

INDUSTRIAL PARKS, BUSINESS CLUSTERS AND BUSINESS INCUBATORS – INSTRUMENTS TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT COMPETITIVENESS, WITH AN IMPACT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT

The need for accelerated recovery of regional disparities gives innovation a central role in this process, regardless of the specifics of the region. Our interest was directed towards the major regulations targeting economic growth and employment. Following the inventory of this wide range of legal instruments, we focused our attention on the eligibility criteria/ conditions to be met in order to qualify for specific regulations, on intervention mechanisms, on the role of central public and local authorities.

Our approach has identified industrial parks, business clusters and business incubators as instruments to promote and support competitiveness, innovation, where scientific research and technological development are capitalised, with benefits for the entire region, stimulating the creation of high-quality employment. These instruments also intensify the collaboration and proper functioning of partnerships, contributing, each with its own specific character, to creating a favorable and sustainable environment in which start-ups can develop harmoniously locally and regionally, while citizens are able to access a better quality of life. Thus, we explored the key measures/ instruments to minimize market failures, support investments, promote modernization and diversify the activity of economic agents, encourage start-ups, etc., that determine structural changes, revitalize economic sectors, ensure the necessary framework for regional development and lead to the increase of competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy, at the same time encouraging cohesion and territorial cooperation.

Keywords: employment, legislative instruments in promoting and supporting competitiveness, intervention mechanism, public authorities.

Introduction

The issues of industrial parks, business clusters and business incubators were approached in numerous studies³ (regarding technology, their evolution over time, their destination, how they are used, the type of intended results, the socio-economic and environmental impact etc.). These different approaches highlight the complexity and the nature of relevant instruments for several public policy of the announced issue.

In this article our aim is to point out those similarities that grant them the quality of regional development instruments and highlight their importance to promote and support competitiveness, innovation, where scientific research and technological development are capitalised, with benefits for the entire region, stimulating the creation of high-quality employment (In this article we will refer to them as "instruments"/"development instruments"). The concepts of *industrial parks*, *business clusters* and *business incubators*, as well as their importance, have lately began to gain awareness, although they are new concepts for most Romanian entrepreneurs, especially from juridical point of view. The importance of the analyzed instruments is reflected by studying their presence in national development policies, how they are regulated through legislation, the identification of some specialized intervention mechanisms (facilities) and the involvement of state institutions in their establishment process.

1. Common elements of the three development instruments

In the context of national law and literature we conducted a comparative analysis of instruments by which we highlighted well-defined juridical units, each one with its specificities⁴, the way investments are attracted and the creation of new jobs is stimulated in order to capitalize the local or regional human potential. Given the fact that this is one of the general principles governing the establishment and operation of

³Cauea C., (2013), Clipa, R. I. &all (2012), Cojanu, V., Pişlaru, D., (2011), Dan, M. -C, (2012), Enache, E., (2012), Găvrea, V. (2011), Guth, M., Cosnita, D. (2010), Coşniţă D., Iorgulescu F., (2013), Maticiu M. (2015), Moreira, A.C., Carvalho, M.F. (2012), *Porter M. (1998)*, Porter, M. (2000), Profiroiu, A., MINA, L. (2008), Tanţău, A.D. (2011), Scutaru L. (2015)

⁴ One of the main goals of establishing an industrial park is according to Art. 1, line 2, Law no. 186/2013 regarding the establishment and functioning of industrial parks, consists of the development of small enterprises; the capacity of clusters to innovate is an essential element through its structure that includes: companies; universities, educational institutions and research centers; public authorities and catalyst: business consultancy, chambers of commerce, clusters contain a group of related industries and other entities such as specialized input suppliers such as components, machinery and services, or providers of specialized infrastructure, they extend downstream to various distribution channels and customers and laterally to manufacturers of complementary products and to industries related by skills, technologies or common inputs; The incubators have a decisive role on the firm's development by promoting the born and the development of the start-up.

