

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURES RELATED TO ACTIVE LABOR MARKET POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

In the present paper are analyzed the expenditures related to the active policies of the labor market. Each country annually allocates financial resources for ALMPs that aim to reduce unemployment at the national level. In this context, each country can allocate financial resources to different ALMP programs, depending on how it has proven its effectiveness over time. In addition to reducing unemployment, ALMPs can also help solve some social problems. ALMP expenditures related to GDP is the indicator that reflects the volume of financing of various programs that aim to reduce unemployment and increase employment. The Public Employment Service is the institution that manages the financial resources intended for ALMPs, the beneficiaries of which can be both the unemployed and the employers. In this context, employers are a main player of the labor market that can benefit from financial resources, through various programs, in exchange for keeping employees in the organization, or hiring unemployed people, or through their participation in the vocational training of the unemployed.

Methodologically, the expenditures of ALMPs were analyzed at the level of each EU member state, reflected by several indicators. The statistical data used in the research were extracted from the website of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Union.

Key words: labor market, unemployment, active labor market policies, ALMP expenditures, employers.

JEL Classification: J24; J48; J64; J68.

1. Introduction

ALMPs are widely used in the labor market with the aim of reducing unemployment and increasing the level of employment, especially through the inclusion of disadvantaged people. At the same time, Crépon and van den Berg (2016) argue that ALMPs are used to improve the outcomes of the unemployed on the labor market, by attracting them into the employment sphere [26]. At the same time, Koning and Peers (2007) argue that the most important, in the process of evaluating active measures on the labor market, should be the response of the participant expressed by higher chances of finding a job [26]. That is why it is important to analyze the impact of ALMPs on labour market behaviour, expressed in terms of effectiveness and customer satisfaction. It should also be noted that the performance of ALMPs on the labor market depends on the amount of resources allocated in this process. In this case, we take into account both financial and human resources. In this paper we will focus only on the financial resources allocated for ALMPs.

However, one of the main motivations behind the development of ALMPs was the transformation of modern labor markets (Sage, 2015). In this context, ALMPs are presented as an economic „remedy” that aims to: balance budgets, reduce social security expenditures, limit inflation, improve skills, increase flexibility and reduce in-work poverty (Daguerre & Etherington 2009).

Over time, many authors have analyzed government expenditures on ALMPs, including how they manifest under different economic shocks. Some OECD research (2011) shows that countries that spent less on ALMPs experienced higher increase in unemployment compared to countries that spent more.

Some authors have analyzed the expenditures related to ALMPs in relation to the evolution of unemployment in the respective countries. Thus, Hur (2019) analyzes whether countries with higher spending on ALMPs before the crisis showed more resilience in terms of unemployment levels compared to countries with lower spending for this purpose. Assessing the impact of active labor market policies on reducing the unemployment rate, Hur (2019) suggests that active labor market investments made countries more resilient during the 2008 economic crisis and helped citizens adapt to the unexpected crisis.

ALMPs is a means of overcoming structural imbalances in the labor market by adjusting the structure of labor supply to demand (Calmfors & Skedinger, 1995). Beyond the economic aspect, ALMPs can contribute to improving subjective well-being, physical health and social capital, a hypothesis supported by several researchers (Anderson 2009; Sage 2013). Thus ALMPs were developed to address some of the harmful social effects of unemployment (Sage, 2015). According to Gregg (2008), these effects consist of: low social capital, poor physical health, low subjective well-being and life satisfaction, lack of personal autonomy and suspension of human capital development.

In this paper, we analyzed the expenditures related to ALMPs at the level of the EU member states in relation to GDP. We also looked at the expenditures of ALMPs, in comparison, for each program. In this regard, several indicators were calculated that also reflect the expenditures for an unemployed person.

