
PARTICULARITIES OF SOCIAL POLICIES TO COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *IN ROMANIA, THE STATE ENSURES THE MANAGEMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT THROUGH DECENTRALIZED AUTHORITIES – COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT AGENCIES. THEIR ATTRIBUTIONS ARE BROADLY OUTLINED BY REGULATIONS, BUT THEY DO NOT ALWAYS MANAGE TO FULLY IMPLEMENT THEM. THE PROPOSAL OF THE PRESENT STUDY STARTED FROM THE NEED TO IDENTIFY THE CURRENT STATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT. THE PARTICULARITIES FOUND IN THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA CONCERNED WERE CORRELATED WITH THE CONCLUSIONS OF IMPORTANT RESEARCH AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. THE STATE APPROACH IN ROMANIA WAS IN PERFECT CORRELATION WITH EU INITIATIVES IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT, WHICH ALSO CREATED THE PREMISES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS IN THE AREA OF INTEREST.*

Keywords: UNEMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYMENT, ACTIVE POLICIES, SOCIAL PROTECTION, EUROPEAN PROJECTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to determine the main tools used recently by Romanian state authorities to reduce the unemployment rate, considering among other factors the pandemic impact.

The observation of changes in statistical data that have altered the hierarchy of areas at higher risk of unemployment.

Adapting the work of professionals from county employment and unemployment agencies in order to implement active measures to combat unemployment, through good practices including the pandemic period.



The pattern of the unemployed has certain characteristics, depending also on the geographical area of origin.

Migrating abroad can be a valve for registered unemployment in the country, counseling in this regard being essential.

The social economy must be a viable alternative including for the unemployed.

Informal ways of acquiring skills can reduce the number of people in unemployment, certification from county authorities for employment and combating unemployment being a necessity.

2. MAIN TEXT

The methodology used is characterized by the deployment of a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of 15 items that include open-ended questions.

The questionnaire was addressed to 7 county employment and unemployment agencies in Romania (Buzău, Galați, Suceava, Dolj, Timiș, Arad, Giurgiu) all of which responded to the request, one of them with difficulty and with a dry answer, usually providing general information. The population density at the level of the respective counties was not taken into account, due to the lack of accessible public data coming from the National Institute of Statistics - which distorts the reality of reported unemployment figures. Thus, the criterion taken into account in choosing these authorities was represented by the high or on the contrary low degree of the number of unemployed, having as temporal reference the statistical data recorded in December 2019, December 2022 and May 2023.

Year reference	Number of unemployed	County	Urban men	Urban women	Rural men	Rural women	Unemployed without education	Unemployed high school	Unemployed higher education
December 2019	17945	Dolj	1287	1420	9134	6104	836	3890	348
	11031	Suceava	1488	1507	4612	3424	922	2611	373
	11296	Buzău	1018	1047	5644	3587	2195	1357	111
	1645	Giurgiu	166	221	609	649	229	363	48
	2610	Arad	496	545	774	795	248	769	196
	2775	Timiș	566	745	706	758	305	810	429
December 2022	16799	Dolj	1117	1232	8407	6043	942	3246	384
	10819	Suceava	1556	1323	4702	3238	965	1553	309
	10158	Galați	894	996	4631	3637	1177	1768	298
	2178	Arad	354	434	704	686	431	434	157
	2204	Giurgiu	176	329	815	884	232	535	42
	2661	Timiș	553	640	726	742	340	741	374
May 2023	15750	Dolj	942	1203	7866	5719	963	2595	303
	10288	Suceava	1379	1275	4420	3214	996	1238	288
	9729	Galați	632	894	4676	3527	1175	1130	211
	1974	Timiș	407	495	570	502	291	447	288
	2068	Giurgiu	131	237	821	879	275	389	37
	2261	Arad	314	509	677	761	469	406	175

The scores recorded in 2020 and 2021 were avoided, considering them irrelevant, being strongly influenced by the effects of the pandemic. Also, the data regarding Bucharest and the



neighboring county Ilfov were removed from the analysis, because this area is the most populated, being the best developed from an economic point of view and with an important influx and finding of labor offer.

The gross figures reported under these conditions established the following hierarchies during the mentioned period (the first three positions with the highest numbers of registered unemployed, respectively the first three positions with the lowest numbers of registered unemployed).

