

**IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI**  
**Doctoral School of Fundamental and Engineering Sciences**



# **DOCTORAL THESIS**

**Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in  
Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the  
Republic of Moldova**

## **ABSTRACT**

**PhD Candidate**  
Mogîldea Ina

**Scientific Supervisor**

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"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați

**Series I No. 9**

**Engineering and Management in Agriculture and Rural Development No. 20**

**GALAȚI, 2024**





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### **ABSTRACT**

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The doctoral thesis titled "**Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova**" explores one of the most relevant topics, highlighting the local entrepreneur as a key player who identifies opportunities, manages risks and resources, innovates, creates a strong identity, builds consumer trust, and drives the emergence and growth of new businesses.

A rural area in the country serves as a driver for a successful economy, where an entrepreneur's success can begin in a village setting. Conceptually, rural entrepreneurship development—whether agricultural or non-agricultural—involves meeting the needs of current generations while preserving the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This objective aligns with broader goals within the European Union and forms the foundation for various government policies. Rural development remains a highly controversial subject within the EU, marked by contradictions in inter-country relations.

The 'De Benedictis' theory posits that the diversification of the local economy is central to development, rejecting the notion that agriculture alone can drive diversification. It asserts that the appeal of rural areas—namely, their capacity to attract resources and curb rural depopulation—largely depends on their ability to create alternative sources of income that are non-agricultural and do not stem from traditional farming practices.

Multifunctionality plays a fundamental role in the survival of farms and farming families. However, it is essential to recognize that this phenomenon could not exist without the development of non-agricultural local production. Over time, new opportunities for rural development have emerged due to changes in urban development processes.

Rural development is also a priority for the Republic of Moldova. The trend focuses on active individuals within local communities and development partners willing to contribute to this sector. Through programs, they can enhance the quality of life in rural areas, introduce new local services that address residents' needs, and create new jobs, among other benefits.

The development of rural spaces is crucial for the country, significantly impacting the population engaged in non-agricultural, agricultural, productive activities, socio-cultural services, and tourism. The level of development in rural areas can be indicative of the overall quality of life and economic health of any state. Rural territories form communities characterized by a specific rural lifestyle. The primary goal in rural development is to create conditions that ensure the well-being of local populations while preserving cultural values and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. Achieving this goal depends on addressing key issues faced by rural areas, such as the promotion of rural and ecological tourism, support for foresters and farmers, and the development of local industries and crafts.

Moldova is predominantly rural, making rural development a pressing, complex, and long-term necessity. The socio-economic situation in Moldova's rural areas is marked by accumulated problems that hinder sustainable development. Crisis phenomena, which have emerged since the onset of current reforms, remain unresolved.

In this context, rural non-agricultural entrepreneurship plays a vital role, gaining significance under current market relations. Rural non-agricultural businesses invigorate the agricultural sector and improve the quality of agricultural products and raw materials. They also reduce unemployment and create competitive conditions, leading to innovative and unique solutions that direct rural producers towards market conditions.

Today, rural areas are not just sources of raw materials and food for the country; they also serve as loyal clients for industrial products, generating profits across various economic sectors. The decline in industrial production in urban centers, combined with high costs and

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low quality of life in cities, increases the attractiveness of rural areas and fosters new functions, particularly near urban centers.

Rural business not only provides a basis for food security but also enhances living standards in less prosperous rural communities. Rural entrepreneurship significantly influences and shapes the socio-economic climate of each region. The research aims to analyze the primary factors contributing to the sustainable development objectives of the Republic of Moldova, particularly focusing on the growth of rural non-agricultural entrepreneurship.

Scientific methods employed in the research include systemic analysis, synthesis, critical analysis, and structuring a vast body of literature on rural entrepreneurship development. The motivation behind the research topic stems from an interest in exploring the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth, as rural economic growth relies on the ability to support entrepreneurship. Small and medium-sized enterprises are critical resources for creating new jobs, and collaboration between entrepreneurs and communities, with state support, turns ideas into actions.

The thesis's objective is to analyze the development trends of rural areas through the lens of non-agricultural rural entrepreneurship as a promising avenue for economic growth. It examines the interaction processes between the state, community, and entrepreneurs involved in organizing and developing rural businesses. The aim is to assess the status of rural business in the Central region of Moldova and to develop strategic directions for its growth.

The research also evaluates the state's objectives in supporting the interests of citizens wishing to become entrepreneurs. Attention is given to rural entrepreneurs, as their contributions to economic growth and sustainable development are significant, particularly through the creation of new businesses, employment shares, and revenues generated by small and medium enterprises.

Key findings indicate essential barriers hindering the growth of rural non-agricultural entrepreneurship. Moldova's economy continues to depend on external funding from international organizations, and migration and social integration represent significant challenges that necessitate a multi-dimensional approach to assessing migration's potential in socio-economic development.

The research is structured into two main parts comprising four chapters. The first part explores theoretical aspects, including international development theories and historical methodology. The second part is based on national statistical data, particularly focusing on social dimensions.

Research objectives are delineated in chapters reflecting different periods since the commencement of the study, partially incorporating reflections and analyses from previous periods alongside current data related to rural development policy reforms in Moldova.

The first chapter analyzes historical writings detailing the evolution of the global development framework, addressing rural development in the context of sustainable development, and the impact of non-agricultural activities on sustainable growth in Moldova. It studies demographic changes in the Central region, highlighting rural threats marked by unemployment and aging populations. The notion of sustainable development is emphasized as a concept for reshaping present generations' perspectives for future generations.

The second chapter discusses non-agricultural gaps in describing Moldova's regions, examining the challenges of developing non-agricultural activities while considering the polarization power of a region through the convergence of current and historical socio-economic relations. The chapter aims to highlight the polarization potential of rural areas contributing to the influence of predominantly urban regions.



A theoretical model is provided by the non-agricultural rural economy, utilizing complexity levels of non-agricultural activities to identify three developmental levels in the studied communes. The case study demonstrates how urban areas polarize labor forces from nearby rural spaces.

The third chapter addresses the contributions of European funding towards the future of SMEs and rural development in the Central region from 2014 to 2020. It discusses the role of funding through the National Rural Development Program in advancing the Central Region, emphasizing SMEs' central role in future integrated local development.

The fourth chapter presents analyzed data from a questionnaire on the development perspectives of entrepreneurship in the Central Region of Moldova. The report, based on responses from diverse individuals, illustrates the need for improvement in economic infrastructure and highlights the importance of enhancing entrepreneurial education for youth. It also identifies bureaucracy simplification as a significant barrier to realizing new entrepreneurial ideas.

Key research questions considered the prospective entrepreneur's motivation to start a business. The analysis concludes that fear of failure remains a top concern for those wishing to initiate and grow a business.

The study assesses the development of young people's business capabilities and confirms that entrepreneurship can be learned; no one is born with a successful business, but rather through experience and skill development applicable across life's aspects.

In conclusions and recommendations, the thesis synthesizes the evolution of non-agricultural rural entrepreneurship and its importance for Moldova. It analyzes the state's intentions to actively promote rural entrepreneurship, both agricultural and non-agricultural, for the efficient implementation of socio-economic potential and financial support for adaptation to modern conditions. Local authorities often lack the capacity to address significant socio-economic development issues in rural territories.

The agricultural sector faces numerous challenges that substantially impact entrepreneurial improvement, including difficulties in capital accumulation, sales channels, equipment shortages, and reluctance among many villagers to engage in rural entrepreneurship, compounded by inadequate infrastructure and processing facilities. These conditions diminish incentives for crop production and grain cultivation, resulting in poor product quality that limits sales and revenue generation.

Notably, local factors intertwine with traditional customs and specific climatic conditions. Rural youth tend to prefer commercial and financial businesses and strive to work in cities whenever possible. Simultaneously, the analysis shows that rural entrepreneurship can address rural issues, enhance household service quality, and optimize resource utilization.

Demographic and ecological situations are threatening life expectancy in the population. Low living standards, limited job opportunities in rural areas, and low income levels significantly contribute to labor degradation and rural depopulation, leading to socio-economic imbalances in rural areas.

In this context, achieving a high level of development in rural areas becomes a critical task for the state, strategically aiming to implement structural and functional transformations that allow adaptation to changing socio-economic conditions.

An innovative economy should not only serve as a separate sector of a country's economy but also as a condition for successful socio-economic development. Growth in the rural sector is achievable only through a transition to innovative development, supported by

Ina Mogildea\_Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova **IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI** legislative and organizational measures, alongside creating favorable conditions for various types of innovation.

Given today's poor development conditions in villages, they require both financial and technical support, as well as the adoption of best practices for advancement. Human resources play an essential role in rural development, participating actively in economic and social life. Implementing a sustainable development program in a specific area necessitates evaluating socio-economic conditions while adhering to fundamental principles, such as integrated management of production processes, processing, transport, distribution, utilization, and storage of products, as well as responsible use of land resources and transparency in state authority operations.

An analysis of strategic documents reveals that these principles align with the Moldova Development Strategy 2020-2030. Sustainable rural activity necessitates producing branded products that maintain sustainability in their offerings and are attractive to consumers. Addressing some of the major social, environmental, and economic issues globally requires leveraging coverage, influence, and resources from civil society, market actors, and stakeholders.

## [Chapter 1: General and Specific Considerations Regarding Non-Agricultural Activities for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Moldova](#)

### **1.1. The Concept of Sustainable Development and Its Application in Rural Areas**

This chapter explores the theoretical foundations of sustainable development, highlighting the interconnection between economic, social, and ecological dimensions. In the context of rural areas, it is essential that sustainable development includes strategies to protect the environment, generate viable jobs, and strengthen social cohesion.

The importance of expanding non-agricultural activities is emphasized as a means to ensure the economic viability of rural regions. These activities not only contribute to diversifying income sources but also improve infrastructure and attract youth to rural areas. Additionally, it discusses how the integration of these activities can support not only the local economy but also the protection of natural resources.

### **1.2. Economic, Political, and Social Factors Influencing Non-Agricultural Entrepreneurship Development**

This section analyzes the national economic context and its impact on the development of non-agricultural entrepreneurship. It finds that the lack of adequate financial resources poses a major challenge for SMEs, with available statistical data illustrating the financing structure of non-agricultural businesses in rural areas.

Another crucial aspect is the influence of government policies. A critical evaluation of support programs and subsidies for SMEs reveals that, although these initiatives have the potential to stimulate development, there are administrative barriers that limit access to resources. Therefore, a reform of the system is necessary to reduce bureaucracy and facilitate a favorable environment for entrepreneurship.

Social factors, such as the migration of youth from rural areas and population aging, present significant challenges. The study analyzes the negative effects of these trends on the labor market and economic activities in rural areas, highlighting the need for viable solutions to attract youth back and maintain an active human capital.

### **1.3. Diversification of Economic Activities in Rural Areas**

Diversifying the rural economy is an urgent necessity, considering that agriculture has traditionally been the primary source of income for these regions. Currently, it is imperative to reduce dependence on the agricultural sector by promoting non-agricultural activities, such as rural tourism, crafts, and agricultural product processing services.

This section emphasizes the importance of economic diversification for creating a sustainable economic environment. Concrete measures are proposed to stimulate these activities, including:

- **Digital Infrastructure:** Implementing digital solutions that facilitate the promotion and marketing of local products, thus contributing to greater visibility in both domestic and international markets.
- **Entrepreneurial Education:** Creating training and entrepreneurial education programs that provide young entrepreneurs with the necessary knowledge to develop successful businesses in non-agricultural sectors.

By adopting these strategies, not only can the economic development of rural regions be supported, but also the quality of life of their inhabitants can be improved, thereby ensuring long-term sustainable development at the community level and fostering a business culture.

## Chapter 2: Contributions of European Funding to Rural Development in the Central Region

### 2.1. The Role of European Funding in the Republic of Moldova

This subsection analyzes the significant influence of European funding on rural development in the Republic of Moldova, emphasizing the impact of funds allocated through the National Rural Development Program (NRDP). European funding, particularly that resulting from the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), has opened new opportunities for local entrepreneurs by providing access to essential financial resources and external markets.

