



THE QUALIFICATION NEED FOR THE UNEMPLOYED PERSONS IN RURAL AREAS OF GORJ COUNTY

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Abstract: *In this article I have presented the results of two focus-groups at which have participated both representatives of public administration institutions and employers from Gorj County. I have started from the hypothesis that the most sought after professions in the rural areas from Gorj county are in agricultural sustenance and the tertiary sectors. In fact, the most important purpose of the article to highlight that a strong knowledge of the labour market from the perspective of employers facilitates both the correlation between training to labour force needs and also the development of effective employment policies.*

Keywords: *unemployment, rural areas, qualification, skills, recruitment*

Introduction

The financial crisis which began in the autumn of 2008 has caused the most severe recession since the Second World War, affecting the entire economy and having strong effects on the labor market of the European Union. The economic crisis has brought a multitude of influences and negative determinations at social level, such as: a reduction of jobs and implicitly of secure incomes, an increase of debtors' rate and forced executions, a pauperization of large social categories and an extension of poverty, visible deterioration of life quality and chances of future evolution of numerous human collectives etc. In Europe, certain population categories, such as women, youth and people from rural areas were more affected by the economic crisis. In this line, it is recognized that the economic crisis not only determined a fragile situation having consequences on the work market but also weakened the social protection system that should create an equilibrium and reduce the crisis' negative effects (Preoteasa, 2011: 29). Currently, workforce employment is a priority goal and efforts are being taken to adapt the Romanian system in order to implement the European Strategy for Employment (Cace, Cace, Cojocaru, Nicolăescu, 2012:63).

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In the context of the economic recession, the labour market from Romania has faced significant transformations at the level of the volume and structure of the labour market. This process was characterized by a reduction of the active and employed population and by maintaining the unemployment rates at relatively constant values (Otovescu, 2011).

The topic of this study¹ consists of the investigation of the imbalanced labour market dimensions that currently exist in Gorj County (Romania). It can be said that the imbalance in the labour market is due to mismatches between supply and demand. On one hand, there is a mismatch between the number of jobs available and the number of people able to work and willing to be employed. On the other hand, there are significant differences between the skills that employers who offer jobs have and the availability of skills of the unemployed, especially those in rural areas. In the first part of this article, we present the literature review, presenting the most important approaches on employment and unemployment. Also, from a systemic point of view, we present some important European and national data on unemployment. The last part of the article presents the results of two focus-groups, conducted in 2012, at which there participated both representatives of public administration institutions and employers from Gorj County.

1. Literature Review

The relationship between education (professional development) and employment was explained with the aid of philosophical, sociological and, especially, economic theories. In the field of philosophy, two great branches were present: progressive theories and normative theories. The progressive theory's main representative was Dewey, who thought that education does not and should not have a specific purpose. Education has an important role in the development of personality, skills and expertise in children and as a consequence, all educative activities must be channelled towards that direction. At the opposite pole are situated the normative theories, according to which, school must fulfil "social efficiency"; it must produce workers, trainees and competent individuals, who will ensure the productivity of the society. To describe the relationship between education and work, the economic theories bring to the fore two concepts: "human development" and "human capital".

Hence, in one of his 1999 works, Lester Thurow stated: "Physical capital can be regained and resold. Human capital cannot be regained and resold" (Thurow, 1999). As a consequence of this, education performs an essential function, because of the fact that it represents an investment in the qualification of the workforce and an investment whose profit is obtained through the productivity of work. In regard to employment, in the field of economy, there have been countless thinkers who elaborated theories about it and how to use the workforce resources, some of them being: Adam Smith,

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David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus, John Stuart Mill and J. B. Say. For them, full employment represents one of the demands of market economy and the best economic policy in this domain would be the one which relies on the following phrase: *“Laissez faire et laissez passer, le monde va de lui même!”* (Smith, 1962: 204-205).

