

# Directions and strategies for the development of rural settlements in Romania. Case study: Domnești commune, Ilfov county

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## Directions and strategies for the development of rural settlements in Romania. Case study: Domnești commune, Ilfov county

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**Direcții și strategii de dezvoltare a așezărilor rurale din România. Studiu de caz: comuna Domnești, județul Ilfov.** Prezentul articol surprinde modul de evoluție al componentei sociale și economice în raport cu resursele existente la nivel local al comunei Domnești precum și modul de utilizare al acestora, pe baza raportului dintre activitățile desfășurate în conformitate cu reglementările calității mediului, dar și capacitățile de adaptare ale populației și autorităților locale. Principalul scop corespunde intenției de a expune în prim-plan aspectele favorabile, dar și cele mai puțin favorabile identificate și propunerea unor soluții de ameliorare și valorificare a resurselor existente. La nivel structural, articolul cuprinde 5 părți ce deserveșc identificării principalelor forme și stategii de dezvoltare ale localităților rurale de pe teritoriul României, cu accent pe comuna Domnești din județul Ilfov, plecând de la elementele de cadru natural și utilizarea terenurilor, la structura socio-economică, respectiv elaborarea profilului economic al zonei, până la elaborarea obiectivelor și a planurilor de dezvoltare a comunității rurale precum și pe întocmirea scenariilor de dezvoltare și a surselor de finanțare. În urma acestui lucru s-au evidențiat aspectele pozitive și modul prin care acestea contribuie la dezvoltarea locală a comunității precum și a celor negative care de asemenea, contribuie și/sau influențează într-un mod nu tocmai favorabil sistemul socio-economic al zonei.

**Cuvinte cheie:** strategie de dezvoltare, comuna Domnești, județul Ilfov, plan de dezvoltare rurală.

**Directions and Strategies for the Development of Rural Settlements in Romania. Case Study: Domnești Commune, Ilfov County.** This article consists of 5 parts and aims at identifying the main forms and strategies for the development of rural localities in Romania with a focus on Domnești Commune in Ilfov County. Following this, the positive aspects and the way they contribute to the local development of the community as well as the negative aspects that also contribute and/or influence in a not very favourable way the socio-economic system of the area were highlighted. Thus, in the first part the natural environment and land use were analysed, the second part reviewed the transport infrastructure of the commune, in the third part the socio-demographic profile was analysed, in the fourth part the economic profile was developed, and the last part focuses on the elaboration of the objectives and plans for the development of the rural community as well as on the elaboration of the development scenarios and the sources of financing.

**Keywords:** development strategy, Domnești commune, Ilfov county, rural development plan.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, rural development is highly hearted onland intensive agriculture production, poor participatory approach and imprudent strategies. “The robust and volatile agriculture sector has been taken as a decisive cornerstone of rural development which provokes a healthy tie to other economic sectors, nonetheless, rural development is more than the scope of agriculture productivity.” (Chanie, M, 2018)

Attention is given to the development of agricultural and rural policy. At the same time the environmental matter is addressed. The role of rural areas is not only the food production, but also to meet the strategic functions in relation to the conservation and protection of the natural environment and to act as a reservoir of cultural heritage - customs, traditions.

The topic of the article was approached both at the level of territorial analysis and at the general level on human settlements in various scholarly papers, designed to highlight the framework of their territorial management both in terms of land administration and socio-economic dynamism in relation to this as well as to highlight the unfavourable aspects, but also the objectives proposed at the same time with the applied strategies (Hadynski, J, 2011).

The main objective of this study corresponds to the intention to highlight the strengths and weaknesses identified within the settlement as well as to propose improvement strategies aimed at reclaiming and, capitalizing on existing local resources. Throughout the paper, aspects on the current status o of the commune in terms of socio-demographic profile involving a state of population development, economic profile, land use and transport infrastructure will be approached.

First of all, the intention was to find outthe level of development of the inter-relations between all these components, resulting in a first part of the performed analysis, but also to consider the hypotheses of the scholarly literature, so that in the end an overview emerges that contributes to effectively setting objectives and development strategies or an action plan.

Thus, in order to develop this article, information sources were used, such as scholarly literature found in the archives of official websites, for example development strategies, draft decisions with local impact on areas such as public and private domain administration, infrastructures, environmental reports, etc.

