

## **IDENTIFICATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET TRENDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE COMPETENCES AND THE SKILLS REQUESTED AS WELL AS THE RECRUITMENT SOURCES USED BY THE EMPLOYEERS FROM THE "CENTRE" DEVELOPMENT REGION**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The lack of skilled workers on the labour market, following several years of economic crisis has created a great discrepancy between the needs of the employers and the skills that the potential employees have to offer. Our paper aims to identify the main market trends of the Center Development Region of Romania with regard to the competences and skills requested by the employers in conjunction with the main recruitment sources. We are presenting a research based on a qualitative and a quantitative dimension carried out on 247 employees of the Center Development Region of Romania. We present the specific objectives, hypothesis of the research as well as the results that have been interpreted following the research process.*

**KEY WORDS:** *competences, abilities, recruitment sources, managers, research, labour market.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *E24.*

### **1. A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE THEME**

The competence of the labour force represents an essential value for the development of a competitive durable and innovative economy, in accordance with the 2020 Europe Strategy objectives. In a time of budgetary constraint and the unprecedented global competitive pressure, the EU policies regarding the employment

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and the competences of the labour force, which contributes to the development of an ecological, intelligent and innovative economy, must be a priority.

The development of the Lifelong Learning system, which responds to the needs of the labour market and those of a knowledge based economy, requires relevant information regarding: the evolution of trades and professions, the evolution trends of the labour market, the companies' needs of competences and qualifications, the degree of correlation between the demand and supply of labour force, the supply of LLL providers and their adaptation to the needs of the solicitants.

From this perspective, the present paper aims to underline the opinion of the employees of the "Center" Development Region of Romania regarding the readiness of the human resources and its adaptation to the needs of the labour market. The research method was the direct one, based on an online questionnaire distributed to the employers of said development region. The research was conducted under the POSDRU contract: „Establishment of the Permanent Technical Secretariat of the Regional Pact for Employment and Social Inclusion in Centre Region”, ID POSDRU 64/3.3/S/33409.

In the last years, the labour force structure has changed significantly in Romania. The large number of young individuals that want to continue their studies (bachelor studies) and the lack of desire to choose a vocational trajectory in their educational career. Intraregional disparities have widened recently, outlining the labour force concentration process, especially of well-qualified labour force in the large urban centres and adjacent areas – areas with a high economic dynamism and which have managed to attract significant investments in recent years (Regional Action Plan for Employment and Social Inclusion 2008-2011 Center Region).

The need for employees with vocational training and that are willing to learn and to provide the labour market with jobs that the said market wants has become greater and greater. This phenomenon is not unique just to Romania, there are many national and multinational companies that have stated that it has become harder and harder to find qualified employees that have the skills and competences needed to do the job successfully.

Even IT giants (<http://www.wall-street.ro>) state that after years of economic crisis it has become harder and harder to find the right man / woman for the job because there is an important discrepancy between the studies and educational knowledge and the type of qualification required by the labour market. According to the Wall Street Journal (Kapur, 2014) and PriceWaterhouseCooper's Trendsetter Barometer (<http://www.pwc.com>), there is a low level of hiring for skilled workers for 2014, just 1.9% due to an important shortage of high skilled potential employees in almost all types of activities.

In addition to the skills and competences, it is necessary for the Romanian employers to use the proper recruitment sources in order to find the right man for the right job. Previous experiences have shown that the recruitment process and its sources must change. In today's ever changing labour market and global economy the recruitment sources must vary and adapt to the realities of the economic environment.

The new means of communication offer the employers new methods of recruitment (Varlan, 2014) for the skilled employers like: (1) Skype interview; (2)

Webinars; (3) Social media recruitment; (4) Video interview at the stand; (5) Open day events. These methods and means of recruitment combined with the classical one (like the ones presented in our paper), together with the selection criteria are the way the managers and their organizations find the proper employee for the right job.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology used in this research is a combination between the methodology used in a marketing research and a methodology used in a sociological research. Taking into account the objectives of the research, the study had two main dimensions: a *qualitative exploratory* dimension and a *quantitative exploratory* dimension.

Trough the qualitative exploratory research we aimed to achieve several objectives like: a diagnostic of the needs of competences and qualifications of the labour force in order to adapt it to the labour market. The methods used in this preliminary research were: secondary data analysis (the specific laws, other studies developed that are linked to the field of occupation, EU recommendations etc), meetings with specialists during roundtable discussions, workshops, work meetings that regarded the occupation and social inclusion in the “Centre” Development Region of Romania.

