

IMPACT OF FLEXICURITY POLICIES ON THE ROMANIAN LABOR MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Along with joining the EU and with the desire to be compatible with the European labor market, flexicurity begins to penetrate gradually the Romanian labor market, becoming a topical concept, an economic and social recovery tool. In the simplest possible way, flexicurity can be defined as the compromise between flexibility and work safety. The flexicurity principle was born as a solution to the European dilemma: how to increase the competitiveness of European enterprises in global competition without sacrificing the European social model.

Although a gradual passage is attempted, the tradition of a profession inherited from one generation to another or a stable job still exists in the human resource mentality, but it no longer exists in the present society. The concept of flexicurity is relatively new, introduced in Europe in 2006, when the principles of flexicurity were developed, but they were implemented according to the economic specificity of each EU member state.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effects that EU accession has had on the Romanian labor market and the subsequent steps to harmonize Romania with the European Union requirements from the point of view of human resources management, flexicurity at the labor market.

In Romania, the flexicurity balance is balanced, in the sense that the trade unions support a broader level of security, and the employers tend to a greater degree of flexibility.

In conclusion, the Romanian labor market to develop a high degree of flexicurity must aim at increasing employment and reducing long-term unemployment, promoting workplace security and reducing the rigidity of labor law, especially in case of voluntary dissolution of firms, or of collective redundancies. In addition, the flexibility of collective and individual work contracts is also sought.

Keywords:

flexicurity, European perspectives of the labour market, innovation, unemployment, lifelong learning, human resources.

JEL J28, J80, M54

INTRODUCTION

Flexibility, although is a process with a major impact on the labor market, refers to the transitions that take place throughout the life of the human resource: from school to work, from one job to another, from unemployment / inactivity to a new job, and last but not least from work to retirement. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that the success of this transition process is not confined to the employer alone (through greater freedom for companies to hire or dismiss the workforce) and does not necessarily involve indefinite work contracts. Flexibility impacts on the progress of the workforce towards better jobs, “upward mobility”, optimal employee development, flexible work organization (both for the employee and for the employer), capable of responding efficiently and quickly to new requirements and competencies productivity and facilitating the reconciliation of professional life with the responsibilities of personal life. [20].

At the level of the labor market, labor safety aims, in addition to preserving the workplace, the development of skills or the access to professional training in professional life, which would help to find a new job easier. [6]. It also intends to provide material support during the period of job loss through unemployment benefits, in order to move towards socio-professional integration.

At the labor market level in Romania it is necessary to prevent an increase in unstable jobs, characterized by excessive mobility and low security. Otherwise, the number of unemployed on the labor market would evolve. Currently, the Romanian flexicurity model can work and deliver the expected results only to the extent that employees have an efficient social conversion and continuous training system.

Essentially, workforce security offers chances for professional development for all workforce, but it mainly targets low-skilled workers, and workforce close to retirement age (very low professional reconquest).

The permanent development of the labor market and globalization are beneficial in terms of labor market development through job growth and the evolution of the workforce (better prepared workforce, receptive to professional change or geographic mobility), but instead calls for openness on the part of businesses and workers. [23].

The main reasons for generating change in the labor market are:

integration of the labor force into the European labor market;

developing new processes and technologies, especially in the field of information and communication; the development of “segmented” labor markets in many EU member states, where workers protected or relatively protected and deprived of coexist;

demographic aging of the population, with a direct impact on the labor market, with relatively low levels of employment and a high level of long-term unemployment, all of which present a risk to the sustainability of social protection systems.

1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature Romania’s integration into the European Union, both in the pre-accession and post-accession period, is a process that has generated profound changes in the workforce and implicitly in the management of the labor force in the context of European flexicurity. For Romania, joining the EU has involved a transition, transfer, being a process that still produces its economic effects. For this reason, I consider the impact of flexicurity on the labor market a topical topic, analyzed in many specialized studies.