A statistical analysis of the absorption of European funds in the Central Region will include data on the number of projects implemented, success rates of SME initiatives, and their impact on the local economy. Furthermore, it will discuss the effects of these funds on rural infrastructure development, support for innovation, and job creation, with concrete examples of success.

### 2.2. National Rural Development Program (NRDP) 2014-2020

The National Rural Development Program (NRDP) is examined as the main instrument for supporting rural entrepreneurs, playing a crucial role in facilitating access to financial resources for SMEs. This subsection will explore the NRDP's objectives, implementation strategy, and how it has contributed to job creation, infrastructure modernization, and the promotion of technological innovation in rural areas.

The positive impact of the NRDP on the diversification of economic activities in rural areas will be highlighted, along with the challenges encountered, particularly excessive bureaucracy that has restricted access to funds for many entrepreneurs. Case studies will showcase both the successes of NRDP-supported initiatives and the obstacles faced by beneficiaries.

### 2.3. The Impact of European Funds on Economic Development in the Central Region

This subsection will focus on assessing the impact of European funds through a comparison between regions that have benefited from European support and those that have not had access to these resources. The analysis will include relevant statistical data presented in the form of graphs and tables, highlighting the following aspects:

- **Increase in the Number of SMEs:** The analysis will explore how European funds have contributed to the establishment and development of SMEs in the Central Region, with examples of successful businesses.
- **Evolution of Turnover:** It will discuss the impact of these funds on the turnover growth of SMEs, including long-term growth trends.
- **Impact on Quality of Life and Infrastructure:** Changes in the quality of life in rural communities will be evaluated, including improvements in infrastructure and essential services such as education and health.

Although European funds have had a significant and positive impact, it will be emphasized that challenges persist regarding the efficient use of these resources and the sustainability of funded projects. Potential solutions will be discussed to maximize the benefits of these funds for future rural development.

### Chapter 3: Analysis of Development Gaps Between Rural Regions in the Republic of Moldova

#### 3.1. Methodology for Assessing Development Gaps

This chapter proposes a detailed methodology for evaluating development disparities among rural regions in the Republic of Moldova. This approach is based on a series of key indicators divided into three main categories:

##### **Economic Indicators:**

- **SME Turnover:** Provides insight into the economic performance of small and medium enterprises in each region.
- **Jobs Created:** Indicates the region's capacity to offer employment opportunities.
- **Gross Value Added:** Measures the contribution of the private sector to the regional economy.
- **Access to Financing:** Assesses the availability of financial resources for entrepreneurs and businesses.

##### **Social Indicators:**

- **Unemployment Rate:** Reflects the level of workforce participation.
- **Education Level:** Indicates the skills and qualifications of the active population.
- **Youth Migration:** Provides information about emigration trends among young people.

##### **Infrastructure Indicators:**

- **Road Access:** Measures the connectivity of the regions.
- **Water and Sanitation Services:** Indicative of living standards and health conditions.
- **Internet Access:** Reflects the level of digitization and connectivity.

The methodology includes both quantitative analyses, based on statistical data, and qualitative assessments that collect perspectives from residents and entrepreneurs.

#### 3.2. Discrepancies Between Rural Regions

The research highlights significant differences among rural regions in Moldova. More developed regions, such as the Central Region, benefit from more consistent resources and superior infrastructure, while less developed regions face considerable challenges.

Key findings include:

- **Concentration of SMEs:** More advanced regions have a higher density of SMEs and greater turnover compared to disadvantaged regions.
- **Access to Education:** More developed regions have a more accessible educational system, contributing to the skill enhancement of entrepreneurs and employees.

These discrepancies underline the need for specific measures to promote more uniform development.

### 3.3. Measures to Reduce Development Gaps

This section presents proposals aimed at reducing the development differences among rural regions:

- **Inter-Regional Collaborations:** It is important to encourage partnerships between developed and less developed regions to facilitate experience sharing and mutual support.
- **Professional Training Programs:** Implementing training initiatives for entrepreneurs in disadvantaged regions, focusing on essential skills for business development.
- **Tailored Financial Support:** Creating support packages for SMEs in less developed regions to facilitate access to essential financial resources.

Through these measures, it is possible to contribute to reducing development inequalities and promoting sustainable economic growth in the rural regions of the Republic of Moldova.

## Chapter 4: Survey on the Development Prospects of Entrepreneurial Activities in the Central Region

This chapter thoroughly explores the development prospects of non-agricultural entrepreneurial activities in the Central Region of the Republic of Moldova, based on market research aimed primarily at identifying solutions to stimulate local entrepreneurship. The results underscore the complexity and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the region, as well as potential opportunities that can be leveraged.

Sampling to establish the development prospects of entrepreneurship at the level of the Central Region of Moldova involves a careful approach to ensure the representativeness and relevance of the collected data. The sample size depends on the precision of estimates and the level of variability among respondents. It is important for the sample to be sufficiently large to provide relevant and representative results.

To establish the development prospects of entrepreneurship, 500 residents from the Central Region were interviewed, covering a broad spectrum in terms of age, education level, employment status, income category, and residential area of the respondents.

Of the 500 respondents, those aged 18-24 represent 22.4%, those aged 25-30 account for 33.2%, those aged 31-35 represent 19.4%, those aged 36-40 make up 16.6%, and those over 40 comprise 8.4% (Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1).

*Table 4.1. Distribution of Respondents by Age*

Specification	Number
18-24 years	98
25-30 years	120
31-35 years	97
36-40 years	82
Over 40 years	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>

Source: Own processing

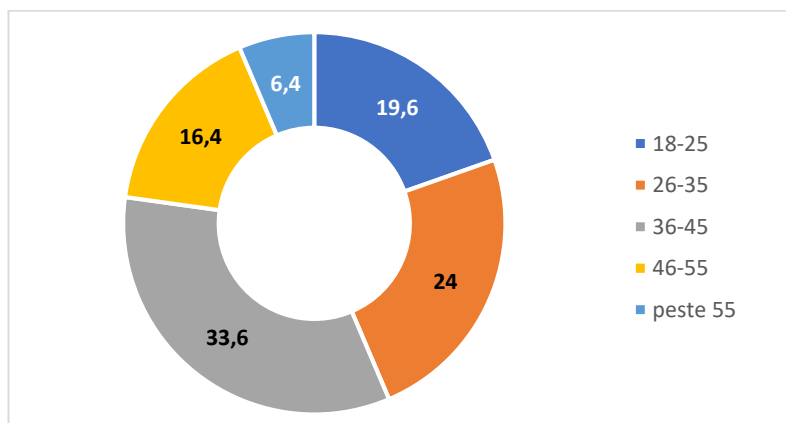


Figure 4.1. Distribution of Respondents by Age

Source: Own processing

It is observed that 218 respondents, representing 43.6% of the total participants in the survey, are under 35 years old. This age group is particularly important as it provides the perspective for developing entrepreneurial activities that ensure long-term sustainability while stabilizing young people in areas of potential entrepreneurial initiatives.

The link between the development prospects of entrepreneurship and the educational level of residents is close and multidimensional. A well-educated population is better prepared to initiate and develop successful businesses due to their skills, knowledge, access to resources and networks, as well as their capacity for adaptation and innovation. Educated individuals are more open to new ideas and the adoption of emerging technologies, which can lead to the development of innovative products and services. This aspect is crucial for market competition and creating a competitive advantage. Investments in education and entrepreneurial training programs are essential to stimulate economic development and create a favorable environment for entrepreneurship.

The analysis of survey participants in the Central Region based on their highest level of education revealed that of the 500 participants, nearly half have completed higher education (42.6%), followed by those with high school education (26.4%) and those with postgraduate education (17.4%). The percentage of respondents with vocational or trade education is 13.6% (Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2).

Table 4.2. Educational Level of Respondents

Specification	Number
High School	132
Vocational or Trade School	68
University Education	213
Postgraduate (Master, PhD)	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>

Source: Own processing

The link between the development prospects of entrepreneurship and the current employment status of potential entrepreneurs is important and can significantly influence their capacity and willingness to initiate and develop businesses. Professional experience, networks, financial stability, available time, motivation, access to training, and market knowledge are factors that directly influence entrepreneurial capability and success. Individuals with favorable employment status are better prepared to initiate and develop businesses, while those with more precarious employment may face more challenges but can also be highly motivated to find entrepreneurial solutions to improve their situation.

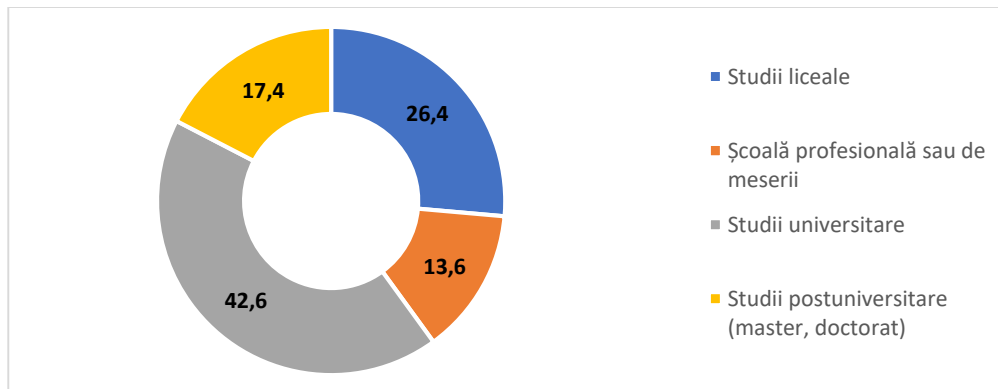


Figure 4.2. Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Source: Own processing

Consequently, for analyzing the development prospects of entrepreneurship in the Central Region, we aimed to understand the employment status of the respondents. Thus, of the 500 residents, more than half (276) indicated that they are employed (55.2%), 104 respondents specified that they are entrepreneurs (20.8%), 68 are students (13.6%), and the remaining respondents are unemployed, farmers, or retirees (10.4%) (Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3).

Table 4.3. Employment Status of Respondents

Specification	Number
Employed	276
Unemployed	24
Student	68
Entrepreneur	104
Farmer	16
Retired	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>

Source: Own processing

The link between the development prospects of entrepreneurship and the current income level of residents is significant and can influence various aspects of starting and managing a business. The current income of potential entrepreneurs plays a crucial role in their ability to finance their business, take risks, and access essential resources. Higher incomes provide a solid financial base, reduce risks, and allow access to essential resources, contributing to the success and growth of the business. Conversely, lower incomes may limit investment capacity and risk-taking, which can pose a significant barrier to initiating and developing a business.

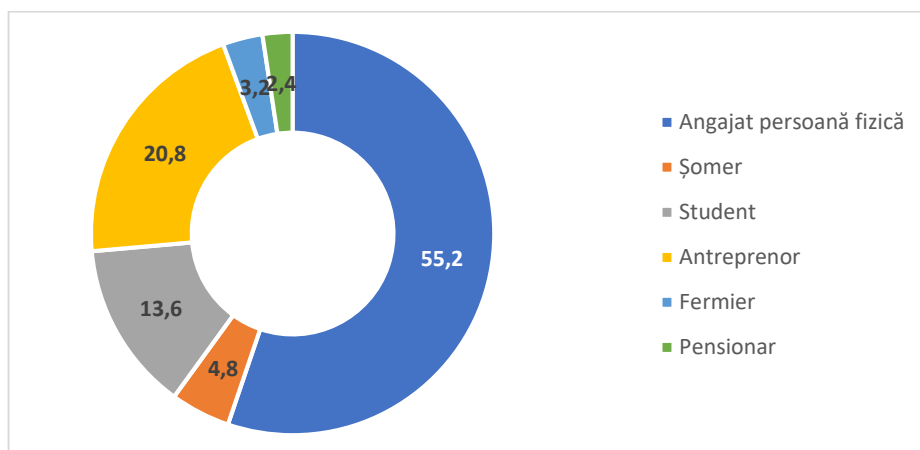


Figure 4.3. Distribution of Respondents by Employment Status

Source: Own processing

For the sample analysis, we also wanted to know the income category of the respondents surveyed in the Central Region. It is observed that two-thirds of respondents (66.8%) have average monthly incomes above the average salary in the economy (13,700 MDL), 22.8% fall into the average income category between 10,000-15,000 MDL, and only 10.4% have average monthly incomes below 10,000 MDL (Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4).



