

STRUCTURAL FUNDS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION – A GENERAL OVERVIEW

Empirical
Study

Keywords

European Social Fund
Migration
Emigrants
Grants

JEL Classification

O15, J01, J24, M53

Abstract

The ample intervention of the European Social Fund in Romania through the Human Resources Development Operational Programme has pursuit, among other objectives, to help migrant people for a successful participation in a modern and flexible labour market. Of course, the interest and support of emigrants are laudable initiatives but unfortunately the inconsistencies and problems that occurred in the implementation of grant projects have generated doubts on the efficiency of funds allocations in this area of interest.

This paper aims to observe how grants have supported the Romanian emigrants and to analyse the implementation of this goal in the human resource development projects.

1. The European Social Fund and its intervention in Romania

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the main instrument which performs the achieving of EU's employment policy strategic objectives. So ESF aims to promote the employment in EU member states by developing skills and employability.

For the last programming period which is ending this year (2007 – 2013) the role of the European Social Fund has been the supporting of EU Member States to anticipate and effectively manage economic and social changes.

The main priorities that are receiving financing from ESF are related to:

- Increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises;
- Increasing access and participation in the labour market;
- Promoting social inclusion by combating discrimination and facilitating access to the vulnerable groups in the labour market;
- Promoting partnership for reform in the field of employment and social inclusion.

Also, in poorer regions, ESF is supporting: the investment in human capital, particularly through modernization of education and training systems, development of administrative capacity and efficiency of public administration at national, regional and local level.

The ESF also has a series of horizontal objectives:

- Partnership

In order to achieve high impact results at national, regional or local level, ESF it's supporting the principle of partnership between all relevant socio-economic actors, starting with programming and continuing with implementation and monitoring of the use of EU's financial assistance.

- Innovative actions and trans-national initiatives

The ESF supports the inclusion of innovative and transnational initiatives among interventions to be financed through the operational programs.

These operations will allow cooperation between public authorities, social partners, civil society and other relevant actors in order to achieve the exchange of best practices in human resource development area.

- Equality

Promoting the equal opportunities was a horizontal priority in the last ESF programming period, and from this perspective the operations will seek to ensure equal access of women and men in all activities financed by the fund and to increase women's participation in the labour market.

According to the Romanian website of the European Social Fund, for the 2007-2013 period, the European Union has allocated to Romania for the actions of the European Social Fund an amount of 3684 million € which represents 19.2% of the total Structural and Cohesion Funds (SCF).

To use these funds were designed two operational programs:

- The Sectorial Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (POS DRU – Romanian), with an ESF allocation of 3476 million € (18.1% of SCF);
- The Operational Programme Administrative Capacity Development (POD CA – Romanian), with an ESF allocation of 208 million € (1.1% of FSC). (www.fseromania.ro)

2. The Sectorial Operational Programme for Human Resources Development and its support for migrant people

The general objective of POS DRU was the development of human capital and the increasing of its competitiveness, by linking education and lifelong learning with the labour market and ensuring

increased participation in a modern, flexible and inclusive labour market for 1650000 people.

This goal was designed to be achieved through seven priority axes. The Axis 6 aimed to promote social inclusion, including migrant people.

The axis financed operations aiming the increasing of social inclusion, preventing exclusion from the labour market and supporting integration in employment of vulnerable groups being disadvantaged in terms of access to education and employment.

Also, there have been funded projects that aimed the promoting of social economy as a factor of social integration of people who are experiencing difficulties in employment (Roma people, people with disabilities, young people over 18 who leave the state child protection system, persons who have been convicted etc.). (Framework Document for the Implementation of POS DRU 2007 - 2013, approved by Order of the Minister of Labour, Family and social Protection and the letter from the Ministry of Public Finance no 547/1984 / July 2010, pp. 129)

The integrated social services and training of social assistance employees were also supported and measures to ensure equality between women and men were promoted. In the same time were encouraged the transnational initiatives in all areas.

The activities to support migrant persons were therefore included in this axis, particularly at three of the four major areas of intervention of axis 6, namely:

- 6.1 Development of social economy
- 6.2 Improving access and participation of vulnerable groups in the labour market
- 6.3 Promotion equal opportunities on the labour market.

Regarding the type of migrant people two categories of migrants were considered: migrants and returning emigrant women. Both of these were

included in the general category of vulnerable groups (The Guide for POSDRU Indicators, ESF Romania, January 2012, pp. 68-69).

3. The analysis of the programme from the perspective of migrant people support

Preliminary data from the 2011 census shows that more than 910 000 of Romanian left abroad for a long period of time.

According to other estimates of mass-media, the number of real labour migrants abroad is approximately 2.8 million people which is over 13 % of the total population. (World Bank, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org>)

For the most part, before the first departure from the country, the migrants were students or students who have not entered the labour market in Romania, employed people (especially 35-44 years) affected by economic restructuring and unemployed people with marginal positions in the labour market of the country.

The preferred countries of destination are Italy and Spain, where most migrants from Romania are service workers, artisans or unskilled workers in the construction sector, in weak or non-skilled services in households, in hotels and restaurants and agriculture. In addition, much of them are working in the informal economy (without contracts).

