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THESIS

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION POLICY
IN DEVELOPMENT REGION SOUTH-EAST
IN PERIOD 1997-2006**

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I. SCIENTIFIC THEMES OF SPECIALITY IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL-ECONOMIC COHESION LEVEL

II. STUDIES - RELEASES

Keywords: economic cohesion, regional development, funding programs, regional disparities, development regions.

SUMMARY

This thesis is structured into five chapters, containing four substantive analysis of the problems of cohesion policy and how it was applied to the South-East Development Region, and one of the conclusions.

Into preamble, in the introduction, I made a presentation of the overall situation of regional disparities at Community level, stressing that their existence is a potential conflict factor of economic, social and political development between Member States. I analyzed the differences in development by the value of GDP per capita, highlighting areas where there is extreme values, among which and Southeast Region.

In the first chapter, Regional Development and Economic and Social Cohesion: concept, history, tools, legislative and institutional framework, I defined the concepts with which I operated during the thesis:

- What are the regions and how they were defined in the literature, over time, to the forms it takes administrative regions in the Member States of the European Union by NUTS regions specific to the Community;
- Who are the main theories that define the role of the regions and their ability to generate economic growth and social welfare. I analyzed the theory of spatial localization of Von Thünen, I extended the analysis to the location of branches (Launhardt and Weber), for structures subnational (Christaller), to economic systems (Losch), for large spaces obtained by aggregation (Isard) and to areas regional scale integrated (Krugmann, Porter, Barro) toward the poles of growth (Perroux, Hirschmann, Friedmann Myrdall).
- What are the main key of regional growth and development. Here I have identified, according to the classifications made in the literature, factors such as geographic, demographic, organizational, related to the size of the sales market, the type of material and human resources from one regional area.

Then, I defined the term social and economic cohesion, a concept often associated with community structures, but which is reflected in economic theory and practice before the advent of the European Union. I detailed the concept of cohesion tying it to that convergence which I analyzed in turn from a dual perspective: real and nominal, and I reviewed the main EU Treaty where it is defined (Treaty of Rome, Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty), noting that each of these treaties brought to light by specific regulations, a particular component of cohesion: economic (Treaty of Rome, the Single European Act), socio-economic (Maastricht) and socio-economic and territorial cohesion (Lisbon).

In subsection 1.2., I defined that cohesion policy and its instruments. I have reviewed the key reforms in this policy, each bringing a substantive change of the objectives regarding law and to sources of funding.

After, I expanded in section 1.3. Cohesion policy analysis towards the development of regions with particularities related mainly to its economic component. I defined the concept of development on a regional scale stressing that the development and growth of a regional space basically means efficient use of factor inputs (capital) material and human resources of the area in question.

I then reviewed a number of theories related to regional development, from the perspective of several current theories that have influenced the management of resources: from the approach of minimal intervention (liberalism and neo-liberalism), to dirigisme with various forms of which the best known is Keynesianism, from classicism and neo-classical, to Marxist theories.

In subsection 1.4. I conducted a thorough analysis of the regions of the European Union, considered to be the foundation of regional development. I presented the main forms of organization of administrative regions in the European Union and the criteria by which they were formed, into historical development. I customized the analysis of the situation in the regions of France, with their competences and prerogatives.

In the second chapter, Legal and Institutional Framework of Regional Development Policy in Romania during the period 1997-2006, I reviewed the main pieces of legislation which had as object the regulation of regional development policy in the European Union (section 2.1.) and

in Romania (section 2.2). I focused on the analysis of the main aspects of regional development policy in terms of regulations of the European Union primary law (2.1.3), the secondary law of the European Union (2.1.4) and I presented the historical development of national legislation on regional development .

In subsection 2.2.2 I made an analysis of how establishing a general framework of regional development policy in Romania, based on Law 315/2004. I emphasized that the implementation of regional development policy in Romania is carried out with respect for fundamental principles, of particular importance in achieving a government in accordance with the principle of good administration: the principle of subsidiarity, decentralization and partnership, proportionality principles defined and analyzed in subchapter said.

I presented the institutional structures created at regional level in Romania in terms of legislative regulations with responsibilities and their role in regional development process.