One of the key components that Romania has pursued in the process of integration into the European structures was the labor resource, an essential component on the labor market. In my opinion, among all the economic resources, the labor resources are the most important, being very difficult, if not impossible to fill from the outside, because they are the only resources within an organization that have the capacity to increase their value with the passage of time, compared

to all other types of resources that can be used both physically and morally. Here I am referring especially to the intellectual work resources, which with the passage of time begin to specialize in the activities that it carries out. I can not say the same about physical work, because the aging workforce has less marginal productivity than the young labor resources.

According to specialty studies, human resources, especially labor resources, are a key resource for organizations that ensure survival, increasing competitiveness on the competitive labor market, and investments in this resource are becoming more and more evident with the passage of time. Economic reform also has fundamental prerequisites for achieving the objectives of the efficient use of human resources.

Labor force management is an indicator of great importance and complexity in the economy of a country, which is why in this paper I will pay more attention to the labor market trends in Romania and in the European Union, especially in terms of European flexicurity, both before and after accession. Taking into account that the labor productivity indicators appreciated by the productivity level are of great importance in wage negotiations and impact on labor mobility, I have proposed that one of the objectives of this paper is to analyze labor market trends in Romania and in the European Union. A key point of this paper is European flexicurity, its impact on the Romanian labor force, as well as the involvement of civil society and social partners in finding the best solutions for ensuring access for all disadvantaged groups to the labor market.

A final part of the paper will address the effects of adhesion on the Romanian labor market and the subsequent steps to harmonize Romania with the European Union requirements from the point of view of human resources management, applied through flexicurity policies at the level of the labor market.

The proposed statistical study is successfully integrated into the new national and international research directions in the field of human resource management and flexicurity in the labor market. The new labor market trends, wage levels in the European labor market integrate perfectly in the new directions of human resources research and labor flexibility, both at national and international level. Employee culture and level of specialization are directly proportional to the salary level within the organization.

A key point of the flexicurity model adopted in Romania was the prevention of excessively flexible, unstable jobs, to the detriment of human capital security at work. It was later concluded that the flexicurity model can only function to the extent that the committed human capital will benefit from an effective system of vocational training and social reconversion. Romania, for the most effective integration into the European labor market, has pursued the continuous development of human capital through educational and formal training projects that correspond to the abilities and knowledge of a person, to facilitate its change in action and economic growth.

Equally important is the employer's flexibility relative to the employee, as a rigid driving system will not be feasible in the long run. This problem can be found both in the Romanian labor market and at the level of the Member States of the European Union.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ON THE LABOR MARKET

The proposed statistical survey is successfully integrated into the new national and international research directions in the field of human resource management and flexicurity on the labor market. Using a wide range of methods, starting with statistical and demographic models (indicators that help to determine and justify the evolution of labor resources) and going up to the level of economic theory (indicators which, through the economic calculation and analysis methodology, fall in the determination of labor resources), the paper addresses only a small part of the whole range of issues raised by labor analysis and the impact that flexicurity has on the labor market.

The information presented in the case studies is the main source of statistical data from the National Institute of Statistics and Eurostat, as well as the Direction Programs and Workforce Strategies. In

addition, web related materials accessible via the Internet were used for further investigation and analysis. These documents include recent policy initiatives, scientific and technological institutions and several innovative approaches to the impact of flexicurity on the Romanian labor market.

The level of culture of any European country is directly related to the level of development of the labor market. National culture and schooling influence the salary level within the organization, the way of internal and external behavior, the type of relationships promoted and the work environment. Organizations, the key pioneers in the labor market, can support workforce with a number of staff policies, rules and regulations that focus on employee development and flexibility. [15].

A key point of the flexicurity model adopted in Romania was to prevent the growth of too flexible, unstable jobs to the detriment of human capital security at work. Later, it was concluded that the flexicurity model can only function to the extent that the hired human capital will benefit from an efficient system of professional training and social reconversion. [19]. Romania, for a more efficient integration on the European labor market, has pursued the continuous development of human capital through educational and formal training projects that correspond to the abilities and knowledge of a person, to facilitate the change in action and the economic growth.

Equally important is the employer's flexibility with respect to the employee because a rigid driving system will not be feasible in the long run. This problem is found both on the labor market in Romania and at the level of the member states of the European Union.