Table 4.4. Monthly Average Income Category of Respondents

Specification	Number
5000-10000 MDL	52
10000-15000 MDL	114
15000-20000 MDL	102
Over 20000 MDL	232
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>

Source: Own processing

The rural-urban location significantly influences the development prospects of entrepreneurship. The urban environment offers clear advantages in terms of resources, infrastructure, and support, while the rural environment may require specific approaches and innovative solutions to overcome unique challenges and leverage local opportunities.

In urban areas, entrepreneurs typically have easier access to essential resources such as capital, infrastructure, markets, and skilled labor. Access to banks, investors, and business support networks is often better developed in cities. In rural areas, resources may be more limited, which can restrict entrepreneurial opportunities. However, rural areas may provide access to specific natural resources that can be exploited through niche businesses, such as organic farming, agritourism, or artisan industries. Public policies and development initiatives that take these differences into account can stimulate entrepreneurship in both environments, contributing to balanced economic development.

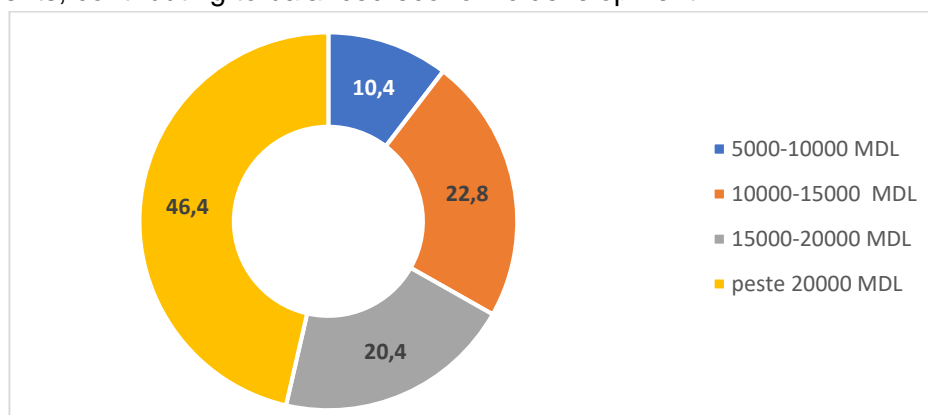


Figure 4.4. Distribution of Respondents by Average Income Category

Source: Own processing

In terms of geographic distribution of the respondents, it is observed that 62.8% of them reside in urban areas of the Central Region, while only 37.2% live in rural areas (Table 4.5 and Figure 4.5).

Table 4.5 Geographic Distribution of Respondents

Specification	Number
Urban	314
Rural	186
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>

Source: Own processing

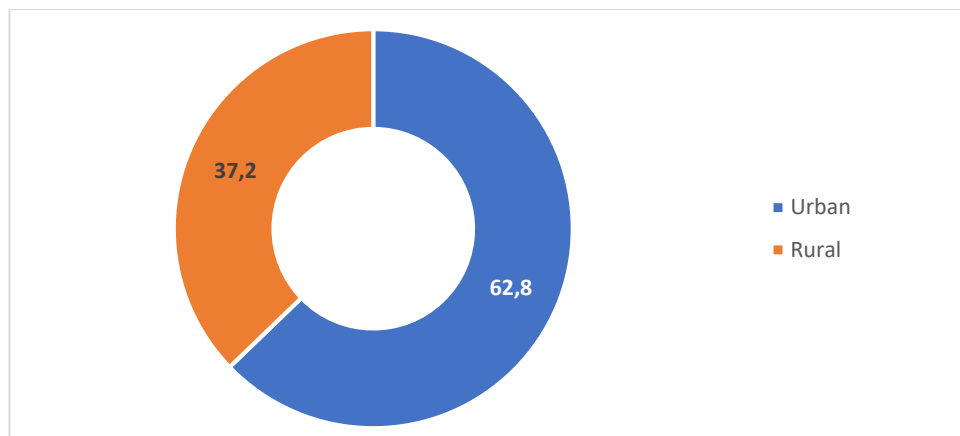


Figure 4.5. Geographic Distribution of Respondents

Source: Own processing

## 4.2. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

The second part of the questionnaire aimed to study the attitudes of residents in the Central Region towards the development of a new business.

To identify the perspective on entrepreneurial development in the Central Region, the questionnaire included questions regarding the respondents' attitudes towards starting a new business. We sought to understand residents' opinions on the economic environment in which they live, whether the education received at school prepares young people to become future entrepreneurs, the types of businesses they believe are needed in their area, and their interest in starting a business and investing in entrepreneurial activities.

The relationship between the perspective of entrepreneurial development and the economic environment in the area is strong and complex, influencing multiple aspects of business initiation and growth. A robust local economy provides entrepreneurs with the necessary resources, infrastructure, markets, and support to start and develop successful businesses. Investments in local economic development and the creation of a favorable environment for entrepreneurship are essential for stimulating economic growth and directly impacting entrepreneurship.

In an area with a high economic level, consumers have greater purchasing power, which can stimulate demand for products and services. This offers entrepreneurs a broader potential market that is willing to spend, facilitating increased sales and revenues. Economic stability and predictability are essential factors for entrepreneurs.

The economic level also influences the availability of the workforce. In areas with a developed economy, there is a greater supply of skilled labor that can support the needs of a growing business. In a stable economic environment, entrepreneurs can plan and develop long-term businesses without facing significant uncertainties, inflation, unemployment, or economic fluctuations.

Regarding the question: "How do you evaluate the favorability of the economic environment for businesses in your area?" it is observed that almost half of the respondents (48.0%) consider the economic environment in their area to be favorable, and only 3.2% think it is very favorable. Notably, 40.4% are undecided on this matter, declaring themselves neutral regarding the question. Conversely, it is important to mention that no respondent considers the economic environment of the Central Region to be very unfavorable, and only 8.4% stated that the economic environment is unfavorable for the creation and development of entrepreneurial activities (Figure 4.6)

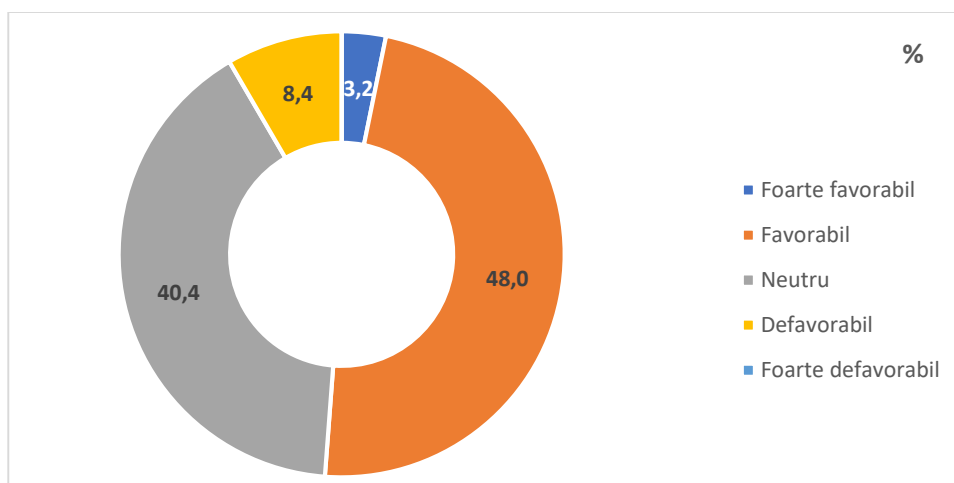


Figure 4.6. Respondents' opinions on the economic environment of the Central Region

Source: Own processing

The relationship between the perspective of entrepreneurial development and the level of education, including entrepreneurial education received in primary school, high school, and university, is significant and multidimensional. Education at different levels plays a crucial role in forming the skills, attitudes, and mindset necessary to initiate and develop future successful businesses.

At the primary school level, entrepreneurial education can introduce children to basic concepts of entrepreneurship, such as understanding money, the importance of saving, and the idea of creating and selling products or services. These initial concepts help lay a solid foundation for entrepreneurial thinking. In high school, entrepreneurial education can stimulate creativity and innovation. Programs and activities that encourage students to identify problems and develop innovative solutions help them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These competencies are essential for entrepreneurial success. At the university level, entrepreneurial education becomes more complex and focuses on developing business planning, financial management, marketing, and leadership skills. Students learn to formulate business plans, manage resources, and lead teams—essential skills for launching and growing a business.

Thus, in response to the question "Do you think the education received in school/high school/university prepares young people to become entrepreneurs?" it is observed that two-

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thirds of the respondents believe that the education young people receive, regardless of their level of schooling, does not prepare them to become future entrepreneurs (Figure 4.7).

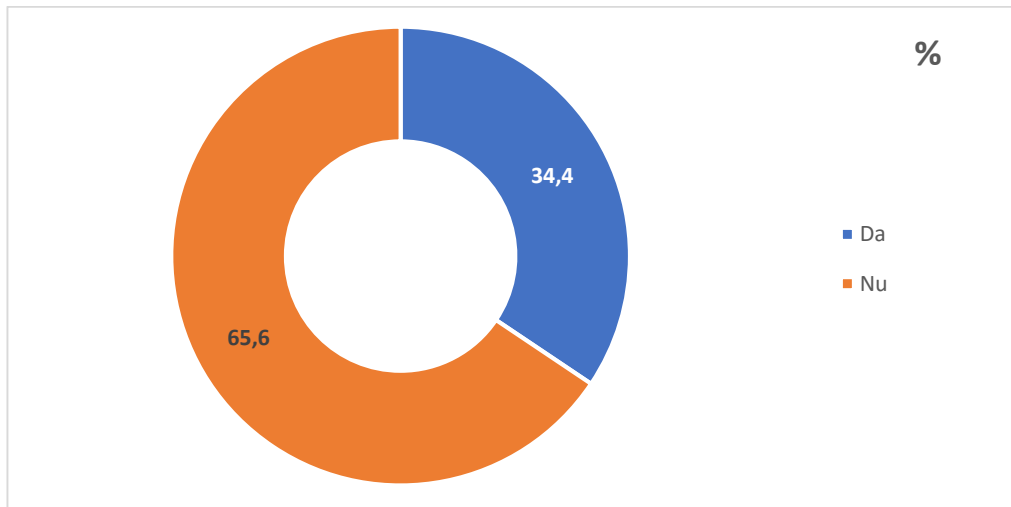


Figure 4.7 Respondents' opinions on the entrepreneurial education of young people

Source: Own processing

By developing competencies, promoting innovation, and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, education plays a crucial role in preparing young people to become successful entrepreneurs. Investments in entrepreneurial education at all educational levels are essential for stimulating the entrepreneurial spirit and promoting a dynamic and innovative economy.

In response to the question "What type of business do you think is needed in your area? Please specify," we allowed respondents to choose one or more responses, but no more than three options from the 11 proposed. It is worth noting that the proposed options also considered ideas received during the pre-test of the questionnaire on a sample of 30 people. The responses received were varied and covered a wide range of potential entrepreneurial activity ideas.

Given that respondents came from both rural and urban areas, the first business idea that residents considered necessary was the establishment of local markets: village fairs for the marketing of local food products (16.3% of total responses). This economic activity would benefit local agricultural producers as they could more easily market their agricultural products, while consumers would benefit from fresh, quality products at more accessible prices, shortening the distribution chain for these local products (Figure 4.8).

