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Dynamics of Migration in Romania and Management of Financing Instruments

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Abstract

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Changes in the international context in recent years have caused tensions and conflicts, having an impact on population and producing an effect of acceleration of the migration phenomenon. Following the escalation of conflicts, the states, their governments and international organizations, including the European Union, have adapted their strategies and policies to face the exodus of immigrants. Our study presents and analyses the dynamics of the migration in Romania during 2010-2015 and the management of the dedicated European funds. The aim of this study is to identify the main positive and negative aspects resulted from the use of the financial instruments in the area of migration in Romania, considering the fact that these are essential to identify ways of improving Romania's capacity to manage migration. We used SWOT analysis on Romania's case in our research methodology. This study is aimed to address relevant topics regarding the evaluation of migration in Romania. Furthermore, the specialized institutions may consider our recommendations on how to improve the management of EU funds allocated in the area of migration in Romania.

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Keywords: management; migration; asylum; European financing.

1. Introduction

Migration is one of the global phenomena in the context of current opportunities to provide more diverse and cheaper transport than in the past decades, flow of information, social tensions, inter- and intra-state conflicts and, not least, in the context of the difficult economic situation. Social changes and the general evolution of the society have made internal and external migration one of with most impact human phenomena of the contemporary world. Migration movements at all levels - individual and collective, temporary and permanent, spontaneous and forced, internal and external - have effectively changed the face of the planet. Migration alters the social, economic and cultural frame, causing temporary or definitive changes of the human reality, migration changes the way of living, the nature and dynamics of the social groups, of both migrants and those who receive migrants, leading to a continuous readjustment of the social organization, the potential problems related to the assimilation or rejection of the migrants.

Europe is facing its worst refugee crisis since the Second World War, with more than 1 million people applying for asylum in 2015 (Migration Policy Institute, 2016). To support Member States in managing the immigration issues, the European Commission has provided funding opportunities for the integration of legal immigrants and repatriation of illegal ones, effective use of these funds will lead to an effective management of the phenomenon seen as a whole.

During the last years, the internationally conducted studies on migration mostly analysed its contribution to population dynamics. At a certain moment, the European Commission stated that if nobody would immigrate to the EU in the next 20 years, the effects would be following: EU's active population would decrease by 33 million (- 11%), the dependency ratio of the elderly (the number of people over 65 compared to the number of active persons) would increase from 28% to 44%, the percentage of young workers (20-30 years) in the total workforce would decrease by 25%, while the elderly (60-70 years) would increase by 29% (European Commission, 2014). Also, analysis and studies have concluded that in spite of the many benefits of migration, migrants themselves remain among the most vulnerable members of society. They are often the first to lose their jobs in the event of an economic downturn, often working for lower salaries, longer hours and in worse conditions than national workers (United Nations, 2016).

At national level, studies in the field have analysed the evolution of the asylum and migration system in recent years and how it responded to foreigners integration needs and some important conclusions resulted: lack of specific immigration legislation and policies addressing issues such as vulnerable groups of immigrants, difficult cooperation, sometimes, of the public authorities with different social partners regarding the selection of the immigrant labour force (Voicu, et. al., 2015, p. 104), integrated approach in the management of immigration, national strategic vision regarding the immigration administration (Alexe, et. al., 2010, pp. 84-85), adoption of measures to prevent and combat immigrants discrimination, in the national strategies on immigration and discrimination (Voicu, et. al., 2015, p. 86).

There are few studies on the migration phenomenon in Romania, so our work brings knowledge not only about the dynamics of migration in our country in the last years, but also about the management of financial instruments dedicated to migration in Romania and how they can contribute to the

consolidation of this management, aiming specifically at the integration of foreigners in the Romanian society.

At the same time, our research, based on an extensive documentation and a consistent analysis, identified the main weaknesses and strengths of the financial tools managing the migration phenomenon in Romania from 2010 to 2015, and several recommendations for improving the absorption of EU funds by Romania in the multi-annual financial framework 2014-2020.

2. The dynamic analysis of migration and the management of the EU funding instruments within member states, focusing on Romania

Immigration is the main factor of population growth in the EU, recording a positive net migration in most of the Member States. In January 2006, the number of third country nationals residing in the EU was about 18.5 million, that is 3.8% of the total population of nearly 493 million. On 1st of January 2014, the number of third countries nationals living in EU-28 was 19.6 million, the highest number of foreign nationals being recorded in Germany (7.0 million persons), United Kingdom (5.0 million), Italy (4.9 million), Spain (4.7 million) and France (4.2 million) (Communication to the Council, 2007).