Expected results

The solutions provided by current legislation for tackling unemployment – active measures – must be considered individually, as each geographical area has its own characteristics, starting from the ratio of the population found in urban/rural environments to the education level of those facing unemployment, taking into account the industries that can no longer ensure staff absorption even if qualified, or the advanced age that does not easily allow for professional reorientation. As with any other activity, the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have necessitated adaptations in work practices, including dealing with registered unemployed individuals. The reorganization of activities, the use of technology that allows for remote communication as much as possible, has certainly been a constant in society during this period.

Prior to March 2020, emigration was a solution for those who were unemployed or could not find work in their home country (particularly within the European Union territory, with Romania being a member state since 2007). With the onset of the pandemic, movement restrictions led to a generalized economic regression in all countries, impacting this alternative as well. In many situations, the migration of human resources caused by the inability to find employment in the country of origin could at least ensure subsistence for an entire family, even if the work was carried out by a single individual. The social entrepreneur model has made significant strides in Romania lately, which has allowed even the unemployed to become a target. The labor market's volatility and changes in employers' offers have often led to changes in the type and place of work, where we speak of jobs involving a medium, qualified, or semi-skilled level of education.

The fact that a person had the skills to perform a certain activity, without holding a diploma or certificate in this respect, did not affect the possibility of being employed in the private sector, but a step towards a public institution could not be taken because there was no certification. Recognizing such competencies can facilitate future employment for this segment of the population. NEET youth, those who are not in continuing education or vocational training programs, constitute a potential pool of unemployed individuals; thus, European projects and national internal actions must manage this vulnerable population segment.

Building on this notion, I have put forward for discussion the proposal to create a national program that would limit school dropout and, consequently, later lead to increased chances of integration into the labor market. For the state to act effectively in trying to integrate/reintegrate hard-to-employ individuals into work, certain occupational fields must be delineated for this purpose.

Answers

The feedback received from the above-mentioned public authorities can be compressed into a series of constants identified as follows:

1. Labor mediation is the solution for reducing the unemployment rate (Timiș, Dolj). The most relevant active measure was subsidizing jobs at employer level for vulnerable people – NEETs,



people over 45 years old (Giurgiu, Galați) or granting installation / employment bonuses to unemployed people re-employed (Suceava).

An extremely interesting approach can be found where the beneficiaries of the social assistance measure – guaranteed minimum income were supported in the employment process by granting the letter of recommendation, which strongly stimulated many of the disinterested to become proactive (Buzău). Exceptional measures, including teleworking, partial support by the state of technical unemployment during the pandemic period led to a reduction in the share of unemployment (Arad).

2. The occupational field in which there is a qualification but which registers syncope (employers in the field have disappeared) in adapting to the labor market differs depending on the geographical area we refer to.

Thus, we find: mining and chemical industry (Suceava), health and social assistance (Dolj), social sciences (Timiș), metallurgical industry (Galați), such a field is not identifiable (Buzău). One of the agencies did not understand the meaning of the question – unskilled workers (Giurgiu).

3. EU-funded projects aimed at covering the need for integration into the labor market of young NEETS are the main target of partnerships with the private environment - 16 POCU agreements (Suceava), 5 projects (Galati). It should be noted that the support provided to refugees in the border area by collaborating with an NGO – Bucovina Institute – is also nominated. Collaboration is also relevant when local administration authorities are involved, as they are directly interested in having as few unemployed people as possible (increased crime risk, budgeting various social benefits from the state budget, respectively the local budget).

The other respondents did not expressly nominate the type of collaboration and/or partner, but referred to the classic activities through which they actually materialize their skills: information, counseling, professional training, organization of the job exchange. (Buzău, Giurgiu, Timiș, Dolj, Arad). The ratio of men / women, respectively the urban/rural origin of unemployed persons has various motivations: the demographic density must be correlated with the number of unemployed found, cataloged based on the mentioned criteria (Buzău).

Labor resources can negatively influence data on the degree of integration of women, given that 53.85% of the active population was represented by men (Giurgiu).

Statistical data refer to the registered unemployed, and certain fields of activity with a significant share of female staff have registered restructurings / have been abolished - textile garments (Timiș).

Layoffs in certain sectors of activity where mainly men were employed - manufacture of machinery, beverages, construction and repair of ships, manufacture of rubber and plastic products (Galați).