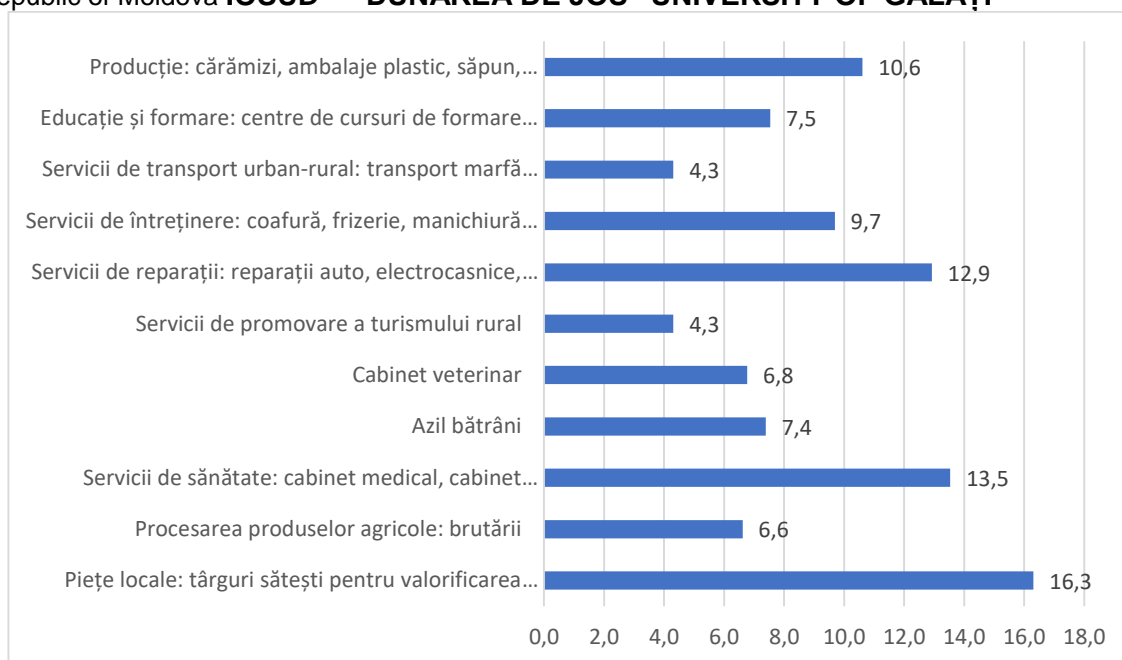


Figure 4.8. Respondents' opinions on the necessity of developing new entrepreneurial activities in the Central Region

Source: Own processing

The next two business ideas proposed by respondents are based on the need for services that are lacking in certain areas of the Central Region: healthcare services (medical offices, dental offices, psychological offices) with a proportion of 13.5% of total responses, as well as repair services (auto repairs, home appliance repairs, shoe repairs) with a proportion of 12.9% of total responses.

Other business ideas that could meet a local need include production activities (bricks, plastic packaging, soap, brooms) (10.6%), as well as maintenance services (hairdressing, barbering, manicure, and pedicure) (9.7%). The remaining business ideas pertain to activities in the field of education and vocational training (7.5%), healthcare services for the elderly (7.4%), veterinary services for pets (6.8%), followed by agricultural product processing services and bakeries (6.6%). The fewest initiatives are recorded in the field of promoting rural tourism (4.3%) and in the transportation services sector (4.3%).

The next question, "How interested are you in the idea of starting a business in your area?" aimed to capture residents' interest in entrepreneurship in the Central Region. Thus, out of the 500 respondents who answered the questionnaire, 184 expressed an interest in initiating an entrepreneurial activity in the near future (36.8%), followed by 152 residents who stated they were slightly interested in this purpose (30.4%) and 100 undecided individuals (20.0%). Respondents who are very interested in starting a business accounted for 7.2% (36 individuals), while those who are not interested at all numbered 28 individuals (5.6%) (Figure 4.9).

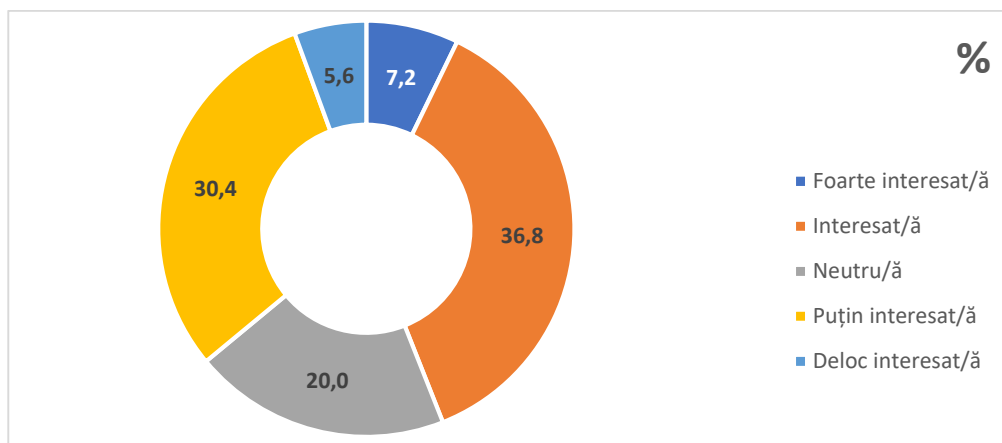


Figure 4.9. Respondents' opinions on intentions to start an entrepreneurial activity in the Central Region

(Source: Own processing)

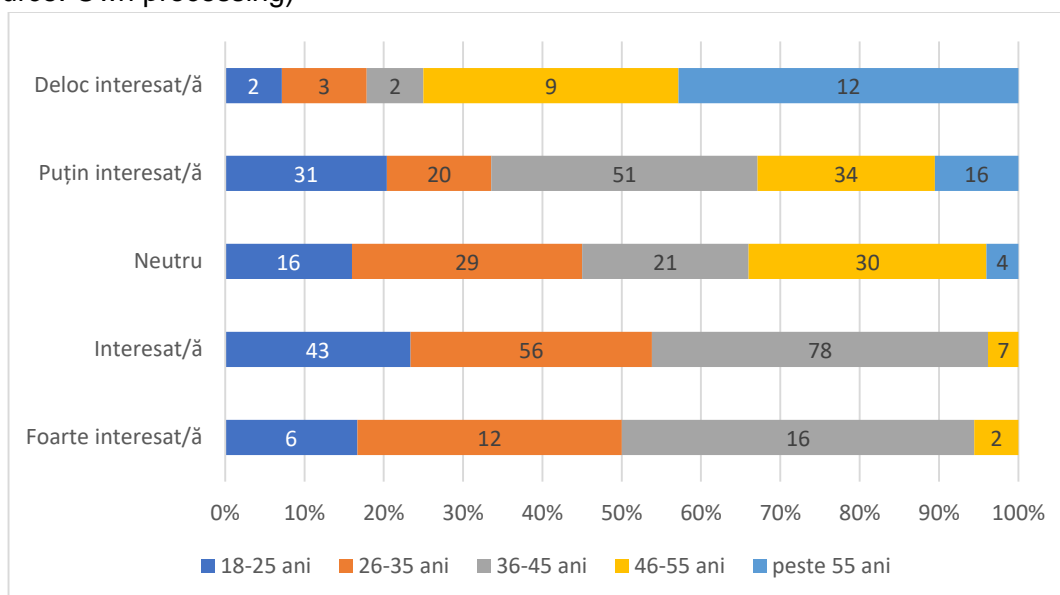


Figure 4.10 Distribution of entrepreneurial intentions of respondents by age categories

(Source: Own processing)

After assessing the level of interest among respondents regarding future entrepreneurial intentions, the next question was: "Would you be willing to invest in a new business in your area?" The responses indicate that 35.2% of the 500 respondents are willing to invest in a business in the near future, while 23.6% remain undecided about investing in an entrepreneurial activity, and the majority percentage of 41.2% do not wish to start a new business in the Central Region (Figure 4.11).

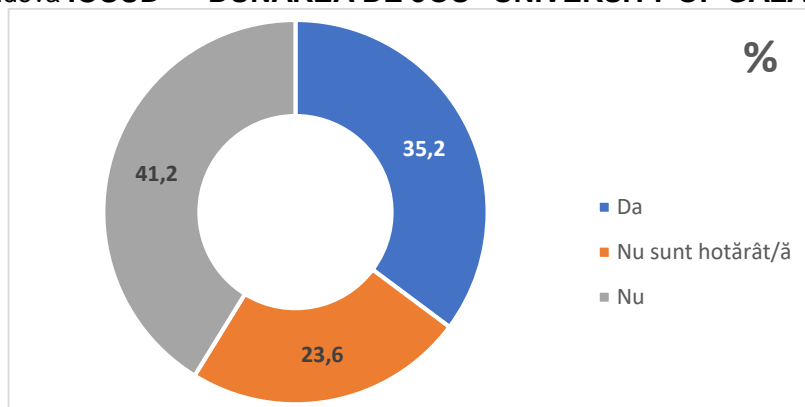


Figure 4.11. Respondents' Opinions on Intentions to Invest in an Entrepreneurial Activity in the Central Region

Source: Own processing

Given that two-thirds of respondents are undecided or do not wish to engage and/or invest in the entrepreneurial sector, we aimed to analyze their responses based on two other indicators: education level and income level of residents in the Central Region.

It is observed that the education level of residents directly influences the skills and knowledge necessary to start and manage a business. Individuals with a higher education level are more likely to possess knowledge about business planning, financial management, marketing, and the use of technology, all of which are essential for entrepreneurial success. Educated individuals are often better able to learn and continuously adapt, allowing them to adjust their businesses according to market conditions and consumer demands. Educated individuals have greater access to information and the ability to analyze it critically, including identifying business opportunities, assessing risks, and making informed decisions. The ability to analyze market data and conduct feasibility studies is crucial for developing a successful business (Figure 4.12).

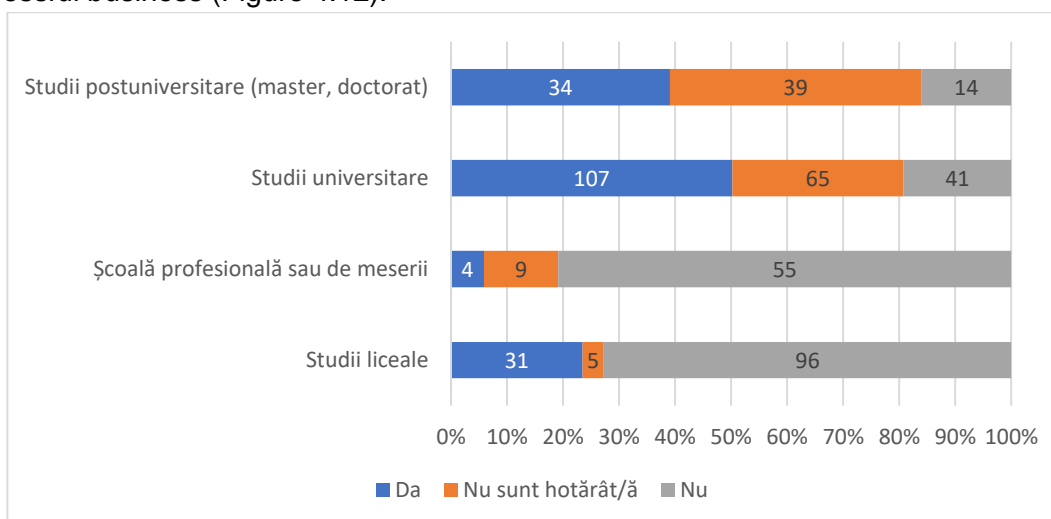


Figure 4.12. Distribution of Investment Intentions Based on Respondents' Education Level

Source: Own processing

At the same time, it is observed that the current income level directly influences the ability of potential entrepreneurs to invest in their own business. In the early stages of a business, income may be uncertain and variable. Entrepreneurs with higher current income

Ina Mogildea\_Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova **IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI** have a greater capacity to endure these periods of financial uncertainty, as they have additional resources to cover personal and business expenses until the business becomes profitable. Those with higher incomes have more financial resources to cover initial costs, such as purchasing equipment, renting space, marketing, and employee salaries. Moreover, higher incomes can reduce dependence on external funding sources, such as bank loans or investors, granting entrepreneurs more control over their businesses.