industrial parks, business clusters, as well as business incubators, several key elements that are common to these three development instruments are presented below.

a) Innovation, localisation and partnership structure are found at the core of all three development instruments. The industrial park contains a diverse family of concepts, including: Technological parks, business parks, science parks and innovation centers. Industrial parks are special areas where business activities, scientific research, industrial production and services are performed under a special incentives regime (Law no. 186/2013 regarding the establishment and operation of industrial parks). Technology parks are key factors that promote innovation and economic growth by actively creating a cooperative environment for business and science (Maticiu M., 2015). A business park is broadly defined as “a development which provides high quality accommodation in which a wider variety of activities such as manufacture, showrooms, distribution, etc. can take place” (Naik B.M. & Kandlikar W.S., 2010). Like an innovation centre, the Business Park does not necessarily have operational links with a higher educational institution and therefore cannot be regarded as a Science Park. Larger than a Science Park, a Technology Park or technopolis is a zone of economic activity composed of universities, research centres, industrial and tertiary units, which realise their activities based on research and technological development. Technology Parks are limited in geographic area but maintain network links to large firms and the public research infrastructure at both national and international levels (PWC Consulting and Tsagaris Consult, 2002). Science parks and incubators have always had a key role to play in the first years of life of newly established companies and they now have the opportunity to build innovation poles/innovative clusters among different companies, but with the same goal of surviving and improving innovation performance or growing (Conicella, Salvador, 2012).

Innovation clusters, “geographical and sectorial concentrations of firms, which produce and sell several complementary products, facing in this way a series of common challenges and opportunities” (PNUD definition), are structures or groups organized of independent parts (such as innovative start-ups, small and medium enterprises (SME) and large corporations, as well as knowledge research and dissemination organizations, NGOs and other affiliated business operators), designed to stimulate the innovative activity by the means of promoting the common usage of equipment and the transfer/exchange of specialty knowledge and by the means of effective contributions to establishing contacts, dissemination of information and collaboration between corporations and other organizations within the cluster. A cluster plays an important role in the relation between competitors, suppliers,

distributors and clients (White Paper Clusters, Technology Parks and Incubators in Poland, 2008).⁵

A **Business Incubator** is a local or regional partnership structure meant to support business, managed by a manager whose goal is to create a sustainable and favourable environment for entrepreneurship in local communities, start-ups and innovative companies with development prospects (SME with a minimum of two years' experience), encouraging their development and viability potential and helping them at the beginning of their existence by ensuring common facilities and managerial support.

b) Integration in such structures as business incubators, clusters, technology and industrial parks, that allow and encourage the transfer of technology, transform the disadvantages of SMEs (size, reduced financial resources and technological levels) in real advantages (flexibility and increased capacity of interacting and change).

c) They created their own support and promotion organizations nationwide with network potential: APITSIAR (The Association of Industrial, Technological, Science Parks and Business Incubators in Romania)⁶; The Romanian Cluster Association⁷; the Incubators and Business Centres Association from Romania⁸.

d) All three require the existence of an adequate level of development. Digital skills and uniform development of the Information and communication technologies (ICT) sector across the country, for example, represent clear advantages for the three development instruments. The share of ICT sector in Romania's GDP is 6%, one of the highest in the EU, but the number of subscriptions to broadband services is one of the lowest in the EU. Access to ICT services is uneven, less than half (46%) of the workforce has basic or more advanced digital skills (compared to 72% in the EU). This reality could become a major obstacle to the economic development of the country, even though Romania ranks first in EU regarding the use of broadband with

⁵ Maticiu M., Business infrastructures – instruments for the initiation of business cooperation, Annals of the „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Economy Series, Issue 1, volume II/2015

⁶ APITSIAR was established on the 26th of May 2005, in Braşov (in 2015, it reunited 45 of the 65 Romanian parks). The association is an organization created with the aim to promote sustainable development of industrial, technological, scientific parks and of the business incubators. Other important targets of the organization include attracting local and foreign investments and providing technical assistance to its members and to potential investors.