Because labor market outcomes are not always what labor force expectations are, the Organizational Psychology Magazine talks about three reform projects that aim at making workforce more flexible and streamlined: the targeted service-oriented model towards the client, the model based on organizational development or on consulting and modeling of the strategic management of human resources. [22].

If the first model focuses on how the human resources department performs its tasks, setting the company's employees and management as its clients, the consulting-based model focuses on what the staff department does, as well as the internal consultant of the organization. The third model of management, the strategic human resource management model, analyzes the position of the human resources department in the organization, its power and role in organizational policies. Members of the personnel department must be the link between the organization's policies and the human resource.

The statistical analysis developed on the labor market uses statistical data provided by Eurostat and the National Institute of Statistics. The socio-demographic variables used are of the nominal type: age groups, level of study, level of training.

3. RESULTS. FLEXICURITY IMPACT ON THE WORKFORCE - ROMANIA VS. EU

In the European Union, on the labour market, employment is on an upward slope and unemployment is steadily decreasing. Transformations in the positive direction are a starting point, even though there are currently many unemployed people and European economies still need restructuring. [29].

From the perspective of legislative changes that have taken place over the past two decades, they have hampered collective and individual negotiation capacity, favored part-time and temporary work, and in particular have had repercussions on youth employability. [17]. Analyzes by Maganaris and Grigorescu [16, 17] on UK, Greek and Romanian legislation have shown a deterioration in workers' protection and a violation of their rights in favor of employers, which could be called a fall in safety, and increasing availability for mobility, at least against culture to the stability of the Eastern European peoples.

The workforce benefits from increasing the social security guarantees by promoting the social component of the employment contract (health insurance, social benefits, implementation of an

effective lifelong learning system) by complying with EU requirements. Aid for companies can be implemented by state institutions by analyzing the costs and benefits of legislative changes, reducing illegal work and setting up an effective tax system.

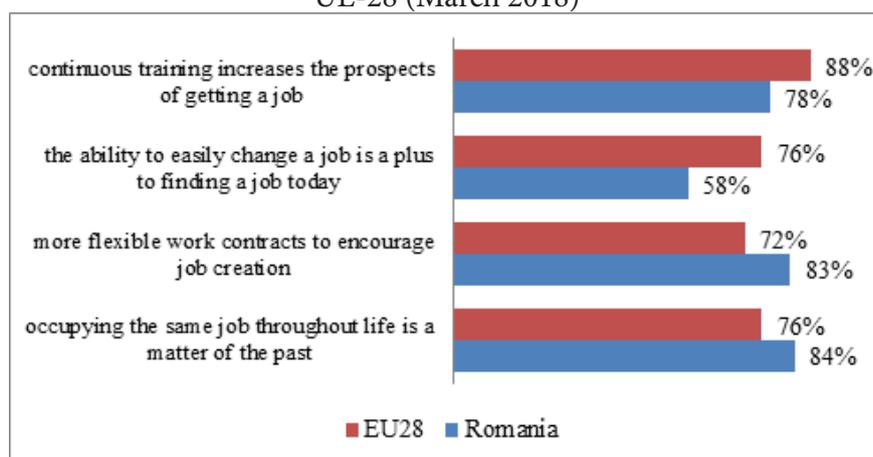
At the level of the labor market, flexicurity is a strategy of simultaneously strengthening the security and flexibility of the human resource at work. In addition, it emphasizes the European Strategy aimed at increasing employment, implicitly reducing the unemployment rate by creating more and more jobs, and with a higher level of security for the employee.

All these developments in the labor market require a more flexible labor market with high security levels that respond to the new needs of employers and employees at the same time. At European level, implicitly at the level of Romania, sustainable development of the labor market is required by creating more and better jobs so that it can manage change and new social risks. In addition, it is necessary to reduce the segmentation of labor markets and the development of precarious workforce and also to promote sustainable integration and the accumulation of competences through the specialization of labor force.