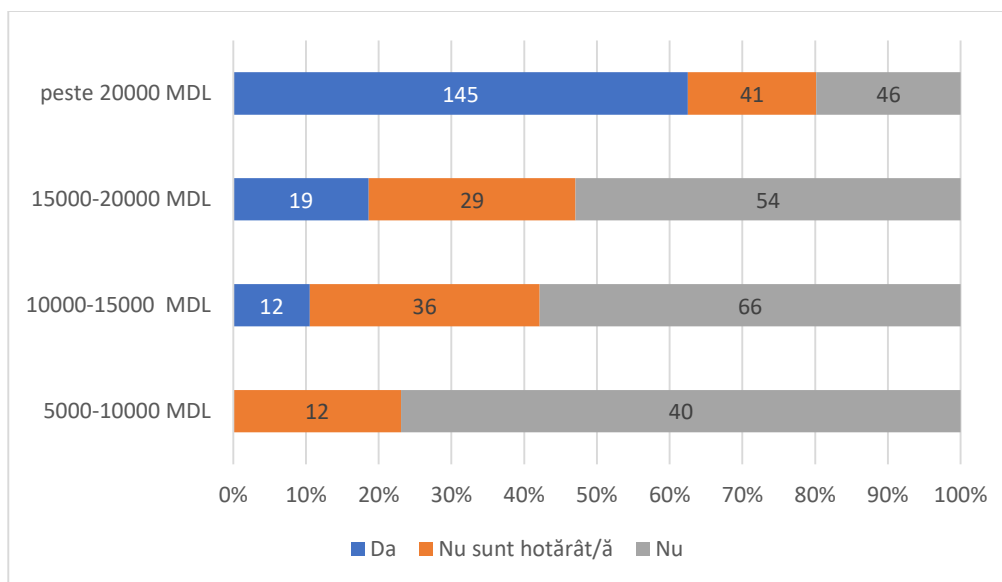


Figure 4.13 Distribution of Investment Intentions Based on Respondents' Income Level

Source: Own processing)

The income level influences the ability to access credit and investment. Financial institutions and investors are more likely to provide funding to entrepreneurs with stable and high incomes, as they are perceived as less risky and more capable of repaying loans. Additionally, higher incomes can improve credit scores, facilitating financing.

Entrepreneurs with higher incomes have the opportunity to invest in their own education and ongoing training. This may include attending entrepreneurship courses, seminars, conferences, and accessing business consultants and mentors. These resources are essential for developing the necessary skills and successfully navigating entrepreneurial challenges (Figure 4.13).

At this point in the questionnaire, for a transparent analysis of the intentions regarding the perspective of entrepreneurship development in the Central Region, we imposed a condition on the respondents: those who answered "NO" to the previous question about the intention to invest in an entrepreneurial activity were asked not to answer the remaining questions of the questionnaire, as their responses would no longer be relevant to the study's purpose. Thus, out of the initial 500 respondents, the remaining questions were completed by only 294 respondents, who indicated that they wish to invest or are still undecided about investing in an entrepreneurial activity in the near future. The undecided respondents could not be eliminated from the survey, as they may change their opinions and become potential investors in the future.

The next set of questions in the questionnaire aimed to profile the potential entrepreneur, focusing on a series of personal characteristics of the respondents. The relationship between the perspective on entrepreneurship development and the



Ina Mogildea\_Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova **IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI** characteristics of potential entrepreneurs, such as competitiveness, organization, and self-confidence, is essential for the success and sustainability of entrepreneurial initiatives. These personal traits directly influence the ability to identify opportunities.

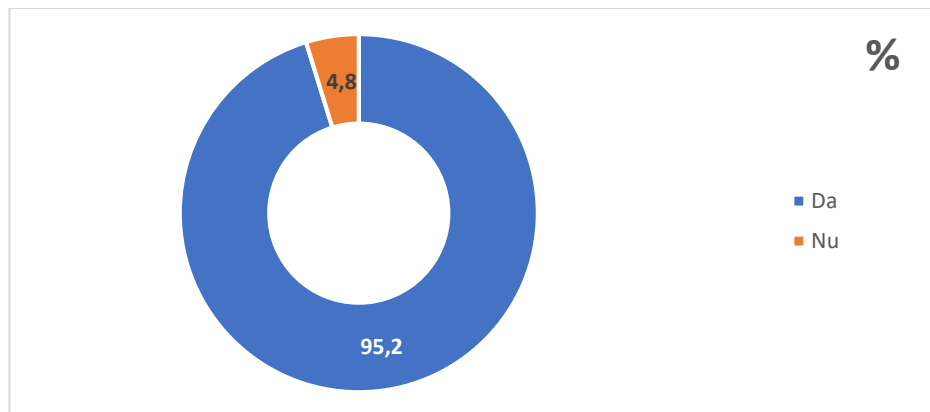


Figure 4.14 Respondents' Opinions on Personal Competitiveness

Source: Own processing

Competitive and well-organized individuals are often very goal- and results-oriented. They are motivated by achieving success and are willing to put in extra effort to meet or exceed expectations. This focus is crucial for maintaining attention on business growth and achieving desired performance.

In response to the question: "Are you a competitive person who takes initiative?" out of the 294 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 280 (95.2%) indicated that they consider themselves competitive and capable of taking initiative, while only 14 respondents (4.8%) do not see themselves as competitive (Figure 4.14).

Competitive individuals have a strong desire to succeed and stand out in the business environment. This characteristic motivates them to constantly seek new opportunities and continuously improve the products or services they offer.

Competitive entrepreneurs tend to be more resilient in the face of adversity, seeking innovative ways to outpace their competitors and proactively adapting to market changes. This attitude is crucial for developing a business in dynamic and competitive environments.

In response to the question, "Are you an organized person who plans activities, sets goals, and establishes steps to achieve them?" the percentages from the 294 respondents remaining in the study showed that a vast majority, 95.9% (282 respondents), stated that they are organized individuals, while only 4.1% (12 respondents) claim they do not plan their activities or set goals (Figure 4.15).

Organizational skills are fundamental for the efficient management of resources and for implementing business plans. Well-organized entrepreneurs can prioritize tasks, manage time effectively, and coordinate teams to achieve established objectives. Good organization reduces the risks associated with disorder and confusion, allowing entrepreneurs to remain focused on business growth and achieving long-term success.

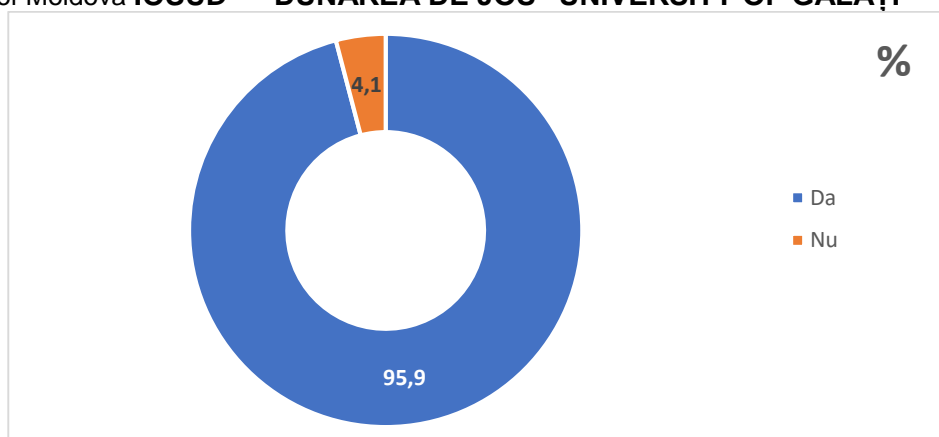


Figure 4.15 Respondents' Opinions on Personal Characteristics Regarding Organization and Goal

(Source: Own processing)

Competitiveness and organization contribute to the development of leadership skills, which are essential for managing a team and inspiring others to follow the entrepreneur's vision. Confident and organized leaders can motivate employees, negotiate with business partners, and create an organizational culture that supports innovation and growth.

In response to the question, "Do you trust your entrepreneurial abilities?" the responses from the 294 residents show that a vast majority (88.4%) of respondents have confidence in their own abilities, compared to 34 respondents (11.6%) who stated they lack the skills to be entrepreneurs (Figure 4.16).

Self-confidence is an essential attribute for entrepreneurs, as it helps them take risks and make difficult decisions. Confident entrepreneurs are more likely to pursue their vision and act with determination, even in the face of uncertainty or obstacles. This confidence motivates them to persevere, learn from mistakes, and adjust their strategies to achieve the desired success.

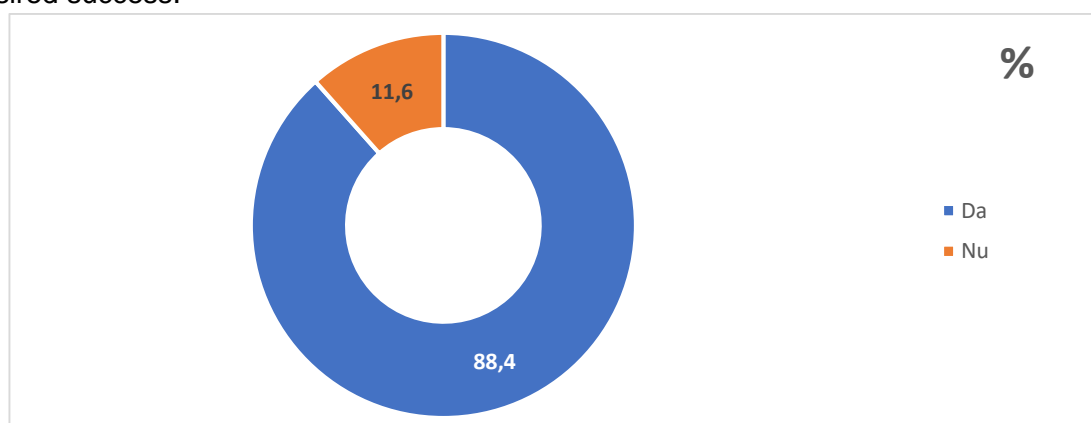


Figure 4.16 Respondents' Opinions on Personal Characteristics Regarding Entrepreneurial Skills

(Source: Own processing)

Confident and competitive individuals are often more willing to take calculated risks, a crucial aspect of entrepreneurship. Trust in one's judgment and the ability to assess potential risks allow entrepreneurs to explore new markets or launch innovative products, which can lead to significant competitive advantages. People with a high level of self-

Ina Mogildea\_Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova **IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI** confidence and good organization are typically more resilient and able to cope with stress and failures. These entrepreneurs have a greater capacity to recover from setbacks and continue pursuing their goals, which is essential for long-term success in entrepreneurship.

In response to the question, "Would you be willing to invest your own savings in a business?" it is noted that the percentage of those confident in their abilities who are willing to risk their savings and invest in an entrepreneurial activity is high (85.7%), representing 252 residents out of the total 294 respondents. The remaining 42 residents (14.3%) are more reserved regarding investments that should be made from their own savings (Figure 4.17).