Procedurally, the holders of guaranteed minimum income (social assistance – right to social work) are men in rural areas, and they must register with the local unemployment agency to prove that they are trying to integrate into work, otherwise they risk having their payment of this social benefit stopped, while women with children up to 7 years old do not have such an obligation; in urban areas the ratio is reversed, women predominating as registered because men find unskilled work in constructions (Dolj).

Job profiling is to the advantage of men, and in rural areas the distance to work – usually located in urban areas – constantly maintains a certain level of unemployment rate (Arad).

One of the agencies did not register a statistically explicit response (Suceava).

5. The legal framework for digitizing the process of preparing and submitting the necessary documentation for accessing the unemployment allowance, the employment premium (by mail, fax,



phone call) was created, respectively a special IT application was developed for accessing the state support for technical unemployment and other assimilable allowances during the pandemic period (Galați, Suceava, Arad, Dolj, Timiș).

The reorganization of internal procedures and the signing of performance contracts at the agency's work points were another solution identified during the period when sanitary restrictions were established (Buzău).

One of the authorities did not respond to this item (Giurgiu).

6. Re-employment after vocational training courses for unemployed people with high school education is easier, without it being a targeted group (Buzău).

The development of the area offers many employment opportunities, not only for those with high school education, and emigration is another solution for those left without a job, with a direct effect on reducing the number of registered unemployed (Timiș).

Support services and those stimulating employment – specific to the public authority in the field of combating unemployment generated a decrease in statistical data for the unemployed with high school education (Dolj, Arad, Suceava).

The sudden increase in the number of unemployed people with high school education in 2022 is determined not by the passivity of the county authority in the field, but on the contrary by accessing a project aimed at sustainable integration on the labor market of young NEETS that required their identification and registration in the system as unemployed uncompensated (Galați).

One of the county agencies for employment and unemployment did not give an answer to the question related to the cause of the increase in the number of unemployed with high school education during the targeted period, with a stagnation at the level of May 2023. (Giurgiu).

7. The beneficiaries of the social assistance system – especially those with the guaranteed minimum income were offered jobs not only with the frequency established by law, every 6 months, but whenever the opportunity arose. Thus, those without education managed to be employed, including those who signed agreements for integration into the labor market, which forces them to make a clear decision: they are employed or remain in the records of the competent public authority (Buzău).

Access by entrepreneurs to active measures to combat unemployment, with indirect effect on those without a job, is the solution to reduce the unemployment rate for people without education (Giurgiu).

The development of the area offers many employment opportunities, not only for those with high school education, but also for those without any education, and emigration is another solution for those left without a job, with a direct effect on reducing the number of registered unemployed – a similar response for the unemployed with high school education (Timiș).

School dropout is the primary factor in increasing the number of unemployed without education (Dolj).

Employers target qualified people who require a minimum of education, which leads to maintaining a large number of people remaining in the agency's records (Arad).

People without education are without a job because they cannot attend courses, they do not have skills, they are difficult to employ. (Suceava).

The unemployed without education are beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum income, they are deprofessionalized and most of them do not have a profession, being difficult to be qualified, at the same time not being used to the work schedule and the rules imposed (Galați).

8. The unemployed with higher education who are easiest to reintegrate into the labor market are found in the following occupational field: industry, construction, information technology (Buzău).

There is a small number of such unemployed, less than 1% of the total, without being able to distinguish a more easily employable occupational profile (Giurgiu).

Those with higher education in the technical and economic field are most easily absorbed into the labor market given that there is a generalized shortage of highly qualified labor force (Timiș).

The tradition of the type of economic activity generates such a response, so we find the field of engineering - Ford factory (Dolj), in the field of economics, engineering, human resources (Arad), in road transport, retail trade in non-specialized stores, accounting and financial audit or construction of buildings (Suceava), respectively medical, construction and services (Galati).

9. There are no data on migration outside Romania of unemployed persons, thus not resorting to counseling services from the competent authorities (Buzău).

There were no registered unemployed people to migrate, who had the obligation to notify the agency, instead they resorted to information on available jobs through the EURES portal - 163 beneficiaries (Timiș).

The evolution of migration of people coming from unemployment is low, and they proceed accordingly after the deadline when the payment of unemployment benefit is stopped (Dolj).

