

Premises and Challenges of Entrepreneurship in Romanian Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

The rural inhabitants need to face and survive structural changes in rural economy and, thus, to become more market oriented. Traditions and old skills were somehow lost and new activities were approached. In order to reach them, public policy intervened and supported several types of activities. The public authorities demand Romanian inhabitants from rural areas to be truly competitive in a fully shacked economy. Therefore, the research question is: what are the premises and challenges that Romanian inhabitants from rural areas confront to? Entrepreneurial skills of Romanians in rural areas are a matter of national interest. The problem of entrepreneurships has, at least, two meanings in the present paper: the premises and challenges of the free manifestation of private initiative and the importance of this manifestation for national economy. The approach is pragmatic, for public policy. The main objectives of the research are: to identify the premises and challenges of the entrepreneurship in Romanian rural areas and to elaborate relevant solution for public policy in order to conduct to robust rural economy as a result of entrepreneurial expression. Therefore, next financial plan of the Romanian national Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 needs to take into consideration the premises and challenges of entrepreneurship, as this is the only pertinent solution for added value creation in rural economy. And the strategic approach is to define the future profile of Romanian rural inhabitant.

KEYWORDS: *entrepreneurship, motivating factors, quality of life, rural development, public policies*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *O13, O18, O52, R11*

INTRODUCTION

The rural Romania confronted in the last three decades several structural changes, such as: massive rural-urban migration in the 80's, massive urban-rural migration in the 90's, farms and agricultural exploitations' structural reorganization, low incomes of inhabitants, high unemployment rates, total decrease of handicrafts, rose of agro and rural tourism.

The rural inhabitants needed to face and survive all these changes and, thus, to become more market oriented. Traditions and old skills were somehow lost and new activities were approached. In order to reach them, public policy intervened and supported several types of activities. European and national funds were spent in order to help and support the continued existence and desired economic performance of rural inhabitants.

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As public farms and agricultural exploitation had no jobs offer after 1991, rural inhabitants, near 45 – 47% of the national population, needed to reorient towards others activities.

In consequence, entrepreneurial skills of Romanians in rural areas are a matter of national interest. Do Romanians really demonstrate that they have such competences? The motivation of the present paper is to have an adequate image of the rural entrepreneurship in order to reach a more articulated public policy in this regards. Studies were made in the field and, obviously, the public policy tried to motivate these inhabitants to be more entrepreneurial. Public finances were allocated in order to be used by them for start-ups in rural areas. And the future Romanian National Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 might allocate important amounts for these aspects.

In the same time, the public authorities demand Romanian inhabitants from rural areas to be truly competitive in a fully shacked economy. Therefore, the research question is: what are the premises and challenges that Romanian inhabitants from rural areas confront to?

The approach is pragmatic, for public policy. The main objectives of the research are:

- to identify the premises and challenges of the entrepreneurship in Romanian rural areas;
- to elaborate relevant solution for public policy in order to conduct to robust rural economy as a result of entrepreneurial expression.

The problem of entrepreneurship has, at least, two meanings in the present paper: the premises and challenges of the free manifestation of private initiative and the importance of this manifestation for national economy. Analysing these two subjects, we will be able to answer to the paper's objectives.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

“The income gap between urban and rural regions has remained both significant and persistent.” (Green, Deller & Marcouiller, 2005). This disparity may be overcome by a strong manifestation of entrepreneurship in rural areas. The huge number of rural population, almost 47,2% of Romania's total population (National Institute of Statistics, 2012) may benefit of the public support and behave as entrepreneurs.

While the rural economy is often mistaken for agricultural activities, and given the national importance of this sector for food security, there are voices who analyse the state interventions for agriculture and its importance (Hubbard et. al., 2003) given different perspectives: food self-sufficiency, stabilizing prices, substituting for private intermediaries.

In order to become competitive, Romanian rural economy should foresee different paths. These may take into consideration, as FAO has named (Rivera & Kalim Qamar, 2003) for state support, only agriculture as main activity of rural areas that may generate added value, or different approaches, multiple-activity paths, assistance paths or exit paths that involve also, social points of view beside economic.

