers, lack of public facilities)
Market town, Commercial interest centre - weekly fair	Lack of market studies to capitalize local resources
Labour force with graduate and undergraduate studies	Lack of qualified farming engineers, agronomists
A stable labour force	Lack of economical activities with a high added value.
The existence of the Employment Agency in the town	Lack of placements/ working opportunities for certain categories (e.g. young or, disabled people)
Traditional/ specific foods: curds, sour milk, comfiture	Low orchard productivity
Ecological orchards and fruit production	Lack of agricultural associations
Sheep and horned cattle stock	Lack of agricultural processing units
Considerable honey production	Lack of information for the agricultural producers
Tradition in crafts (pottery, carpets, wickerwork)	Lack of producers and craftsmen's associations
A increasing number of tourists during the summer	Lack of tourist services, low standards and low diversity
Opportunities	Threats
Developing monastic tourism (a Monastery Tour)	The decline of local mining industry
Organizing events/existence of monuments (The Horezu Cock, Hurez Monastery)	The political environment-the influence of politics-on certain decisions taken by County Council
The existence of programmes run by Ministries	Frequent and contradictory changes in legislation
The existence in Valcea county of firms, which produce natural foods (ex. SANOVITA)	Capitalizing existing natural resources outside the local market, with no benefit to the local community
People born in Horezu who have reached influential positions both in the economic and social life.	Competition with the new urban centres Berbesti and Babeni in attracting investments

LED Planning Conference



Review the SWOT Analysis and Situation Analysis

The participants were given a presentation of the Situation Assessment between 10:00 and 11:00am to set the context for the workshop. This included the SWOT analysis.

Develop a common Vision for Horezu

From 11:00am until 12:30pm, the participants of the planning conference were presented with the task to develop a vision of Horezu, as they would like to be, economically developed in a sustainable and socially equitable way. FPDL facilitators gave each breakout group a large piece of paper in the shape of a flower petal. This creative approach emphasized using the non-analytical part of the brain and also stimulated group interaction. The vision of the future Horezu was drawn using both words and pictures on a petal in preparation for presentation in plenary. TOT Trainers, together with Manual author (William Trousdale, Canada) and UN HABITAT, LGI representatives formed a special English speaking experts group. After all groups presented, the vision of Horezu was ready, in the form of a flower with five petals, suggesting that different parts could form a meaningful whole.

FPDL Facilitators captured, during presentations the key words on a flipchart.

During lunch break FPDL facilitators and members of the core planning team "wordsmithed", the vision in a series of statements. Using the participants own language, the facilitators developed a Draft Vision which was presented, after lunch, in plenary and modified based on participants observations, on the spot.. The final vision statement is shown below.

Vision Statement for Horezu

"Our vision is that in 2008 Horezu, our city, is a dynamic city, accessible to all those interested. Horezu plays an increasing role in its micro-region due to the high quality services it provides.

*Through a balanced use of its resources, Horezu has gained national recognition and is known internationally for: **ecotourism and cultural tourism, crafts and non-polluting industry, ecological agriculture and continuous education.** The spiritual and religious historical prestige as well as the beauty of its mountains attracts tourists, as do local natural products. Producing pottery and honey, animal breeding are traditional occupations practiced with modern technologies, these knowledge and skills being also subject of know-how transfer.*

Horezu is an open community, harmoniously united, vibrant in which people learn and are able to help others learn. Already a successful registered trade mark, Hurezi rooster's song of shining victory is heard everywhere."

Identifying problems and opportunities to achieve vision

The afternoon of the Planning Conference Day 1 in breakout groups participants identified the problems that are obstacles in achieving their vision as well as opportunities that can be used to achieve their vision. The results were presented back in plenary session.

Break Vision into Strategic Objectives and cluster problems/opportunities

The evening of Day 1 was used by FPDL Facilitators to organize and cluster the problems/opportunities under four areas/strategic objectives based on the Vision statement: The organized results are presented below.

