

UNIVERSITY "ȘTEFAN CEL MARE" OF SUCEAVA
FIELD OF QUALIFICATION: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SUMMARY
HABILITATION THESIS
THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BORN GLOBAL FIRMS IN
THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL ECONOMY

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SUMMARY

The tumultuous evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic has put particular pressure on the entrepreneurial environment to adapt on the fly and reinvent itself. On the one hand, the recurrent and versatile nature of the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has divided society, generating contradictory discussions and requiring socio-economic and political decisions that have in turn generated controversy and economic instability, but on the other hand, it has opened new windows of opportunity. Faced with such challenges, driven by the new global reality, business organisations need to innovate both technologically and socially.

Starting from Peter Drucker's assertion in *Managing in the Next Society* (2002) that "all businesses must be globally competitive, whether they produce or sell in a local or regional market" - understood as the standard generated by the process of modernisation and globalisation of markets - we felt that this issue should be explored in greater depth in a synthesis paper analysing the extent to which business shares the sustainable development paradigm.

The habilitation thesis entitled **The role of entrepreneurship and Born Global firms in the sustainable development of a national economy** incorporates the most representative results obtained from the research activity after the defense of the PhD thesis at the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest in 2012, confirmed by MECTS Order no. 67363 of 08.11.2012. The concerns of the last years, in the field of Business Administration, have been channeled towards addressing some directions of scientific interest and topical issues so that later I can make a "diagnosis" of some of the most challenging triads in the business area: entrepreneurship - start-up - SME's and, respectively, local/national - internationalization - sustainable development. At times, this multilateral approach has been pigmented with elements of tourism, human resource management, knowledge management, competitiveness, innovation, etc. However, the intrigue of this habilitation thesis aims to highlight whether or to what extent start-ups and Born Global firms have the capacity to confer stability and predictability to a national economy. Finally, it remains to be established whether or not these business organisations support sustainable development.

The consolidation of the professional and research career on Business Administration was carried out from a three-dimensional perspective. *The first section* looked at the content and structure of undergraduate studies and teaching experience gained during 17 years of academic work. In summary, it included the completion of two faculties with specialization in the field of

Earth Sciences (study program: Geography of Tourism) and Economic Sciences (study program: Management), the completion of a Master's program in Business Administration, a doctoral research on the same field (Business Administration) and a postdoctoral study program in the area of Economics. The training courses I have completed have had a complementary character with synergistic effects on my professional career both in terms of my teaching career and the results obtained.

The literature review started from a bibliometric analysis that included the three other keywords of the thesis: *sustainable development, entrepreneurship and Born Global*. The international research revealed that these three areas of interest have heterogeneous, sometimes interdisciplinary approaches, take place in different contexts, with different results, and highlight a variety of trends. The topicality of the topic allows for different interpretations and, at times, leaves room for contradictions between the opinions and explanations given by different authors on the relationship between national start-up firms, Born Global firms, entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

According to the current paradigm on entrepreneurship, innovation and education, whether the entrepreneur is a large, existing institution or an individual starting a new business, they are based on the same principles. The rules of the 'game' are similar and they are dictated by the competitive market, the things that (don't) work are much the same, so are the types of innovation and where to look for them.

The elements that give vitality to the entrepreneurial environment are mainly based on the quality of education systems, the accumulation of new knowledge, the learning and development capacity of employees, the power of continuous innovation ("invention of invention") and the real desire to develop disruptive technologies at firm level, whether we are talking about start-ups, Born Global firms or MNCs.

Anticipating some aspects that relate to the actual sustainable development of an economy, we appreciate from the outset that high sociability and competition are at the basis of building a social capital and a national culture that supports, by itself, economic performance. From a micro perspective, sustainable development should be the answer to the question: what is the purpose of business organisations?

If humanity is to make progress, then a fundamental transformation of the way society consumes natural resources, addresses pressing environmental problems, produces energy and acts

entrepreneurially is required. In this context, entrepreneurship is increasingly mentioned as an important means to achieve a shift towards 'user-friendly' products and processes.

