

The 1st International Conference Economic Scientific Research - Theoretical, Empirical and Practical Approaches (ESPERA 2013), December 11-12, 2013, Bucharest, Romania.

Achievements and future thoughts

1. General Presentation

The “Costin C. Kirişescu” National Institute for Economic Research (NIER) is a public legal scientific entity of national interest for fundamental research, financed by the public budget, as well as for applicative research, financed from domestic and foreign public or private sources.

The “Costin C. Kirişescu” National Institute for Economic Research is part of the fundamental research structures of the Romanian Academy and is a preserver of the economic and social research set up almost one century ago. The present objectives of the NIER stem from the mission undertaken at the beginning of the tenth decade of the 20th century.

The NIER’s mission is to correlate its own research strategy with the Romanian Academy’s vocation and with European and national strategies and policies in the science and research field.

As an academic entity for fundamental research, the NIER plays a significant role in the development and preservation of the scientific heritage, of the institutions and of the national identity not only in the field of economics, but also in other fields of culture and science by promoting and carrying out projects of major interests.

These are large-scale works with an encyclopaedic purpose seeking to capitalize the historic contributions and resources of several generations of Romanian researchers and scientists.

The NIER seeks to develop and consolidate scientific competence, knowledge in the economic research field in Romania, in accordance with the national development strategies.

The activity of the NIER, as the highest economic research entity in Romania, is based on three fundamental landmarks:

- European and national strategies for economic and social development;
- European and national R&D strategies;
- The Romanian Academy’s vocation.

In the context of the above three points, the NIER's fundamental research is accompanied by studies, programmes, strategies and other works aimed to support sectoral and national strategies for economic research and development, as well as by works and analyses in support of legal initiatives and development policies; also the NIER provides consultancy and expertise to support the activity of the Government and Parliament without any formal request.

The status of representative think tank for research, information, documentation and syntheses, economy and economic policies is closely related to the efforts made to increase the involvement in the economic and social environment and in the community's live, based on equilibrium and national consensus in the European context.

After 1990, the NIER and its network have been involved in all major areas of the economic and social transition process in Romania, contributing to the preparation of documents of strategic importance, such as: the draft study on Romania's transition to a market economy (1990); developing the national consensus for Romania's accession to and integration into the European Union, based on the principles of the 1995 Strategy; economic streamlining strategies; the privatisation strategy; the sustainable economic development strategy, etc., the usefulness of which has been commended at home and abroad.

The main lines of research of the NIER and entities in its network are: sustainable development; economic equilibrium, environmental and social development; economic restructuring; European integration; society based on knowledge, communication and information; continuous training and better use of labour resources; quality of work and employment; technical and scientific progress; efficiency and sustainability of production factors, enhanced competitiveness and economic efficiency; macroeconomic equilibrium and correlation; regional development; efficiency of public administration and services of general economic interests; improvement of the set of indicators and measurement of economic phenomena; assessment of financial and monetary policies, and of the banking system; international economic, technical and scientific relations; economic and social macromodelling and forecasting; human development and the quality of life; methods of evaluation for specific policies; effects of demographic trends, and other developments that challenge the Romanian economy and society.

To address the NIER's array of economic and social research interests, there are nine scientific units acting as entities incorporated under the current legislation, and working as part of the NIER's network and under its scientific and administrative coordination. They are:

- a) Five research institutes: The Institute of National Economy, The Institute of Agrarian Economy, The Institute of Research into the Quality of Life; The Institute for Economic Forecasting; The Institute of World Economy;
- b) Four research centres: the Centre for Studies in the Economics of Industry and Services; Centre for Financial and Monetary Research; Centre for Studies and Research in Agricultural and Forest Biodiversity; and the Centre for Economic Documentation and Information; and
- c) Seven research units, all under NIER's umbrella, operating as unincorporated entities: the Complex Research Team (task group); and six centres, namely: the Romanian Centre for Comparative Economics and Consensus; the Centre for Macroeconomic Modelling; the Centre for Demographic Research; the Centre for Foresight and Management of Research Projects and Programmes; the Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency; the Centre for Mountain Economics.

