

# Territorial dimensions of Lithuanian Rural Development Plan 2004–2006: lessons for 2007–2013

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The EU structural policy aims at reducing economic and social differences among EU member states and improving competitiveness of less developed European regions through financial help. Lithuania's Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2004–2006, supported by the national and EU funds has made a positive impact on the country's rural development, but it could benefit from a better alignment with the regional development agenda. This article presents analysis of regional aspects of EU support for rural development in 2004–2006. The analysis includes a review of rurality definitions used by others and how they may be applicable to Lithuania in planning rural development programmes for 2007–2013.

**Key words:** rural development programme, regions, rurality, Structural Funds

## INTRODUCTION

In 2004, implementation of the EU Common Agricultural Policy measures started according to the programs of compensatory and investment support to rural development, assigned from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). In Lithuania, support to rural development and agriculture from EU funds is allocated according to the measures of the Lithuanian Single Programming Document (SPD) and Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2004–2006. The SPD includes the strategy for development of the whole country, and the RDP measures complement SPD Priority 4 measures related to agriculture, rural development and fishery.

The successful absorption of EU rural development support during 2004–2006 shows that the ability of the Lithuanian countryside to adjust to the changing economic and social environments is gaining speed. Nevertheless, the directions of change are determined by an unfavorable demographic situation, namely population ageing and significant outmigration, causing problems of labour, social protection, infrastructure and education constraints as well as the lack of state support measures to solve these local and regional problems. Such factors as urban influence, natural conditions, geographic location, economic structure and human capital shape the socio-economic differentiation of rural areas. In order to reduce the process of diverging development, it is important to invest in the development of problematic rural territories.

The paper reviews the experience with EU rural development programmes in the period 2004–2006 with a view to seeing the

distribution of development resources that resulted from these programmes across different territories of Lithuania. Rurality definitions are explored as a means to identify what it may mean to improve rural targeting. Finally, we draw conclusions from the analyses and make recommendations on how they could be useful in designing and implementing the RDP 2007–2013.

## EVIDENCE FROM 2004–2006 RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

### Regional aspects of European Union support for Lithuania in 2004–2006

Since Lithuania became a member of the EU in 2004, the possibility to use EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund support opened for Lithuania. Plans for these were contained in the Single Programming Document (SPD) where financial commitments in Lithuania for 2004–2006 amounted to nearly 4.2 billion Lt, of which 3.09 billion Lt was the EU contribution. The biggest share of these resources (38%) was allocated to SPD Priority 1 “Development of social economic infrastructure” (Fig. 1). It was followed by Priority 3 “Development of Production Sector” (25%), Priority 2 “Development of Human Resources” (18%), Priority 4 “Rural Development and Fishery” (16%) and Priority 5 “Technical assistance” (3%).

The effect of structural funds at regional and local levels may sometimes be contrary to the objective and tasks of the national regional policy. Only 10% of the European regional development fund resources was planned for local development. The structural

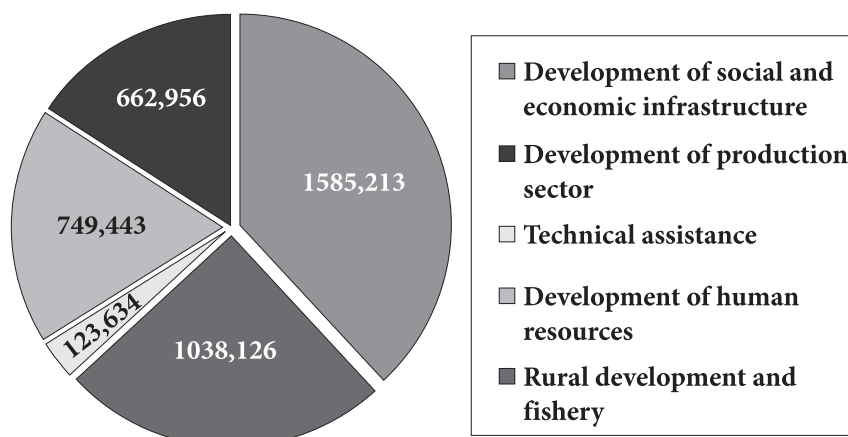


Fig. 1. SPD financial commitments according to the priorities, 2004–2006 (mill. Lt)