Also, in the economic field, a very important part is played by the theory of full employment in a macroeconomic sense as elaborated by J. M. Keynes. He created a balance between full employment and steady employment (which ensures the growth rate and usage of production capacities is compatible with price stabilization). According to the Keynesian theory, “full employment is a situation in which the aggregate employment remains inflexible towards the growth of effective demand for the production which is corresponding to it” (Keynes, 1970: 290-310). At the beginning of the 20th century, there emerge new theories in regard to work and professions, which can be grouped in two great orientations: constructivism and deconstructivism. The first emphasizes the part people play in the creation of professions while the latter analyses the process of how they are created by focusing on power (Nica, 2007: 15-16).

One of the important theories on unemployment was the theory of innovation, developed by Von Mangoldt. In his paper, the German economist spoke about a connection between unemployment and entrepreneurship. He released the theory that entrepreneurship can lead to profit and that profit is an important solution to diminish unemployment. In his opinion, the best ways to make profits and to diminish unemployment are: 1) to acquire productive agents; 2) to find specific markets; 3) to combine factors of production; 4) to find a successful sales policy and 5) to focus on innovations (Mouhammed, 2011: 100-110)

A different opinion about the connection between entrepreneurship and unemployment is presented by R.W. Fairlie (2013). According to her, “high unemployment rates could increase entrepreneurship because of limited opportunities in the labor market” (Fairlie, 2013: 223). The argument that Fairlie is using is that “recessions limit demand for the products and services of entrepreneurs”. In this case, individuals who currently have wage/salary jobs would be reluctant to leave those jobs to start a business that might struggle in these economic conditions (Fairlie, 2013: 224).

We can say that unemployment is affecting the outcome of people, not only from rural areas, but also from urban ones. This was explained also by Blanchard, who presented two points of view: “the first is that, given the positive probability of finding themselves unemployed, employed workers should and will care about the state of the labour market: the higher the unemployment rate, the more careful they will be in setting the wage. The second is that wages are not set unilaterally by unions, but rather by bargaining between unions and firms. And firms can threaten to hire the unemployed; the higher the unemployment rate, the more relevant the threat” (Blanchard, 2011:24).

In another paper, Blanchard and Wolfers emphasize the idea that we can explain the evolution of unemployment in different European economies by studying the interactions between “shocks and differences in labour market characteristics”

(Blanchard, Wolfers, 2000). This idea was also presented by other authors and researchers, who have noted that the labour market experienced its deepest downturn in the post-war era in the recent recession (Elsby et al., 2010).

Another important theory that is strongly related to unemployment is the theory on "labour market segmentation". According to this theory, "labour markets in low and middle income countries tend to be highly segmented, with different wages and conditions of employment in each sector and limited mobility from less productive to more productive jobs (Hull, 2009: 69). This theory is in contrast with the basic classical theories (that state equalization of wages), emphasizing that "since some workers cannot afford to remain unemployed, they will accept a "less productive" job in which earnings and/or conditions of employment are below the level set in the "more productive" sector" (Hull, 2009: 69).

During the last years, another important concept was emphasized in economic theory: the *underemployed*. They are defined as "those currently in work who would prefer to work longer hours. Their ability to supply hours at the current wage is constrained by the level of demand in the economy, because there simply isn't enough work around. Some of these people are classified in the official statistics as part-timers who would prefer to be full-time, but the phenomenon also applies to full-timers, which is not reported in the published Office for National Statistics (ONS) statistics" (Bell, Blanchflower, 2013: 224).

This phenomenon of *underemployed* persons can be explained by one factor: the decline of real wages. In Europe, and also in the United States "there has been such a dramatic increase in underemployment that the unemployment rate is now a poorer indicator of the degree of slack in the labour market than it has been in the recent past" (Bell, Blanchflower, 2013: 224).

2. Statistical data

Until the start of the financial crisis, the European labor market had witnessed an improvement, if we consider that in 2007, the EU employment rate of employment was 68% (approaching the "target" of the strategy from Lisbon - 70%), and the unemployment rate had fallen to near 7% (European Commission, 2011).