Broadly speaking, this paper captures the evolution of the social and economic component in relation to existing resources at the local level, but also their use, the impact of the geographical position of the township to the city and how it has contributed to the emergence of new sectors of activity to the detriment of the disappearance of others; the

relation between the activities carried out in accordance with the environment quality regulations, but also the adaptive capacities of the population and the local authorities.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Study area

Domnești Commune represents an administrative-territorial unit, consisting of the villages of Domnești (seat) and Țegheș, located in the southwest of Ilfov County, being part of the Bucharest-Ilfov Development Region. The commune is crossed by the county road DJ602 which makes the direct connection with the Bucharest string road.

From the point of view of the geographical location, the commune is located in the area of the Romanian Plain, more precisely in Vlăsiei Plain, Cotroceni Field district (Figure 1). The main landforms present on the territory of the commune are represented by: Argeș-Sabar-Ciorogârla meadow, located in the centre of the commune, in the area of Argeș-Sabar-Ciorogârla Rivers and the Plain itself, intersected by dry valleys and interspersed by a depressionary relief (Bărbărie, 2017).

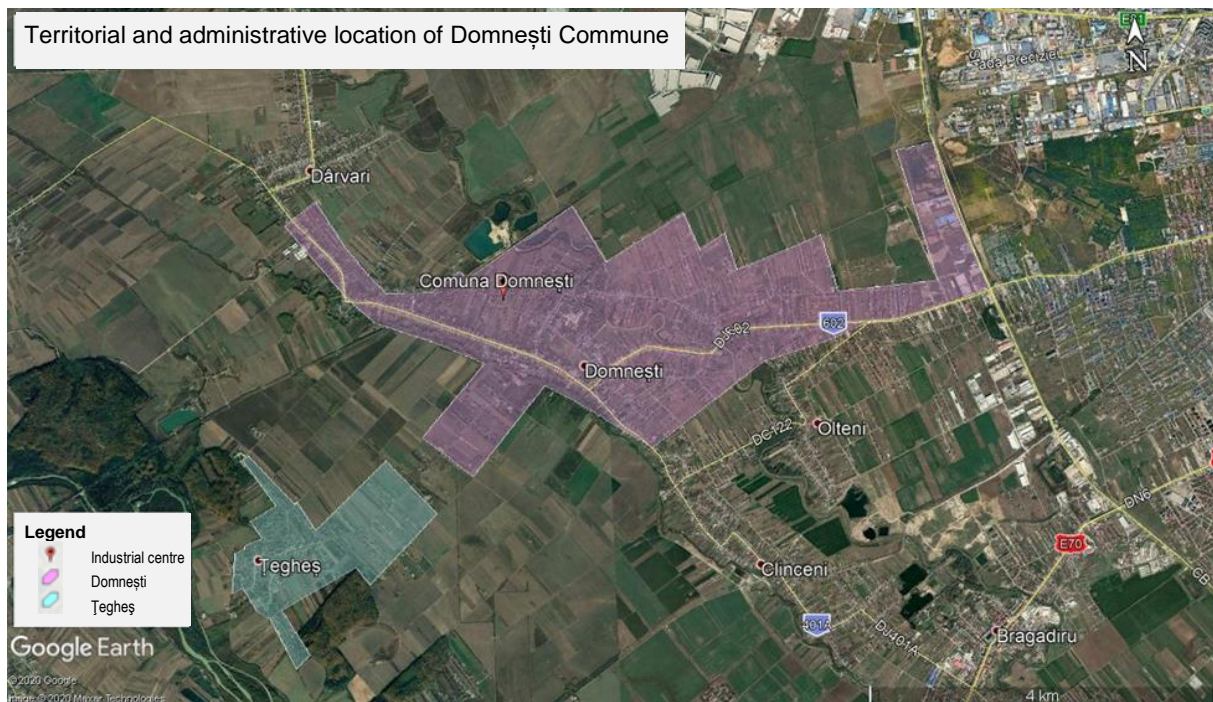


Figure 1. Territorial location of Domnești Commune, Ilfov County

Source: Google Earth

## Land use

In terms of land use, agriculture was the main dominant activity, generating the source of income, for most of the population of Domnești Commune. It has now been replaced by other economic activities, in particular services and trade, especially with the expansion of private property and residential neighbourhoods (in the years 2000s). (Bărbărie, 2017)

Regarding the evolution of the property system on land use in Domnești Commune, especially after the 1990s, a large difference can be noticed between the rise of the private sector compared to the public one (Table 1).

Thus, with the end of the last century, public property, represented by state-owned enterprises, was either abolished or changed its profile, most of them being privatized.

