

Support for the least developed districts and regional development in Slovak republic

Roma advocacy and research center

Introduction

In Slovakia we have several initiatives that try to address regional differences. One of them is Community led local development - CLLD. CLLD is a tool for involving local actors in deciding on the social, environmental and economic development of their territory. It is based on the bottom-up principle and on the LEADER signs, so far used only as a separate initiative of the European Union and later as part of rural development programs. Basically, representatives of the microregion in question will determine their own development priorities (strategy) and, after approval by the governing body, carry out their own selection of projects. This approach is implemented through Integrated Local Development Strategies (ILDSs), respectively. CLLD strategies, which are developed with respect to local needs and capabilities, and include innovative elements linked to local situations, networking and, where appropriate, cooperation. The promoter and holder of the ILDS is a territorially competent public-private partnership that acquires the status of a Local Action Group (LAG) upon its approval by the competent authority.

Another tool to alleviate regional disparities is a program to support the least developed districts. Economic growth and development in the Slovak Republic highlighted the differences between regions and districts of Slovakia. If the majority of the population benefits from the growth, the least developed regions suffer from a high rate of unemployment, the departure of the young and educated workforce, and a lack of investment and entrepreneurial activity. After long decades of discussing the necessity of eliminating regional disparities, the government of the Slovak Republic has offered tools that should reduce these differences, increase the competitiveness of the least developed regions and thus also the quality of life. The aim of support is, first and foremost, job creation.

Currently, CLLD support is aimed at strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of predominantly rural areas and ensuring long-term sustainable territorial development, addressing the relationship between rural development centers and their functional background with the potential for complementarity to integrated territorial

investment and sustainable development.¹ That is why we have decided to look at other government measures that focus on regional development.

Legislative definition

It has been adopted Act no. 336/2015 on support for the least developed districts, which allows the concentration of instruments, measures and, of course, cash resources to stimulate economic and social development and employment. The petitioners envisaged support for a local initiative, motivation for joint action by cities and municipalities in the district, combined with measures at the level of the self-governing region and at central level. All these tools serve the sole purpose of giving people in lagging districts work to ensure their families' better lives, not having to go abroad for work. The Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family maintains a list of the least developed districts. The list of the least developed districts will include the district where the registered unemployment rate calculated from the disposable number of job seekers reported by the headquarters in the period of at least nine calendar quarters was higher than 1.6 times the average registered unemployment rate in the Slovak Republic for the same period. Recipient of aid in the least developed district under this Act may be a municipality located in the least developed region, other legal persons and other entities of territorial cooperation in accordance with the Action Plan of the least developed district. Particular support for the least developed districts is provided on the basis of action plans approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic for each of the least developed districts, as each of these districts has its own causes of economic backwardness, each requiring different concrete solutions. In addition to existing measures and the use of existing financial resources, the Action Plan may also include technical support for local government and civil society (eg training for better use of European funds, training for knowledge transfer in the field of agriculture and training, training to improve service support for small and medium entrepreneurs, etc.) and so-called regional contribution as a complementary source of funding for the implementation of the relevant action plan. The support defines the conditions for the districts covered by the special, favored regime and instruments to support them. Whether it is the preferred approach to support from European funds, the more favorable conditions for obtaining investment incentives, favorable conditions for job creation and so on. This means the maximum concentration of supporting economic activities to make them very interesting for investors.

¹ Information sent from Ministry of Agriculture,

The Action Plan is the Government of the Slovak Republic approved a binding document aimed at removing backwardness of the least-developed district, based on the fundamental documents of regional development. The action plan includes an analysis of adverse economic, social and environmental status of least developed district, assess its development potential, draft measures and tasks to ensure the implementation and fulfillment of the action plan, timetable, methods and sources of funding, monitoring and evaluation of progress. At the same time, the Action Plan integrates existing sectoral programs, cross-cutting programs and includes proposals to remove barriers to their use. The Action Plan contains recommendations for monitoring committees for operational programs financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds in relation to the provision of assistance to the least developed districts. The draft action plan is submitted by the Council to the Government Office within six months of registration of the district in the list of least developed districts. The draft action plan after the comment procedure is submitted by the government to the government. The Government Office submits to the Government, for approval, a draft action plan within nine months of registration of the district in the list of least developed districts. The action plan is usually drawn up for a period of five years and is implemented through annual priorities. Annual priorities are a government-approved binding document aimed at implementing the objectives of the action plan in the relevant year of implementation of the action plan presented by the relevant district office. Annual priorities are drawn up for the calendar year. The annual priorities include a list of activities in the district to be launched in the relevant calendar year and a list of projects financed or co-financed by the regional contribution. The regional contribution is a financial contribution provided from the budget chapter of the Government Office in accordance with the Action Plan and the annual priorities. The principles of transparency, economy, efficiency, effectiveness and efficiency and the prohibition of conflict of interest apply to the regional contribution. The regional contribution is awarded on the basis of a contract concluded with the beneficiary by the Government Office. The legal entitlement to the grant of a regional contribution arises from the entry into force of the contract.

