

Cultural Opportunities and Shortcomings in the Management of EU-funded Projects in Romania

Nicolae PĂUN, Adrian CORPĂDEAN

Romania's EU integration file has undoubtedly been written over a prolonged and complicated period, often referred to as 'transition', and marked by profound changes meant to steadily align the country to the requirements of the *acquis communautaire*. Albeit integration did occur eventually, the country still faced specific challenges pertaining to the absorption and use of European funds, as it strove to create its own management culture, adapted to cultural traits and the specific context of its economy and development patterns. This study focuses on the extent to which Romania has been successful in achieving success during the course of its first multiannual financial framework as a EU member state, with quantitative and qualitative assessments, as well as recurrent manifestations of the heritage of the recent past.

1. Romania – a sinuous path to European integration

The collapse of the communist regime in Romania, albeit part of the wave of revolutions of 1989, met with fierce resistance and bloodshed, in anticipation of the demise of what was in all likelihood the most rigid and obsolete dictatorial regime in the wider region.¹ The newly acquired taste of freedom engendered throughout the country a euphoric, almost ineffable feeling, undoubtedly fuelled by the sense of synchronisation with the wind of change that was sweeping the part of the continent which had still been, only moments before, shaded by the Iron Curtain. The unsuspectingly controversial embodiment of revolutionary authority which became known as the National Salvation Front made it clear from the very beginning, in its famous 10-point communication-programme,² that it intended to move towards a form of

-
1. For an up-to-date bibliographical assessment, see, amongst others: B. MURGESCU, *Revoluția română din 1989: Istorie și memorie*, Polirom, Iași, 2016; I. CALAFETEANU (coord.), *Revoluția din Decembrie 1989 și integrarea europeană a României: lucrările sesiunii științifice a IRRD din 21 decembrie 2007, cu prilejul aniversării a 18 ani de la Revoluția Română din Decembrie 1989*, Editura Militară, Bucharest, 2008; I. SCURTU, *Politică și viață cotidiană în România: în secolul al XX-lea și începutul celui de-al XXI-lea*, Editura Mica Valahie, Bucharest, 2011; C. DURADIN, Z. PETRE, *La Roumanie post 1989*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2008; P. SIANI-DAVIES, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, Cornell University Press, New York, 2007; S.D. ROPER, *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution*, Routledge, London, 2000.
 2. Full text available here: *Comunicatul către țară al Consiliului F.S.N. din 22 decembrie 1989*, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/comunicatul-catre-tara-al-consiliului-f-s-n-din-22-decembrie-1989>, last access: 31.03.2017.

alignment of the new authority to western values, both in terms of internal policy and from the standpoint of Romania's foreign orientation.³

A swift rebirth of historical political parties, a rather rushed constitution and recurrent tensions between the new administration and the far-reaching democratic aspirations of an emerging intelligentsia, hopeful to sever all political connections with the bleak reminiscences of the past, are merely a few of the premises that resulted in a controversial and unpredictable time frame one ambivalently refers to as 'transition'.⁴ Whilst its edges are difficult to pinpoint, it has doubtlessly been overcome, as Romania in 2017 remembers this interval with a peculiar sense of remoteness, with the occasional flashback and amid the sporadic setbacks stemming from ill-timed political attitudes or short-lived measures halting reforms, swiftly reversed by public pressure.

The natural reflex that manifested itself in the aftermath of the events from December 1989 was to seek closeness to the West and its pattern of integration, chiefly economic but gaining political momentum with the Maastricht endeavour – a project that was no stranger to Romania, in spite of its arid past propaganda and precarious stance following a disastrous decade during the 1980s.⁵ Albeit political tensions amongst the plethora of parties that took shape once pluralism was established mounted, and the quest for even a gleam of doctrine in the case of most of the former would often prove futile, there appeared to be one point on which national consensus was reached with rather unexpected ease, that of supporting the country's integration bid. On 21 June 1995, the Declaration of Snagov was the means through which all prominent political forces in Romania pledged their support for starting negotiations with the newly-upgraded European Union, and, more concretely, for the implementation of a nationwide strategy aiming to pave the way for this still unlikely prospect.⁶ The five-year period leading to the European Commission's decision to formally begin the process was marked by periodical reports on the country's progress, chiefly pertaining to the commitment to and readiness for the protracted negotiation procedure that would eventually begin on 15 February 2000.⁷ The practice marks one of the lengthiest recorded monitoring endeavours assumed by the Commission, which would continue long after Romania's Accession Treaty was signed, in the spring of 2005. In fact, to this day, the country has been subjected to the Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification, along with its Southern neighbour,

