



MODELING AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT, FOR THE NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD, FOR THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME DEDICATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, IN ORDER TO GENERATE RESOURCES FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE

Dragoş-Adrian IORGA, PhD Candidate*

Human resource is, unequivocally, the most important resource of an organization, regardless of the nature of its structure, civilian or military. That's why, the constant investment in human capital is an essential element for the optimal development of the organizational activity, which a great manager/military commander must take into account.

This hypothesis was, moreover, the basis for supporting, negotiating and implementing operational programmes for investment in people, in Romania (SOPHRD 2007-2013 and OPHC 2014-2020) and it will continue to be so for the future operational programme, dedicated to human resources development, related to the financial framework 2021-2027. Moreover, our country must manifest openness, in the negotiation stage of the new Partnership Agreement, as well as a comprehensive approach to all its strategic areas, obviously military, for the modeling and construction of programmatic documents, for setting investment priorities and its thematic objectives

Keywords: Partnership Agreement (between the European Commission and Romania); the 2021-2027 programming period; Operational Human Capital Programme 2021-2027; human resources; complementary resources; national defence.

Considering, on the one hand, that the current programming period, 2014-2020, is coming to an end and, on the other hand, that the new thematic objectives and national investment priorities for the next financial framework, 2021-2027, are already, generally outlined¹, we consider opportune, on this occasion, to make the operational/programmatic analysis of the architecture of the new construction in the field of European policies, materialized at national level, which will be implemented in the next programming period, in order to facilitate a better understanding, by all stakeholders, of its specific elements, as well as the awareness, by the general public, of the need to give importance and the right place to national defence in this new programmatic edifice.

To begin with, in this article, we will direct our analysis towards a strategic national document, of overwhelming importance within the

mechanism for allocating and spending European funds by Romania, the *Partnership Agreement*. Consequently, in this context, it is necessary, first of all, to make it a fair conceptual delimitation.

Therefore, in a general sense, when we mention the concept of a *Partnership Agreement*, we are referring to a strategic national document, negotiated, in detail, by each EU Member State, separately, with the representatives of the European Commission, through which both thematic development objectives and the indicative allocation of European funds are set, within the well-established and specified time limits of a programming period².

Particularly, the *Partnership Agreement with Romania* is the document elaborated by our country, in its capacity as a member state of the European Union, in close cooperation with key social-economic actors, through which three essential points are established, defining such document: the *strategy, priorities*, as well as the *institutional framework* involved in the complex process of implementing European funds, in a

* "Carol I" National Defence University
e-mail: dragoș.iorga@yahoo.com

certain programming period³. More precisely, the last such document, the *Partnership Agreement with Romania*, was adopted by the European Commission on August 6, 2014, and established the national strategy for the efficient and effective use of the European Structural and Investment Funds, within the financial framework 2014-2020⁴. Moreover, the *Agreement* set out the general framework within which the investment of EUR 23 billion was planned, amounting to the total funding, available under cohesion policy, for the current financial cycle, 2014-2020⁵. Romania can also access 8 billion euros for rural development and 168 million euros for the fisheries and maritime sectors⁶.

For the next programming period, 2021-2027, the *Partnership Agreement* has not yet been adopted by the European Commission, a fact that gives us the possibility to formulate, in this scientific article, potential suggestions and recommendations for modeling and construction of this new national strategic document, so that strategic levels of the economic and social dimensions of national defence are the subject of non-reimbursable funding as well. In this context, the main objective of our research is the creation of knowledge and its transfer in social-economic practice by developing and providing – through dissemination to relevant actors, public and private – the premises for inclusion in the agenda of public consultation meetings, of the theme of new national investment priorities, which directly or indirectly target the socio-economic components of national defence in order to generate resources for this strategic area, by including it in future operational / national programs (*OPHC 2021-2027*; *NPH 2021-2027*; *OPSITD 2021-2027*), programs dedicated to human resources development.

The next programming period, 2021-2027

As mentioned above, the foundations for the construction of the operational framework, related to the programs dedicated to cohesion policy 2021-2027 are currently already established.

Therefore, the main pillar underlying the next multi-annual financial period, 2021-2027, is given by the five objectives around which national investments will be made, namely: "A SMARTER Europe", an objective to which there have been allocated approx. 6 billion EUR; "A GREENER Europe", for which approx. 7 billion EUR have been

allocated; "A MORE CONNECTED Europe", an objective that will receive approx. 4 billion EUR; "A MORE SOCIAL Europe", with an allocation of approx. 10 billion EUR, and "A Europe CLOSER TO ITS CITIZENS", for the realization of which approx. 0.6 billion EUR have been allocated⁷.

