

CHANGES OCCURRING ON THE LABOUR MARKET IN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANIA'S ADERATION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

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For Romania, the adhesion to the European Union will bring important changes on the labour market. Those who work on this market, the bearers of the work demand as well as the work offer, must adapt to the changes caused by Romania's participation to an integrationist organisation which supports the free circulation of the labour force among the countries that are members of the E.U. Human resources are an important factor for the economic growth and for the increase of the competitiveness of the firms on the European market. We anticipate that, in the near future, many of the companies will face difficulties regarding employment, especially in the case of the trades that are wanted in the E.U. Taking into account this lack of work offer and the economic growth, we anticipate an increase of the wage expenses for the companies.

Key words: labour market, economic integration, external migration.

Signing the Amsterdam Treaty on the 2nd of October 1997, the European Union set as main objective for promote the economic and social progress, as well as a high level of employment, and to come to a balanced and sustainable development, especially by creating a space with no internal frontiers, by consolidating the social and economic cohesion. Therefore, the Community's action aims at promoting a co-ordination between the employment policies of the states that are members of the E.U., in view of enhancing their efficiency by drawing up a co-ordinate policy regarding employment.

At the meeting of the European Council that took place at Lisbon, a new strategic objective was set for the E.U. for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world, based on knowledge, capable of a sustainable economic growth, with more and better work places, and with a better social cohesion.

In order to achieve this objective, the European Council decided upon a strategy having three essential components:

- to promote the transition to a competitive economy based on knowledge and a informational society for everybody;
- to modernise the European model, to invest in people and to promote the social inclusion;
- to support a healthy economic growth.

The Romanian society is now, more than ever before, at a turning point. We must face both the destructive effects of some important socio-economic changes, and to revive a development process in order to become a modern, competitive society with a high degree of social cohesion which, in fact, is the common objective of the entire European construction. If the past is obsessive by the great number of problems it generated, the future is oppressive by a rapid social construction based on new co-ordinates, due to the fact that our country belongs to the large European family.

In Romania, the main objective is to create a thriving society, active from the economic, social and political points of view, with a high level of collective and individual responsibility, socially united, with many opportunities for everybody:

- active: capable to develop itself from the economic and social points of view, to use the opportunities and to face efficiently the risks, to continuously develop its capacities and to activate the excluded, passive social parts which are subjected to the risk of involution and dependence;
- socially united: a high degree of social solidarity, in which the parts excluded socially, subjected to multiple shortage, are to be minimised;
- opportunities for everybody: a society in which each member is granted real chances to take an active part in all the fields of the social life.

Summarising these three characteristics - active, socially united and opportunities for everybody - we can say that the society model which we want to build is an inclusive one. In order to achieve this objective, the entire Romanian society must take an active part: the government, the companies, the social partners, and all the citizens of this country.

Although the work resources are a part of each individual's life, their use as well as the effects of this use are directly connected to the life of a community or even to that of society, as a whole. The social integration of the work resources makes us take into account the human capital, with all the characteristics of a public good: even those that do not take an active part in its creation benefit from it directly or indirectly. The general interest is that these resources shall be not only preserved but also developed in accordance with our aspirations of welfare, stability and social cohesion, all the more Romania is rich in work resources. The work resources must become a national priority, and the practical achieving of this priority can be done only by clearly setting forth the objectives and by a realistic policy based on consensus and social dialogue.

The efficiency of the labour market is a basic request, essential for the economic growth. It can not be estimated in a simple manner, in the terms of other market. These arguments are perfectly understandable if we take into account the complexity of the new labour market, the fact that its object is special merchandise: the labour force. On the other hand, the labour market occupies a strategic place in the system of existing markets, taking the impulses of the other markets, sending, in its turn, its own impulses, to them, a fact that encourages or hinders the economic development.

Starting with the 1st of January, Romania becomes a part of the large European family. The adhesion to the European Union could generate a series on changes in the near future. These changes could also affect the labour market, both the companies and the people working or are looking for a job. Let's not forget that the adhesion to the European Union involves the complete freedom of the four basic fluxes: goods, services, capitals and labour force.