3. I. CULIC, *Câștigătorii: elita politică și democratizare în România 1989-2000*, Limes, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p.62.

4. See: D. LIGHT, D. PHINNEMORE, *Post-Communist Romania: Coming to Terms with Transition*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.

5. See: T. GALLAGHER, *Romania and the European Union: How the Weak Vanquished the Strong*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, pp.16-18.

6. An accurate English translation of the Declaration of Snagov is available in: D. PAPANIMITRIU, D. PHINNEMORE, *Romania and The European Union: From Marginalisation to Membership?*, Routledge, London, 2008, pp.73-75. See, for the original text: I. CALAFETEANU (coord.), op.cit., 2008, pp.107-108.

7. E. GATEVA, *European Union Enlargement Conditionality*, Springer, Basingstoke, 2016, pp.88-91.

Bulgaria, whose aim is to continuously assess the course of judicial reform and the effectiveness of the fight against corruption.⁸

In the light of these unprecedented supervisory measures, Romania's progress reports were anxiously expected within the country and carefully scrutinised by the Western chancelleries and public opinion, as benchmarks in a complicated accession bid. For instance, the October 1999 report set particular conditions prior to the initiation of official negotiations, consisting of a clear improvement in the situation of children in Romania's foster homes, as well as the adoption of a comprehensive economic strategy.⁹ Furthermore, once negotiations got under way, under the lead of Romania's Chief Negotiator, Vasile Pușcaș, the following hurdle was met in 2001, when MEP Emma Nicholson's progress report severely criticised the state of reforms in Romania, once again with a particular focus on the matter of foster children, as well as the need for the country to make significant progress in its fight against high-level corruption and in the implementation of solid economic reforms.¹⁰

In response to this tense moment, as the report prompted the European Commission and the Council to halt talks with Romania until the rule of law was consolidated, the negotiation team resorted to a prompt action plan, steering the country towards the level of compatibility required at the time. Set against this edgy background, the Eurobarometer found that, in 2005, Romanians' trust in the European Union recorded a level of 68%, considerably higher than the confidence level in national authorities and definitely the most elevated in Europe.¹¹

This optimism towards the "outside", certainly a trait that did not characterise the general perception of the population with regard to quality of life, also came as a consequence of disturbing internal macroeconomic indicators, demographics and reform pace, compared to the neighbouring countries that had managed to fulfil their integration objective by 2004. Low life expectancy and a quick decrease in population, combined with poor tax collection and general instability constituted the basic traits of the early 2000s in a country whose social system was a major cause for discontent. Once Romanians were granted visa-free access to the Schengen Area, on 1 January 2002, migration rates skyrocketed, also amongst the highly-qualified, to the extent that the National Development Plan of December 2005 noted that more than one quarter of all Romanian emigrants belonged to the latter category.¹² This

8. Additional research on the contents of all MCV reports pertaining to the two countries should include the archive of all reports between 2007 and 2017, available on the website of the European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/effective-justice/rule-law/assistance-bulgaria-and-romania-under-cvm/reports-progress-bulgaria-and-romania_en.

9. Ministry of Finance of Romania, 1999 Regular Report from the Commission on Romania's Progress towards Accession, Brussels, 13.10.1999, available on http://discutii.mfinante.ro/static/10/Mfp/control_prev/documente/regular_report1999.pdf, pp. 15-16 and 27-28, last access: 31.03.2017.

