

SUMMARY OF HABILITATION THESIS

RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTIONS CONCERNING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PUBLIC FINANCES AND THE EXTERNAL PUBLIC AUDIT, KEY-FACTORS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

The author of this thesis has conducted research and performed professionally in an environment characterized by complex transformations in the economic and financial fields, including periods of both growth and crisis whose solutions involve recourse to substantial reforms in various domains.

Given that macroeconomic stability and, in particular, a sound fiscal policy are supported by a high degree of flexibility in the market for goods and services and in the labor market, which constitutes an essential element to face macroeconomic shocks, this necessarily engenders a number of mandatory requirements such as: ensuring a culture of stability, the creation of favorable conditions for the efficient use of capital and labor in the economy, to relaunch investment and the existence of strong institutions and of a favorable business environment.

The author's concerns have been consistently marked by an effort to align to the lines of action most advanced at European and international levels, on the one side, and by a special attention paid to her own original contributions relating to the economic situation in Romania, on the other side.

Professional career. Conducted for over 35 years, the author's activity reflects her active involvement in a well-structured mosaic of areas which are either complementary or naturally present in a synergistic interaction. In a succinct enumeration, these include: (a) performance of management functions at the highest level in the Romanian public financial system, in the public external audit of public funds, and (b) conducting parallel university teaching activity, evolving over the past 18 years holding position from Lecturer to Associate Lecturer (2005), and then (in 2007) to University Professor.

Specific professional activities, including coordination of areas of major importance for the Romanian economy, as well as coordination of large-scale projects (most having budget of over one million euros each), materialized on a personal level in a capital of advanced knowledge and contributed to the formation of a modern, complex vision of the financial system in Romania. This knowledge was reflected directly in the approach and content of courses and practical presentations, based on an extensive body of cases resulting from actual field practice.

Personal scientific, professional and academic achievements. After passing the doctoral thesis ("The improvement of systems and methods of control over indirect taxes", ASE Bucharest, 2001), the author was focused on two main directions, which are key drivers of economic growth: (1) sustainable public finances; (2) external public audit - a determining factor for the Government performance.

The two directions of research do not represent disjoint approaches, their convergence leading to the creation of a solid theoretical and practical support in the financial, managerial, and control domains of public funds. Through its complexity and scope, such an approach can be seen as an effective contribution to ensuring macroeconomic stability and the economic growth sustainability, as well as to the processes of convergence and cohesion at European level, on the basis of common policies.

Scientific research relies for the most part on the rich practical experience resulting from main professional activity (coordination of major institutional structures within the Ministry of public finance, coordination of national and European projects conducted in the process of reform of the public finances in Romania). A special mention must be made for the significant contribution of the author to the development of the institutional capacity of the Court of Accounts of Romania (as Vice-President of this institution), by modernizing the regulatory framework, the system of internal control and management, and the methodological and procedural support for external public audit, as well as by the harmonizing the standards of the Court with the INTOSAI (International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions) standards and with the European directives.

Turning to the two perspectives defined by the research directions themed above (sustainable public finances and the external public audit as a key-factor for governance performance), it can be concluded that the major objective of the scientific endeavor of the author of the thesis was to identify modern approaches, able to effectively contribute to the macroeconomic stability and to the sustainability of economic growth in Romania, by promoting performance in public spending, with a view to ensuring the processes of convergence and cohesion.

The contents of the research carried out was influenced by the presence and action of at least three factors driving the evolution of the Romanian economy: (a) the obligation to harmonize the national legal framework with the European directives (taking over the Community *acquis*); (b) the profound transformations generated by the development of knowledge-based economy; (c) attainment of the incumbent objectives assigned to Romania under the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The research results fall within a wide range, being embodied in both theoretical formats and traditional formats (studies, reports, books, articles; and made known through presentations, conferences, symposia) as well as in technical formats (models, methodologies, standards, procedural framework, practical implementations).

In a synthetic description, the author's scientific and professional career, having as predominant trait a multidisciplinary character, mainly targeted on sustainable growth, on models, methods and tools for the management of public finances, and on the control and the external audit as a means of increasing the accountability, can be characterized by the following generic approaches:

- (1) the assurance of convergence and continuity of research (in terms of theme and specific content area) in relation to the practical activity;
- (2) alignment of sustained scientific research to the EU's trends and objectives for research and development related to the economic growth ensured through a high-performance management of public finances;
- (3) involvement, on the basis of these premises, in the development of students abilities (course content and seminars) and specialists elite (Ph.D. and other forms of training) in the management of public finances, in Romania and internationally (through various ways of scientific collaboration).

Modern knowledge and experiences capitalization was valued also by addressing topical problems of public finance in the teaching activity (as reflected in the content of the courses and training materials, of the case studies and of the tests for students).

The Habilitation Thesis is structured in two main parts.

