

SUMMARY

of the doctoral thesis entitled:

STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES THROUGH THE USE OF DIFFERENT SOURCES OF FUNDING IN RURAL AREAS IN THE SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA REGION

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The harmonious development of an area, the well-being of the people in that area, is linked to the availability and quality of human resources. There are resources in vain, strategies are developed in vain, if the human resource is not a quality one, with the skills and abilities necessary to achieve the proposed objectives.

The rural environment, more than ever, needs human resources adapted to existing particularities and needs. Traditions and customs, natural beauties, are best preserved in this environment, affected less by the unhealthy changes and developments of new technologies. However, the rural population has a lower standard of living, poorer access to infrastructure services for the population, lower incomes and reduced development possibilities. In this context, European funds can bring additional financial resources that, if used in those areas where major interventions are found to be needed, can significantly contribute to solving certain problems. One such area, which requires interventions and non-reimbursable funds, is the human resource in the Southwest Oltenia region.

The population from the rural environment of the region, mainly engaged in agricultural activities and animal husbandry, requires investment in the professional training of the workforce, in the acquisition of skills that will help them develop both in the field in which they are already active, but also in related fields or in non-agricultural ones. This is necessary because a sustainable development of the area requires diverse activities, agricultural and non-agricultural, the development of entrepreneurship in the area, as well as a well-qualified workforce. Thus, professional training brings added value to the human resource by developing the skills already possessed, the development of new skills, in accordance with current requirements of the labor market.

The economic context of the rural area in the South-West Oltenia region is one with a high potential for development and, at the same time, one that requires considerable investment in the workforce, in agricultural infrastructure, in tourism and services, all of this in order to reduce the degree of poverty and material deprivation, and with a view to offering a better life to the inhabitants of the region.

Starting from these premises, we set out to analyze the extent to which non-reimbursable European funds contribute, in a real way, to the development of human resources in Oltenia region.

The objectives that were taken into account in the realization of the work were established based on the analysis of the literature in the field and on the wide range of European funds that can be accessed for the vocational training of employees and job seekers in the Oltenia region. Thus, the set objectives to be achieved are:

1. Socio-economic analysis of the Oltenia region, with priority emphasis on the human resource, analysis carried out in order to establish the regional, geographical and demographic peculiarities, which give the human resource in the area specific characteristics;

2. Analysis of human resources in the region subject to analysis from a quantitative, qualitative and structural point of view;

3. Presentation of the operational programs of the current programming period through which non-reimbursable European funds can be accessed for the training, stimulation and development of human resources in the rural environment in the Oltenia region;

4. Analysis of the funds allocated through the National Rural Development Program that are intended to increase the efficiency and stimulate the human resource in the rural environment;

5. Analysis of the use of funds allocated through the Human Capital Operational Program for the development of human resources in rural areas;

6. Analysis of the impact of the use of non-reimbursable funds on human resources in the Oltenia region by means of a questionnaire-based research;

7. Analysis of the contribution of funds allocated through the Human Capital Operational Program to increasing participation in continuous professional training for employees.

The research theme is tender and contributes to the establishment of those sectors and occupations that require the most non-reimbursable funds, helps to speculate on the opportunities offered by the region from a natural, economic and social point of view, in order to reduce the disparities between the urban and rural environment, to the development of the market of work in the Oltenia region and increasing the standard of living of the population in the area.

The thesis is developed in two parts: bibliographic study regarding the current state of knowledge of the analyzed problem, structured in two chapters and own

research, with two other chapters to which the chapter of conclusions and recommendations is added.

Chapter I entitled "The current state of knowledge regarding human resources in the rural environment" makes a foray into the issue of the rural environment and sustainable development. The presentation begins with a conceptualization of the rural environment, as it has been long debated by the European Union since the end of the 50s and the beginning of the 60s until now. And the concept of sustainable development is presented in its conceptual evolution, emphasizing the 17 objectives of sustainable development that were established by the United Nations within the 2030 Agenda, with a view to eradicating extreme poverty, combating inequalities and injustice and protecting the planet. In addition to these, the dimensions of sustainable development, its importance and, last but not least, sustainable rural development, as an element of first importance in this study, are mentioned and presented.

The rural environment, unlike the urban one, presents certain specific characteristics and traits, which are manifested by the predominance of agrarian activities and manufacturing industry. The main function specific to the rural environment is agricultural production, which imposes a specific way of life, a behavior and a system of values distinct from the urban environment. Traditions and customs are respected and the environment is better protected. In this framework. The human resource is, perhaps, the most important capital for the development of the rural environment, a fact for which we considered necessary an analysis of the characteristics of the human resource in the rural environment as a consequence of the existing peculiarities in the rural environment in the Oltenia region. The labor market in the rural environment is closely related to its characteristics, the resident population being most often employed in the agricultural field, hence the need to present the causes and problems of the labor market in the area.

