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Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences

Doctoral School of Administration and Public Policies

Summary

DOCTORAL THESES

EVALUATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN ROMANIA

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Cluj-Napoca

2024

Keywords : entrepreneurship, financing, SRL-D, START, START UP NATION, program evaluation, indicators, turnover, net profit, capital, employees, administrative capacity, simplification of procedures.

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Summary

Romania is going through a period of economic and social transition, in which entrepreneurship is recognized as an essential driver of development. In recent years, the government and various organizations have implemented numerous programs to support entrepreneurship and innovation. These initiatives include subsidies, grants, mentoring and business accelerators, aimed at stimulating the creation and development of businesses, increasing innovation and competitiveness, thus contributing to the economic and social development of the country.

The main aspects addressed

In order to fully understand the entrepreneurial context in Romania, it is essential to analyze the factors that influence the development of the business environment. Romania has made significant progress in modernizing its economy, but still faces major challenges such as poor infrastructure, bureaucracy and corruption. Entrepreneurial culture is evolving, with young people increasingly interested in entrepreneurial initiatives. However, risk aversion remains a barrier for many. Also, the legislation and regulatory environment, as well as access to resources and finance, present significant challenges for entrepreneurs.

Evaluation of entrepreneurship support programs is crucial to ensure efficient use of resources and to continuously improve existing programs. This allows identifying the most effective ways to support entrepreneurs and maximizing the social and economic impact of these initiatives. The evaluation also ensures responsibility and transparency in the management of funds intended for entrepreneurship, contributing to the creation of a support environment more adapted to the needs of Romanian entrepreneurs.

This paper aims to investigate and evaluate the programs financed from the state budget to support entrepreneurship in Romania, focusing on economic-social indicators, the effectiveness of evaluation tools and the prospects for improving these programs. The main objectives include: Detailed analysis of the evolution of the main indicators for each edition of the programs studied; Comparing performance between successive editions of programs to identify trends and needed improvements; Qualitative assessment of the perspectives of representatives of implementing and monitoring agencies, as well as program beneficiaries.

These objectives and research questions ensure a deep understanding of how entrepreneurship support programs work and provide concrete data for the future development of the business environment and public policies in Romania.

Entrepreneurship in Romania is recognized as an important driver of economic and social development, and the government and other organizations have implemented various programs and initiatives to support this sector. However, there are still major challenges such as poor infrastructure, bureaucracy and corruption that can slow down business development and innovation in the country. Despite these challenges, there is an emerging ecosystem of support for entrepreneurs, including incubators and business accelerators and funding programs that can stimulate progress and innovation in the business environment.

The entrepreneurial mindset has evolved, and more and more young people are interested in entrepreneurial initiative due to the opportunities offered by technology and innovation. However, there is still risk aversion among a part of the population, which can hinder business growth. The legislation and regulatory environment present challenges related to the clarity and stability of tax legislation, and access to resources and finance remains an obstacle for many entrepreneurs.

However, Romania has developed an emerging ecosystem of support for entrepreneurs, including business incubators, accelerators and funding programs that can stimulate progress

and innovation in the business environment. Deep understanding of the entrepreneurial context in Romania is essential for stimulating economic growth and innovation in the country.

Access to resources and financing prove to be the biggest challenges for many entrepreneurs in Romania. Although various sources of financing are available, including European funds and venture capital investments, access to them may be limited for certain categories of entrepreneurs, such as women entrepreneurs or those from rural areas.

The evaluation of entrepreneurship support programs in Romania is vital to ensure efficient use of resources and to continuously improve existing programs. The motivation and importance of evaluation consists in the efficient allocation of resources, improving the quality of programs, maximizing the social and economic impact, as well as ensuring transparency in the management of funds intended for entrepreneurship.

By constantly evaluating the performance of entrepreneurship support programs, the most effective ways to support entrepreneurs at different stages of their development can be identified. Also, evaluation contributes to improving the quality of existing programs, stimulating innovation and increasing the competitiveness of enterprises.