Table 1. Land tenure system in Domnești Commune (1994-2016)

Years	1994	2002	2016
Public property (m <sup>2</sup> gross building area)	1,000	527	259
Private property (m <sup>2</sup> gross building area)	70,000	109,456	302,453

Source: National Institute of Statistics

It can be seen that the public property on the residential area in Domnești Commune gradually decreased from 1994 to 2016, when it decreased by about 1,000 to 750 m<sup>2</sup>, which indicates that some of the state-owned buildings during the communist period were later privatized or closed. As for the other categories of land use, they are practiced in very small number, most likely for domestic use if we were to refer to grass land and vineyards; regarding orchards, they register a slightly higher number (about 80 ha), most likely being cultivated for commercial purposes, but they also tend to decrease after 1994 (Figure 2).

Following the analysis of the statistics provided by the online TEMPO database, for some of the agricultural activities, no data were identified, but it can be seen that, as in previous cases, the largest share of land fund by use is intended to agriculture and arable land which gradually decreased by about 1,000 ha between the period from 1992 to 2014. As can be seen, the land fund area of construction land for 2014 is increasing, as a result of the expansion of the residential area, but also of non-agricultural/degraded land as a result of overexploitation of natural resources (Figure 3).



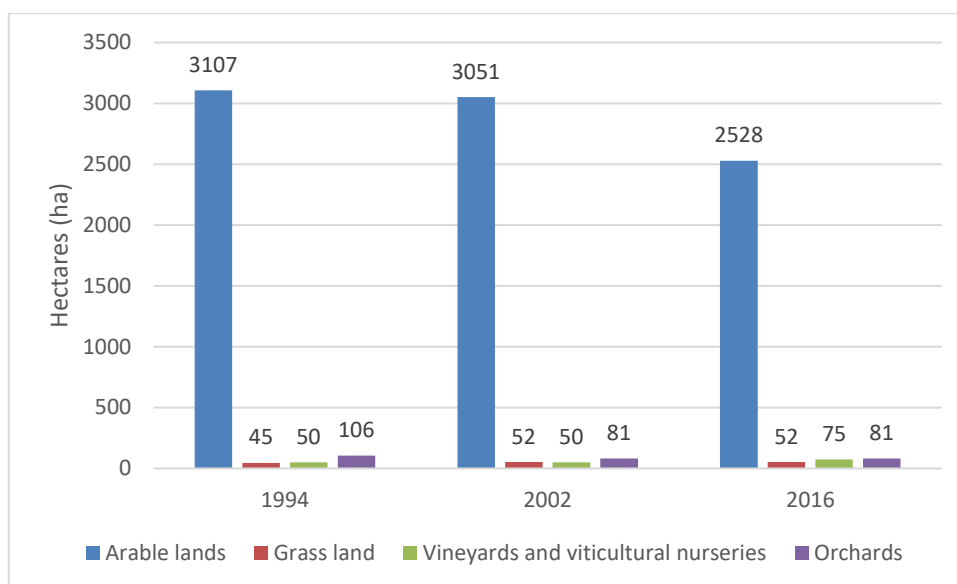


Figure 2. Land use in the primary sector  
Source: National Institute of Statistics (2021)

Another way of land use developed in recent years is tourism, which is highlighted in recent years by:

**Transit tourism**, by its positioning in relation to the important traffic routes, existing or foreseen, which creates the premises for a development of this type of tourism.

**Weekend tourism**, due to the easy access and the presence of Țeșeș Forest and Ordoreanu Forest with their landscape potential and tourist attractiveness.

**Cultural and rural tourism**, Domnești Commune has a valuable cultural-historical and ethno-folkloric heritage that can give it attractiveness and tourist identity (Honduș, et al., 2019).

#### **Transport infrastructure**

From the point of view of transport infrastructure, it is based in principle on the transport of people and goods, thus, at the level of Domnești Commune, road and rail transport are identified as main modes of transport.

Road transport has connections with the network of national, county and communal public roads such as the Bucharest - Pitești Motorway, at the contact with the northern limit of the territory, the DJ 100 A Ring Road and Bucharest - Domnești DJ 602 Road. Regarding the current state of public roads, their length is 59.1 km of which only 24% are modernized roads, 14% are paved, and the remaining 62% are earth roads. Public transport is provided by a county operator. Within Domnești Commune there are 15 arranged stations located on DC communal road and 11 arranged stations located on DJ county road.

