Work groups' cohesion in the county of Satu Mare: an empirical comparative analysis of employers' and employees' perception

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Abstract
The paper compares the views of employers and employees regarding the use of work cohesion instruments within companies from Satu Mare County. The comparison is based on data collected and processed within the project HURO/0901/264/2.2.2 implemented in partnership by "Vasile Goldiş" Western University and University of Debrecen and financed by European Union through ERDF under Hungary-Romania 2007-2013 Programme, in 2012, and on data collected and processed in 2013-2014, in a new field research applied to employees of 75 companies from Satu Mare County.
Key words: human resources, group cohesion, working conditions
JEL codes: J24**,** J28

Introduction

Managers became aware that enhancing and promoting the social skills of their employees could be a push factor for higher performance and contribution to the business success. Within organisations, people are working together and communicate in a productive, cooperative and satisfying way that meets expectations of all, employers and employees. The cohesiveness of work groups is seen as an impact factor on market performance and organisational climate.
The aim of the paper is to compare the views of employers and employees regarding the use of work cohesion instruments within the companies from Satu Mare County.
The paper is organized as follows: the conceptual aspects of the study are presented in the first section and the methodology is described in the second section. The main findings are exposed in the third section and the final section is dedicated to Conclusions.

1. Literature review and conceptual aspects

As general perception, group cohesion is the extent to which members of group express a desire to achieve common goals and group identity.
In the cohesion literature, researchers in psychology, sociology and human resources believe that cohesion is generated by a field of social binding forces that act on members to stay in the group (Festinger, 1950) and social and motivational forces that exist between group members create a bond or cohesion among them

and the stronger is that bond, the group perform better or is more productive. Presumably, when cohesion is strong, the group is motivated to perform well and is better able to coordinate activities for successful performance (Cartwright, 1968; Davis, 1969).

Cohesion is generally described as group members' inclination to forge social bonds, resulting in members sticking together and remaining united in its pursuit of goals and objectives (Carron, 1982) or the degree to which members are attracted to their team and their desire to remain in it (Hogg, 1992).

There is an abundant literature documenting the relation between group cohesion and performance.

Many researchers explored the group cohesion in relation with group performance and found a positive relationship between them (Evans and Dion, 1991; Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994; Mullen and Copper, 1994; Gully, Devine, and Whitney, 1995; Ostroff, 1993; Scullen, 1997; Oliver, Harman, Hoover, Hayes, & Pandhi, 1999; Carron, Colman, Wheeler, & Stevens, 2002, Stashevsky& Koslowsky, 2006).

Using meta-analysis, Evan &Dion (2012) examined 27 studies on group cohesion and performance and found, as above, that group cohesion and performance are positively related.

Some researches suggest that the cohesion-performance relationship is influenced by moderating variables such as group norms, organisational goals and oportunities for personal development and social skills enhancement.

Group cohesion was seen by several authors as influenced by the interpersonal skills of individuals and contributing to healthy organisational climate. Bambacas and Patrickson (2008) investigated and identified the interpersonal communication skills that enhance employee commitment to the organisation through a series of in-depth interviews with 32 senior HR managers. Clarke (2010) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and specific teamwork behaviours that are associated with transition, action and interpersonal team processes and found that emotional intelligence may be an important aspect of individual difference amongst team members that can contribute to team effectiveness. Barbuto et al (2010) found that personality and conflict management style have a mediating effect in the leadership effectiveness. Carrer success, social connectedness and self-esteem are associated with both psychosocial and physical well being (Leung et al.2011).

Some moderators of cohesion-performance relationship such as: group size, setting, team tenure, level of measure (group or aggregated level) were investigated by Castano et al. (2013) in a significant large number of studies (132).Theirs results showed that the task cohesion-performance is different in a sports setting from a business settings, with the latter showing a stronger effect.

Group cohesion influences directly and positively the group performance and quality of its work activity and it also proves that group structure analysis is the key for improving the degree of group cohesion (Vrânceanu, 2013).

For the purpose of the present study, the authors selected the following types of factors which contribute to the cohesiveness and loyalty of work groups: (i) monetary incentives, (ii) professional opportunities (career advancement, professional/personal development), (iii) enhance of social capital (social events), (iv) social benefits and (v) involvement in local policies. These factors are used in this work under the term of "cohesion instruments" at the disposal of employers:

(i) monetary incentives:
- supporting schooling fees;
- grant scholarships for the employees;
- covering the treatment costs of professional illness or work accidents;

(ii) professional opportunities:
- offering training opportunities to the employees;
- promoting the higher skilled labour force in the company's hierarchy;

(iii) enhance of social capital:
- organizing recreational and socialization events.