In total, the financial allocation proposed to Romania for the implementation, at national level, of these objectives related to Cohesion Policy, is over 30 billion EUR⁸.

Another main pillar, which we also present below, lies in the *premises that underlie this new architecture*, namely: *safeguarding the management and control system specific to the 2014-2020 programming period; simplifying, as well as improving, certain aspects so as to ensure constant support and assistance to beneficiaries; decentralization/regionalization of implementation, as well as intensification/augmentation of leadership in the sphere of all actors involved*⁹.

Also, the basis of the future construction consists of the following six guiding principles: *an even better coordination among the financed operations (projects)*, by permanently relating to the new challenges; *a unitary approach in the sphere of procedures and practices*, by grouping all the managing authorities within the Ministry of European Funds, the institution responsible for ensuring the horizontal coordination of the management structures; *simplification and efficiency of coordination* for the function of management authority, as well as for the accounting function; *ensuring the continuity of expertise; the real/pragmatic adaptation of the interventions both to the needs and to the regional specifics*, by decentralizing the management and implementation at the level of the Intermediate Bodies; *an innovative and integrated approach*, by developing multi-fund programs¹⁰.

In this context, the *institutional architecture 2021-2027* is established on the following *four pillars*: the *Ministry of European Funds* (coordinator of Cohesion Policy); *Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration* (in its capacity as coordinator of territorial cooperation programs); *Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development* (coordinator of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy and the Maritime Affairs Fund); *Ministry of Internal Affairs* – in its capacity as coordinator of the following four



Funds/Instruments: Funds related to the field of Internal Affairs; Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI); Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Instrument for Border and Visa Management (IMFV)¹¹.

Regarding the *architecture of the operational programs 2021-2027*, related to the implementation of cohesion policy, at national level, we list below the nine programs, as they were established during the last public consultation, carried out on 9 March 2020: *Operational Program Transport (OPT)*; *Operational Program Sustainable Development (OPSD)*; *Operational Program Intelligent Growth and Digitization (OPIGD)*; *National Program Health (multifund, NPH)*; *Operational Program Human Capital (OPHC)*; *Operational Program Social Inclusion and Integrated Territorial Development (multifund – OPSIITD)*; *Regional Operational Programs – implemented at regional level*; *Operational Program Technical Assistance (multifund – OPTA)* and *Operational Program Equitable Transition (OPET)*¹².

For these, the functions of management authority (MA) will have the following ministries: *Ministry of European Funds* - MA for OPSD, OPIGD, NPH, OPHC, OPSIITD, OPTA, OPET; *Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Communications* – MA for OPT and *Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration*, through RDAs, MA for Regional Operational Programs¹³.

Also in this context, we consider relevant, for our scientific approach, the following *clarifications regarding the accounting and auditing function*.

Consequently, in the first case, the accounting function, it is necessary to emphasize a new aspect, planned to change in the new programming period, namely that the *Certification and Payment Authority (CPA)*, an institution within the Ministry of Public Finance, will fulfill the attributions deriving from the relationship Romania – Member State and the European Commission (receiving funds from the Commission, ensuring foreign exchange and replenishment of accounts of managing authorities, keeping accounting records on amounts received and conducting bank reconciliations, elaboration of the payment requests prognosis to be transmitted to the Commission through the SFC, in collaboration with the Ministry of European Funds) for regional and other operational/national programs¹⁴.

In the second case, the *audit function*, we specify that it will continue to be performed in the new programming period, 2021-2027, by the *Audit Authority attached to the Court of Accounts of Romania*, an independent body from an operational point of view vis-à-vis the Court of Accounts, but also to the other authorities responsible for the management and implementation of non-reimbursable external funds¹⁵.

Last but not least, in order to conclude, we also consider illustrative for our approach a brief review of the *most important simplification measures, which will be implemented in the margin of the next programming period, 2021-2027*.