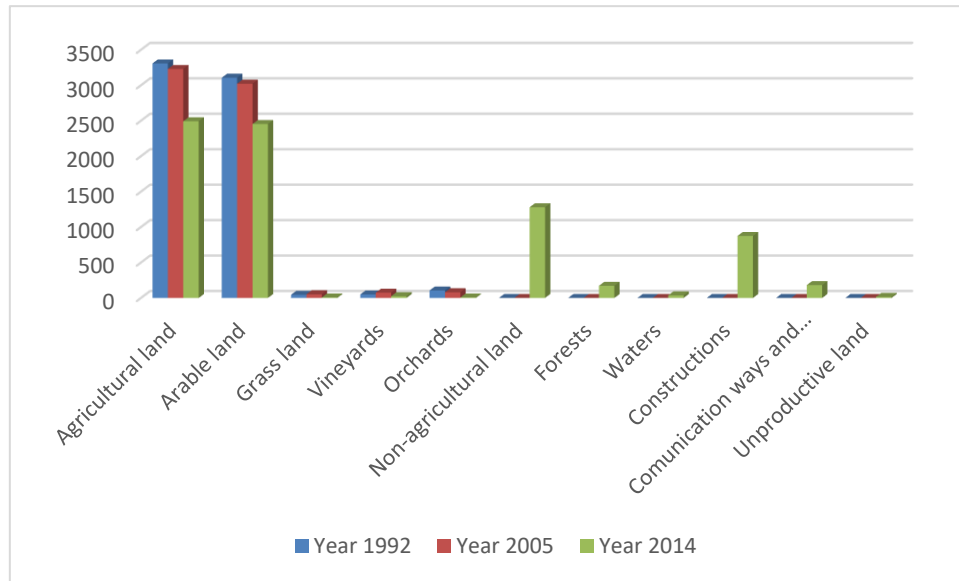


Figure 3. Land fund area by land use, Source: National Institute of Statistics

Rail transport is designated by the belt line railway; Bucharest-Videle railway passes through the commune, which is served by Domnești de Sus flag station (Ianoș, 2000).

### Socio-economic profile

The evolution of land use in recent decades has gradually influenced the population dynamics in the township under analysis, which thus experienced critical periods, with indices such as birth rate, natural growth rate or the evolution of population in number in a downward trend, but as the commune experienced a development at the level of infrastructure and services as well as an expansion of the territory, the structure of the population is on an upward trend (Stoicescu, A., 2013).

Regarding the evolution of the number of inhabitants of Domnești Commune, this is characteristic to the localities bordering the City of Bucharest. During the 1990s, the population recorded a constant level, the stable population varying around 6,000 inhabitants. Starting with 2006, the phenomenon is reversed, the population growing in number (Figure 4).

In the last decade and a half, more precisely since 2005, Domnești Commune is characterized by two contradictory phenomena in terms of population evolution, negative natural growth rate and stable population growth. This represents the effect of two causes, namely the age structure of the stable population and the population that has established their domicile or residence in the commune.

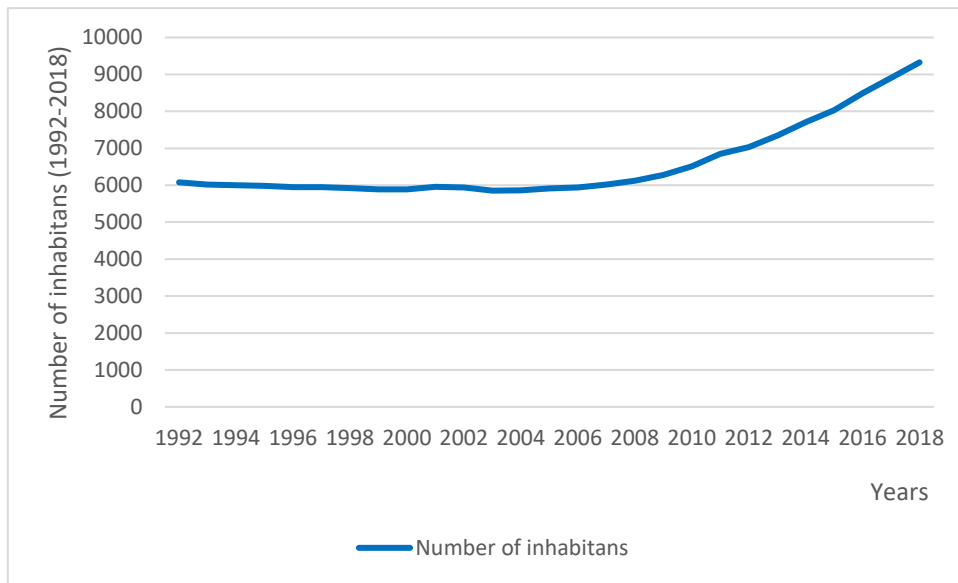


Figure 4. Evolution of the number of inhabitants in Domnești Commune (1992 - 2018)