The Act in practice

We chose five districts in which we looked at Action Plans as well as their existing performance. They are Kežmarok, Michalovce, Sobrance, Snina and Bardejov. The analysis was prepared using available government documents and supplemented with information

obtained by personal visit to the regions. During a personal visit, interviews were conducted with local actors. Interviews were informal and semi-structured, respondents were anonymized.

District Kežmarok

General characteristics of the district

Kežmarok District has 73,756 inhabitants and has an area of 630 m². It is situated in Prešov region. There are 41 municipalities in the district, including 3 towns. Two nationalities prevail in the district, 80% of the Slovak population ² and Romani 20%.³

On 15 December 2015, the district of Kezmarok was registered as the least developed district. The rate of registered unemployment, calculated from the available number of job seekers, was higher than 1.6 times the average registered unemployment rate in the Slovak Republic for the same period under the criteria set by the law. The unemployment rate reached almost 27% in the period 2012 - 2015, which is the third highest share of unemployment in the district in Slovakia.

Action plan

The Action Plan for the Development of the District of Kežmarok was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on the external meeting on 10 February 2016 by Government Resolution no. 45/2016. Long-term high unemployment in the district of Kežmarok was caused by specific district factors and impacts of past central economic policy and social policy, institutional settings and developments in global and local markets. Specific district factors include, in particular, the underdeveloped infrastructure of the region, the low qualifications of the workforce, the departure of the young qualified force from the district, and the inadequate structure of regional education. In the district, there were no adequate conditions for job creation by smaller enterprises and businesses, which should contribute to the development of agriculture following tourism. Moreover, due to lack of coordination and lack of planning and support for regional development, the district of Kezmarok does not fully exploit its economic, natural and cultural potential as well as the potential of territorial cooperation in the region. The Action Plan states that job creation reflecting the specificities of the available labor force is essential to the development of the district and at the same time

² Zdroj: www.statistics.sk

³ Zdroj: Atlas rómskych komunít 2013

improving the structure and qualification of jobseekers better reflecting labor market requirements and specific limits of the unemployed social groups. The unemployed are mostly low-skilled labor force long without employment, education insufficiently responsive to local labor market needs. According to a qualified estimate of the Labor Office, Kezmarok, in cooperation with towns and municipalities, roughly half of the unemployed and more than three quarters of the long-term unemployed are Roma, including communities with multi-generational poverty. The high population growth combined with poverty and long-term unemployment represents a high pressure on infrastructure development, especially housing, and the high level of personal indebtedness leads the unemployed to be employed in the gray economy, rather than engaging in the formal labor market, as well as insufficient combating of undeclared work. The aim of the Action Plan is to reduce the unemployment in the Kezmarok district by supporting the creation of 2000 jobs by 2020. In the district of Kezmarok, support for the development of the labor market is focused on the available workforce, in particular the low level of education and insufficient work habits, the workforce that needs to increase qualifications, or formalize the informal qualifications, the workforce that does not have the incentive to place themselves in the formal labor market for personal debt and the related executions, or the high immediate income in the informal labor market and the high personal discount factor, the future workforce that is not motivated to invest its efforts in primary or secondary education. The Action Plan contains systemic measures and activities at district, region and state level. Key activities lead directly to job creation or remove barriers to employment development in the district and are pilot activities that will subsequently be replicated in other districts and locations. The projected budget for the implementation of the Action Plan over the period 2016-2020 is 55.9 million. EUR, of which ESIF funds amount to more than 33.8 mil. EUR and a regional contribution of 4.86 million EUR.⁴