Statistical data presented by *Eurostat* indicate that the European Union was facing an increasing crisis after the American economy was greatly affected in 2007. Thus, in December 2008, the labour force market in the EU had 1.6 million unemployed people more than the previous year, the unemployment rate reaching 7.4%. In December 2008, the number of unemployed people was 17.91 million, the most affected states being the ones in the euro zone, where the number of unemployed increased by more than 1.4 million people. The highest unemployment rates were registered in Spain (14.4%) and Latvia (10.4%), while the lowest were registered in Netherlands (2.7%) and Austria (3.9%). Unemployment rate continued the upward trend in 2009 and 2010. In EU 27, the unemployment rate was 9.6% in September 2010, the same as in the USA, but almost double when compared to Japan (5%). In Europe, the highest rates of unemployment were registered in Spain (20.8%), Slovakia (14.7%) and Ireland (14.1%)

and the lowest in Netherlands (4.4%), Austria (4/5%) and Luxemburg (5%). (Eurostat, 2011)

At the end of December 2008, there was discussed for the first time the elaboration of a *European Economic Recovery Plan* whose main purpose was to minimize economic recession effects and to stimulate economic growth. According to this plan, the most important challenges for the European Union's economy were: decreasing unemployment, especially long-term unemployment and professional reconversion (European Commission, 2008).

The economic crisis unsettled the labour market in Romania and led to the increase of the unemployment rate to 8.1% (first trimester of 2011). We underline that in June and July 2008, it was registered as the lowest unemployment rate in our country – 3.7% - due to the favourable economic situation. In November 2009, the unemployment rate reached 7.5%, while the annual average was 6.3%. However, there was an upward trend until the end of January 2010, as there were 700,000 unemployed people in Romania and the estimated number for the end of the year was 1,000,000 persons (the number included the persons there that were not officially registered) (National Institute of Statistics, 2011)

By the middle of 2011, the highest unemployment rates were registered in Vaslui (13.94%), Mehedinți (12.36%), Teleorman (12.11%) and Dolj (11.35%). The lowest unemployment rates were characterized in Bucharest (2.57%), Ilfov (2.78%), as well as the counties Timiș (4.24%), Constanța (5.45%) and Bihor (5.94%) (National Agency for Employment, 2011).

3. Methodological approach

a) The main objectives and the method for selecting participants

The overall objective of the study was *to analyze the labour market trends as well as identifying the work demands in Gorj County*. More specifically, the qualitative research sought to identify the specific needs for employment and the creation of new jobs as well as the skills and professional abilities demanded by the labour market, hence the need for training. As specific objectives, we can mention the following: to analyze the county's labour market from the employers' point of view and the employers' perception on the rural unemployed from Gorj county, and to identify activity sectors that will grow in the future and occupations that are in demand on the urban labour market in Gorj county that may qualify for the rural unemployed.

The research method was a qualitative one – the focus-group. We have chosen these two categories of participants for the following reasons: on one hand, we believed that the employers know the best, which are the trends of the labour market, and can influence these trends, by absorbing the labour force from the entire county; on the other hand, we assumed that the representatives of local public administration (mayor, counselor, inspector etc.) can represent a bridge between employers or trainers and the unemployed persons from the rural areas.

The research was based on two focus-groups that were moderated on a moderation guideline. The guideline was divided into six topics for debate: the characteristics of the labour market in Gorj county, recruitment strategies, employability strategies for the unemployed (advantages and disadvantages), the rural unemployed typology in Gorj county, skills required for the unemployed to re-enter the labour market, difficulties in finding employment and professions and trades that will be required on the labour market - the need for training / retraining of the unemployed in the rural area of Gorj.

Another technique used was "verbal associative". Thus, the participants were handed boards and asked to write five words that they associated with the terms "labour market" and "unemployed". Another three boards were designed to obtain information on the difficulties faced by the unemployed in the labour market, the advantages and disadvantages of employers when hiring the unemployed as well as the fields and professions that will be required for the county's labour market in the future. Also, the "workshop scenario" technique has been used. The participants were asked to leave their current problems aside, to imagine a desirable future and then to identify the steps that need to be taken to achieve their desired scenario. Based on the present and the possible evolution of the labour market in Gorj, participants will evaluate different scenarios and solutions to the reintegration problem for the rural unemployed in Gorj county's labour market.

b) The main hypothesis of the research

H.1. *Employers, generally, show reluctance in hiring people who have not had a job in the last 3 years, especially if they are young.* Even more, at the beginning of the economic recession in Romania, some recruiters were forwarding the following scenario: companies preferred hiring people with at least two years experience in entry-level positions at the expense of fresh graduates, because they come on the same salary that they would also give to the students but bring know-how (knowledge). In this way, employers pay the same amount for an experienced employee, saving costs for training programs.