2. The expenditures related to ALMPs

The level of expenditures related to labor market policies differs from one country to another: some allocate more financial resources to active policies, while others focus more on passive policies. The difference in spending on these policies is determined by the institutionalized patterns of different cultures and experiences (Calmfors & Driffill 1998; Kahn 2012). Analyzing the effectiveness of labor market policies, some authors argue that ALMPs have little effect on the unemployment rate (Baker et al., 2003; Bertola et al., 2007) and are not cost-effective (Betcherman et al., 2004). Even though ALMPs have been criticized, there are researchers who support them, noting that passive policies provide the unemployed with large benefits that reduce the willingness to work (Hur, 2019). ALMPs also lead to increased employment by improving labor market matching by setting incentives for improving job search assistance or expanding monitoring and skills development (Bassanini și Duval 2009; Murtin și Robin 2016). While most studies have been conducted to determine the impact of ALMP expenditures on the evolution of unemployment, Cvecic & Socolic (2018) analyzed the effects of government spending on youth unemployment.

Most developed welfare-oriented states use various ALMPs while reducing unemployment benefits. This phenomenon has been described as „a paradigm shift towards a job-based/employment-oriented welfare state” (Bonoli, 2011; Ko&Cho, 2017). The shift from financing passive to active labor market policies was aimed at involving more people in the labor market (Ko & Bae, 2020). Proponents of this paradigm urged that the government actively intervene in the labor market to expand employment, not just to support the incomes of the unemployed. Thus, government efforts to increase employment would help to solve not only the severe unemployment rate, but also the unsustainable problems in public finances (de Beer, 2007).

According to Janoski (1996), there are several factors that can influence the expenditures related to ALMPs. The author suggested a transversal institutional model of expenditures related to active labor market policies. Based on Janovski's model, Blazevic Buric & Mrnjavac (2017) grouped the multitude of factors that influence the expenditures related to ALMPs into three categories: economic, social and political. Economic factors include: unemployment rate, GDP, structure of the

unemployed, number of vacancies, inactivity rate, cost of labor, public expenditure and the ratio of jobs in the public and private sectors. Social factors, in turn, take into account: the social protection system, the expenditures related to passive labor market policies, the incidence of in-work poverty and inequalities. Political factors include: political party orientation, elections, international influences, power of trade unions and employment protection security index.

Jeong et al. (2012) showed that policies that promote the employment rate and productivity of human resources could have a robust circular relationship with the economic situation, which would then contribute to financial soundness (Bernard & Boucher, 2007). Also, Ko & Cho (2017) investigated the relationship between the effects of LMPs and financial performance, focusing on the quality of employment and the type of jobs created by government intervention. The authors found that the expansion of ALMPs contributed to strong financial performance by promoting employment.

Some authors have analyzed the impact of some ALMP programs on the evolution of employment. Evaluating the medium-term impact, some authors found that wage subsidies and vocational training programs lead to increased employment (Jacobson et al., 2005; Winter-Ebmer 2006; Lechner et al., 2009).

3. ALMP expenditures in the EU and Republic of Moldova

The volume of financial resources allocated to ALMPs differs from one country to another, depending on its level of development, as well as the spectrum of active policies implemented on the labor market. Thus, the more developed the country is, the greater is the volume of allocated financial resources. The reporting of financial resources related to active policies on the labor market to GDP is an indicator that reveals the level of financing of measures on the labor market at the level of each country. So, Figure 1 shows the share of expenditures related to active policies on the labor market in GDP. 2013 and 2019 were taken as reference years. In 2013, the highest level of unemployment was recorded in most EU member states, and 2019 – includes the last available statistical data.

