

## THE NEED TO ADDRESS WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT FROM AN INCLUSIVE LABOR MARKET PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT :** We intend to emphasize in this paper the importance of studying ways of harmonizing the relationship between work and private life when labor market inclusion is desired.

The Lisbon Strategy, The Treaty on the Functioning of the EU or the development strategy Europe 2020, promote as major priorities for sustainable economic development, research, innovation and education, developing an inclusive labor market (such as the inactive, in social risk situations, hard engageable to find jobs).

These recommendations come as a result of current demographic context that characterizes the continent with growing imbalance between the working population and social assisted (aging populations, falling birth rate, migration, introduction of new technologies that replace human resource, etc.), which determines the necessity of allocating significant proportion of national budgets to social support systems, an expense which is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

Before mentioned factors led the European Union to consider creating an inclusive labor market as an objective of its policies, noting frequently as barriers in achieving this established goal: access to employment for certain categories, return to work after an interruption caused by pregnancy, maternity, caring for a family member, cases of disease, and others.

From this follows the need to address work-family conflict, in order to harmonize the two major spheres of our existence when we intend to realize the wish of an inclusive labor market.

**Keywords:** inclusive labor market, work-family relationship, social economy

## Introduction

Throughout history there have always been interests in helping the vulnerable people, sometimes by the most potent members of the community, sometimes by the care of social institutions, for example the church, besides which even appeared the first public institution of this type, as part of social policy, at the end of the nineteenth century.

In France, for the first time the problem of exclusion certain categories of the population such as the elderly, orphans and the homeless was issued. France is the pioneer state in building a welfare system that actively seeks integration of disadvantaged people. Active inclusion of disadvantaged people involves their participation in the labor market, which is often difficult, because of their particularities or their family members.

Although it brings a multitude of benefits, both social and psychological, for many people work is the only way of procuring material resources for daily living for themselves and all their family members. How professional requirements have increased over time by changing labor content, the working environment or requests from employers, researchers have bowed out imbalances between work and private life. This trade-off was also emphasised by the participation in the growing number of women in the labor market, especially after 1980, or by replacing human resources with new working technologies.

## Conceptual Framework

That "form of conflict between roles where requests from work roles and from the family are incompatible to that extent that participation either in roles related to work or in the family is more difficult because of their participation in the other role" was conceptualized as representing work-family conflict (Beutell and Greenhaus, 1985)<sup>1</sup>. These are based on the definition given by Kahn to role conflict „simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey H. Greenhaus , Nicholas J. Beutell, *Sources of Conflict between Work and Family Roles*, The Academy of Management Review, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1985, pp. 76-88

pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other” (Kahn et. al., 1964, p.19)<sup>1</sup>.

Empirical studies have identified several generating sources of imbalance between work and personal life, coming both from the working environment and the private sector. Thus, the labor may adversely affect this balance (the hours spent at work, rigid work schedule, role ambiguity or load the job). Sources of conflict can also come from family, by the need to care for children or other family members who need help, household duties, family conflicts or low support from their partner.

The imbalance between work and private life can be manifested at three levels: time (the time to fulfill a role makes it difficult to achieve the requirements of the other role), tension (stress caused by one of the roles make it difficult to fulfill the other) and behavior (occurs when behavior necessary to achieve one of the roles becomes an impediment to fulfilling the requests of the other role).

If this imbalance between personal and private life is not adressed, some people are really pushed to exclusion. Social policies have had this in mind so that we can note their progress in financial assistance to vulnerable persons to active involvement of these members of society, so that they can support themselves. This view is apparent in EU documents, which until the 2000s were promoting fighting social exclusion and, following this period, gradually, the focus is shifted to social inclusion, as it otherwise clearly emerges from the Lisbon Strategy.

The phrase " inclusive labor market " is based on the assumption that all society members can be employed, differentiated by their own specific features, so that all the member states of the European Union can benefit from the capacity that human resources existing on the continent can provide . It is often increasingly discussed about transferable, complex, skills and employment policies and standards are similar in multinational corporations, for example, regardless of the country of residence of the employee, as well as other labor law stipulations.