Source: Single Programming Document 2004–2006.

support was used according to the competitive principle. This offered bigger possibilities for the stronger applicants. Accordingly, financial support concentrated in economically strong regions and municipalities. These tendencies are typical of the neighboring Baltic states as well. Studies carried out in Latvia show that the EU financing tends to go to those who can better put these money in practice, not where it is more necessary (Kruzmetra, 2007; Saktina, Meyers, 2005). National interests often dominated locally important interests in the competitive battle. Failing a political agreement, in spite of established criteria for problematic territories in the period 2004–2006, regional policy in those territories was not implemented (Česonis, 2006).

In order to change this situation, on 31 January 2007 the Government of Lithuania adopted a resolution where 14 problematic territories were designated (Akmenė, Druskininkai, Ignalina, Jonava, Joniškis, Jurbarkas, Kelmė, Lazdijai, Mažeikiai, Pasvalys, Rokiškis, Skuodas, Šalčininkai and Švenčionys municipalities). The list of municipalities was identified according to two criteria: problematic territories are the ones where the average annual rate of registered unemployed in the employable age population is 60% and higher than the national average and the average annual rate of social allowance receivers is 60% and higher than the national average. In these municipalities, the unemployment level reaches 7.8 to 12.4% and there are 2–3 times more receivers of social allowances than in other places. In 2007–2013, it is planned to give larger EU support to these municipalities and to give more autonomy to the regions to decide where to give more support.

The regional aspect of support distribution was partly implemented by EU support programmes in SPD Priority 4. They were aimed at increasing rural population employment and the improvement of the quality of life in all regions of the country. For measure 4.1 “Investments into agricultural holdings”, a max-

imum support level of 60% of all eligible project expenses was set for the farmers in the less favoured areas, i. e. 10% more than usual. Similarly, measures 4.4 “Development and diversification of agricultural and adjacent economic activity sectors for the multiple activities and alternative income” and 4.5 “Promoting rural tourism and crafts” were given an additional 25 points at the stage of project usefulness and quality evaluation. Also, for measure 4.6 (LEADER+ “Obtaining skills”), during evaluation of the strategies of local action groups, additional points were given to the local action groups that represented rural areas in the less favoured areas. On the other hand, despite the size of Technical Support, the least share of resources was allocated for SPD Priority 4 in comparison to other SPD priorities. Therefore, implementation of these regional support aspects could not significantly influence structural changes in the problematic territories.

Besides the support of structural funds to agriculture and rural development, measures of the Common Agricultural Policy (Pillar I and Pillar II) were provided in 2004–2006 (Table 1). However, according to their purpose these measures cannot solve all the problems of the backward rural areas. The only measure oriented to the solution of regional problems was “Less favoured areas and areas with environmental restrictions”. The resources for implementing this measure took 31% (the biggest share) of total support in the Lithuanian Rural Development Plan 2004–2006.

#### Analysis of implementation of European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund Measures

The European Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF) was designed for agriculture and rural development. Investment type measures were supported from the Guidance section of this fund and were a continuation of the SAPARD programme.

Table 1. Structure of agriculture and rural development support in Lithuania, 2004–2006

Structural funds + co-financing	CAP + co-financing	
Single Programming Document (4,159,372 million Lt)		
<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Pillar II</i>	<i>Pillar I</i>
1. Development of social and economic infrastructure	Rural Development Plan	Direct Payments
2. Development of human resources	(1,630,276 million Lt)	(2,157,035 million Lt)
3. Development of production sector		
4. Rural development (EAGGF Guidance section) and fishery (FIFG)	EAGGF	EAGGF
5. Technical support	Guarantee section	Guarantee section

