

THE EVOLUTION OF CONSULTANCY FIRMS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF NON-REIMBURSABLE FUNDS DURING THE 2020 PANDEMIC

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DOI: 10.24818/IMC/2020/05.11

ABSTRACT

The crisis generated by Covid-19 affects the world not only from a health perspective, but also from a socio-economic one. While facing an unmatched situation, governments have reacted differently in order to bolster their economies. This article deals with the activity of consultancy firms from the non-reimbursable funds domain and means to adapt to the current situation, but it also touches on the support established by the Romanian Government for enterprises and economic recovery. The key questions this article aims to answer are the following: how is the government planning to invigorate the economy and what immediate effects should entrepreneurs expect? The main question of this research remains: Has the context of the pandemic represented a disadvantage or a springboard for new services coming from consultancy firms in the management of non-reimbursable funds?

KEYWORDS: *COVID-19, economic support measures, European and national funds, management consulting services.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) started at the end of 2019 from the Chinese region of Wuhan (WHO Timeline – COVID-19, 2020), spreading until May 2020 to 212 countries and territories (Coronavirus Update (Live): Worldometer, 2020). Europe and EU states have been affected by the pandemic starting with February, and the authorities' responses have been, with few exceptions, quite similar. The most common measures were: the establishment of the state of emergency, social distancing, prohibiting events and public gatherings, closing up schools and forbidding some economic activities. In Romania, preventive measures were generally more severe compared to the rest of the continent. In addition to all the problems and damages caused by the new coronavirus regarding health, there is also an incommensurable number of economic risks and losses. Without comparing the effects of the health crisis and the effects of an eventual economic crisis, the present study aims to analyze the management of consultancy firms in the non-reimbursable funds domain in the critical period of a pandemic from three perspectives: ethical, stressing the role of the consultant, marketing and restructuring in emergency situations. These aspects will be analyzed in parallel with the series of measures introduced by the Government of Romania during the establishment of the state of emergency and later for supporting the economy, respectively for restarting the activity or the subsequent economic invigoration.

The economic recovery plan sets out a massive state support for almost every economic domain and invokes investments in infrastructure, agriculture, health or education worth tens of billion of Lei or Euros. The magnitude of changes and the increase in competition that explores the field of

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management and, in this case, of consultancy for non-reimbursable funds, are the main elements which lead to a greater accent on implementing and undertaking new marketing and work strategies for successful projects. Companies look for new opportunities for growth, cost-effectiveness and survival in times of quick and extremely competitive changes. This article has two major objectives. The first objective is presentation and analysis of the measures taken by the Romanian Government during the pandemic crisis. The second objective is to analysis of consultancy firms in the management of non-reimbursable funds, handling the activity during a crisis and maintaining social responsibility towards customers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ethical responsibilities of Management Consultants towards clients

Social responsibility represents a great challenge that the community and companies are facing due to the pressure stemming from their responsibility in front of legal, ethical, moral or any other expectations. It is self-evident that it adds value and leads the management structure to another level. What's more, consultancy firms have to pay attention not only to internal factors for the wellbeing of employees, but also to external ones in their relationship with customers and other collaborators so as to reach their objectives. From here arises one of the questions to be addressed in this study: Is the financial responsibility able to bring financial benefits and to maintain safety and honesty between the customer and the consultant?

Ethics distinguish between wrong and wise approaches, which means that it is a social value just like fairness, honesty, truthfulness or others which control the behavior and actions of companies towards their employees and customers (Fassin et al, 2011). Social responsibility and marketing strategies were tackled together because social responsibility can be used as a strategic marketing instrument through which a society can acquire notoriety, access on the market, an exemplary image, ensuring a very good reputation that can subsequently attract new customers (Dobrea, 2006). Studies show that there is a special link between ethics and performance, with the majority of literature indicating towards how extremely beneficial ethics can be on long-term, but not as efficient on short-term. Trust plays an especially important role at the workplace, and its contribution can be seen in efficient work relationships, good practices of the company and the method of information delivery. Honesty is important for companies, but it is not easily accomplished as long as there is a disparity between honesty and personal interest (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). In the field of management consultancy, a key factor towards success should be represented by the attention given to customers' trust in the provided services. It is strongly believed that consultancy firms have an ever-growing presence in modern business. Their role is sometimes self-explanatory, but at the same time there is a series of approaches of consultants' roles in innovative activities. Anna Canato and Antonio Giangreco have structured the efficiency and the role of management consultants in four categories with the following perspectives (Canato Anna and Giangreco Antonio, 2011).