Maximizing the social and economic impact of entrepreneurship support programs is essential for the sustainable development of communities and the growth of the national economy. Evaluation is also crucial to ensure accountability and transparency in the management of funds for these initiatives. By effectively addressing the needs of entrepreneurs, optimal conditions can be created for innovation and prosperity in the Romanian business environment.

The main aim is to investigate the socio-economic indicators, the effectiveness of the evaluation tools and the prospects for improving the programs.

It is also desired to make a comparison between the different editions of the programs in order to identify any necessary improvements. Another objective is to analyze the perspective of the representatives of the agencies involved and the beneficiaries of the programs to better understand their impact and to identify possible suggestions for improvement.

Through this study, the aim is to provide concrete and relevant data to decision-makers in order to improve existing programs and to contribute to the development of the business environment and entrepreneurship in Romania.

Chapter structure

The work is structured in six chapters, each of them theoretically and/or practically analyzing problematic aspects that can provide explanations related to the current situation and the future evolution of the field of government programs to support entrepreneurship. Each chapter addresses specific topics, examining both their theoretical foundations and their practical applications, to provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the context and impact of these programs on the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania. This structure allows for an in-depth exploration of the key factors and challenges in this area, providing valuable insights for the continuous improvement and development of entrepreneurship support policies.

Chapter 1, Introduction, captures the general framework of entrepreneurship in Romania, highlighting recent developments and dominant trends in the sector. The economic and social context is analyzed, as well as the influence of legislation and government policies on entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, it emphasizes the need to evaluate entrepreneurship support programs, motivated by the importance of understanding their impact on economic and entrepreneurial development. Evaluation is essential to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs and to optimize them.

This chapter also presents the main objectives of the research and the questions it aims to answer. These include evaluating the effectiveness of programs, identifying barriers and facilitators, and providing recommendations for their improvement.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, provides a solid theoretical foundation by presenting key definitions and concepts in entrepreneurship, exploring various perspectives on it, and introducing concepts such as start-ups, SMEs and the entrepreneurial ecosystem. This chapter analyzes the specialized literature and previous studies that evaluated entrepreneurship support programs, highlighting the methods and approaches used, as well as the results obtained and their relevance for the business environment.

Chapter 3. The context of entrepreneurship support programs in Romania, presents the relevant entrepreneurship support programs existing in Romania, critically analyzing their procedures and effectiveness. The impact of the programs on entrepreneurial and economic development is examined. It also analyzes the legislative framework and relevant public policies for supporting entrepreneurship, identifying the key actors involved in the implementation and monitoring of the programs. The chapter examines the resources and

infrastructure available to entrepreneurs in Romania, including financial facilities, professional training and logistical support.

Chapter 4, Methodology, presents the methodological approach to the research, explaining the reasoning behind the choice of analysis methods and techniques. Carrying out an exhaustive research of all companies receiving non-reimbursable financing through the analyzed government programs. The research tools used and data collection methods are described, ensuring the validity and reliability of the information obtained. The chapter explains the procedures for analyzing the collected data, using statistical and qualitative techniques to interpret the results.

The methodology chapter describes the approach used to evaluate entrepreneurship support programs in Romania, based on a multimethod paradigm that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods, such as statistical and economic data analysis, provide objective information about the economic performance of supported businesses, such as revenue growth and the number of jobs created. Qualitative methods, including structured interviews with representatives of institutions and program beneficiaries, provide detailed insights into the experiences and perceptions of beneficiaries, exploring the challenges encountered and the degree of satisfaction with the support received.

Data triangulation combines quantitative and qualitative information to enhance the validity and reliability of conclusions by contextualizing quantitative data with qualitative insights. The analysis of economic and financial indicators, such as turnover, number of employees and net profit, provides a comprehensive picture of the performances of the beneficiary companies, and comparisons between the different editions of the programs allow the identification of the most effective practices and policies. The selection of participants was made to ensure the representativeness of the different categories of beneficiaries of the entrepreneurship support programs, and the structured interviews with them collected essential data about their experiences, the challenges encountered and the impact of the programs on their businesses.

