

PROPOSALS REGARDING THE STATUS OF SEVERAL SETTLEMENTS OF MUREȘ COUNTY

Raularian Rusu, Ioan Fodorean

"Babes-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, rrusu@geografie.ubbcluj.ro

Abstract. In Mureș County, there was a high number of changes concerning the settlement network since the enforcement of Law 351/2001. Four communes became towns, five other communes were created and five villages were re-established. Although the Law 100/2007 practically ended the creation of new towns, the setting up of new communes is still possible and a list of 18 potentially new communes is presented. More changes are possible at the level of villages. Other five villages may be re-established, while 46 villages with less than 50 inhabitants are proposed to be merged with the nearest viable village. Five villages belonging to cities are proposed to be merged with the respective cities. Eight villages need urgent measures for their revitalization, as well as the communes listed for this purpose in the Law 351/2001. All these proposals are included in the updated Plan for the Arrangement of Mureș County Territory (PATJ Mureș), sanctioned by Mureș County Council in 2009.

Keywords: *settlement network, Mureș County, town, commune, village, merger.*

General issues

The latest years, especially since 2003, were characterized by a certain dynamics regarding the promotion of settlements to a better status than the one they had before. For instance, in Mureș County, four communes became towns (Sărmașu, Ungheni, Miercurea Nirajului, Sângeorgiu de Pădure) and five new communes were founded (Chibed, Sărățeni, Mădăraș, Corunca, Bereni), due to the separation of villages (usually just one village) from the administrative units of Ghindari, Sovata, Band, Livezeni and Măgherani. At the same time, the villages of Sînvășii (Gălești commune), Seuca (Gănești commune), Cîba, Foi and Nicoleşti (the latter three within the commune of Crăciunești) were reestablished.

These praiseworthy actions, performed due to the efforts of local communities, represent an important step for the normalization of the situation of administrative units at the level of Mureș County, within the context of Law 351/2001.

However, Law 100/2007, which modifies and completes Law 351/2001, imposes higher demographic thresholds for the setting up of new towns (10,000 inhabitants) and new cities (40,000 inhabitants), aiming at stopping this phenomenon at national level. In Mureș County, three settlements might be affected by this law: Gurghiu, Band and Deda. They were initially proposed to become towns, but they no longer meet the demographic criterion, considered to be the most important one, under the conditions of the new law.

Proposed new communes

There is still the opportunity to set up new communes because the demographic threshold remains the same as the one established by Law 351/2001: 1500 inhabitants.

This criterion should be met by both the newly-formed commune and the commune from which it separates. Without stressing in an unjustified manner the need for the existence of a higher number of administrative units, we sketch certain potentially new communes, based on the elementary criteria (demographic and spatial-geographical ones). The proper setting up of these new communes would not be possible, however, without the accomplishment of the other criteria mentioned in the law, especially the will of decision makers and that of the local community, expressed by referendum, according to the law. It must be mentioned that the criterion according to which the villages should be located closer to the new commune seat than they were to the former commune seat was respected for each proposed new commune (table 1), so that the setting up of these communes respects the general interest of the local community.

The communes proposed to be separated from towns (Cipău, Gheja, Șardu Nirajului and Balda) represent a special situation and should gain priority. The main arguments are the decrease in weight of the rural population within the urban administrative units (mainly Miercurea Nirajului and Sărmașu) and a better administration of the population of these settlements, which are under-represented at the town level (especially in the case of Luduș and Iernut towns).