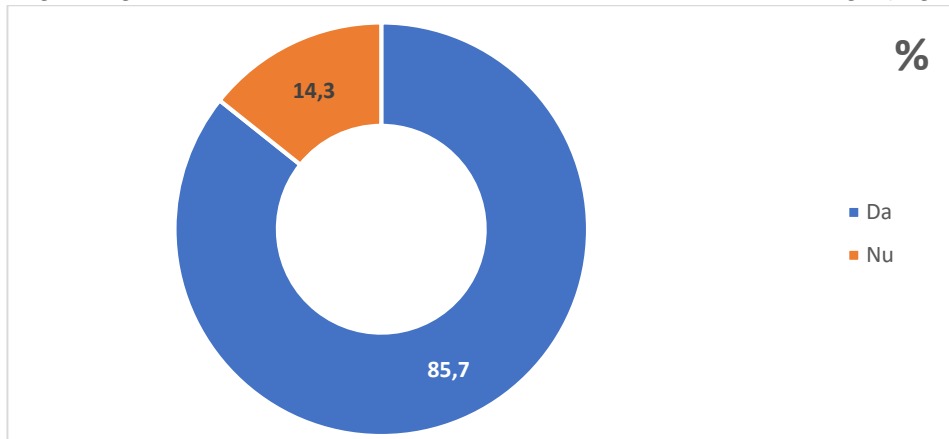


Figure 4.17 Respondents' Opinions on the Intention to Invest Their Own Savings in an Entrepreneurial Activity

(Source: Own processing)

The connection between the perspective on developing an entrepreneurial activity and the time availability that needs to be allocated to the business is essential and directly influences the success and growth of a business. The time an entrepreneur dedicates to their business affects all operational, strategic, and development aspects of it.

In the early stages of a business, entrepreneurs need to allocate a significant amount of time to lay the foundations of the business. This includes developing the product or service, creating a business plan, identifying the target market, and establishing relationships with suppliers and partners. The time invested in formulating strategies, managing operations, cultivating customer relationships, and developing the team has a significant impact on business growth and its adaptability in a constantly changing business environment. Therefore, effective time management is crucial to ensuring the sustainability and long-term success of any entrepreneurial initiative.

The next question in the questionnaire, "Do you agree that starting a business involves less free time for you as an entrepreneur?" showed that a vast majority of respondents who desire direct involvement in entrepreneurial activities are aware of the limitations on their free time (91.8%), compared to 8.2% of respondents who do not believe that being an entrepreneur will limit their free time (Figure 4.18).

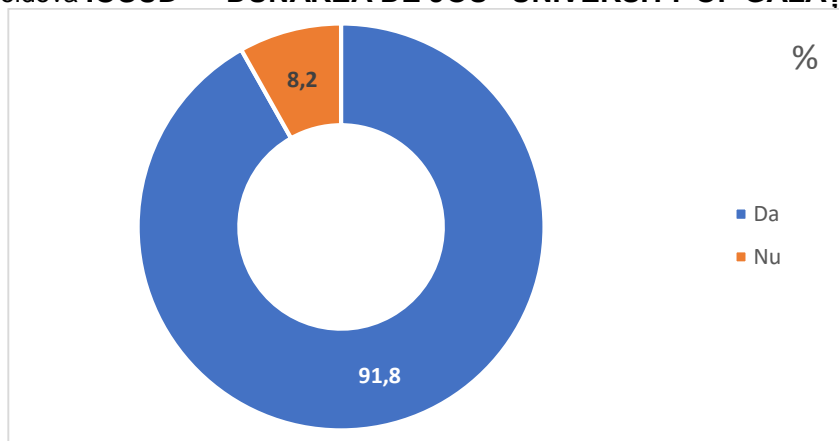


Figure 4.18 Respondents' Opinions on Limiting Free Time as Future Entrepreneurs

(Source: Own processing)

The next two questions in the questionnaire aimed to highlight respondents' opinions on both the positive and negative aspects they identify in the context of entrepreneurship development in the Central Region.

In response to the question, "What are the main benefits you see in starting a business in your area?" more than half of the respondents indicated that the main benefit is increased income (51.7%), followed by two other aspects highlighted almost equally: diversification of existing products and services (21.1%) and job creation (18.4%). The last identified benefit was addressing an existing need for products and services, with only 8.8%. This relatively low percentage shows that respondents may not be aware of the need for products or services or are not interested in promoting products and services that are lacking in their area, which could be a drawback in the proposed business development strategy (Figure 4.19).

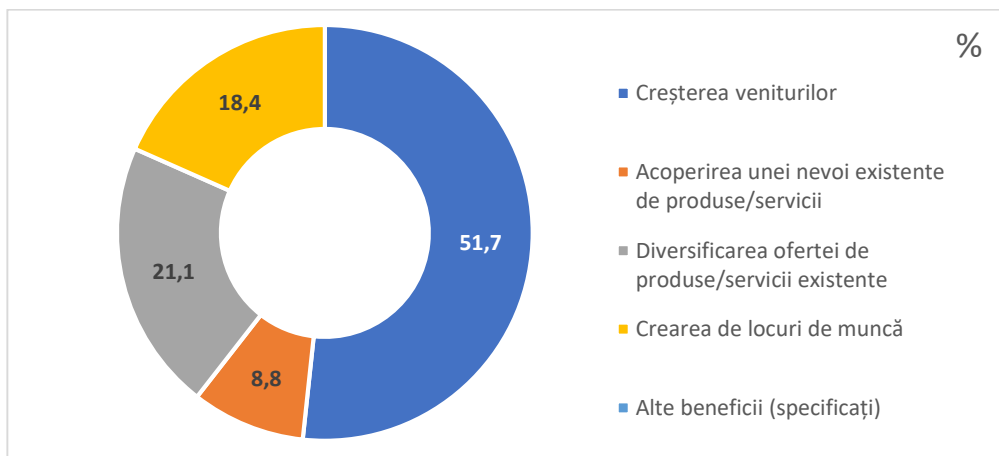


Figure 4.19 Respondents' Opinions on the Main Benefits Entrepreneurial Activities Can Bring

(Source: Own processing)

The success of a business is heavily influenced by its ability to meet existing market needs and diversify to satisfy the ever-changing demands and preferences of consumers. A

Ina Mogildea\_Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova **IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI** successful business balances both aspects, ensuring it effectively responds to current market needs while innovating and expanding to remain relevant and competitive in the long term.

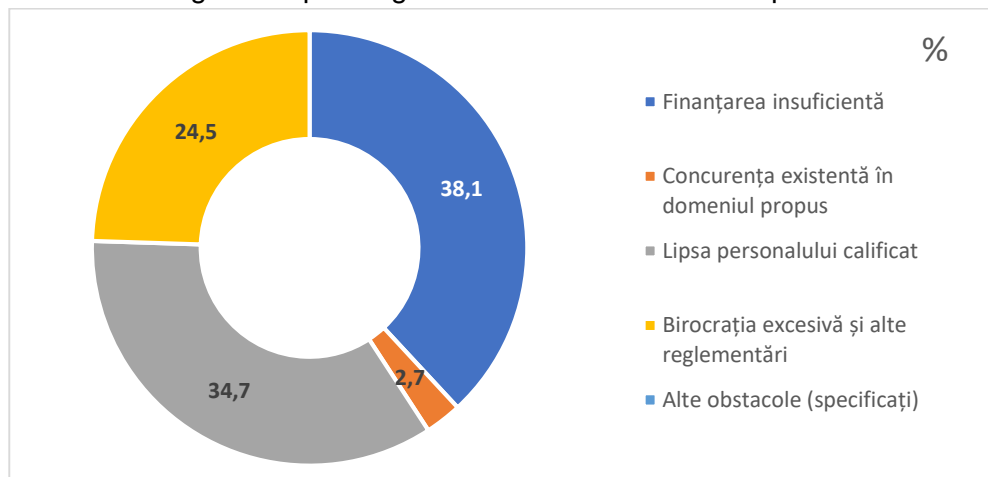


Figure 4.20 Respondents' Opinions on the Main Obstacles to Business Development

(Source: Own processing)

In response to the question, "What are the main obstacles to business development in your area?" the primary obstacle identified by respondents was insufficient funding (38.1%), followed by the lack of qualified personnel (34.7%) and excessive bureaucracy and other regulations imposed in the field (24.5%). Only 2.7% of respondents, represented by just 8 individuals, specified that potential competition in the proposed field is an obstacle to business development (Figure 4.20).

The primary obstacle to business development can vary depending on the specific context of each business and the economic environment in which it operates; however, each of the mentioned factors—lack of funding, lack of qualified personnel, excessive bureaucracy, and existing competition—can play a significant role and can become a major obstacle under certain circumstances. Insufficient funding is often viewed as the main obstacle because it affects all other aspects of business development. Without adequate funding, a business cannot invest in qualified personnel and cannot compete effectively in the market.

The next question, "Would you participate in consultation sessions or other types of public meetings regarding the opening of a new business in the area?" aimed to observe how future entrepreneurs are open to the process of continuous learning, exchanging ideas, and finding solutions to identify existing needs in the area. Thus, of the 294 respondents, 70.1% agreed to participate in consultation sessions for opening a business in the area, 21.8% were undecided about participating, and 8.2% (24 respondents) stated they would not attend such meetings (Figure 4.21).

Participation of future entrepreneurs in courses, consultation sessions, and public meetings related to their future business is closely linked to its success. These activities not only enrich the knowledge and skills of entrepreneurs but also provide access to a valuable network of contacts, constructive feedback, and increased motivation. All of these contribute to enhancing the chances of business success and developing a sustainable and competitive venture.

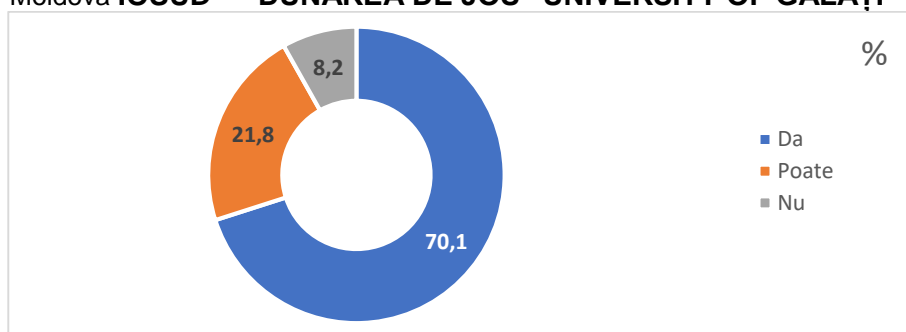


Figure 4.21 Respondents' opinions regarding participation in consultation sessions on future entrepreneurial activities

(Source: Own processing)

Participation in courses and training sessions helps future entrepreneurs acquire essential knowledge about business management, marketing, financing, legislation, and other areas crucial for running a business. This knowledge prepares them to make informed decisions, avoid common mistakes, and tackle challenges with greater confidence and competence. Additionally, public meetings and networking sessions provide opportunities to connect with other entrepreneurs, investors, mentors, and potential business partners.

In the next question, "What aspects do you believe should be prioritized by the new business?" we allowed respondents to choose one or more answers, but no more than three. Almost half of the responses received (44.9%) referred to meeting an existing need for products or services, followed by the quality of the offered products or services (29.1%) and affordable prices (20.5%). Only 5.5% of respondents mentioned that environmental sustainability should be a priority for the business they envision (Figure 4.22).

Priorities for the success of a business can vary depending on market context, the entrepreneur's values, and the specific nature of the business; however, addressing an existing need for products or services is often considered the top priority. This is because, without clear demand or a genuine need, even the best products or services can fail in the market. A business that responds to a real need is more likely to attract customers and generate quick sales. If there is clear demand, the business has a solid foundation on which to grow and develop. Without addressing a need, even high-quality products at affordable prices can go unnoticed or underappreciated by consumers. Subsequently, once the need is identified and met, quality, price, and sustainability become the factors that differentiate the business and strengthen its long-term success.