The main categories of people experiencing greater insecurity at work are women, young people and migrants. [25]. Also here can be the old work force, which has difficulty in maintaining or finding a new job. [26].

The workforce has a level of acceptance of the need for adaptation and change in the workplace quite differently in Romania, compared to the EU-28 level.

Figure 1. The acceptance level of the need to adapt and change the workforce – Romania versus UE-28 (March 2018)



Source: Authors conception based on data from <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> and MMFES, Direction Programs and Workforce Strategies

From the point of view of labor mobility, the human resource in Romania, 84% consider that a job must be throughout its life (at EU-28 it is 76%). In the same sense, only half (58%) of Romanians consider that changing jobs is a plus to find a job today (76% of the EU-28). Although in Romania we are far off in this chapter, increased mobility of workers between companies would increase the benefits of citizens and society. Thus, the employed workforce would be more motivated in assuming the risks of transferring from one job to another if the benefits would be sufficient during the transition periods, and the prospects for finding better jobs would be real. [28].

The Romanian labor market faces a low level of labor mobility, meaning that a job-free employee does not agree to go to another city where his / her qualification is required. At the opposite end, labor mobility is external, because the chances for the family to find a job as a result of relocating a family member are much higher.

If at the EU level a large part of the workforce is aware of the fact that job mobility is an asset for new jobs in Romania, probably due to the level of development, the situation is not similar.

At present, Romanians prefer safe, stable jobs throughout their professional life, which do not necessarily involve continuous professional training.

A threat to the labor market also affects workers with a contract of indefinite duration (due to the low mobility and flexibility of the workforce at the workplace), who at the time of dismissal face difficulties in finding new quality jobs.

At EU level, the main objective of flexicurity in the labor market is to ensure European citizens and their occupations by providing the opportunity to be informed about the existence of new jobs and to get a job without difficulty at any stage of life active. The evolution of the workforce is also being pursued through the career development prospects in an ever-changing economic environment.

Flexibility and security at work have a mutually stabilizing role in the labor market, the main objective being to support employers and employees alike to take full advantage of the opportunities of globalization. [10].

Romania alongside the EU member states should act in such a way that the labor market is mainly oriented towards employment, economic growth being an opportunity for the EU Member States. [23]. Currently, labor market policies create a contradictory environment, aiming either to increase flexibility for businesses or to increase security for workers.

4. ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES SPECIFIC TO FLEXICURITY ON THE LABOR MARKET

Flexicurity has the role of narrowing the gap between the workforce and the workforce in the excluded categories (human resources without employment, women, young people, and migrants). If forced labor needs protection and training during the transition from one job to another, the excluded workforce needs to facilitate access routes to workplaces, with definite employment contracts involving rights and obligations of the parties.

Following the research reports and the experience gained during the development of the labor market, the European Commission together with the EU Member States concluded that flexicurity policy is based on four main application axes: flexible and safe work contracts, development strategies continuous professional, active and efficient labor market policies and modern social security systems at work. [21]

At the labor market level, flexible and secure contract provisions are made through collective labor agreements, an efficient organization, which means a modern labor law.

If lifelong learning strategies guarantee the adaptability and employment of employed workers and vendors, active and efficient labor policies help human resources to move more easily through transition periods by reducing periods of time unemployment. [2].

Last but not least, the fourth component of flexicurity policy, the implementation of modern social security systems encourages employment, guaranteeing financial support and mobility on the labor market.

Although at the level of Romania, compared to the EU Member States, the level of human resources is not similar, the policies and measures applied on the labor market in terms of flexicurity are based on attempts to modernize and adapt to global change. Thus, in order to meet the objectives of growth and employment in the labor market, it is necessary to reach a consensus at European level on the principles of flexicurity. [31]. These common principles represent key points for sustainable development, reaching the goal of creating open and selective markets, and last but not least, to increase jobs.

The most relevant principles of flexicurity are:

Flexicurity should be seen as a contractual policy, involving a balance between rights and obligations, for employers or public authorities on the one hand and for employees or the workforce in search for a job, on the other.