No matter what the state support will focus on, the rural inhabitants face a new form of their economic activity. Entrepreneurship is a risky business and the decision of becoming entrepreneur may be as a career move, probably the most suitable for Romania's rural

inhabitants who have nothing else to lose, or as a career decision, for those persons who migrate towards rural activities as they have no further satisfaction on their current jobs (Porath, 2012).

Before asking, at public level, what will conduct to entrepreneurship and, as effect to this private business, to economic development, in order to finance it, the answer should look for the true motivations of the rural inhabitants for such an economic behaviour. We will further analyse and answer this thesis.

We could not image that “all nation’s subjects may be all potential entrepreneurs” (Voicu & Radulescu, 2003), as they are unique and they have different attitudes, personalities, open views, taste for risk taking etc, but we should take into consideration what is really motivating the rural inhabitants for this approach in order to create an business.

Within the motivating reasons may be the “consumer behaviour for food and near-food products” (Istudor & Pelau, 2011) and the necessity of answering to this question or even, or the needs to orient their activity and their products towards “new trends in consumers behaviour” (Filip & Voinea, 2012) or, why not, “the exponential growth of mobile communications and the number of internet users” (Ciocoiu, Burcea & Tartiu., 2010) as form of obtaining a more qualitative information about a business organizing and managing or demand, in general.

The rural Romania has traditions, own mentalities, own resources and outputs, own expression on national level, but all Romania should reach the Europe 2020 objectives. The European Commission plans involves two goals in this respect: elaboration of “Platform Against Poverty” and the development of a forward-looking agriculture in order to provide food security, sustainable management of natural resources, and to fight against biodiversity loss (Ignat, 2011).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to reach the aimed objectives, the research starts from the elaboration of the premises that support the entrepreneurial manifestation in Romanian rural areas. Subsequently, we demonstrate, from literature review, the two meanings of entrepreneurship: the premises and challenges of the free manifestation of private initiative and the importance of this manifestation for national economy.

In order to decide upon premises, we elaborate a scheme of factors with five aspects: legal, social, economic, educational, and motivational. We determined for each factor a set of five most eloquent indicators, able to better express the conditions and the limits of the entrepreneurial expression at rural areas. Each of these indicators were detailed and sustained by reflection and statistics.

After establishing the premises, we elaborate a set of eleven challenges that Romanian rural entrepreneurship confronts to. The aspects are divers, from psychological to educational approaches, from legal to economic aspects. The challenges refer both to individuals and public administration.

The conclusions were elaborated into a very pragmatic approach: further plan for Romanian National Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 should take into consideration these results and should try to overcome all possible restrictions.

This paper has a conceptual and theoretical approach. Obviously, the studies may continue with further empirical investigations, quantitative approaches of the impact of public measures etc.

3. PREMISES FOR THE ENTEPRENEURIAL EXPRESSION IN RURAL ROMANIA

The premises for the Romanian rural inhabitants' entrepreneurial manifestation are different in time and space. There are macro-regions in Romania where the rural population initiate and conduct business in agro and rural tourism, as Bucovina region, Prahova, Dolj, Maramures and Tulcea counties, or in small agricultural registered exploitations, such as milk farms in Bucovina, pigs farms in Timis county etc. Still, these are only few structures. The intensive entrepreneurial expression may conduct to a more competitive rural economy.

Given the nature of Romanian rural inhabitant, his volunteer and traditional membership to the local community, it seems that the decision does not belong only to himself, but to himself as a group member. The nuance is justified by the types of the factors that may influence his judgment of becoming entrepreneur (Figure 1).