10. T. GALLAGHER, *Modern Romania: The End of Communism, the Failure of Democratic Reform, and the Theft of a Nation*, New York University Press, New York, 2008, pp.319-320.

11. European Commission, Eurobarometru 63.4 (in Romanian), spring 2005, p.7.

12. Government of Romania, Planul Național de Dezvoltare 2007-2013 (National Development Plan), December 2005, pp.15-17, available here: http://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/Document_Files/documente/00000047/r5dco_PND_2007_2013.pdf, last access: 31.03.2017.

so-called 'brain-drain' phenomenon would not cease to be a paramount cause for concern in the country, to this date.¹³

In effect, Romania's imbalances in the pre-accession period consisted of much more than the migration phenomenon, as an internal trend would see many Romanians first move from rural to urban areas, in the aftermath of the Revolution, as a response to previous prohibitions in this respect established by communist authorities. Nevertheless, as the cost of living in large cities began to grow and amid the scarcity of jobs, a reverse trend manifested itself chiefly after 2000, albeit investments in Romanian villages and the advent of industrial parks came much later and the phenomenon remains confined to the vicinity of prominent urban centres.

One last major topic that needs to be addressed in order to foster the understanding of Romania's access to European funds pertains to its macroeconomic situation during the transition period. The country's GDP fluctuated greatly in the first decade after the Revolution, but as of 2000, the latter exhibited firstly a steady and later an accelerated growth pattern, amounting to 8.3% in 2004. Complementarily, Romania's GDP/capita attained 28.8% of the European Union's average in 2004, far from overcoming the long-standing development lag, but marking a positive trend.¹⁴

Economic growth was favoured by the rise in internal consumption and the overall growth of the private sector, accounting for 70.8% of the country's GDP in 2004, combined with increasing foreign direct investments and a welcome measure taken by the liberal government that implemented a single-quota tax of 16% (which remains to this day and has been generally considered intangible, including by the socialist governments that have followed).¹⁵ On the other hand, inflation proved to be a much heavier burden for the economy, as price liberalisation, achieved somewhat late, in 1997, caused it to soar to no less than 151.4%. The worrying phenomenon was gradually contained and reached a level of 8.6% in 2005, while at present, the National Institute for Statistics places it at -1.5%, in its latest report for 2016.¹⁶

As for unemployment, Romania's performance put it on a par with the EU's average in 2004, with a recorded value of 8%, it too exhibiting a descending trend, as current statistics indicate that it stands at 4.8%, while youth unemployment remains a cause for concern.¹⁷

13. D. ANDRÉEN, M. ROMAN, *Should I Stay or Should I Go? Romanian Migrants During Transition and Enlargements*, in: M. KAHANEK, K.F. ZIMMERMANN (eds), *Labor Migration, EU Enlargement, and the Great Recession*, Springer, Berlin, 2016, pp.264-265.

14. Government of Romania, Planul Național ..., op.cit., p.18.

15. Ibid., p.20. See also the Fiscal Code of Romania, Law no. 227/2015, amended by the Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 9/27 January 2017, available on the website of the National Fiscal Administration Agency: https://static.anaf.ro/static/10/Anaf/legislatie/Cod_fiscal_norme_09022017.htm, last access: 31.03.2017.

16. Romanian National Institute for Statistics, Data series on inflation (1971-2016), <http://www.inss.ro/cms/ro/content/ipc-serii-de-date>, last access: 31.03.2017.

17. Government of Romania, Planul Național ..., op.cit., p.27; Romanian Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, National Labor Force Agency, Press Release, 20.03.2017, <http://www.anofm.ro/files/Comunicat%20somaj%20ianuarie%202017.pdf>, last access: 31.03.2017.