- I. *In the first part* (chapters 1-3), the author presents, in an integrated and documented manner, the main original scientific results obtained in scientific research, in the academic teaching activity, and in the applied research area (evidenced in practical, actual implementations of theoretical results). The author illustrates, by describing some relevant personal contributions, published in books and journals of reference in the field, her own theoretical approaches, and solutions placed in the European and international context presented in Chapter 1.
- II. *The second part* of the thesis reflects the author's ability and experience to coordinate research teams, to organize and manage teaching activities, to explain and to facilitate learning and research, and includes the following topics:
- (1) an indication of the evolution of scientific, academic, and professional career;
 - (2) elements of guidance and decision support in the planning of future scientific career;
 - (3) main directions of future scientific career development, in the context of the significant and state-of-the-art scientific achievements, in the specialty area of her competencies.

As the national authority on education and scientific research requires, the thesis empowerment is based on scientific results published in journals of prestige (listed Thomson Reuters, **ISI**, Web of Science, with significant impact factor or indexed in the international databases), on books issued by publishing houses with academic recognition or on communication published in volumes and university annals. Furthermore, the thesis is also based on professional achievements including development or pure research projects and grants, registered before submitting the accreditation dossier and after obtaining the doctorate (2001-2016).

The present approach, as a whole, aims at obtaining the quality of *doctoral supervisor in Economics*, other steps of evolution being already taken - Lecturer (1998), Associate lecturer (2005) and University professor (2007).

Therefore, the plans of evolution and development for the author's professional, scientific and academic career have been tailored according to the performance parameters required by the criteria and standards for this position, which offers the satisfaction of guiding young economists who aspire to turn to a career as a researcher.

Thus, in terms of professional career development, the author aims to evolve further within her area of expertise to which she devoted more than 35 years, of which 18 as an academic, at the same time pursuing the two converging lines of research represented by the domains of: *sustainable public finances* and the *external public audit*.

The thematic areas of research of the author will be further pursued and aligned with the previous and present objectives of research and development, and the author proposes to extend the collaborations with other specialists from the country and from abroad, to open new horizons in this regard and to obtain results that generate value.

In the field of scientific publishing, the author of the dissertation intends to be guided mainly by international journals indexed and quoted in major scientific databases, which will contribute to increasing her professional and scientific prestige, and will constitute a contribution to the achievement of academic performance indicators and to improving the quality of the educational process.

Presenting lectures at other academic institutions, in the country and abroad, as well as attending a larger number of conferences and seminars on economic themes, as well as participating as a "visiting Professor" at universities abroad, is another concern of scientific nature that the author of this thesis will focus on.

The research directions chosen by the author of the thesis are based on timeliness and aligned with the objectives of research and innovation specific to the aforementioned categories of developments, with high priority at global and European level. They are characterized by novelty at national level, complexity of issues and the increased impact of the results on the development of theoretical and practical knowledge, as reflected in the contents of the habilitation thesis, and can be described as follows:

- I. Creating a solid theoretical and applicative support, effectively contributing to ensure the macroeconomic stability and sustainability of economic growth, as well as the processes of convergence and cohesion at European level, on the basis of common policies;
- II. Improving policies and budgetary consolidation strategies;
- III. Improving the management of the financial-fiscal system, through the implementation of an evaluation framework for public finance management (of type PEFA - PFM);
- IV. Developing new methods of external audit, with emphasis on the audit of performance in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- V. Researching and addressing topical, open issues of great interest at international level, in the field of auditing: *development of a new model of external audit*, to include the advantages and meet the requirements arising from: (a) developments in the knowledge-based society and economy; (b) openness of government and open data, (c) the use of advanced methods of auditing facilitated by the expansion of digital technologies in the context of the *Digital Agenda* included in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Referring to the challenge related to the doctoral school, the author aims to consolidate the research issues and to attract the most outstanding master's graduates in future projects/grants included under the (sub)directions and/or themes from the University's research program.

In this context, the targets set by the author of this thesis include ensuring the stability and continuity of the research processes, by obtaining financial resources based on foreign grants, as well as involving students in doctoral or post-doctoral programs, pursuing the increase in capacity-building and development of human capital to the level of excellence.

At the same time, in addition to the optimizations of the content of the lectures held, the author of this thesis aims to improve the teaching methods, by increasing the attractiveness of the process of learning for students, regardless of the cycle they are in, bearing in mind that the mission pursued in her career is to bring contributions to the professional and personal development of students, by facilitating a learning process which is both attractive and stimulating.

Keywords

Economic growth; taxation; Budget central/local/community; Fiscal compact; Budget deficit; Public debt; Budgetary vulnerability; Gross Domestic Product (GDP); degree of indebtedness; charging/taxation; public services; institutional capacity building; public external audit; online audit, Europe 2020 Strategy; Open data; advanced methods/techniques of auditing.