

Obtaining better worker qualification: SASeC, a construction sector initiative (Romania)

FGS FAMILIA, a union of employees in the construction, building materials, wood and services (government) sectors

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1. Observations and motivations

Because of the attractiveness of the labour market in Western Europe, employees in Romania have a strong tendency to travel to foreign countries for work.

This attractiveness results from several factors: the salary level (generally 50% higher), as well as better working and living conditions, more favourable health insurance systems, better quality education, more advantageous bank loans (in particular for mortgage loans) and, overall, the market's ability to provide jobs.

Several contextual elements also encourage the mobility of Romanian workers:

- The principle guaranteeing freedom of movement for persons who are European citizens within the EU area and the fact that the “barrier” of labour market restrictions for Romanian workers should be removed in 2014;
- Little or no knowledge of legislation in the host country;
- The establishment of a non-declared contractual relationship, a “fatal attraction” in the relationship of complicity between workers and their boss;
- Weak controls by authorities in the host country and country of origin, combined with a lack of control instruments (cf. the project for a European Worker's Card for the construction industry).

In addition, pressure from the international financial system ensures the maintenance of a low level of salaries in the countries of Eastern Europe (In 2013, the average salary was 450 euros net/month in Romania for the construction sector, increased by about 10% for the building materials sector, decreased by about 25% for the wood sector and with an approximately 5% additional decrease for the services sector. The 2016 estimate is an average salary increase to 600 euros net/month in the construction sector).

2. Goals

Faced with these observations, the main social partners of the construction and building materials industries (ARACO, an employer association, and FGS FAMILIA, an employee union) have created a joint “platform” integrating services comparable to those existing in Western Europe.

The main goals are to:

- Act on the qualification of workers as a lever to develop the performance and quality of human resources throughout the sector;
- Seek for ways to integrate this platform with systems in the European area with similar goals;
- Protect Romanian workers on the Romanian and European labour markets;
- Protect Romanian capital in the construction and building materials sectors on the European market.

3. Method implemented

With the implementation of a **Self-Regulatory Sectorial System in the Construction Sector**, known as SASeC (Sistemul de Autoreglementari Sectoriale in Constructii), the social partners have a platform for developing and funding different services which complement each other.

The platform has existed for fifteen years. Created in 2007 when Romania became a member of the European Union through an agreement protocol for implementing a social fund, it has developed in the form of a sectorial tool which aims to be **structural and multidimensional**.

It currently mobilises a global budget of 125 million euros and concerns nearly 100,000 workers (approximately a third of the sector).

It is organised in the form of six entities, which are jointly managed non-profit bodies:

- The **Social Fund for Builders**, or CSC (Casa Sociala a Constructorilor)

This fund extends social protection within the sector with specific services, such as winter allowances and financial social services in the form of bank-issued letters of credit.

- The **Centre for Building Trades**, or CMC (Casa de Meserii a Constructorilor)

Its goal is to implement a National Qualification Framework (NQF) at the sectorial level and develop the quality, availability and amount of vocational training (*VET*).

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- The **Centre for Builder Health and Safety in the Construction Industry**, or CASIMMCO, an entity for advice, training, research and study

- The **Joint Committee for Multinationals**, or TT, a tool for establishing a dialogue with multinational groups and promoting the interests of “local” companies

- The **Paid Leave Fund**, or 3C

- The **Joint Committee for Migrant and Posted Workers**, or MM

The Committee aims to **develop** the construction sector in Romania through the use of **resources** provided by the contingents of migrant and posted workers, in particular by regulating the flow of workers who work in the European area and have an impact on the legal contingent of migrant workers in Romania.

The Committee acts within the context of specific goals which aim to “connect” the Romanian construction sector with construction sectors in other member countries by acting in particular on the quantity and quality (quality and attractiveness of employment and working conditions) of labour needs.

4. Type of actions carried out

Actions undertaken by the platform include a set of services designed to be interoperable. They concern both the material services mentioned above and a palette of immaterial services aiming to qualify human resources: recruitment, placement, evaluation and vocational training.

These actions affect **migrant and posted workers** through actions of information and sensitisation in the field, to compensate for their lack information. Many of these workers leave for foreign countries on the basis of personal networks and lack knowledge of both employment conditions in the host country and the possibilities of professional qualification in Romania.

To support their development, SASeC has implemented collaborations:

- at the national level (Ministries of Labour and Education, Labour Inspectorate, National Authorities for Qualification, Romanian Office of Migration, European Social Fund, etc.);

- and internationally, with the aim of an integrated action at the European level (European Association of Equivalent Institutions for Social Protection, or AEIP, European construction federations, FIEC and

FETTB for the European Union, FORMEDIL and CEAV in Italy, the “Fundación Laboral de la Construcción” in Spain, OPPBTP in France and Fbz-fseConstructiv in Belgium).

5. Impact of action in terms of difficulties encountered

The main difficulties are the following:

- The obstacles to recognition of “Romanian Good Practices”;
- Reluctance to work in a true European network with non-profit organisations (NGOs);
- An attitude which tends to be “segregationist” with respect to NGOs in Eastern European countries, notably Romanian NGOs.

6. Impact on participant dynamics

A process for evaluating collaborations has been implemented: we hope to better cooperate in the future with French institutions, especially NGOs.

In spite of financial limits, the effects are positive because of the increasing reciprocal credibility of partners. As for other impacts, we will discover them together by working together!

7. Analysis in terms of feedback

It is necessary to carry out a long-term project at the European level to better integrate the participants who want to take charge of the issues within true and effective continental networks. The credibility and integration of their databases is more necessary than ever. A (European) Construction Worker Card has become a pressing need (we have proposed a project along these lines with partners in Italy (FORMEDIL), France and Belgium (Constructiv)).