The current implementation

The goal of the Kežmarok District Action Plan was to create 2,000 new jobs by 2020. By September 30, 2018, they had been created by 2027. At the end of October 2018, 13 applications were submitted to the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic with a request for a regional contribution of EUR 2.34 million. EUR, of which 9 were contracted. Several projects focusing on social inclusion, education and increasing the possibility of

⁴ Zdroj: https://www.nro.vicemier.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1101/akcny_plan_rozvoja_okresu_kezmarok.pdf

applying to the labor market of members of marginalized Roma communities through the construction of social housing in the villages of Krížova Ves and Ihľany - totaling 245,000 EUR, material-technical equipment, workshop operating costs and building up electrical and sewer connections for the municipal enterprise again in the village of Ihľany - 120,800 EUR, but also for the reconstruction of the facility for seniors and nursing facilities in Kežmarok - 230,000 EUR. At the same time, the total amount of almost 74,8 mil. EUR, of which, for example, projects supporting the regional economy and innovations supported by 30 mil. EUR, projects to increase the attractiveness of the territory and improve the quality and availability of services by 25 mil. EUR and the development of human capital - by almost 18,8 mil. EUR. The Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic provided the entities of the district of Kežmarok for the period of 2015 - 2018 with the addition of a regional subsidy under various subsidy programs (sports, culture of national minorities, regional development), grants from the EEA and Norway, the Swiss Financial Mechanism, reserves of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic and so on. total of 466,000 EUR. The activities of the Regional Development Agencies were supported, inclusion in the educational process and the labor market of marginalized groups, improvement of the preparation of students of secondary vocational schools to the labor market, but also an interesting project in tourism: The path of mineral springs.⁵

Currently, the biggest problem in the district of Kežmarok is transport infrastructure. After meeting with the representatives of the place and the municipalities, Richard Raši, Deputy Prime Minister for Investment and Informatisation, stated that the problems were related to both general and regional and state roads. *"We have released funds from programs that have failed to draw on finance, bypasses and first class roads, and more than 300 million EUR for the transport sector. I believe that even here in the district, the projects will be able to draw money,"* said the Deputy Prime Minister. At the same time, he pointed out that two projects in Kežmarok are a positive example of how funds can be effectively spent from the regional contribution of the Slovak Government. *"One is the home of social services, where two departments have been reconstructed for 230,000 EUR from state resources and other money from the town. The second is the local social enterprise Technical Services, which currently employs Roma."*⁶

⁵ Zdroj: <https://www.nro.vicemier.gov.sk/aktuality/kezmarku-sa-aj-vdaka-podpore-statu-podarilo-vytvorit-uz-2027-pracovnych-miest/index.html>

⁶ Zdroj: <https://www.nro.vicemier.gov.sk/aktuality/r-rasi-najvacsim-problemom-okresu-kezmarok-je-dopravna-infrastruktura/index.html>

District Michalovce

General characteristics of the district

Michalovce District is located in the Košice Region and has a total of 78 municipalities, including 3 cities. There are 110,713 inhabitants in the district, with a large Roma minority living in the district. The unemployment rate in the district of Michalovce is 10.1%.

The district of Michalovce was included in the list of the least developed districts on October 19, 2018, and within 4 years it will be able to draw funds of 4.4 mil. EUR earmarked by the Slovak Government for moving economic and social development and employment. The main objective of the support is to create new jobs.

Action Plan

The funds will be available on the basis of the Michalovce District Development Action Plan. This important strategy paper should have been prepared by 31.03.2019. On March 20, 2019, a meeting was held at which it was declared that a meeting of the Government would be held in Michalovce on 25 June 2019, at which the approval of the Action Plan for the Development of the Michalovce District will be discussed. The final meeting was finally held on June 26, 2019, where the Action Plan for the Development of the Michalovce District was approved.

The processors of the Michalovce District Development Action Plan were partners from LAG DUŠA. Likewise, representatives of other local action groups in the district of Michalovce (Poondavie and Medzi riekami) were approached and decided to actively participate in the preparation of this action plan. On January 4, 2019, a working meeting of the local action groups of the Michalovce District took place at which LAG DUŠA was represented by the Chairman Ing. Vladimír Mati and Vice-Chairman Ing. Matej Repel, PhD. Jarmila Lopatová, Vice-Chair of LAG Duša, was nominated as a representative of local action groups to the committee for the preparation and implementation of the Michalovce District Development Action Plan. LAG „Medzi riekami“ invited all experts in the field of government, entrepreneurs and the third sector to take part in the preparation of the Action Plan through consultation, commenting on material or providing relevant information for the analytical part of the action plan, or proposing measures.

