

## ACTIVE POLICIES TO DECREASE UNEMPLOYMENT IN BIHOR COUNTY

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**Abstract:** *Beginning with the theoretical reasons regarding unemployment and active employment policies, we intend to carry out a quantitative analysis based on the data provided by AJOFM and presented in the Activity Report of 2017 aiming to estimate the effectiveness of active policies against unemployment by taking the number of employments due to policies implemented in Bihor County. The objectives of the study were: to analyze the evolution trends of unemployment in Bihor county compared to the national level during the transition period, to discuss the trend and the unemployment structure in Bihor in 2017, to determine of the occupancy rate of unemployed people in Bihor in 2017, as well and analyzing the effectiveness of the employment policies of graduates. Statistical data suggests that the most effective active measure to stimulate employment is mediation of work, beginning with the idea that 44.4% of the people included were involved in mediation. The analysis of the concerns for professional training shows that the highest interest for this form of professional insertion is among young people, oriented towards qualification / requalification and improvement of the professional training. This trend could also indicate the existence of a discrepancy between the school network in the county and the structure of the labor market. The existence of compatibility between the orientation of the unemployed people towards jobs demanded on the labor market and the organization of training courses in accordance with such tendencies suggests an adequate preoccupation of the specialized institutions for amending the malfunctions existing in this respect. Regarding the efficiency of the policies to stimulate the employment of young people there is a more pronounced interest from young people in using employment policies in comparison to other age groups. On the other hand, there is a certain reluctance on the part of the employers to access the state's facilities for the employment of unemployed people.*

**Keywords:** *unemployment, active policies, unemployment rate, unemployment costs, employment*

**JEL Classification:** J23; J24.

### 1. Introduction and theoretical reasons regarding unemployment and active policies to reduce unemployment

Specialist literature is concerned with understanding unemployment as a social phenomenon with complex causes and consequences on both society and the individual who fulfils this social role over a certain period of time. Some definitions emphasize the causes of unemployment, defining it as being "the situation of a surplus labor market where the supply exceeds the demand for labor", which means that part of the population cannot find a job, although they wish. (Pop, 2002: 686). In the same note, unemployment is the expression of imbalances which occur on the labor market but also on the goods and services market, and is manifested by the

fact that part of the employed population loses their job, but also due to the fact that the new generations reach the legal employment age which determines the increase in labor supply. (Zamfir and Vlăsceanu, 1993).

Other definitions, those with an operational role, are concerned with the correct definition of the person having this status being described as the person who fulfils the following cumulatively: he/she is looking for a job from the age of minimum 16 and up to the fulfilment of the retirement conditions, the state of health and the physical and mental capacities make him / her fit for work, he / she does not work, does not earn any income or has income from activities authorized according to the law, incomes lower than the value of the social reference indicator of the insurance for unemployment and employment stimulation in force, is available to start work immediately if he/she finds a job. (Law 76/2002, article 5 point IV)

According to the law, unemployed people are people who have not been able to work after graduating from an academic institution or after performing their military service if they fulfil the following conditions: they are graduates of academic institutions, aged 16 and over who, 60 days after graduation, failed to work according to their professional training, they are graduates of special schools for disabled people, aged 16 and over, who have failed to work according to their training professional (Law 76/2002, article 17, paragraph 2);

Unemployment generates a series of costs for individuals, the economy, and society. This is about the social cost, which takes into account the demoralizing effect of unemployment on the unemployed person, the financial cost, which results in the payment of unemployment benefits, but also in the loss of some tax and contribution income and the economic cost that arises from the fact that the economy has a low level of production of goods and services compared to what it would have had if the labor force had been employed. (Buzducea, 2010).