In the light of the positive prospects registered prior to accession, Romania had set the target of joining the ERM II and adopting the Single European Currency by 2014, which proved to be unrealistic, notably following the effects of the economic crisis that did not spare the country.¹⁸

2. Building a Romanian managerial culture in the absorption of structural funds

The country's first notable contacts with financial assistance from the European Union came, as in the case of the other countries in the East-Central area, prior to accession, by means of the PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD programmes. The three pre-accession instruments are, in our view, Romania's first major trial in the development of a genuine managerial culture tailored to the specific traits of non-reimbursable funding, with numerous positive results, but also with delays, inconsistencies and errors at various levels of implementation. The availability of these funding opportunities enabled the Romanian government to accelerate the pace of reform in preparing for structural instruments, as well as to attempt to identify best practice examples from the experience of other countries in the area with respect to the implementation of assistance packages before membership was achieved.¹⁹

In fact, the completion of PHARE, i.e. the Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies programme, as it was originally called, prior to its expansion meant to assist all other candidate countries in the East-Central area in the late 1990s and early 2000s, although marked by a certain delay (it only came to an end in Romania in 2010, at a time when structural funds had already become available), left the country with a positive balance.²⁰ This first important experience for Romanian public authorities prompted the creation of specialised departments and led to an abundance of training programmes conducted with available and new personnel. The specific interests of the country related to the objectives of PHARE included the increase in administrative capacity, the adoption of the *acquis* and the challenging aspect of cohesion. With a consistent, but late absorption, the programme was one of the first clear indications that a project management culture needed to be

18. P. HOWELLS, K. BAIN, *The Economics of Money, Banking and Finance: A European Text*, 4th Edition, Pearson Education, Harlow, 2008, p.499.

19. P. VAN ELSUWEGE, *From Soviet Republics to EU Member States: A Legal and Political Assessment of the Baltic States' Accession to the EU*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden/Boston, 2008, pp.256-261.

20. A. NIEMANN, *Explaining Decisions in the European Union*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, pp.67-69.

set in place.²¹ Technical observations germane to this point can be encountered in the 2010 budgetary project of Romania, whose 3/15 addendum performed a rather unusual analysis of the factors that were preventing the country from achieving full access to PHARE funding as it drew to a close.²² Such criticism was directed towards the legislative gap in the area of construction design, as well as the difficulties in reaching the necessary amounts of pecuniary contributions on the part of local contractors. An unfortunate *leitmotif* also pertained to the need for more coherence of national public procurement legislation, which often led to miscalculations and eventually financial interventions from local budgets so that contracts would be completed based on existing biddings. The delays with which national provisions on public procurement have been adjusted to the needs of non-reimbursable funding contracts remain, in our view, one of the principal causes for concern in the shaping of an efficient management culture in this regard, in Romania, even though the currently applicable law does provide for a simplified procedure that has resulted in fewer hurdles and unwanted setbacks.

ISPA, or the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession, was from the very beginning of paramount importance to Romania, as both priorities envisaged by the fund were inherently linked to two of the country's long-standing shortcomings, namely transport infrastructure and environmental policies. The existence of an elaborate *acquis* on matters like water reserves, waste management and air pollution made the government treat the programme with utmost interest, its value amounting to approximately 240 million euros per year between 2000 and 2007, when the instrument was replaced by the Cohesion Fund (the latter providing almost three times the amount of its predecessor on an annual basis).²³ Without dwelling on details about successful projects, it suffices to say that the accomplishments generated by ISPA were some of the most visible ones in the pre-accession period, especially if one is to take into account the poor development of infrastructure in the country.

As for SAPARD, the Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development created in 1999 for the purpose of preparing candidate states for the adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy, a successful balance at the end of the pre-accession period in this case mirrors those of the other two instruments. With an absorption rate of about 90%, consisting of payments of 1.34 billion euros, Romania prided itself on the effectiveness of the use of the funds, amounting to 4.457 projects

-
21. Romania's total allocation was approximately 3.7 bn. euros, according to the Evaluation of PHARE financial assistance to Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), Hungary (HU), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Malta (MT), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovakia (SK), Slovenia (SI) final report, 19.01.2015, p.261, available on https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2015/20150806-phare-ex-post-evaluation-final-report.pdf, last access: 31.03.2017.
 22. Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, Addendum no. 3/15 to the National Budget Project for 2010, available on the website of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2009/700/20/1/ax03_15.pdf, last access: 31.03.2017.
 23. S. VĂDUVA, *Between Globalization and Integration: the Europeanization of Romania*, Springer, Cham, 2016, p.85; M. SAJDIK, M. SCHWARZINGER, *European Union Enlargement: Background, Developments, Facts*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick/London, 2008, pp.94-95.