Flexicurity is based on a strategy of diminishing the difference between the human resource with

the job and the human resource framed in the excluded categories. If employees need pre-transition training and protection from one job to another, excluded categories need easy access to finding a job.

Employees, employers, and excluded categories want flexicurity to develop flexible and secure contractual arrangements. These include active policies of continuous development, lifelong learning, and efficient workforce and social security systems. Their aim is to reinforce the implementation of the strategy for job growth and proximity to the European social model, providing new forms of flexibility and security to increase adaptability, employment and social cohesion.

Flexicurity supports gender equality, promoting equal access to quality jobs for both men and women.

Flexicurity policy offers the possibility of reconciliation and professional reconversion and ensures equal chances for the excluded categories (the young labor force, migrants, the disabled and the elderly workforce).

There is no single model or strategy to implement flexicurity on the labor market, it must be adapted to the circumstances, labor markets and labor relations of each Member State.

Applying internal (within the company) as well as externally (from one company to the other) policies that promote flexicurity. High flexibility in hiring and redundancy, correlated with a high level of security, which means safe transitions from one job to another.

Flexicurity has the role of facilitating on-the-job mobility, as well as the transfer between unemployment or inactivity and work. We are pursuing the development of social protection through quality jobs with a good leadership, a good organization of work and continuous updating of skills.

Flexicurity develops a climate of trust between public authorities and social partners, all prepared to take responsibility for change and initiate balanced policy packages.

Flexicurity policies generate budgetary costs that need to be applied in order to contribute to the sustainability of budgetary policies.

5. IMPACT OF FLEXICURITY POLICIES ON UNEMPLOYMENT

Flexicurity seeks to solve contractual segmentation by wishing the EU Member States to address the challenges they face in segmenting the labor market, integrating both labor and vulnerable workers. This segmentation aims at the equitable distribution of human resources in the labor market, offering the chance for new labor market entrants to advance after performance evaluation at the workplace and then to obtain better contractual conditions.

The implementation of flexicurity principles in Romania and other EU Member States involves managing change by combining a series of carefully planned and negotiated financial and social policies and measures. As the socio-economic, cultural and institutional background of the EU Member States differs considerably, combinations and policy series will be different and implemented differently.

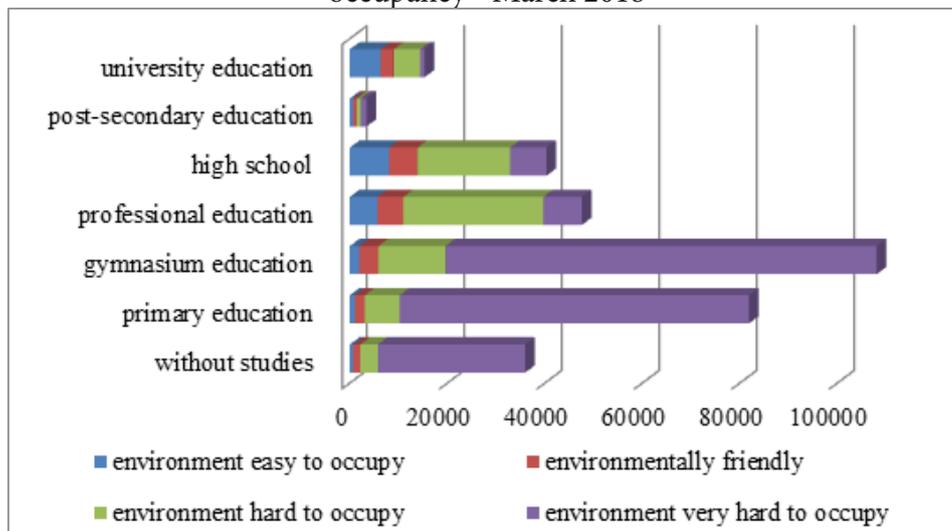
Although flexicurity is not a unique model for implementation and implementation in the labor market or a single policy strategy, the principle of “good practice” can be applied, so Member States have a multitude of possibilities to learn from each other by analyzing punctual which works best in national contexts. In conclusion, flexicurity can be defined as the link between flexibility and security, so flexibility can be considered a precondition for security, and security a precondition for flexibility. [20].