Correctly assessing the costs generated by unemployment also requires taking into account unemployment advantages, which are related to aspects such as: determining employees to look for jobs in the primary labor market sector, which involves secure jobs, high incomes, superior qualification, creating a flexible workforce capable of adapting to the requirements of changes in the structure of the economy, "which contributes to greater efficiency in short-term resource allocation and faster economic growth in the long run". (Cochinescu, 2005)

Ensuring a high level of employment is a priority in national economy, because "this is the source of the supply of state budgets, especially the state social insurance budgets, and therefore a guarantee of sufficient financing of education, health, budgetary personnel, etc., as a guarantee of adequate social protection." (Blaga, 2005:11)

The "Europa 2020" strategy, a programmatic document of the European Union, includes strategic priorities for the countries of the Union, and in terms of employment it is reflected in the fact that 75% of the population aged 20-64 should have a job.

The issue of employment and unemployment is addressed generally by two types of social policy: passive policies, which mainly involve the payment of unemployment benefits and active policies, which aim to increase employment and which externalize in "group or community individual initiatives or actions, usually supported by public authorities at local and / or national level" (Mihăescu, 2001:209)

Specialized literature highlights four categories of active measures: mobilizing job offers, which includes programs that increase the chances of employing people who

pose difficult placement problems, the development of work skills, which are primarily the responsibility of employers and the national education system, the promotion of the active search spirit, which aims to support the processes of connecting jobseekers with potential employers and the direct creation of temporary or permanent jobs in the public sector or within the non-profit organizations (Giarini and Liedtke, 2001).

Regarding the legislation on unemployment, in our country it is worth mentioning that Law no. 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and the stimulation of employment, as subsequently amended and supplemented, is in effect today. The normative act is structured in two parts: a first part dedicated to the detailed regulation of the unemployment insurance system which includes after defining the basic concepts used, the categories of beneficiaries and system insurants, regulations on the unemployment insurance budget, the unemployment benefit, and a second part that includes active measures to stimulate employment (Onica-Chipea, 2014).

Pursuant to this law, the increase in employment opportunities for jobseekers is achieved by the National Employment Agency, mainly through: professional information and counselling, work mediation, professional training, counselling and assistance in starting an independent activity or for starting a business, completing employee salary income, stimulating workforce mobility. Professional information and counselling is a set of services granted free of charge to jobseekers, with the aim of: providing information regarding the labor market and the evolution of jobs; profiling and classification in employment level: easy to hire, medium level, difficult to hire and very difficult to hire; developing the ability and self-confidence of jobseekers to make their own career decisions; training in methods and techniques of job search; guidance during the process of socio-professional integration into the new job. (Law 76/2002, article 58)

It should be mentioned that the graduates of the academic institutions and graduates of the special schools, aged 16 and over, who, within 60 days of graduation, register with the employment agencies and work full-time for a period longer than 12 months old, benefit from an entry premium of 1500 lei. (Law 76/2002, art. 73<sup>1</sup> alin. (1))

Another active measure provided by Law 76/2002 refers to the stimulation of employers for hiring unemployed people and is done by subsidizing the jobs for the following categories: graduates of academic institutions, people over 45, unemployed people who are the only providers for single-parent families, long-term unemployed people, NEET youth, unemployed people who, within 5 years from the date of employment, meet the conditions for retirement, people with disabilities. (Law 76/2002, art. 80 alin. (1), art. 85 alin. (1-2), and alin. (5)).

Thus, employers who hire for an indefinite period of time, graduates of academic institutions receive monthly, for a period of 12 months, for each hired graduate an amount of 2250 Ron, with the obligation to maintain working relations for at least 18 months. (Law 76/2002, art. 80 alin. (1)).

## 2. Dimensions of employment policies for the unemployed people in 2017.

### Statistical analysis of data

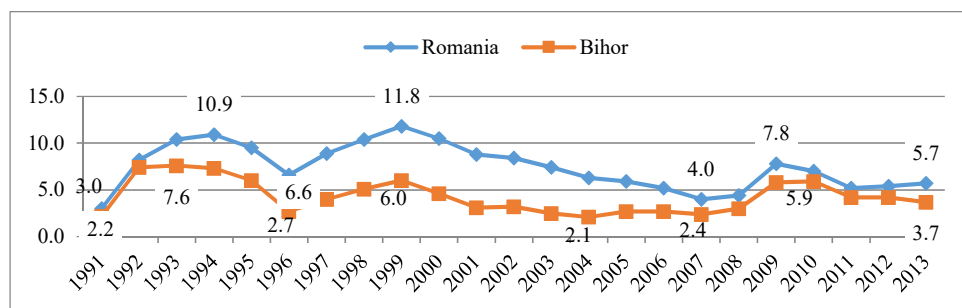
We intend to carry out a quantitative analysis based on the data provided by AJOFM and presented in the Activity Report of 2017 aiming at estimating the effectiveness of active policies against unemployment by taking the number of employments due to policies implemented in Bihor County.