The research was conducted through an online questionnaire addressed to employers, it had a high degree of structure and was also directly distributed to the managers and / or the department heads. The survey was an unconcealed one, the main purpose was known from the beginning by the respondents.

The main target group for the study was formed by employers (companies, public institutions, NGOs, etc) from the counties of Alba, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Mures and Sibiu. The target group consisted of approximately 55.000 employers from the “Centre” Development Region.

In order to establish an adequate survey base, we used the data supplied by: the Unemployment Agencies of the 6 mentioned counties and the Romanian National Statistics Institute. Therefore we have obtained information regarding the name of the employers of the development region, the address, phone number, email and the name of the legal representative, thus giving us the possibility to contact the target group easier.

In order to establish the sample we used the random sampling method, which was based on a *fixed sample* (taking into account the organizational restrictions, we have establishes a sample of 246 respondents with a confidence level of 94% and a margin of error of 6%) *with restrictions*. We can state that the sampling method consists of a combination between the *multi-stage sampling method* and the *disproportional random sampling method* (Cătoi, 2009).

Keeping the confidence level and taking into account that 247 questionnaires were collected 5.99%. It was taken into consideration the development of a sample that includes relevant employers of the 6 counties mentioned before. As always, every research has to take into consideration certain errors. Among the errors considered in this study we mention: the random sampling error, response errors, sampling method errors etc.

We consider that the main limitation of the research stems from the choice made in the development of the sample size, more clearly, our choice for the non-proportional method. Regarding this, we would like to argue that, even if we use the non-proportional method, the sample subject do not match the statistical reality with regard to their proportion within the hole number of employees of the “Centre” Development Region. We hypothesised that certain groups represent a greater importance for the purpose and the context of our research.

Information gathering was done online with the help of the kestionare.ro platform and by meeting at the headquarters of the employer. The analysis of the data was done with SPSS 19 – Statistics Base for Windows.

Trough the descriptive quantitative research, we aimed to identify the labour market trends from the perspective of the required competences, abilities and the recruitment sources used by the employers of the “Centre” Development Region. The conclusions drown are purposed to increase the level of labour force occupation in the Development Region. The specific objectives and the research hypothesis are presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Specific objectives and research hypothesis**

<b>Specific objectives</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Q<sub>1</sub></b> – The employers’ perception regarding the personnel recruitment and selection process.	<b>H<sub>1</sub></b> – The recruitment process is mostly based on newspaper ads and the selection of the personnel has as the main selection criteria the specialized competences of the applicant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Means / sources of recruitment of the employees.</li> <li>• Personnel recruitment and selection criteria.</li> </ul>
<b>Q<sub>2</sub></b> – Knowing the opinion regarding the importance of different competences and abilities in order to achieve successfully the activities set forth by the organization.	<b>H<sub>2</sub></b> – The most important competence that is common to all occupations is <i>the competence to learn</i> and the most important competence needed by an employee, in order to fulfil his/her job successfully is <i>the ability to learn quickly</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The common competences to all occupations that are needed by an employee.</li> <li>• Competences and abilities needed by an employee.</li> </ul>

## 2. RESEARCH RESULTS

### **Q<sub>1</sub> – the employers’ perception regarding the personnel recruitment and selection process**

The individual cu its creative potential, with its resources, is the most valuable acquisition that an organization can make. The decision to choose a certain candidate is extremely important and full of responsibility. This responsibility derives from the fact that it is a decision that has major implications on the long term for the organization as well as for the individual.

In this context, the first objective of our research takes into consideration identifying the employers' perception regarding the personnel recruitment and selection process. In order to achieve this objective, the following questions were asked: According to you, what is the importance that you award, in the recruitment and selection process, to the following criteria? In what measure, do you use the following means / sources of recruitment? The data collected in order to identify the importance of certain criteria for the recruitment and selection process of the personnel are presented in table 2.

**Table 2. Main criteria used in the recruitment and selection process**

Criteria	Not at all important	Little important	Neutral	Important	Very important	Score
Level of education	1	3	8	47	41	4.25
Prestige of the graduated education institution	8	20	21	40	11	3.27
Study abroad	20	23	29	20	8	2.71
Skill	0	4	3	48	45	4.35
General knowledge	1	7	14	58	20	3.88
Specialised knowledge	0	3	6	25	66	4.54
General competences	1	4	13	53	30	4.06
Specialised competences, linked to the job	1	2	3	25	69	4.20
Abilities		2	10	49	39	4.26
Seniority / accumulated service	8	26	37	26	3	2.87
Professional experience in the field	2	8	14	52	24	3.87
Volunteering	18	24	36	18	4	2.66
Recommendations	9	22	25	37	7	3.10
Gender	49	17	29	5	0	1.92
Age	31	29	29	11	0	2.21
Physical aspect	40	23	22	14	1	2.12

