
A MERITORIOUS RESEARCH IN A PANDEMIC CONTEXT

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Cristina Otovescu's new work about Social Realities and Public Policies in Romania (Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2021, in original: *Realitati sociale si politici publice in Romania*), is the result of a thorough systemic analysis, entering into dialogue with similar concerns, both in Romania and abroad, responding to the effort of awareness and optimization of social realities, "providers of problems or dysfunctions", as the author warns us. By interdisciplinarily exploring the relations between social life and public policies (Zamfir, Cace, 2020), such investigations highlight both the way in which state institutions do their job and the degree of appreciation they enjoy from the population. It should be noted from the outset that the seven chapters of the volume are a comparative examination, with the national diagnosis being linked to the situation in other countries. In addition, the author reminds us that in order to produce 'innovative social effects', political will is needed; only if they are turned into law can public policy projects be implemented (Tomescu, 2021). And she notes (by way of example) that, unfortunately, full compliance with them is lagging behind (in the case of education policies, pension laws, the doubling of allowances etc.).

While the first chapter presents a synthetic-descriptive presentation, using official statistical data and "relevant indicators", of the general state of Romanian society, establishing, through identity benchmarks, a country profile, the proposed diagnosis (historical, economic, social and legislative development) is analyzed in a global context, identifying, through reference standards, Romania's place in possible European and world rankings. In the following chapters (II-VII), Cristina Otovescu describes in detail the situation of public policies in Romania, identifying developments and vulnerabilities: standard of living, health, life expectancy, demographic decline, pandemic context. Naturally, the author's approach then targets public policies in emergency and crisis situations, highlighting the dynamics of the regulatory framework, risks and uncertainties, etc. caused by pandemic waves. On the basis of this rich documentary material, in an accessible language, using and corroborating various sources, the author looks at the pandemic phenomenon on a global scale, comparing the reactions of public authorities (Asian world, Western Europe, USA), trying to give us, beyond the media spectacle, "objective knowledge". This would certainly be the main merit of the work, combining various methods in the comparative frame:

historical, statistical, legal, opinion polls, etc., with the data collected and the interpretation of the information projected against a sociological background.

Analysing the challenges of the pandemic and the resurgence of infections on a global scale, the author of the book highlights, in an optimistic tone, the mobilisation of the international community, speaking triumphantly about "the saving vaccine" and "the sovereign triumph of science", reviewing various vaccination strategies, including the Romanian experience. It should be noted that the population's "immunisation intentions" and confidence in the quality of the vaccine (or reluctance) benefit from numerous opinion polls, revealing interesting conclusions, probingly developed by the author, discussing, with statistical armor, the vaccination process, implicitly the pace and the syncopations that have occurred.

With an impressive bibliography, presenting at the end of the work, differentiated by ministries, a series of public policies within the framework of development strategies / programs validated by the ministries, the volume signed by Cristina Otovescu is a meritorious contribution to the collective effort to study the socio-economic and educational consequences of the pandemic phenomenon (Zamfir, Cace, 2020). It rightly stresses that the effectiveness of public or social policies depends on a multitude of factors (Zamfir, Voicu, Stanescu, 2020), mixing the level of development, financial resources, political will and organisational capacity. As the literature devoted to the investigation of public policies has gone beyond the pioneering phase in our country, Cristina Otovescu honestly mentions the fundamental works that have appeared, but also the institutional support; either by providing conceptual clarifications or by examining the typology and actors of public policies, engaged in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, according to EU standards. This methodologically accurate and informative volume is aimed at a wide audience and can be consulted not only by specialists in the field.

References

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