Table 1. Typology of the role of consultants in innovative activities

Perspectives				
	Information sources	Standard setters	Knowledge brokers	Knowledge integrator
Main purpose	Provide customers with specific information about market or technological trends	Propose and diffuse the same solution for different costumers	Help customers develop original solutions	Help customers integrate solutions
Source of legitimation	Greater expertise and established experience in a given industry	Reputation	Experience in different industries	Previous experience with the same solution
Locus of experience	Better availability of information. Multiple contacts with firms and institutions of the industry	Brand; development of new standards	Brokering mechanisms (e.g., contacts, use of knowledge databases)	Specific expertise of consultants

Source: Canato Anna and Giangrevo Antonio, 2011

The ethical responsibility a consultant has in the management of non-reimbursable funds is heading towards the client and making correct, specific and safe information available to him. In a field in which procedures and governance are constantly changing, it is extremely difficult to keep an honest appearance, thus contributing to the insecurity a client can feel towards the system (Clark 1995; Edvardsson 1990).

2.2 Economic invigoration support measures in Romania between March-August 2020

The health and economic crisis determined by the Covid-19 global pandemic has shown the vulnerabilities of Romania due to the developmental model heretofore promoted. With a view to surpass the negative effects of the pandemic and to increase economic resilience, the Government has assigned considerable resources to intervene against Covid-19 and to support the economic activity. The first confirmed case of conoravirus on national territory was announced on February 26, preceding the first legislative action from March 6, the GSTSCBIC Decision number 6 (Grupul de suport tehnico-științific privind gestionarea bolilor înalt contagioase pe teritoriul României). Starting with March 16, Romania enters the state of emergency for a period of 30 days according to the Decree of the President of Romania regarding the establishment of the state of emergency on the Romanian territory, followed by an additional 30 days. Measures of utmost urgency with gradual applicability have imposed the temporary closure of some restaurants, hotels, cafés, clubs, casinos, association headquarters and other public spaces (Decret al Președintelui României nr. 195/16). These sectors were not the only ones affected by the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the first solutions proposed by the Government of Romania to support the economy surfaced on March 21, when Ordinance no. 30/2020 was published, dealing with the establishment of social protection measures in the context of the epidemiological situation determined by the spread of the SARS-CoV-2, which was later simplified through OUG no. 32/2020. Thus, the Government has enacted the conditions for claiming technical unemployment and regulated the online deposit of necessary documents for social benefits during the state of emergency (Ordonanța de urgență 32 din

26.03.2020). Rebuilding Romania, as was designated the National Investment and Economic Recovery Plan, comprised three great categories of economic measures and policies, namely: Fiscal and budgetary support policies in the context of Covid-19, Programmes for supporting and protecting jobs affected by the Covid-19 crisis and Support grants for restarting enterprises, work capital and investments. The first two facilities will not be analyzed in the present study as they are not directly subject to research. Thus, the grant facilities will be presented because they directly and deliberately influence the demand for consultancy offers (Guvernul României, 2020, https://gov.ro/fisiere/programe_fisiere/Planul_Na%C8%9Bional_de_Investi%C8%9Bii_%C8%99i_Relansare_Economic%C4%83.pdf).