(iv) social benefits:
- facilitation of women insertion on the labour market;
- supporting the disadvantaged people;

(v) involvement in local policies:
- participation at local employment policies.

2. Methodology of the study

The study is based on data collected in two surveys. A first part of data was collected during the implementation of the project entitled "The impact of human capital quality on social and economic cohesion in the border area", HURO/0901/264/2.2.2 carried out by the "Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad in partnership with the University of Debrecen, co-financed by the European Union trough the ERDF under the 2007-2013 Hungary-Romania Cross Border Cooperation Programme. Within this project, a research was conducted by experts from the two universities regarding the human capital in the border area and its impact on economic and social development. The field component of this research included an inquiry based on a questionnaire applied to a number of 114 organisations from the counties of Satu Mare and Bihor. The questionnaire had 61 items regarding various aspects of human resources and their human capital in these organisations and was applied to ***employers*** from the target area. As follow-up of the project, another field research was conducted in 2013-2014 with the same instrument but addressed this time to the ***employees*** of Satu Mare County. They were coming from the same 75 companies interviewed in the first survey. The second part of the used data in the present paper is coming from this late survey.

The 75 surveyed companies located in Satu Mare are active in the following activity sectors (NACE 2): Agriculture, forestry and fishery(4,5%), Manufacturing (8%), Electricity (4%), Constructions (4%), Trade and car repair(3,5%), Transport and storage (5,5%), Hotels and hospitality services (3,5%), Informational and communicational technologies (ICT) (4%), Financial activities/insurances (3,5%)

scientific/technical activities(3,5%), Public administration, defence and social insurances(12%), Education (12%), Health and social assistance (6,5%), Arts and leisure(4%), Mining and quarrying (1%), Production/services for own consumption (8,5%), Other services (12%). 32% of the surveyed companies were small enterprises (5-9 employees) and 68% were small and medium.

For the purpose of the present study there were selected the items related to group cohesion. The question addressed to employers was: *How often do you use the following cohesion instruments?,* and to employees: *How often are used in your company the following cohesion instruments?* The answers were scaled on: *never, rarely and often*. The cohesion instruments are listed in the Table 1, column 1.

The data were processed by SPSS Software.

In order to verify if there is a significant difference between activity sectors regarding the frequency of using these instruments, in the view of employers and employees, the ANOVA test was used. In order to find out whether there is an significant association between respondents' answers and the status which they have on the labour market, the chi-square independence test was used.

3. Main findings

3.1. Differences in employers' and employees' perception

As we can see in the Table 1 and Figure 1, the general perception of employees regarding the frequency of cohesion instruments' use in their companies is lower than those of employers, but the difference is not notable (0,18 points). An explanation of this difference could consist of the different position in the company's hierarchy (coordinators against subordinates) and of the diversity of education and skills of employees. The highest gap is registered for the frequency of training opportunities (K5) followed by the possibility to be promoted in the company's hierarchy (K4). This leads us to the following conclusions: employees are not informed on all training and career advancing opportunities within their companies.

It is interesting to find that the frequency of training opportunities as instrument of work cohesion is the highest for employers as well as for employees. This suggests a high interest for this aspect of human capital development within companies from the target area (Satu Mare County).

Regarding the insertion of women on the labour market, the opinion difference is the lowest, employees and employers are thinking similarly on this issue.

Only in one case, the employees' evaluation is better than that of employers: scholarships offered by companies. This over assessment of employees could be generated by positive experiences of employees - responders, which have had benefit from their companies during training/skills-up-dating or similar cases. But it is to mention that this instrument is the less used in both perception, of employers and employees.