The objectives of the study were:

- analyzing the evolution trends of unemployment in the Bihor county compared to the national level during the transition period;
- discussing the trend and the structure of unemployment in Bihor in 2017;
- determining of the occupancy degree of the unemployed people in Bihor in 2017
- analyzing the efficiency of the employment policies of graduates

### 2.1. Unemployment developments in Romania and Bihor County, 1990-2013

Even a brief analysis of the evolution of the unemployment rate in Bihor County, during the transition period, shows that it was lower than the average recorded in Romania. Among the possible explanations we mention: the accelerated development of the private sector, which has absorbed some of the redundant workforce; the development at a more sustained pace compared to the national average of the light industry in the "lohn" system, which attracted much of the labor force in the area (Bihor County being an important outlet for this economic activity, given the cheap and qualified labor force in light industry), even if the level of pay is well below the national average; spatial proximity to Hungary and the other countries in the European area, which has facilitated, even in the first years after the revolution, the insertion of the county labor force into the economy of the countries in the area. (Chipea, 2015: 176)



**Figure 1:** Evolution of the unemployment rate in Romania and Bihor County, 1991-2013

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo database, online, apud Chipea, 2015: 174

The evolution of the unemployment rate in the Bihor County is similar to that registered at national level, with the indication that the values are much lower. Thus, the highest unemployment rate was registered in 1994, when it reached 7.6% compared to 11% at national level and in 1999 when it had the value of 6% of the population compared to 11.8% at national level. The same appreciation can be

made with regard to the lowest value of the unemployment rate. It is registered in 2004, being 2.1% in Bihor County and 4% in 2008 at national level. In 2009, a year of economic crisis, both at national level and at the level of Bihor County, unemployment increased, reaching 7.8% and 5.9%, respectively. (Idem: 174-176) The data show that since 2011, the two levels of analysis are separated by opposite trends; at national level is on an ascending line (from 5.2 in 2011 to 5.4 in the following year and 5.7 in 2013) and in Bihor county on the downward slope from 4.2% to 3.7 in 2013.

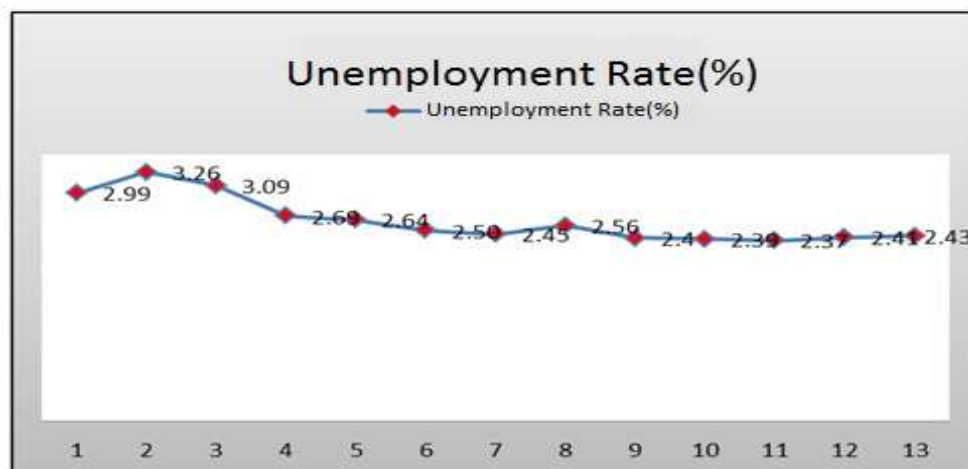
In 2016, with a relatively high unemployment rate of 5.9%, Romania is below the European average. Values above the Romanian average were recorded in the same period in: Greece 23.5%; Spain 19.6%; Portugal 11.1%; Italy 11.7%; France 10.1%, Ireland 7.9%; Poland 6.2%; Slovakia 14.0%; (Chivu, 2018: 32)