Emigration with an impact on the workforce coming from Romania is decreasing, as is the request for counseling for work to be performed abroad (Arad).

The pandemic has generated a decrease in workers' mobility and, implicitly, in the request for information on the external labor market, which is usually limited to the field of social security - allowances granted by the foreign state (Suceava).

Specific advice on the advantages of mobility was carried out through the EURES network, and the number of unemployment outings by going abroad increased steadily during the reporting period 2019/2023, with a decrease justified by the pandemic in 2020, starting from 40 people and reaching over 100 clients (Galați). Giurgiu agency did not return any response.

10. During the reporting period, there is no request from the unemployed registered for the necessary support in starting a business (Buzău, Giurgiu, Timiș, Dolj, Suceava).

To a very small extent, starting a business is an option for those unemployed, and the profile of such a candidate is described as follows: age up to 30 years, both sexes, high school and higher education, the field of services and HORECA (Arad).

Within the projects dedicated to young needs, a number of 69 people initiated businesses, of which 29 aged up to 25 years, the rest aged between 25-30 years, most of them having high school or higher education. Without this program, entrepreneurship was not regarded as a real alternative by those in evidence (Galați).

11. Social economy has been a solution for absorbing the unemployed as a result of the registration of 89 social enterprises, of which 6 insertion social enterprises (they must employ a minimum number of 30% vulnerable people). Their activity was carried out in the field of bread and pastry manufacturing, other forms of education, washing and cleaning of textiles and fur products, accommodation facilities for holidays for short periods, construction works of residential and non-residential buildings, catering, hairdressing and beauty activities, collection of non-hazardous waste, car rental and leasing activities, tangible equipment and assets. One of the social enterprises created 5 jobs, of which 2 for vulnerable people, supporting children from large and socially disadvantaged families (Buzău).

The evasive answer was answered, only confirming the existence of these organizations, without any detail, in one case only the legal definition was explained (Giurgiu, Timiș).

The existence of such entities (Dolj, Arad) was denied.

There is only one insertion social enterprise, which does not manage any case arising from unemployment (Suceava).

There are 34 social enterprises, 11 of which have the status of social insertion enterprises. One of them organized courses dedicated to the unemployed to increase their chances of employment – curriculum vitae writing, letter of intent, preparation for the job interview (Galați).

12. The County Authority for Employment and Unemployment has not been certified by the National Authority for Qualifications (A.N.C.), thus not being able to attest skills acquired in other non-formal ways, although skills recognized for the specificity of a profession can be a solution for employment. The lack of trade schools negatively influences the success on the labor market because where there is vocational training, it is done over a short period. Classical training is encouraged in the absence of this alternative (Buzău, Dolj, Arad, Suceava, Galați).

The meaning of the question was not understood – there is talk about the non-existence of own vocational training centers, not about the attestation of competences acquired by other ways than the formal ones (Giurgiu).

It is specified that there were no requests regarding the attestation mentioned earlier, without talking about the actual possibility of achieving such certifications (Timiș).

13. The solution indicated for NEETs was to identify them, register them, build profiles, advise them, determine them to be subject to active measures and last but not least they were recommended to participate in projects through the European Social Fund (Buzău, Dolj, Timiș).

Professional training and apprenticeship programs, employment by subsidizing the workplace, granting de minimis aid for setting up companies are other options proposed to this vulnerable category (Arad, Suceava, Galați).

The authority did not respond to this item (Giurgiu).

14. A national program in the field of employment that combines combating school dropout with the early integration of these people into the labor market is opportune and could fall under the competence of county school inspectorates in collaboration with employers' organizations (Galați).

The conclusion of a protocol between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity to identify those who have dropped out of school and who can later be registered in the records of local agencies for combating unemployment, to provide them with counseling and labor mediation, can be completed by informing and raising awareness of the importance of work in the life of each individual, an activity that can be carried out at the level of local public administration units (Arad, Buzău).

Improving access for people without education in "second chance" programs can be an alternative (Suceava).

They agree with such a program suggestion, without rendering elements in detail (Dolj, Timiș, Giurgiu).

15. The occupational field in which it is found that most hard-to-employ people appear is represented by uncompensated workers, unskilled workers - people with incomplete education. (Buzău, Dolj, Arad, Suceava, Giurgiu).

There may also be unemployed those with theoretical high school education who cannot capitalize on a certain qualification (Timiș).

