

Social Cities: European Social Fund in Romanian Urban Areas

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Abstract: Urban areas in Romania have been associated with channels for promoting economic development at territorial level. However, inside many of these cities still lie growing social problems, sometimes reflected in the development of areas which accumulate disadvantages regarding human capital, employment and housing. Addressing these problems with the significant external funding provided by EU funds can provide the grounds for tackling these social issues.

This study aims at contributing to magnifying the lens on EU funds absorption by cities in Romania. The perspective is twofold. On one hand, at national level, the study analyses in an aggregated manner two key indicators, for all urban areas: overall EU funds absorption and overall European Social Fund (ESF)'s absorption. On the other hand, the study provides a more comprehensive picture on a selection of urban areas with marginalized communities by analysing, key indicators at project level.

The methodology uses desk research of relevant studies and a secondary analysis using the EU Funds by Area Results database (EU FAR). ESF data at LAU level have been granted by the Ministry of Public Finance, based on a public information request. Data at project level are based on the information published by the Ministry of Investments and European Projects.

This study combines the highest disaggregated analysis level (LAU) on the territorial dimension with a relevant analysis unit – EU funded project. At national level, the paper explores whether there are significant disparities regarding population dynamics, financial autonomy, local human development, development region or county level, etc.

The study combines, in meaningful ways, economic and social dimensions of geography in Romania, with the aim of providing evidence-based policy recommendations which are relevant for a variety of EU, national and local stakeholders. Both the dataset created, and the associated analysis are reproducible, to the extent similar data are available.