

THE EVOLUTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN HUNEDOARA COUNTY IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC CHANGES

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Abstract: The paper “Unemployment Dynamics in Hunedoara County in the Context of Economic Transformations” examines the evolution and fluctuations of the unemployment rate in Hunedoara County during the period 2013–2023. The study is based on official statistical data provided by the National Employment Agency, the National Institute of Statistics, as well as relevant regional economic reports. During the decade analyzed, Hunedoara County has gone through significant stages of economic transformation, moving from an economy strongly dependent on the extractive industry (coal, mining) to a more diversified economic structure, in which sectors such as information technology, tourism and agriculture stand out. The paper offers a comprehensive perspective on the relationship between economic transformations and unemployment dynamics in Hunedoara County, a territory with a historical industrial profile, in a continuous process of economic reconversion. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need to implement a coherent mix of public policies focused on diversifying the local economy, professional reconversion of the workforce and creating a framework favorable to the development of new industries, in order to support the integration of young people into the labor market and to stimulate the sustainable development of the county.

Key words: unemployment, dynamics, impact, labor market, transformation

INTRODUCTION

Hunedoara County is an administrative unit located in the central-western part of Romania, in the historical region of Transylvania. The county seat is the municipality of Deva. Hunedoara County is part of the West Development Region, and its seat is the municipality of Deva. The county covers an area of 7,063 km², representing approximately 2.9% of the territory of Romania.[17]

The relief is predominantly mountainous (approximately 68% of the area), represented by: the Southern Carpathians and the Western Carpathians. Between these mountains there are intramontane depressions and important hilly areas.

The hydrographic network is rich, the main river being the Mureș, which crosses the county from east to west. The county is notable for its numerous lakes, over 80 glacial lakes and anthropogenic lakes.

The climate is temperate-continental, with variations depending on altitude. In the mountainous areas it is wetter and cooler, with cold winters and unstable summers, while in the depressions it is warmer and drier.

The economic profile of Hunedoara County has historically been strongly influenced by heavy industry, especially the extractive, metallurgical and energy industries. Although, in the analyzed period, 2013-2023, significant transformations have been recorded, these sectors remain important, along with the development of other areas, such as services and manufacturing.

The characteristics of the key sectors, the extractive, metallurgical, energy industry and their evolution during the analyzed period are described as follows:

a) Extractive Industry:

- Characteristics: Hunedoara County is rich in various mineral resources. The main subsector was the exploitation of coal, especially hard coal from the Jiu Valley (Petroșani, Lupeni, Vulcan, Petrila, Aninoasa). Ferrous ores (Poiana Ruscă Mountains), gold-silver (Metaliferi Mountains), non-ferrous ores, bauxite, bentonite, dolomite, limestone, etc. were also exploited.

- Evolution during the period 2013-2023: This sector has experienced a significant decline, especially in terms of coal exploitation. The gradual closure of the mines in the Jiu Valley, for economic and environmental reasons, led to job losses and a reconfiguration of the local economic landscape. Statistical data indicate a significant decrease in the number of employees in the extractive industry during the period under review. However, the exploitation of other minerals (non-ferrous, construction materials) could have maintained some activity in this sector.

b) Metallurgical Industry:

- Characteristics: Hunedoara County has a long tradition in the metallurgical industry, centered on the Hunedoara Steel Plant (currently ArcelorMittal Hunedoara). This plant was a pillar of the local economy, producing billets for pipes, heavy and light profiles, reinforcing steel, wire and other steel products. In the past, it was an integrated industrial complex with a large number of employees.

- Evolution in the period 2013-2023: The metallurgical sector has undergone restructuring and modernization. Although ArcelorMittal Hunedoara has remained a major employer, production capacity and the number of employees have fluctuated depending on market conditions and investments. Other companies have also emerged in the metal processing sector. Statistical data could indicate a decrease in the total number of employees in metallurgy compared to past peak periods, but the sector remains significant for the county's economy, contributing to exports and the formation of local GDP.

c) Energy Industry:

- Characteristics: Hunedoara County has a significant capacity for electricity production, being even autonomous in this respect at regional level. This is based on both conventional sources (thermal power plants that used local coal, such as the Hunedoara Energy Complex with the Mintia and Paroșeni thermal power plants) and hydropower (numerous microhydropower plants).