From the analyses carried out by the specialized bodies it results that in Bihor county, the causes of the increase of unemployment in 1999 (with the highest unemployment rate) consisted in: intensification of the restructuring measures by liquidation of the units with majority state capital; the increase in the number of beneficiaries of professional reintegration, unemployment benefits and support allowances among young people under the age of 25, who, after graduating from academic institutions, do not find employment opportunities as part of their professional training, being refused due to lack of experience; conventions concluded between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministries of Agriculture, Transport and M.L.P.A.T., which provide social protection during December-March when, due to unfavourable meteorological conditions, they cannot continue their activity; the refusal of economic agents to hire people over the age of 45, who prefer unemployment in comparison to other options granted to them; collective redundancies (since 1998 and 1999), the most affected areas, which were declared by governmental decision as deprived areas, were: Ștei and Nucet, Șuncuiuș, Popești, Derna, Dobrești, Borod, areas in which only one industrial activity was developed, namely mining. (Chipea, 2015:176)

## **2.2. Evolution and structure of unemployment in Bihor County in 2016-2017**

From a 3.7% unemployment rate registered in Bihor county in 2013 (Figure 1), it is constantly decreasing, reaching 2.43% at the end of 2017 (Figure 2), the number of registered unemployed people decreasing by 1,658 people, in 2017, from 8,155 people at the end of 2016 to 6,497 in December 2017. It should be noted that the decrease of the total number of unemployed people is influenced by the uncompensated unemployed people who have not renewed their applications, the number of unemployed people who benefit from the unemployment benefit remaining roughly the same (1862, compared to 1936 in 2016). The percentage of uncompensated unemployed people in the total number of unemployed people is 71%, their number decreasing compared to the previous year by 26% (from 6219 in 2016, to 4635, in 2017).

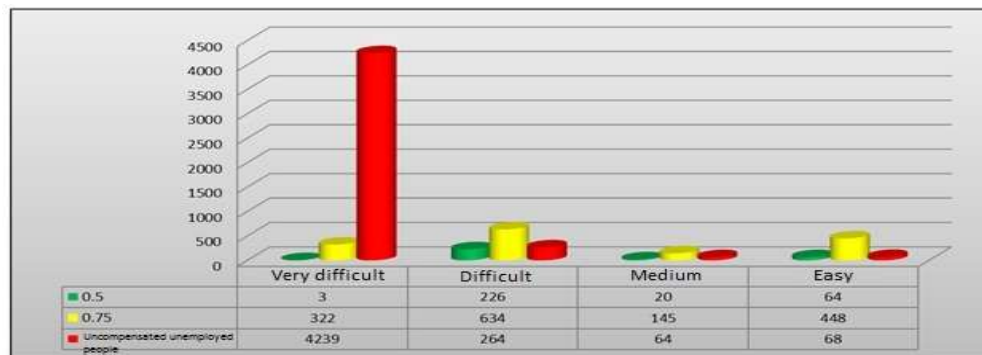
With regard to the age structure of unemployment, 31.12.2017 the highest unemployment rate is among the age group 40-49 years old (28.1%), followed by the age group 30-39 years old (23.1%) and in terms of the level of education, the unemployed people with primary, gymnasium and professional education represent the highest share (78.6%), followed by the unemployed people with high school and secondary education (14.7%). and those with university studies representing only 6.7%.