Table 1

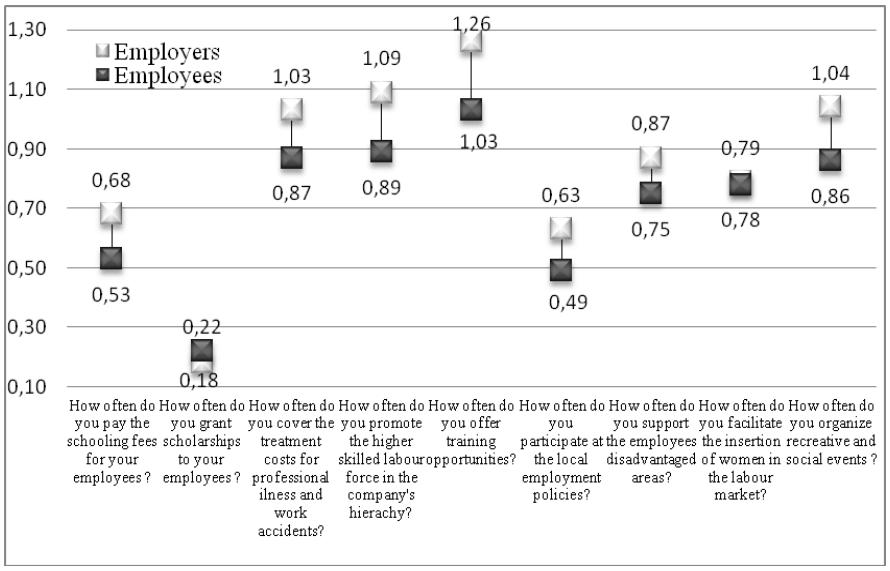
Mean scores of the frequency of using various cohesion instruments

Mean scores of:	***Mean scores*** *-employers-*	***Mean scores*** *-employees-*	***Gap*** *between employers and employees*
K1.How often the schooling fees are paid for employees?	0,68	0,53	**0,15**
K2.How often scholarships are granted to employees?	0,18	0,22	**-0,04**
K3.How often the treatment costs for professional illness and work accidents are covered by the company?	1,03	0,87	**0,16**
K4.How often the higher skilled labour force is promoted in the company's hierarchy?	1,09	0,89	**0,20**
K5.How often training opportunities are offered?	1,26	1,03	**0,23**
K6. How often the company does participate at the local employment policies?	0,63	0,49	**0,14**
K7. How often are supported the employees from disadvantaged areas?	0,87	0,75	**0,12**
K8. How often the insertion of women in the labour market is facilitated?	0,79	0,78	**0,01**
K9. How often recreative and social events are organized?	1,04	0,86	**0,18**

Source: authors' computation from SPSS Report

As we can notice in the Figure 1, the ranking of cohesion instruments according to their frequency of use is similar for employers and employees. Training and career advancing opportunities are placed in the first positions, followed by social events, insertion of women on the labour market, covering the schooling fees, participation at local employment policies and granting scholarships for employees.

Figure 1 Synoptic of employers' and employees' perception on the frequency of cohesion instruments' use



Source: authors' computation based on collected data

We use, further, the chi-square independence test in order to find out whether there is an association between respondents' answers and the status which they have on the labour market. The null hypothesis is that the variables are not associated: in other words, they are independent.

We note that, in the case of the chi-square test of independence, the number of degrees of freedom (df) is equal to the number of columns in the table minus one multiplied by the number of rows in the table minus one. We select $\alpha = 0{,}05$ and we find the critical value of $\chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5{,}99$, with df=(2-1)(3-1)=2.

According to the results displayed in the Table 2, perception of employers and employees are significantly associated regarding the career advancing and training opportunities (K4, K5), support for employees from disadvantaged areas (K7) and social events (K9).

Table 2

Results of chi-square test for the association between employers and employees' perception

K1.How often the schooling fees are paid for employees?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	55	38	19	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 4{,}43 < \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5{,}99$
Employees	138	57	31	**226**	
Total	**193**	**95**	**50**	**338**	

K2.How often scholarships are granted to employees?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	90	21	1	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 0{,}78 < \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5{,}99$
Employees	179	40	5	**224**	
Total	**269**	**61**	**6**	**336**	

K3.How often the treatment costs for professional illness and work accidents are covered?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	29	54	29	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 4{,}25 < \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5{,}99$
Employees	82	87	54	**223**	
Total	**111**	**141**	**83**	**335**	

K4. How often the higher skilled labour force is promoted in the company's hierarchy?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	26	45	41	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 7{,}38 > \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5{,}99$
Employees	82	77	59	**218**	
Total	**108**	**122**	**100**	**330**	

K5. How often training opportunities are offered?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	15	51	46	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 14{,}97 > \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5{,}99$
Employees	72	70	79	**221**	
Total	**87**	**121**	**125**	**333**	

K6. How often do you participate at the local employment policies?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	58	37	17	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 3,25 < \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5,99$
Employees	135	61	23	**219**	
Total	**193**	**98**	**40**	**331**	

K7. How often employees from disadvantaged areas are supported?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	33	55	24	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 15,34 > \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5,99$
Employees	107	63	51	**221**	
Total	**140**	**118**	**75**	**333**	

K8. How often the insertion of women in the labour market is facilitated?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	39	49	24	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 3,44 < \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5,99$
Employees	97	75	49	**221**	
Total	**136**	**124**	**73**	**333**	

K9. How often recreative and social events are organized?