The preparation of the Action Plan is a demanding process, so its individual phases require the involvement of all potential actors in the district, including the Roma themselves. It is more or less clear from the meetings so far that Roma living in the territory are a misunderstood group and the work with them is very demanding, as community center workers said. Interesting information on their part was said that several Roma calculate wages, which are often at the minimum wage. According to them, what they say is that they get more than the minimum wage at home when they receive social benefits and therefore it is uninteresting for them to work.

However, it is worth noting that community center workers do not have sufficient knowledge about the overlapping of the minimum wage and contributions from the labor office, and that this lack of knowledge is a major shortcoming in working with the community. The ignorance of community workers causes them not to provide information that would help the Roma themselves. Also, as is customary in the work of local action groups, the Roma themselves were not invited to cooperate in the development of the action plan, so it may also be feared that the effect of the measures will not have the desired effect.

Until the finishing of this analysis, the Action Plan was not published, so it is not possible to comment on its actions in more detail.

The current implementation

As the Action Plan was approved at the time of the study, individual measures have not yet been implemented.

District Sobrance

General characteristics of the district

Sobrance district is located in the Košice region and consists of 47 municipalities of which 1 town. Population in the district is about 23 thousand, while according to sociographic mapping of Roma settlements in 2013, approximately 11.4% of Roma lived in 15

municipalities of Sobrance district.⁷ It can be said that the district of Sobrance is rather a rural district. In the list of the least developed districts was included 15.12.2015.

Action plan

The action plan was based on an analysis of the conditions for the social and economic development of the district. It was based on the effective use of the district's potential and its competitive advantages. The action plan took into account the impact of national aglobal impacts on the district and took into account existing risks. This approach has created the preconditions for the effective and sustainable implementation of the Action Plan and thus the efficient use of public resources. The Action Plan was approved on August 23, 2016.

The main objective of the Action Plan was to reduce the unemployment rate in Sobrance by supporting the creation of 1,225 jobs by 2021.

The Action Plan focused on the following main areas:

- - adaptation and development of the labor force through education as required by the labor market and regional policy of the district,
- - Integration and improvement of all educational, training activities as well as counseling, according to district and labor market priorities, and communication on common goals in education and human resources development, including members of marginalized Roma communities, involving institutions, schools, employers from the business sector and public administration,
- - the development of a labor market based on strengthening the regional and local economy, including agriculture, forestry and downstream sectors,
- - promoting the development of the labor market by improving the conditions for entrepreneurship, as well as supporting municipal social economy enterprises, innovative projects, new technologies, transfer of know-how, including support for agriculture and forestry with a focus on job creation and employment marginalized groups,
- stabilizing skilled labor and investment in the territory by improving living and business conditions, as well as developing technical and social infrastructure and improving service quality,
- construction, modernization and reconstruction of transport and technical infrastructure, environmental protection infrastructure, including flood protection

⁷ Zdroj: https://www.nro.vicpremier.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1129/akcny_plan_rozvoja_okresu_sobrance.pdf

measures, basic infrastructure of towns and villages, support for improved waste management, including municipal waste sorting and waste recovery, social and health infrastructure, including schools and school facilities, building of rental apartments, improvement of civic amenities and public services for the benefit of the inhabitants, business sector, investors, as well as visitors and tourists, at the same time development of services, marketing of the territory and activities supporting tourism using the cultural and historical values of the district.

Of the total estimated financial investment of about 69 million EUR in 2016-2020, public funding of 53,4 million EUR and 15,4 million EUR from private sources was foreseen, with the total amount of the regional contribution under § 8 of Act no. 336/2015 was 2,5 mil. EUR.

The current implementation

The most important projects to date include the renovation of the Tibava Castle, which involved several volunteers and sponsors from the district's inhabitants. In 2018, the project was supported by EUR 25,000 from the Regional Contribution of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investment and Informatisation. It is not known how many jobs have been created and whether long-term unemployed job seekers have also been employed.

No other activities are known.