Table 2. Support grants to restart enterprises, work capital and investments

Nr.	Grant designation	Value and intensity of financing	Aid type	Allotment	Estimated number of beneficiaries	Observations
1.	Work capital microgrant	EUR 2.000, Intensity 100%	COVID temporary de minimis	EUR 100.000.000	50.000	SMEs with sole associate/administrator, without individual labor contract (SMEs without employees); registered sole traders which undertake activities in the arts and entertainment field; registered sole traders with activities in the health domain, if they were directly involved in the transportation, equipment, evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 patients.
2.	Aid schema for commerce activities and services affected by Covid-19	N/A	COVID temporary de minimis	Lei 160.000.000	2.000 merchants	For rent payment during crisis, for commerce and services.
3.	Work capital to restart economic activities for SMEs	EUR 5.000 – 125.000 15%	COVID temporary de minimis	EUR 350.000.000	90.000 – 100.000	For 4 affected sectors: HoReCa, transport, travel agencies, event planning
4.	Grants for investments and the conversion of SMEs	EUR 50.000 – 200.000 Maximum 85% intensity	COVID temporary de minimis	EUR 550.000.000	2.750 – 3.100	For most domains, unconditioned by the level of affection, including București-Ilfov
5.	Grants for investments in renewable energy for SMEs	EUR 30.000 100% intensity	Environment fund and the MEEMA Budgetary	EUR 200.000.000	7.000	Grants for installing photovoltaic panels, maximum 27 KW, but also for the acquisition and installation of charging stations for electric cars.
6.	POR 2.2 – national call	EUR 2.000.000 – 6.000.000 Maximum 70% intensity	State aid	EUR 550.000.000	150 - 180	

Nr.	Grant designation	Value and intensity of financing	Aid type	Allotment	Estimated number of beneficiaries	Observations
7.	Grants for start-ups and students in innovative and competitive domains	EUR 40.000 – 100.000	Minimis standard	EUR 150.000.000	1.300 – 1.5000	POCU Innotech Student, Universities will apply through partnerships and will offer grants to the target group (students)
8.	Grants for the digitalization of SMEs	EUR 30.000 – 100.000	COVID temporary de minimis	EUR 150.000.000	1.300 – 1.5000	
9.	Star-Tech Innovation (successor of Start-up Nation)	EUR 42.000 100% intensity	De minimis standard	EUR 294.000.000	7.000	SuN successor, focused on technology
10.	Financing programmes for the digital education of SMEs employees	EUR 30.000 – 100.000	FSE (POCU)	EUR 30.000.000	420 – 440	-
11.	Grants for the acquisition of irrigation equipment	EUR 6.000	COVID temporary de minimis	EUR 48.000.000	8.000	-
12.	Financing grants for rural entrepreneurship	EUR 40.000 – 100.000	FSE (POCU)	EUR 200.000.000	2.800 – 2.880	For processing agricultural products
13.	Providing young farmers with agricultural lands from the state	-	FEADR	EUR 42.000.000	-	-
14.	State aid schema for new investments (greenfield)	EUR 37.500.000	State aid	1,5 billion Lei annually	40	-
15.	State aid schema to support investments which promote regional development	EUR 37.500.000	State aid	450.000.000 Lei annually	12	-
16.	Financing grants for rural entrepreneurship	EUR 40.000 – 100.000	FSE (POCU)	EUR 200.000.000	2.800 – 2.880	For processing agricultural products

Source: Own editing, based on the literature reviewed

As seen in Table 2, the economic recovery plan has an ambitious proposal of over EUR 100 billion and is to be financed by the state budget and European funds. The programme proposed by the Government has a main goal of ensuring the convergence with European economies, so as the Gross Domestic Product per capita to parity by standard purchase will reach 87% of the EU27 average, on the dawn of 2025 (Guvernul României, 2020,

https://gov.ro/fisiere/programe_fisiere/Planul_Na%C8%9Bional_de_Investi%C8%9Bii_%C8%99i_Relansare_Economic%C4%83.pdf).

In the last few years, the GDP per capita has evolved compared to the average purchasing power as follows: 2016 – 59%, 2017 – 63%, 2018 – 65%, 2019 – 69%. By means of these indicators, we can speculate that in 6 years Romania should increase by 18 points, which would not necessarily represent an unreachable objective, seeing that in the abovementioned years the GDP has been growing by 10 points. At the moment, it is clear that Romania, despite its recent years' economic growth, remains one of the poorest countries in the EU, humbly surpassing Greece, Bulgaria and Croatia in 2019, GDP-wise (Eurostat Press Office, 2020).

