

From Policy Shifts to Career Shifts: How Political Changes Fuel Professional Reconversion in the Knowledge Economy

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Abstract. *Political shifts can occur in any country at any moment, and it can lead to different kinds of changes, such as employment disruptions. These kinds of changes can force employees to follow a different career path, make new choices and acquire different skills. This research investigates how the instabilities from the Romanian presidential elections affect the decisions of the employees in their professional and personal life. The actual situation in Romania needs more focused attention on professional retraining and on knowledge economy-based adaptation measures for making workers more prepared for the new professional market. In order to analyze these impacts of political instability on workforce adaptability, we have used a survey data collection. The uncertainties about the workplace stemming from political instability lead the employees to find other alternatives in terms of getting new skills and checking out other job offers. By its skills development features and the new emerging sector employment generation, the knowledge economy plays a vital role in professional transition routes. The research frames the need for the development of targeted national policies that enable workers in the adaptations to careers being supported by knowledge economy approaches, in order to reduce the impact of the political instabilities.*

Keywords: professional reconversion, workforce adaptability, political instability, knowledge economy, Romania.

Introduction

Professional reconversions can occur in different situations and from different reasons, either the need of learning new skills, either financial reasons or maybe simply psychological reasons. Political changes have such a complex impact on a day to day life of an employee that it can involve all those reasons and situations. In the knowledge economy field, when political shifts occur, the workforce and the economic policies are highly affected. Factors such as creativity, innovation and professional capital are affected which will further influence career progress.

When political news emerges, the risk of professional changes is very high. A new political leadership can introduce new ideologies, new laws that could restructure economies. When the new government may decide to invest more in other sectors, it is obvious that the shortages that the remaining sectors will suffer will create frustration and obsolescence among the professionals who remained in the sectors in which no investment was made.

Our study aims to search and to find out what is the influence of the political insecurities on reconversion in the knowledge economy field. More exactly, we have focused more on the following questions: How do political changes affect professional reconversion in the knowledge economy? And maybe find out what are the factors that help workforce adaptability. To answer these questions, we will share people's shared opinions and experiences before and after the possible political changes. The survey will allow us to dive into the perception of the employees that agreed to take part in this academic research. Our research combines the answers from our responses with a wide analysis of other studies made on the same topic. This research will use labour market data, articles highlighting policy changes, and we will investigate different cases of job mobility. These will help us find a connection between job mobility and policy change. The

results will be beneficial, because they will show professionals the advantages of professional mobility and perhaps these advantages will remain relevant during times of political change.

Literature review

Political Changes and Workforce Adaptation

Substantial political events directly cause workforce adaptation issues through changes in leadership and open leadership positions following elections. Unrelentingly uncertain political situations drive employees to conduct professional redeployment assessments as they do when facing private and public sector impacts (Martin-Russu, 2022). Researchers today can study the effects of political instability on organizational employee adaptability because of Romania's existing political situation. The political leadership changes and interrupted elections triggered a period of economic turmoil that destroyed several job sectors in Romania (Tulun, 2025). Dumitrescu (2024) explains that economic policies have trouble because political instability leads to industrial sector adjustments while driving workers to switch positions or sign up for training programs. Creative industries have a very important economic role in the European Union (Nistoreanu et al., 2017)

Government policies that alter financial sector budgets demand quick employee adaptability and organized workforce operations to succeed. Unstable political conditions in Romania have launched multiple employment law changes and created regulatory ambiguity that leads workers to remain unclear about their rights while seeking future career opportunities (Martin-Russu, 2022). Modern employees conduct training sessions to keep their employment status competitive within the changing employment landscape. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024), workers that work in the coal mine sector are facing a lot of difficulties in those times.

Most adults spend significant time engaging in work, and many contemporary societies are arguably 'employment centred' In such societies, work is the primary source of income for most people and is normative in the sociological sense, i.e. work is expected to be a central feature of day-to-day life, at least for normally functioning adults. However, technological advances such as the increasing sophistication of industrial robots, and the development of ever more sophisticated artificial intelligence, have led some to argue that we are on the cusp of a social revolution one where the contribution of human beings to economic production is no longer needed and, consequently, one where human work would cease to be performed, or at least, required. That said, very few have argued that work would disappear altogether, at least in the near future. Nonetheless, the sense that there is something different about current forms of technological innovations, and that this will lead to a radical re-shaping of the place of work in our social world, is not presented as mere fantasy. (Alfano, 2025)