The number of asylum applications has increased in Europe for the past 8 years, from 281,000 (2008) to 1.25 million (2015). In 2015, the number of people seeking international protection in the Member States of the European Union (EU) has doubled compared to 2014 (625,000 asylum applications), due to the conflict in Syria and the exodus towards Europe. In 2015, the largest number of asylum applications were registered in Germany (441 800 applications for asylum, 35% of all asylum applications in the EU), followed by Hungary (174.400, 14%), Sweden (156 100, 12%), Austria (85 500, 7%), Italy (83.200, 7%) and France (70 600, 6%) (Eurostat Newsrelease, 2016).

Dynamics of migration in Romania in the last 5 years have been influenced by the political situation at the international level and the statistics below present the evolution of the main indicators (Immigration General Inspectorate, 2016).

As shown in Fig. 1, the number of asylum applications in Romania has experienced a different trend from year to year due to the global tensions.

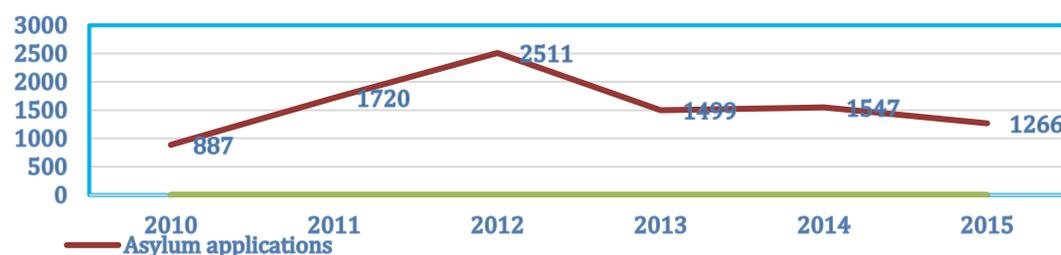


Fig.1 Number of asylum applications in the period 2010 -2015 (Source: Immigration General Inspectorate. Immigration General Inspectorate analysis of the activity realised in the period 2010-2015. Available at URL: <http://igi.mai.gov.ro/detalii/pagina/ro/Bilant/189>)

Fig. 2 shows that during 2010-2016, due to the processing of asylum applications, 2,501 people received a form of protection in Romania. A significant increase was recorded in 2013 amid the outbreak of the conflict in Syria. In 2013, 68% of asylum applications were registered from the Syrian citizens.

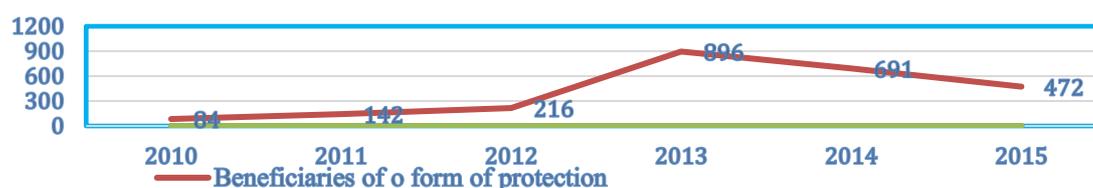


Fig. 2. Number of beneficiaries of a form of protection 2010-2015 (Source: Immigration General Inspectorate. Immigration General Inspectorate analyses of the activity realised in the period 2010-2015. Available at URL: <http://igi.mai.gov.ro/detalii/pagina/ro/Bilant/189>)

The number of foreigners from EU / EEA with legal right to stay in Romania had an insignificant evolution over the past 5 years, increasing from 98.073 people to 104.139 people in 2016. Foreigners who have illegally entered or whose stay in Romania has become illegal may be removed from Romanian territory. For the period 2010-2015, the number of return decisions of Romania was reduced from 3,294 to 1,677.

For the period 2007-2013, the EU common approach on migration was sustained by four financing instruments grouped in the General Programme “Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows” - PG SOLID. Out of the four instruments, only three were designed only for the migration and asylum domain, respectively European Refugee Fund, European Integration Fund for Third Country Nationals and European Return Fund. European Refugee Fund had a budget of EUR 630 million for the period 2008-2013 and supports EU countries efforts in receiving refugees and in guaranteeing access to consistent, fair and effective asylum procedures. With a budget of EUR 825 million, the aim of European Integration Fund (2007-2013) was to support national and EU initiatives that facilitate the integration of non-EU immigrants into European states. European Return Fund allocated EUR 676 million for the period 2008-2013, trying to improve return management as well as to encourage the development of cooperation between EU countries and the countries of origin (European Commission, *Asylum, Migration and Integration*).

In 2008, European Commission approved management and control system for the migration funds in Romania. Through his specialised structures, the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Romania assured the management of European funds for migration. As shown in Table 1, the financial allocations for the 2007-2013 programming period, totalled EUR 20,506,123.54 (Immigration General Inspectorate. *General Programme*). Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.