The manifestation of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has led to an uncertain global macroeconomic scenario, as there still is a mixture of hardly quantifiable factors that inhibit economic growth, in a background of applying public health safety measures. The effects of the pandemic were less obvious in the Romanian economy in the first quarter of 2020, but started to develop in March. Thus, compared to the first quarter of 2020, the GDP of the second quarter of 2020 decreased with 12,3%. Compared to the same quarter in 2019, the GDP has recorded a drop of 10,5% in the second quarter of 2020, both grossly and on the seasonally adjusted series (INS, 2020, https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/pib_tr2r2020.pdf).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In order to respond to the research question approaches were undertaken from multiple perspectives, taking into account the sensitive context in which we might be heading towards an economic collapse. The research question is the following: Has the context of the pandemic represented a disadvantage or a springboard for new services coming from consultancy firms in the management of non-reimbursable funds? Thus, the analysis was accomplished through the following lens: demand for services, methods of promoting and delivering information through websites, request for the Certificate for Emergency Situations.

The first aspect to be analyzed is the Certificate for Emergency Situations, a document that offers certain facilities to those companies whose activity was affected in the context of the pandemic. Taking into account the Decree from the President of Romania regarding the establishment of the emergency situation, the first two military ordinances of 2020 and the Government's emergency ordinance no. 30/2020 for the modification and completion of some normative acts, as well as for the establishment of some measures in domain of social protection in the context of the epidemiological situation determined by the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the Government's emergency ordinance nr. 29/2020 regarding some economic and fiscal-budgetary measures, the idea of the certificate for emergency situations was introduced through Ordinance no. 791 of 24.03.2020 on granting certificates for emergency situations of the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment to economic operators whose activity is affected in the context of SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. There are two types of certificates: blue and yellow. The blue certificate can be requested by economic enterprises whose activity was totally or partially interrupted as a result of decisions taken by the competent public authorities, while the yellow one is granted, based on an affidavit, to legal entities which have recorded a loss of at least 25% of revenue or income in March or April 2020 compared to the average revenues of January-February 2020 (Modificări la emiterea Certificatelor de Situație de Urgență în favoarea operatorilor economici, 2020). The method of obtaining these certificates is simplified, the applicants uploading the identification data and the affidavit by which they confirm the veracity of the request on the platform <http://prevenire.gov.ro>. An electronic signature is needed for registration and those of accountants are also accepted. A few minutes after submitting the documents, the certificates are issued exclusively online, at no costs. At the same time, it should be noted that these emergency certificates were not limited to sectors of activity, even if the form initially concerned only the following: transport, tourism, HoReCa, event

planning, advertising, primary education and related activities, the garment industry, footwear and leather goods and general services. The facilities that can benefit the enterprises which obtain emergency situations certificates are: the postponement of utility payments (electricity, natural gas, water, phone and internet services), as well as rent, the possibility of invoking force majeure against them only after the renegotiation of contracts and the postponement for a period of 9 months of existing loans introduced by OUG 37 from 30.03.2020 regarding the grant of facilities for loans given by credit institutions and non-banking financial institutions to a certain category of debtors. Taking this into account and the fact that the CSU indicates to a greater or lesser extent those firms who were indeed affected in this period, for this study the following indicators were analyzed from the online list – The list of firms in Romania with complete information („Lista firmelor din România cu informații complete”- a website where an access fee is requested from members <https://www.listafirme.ro/>).

Table 3. CSU indicators

Analyzed indicator	Total number	Percentage	Observations
No. Consultancy firms (7022) to have submitted their review for 2019	21492	100%	The firms were filtered by their main area of activity. It is important to note that each company in Romania can receive income from a generous list of fields. The society has only one main area of activity and all the other domains from which the turnover is generated must fall under the CAEN authorized codes. Companies must engage in activities under domain 7022 in order to undertake consultancy services in management, including management services for non-reimbursable funds.
No. Consultancy firms (7022) to have obtained BLUE CSU	225	1,047%	For judicial persons who have recorded a decrease of at least 25% in cash collection or revenues in March or April 2020 compared to the average earnings from January-February 2020
No. Consultancy firms (7022) to have obtained YELLOW CSU	324	1,508%	For the judicial persons whose activity was partially or completely interrupted as a consequence of the decisions issued by the competent public authorities

Source: Own editing, based on the literature reviewed

Taking into account the provided indicators, the national-level situation is as follows.