In 2013, the NIER initiated ESPERA, an annual scientific meeting of national and international interest on priority issues concerning today's and tomorrow's global economy.

The NIER's intent is to perpetuate the ESPERA conference and include the annual meetings in the international calendar of specific scientific events.

Our intent is that ESPERA becomes a domain of conceptualisation and establishment of policies and strategies of national and European interest, as well as partnerships for high level research projects.

In this respect, ESPERA will carry on its works between the annual meetings by an online forum, having a systematic, permanent, wide and challenging dialogue within the European area of economic and social research. ESPERA is meant to provide theoretical, empirical and practical approaches by open, national and international interacademic dialogue.

Moreover, NIER intends to conceive future research projects and programmes based on quasi-permanent online discussions at national and global level. Thus, we are able to present the answer of the body of economics researchers to the society's concerns and put fundamental research to good use.

2. The Conference organisation

The aim of the international conference ESPERA 2013 is to present and evaluate the academic scientific research portfolio in the field of economic sciences, for supporting and substantiating Romanian economic development strategies – including global and European best practices.

The plenary session and the parallel sections are focused on the Romanian Academy's and its institutes' fundamental and priority research programmes: National economy state evaluation; Romania' social state evaluation; New Encyclopaedia of Romania; Eco-economy and sustainable development; Innovation and knowledge-based economy; Advanced theories and models for economic analysis and prognosis; Interdisciplinary programme to prevent major risks at national level; Romania's economy and the Euro system; Regional development in Romania; Natural resources policy; Economy and culture; World economy under structural changes; Bioeconomy and biodiversity.

The ESPERA 2013 International Conference was organized under the aegis of the Romanian Academy, the National Bank of Romania, the Romanian Centre for Economic Information and Documentation of the Romanian Academy. The schedule and procedures specific to the conference included the following stages:

- Full paper submission: November 25, 2013;
- Notification of acceptance/rejection of papers; December 5, 2013;
- Registration of participation: December 6, 2013.

Following the invitations sent out by the NIER, 51 personalities agreed to join the Scientific Board of the Conference, of which 16 academicians and professors from abroad (Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, United Kingdom and 35 Romanian academicians, professors and researchers – from 7 academic and research centres: Bucharest, Craiova, Sibiu, Oradea, Cluj-Napoca, Ploiești, Timișoara) (See the attached Agenda).

In accordance with the procedures for the submission of papers, we received 287 proposals, of which the Scientific Committee selected and included in the Conference Programme 188 papers, distributed as follows:

- 17 for two plenary sessions;
- 8 for a roundtable (the third thematic section);
- 163 in 12 thematic sessions.

The plenary sessions were held in Aula Magna of the Romanian Academy on December 11, 2013, and the Roundtable (Section 3) and the other 12 sections of December 12, 2013 were held in the Scientific Meeting Rooms of the NIER's institutes in accordance with the scientific themes.

The conference was attended by 250 persons in plenary sessions and over 400 persons in thematic sessions.

As a whole, 179 papers of 359 researchers and academics (as authors and co-authors) were presented, of which 33 by foreign guests (from France, Spain, Republic of Moldova, Hungary, Poland, FYR Macedonia, Austria, Italy, Greece,

Egipt, Serbia). During the debates, over 130 points of view and comments were presented.

3. Debate conclusions per sections

1. The plenary sessions and section works were preceded by speeches and messages addressed by Acad. Ionel Haiduc, the President of the Romanian Academy; Acad. Eugen Simion, President of the National Foundation for Science and Art of the Romanian Academy; Acad. Jaime Gil Aluja, President of the Spanish Royal Academy of Economic and Financial Sciences; Prof. Victor Moraru, President of the Department of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Moldova; Acad. Grigore Belostecinic, Rector of the Academy of Economic Studies of the Republic of Moldova; Prof. Mario Giampietro, University of Barcelona; and Prof. Luminița Chivu, General Director of the "Costin C. Kirițescu" National Institute for Economic Research.