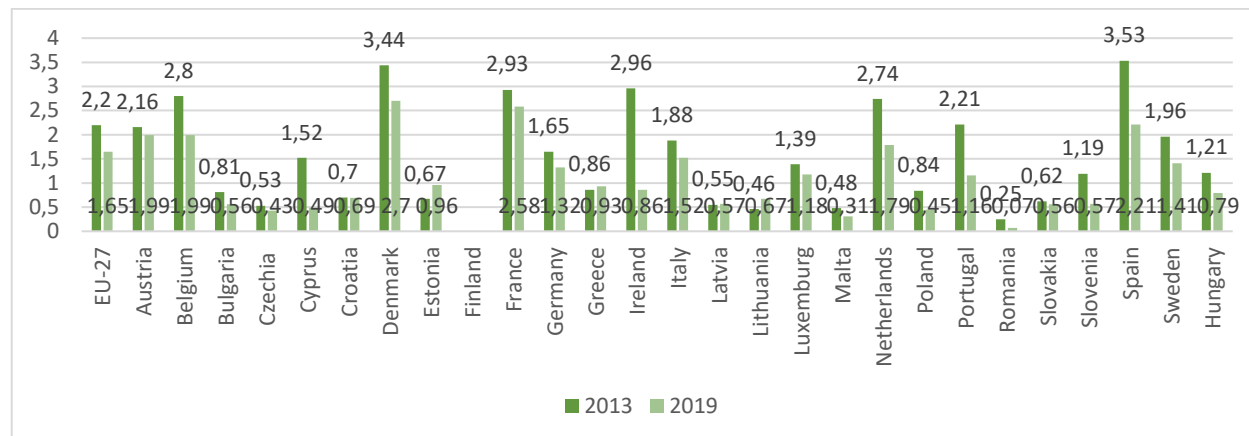


Figure 1. Share of expenditures related to active labor market policies in GDP in 2013 and 2019, %

Source: Elaborated by the author based on information from [15].

As can be seen from Figure 1, the share of expenditure related to active labor market policies in GDP, at the EU level, decreased from 2.2% in 2013 to 1.65% in 2019. The tendency to reduce expenses related to active labor market policies is valid for most of the EU member states, with the exception of Estonia which recorded, in this time period, an increase of almost 0.3% of them in GDP, Lithuania – 0, 21%, Greece – 0.07% and Latvia – 0.02%. The gradual reduction of the share of expenditures for active labor market policies in GDP can also be determined by the gradual reduction of the unemployment rate in the EU member states, the fact that less financial resources have been

allocated for unemployment benefits. The relative reduction of expenditures in GDP, during the analyzed period, does not mean that they were reduced in the same proportions and in absolute value, since GDP registered a constant increase in all EU member states.

At the same time, we observe a large gap between EU member states in terms of the share of expenditures related to active labor market policies in GDP. If in some EU member states, the share of expenditure for active labor market policies constituted more than 3.0% of GDP (Spain and Denmark), then in others they did not exceed 0.5% (Romania, Lithuania and Malta), in 2013. Following the constant reduction in spendings on active labor market policies, in 2019 they exceeded 2% of GDP only in Denmark, France and Spain.

As for the expenditures related to ALMPs in the Republic of Moldova, they are very small, which cannot cover all the measures practiced on the labor market. (Figure 2).

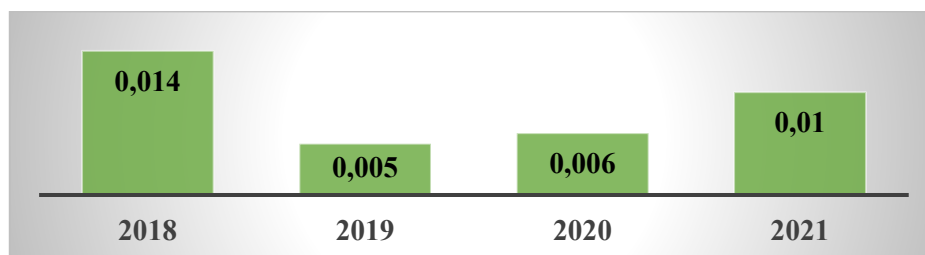


Figure 2. The share of expenditures related to active policies on the labor market in GDP in the Republic of Moldova, %

Source: Elaborated by the author based on NAE reports.

