



THE MANAGEMENT OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES – POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS AND BENEFITS, FORMULATED BY REFERENCE TO THE COMPLEMENTARY FINANCING NEEDS OF ROMANIA'S NATIONAL DEFENCE

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Nowadays, more than ever, as a result of the transformations undergone on an international level, the dynamics of new challenges sustain the reconfiguration of the priorities of the internal and external agenda of the states through adding new risk, threat and vulnerability factors, which are not included in armed defence, modifying at the same time the relationship between different security aspects. In this context, national defence must – through an anticipative, preventive and participative approach and, moreover, through utilisation of various resources, by contacting the integrated management of the defence resources – to identify and sustain those response ways which are adequate to contemporary challenges. This hypothesis represents the starting point of this research, through which we have decided to identify and formulate possible connections and possible benefits that can be obtained not only as response means of the national defence against new challenges, but also as its complementary resources. Thus, looking from this point of view, we will demonstrate how should be the management of the operational programme dedicated to the human resources development in Romania.

Keywords: management; operational programme; human resources; complementary resources; national defence; integrated management of the defence resources.

Given, on the one hand, the economic developments of recent years and, on the other hand, the financial difficulties at European level, rethinking the equation and how to plan, allocate and use resources towards their optimal management and multinational financing of capabilities, in terms of efficiency, and the need to materialize a prioritization of investments and, implicitly, its extrapolation from the military dimension of national defence in all areas and aspects of socio-economic reality was only a matter of time.

Moreover, *the multidimensional, modern and multidirectional approach*, offered, at national level, for the first time by the *National Defence Strategy 2010-2015*¹ to the concept of *Romania's defence*, according to which, equally, the success of defence – obtaining security – can be ensured by combining means with political, economic, social, encouraging initiative and participation in the management of national security and civil society – press, specialized NGOs, citizens – based on partnerships,

including those with private organisations, for an effective and efficient correlation of resources with the objectives of security, is another variable derived from the integrated management of defence resources, which we present, in this way, with the main purpose of arguing the need and importance given to the existence and implementation, and in our country, of such of management.

This modern and multidimensional direction was continued and developed by the *National Defence Strategy 2015 - 2019*² and is supported, substantiated and promoted in the current national defence strategy, *National Defence Strategy 2020 - 2024*³, the fundamental programmatic document through which defence planning is thought about at national level, which has been designed and adapted to new facts (*new challenges*) and development needs of the country and was also designed to update Romania's responses to the main problems and issues specific to the increasingly dynamic security environment, new risks, threats and vulnerabilities to it.

Integrated and multi-annual defence planning, achieved by grouping in a unitary system short, medium and long-term objectives, policies and

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human, material and financial resources for defence, which allowed the identification of constraints, limitations and restrictions of any kind for taking, in due time, measures to reduce their negative effects, took into account, according to NDS 2010-2015, achieving all the capabilities in the field for fulfilling the responsibilities assumed within NATO, EU and international coalitions.

Moreover, the current strategy, *NDS 2020-2024*, outlines the main courses of action and ways to ensure security through seven dimensions: *the diplomatic dimension; defence size; the dimension of public order; the size of information, counter-intelligence and security; the economic and energy dimension; the dimension of crisis management and civil protection; the environmental security dimension, with direct effects in terms of quality of life assurance; the educational, health, social and demographic dimension (societal dimension)*⁴.

Consequently, another essential variable of integrated management to defence resources, the achievement of an optimal allocation of limited resources, choosing from a multitude of possible alternatives, over an average (long) period of time and under conditions of uncertainty, in order to maximise national security, is presented, to be implemented, in the document that substantiates Romania's defence planning, at national level, *NDS 2020-2024*, emphasizing in this form, once again, the need for the existence of *integrated management of defence resources*, as well as the participation/involvement of all institutional actors, both public and private, in order to achieve security, in the sense of *an integrated relationship and collaboration*⁵.

In this framework, we consider another variable derived from *integrated defence resources management* to be of a real and meaningful use, namely the existence of variants, options and solutions meant to support the decision-making process, in case of additional requests or budgetary constraints, which we will present and exemplify below.

Thematic concepts

Overview

Although on the same level, *the scientific one*, and categorised by the same fundamental field, *project management*, both thematic concepts,

namely *management* and *operational programme (OP)*, requires our attention as well. Specifically, while, at first glance, the scientific term of *management* does not raise big questions and can be easily defined or conceptualized by the general public, it doesn't work like that with the thematic notion *operational programme*, more and more often confused, in specialised practice, with another term of this register, the term of *project*.