In subsection 2.2.3 I presented the National Strategic Reference introduced as a new tool in the development of regional development policy for the 2007-2013 period and I showed again what it brings compared to instruments used in 1999-2006. Then, I presented five priorities for achieving the objective of reducing disparities manage financing using European funds: the development of basic infrastructure; increase long-term competitiveness of the Romanian economy; development and use more efficient of human capital in Romania; building effective administrative capacity; promoting a balanced territorial development.

In sub-section (2.3) I presented the main sectoral operational programs detailed in the Strategic Reference Framework.

In the third chapter, The funding programs of regional development in Romania before accession to the European Union, I examined in detail how were derulated PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD programs since 1998.

I described each of these programs and objectives associated subprograms. I presented distribution by regions of funds allocated through each of these programs, finding that mode equal distribution in each region was not an action that will lead to reducing disparities. Conversely, regions lagging behind, northeast, respectively southeast declined in economic

growth that correlate with impaired absorption of pre-accession funds. The first program PHARE implemented in Romania has demonstrated the need to increase funding so happened since PHARE 2000, the Economic and Social Cohesion component was directly linked to three regional priorities: human resources development in the context of industrial restructuring; support for small and medium-sized local and regional infrastructure respectively. Most of the funds PHARE 2000 was allocated to improve and develop regional and local infrastructure to decreasing disparities between regions and promote business.

Funding programs PHARE 2002 and 2003 was achieved by more complex projects. For this reason I analyzed only the programs allocated by Economic and Social Cohesion component and sub-component human resources development.

SAPARD program was implemented in Romania based on the national program for agriculture and rural development approved in December 2000 by the European Commission. I analyzed the sources of the funds and structure SAPARD measures, amounts and activities funded through this program 2000- 2006 period. Also, I conducted an assessment of the absorption of SAPARD funds in Romania in terms of aid, the amounts involved, the level of employment, the amounts paid and the degree of absorption and found that there are significant differences in the value of these indicators depending on development goals. The highest absorption rate was achieved on target rural infrastructure development (70.8%) and lowest on the development and diversification of economic activities to generate multiple revenue (6.28%).

In section 3.3, I focused on funding for regional development fund ISPA. Through this program were funded environmental measures that allowed entry into line with EU environmental requirements by complying with the accession partnership and action on transport infrastructure.

Then, I analyzed the evolution of the financing of pre-accession funds for regional development programs in Romania in 2000-2006, noting that the PHARE program has benefited from the higher amounts (10.920 million), followed by ISPA with 7.280 million euro and SAPARD with 3.640 million euro.

Financial resources allocated to Romania by the Community budget were joined by grants from the National Fund for Regional Development, worth insignificant compared to EU funding.

After accession to the European Union pre-accession funds were replaced with structural funds that the cohesion fund. I analyzed their allocation on three sources: the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund. I explained in detail, based on the National Strategic Reference main operational programs, the Managing Authority responsible for their management and fund of which were funded. I have deepened our analysis of the regional operational program whose strategic objective is to create new jobs and decreasing inter-regional disparities. Then, I analyzed the main measures to support regional economic development programs in Romania'm focusing mainly on those allocated state aid for 2001-2006.

Regiunea analizată, situată în Europa Răsăriteană și în partea de Sud-Est a României, prezintă o serie de particularități care dau imaginea potențialului de dezvoltare al acesteia. Dintre acestea amintim:

The region, situated in Eastern Europe and in the South-East of Romania, presents a number of features that give the image of its development potential. These include:

1. geographical existence of all forms that are found in Romania;
2. polycentric regional structure: the level of the six counties (Braila, Buzau, Constanta, Galati, Tulcea and Vrancea) there are 11 cities, 24 towns and 1447 villages.
3. the counties forming region there are great disparities, measured by a series of indicators such as GDP / per capita gross monthly earnings and unemployment.
4. are among the poorest and least developed regions in the European Union;
5. with all sustained efforts and an average annual growth rate over the region fails to overcome development gaps compared to the other regions of Romania and the European average. Average GDP per capita in Southeast Region stood at the level of 2015-6657 euro, and

until 2018 it reached 8225 euro. Between counties also are very different components that will be presented in the analysis section of objectives Development Region Southeast;

6. the region faces the existence of long-term demographic issues related to aging and migration, placing the region on position 531 of the EU's regions in terms of demographic vulnerability index in 2008.2