As can be seen from Figure 2, the expenses related to ALMPs in the Republic of Moldova are much lower, compared to those practiced in the EU member states. The share of expenditures allocated to ALMPs in GDP in the Republic of Moldova is more than 10 times lower, compared to that recorded in Romania, the country that has the lowest share of ALMP expenditure in GDP in relation to the other EU member states. At the same time, it should be noted that the expenditures in GDP reflected in Figure 2 refer only to the active measures implemented by the National Agency for Employment. The financial resources allocated for unemployment benefits are administered by the National Social Insurance House and are not included in Figure 2.

It is interesting what is the share of spendings in GDP for measures to activate the unemployed and those to ensure an income for people out of employment. That is why Figure 3 shows the share of expenditures for the activation of people looking for a job and those for the financial support of the unemployed.

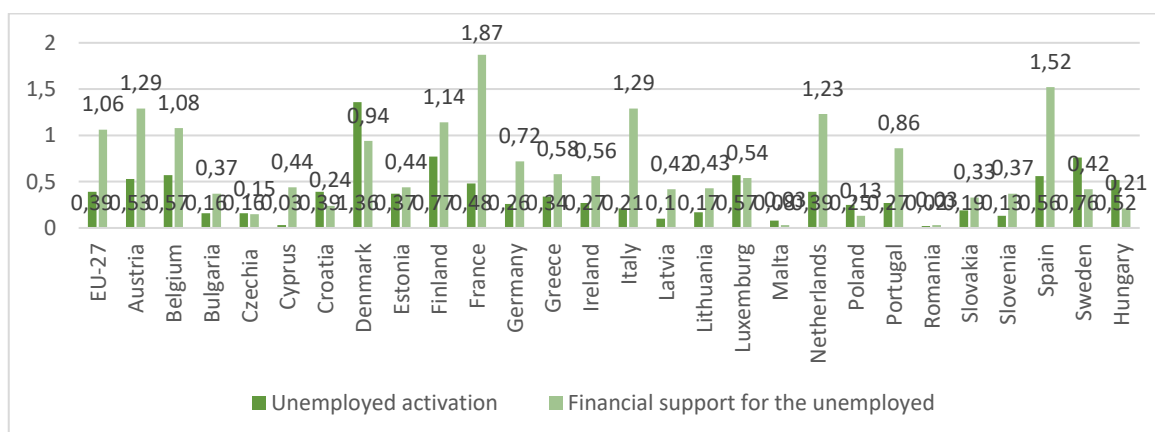


Figure 3. The share of expenditures for the activation and financial support of the unemployed in GDP in 2019, %

Source: Elaborated by the author based on information from [15].

Analyzing the way financial resources are directed in Figure 3, we find that most of them have as their objective the financial support of those who have lost their jobs. At the EU level, the financial resources allocated to support the unemployed were approximately 2.7 times higher than those allocated to their activation, in 2019. In Italy, this gap was 5 times larger, and in Latvia 4 times. At the same time, it should be noted that in some EU member states the financial resources allocated for the activation of the unemployed exceeded those related to financial support (Czechia, Croatia, Denmark, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Sweden and Hungary). This demonstrates the fact that some EU member states are more oriented towards those active measures that help the unemployed to return to the professional environment more quickly.

Although in Figure 3, we have shown the share of expenditures for measures to activate jobseekers in GDP, it is relevant to analyze their share in total expenditures related to active labor market policies. That's why, in Figure 4, we proposed this particular aspect as an objective.