Those with primary education or without education, found in the field of classification of occupations in Romania as loader-unloader are those classified as active persons very difficult to employ - the abolition of organizations that carried out handling / storage activities in the port area (Galați).

Discussion

In addition to the solutions commonly encountered to combat unemployment, such as labor mediation, or pro-part support of wages by the state, respectively the granting of incentives also by the state to employees taken over from unemployment, there are novel solutions such as the interest of the vulnerable in getting out of the state of dependence. In the social assistance system, personal, institutional and community resources converge to favor the autonomy of the individual and including the community (Pieroni & Dal Pra Ponticelli, 2021).

The social insurance system against unemployment is a priority solution to the social work system, but the solutions converge to stimulate the individual to change his vulnerability status. The implementation of the national strategy for employment between 2014 and 2020, corroborated with the fact that the European Union has made available various forms through which dedicated funds are accessed in this regard, has allowed the effective, long-term integration of people coming from the category of young NEETS (Buzău, Galați).

In fact, the European Union managed to increase the overall employment rate between 1990 and 2017 from 60% to 72.3%, proposing the target of 75% through the Economic Growth Strategy 2020. Romania is a less developed country than the other member states, and under these conditions it can take over the idea that there is a greater agreement on the welfare proposed by this confederative system, compared to the low interest in this regard coming from much more developed states (Gerhards *et al.*, 2019; Reintl & Giebler, 2021).

On the other hand, the confrontation of young people with unemployment has generated a targeted concern of Europe's decision-making structures, trying to prevent the risk that the current generation will be more vulnerable to poverty than the previous one (Goudenhooff, Brihan & Horga, 2018). Among the new appropriate methods in order to achieve social inclusion, to interest adolescents in acquiring skills and competences it find serious games (Mäkinen *et al.*, 2023). The extent of such a phenomenon concerning adolescents who risk never becoming employed is therefore confirmed by these concerns specific to other countries.

There are authors who have tried to establish whether this state of young people's unemployment on the labor market is somehow influenced by the unemployed status of parents (Muller, Riphahn, & Schweintek, 2017). The effects of unemployment on parents should not only be limited to the possibility of copying an attitude from the family, but also to the negative influence on the mental plane. Adults who succeed early in employment have not felt in any way the impact of childhood job loss by parents (Mork, Sjogren & Svaleryd, 2020). In the same logic it can say that a low social trust at the level of the individual generates the scars of unemployment (Azzolini, 2023).

All these findings underscore the importance of counseling in these extreme situations. The transition to a new stage of development of society has inevitably led to the decline, to extinction, of some sectors of activity. The evolution of these changes is closely linked to the tradition of the type of industry or services delivered in a certain geographical area (mining and chemical industry - Suceava, metallurgical industry - Galați). If they are also older, then adapting them to new skills specific to other professional profiles will be difficult, especially when this also requires the use of different technologies (Caporale, Gil-Alana & Trejo, 2020).

Also, the socio-humanistic fields are harder to readapt to the new requirements of the labor market (Timiș, Dolj), while the technical and economic field, constructions, transport and services are viable solutions especially for the highly qualified - higher education (Timiș, Dolj, Arad, Suceava). When certain people lose their jobs, not only the bankruptcy of the organization they are part of is a risk, but also the fact that until that moment the employer has not provided optimal working conditions, the additional effort made by the hired staff being another risk. Their reaction



will be achieved not individually, but in solidarity, given that the work process is completely out of their control (Ricciardi, 2010).

People without education are difficult to hire, because they do not have skills, competencies – the only solution is to diversify the facilities offered to employers who conclude employment contracts with such unemployed people, who may eventually try further training at work. Many of them are also not incentivized to give up being dependent on the minimum social assistance granted by the state. Removing the main cause, namely premature school dropout, can generate a solution in the future, here being a cooperation between the state, employers and especially the local community from which these beneficiaries come. In addition to the problems generated by the challenges involved in the transition from adolescent to adult status (finding a job, getting a house and setting up a family), the factor determined by the natural increase and the one represented by fertility in the couple should not be omitted (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015).