<https://doi.org/10.5771/0947-9511-2017-2-295>

Generiert durch IP '172.22.53.54', am 08.12.2022, 04:39:33.

Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.

in an area of interest for a country with an approximate rate of 44% rural population. This successful managerial example put Romania in second place with regard to the effectiveness of expenditure, surpassed only by the Republic of Ireland three decades before.²⁴

One reform that was particularly prompted by the implementation of the three aforementioned instruments, with far-reaching consequences at unexpected levels, including the cultural, is the definition of the country's regional policy, in 2004. Unlike Poland, for instance, Romania complied with NUTS II requirements in a rather artificial fashion, i.e. without taking into account the cohesive potential of exploiting cultural ties and historical bonds among local communities. In other words, the definition of its eight regions became a purely geographical one, while the traditional administrative units of the country, the so-called "counties" (Romanian: județe) were given an NUTS III status.²⁵ Albeit we agree that the 42 entities would have been too numerous to comply with the customary approach to defining regions within the EU, it remains regrettable that the country's historical regions (Transylvania, Banat, Dobruja etc.) were not considered when shaping this culturally meaningful policy.

Set against this background, Romania's accession in 2007 and the adoption of the *acquis* enabled its government to start implementing the priorities identified in the two major programming documents that lay the bases for the first seven-year funding period the country has been part of, i.e. the National Development Plan and the National Strategic Framework of Reference. As it became apparent *ab initio*, Romania was meant to be a net beneficiary of the Cohesion Policy, as it was still the case of the other member states in the broader region, and which prompted an initial allocation of 19.57 billion euros for it, within the 2007-2013 time frame. Nonetheless, given the country's due contribution to the EU's budget for that period, amounting to 10.6 billion euros, it was evident that absorption needed to be treated as a strategic priority, which may have been the case *per se*, but the performance levels exhibited a worrying figure upon the completion of the interval. Hence, at the end of 2013, Romania's absorption rate was found to be of 33.47% (with the first two years of membership recording no absorption whatsoever), making the balance of integration tilt towards the status of a contributor to the EU's budget and marking the poorest result of any member state.²⁶

Prior to attempting to explain this baffling result, it has to be pointed out that, once the alarm signal was drawn and extended periods were negotiated with the European

24. According to a report of the Romanian Agency for Payments in Rural Development and Fishing, presented by Euractiv, 18.12.2009, available on: http://arhiva.euractiv.ro/uniunea-europeana/articles%7CdisplayArticle/articleID_19023/Bilant-SAPARD-absorbtiie-90.html, last access: 31.03.2017.

25. M. SUCIU, *Decentralization and Regional Development in Romania*, in: F. PALERMO, S. PAROLARI (eds), *Regional Dynamics in Central and Eastern Europe: New Approaches to Decentralization*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden/Boston, 2013, pp.119 and 132-133.

26. Report of the Romanian Ministry of European Funds on the Absorption of Structural and Cohesion Funds, 30.12.2013, available on <http://ultimaora.digi.ro/wp-content/uploads/bilant-MFE-30-dec-2013.pdf>, last access: 31.12.2017.

Commission for better absorption, the government took intensive measures to increase reimbursement, which eventually amounted to 51.81% in 2014, 74.3% in 2015 and concluded at 79.23% for the 2007-2013 financial framework.²⁷ Whilst this may be eventually regarded as a satisfactory result, in keeping with the EU's average, it came at the expense of a delayed beginning of the new multiannual cycle, intended for 2014-2020 and barely initiated in Romania at present.