7. There are significant territorial disparities between counties components. The disparities are found both in economic (GDP per capita, road infrastructure and research and development, the number and size of businesses, the added value achieved in various sectors) and social perspective and connected environment. Extremes are given by Constanta, with the greatest economic potential) respectively Vrancea less than half the average score of the region;

8. have the highest index of vulnerability to globalization from Romania and ranks third in the European Union according to its value;

9. regional average of labor productivity is at the national average, but less than half that of the European Union, and the unemployment rate and the employment rate have values around the national average;

10. the region is vulnerable to climate change, as demonstrated by the climate vulnerability index value, which ranks the region on No. 241 from 267 EU regions and on the last place among the eight development regions in Romania, mainly due to location geographic, potential for flooding, changes regarding to precipitation and temperature, etc.

11. there is a potential energy resource exploitation given mainly of conventional energy (oil, natural gas - especially those on the Black Sea continental shelf, and others) and renewable (solar, wind, biomass, etc.);

12. traditionally, the region is an agricultural area with growth potential given the climatic and environmental factors but still exploited due to inefficient small farms that achieve a subsistence agriculture and due to an insufficient irrigation infrastructure and transport in agriculture;

13. the industrial activities cover the few sectors with low added value, mainly directed towards shipbuilding, food processing and furniture manufacturing and service sector provides jobs for half the employed population (with differences among the counties components) mainly in trade, transport, tourism and catering;

14. there are significant regional disparity in the few sectors: research-innovation-development, reflected by an indicator of spending for this area, which has represented, in 2008, 1.85% of the average GDP from European Union, 0.52% of the average GDP from Romania and 0.18% of GDP average from South East region. A note is: at intra-regional values are polarized (0.02% Vrancea, 0.03%, Buzau 0.06% Braila, 0.12% with the highest value of the index - Constanta, 0.46% Galati and 0.47% Tulcea).

15. education is represented at regional level on three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Education infrastructure (number of schools / kindergartens / universities per 1000 inhabitants) is one poor and with significant differences from county to county;

In this context, still in the period before accession to the European Union were developed a series of policy documents aimed at reducing the disparities that exist in inter-regional plan in relation with other regions from Romania and European Union. Among them I mention The Regional Development Masterplan of South East Region, Regional South East Development Plan 2010-2020 and 2014-2020 developed by the Regional Development Agency and a number of national policy documents that refer to the development potential the region in the national context, such as the Sectoral Operational Programme 2007-2013, the Territorial Development Strategy of Romania (polycentric Romania 2035 - territorial cohesion and competitiveness, development and equal opportunities for men) developed by Romanian Government. From the programated documents elaborated to community level, I mention the Lisbon Strategy, Strategy 2020 and as the document support, The Cohesion Reports elaborated by the European Commission.

The programmatic documents mentioned above and institutional elaborated are completed by a series of sectoral strategies concerning and analyzed region such as the Danube Strategy and a number of documents among which I mention The Analysis of context of South-East Region, elaborated through a project POSDRU by the Foundation for Local Democracy Multimedia), or a document prepared by the Advisory Committee on territorial cohesion of the

Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism (name of the ministry since 2012) related to the sustainable territorial development of the Danube territory.

I analyzed, critically all, all these documents and, on their basis, I developed the positioning of some of the development goals of the region, starting from the disparities identified, structural instruments and funds used for the regional development programs aimed at their decreasing: expansion and modernization of transport; attracting foreign direct investment by decreasing bureaucracy and facilities to investors; flexible labor market; promotion of environmental policy directed towards the protection of biodiversity and to increase the quality of ambient environmental factors.

The analysis carried out allowed me to reach a number of conclusions, summarized below.

After nearly six decades of European construction, the Community area is still far from the wishes of its founding members, related to ensuring balanced development in a supranational space, able to provide a high standard of living of all its citizens.

It is the reason why, over time, have arisen and have developed new tools and policies which to lead to achieving this. I tried, during the research, to highlight some of the particularities of regional development and economic and social cohesion, based on the legislative developments in the institutional framework and own instruments of this policy, with an emphasis on financing community projects in Romania before and after accession to European Union.

Then, I transposed the research towards South East Region, for several reasons. According to statistics dates, the region ranks the last in the rankings by the European Commission based on a series of indicators of economic, social, demographic, etc. At the same time, the region has a particularly high potential development, given the strategic geographical location and the availability of material and energy resources (I am referring mainly to renewables and natural gas reserves and oil from the Black Sea) .