Thus, taking into account the introductory considerations, as well as the need to operationally define the concepts specific to our subject, to which is added the fact that a substantial part of my professional activity, which I still carry out as executive director of the Intermediate Regional Body for Sectorial Operational Programme of Human Resources Development Bucharest-Ilfov, focuses on achieving a high degree of absorption of the European Social Fund, by ensuring the efficient management of the projects under management, both those financed by SOPHRD 2007-2013, as well as those financially supported by Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020, we consider it appropriate and necessary to use our own experience in order to clarify programmatic notions, weakly defined in the literature, with which Romania, as a member state and, implicitly, beneficiaries and project applicants, including defence institutions operate in this specific field.

For this, a first direction of research, proposed and assumed to be explored and presented in this article, is the operational definition of the following specific concepts: *management and operational programme*.

Also, having as a starting point this conceptual framework presented, we will continue our approach in the practical/applied direction, namely that of exemplifying these notions, by using *the management function of an operational programme*.

Therefore, the first concept on which we focused the scientific study was the concept of *management*, a concept that generated, moreover, the first challenge, resulting from the multitude of theories and approaches, found in the literature, developed around it, challenge, which we managed by appealing to the method of selecting the information applicable to our topic, in order to a fair and necessary delimitation and definition.

Consequently, for these reasons, we offer the definition of *the management concept of an*

operational programme, an approach that allowed us to extract and formulate a complementary conclusion: the concept evolves and acquires new and new valences, depending by the realities and socio-economic needs, offering, in equal measure, the possibility to apply, naturally, even instinctively by the leaders the functions or principles described by the theories developed around it.

For the first concept, management, from the literature, we choose and present a suggestive definition: "the job which consists in leading, in a given context, a group of people, with the purpose of achieving common goals in accordance with the purposes of the organisation to which it belongs"⁶.

The second concept necessary to be operationally defined for the theme of this paper is the concept of *programme (operational programme)*, an approach on which we will continue our action.

Given the fact that, very often, in practice, the notion of *programme* is confused and used with meaning equivalent to the notion of *project*, following our approach, we will direct our analysis in the direction of presenting and delimiting the concept *programme* by referring to the concept *project*, so that we can present and highlight the distinction between these notions.

Therefore, in this sense, a first distinct element that we present as an argument is the one referring to the idea of composition – *inclusion relationship – a programme (the whole) is composed of several projects (component parts)*, which are, in turn, made up of subprojects and activities so that they can be implemented more easily. Subprojects with related activities are implemented in partnership or outsourced to third parties. In other words, *projects are integral components of a programme*, through whose punctual activities, well-established objectives, specially allocated and planned resources contribute to the achievement of the indicators, objectives and results of the programme they are part of.

The growing supply of programs has inevitably led to the emergence of a new science, *programme management*, defined by the Central Agency of Informatics and Telecommunications in 1999, as coordinated type management of a project portfolio, which modifies organisations to achieve strategic benefits.

Also, the distinction between the notion of programme and that of project can be highlighted

by the space element. If the location or spatial coverage of the programme is large, national, that of the project is smaller, related to the local, regional or multiregional level. Equally, the distinction can also be highlighted by the element of the extent of the area concerned, which, in the case of the programme is of overview, and in that of the project is distinct.

Another argument that we bring to the fore is the one regarding their duration. While projects have a limited, determined, clearly defined duration (months, years), programmes usually have a rather long, vaguely defined, cyclical duration, some of which are almost impossible to limit in time due to the possibility readjustment according to the results of the evaluations to which their objectives are subject, on the one hand, and their objectives, in themselves, which are either too tender or too difficult or sometimes impossible to achieve on the other hand.

The distinction between the analyzed notions also lies in the characteristic element of the budget, which is global and adjustable within the programmes and determined, fixed, within the projects.

The argument regarding the role of the team is also eloquent – within the programmes, the team has planning, coordination, supervision, management and control tasks, and, within the projects, they have the attributions of effective, direct implementation.

A last characteristic element that we engage in the process of argumentation is the one that highlights orientation or focus of the evaluation – for a programme, the evaluation is oriented in the directions of the performance and their impact, on the other hand, for a project, it is strictly aimed only at performance.

In conclusion, the operational programme, unlike the project, never achieves all its strategic goals; in order to achieve a complex objective of a programme it is necessary to implement several projects, each producing an independent result.