Table 1. Potentially new communes in Mureș County

No.	Proposed commune	Component villages	Population (2002)	Administrative unit it separates from	Remaining component settlements	Population (2002)
1	Cipău	Cipău, Oarba de Mureș, Sfântu Gheorghe	1670	Iernut	Iernut, Deag, Lechința, Porumbac, Racameț, Sălcud	7853
2	Gheja	Gheja	1585	Luduș	Luduș, Avrămești, Cioarga, Ciurgău, Fundătura, Roșiori	15912
3	Șardu Nirajului	Șardu Nirajului, Beu, Lăureni, Moșuni, Tâmpa, Veța	1680	Miercurea Nirajului	Miercurea Nirajului, Dumitrești	4144
4	Balda	Balda, Vișinelu	1819	Sărmașu	Sărmașu, Larga, Moruț, Sărmășel, Sărmășel-Gară, Titiana	5674
5	Vălenii	Vălenii, Corbești, Găiești, Grușor, Suveica	1918	Acățari	Acățari, Murgești, Roteni, Stejeriș	2863
6	Cornești	Cornești, Crăiești, Herepea	2579	Adămuș	Adămuș, Chinciuș, Dâmbău	3387
7	Boiu	Boiu, Bărlibășoia, Jacu, Țopa	1898	Albești	Albești, Șapartoc, Valea Albeștiului, Valea Dăii, Valea Șapartocului	3568
8	Chendu	Chendu, Dumitrești	2056	Bălăușeri	Bălăușeri,	3008

					Agrișteu, Filitelnic, Senereuș	
9	Dedrad	Dedrad, Gorenii	2216	Batoș	Batoș, Uila	1957
10	Voiniceni	Voiniceni, Porumbeni	1502	Ceuașu de Câmpie	Ceuașu de Câmpie, Bozed, Câmpenița, Culpiu, Herghelia, Săbed	3917
11	Seleuș	Seleuș	1781	Daneș	Daneș, Criș, Stejărenii	3054
12	Dumbrăvioara	Dumbrăvioara, Sângeru de Pădure	2047	Ernei	Ernei, Călușeri, Icland, Săcăreni	3172
13	Periș	Periș, Iara de Mureș, Ilioara, Mura Mare, Mura Mică, Petrilaca, Teleac	3404	Gornești	Gornești, Pădureni	2481
14	Glăjărie	Glăjărie, Fundoaia, Larga	2063	Gurghiu	Gurghiu, Adrian, Cașva, Comori, Orșova, Orșova- Pădure, Păuloaia	4321
15	Toaca	Toaca, Bicașu, Uricea	1870	Hodac	Hodac, Arșița, Dubistea de Pădure, Mirigioaia	3111
16	Deaj	Deaj, Hărănglab	2380	Mica	Mica, Abuș, Căpâlna de Sus, Ceuaș, Șomoștelnic	2321
17	Chirileu	Chirileu, Valea Izvoarelor	1921	Sânpaul	Sânpaul, Dileu Nou, Sânmărghita	2095
18	Curteni	Curteni, Chinari	1567	Sântana de Mureș	Sântana de Mureș, Bărdești	2699

We consider that the setting up of 18 new communes in Mureș County is difficult to perform and the total number of administrative units at the county level would be too high, but the above table represents rather a guide for a possible reformation of the administrative organisation within the county.

Proposals concerning villages

There were also several reforms with regard to villages since 2004. Five villages (Sînvășii, Seuca, Ciba, Foi and Nicoleşti) were re-established, after having been terminated during the communist period. The last census recording their population had been in 1966. Afterwards, they were merged with neighbouring villages.

In order to anticipate such situations, we searched the settlements which had existed uninterruptedly until 1966, and then were merged with other settlements located nearby (table 2). The settlements which received the village status in 1954, to be merged after 1966, are not included as they had a very short existence.