Table 4. Obtaining CSU structured on development regions

Development region	NORTH-EAST	SOUTH-EAST	SOUTH MUNTENIA	SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA	WEST	NORTH-WEST	CENTER	BUCURESTI-ILFOV	TOTAL
Yellow CSU	24	16	21	15	30	48	18	152	324
Blue CSU	19	14	17	8	17	25	29	96	225
Total CSU	43	30	38	23	47	73	47	248	549

Source: Own editing, based on the literature reviewed

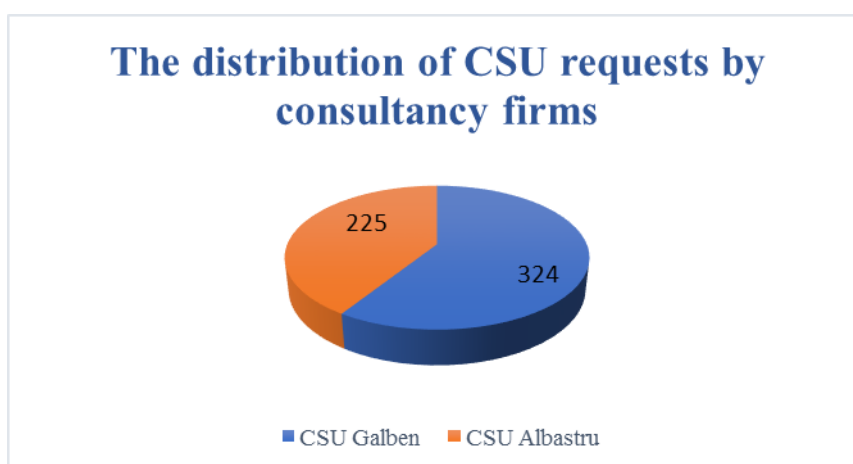


Figure 1. The distribution of CSU requests by consultancy firms
 Source: Own editing, based on the literature reviewed

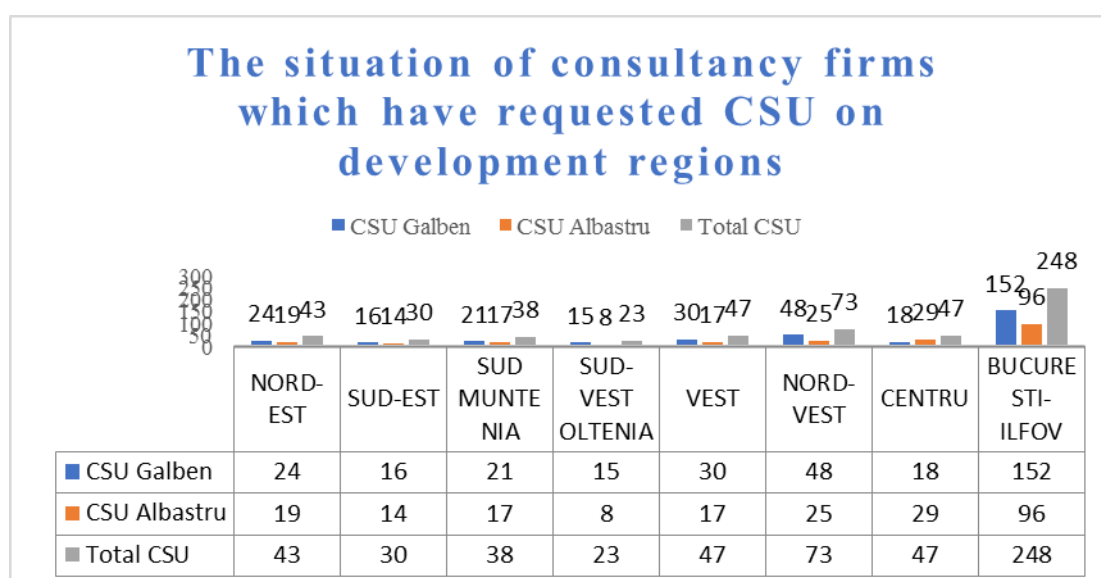


Figure 2. The situation of consultancy firms which have requested CSU, by development regions