⁷ The purpose of the association, established in July 2011 with 15 clusters founders, is to promote, relaunch and develop Romania economy by supporting the creation, development and cooperation between clusters at regional, national and international.

⁸Incubators and Business Centers Association from Romania is an initiative that has been supported by the Agency for Implementation of Projects and Programmes for SMEs and the United Nations Development Programme) has been looking to strengthen the role of business incubators in economic development of Romania by harmonizing the organizational, informational and theoretical aspects of business incubators, promoting network development between business incubators, development of national and international relations with similar organizations.

ultra-fast access. According to Eurostat, in 2015, in Romania, the percentage of people who regularly used the internet was the lowest in the EU (52% compared to 76% in the EU) and 32% of the population has never used the internet, compared to 16 % in the EU. (European Commission, Country Report Romania 2016)

e) Local communities take the necessary steps to establish their own potential and demand, in order to put them in line. Without these steps, the existence / fundraising / long-term investors cannot get the desired results; local communities support and encourage the establishment and development process through tax incentives by promoting public policies to encourage the technology transfer etc.

f) There is a visible lack of links between industrial parks and other elements of business infrastructure, such as science parks, business incubators and clusters.⁹

2. Awareness of the importance of Industrial Parks, Business Clusters and Business Incubators

The importance of these instruments (industrial parks, business clusters and business incubators) of economic growth accompanied by increasing employment is structured considering the following aspects: their nomination in key policies, their regulation through legislation, intervention/ facilities mechanisms and the involvement of state institutions in their establishment.

a) Nomination in European and national development policies

Industrial parks, Business Clusters and Business Incubators can make a difference by creating the necessary environment for the emergence and proper functioning of cooperation relations horizontally and vertically, forming an effective enforcement of the new **EU cohesion policy** for 2014-2020. It states that member states and regions should direct EU investment towards four **key areas for growth and jobs creation**: Research and innovation; Information and communication technologies (ICT); Increase SME competitiveness; Supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy.

Implicit association of the concept of economic growth with the creation of jobs is explicitly highlighted in the European documents. The national documents are focused mainly on aspects related to economic growth, employment creation being disconnected from it.

Government strategy for the development of SME sector and improving the business environment in Romania - Horizon 2020, approved by GD 859/2014, by Line of action 1, Supporting and promoting entrepreneurship has among its priorities: Facilitation of modern structures of supporting business and improvement of existing ones (eg. incubators/ accelerators and centres/ hubs of business, technology

⁹ Maticiu M., Business Infrastructures – Instruments for the initiation of business cooperation, Annals of the „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Economy Series, Issue 1, volume II/2015

HOLISTICA Journal of Business and Public Administration
No. 1/2016

parks/ software and industrial clusters/ centres of excellence, design centres, manufacturing centres under local phrase “one village - one product”; “one city - one industry” etc.); Encouraging technology transfer; The formation of clusters of creative companies at rural level; Develop a support system for innovation at national level; Programs for the creation and strengthening of structures to support business development: technology incubators, creative and accelerators business centres, business consulting, clusters, science and technology parks¹⁰ (Training for the development of the entrepreneurial spirit of creative persons; Financial incentives for attracting, hiring and maintaining individual creative talents in the SME activity).

