

Organizational studies in Romania and the FP6 priority: “Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society”

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1 Background

This paper is an attempt at broadly presenting a Romanian perspective regarding the fundamental question raised by the Sixth Framework Program (FP6) i.e. "Why European Research?"

In this respect, the EC states that the creation of a common European Research Area (ERA) is necessary in order for Europe to play a more active role in cutting edge research at a time when certain challenges are relevant to high level research in general:

- higher levels of complexity and interdisciplinary
- increasingly higher costs
- the need for a constantly increasing "critical mass"

As a consequence, "hardly any research team or research laboratory, hardly any company can reasonably claim to be able to respond to these challenges. Organizing cooperation at different levels, coordinating national or European policies, networking teams and increasing the mobility of individuals and ideas is therefore a requirement resulting from the development of modern research in a global environment".

In this context, FP6 "will support cooperative research, promote mobility and coordination and invest into mobilizing research in support of other EU policies".

Furthermore, "research policies must have structuring principles that are geared to the aims of society and make sense to the public in general". "... the aim is to develop a coherent overview, with common approaches and coordinated activities on a European scale since "nowadays scientific knowledge and technological know-how are no longer the sole result of the activities of specialized institutions ... they are produced within a very broad spectrum of organizations and structures and networks encompassing research bodies and the users, both public and private, of the products of scientific endeavor".

2 Several basic questions from a Romanian perspective

Considering the above European Research Area (ERA) philosophy and framework, there are several questions that must be raised from the Romanian perspective:

- What could we offer to the EU?
- What could the EU be interested in?
- Are fundamental as well as applied research in humanities and social sciences marketable?
- What could the EU / FP6 specifically contribute to the specific Romanian needs in humanities and social sciences research?

If we seek funds in order to make our research possible we definitely have to market ourselves. And in this respect we have to learn how to make our work interesting for the outer world as part of a broader picture such as ERA.

Furthermore, we have to alter mindsets from individualism and focus on a specialized domain to teamwork and multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches as part of a broadly interconnected and integrated European research network.

Take my particular situation where having a background in engineering combined with advanced studies in Organizational Development and Change, I find myself an unwanted engineer, a not recognized economist and definitely a not recognized specialist in humanities and social sciences in Romania. From the humanities and social sciences view point I'm not even regarded as an intellectual.

So, there is a tremendous need in Romania for institutions that can validate multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, and NEC represents the benchmark for only a few.

My field of research that is organizational studies focused on organizational culture, organizational development, technology transfer and change is at the interface between fundamental and applied research in humanities and social sciences and some key questions that my field is raising with regards to present Romania are:

- What are our defining features as Romanians and how are these shaping our organizations?
- Why our organizations are not currently performing as well as expected?
- What should we preserve in terms of basic assumptions, beliefs, traditions and values and what should we change in order to improve our performance as part of the European family?
- These issues are critical for our EU integration since addressing them would allow us to move forward efficiently.

This is an isolated example of multi and/or interdisciplinary research where everyone can contribute both at a fundamental and at a more applied level. Organizational studies could be of equal interest for the EU in building a knowledge-based society in a unified Europe. This way we can make Romanian research in humanities and social sciences attractive and an equal partner for the EU research community therefore FP6 can be the best opportunity for us to "join the club".

3 The infrastructure

As regards the research infrastructure there are several potential approaches to their building and integration:

- National / transnational networks (i.e. women network undergoing research on gender issues)
- Institution building
- Strategic alliances
- J.R.C. as an integrating institution.

My experience while working with a transnational women network (gathering fellows from Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, Greece, Estonia and Romania doing research on gender issues and women performance in organizations) was that in order to perform well networks need institutional support. In most of the cases Romanian and transnational networks working under the umbrella of universities turned out to be too bureaucratic. It's not specific to Romania since everyone agreed that "red tape" performed well everywhere. The academic institutions are particularly very conservative in this area.

So, in my experience with various programs in Romania we usually wasted up to 30% of the time and up to 15% of funding for "compulsory administrative services" provided by our supervising

universities. In fact, we needed to perform all administrative tasks ourselves in order to push things forward.

In the light of these findings could we fund building of institutions and certify these institutions as private, and more reliable research centers? What type of strategic alliances do we need in order to get more flexibility and less “red tape”?

And, finally, how could we rely on JRC as a framework and expertise provider in supporting the growth of flexible, network-based European research infrastructures?

4 Methodology and funding

From the Romanian perspective the questions related to methodology as well as to organizational studies are:

- How can we promote inter- and multidisciplinary approaches (i.e., portals)?
- How can we integrate them nationally as well as internationally?
- What are reliable EU standards for research and how can we define them?
- How can we access organizations in order to do fieldwork?

There is currently a wide agreement that high level research uses multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches as well as integration. How can one integrate all these?

Should we design portals on the Web to bring us together, get information and post what everyone can do towards accomplishing specific goals?

Also, what do EU standards for research mean? The challenge is to define standards for research itself and also to define standards for certification of research institutions and to assessing the quality of projects.

Furthermore, in my field of research, there is a difficulty in gaining wider acceptance and obtaining access to European organizations (companies, public institutions, etc.) necessary to perform the fieldwork in an integrated manner.

Finally, in terms of funding and rewards systems, should they be based on “comparable worth”?

For Accessing Countries as Romania this is a particularly sensitive issue. The “comparable worth” principle should be applied in order for us to get equal status along other researchers from the EU. Consequently, once accepted into a network and into a research program, we have to assume that we can produce and provide research results at the same quality as everyone else involved.

5 Final remarks

Participating in European research networks in organizational studies would be a unique chance for Romanian researchers and research bodies to transfer know-how and know-why to shape the latest standards in the field and to share findings with the international scientific and business communities. Furthermore, participating in European research-practice, inter-organizational networks of knowledge production would have positive impact on bridging the gap between research and practice and could make a significant contribution to the visibility of Romanian organizations and Romanian economy abroad, in a clearer and more realistic light.

References

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