TOURISM

Develop tourism, which makes effective use of Horezu's natural and cultural resources

PROBLEMS	OPPORTUNITIES
1. Insufficient tourist services and only partially of good quality	1. Horezu is well positioned in an attractive region: environment, culture and history.
2. Insufficient training of staff working in tourism services (client relations, cleaning, marketing)	2. Existence of well-known cultural events (annual fair of pottery) and tourists are coming to Horezu
3. Unattractive urban image	3. Special programs of the Ministry of Tourism
	4. Potential of creating national parks or protected areas

ASSOCIATIONS

Establish associations that can support local partnerships for the benefit of the community

PROBLEMS	OPPORTUNITIES
1. Low number of associations due to a lack of culture, lack of trust and poor communication	1. Schools' / Children's club positive experience in programs of cleaning the city and other
2. Lack of civic spirit / conservative mentality, reticence to new ways, resignation	2. Local government's initiatives with schools
3. No sports clubs	3. Students in architecture could work on plans for the center of the city
4. Lack of central public spaces for meetings and gatherings, spaces for cultural events	4. Social events which gather people in the city

AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY, CRAFTS

Increase value added in the areas of agriculture, forestry, crafts and small industry

PROBLEMS	OPPORTUNITIES
1. Lack of collection and processing facilities for products (milk, meat, mushrooms, fruits)	1. Existence of some production spaces and food products local specialties
2. Low productivity of animal breeds	2. Existence of trade fairs for traditional products in Romania and abroad
3. Old and low productivity orchards	3. Forests as economic resource of raw material for small industry and traditional crafts
4. Pastures of low quality, poorly maintained	4. Bee-breeding as a profession with an established tradition, with advanced technology and expertise and well-established markets
5. Difficult access to credit for agriculture	5. Legislation which encourages formation of associations of farmers and agriculture workers
6. Loss of traditional markets	6. Diverse and valuable crafts tradition
7. Lack of knowledge and modern technologies and current use of old technologies	7. Existence of training programs, vocational education and consulting services
	8. Work force qualified for food industry

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Increase capacity of the local government to take a leading and proactive role in local economic development

PROBLEMS	OPPORTUNITIES
1. Poor enforcement of existing legislation related to protection of environment and historical heritage and city cleaning	1. The territorial role of the city (administrative services for the micro-region - education, justice, health)
2. Poor quality of roads (poor quality of streets and roads maintenance makes some of them basically not fit for public use)	2. Existence of land available in municipal property, well equipped (electricity, water)
3. Old water supply system	3. Existence of under-used buildings (e.g. House of Culture) which can host development activities (e.g.. Information center)
4. Incomplete sewage system	4. Production facilities available, not used
5. Lack of information related to funding programs	5. Existence of governmental programs for modernizing infrastructure
6. Lack of internet access	6. Existence of national and international capacity building programs for local governments and public services
7. Limited capacity to design and implement projects	7. Local government open to change and development
8. Lack of transparency in the activity of local government	
9. Limited financial resources	
10. Poor quality of cleaning and waste management services	
11. Lack of information for citizens, investors, companies	
12. Insufficient cooperation with local governments in neighboring communities	
13. The rural features of the community	
14. Inadequate office space for city hall	
15. Lack of jobs for youth	

Strategy Development

In the morning of Day 2, working in breakout groups for each strategic objective, brainstorming was used to generate alternative strategies (activities) by answering the following question:

"What can we do to overcome the main problems and to use the main opportunities to achieve the objective?"

Participants were asked to assign themselves to work on the objective they think they can use their expertise and time to help achieve it. Four groups were organized and they developed alternative strategies, which were presented in plenary.

During evening, after the planning session ending FPDL facilitators organized ideas on big flipcharts to be used in the last and 3rd planning day to prioritize the most important and urgent strategies and to decide on time-frame and responsible organizations to implement them.

A summary of the results of the consensus strategy development exercise is shown below.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM THAT MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF HOREZU'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

1. Creation of an action group "Tourism in Horezu" and create an association/chamber of tourism
2. Design a coherent strategic development program through direct participation of interested parties.
3. Pursue the systematic activities to attract tourists such as a tourism agency, a tourist information point located centrally and an Internet site.
4. Development of an urban image program
5. Improve public spaces in the center of the city (buildings, facades, window-shops)
6. Preserve traditional architecture
7. Access special programs of the Ministry of Tourism and opportunities of training in tourism
8. Revitalize the home management and crafts school (scoala de menaj) of the "Nadia Duca" Association to train staff for tourism services.
9. Inventory of houses and family homes running bed and breakfast or other boarding services
10. The high school Ecoclub should develop mountain routes and maps with local tourist attractions
11. Identify new and improve existing camping areas and tourist itineraries
12. Create events or promote existing events to attract tourists throughout the whole year,
13. Create possibilities of spending time during bad weather
14. Develop commerce close to public spaces (e.g. bus stops)
15. Use existing tourist potential and expand market by attracting new tourists and expand existing tourist facilities
16. Increase attractiveness of mountain area accompanied by enforcement