The Romanian Government, through the creation of a viable entrepreneurial ecosystem at national level by 2020, aims at achieving an interconnected functioning of the productive chains of SME, local, regional or global, prioritizing chains with high potential for adding value, i.e., clusters, poles of excellence or industrial or service networks high quality. Thus, the entrepreneurial ecosystem at national level based on the consolidated structure of the local system of the SME, more numerous, more active economically and more competitive, as compared to the present, to contribute to a great extent to Romania's economic growth on the long term and thus to social progress and prosperity for all its citizens. (Public policy statement on strategic vision and government mission).

b) Their regulation through legislation

Starting with the need for innovative tools for business development of an entrepreneurial environment within local communities, that can contribute to the achievement of the goal of the Governmental Strategy for SMEs development - Horizon 2020 (i.e.: Romania can become the country with the most attractive business environment in Southeast Europe), the establishment and operation of industrial parks were regulated by Law no. 186/2013 and business incubators by Law. No. 102/2016 on business incubators and GD No. 583 from 22.07.2015 approving the National Plan for Research, Development and Innovation for the period 2015-2020 PNCDI III) defined innovation clusters, thus clarifying their role and highlighting their importance.

c) Intervention mechanisms (facilities)

Investments in **industrial parks** may benefit, according to Law no. 186/2013, from the following incentives: exemption from taxes applicable for the change of land use or for the removal of the land from the agricultural domain; exemption from the

¹⁰ through co-financing (state budget and external funds) such as creative incubators: cluster of businesses that produce customizable and specific program: "The formation of clusters of creative companies in rural areas"

HOLISTICA Journal of Business and Public Administration
No. 1/2016

land tax and from the building tax, for the land pertaining to the industrial park and, respectively, for the buildings which are part of the industrial park's infrastructure; subject to approval by the local public administration, exemptions from any taxes due to the local budgets for the issuance of any zoning certificates, building permits and/or dismantlement permits for the land and buildings included in the industrial park; other incentives that may be granted, under the law, by the local public administration.

In what **Clusters** are concerned, we shall firstly refer to the state aid schemes. A new recording session regarding the Applications for funding under the agreement G.D. no. 332 / 2014 on the establishment of a state aid scheme for investments that promote regional development by creating jobs, as amended and supplemented, was held from 30.05 - 06.10.2016. The Romanian state has an important role in the development of clusters and can use financing projects more efficiently by supporting start-ups, innovative companies and can implement effective public policies for health, education, infrastructure, etc. (Dan, 2012, p. 8-9). In areas where there are already various forms of partnership and networking, initiatives cluster is formed easier and has quicker results. Experience so far shows that, on the one hand, the Romanian state facilitates the establishment of clusters and has already introduced measures that favor industry and SMEs, and on the other hand, there are few cluster initiatives that work, although the potential exists (Guth et.al, 2010, p.10).

The law established that founder of **business incubator** has the right to some fiscal facilities, through state aid schemes, initiated by local authorities, within the budget allocated annually, thus: exemption from land tax, appropriate land related infrastructure business incubator, with local authority approval; exemption from tax on buildings, appropriate infrastructure buildings which are part of the business incubator, with local authority approval; exemption from any taxes owed to local budgets of administrative-territorial units, for issuing any certificates of urbanism, building permits and / or demolition permits for construction of infrastructure land and buildings business incubator, with local authority approval. Also, the founders of incubators will be able to benefit from other facilities that may be granted, law, the local or central public administration authorities (Article 20 paragraph 1 lit. d from the Law. no. 102/2016 on business incubators).

d) The involvement of state institutions

The establishment of an **industrial park** may be initiated by local public authorities, private legal persons or individuals (Romanian or foreign), acting jointly or separately. Such founders set up a company that will manage the industrial park, after industrial park title is issued by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (Art. 8 point 8 Law no. 186/2013 regarding the establishment and operation of industrial parks). The establishment of the inter-ministerial

HOLISTICA Journal of Business and Public Administration
No. 1/2016

committee for industrial parks (CIPI)¹¹ through G.D. no. 959/2014, that is formed by representatives of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Tourism; the Ministry of European Funds; Ministry of Public Finance; Ministry of Education and Scientific Research; and is presided by the representative of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration is a decision that people are looking forward to, even though the collaboration by consultancy with APITSIAR is not as wished for.