Table 2. Allocations for SPD Priority 4 “Rural Development and Fishery” measures

No.	Measures	Allocations for 2004–2006, mill. Lt	Structure, %
4.1	Investments in agricultural holdings	273.961	45.4
4.2	Setting up of young farmers	55.901	9.3
4.3	Improving processing and marketing of agricultural products	102.022	16.9
4.4	Promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas:	136.623	22.6
4.4.1	Water management in agriculture	54.562	9.0
4.4.2	Redistribution of plots of land	2.622	0.4
4.4.3	Consultations to agricultural holdings	9.661	1.6
4.4.4	Development and diversification of agricultural and adjacent economic activity sectors for the multiple activities and alternative income	14.925	2.5
4.4.5	Promoting rural tourism and crafts	54.853	9.1
4.5	Forestry	22.685	3.8
4.6	Leader + type measure	9.373	1.5
4.7	Training	3.044	0.5
<b>Subtotal (EAGGF)</b>		<b>603.610</b>	<b>100</b>
4.8	Scrapping of fishery ships Modernization of fishery ships	41.604	70.1
4.9	Development and security of water resources, aquaculture, fishery port equipment, processing and marketing and fishery in inner waters	15.977	26.9
4.10	Other fishery related activities	1.765	3.0
<b>Subtotal (FIFG)</b>		<b>59.346</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>662,956</b>	

Source: National Paying Agency, Single Programming Document 2004–2006.

EAGGF contributed to sustainable rural development support. A total of over 603 million Lt was allocated for rural development measures in SPD 2004–2006 (Table 2). Support was provided through SPD priority 4 “Rural Development and Fishery” measures 4.1–4.7.

Evaluation of the committed resources from the EAGGF Guidance section and national budget for separate rural development measures reveals that the biggest share of support (over 60 percent of all assigned means for rural development) was allocated to measure 4.1 (Investments in agricultural holdings) and measure 4.3 (Improving processing and marketing of agricultural products). The remaining part was assigned to the other nine measures.

By the end of 2006, almost 2.2 thousand applicants applied for the total sum of 867,9 million Lt (which exceeded almost 1.5 times SPD resources provided for agriculture in the seven measures of Priority 4). Contracts were made with 1.6 thousand applicants who made up 71% of all applicants (as of 31 December 2006). The sum assigned for support was 560,7 million Lt, or 93% of support allocated for agriculture in SPD Priority 4, and reached 65% of the requested support.

Support granted under the Rural Development Plan (RDP) was not an investment support, but it was granted for agricultural activities carried out by fulfilling certain requirements. There were seven structural measures within the RDP for 2004–2006 (Table 3). Farmers were granted support under six RDP measures that aimed to modernize holdings, encourage farmers to transform traditional agriculture and start alternative activities, diversify them and improve the age structure of farmers.

The RDP budget for three years was 1.63 billion Lt and was allocated for agriculture and rural development of Lithuania. Eighty percent of the support was financed from the Guarantee

section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund and the rest from the budget of Lithuania.

Implementation of the RDP measures had the objectives of raising a competitive and EU market oriented modern agriculture, improving living standards in rural areas, creating new jobs and ensuring the preservation of agricultural traditions, countryside, environmental and cultural heritage.

The distribution of total support to agriculture and rural development in 2004–2006 (SPD 2004–2006 Priority 4 measures (excluding fishery), RDP 2004–2006 measures and direct payments) by municipality was analysed. The analysis showed that per 1 ha of declared agricultural holdings, 28 of 51 municipalities received more support than the national average (Fig. 2). LFA municipalities dominate receivers of the highest support levels, accounting for 22 municipalities of the 28 highest recipients. The other six are municipalities with the high land quality points. Municipalities that received the least support are close to Lithuanian cities, close to Lithuanian borders, and municipalities where land quality points are close to the national average. In the suburban municipalities, traditional agricultural activity is declining due to their changing land use patterns. The difference between the lowest and the highest support receivers per 1 ha of declared agricultural land reaches more than two times or around 1000 Lt.