ESTABLISHMENT OF ASSOCIATIONS THAT CAN SUPPORT LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY

1. Organize training sessions on how to establish an association
2. Organize summer schools/thematic youth camps
3. Organize a meeting between local government-University of Architecture in

- Bucharest - the community to develop the center of the city
4. Organize training courses to increase local capacity in leadership, partnerships, community work and facilitate exchange of experience and good practice
 5. Evaluate existing associations, create a database of these associations, develop and submit projects, which support development of civic spirit.
 6. Develop formal partnership between local government - school-business community to organize social and sports events
 7. The city hall should create a post with dedicated responsibilities of cooperation with civil society organizations
 8. Establish the International Association "Friends of Horezu"

INCREASE VALUE ADDED IN THE AREAS OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, CRAFTS AND SMALL INDUSTRY

1. Promote quality traditional products on the occasion of local, national and international fairs.
2. Increase effectiveness of agricultural activity by establishing agriculture associations
3. Organize systems for collection, processing, selling on new markets according to EU requirements
4. Access modern technologies
5. Develop farmers knowledge and skills through training, exchanges
6. Create a business center for small industry and crafts in the region
7. Promote the establishment of businesses
8. Promote the establishment of businesses to process existing animal products
9. Develop training programs for youth
10. Develop joint marketing activities

INCREASE CAPACITY OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO TAKE A LEADING AND PROACTIVE ROLE IN LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Short and medium term program to improve quality of roads. Promotion and lobbying activities for this program with county and national authorities.
2. Sanitation program to ensure compliance with EU environmental standards using a participatory approach
3. Program to improve quality of public services and utilities.
4. Program of urban cadaster
5. Continuous development of human resources in local government
6. Urban planning program through strategic partnership between local government, private sector and civil society
7. Project to promote children and youth participation in local economic development in partnership with schools
8. Establishment of an information center for citizens, companies and self-employed, tourists within existing office spaces and internet based with support from House of Culture
9. Project of economic promotion in partnership between local government and business sector
10. Using larger scale public events to promote the city, its government and its businesses
11. Recruitment by the city hall of staff well qualified in communications, projects with external funding, urban planning

Strategy Implementation 2004

Elaboration of LED Strategy Document

FPDL Facilitators in collaboration with the planning team members from the local government put together and structured in a document the results of the Planning Conference.

LED Strategy Document approved by Local Council

In June 2004 local elections were held. The new Mayor, previously involved in the Local Planning Team, passed the LED Strategy document through the Local Council approval

Training events for young entrepreneurs and Local Government officials

- A course on entrepreneurship for youth "How to start a business" organized in cooperation with the Center for Economic Development in Bucharest – Shell corporate program "You Can".
- A Training event on project elaboration was offered by FPDL for Local Government representatives. As result, two of the project ideas were elaborated in detail and Horezu Local Government applied successfully at the Regional Development Agency: they received two grants, one to modernize city hall equipment and one to rehabilitate the road that links Horezu with one of the poorest village inhabited mostly by Roma minority.

Summer School for Architecture and Urban Planning University students



10-day Summer School was organized by FPDL with the University of Architecture and Urban Planning for 40 students from:

- Architecture and Urban Planning University
- Horezu students, learning in bigger cities in economic and law universities

They generated ideas for Tourism development strategic direction, for five activities.

Projects developed by Horezu Local Government

Based on their Summer School ideas, Horezu Local Government developed the collaboration with the Institute for Tourism Studies from Bucharest and applied to EU Funds, with a large rehabilitation project focused on the town center.

Horezu Local Government applied successfully with two other projects accessing EU Funds:

- City Hall modernization (computers, e-mail and website)
- Rehabilitation of the road leading to the village inhabited by Roma population

Dissemination of the lessons learned in the LED TOT Process

- A detailed report on Horezu experience was sent to UN HABITAT and manual author in order to be included in the LED Habitat manual as a *Horezu Case Study*.
- FPDL representatives were invited as panelists at the "World Urban Forum" in Barcelona, when Horezu experience as well as the Regional Program "Working Together" supported by LGI, were presented and raised a huge interest.