Table 2. Rural settlements terminated by merging during the communist period

No.	Village	Population (1966)	Settlement to which it was merged	Administrative unit
1	Boziaş	2843	Târnăveni	Târnăveni
2	Sântana Nirajului	475	Miercurea Nirajului	Miercurea Nirajului
3	Sântandrei	969	Miercurea Nirajului	Miercurea Nirajului
4	Gogan Varolea	652	Gogan	Bahnea
5	Domald	701	Viişoara	Viişoara

We consider that, in these cases, the solution is to merge these villages with the neighbouring settlements, within the same administrative unit. In other words, the situation should be the same as before 1954, when these villages had an unofficial status, that of hamlet, belonging to a larger village nearby, and functioning in a similar manner to a remote district of that village. Although this is not an absolute criterion, we took into consideration the villages with less than 50 inhabitants. Only seven settlements with less than 50 inhabitants (Bezidu Nou, Vaidacuta, Jacu, Şapartoc, Sâniacob, Herepea and Chinciuş) had an existence earlier than the 20th century. Only in their case there might be some difficulties as a result of merging, and for this reason they are approached separately, together with the village of Lăpuşna.

Table 3. Rural settlements proposed to be merged

No	Village proposed to be merged	Population (1992)	Population (2002)	Settlement proposed to be merged with	Administrative unit
1	Bârlibăşoaia	0	0	Boiu	Albeşti
2	Maldaoci	0	0	Cecălaca	Aţintiş
3	După Deal	0	0	Dătăşeni	Cuci
4	Hodaia	0	0	Fărăgău	Fărăgău
5	Şandru	2	0	Papiu Ilarian	Papiu Ilarian
6	Fântâna Babii	2	0	Pogăceaua	Pogăceaua
7	Vălişoara	3	2	Pripoare	Sânger
8	Linţ	4	2	Grindenii	Cheţani
9	Obârşie	5	3	Sânmartinu de Câmpie	Râciu
10	Angofa	4	4	Sighişoara	Sighişoara
11	Valea Dăii	7	4	Albeşti	Albeşti
12	Fânaţe	9	5	Iclandu Mare	Iclânzul
13	Malăeşti	13	5	Valea Largă	Valea Largă
14	Dalu	8	6	Zăpodea	Sânger
15	Loţu	15	6	Bezid	Sângeorgiu de Pădure
16	Valea Ungurului	10	9	Cozma	Cozma
17	Cureţe	16	12	Sânmartinu de Câmpie	Râciu
18	Chisăliţă	25	12	Căpuşu de Câmpie	Iclânzul
19	Cirhagău	15	13	Miheşu de Câmpie	Miheşu de Câmpie
20	Fânaţe	22	13	Fărăgău	Fărăgău
21	Nima Milăşelului	14	15	Milăşel	Crăieşti

22	Coasta Grindului	25	15	Grindeni	Chețani
23	După Deal	13	16	Iclandu Mare	Iclânzul
24	Scurta	20	17	Ciulea	Pogăceaua
25	Valea Iclandului	19	19	Iclandu Mare	Iclânzul
26	Giurgiș	22	19	Grindeni	Chețani
27	Cotorinău	25	19	Sânmartinu de Câmpie	Râciu
28	Tofalău	21	20	Cotuș	Sângeorgiu de Mureș
29	Mogoia	31	20	Răzoare	Miheșu de Câmpie
30	Valea Seacă	24	21	Sânmartinu de Câmpie	Râciu
31	Ghidașteu	28	22	Iclandu Mare	Iclânzul
32	Fânațele Socolului	40	24	Socol de Câmpie	Cozma
33	Tăblășeni	25	26	Iclânzul	Iclânzul
34	Racameț	33	26	Lechința	Iernut
35	Valea Sasului	19	31	Cozma	Cozma
36	Ștefăneaca	30	31	Zau de Câmpie	Zau de Câmpie
37	Porumbac	53	32	Lechința	Iernut
38	Mirigioaia	45	34	Hodac	Hodac
39	Bologaia	43	37	Văleni	Pogăceaua
40	Titiana	45	39	Sârmașu	Sârmașu
41	Valea Ulieșului	38	44	Sânmartinu de Câmpie	Râciu
42	Groapa Rădăii	58	46	Șăulița	Miheșu de Câmpie
43	Ștefanca	55	47	Răzoare	Miheșu de Câmpie
44	Ceie	57	47	Trei Sate	Ghindari
45	Dobra	69	48	Papiu Ilarian	Papiu Ilarian
46	Sicele	55	49	Pogăceaua	Pogăceaua