Source: Author's computation

From the preliminary analysis of the responses we can see the following results:

- The most important criteria considered in the recruitment and selection process of the personnel are the *specialised knowledge* (considered as being: very important by 66% of the respondents and important for 25% of them), *specialised competences - linked to the job* (69% of the respondents consider this criteria as being very important and 25% consider it to be important), the *skills* (considered as being very important by 45% of the respondents and are considered important by 48% of them).
- For the skill, specialised knowledge, abilities criteria, no respondents mentioned them as having no importance for them, with regard to the criteria of education, general competences, specialised competences - linked to the job, professional

experience in the field only 2% of the respondent mention them as having no importance.

- In the recruitment and selection process of the employees there following criteria are considered as having no importance: *gender* (49% of the organization chose this criteria as having no importance, 17% of them stated that it has little importance; no organisation mentioned the gender as having a great importance), *physical aspect* (is appreciated as having no importance by 40% of the respondents and of having little importance for 23% for them), *the age* (no importance for 31% of the organizations and little importance for 29% of the organizations).
- Due to the fact that 2011 was declared the *Year of Volunteering*, a new criterion was added: *volunteering*. This aspect is appreciated as being very important or important by 4% respectively 18% of the organizations, the majority of the respondents having a neutral opinion with regard to this aspect (36%). We consider that volunteering is an important criterion that must be added to the company's assessment policy, due to the fact that the companies require experience from the young employees.

After establishing the Likert scale scores (1 – Not important ... 5 – Very important) for the 16 criteria considered in the recruitment and selection process we can draw the following conclusions:

- The *specialised competences* (4.60) and the *specialised knowledge* (4.54) are appreciated by the respondents as being very important.
- The *skill* (4.35), *abilities* (4.26), *education* (4.25), *general competences* (4.06), *general knowledge* (3.88), *experience* (3.87) are considered as being important for the recruitment and selection of the employees.
- The neutral opinion is declared for the following: *prestige of the graduated education institution* (3.27), *Recommendations* (3.10), *Seniority / accumulated service* (2.87), *study abroad* (2.71), *volunteering* (2.66).
- The following criteria: *age* (2.21), *Physical aspect* (2.12) and *gender* (1.92) are considered of little importance by the respondents, what leads us to consider that the organizations respect the equal chances principle. We consider that these criteria were not positioned in the *Not important* evaluation level, because there are fields of activity in which the above mentioned criteria are viewed for a possible employment, but are not eliminatory (for example there are jobs that require high level of physical activity).

In order to ensure the covering of vacant jobs, there are two main possibilities of action: bringing in new employees using the external labour market (external sources) and/or redistributing the current employees, through promoting or transferring (internal sources). If usually, for the vacant jobs from the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid of the organization one must call upon the external sources, the other jobs can be filled by candidates of both sources.

In the questionnaire the means / external sources have been identified as follows: the Counties Un-employment Agencies, Private recruitment agencies, newspaper adds, higher education institutions, high schools / vocational schools, individual requests, recommendations. The data that was collected in order to know the recruitment sources used by the employers of the "Centre" Development Region are presented in table 3.

**Table 3. The main recruitment sources used by the employers**

Criteria	Very little	Little	Neutral	Much	Very much	Score
Un employment agencies	43	24	17	7	9	2.17
Private recruitment agencies	58	13	19	8	2	1.81
Newspaper adds	31	16	20	22	11	2.68
Directly from the higher education institutions	46	28	20	4	2	1.88
Directly from high school / vocational schools	55	19	20	6	0	1.78
Individual requests	21	19	17	33	10	2.94
Recommendation	25	19	26	25	5	2.66
Internal recruitment	13	11	19	38	19	3.38

Source: Authors' computation

Regarding the means / external recruitment and selection sources, the most common tool used by the employers are *individual requests* (43% of the organization use this method much and very much) and *newspaper ads* (used much and very much by 33% of the organizations).

It can be pointed out the extremely low level of recruitment and selection *directly from the education institutions*. Therefore 46% of the organizations stated that they use very little the recruitment form the higher education institutions and 55% of the respondents stated that they use very little the recruitment from high schools / vocational schools.

In our opinion, The County Unemployment Agencies (AJOFM) should be the main external sources of recruitment and selection source of the personnel, taking into account their existing databases, the job fairs organized by them and all the information that they possess. Our research underlines that only 16% of the organizations extensively use this recruitment source while 43% of the respondents state that they use very little this tool.