Source: National Institute of Statistics

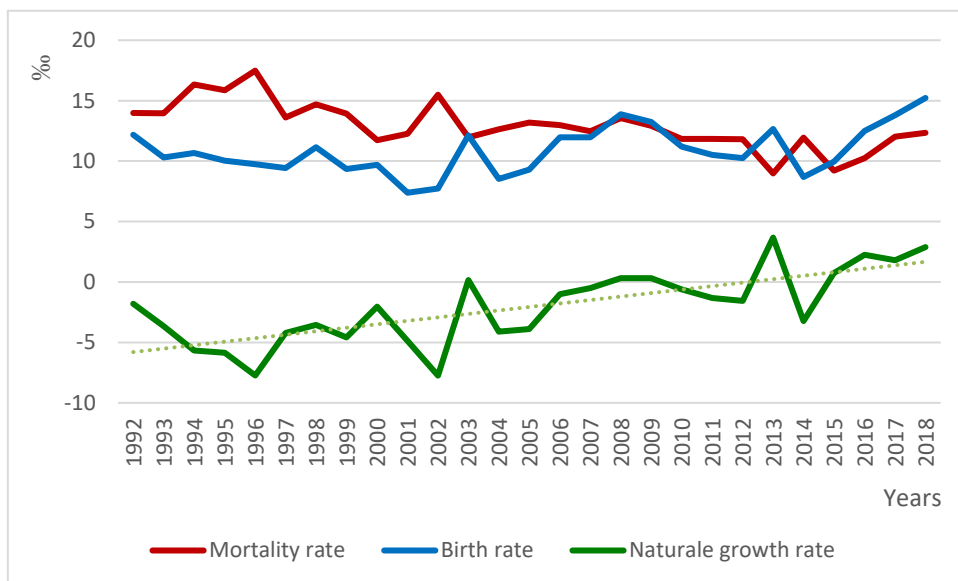


Figure 5. Natural movement of Domnești Commune, Ilfov County (1992 - 2018)

Source: National Institute of Statistics (2021)

Thus, due to the characteristics of the population that established their domicile or residence in the commune during this period, the birth rate increased slightly from 2002 to 2010. Starting with 2010, there are small fluctuations, but the general trend of the birth rate is upward, which is why, in the same period, the natural growth rate registered positive values, the highest threshold being reached in 2013 (3.67 ‰), given the fact that mortality also registered negative values.



Given the general upward trend in recent years in the birth rate to the detriment of the mortality rate, the migratory balance is also positive. These are mainly due to the growth of the young population in recent years, immigration from the city, including settlement settlements, which have contributed to these demographic phenomena. Development of transport infrastructure from and to the areas adjacent to the capital, the high demand for housing in the capital, the increase in the living standards and people's desire to live in houses, difficult to access in Bucharest from a financial point of view, the provision of the necessary utilities in the towns and communes neighbouring Bucharest are just some of the reasons behind the migration of inhabitants. Therefore, the migration growth rate takes an upward trend as the incoming population is larger than the one leaving the commune, although the resident population is not a good indicator for establishing migration, as many people move without changing their residence.

### Economic profile

Over time, the economy of Domnești Commune was based on agriculture and animal husbandry, i.e. practically most of the activities carried out were part of the primary sector. In recent years, however, more specifically after 2005, private sector activities have grown, in particular through the opening of new trading companies and the expansion of real estate, food, furniture, construction materials and equipment industries (Figure 6).