What Hirsch further observed is that as economic growth proceeds, the number of goods that have positional aspects increases precisely because people's material wants are increasingly accessible; as society becomes more prosperous, consumers' ability to acquire positional goods remains largely unaffected. The reasons for this phenomenon are complex, but the plainest way to understand the dynamic is to note that a general increase in material prosperity simply translates into greater abundance (and thus affordability) of goods and services which are not positional and whose supply can thus be expanded. The relative price of positional goods and services will thus have a tendency to increase compared with non-positional ones as economic growth unfolds. (Alfano, 2025)

In times of ageing workforces, strategies to extend the working life gain in importance. Currently, early exit routes from employment are reduced in many countries as a reaction to the demographic change. Moreover, older workers are encouraged to work longer. While today more employers are promoting sustainable employability the responsibility for maintaining the employability still largely rests with the workers themselves. The rapid changes in today's labour market and working life bring about new needs for adjustment among older workers, to guard against risks for an increasing person–job misfit and earlier exit from working life. Active strategies to maintain or promote person–job fit, health, work ability, motivation and – subsequently – employment participation of older workers may be occupational changes.

Various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, economics and occupational health, deal with occupational change – all from their own perspective. (Garthe N., 2022)

Therefore, reviewing occupational change literature offers different understandings and operationalization of occupational changes. Three forms of occupational change may be differentiated: A change of profession, meaning a change from one profession to another, which is often accompanied by retraining or further education and may end in a changed professional identity. An example is a change from salesperson to bus driver. (Garthe N., 2022)

A change of employer, meaning a change from one employer to another, typically while continuing to practice the same profession. Depending on the discipline, researchers use alternative terms such as turnover, transition, (external) job mobility or career change. A change of work tasks, meaning a change of work tasks within the workplace without changing profession or employer, e.g. by adding, omitting or modifying tasks. (Garthe N., 2022)

Changes of profession have the potential to leave professions with characteristic high mental or physical work demands, such as roofing, construction work or nursing, and workers may change to professions with a less-demanding work content. In contrast, job factors more related to work organisation, such as the quality of leadership and of social relations at work, are approved drivers for employer changes, this includes work–family incompatibilities. (Garthe N., 2022)

Methodology

Our study tries to understand how political instability in a country such as Romania, can impact the professional reconversion tendency of the citizens throughout Romania's knowledge-based transformation. Our chosen methodology consists in a quantitative data collection realized through a GoogleForms survey that has been disseminated among specifically chosen respondents. This investigation type evaluates statistical data using direct personal studies.

Research Design

The research has used quantitative data collection, with a well-established survey formed by 10 questions and distributed to our 100 participants. Each question had options, making the process easy and fast for the respondents.

The obtained results will help us have a clearer vision on how a leadership change and interrupted electoral process can make workers more concerned and more interested to improve their knowledge economy and pursue professional development.

Quantitative Data Collection

A survey correctly structured is a good method and a useful instrument for obtaining numerical results, in our case, the numbers reflect the professional development of employees, while going through political and policy uncertainty. This data collection examines the impact of political

turbulence on professional careers. Our questionnaire consists on a number of 10 questions that focus on career transitions, professional retraining, opinions about unstable politics, and maybe obstacles to professional reconversion.

The questions in our survey have followed the Likert scales, this way we were able to determine the level of agreement or disagreement with statements that are related to career. As a standard method in social science research, the research approach lets us have an analysis of attitudes and trends (Fischer et al., 2023). For this research, the questionnaire was shared with employees from different economic domains, such as public administration, healthcare, technology, and manufacturing.

All that we have found through our research has to be transparent and respect integrity and also a proper treatment of the participants. Consent receipt was followed by each survey and interview participant receiving detailed explanations of study aims, as well as descriptions of research methods and possible risks (Dehankar & Das, 2024). It was possible for the survey participants to drop out of the study at any time before or after assessment completion without any negative effects.

Because researching the subject of job instability and political instability can maybe be a sensitive topic for the respondents, we have used ethical methods that would protect the participants from being stressed about the topic. We went step by step to make sure that the proposed policy recommendations were all right with theoretical frameworks and affordable in terms of workforce development program accessibility policies. The contribution of all the work done was made with the purpose of giving a further contribution to academic research and policy development, all this, listening with respect to the opinions of all people involved.

Results and discussions

As we have mentioned previously, our purpose is to learn more about the relationship between political instability and professional transformation in Romania, finding itself in a new knowledge economy. Useful data that we have collected from the survey gave us important knowledge about how employees feel about political instability and their vocational education approaches. A place that lacks political stability will be a place where employment is uncertain, this will lead to employees that have to start a new profession and that will need to emerge into a new knowledge economy.