Chapter II, "Sources of financing that support human resources", bring to the fore the main sources of financing that can be accessed in order to develop human resources in the rural environment. Given the importance of human resources in rural development, it is important to establish the existing level of professional training of the human capital in the rural environment. Not infrequently, the entry into the labor market of the population from this environment is stopped by the fact that the people who want a job have sufficient skills or qualifications, or by the inconsistency between the level of training and what is required in the local labor market, aspects that ultimately lead to a low occupational mobility. Moreover, training opportunities are also reduced in rural areas, and accessing training opportunities often involves costs that they cannot afford (such as: fees for participating in training courses, activities training practices).

This chapter presents the operational programs of the 2014-2020 programming period through which funds can be accessed for human resource training, for its professional development and continuous training or for entrepreneurial activities that

can be developed in the area, activities that are a source job creation and development of the area. In addition to these, the national programs financed by the state budget are also mentioned, programs that contribute, to some extent, both to the professional training of the population in the area and to the diversification of activities in the region and to the development of the area.

The second part is intended for own research on the analyzed theme and begins with the presentation of the purpose and objectives of the research, followed by two chapters of analysis and one of conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter III is entitled "Socio-economic analysis of the South-West Oltenia region, with an emphasis on human resources". A correct and pertinent analysis of the human resource situation in the rural environment in the Oltenia region requires a socio-economic analysis of the region. Thus, starting from the observation of some aspects related to location, relief, climate, infrastructure, and then demographic, social and economic ones, it was possible to develop a current radiograph of the studied region. This analysis will provide us with information such as: the number and structure of the population, the labor force in the area, the employed population, jobs, standard of living, etc. The geographical, demographic and economic conditions of the area greatly influence the quantity of rural labor as well as its quality. The 5 counties of the region, Dolj, Gorj, Olt, Mehedinți and Vâlcea, have a certain structure of human capital depending on the geographic, demographic, social and economic specifics, so that they give them special features. After establishing the geographical peculiarities of the region with an emphasis on the rural environment, the socio-economic indicators of interest and which give the analyzed environment a certain specificity were established. The combined use of social and economic indicators is essential, and the explanation is as simple as possible – an economic growth does not automatically entail a social improvement of the same nature. Most of the time, the social side is neglected, putting a lot of emphasis on everything that means economy. In order to comply with this objective, but also to simplify the structure of the research work, several indicators were chosen from both categories.

The results obtained are based on statistical data analysis methods, data taken from official sources and analyzed, so that pertinent and clear conclusions can be drawn regarding the current situation of the rural environment in the South-West Oltenia Region, data that are based on the basis of the analysis of the labor force situation. The data used were obtained by accessing the national database, namely the National Institute of Statistics (INSSE), Tempo-online, and the Eurostat platform on the European Commission website was used to access information from the European Union.

Both types of information were useful in highlighting the current state of the rural environment in the South-West Oltenia Region, its attractiveness for the labor market, the need for European funds in the human resource in the rural environment, as well as in determining its effectiveness for the economic-social situation in region.

In choosing the socio-economic indicators to be presented and evaluated, we started from the idea that, in relation to the demographic fluctuation, the economic development of the Oltenia Region faces various challenges, and the demographic changes end up becoming risk factors in the implementation process of local sustainable development policies, including human resources. It can be said that the evolution of the population is one of the factors that show us the economic perspectives of a region. The human resource in a region is closely related to the population in the area, the migration flow, education and, not least, the investments made in the area. On the other hand, if the human capital is lost due to the decrease in the population, the region will not evolve more difficult, being equally affected production, consumption, standard of living.

Agriculture, as the main occupation in the Oltenia region, is quite rudimentary, technical progress being rather difficult to introduce in this field due to the lack of funding. People from rural areas work mainly in agriculture but, having no other income apart from agriculture, they have no way to make large investments in order to modernize the equipment and the way of working in agriculture. Entrepreneurship in the region is a modest one, with potential for growth, most financial resources for the establishment of companies coming from the non-reimbursable funds of the European Union. The most representative sectors of activity from the point of view of entrepreneurship are trade, agriculture, forestry and fishing, construction, and to a lesser extent hotels and restaurants, although, as I mentioned before, the area has good potential in this regard.

Chapter IV, "Analysis of the use of European funds for the development of human resources in the south-west Oltenia region" was carried out in order to establish the concrete measure in which European funds helped and were appropriate for the development of human resources and, implicitly, increasing the standard of living of the population. Therefore, it was decided to analyze the human resource at the level of the Oltenia region, the analysis of the funding sources for the development of the human resource in the area, as well as how the non-reimbursable European funds influenced the development and quality of the human resource in the region. Thus, in addition to the study materials from the vocational training companies, the Intermediary Organism Regional Human Capital Program, statistical information, we decided to create a questionnaire, which will be distributed online, given the fact that, many people, send their answers much more objectively to questions asked when not in front of the person asking them the questions. Some key aspects related to the theme of the thesis were followed, such as: training needs at the level of the region, the degree of absorption of European funds at the level of the region, the allocation of these funds for the training and development of the human resource, the degree of satisfaction of the employees or even of the unemployed people who, after graduating from professional training programs, are going to take a job on the labor market. The study focused on the human resource in the rural environment, as the South-West Oltenia Region, as shown, has

development potential, but lacks qualified human resources, the degree of poverty and material deprivation is high and the unemployment rate is high in the area.