- Evolution in the period 2013-2023: The energy sector has been subject to significant pressures related to the energy transition and decarbonization policies. The use of coal has become increasingly expensive and less attractive from an environmental point of view. The Hunedoara Energy Complex has gone through financial difficulties and restructuring processes. In parallel, there could have been an increase in the importance of renewable sources, although probably not to an extent that would compensate for the decline in coal-based production.

d) Service Sector:

- Characteristics: As in most modern economies, the service sector has become increasingly important in Hunedoara County. It includes a wide range of activities, such as: trade, transport, tourism, public services, financial services, IT, consulting services, etc.

- Evolution during 2013-2023: The service sector is expected to have grown during this period, partially offsetting the decline in heavy industry. Tourism has significant potential in Hunedoara, due to the natural landscapes (Retezat National Park, Țara Hațegului Dinosaur Geopark), historical remains (Sarmizegetusa Regia, Deva Citadel, Corvin Castle) and spa resorts (Geoagiu, Călan). Infrastructure development and tourism investments could have contributed to the growth of this subsector. There may also have been a development of information technology-related and other modern services.

e) Manufacturing Industry:

- Characteristics: This sector includes a variety of industrial activities that transform raw materials into finished products. In Hunedoara, subsectors such as the production of automotive parts and wiring, the wood and furniture industry, the food industry, the production of machinery and equipment, etc. could be present.

- Evolution in the period 2013-2023: The manufacturing industry is likely to have experienced a mixed evolution, with some subsectors growing (attracted by the skilled workforce and potentially lower costs) and others declining (related to the restructuring of heavy industry). Foreign direct investment in certain branches of the manufacturing industry could have played an important role.

The economic profile of Hunedoara County in the period 2013-2023 was marked by a transition from an economy dominated by heavy industry to a more diversified structure, with an increasing importance of services and certain branches of the manufacturing industry. The decline of the extractive sector and the restructuring of the energy and metallurgical sectors represented major challenges for the local labor market, influencing the evolution of unemployment.

The labor market in Hunedoara County faces a number of structural challenges, such as:

- *Historical dependence on heavy industry*: The economy of Hunedoara County has long been dependent on the extractive industry (coal), metallurgy and energy. The decline or restructuring of these sectors, as mentioned above, led to significant job losses, for which the local labor force was not always ready to quickly reorient itself to other areas.

- *Labor force qualifications and skills gap*: The labor force in the regions of former industrial centers may have qualifications specific to declining sectors, with a gap between the skills available and those required by growing sectors (services, IT, certain branches of manufacturing). The process of retraining and adapting to new labor market requirements can be slow and difficult for a part of the active population.

- *Infrastructure and connectivity*: Economic development and job creation are often linked to the quality of transport infrastructure (road, rail) and access to communication services (high-speed internet). Deficiencies in these areas can limit the attractiveness of the county for investment and hinder labor mobility.

- *Labor migration*: Migration, especially of young and highly qualified people to larger urban centers in the country or abroad, can lead to a “brain drain” and the aging of the labor force available in the county, affecting the long-term economic growth potential.

- *Slow pace of economic diversification*: Although progress has been made in diversifying the economy, the pace may not be sufficient to quickly compensate for losses in traditional sectors. Attracting investment in new, higher value-added sectors requires sustained efforts.

- *Social problems associated with industrial restructuring*: Mine closures and restructuring in large enterprises can generate significant social problems, such as long-term unemployment, depopulation of certain areas (especially the Jiu Valley) and the need for social and labor market reintegration programs.

Understanding these structural challenges is crucial to analyze the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara County and to identify effective strategies to stimulate employment and sustainable economic development in the region.

Knowledge of population dynamics, its probable evolution according to certain characteristics, especially the evolution of the employed population, is very important for the substantiation of socio-economic development programs.[1]