The desire to include the disadvantaged in the labor market was born we could say because of two main categories of reasons. On one hand the financial ones, because in developed countries the number of assisted people is

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<sup>1</sup> Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. Organizational stress. New York: Wiley, 1964.

greater than the supporters, about 60% of residents being helped by the contribution of the other 40% in countries such as France, Denmark, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and others . On the other hand, there are reasons that we call psycho-social. Thus, research in these areas has shown that the state of activity is specific and necessary for human beings, bringing economic benefits besides many other psychological gains (continuing school, treating addiction to alcohol or other substances, changing self-perception, learning and personal development or education in the spirit of work. In order to meet these psycho-social needs we may say, are avoided certain costs arising from the treatment or care of such persons, which leads again to a financial argument.

It is noted from those expressed earlier that inclusion is a goal with many advantages, that favors state budgets, work environment and relationships within families, but achieving this goal is often difficult when it comes to really put it into practice, precisely because those who belong to such vulnerable categories have some family or personal peculiarities that make their employment difficult. For example, some of these people did not finish school, or they even have no education, are living in isolated areas, so they can hardly get to work or their children to school, have family members with disabilities who require urgent help, or are single-parent, so it is difficult to split between childcare and employment obligations. These and many others are specific situations that make difficult work inclusion of certain categories of people.

## **The Lisbon Strategy and the EU 2020**

Issues arising from international migration have imposed both at European level and for each Member State the need to adopt uniform policies, all contributing to the effective management of people and resources considerably<sup>1</sup>.

Inclusion in the European Union of the new member countries in Central and Eastern Europe has brought new challenges, favorable conditions for labor mobility created by the Lisbon strategy even for pre-acceding

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Porumbescu, *Migration Policies in the European Union: Espoused Perspectives and Practices-In-Use*, în *Revista de Științe Politice/Revue des Sciences Politiques*, nr. 46/2015, p. 166

countries contributed to an infusion of manpower especially for jobs with minimal qualifications, which threatens their occupants.

Also, personal challenges specific to these categories of people have led to thinking and implementation of new legislation, born from the need to adapt employers to employees' peculiarities. Therefore, employment models have been diversified, with part-time contract, fixed-term, seasonal work, the schedule is sometimes very flexible and can take various forms, enabling work from home or by using modern means of communication from almost anywhere.

Another area of intervention was that of building centers to facilitate care for dependents, such as children, disabled or elderly. In addition, actively pursued training and retraining of human resources, with the possibility of qualification or specialization not necessarily through the formal education system, also by awarding a grant for students.

These are several attempts to facilitate access to labor market for several categories of persons, with encouraging the creation of new jobs through small and medium enterprises, arts and crafts workshops or other entrepreneurial initiatives both in urban and rural areas .

Several European countries have acted effectively to achieve this goal, some of the measures taken having an effect on the balance between private and professional life. Thus, in France since 2002 was decided the decrease of maximum permitted number of hours worked per week, because, as it also happens in our country, employes often worked 10-12 hours a day. This measure was not regarded favorably by employers, but statistical data obtained after applying this change showed that the unemployment rate fell because new jobs were created, full or part time, and for workers the work-family balance had won.

In Italy also the working week was reduced with 4 hours and in the Nordic countries the problem of reducing the number of days worked per week was issued. Through various funding opportunities youth entrepreneurship and social economy or associative economy manifestation forms were also promoted.

All these measures aimed to achieve concrete aspirations of EU2020 Strategy, which proposes that the main pillars of the development of a united Europe were inclusive economic growth, increased participation in the labor market, acquiring new skills and poverty reduction.

The economic crisis has confirmed that the solution is to create an inclusive labor market combined with a strong social economy, through which to provide jobs for various categories of people, based on their own specific needs, because the protective position, of just assisting vulnerable people proved to be less effective.

### **The particularities of the labor market in Romania**

The labor market in Romania has certain characteristics unavoidable given by economic and social transformations affecting the country, manifested in the context of global change and bolstered by some unfortunate public policy which encouraged negative trends<sup>1</sup>.

It is well known that sectors such as agriculture and industry were most affected, and development of services sector, for example, it was not yet able to take over this influx of people unemployed, who often turned to agriculture or work in other European countries, often undeclared and lower than their preparation.