The regional analysis of structural support together with direct payments granted per ha of declared agricultural land among the municipalities that received the biggest the smallest amount of support differs 3.4 times (from 2361 Lt/ha in Rietavas municipality to 699 Lt/ha in Kalvarijos municipality). However, it must be noted that such a high level of support in Rietavas municipality was mainly due to the investment support for the establishment of the Rietavas animal waste rendering plant

Table 3. RDP support for Lithuania in 2004–2006 under measures (million Lt)

Measures	Allocations for 2004–2006, mill. Lt	Structure, %
1. Support of early retirement from agricultural production activities	447.738	27.5
2. Less favoured areas and areas with environmental restrictions	507.212	31.1
3. Support to semi-subsistence farms undergoing restructuring	105.309	6.5
4. Meeting the EU standards	242.298	14.9
5. Agrarian environmental protection	214.762	13.2
6. Afforestation of agricultural land	92.505	5.7
8. Technical assistance	20.444	1.2
Total	1.630.268	100

Source: National Paying Agency, Rural Development Plan 2004–2006.

Table 4. The structure of support to agriculture and rural development in 2004–2006 by groups of municipalities

Groups of municipalities	Support structure, percent		
	SPD support (structural support)	RDP support	Direct payment
LFA municipalities that received bigger than national average Lt per ha support	15	46	39
Municipalities of favourable farming areas that received bigger than national average Lt per ha support	26	13	61
Municipalities that received less than national average Lt per ha support	17	16	67
Average	15	29	56

Source: Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics according to the data of National Paying Agency.

(the influence of the measure 4.3 “Improving the processing and marketing of agricultural products”). The difference in the amount of structural support for the primary production (without direct payments and support for the processing industry) on the level of municipalities was about 4.3 times. The biggest support was received in Švenčionys municipality and the smallest in Vilkaviškis municipality (RDP 2007–2013).

Speaking about shares of the total support (SPD Priority 4, DP and RDP payments), except for Druskininkai, the highest recipient municipalities were in that position due to the LFA (RDP) payments. The LFA represents 29% of total support on average nationally. Support received through direct payments dominates in the support of other groups of municipalities. Investment processes (SPD) are more intensive in the most favoured farming areas. The farmers from the areas favourable for agriculture were more active in receiving support for the measure “Investments into agricultural holdings”, whereas for LFA areas, those absorbed more funds under the measure “Promotion of rural tourism and crafts” (RDP 2007–2013). The difference of support for the investments among the areas favourable for agricultural activities and LFA still remains, but it is decreasing. In 2004, investment support per one ha of agricultural land in the LFA was half as much as in the areas favourable for agriculture, whereas in 2005 the difference was only 10%. One of the reasons is that farms in the LFA areas receiving direct payments and compensatory payments could approach the “playing field” level, and it provided conditions for the same level of investments as for farms in the areas favourable for agriculture (RDP 2007–2013).

The distribution of the support in different regions was determined rather by financial capability and activity of the ap-