Also, given the evolution of demographic phenomena, low birth and fertility rates, as well as the aging of generations, the age structure of the population will change, in the

sense of reducing the number of young people and increasing the number of adults and elderly people.[19]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the context of economic changes, starting with the dependence on the extractive industry (coal, mining) and reaching an increasingly diversified economic sector, including areas such as IT, tourism and agriculture, the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara County has recorded considerable fluctuations in the period between 2013 and 2023. These changes have had a significant impact on the labor market, reflected in the fluctuating evolution of unemployment. However, the dynamics of unemployment in Hunedoara County during the period 2013–2023 has not been analyzed systematically enough in relation to these economic transformations. The lack of a clear assessment of existing trends and vulnerabilities makes it difficult to formulate effective employment policies. Among the research objectives of the paper, we mention the analysis of the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara County during the period 2013–2023, in the context of regional economic transformations, as well as the highlighting of the economic and structural factors that influenced the dynamics of unemployment. The formulation of relevant conclusions for the substantiation of public employment policies and sustainable economic development at the county level. The study is based on official statistical data from the National Employment Agency, the National Institute of Statistics, but also on the analysis of regional economic reports (2013-2023). The data analyzed are: number of unemployed, unemployment rate, number of registered unemployed, registered unemployment rate. Analyzing the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara is a practical necessity to understand the socio-economic realities of the county, to assess the impact of past transformations, to identify present vulnerabilities and to substantiate future decisions and policies in order to improve the employment situation and promote sustainable and inclusive economic development.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The employed population is the effective producer of goods and services necessary for the existence and functioning of the entire society. The employed population is determined by the evolution of economic phenomena and processes, but also by demographic evolution.[2]

In Hunedoara County, unemployment is the main cause of poverty for the population in the working age group. The risk of poverty for the unemployed is over five times higher than for those who have a job.[18]

The employed population in Hunedoara County registered a significant decrease during the analyzed period. Thus, in 2023, the employed population numbered 146.1 thousand people, of which 68.0 thousand were women, compared to 179.5 thousand people in 2013, of which 83.1 thousand were women. [4,6] This evolution reflects a reduction of approximately 33.4 thousand employed people over ten years, respectively a decrease of almost 19%, affecting both the male and female population. From the perspective of the evolution of unemployment, the period 2013–2023 is characterized, at the level of Hunedoara County, by a general trend of decrease in the number of registered unemployed and the unemployment rate, against the background of structural adjustments of the local economy and active employment policies. The evolution in 2023 can be associated with the slowdown in economic activity, macroeconomic uncertainties and difficulties encountered in absorbing the workforce laid off from sectors in transition, highlighting the persistence of structural vulnerabilities in the county's labor market. (Table 1)

Table 1.
Evolution of number of registered unemployed and unemployment rate in Hunedoara county

Specification	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of registered unemployed persons											
Total	14,476	12,467	11,339	11,339	7,898	5,830	5,157	5,736	6,231	6,170	7,062
Women	6,831	5,926	5,479	5,479	3,766	3,081	2,714	3,156	2,978	3,292	3,820
Recipients of the unemployment benefit (unemployed persons with work experience)											
Total	5,635	3,810	3,020	3,020	3,014	2,579	2,165	3,468	2,885	1,865	2,127
Women	2,385	1,723	1,549	1,549	1,359	1,419	1,212	1,927	1,266	1,044	1,140
Recipients of the unemployment benefit (unemployed persons without work experience)											
Total	1,292	801	591	591	234	203	203	224	133	141	123
Women	599	394	322	322	122	125	175	206	74	70	67
Unemployed persons who do not receive an unemployment benefit											
Total	7,549	7,856	7,728	7,728	4,650	3,048	2,789	2,044	3,213	4,164	4,812
Women	3,847	3,809	3,608	3,608	2,285	1,537	1,327	1,023	1,638	2,178	2,613
Unemployment rate (%)											
Total	7.5	6.6	6.1	6.1	4.5	3.4	3.0	3.4	4.0	4.0	4.5
Women	7.6	6.9	6.3	6.3	4.6	3.8	3.4	4.0	4.3	4.5	5.2

Source: Anuar Statistic județul Hunedoara 2017, 2020, 2024; Anuarul statistic al României, 2014-2024 [4-17]

Also, at the level of Hunedoara County, during the analyzed period 2013–2023, the number of registered unemployed by educational attainment exhibited a fluctuating trend, reflecting the structural changes occurring on the local labor market. Overall, the evolution is characterized by alternating phases of decline and increase: an initial period of decrease in the number of registered unemployed, followed by a subsequent increase, then another phase of decline, and, finally, a renewed increase observed in 2023. These fluctuations vary across educational categories, indicating differentiated capacities of labor market absorption depending on education level. (Table 2)

Table 2.
Evolution of registered unemployed people by educational level in Hunedoara county