In order to examine the priority areas that were addressed by the first wave of structural funding in Romania, we shall briefly present the Operational Programmes (OPs) created upon the country's accession, with some quantitative explanations. The top performer was the dwarf Technical Assistance OP, with a success rate of 86% (0.14 billion euros), whose aim had been to manage the absorption of funding through all other programmes and assist the Ministry of European Funds in its relevant activity. It was closely followed by the much ampler Economic Competitiveness OP, chiefly focusing on research and development, ITC, and small and medium-sized enterprises, with an absorption rate of 85.94%, or 2.18 billion euros, in absolute terms. Thirdly, we should make note of the Regional OP, a complex set of initiatives revolving around the principle of urban development, perhaps one of the most noticeable endeavour amongst Romanians, with a success rate of 85.04%, or 3.37 billion euros. In fourth place, there was the Administrative Capacity OP, another minor initiative whose purpose had been to assist public institutions in their protracted reform process, amounting to 82%, or 0.17 billion euros of the total funds allocated to it. The Environmental OP came fifth, with 78.48%, or 3.46 billion euros, mostly allocated for water, sewage and waste collection infrastructure, as well as for the prevention of floods. Sixthly, the Transport OP remained with a success rate of only 74.63%, i.e. 3.2 billion euros, as it marks an area where Romania is in dire need of a coherent strategic approach, notably with respect to motorways and the rehabilitation of railways. Finally, the worst performer was the Human Resources OP, which started under the management of the Ministry of Labour and was then transferred to that of European Funds, a measure which still failed to enable it to gather more than 73.37%, or 2.34 billion euros of its intended funding. The programme was marred by several cases of fraud, leading to temporary suspension and intense monitoring on the part of the Commission.²⁸

Notwithstanding such results, Romania's appetite for writing projects was considerable since the beginning of the financial period, with a total of approximately 46.000 applications submitted before mid-2015 and a success rate of about one in three.²⁹ A thriving private consultancy sector was partly responsible for the eventual

27. Report of the Romanian Ministry of European Funds on the Absorption of Structural and Cohesion Funds, 28.02.2017, available on http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/images/files/implementare-absorbtie/Anexa_1-Stadiul_absorbtiei_2007_-_2013_februarie_2017.pdf, last access: 31.03.2017.

28. Ibid.

29. Report of the Romanian Ministry of European Funds on the Absorption of Structural and Cohesion Funds, 31.07.2015, available on http://old.fonduri-ue.ro/res/filepicker_users/cd25a597fd-62/rezultate/std_abs/Raportare%20Programe%20Operationale%2030%20iulie%202015.pdf, last access: 31.03.2017.

performance, with academic qualifications tailored to the needs of the market for dynamic specialists, a myriad of training courses available nationwide and an NGO sector eager to exploit new niches. In the meantime, powerful and often worrying messages were coming from Brussels, partly due to the important activity of two consecutive Romanian Commissioners, first Dacian Cioloş, who was responsible for Agriculture, and then Corina Creţu, holding another important position, that of Commissioner for Regional Development – clearly two priorities for Romania in its new context, as an EU member. Both the Commission and an increasingly knowledgeable academic sector expressed criticism directed towards the effectiveness of management authorities (national ministries), the sustainability of strategic projects and the tendency to increase the absorption of funds at all costs, regardless of the quality of investments.

A moment of particular significance in this respect occurred at the international conference “The Simplification of European Structural and Investment Funds”, which took place in May 2016, at the Faculty of European Studies of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, with the participation of Commissioner Corina Creţu, Deputy Prime-Minister Vasile Dîncu, academics and members of the European Parliament. On that occasion, MEP Mircea Diaconu voiced his concern over poorly implemented projects across the country, ranging from the bizarre to the outrageous, including sporting facilities in areas with a predominantly elderly population, incomplete restoration of historic buildings and waste recycling plants placed in protected natural habitats. On the other hand, successful projects – undoubtedly the vast majority of the projects implemented in the country fit into this latter category – were also analysed, from the Turda Salt Mine to the about 200 contracts signed by Babeş-Bolyai University, one of the most effective actors in the area of project management in the country.³⁰