Thus, according to the document edited by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, *Simplification Manual – 80 simplification measures in cohesion policy 2021-2027*¹⁶, there are ten key points on which the concept of *simplification* will be materialized: (1) legal framework – which is intended to be transformed, through key provisions, into a clearer, simpler, unified/common regulatory framework for all funds, which provides certainty and overview from the outset and which is easy to use/apply¹⁷; (2) the policy framework – which will be outlined, for a simpler programming, in an streamlined framework, characterized by the following specific elements: flexibility and simpler formulation of policy objectives and rules for a thematic concentration; integrated administrative capacity with sector objectives¹⁸; (3) conditions/requirements - which will be less and clearer, with automatic applicability and without checking the additional character in order to make the policy more efficient; the obligation on action plans will also be lifted¹⁹ (4) faster and more strategic programming – for a faster and easier start of implementation (a strategic document is provided for each Member State to guide the negotiations; at the same time, the PA is not changed after the initial adoption; concentration, conciseness and clarity are recommended when adopting the Commission proposal, as well as avoiding any overlap between PAs and programs; moreover, it has been proposed to reduce the burden of documents, the new programs will be shorter and better structured, and the intervention logic will be streamlined; the need to reach a Commission decision will be eliminated for minor financial transfers made under a program,



as well as for minor changes and corrections; a separate adjustment procedure will also no longer be necessary; simplified cost options and the use of independent cost financing are encouraged)²⁰; (5) territorial instruments, designed flexibly, more simply, more clearly, around the same rules, and adapted to local situations - there will therefore be a single set of rules for local development under the responsibility of the community, a coherent approach to cities and a simpler structure to reach the 6% target)²¹; (6) simpler, faster and easier implementation of results through the following measures: elimination of specific rules and procedures for major and for-profit projects, in addition to state aid rules; predominant use of simplified cost options and independent cost financing (elimination of supporting invoices); proposing clearer and simpler rules on VAT eligibility; approval of expenditure and projects outside the Member State; calculating costs where projects cover different categories of regions; implementation of a simple transfer system between funds and instruments; introduction and use of the "Emblem of Excellence" concept, applied to the integration of EU instruments²²; (7) the management, control and audit system – desirable to also become a simpler and more proportionate system, which is largely based on national systems (the designation procedure will be stopped; the number of audits will be reduced; audits will be proportionately addressed and audit, unique; simplification of accounts will be accepted, simpler models for accounts and payment claims will be proposed²³ (8) financial instruments (FIs) – will be characterized by simpler and less detailed provisions, and they will be better integrated into the programming process, the more flexible combination of grants and financial instruments will be encouraged, rules will become simpler on costs and management fees, payment claims will be streamlined; clearer rules will be established with recycling funds; there will be a single reporting system for all forms of funding and a simplified system of grant and IF²⁴; (9) monitoring and evaluation – will change in the following directions: reporting will be more frequent but easier, and the provisions streamlined – in other words, there will be no obligation to perform an ex ante evaluation; the reporting will be done in real time, instead of the annual one; a single set

of indicators will be proposed for better coverage; the performance reserve will be eliminated)²⁵; (10) Interreg – will have a single, integrated regulatory framework, adapted to the specific context of cooperation (the legislative act will be easier to use, comprehensively, with common rules, and the approach to audits for Interreg will become more proportionate; outside EU cooperation will be supported; the simplified review, the European cross-border mechanism and the streamlining of funds for maritime and cross-border business are also planned (Interreg – will thus become a single brand)²⁶.

The series of public consultations, initiated and organized by the Ministry of European Funds, with the key actors for the preparation of the next programming period, were intensified in the first part of this year in order to reach an agreement, at national level, and to finalize negotiations regarding the funds to be allocated to Romania for the next seven years²⁷.

The latest such consultation took place on 9 March 2020 and set out the following types of investments that could be made for human resources development under three operational programs: (1) OPHC, which covers six areas: NEETs; Education (study programs and initial teacher training, life-long learning, counseling services, guidance and educational assistance, children with specific educational needs, school minibus leasing); Education (vocational and technical education); After school; Employment and Integrated Territorial Instrument (ITI West Region - Jiu Valley, South-East Region); (2) NPH, through which investments will be made in Health, more precisely investments in: Regional Hospitals (Craiova, Cluj, Iași); Health infrastructure; eHealth (digitization); Medical services – training, family medicine, doctors' offices in educational institutions; Medical services – training/specialization of equipment, modern methods of investigation and Research (including Cantacuzino, genetic medicine), as well as (3) OPSIITD, which will finance the following areas: Infrastructure (social, educational, leisure, sports); Social services; Social inclusion (combating early school drop-out); Social inclusion (de-institutionalization, combating poverty, migrants) and disadvantaged people (food, supplies, childcare)²⁸.



Conclusions

As novelty aspects, related to the future programming period, 2021-2027, we highlight the following: a separate program in the field of health is proposed, social inclusion is delimited by the program dedicated to human capital and the introduction of a new program is planned, the Operational Program Equitable Transition. Also on this level, there is the implementation of a program dedicated to Transport, which will be managed by the relevant ministry.