The working migration in Romania is circular, which means that migrants are alternating periods of work with periods abroad returning home. Most emigrants have left Romania during the economic crisis during 2008-2009, when demand for new workers was strongly decreased. (Sandu, 2010)

Thus, the emigrants who have returned back because of the crisis are mostly those who went for the first time later than other migrants who have managed to stay in the receiving country. (Stanculescu, Stoiciu, 2012)

Money sent home by Romanian workers abroad helps largely consumption, representing for many families in the country a vital source of livelihood. Also, the remittances are with foreign direct investment the most important source of balance of payments balance. The volume of remittances from Romanians abroad came to be comparable to foreign direct investment. (The Socio-Economic for Programming the European Funds 2014 – 2020 in Entrepreneurship and Social Economy Area)

If we analyse the POS DRU grant funding for the two vulnerable groups reminded in the second part of this paper there can be drawn both positive aspects and negative aspects.

This analysis does not intend to investigate shortcomings and controversies that led to the blocking of programme in Romania but is focused on the issue of migrants in particular.

The main positive aspects of the POS DRU Programme were:

- The initiative is a laudable one itself because the migrant people have difficulties in labour market integration;
- There is an special axis allocation for some of migrant people categories (the first three major areas for immigrants and the third for returning emigrants);
- The diversity of activities and training programs that have supported these individuals;
- The fact that was given the opportunity of helping these persons in the other axes of POS DRU Programme, which was not dedicated to them especially.

The main negative aspects of the POS DRU Programme were:

- The bureaucratic project management system and reporting;
- The frequent changes of procedures or introducing new ones that created blockages and raised questions;

- Problems with reporting and recording of the target group.

The last of the issues listed above can be considered the most important negative aspect being essentially one very simple: if there are no problems on immigrants regarding their identification and reporting them as immigrants (based on ID or data from embassies, mayors, censuses, etc.) in terms of returning emigrants we cannot say the same thing.

There is no institution provided to show that there is a way to certificate the returns of emigrant women.

This problem affects the biggest part of emigrant women, especially those who worked abroad without any papers and do not apply to women who have worked with labour contracts that can be used as an evidence.

Basically, a returning emigrant women has nowhere to procure a certificate stating that she was out of the country and so she cannot prove that she is eligible for project activities, whatever how long was the time spent outside the country.

This was reflected in project management because many of the applicants were forced to sign additional documents which changed the grant applications and especially the part of the text that it's stating emigrants as a target group.

The other ones requested exemption from achieving this indicator and probably increasing another one for to countervail the change.

Of course this slip does not mean that the program did not achieved even partially its goal but returning emigrant women who participated in the project activities were recorded in other target groups more easily justified with documents in order to certify their belonging to the target group of the project.

Unfortunately, from the total number of women participating at projects from Axis 6 in particular, there can't be

highlighted the returned emigrants to see if the financing agreement included a considerable number of people and if it was justified the financial allocation for this vulnerable group.

Also the lack of legal options for certification of these women has a statistically negative effect: a national or even regional record of these women would have been useful for sizing the number of emigrant women from Romania, returned emigrants, analysing the destination countries, the average length of staying etc.

This was the opportunity to collect some important statistical data on migration because this is a phenomenon still poorly studied and insufficiently covered by statistics in Romania.

Returning to the immigrants, they were summarized and reported in the projects but according to the latest report on the implementation of POSDRU in Romania, the number was extremely low compared to other indicators: a total of 247 people (125 women). (POS DRU – The Annual Report of Implementation, 2012, pp. 22).

We believe that financial allocation for this target group was overrated and has reached the goal only to a small extent.

4. Conclusions

One of the great merits of POS DRU program (and the other programs) was the encouraging of initiative and innovation.

Therefore the diversity of projects, training, and consulting support measures etc. which has involved the whole country was a good omen for the target groups.

Unfortunately the inconsistencies in the administrative system have braked the projects activities and slowed the

achieving of important goals which made unfulfilling the purpose of that financial allocations.

Although recent history have showed that POS DRU axes were well planned and rigorously structured, the future axes will require the increasing the adaptability of the administrative system to the problems and needs that arise in projects of this area.

References

- [1] ESF Romanian Website: <http://www.fseromania.ro/index.php/posdru/informatii-generale/fse>, accessed March 2014
- [2] Framework Document for the Implementation of POS DRU 2007 - 2013, approved by Order of the Minister of Labour, Family and Social Protection and the letter from the Ministry of Public Finance no 547/1984 / July 2010, pp. 129
- [3] POS DRU - Annual Report of Implementation, 2012, <http://www.fseromania.ro/images/doc2013/rai2012.pdf>, pp. 22, Accessed March 2014
- [4] Sandu, D. (2010), Modernising Romanian society through temporary work abroad, in Black, R., Engbersen, G., Okolski, M., and Pantiru C., *A Continent Moving West? EU enlargement and labour migration from Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 271-288), Amsterdam University Press
- [5] Stanculescu, M. S., Stoiciu, V. (2012) *Impactul crizei economice asupra migratiei fortei de munca din Romania* [The Impact of the Economic Crisis over the Romanian workforce migration], Bucharest, Paideia
- [6] The Guide for POSDRU Indicators, ESF Romania, January 2012, http://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/Document_Files//Stiri/00010448/rk7_qu_ghidul_indicatorilor_final.pdf, pp. 68-69, accessed March 2014
- [7] The Socio-Economic for Programming the European Funds 2014 – 2020 in Entrepreneurship and Social Economy Area, <http://www.fseromania.ro/images/doc2013/mmfpsspveconomiesociala.pdf>, pp. 10, accessed March 2014
- [8] World Bank, Remittances Data Watch, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org>, accessed March 2014