For our research, we have created a survey formed by 10 questions. The survey has 100 respondents. All the questions have been specially designed with the purpose to help us get a clearer vision on how much impact political changes have on the professional choices of employees. The 10 questions are grouped strategically in different categories.

We start with the first category of questions, the demographic and the general information about our respondents. With this category, we will be able to differentiate our participant's background, and to sort our participants in different categories as well. Respondents with different perspectives, various professional domains and different lifestyles can give us more points of view and more details to analyse. More details can lead to a more complex result and closer to the truth.

Question 1: What is your current employment status?

We have chosen this question in order to determine if they work as a full-time employee, as a part-time or if they are self-employed or maybe not employed at all at the moment.

Results: We can observe in the bar chart below that the majority of the respondents have a full time job, more exactly 61% of the respondents. The time investment in such a job is much

more than for the others that tend to have more flexibility in their lives. Therefore, a professional reconversion would have even more impact on their lives.

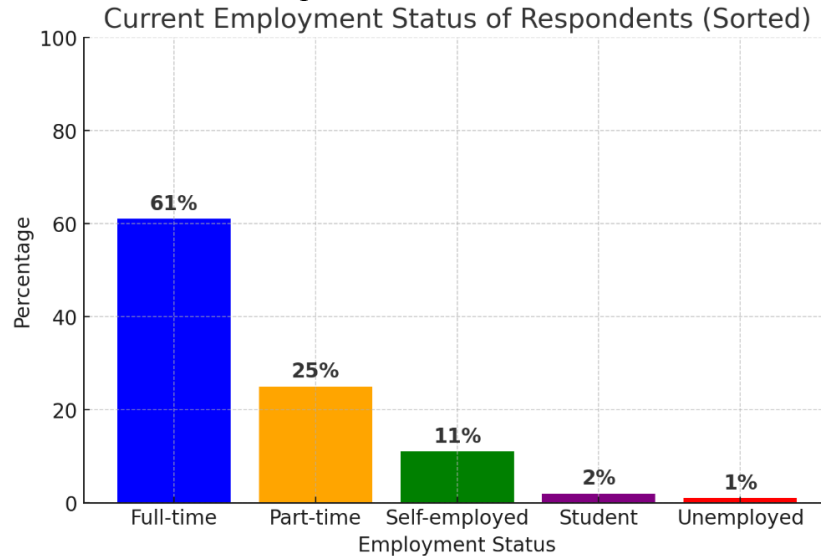


Figure 1. Employment Status

Source: Author's own research.

Question 2: Which sector do you work in?

With the information from this question, we can see which sectors were mostly affected by the political changes or which are more exposed. Those professional fields can change depending on the political situation, depending on the new laws that were given some industries or fields might not be influenced by political changes.

Results: After interpreting the results below, the private sector has the highest representation with 40% which means most of the respondents work in corporations for example. This is followed by the second largest respondents group, the public sector with 25% which means many respondents are government employees. The least selected option is other, selected by only 8% this captures people such as freelancers for example.

Sector	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Public sector	25	25%
Private sector	40	40%
Non-profit/NGO	15	15%
Academic/Research	12	12%
Other (specified)	8	8%
Total	100	100%

Figure 2. Employment Sector

Source: Author's own research.

Question 3: Please choose the age range where you find yourself.

With this question, we will divide the respondents into age groups. This is an important detail for our quantitative research, because we will be able to categorize the participants, which

age which generation is more influenced or more sensitive to those kinds of changes. Although maybe all the generations might be sensitive to political changes, not all of them will be willing to do a big career shift.

Results: The largest group is 25-34 years old (30%), suggesting that a big portion of respondents is in their early-to-mid career stages.

The second largest group is the 35-44 age group which is (25%), this shows that many mid-career employees have participated.

These two groups, 18-24 and 45-54 are represented equally (15%), therefore we have a balance between young professionals and the ones approaching senior career stages.

55+ (15%) shows a notable number of older professionals, possibly in leadership or nearing retirement.

Age Range	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18-24	15	15%
25-34	30	30%
35-44	25	25%
45-54	15	15%
55+	15	15%
Total	100	100%

Figure 3. Age range

Source: Author's own research.

Starting with question 4, we also start with a new category of questions, in this phase of the questionnaire we will check the perception of the political changes and their impact.

Question 4: How aware are you of recent political or policy changes affecting your industry?