We all ask the question: what will the adhesion to the European Union bring in the labour market filed that is extremely sensitive? We ask this question because we have inherited from the communist period and from the period of transition to the market economy an inertia that manifests in a low mobility of the labour force and an educational-cultural inclination towards stability. Only in the last few years the things have started to change and, as a consequence, by eliminating the restrictions in the circulation of the Romanian citizens to the western countries, the migration flux to the developed economies in the European Union has become more intensive, even in the circumstances in which certain countries have tried to stop the mobility of the labour force coming from Romania.

First of all, the companies must know that the adhesion to the E.U. will generate an important economic growth in the near future. This will contribute to progressively eliminating the discrepancies between Romania and the other countries that are members of the E. U., because the level of the economic growth exceeds by far the level of the economic growth in the Euro zone (more than 8% economic growth is predicted for 2006). As a result, an increase of the wage value is expected, which has a direct influence on the production expenses. But the main motivation of the foreign investors that have come to Romania lately was the low costs for the labour force. There is the danger of transferring the operating efficiency from Romania to the East, namely to the countries that have a low wage level, that is towards the ex-soviet countries or towards Asia. I anticipate that this situation will only appear after 10-15 years. Meanwhile, the investments can generate new jobs and can stimulate the economic growth in Romania.

It is obvious that in the near future, the adhesion to the E.U. will generate the increase of the wage value and if we take into account the best specialists who can now choose a work place in any of the 27 states which are members of the E.U, the increase will be significant. However, my opinion is that, in the near future, real "fights" will take place among the multinational companies that are able to offer good wage to attract the best specialists. The migration to the E.U. might cause a lack of eligible candidates for the top positions. This trend is also influenced by the fact that the graduates of the universities are not enough prepared, only a small percent of them being able to face a dynamic and creative work environment.

It is rather difficult to evaluate the effects of Romania's adhesion to the E.U. from the point of view of the external migration. The specialists have conflicting opinions. My opinion is that, in the next years, after the adhesion, more Romanians will leave abroad. But this will not generate an alarming situation. On medium and long term, the number of leavings will decrease and some of the Romanians that have departed before 2007 will come back. My opinion is based on the fact that the discrepancies between the value of the wages in Romania and that in the other European countries have been reduced, as a result of achieving a good economic growth in the next period. For the 10 countries that have adhered to the E.U. in 2004, the migration proved to be a false problem, being estimated to 4% out of their population (about 3 million persons) or to 0.8% out of the E.U. population.

Although, at first sight, we have the tendency to assert that in case of liberalising the circulation of labour force, capitals, goods and services we run the risk that a large part of the local labour force shall migrate towards the other E.U. countries, we must also take into account the reverse phenomenon. It is estimated that together with the flux of foreign investments from the art of the E.U. countries, the interest for the Romanian labour market will also increase. Thus, an increase of the immigrating labour force, especially of

the qualified staff, the one that has acquired experience, is estimated or, otherwise, an increase of the competitive pressure on certain segments of the labour market.

Thus, it is possible that, because of the external migration, Romania shall face a shortage of labour force. It is foreseen that this deficit will affect the entire E.U. in the next decades. The value of this deficit is expected to amount up to about 60 million persons. This shortage has as main cause the ageing phenomenon that affects the population in the E.U. countries. After the adhesion, our country, too, may be affected by this phenomenon. It consists in the fact that the employers have to hire ex-communitary workers because there is a tendency among the local workers to refuse the jobs offers from other fields of activity. Therefore, a part of the foreign citizens coming from a third country will be allowed to work in Romania in fields in which the Romanian or the E.U. workers are not interested to work in (especially because of the low value of the wage in the respective fields).

After 1990, the reorganisation and privatisation have generated a drift of the urban population towards the restructured fields in the countryside. Agriculture has become an employer, a fact which contributed to the increase of employment in the countryside. In the next period, it is estimated that the active population in the rural world shall turn towards the agricultural sector, because of the development of a competing agriculture focused on middle-sized farms. Thus, the adhesion to the E.U. will encourage the entrepreneurs working in the agricultural field, not only by the opportunities offered by the great variety of the intervention instruments that support the competitiveness in this field, but also by the possibility of attracting an important part of the population working in the agricultural field towards the field of non-agricultural services.