Strategy Implementation 2005-2006

FPDL applied successfully to Global Opportunity Fund, UK, to continue to support Horezu in 2005, implementing its LED Strategy and to extend the process to other 6 towns from the same region – Romania South-West Development Region, one of the most under-developed. The following activities have been planned and their results evaluated through an Impact Evaluation Study focused on 5 main activities:

- *Training*
- *Local Economic Development strategy implementation in Horezu*
- *LED Strategies elaboration in 7 communities*
- *Experience exchange, partnership development, area promotion*
- *Project concepts and outputs dissemination*

Training

Leadership and Management Skills Training improved the basic knowledge and skills of the most important actors involved in the LED Process – Local Governments Elected and Appointed Officials and Stakeholders, Informal or Formal Leaders - to understand and better perform their new roles in the planning and implementation of Local Economic Development strategies and project

Change Agents Skills Training built the capacity of LED Promoters (selected from those who attended L&M) to facilitate problem-solving processes, to identify funding opportunities and to elaborate and manage EU funded projects for LED

Ecological farming and ecological tourism - experts in ecological farming, and rural tourism improved business and farmers knowledge and skills in performing these economic activities, in order to meet EU criteria through their projects and activities, and develop their businesses

FPDL involved 30% more participants in the training than initially planned and the training topics were extended as well, by adapting, during the project life, the training content to the participants' specific needs. *The training programs reached their planned objectives and participants appreciated that:*

- They improved their knowledge and skills
- They will use the concepts learned by applying them in their workplace

Participants appreciated the quality of the training, especially:

- The content – as addressing their needs
- The training methodology – as being useful for the learning process
- The training design – as being logically organised
- The trainers' performance – they mastered the topics, created opportunities for ideas exchange and showed interest to support participants during the learning process

Here after are few comments written by participants in the evaluation forms, at the training programs end:

"The specific topics of this training program and the way it was designed, clarified our role as a planning team and helped us understand how to work and to communicate both within the team and with the community"

"Excellent trainers, they brought in new ideas and innovative approaches!"

"What I gained through this training is useful both at my personal, as well as professional level, and I am sure that this will impact positively and will become visible during my activity"

The most useful fields of knowledge and skills were appreciated as being: strategic planning, project writing and communication with citizens.

Participants appreciated that they applied the acquired knowledge and skills in their workplace. The impact, at local governments and communities levels, was considered to be: a better planned and more coherent activity within the town hall, accessing alternative sources of funds, elaboration of local economic development strategies, cooperation and communication in the workplace and with citizens, improving the relationships with citizens, creation of new associations, attracting a larger number of tourists and creating a more positive image of the community.

Local Economic Development – LED Strategy Implementation in Horezu

70% of the actions planned within the 2004-2008 LED Strategy, elaborated through a participatory process, have been implemented in all the 4 strategic directions:

- (1) *Development of tourism, which makes effective use of the natural and cultural resources*
 - Affiliated villages have been declared rural settlements through decisions of the local council in order to ease the access of economic agents to SAPARD program
 - Horezu got the statute of local interest tourist resort through the Governmental Decision HG 936/2005
 - In collaboration with Horezu Town Hall, FPDL organised the Summer School for 40 students in architecture and urban planning who elaborated studies on (a) the rehabilitation of the town centre, (b) the preservation of architectural traditions in the new B&B buildings (c) the identification of tourist routes (d) marketing materials for promoting the town and the tourism (e) ideas for the organisation of the tourist information centres
 - Based on the students' ideas, the town hall initiated the Feasibility Study *"Rehabilitation and development of the general and tourist infrastructure in the cultural-historical area of the Horezu Valley"*, publicly debated and financed with 5 million Euros from EU funds
 - FPDL organised the Summer School *"Let's talk with local actors"* for students in urban planning and sociology who collected data on the business sector, based on which diagnostic studies on the economic potential have been elaborated

- The town hall organised events for attracting tourists and celebrities
- Tourist maps and marketing materials were printed
- 6 communities participated through "Depresiunea Horezu" Association to 3 national and international tourism fairs
- Sivatrans tourist agency has been established in Horezu
- The capacity and quality of the accommodation facilities have increased

(2) *Increased value added economic activities in the areas of agriculture, forestry, crafts and small industry*

- Training courses for the accreditation of apiculturists were organised
- New economic activities were created or already existing ones have been reactivated
- The business consultancy centre "UGIR 1903" has been opened in Horezu

(3) *Increased Local Government capacity*

- The town hall's staff attended training courses provided by FPDL and other organisations
- The web page created by the town hall is being used for the economic activities marketing and for providing information to citizens
- The town hall endowed itself by acquiring computers and software (with Phare financing)
- The newly created department for European integration has employed qualified personnel for promoting the town, European integration and public relations
- The town hall initiated, in partnership with FPDL and the University of Architecture and Urban Planning Bucharest, the contest of ideas on urban planning for the town development, organising a public debate for the presentation and analysis of the contest results

(4) *Establishing Associations*

- The town of Horezu became member of the Association of Romanian Towns and of the Romanian Federation of Local Authorities; the mayor of Horezu became vice-president representing Oltenia region
- 6 local associations have been established, among which the "Depresiunea Horezu" Association, a mayor's initiative, is an association of communes