H.2. *Lack of employment for a long time generates the effect of "stigma" for the unemployed.* To cope with job loss, in a period of economic recession, and to face a period of unemployment, which automatically comes from the job loss, presents a difficult situation to resolve that puts deadlock on most workers. For most individuals, to be unemployed, even at the start of their active life, appears to have only a temporary effect on their future career perspectives and social positions. For disadvantaged young individuals who have not acquired basic knowledge, the failure experienced in their first encounter with the labour market is often difficult to avoid and can expose them to a long period of stigmatization.

H.3. *The most sought after professions in the rural areas in Gorj county are in agricultural sustenance and the tertiary sectors.* As the regional statistics prove, the most developed sectors in Gorj are the agricultural sustenance and tertiary sectors. For this reason, one of the solutions to the labour market reintegration for people who lost their jobs (that previously worked in the industrial sector – particularly the extraction industry and mining) could be retraining these people in the areas of agriculture (to facilitate the attainment of

European agricultural funds) and services (especially related to tourism, a well developed sphere of activity in Gorj county).

4. The results of the qualitative research

Labour market characteristics in Gorj County

From the statistical analysis of employment rates in Gorj county, major fluctuations arise in the use of the labour resources available. Given the economic specifics of the county, with a developed mining industry and with influences on the horizontal industry connected to it, we consider that there is a greater demand for male labour resources (Otovescu et.al., 2012).

It should be noted that, according to the National Agency for Employment, at the end of August 2013, in Gorj, the unemployment rate was 6.98%, corresponding to a total of 10,282 unemployed people, an upward trend of unemployment being registered compared to July of 2013 when the unemployment rate was 6.58%. Of the total number registered unemployed on 31/08/2013, the women count is 4,796, representing 46.64%, compared to July of 2013 when the number of unemployed women was 4,449 (45.92%). From the analysis of compensated and uncompensated unemployment registered on the agencies' accounts, we find that the number of uncompensated unemployed is 6,905, which include 3,112 women (67.16%) compared to 3,377 unemployed people receiving unemployment benefits, from which 1,684 are women, respectively 32.84% (National Agency for Employment, 2013).

On August 31st 2013, there were 265 long-term unemployed, young people less than 25 years, which include 93 women, representing 11.54% of the total unemployed in this category. Regarding the long-term unemployed, there were 2,478 unemployed persons, which include 1,013 women or 31.10% of the total unemployed of the same category, adults older than 25 years at the end of August 2013 (*Ibidem*).

For this first topic of discussion, we started from the following questions: "Is there a balance between supply and demand in the labour market in Gorj County?", "Where is a greater imbalance - in urban or rural areas?", and "What is the main feature of the labour market in Gorj County?". Following the discussion with the participants on the subject, the following conclusions were drawn:

"The labour market in Gorj is unbalanced; there is no relationship between supply and demand." "I think the imbalance is much higher in rural areas. There are many without a job in rural areas than in urban areas, big cities, because there it is easier to find a job ... while in small towns and villages you have nothing to do". Another opinion emphasized that "in rural areas most of those unemployed are men, because women are housewives and they have household deals, they never had a job".