It is obvious that action should have precedence on these settlements (tables 3 and 4). The main direction is the revitalization of these settlements, wherever possible, by a priority-based policy of investments meant to determine the close setting of living standards, good enough for the population to come back and resettle (repaired roads, a minimal technical infrastructure, the construction or repair of buildings of public interest – general store, nursery school, school, pub, etc). Wherever this is no longer possible, or the investments are inefficient, without predictable results in an average time, the merger of these settlements with the nearest viable settlements should be officialized. They should both belong to the same administrative unit, so that the administrative limits of communes or towns remain the same. Such a measure should not determine the physical disappearance of these settlements, which may have a similar status to that they had before 1954, as hamlets or districts of the larger neighbouring villages.

In all, there are 46 rural settlements proposed to be merged with the settlements they had belonged to before 1954, if their revitalization fails. There are also very cases where the merger is not proposed to be made with the village from which the hamlet was initially separated: Vălișoara (proposed to be merged with Pripoare, instead of Cipăieni), Dalu (Zăpodea, instead of Sânger), Scurta (Ciulea, instead of Văleni) and Groapa Rădăii (Șăulița, instead of Răzoare). The explanation is that there is another viable village, also

separated from the same village, between the settlement proposed to be merged and the one it was once separated from. Most of these settlements are located in the Transylvanian Plain.

In all situations, one notices a continuous decrease of the population of these villages or, in the best case, stagnation, in the context of a very low number of inhabitants. Only two settlements registered a small increase between the two censuses (1992 and 2002): Valea Ulieșului and Valea Sasului, and there were a few others whose population increased by 3 inhabitants at most. This fact cannot be due to a consistent improvement of the living standards in these settlements.

Apart from the 46 villages for which the merger seems to be the solution most at hand, there are also eight settlements with less than 50 inhabitants, which have a long existence or (in the peculiar case of Lăpușna village) the trump needed for revitalization.

Table 4. Rural settlements that need urgent measures for their revitalization

No.	Village	Population (1992)	Population (2002)	Administrative unit
1	Lăpușna	71	1	Ibănești
2	Jacu	22	15	Albești
3	Chinciuș	40	17	Adămuș
4	Vaidacuta	55	30	Suplac
5	Herepea	72	34	Adămuș
6	Sâniacob	36	38	Ațintiș
7	Bezidu Nou	126	39	Sângeorgiu de Pădure
8	Șapartoc	55	43	Albești

Measures of revitalization should be applied with priority in the case of these villages, because their merger would raise a number of juridical issues, to which one may add the psychological impact on the population of these villages and those who were born there. Unlike the hamlets that became villages in 1954, these settlements have a millenary existence and a clearly defined historical identity. Their inhabitants identify with a series of values that belong to the village and have roots in its history. Also, these villages comprise a number of older buildings, even if some of them are no longer functional: church, school, kindergarten, pub, store, culture house etc. Actions should concentrate with priority on ensuring access to the villages, to create or maintain a minimal technical infrastructure, to repair, restore or refurnish the public buildings, to provide fiscal facilities to the potential investors, so that the young population is tempted to come back to these villages.

A number of administrative measures may also be applied. For instance, it is unacceptable that Jacu village belongs to Albești commune, given the fact that the commune seat is more than 10 kilometers away, using dirt roads and paths in the forests. Even if Boiu commune is established (as proposed in table 2), the distance is too high and access is still difficult. This village is much closer to Vețca commune and therefore, in this case, we propose to change the limits of the two communes and to transfer Jacu from Albești commune to Vețca commune.