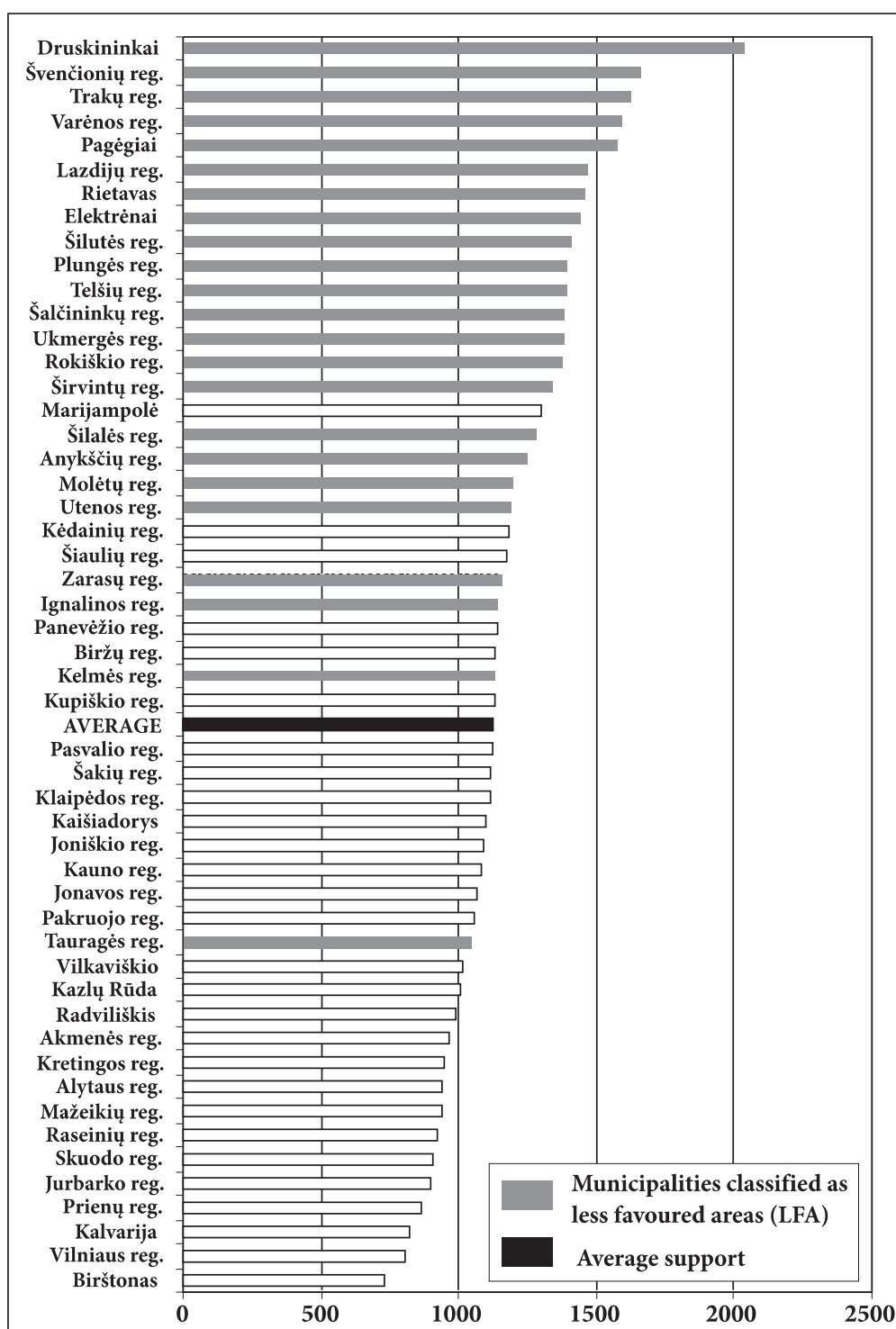
plicants (Table 4). The regional analysis of support according to the Lithuanian RDP 2004–2006 measures shows that farmers in more productive areas more actively participate in measure 1 (Support of Early Retirement from Agricultural Production Activities) and measure 3 (Support to Semi-Subsistence Farms Undergoing Restructuring). This is less typical of farmers in LFA, even though the age structure in these areas is worse than in favourable farming areas. Besides, restructuring of economic activities and stimulation of local initiatives with a view to economic viability of these areas is more relevant for farmers in LFA. However, compensatory payments for inhabitants of LFA do not necessarily induce these processes of restructuring and modernization. They are income transfers rather than investment incentives.

Analysis of the support distribution shows that rural development measures in 2004–2006 didn’t have abig influence on reducing disparities in development across regions. Latvian studies have also shown (Kruzmetra, 2007; Saktina, Meyers, 2005) that, as stated bu kruzmetra, “EU financing is going to those who can better put this money in practice, not where it is more necessary”.

If the next RDP 2007–2013 is to put more focus on the targeting of rural economic development, it would be useful to view this prospect in the context of those features that would distinguish rural from non-rural areas in Lithuania. We explore concepts of rurality in the next section.