A **business incubator** can be set up by local government authorities, an institution or consortium of institutions of higher education, research and development centres, chambers of commerce or any private law entity. The title of business incubator is granted to the founders by the central government authority responsible for small and medium enterprises for a period of 10 years, with the possibility of extension at the request of the founder or administrator, provided the incubator continues to meet the relevant legal conditions. (Law no. 102/2016 on business incubators).

The institutions that have an impact on the activity of **clusters** are Ministries: Ministry of European Funds, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Relations with Business, SOP IEC, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Communications and Information Society, etc. (at national level), Regional Development Agencies, county councils (at regional level) and local councils, town halls, etc.(locally).

State involvement in setting up these institutions offers a national dimension with local action through the mechanisms of recognition, funding and support from public authorities.

¹¹ to stimulate and facilitate the establishment of new industrial parks "and has the following main tasks: ensuring cooperation and information exchange necessary for the interinstitutional decision-making at government level in the field; undertake analysis of the conditions that may encourage the establishment of new industrial parks on existing industrial sites / disused, in accordance with Law no. 186/2013 regarding the establishment and operation of industrial parks; ensure communication and consultation with the local authorities as well as economic and social partners; identifying possible financial resources necessary for the establishment and development of industrial parks; identifying potential investors and / or partners of local entities interested in the development, operation or use of new industrial parks; administrative support in solving problems identified in the establishment of new industrial parks; submits to the Prime Minister periodical reports on the activity and results of CIPI; analyses the national context and good practices to ensure compatibility and coherence of national legal and administrative framework for the industrial parks or other infrastructure with the existing business in other European Union member states; Proposing regulatory issues of the analysed issue in order to improve and ensure consistency of the national legal and administrative framework of industrial parks and other business infrastructure such as: incubators, business clusters or networks ". Source: Art. 2 GD no. 959/2014 on establishing the inter-ministerial committee for GD no. 959/2014 on establishing the inter-ministerial committee for the facility and Encourage establishment of new industrial parks.

3. Constant issues

From a fiscal standpoint, facilities on existing industrial parks are welcome, but **their transfer to local governments creates problems with ensuring the utilities.** Investments are big and cannot be covered by the communities. Given that obtaining the title for an industrial park is conditioned by an agreement in principle of the territorial administrative unit within the range of the industrial park, by an opinion of principle issued by environmental authorities as well as the presentation, along with other documents, a feasibility study, the role of administrative authorities is important and the risk of excessive bureaucratic attitude is high. Moreover, the law on exemption from payment of taxes on land and buildings is interpreted differently by local authorities; there are inconsistencies between decisions at local and county level, numerous local authorities refusing to pay facilities. There are cases presented by APITSIAR representatives, when the De Minimis Aid Scheme is only granted to the company which manages the industrial park, but not to its residents (eg. Ploiesti) or cases where the City Hall refuses to exempt companies from taxes (eg. Mizil) corresponding to the industrial parks created with the budget provided by the County Council.

The main obstacle in the creation of industrial parks is “the land issue”. Following restitution, local government / state no longer owns land, with the required size and location, without dismemberment of the ownership right, for ensuring long-term private investment.

Expected results through industrial parks cannot be achieved without the regionalization process, without a unique Master Plan for economic development, without a cadastre with a well-structured national inventory, with lands that are not subject to any registered encumbrance¹² and guaranteed on the long-term by public-private partnerships (an inventory of unused state assets and the draft of a strategy¹³) and without consistency in government decisions, where political involvement is

¹² several conditions must be cumulatively met by the land of the industrial park: is owned, held in concession/administration/use by the company that will manage the industrial park, by its founders or by the residents of the industrial park; has access to a European road and/or to a national road and/or to a county road and/or to a ring road; has a compact area of minimum 5 hectares, excepting the areas crossed by transport routes; is not subject to any registered encumbrance, dismemberment of the ownership right, mortgage, precautionary measure or enforcement procedure, except for any easement for passing, as well as for any mortgages set up in favor of credit institutions from European Union member states, for the purpose of securing the reimbursement of bank loans entered into by the company managing the industrial park aimed at financing the maintenance and/or development and/or refurbishment investments for the industrial park's infrastructure. (Art. 5 Law no. 186/ 2013).