Sustainable development must not be limited to changing the behaviour of organisations and individuals - consumers or employees - in relation to the environment, but, in the medium and long term, their attitudes towards the economy, society and the community must be reformed.

Investment and the stimulation of research, development and innovation activities through 'smart growth' and internationalisation will lead to increased competitiveness. In this equation, innovation is seen as a process of continuous improvement, in terms of efficiency and quality, in almost all sectors of European economic activity. Supporting the European SME sector, especially start-ups, is a pragmatic approach, in some respects slightly different from other developed economic macro-systems, but designed to encourage, in the long term, competitiveness and innovation - two of the vital directions of the EU economy. In this respect, a whole series of EU-funded programmes have been launched to support start-ups and encourage internationalisation at EU level. For example, 'Startup Europe' is a European Commission initiative to connect high-tech start-ups, scale-ups, investors, business networks and university centres.

In the same paradigm, one of the most dynamic components of the European economy is undoubtedly tourism. Tourism requires, among other things, modern human resource management, as activities in this sector rely heavily on inter-human relations, both between employees and with business partners and customers.

Through its funding policy, the EU aims to support investment and the development of legitimate tourism activities both within the EU and in cross-border areas; start-ups have a special status. In the thesis, a number of references were made to studies presenting the role and involvement of Romanian start-ups in the national economy and the support of important sectors for the local business environment, including tourism.

The assumption of risks and the prospect of failure, especially in the current conditions, lead start-ups to take the step in the direction of business internationalization. As a result, start-ups' investments in research, development and human resources encourage the most competitive of them to translate to the global market, namely to become Born Global.

For more or less economic reasons, entrepreneurs from two or three different countries pool their efforts and succeed in identifying new business opportunities in the international market for a product or service, in particular by exploiting the advantages of disruptive technologies in

dynamic areas such as information and communication technology, cognitive and life sciences, robotics and digital nanotechnologies, satellites, biotechnologies or the internet of things. It is more than obvious that sustainable national and business development favours the use of such technologies.

Such approaches became much clearer and more evident with the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, when firms around the world (and thousands of other organisations) were forced to restructure their strategies and ways of doing business under lockdown and other constraints imposed by the increasingly unpredictable socio-economic context.

Born Global firms, those start-ups that are growing rapidly and early internationally, are ideal examples for understanding the concept of "creative destruction" first proposed by Schumpeter. We are talking here about major innovations that some entrepreneurs achieve in the process of creating new technologies, which by their very nature then drive other established technologies or companies, anchored in the past, out of the market.

The second section, entitled Scientific, Professional and Academic Career Development Plan, outlines directions for further development on the three fronts - scientific, professional and academic careers.

Thus, from the perspective of scientific research (SR) I aim to pursue a systemic approach to scientific research in the field of Business Administration, with a channelling of the research approach towards topics such as business administration in the corporate system, Knowledge Management and Born Global.

Given my professional training in the field of Business Administration (Master's and PhD studies), the thematic directions of research have naturally been circumscribed to this area and in particular to issues that highlight the role of entrepreneurship and, in particular, start-ups in the sustainable development of the business environment. Such an approach, outlined in the doctoral programme, has been deepened in the own published scientific research in recent years.

My professional career (CP) will focus on supporting the Suceava PhD school in the field of Business Administration and on paying particular attention to the enhancement of human resources at the level of the department in which I work.

Last but not least, from an academic career perspective (CA), I intend to support the provision of continuing education in all conditions (on-site and/or online), by familiarizing and using the best resilient teaching methods that foster learning in a pandemic context. I will also

focus on developing my own teaching skills through participation in continuing education programmes or other forms of training developed through online platforms or webinars.

The thesis concludes with *section 3* dedicated to the bibliographical references that constituted the scientific support of the topic under analysis.

In conclusion, given the fact that we are in a period of socio-economic repositioning post COVID-19, we believe that both start-ups in different phases of internationalization and we humans (people anchored in the realities of today's world) "should not let [let] a good crisis pass without taking advantage of it" (Joseph Stiglitz, 2021).