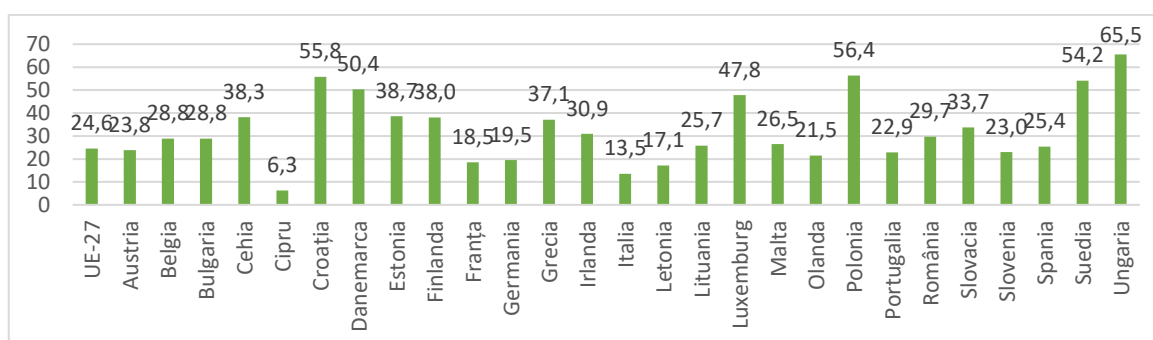


Figure 4. Share of expenditures for the activation of the unemployed in the total expenditures related to active labor market policies in 2019, %

Source: Elaborated by the author based on information from [15].

The information presented in Figure 4 proves that the share of spending on the activation of jobseekers differs from one country to another. At the EU level, they were almost a quarter of the total expenditure on active labor market policies. On a country-by-country basis, we find that they exceed spending on financial support for the unemployed in Croatia, Denmark, Poland, Sweden and Hungary. This demonstrates that the PESs in the respective countries are actively concerned with involving the unemployed in various measures so that their return to the professional environment occurs much faster. At the same time, we note that, in some countries, they do not exceed 20% of the total expenditures (Cyprus, France, Germany, Italy and Latvia).

If Figure 3 shows the share of expenditure for activation measures for the unemployed in the total expenditure, Table 1 shows the structure of expenditures for each measure.

Analyzing the information from Table 1, we notice that, in the case of vocational training, the highest spendings were borne by Austria (75.8%), Cyprus (75.3%) and Germany (71.0%), out of the total expenditures for the activation of the unemployed. In the case of employment incentives, we note that the most financial resources were allocated by: Romania (84.9%), Malta (83.8%) and Lithuania (68.4%). Job creation is another active policy promoted on the labor market. In this case, the most financial resources were allocated by Hungary (67.3%), Bulgaria (66.5%) and Greece (62.2%). Although, in the case of business creation, less financial resources were allocated at the EU level, the countries that stand out more in this chapter are: Croatia (31.3%), Spain (24.1%) and Poland (11.6%) from the total expenditures for the activation of the unemployed. The last measure presented in Table 1 relates to rehabilitation and supported employment. The countries that have allocated the most resources for this purpose are: the Czech Republic (79.2%), the Netherlands (78.2%), Denmark (71.2%) and Poland (60.1%).

Table 1. The structure of the expenditures of active measures on the labor market, in 2019