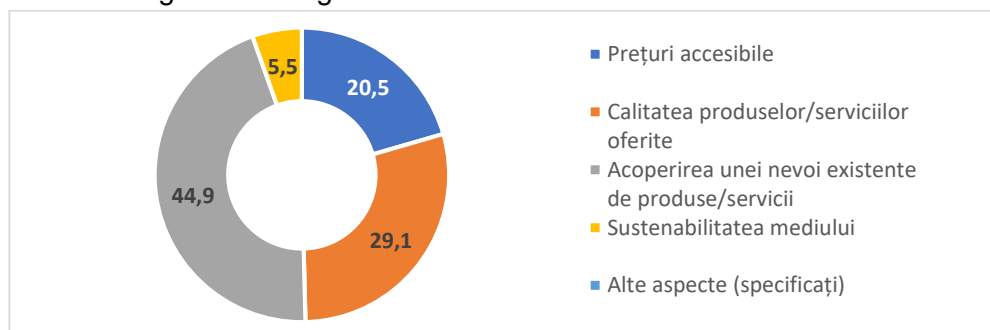


Figure 4.22 Respondents' opinions regarding the priorities of entrepreneurial activities

(Source: Own processing)

The next question, "How important is the entrepreneur's reputation to the success of a new business?" showed that the vast majority of respondents consider the future entrepreneurs' reputation to be very important (58.5%) or important (30.6%). Only 32 respondents (10.9%) stated that the entrepreneur's reputation in the success of a new business is neutral or somewhat unimportant (Figure 4.23).

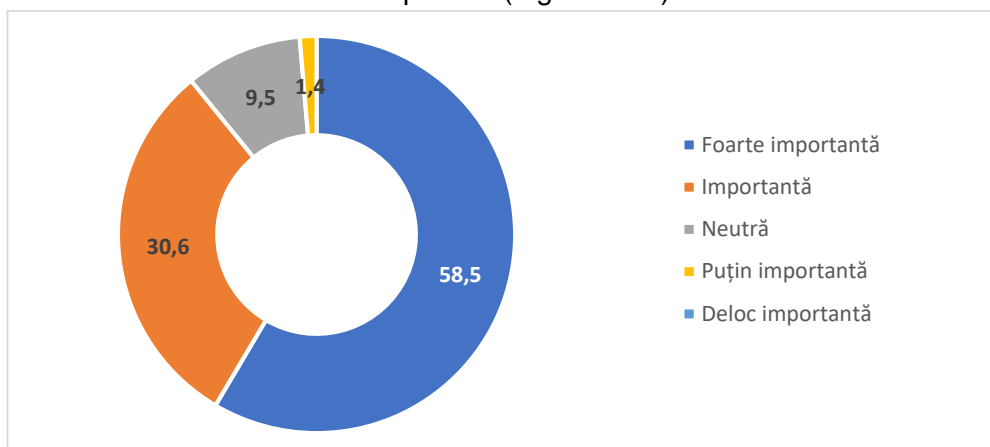


Figure 4.23 Respondents' opinions on the importance of the entrepreneur's reputation in the success of a new business

(Source: Own processing)

The entrepreneur's reputation plays a major role in the success of a business and can significantly influence various aspects of its development and operation. A strong reputation can attract business partners and investors, inspiring trust from customers and employees. In contrast, a questionable reputation can be a major obstacle, regardless of the quality of products or services offered. Investors or funders are much more willing to finance a business led by an entrepreneur with a good reputation, as it reduces perceived risk. Reputation can make the difference between securing funding and being turned down, as investors look for entrepreneurs who have integrity, competence, and a proven track record of success.

Moreover, a positive reputation can attract customers, especially in a market where trust is essential for purchasing decisions. Customers are often influenced by their perception of a business owner, associating the entrepreneur's reputation with the quality and ethics of the offered products or services. An entrepreneur with a solid reputation can also positively influence team morale, leading to greater engagement and productivity. Employees are more motivated to put in extra effort and remain loyal when led by someone they trust and respect.

In the next question, "How do you think the local business environment could be supported for new initiatives?" we offered respondents the opportunity to choose one or more answers, but no more than three. Almost half of the responses received (47.8%) specified that providing tax incentives could support the local business environment, followed by simplifying bureaucracy (28.1%) as a benefit for the business environment, and participation in training programs for entrepreneurs (19.7%). Only 4.4% of the responses (34 respondents) indicated that improving infrastructure could support business development (Figure 4.24).

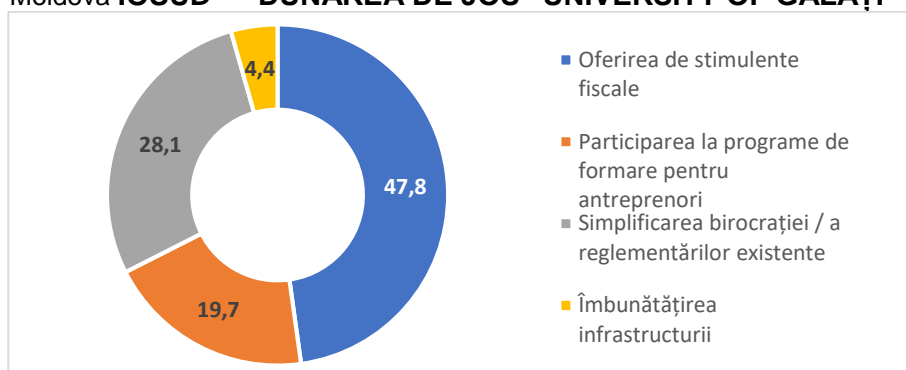


Figure 4.24 Respondents' opinions on support for the business environment

(Source: Own processing)

In the next question, "What measures do you think should be adopted to integrate the new business into the community?" we allowed respondents to choose one or more answers, but no more than three. Over half of the responses received (54.8%) mentioned that to integrate the business into the local community, discounts should be offered for a limited time. Another promotion solution is to hire staff from the local community (21.3%) or even organize a local event (14.5%). Only 9.4% of the responses indicated that potential collaboration with other local businesses could represent an effective measure to promote the new business in the community (Figure 4.25).

Offering discounts can attract attention and encourage community residents to try the products or services offered by the new business. It is an excellent way to generate foot traffic and can contribute to increasing the business's visibility, helping customers remember the company's name and offerings. Additionally, hiring local staff is one of the most effective ways to integrate the business into the community. It demonstrates a commitment to local development and helps create an emotional bond between the business and the community.

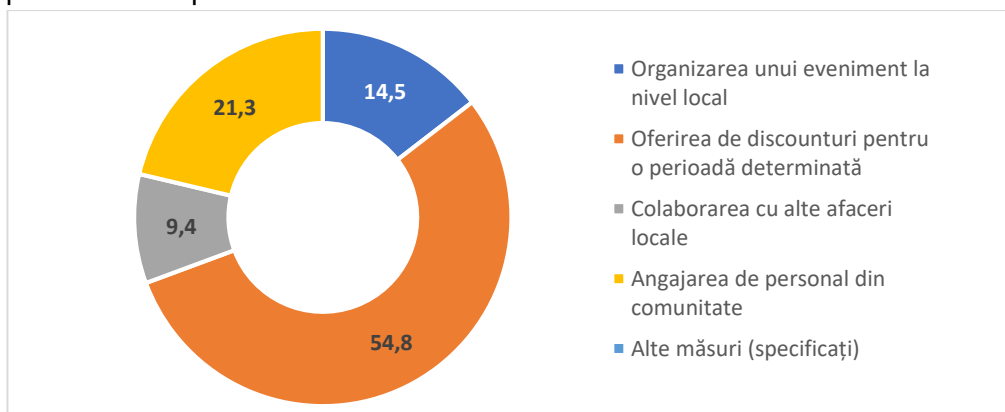


Figure 4.25 Respondents' opinions on measures for local promotion of a new entrepreneurial activity

(Source: Own processing)

A local event, such as an open house day, an official launch, or a volunteer activity, allows the business to interact directly with community members. Such events provide an opportunity to showcase the business in a personal way and build long-term relationships, while collaboration with other local businesses can create beneficial synergies and strengthen community integration.



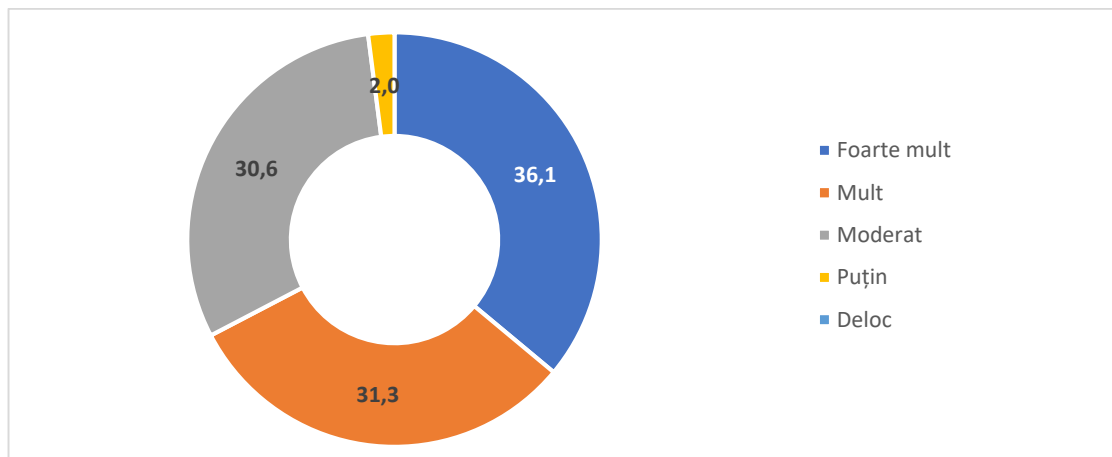


Figure 4.26 Respondents' opinions on how a new business can economically develop the area

(Source: Own processing)

The next question, "How much do you think a new business would contribute to the economic development of the area?" revealed that respondents have varying perceptions: 36.1% believe that a new business can contribute significantly to the economic development of the area, 31.3% think a new business can contribute a lot, and 30.6% believe it can contribute moderately. Only 2.0% (6 respondents) feel that a new business can contribute little to the economic development of the area (Figure 4.26).

In response to the question, "How do you view the current infrastructure in supporting a new business in your area?" over half of the respondents (61.2%) consider the local infrastructure to be at an acceptable level, 23.8% consider it to be good, and 8.2% have higher expectations regarding local infrastructure and stated that it is weak. Only 20 respondents (6.8%) said that the current infrastructure is very good (Figure 4.27).

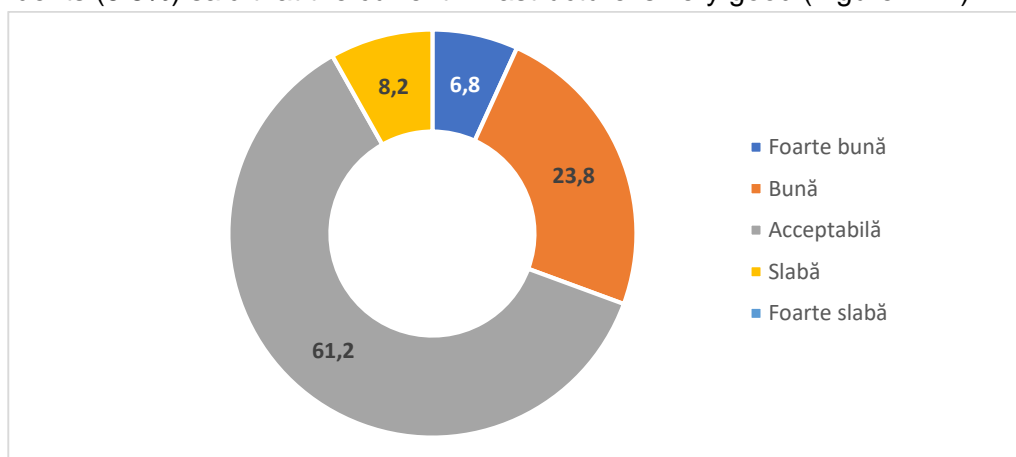


Figure 4.27 Respondents' opinions on the existing infrastructure

(Source: Own processing)

Well-developed local infrastructure can support the growth of a new business by facilitating access to markets and resources, as well as reducing operational costs and logistical barriers. Well-developed infrastructure not only lowers operational risks and costs

Ina Mogildea\_Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova **IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI** but also supports the long-term growth of the business, making it more attractive to customers, employees, and investors.

