

THE BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES

HABILITATION THESIS

– SUMMARY –

**CURRENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES.
ANALYSIS OF ROMANIA IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

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The European construction has been marked by many changes and challenges over the past seven decades and, undoubtedly, the current context differs to a significant extent from the integrationist vision of the founding fathers of the European Union.

Hence, this habilitation thesis addresses several relevant issues for the present, but especially for the future of the European Union and its citizens, representing the results of the research efforts that I have undertaken both at individual level and within the multidisciplinary research teams, materialized in completed research projects and published scientific papers and works. The structure of the thesis respects the rigors imposed by the legislation in force and the academic practice and includes: an introduction to the field of European integration, part I – consisting of five chapters, in which are broadly presented part of the results of the research undertaken after completing the doctoral cycle, Part II, in which I presented, based on the results already obtained in research, the subsequent directions that I propose for the future development of my university career, to which, in the end of the thesis, the related bibliographical references are added.

The first part of the habilitation thesis addresses some of the perspectives that define the current European framework, focusing on Romania as a Member State of the European Union. Thus, in the first chapter I addressed the issue of food safety in our country, also from the perspective of climate change, based on a set of relevant indicators such as: *average value of food production, food availability, value of food imports over total goods exports, Gross Domestic Product per capita, temperature and precipitation variation, number of diseases from food sources* etc. The results of the research undertaken in this area have highlighted that the relevant variables for food safety are: *average value of food production, food availability, food production variability* and *food supply variability* without significant influence from other variables taken into consideration.

The second chapter logically follows the subject opened in the previous chapter, extending the analysis from the effects of climate change on food safety towards environmental issues and possibilities of mitigation. In this respect, I have analyzed the extent to which the effects of pollutant emissions can be reduced by reusing in the productive cycle an increasing amount of waste in the context of the circular economy, highlighting the particular situation of our country, and to what extent the existence of Kuznets Environment Curve (EKC) at EU-28 level can be identified. The EKC hypothesis has been confirmed for some of the pollutant emissions to the atmosphere, such as *sulfur oxides, emissions of non-methane volatile organic*

compounds or *nitrogen oxides*, and the short-term causality relationship between per capita GDP growth and greenhouse gas emissions has also been identified. Based on the relevant results highlighted in the first two chapters, the need to promote the use of renewable energy and to increase the national and European efforts to strengthen the circular economy circuit arises, with tangible benefits on the economic and social dimension in enhancing food safety, improving air quality and, implicitly, diminishing adverse effects on citizens' health.

As far as the economic development opportunities are concerned, given the existing information regarding the experience of other Member States, the niche of rural tourism, and especially agritourism, has been identified, as a sector of activity relevant to the future orientation of tourism in Romania. Within this framework, the third chapter analyzes the factors contributing to the development of agritourism in our country based on a set of variables from the economic, as well as the social and tourism domains applied in the counties of Romania; some of the significant variables identified as having a direct effect on the development of regional agritourism were the *regional GDP*, the *total number of kilometers of national roads*, the level of *tourism salary relative to the average salary in the region* or the *total number of tourists*. Particularizing this sector with real development potential, we have also proposed in this chapter an example of a rural tourism business applicable in Romania, based on a cost-benefit analysis, with the identification of the optimum occupancy degree according to different types of initial investment (with or without credit).

Since it has been identified as a factor that determines the development of tourism in Romania, the fourth chapter presents an analysis of the road infrastructure in Romania compared to the other EU Member States, while investigating the relationship between the *number of kilometers of high speed roads* and a series of dependent variables such as *per capita GDP*, the *number of domestic and international tourists*, *school dropout rate*, *road accident victims*, with significant outcomes whose interpretations, corroborated with the results of previous chapters, lead to an overall representation and conclusions on the link between the development of road infrastructure and the opportunities for economic growth on the one hand and mitigation of the negative effects on the quality of life and the environment on the other.

Last but not least, as a result of these gaps between Romania and the EU-15 Member States, a phenomenon with economic and social repercussions, accentuated over the last years, is the one of migration of Romanian labor force to these countries; the fifth chapter of the first part of the habilitation thesis studies this phenomenon from the point of view of one of the

highly affected fields of activity, namely the medical field, bringing to the fore the impact of emigration, the reasons and motivations leading to departure, as well as the economic and social consequences thereof.

Each of the chapters represents a segment of the current national and European framework, but the identified results and solutions come from the integrated approach, in a multidisciplinary way, and arouse the expansion of research with new dimensions and variables, which I intend to address in the future.

Therefore, part II of the habilitation thesis, comprising two chapters, sets out, on the basis of the research and professional activity carried out since the end of the doctoral cycle up to date, my proposals for the development of my university career through four coordinates: didactic activity and academic educational framework, research activity, coordination of doctoral research and the scope of other related academic professional duties. I consider that each of these coordinates is conducive to the development and consolidation of my academic career and experience gained so far, and, by the proposed orientations, allows the opening of new perspectives and approaches to research and teaching, which underlie subsequent collaborations with various research groups, as well as with students, masters and PhD students, in order to increase the level of national and international recognition of the research results.