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Doctoral School of Socio-Human Sciences

Field: Economics

SUMMARY HABILITATION THESIS

THE REDUCTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC GAPS AND PERSPECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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SUMMARY

The habilitation thesis titled *The Reduction of Socio-Economic Gaps and Perspectives of Sustainable Development* summarizes the most important results obtained from the research activity after completing the doctoral studies in 2013.

My scientific, professional and academic career path comprises my higher education (Bachelor and Master Degrees) and PhD studies, accompanied by with a continuous teaching, research and publishing activity in the field of Economics, validated by the academic environment and characterized by an interdisciplinary approach. The most important directions of my teaching interests coincide mainly with the research ones, all being subsumed to the *Economics* field.

The 1st part of the habilitation thesis includes the principal interest directions in the scientific research activity: *the economic sustainable development and the reduction of socio-economic disparities* – at a European and regional level – *and the means of diminishing socio-economic gaps*, respectively. The approaches are characterized by interdisciplinarity and include elements of tourism, human resources, digitalization, etc. Thus, we aim at revealing the way in which development brings along – through specific policies, by stimulating certain branches, fields and processes – the reduction of the existing socio-economic gaps.

The research topic of the thesis has two directions that take the shape of two chapters which have been structured into several subchapters ordered in a logical manner.

Chapter 1 presents the current state-of-the-art of the researched field, through analyzing the specialized literature related to the regional development, the socio-economic disparities and the sustainable development. Certain development gaps have always existed, but despite the overall progress and the economic growth, in some cases, they have become even more significant in time. On the European continent, as the extension of the European Union was taking place, the community area included, within its borders, increasingly higher socio-economic discrepancies. It had been searched an explanation of their appearance and perpetuation, as well as solutions for their decrease. These solutions include regional development and cohesion policies, but also the stimulation of some fields, of the SMEs, etc.

The EU integration of the states of the Central and the Eastern Europe brought them opportunities and challenges, influencing their development level and the evolution of the socio-economic disparities between them and the countries of Western Europe. Even if there still exist significant gaps, the EU regional policy, which directs most of the funds to the less developed areas, has had a beneficial effect, contributing to the reduction of socio-economic disparities.

A balanced development will certainly be ensured by the growth of the local economies, and here the primary role is played by SMEs (which are the link element) and the training of human resources within them. It is obvious that economic development must take place without causing irreversible damage to the environment and with an efficient use of resources. That is why waste management and recycling have an increasing importance. Raw materials for new production cycles can result from this process. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, an accelerated digitization has been observed, and this trend also contributes to the effectiveness of economic activities. It is necessary to adapt to digitization and implement it in all businesses where it would bring obvious benefits.

Chapter 2 highlights the contribution of tourism to the sustainable socio-economic development and to the decrease of disparities. This is a branch that can bring benefits to certain areas where there is potential. The intensification of tourism activity could also stimulate other economic sectors creating products and services that the former could use. There are also relatively peripheral areas that could be suitable for tourism, and the beneficial impact on the local communities would be significant.

In the Central and Eastern part of the EU there are several regions with intense tourist activity. Some have capitalized the opportunity of attracting tourists from the old EU Member States. Other regions disposing insufficiently exploited potential could make tourism become an important economic branch. The North-East region of Romania has an important tourist potential, especially in terms of rural, religious and cultural tourism. It is also important to learn from the successful experiences of other similar regions in this part of Europe. As the development of tourism is done with the participation of the community, we also analyzed the perception of the locals regarding the effects of the rural tourism development in Suceava County.

Therefore, the results of the conducted researches so far in the main interest directions can be summarized as it follows:

- The analysis of the evolution of the socio-economic disparities within the EU and the highlighting of some sustainable development directions;
- The role of tourism in combating socio-economic gaps and underdevelopment, in order to achieve a sustainable development.

The 2nd part of the habilitation thesis includes the evolution and development plan of the professional, scientific and academic career, along with future research directions. My research activity is harmoniously intertwined with the teaching activity sustained.

Concerning the results of the didactic and the scientific research activities, these have been materialized in the publication of specialized books, chapters in economic field books published by

prestigious publishing houses, guides for practical works, articles in recognized specialized journals and in the elaboration of university courses. At the same time, I presented papers at numerous national and international scientific conferences, I was cited in numerous works, and I was part of the implementation teams of some projects.

The two aspects of my university career (teaching and research) were presented in the frame of a coherent approach and in a logical sequence, summarizing the most important results and drawing future development directions.

My *professional career* will consist in the continuation of the activities carried out so far (organization of scientific manifestations, involvement in the elaboration of accreditation and regularly assessment documents for the study programs, participation as member of various commissions, etc.) and will be under the sign of collaborations with various researchers, being also dedicated to supporting the Doctoral School of Suceava, in the field of Economics.

Regarding the *scientific research*, I propose to continue the activity in the mentioned directions, circumscribed by the field of *Economics*, aiming to analyze the new paradigms and challenges that will inevitably exist, especially in the post-pandemic context and in the new geopolitical realities.

The *academic career* will focus on using the most appropriate teaching methods, so that the didactic process takes place at optimal parameters. I also intend to develop my own teaching skills by participating in various continuous training programs or other similar ones.

The third part of the habilitation thesis includes the bibliographic sources which constituted the foundation of the elaboration of this work.