In spite of the numerous examples of setbacks, fraud and insufficiently developed administrative capacity that marred the first EU multiannual financial framework in Romania, it is beyond doubt that a managerial culture has already taken shape, not only in the dynamic private consultancy sector, but also in local administrative bodies, agricultural chambers and, perhaps most importantly, educational institutions. Empirically, the country has greatly improved, both in urban and in rural areas, smaller economic actors have been assisted, start-ups created, requalification fostered, while the know-how developed in research and development has engendered important initiatives. Public institutions, as well as private enterprises and NGOs, have created special departments meant to identify and access sources of funding, often enabling them to attain results that would have been impossible amid the hurdles of reimbursable funding, usually taking the form of burdensome loans.

30. Details about the project and its funding are available on its website: <http://salinaturda.eu/project-design/?lang=en>, last access: 31.03.2017.

<https://doi.org/10.5771/0947-9511-2017-2-295>

Generiert durch IP '172.22.53.54', am 08.12.2022, 04:39:33.

Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.

3. Prospects and lessons learnt

It is apparent that the area of project management and, more precisely, the implementation of EU-funded programmes, is a work in progress in Romania, with a new multiannual framework barely initiated, albeit the 2014-2020 interval is halfway through. That said, European projects *per se* need to be considered from a cultural and institutional standpoint, all the more so because their ultimate goal is modernisation, more integration and a certain internalisation of the processes that accrue from being a member state of the EU. From this standpoint, one which encompasses cultural processes, the understanding and assimilation of a project-oriented culture into collective mentalities, with new definitions of team work, objectives, tasks and analyses prior to and after implementation, it is evident that the Romanian society has met with enormous progress. This is because it has endowed itself, or more precisely its development strategies, with a managerial culture centred on projects.

Moreover, it is the merit of large universities in the country to have succeeded in this rather short time frame to instil into the Romanian society the necessary expertise to write, implement and evaluate such endeavours. Academic actors such as the Faculty of European Studies from Cluj-Napoca have created a successful Master's Degree in European Affairs and Project Management, which, during its ten years of existence, has generated, chiefly in the region of Transylvania, comprehensive networks of young specialists that often set the tone for directions and approaches regarding the available funding opportunities, whether the latter stem from the EU, the EEA or other international sponsors.³¹

Such academic initiatives have led to additional developments meeting the needs for an innovative curriculum nationwide, in the area of project management. To give one example, the aforementioned MA was followed by a complementary one, entitled "The Evaluation of Regional Development", which entered the curriculum of the Faculty of European Studies with the support of a project sponsored by the European Social Fund.³² This type of educational programme thus became available nationwide and centred on best practice in the area of regional development from across East-Central Europe, with the assistance of Regional Development Agencies and some support on the part of the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development. Truth be told, the latter's involvement in curriculum development projects of this sort has somewhat fluctuated over the years, amid the frequent changes at governmental level in the country.

The Romanian academic environment has managed to establish a "food chain" in the cultural-institutional prospects of European funds, owing to its consistent expertise in writing, implementing, and, to a lesser degree, evaluating EU-funded projects. Nonetheless, it is not only the university environment that has reacted to the creation of a cultural format for project management, as the involvement of the non-govern-

31. See details on the curriculum on the official website of the Faculty of European Studies: <http://euro.ubbcluj.ro/afaceri-europene-si-management-de-programe>, last access: 31.03.2017.

32. Idem., <http://euro.ubbcluj.ro/evaluarea-dezvoltarii-regionale>, last access: 31.03.2017.

<https://doi.org/10.5771/0947-9511-2017-2-295>

Generiert durch IP '172.22.53.54', am 08.12.2022, 04:39:33.

Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.

mental sector has also been noteworthy. On the other hand, given their abundance, few NGOs have proven to be capable of building a model of civic and cultural demeanour that remains necessary in society, whilst the others have diluted their enthusiasm in the shallowness of everyday petty concerns, numerous but of little significance in Romania nowadays.