In conclusion, the use of a multi-method paradigm allowed a rigorous and integrated evaluation of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship support programs in Romania, providing valuable information for the formulation of future policies and interventions and highlighting both positive aspects and areas that require improvement.

Chapter 5. Performance evaluation of the entrepreneurship stimulation programs launched by the Romanian government between 2014-2018, evaluates the performance of various government entrepreneurship stimulation programs launched between 2014 and 2018, analyzing each program separately and comparing successive editions.

The performance of the SRL-D and START programs from 2014 to 2016 is analyzed, as well as the ambitious Start Up Nation program in the 2017 and 2018 editions, examining the results obtained and the impact on the entrepreneurial environment.

The chapter provides a comparative analysis of the performance of different editions of the SRL-D, START and Start Up Nation programs, identifying key trends and developments, as well as a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with representatives of implementing and evaluation agencies, as well as program beneficiaries, providing valuable insights into their experiences and opinions.

Chapter 6, Conclusions regarding the achievement of the research objectives, concludes with a detailed analysis of the evolution of the main indicators and the qualitative perspectives of the representatives and beneficiaries, highlighting the achievements and challenges of the programs. Provides recommendations for improving entrepreneurship support programs based on research findings and critical analysis of collected data.

The chapter concludes the paper by synthesizing the main findings and implications of the research, highlighting its contribution to the improvement of policies and programs to support entrepreneurship in Romania.

The research objectives were successfully achieved by providing detailed and pertinent answers to the originally formulated research questions. The evaluation process of the entrepreneurship support programs in Romania revealed a broad and deep understanding of their performance and impact, thanks to a detailed analysis of the main performance indicators.

By comparing the successive editions of the SRL-D, START and Start Up Nation programs, the positive and negative developments of each were identified, highlighting both the notable achievements and the challenges encountered. The comparative analysis showed how certain changes in structure or implementation influenced the success of these initiatives, thus allowing the formulation of concrete recommendations for the optimization of future editions.

The qualitative assessment involved a series of interviews with representatives of implementing and monitoring agencies, as well as program beneficiaries. This approach

provided valuable insights from within the system, highlighting the direct experiences and views of those who were directly affected by these initiatives. The beneficiaries discussed both the advantages obtained and the difficulties encountered, thus providing a nuanced and realistic picture of the impact of the programs on the entrepreneurial environment.

The information obtained is essential for the continuous improvement of these initiatives. Analyzes have demonstrated where procedures and policies need to be adjusted to maximize efficiency and increase beneficial effects on the economy. The contribution of research is vital to the development of effective public policy in the field of entrepreneurship, providing a solid foundation on which decision-makers can take informed and strategic action.

In conclusion, the research managed to outline a clear and detailed picture of the performance of entrepreneurship support programs in Romania, providing both a robust quantitative analysis and a comprehensive qualitative assessment. The results obtained will serve as a basis for future improvements and will significantly contribute to the development of entrepreneurship in Romania, ensuring a more dynamic and competitive economic environment.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluations highlighted the positive impact of the programs on start-ups, facilitating their establishment and development, but also the administrative and bureaucratic challenges. Additional support and mentoring for entrepreneurs and reduction of regional disparities in access to finance is needed. The long-term sustainability of the funded businesses is essential, with programs having to include long-term support measures and follow-up programs.

In conclusion, the research provided a comprehensive understanding of the performance and impact of entrepreneurship support programs in Romania, being essential for the continuous improvement of these initiatives and the development of an effective public policy in the field of entrepreneurship.

Recommendations for improving evaluation methodologies include greater attention to data collection and analysis, the use of standardized evaluation tools adapted to the Romanian context, the involvement of interdisciplinary teams of experts, and the use of mixed evaluation methods. In addition, greater transparency and accessibility of evaluation data and results is needed.