It is important to know how invested and influenced our respondents are towards political movement. In some cases, employees do not show any interest in the political environment or they tend to be uninformed or maybe following the wrong sources of information.

Results: We can observe from the table below how many of our respondents are informed and we can see that the majority is represented by moderately aware with a percentage of 54%. This percentage shows that the respondents are mostly aware of how political changes affects their domain, although even being informed about political changes, we cannot estimate 100% the changes that a domain might suffer from this.

Awareness Level	Percentage
Not aware at all	2%
Slightly aware	11%
Moderately aware	54%
Very aware	27%
Extremely aware	6%

Figure 4. Awareness level

Source: Author's own research.

Question 5: Which political factor has influenced your career decisions the most?

With this question, we can get more insight about the reasons why employees tend to change their professional path. With the analysis that we obtain from the percentages, we can have a better understanding of which aspects of political manners are most impactful for professionals.

Results: We can observe from the table below, that the most influential response factor was political instability with more than a half of the responses 51%. As a secondary influence, we have policy changes with 23% of responses, this means almost a quarter of the professionals. The minimal impact is represented by other factors with only 6%.

The data obtained indicates that political instability is the biggest concern. This might show us that the employees in the knowledge economy prefer stability and predictability in governance when making career decisions. Those results can suggest that governments and policymakers would have to consider the risks that this political instability might bring to the workforce causing a market instability.

Political Factor	Percentage
Policy changes (e.g., regulations, labor laws)	23%
Economic policy (e.g., tax changes, funding cuts)	20%
Political instability (e.g., government turnover)	51%
Other	6%

Figure 5. Political Factor

Source: Author's own research.

We have reached the part of the questionnaire that it is focused on career shifts and professional reconversion.

Question 6: In the past five years, have you considered a career change due to political or policy-related reasons?

With this question, we manage to see how much of an impact can political changes bring to an employee's life, if maybe they decide for the first time to do a professional reconversion due to political reasons.

Results: as we can see from the chart below, the majority of the respondents said yes, 63%. This can show the level of desire and worry of employees because of political changes.

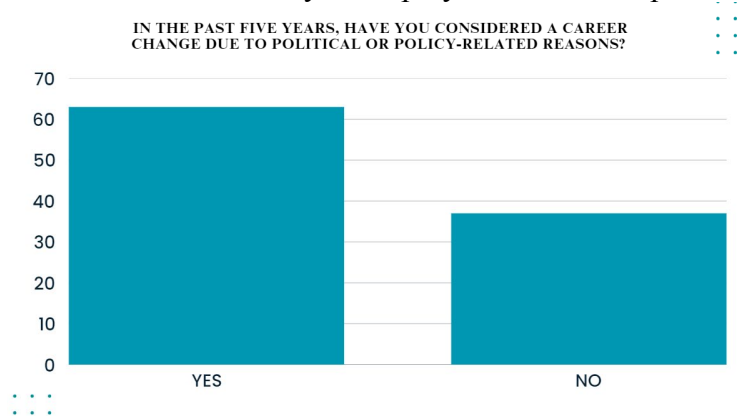


Figure 6. 5 years change

Source: Author's own research.

Question 7: How likely are you to pursue professional retraining or upskilling if political changes affect your current job? (1 = Not likely at all, 5 = Very likely)

With this question, we will determine the level of desire and openness of professionals to make a drastic change into their careers.

Results: We can observe from the table below that 30% the largest group selected 5, which indicates that a significant portion of the respondents are willing to make a professional retraining because of the political changes that might affect their jobs. The minority 25%, 15% selected 2 and 10% selected 1 meaning that this percentage of the respondents are resistant to pursuing a professional retraining.

Overall results for question 7, the majority 55% are proactive about retraining and upskilling when they face political complications and a smaller portion remains undecided. This shows us we need to raise a strong awareness of the importance of professional flexibility in actual job market.

Likelihood (1-5)	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1 - Not likely at all	10	10%
2	15	15%
3	20	20%
4	25	25%
5 - Very likely	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Figure 7. Likelihood

Source: Author's own research.

Question 8: Which type of professional adjustment have you made (or are considering) due to political changes?

With this question, we will determine what type of changes are the respondents ready to go through due to political shifts. We will be able to determine which the career adaption trends are, and it will help us understand if political changes force people to go toward new industries, entrepreneurship or a new knowledge economy in order to face the competition. If respondents will choose geographic relocation, it could mean that political uncertainty can lead to a migration in search for the lost stability and for more opportunities. Furthermore, this question explores the role of the knowledge economy and it provides interesting insights into career shifts.