The persons interviewed commented on the FPDL activities impact in Horezu:

"If it wasn't for FPDL, we would have had only minuses; we have gained from this collaboration." (Local Government representative)

„Since 2003, FPDL presence has been the development engine around here." (Public institution representative)

Local Economic Development-LED Strategies Elaboration in 7 communities

FPDL extended the project-targeted area from 1 to 7 communities. 7 diagnostic studies on the communities economic potential have been elaborated, based on the data collected in a participatory way through the data guides completed by the planning teams (taken on further by Gorj County Council and disseminated to be completed by each of the county 66 communes), 279 interviews and questionnaires were completed with the support of the summer school students, 110 questionnaires were completed by citizens.

7 participatory processes have been organised in the 7 communities for the elaboration of Local Economic Development strategies, involving 163 persons, out of which 33 elected officials (mayors, vice-mayors, councillors), 49 public servants, 4 NGOs, 9 from the private sector and 68 others (teachers, doctors, priests, citizens).

Here are some of opinions about the participatory processes, expressed during the interviews:

"All key actors participated, especially the social groups elites and those interested in doing something for their community" (Local Government representative, Tomșani)

„There has been a lot more participants than we expected. In the beginning many of them came because they were curious, but they stayed because they liked it" (Local Government representative, Horezu).

„We did not expect to have that many persons and institutions involved" (Local Government representative)

The working methodology used within the strategic planning workshops was considered efficient since it helped participants knowing each other better, as well as presenting and exchanging ideas in a constructive way:

"The workshops working methodology was well chosen to allow everyone to express their opinion. We have learned from each other, it has been an exchange of ideas and experience. All for one and one for all is how we worked" (public institution representative, Tomșani).

FPDL facilitators were appreciated as professionals, efficient, able to involve all the present actors, to synthesize and to structure the expressed ideas. Participants appreciated during the interviews:

„FPDL was a coagulator of energies and interesting ideas." (Public institution representative, Costești)

A Regional Strategic Planning workshop was organised for the Oltenia sub-mountainous area, attended by 47 representatives of the 8 communities, Romanian experts from county and central level, and foreign experts. The regional workshop aimed at building a common understanding on the integrated economic development concept, at elaborating ideas for tourism services packages through collaboration of different local actors, as well as facilitating experience exchange.

Following the Workshop, the project focused on the topic *Plan for Oltenia sub-mountainous region development* has been included in the design curricula of the Urban Planning Faculty fifth year. Students' projects were displayed at the exhibition organised by FPDL at the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning and they were provided to all the communities' representatives.

The 7 communities went even further than elaborating and approving the strategies in their local councils (as initially planned by FPDL project), starting to implement some of the planned actions, such as:

- Elaboration of projects to apply for existing and future European funds
- Inauguration of the Tourist Information Centre in Novaci town
- Participation of bed & breakfasts' owners in the training program to be accredited legally as bed & breakfast administrators

Experience Exchange, Partnerships Development, Area Promotion

6 meetings were organised, facilitating experience exchange among 8 communities members and other local, county or central governments representatives.

Common projects were elaborated involving more communities both in Gorj (Novaci, Baia de Fier, Polovragi and Crasna) and Vâlcea (Horezu, Măldărești, Vaideeni, Slătioara and Costești).

Gorj County Council initiated the process to establish *Gorj Mountain Region Communes Association*, by organising a meeting attended by 13 communities. 26 representatives of NGOs from Gorj County attended a meeting organised by the County Council of Gorj in partnership with FPDL, presenting the participatory approach in the elaboration of Development Strategies and the experience gained in Novaci and Polovragi along the process

“Depresiunea Horezu” and “Bistrița – Otăsău” Associations represent a model of cooperation for other Romania’s regions.

Concepts and Outputs Dissemination

Two Training Handbooks to be used during future training programs were elaborated and printed: *What is Participatory Planning* and *What is Local Economic Development*.

Over 70 students were involved in the project, for both, their personal development and local communities benefit. The concepts of participatory planning and local economic development were introduced in the Integrated Urban Planning and Urban Management courses, as well as in the courses of the Faculty of Sociology. During the project Final Evaluation Conference, the students’ projects were displayed in the exhibition organised at the University of Architecture and Urban Planning and each community received a catalogue with the students’ projects for the Oltenia sub-mountainous region development.

The participatory process for Local Development Plans elaboration as well as Horezu case study were presented in different national and international events.