Specification	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Recipients of the unemployment benefit (unemployed persons with work experience)											
Total	5,635	3,810	3,020	3,020	3,014	2,579	2,165	3,468	2,885	1,865	2,127
Primary, secondary, vocational education	2,948	2,041	1,529	1,529	1,461	1,309	1,175	1,720	1,358	881	948
High school and post high school	1,896	1,275	1,052	1,052	1,124	967	675	1,268	1,106	746	877
University	791	494	439	439	429	303	315	480	421	238	302
Recipients of the unemployment benefit (unemployed persons without work experience)											
Total	1,292	801	591	591	234	203	203	224	133	141	123
Primary, secondary, vocational education	12	36	27	27	14	-	0	-	16	30	27
High school and post high school	1,058	655	467	467	182	174	201	206	97	92	79
University	222	110	97	97	38	29	2	18	20	19	17
Unemployed persons who do not receive an unemployment benefit											
Total	7,549	7,856	7,728	7,728	4,650	3,048	2,789	2,044	3,213	4,164	4,812
Primary, secondary, vocational education	5,913	5,778	5,278	5,278	3,602	2,219	1,902	1,436	2,393	3,028	3,455
High school and post high school	1,359	1,712	1,991	1,991	844	653	678	517	685	966	1,137
University	277	366	459	459	204	176	209	91	135	170	220

Source: Anuar Statistic județul Hunedoara 2017, 2020, 2024; Anuarul statistic al României, 2014-2024 [4-17]

Individuals with lower levels of education were generally more vulnerable to unemployment, particularly in the context of industrial restructuring and the contraction of traditional sectors, while those with higher educational attainment displayed comparatively

greater adaptability to emerging economic activities. The increase recorded in 2023 suggests persistent mismatches between labor supply and demand, as well as challenges related to reskilling and the alignment of educational qualifications with the evolving requirements of the local economy.

The analysis of the possible causes of the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara County during the period 2013-2023 requires a detailed examination of the economic, political and demographic factors that shaped the local labor market.

The factors presented below do not act in isolation, but interact in a complex way. For example, the decline of the extractive industry was exacerbated by the lack of effective policies to reconversion and attract investment in alternative sectors. The economic crisis amplified the negative effects of industrial restructuring. Migration was partly determined by the lack of attractive employment opportunities in the county.

1. Decline of certain industrial sectors:

- **Extractive industry (coal):** The progressive closure of mines in the Jiu Valley was a major cause of the increase in unemployment in this area, with significant effects on the entire county. The lack of immediate employment alternatives for the thousands of laid-off miners led to structural unemployment.

- **Metallurgical and energy industry:** Restructuring, modernization and financial problems within large metallurgical and energy enterprises (dependent on coal) may have led to staff reductions and a slowdown in employment in these traditional sectors. Decarbonization pressures have affected the long-term viability of certain energy activities.

- **Lack of rapid economic diversification:** The slow pace of development of alternative sectors capable of absorbing the workforce laid off from declining industries has contributed to the persistence of unemployment.

2. Impact of economic crises:

- **COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021):** As at the national and global levels, the pandemic had a significant negative impact on the economy of Hunedoara County. The imposed restrictions, the temporary closure of businesses (especially in the HoReCa, tourism, services sectors), and economic uncertainty led to job losses and increased unemployment. The resumption of economic activity post-pandemic subsequently influenced the decrease in unemployment.

- **Global financial crisis (residual effects):** Although the main period of the crisis was earlier (2008-2009), its structural effects on the local economy (e.g., the solvency of some companies, the level of investments) could have persisted and influenced the evolution of unemployment in the analyzed period.

- **Energy crisis and inflation (after 2021):** Rising energy prices and high inflation could have negatively affected the competitiveness of companies, especially those in energy-intensive sectors, and could have generated uncertainty, influencing hiring decisions. The decrease in the purchasing power of the population could have reduced the demand for goods and services, indirectly affecting employment.

3. Government policies (national and local):

- **Active labor market policies:** The success or failure of vocational training, retraining, employment subsidies, and mediation services offered by County Employment Agency have influenced the ability of the unemployed to find a new job.

- **Economic development and investment attraction policies:** Government and local measures to stimulate investment, support entrepreneurship, and develop infrastructure have been able to influence the creation of new jobs.