Source: Own editing, based on the literature reviewed

As seen from the total number of firms in Romania whose main area of activity is consultancy services in management, only 2,55% of them have requested CSU in April-August 2020. From here stems the question whether only such a small percentage of economic operators are affected according to the definition, directly or indirectly, or if many entrepreneurs did not request the document because they did not need it or did not see its purpose. Out of all the regions, it seems that București – Ilfov is the most affected and its number of CSU requests is slightly smaller than all the regions combined.

Another important aspect in the context of the pandemic, which seems to have brought a substantial incentive to the domain of consultancy, is the economic recovery plan previously presented. An ambitious plan through which consultancy firms will enlarge their area of application and the list of interested customers. For this study, the websites for promoting services of 26 companies from the field of non-reimbursable funds were analyzed in order to verify the transparency of services, package sales methods and the applied marketing strategies.

Table 5. Analyzed websites of consultancy firms

Nr. crt.	CONSULTANCY FIRMS	WEBSITE	PROVIDES INFORMATION ABOUT PACKAGE I MLD	PARTIAL INFORMATION	INFORMATION MINIMAL CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION	INFORMATION CRITERIA MAXIMUM SCORE
1	FABRICA DE CONSULTANTA SRL	https://www.fabricadeconsultanta.com/	Promotes the package	Only the maximum value of financing		Shows on the site all the information related to this financing line, including eligibility and selection criteria, including CAEN codes list.
2	MORADO BUSINESS SRL	https://moradoconsulting.ro/	Promotes the package			
3	SC CENTRU DE ELABORARE PROIECTE UNIONALE SRL REIDEN	https://cepu.ro/	Does not promote the package			
4	BUSINESS CONSULTING SRL	https://reiden.ro/	Promotes the package		Shows only the minimal eligibility criteria and the CAEN codes list	Shows on the site all the information related to this financing line, including eligibility and selection criteria, including CAEN codes list.
5	NEOTRUST CONSULTING PARTNER SRL	https://www.neotrust.ro/	Promotes the package			
6	LONG WAY SRL	http://www.longway.eu/	Promotes the package	Only the maximum value of financing, principal domains, main expenditure		
7	ODAS GLOBAL CONSULTING SRL	https://www.odasglobalconsulting.net/	Does not promote the package			
8	ACTIV BUSINESS ADVISOR SRL	https://activadvisor.ro/	Does not promote the package			
9	RCG CONSULTING GROUP	http://www.rcgconsulting.ro/home	Does not promote the package			
10	AREA4U SRL	https://area4u.ro/	Promotes the package	Only the maximum value of financing, minimal contribution		
11	GOODWILL CONSULTING GWC SRL	https://www.gwconsulting.ro/ro	Promotes the package		Shows eligibility criteria, eligible expenditure, value of financing. Shows the minimal participation criteria and eligible expenditure.	

12	SNCMARITEX SRL	https://antreprevision.ro/	Promotes the package		
13	MARG & ASSOCIATES EUROPEAN FUNDS SRL	https://meuropeanfunds.ro/	Promotes the package		Shows minimal participation criteria, eligible expenditure, and eligible principal domains
14	MAGNA SRL	http://www.magna.ro/	Does not promote the package		
15	ARIA UNITED SRL	https://ariaunited.com/	Does not promote the package		
16	CONSULTANTA DE SUCCES SRL	http://succes-consult.ro/	Promotes the package		Shows minimal participation criteria and eligible expenditure
17	ROMCOM INVEST SRL	https://romcom.ro/	Does not promote the package		
18	ACONSULTING	https://aconsulting.ro/	Promotes the package	Only the maximum value of financing, principal domains, main expenditure	
19	INCEPTA CONSULTING SRL	https://www.incepta.ro/	Does not promote the package		
20	KELSO CONSULTING PARTENER	https://kelso.ro/	Promotes the package	Only the maximum value of the project	
21	CAMYRE SRL	https://camyre.ro/	Promotes the package		Shows minimal participation criteria and eligible expenditure
22	INDAIS MEDIA BUSINESS SRL	https://www.indais.ro/	Promotes the package		Shows minimal participation criteria, eligible expenditure, and eligible principal domains
23	YOUNIQUE ADVISERS SRL	https://tipique.ro/	Promotes the package		Shows minimal participation criteria, eligible expenditure, and eligible principal domains
24	START CONSULT	https://startconsult.ro/	Promotes the package		Shows on the site all the information related to this financing line, including eligibility and selection criteria, including CAEN codes list.