The employment rate in Romania is below the EU27 average, although the CE reports places our country at an average level in Europe in terms of unemployment<sup>2</sup>.

For Romanians fresh out of a long totalitarian regime, open borders and access to information in areas such vast represented great opportunities<sup>3</sup>.

Another feature of Romania is the major differences between rural and urban areas, the first characterized by subsistence farming, like in pre-industrial societies, while in the latter case similarities with Western European societies are the most common. Thus, in cities predominate employees, over 90%, about 5% are self-employed, entrepreneurs holding a share of only 2%, unlike other European countries where entrepreneurship is better represented.

Although is projected a growth of the urban population, among those who have moved, over 50% have moved to rural areas, where over 60% of the

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<sup>1</sup> Societatea Academică Română, *Criza pe piața muncii*, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Comisia Europeană, *UE Employment and Social Situation Quarterly Review – 10 Key Facts and Figures*, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Alexandra Porumbescu, *The cultural impact of the emigration of German ethnics from Romania*, în *Globalization and Intercultural Dialogue. Multidisciplinary Perspectives. Section: Psychology and Sociology*, Târgu-Mureș, Editura Arhipelag XXI, 2014, p. 234.

employed population is confined to subsistence agriculture. In addition, 19% of rural occupied population is working illegally, compared to 7% of city dwellers (INS, 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

Although such interventions financed by the European Social Fund and other structural programs are well-intentioned and necessary, they often go on a rigid model, generalized, which is not adapted to a particular area of intervention.

Analyzing the role of social actors in developing an inclusive labor market in Romania, several experts from the Economic and Social Council noted that "the development of agricultural production and related effective manufacturing, which can support more jobs is hindered in Romania because of several major factors - fragmentation of ownership, the level of labor training, the existence of outlets fair for primary and processed products, the negative impact of social model of "business success", based on corruption and theft, and other factors, at general, regional or local level "(CES 2013, p.11)<sup>2</sup>.

Turning to the Lisbon strategy, and following the path of EU funding, we can note the positive impact of the social economy to reactivate the productive sectors in rural areas mainly because there are very suitable for this type of interventions, but also because it seems that is the area that is most in need for a push.

But unfortunately, field studies, show that for both the disadvantaged, but even for the leaders of local communities, the concept of social economy does not yet have much resonance, is even unknown in many cases (IRES study, 2012) . In rural areas still prevails unrealistic expectations of individuals about central players, responsible to create jobs and other facilities of social protection, combined with suspicions on volunteering or other informal ways of collaboration, such as pairing, social enterprises or personal initiative .

Another feature of the romanian labor market is the situation of young people. In this category stands high unemployment proportion (20.9%) and informal work. In addition, employers complain because of poor training of young people for professions where there is a shortage of skilled labor.

Moreover, such differences between educational training and labor market demands are also a cause of the difficulty of finding work places in

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<sup>1</sup> Institutul Național de Statistică, Balanța forței de muncă la 1 ianuarie 2011, 2011

<sup>2</sup> CES România, Studiul Rolul Actorilor Sociali în Dezvoltarea Unei Piețe a Muncii Inclusive în România, 2013

certain professions, and the shortage of skilled labor in other fields. It follows that the real needs of professional skills created at European level have not been yet transposed in educational policies.

## **Conclusion**

We previously mentioned the benefits that hiring more people in work brings, beyond the obvious financial pluses. These goals are sometimes difficult to put into practice exactly for those people who may have the most need: the uneducated, disabled, single parents sustaining families with children, young people who still do not have a home, experience, and are set in a position to choose between having a family and building a career.

These issues have reached the attention of European stakeholders, given the importance of addressing those situations, especially in the current demographic context. Fixing attempts were materialized first through the establishment of guidelines such as Lisbon Strategy, then doubled by specific intervention measures aimed at inclusion, some of them publicly financed from community money. This interest comes to confirm the necessity of shifting from protecting the underprivileged, also necessary, but not sufficient, to the active involvement of various categories excluded from work. The inclusion way may cost more for the beginning, but is part of the broader concept of sustainable development.

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