- **Sectoral policies:** Government decisions regarding the mining sector (mine closure), the energy sector (transition to alternative sources), and other sectors important for the local economy have had a direct impact on employment.

- **Social policies (unemployment benefits, social assistance):** The level and conditions for granting unemployment benefits and other forms of social assistance can influence the duration of unemployment and the motivation to look for a job.

- **Tax policies:** Legislative changes regarding labor and profit taxation can influence hiring costs for companies and, implicitly, labor demand.

4. Demographic changes:

- **Labor migration:** The emigration of young and skilled people from the county to other regions of the country or abroad may have reduced the labor supply in certain sectors and contributed to the aging of the remaining active population.

- **Population aging:** The decline in birth rates and the increase in life expectancy have led to an aging of the active population, which may influence labor market dynamics and create pressure on pension and health systems.

- **Education level and qualifications:** The overall education level and qualifications available among the active population in the county influence its ability to adapt to the demands of a changing economy and to fill available jobs in growing sectors. Skills gaps may lead to structural unemployment.

The analysis of the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara must take into account this complex interaction of factors in order to provide a complete and nuanced picture of the causes of the phenomenon. The use of statistical and econometric methods can help quantify the relative impact of different factors on the unemployment rate.

The detailed analysis of the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara County in the context of economic changes (2013-2023) has significant practical implications for the development of effective employment and economic development policies at the local and regional levels. Here are some of the most important:

► **Economic diversification policies:**

- *The need to reduce dependence on declining sectors:* The results of the analysis can highlight the degree to which unemployment is concentrated in mono-industrial areas affected by the decline of the extractive, metallurgical or energy industries. This underlines the urgent need to diversify the local economy by attracting investment in sectors with growth potential (e.g., high value-added services, specialized tourism, creative industries, renewable energy, modern agriculture).

- *Identification of sectors with potential:* The study can identify economic sectors in Hunedoara County that have demonstrated resilience or growth during the analyzed period and that could be targeted for additional investment and support.

► **Locally tailored active labour market policies:**

- *Targeted retraining and vocational training programmes:* Analysis of the skills gap between the available workforce and the requirements of new economic sectors can inform the design of retraining and vocational training programmes specific to the needs of the local labour market. These programmes should be tailored to facilitate the transition of workers from declining sectors to new opportunities.

- *Stimulating labour mobility:* If the analysis indicates a concentration of unemployment in certain areas, policies should aim to facilitate the geographical mobility of the labour force through support for transport, housing or information on employment opportunities in other areas of the county or region.

- *Support for entrepreneurship and start-up creation:* Encouraging local entrepreneurship, especially in sectors with potential, through financing, mentoring and consultancy programmes, can generate new jobs and stimulate innovation.

► **Talent attraction and retention policies:**

- *Measures to combat skilled labor migration:* If demographic analysis indicates a significant emigration of young and highly qualified people, policies should focus on

creating an attractive economic and social environment to retain them in the region (e.g., career opportunities, competitive salaries, quality of life).

- *Attracting talent from other regions*: If there is a shortage of skilled labor in certain sectors, policies could aim to attract specialists from other areas of the country or even from abroad.

► **Infrastructure development policies:**

- *Strategic investments*: Analysis of the impact of infrastructure on investment and job creation can justify strategic investments in transport, energy, digital and social infrastructure to support economic development and improve the quality of life.

► **Active and efficient social policies:**

- *Modernization of employment services*: The results of the analysis may indicate the need to improve the services offered by County Employment Agency in terms of mediation, counseling and career guidance, adapting them to the specific needs of the unemployed in the county.

- *Support programs for vulnerable groups*: If the analysis identifies population groups with persistently high unemployment rates (e.g., long-term unemployed, people with low education levels), policies should target specific interventions to facilitate their reintegration into the labor market.

► **Cooperation and partnerships:**

- *Collaboration between local actors*: The development and effective implementation of policies requires close collaboration between local authorities, employment agencies, the business environment, educational institutions and civil society organizations.

- *Regional and national partnerships*: Accessing European and national funds for employment and economic development programs requires the development of solid projects and strategic partnerships.

► **Continuous monitoring and evaluation:**

- *The need for relevant indicators*: Establishing clear indicators to monitor the impact of implemented policies and periodically evaluating their effectiveness are essential for the continuous adjustment and improvement of interventions.