Table 1. Reimbursable financial allocations for each Fund

	Annual Programme 2007	Annual Programme 2008	Annual Programme 2009	Annual Programme 2010	Annual Programme 2011	Annual Programme 2012	Annual Programme 2013
RF	-	583.727,59	621.471,27	701.106,77	744.465,02	774.919	879.956
ERF	761.525,37	780.702,90	804.797,29	983.133,41	1.155.030,44	1.471.644	1.196.139
IF	-	776.622,48	797.412,48	1.032.721,97	1.560.501,55	2.295.060	2.585.187

Source: Immigration General Inspectorate. General Programme. Available at URL: <http://igi.mai.gov.ro/detalii/pagina/ro/Programul-general/180>

On the one hand, the European Refugee Fund was provided with legal, social, cultural, educational counselling / assistance for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of a form of protection in Romania, and

on the other hand, the operational and logistics capacity of Romanian specialised authorities was improved. By managing the European Integration Fund, it was aimed at the integration of third country nationals in Romania through social, medical, material assistance, intercultural communication, studies looking for the perception of Romanian population regarding the foreigners in Romania, awareness campaign regarding the benefits of foreigners' integration in Romania. The European Return Fund has mainly contributed to the implementation of forced return measures or voluntary repatriation of the persons who were illegally staying in Romania. The cooperation mechanism with third countries embassies was strengthened, as well as public institutions with responsibilities in this area, searching for the streamlining of diplomatic and inter-institutional relations.

The Funds implementation followed two directions, as stipulated by the European directive: the awarding body (i.e. open calls for proposals) and the executing body (i.e. the responsible/delegated authority implements projects which suppose a situation of monopoly de jure or national security). In the National Programmes (PA) 2008-2013/PG SOLID, 42 calls for proposals were conducted, trends in their dynamics being influenced by various factors. If in the National Programmes 2008/2009 the resumption of many calls for proposals was necessary because of the unawareness of the Fund existence by potential beneficiaries, then effective lack of projects proposals or lack of the quality of submitted projects proposals, in the National Programmes 2010/2011 decreased the number of calls for proposals and increased the number of projects proposals for every selection procedure. Thus, a leap from 10 projects proposals per year of implementation to approximate 50 was registered, leading to the un-approval and diversification of the assistance provided for target groups, respectively asylum seekers, beneficiaries of a form of protection, third country nationals and persons with illegal stay in Romania.

Fig. 3 shows the absorption rate for the management of PG SOLID Funds. It can be observed that the absorption rate had increased each of the following years until the end of the financial programming year.



Fig 3. Absorption Rate (%) for PG SOLID 2007-2013 (Source: Immigration General Inspectorate. Immigration General Inspectorate analyses of the activity realised in the period 2010-2015. Available at URL: <http://igi.mai.gov.ro/detalii/pagina/ro/Bilant/189>)

At the beginning, when PG SOLID was being implemented, the organisations working in the field of asylum and immigrants' integration were not many. Those who applied for projects felt confident regarding their field of activity and there was no notable competition. The financing authority made constant efforts to inform the potential beneficiaries about the existing funds by organizing visibility

events, training sessions and working groups. Therefore, new organisations in the field of asylum and migration were created and this increased the quality of the submitted projects proposals and the effectiveness of the absorption rate.

An important factor which influenced the absorption rate was determined by the changes in the dynamics of the migration flows, with direct effects on the structure of the target group, the type of assistance necessary for his integrations or on the capacity of adaptability of the dedicated authorities to new challenges.

For example, the absorption rate of the European Return Fund from National Programme 2012 registered a decrease of 38% compared to National Programme 2011. This significant decrease was caused by many factors, such as the low number of foreigners who arrived and whose illegal stay on Romanian territory was discovered. Due to changed migration routes, most of migration groups were coming from countries with internal conflicts (such as Syria, Irak, Afganistan or Somalia) and where the effective return actions were forbidden, impossible or hard to be realized. The majority of those immigrants detected as illegal residents in Romania submitted asylum application, and the rate of providing a form of protection considerably increased compared to last years.

The implementation of the projects financed by PG SOLID ended at 30.06.2015. All the factors involved in managing these Funds, strengthening their capacity of managing asylum and migration financing and getting ready for new challenges required by the New Framework 2014-2020, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, known as the FAMI. Romanian budget for FAMI has an actual value of EUR 50.310.877 (Immigration General Inspectorate. *National Programme FAMI revised 14.12.2015*), aiming to ensure the principle of solidarity and responsibility sharing in the refugee crisis context. The new structure of financing in home affairs domain was meant to simplify the applicable rules for the authorities as well as for beneficiaries.