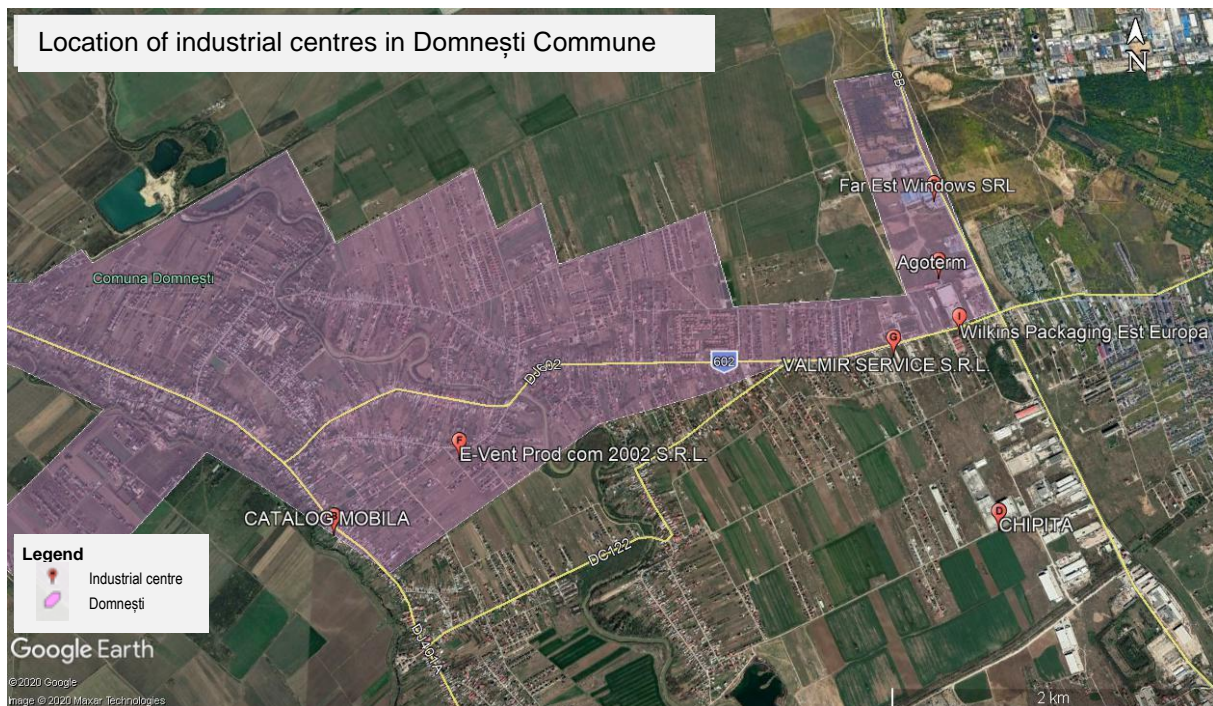


Figure 6. Location of industrial centres in Domnești Commune

Source: Google Earth

Currently, most of the land in Domnești has become an agricultural land within incorporated area, and in the areas with new constructions the arrangement of roads, the installation of electricity poles and the development of the gas pipeline network have started. In the last 10 years, there has been a real estate explosion, the main real estate investments that stand out being the Brâncovenesc District or the Royal Court. At the level of 2002, the indicators of Domnești Commune regarding the labour force, its employment and unemployment rates were at the level of the average of Ilfov County (Table 2). This was due both to the economic evolution of the area, which benefited from a peak of economic development, and to the contribution of the employed active population that migrated from Bucharest to the neighbouring localities in Ilfov County.

Table 2 Statute of the population by economic activity (2012)

INDICATOR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
<b>Active population (35%)</b>	<b>2,227</b>	<b>1,418</b>	<b>809</b>
Employed persons	1,862	1,125	737
Unemployed persons looking for another job	239	204	35
Unemployed persons looking for their first job	126	89	37
<b>Inactive population (65%)</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>1,718</b>	<b>2,382</b>
Pupils / students	1,019	531	488
Retirees	1,600	717	883
Housewives	706	31	675
Dependants	669	357	312
Persons supported by the state or private organizations	33	19	14
Persons with another economic situation	73	63	10

Source: 2013-2020 Development Strategy of Domnești Commune

It can be seen that the inactive population rate of Domnești Commune has a higher percentage than that of the active population, as a result of an obvious elderly population and a high level of pupils and students who practically do not exercise economic activities in the pay system. In the last decade, the situation has gained momentum in a positive

sense, as the population has migrated from Bucharest to the vicinity of the commune; the favourable location of the township in relation to the City of Bucharest also contributes to this fact, thus, due to the development of the economic and transport infrastructure in recent years, many companies have opened offices nearby, which caused an expansion in the territory, thus providing jobs to residents from Domnești. More and more people are opting for home settlement due to the fact that taxes and land have a much lower rate, which results in a development of the territorial economy but also in a new way of using land as a result of the emergence of new economic activities (Bold, I, et al., 2013).