25	SIENA BB CONS SRL	https://sienaconsulting.ro/	Promotes the package	Shows on the site all the information related to this financing line, including eligibility and selection criteria, including CAEN codes list.
26	CHROMA CONSULTING AGENCY SRL	https://chroma.ro/	Promotes the package	Shows minimal participation criteria, eligible expenditure, and eligible principal domains

Source: Own editing, based on the literature reviewed

We should note that the 26 firms were chosen from different regions, in the SME category, and the important criteria was owning a promoting website. As seen above, only 9 of the firms do not promote the 1 billion package. The proposed programmes were presented in this article with the purpose of highlighting the plethora of programmes the Government will analyze in the upcoming period. Compared to the period before the pandemic, we can certainly say that these priorities are more ambitious and will lead to a bigger demand for consultancy services. Throughout the course of the last year, three national programmes were expected but never launched. Two of the important support programmes are not on their first call, and to exemplify the fact that not only the demand will increase, but so will the competition, some features of these programmes will be outlined. The first example is the Regional Operational Programme priority axis 2.2., a programme for enterprises with market activity, with a non-reimbursable value between EUR 200.000 and EUR 1.000.000 and a maximum of 70% intensity, launched for certain regions: North East, South East, South Muntenia, South West Oltenia. Therefore, in the North East region the allotment was of Lei 152, 102 million, and the value of submitted projects was of Lei 3.290, 18 million, with a 10 times bigger coverage for the call, namely of 1.097,40% (ADR Nord-Est, 2020, <http://www.inforegionordest.ro/situatie-proiecte>). The situation remains the same with Southern regions, such as the closed call for May in South Muntenia reaching the following values: allotted value Lei 177,34 million, value of submitted projects Lei 3.288,80 million, coverage of 1.041,75% (ADR Sud Muntenia, 2020, <https://regio.adrmuntenia.ro/situatia-proiectelor-depuse/static/1026>). In the Western region the situation is more, so to say, balanced than the rest of the regions, with a coverage of only 120,14% (ADR Vest, 2020, <https://adrvest.ro/por-2014-2020/stadiul-implementarii/>). The second example, this time for newcomer firms recently founded, is the Start-Up Nation programme, which has notoriety on the market, launching for the third time along with the economic recovery plan. The last session was considered a real success for the authorities but a disappointment for the applicants. The programme was competitive, with a 100% intensity, a value of EUR 42.000 and 10.000 beneficiaries. 33.514 projects were submitted, of which 32.152 companies received 100 points. Thus, the tiebreaker criteria had an extremely important role, first criteria being the number of employees, the second the share of technological equipment, and the next criteria the date and hour of submission. The line of projects accepted for financing was laid out to 4 employees in the context that each of them must be kept 2 years after the implementing phase of the project is over. The completion of the submission session revealed data that the applicants were probably not expecting: projects with more than 4 employees - 5.984, and with 4 employees - 11.018 (Ministerul pentru Mediul de Afaceri, Comerț și Antreprenariat, 2019, <http://www.imm.gov.ro/ro/2019/02/15/lista-aplicantilor-start-up-nation-in-ordinea-atribuita-de-registrul-unic-electronic/>). The programme will be relaunched based on innovation, and the number of projects that will be accepted for financing falls by 3.000 than the last session.