In conclusion, the rigorous analysis of the evolution of unemployment in Hunedoara County provides a solid factual basis for the development of well-informed employment and economic development policies, adapted to the local specifics and capable of responding to the structural challenges facing the region. The practical implications extend from economic diversification and retraining of the workforce to improving infrastructure and creating an environment conducive to investment and talent retention.

The essential priority of the human resources development strategy must be directed towards active employment policies, towards the creation of new jobs. In addition to the jobs offered by enterprises, other employment opportunities must be developed by initiating active employment policies for the unemployed.[3]

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of economic transformations and labor market developments in Hunedoara County highlights the persistence of significant structural vulnerabilities. The county's economy remains strongly influenced by traditional sectors, such as the extractive, metallurgical and energy industries, sectors that have experienced a sharp decline in recent decades. This structural dependence has contributed to the reduction of the employed

population, the emergence of imbalances on the labor market and difficulties in absorbing the redundant workforce.

At the same time, the empirical results indicate that the transition to a more diversified economic structure is uneven and insufficiently consolidated. Although there are emerging sectors with development potential – such as tourism, high value-added services, modern agriculture or renewable energy – they have not yet managed to fully compensate for job losses in declining industries.

Based on these findings, economic diversification and workforce retraining emerge as essential strategic directions for the revitalization of Hunedoara County and for reducing labor market vulnerabilities.

1. Economic diversification policies

Economic development strategies should aim to reduce dependence on traditional sectors and stimulate areas with sustainable growth potential, such as:

- *Tourism*, by capitalizing on natural and cultural heritage (Retezat National Park, Țara Hațegului Dinosaur Geopark, Corvin Castle, spa resorts), supported by investments in infrastructure, quality services and integrated tourism promotion.
- *High-value-added services*, including IT, consultancy and shared service centers, by creating a favorable environment for investments and developing digital infrastructure.
- *Modern manufacturing* industry, oriented towards competitive and highly processed activities, capable of capitalizing on the reskilled workforce.
- *Renewable energy*, by exploiting the potential of solar, wind, hydro and biomass, generating new jobs in installation, operation and maintenance activities.
- *Modern agriculture* and *food processing*, through investments in advanced technologies and the development of local value chains.

2. Retraining and adaptation policies for the workforce

To support economic diversification, employment policies must give priority to the retraining of the workforce from declining sectors. In this regard, it is recommended to:

- develop vocational training programs adapted to the requirements of new economic sectors, flexible and oriented towards skills required on the labor market;
- strengthen partnerships between AJOFM, educational institutions and private training providers, to increase the relevance of retraining programs;
- expand career guidance and counseling services, to facilitate the transition to new occupations;
- ensure adequate financial support for participation in training programs, including through national and European funds;
- promote learning at the workplace, through apprenticeship programs, internships and practical training.

Economic diversification and workforce retraining are interdependent processes, requiring a long-term strategic vision, institutional coordination and efficient resource allocation. Implementing coherent and integrated policies in these areas can contribute to building a more resilient, diversified county economy capable of providing sustainable employment opportunities, with a positive impact on the quality of life of the population in Hunedoara County.

The analysis of unemployment dynamics in Hunedoara County, in the context of economic transformations in the analyzed period, highlights the persistence of structural imbalances on the labor market. The county's economy continues to be marked by a significant dependence on traditional sectors, especially the extractive, metallurgical and energy industries, whose restructuring processes have generated significant job losses. Although some directions of economic diversification have emerged in recent years, these have not yet had a strong enough impact to fully compensate for the decline in

employment in traditional industries. The empirical results indicate that the transition to a more diversified economic structure is uneven and insufficiently consolidated, and the absorption capacity of the laid-off workforce remains limited. At the same time, there is a mismatch between the level and structure of the local workforce's skills and the requirements of emerging sectors, which contributes to the emergence of structural unemployment and difficulties in professional reintegration. These findings highlight the need for coherent and well-founded public interventions, aimed both at stimulating economic development and at adapting the workforce to the new realities of the labor market. In conclusion, the implementation of coherent and integrated policies in the field of economic diversification and workforce retraining can contribute to increasing the economic resilience of Hunedoara County, reducing structural unemployment and improving the quality of life of the population. Such a strategic approach is essential for ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development in the long term.

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