

Electronic Supplementary Material 2 – a brief comparison of Belgium and Romania

Structurally, the two countries differ on many categories, such as the form of government (federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy in Belgium, unitary semi-presidential republic in Romania), their area (Belgium is almost eight times smaller than Romania), or population density (more than four times denser in Belgium than in Romania). Romania is a former Eastern Bloc socialist country and a founding member of the Warsaw Pact, while Belgium is a Western European country, founding member of NATO. Although both countries are now part of the European Union (EU), Belgium plays a central role, being a founding member and hosting institutions such as the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the European Council, and the European Parliament, while Romania's role is more marginal, having only joined in 2007 and hosting no main European institutions.

From an economic standpoint, Belgium is a developed country, member of the eurozone, the EU single market and of the Schengen Area. By contrast, although a member of the EU single market, Romania is a developing country, not part of the Schengen Area or the eurozone, with a nominal gross domestic product per capita more than three times lower than Belgium's. With the 2007-2010 financial crisis over, Europe was left with a higher level of unemployment, measured on average at 9.7% in February 2010 compared to 6.8% in April 2008 (Casaux & Turrini, 2011). Between Q1 2012 and Q3 2013 unemployment rose in Belgium from 7.2% to 8.9%, while remaining relatively stable in Romania at around 7.5%, with low skilled workers seemingly affected more than the average in Belgium (13.7% in 2012), but not in Romania (7.6%), according to the European Commission (2013).

The Hofstede Insights Country Comparison (n.d.) displays important differences between the scores on power distance (Belgium, 65; Romania, 90), meaning that people in Romania tend to accept to a greater degree that a well-established hierarchical order exists, and everyone has a

certain place. In Romanian organizations this translates into a more obedient attitude and a preference for autocratic benevolent leadership, while in Belgium, even though the attitude toward managers can still be formal, control is considered expected, but not essential. Regarding individualism (Belgium, 75; Romania, 30), autonomy, focus on the task and private opinions would be more favoured in Belgium, than in Romania. Belgium's very high long-term orientation (82) should allow for an easier adaptation to changed conditions, compared to Romania's intermediate score (52). Finally, Belgium is listed as rather indulgent (52), compared to Romania (20), meaning that the same objective facts may be perceived through an optimistic lens in Belgium and a rather cynical and pessimistic one in Romania. The scores on uncertainty avoidance and masculinity are rather similar, meaning that both countries prefer having rules, security and aim toward reaching mutual agreements. The cultural aspects could affect the way in which employees perceive certain valued job features as being threatened. For example, resources at work such as autonomy might be more valuable in a rather individualistic country, whereas clear and firm directives from leaders might be preferred in a collectivistic society.

References

- Casaux, S., & Turrini, A. (2011). Post-crisis unemployment developments: US and EU approaching?, *ECFIN Economic Brief*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.2765/59743>
- Hofstede Insights Country Comparison. (n.d.). Hofstede Insights. Retrieved April 27, 2020, from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/belgium,romania/>