## CHOOSING A CONCEPT OF RURALITY

The legal definition of rural and urban areas was adopted in the Law of Administrative Units and their Limits of the Republic



Source: National Paying Agency, March, 2007.

Fig. 2. Payments for SPD priority 4 measures (excluding measures financed by FIG) according to signed contracts, sum of actually paid direct payments and total sum of payments according to rural development measures by municipality, Lt per ha of declared agricultural holdings

of Lithuania (1994). According to this law, small towns and villages are the “rural” space, while towns are the “urban” space as defined below:

- Towns (cities) – compact residential areas, with population more than 3000 people, where 2/3 of workers work in the fields of industry, business or industrial and social infrastructure.
- Small towns – compact residential areas, with populations between 500 to 3000 people, where more than a half of workers work in the industry, business and also in the field of industrial and social infrastructure, including traditional small towns.
- Villages – residential areas without features of cities and small towns.



According to this definition, 33.3% of Lithuanian population live in small towns and villages or in rural areas which make up 97% of Lithuanian territory.

So, applying the OECD definition of *predominantly rural* (described below), if more than 50% of people live in villages or small towns (rural communities) it can be classified as PR.

In Lithuania as well as in other countries, the share of the workforce employed in agriculture is rapidly decreasing and the share of employed in industry and services is gradually increasing. Thus, the criteria of agriculture and forestry employment is becoming less suitable for the identification of rural areas. Maiga Kruzmetra (2007) reconsidered the traditional and the modern concepts of the countryside and concluded that at the end of 20th century the situation of Latvian countryside essentially changed: agriculture remains as one of the parts of rural economy, employment in this branch decreases fast, the notion of “countryside” has broadened and includes agriculture as one of the elements. This is far different from 1930 when 91% of rural population was engaged in agriculture. The objective of Lithuanian rural policy for 2013 is to diversify economic activities and to reduce agricultural employment in the countryside to 30% of total employed (for comparison, 40.6% of total employment in the countryside were employed in agriculture in 2006).

In the Rural Development Programme for Lithuania 2007–2013, the rural area is defined as a village, small town or town populated by no more than 6000 residents. Only support under the measure “Encouragement of rural tourism services” can be granted to a village, small town or town populated by no more than 3000 residents. This number was derived from the attempt to link it with the EU support requirements. According to the Lithuanian Rural Development plan 2004–2006, support through the LEADER + measure is given to people of residential areas with less than 6000 inhabitants.

There exists no commonly used definition of rural areas in the European Union. Member States have generally developed their own definitions of rural areas, which are often based on socio-economic criteria such as agricultural patterns, the density of inhabitants per square kilometer or changes in population structure. They are quite heterogeneous and not universally applicable (European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture, 1997). Among the different conceptualizations of rural, two main approaches can be distinguished: concepts that denote the rural as a distinctive type of locality and concepts that describe the rural as a social representation. In the first approach, spatial classifications are based on a variety of land use and/or socio-economic variables, resulting in locations with boundaries on a map (Errington, 1994; Du Plessis et al., 2001). In the second approach, rural space is regarded as a social representation: a mental construct which acts as a guide to deal with the complexity of the social world (Terluin, 2006).

In the European regional classification schemes, the regions are grouped by:

- size and employment structure of the settlements (small settlements where a large share of the population is occupied in agriculture and forestry are ascribed to rural areas);
- intensity of concentration in the cities (the presence of a city in the region);

- population density in the region (densely populated urban regions and sparsely populated rural ones);
- relation of rural territories with a regional centre;
- relation of settlements of the regions;
- attractiveness of the region (Čaplikas, Melnikienė, 2006).

Depending on the purpose, rural typologies can be derived from many individual units and differentiating characteristics. There are three similar rural typologies derived from population density: OECD, Eurostat, and HARM2. All three typologies have the same differentiating characteristic – population density, but slightly different regional units (functional regions, NUTS3 and HARM2 regions) (Terluin, 2006).