**Figure 2:** Evolution of the unemployment rate in Bihor County, 31 December 2016-31 December 2017  
Source: AJOFM Report, 2017: 4

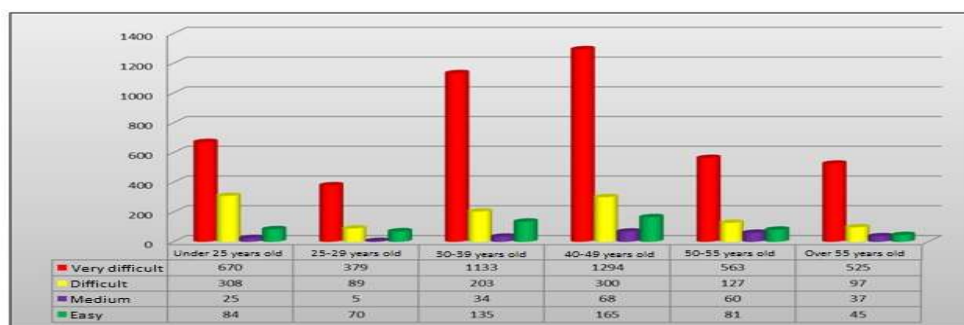
### 2.3. Determining of the occupancy degree of unemployed people registered in 2017, in Bihor County.

In line with the legislative changes, during 2017 an important role was given to the profiling and classification in employment level: easy to hire, medium level, difficult to hire and very difficult to hire, by the end of the year a total number of 15,381 Dutch questionnaires were applied to all job seekers, out of which 3,373 are under 25. The degree of occupancy of the unemployed people registered in 2017 was determined according to: type of benefit, age category and level of training, as follows:



**Figure 3:** Occupancy rate of unemployed people registered in Bihor County in 2017, in terms of the type of benefit  
Source: AJOFM Report, 2017: 8

Uncompensated unemployed people are those who fall into the largest share in the category of very difficult to hire.



**Figure 4:** Occupancy rate of unemployed people registered in Bihor County in 2017, in terms of age category

Source: AJOFM Report 2017: 8

The figure shows that the most difficult to hire are unemployed people aged between 30 and 50 years old, followed by young people under 25 years old.



**Figure 5:** Occupancy rate of unemployed people registered in Bihor County in 2017, in terms of the level of training

Source: AJOFM Report, 2017: 8

In terms of the level of training, unemployed people with poor schooling (without education or with incomplete school) fall into the category of very difficult to hire, and those with higher education have few problems from this point of view.

Analyzing the data presented in the three charts, it is clear enough what are the predominant categories that are included in the typologies presented:

- *"Very difficult"* to hire - includes people who are registered as unemployed people without the right to benefit (minimum guaranteed income beneficiaries) aged 40-49 and who have no incomplete education / schooling.
- *"difficult"* to hire - people who are registered as unemployed people beneficiaries of unemployment benefits - 75%, aged under 25 but approximately equal to those aged 40-49 and having high school / secondary education

- "medium" to hire - people who are registered as unemployed people beneficiaries of unemployment benefit - 75%, aged 40-49 but approximately equal to those aged 50-55 and having high school / secondary education
- "Easy" to hire - people who are registered as unemployed people beneficiaries of unemployment benefits - 75%, aged 40-49 but approximately equal to those aged 30-39 and having high school / secondary education.

#### **2.4. The effectiveness of policies to stimulate the employment of graduates**

Although, as previously noted, graduates being included in the category of young people with a higher level of education (medium, secondary and higher) fall, in terms of employability in the category of "medium" and "easy" to hire, we considered that they are eligible for a special analysis starting from the finding that, at both European and Romanian level, youth unemployment is characterized by a rate much higher than the average unemployment rate - in 2016, the average unemployment rate in Romania was 5.9%, while the youth rate was 20%. (Chivu, 2018: 32)

We will continue to present data and information on the most relevant measures to stimulate the employment of people who address AJOFM Bihor, even if in the case of some measures, the situation of the graduates is not expressly highlighted.

Through the information and counselling measure promoted by the law, in the year 2017 there were a number of 8100 newly registered people, along with another 1712 who were among those previously included in such actions. By participating in this measure, 586 people (5.9%) were enrolled in professional training courses and 1121 people (11.4%) were hired exclusively through counselling and professional guidance services.