Also within the commune of Albești, it is proposed to merge the villages of Șapartoc and Valea Șapartocului. The name of the new village would be Șapartoc. The solution is the opposite of the one described in table 3: the older village (Șapartoc) is the

existing facilities (summer camp, trout farm), would valorize the beautiful location of this settlement, which may become at least a local interest resort.

Apart from the need to merge certain villages, as a result of their very small population, there is also a category of rural settlements, which are part of urban administrative units, and are about to be “absorbed” by the neighbouring city, as a consequence of the continuous growth of the built-up area of the city. These settlements are practically comprised within the city and function as city districts, and they preserve a rural nature only from the point of view of the landscape. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of suburbanization affects directly these settlements too, and their aspect is less and less rural. Even the population grew significantly in some of these settlements, so one can hardly speak of rurality in these cases.

All these factors determine the need to merge *de jure*, not only *de facto*, these settlements with their neighbouring cities (table 5), as they belong to them anyway from the point of view of the administrative organization.

Table 5. Component settlements of the cities, proposed to be merged

Nr.	Settlement proposed to be merged	Population (1992)	Population (2002)	City proposed to be merged with
1	Mureşeni	970	9402	Târgu Mureş
2	Remetea	2259	12027	Târgu Mureş
3	Apalina	2863	2826	Reghin
4	Iernuţeni	1373	4105	Reghin
5	Viilor	124	121	Sighişoara

As one can see in table 5, the only settlement which does not have a large population for a rural settlement is the village of Viilor. Yet, we included it in the same category because it functions as a district of Sighişoara City, the same as the four settlements that are part of Târgu Mureş and Reghin cities, which (except for one) registered a significant increase between 1992 and 2002.

An even more ticklish situation, specific for the large city of Târgu Mureş, is the tendency to comprise within the city not only the component settlements, but also a number of neighbouring communes. This is mainly the case of the communes of Cristeşti (Cristeşti and Văluţeni villages), Sâncraiu de Mureş (Sâncraiu de Mureş and Nazna villages), Sângeorgiu de Mureş (only Sângeorgiu de Mureş village) and Sântana de Mureş (only Sântana de Mureş village). In the context of the growing pressure on land and the need to expand continuously the built-up area, it is not difficult to imagine that these settlements will also become practically component parts of Târgu Mureş City. The agreement of the local communities is however necessary for these communes to lose their present administrative status and to become simple district of the county seat. We believe that the creation of Târgu Mureş Metropolitan Area represents a first step for a fruitful cooperation between all the parts involved, in order to concentrate the economic and human resources in this area of capital importance for the entire county.

Communes which need measures of support and revitalization

Not just the villages need urgent measures for revitalization, but also a number of communes, especially those mentioned specifically in the appendix IV of Law 351/2001. The law indicates the communes where a high decrease of population took place between 1966 and 1998, and therefore need actions meant for support and revitalization. The communes experiencing a high decrease of population are divided into two categories: those with a population decrease between 30% and 50%, and those whose population decreased by more than 50% in the above-mentioned period. Table 6 only includes the communes which registered a population decrease by more than 50% between 1966 and 1998, according to the law.

Table 6. Communes which need urgent measures of support and revitalization, with a population decrease by more than 50% in the latest decades

No.	Commune	Population (1966)	Population (1992)	Population (2002)
1	Băla	2360	1095	905
2	Bichiș	2186	1081	1039
3	Cozma	1936	759	644
4	Iclânzul	4403	2181	2292
5	Papiu Ilarian	2036	1024	1013
6	Râciu	6442	3848	3752
7	Vețca	1830	972	862
8	Viișoara	3095	1636	1663

One simple look at table 6 would lead to the conclusion that not all these communes are in the same situation. Priority should be given to the communes of Cozma, Vețca, Băla, Papiu Ilarian and Bichiș, whose population decreased dramatically, even below the 1500 threshold, the minimal number of inhabitants for the setting up of a new commune. The other three communes, Râciu, Iclânzul and Viișoara, still have a population above the above-mentioned threshold and even recorded a small increase of their number of inhabitants (Iclânzul and Viișoara) between the last two censuses. Moreover, although we do not know the population values for 1998, the values recorded at the 2002 census do not represent less than 50% as compared to the 1966 values. From the point of view of the location of these communes, it comes out that more than a half (five out of eight) lie in the Transylvanian Plain, the region where most problems are encountered regarding the settlement network, while the other three communes are situated in Târnave Plateau.