	Never	Rarely	Often	Total	Significance of association between employers' and employees' perception
Employers	20	64	28	**112**	$\chi^2_{statistic} = 11,58 > \chi^2_{0,05;2} = 5,99$
Employees	79	95	47	**221**	
Total	**99**	**159**	**75**	**333**	

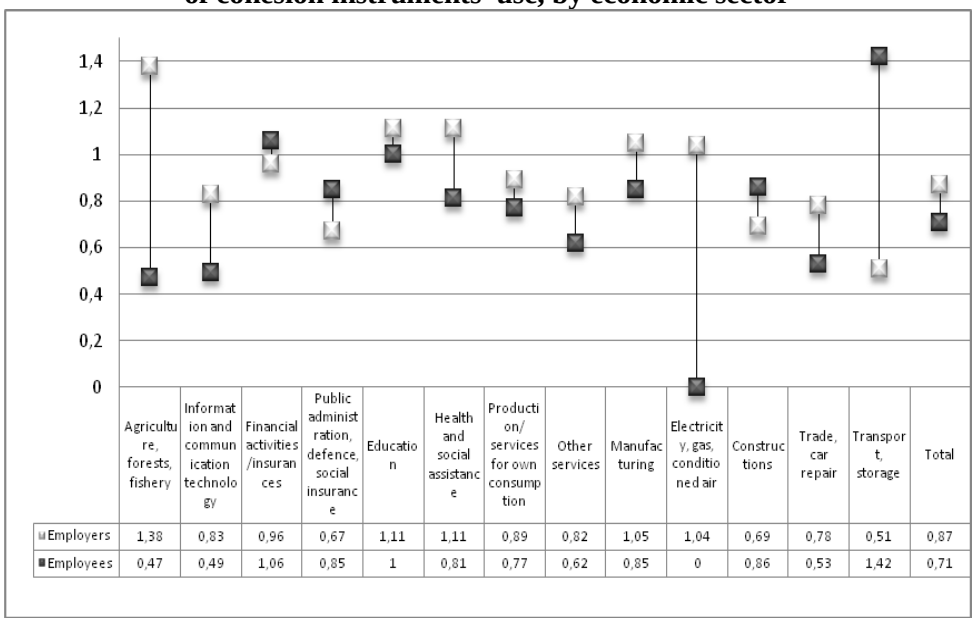
Source: authors' computation based on collected data

There is no significant association between employers and employees when we speak about the payment of employees' schooling fees (K1), scholarships granting (K2), medical costs covering (K3), contribution at local labour market policies (K6) and insertion of women on the labour market (K8) (Table 2). Their opinions on the use of these cohesion instruments are independent each from another. An explanation of this finding could consist of the different positions of employers, as payers, and employees, as beneficiaries of education and training and medical care costs.

3.2. Differences of employers' and employees' perception, by economic sector

The employers' and employees' perception does not follow a similar hierarchy ranking of the mean scores in various activity sectors. As we can see in the Figure 2, agriculture is placed on the first position by the employers while employees consider that in transport and storage the use of cohesion instrument is very intense. Public sectors (education, public administration) have mean scores higher than 1 in the employers' view, while employees under-evaluated these sectors. Employers' perception on the use of cohesion instruments is, mainly, higher than those of employees in all economy sectors, except financial activities and insurance, public administration and transport.

Figure 2 Synoptic of employers' and employees' perception on the frequency of cohesion instruments' use, by economic sector



	Agriculture, forests, fishery	Information and communication technology	Financial activities /insurances	Public administration, defence, social insurance	Education	Health and social assistance	Production/ services for own consumption	Other services	Manufacturing	Electricity, gas, conditioned air	Constructions	Trade, car repair	Transport, storage	Total
Employers	1,38	0,83	0,96	0,67	1,11	1,11	0,89	0,82	1,05	1,04	0,69	0,78	0,51	0,87
Employees	0,47	0,49	1,06	0,85	1	0,81	0,77	0,62	0,85	0	0,86	0,53	1,42	0,71

Source: authors' computation based on collected data

As we can notice in the Annex 1a, the use of cohesion instruments in the employers' opinion is very low in: scientific/technical activity, public administration, defence and social insurance, arts and leisure, mining and quarrying, constructions, transport and storage. The most used cohesion instrument is *K5-training opportunities* offered by companies and institutions mainly from education, health and social assistance and public administration, defence and social insurance sectors and the lowest valued cohesion instrument is *K2-granting scholarships to employees*.