The last question of the survey, "How important is sustainability for you in a new business?" showed the level of engagement of future entrepreneurs in environmental protection. Thus, 59.9% of respondents consider the sustainability of a business to be very important, 34.7% view this aspect of environmental protection as important, and only 16 respondents (5.5%) mentioned that sustainability in a new business is neutral or even somewhat unimportant (Figure 4.28).

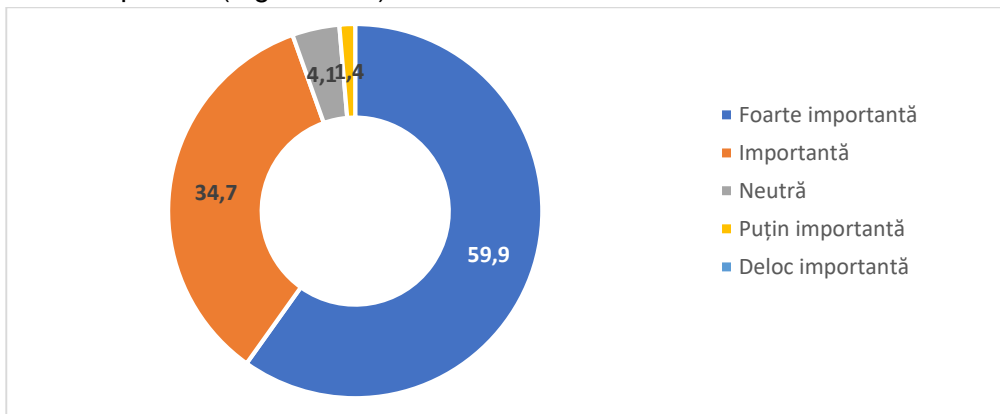


Figure 4.28 Respondents' opinions on the importance of sustainability in a new business

(Source: Own processing)

Sustainability is becoming increasingly important for long-term success, influencing not only the reputation and social responsibility of the business but also its economic and operational aspects. A sustainable business is capable of managing its resources efficiently, minimizing negative environmental impacts, and contributing positively to society, which can bring numerous competitive advantages.

Implementing eco-friendly practices, such as optimizing energy consumption, reducing waste, and using recycled materials, can significantly help decrease operational expenses. Given the rising prices and restrictions on resources, efficient management of these becomes crucial for maintaining the profitability of a business.

Furthermore, consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the ecological impact of the products and services they purchase. Thus, a business that adopts sustainability practices is more likely to attract this category of consumers, who are willing to pay a premium for environmentally friendly options.

Businesses that commit to sustainable practices provide significant benefits to the community by creating quality jobs, supporting social initiatives, and reducing negative environmental impacts. This commitment can strengthen relationships with the local community, generating support and loyalty from it.

## Conclusions

This paper focuses on the potentially important role of non-agricultural rural activities in the process of sustainable development. The research and creation of this thesis is a structuring of a volume of literature from several authors, as well as a personal perspective on non-agricultural rural entrepreneurship and its impact on sustainable development in the Republic of Moldova. It demonstrates that the implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies not only reduces negative environmental impact but also contributes

Ina Mogildea\_Research on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Conducting Non-Agricultural Activities in the Republic of Moldova **IOSUD – "DUNĂREA DE JOS" UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI** to improving the quality of life for local communities, as the traditional agricultural base is increasingly unable to provide the necessary jobs and incomes for a growing population.

The National Development Strategy Moldova 2030 is the foundational document that defines the strategic directions for the country's development until 2030, including objectives for both rural and urban sustainable development. Sustainable development in rural areas of Moldova is essential for ensuring a better quality of life and reducing disparities between urban and rural areas. This process involves a series of strategies and initiatives aimed at improving the economy, environment, and living conditions in the villages and communes of the country.

Currently, rural sustainable development is relevant to various countries, both developed and developing. Improving existing approaches to assessing and managing rural settlement systems is particularly relevant for the Republic of Moldova, country rich in agricultural resources. Bridging the gaps between urban and rural areas has become a primary objective of rural development. As highlighted in the World Social Report 2021, disparities in living standards appear to be a cause of the rural-urban gap. However, innovative practices have stimulated rapid technological development (especially digitization), opening opportunities for rural communities to enhance the agriculture-based and non-agriculture-based rural economy. Additionally, infrastructure and public services are two essential aspects of rural community development.

A key ally in rural development is non-agricultural rural entrepreneurship, which plays a crucial role in revitalizing rural economies, creating jobs, and improving the quality of life in communities. By overcoming challenges and implementing appropriate strategies, these initiatives can significantly contribute to sustainable development and the prosperity of rural areas. Experts agree that non-agricultural enterprises are essential for rural development, having a significant impact on local economies. These businesses not only diversify the economic base of rural areas but also contribute to job creation and improving the standard of living in these regions. They play an important role in enhancing economic stability, reducing dependence on agriculture alone, and supporting the overall growth of rural communities. By fostering a vibrant and sustainable economy, these enterprises not only improve residents' lives but also attract tourists and investors.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that government policies prioritize and promote educational initiatives for rural entrepreneurship development. Furthermore, collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential to achieve sustainable development goals. In this context, the challenge of rural development relies on both the agro-food sector and the food-tourism domain, representing the need to connect participating actors who can focus on the skills and traditions of the territories they utilize to create a sense of identity.

Closely linked to education and training is the level of technology used in businesses. Economic and business development policies assume that to compete at the national and international levels today, the most modern production and communication technologies are necessary. While the level of technology permitted in the use of high-tech production and operating methods is generally absent in Moldova, digital technologies could provide tools capable of meeting the increasing need for interaction among all stakeholders involved in rural development.

Rural development is positioned as a priority within the National Development Strategy Moldova 2030. The "EUROPEAN VILLAGE" initiative supports this direction through the national development plan. The project competition is part of the Local Development Program intended for local public authorities at Level I, which are invited to propose projects that contribute to:

Promoting sustainable development in localities;

Improving citizens' access to high-quality public services;

Expanding the available social infrastructure for the population;

Maximizing opportunities to attract external investments within local authorities.

In the context of limited financial resources, often considered a barrier to rural development, the government of the Republic of Moldova has implemented a support policy for strengthening rural development. This includes allocating funds from the National Fund for Regional and Local Development (FNDRL), the main financial instrument for regional and local development programs. Through this fund, projects such as water and sewage infrastructure, thermal insulation of buildings, enhancing tourist attractiveness, and developing economic infrastructure will be supported. For 2024, a budget of approximately 600 million lei has been set for these initiatives.

In accordance with this policy, the objectives of the village fund program include overcoming poverty and inequality, encouraging the development of rural infrastructure, and increasing community incomes in rural and village areas by stimulating local economic institutions. Moreover, ideas and knowledge from locals, as well as creative methods led by rural economic agents, including the role of social innovation, will also contribute to rural development.

Village funds, financed by the Moldovan government, aim to stimulate community development by funding projects such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare in rural villages. These funds are collectively managed by local authorities and are not reimbursed by the community. On the other hand, programs led by NGOs provide small grants to individual entrepreneurs in low-income areas, primarily for income-generating activities.

Rural development initiatives often rely on strengthening and diversifying the agro-food sector as a means of stimulating economic growth, generating job opportunities, and improving livelihoods in rural areas. In fact, the agri-food chain, encompassing agricultural production, processing, distribution, and marketing, is an integral part of a territory's economy and plays a vital role in rural economies.

Rural development requires collaboration among governments, local authorities, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Integrated approaches that consider the unique characteristics and needs of each rural area are essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive development outcomes.

In this regard, key approaches to rural development are linked to rural entrepreneurship and employment. This involves encouraging entrepreneurship and creating job opportunities in rural areas, which are vital for sustainable development. Empowering rural communities through capacity building is crucial for successful rural development. Engaging local communities in decision-making processes and project implementation stimulates a sense of ownership and ensures that initiatives align with their specific needs and priorities.

To achieve this, the adoption and integration of information and communication technology in rural areas, which can bridge gaps, are necessary for promoting inclusive development. Access to internet connectivity, digital literacy programs, and e-governance initiatives can facilitate knowledge exchange, market access, and the provision of essential services in remote rural regions.

In conclusion, the concept of the EUROPEAN VILLAGE in Moldova reflects efforts to bring Moldovan rural communities up to European development standards, improving infrastructure, public services, and the local economy while promoting sustainability and community participation. This process is essential for ensuring a better quality of life for

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residents of villages and for integrating them into the broader context of regional development.

Another conclusion confirms that sustainable development in Moldova is a complex process requiring coordinated efforts at both the national and local levels. By implementing appropriate strategies, promoting a green economy, and actively involving communities, Moldova can make significant progress toward a more sustainable and prosperous future.

In rural areas, the concentration of employment in agriculture has left few areas and sectors of the rural economy untouched. Thus, the rural area in the Republic of Moldova remains largely undiscovered, but it is not too late for those currently exploring it; it serves as a source of inspiration for new rural businesses where competition is fair and minimal. Rural business is typically small-scale, with lower and more consistent expenses.

The aim of this thesis is to unlock the potential of systemic innovation in rural development through research perspectives and practical methods. The results have ignited my ambition and knowledge, which will serve as the foundation for future financial education projects, creating a new approach to encouraging young or new entrepreneurs to establish businesses in rural regions.

The transformation of traditional rural industries and the impact of these changes on rural communities are sources of concern for many stakeholders invested in the well-being of rural areas. Thus, salvation comes through financial education, the establishment of information centers, and the support of rural entrepreneurs. The conclusions from this chapter emphasize the necessity for local administration, represented by the Mayor's Office and the Local Council, to reconfigure their institutional development strategy to provide adequate logistical support for the proposed action plan.

Additionally, the local community, including citizens and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), plays an essential role in local development in both rural and urban areas through active participation and engagement. The business environment, consisting of companies and financial institutions, offers both financial and logistical support, contributing information and modern technologies.

The analysis presented in the first chapter highlights that the Republic of Moldova faces significant challenges in ensuring the social well-being of its population, an essential aspect for sustainable development. In this context, implementing concrete measures to change the economic paradigm and better align it with the needs and well-being of people is crucial.

Another conclusion is that the Republic of Moldova is in certain historical, political, and international circumstances that allow it to achieve significant results in the context of reforming public activity and obtaining sustainable development. Notably, the financial support from foreign development partners, technical assistance from international experts, and governance that is open to reforms and ensuring adherence to European principles of local government organization are noteworthy.

For this analysis, we clarify that we have processed statistical data based on the concept of permanent residency. Currently, permanent residency should not be equated with usual residency. Many people remain elsewhere because they travel, study, work, or simply have not reported a new residence. Therefore, the statistical situation may not fully reflect reality. A second remark pertains to the varying population numbers in individual localities. Depopulated localities generally have significantly fewer residents than those in the central region. Consequently, more people live in progressive rural areas, while depopulated rural areas may occupy relatively larger territories.

The level of development of the quality of life of the population and the economy of any state can be judged by the level of development of rural areas. Rural territories are

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territorial entities where a community is formed, characterized by a specific rural lifestyle. The primary objective of rural development is to create conditions that ensure the well-being of the population residing there, preserve cultural values, and promote sustainable development.

In this context, we have outlined the state of sustainable rural development in the Republic of Moldova, which remains a priority for the country as part of its integration into European structures and processes. To support this statement, the legal framework that favors rural entrepreneurship and the modernization of the agricultural sector is in continuous evolution. Consequently, improving quality of life indicators in rural areas will remain a focus for the authorities in Moldova, which includes constant engagement in dialogues and partnerships with civil society.

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1. Ludmila MOGILDEA, **Ina MOGILDEA**, Constanta Laura AUGUSTIN (ZUGRAVU), Gheorghe Adrian ZUGRAVU, Agri-food Competition Trends in EU and the USA, Review” to the 38<sup>th</sup> IBIMA International Conference, Seville, Spain has been accepted for publication and presentation at the conference. The paper will be included in the conference proceedings (ISBN: 978-0-9998551-7-1) and (ISSN: 2767-9640).
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