The health of the employee is extremely important as it has been found that mental health disorders can lead to dependence on the social work system (Haula and Vaalavuo, 2021). As such, it must not only lead to the finding of incapacity for work, we must intervene at the right time, as much as possible. A demarcation of the unemployed according to the criterion of sex leads to some interesting milestones. Some time ago, the organization of a job exchange exclusively for women led to the conclusion that the traditional fields in which they work are much lower paid, therefore reintegration into such positions is not a trend (Popescu, 2006).

In Italian law, for example, the Code of equal opportunities contains a principle according to which women must be included in activities or sectors of work where they are underrepresented, this diversification implying a much better inclusion (Napolitano, 2008). If the registration of a higher or lower level of women or men was necessarily influenced by the disappearance, reorganization or respectively development of a certain sector of activity profiled according to the criterion of that sex (metallurgy-men versus tailoring-women), the legal procedures for granting social benefits - guaranteed minimum income may generate errors in assessing the phenomenon of unemployment, depending on the criterion of sex. Men are in Romania the holders of the application for that social dignity and must register among the unemployed to prove that they are making an effort to get into work, but women who are raising children do not have such an obligation.

At the level of a family that does not have the chance to build careers, especially with regard to the status of women after giving birth, there are no consequences of defamiliarization and abandonment of the role of caregiver, educator and role model for their own children as reflected in a recent study (Yu, Chao & Lo, 2023). Otherwise, the woman is not affected to the same extent as the man when she loses her job, having the ability to invest in herself and also in the home in which she lives, when enjoys available financial funds (Hussam *et al.*, 2022). Also, in urban areas, men find easier solutions to get into work, compared to women, and the fact that men predominate as an active population to the detriment of women can generate a higher number of unemployed among the first category mentioned, although the figures do not necessarily express a real discrepancy between the two categories.

Migration from Romania to more developed countries, which would also take over some of the unemployed, is difficult to estimate, although those who are in such a situation should notify this aspect. Emigration here is certainly a much broader phenomenon than immigration, thus finding the lowest figures for EU and non-EU residents. However, in the long run, the social protection system will have to adapt to educational and welfare policies that also allow the inclusion of migrants- especially Asian migrants (Burlacu, Soare & Vintilă, 2020). The EURES network should be promoted more in Romania at the level of county agencies, because often the beneficiaries do not



know that they have such an opportunity to check what positions are sought in the western states of the continent. Also, the necessary counseling before going to work abroad is important, but many do not access it (here, besides the popularization effort that depends a lot on the diligence of the state authority, there is also the lack of interest coming from the beneficiary, caused by his level of training).

The pandemic has diminished this migration phenomenon during the restrictions period, but in general, the data certify the existence of mobility also in the studied time frame. The effects of restrictions (with implications for both organizations and employees) had to be managed through national policies, but numerous dysfunctions also emerged at the level of supranational institutions. At the same time, states that chose isolation could not reap the benefits of cooperation (McKibbin & Roshen, 2023).

Opening a business cannot be a solution for the unemployed as long as there is no support for a longer period of time from the state. Self-determination to succeed in such an attempt is rare, these people being somewhat dependent until that moment on allowances and/or financial support of the family. The inclusion of this solution in a European project was a success due to the careful monitoring carried out in a sufficient time frame for adaptation. This consideration was also retained when the entrepreneurial culture was specific to a certain population, which determines an assimilation of this type of behavior in the case of romanian immigrants, for example (Croitoru, 2016).

The Romanian practice of social economy in the area of unemployed people is in its infancy, although social insertion enterprises authorized to operate must employ 30% of staff coming from vulnerable people (including the unemployed). Formal organizations are a starting point for everything that means creating relationships between individuals. Sonnenberg (2014) said that under such conditions, labour market interaction and, respectively, unemployment are determined by strong or weak relationships at intragroup level. The state should create more facilities for these organizations because where they have developed, the results have been gratifying. Unfortunately, there are areas where even the authorities involved in this process of fighting unemployment are not very clear about how such a structure works.

The skills existing at the level of an unemployed person, but not certified by an act of study or training, can be the element that makes the difference, in the sense of facilitating employment. Often, however, the employer – especially in the public sector – establishes a selection criterion regarding the certified competence. In Romania, the National Authority for Qualifications is the entity that certifies organizations that want to have the possibility to attest non-formal acquired competences, exclusively based on practice or in certain cases when it is self-taught. Most county agencies for employment and combating unemployment unfortunately did not go through this procedure. This can be a starting point in trying to create new active policies to combat unemployment. In a cross-border study conducted in 9 developed countries in Europe, it was concluded that public spending can reduce unemployment rates, although differences can be observed due to the conception of the social protection system and historical traditions (Irandoost, 2023).