In the employees' opinion (Annex 1b), the use of cohesion instruments is the most intensely in transport and storage, financial activities and insurances, public sectors (education, administration) and manufactures. The employers' opinion converges to that of employers when we refer to public sector (education, health, public administration, defence).

We intend to test if there is a significant difference between activity sectors regarding the frequency of using these instruments, in both of cases, employers and employees.

By using the ANOVA test (Annex 2) for employers data we notice that only in the case of K5 (training opportunities), K6 (participation at local employment policies), K7 (support for disadvantaged people) and K8 (facilitation of women insertion on the labour market) variables the variation among activity sectors is significant, for a significance threshold of 5% (Annex 2a). For other cohesion instruments, such as: grants and fees for employees' education and training, cover

of medical care costs, career advancing and training opportunities and social events, the activity sector is not important, they are used without a sector differentiation.

In the case of employees, all variables, except K1 (payment of schooling fees), are statistically associated with economic sectors (Annex 2b) meaning that the opinion of employees depends in a great measure of the economy sector where they are employed.

We can conclude that employers have an uniform behaviour in almost economic sectors when they decide to use education and training support for employees and social event as cohesion instruments within their companies, while employees perceive differently the use of these cohesion instruments, by economic sector.

5. Conclusions

The aim of the paper is to compare the views of employers and employees regarding the use of work cohesion instruments within the companies where they work and located in the Satu Mare County.

We found that the general perception of employees regarding the frequency of cohesion instruments' use in their companies is lower than those of employers, but the difference is not notable.

We found also, that the most valuated instrument of work cohesion by both responders, employers and employees, is the use of training opportunities. This suggests a high interest for this aspect of human capital development within companies from the target area (Satu Mare County).

The opinions of employers on the use of cohesion instruments related to cover employees' education and training costs or medical care costs are independent from the employees' vision. This could be explained by the different positions of employers, as payer, and employees, as beneficiary of education and training and medical care costs.

According to the above lines, the employees' expectations regarding the training and professional development within the companies where they are working are not met and the work cohesion instruments are not as effective as employers think. An unified vision on this issue it is be very difficult to be achieved due to antagonist position of employers and employees but due to their common interest highlighted by our survey, this will be possible.

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Annex 1. Data display: frequency of using cohesion instruments (mean scores) by activity sector

A - *employers*

Activity sector	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	Sector mean score
Agriculture, forests, fishery	1,4	0,4	1,8	1,4	1,4	1,2	1,8	1,6	1,4	**1,38**
Information and communication technology	1	0,5	0,5	1,5	1,5	0,5	0,5	0	1,5	**0,83**
Financial activities/insurances	0,67	0,5	1	1,5	1,67	0,83	0,5	1	1	**0,96**
Scientific/technical activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	**0,67**
Public administration, defence, social insurance	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	**0,67**
Education	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	1	2	**1,11**
Health and social assistance	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	2	**1,11**
Arts and leisure	0	0	1	1	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	1	**0,61**
Mining and quarrying	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	**0,56**
Production/ services for own consumption	1	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	**0,89**
Other services	0,75	0,08	0,92	1	1,42	0,5	0,75	0,75	1,17	**0,82**
Manufacturing	0,87	0,3	1,17	1,26	1,52	0,96	1,13	1,13	1,09	**1,05**
Electricity, gas, conditioned air	0,33	0	0,67	2	2	1	1	1	1,33	**1,04**
Constructions	0,56	0,22	1	0,78	0,78	0,22	1,11	0,78	0,78	**0,69**
Trade, car repair	0,71	0,18	0,89	0,96	1,14	0,46	0,86	0,75	1,07	**0,78**
Transport, storage	0,1	0	1	0,7	0,8	0,2	0,7	0,5	0,6	**0,51**
Hotels and hospitality services	0,75	0	0,75	1,75	1	0,75	1,5	1,5	0,75	**0,97**
Total	0,68	0,21	1	1,13	1,28	0,63	0,92	0,87	1,07	**0,87**