From the point of view of the dynamics of the labor market, it was ascertained, both at the level of Romania and at the level of the EU member states, that the indefinite period of labor contracts is seen by the labor force as a guarantee of the labor legislation and of the collective agreements. Thus, the degree of professional training and the increase in the level of security at the workplace tends to depend on the existence of work contracts for an indefinite period. In the legislation in Romania

for the last 10 years, in order to increase the level of flexibility of the labor force, the number of fixed-term labor contracts, occasional labor contracts and labor through agencies also increased. In Romania, in the vast majority of cases, a newly employed employee, during the period in which he exercises his duties, is initially employed for a fixed period until a contract for an indefinite period becomes available to him. Hence, engaging instead to play a basic role as a starting point for this type of contract risks becoming a trap for workers. [1]. The segmentation principle of the labor market tends to rely more on job protection than on social benefits. Thus, unemployment benefits (unemployment benefits) record low rates and large numbers of beneficiaries, while social protection systems are underdeveloped.

In Romania, at the end of the first quarter of 2018, the situation does not look very good from the point of view of the number of unemployed registered by the level of education and employment on the level of employability. Of the total of 332,730 unemployed, over 33% are unemployed with a level of gymnasium training (absolute value 108,096), while the unemployed with post-secondary education have the lowest weight of 1% (absolute value 3430). Of the unemployed without studies (36,013), about 92% are hardly occupying, compared with the unemployed with a primary education level, where the very hard-working unemployed have a weight of 88%.

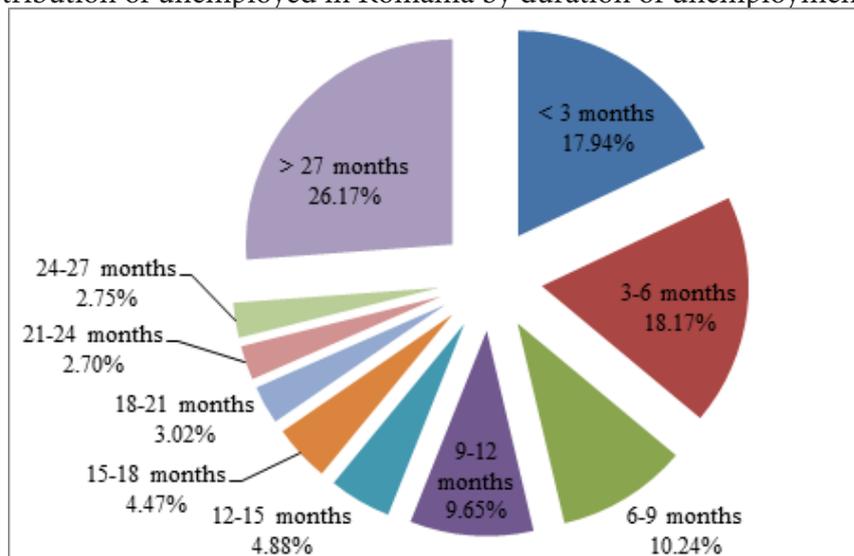
Figure 2. The distribution of Romanian unemployed the level of training and the level of occupancy - March 2018



Source: Authors conception based on data from ANOFM, Direction Programs and Workforce Strategies

How to apply the flexicurity policy implemented at the labor market level of each Member State can be analyzed by monitoring the market and the employment rate, namely the share of the workforce with a job, set to ascend and learn all the time life. Thus, in order to record an institutional evolution, both social administrations and local public services that manage employment need support and support. The added value can be quantified by helping the unemployed, but also by properly managing the decisions taken in the field of the labor market.

In March 2018, in Romania, the highest share (26.17%) of unemployed people were unemployed for more than two years, followed by unemployed unemployed for 3-6 months (18.17%) and those in unemployment less than 3 months (17.94%).