A simple and widely used definition of rural areas was developed by the OECD (1994) for making international comparisons of rural conditions and trends; the only criterion used is population density. At the local level (NUTS 5), communities are regarded as rural if they have a population density below 150 inhabitants per square kilometer. At the regional level (mainly NUTS 3 or 2), the OECD distinguishes three main categories depending on the share of the regions' population living in rural communities:

- *predominantly rural (PR) regions*: over 50% of the population living in rural communities;
- *significantly rural (intermediate – IM) regions*: 15 to 50% of the population living in rural communities or include a city of more than 200,000 inhabitants with at least 25% of population;
- *predominantly urbanized (PU) regions*: less than 15% of the population living in rural communities or include a city of more than 500,000 inhabitants with at least 25% of population.

The OECD approach for Lithuania indicates that predominantly rural areas exist in many areas of the country (Fig. 4). It is the most predominant of the three classifications and is too widespread to be useful in terms of identifying the backward areas.

For national comparisons of rural areas, the OECD rural typology could be considered to split the three rural types into subgroups tailored to the needs of programmes and policies within Member States. This tailored national rural classification can be used for national comparisons, while the purpose of international comparison can be easily served by switching to the three main rural types (Terluin, 2006).

Terluin (2006) suggests that at the national level the OECD rural typology could also be used in the scope of the EU rural development policy axes (1), (3) and (4) in two ways:

- 1) Prior to starting the programming period. In most Member states, rural development plans are made for the whole country. This implies that development needs have to be identified at the national level. By ranking regions within each type from high to low with regard to their score for each individual indicator, regions with a low and high performance can easily be identified. Regions with a low score reflect development needs. This procedure might also reveal different rural development needs among the three types of regions within the country, for example, whether rural development needs differ between predominantly urban and predominantly rural regions;
- 2) at the end of the programming period. For each individual indicator, regions within each type are again ranked from



parities of development across the regions. This highlights the need of a more effective use of the Regional and Social Funds for rural territories.

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The analysis also showed that the funding available through SPD Priority 4 was not sufficient to significantly change the dis-

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## 2004–2006 M. LIETUVOS KAIMO PLĖTROS PLANO TERITORINĖS DIMENSIJOS: UŽDAVINIAI 2007–2013 METAMS

### *S a n t r a u k a*

ES struktūrinė politika finansinėmis priemonėmis siekia mažinti ES šalių ekonominius ir socialinius skirtumus bei didinti mažiau išsivysčiusių Europos regionų konkurencingumą. Lietuvos 2004–2006 m. kaimo plėtros planas, remiamas nacionalinio ir ES fondų, padarė teigiamą poveikį šalies kaimo plėtrai, tačiau galėjo būti naudingas geresnis jo derinimas su regioninės plėtros politika. Šiame straipsnyje pateikiama ES paramos kaimo plėtrai 2004–2006 m. regioninių aspektų analizė. Apžvelgiamos kitur naudojamos kaimiškumo koncepcijos bei svarstoma jų taikymo Lietuvos kaimo plėtros programoje 2007–2013 m. galimybė.

**Raktažodžiai:** kaimo plėtros programa, regionai, kaimiškumas, struktūriniai fondai

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## ТЕРРИТОРИАЛЬНЫЕ ДИМЕНСИИ ПЛАНА РАЗВИТИЯ ЛИТОВСКОГО СЕЛА НА 2004–2006 гг.: ЗАДАЧИ НА 2007–2013 гг.

### *Р е з ю м е*

Структурная политика ЕС с помощью финансовых средств ставит своей целью снизить экономические и социальные различия между странами ЕС и повысить конкурентоспособность менее развитых европейских регионов. План развития села Литвы на 2004–2006 гг. при поддержке фондов – национального и ЕС – оказал положительное влияние на развитие села Литвы, однако мог бы лучше сочетаться с политикой регионального развития. В данной статье на основе региональных аспектов 2004–2006 гг. анализируется помощь ЕС, направленная на развитие села. Также рассматриваются применяемые концепции крестьянства и возможности их применения в программе развития литовского села в 2007–2013 гг.

**Ключевые слова:** программа развития села, регионы, крестьянство, структурные фонды