Source: SPSS report

B - *employees*

Activity sector	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	Sector mean score
Agriculture, forests, fishery	0,00	0,33	0,33	0,67	1,00	0,00	0,33	0,33	1,25	**0,47**
Information and communication technology	0,00	0,50	0,75	0,67	0,50	0,25	0,50	0,50	0,75	**0,49**
Financial activities/insurances	0,00	0,00	0,00	1,50	1,50	1,50	2,00	1,00	2,00	**1,06**
Support activities/services	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,50	1,00	**0,17**
Public administration, defence, social insurance	0,64	0,29	0,93	1,21	1,43	0,50	0,79	0,86	1,00	**0,85**
Education	0,33	0,00	0,42	1,36	1,73	0,83	1,33	1,33	1,67	**1,00**
Health and social assistance	0,42	0,08	0,83	1,17	1,67	0,75	0,58	1,00	0,83	**0,81**
House hold activities	0,00	0,00	2,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	**0,22**
Production/ services for own consumption	0,75	0,32	1,21	0,82	0,96	0,14	0,96	0,82	0,92	**0,77**
Other services	0,59	0,21	0,82	0,69	0,88	0,37	0,63	0,66	0,70	**0,62**
Manufacturing	0,56	0,06	1,21	1,00	1,16	0,83	1,00	0,89	0,94	**0,85**
Electricity, gas, conditioned air	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	**0,00**
Constructions	0,75	0,50	0,75	1,25	1,25	1,00	0,75	0,75	0,75	**0,86**
Trade, car repair	0,22	0,17	0,74	0,91	0,70	0,48	0,35	0,50	0,70	**0,53**
Transport, storage	1,00	0,88	1,38	1,88	1,75	1,38	1,50	1,88	1,13	**1,42**
Total	0,53	0,22	0,87	0,89	1,03	0,49	0,75	0,78	0,86	**0,71**

Source: SPSS report

Annex 2. Anova test - for the correlation between activity sector and cohesion instruments used by employers

A - *employers' view*

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
K1 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	10,783	16	,674	1,240	,253
	Within Groups		51,645	95	,544		
	Total		62,429	111			
K2 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	3,628	16	,227	1,294	,217
	Within Groups		16,649	95	,175		
	Total		20,277	111			
K3 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	8,384	16	,524	1,003	,460
	Within Groups		49,616	95	,522		
	Total		58,000	111			
K4 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	13,986	16	,874	1,628	,076
	Within Groups		51,005	95	,537		
	Total		64,991	111			
K5 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	14,146	16	,884	2,195	,010
	Within Groups		38,273	95	,403		
	Total		52,420	111			
K6 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	14,531	16	,908	1,898	,030
	Within Groups		45,460	95	,479		
	Total		59,991	111			
	Eta		0,492				
	Eta squared		0,242				
K7 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	14,701	16	,919	2,099	,014
	Within Groups		41,576	95	,438		
	Total		56,277	111			
K8 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	14,127	16	,883	1,790	,044
	Within Groups		46,864	95	,493		
	Total		60,991	111			
K9 * KS	Between Groups	(Combined)	9,006	16	,563	1,392	,162
	Within Groups		38,422	95	,404		
	Total		47,429	111			

B - *employees' view*

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
K1 * KS	Between Groups	10,366	15	,691	1,344	,178
	Within Groups	107,974	210	,514		
	Total	118,341	225			
K2 * KS	Between Groups	6,095	15	,406	1,977	,018
	Within Groups	42,744	208	,206		
	Total	48,839	223			
K3 * KS	Between Groups	17,500	15	1,167	2,100	,011
	Within Groups	114,984	207	,555		
	Total	132,484	222			
K4 * KS	Between Groups	22,089	15	1,473	2,554	,002
	Within Groups	116,484	202	,577		
	Total	138,573	217			
K5 * KS	Between Groups	28,767	15	1,918	3,222	,000
	Within Groups	122,011	205	,595		
	Total	150,778	220			
K6 * KS	Between Groups	20,419	15	1,361	3,441	,000
	Within Groups	80,302	203	,396		
	Total	100,721	218			

K7 * KS	Between Groups	23,041	15	1,536	2,607	,001
	Within Groups	120,769	205	,589		
	Total	143,810	220			
K8 * KS	Between Groups	20,129	15	1,342	2,383	,003
	Within Groups	115,445	205	,563		
	Total	135,575	220			
K9 * KS	Between Groups	17,439	15	1,163	2,293	,005
	Within Groups	103,927	205	,507		
	Total	121,367	220			

Source: SPSS report (ANOVA test using SPPS and based on data from Annex 1)
Note: K1-K9 are vectors of mean scores of the frequency of using cohesion instruments by activity sectors and KS is the vector of sector mean scores.