In the labor mediation services there were 8769 people from which 3894 (44.4%) people were hired, out of which 3,339 people with employment contract for indefinite period and 687 people with fixed-term employment contract.

During the year 2017, 5930 new job vacancies declared by the employers were registered at the labor agency, whose structure confirmed the orientation of the county, but especially of Oradea Municipality, to technical activities, from production engineers to digital control operators or industrial robots.

On the other hand, it is significant for graduates that most of the jobs communicated were addressed to people with high school or professional education (60%) mainly in trading, services and tourism, followed by the technical and medical field. The structure of the job market offers graduates of high school and higher education opportunities for jobs such as: commercial worker, salesman, cashier, security agent, chef/ chef assistant, waiter / waiter assistant, maid, nurse, manufacturing operator / industrial robots / electronic components, mechanical locksmith, technician, maintenance electrician, welder.

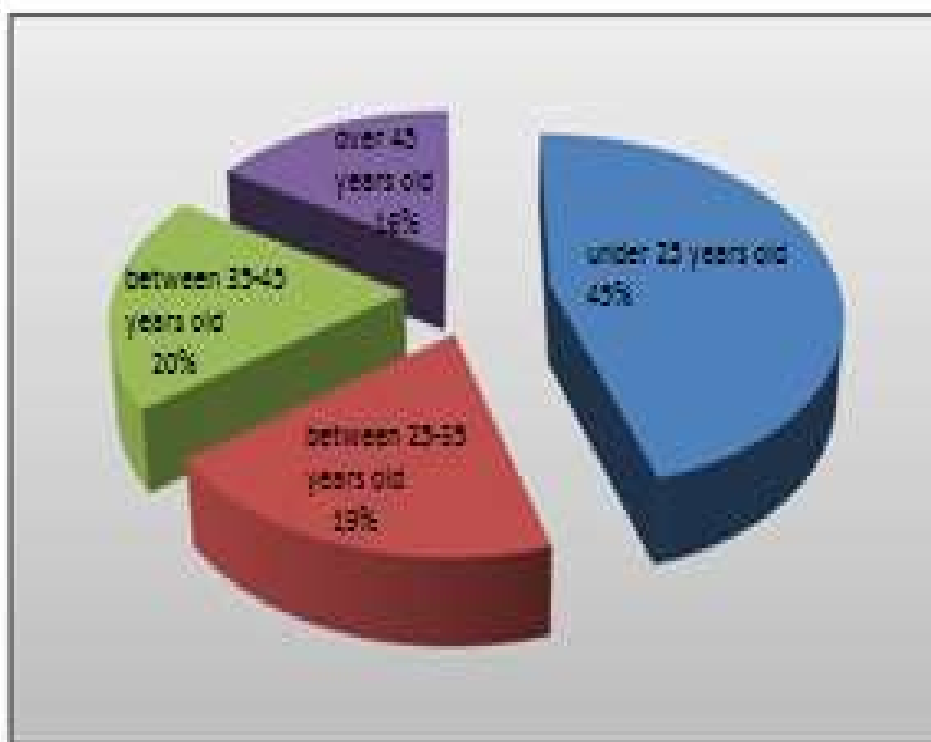
It is also relevant that 27.5% of the declared vacancies are offered for unskilled work for which employers require high school or general education: unskilled workers in the light industry - clothing or leather goods and substitutes; cargo handler; component moulder; kitchen worker.

In 2017, AJOFM Bihor organized 30 professional training programs for a total of 586 people and continued another 8 professional training programs initiated in 2016 with 150 people. The 736 people were included in the 38 professional training programs, of which 8 were initial courses, 20 requalification / qualification courses and 10 further training / specialization courses.



Analyzing the structure of the training courses we mention that the highest interest for training is represented by the compensated unemployed people - 519 persons (70.5%), compared to the uncompensated unemployed people - 217 (29.5%); in terms of forms of training, the focus is on re-qualification and specialization programs - 363, respectively 238 persons, compared to the orientation towards initiation courses of only 135 persons. We consider that a plausible explanation for such a trend may be the incompatibility between the professional training network and the structure of the market for qualifications in Bihor County.