Countries	Total expenditure active measures, million euros	Inclusive:				
		The share of expenditures for vocational training in the total expenditures, %	The share of expenditures for stimulating employment in total expenditures, %	The share of expenditures for job creation in total expenditures, %	The share of expenditures for the creation of startups in the total expenditures, %	Share of expenditures for professional rehabilitation and assisted employment in the total expenditures, %
EU – 27	54 634,765	40,3	17,4	11,4	6,3	24,6
Austria	2 087,214	75,8	10,8	8,0	1,0	4,4
Belgium	2 734,380	29,3	39,0	7,4	0,1	24,2
Bulgaria	98,048	8,0	25,4	66,5	0,1	;
Czechia	365,496	1,7	7,3	11,7	0,1	79,2
Cyprus	6,948	75,3	20,2	;	0,2	4,2
Croatia	209,012	16,2	20,2	28,6	31,3	3,1
Denmark	4 252,110	16,2	12,6	;	;	71,2
Estonia	103,811	32,1	11,7	0,1	1,9	54,2
Finland	1 841,880	46,0	10,3	24,6	1,9	17,2
France	11 623,330	54,8	4,3	13,4	9,0	18,5
Germany	8 878,120	71,0	9,7	8,2	3,3	7,8
Greece	631,441	1,9	29,0	62,2	6,9	0
Ireland	942,318	39,7	6,5	50,3	0	3,5
Italy	3 669,950	61,6	34,1	0,9	0,2	3,2
Latvia	29,702	50,3	28,4	19,1	1,9	0,3
Lithuania	80,635	24,4	68,4	;	;	7,2
Luxemburg	359,298	31,8	62,8	4,5	0	0,9
Malta	11,068	7,8	83,8	1,0	1,0	6,4
Netherlands	3 122,450	14,6	7,2	;	;	78,2
Poland	1 350,920	1,9	23,3	3,1	11,6	60,1
Portugal	567,975	62,5	20,3	9,2	1,8	6,1
Romania	47,240	13,8	84,9	1,1	0,2	;
Slovakia	177,776	10,5	55,9	4,5	7,1	22,0
Slovenia	63,511	28,9	39,7	26,4	2,3	2,6
Spain	7 007,510	19,0	14,5	20,2	24,1	22,3
Sweden	3 616,810	8,1	60,5	;	0,6	30,8
Hungary	755,833	4,8	23,3	67,3	4,5	;

Source: Elaborated by the author based on information from [15].

The financial resources allocated for active labor market policies can be directed to both jobseekers and employers. Employers benefit from certain incentives for hiring especially disadvantaged people or for creating new jobs. That is why, in Figure 5, we have shown the share of financial resources granted to employers.

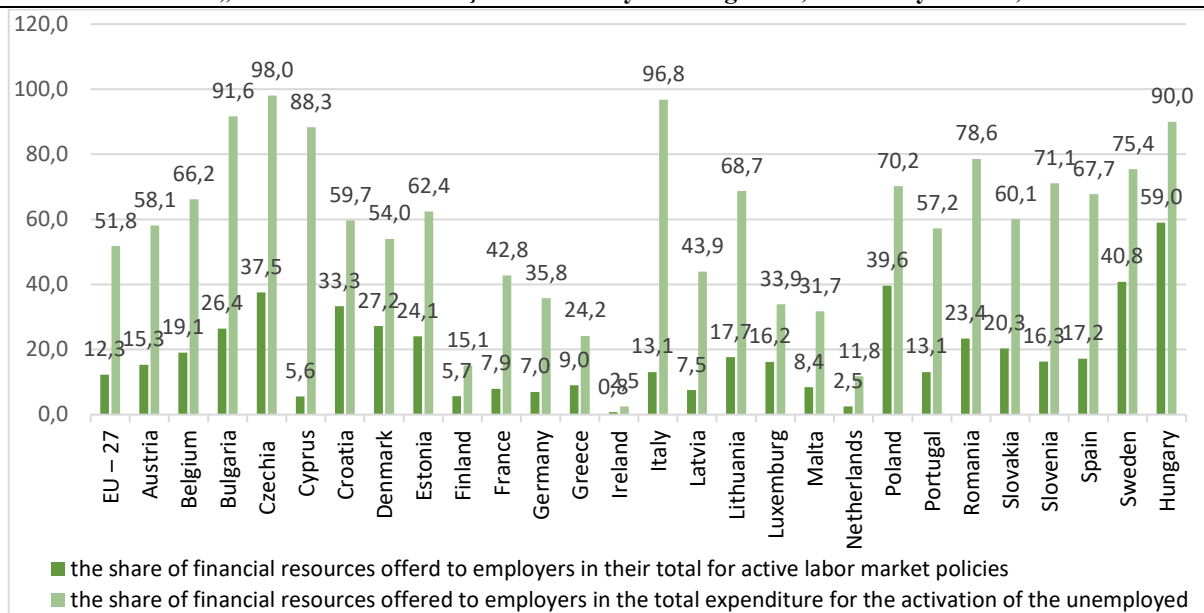


Figure 5. Share of financial resources offered to employers in 2019, %

Source: Elaborated by the author based on information from [15].