At the same time, at the operational level, a funding programme can be defined as a document written by the ministry designated / responsible for its implementation, approved by the European Commission, which represents the form / way in which Romania uses European funds for its specific investment areas.



Last but not least, to define the concept of *the operational programme*, we will make use of the *Decision no. 936, of November 5, 2020, for the approval of the general framework necessary for the involvement of the Romanian authorities and institutions in the process of programming and negotiation of non-reimbursable external funds related to the 2021-2027 programming period and of the institutional framework for coordination, management and control of these funds*, according to which the concept is given the following meaning: "operational programme – detailed multi-annual plan drawn up by a Member State and adopted by the European Commission by decision setting out how non-reimbursable external funds are allocated to a given region or to one or more areas of development across the country, in line with policy objectives and investment priorities under cohesion policy and the common fisheries policy"⁷.

Taking into account all these aspects, based on the specific experience in the field, we propose the following definition of the concept of *management of operational programme*: the complex process of coordination and management, by calling for a series of specific management tools, methods and techniques, of all the resources involved (information resources, material resources, financial resources, material resources and time resources), with a very well defined purpose, precisely – the achievement of the objectives, indicators and results assumed, at OP level, as an EU Member State.

Moreover, for the operational definition of the derived thematic concept, *the management of operational programme*, we will consider, at this point in our research, a key concept, namely *the monitoring committee*.

Therefore, the Monitoring Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of an operational programme (OP) and ensures compliance with Community and national legislation, achievement of objectives assumed at programme level, by efficient use of allocated resources.

The Monitoring Committee has mainly the following responsibilities: it approves the selection criteria for the projects financed by the OP and revises them according to the programming needs; regularly monitors progress in achieving the specific objectives of the program, based on the

documents submitted by the Management Authority (MA) that manages the respective OP; examines the results of implementation, in particular the achievement of the indicators set for each priority axis; approves the annual and final reports on the implementation of the programme before being sent to the Commission; is informed of the annual control report and of the Commission's comments on the report.

Also, the Monitoring Committee has its own rules of organisation and functioning, as well as the way of making decisions. The Monitoring Committee is chaired by the MA, which also provides the Secretariat of the Committee.

MA transmits, annually, to the European Commission, *an annual implementation report of the OP* and submits a final report after the end of the programming period. The responsibility for preparing these reports rests with the MA together with the IBs (Rs).

Implementation reports must include the following information: the progress made in the implementation of the OP and its priorities compared to the established indicators (stage of implementation of projects; financial implementation, detailing on each priority of the expenditures made, their breakdown on national contribution and ESF contribution); the steps taken by the MA and the Monitoring Committee to ensure the quality and efficiency of the implementation, in particular, monitoring and evaluation measures, including data collection arrangements; a summary of all problems encountered in implementation and measures taken; the way of using technical assistance; the measures taken to do advertising and providing information on OP; the statement on compliance with Community rules in the implementation of the OP; the progress in financing major projects.

Project management aimed at human resources development in Romania: present and future

Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) 2014-2020 is the programmatic document that establishes the investment priorities, the specific objectives and the actions assumed by Romania in the field of human resources, thus continuing the investments made through the European Social Fund, in the period 2007-2013, through *Sectorial Operational Programme of*

Human Resources Development and at the same time contributing to the achievement of the general objective of the *Partnership Agreement (PA 2014-2020)* and, implicitly, of the European Structural and Investment Funds in Romania, namely, to reduce the disparities of economic and social development between Romania and the EU Member States. With integrated interventions, planned in the field of employment, social inclusion and education, HCOP functions as a means of stimulating economic growth and cohesion and also supports the achievement of the objectives set in other development challenges – competitiveness, infrastructure, administration and governance – contributing to the achievement of the objectives assumed by Romania in the context of the *Europe 2020 Strategy* for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In other words, for the 2014-2020 programming period, the projects destined for the development of human resources, in Romania, are financed and managed with the help of the tools and rules applicable to this operational programme.

For the next programming period, 2021-2027, the programme that will continue and finance investments in human capital in Romania is *Education and Employment Operational Programme*.

The development of *EEOP 2021-2027* was coordinated by the Ministry of European Funds, respecting and applying the partnership principle, and involved close cooperation with public authorities responsible for policy policies funded by the program, as well as with the main types of beneficiaries, representatives of civil society, academia and society – economic, involved or targeted by the actions financed through this OP⁸.