By their speeches, the participants highly appreciated the initiative of our Institute to organize ESPERA 2013, and revealed the significance of the conference as an opportunity for scientific dialogue to the benefit of the society, in general.

Academician Ionel Haiduc, President of the Romanian Academy said that "the debate programme makes a strong impression of firm and responsible involvement of the researchers of NIER and their foreign partners in understanding the present and future major challenges both in our country and in the world".

2. Plenary Sessions were meant to present the general framework of the academic research programmes in the economic and social fields: evaluation of the economic and social state of Romania; sustainable development and regionalisation in relation to the European space; significance of the euro governance; encyclopaedic knowledge of Romania; prevention of the high risk phenomenon on a national scale; natural resource management; challenges to science and research in relation to the structural changes in the world economy; bio-eco economy promotion.

3. Conference Section 1: "Evaluation of the State of the National Economy – ESEN": 26 papers were presented, revealing the preoccupations in this field of the Romanian Academy's researches within a fundamental programme initiated in 1999 to support the dialogue between Romania and the European Union for Romania's accession to the European Union. It included valuable analyses regarding the rearrangement of industrial structures in Romania, the income policy and, generally, the stimulation of the human capital, the modernisation of the Romanian industrial policy coordinates, the impact of foreign trade on the

sustainability of the Romanian economy during the pre- and post-accession period, the competitiveness of the European Economic Area etc.

4. Conference Section 2: "Evaluation of the Social State of Romania – ESSOR" was mainly aimed at analyzing the challenges regarding social cohesion and the management of social resources, polarisation mechanisms and the state of the middle class in transition, public expenditure on health and education – comparative studies of the EU member countries, etc. Eight papers were presented.

5. Roundtable: "The New Encyclopaedia of Romania – NER" was part of the Conference Section 3 and consisted of interactive debates on the main review presented by the coordinator of the fundamental project of the Romanian Academy.

Special attention was paid to the opinions on the co-existing succession of civilisations and generations of technologies and knowledge, the role of general encyclopaedias in presenting their complexity as well as some comments on the encyclopaedic preoccupation in Romania in the 19th and 20th centuries. The participants presented the critical developments in the Romanian demography projections for the 2050 perspective, as well as aspects of the agrarian history of Romania. All these issues are part of the NER structure. Eight papers were presented.

6. Conference Section 4: "The Economy and Sustainable Development of Romania" consisted of 20 papers. The most remarkable were those on the role of the indicators used to analyze and assess sustainable development in the EU; tax pressure and sustainable economic development; eco-systems as a source of sustainable development; food versus bio-fuel – an approach based on the energy balance: modernization of agricultural exploitations – a comparative study of Romania and Poland; estimation of environmental costs in FYR Macedonia, Greece and Romania; regional and microterritorial case studies on the environment protection performance in limited and reserved areas, etc.

7. Conference Section 5: "Innovation and knowledge-based economy. Trends and new methodologies in economics" included 9 papers on: the European context of innovation and trade in intellectual production; intellectual property rights; Smart Specialisation and the promotion of fundamental research from this perspective; the R&D market in Romania versus the EU's requirements in the matter.

8. Conference Section 6: "Advanced theories and models for economic analysis and prognosis" consisted of 23 papers covering a wide range of specific issues: the promotion of new models of expertise in mathematical applications for forecasting economic developments (e.g., log normal distribution, differential geometry procedures, models based on simultaneous equations applied to the

economy, GARCH volatility, etc.); determinants of economic and social cohesion; the central energy block of the Dobrescu macromodel of the Romanian economy. Also, the participants presented their notable experience in endogenous innovation as well as in the GDP oscillating dynamics during the 2008-2013 economic crises.

9. Conference Section 7: “Prevention of high-risk phenomena on a national scale” consisted of 6 papers, from aspects concerning the risk management in Romania and some good practice guides in the matter to the role of strategies in preventing child and adolescent obesity. The participants discussed the risk the Romanian agriculture faces in the absence of hydro improvements versus climate change as well as the monitoring of earth instability in areas of high seismic risk.