In this context, I tried to determine the main reasons for which in Romania and in Development Region Southeast the applying financial instruments of cohesion policy has not

produced the expected results, while the absorption of European funds, according to the dates offered by the Minister of Regional Development and Public Administration, it was in Romania to beginning of 2016, 61.5%.

The absorption's rate of EU structural funds and cohesion funds, including pre-accession was low at the beginning of the programming period, which is explained by the lack of experience of using this type of financing and the existence of complex system but bureaucratic access and monitor their use. Subsequently, the absorption's rate increased progressively, Romania became a net beneficiary of the funding received by the Community budget for cohesion policy. Pre-accession funds PHARE and SAPARD had a high absorption capacity compared to the ISPA funds that have assumed administrative effort and higher implementation due to the specific purposes for which they were created.

The absorption's capacity is given, on the part by the power of the institutional system created by the state to administer the funds in question and, on the other part, by the absorption's capacity of the beneficiaries targeted by these funds. Comparisons with assessments of absorption's capacity in other Member States joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007 in similar moments of time, shows that Romania ranks last in the ranking, both for EU pre-accession and for those accessed between 2007-2013.

I believe that the problem consist lies in a low authority for coordinating the preparation for the management of Community funds, despite the fact that there were, both before and after 2007 special programs for technical assistance on EU programs.

I also believe that it's need a decentralized management which increases the responsibility of the Member States of ensuring the efficient use of funding from the European Union. This is also an obligation under the Treaty of Accession and a requirement of Structural Funds regulations. The Rules include specific arrangements aimed at enhancing management quality and capacity and ensuring effective implementation and evaluation.

The absorption capacity of beneficiaries refers to the ability of potential beneficiaries to develop projects and to co-financing. Providing human resources and their training remains a critical problem to the management process of structural instruments. A series of budget

constraints limited the recruitment process, so that the human resources involved in consulting and writing projects is insufficient and relatively far from commitments made by Romania. In addition, in the first years after accession programs in the pre-accession PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD were developed in parallel with new programmes from post-accession period. The number of those who have experience in accessing EU funds and received technical assistance is still small, despite the fact that the level of academic education have created courses and majors for development and management of European projects, which were joined by numerous training programs in this field, financed mainly by POSDRU programs and POAT.

The basic problem that I identified in the research included in this thesis consist in the low capacity of administrative authorities at central and local level to coordinate and implement regional programs. At the central level had created ministries which in their name or in their attributions the especially phrases such as „regional development”, „major projects”, in conjunction with segment specific national environment, administration, tourism. They had played and continue to play an important role in creating strategies and identifying lines of funding in the guidelines for socio-economic development of Romania from the perspective of regional development.

Locally, there are public structures administered, sequentially, projects and European programs, depending on immediate and future interests of the county or municipality, but the problem comes when projects arise that transcend the local and county boundaries.

This remark makes me bring the issue full operation efficiency and regions. As I noted in the analysis, the development regions in Romania are regions (entities) created after the model NUTS and as such have not legal personality and its own administrative capacity. For this reason, these regions have not power or institutional necessary legal framework for implementation of strategic programming documents. Territorial and social-economic development at regional level is coordinated by the Regional Development Council and is an important component in the development and monitoring of projects Regional Development Agency, but this is insufficient. Therefore, I believe that developing regions need to acquire greater administrative powers so that they can manage, legislative and institutional issues arising from the interests, sometimes divergent, to the counties of them.

In the future, the issue of regional economic development should be seen from a pragmatic perspective, given the geo-strategic and political developments to globally and european level. There are many voices calling restricting funding through the Community budget for two important segments for the evolution process of European integration: agriculture and regional development, arguing their position that the raport effort / effect, interpreted strictly from terms of economic efficiency is not positive and the market, allowed to play their role through two components, supply and demand, would determinate a better allocation of factors and in addition would generate cohesion and development.

At the same time is strongly supported the point of view, which I endorse and I, that the area supra-called European Union is still in construction and it's need to redistributing the Community budget so as to ensure the decreasing of disparities between Member States, between regions through regional development policy and between social and economic categories, regarding to Common Agricultural Policy.

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