The National Programme (NP) is focused on actions aimed at addressing the current situation in asylum and immigration in Romania and it is based on the statistics on asylum applications, legal stay in Romania, persons benefiting from integration programmes, returnees, as well as on the latest trends and perspectives in the main countries of origin of the targeted people.

3. Swot Analysis

In order to design an overall view on the use of European migration funds, a SWOT analysis was used. Thus the analysis identified the main strengths and weaknesses in the management of European funds up to this moment, the opportunities and threats that will shape the strategy planning for the future.

3.1 Strengths

- The effective Management and Control System for the funds in the area of migration, consisting of public authorities who have demonstrated a high capacity to exercise the responsibilities in managing EU funds, led to an improved absorption rate in the last 5 years;

- The amounts of technical assistance, allocated by European Commission, were effectively used for training the staff, at home and abroad, disseminating information to potential beneficiaries, providing necessary equipment and supplies for the management authorities;

- The level of the financial contribution requested from the beneficiaries of the migration funds remained 5%, with the possibility to be reduced to 0%;

- An effective administrative mechanism, based on permanent communication between the management authorities and other actors involved in the management of migration, has responded to the needs of the target group.

3.2 Weaknesses

- Beneficiaries still have a low administrative capacity to implement EU funded projects;

- It is quite rarely that the project applications have innovative approaches;

- Beneficiaries have a relatively low ability to ensure the sustainability of the finalised projects;

- Projects mostly use quantitative indicators, detrimental to impact and qualitative indicators.

3.3 Opportunities

- The number of organizations active in the migration area has been increasing and that can lead to high quality applications and consequently to better assistance for the foreigners in Romania;

- The economic and social benefits obtained through the integration of foreigners in Romanian society are facilitated with the support of EU funds, e.g. sustaining the economic sectors which face the problem of migration of the local population (health, construction), attenuation of religious discrimination / racism by promoting multiculturalism;

- Conferences and committees organized at EU level are opportunities for an active dialogue with other Member States in exchanging best practices on how to manage EU funds in the field of migration;

- The European structural and investment funds have been diversified with the aim to provide social assistance to foreigners in Romania.

3.4 Threats

- The international conflicts may cause massive influxes of asylum seekers, with severe effects on the host nation if the European funds are inadequately managed or insufficient to sustain the integration process;

- Terrorism incidents threaten the citizens' security in the host countries; therefore, migration and specifically the integration of foreigners in Romanian society may be regarded with scepticism by the local population, as well as the implementation of European projects in the area of migration;

- EU funded projects aimed at the integration of the immigrants proved often to be unsustainable, as the assisted persons chose, ultimately, to leave Romania;

- The lack of investments or jobs for immigrants may cause low absorption of European funds for their integration in the labour market in Romania.

The global analysis regarding the management of allocated migration funds in Romania, for the period 2007-2013, led to the following main recommendations, which, once implemented, could lead to a better management in the new financial framework 2014-2020:

- Cooperation and complementarity between the programmes financed by European funds, especially the structural and investment funds, could lead to increased support for actions dedicated to education or raising awareness of local communities for a better integration of foreigners, educational activities for immigrants, educational and awareness activities for the staff of the national public authorities regarding the rights and obligations of the foreigners in Romania;

- Potential beneficiaries of EU funds should be encouraged to propose qualitative indicators to measure projects results, sustained by reliable sources of verification;

- Visibility of the EU funds should be ensured through conferences, training sessions or workshops with the participation of all the actors involved in the management of asylum and migration;

- Awareness campaigns for the host population should be organized, mostly on the necessity and benefits of the integration of foreigners in the Romanian society, aiming to reduce fear and reluctance of the local population concerning initiatives in the area of migration and integration;

- The staff of the dedicated authorities should benefit from training, and they should be trained with the help of technical assistance funds, such as courses in Romania and other countries, exchanges of experience and practices with other EU Member States, participation in events at EU level;

- An integrated system of immigration management should be established based on cooperation and coordination at EU level, with representation in each Member State. The implementation of this system can be supported through new projects, financed by the new multi-annual financial framework 2014-2020.

4 Conclusion

Within this general analysis we have identified many relevant issues leading to the conclusion that Romania has made significant progress in recent years in the management of funds allocated to migration and problems generated by flows of immigrants have been or could be solved. However, in the new international context in which migration issues interfere with those from terrorism, it is our opinion that important changes are necessary in both the strategic vision of the EU on migration in Europe and the mechanism of managing complex and unusual situations that occur. To achieve these objectives, the European Union has a variety of instruments that can support concrete measures in a stable, legal and safe frame. Although the rate of movement of people inside, outside and between EU Member States is different, the states share similar challenges and opportunities of migration. Therefore, cooperation and systematic approach to immigration issues and those derived from it, become particularly important for European citizens to continue the process of sustainable economic and social development, using financial resources through specialized programs.

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