### **Rural development assessment**

The topic of the article was approached both at the level of territorial analysis and at the general level on human settlements in various scholarly papers, designed to highlight the framework of their territorial management both in terms of land administration and socio-economic dynamism in relation to this as well as to highlight the unfavourable aspects, but also the objectives proposed at the same time with the applied strategies.

The development strategies were thus documented, having as main objective the sustainable development by capitalizing on the local potential, as well as objectives that reflect the current needs of the community and their reach in the future.

Subsequently, following the analysis at the local level, regarding the degree of development of Domnești commune as well as the generating factors that contribute to the evolution or involution of certain aspects that cause changes in the territorial planning structure, they established a diagnosis based on which solutions for improvement and consolidation in the light of the proposed objectives were assigned.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Elaboration of objectives and rural development plans for Domnești Commune**

Thus, own development objectives were proposed, in order to establish a clear image of the current situation at the level of Domnești commune. Thus, the objectives and development scenarios developed represent an individual contribution with the role to contribute to a future direction of improvement.

Following the analyses carried out regarding the current situation of Domnești commune, from the point of view of territorial administration and management policies, the lack of certain concerns regarding the capitalization of certain resources, respectively of some branches, such as tourism and leisure resources capitalization, encouragement of traditional agriculture or participation in social life.

The objectives proposed in the strategic development plan of Domnești Commune are meant to represent a framework necessary for the orientation and efficiency of the economic-social development, based on a series of strategic directions of action, respectively, economic, socio-cultural aspects, agriculture and rural development, tourism, infrastructure, health but also social protection.

However, no detailed analysis of the current situation of these strategic directions is drawn up, namely no project or plan is assigned. Thus, in order to provide a clearer visibility of the current level of development of Domnești commune, strategic objectives for each sector of activity, as well as the initiation of development scenarios have been suggested.

*Objective 1 - Maintaining a stable balance between the administrative system / local council and the population*

The implementation of this objective is meant at informing the population about possible changes in the administrative structure of the locality and at involving the population in carrying out certain proposed activities, exposing risks and opportunities regardless of changes taking place, finding new solutions for all stakeholders to contribute to the mitigation of possible administrative problems, as well as to the mitigation of socio-economic gaps. In the long run, this objective aims at supporting the population from a socio-economic point of view in order to contribute to a higher level of well-being, providing funding for projects serving the basic local economy and capitalizing on the natural environment in order to develop the territory management activities.

*Objective 2 - Economic competitiveness for rural development*

This objective encourages the support of the local economy, helps to reduce the share of the inactive population and the unemployment rate, capitalizes on unused land and promotes public-private partnerships. The advantages of this local competitiveness provide jobs in public state and private institutions in order to reduce the unemployment rate, validate/certify the products obtained as a result of services and economic activities and create markets.

*Objective 3 - Durability and sustainability in rural areas*

This objective helps to properly manage the development of activities in order to mitigate the degree of pollution, to properly manage waste, rationally uses existing natural resources and also expands green spaces, which in turn would generate a plan for the development of activities, especially of the industrial ones, so as to help in preventing the constructions throughout the year, of the location of selective waste containers both at street level and punctually especially in the areas dedicated to tourism and would create landscaped green spaces and playgrounds for children.

*Objective 4 - Promoting culture and tourism in the commune*

The objective is meant to capitalize on the local and cultural heritage of the area by implementing an online tourist information network, to rehabilitate recreation centres, to arrange recreational areas especially in forest areas and serves to develop the concept of brand and tourism competitiveness.

**2. Preparation of rural development scenarios**

Regarding the development scenarios, they come as own contribution, with the role to propose the implementation of development projects in Domnești Commune, in order to improve the current situation. The latter refer to a series of issues that require a careful contribution from local authorities, with the main objective of increasing the level of connectivity with other localities, of improving living conditions, of meeting the needs of citizens and building a civic spirit.

➤ **SCENARIO 1 (REFERENCE SCENARIO)** - it includes all proposed development projects, for which the financing has been carried out and the actions are in progress. For this scenario, two projects are highlighted.

PROJECT 1 - Rehabilitation of the road infrastructure, including the modernization of the street network of county and communal interest.

PROJECT 2 - Rehabilitation of the road infrastructure including with bike lanes, road signs and markings.

➤ **SCENARIO 2 (MODERATE SCENARIO)** – it proposes moderate measures for the transport network in Domnești Commune. Thus, projects that propose the expansion/modernization or moderate rehabilitation of existing infrastructure (roads, public transport, parking lots, bicycle areas) will be included. The projects proposed for the second scenario are in line with those discussed in the previous scenario.