From the conversation had with the public institutions representatives, there were some conclusions drawn that are significant for the situation in rural areas: *"The labour market is weak, not only in rural areas but also in Targu-Jiu. However, in rural areas the situation is more delicate. Let's take, for example, Căpreni village. Although it is located on an oil zone, it has very few jobs. For example, where 20 people were working, now, due to modernization there are only 2-3. These*

people don't really have anywhere to go ... they are tied to the community. They stay unemployed nine months, and then have nothing more to do. Since 1996, when that government ordinance on staff reductions was released in this village, occurred a lot of things: some of the people who worked in oil had no expertise in this area, no qualifications and therefore could not work abroad. "

Another participant from the first group said that following a personal experience, the participant realized that there is a big difference between the job offers in the North (ex. Bistrita County) and South of the country. *"For example, in Targu-Jiu, where in addition to two large shops, one of which went bankrupt, there is nothing. Most large companies have left the area .. Beyond the Carpathians, as if it were another God".*

Although we might think that a job offer is more generous in the city Turceni due to the thermal electricity plant, one of the representatives here from the City Hall informed us this: *"Officially, the unemployment number here isn't very great, because they take into account only those receiving unemployment but in fact it is very high. Most of them are young."*

"Even if there is the thermal plant, it is very difficult to get a job there. Although the High School in Turceni has an energy profile, they do not hire young high school graduates anymore and they often go abroad or stay at home on their parents' money". The local public administration representatives say that the biggest offer of employment in the rural areas resides in services: *"When some companies come into the village they come with their own workers, their own labour, the only hiring they make are in security to guard some warehouses with products or materials"*

Concerning the participants from the second group, the employers, they have shown other significant issues in the labour market of Gorj. It was said that *"the construction domain was one of the most affected by the crisis in the county"*. However, the number of firms that have supplemented this staff is very high. Unfortunately, it also specified that *"this is the area where most employments are undocumented, and many of the new employees are qualified to work without having their skills tested, thus acquired."*

Recruitment strategies. Advantages and disadvantages of hiring the unemployed

This section of the discussion sought to identify the information channels used in recruiting skilled labour, to explore different recruitment behaviors, and to identify employers' expectations for potential candidates at a job.

Professional skills are the major criteria for most employers' representatives. In this period of uncertainty regarding the return of Romania's economic growth before the crisis, employers prefer a large extent of their staff to be hired on a fixed period. It has been said that *"for much larger companies, it is more profitable to hire staff for an undetermined time. They make important investments in human resources"*. An employer said that *"whether or not the experience, the probationary period is the fairest. Although some candidates have an impressive resume after a trial period, you can tell whether or not the candidate is compatible with the open job position"*. Another group of employers said on the contrary, *"they do not take account of the skills an unemployed person has and prefer to form him"* and to provide a qualification (training) for the workplace, a solution involving high financial costs. At the same time there were opinions like *"experience has an important role in the recruitment strategy."* Basically, experience proves to be the best predictor for future employment.

Most employers appreciate that when they recruit, they do it through the following means: newspaper ads, website profiles (electronic platforms: *Ejobs*, *Bestjobs*), ads in the County Employment Agency or recommendations and informal networks of recruitment.

Also, it was revealed that the rural unemployed from Gorj follow these descriptive characteristics: he is young: *"most keep a firm grip on their posts, they would do anything to avoid being thrown out, but one that does not work, has no choice but to wait for the opening of a new job"*; has secondary education *"even young people stopped going to college because they do nothing with it"*.

- the female unemployed: *"they do not work because they are housewives, they take care more of the children and family."* Given the fact that housewives either never worked or long ago went from being active, they have difficulties in adjusting to the modern labour market, have few incentives to lower or maintain a place of employment and their qualifications are either nonexistent or redundant on the labour market.
- the male unemployed: *"they are the majority, because women can handle things better. Some leave the country to work in agriculture. Others remain here and work as salesmen or waiters. Others have never worked"*
- the young unemployed that has not worked for a period of 1-3 years;
- the unemployed that has not worked for a while longer (3-5 years or more) is part of the 35-54 years of age group
- *"doesn't have qualifications for a particular job."* Here it should be noted that most of the time, not all categories of being unemployed are open to the following qualification classes. For example, those who have never worked *"have a high degree of reluctance to training / retraining that may follow."*

Skills required for an unemployed to find a new job

One of the strategy components to overcome unemployment status is the effort put in searching for a job (*"he must want to work and frequently seek a job to find one"*).