We ask the question: can this really happen? Is this opinion given by the governmental specialists a little optimistically? If we take into account the fact that Romania has a sustainable economic growth, we should witness a drift of an important part of the active population from the countryside into the urban environment, in the attempt to find better paid jobs. But this did not happen in the previous years and I do not know what can make us believe that the same thing will happen in the future.

We notice a different trend. Indeed, mention can be made of a migration tendency existing in the countryside, but not towards towns, but towards other countries. We can notice a process of village depopulation because many people living in the countryside choose to work abroad, in the E.U. countries. This tendency could amplify in the next period, after the adhesion, because of eliminating most of the restrictions that used to hinder the free circulation of persons. Many Romanians that have been working abroad for a long time could take advantage from this and bring their families close to them. This can affect the agricultural farms by causing a shortage of labour force, but even more affected will be the companies in towns, especially the small one, that might face the same problem.

After a period in which the labour market in general, and especially the employment, has surpassed a crisis situation, the evolution in the next period will probably determine a change that is in accordance with the requests of a market economy. In the next period it is imperative that the reconsideration of the part played by the industry in increasing the performance of the national economy and the importance of the field of services, should take place. An efficient and profitable economy will cause, in the next years, a drift of the labour force in fields in which there is a growing labour productivity. The labour market in Romania must meet the requirements of the companies to permanently adapt to an increasing competitiveness.

Because of the work offer shortage, the fluctuation of the labour force may increase in the next period. The phenomenon has already effects on the labour market. This fluctuation is caused by the economic growth, privatisation, the increase of the value of the wages and the bad management of human resources. The fluctuation of the labour force is normal and the companies have to get used to it though this fluctuation is not beneficial for most of the employers who have got used to having at their disposal a good quality, very badly paid and numerous labour force. Obviously, this phenomenon will lead to the increase of the firms' preoccupations for motivating and meeting the employees' needs in order to face the pressure generated by the lack of labour force.

Mention should be made of the fact that the European Union lays stress on professional training, professional reconversion and requalification, professional integration of the unemployed and on supporting the continuous training. It is anticipated that, in the next 5 years, about 3 million Euro will be allotted from the European Union's funds to support such programmes in Romania. It is expected an increase of the value of the employees' professional training which the firms carrying on their activity in Romania can benefit from. The firms have already become aware of the importance of the professional training and pay an increasing attention to their own training programmes for their own employees.

Taking into account the globalisation of the markets, the increase of competitiveness is seen from a new perspective: more specialisation and adaptation of the companies to the new demands and trades generated by the technical progress. In order to make the companies more dynamic, the offer and demand of initial and continuous professional training on the labour market must satisfy these needs. Therefore, apart from

the necessity of getting information about the available work places promoted by means of the institutions that find jobs for the labour force, the connections of the latter with the companies and training centres must be encouraged so that the requirements of the companies should be met.

The training quality and the acquisition of new skills by the employers and employees become increasingly important factors of competitiveness in an economy based on knowledge, as it is the case of the European Union's economy. Unfortunately, the low number and the incomplete geographic coverage of the suppliers of training programmes, the companies' low interest in investing in the development of the human resources as well as the training offer regarding more the programmes for acquiring general skills rather than specific ones, contributed to the low rate of participation to this kind of programmes. The development of the complementary character of the continuous and initial professional training programmes must be set as main objective, in view of making them more attractive and flexible.

After the adhesion, Romania will have as main challenges to maintain the economic growth, to keep the labour force, especially the qualified one, inside its borders, to develop the human resources, to get communitary funds, to attract capitals based on knowledge.

The economic changes caused by the adhesion to the E.U. will have important effects on the work resources. The citizens will have to assume new responsibilities, to use their own knowledge, practice and skills in a different context. Under the new circumstances, the existing human capital will have to be capitalised and improved according to the new requirements of socio-economic development.

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