The other group, consisting of 27 communes (table 7), with a population decrease between 30% and 50%, is even more heterogeneous. It includes most of the communes of the Transylvanian Plain and Târnave Plateau, located far enough from an important urban centre, which were most affected by the rural migration to the cities that characterized the communist period, especially after the collectivization and during the forced industrialization period.

However, it is noticeable that a number of communes registered a small increase after 1992 (Apold, Bogata, Grebenișu de Câmpie, Miheșu de Câmpie, Ogra, Pogăceaua, Șăulia, etc), in the context of the remigration from the urban areas or immigration from other rural settlements. For these communes, there is no need to worry and special measures of support are not really necessary. Other communes, although they lost a part of

their population, acquired a certain level of stability and balance, which is obvious when population numbers in 1992 and 2002 are compared. The most critical situation, similar to the communes mentioned in table 6, is recorded in the case of those administrative units whose number of inhabitants decreased below the 1500 threshold or are very close to it, and whose population continues to decline. These communes are: Crăiești, Tăureni, Zagăr, Hodoșa, Coroisânmartin, Neaua, Șincai, Fărăgău, Cucerdea and Chiheru de Jos.

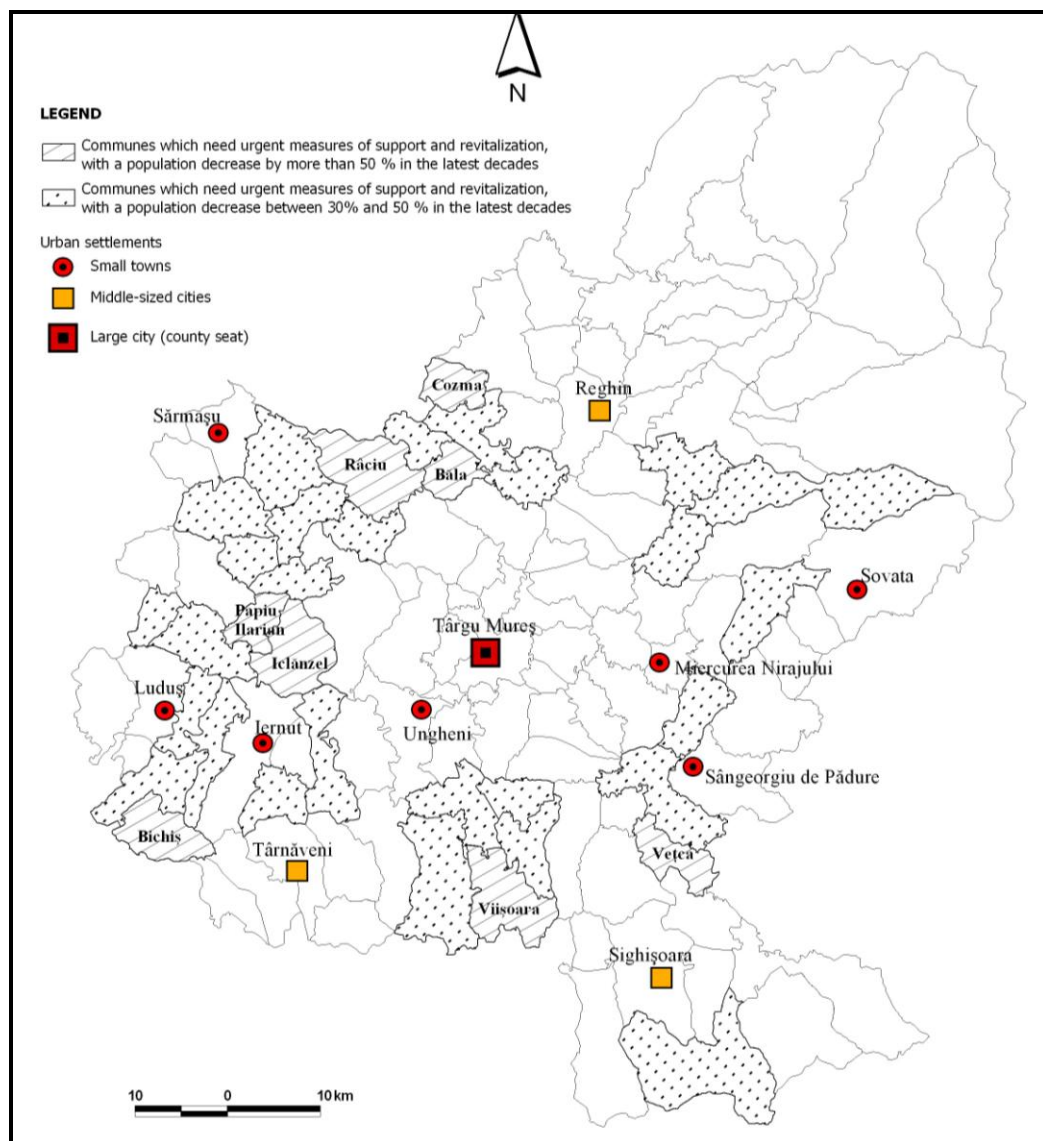


Figure no.3 Communes which need measures of support and revitalization

Table 7. Communes which need urgent measures of support and revitalization, with a population decrease between 30% and 50% in the latest decades

No.	Commune	Population (1966)	Population (1992)	Population (2002)
1	Apold	3670	2471	2722