PROJECT 1 - Development of road infrastructure, especially in the areas of expansion of the land within incorporated area.

PROJECT 2 - Rehabilitation of sidewalks, especially in the case of the street network inside the locality.

PROJECT 3 - Rehabilitation of bus stations in areas with moderate development.

PROJECT 4 - Rehabilitation of Domneștii de Sus flag station with appropriate urban furniture.

PROJECT 5 - Systematization/equipment of intersections with road signs and markings.

PROJECT 6 - Arrangement of pedestrian areas, especially in the central area and other areas of community interest.



PROJECT 7 - Arrangement of parking lots mainly in areas of community interest.

PROJECT 8 - Provision of the street network with signs to facilitate orientation in space.

PROJECT 9 - Development of a surveillance system by introducing video cameras in bus stations and on the main pedestrian arteries.

PROJECT 10 - Improvement of the street urban system through various types of development in accordance with environmental policies (plantations, squares).

PROJECT 11 - Expansion of the public transport system in order to facilitate the commuting phenomenon.

PROJECT 12 - Rehabilitation of the road and transport system to areas with tourist potential.

PROJECT 13 - Design of a road system for cyclists inside forest areas.

PROJECT 14 - Design of a forest road system.

➤ **SCENARIO 3 (EXTENDED SCENARIO)** – it implies the extended measures proposed for the rehabilitation/improvement of the road and transport system in Domnești Commune. This includes projects involving the extensive rehabilitation/modernization of existing infrastructure, in accordance with the projects set out in Scenario 1:

PROJECT 1 - Elaboration of a detailed plan of the road and transport infrastructure and its inclusion in a Zoning Urban Plan (ZUP).

PROJECT 2 - Arrangement of parking lots / commodity loading/unloading/storage places, especially in the industrial lane, in the area of the first ring of the Bucharest ring road and of the A1 motorway, in order to reduce the general traffic.

PROJECT 3 - Implementation of a management system regarding the imposition of the legal speed of circulation.

PROJECT 4 - Implementation of a management system for prioritizing public transport (monitoring, management).

PROJECT 5 - Elaboration of a study in order to monitor and intensify the traffic according to the areas of interest.

In order to elaborate these development scenarios, their impact in relation to the degree of economic development, their environmental impact, their accessibility, their risks and the quality of life were taken into account. Thus, the Domnești Commune Development Scenario aims at improving and consolidating the road and transport system, at increasing connectivity and accessibility with the City of Bucharest as well as with other localities and areas of interest by ensuring optimal basic services (e.g., the existence of efficient and diversified transport networks; people's access to opportunities, etc.) (2013-2020 Development Strategy of Domnești Commune, Ilfov County, 2020).



### 3. Sources of project financing

- **LOCAL BUDGET** – establishment and integration of the measures for a better management of the locality, in accordance with the “Law no. 215/2001 on local public administration”.
- **ILFOV COUNTY BUDGET** - distribution of funds for balancing local budgets.
- **STATE BUDGET** – according to the law, it is approved annually by the state budget law for financing development programmes at local, county or national level (Ilfov County Development Strategy Horizon 2020, 2020).

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, sectors such as trade, industry and other services have begun to grow, which has led to a diversification of land management methods, including land use, on the one hand through the development of the economic condition, and on the other hand by increasing private property, increasing demand for housing (the emergence of residential complexes), etc.

Therefore, it was found that the level of economic development of a locality plays an extremely important role in the territorial management of a locality. For example, at the moment, Domnești Commune features a diversification that tends to evolve, even though many of the basic activities have changed their trajectory.

The ever-changing branches whose objectives are the subject of the development strategy and projects include transport (road and/or rail) infrastructure, environmental issues and its sustainability, as well as the promotion and development of tourism potential in the area, which also are part of the category of land administration.

There are also areas that face poor management of road infrastructure, street development, cultural heritage management, environmental issues and lack of environmental protection or pollution control.

In order to make these gaps less visible, it is necessary to grant a greater degree of interest from both the authorities and the population in order to increase the attractiveness of the area and ensure a balanced degree of development within the territory. Also, due to the increasing phenomenon of urbanization as a result of the expansion of residential neighbourhoods, the territory of the township may face huge changes in terms of territorial and urban development in the sense that local authorities will have to adopt new methods of administration in exchange of existing ones, and the ability to adapt of both the population and the environment will bear drastic consequences.

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