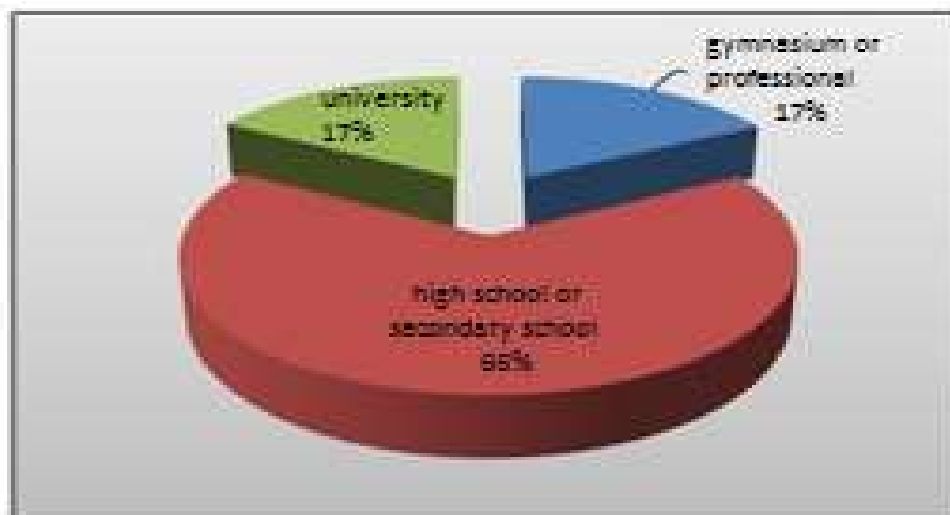
From the point of view of the topic we approached, however, the greatest interest is the structure of the participants in the training according to their age, starting from the premise that the graduates are young people, aged up to 35 years old. From this point of view, the data provided in the AJOFM Report for 2017 shows that young people under 25 years old - 334 people, along with those aged between 25 and 35 - 142 people represent the highest share in the total number of people in 2017 in training (64.7%) out of a total of 736 people (figure 6). Corroborating the data with the above mentioned on the tendency of the participants to undertake qualification / requalification and training courses confirms the hypothesis we concluded regarding the existence of a disparity between the structure of the labor market and the structure of the professional training network in Bihor County.



**Figure 6:** Structure of participants in training courses in 2017 in terms of the age of the participants.

Source: AJOFM Report, 2017:10

Significant for the topic is the structure of participants in training courses in terms of the level of training of the participants. From this point of view, we find that the majority of the participants in the courses are those who have graduated high school and secondary education - 487 (66.1%) and who together with graduates of higher education - 123 people, represent 82.89% of the total number of participants.



**Figure 7:** Structure of participants in professional training courses in 2017 in terms of the training level of the participants.

Source: AJOFM Report, 2017: 10

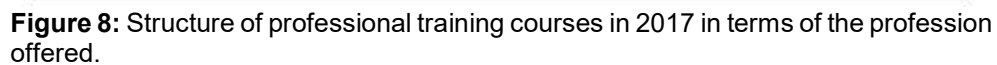
The analysis of vacancies declared by employers during 2017 shows that the structure of the job market offers graduates of high school and higher education opportunities for jobs such as: commercial worker, seller, cashier, security agent, chef / chef assistant, waiter / waiter assistant, maid, nurse, manufacturing operator / industrial robots / electronic components, mechanical locksmith, technician, maintenance electrician, welder. (AJOFM Report, 2017).

The existence of a visible concordance between the structure of the labor market defined by the jobs declared vacant and the structure of the training courses organized by AJOFM Bihor attests, in our opinion, first of all an adequate preoccupation of the specialized institution for the adequacy of the professional training of the labor force market requirements and, on the other hand, raising awareness among the unemployed people of the increase in employment opportunities through involvement in qualification / requalification and specialization training in the jobs required by the labor market.