It was found that the human capital present in the rural environment of the analyzed region, as at the national level, does not have specialized studies in accordance with the job they want to occupy, thus having limited employment opportunities. The rural population is, more often than not, employed in the agricultural sector, an occupation that does not bring constant income to the family or household because it is seasonal. Programs with European funding contribute to the development of human capital in the rural environment by involving people from this environment in various information activities, professional training, vocational counseling, mediation on the labor market or even the establishment of micro-enterprises and small businesses in agriculture and non-agriculture. This fact increases the chances of employability of the population able to work, of finding and occupying a place on the labor market, or of obtaining additional income. Thus, being involved in the various activities of the projects, they will be able to obtain skills and abilities that will help them find a job or advance in their career.

NRDP, through the measures that could be accessed, offered farmers the opportunity to participate in various professional training programs that would help them in the development of the farms they own and in the agricultural activities they carry out. However, the program was not very successful due to various problems that the training providers who implemented these projects encountered.

HCOP, through the axes intended for the training of the human resource, manages to finance a series of activities within the projects, activities whose objective is the training and development of the human resource, including and especially that of the rural environment. Thus, the human resource from the rural environment could acquire new qualifications in order to take up a job in accordance with the need of the market, could develop skills such as ICT, English language, entrepreneurial skills, etc., so that they could have access to the digital environment and the online one, to be able to establish and develop their own business or to be able to develop personally and professionally.

The research carried out within the study shows us the fact that, although the vast majority of people from rural areas had access to the activities of the projects with non-reimbursable European funding, the results they obtained did not bear fruit, the motivation for participating in the projects being rather the subsidies received, so the immediate benefits and not the capitalization of the learning outcomes that will help them in the long term.

Chapter V, "General conclusions and recommendations", is one of synthesis, which includes the results of the research carried out as well as recommendations in this regard.

The rural environment, mainly associated with agriculture, is often a poorly developed environment in terms of infrastructure, jobs and living standards. Given the

agrarian specifics, the vast majority of jobs are in agriculture, a fact that indicates its strong seasonality and a fairly limited level of wage earnings. The labor market in the rural environment is closely related to the demographic structure of the population, with a certain specificity, with jobs occupied in the subsistence economy, frequent personnel fluctuations, with modest incomes and accentuated seasonality. Jobs in agriculture contribute greatly to the implementation of sustainable rural development policy, requiring income that can ensure an adequate quality of life and a decent standard of living. The frequent occupations in these rural areas are concentrated, mainly, in the field of services and agriculture, being carried out by those who own agricultural holdings, or work in these holdings. The activities in this field are also characterized by a strong seasonality, a fact that negatively affects the incomes of the population. Accessing European funds helped farmers to purchase modern, high-performance equipment that would increase their work productivity, develop their farms and stop migrating to other areas.

The effects of the pandemic were also strongly felt in the agricultural field, which caused serious disruptions in the market and considerable variations in labor productivity in the country and throughout the European Union. 2022 was marked by extraordinary inflationary pressures, stemming mainly from other supply chain issues as COVID continued, and from Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, which disrupted energy supplies, the availability of raw materials needed in agriculture and trade in some agricultural goods.

Through European funds, more and more people have access to professional training programs, as employers do not have enough financial resources to send their employees to qualification, training or specialization courses. At the same time, part of the active population in the region who have not yet found a job can improve their skills and abilities to more easily occupy a position in the field to which, without the acquired qualification certificates, they would not have access.

The results of the study clearly show that, although non-reimbursable European funds contribute significantly to the development of human resources in the South-West Oltenia development region, many people who are interested in completing the training programs are more interested in the subsidies that are given after the completion of the activities within the project.

On the other hand, for employers, non-reimbursable European funds bring obvious benefits, because they do not have sufficient funds to send their employees to training programs in order to develop and diversify skills and abilities, their own financial resources that they would direct to these courses, being able to use them in the development of the company or in other investments for the organization.

Certainly the new programming period will come with operational programs according to the needs of the human resource in the rural environment, based on the realities of the labor market, on the promotion of sustainable rural development, on innovation and well-being. Reducing the disparities between the urban and rural

environments will again be a priority that will be taken into account and this fact will bring to the fore measures of training and development of human resources simultaneously with measures to increase the quality of life and reduce poverty in the rural environment .

The results obtained during the years of doctoral studies were presented at national and international scientific events and published in specialized journals indexed in international databases, rated B+.

The bibliography is rich, specialized, including titles of articles and books by national and international specialists, legislation in the field, but also national and European databases and web addresses.