Essentially, *Education and Employment Operational Programme (EEOP)* presents an integrated vision of access to education and access to the labour market⁹. Moreover, it aims to modernise the institutions and services offered to the labour market, to promote balanced participation, according to gender, in the labour market, to ensure the balance between professional and personal life, but also to lead to a better adaptation of workers to fast changes on the labour market¹⁰.

To this end, a financial allocation of EEOP has been established of 3.8 billion euro, of which 3.2 billion euro come from the European Social Fund (ESF+) and 581 million euro from the State Budget¹¹.

At the same time, three areas of intervention are specific to this OP: youth employment (informational NEETs, youth centres / clubs / networks of youth workers, integrated packages of personalised measures tailored to the needs of young people); education (prevention of early school leaving, accessibility of education) and occupancy (access to employment for all, increasing employment among women, entrepreneurship and the social economy, anticipating skills, social dialogue / partner capacity, health and safety at work, active aging)¹².

Therefore, among the potential beneficiaries of this operational programme are: the central authorities / institutions and public services with responsibilities in the field (MLSP, NEM, NQA, NAE, NCCTD etc.); local authorities / institutions and public services with responsibilities in the field (decentralized services of MLSP, NEM, NQA, NAE, etc., UATs); public or private providers of employment services / education or training services / skills assessment and certification services / career information and counseling services; units in the national education system; higher education institutions; research institutes; youth associations; chambers of commerce; non-governmental organisations; employers, social partners, employers 'and trade unions' associations, sectoral committees and relevant actors in the economic sectors; county commissions for the authorization of training providers, regional training centres, competence assessment centres; community or youth centres.

All these actors will contribute, through the proposed and implemented projects, to the achievement of the general objective of the operational programme, that "to contribute to the creation of a more sociable Romania with equal access to sustainable, quality employment, to an education system relevant to the labour market and an incentive for lifelong learning"¹³. They will also contribute to achieving the specific objectives of each area of intervention, such as: education (Improving the accessibility, quality and affordability, cost, education and care of preschool children, including related infrastructure; preventing early school leaving by introducing a student-centered approach for children at risk, of flexible "Second chance" programmes, but also relevant counseling and career guidance services, while



improving the skills of teachers so that they can pay the necessary attention to children from vulnerable / disadvantaged groups, improving the quality of education and training, so to adapt to labour market developments, including the necessary training and the provision of specific equipment; supporting the development of innovative and effective teaching methods and techniques); occupancy (integration of young people into the labour market; ensuring access to employment for vulnerable groups, including increasing women's employment; developing an entrepreneurial culture, supporting entrepreneurship and the social economy; developing mechanisms for anticipating skills and monitoring active employment policies; developing social dialogue and involving the social partners in the implementation of employment policies, including by increasing their capacity, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment and promoting active aging, increasing participation in lifelong learning to ensure labour market transitions and employee mobility)¹⁴.

At last but not least, investment priorities, which will be funded under EEOP, are the following:

1. Unlocking the potential of young people on the labour market;
2. Preventing early school leaving and increasing access to and participation of disadvantaged groups in education and training;
3. Increasing the quality of education and training to ensure the fairness of the system and better adapt to the dynamics of the labour market and the challenges of innovation and technological progress;
4. Increasing the accessibility, attractiveness and quality of vocational and technical education;
5. Increasing access to the labour market for all;
6. Entrepreneurship and social economy;
7. Supporting labour market reforms in line with labour market dynamics;
8. Strengthen population participation in lifelong learning in order to facilitate transitions and mobility in the labour market;
9. Technical assistance to facilitate and streamline the management of the Programme¹⁵.

Connections between the needs of human resources training in the Ministry of National Defence and the opportunities offered by HCOP / EEOP

For example, below, we will appeal to elements, aspects and variables specific to the organisation of affiliation, the Ministry of European Funds, the

institution with a role, at national level, for managing European funding, which are made available to Romania in the current programming period. In other words, we recommend focusing stakeholders in the field of integrated defence management in the direction of (re)considering as variants, options and ancillary solutions of new sources of funding, European funds, additional financial sources, designed to support the economic and social dimensions of national defence, resources that, accessed, can contribute and support, along with traditional funding sources, the success of national defence and, moreover, which can be transformed into ways, optimal solutions for managing and reducing the main risks and vulnerabilities to national security of Romania and its citizens.