Regarding the internal recruitment it is noted that most organizations prefer to use and use this type of activity extensively by more than 55% of the organizations with great success. Following the analysis of the information, we calculated the Likert scale score, which pointed out the following:

- Internal recruitment (3.38), individual request (2.94) and newspaper ads (2.68) are the recruitment sources that the respondents had a neutral position, noticing a rather large difference between scores of internal recruitment and the individual requests.
- The County Unemployment Agencies (AJOFM) – 2.17, directly from the higher education institutions (1.88), private recruitment agencies (1.81), directly from high schools / vocational schools (1.78) are recruitment sources that the organizations use very little.

Taking all this into consideration, we consider that the hypothesis launched at the beginning of the research ( $H_1$  – *The recruitment process is mostly based on newspaper ads and the selection of the personnel has as the main selection criteria the specialized competences of the applicant*) is partially confirmed, the internal sources are preferred for the recruitment of the personnel.

**Q<sub>2</sub> – Knowing the opinion regarding the importance of different competences and abilities in order to achieve successfully the activities set forth by the organization.**

Pursuant to the Commission’s Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (COM (2010) 682/23.11.2010, Strasbourg), “*regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic background, ethnicity or disability, all EU citizens should have the opportunity to acquire and develop the range of knowledge, skills and abilities they need to succeed in the labour market*”.

To this end, the education and training systems should provide appropriate range of skills, including digital and transversal key competences, education in media and communication in a foreign language. They must also ensure possession by young graduates of secondary and tertiary education the skills needed for a successful and rapid transition to get a job. Tackling early school drop-out and low educational outcomes in basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and science, including among adults, is an essential element for inclusion, employment and development.

In this context, the questions have been included in the questionnaire “*Appreciate the importance of the following skills common to the occupation – according to C.N.F.P.A. / A.N.C. that an employee should have*” and “*Appreciate the importance of the following skills and general abilities, which an employee should have in the successful implementation of the activities within your organization*”.

Key competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context, as those required to all individuals to affirm and personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

National Council for Adult Vocational Training approved by Resolution no. 86/24.06.2008, in accordance with the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC), the list of key competencies, common to many occupations, a list which includes: ability to communicate in the official language, the ability to communicate in foreign languages, basic skills in mathematics, science, technology, computer science skills, competence to learn, social and civic competences, entrepreneurship skills, the ability of cultural expression.

The data collected in order to have better awareness of the employers on **the importance of skills common to all occupations which an employee should have** are shown in table 4.

After processing the data collected to assess the importance of skills common to all occupations which an employee should have, we found the following:

- *the ability to learn* is best appreciated by employers, most of them (53%) stating that it is very important, while 44% consider it to be important;
- with regard to *the ability to communicate in the official language*, it is very important according to 49% of respondents and to 40% of them it is important, while the ability to communicate in foreign languages is given less attention, being very important for 19% of employers and important according to 46% of them;
- the importance given to *computer skills* can be noticed, most respondents (52%) considering that they are important and very important (33%);

- views somewhat unexpected were found for *social and civic competences* to which no respondent felt they were not at all important, the majority of them framing them within the category of important and very important skills (78%);
- employers do not consider the *entrepreneurial skills* as absolutely necessary to employees, 6% of respondents are considering them as not at all important, 11% appreciate them as less important and 38% of employers' opinion is neutral.

**Table 4. Common Skills (C.N.F.P.A.) that an employee should have**

<b>Skills common to all occupations – according to C.N.F.P.A.</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Score</b>
Ability to communicate in the official language	2	3	6	40	49	4.32
Ability to communicate in foreign languages	6	12	17	46	19	3.62
Basic skills in the use of general knowledge of mathematics, science, technology	8	14	23	46	9	3.34
Computer skills (IT usage)	3	6	6	52	33	4.05
Ability to learn	1	1	1	44	53	4.49
Social and civic skills	0	4	18	44	34	4.06
Entrepreneurship skills	10	9	33	38	10	3.13
Ability of cultural expression	11	11	38	34	6	3.27
General score						3.79

*Source: authors' computation*

The score for the ability to learn is 4.49, being also the highest and placing this ability in the “important” area, but at a difference of only 0.01 points from “very important”. *Communication in the official language* (score 4.32) is another common skill of all occupations important to employers, which shows that, regardless of occupation or function, it is important for employees to speak correct language of the country they reside in and write correctly the native language. In the category of major skills, there can also be found the social and civic skills (score 4.06), skills (score 4.05), communication in foreign languages (score 3.62).