Cooperation between authorities is essential because it can limit a propagated effect in society. Thus, early school leaving cannot generate skills, and the integration of such people into the labour market becomes illusory. Lifelong learning was a predefined target at European level for 2020, without being limited to the classical education system and which was correlated with the employment rate (Frunzaru, 2012). The Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity may set up in the near future a program to fight early school leaving, with real



chances of access to a future job. The implementation of this project proposed in the study is also considered dependent on the degree of involvement of local communities and, last but not least, of the state authorities decentralized in the territory (county school inspections and territorial labor agencies).

Some people may fall / reclassify more easily or harder, but not necessarily the occupational field determines that classification, but also situations such as: a longer period of unemployment - long-term unemployed (over 6 months for people aged up to 26 years, over 1 year for people over 26 years old), distances of more than 15 km from home to the more economically developed area of the county where potential employers find their headquarters. At international level, some countries have tried to orient older people who have lost their jobs to unemployment systems as an alternative to early retirement that could not be achieved. Although the solution removes the risk for other categories of people to be made redundant at the level of these organizations, the costs from public funds have been costly and such approaches have been abandoned (Kyyrä & Pesola, 2020).

Limits

The involvement of only seven authorities out of a total of forty-one across the country in research may overlook certain constants that could emerge from a more extensive analysis. Although the aim was focused on identifying measures either implemented or not applied in practice to reduce unemployment, involving agencies that recorded the lowest and highest figures, a study expanded to all such institutions could have revealed other areas of interest.

The omission of naming key partners from the private sector in the fight against unemployment may also reflect a particular reluctance of public authorities to disclose such information (to avoid subsequent accusations of favoring or promoting a certain private entity)—one of the items refers to this issue.

One of the authorities only responded after being notified that it would be the sole agency declining to participate in the survey. Even then, it did not answer some items, and responses to others were terse. Some agencies were extremely prompt in providing feedback, responding within a few days, while others took up to the legally allowed deadline for a petition/request, even though it was not such a case. The majority of the agencies' responses were endorsed by naming the individual assigned to formulate the viewpoint (in one instance, this included the institution's directors). The willingness or lack thereof of these state agencies to engage in such a dialogue with the research environment, or conversely, the lack of interest, may also be a response to how the statistical data reflected the regression (Giurgiu) or progression of the managed phenomenon (Buzău).

3. CONCLUSIONS

In some regions of the country, economic development is more advanced, and consequently, the effort required by the authorities to combat unemployment is less - with the same human resources, a smaller number of unemployed and jobless individuals are managed, even if not all of those in such situations officially register. The pandemic has shortened procedures, and the response of the authorities has been quicker, although in the case of certain beneficiaries not accustomed to remote communication methods, collaboration has been more cumbersome. Labor migration within the European Union has generally continued to exist, even if this solution tends to become marginal due to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, probably exacerbated by the energy crisis. The observed differences between men and women in terms of employment difficulties could be



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minimized to a greater extent, especially as the 2014-2020 strategy for combating unemployment and ensuring equal opportunities has been an explicit objective for the Romanian state. Facilities and services dedicated to this segment of the population, combined with correlative opportunities for employers in the context of their absorption into the labor market, need to become realities, not mere projections.

The deprivation of rural residents from the benefits generated by the proximity of workplaces, which are more easily accessible to those living in urban environments, must be eliminated. It is not always a lack of interest in employment that prevails in motivating the failure of these individuals, but often there are limits imposed by the high costs of commuting to work (transport, food, time). Limiting school dropouts and ensuring continuity of education for as many minors and young people as possible will certainly lead to a decrease in those coming from this category. Substantial steps have been taken for young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) through the access to European projects and achieving the target also found in the aforementioned national strategy, yet there is a need to insist on limiting the cases where children end up becoming young NEETs. A greater involvement of county authorities with occupational competencies in terms of authorizing certification of skills acquired by the unemployed through non-formal means should emerge, especially since vocational schools or training for certain professions are in decline in Romania. Bureaucratic procedures for realizing these competencies limit the interest of authorities, although the impact would be welcomed.

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