District Snina

General characteristics of the district

District Snina is located in Prešov region on the border with Poland and Ukraine. Nearly 37 thousand inhabitants live in the district. There is one town and 33 municipalities in the district. It is interesting for this district that the Starina water reservoir is built on the Cirocha River, but there is no water and sewerage infrastructure in the villages. Of the 34 municipalities in the district, only 10 are connected to the public water supply and 6 to the public sewer. Building a basic infrastructure at least in potentially developing communities is essential for stopping the permanent outflow of local people, for improving their living conditions and for creating the preconditions for sustainable development of the region. In the Snina district, the population of the Slovak nationality is predominantly living, accounting for almost 78% of the total population. The second largest nationality is Russins with a share of

12.3% and the third largest nationality are Roma with 6.8%. In rural areas, the majority of this minority lives in good conditions, comparable to the majority population. The problem is the unemployment of marginalized low-income groups of the population and disadvantaged people on the labor market (threatened by social exclusion, persons with low qualifications or without qualifications, long-term unemployed, etc.). Especially Roma in the district town of Snina live in poor living conditions, where they are concentrated in two larger communities, namely the housing estate I and the “Kostrubáň” locality, and to a lesser extent dispersed among the majority population of the city. Most of them have their unfavorable social situation resolves participation in minor municipal services.

Action plan

The district of Snina was included in the list of the least developed districts on April 25, 2018 and the action plan was approved on January 16, 2019. The main goal is to create 582 jobs by 2023 and an estimated budget of 76 million Eur.

Priority areas for the development of the Action Plan were defined in such a way as to guarantee the content and time coordination of individual projects, activities and system measures of the Action Plan using the support of individual operational programs in the 2014-2020 programming period and the next programming period with complementary interventions from the state budget and other sources . The implementation of the Action Plan will also be supported by other government support measures. In the Action Plan six priority areas have been defined, with three focusing on specific activities and three supporting systemic actions. Interesting is the measure called Special Plant and Animal Production with an emphasis on finalizing products, which also envisages the employment of marginalized groups in agriculture. The activities of this measure will focus mainly on strengthening the competitiveness of the local processing and food industry and increasing the efficiency of all production factors, the development of specialized plant production, fruit growing and vegetable production, including less widespread species, growing medicinal, spice and technical plants with subsequent production of local products, development of specialized livestock production, beekeeping, fish farming, followed by the production of local products with added value of biocvality, respectively. specific regional brand, support for horse breeding usable in agro-tourism and forestry, support of sales of local products (sales points) directly in the district, support of regional brand as a form of promotion of Snina district and

quality of services and products of its population, renewal of traditional rural houses (reconstruction and construction adjustments) by traditional technologies, using traditional materials, procuring equipment and the like, which are directly related to the subject of business in the sale of agricultural and local products, restoration of farm buildings (reconstructions and building modifications), procurement of machinery, equipment and the like. that are directly related to the subject of business in agriculture.

The current implementation

Since the Action Plan was approved in January this year, there have been no activities yet, so the activities are at an early stage of implementation.

District Bardejov

General characteristics of the district

Bardejov district is located in Prešov region and has about 78 thousand inhabitants divided into 82% of Slovak nationality, 14% Roma nationality and 4% Russians nationality. There are one town and 85 municipalities in the district. The Roma population lives in predominantly segregated settlements in the district town of Bardejov and in another 24 municipalities of the district. In the six municipalities of the district - Cigeľek, Frička, Lenartov, Petrov, Varadka and Zborov, they make up more than half of the population in the respective municipalities. They often have difficulty accessing education because there is no kindergarten or primary school established in seven municipalities. The municipal water supply is connected to the town of Bardejov and 60 municipalities of the district.

In the district of Bardejov there is no water supply in 24 municipalities. In order to improve the comfort of living in small villages, there is a need to increase the connection of municipalities to public drinking water supply. In the district of Bardejov, only 10 municipalities have a sewer system and the town of Bardejov has been in operation for more than 10 years. The connection of the citizens of the district to the waste water treatment plants is low, therefore it is necessary to consider the extension of the sewerage system by the connection to the existing wastewater treatment plants, or by building other waste water treatment nodes.⁸

⁸ Zdroj: https://www.nro.vicpremier.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1359/akcny_plan_rozvoja_okresu_bardejov.pdf

The district of Bardejov was ranked among the least developed districts on 30 September 2017.