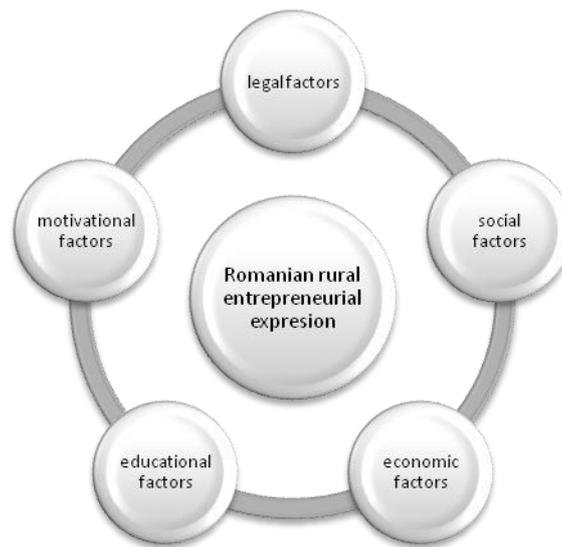


Figure 1. The influence factors of the Romanian rural entrepreneurial expression

Source: own reflections

We may consider the following influence factors as premises for the Romanian rural inhabitant's manifestation as entrepreneur.

3.1 Factors with legal aspects

The legal factors have a historical perspective. After the '90's, Romania built its own set of laws and regulation, according to European legal framework, for the private sector activities. Thus, several laws were issued in order to a better management of the sector.

In agriculture, Law no. 18/1991 was the first step for the further entrepreneurial activities. After this, state farms and agricultural exploitations structures in general were just rearranged and the Romanian agriculture, the dominant rural activity, entered into a continuous decline.

In order to support the entrepreneurial spirit expression, there are the following legal aspects that we considered:

Table 1. Factors with legal aspects for Romanian rural entrepreneurial expression

No.	Factor	Description
1.	Law no. 31/1990 Law of trading companies	It states the legal framework of private companies activities, the main companies' types, the main management bodies for each type, main attributions and limits etc.
2.	Laws that facilitate the access to a start-up in general or for certain socio-professional categories	Government Decision no 166/2003 for stating the facilities given to students in order to initiate a private company Emergency Government Ordinance 6/2011 for stimulating the initiative of SME's development by young entrepreneurs
3.	Legislation for pre-adhesion funds	Several laws and different ministers' orders were issued in order to legislate the absorption, management and results of pre-adhesion funds, especially for rural areas: SAPARD, PHARE
4.	Legislation for European structural funds	Several laws were issued in order to state the legal framework for the proper management of structural funds, such as Romanian National Rural Development Programme, Fishing Operational Programme etc.
5.	Law no. 178/2010 Public - private partnership law	This law may be accessed in rural communities in order to offer qualitative public services

Source: own reflections

Law no 31/1990 Law of trading companies established the legal framework for all that private activities in trade companies means, therefore it addresses to rural areas too. This law has a well-known dimension and even rural inhabitants may talk about this. Obviously, the majority of them know it from the perspective of goods and services consumers, and less as entrepreneurs. In rural areas, given the importance of agriculture as main activity, the inhabitants used more often other laws, such as cooperation laws. Still, persons activate in other economic activities than agriculture, e.g. agro or rural tourism, are more familiar with this law.

Romanian state has undertaken, during time, special legal measures in order to provide motivation for Romanian inhabitants to become more entrepreneurial, as seen in Table 1. Still, no such intervention will be ever lucrative, if it will not be supported by economic and financial facilities for these persons.

Legislation for pre-adhesion funds and for European structural funds was issued in order to provide the legal framework for the proper management of these funds. These norms and

those especially for agriculture were disseminated at rural areas using agencies and other bodies of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Labour Ministry, Ministry of Public Finance. National Agency for Agricultural Consultancy in the past and Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture and Agency for Payments for Rural Development and Fishing, in present, from Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, have put into force all these measures and contributed to the motivation of entrepreneurial expression. Obviously, the motivation was done neither at emotional level, nor at mentalities level, but with a legal and economic approach, given the conditions of accessing European financing by Romanian rural population.

We may consider that Law no. 178/2010 Public - private partnership could be premise for rural entrepreneurial expression, as it might be accessed in rural communities in order to offer qualitative public services that they better feel the need of.

3.2 Factors with social aspects

We do not intend to identify social aspects or social factors that determine the rural entrepreneurial expression, therefore we discuss about factors with social aspects that may intervene in the motivation of rural inhabitants (Table 2).