According to Figure 4, the share of financial resources allocated to employers in their total for active labor market policies differs from one country to another. At EU level, they constituted 12.3% in 2019. At the same time, we can easily note that in some EU member states, their share exceeded 40% of the total financial resources allocated to active labor market policies in Sweden and Hungary. At the opposite pole are Ireland and the Netherlands, where the financial resources allocated to employers constituted 0.8%, respectively – 2.5% of the total financial resources allocated for this purpose.

If we compare the financial resources offered to employers to those offered for measures to activate the unemployed, we find that organizations in many EU member states benefit from substantial incentives from the PES. Thus, in some EU member states, the share of financial resources offered to employers in the total financial resources for the activation of the unemployed exceeds 90% (Czech Republic, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary). This proves that in the above-mentioned countries most of the financial resources allocated for the activation of the unemployed are oriented towards employers. In such way, the government policies in the respective countries are oriented more towards the financial support of employers for the creation of new jobs or for the employment of disadvantaged people on the labor market, who are unemployed in the long term.

In the case of the Republic of Moldova, ALMP expenditures are not divided by measures or programs to analyze their share. This does not allow us to compare the costs of each ALMP program.

In order to obtain qualitative information on the use of financial resources, we reported the total expenditures related to active labor market policies for the population aged 15-64, the employed population aged 15-64 and the unemployed registered by the PES (Table 2). In this case, we referred to the population aged between 15 and 64 and the employed population of the same age group, as potential clients of PES. The financial resources allocated annually to a person, calculated by the authors, refer to the financing of all measures for the activation and support of people looking for a job, as well as those necessary for the maintenance and efficient administration of the PES or other government institution, responsible for this problem.

Table 2. Financial resources allocated annually to a person, in 2019

Countries	Total expenditures, mil. euros	Population aged 15-64, thousands of people	Employed population aged 15-64, thousands of people	Unemployed persons registered at PES, persons	Financial resources allocated annually, on average, to a person aged 15-64, euro	Financial resources allocated annually, on average, per employed person, euro	Financial resources allocated annually, on average, to an unemployed person registered at the PES, euro
EU – 27	229 867,040	284 913,8	194 848,8	...	806,8	1 179,8	...
Austria	7 917,652	5 819,1	4 280,2	301 328	1 360,6	1 849,8	26 275,9
Belgium	9 491,558	7 306,9	4 770,7	341 687	1 299,1	1 989,5	27 778,5
Bulgaria	340,136	4 474,1	3 136,3	185 266	76,0	108,4	1 835,9
Czechia	955,116	6 855,5	5 151,0	212 409	139,3	185,4	4 496,6
Cyprus	109,940	572,0	403,5	;	192,2	272,5	;
Croatia	374,57	2 658,0	1 649,6	128 650	140,9	227,1	2 911,5
Denmark	8 435,703	3 704,4	2 779,1	96 112	2 277,4	3 035,4	87 769,4
Estonia	268,496	842,2	634,1	32 126	318,8	423,4	8 357,6
Finland	4 843,46	3 409,5	2 487,0	240 381	1 420,6	1 947,5	20 149,1
France	62 674,234	40 730,3	26 710,9	3 591 776	1 538,8	2 346,4	17 449,4
Germany	45 469,364	53 545,0	41 065,1	2 266 720	849,2	1 107,2	20 059,5
Greece	1 701,358	6 770,6	3 824,6	1 016 275	251,3	444,8	1 674,1
Ireland	3 051,060	3 219,3	2 238,5	191 552	1 087,5	1 564,0	18 277,3
Italy	27 199,939	38 427,5	22 687,1	;	707,8	1 198,9	;
Latvia	173,339	1 204,0	870,3	56 858	144,0	199,2	3 048,6
Lithuania	313,297	1 814,4	1 324,3	144 898	172,7	236,6	2 162,2
Luxemburg	751,921	422,9	287,3	15 383	1 778,0	2 617,2	48 880,0
Malta	41,778	340,8	249,3	1 698	122,6	167,6	24 604,2
Netherlands	14 520,797	11 116,0	8 689,2	633 310	1 306,3	1 671,1	22 928,4
Poland	2 395,089	23 596,3	16 094 ,1	903 200	101,5	148,8	2 395,1
Portugal	2 481,482	6 603,4	4 652,9	314 627	375,8	533,3	7 887,0
Romania	158,892	12 774,2	8 407,9	266 124	12,4	18,9	597,1
Slovakia	527,647	3 718,1	2 543,8	259 318	141,9	207,4	2 034,7
Slovenia	276,449	1 349,7	969,7	74 178	204,8	285,1	3 726,8
Spain	27 562,955	30 909,0	19 567,9	3 148 752	891,7	1 408,6	8 753,6
Sweden	6 676,469	6 403,5	4 938,5	349 646	1 042,6	1 351,9	19 094,9
Hungary	1 154,339	6 327,1	4 436,0	250 947	182,4	260,2	4 599,9
Republic of Moldova	0,6	1 580,3	872,4	31,5	0,35	0,64	17,8