Action plan

Action Plan adopted 4.7. 2018. According to data from the database of economic entities of the Slovak Republic, which is administered by the Institute of Informatics and Statistics (Infostat), at the end of 2016, St. James Hospital is among the largest employers based in Bardejov district. Retailers in non-specialized stores mainly with food, beverages and tobacco, recruitment agencies providing personnel leasing also achieved over 200 employees. Other large employers are freight transport companies, the company for the production of liquid drive equipment, the spa and the town of Bardejov.⁹

The Action Plan includes measures to support the implementation of development activities and financial support, the development of the regional economy and innovation, the training and adaptation of the workforce to the needs of the market, the building of infrastructure, the enhancement of quality and accessibility of services, and the care of the environment. The priority area is aimed at increasing the economic performance of the Bardejov district and creating job opportunities by applying new technologies and innovative projects, transferring know-how, extending existing production, or promoting the emergence of new entities, including support for agriculture, forestry and timber production with an added added value value and job creation, including the employment of marginalized groups. The priority area also deals with the development of tourism as a tool for the economic development of the district, in particular through the construction of tourism infrastructure, regional branding, the creation of tourism products and services, which will lead to an increase in the region's visit rate. Another objective of the Action Plan is to support the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products, in particular local specialties and the introduction of BIO production with a positive impact on the creation of new jobs, support for livestock production, fruit growing and other parts of the district's farming. It is necessary to focus on the use, processing of domestic raw materials, ensuring their sales in the region, creating the preconditions of the processing industry, diversifying activities, creating a local market for regional products. In the field of forestry development, it is necessary to focus on land

⁹ Zdroj: Infostat.Sk, 2016

consolidation, property settlement, afforestation. The Bardejov District is the largest forest area, with many forestry businesses in the district.

Activities will be supported, in particular, to support the development of agriculture in the district and to strengthen the competitiveness of the local processing and food industry and to increase the efficiency of all production factors, support the development of forestry enterprises, in particular to increase their competitiveness, increase the economic value of forests through improved forest management practices and support new jobs, restoration of farm buildings (reconstructions and building alterations), procurement of machinery, equipment and the like, which are directly related to the subject of business in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

In this action plan, too, the emphasis is on promoting the education of people from marginalized Roma communities, which is of course important. However, in the context of non-existent basic infrastructure in excluded locations, such as public water supply or sewerage, it is really unfair to talk about the inadequate hygiene habits of children from marginalized Roma communities entering the education process. These findings also show that the inclusion of excluded communities is not subject to a comprehensive approach.

The current implementation

Almost 1,400 new jobs were planned and so far more than half have been created.

New jobs in less than a year were created mainly in the footwear industry, where six of the largest companies created about 200 new jobs, 170 were created in local government, and others in engineering and construction work.¹⁰

Summary and conclusion

For all the Action Plans analyzed, we have encountered that marginalized Roma communities are among the most vulnerable groups and are indeed the target of the measures. Job creation is without doubt a great asset and means a change for an economically excluded individual. It is a way to socialize on the one hand, and on the other hand, household income also means a change in quality of life. Each action plan has the ambition to integrate marginalized Roma

¹⁰ Zdroj: <https://www.nro.vicepremier.gov.sk/najmenej-rozvinute-oresy/bardejov/index.html>

communities into society, but in one action plan no emphasis has been placed on systemic housing solutions.

Indeed, marginalized Roma live in areas where there is no access to drinking water, there is no sewerage system or public water supply. Locations where Roma live in this way are often times literally cut off from the surroundings because there is no way, paths, lighting. The fact that there are no water, sewage and drinking water in the sites results in a low hygienic index. And this does not solve the creation of programs for children to learn hygienic habits. This fact also constitutes the social isolation suffered by the inhabitants of the marginalized communities.

Of the districts surveyed, the Kežmarok District has been the most significant in the implementation of the Action Plan. An important role in the implementation of several measures is the effort to change the current unsatisfactory state and to offer people in the district the opportunity to have a better life. It is important that all possible actors are involved in such a change process, because without the involvement of all those involved, the effect will not be desirable and, in particular, will not affect those affected. Also in the district of Kežmarok, they started to focus on housing because they realize that if Roma live in isolation and in poor conditions, any plans for inclusion will fail.

The ambitions of action plans for the least developed districts are large, but they are also limited by external factors, such as the non-existent highway infrastructure, which would transport goods to potential investors in regions with least developed districts. Because for sustainable employment growth it is necessary to build a road infrastructure in this part of Slovakia to make it attractive to investors who want to come to the least developed regions.