

Smart University: A Premise for Regional Development. Evidence from South-East Region of Romania

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: A Smart University is a creative environment with a high level of adaptive capacity building to current societies' challenges. From regional development planning perspective, a Smart University proves an anticipatory rather than reactionary adaptation to the context conditions, providing more development alternatives into the future, assuring in this way the regional performance and competitiveness.

OBJECTIVES: The paper tackles 3 important perspectives of the role of HEIs from South-East region of Romania to regional development: The University as an *Education and Training Platform*, The University as a *Research Platform* and The University as a *Knowledge and Technology Transfer Platform*. An interesting research question becomes whether and to what extent the academia can contribute to territorial development policies in South-East region of Romania?

METHODS: This research-paper highlights the main characteristics of the academic environment of South-East region analysing at intra-regional level, the educational offer and the results of HEIs activities in the fields of research and knowledge transfer.

RESULTS: A Smart University should first and foremost help the local community to develop their territorial capital, which is defined by OCDE as "an ensemble of geographical (accessibility, agglomeration economies, natural resources), economic (factor endowments, competences), cognitive (knowledge, human capital, cooperation networks), social (solidarity, trust, associations), and cultural assets ("understandings, customs and informal rules that enable economic agents to work together under conditions of uncertainty").

CONCLUSION: Rethinking higher education system is the first step in boosting regional development in the digital age.

Keywords: innovation, career development, e-platform.

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1. Smart University – A Portal to the Future

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are the meeting and mediation point between business, public administration and civil society, creating favourable premises for the development of innovative methods, products and services designed to manage the territorial impact of globalization and digitization. Consequently, the *Smart University* generically presents itself as a training provider, research centre, technology platform in partnership with the regional community whose values and interests it represents. Nowadays, because of new trend of digital

transformation of industry and urbanism, Smart University is needed in order to promote the knowledge-based economy at local and regional level.

2. The South-East Region's Universities, an Unexploited Source for Regional Development

The South-East Region of Romania faces a number of long-term challenges, such as: aging population, adapting to the digital era, maintaining competitiveness in a globalized and knowledge-based economy. In this context, economic recovery and sustainable growth can be achieved by: reducing investment deficits, creating jobs and

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