Table 2. Factors with social aspects for Romanian rural entrepreneurial expression

No.	Factor	Description
1.	Population migration	The urban-rural migration in the 90's and the national emigration in present determine an unstable population who could become rural entrepreneur
2.	Occupation and unemployment issues	The problems in the labour market determined a low purchasing power in rural areas
3.	Professional reorientation	The professional reorientation from agriculture towards other occupations is needed
4.	Facilities for young persons	In order to have strong and durable manifestation of entrepreneurs in rural areas, special measures and axes in Romanian National Programme for Rural Development were offered for young persons
5.	Rural attractiveness for business	The consumption in rural areas suffered real structural changes and there is yet less economic competition in communes and villages

Source: own reflections

The population migration was different in the last two decades, and for that reason there is lack of stable population in the villages in order to become more entrepreneurial. The massive emigration to Western Europe in the last ten years determined strong manifestation at employment level in those countries. The supposed effect of these migrations of coming back with money for investments was not a feasible one, as these persons started to accomplish their own household in foreign countries. Yet, the rural population is about 47,2% from the total population, which means a demanding market.

Specific issues of occupation and unemployment determined a low purchasing power in rural areas. Corroborating them with professional reorientation of rural inhabitants from agriculture towards other activities, diversification of rural activities given the new rural market demands, may contribute to entrepreneurial expression.

In order to have strong and durable manifestation of entrepreneurs in rural areas, special measures and axes in Romanian National Programme for Rural Development 2007-2013 were offered for young persons. These axes were accessed and the majority of the amounts were already spent, generally in agriculture. The question is if these axes were accessed by young persons who are eager to remain in rural areas or if they are just substitutes of their parents who are really involved in agriculture and needed the amounts. The key factor is that the amounts are still needed in rural areas, as form of motivating young persons to remain there. The public authorities will just need to discover and elaborate the best measures in order to control this phenomenon.

The consumption in rural areas suffered real structural changes and there is yet less economic competition in communes and villages. Either traditional activities are no longer done at household level, or local population have structural changed own consumption. As a consequence, the rural attractiveness for business may rise and the rural inhabitants may be motivated to invest in private business in order to adapt to new market conditions.

3.3 Factors with economic aspects

The rural economy is a reflection of the national economy's situation. There is enough potential, lot of effort to value it, but no superior results. These may be caused by the lack of articulated and integrated public policies, or just because of the mentality and education level of local population.

Table 3. Factors with economic aspects for Romanian rural entrepreneurial expression

No.	Factor	Description
1.	New demand	The diversification of the rural activities, due to new local needs
2.	The already done investments	The already made enterprises and business in rural areas, such as rural tourism pensions, fishing farms, food processing manufactories, determine the creation of other support business
3.	European funds for business	European structural funds for business start-up and development are available; the accessing conditions are difficult
4.	Financial motivation	The interest rate is not attractive for investments; usually Romanian and rural population access personal loans and use them for business crediting.
5.	Tax system	The Romanian taxation system has no facilities for rural business; only the local taxes differs for one commune to another

Source: own reflections

With a history of no entrepreneurial expression in rural areas, the public authorities seek for a competitive rural economy. Someway, in this rush of applying European rules and regulations, techniques and requirements, the Romanian authorities gained the worst enemy: mentality and its opposition.

The diversification of the rural activities took place due to new local demand, the structural changes of the rural consumption; the tradition is no longer part of the household as several food products are purchased and not homemade.

In the same time, the already made enterprises and business in rural areas, such as rural tourism pensions, fishing farms, food processing manufactories, determine the creation of other support business.

This activity's diversification might be financed by European structural funds for business start-up and development. Still, the accessing conditions are difficult, given the well-known bureaucracy and hard and risky conditions of reimbursement.

While all these conduct to entrepreneurial expression and economic growth, the interest rate is not attractive for investments; usually Romanian and rural population access personal loans and use them for business crediting.

More, the Romanian taxation system has no facilities for rural business; only the values local taxes differ for one commune to another, according to local councils' administration.

3.4 Factors with educational aspects

Developed agricultures and rural areas in Western Europe or other parts of the world have long lasting tradition in the field of entrepreneurial expression. We are talking about a population with entrepreneurial competences that were matured over centuries. The free initiative and the private ownership were part of a lifestyle, and had not just an economic perspective.