The previous chapter dealt with the subject of social responsibility and the uncertainty of the field which hinders the ethics and performance process. The tough competition for some programmes, the impossibility to anticipate the total number of applicants and the additional criteria the companies must meet lead to some trust issues in the domain. This is exactly why the method of promoting the package proposed by the Government was analyzed, namely the grants already launched through OUG 130/2020 regarding some measures for non-reimbursable external financial support, related to the Competition Operational Programme 2014-2020 in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. Analyzing the data from table 5, we can note that the information delivered by means of one's own website is correct, only the strategy differs. Four out of the analyzed firms have chosen to show the criteria for the maximum score, and eight of them present only the minimal criteria for submitting a project, revealing the importance some firms put in the development phase of projects with real chances of being approved.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This article was headed towards achieving two main goals. First of them was related to the presentation and analysis of measures taken by the Government of Romania during the pandemic, from the point of view of economic recovery, influencing the demand for consultancy services. A second matter of interest was the analysis of consultancy firms in the management of non-reimbursable funds, handling the activity during a crisis and maintaining social responsibility towards customers.

The Government's attention has shifted in this period towards the provision of financing programmes for work capital in the domains directly affected by the ordinances issued at the beginning of the pandemic, investments in state guarantees, grants and aid schemes for new investments in order to resume or convert economic activities. Therefore, the short-term priority of the Government is to ensure the necessary work capital to enterprises affected by Covid-19 as a consequence of temporary closure of activity, reducing the demand for consumption and supply chain disruptions. Since the presentation of the economic recovery plan, 1st of July, we have seen emerging only the ordinance regulating the eligibility conditions for three out of sixteen proposals. It is necessary to apply these programmes as fast as possible, so that the enterprises won't wait for some programmes that might not even cover half their needs. Societies' need for liquidities is quite high if we review the current situation of the IMM Invest programme which aimed to offer firms access to work and investment capital through guaranteeing up to 90% of credits by the Ministry of Public Finances through the National Fund of Credit Guarantee for Small and Medium Enterprises and the subsidy of interest-rates and banking expenditures (ex. administration fees, risk fees, guarantee premium). On August 26th, the number of registered enterprises reached 67.523, of which approved by the bank:14.256 and rejected by the bank: 26.455. Societies' facility of having fees paid for by the state comprises only the year 2020, and, at present, less than 21% of firms benefit from this facility.

After analyzing consultancy firms and the services they provide in this period, we can state that they are experiencing prosperous times with plenty of ideas for economic support. The efficiency of activities has increased due to the introduction of digitalization and de-bureaucratisation methods in administration and economy, as well as the widespread recognition of digitally-signed documents, which are necessary for some programmes and can be requested online, thus shortening the waiting time. The work in this domain can be easily transferred online and the consulting process can be supported by applications, similar to the process of projects' submission or implementation. Not only the target market has directly benefitted from some of these facilities, but also the companies in this domain. As seen in the analysis of the Certificate for Emergency Situations, we can note that an extremely low number of consultancy firms have requested the issuance of the certificate, maybe because they did not have decreases in revenue or cash collection, their activity was not

interrupted, or they did not think the document can be useful. To conclude, taking into account all the aspects subject to this research, we can certainly claim that consultancy firms have been going through a favorable period that allows them to develop their services. The Government's proposal regarding a recovery program has represented a source of growth for the demand in consultancy services. Economic actors have experienced critical situations during the pandemic, but their attention seems to have shifted toward state aid due to a lack of capital and the closing of sectors. The digital attainment facilities for some documents represented a decrease in bureaucracy and shortened the time dedicated to funding requests in the consultancy domain. Increasing notoriety, trust and safety, alongside constant adaptation, are essential elements in the consultancy domain, as the consultants must own correct and relevant information and be able to prepare successful strategies without altering their customers' activity. Obviously, the method by which the information is delivered to the suited public is an important aspect, which is why the analyzed websites proved that the information, be it minimal for some programmes, is correct but not sufficient for a project's success, as the strategies undertaken by firms based on the programme and any antecedents can be game changers.

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