One should also remember the collective effort of the already mentioned Regional Development Agencies, still finding themselves in a quest for an identity, in their relations with the public and private environments, i.e. the main beneficiaries of European resources, through the available funding.³³ To this should be added the ambition of the Ministry of European Funds, partly declarative, but which has engendered high expectations of efficiency and performance at the level of society. All of the above enables us to conclude that Romania has succeeded in setting in motion a mechanism that, through its complexity, has gathered significant interest from society due to its complexity.

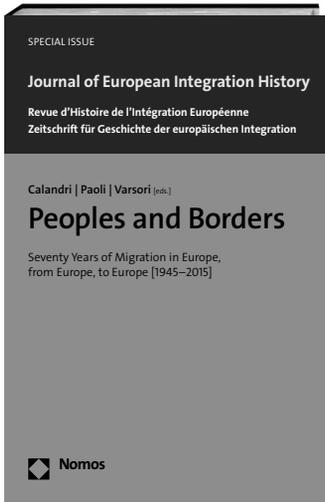
The process is not exempt from limitations, some of which pertain to learning or adaptation, as it follows from the analysis of the 2007-2013 funding period, but such setbacks can be treated at a marginal level and often stem from the process of transition undergone by some decision-makers who, in the post-revolutionary recent past, mistook public funding for their own areas of competence. In so doing, many of them stepped out of the eligibility frame and, certainly, out of best practice. Such aspects, although statistically certified as marginal and quite insignificant in the cultural-institutional perception of EU funding, have nevertheless triggered setbacks, delays, suspensions and, all things considered, an initially feeble absorption rate. While arithmetically, this has now been greatly improved, the slow pace has meant less funding at the right time for key development projects that Romania needs.

In the new 2014-2020 funding period, we have found a more coherent approach to the contents and objectives of the programmes, as they appear to have been tailored not for the sake of accessing EU money at all costs, but with a view to moving away from the quantitative-declarative area. Albeit late, Romania is making steps so as to align itself with the states that have turned European funds into key accelerators of development.

33. F. PROTA, A. FIORE, M.J. GRISORIO, *The regional innovation agencies in Europe: a comparative analysis*, in: N. BELLINI, M. DANSON, H. HALKIER (eds), *Regional Development Agencies: The Next Generation? Networking, Knowledge and Regional Politics*, Routledge, New York, 2012, pp.52-69.

Journal of European Integration History

Special Issue



Peoples and Borders

Seventy Years of Migration in Europe,
from Europe, to Europe [1945–2015]

Edited by Prof. Dr. Elena Calandri, Dr. Simone Paoli and Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Antonio Varsori
2017, 322 pp., pb., € 79.00, (*Special price for subscribers of the magazine as part of the subscription € 59.25*)

ISBN 978-3-8487-3452-8

eISBN 978-3-8452-7786-8

nomos-shop.de/28234

Movement of people has been a key feature in the whole history of European integration. While existing literature has mostly adopted national viewpoints and a socioeconomic perspective, this book integrates these existing fragmented analyses, views them from a broader perspective and places them in the wider context of the social and demographic transformation of Europe and the political and economic narrative of continental integration. It highlights the impact made by EC/EU immi-

gration policies on the external political and economic relations of Europe and acknowledges that pre-1989 migration from East European countries is part of European integration. By showing that migration policies and their impact on European national societies and economies cannot be fully understood without taking into account the EC framework, this book, therefore, contributes to migration studies as a whole.



Academic research and scholarly publications are also available on our online platform:
www.nomos-elibrary.de

To order please visit www.nomos-shop.de,
send a fax to (+49) 7221/2104-43 or contact your local bookstore.
Returns are at the addressee's risk and expense.



Nomos

<https://doi.org/10.5771/0947-9511-2017-2-295>

Generiert durch IP '172.22.53.54', am 08.12.2022, 04:39:33.

Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.