Source: Elaborated by the author based on information from [15].

Analyzing the information in Table 2, we note that at the EU level, in 2019, almost 230 billion euros were allocated. Referring to the population aged between 15 and 64, it follows that at EU level, annually were allocated 806,8 euros per person. At the same time, we find that this indicator is almost 2 300 euros in Denmark, almost 1 800 euros in Luxembourg and more than 1 500 euros in France. From the EU member states, Romania annually allocates the fewest financial resources to a person aged 15-64 (12,4 euros), followed by Bulgaria (76,0 euros) and Poland (101,5 euros). This situation

is also characteristic for the employed population aged 15-64 years. As for the financial resources allocated annually to an unemployed person, we find that they are the highest in Denmark (87 769,4 euros), followed by Luxembourg (48 880,0 euros), Belgium (27 778,5 euros) and Austria (26 275,9 euros). At the same time, the fewest financial resources allocated annually to an unemployed person were in Romania (5 97,1 euros), followed by Greece (1 674,1 euros) and Bulgaria (1 835,9 euros).

In the case of the Republic of Moldova, the financial resources allocated on average to an unemployed person registered at the PES were 17.8 euros, being more than 33 times lower than in Romania. Even if in the Republic of Moldova, in the following years, the financial resources allocated to ALMPs increased, they still remain at a very low level.

4. Conclusions

The implementation of active labor market policies depends, to a large extent, on the level of their financing. The investigations carried out demonstrate the fact that any measure implemented on the labor market must have financial coverage, that is, financial resources must be allocated for this purpose. In case of insufficient funding of active labor market policies, we will not achieve the effectiveness, set as an objective, and the labor market situation will not improve.

At the EU level, there are discrepancies between countries regarding the financial resources allocated to ALMPs. Thus, in 2019, there were countries that allocated more than 2% of the GDP to ALMPs (Denmark, France and Spain). At the same time, in some EU member states, their share was less than 0.5% of GDP (Cyprus, Malta, Poland and Romania). The Republic of Moldova is far from European practices regarding the financial resources allocated for ALMPs.

The research carried out shows that more than 50% of the financial resources allocated to ALMPs are directed towards those programs whose objective is to activate the unemployed (Croatia, Denmark, Poland, Sweden and Hungary). In most EU member states, the financial resources allocated to ALMPs are directed towards the payment of unemployment benefits.

Employers are the main beneficiaries of the financial resources allocated for the activation of the unemployed. The share of financial resources absorbed by employers in the total financial resources allocated for the activation of the unemployed is greater than 90% in such countries as: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy and Hungary. At the opposite pole are: the Netherlands, Ireland and Finland. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, there is no information on the financial resources absorbed by employers.

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