¹³ In 2015, out of the 70 industrial parks, most of them were in the South - Muntenia (without Bucharest) - 18 industrial parks, in the Central Region - 16 and North-West - 8 units, which places Romania at the end of the European list in terms of number of industrial parks. For example, in 2013, Hungary had 220 industrial parks, Poland - 210, Czech Republic - 200, Slovakia has 85 units.

HOLISTICA Journal of Business and Public Administration
No. 1/2016

minimal, but effective and consistent. Investors need stability and access to relevant information¹⁴ on a regional and national level.

We consider that the success of using these complex instruments depends on a better understanding of the integrating objectives which they serve, namely economic growth accompanied by directly or indirectly creating jobs, which reflects the common interest of all stakeholders.

Conclusions

Following our research we have identified a number of factors that influence the establishment / good development of industrial parks, business clusters and business incubators with positive consequences on regional development, such as: predictability in the field of legislation based on consistent policies to support strategic sectors; efficient use of public money and diversifying financing sources (European funds, credit facilities and targeted subsidies, tax incentives for attracting large investments); local authorities increasingly involved in the identification of financial/human resources to inform local parties of the existence and terms of access to various financing modalities.

The lack of a complete and continually updated inventory of the three innovative instruments at national level, as well as the regulation of the public-private partnership, represent obstacles in the effectiveness of these instruments and finally in revealing the role, the impact and the importance of these instruments in achieving the local / regional harmonious development and their actual contribution in implementation the new cohesion policy. Only in static and dynamic analysis of the instruments acting locally, strongly spatialized, the inhomogeneous development can be compensated by finding innovative solutions. These analyzes harmonized with public policies can provide the necessary input for the public authorities (the state through the government and its agencies etc.) to identify those priority objectives, that cannot be achieved without a public-private partnership. The state may participate, providing the land, the local government may participate, providing advantages / local tax exemptions; private investment can thus be guaranteed on long term, but the functioning and operation of these facilities are capitalized by the private economic.

The sine qua non for achieving equalization of economic performance in territorially bounded geographical areas is the existence of a legal and institutional framework that is stable and functional. Good local governance can be added to this and use existing skills effectively and support appropriate training for emerging sectors by improving skills, which creates and maintains a local workforce that is well

¹⁴ public and industrial land availability, their physical condition, whether they are located within or outside the city, whether they have land forms, if you are selling, or can lease or rent and at what price, about the available workforce in the area, with what qualifications.

HOLISTICA Journal of Business and Public Administration
No. 1/2016

prepared and adaptable. Thus, increasing the level and effectiveness of public support for innovation, through direct or indirect support, may lead to the desired results.

Moreover, in increasing economic development and creation of quality jobs, an active role can be played only by local communities with well-informed and aware residents of the complex role and objectives of these innovative tools, by creating public-private partnerships involving modernized structures: professionalized local administration capable to sustain a transparent and efficient decentralization of local interest decisions with the support of civil society, namely the main representative and active NGOs.

Industrial parks (science and technology), business clusters and business incubators are complex instruments. They promote and support competitiveness and innovation, where the scientific research and technological development are capitalized, have positive effects on the entire region, not only stimulating the creation of quality jobs, but also prolonging their viability and they became autonomous after a period of financial support. Intensifying at the same time the collaboration and the well-functioning of partnerships, they contribute each with its specificity, to the creation of a favorable, sustainable environment, where start-ups can develop harmoniously both locally and regionally, improving the quality of people's life.

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HOLISTICA Journal of Business and Public Administration

No. 1/2016

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