Moreover, within the same coordinates proposed as examples, there is also the possibility to respond to a major challenge for our country, that of conceiving the extended management of security in terms of project, to propose those activities that create value and are solutions to the main problems, especially those of an economic and social nature, budgetary constraints, as well as the main vulnerabilities of our country, the focus falling on the specific elements of the absorption of European funding.

Therefore, the first and most important level, specific to the military dimension, if we take into account the fact that it enhances and carries out the entire activity within an organisation, the human resource (military, civilians, collaborators, partners, etc.), can be supported by the results of our research. In this case, projects contracted by military educational institutions (National Defence University, Military Technical Academy, as well as other military academies, high schools and schools), in partnership with other similar educational institutions, national or community, may represent, in itself, consistent financial support and significant investment in own human resources (participation in various specialization, advanced training courses, doctoral and postdoctoral courses; organisation of study visits, internal and transnational, intrasectoral or intersectoral mobilities, national and international conferences and seminars; organising exchanges and integrated approach to good practices; providing financial support – scholarships – for students of military educational institutions, including providing

tutoring and guidance activities; diversification of forms of training, creation and development of networks, partnerships and cooperation between universities and military institutions and civilian organisations, research centres at regional, national and European level, etc.).

The second resource of the military dimension, which can be supported by the results of our research, is the material resource. To exemplify this conclusion, we will use, again, the projects that can be submitted by military educational institutions within the financing lines of the EEOP 2021-2027. As a result of contracting such projects, it will be possible to purchase a series of materials necessary to ensure the performance of activities, as well as materials associated with the operation and maintenance of equipment (are considered eligible expenses such as the purchase of furniture, equipment, office, protective equipment of human and material values, expenses made with the archiving of documents, with the payment of utilities, etc.).

The results of this research may also influence the financial resources intended for defence on both levels, budget planning and ensuring the co-financing of projects, on the one hand, and the generation of new resources for defence, on the other hand. In other words, in order to be able to generate other resources, additional resources for national defence, the submitted projects must, first of all, have the financial support of the applicant, they must ensure the part of co-financing established and assumed by signing the financing contract. Moreover, once identified, planned and budgeted, the resources necessary for the implementation of the projects, the categories of expenses such as the expenses with the salaries of the staff involved in the implementation of the projects; operating, maintenance and support costs; expenses with some purchases; research and development expenses; infrastructure spending will be able to benefit from additional sources of funding, financial support worthy of consideration.

Conclusions

This new approach, specific to the integrated management of defence resources, open, multidimensional and proactive, as well as this whole complex of actions related to both the military and non-military dimensions of national

defence, which can be carried out to ensure normal functionality and of organised human communities, successfully compete, as strategic resources, along with other dimensions and variables derived from the integrated management of defence resources, to maximise national security.

NOTES:

1 [Romanian Presidency], *National Defence Strategy – for a Romania that guarantees the security and prosperity of future generations (NDS 2010-2015)*, Bucharest, 2010

2 [Presidential Administration], *National Defence Strategy 2015-2019 – "A Strong Romania within Europe and the World"*, Bucharest, 2015.

3 [Presidential Administration], *National Defence Strategy 2020 - 2024 – "Together, for a safe and prosperous Romania in a world marked by new challenges" (NDS 2020-2024)*, Bucharest, 2020, Monitorul Oficial, Part I, no. 574, from 1 July 2020.

4 *Ibidem*, pp. 30-38.

5 *Ibidem*, pp. 38-40.

6 Călin Emilian Hînțea, Călin Ghiolțan, *Management public I*, Gewalt Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2000.

7 *** *Decision no. 936, of November 5, 2020, for the approval of the general framework necessary for the involvement of the Romanian authorities and institutions in the process of programming and negotiation of non-reimbursable external funds related to the 2021-2027 programming period and of the institutional framework for coordination, management and control of these funds.*

8 *** *Education and Employment Operational Programme (EEOP)*, ver. 1, October 2020, p. 118.

9 <https://mfe.gov.ro/consultari-publice-pentru-perioada-2021-2027-programele-operationale-regionale-por-si-programului-operational-educatie-si-ocupare-poeo/>, accessed on 15.01.2021.

10 *Ibidem*.

11 *Ibidem*.

12 *Ibidem*.

13 <https://www.finantare.ro/consultare-publica-programul-operational-educatie-si-ocupare-poeo.html>, accessed on 15.01.2021.

14 *Ibidem*.

15 *** *Education and Employment Operational Programme (EEOP)*, ver. 1, October 2020.

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