The overall score calculated for this question is 3.79 and shows that, overall, employers believe that the skills common to all occupations that an employee should have are important.

Nevertheless, common skills are not the only ones that should be considered for employees. Besides these, there are a number of other general skills and abilities that an employee should have. They may however be more or less important, depending on the employee, the nature of work, position held.

The data collected for knowing the employers' opinion on the importance of skills and general abilities that an employee should have are shown in table no. 5.

**Table 5. General skills and abilities that an employee should have**

<b>Other skills and abilities - general</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Less important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Score</b>
Competencies (expertise) specific to the field	1	1	6	41	51	4.39
Competencies (expertise) specific to other fields	5	23	29	41	2	3.11
Capacity of synthesis and analysis	1	10	7	41	41	4.13
Analytical thinking	0	7	5	48	40	4.19
Ability to learn quickly	0	0	0	43	57	4.55
Ability to search for information and use them	0	4	4	37	55	4.41
Ability to cope with change		1	6	45	48	4.39
Ability to work under stress	4	6	5	43	42	4.13
Ability to organize and coordinate	2	10	6	50	32	4.00
Willingness to work overtime		10	14	57	19	3.84
Ability to negotiate		3	1	44	52	3.69
Ability to solve problems			4	38	58	4.45
Ability to use time efficiently		5	9	43	43	4.53
Ability to take decisions	1	4	10	40	35	4.23
Creativity and innovating thinking	1	5	10	56	28	4.14
Ability to act independently and creatively	4	14	16	21	25	4.05
Ability to work in team		1	6	27	66	4.59
Ability to communicate effectively			4	45	51	4.47
Interpersonal abilities, (cooperative, sharing knowledge, ideas)	1	2	14	52	31	4.10
Ability to motivate and influence others	1	2	14	55	28	4.07
Ability to make oneself understood			7	52	41	4.33
Ability to assert	1	7	30	46	16	3.67
Willingness to accept criticism	2	5	10	60	23	3.95
Ability to make public presentations	6	13	20	37	24	3.58
Ability to produce specific documents	2	5	13	45	35	4.07

(Source: authors' computation)

Based on the results obtained, we conclude that all organizations included in the analysis state that in general, the general skills and abilities that an employee should have in the successful implementation of the activities are important or very important.

From the analysis of the scores (from 1 - not at all important to 5 - very important), we conclude that the most important skills and abilities of employees are considered to be: ability to work in team (score 4.59); ability to learn quickly (score 4.55); ability to use time effectively (score 4.53); ability to solve problems (score 4.45); ability to search information and use (score 4.41); ability to cope with change and competencies (expertise) specific to the field (score 4.39).

In conclusion, the advanced hypothesis ( $I_2$  - The most important skill common to all occupations is "the ability to learn" and the most important competency required of an employee to successfully accomplish its work, is "the ability to learn quickly") is partially confirmed. We believe, however, necessary to point out tiny differences that exist between the scores calculated for the first three skills and abilities listed above, scores that fall in the "very important" category.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Our research has been developed in order to firstly understand the methods of selection and recruitment for the employees, linked to the necessary skills and competences needed by the employers of the Centre Development Region of Romania, and secondly to offer certain solutions in order to diminish the high number of employees that do not have the necessary skill required by the labour market.

As a general conclusion for the first objective ( $O_1$ ), we can state that in the recruitment and selection process of the personnel the main criterion taken into consideration is the specialised knowledge. In the same time there is a lack of trust of the employers for external recruitment sources.

Regarding the second objective ( $O_2$ ), we note that the skills and competencies considered by employers as essential for employees belong to the category of knowledge, organization, coordination / communication. The lowest value recorded was for "skills (expertise) in other fields" (score 3.11), a value that reflects a neutral view of employers and, we might say, their interest that employees meet the requirements of the job they occupy in the organization. As we can see, the employers of the Centre Development Region of Romania consider that the specialised knowledge is the main selection criterion but in the same time they do not trust the educational system of Romania and the skills and knowledge provided by it.

Further investigation in this matter is needed in conjunction with a clear diagnosis of the Romanian educational system, in order to find the right means of supplying the labour market with skilled workers that the employers can and want to use without fear of failure.

Together with the results from other research carried out in the same field (Ciuhureanu, et al., 2012) we consider that the results presented in our paper, through its conclusions, may help in the development of future projects within SOPHRD carried

out by the members of the Territorial Pact and the County Partnerships in Centre Region and by other interested organisations.

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