Figure 3. Distribution of unemployed in Romania by duration of unemployment - March 2018

Source: Authors conception based on data from ANOFM, Direction Programs and Workforce Strategies

Another approach to flexicurity can be done through the remediation of low skills levels and the lack of employment prospects for the labor force. Here, Romania can be included, as well as a Member State that faces sharp discrepancies in skills and employment prospects among the population. [11]. With this aspect of flexicurity, it is intended to increase the employability of people with low skills and the development of skills to provide them with job security.

6. THE ROMANIAN LABOR MARKET - DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Although more than half of the implementation period of the Europe 2020 Strategy, a strategy to address the effects of the crisis over the next decade, has many key points to follow. By joining the European Union, Romania has proposed harmonization, sustainable development of the labor market through multiple changes that have a direct impact on the workforce and the employers' companies. Essential are social progress and combating social exclusion, increasing employment and guaranteeing social protection.

Europe has identified, through the seven flagship initiatives, new engines to boost growth and job growth. Within each initiative, both the EU and national authorities must coordinate their efforts so that they reinforce each other. Some of the initiatives presented by the Commission in 2010 aim at smart growth, a digital agenda for Europe, an Innovation Union, youth on the move, sustainable growth, efficient resources in Europe, an industrial policy for the globalization era, an inclusive growth, an agenda for new skills and jobs and the European platform against poverty. In addition, most of Europe 2020's major initiatives are directly affected by demographic challenges, particularly aging populations.

The major digitization initiative promotes digital education and accessibility of digital services for elderly members of society, while the EU's new skills and jobs agenda initiative supports a longer working life through lifelong learning and the promotion of active aging and under conditions good health. The "Innovation Union" major initiative offers the opportunity to bring together public and private actors from different territorial levels to solve a variety of challenges, and in 2011 a European innovation partnership for active aging was launched. Good health: its goal is to increase by two years the average life expectancy in good European health conditions by 2020.

Finally, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion addresses the adequacy and sustainability of social protection and pension systems as well as the need to provide older citizens

with support to have adequate income and access to healthcare systems. Romania aims to make the Romanian labor market compatible with the requirements of the European Union, aiming at creating better working conditions, based on a new type of growth: smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive. In line with the EU, Romania, through the Europe 2020 Strategy, has at least five key objectives to be achieved by the end of the 10 years: employment, education, research and innovation, social inclusion and the reduction or at least the reduction of poverty.

In order to facilitate the achievement of the objective of increasing employment and reducing unemployment, the EU has taken a series of initiatives to support job creation (by promoting social enterprises) in order to restore the dynamics of labor markets (by proposing a framework to anticipate economic restructuring) and to improve EU governance (through the annual publication of a benchmarking system of European performance on the basis of selected employment indicators).

The European Union promotes a more focused and holistic approach to tackling youth unemployment: direct support for young people most in need, combined with structural reforms aimed at strengthening partnerships across all EU countries between government departments, education systems formal training bodies, employment agencies, businesses, social partners and civil society organizations.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although active labor market policies provide for strong measures to stimulate workers to accept and maintain jobs, the Member States, implicitly Romania, have to make efforts to ensure progress in the quality of jobs and in the field of competence levels. [24].

Another approach to flexicurity is in terms of diminishing social assistance and increasing employment opportunities for people receiving benefits and for workers who are employed informally. A handful of countries have been affected by economic restructuring, which has led to an increase in the number of people who benefit from long-term social benefits and who have a low chance of returning to the labor market. This approach also aims to increase the social assistants' chances of coping with the transition from informal employment to formal employment through effective active labor market policies and lifelong learning systems associated with an appropriate level of unemployment benefits.

Flexicurity on the labor market implies high elasticity, adaptability to the new, giving up rigidity and efficiency in seeking the best solutions in terms of work. The purpose of these actions is to develop economically, to increase competitiveness and, last but not least, to provide the employee with safety and stability.

The conclusion regarding flexicurity in Romania is that even though there is a legal framework in order to meet the requirements of the European labor market (increase of work, decrease of unemployment and increase of the employment rate, increase of efficiency and productivity at work), its application depends mainly on the will of decision-makers, and in particular that of employers.

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