When the level of education is higher, the chances of finding a job are higher, employers' representatives appreciated, especially because *"there is a widespread practice in Romania: the positions that normally would be filled in by persons with secondary education a university degree is required."*

Work experience is another advantage for the unemployed in finding work: *"If you write in a resume that you worked there and there and there, it matters more than if you finished some college. At the same time, many of the employers do not seem to care much for what is written in the CV. For the candidate to obtain a post, he should be open to learning new things to fold on the company's profile. Otherwise, if he can't accommodate, difficulties arise and he gives up because he can not cope"*.

If employers put great emphasis on work experience, the representatives of the public institutions have argued that they have encouraged citizens to continue their studies: *"Everyone must have a certificate, a diploma, a certificate that can attest he can do something. Otherwise, he won't find a job, even if in practice he is much better prepared than a person who holds a certificate"*. Not least, it was considered that one of the most important skills is the skill of computer use: *"not only should the young be able to use a computer but also the averaged age. It*

comes to no end if he knows generally, but has no degree, he cannot engage in such a post. The employer asks: What do you do? Well, I know... that... but do you have a degree? ..."

The majority opinion of the participants in both focus groups was that *"whatever skills they hold in relation to the labour market, the unemployed person must attend a training / retraining course"*. From the perspective of the participants in the focus groups, the accumulation of qualifications can be a viable strategy to increase the chances for the unemployed to find a job. *"A lot of qualifications look better in resumes"; "in the meantime it seems natural to do courses because the labour market is very fluctuant and even if you have studies and experience, one cannot guarantee that you are sufficiently prepared."*

Difficulties in finding a job

There are situations where the unemployed attend a job without having the necessary skills and abilities to perform the tasks involved and *"without having knowledge of the requirements that must be met."* The difficulties faced by the unemployed in the labour market at the time of attempting insertion are not necessarily correlated to legislation aspects.

Among the challenges identified by the participants in both focus groups, that condition, the reinsertion of unemployed people into the labour market were mentioned preparation (education), and experience and access to a job on the basis of connections. *"Many complain that they are not experienced. But where to gain it if no one gives them a chance to gain experience."*

In both focus groups, there was brought into discussion the impediment of training and education of a person. One of the reasons for the lack of success in finding a job is the lack of higher education. In this situation we find:

- housewives with children and family who did not have time to follow specialized courses or forms of higher education;
- the unemployed aged over 45 years whose qualifications do not meet the current labour market requirements. This creates a sense of discouragement and thus them abandoning the quest in finding a job.

Another difficulty is that of the experience required for employment. Young people aged between 18 and 24 years are most affected by this difficulty, especially young graduates. *"Everywhere, if you don't have experience, the employers say: We'll call you and they never call back "*.

Age represents another impediment. Although with work experience *"people over 45 years have difficulties in finding a job, even if they will work on any post."* The area of residence is another difficulty: *"If the unemployed person is from the rural areas, some employers are reluctant to hire because they will have to bear the travel costs"*.

Skills that will be required in the labour market. The need for training for the unemployed in Gorj County

One of the solutions meant to correct the imbalances in the labour market, particularly in relation to structural references and to reduce the phenomenon of training inadequacy at specific jobs, which are offered at times, is retraining. Orientation and

qualification of individuals, in jobs that are required on the labour market, implies an anticipation of job mobility, both in relation to technical change and to the forecast of job restructuring. Participants in the two focus groups felt that the re-qualification themes need to be as varied as possible, therefore more useful for the unemployed. Courses should not be in areas where there is already a labour inflation but should be to enable their retraining for a job position where they would have more opportunities.