As we can see in figure 7, most jobs for which training courses are organized are in line with the demand on the labor market presented in the previous paragraph. In addition, courses were organized for hairdressers, hair stylists, masseurs, photographers, automotive mechanics, fitness trainers who did not appear in the vacancy structure, as the people in question were placed on the labor market as self-employed people.

Based on the legal provisions on subsidizing graduate employment, in 2017, 243 conventions were signed to subsidize the employment of 284 graduates of which the majority, 153 (53.9%) were graduates of higher education, followed of 114 (40.1%) graduates of secondary education or post-secondary education and only 17 (5.9%) graduates of the lower cycle of high school or of arts and crafts schools.

During the year 75 premiums were awarded acc. to art. 73 (1), of which 52 (69.3) for compensated unemployed people and 23 (30.7%) for people without right to compensations. Most premiums were granted to high school graduates (43 people), followed by higher education graduates (31) and only one to a graduate of professional education.



In order to prevent long-term unemployment and to stimulate the unemployed people to work before the end of the period of benefit, the financial resources necessary for the allocation of 587 unemployed people were provided, the majority 317 being young people up to 30 years of age, which attests to the fact that this category of

people are more interested in getting hired as soon as possible after the agency's entry.

During the same period, qualification premiums amounting to 500 lei (for uncompensated unemployed people who are hired full-time for more than 3 months after the date of registration with the employment agencies) and qualification premiums for 835 unemployed people without the right to benefit (which means qualification premium). What is relevant for our analysis is that those who benefit mostly from these premiums are young people (41% up to 35 years of age) and on the other hand people with a medium level of training and higher compared to people with precarious training.

Regarding the use of the form of apprenticeship at the workplace, we can see that, although the employer concluding an internship contract, upon request, receives, during the period of the internship contract, a sum of 1350 lei / month, granted from the unemployment insurance budget in 2017, only one employer has used this form of training of the necessary qualified staff.

The same finding can be made in connection with the use of the facility for employers who, although they conclude an internship contract with the graduates of higher education, receive, on request, during the period of the internship contract, an amount in the amount of 1350 lei / month, granted from the unemployment insurance budget, has a reluctance to use this policy, with only one employer applied for this facility in 2017.

To obtain the subsidize provided by Law no. 76/2002 for the employment of pupils and students during the holiday period, in year 2017 there were 81 applications, out of which 77 pupils and 4 students and only 49 requests for the conclusion of the conventions stipulated by this law.

We are aware of the main limitation of our approach of exclusively quantitative approach to the problem under analysis. We believe that for the deepening that generates the behaviors that have been signalled, it is necessary to continue the analysis using qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups.

### **3. Conclusions:**

- The evolution of the unemployment rate in Bihor County during the transition to the market economy follows a trend similar to the national one, stating that, constantly, the unemployment rate is lower in the county compared to the national average. Explanations could be identified in: the faster pace of privatization; spatial proximity to Europe's developed West, and development of light industry in Lohn system.
- In an attempt to create the type of unemployed person difficult to hire, based on the data analyzed, this person would be one who is in the category of uncompensated unemployed people with poor education and professional training in the extreme age groups, either over 50 or under 25;
- Statistical data suggests that the most effective active measure to stimulate employment is mediation of work, starting from the idea that 44.4% of the people involved in the mediation were employed;
- The analysis of the preoccupations for the professional training shows that the youngest people, oriented towards qualification / requalification and improvement of the professional training, are of the highest interest in this form of insertion. This trend could also indicate the existence of a discrepancy between the school network in the county and the structure of the labor market.

The existence of compatibility between the orientation of the unemployed people towards jobs demanded on the labor market and the organization of training courses in accordance with such trends suggests an adequate concern of the specialized institutions to correct the existing dysfunctions.

- Regarding the efficiency of the policies to stimulate the employment of young people there is a more pronounced interest from young people in using employment policies in comparison to other age groups. On the other hand, there is a certain reluctance on the part of the employers to access the state's facilities for the employment of unemployed people.

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