10. Conference Section 8 “Romania’s economy and the euro system” consisted of 5 papers on Romania’s economic convergence for the euro adoption, the public debt and factors of influence – including scenarios – on the euro governance sustainability for limited and unlimited periods of time. The opinions on the opportunity of approaching issues concerning the adoption of a universal currency were highly appreciated.

11. Conference Section 9: “Regional development in Romania” included 6 papers on recent preoccupations regarding the country’s administrative division for a decentralisation based on economic regionalisation of Romania. Special attention was paid to the approaches to the assessment of territorial disparities in health care services and to the determinants of wage gaps at the territorial and regional level. The presentation of the demographic trends by regions of Romania was highly appreciated.

Six papers were presented.

12. Conference Section 10: “Romania’s natural resources. Evaluation, preservation, exploitation, efficiency” consisted of 5 papers focused on the ecological and economic assessment of the quality of natural resources. They included scenarios of the management of low-voltage power distribution, studies on renewable energy resources in Romania and Poland as well as opinions on the shale gas exploitation in Romania and worldwide.

13. Conference Section 11: “Economy and Culture” included 12 papers on issues concerning economic education and not only. The papers on the consolidation of fiscal culture in Romania, the inclusion of the youths in foreign companies in relation to the access to managerial and organisational culture were highly appreciated. The participants appreciated also the papers on creative towns and urban regeneration as well as those on education as a means of action against corruption or unhealthy food. Another original approach covered the relation between economy and religion as well the paper on history of European civilisations.

14. Conference Section 12: “World economy under structural changes” revealed the experience of the specialized institute pertaining to the NIER network. This was one of the most attended sections. The participants presented themes concerning the world, European and national dialogue as well as trends in world economy and international trade, theories of the role of growth poles in economic integration, processes of integration into the modern society – local and global dialectics, consequences of foreign direct investment for the SMEs. As regards the new poles of economic power in the world, the researchers had discussions about global polarisation, BRIC challenges, and economic convergence in relation to macroeconomic disequilibrium.

15. Conference Section 13: “Innovative bio-eco-economy” focused on bio-economy integrated with biodiversity for innovative bio-eco-strategies. 14 papers were presented. They could be related to ideas advanced by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, an American scientist of Romanian origin, father of bio-economy who formulated the theory of the connection between entropy and economy, continued by Lester Brown in the last decade of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

The papers presented by Romanian, Hungarian and Austrian authors captured the attention of the attendance, just as in the other twelve sections, by the holistic approach to bio-economy and eco-economy, from *Fiat panis* to *Habemus panem*, based on agriaquafood biopower. The Romanian scientist Grigore Antipa was mentioned for his economic-innovative experiments in the aqua-Pontic system. Then the traceability of products of animal origin, the economic mark and its economic cost and case studies in the Romanian area of interest were also discussed.

4. Conclusions

The Scientific Board of ESPERA 2013 appreciates that the scientific meeting held in the Romanian Academy - The “Costin C. Kirițescu” National Institute for Economic Research was a real success.

The wide range of themes reveals the NIER’s potential as an important institute for fundamental research in Romania, which makes the conference be not only scientifically credible but also open to possible European and global breakthrough.

Then a double blind-review followed for the evaluation of all papers by the Editorial Review Committee Members and other experts, so that the most valuable and original papers be promoted among the international scientific community and then published by *Procedia – Economics and Finance*, an international Elsevier journal hosted by Science Direct, which is indexed in

Scopus and it will be further submitted for evaluation and inclusion in the Conference Proceedings Citation Index by Thomson Reuters.

The papers which are not included in *Procedia – Economics and Finance* by Elsevier will be published in NIER working papers, indexed RePEc international database.

At the same time, the Organisation Committee authorized the Centre for Economic Information and Documentation of the Romanian Academy to ensure the organisational framework for the 2014 Conference. For this purpose, we seek partners from the academic community to identify available space (for scheduling reasons) in October and November 2014 for the ESPERA 2014 Conference.