Given the fact that Gorj County enrolls in the national trend that, of the service sector, there have been proposed retraining courses such as: security guard, waiter, commercial worker, cook, barber, tailor. These courses are useful because *"they can afford to make a small workshop in the village. For example, we can use a tailor or a hairdresser. Plus, a qualification in textiles would help a female person get a job easier."* Given the fact that in the rural area the dominant activities are agricultural, practicing agricultural sustenance, some proposals were advanced for courses from European funds for agricultural contracting *"it is very difficult to get European funds, because you need money and it also takes a certain level of training or expertise in an area."* With such a qualification, people could obtain funds for crops or livestock. Even more *"the people are not informed, even if they wanted to access European funds."*

Some of the APL representatives discussed the need for specific qualifications in rural areas that would help the unemployed in these areas to obtain European funds. *"They need certificates in order to obtain funds for crops or livestock. So, such a course would be beneficial for them."* A representative of the village Căpreni discussed the situation of the areas' inhabitants where there is an activity developed on the extraction of methane gas. Given the fact that investors have already appeared in the area, it would be useful for the local residents who are looking for a job to take a retraining program in the craft of borer. *"In our village, there will be the largest natural gas processing plant in Eastern Europe. The investment is of those at OMV Petrom. Why not place the unemployed in our village there? What if they have a qualification in this field? Why bring more manpower and specialists from other areas?"* Starting from this descriptive situation, it was advanced the possibility of retraining Căpreni's unemployed inhabitants into security guards. *"There are many who are not qualified and are being used at the caterer or security firms."* The need for security guards was described by the employers' representatives: *"here were recently developed security firms. Therefore, there is a need for security guards"*.

As for the unemployed with higher education, they can retrain in the fields of: insurance, IT or procurement. For example, it is acknowledged that *"the insurance field is fairly developed; most job vacancies are present in this sector."* In order to get a job in the fields above or to access European funding, it is very profitable for an unemployed person to hold a certificate of qualification in IT or procurement.

5. Conclusions

Generally, in times of economic recession, any person is prone to the risk of becoming unemployed, regardless of their level of education. But often, people who have poor qualifications and medium levels of education are more affected by unemployment than those with a higher education level. At the level of quantitative analysis, it is important to continue first to carefully examine the information available at the lowest disaggregated level, with as much additional economic and socio-demographic data as possible

(Marin, 2012:667). These are the main conclusions of our qualitative research that is confirming also some of the theories that we have presented in the article. Indeed, in times of economic recession, people are more careful with their jobs and give a bigger importance to their wages. We find not only persons that are underemployed, who are trying to face the consequences of the economic crisis, but also, most important of all, unemployed people. The most exposed persons to the risk of being unemployed in times of economic crisis are: youths, females, people with medium and low level of qualification and persons from rural areas. So, specific attention should be kept on youths from rural areas who have low qualifications and no skills for getting a job. This category of population is considered to be “outside” of the labour market. Finally, a special attention has to be paid to bridge the gender gap, where women are concentrated in low-paying occupations, aspects more visible in rural areas (Joseph, J., 2012:787). Thus, in the near future, it would be necessary to follow as our recommendation: improving the data base for women workers, through more detailed questions, which would help to identify and quantify women's work in terms of productive and domestic work (Kumari, R., Pandey, A., 2012:31).

Gorj county's economic restructuring has led to a significant reduction in the number of jobs, which considerably diminishes the chances of reintegration into the labour market for vulnerable groups. To facilitate access to employment for people looking for a job, we need to improve the overall knowledge of the evolution of economic factors and their needs in terms of labour force. Thorough knowledge on the dynamics of the labour market, from the perspective of the employers' representatives, will correlate with the professional training and the needed manpower as well as capturing the areas of work that will be searched in the future in the labour market in Gorj.

From the two focus-groups conducted, we have concluded that people from rural areas of Gorj County still have the chance to be reinserted into the labour market if they will participate in training programs that will help them to acquire the skills needed in order to get a job. Being a county that has an economy mostly based on tourism, the unemployed persons can participate in training programs for: pension administrator, receptionist and chambermaid. According to the fact that in rural areas the most important sector is the primary one, people practicing subsistence agriculture, there have been also suggested that it is very important for the unemployed to participate in courses that will certificate their level of expertise in this field. This will help them, for example, to obtain more easily European funds to maintain crop diversity.

We can conclude that the main method of diminishing unemployment in rural areas that has been advanced by the participants at the focus-groups was the training programs, which aim to correct the imbalances in the labour market, and to reduce the phenomenon of training inadequacy and workforce training at specific labour places, which are offered at a given time.

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