The entrepreneurial education of this population was done both by specialised institutions and families. To make money and to gain your living was a matter of survival and supremacy, too. The effectiveness was given by the need of being smart and wealthy for each child, no matter the social class. In this regard, these societies are developed not only as economies, but as individuals.

As a consequence, those societies who would like to prosper should invest in the entrepreneurial education of their children, using a shaped profile of their future component person. Having no profile of the future Romanian rural inhabitant, the rural economy and rurality in general will have no durable development.

The access to education in rural areas is restricted by the long distances and mentalities of local population. The mentality of parents refers to a fact of finding more important to use children at housework than to send them to school. The distances refer to the kilometres that a pupil need to do between his home and the school. Even if in the last years the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth allocated several school buses in order to overcome these long distances, they still represent an obstacle for accessing education at primary and secondary level. The main impediment for access to high-school education is their position in urban centres and not in rural areas. The expenditures made in order to access high-school are very high, even if the education is free of tuition fees. The cost of urban living and the prices of the manuals and study materials are often much more than a rural family may support.

Table 4. Factors with educational aspects for Romanian rural entrepreneurial expression

No.	Factor	Description
1.	Access to education	The access to education in rural areas is restricted by the long distances and mentalities
2.	Education institutions network	The education institutions network is more developed in urban centres, than in rural areas.
3.	Entrepreneurial educational	The disciplines for entrepreneurial education are not in the primary or secondary or high-school curricula

4.	Professors for entrepreneurial education	Professors for entrepreneurial educational are more often at university level and less in pre university level
5.	Entrepreneurial knowledge	The entrepreneurial knowledge in rural areas do not have enough sources in order to be accessed

Source: own reflections

From this perspective, the vocational training may be the solution, but in a Report of the Ministry of Education (2012), the abandon rate of the professional educational is around 21% in rural areas, even higher than in urban centres. Adding to these issues, the education institutions network is more developed in urban centres, than in rural areas, even if in rural areas the population is bigger.

The disciplines for entrepreneurial education are not in the primary or secondary or high-school curricula, only at university level. In the same time, professors who have knowledge and training for entrepreneurial educational are more often at university level and less in pre university level, and, as circumstances, the entrepreneurial knowledge in rural areas does not have enough sources in order to be accessed.

One way or another, the premises for entrepreneurial expression from the education point of view is restricted by the lack of knowledge and skills. An outburst of these information and competences is desired. In this sense, the Ministry of Education, research and Youth is running the “*Proiectul pentru invatamantul rural* (Project for rural education)” (<http://proiecte.pmu.ro/web/guest/pir>, 2012). It aims: superior trained professors, didactic materials and booklets, better school conditions, in order for schools to be more attractive to rural population and to fight against abandon due to lack of money and need of available work force within household.

3.5 Factors with motivational aspects

In the process of becoming an entrepreneur, strong personal motivations are needed. They are treated on the last position, even if they seem to be the main determinate factor.

The psychological legacy is the incentive for becoming independent in business and in risk accepting. The family professional orientation, the need of self-accomplishment, the economic changes, the professional expertise, the information, might be premises for trying to act independently (Table 5). To survive and to make money, to taste the risk and to avoid compromising own and family resources may contribute to the personal success.

Moreover, the tradition of practice an activity may represents a determination factor for an entrepreneurial expression, especially for those rural inhabitants who have done for decades a successful activity. The best practise, the journals and newspapers, the TV news, the hall's activities in this regard represent sources of information ready to motivate the entrepreneurial expression.

Table 5. Factors with motivational aspects for Romanian rural entrepreneurial expression

No.	Factor	Description
1.	Survival desire	This desire is given by the absence of any other money source
2.	The need of self-accomplishment	This need is usually given by the interior motivation, own personality, necessity of being own manager
3.	The professional expertise and competence	The tradition of practice an activity may represents a determination factor for an entrepreneurial expression
4.	The information from environment	The best practise, the journals and newspapers, the TV news, the hall's activities in this regard represent sources of information ready to motivate the entrepreneurial expression
5.	The accessibility to a financial support	The transparent opportunity of accessing financial support, especially from European structural funds, to invest is a motivational factor

Source: own reflections

All these encourage the entrepreneur and provide premises for boosting an enterprise.

4. CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ROMANIAN RURAL AREAS

The already mentioned mentality is the worst enemy of Romanian public authorities as it represents the barriers against cooperation in agriculture, the opposition to a truly functioning association in supply chain and distribution and marketing, the unfair promotion of own products, the non-market oriented behaviour of producers and offers, the abusive behaviour of some urban non-producers inhabitants that want to dominate traditional vegetable market places etc.

Having just four SMEs at 1000 inhabitants and more than 50% of than activating in services and not in production, the challenges of the Romanian rural entrepreneurship are many and incommensurable. Their impact upon Romanian rural economy may be seen every day, due to its lack of performance and huge problems that rural entrepreneurs confront to.

The limits and restrictions, therefore the challenges of the Romanian rural entrepreneur, are given by several aspects:

- (a) a poor quality of life in rural areas, with bad living conditions and precarious existence of road, water and sanitation, communication, education infrastructure. This conduct to a less competitive manifestation of desire to become entrepreneur and to a strong effort against these living conditions. The effort may be: the emigration towards Western European countries, urban migration, accession university education and settlement in urban centres, or even an illegal behaviour.
- (b) a traditional approach of profession in rural areas that almost excludes the entrepreneurial expression, as a result of a weak manifestation as rural business in the past. The fear of risk taking, the resistance to financial investment whatever the financial resources, the lack of entrepreneurial education and competences take away any persons who would like to have a market approach.

legally constitutes traders to further continue their activity, as their profit decrease and loose market.

- (h) an illegal behaviour on behalf of some persons who make pressure upon agricultural producers at the traditional vegetables and fruits market. They control the selling prices and the market access, and this situation is very demotivating for rural entrepreneurs, as they indeed fight for their life and survival and soon will look for another nonviolent activity.
- (i) the absence of a family tradition in entrepreneurship in rural areas, and not only. The family profile is an important challenge, as the entrepreneur risks the family's treasure and financial stability and this is equivalent of family's image and community's acceptance, especially in rural areas.
- (j) the absence of special financial products offered by banks or guaranteed by public authorities, given the necessity of developing rural economy. The lack of attractiveness of such financial products should be overcome.
- (k) the bureaucracy of accessing and managing European structural funds for rural development. These projects should be written and managed by persons who have no economic background, but desire to access public financing. The future policies should rearrange these conditions, according to the rural inhabitant profile.
- (l) Taking into consideration the weak manifestation of the rural economy, in the same time, having in mind the still important contribution of GAV of agriculture, as main rural activity, to the creation of Romania's GDP, public policy should overcome all these challenges and help rural inhabitants to become more entrepreneurial.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The Romanian rural areas do have advantages of entrepreneurial expression. The Romanian rural inhabitants confront many challenges in daily activities and living conditions, in order to be able to answer to the being more competitive demand.

The research question was answered: there are strong credentials for entrepreneurs in rural economy, such as determined factors with social, economic, educational aspects. They will probably be evaluated by public policy in order to reach the common goal: a competitive rural economy.

The research was conducted in order to offer to the public policy a scientific and theoretical approach of the rural economy's future. Articulated legislation, robust position from national and local authorities, willingness at all intervention levels in rural economy to motivate and boost economic activities will determine the expected result.

The next financial plan of the Romanian National Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 needs to take into consideration the premises and challenges of entrepreneurship, as this is the only pertinent solution for added value creation in rural economy. And the strategic approach is to define the future profile of Romanian rural inhabitant. If he will be an entrepreneur, the public policy should arrange all educational, social, economic and legal decisions in his regards.

Further research may intervene with empirical evidence to offer the figures support for all these consideration. Also, the impact of several already undertakes measures in the field of entrepreneurship must my quantified. Studies may demonstrate the connection between the quality of life in rural areas and the entrepreneurial education of rural inhabitants, on one hand, and the future of rural economy, on the other hand.

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