Results: As seen from the table below, the most chosen option is geographic relocation with 40%, which unfortunately it means that political shifts may push people to move. The least chosen option is sector switching with 18%.

Professional Adjustment	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Sector switch (e.g., public to private)	18	18%
Geographic relocation	40	40%
Pursuing further education	22	22%
Freelancing or entrepreneurship	20	20%
Total	100	100%

Figure 8. Professional Adjustment

Source: Author's own research.

Reaching question 9, we will start a new category, a category that is focused on knowledge economy and further insights.

Question 9: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Political changes increase the need for adaptability in knowledge-based professions? (1 = Not likely at all, 5 = Very likely)

This question brings shows us the level of change can political shifts can bring to the knowledge economy, it brings up also the importance of it and how indispensable it is for the workforce.

Results: Percentages from the table below show us that significant parts of the respondents 43% have chosen strongly agree, this shows that the majority feel political changes increase the need for adaptability in knowledge-based professions.

Agreement Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1 - Strongly Disagree	5	5%
2	11	11%
3	14	14%
4	27	27%
5 - Strongly Agree	43	43%
Total	100	100%

Figure 9. Agreement level

Source: Author's own research.

Question 10: What resources would most help you navigate career changes related to political shifts?

The question helps identify what resources people feel they need to effectively adapt to political changes that affect their careers. Understanding these needs is crucial for the study, as it directly relates to how professionals are trying to mitigate or manage the challenges presented by political shifts.

Result:

Table 10. Resource Type

Resource Type	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Financial support (e.g., grants, subsidies)	31	31%
Training programs and certifications	24	24%
Networking opportunities	12	12%
Legal/policy guidance	33	33%
Total	100	100%

Source: author's own research.

Discussion

After interpreting the results, continuous political change can be tiring, economically and emotionally, and this can be sort of a barrier for the employees when they want to change, the directions are not clear and evolving in work uncertainty is difficult.

As Borotov & Orhangazi (2022) have mentioned in their research, if the political environment stays unstable, then the employees will encounter professional doubt, and will need to search for stability again, shifting from a profession to another. Of course, an unstable place makes employees fear and not feel safe about their current job, and so the desire of leaving their position comes up. (OECD, 2024) reported that economic instability along with political turbulence can change many work patterns. In in the constant evolving economies from the entire world, lack of leadership combined with stopped elections can affect and make some changes to employment policy structures and to labor market systems in a country such as Romania (Dumitrescu, 2024). This study contributes with valuable knowledge about employee political instability responses and opinions, by showing their pursuit of retraining options.

Employees that find themselves in changing political environments will find themselves in changing work fields, and therefore they need to learn by themselves and gain other certifications in order to keep up, based on (Taherdoost, 2021) research.

Because of the practical and applied orientation of this research, it is necessary that such studies be carried out regularly in order to periodically monitor the effectiveness of the Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage list and the additional measures taken along the way. (Glaser-Segura et al., 2018)

Conclusion

Political shifts can be desired or undesired, some happen caused by other international events and some happen when it is time for a reconversion. Change is needed in order to evolve or when the current situation is no longer beneficial. Even though change can cause uncertainty at first, little by little, elements will adapt, some sooner than the others. But when political uncertainty and change happens, it is not only a change of political power, but also administrative change, policy change, economical transitions that will affect people's way of living. Therefore, this continuous political turbulence can make people fear and have doubts about their current job.

What we have noticed from our research, is that even people that were not interested in the political topic, have started to become aware and more interested once the political system has

suffered changes and uncertainty. Why is that? Because their day-to-day life might be at the point of change, and so is their professional life. We have observed from our survey that people are more willing now to start a professional transition because of the political shifts.

For future research directions, future research needs to study how employed individuals in the knowledge-based fields maintain job stability with time and what employment barriers they face while transitioning. Through our research, we have managed to obtain valuable insights about how a professional transition can go, under the pressure of the political instability. Future research should continue to examine the professional transitions of employees after they were made. Also, very important, next studies should investigate how automation and artificial intelligence can maybe help employees in uncertain times like this, and not fear it will end certain professions.

As limitations of this study, for a wider perspective, a larger number of respondents 1000 rather than 100, would also have a huge impact on our results, along with using other academical programs for analysing the results statistically. Another limitation would be the sole focus only on Romania's political situation. Focusing on more countries could bring a very wide and interesting approach, especially when in 2025, many countries such as Poland or Serbia have found themselves in political uncertainty.

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