Moreover, at programmatic level, the European Commission has established consistent measures, of substance, in order to simplify the key elements of the process of implementing cohesion policy 2021-2027, measures that can and must become opportunities for our country as well. More precisely, starting from the initial purpose of these simplification measures, streamlining the implementation of operational programs, Romania can identify and include, from the beginning, in its new construction, due to the flexibility recommended by the European Commission, following the model already operated within OPHC 2014-2020, by the Ministry of European Funds, of the immediate possibility of redistributing funds for solving crisis situations, as, moreover, it has already been done in the case of COVID-19, to support vulnerable people in pandemics), succeeding, this way, in mitigating this threat to national defence, through European funds.

In addition, within OPHC 2021-2027, NPH or OPSIITD potential funding, direct or indirect, for the national defence can be identified in the architecture already established.

Last but not least, the main objective of our research was to create knowledge and transfer it to social-economic practice by developing and providing - by disseminating to relevant actors, public and private, the prerequisites for placing on the agenda of public consultation meetings, of the topic of new national investment priorities which, directly or indirectly, target the social-economic components of national defence in order to generate resources for this strategic area, by including it in future operational/national programs (OPHC 2021-2027; NPH 2021-2027; OPSIITD), programs dedicated to human resources development.

NOTES:

- 1 <http://mfe.gov.ro/minister/periode-de-programare/perioda-2021-2027/>, accessed on 12.05.2020.
- 2 <http://mfe.gov.ro/9-ce-este-acordul-de-parteneriat/>, accessed on 11.05.2020.
- 3 <https://por2014-2020.adroltenia.ro/acordul-de-parteneriat-2014-2020/>, accessed on 11.05.2020.
- 4 *Ibidem*.
- 5 *Ibidem*.
- 6 *Ibidem*.
- 7 <http://mfe.gov.ro/ministrul-marcel-bolos-a-avut-oua-noua-runda-de-consultari-cu-reprezentantii-societatii-civile-pe-tem-a-prioritatilor-din-viitoarea-perioda-de-programare/>, accessed on 13.05.2020; <http://mfe.gov.ro/ministrul-marcel-bolos-a-discutat-cu-reprezentantii-adr-despre-noua-arhitectura-institutionala-si-stadiul-documentelor-pentru-pregatirea-viitoare-periode-de-programare/>, accessed on 13.05.2020.
- 8 <http://mfe.gov.ro/mfe-continua-consultarile-pentru-stabilirea-unui-acord-la-nivel-national-si-finalizarea-negocierii-fondurilor-pentru-urmatorii-sapte-ani/>, accessed on 13.05.2020.
- 9 <http://mfe.gov.ro/minister/periode-de-programare/perioda-2021-2027/>, *Arhitectura programelor operaționale – politica de coeziune 2021-2027*, p. 2, accessed on 12.05.2020.
- 10 *Ibidem*, p. 3.
- 11 *Ibidem*, p. 4.
- 12 <http://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/19239ff75ce05dfefee21d4d1b5013d1.pdf>, accessed on 13.05.2020.
- 13 <http://mfe.gov.ro/minister/periode-de-programare/perioda-2021-2027/>, *Arhitectura programelor operaționale – politica de coeziune 2021-2027*, p. 6, accessed on 12.05.2020.
- 14 *Ibidem*, <http://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/19239ff75ce05dfefee21d4d1b5013d1.pdf>, p. 7; accessed on 13.05.2020.
- 15 <http://mfe.gov.ro/minister/periode-de-programare/perioda-2021-2027/>, *Arhitectura programelor operaționale – politica de coeziune 2021-2027*, p. 7, accessed on 12.05.2020.
- 16 *** *Manual de simplificări – 80 de măsuri de simplificare în politica de coeziune 2021-2027*, <http://mfe.gov.ro/minister/periode-de-programare/perioda-2021-2027/>, accessed on 11.05.2020.
- 17 *Ibidem*, p. 2.
- 18 *Ibidem*, p. 3.
- 19 *Ibidem*.
- 20 *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.
- 21 *Ibidem*, p. 6.
- 22 *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.
- 23 *Ibidem*, p. 9.
- 24 *Ibidem*, p. 10.
- 25 *Ibidem*, p. 11.
- 26 *Ibidem*, pp. 12-13.
- 27 <http://mfe.gov.ro/timeline-consultari-publice/>, accessed on 13.05.2020.
- 28 <http://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/19239ff75ce05dfefee21d4d1b5013d1.pdf>, accessed on 13.05.2020.



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