2	Ațintiș	2945	1621	1631
3	Bahnea	5422	3867	3812
4	Beica de Jos	3329	2343	2243
5	Bogata	2693	1862	1947
6	Chiheru de Jos	3416	1975	1744
7	Coroisânmărtin	2398	1617	1487
8	Crăiești	1988	1151	1026
9	Cucerdea	3131	1950	1707
10	Cuci	3467	2207	2200
11	Fărăgău	2918	1774	1659
12	Fântânele	6922	5329	5067
13	Grebenișu de Câmpie	2607	1455	1642
14	Hodoșa	2433	1604	1420
15	Măgherani	5240	3033	2733
16	Miheșu de Câmpie	3750	2479	2538
17	Neaua	2317	1632	1544
18	Ogra	3535	2307	2441
19	Pogăceaua	3128	1879	1983
20	Sânger	4415	2319	2530
21	Sânpetru de Câmpie	5282	3278	3181
22	Suplac	3917	2548	2369
23	Șăulia	2778	2003	2117
24	Șincai	2704	1694	1634
25	Tăureni	1943	1054	1049
26	Voivodeni	2785	2124	1957
27	Zagăr	2001	1255	1208

Conclusions

There was a significant number of changes regarding the settlement network in Mureș County since the enforcement of Law 351/2001. Four communes became towns, five new communes were founded and five villages were re-established. Although the Law 100/2007 put an end to the creation of new towns, the setting up of new communes is still possible and a list of 18 potentially new communes is provided. More changes are possible at the village level. Five more villages may be re-established, while 46 villages with less than 50 inhabitants are proposed to be merged with the neighbouring viable village. Five settlements belonging to cities are proposed to be merged with the respective cities. Eight villages need urgent measures of revitalization, as well as the communes provided as such by Law 351/2001. All these proposals are included in the updated Plan for the Arrangement of Mureș County Territory (PATJ Mureș), sanctioned by Mureș County Council in 2009.

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