

# Achieving the Lisbon Goal: The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems

## Country Report: Romania

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## ACHIEVING THE LISBON GOALS: THE CONTRIBUTION OF VET

### THEME I: PROGRESS OF THE NATIONAL VET SYSTEMS TOWARDS MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF LISBON

#### 1. Strategies and Barriers for Improving the Status, Flexibility and Attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET)

##### □ *Recent developments*

With the extension of compulsory education to 10 years, (starting with the school-year 2003/04) major changes are being introduced in the structure of the initial vocational education and training (IVET) system (see, also, item 2). Aiming at improving the provision of education and increasing its attractiveness and flexibility, the changes will affect the curriculum, the finalizing conditions of various school pathways, the development of the social partnership etc. The implementation of these changes will be made with the major EU financial support (through the multi annual 2001, 2002, 2003 Phare Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programmes).

As the process is only at an early stage it is rather difficult to estimate its impact on the entire educational system. Provisional data provided by the Romanian authorities shows for instance an increase in the enrolments in vocational programmes by 10% in the school year 2003/04 compared to previous school year. But the increase was only 2.5% in the rural areas where the number of VET schools/specializations went up by almost 20%.

- **The development of vocational pathways as a prerequisite of an increasing attractiveness of and flexibility of the IVET system.** During the reference period of the present report, the amended Law on Education (Law no. 268/2003) has set up a new structure of the educational system (see the Annex). Compulsory education has been extended from 8 to 10 years and there are currently two pathways of compulsory education at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade: the lower cycle of high schools and the Arts and Trades Schools (ATS). In the school year 2003/04 about 50% of the enrolments at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade were in theoretical high schools, 43% in technological high schools and about 7% in other types of high schools (arts, sports, etc.). Many high school graduates pursue their studies in post-high school and higher education. The ATS is a product of a merger of the two previously existing vocational and apprenticeship schools. At the end of compulsory education (grade IX-X) ATS graduates can obtain a level 1 qualification. This qualification enables the holder to perform relatively simple work. A level 2 and 3 qualification that are more in demand on the labour market, will still need an additional one and three year further study after compulsory education<sup>1</sup>. The level 2 of qualification, which is awarded after grade XI, represents at the same time the “class de passage” towards level 3 for both routes (high school and vocational). Grades XII-XIII of the vocational route provide a level 3 qualification as well as an educational diploma (baccalaureate), the last one giving the right to access the higher education.
- **The development of a new IVET curriculum.** The new curriculum available only for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades (the last two years of compulsory education, all types of schools) is designed according to the vocational training standards and is based on transferable credits. The new curriculum embraces the development of core and vocational competencies including career orientation and entrepreneurial ones. This structure goes beyond the traditional pattern of vocational training, which limited training to speciality skills. The modular structure of the curriculum and its focus on broader skills, offers better guarantees for the increased quality of the vocational training and the graduates’ mobility on the labour market.
- **Improved strategic planning of the IVET provision** taking account of regional perspectives: The Regional Education Action Plans (REAP) help adjust the IVET provision for education to the labour force market demand and expand the graduates’ professional insertion opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Romanian vocational qualifications are based on the European five levels framework as defined in Council Decision of 85/368/EEC. A level 1 qualification enables the holder to perform relatively simple work. A level 2 qualification enables the holder to perform work, which may be independent within limits of the relevant techniques. A level 3 qualification enables the holder to perform chiefly technical work which can be performed independently and/or entail executive and coordination duties. A level 4 qualification covers a higher level of knowledge and of capabilities. It does not generally require mastery of the scientific bases of the various areas concerned. Such capabilities and knowledge make it possible in a generally autonomous or in an independent way to assume design and/or management and/or administrative responsibilities

- **The increasing role of social partnership structures.** As the evaluation of the training quality is a prerequisite for an improved quality of IVET graduates' an increasing role of the social partners is foreseen in the following areas: planning, development and validation of professional qualifications (the training offer), correlation of learning with the world of work.

□ ***Strengthening IVET as a main pillar***

The *Phare TVET Programme* (2001-2003), with its two main components — development of institutional capacity and investments — has as its general objectives the restructuring of the TVET system, the rehabilitation of the infrastructure, and the supply of up-to-date equipment for the educational units in the TVET system. The major goals of the programme include the updated vocational and technical curriculum, student-focused education, the development of the VET school environment with a view to ensuring the quality of education, attention to special needs students, and strengthening the role of the career counselling and orientation in VET school units.

□ ***Remaining barriers***

Difficulties however can hamper the implementation of these changes meant to improve VET quality and provision. Despite the fact that the legislation in force refers to the recognition of the skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, the system is not functional yet. Delays have been registered in the decentralisation of the system of education but with the implementation of the new funding system (by the amendments on the Education Law that passed in July 2004) the autonomy of the education units is expected to move an additional step forward without substantial re-arrangements. Another difficulty resides in the deficient development of functional mechanisms needed to monitor the professional progress/insertion of the VET graduates. Which results in the VET system's, hence the educational units', missing a valuable tool needed to regulate VET provision. In spite of EU and international support for IVET reform, the public investment in education has been structurally below the development needs of the system, although a national target of 4% GDP has been set in 1995.

## **2. Reducing the Numbers of Early School Leavers**

In 2003 the early school leavers rate in Romania was well above the EU-25 average at 23.2%. The participation rate of young people (aged 15-24) in education (all ISCED levels) in the school year 2000/01 was 42%, among the lower levels in Europe, with a deteriorating trend in recent years. Increasing the overall participation in education and especially in compulsory education is therefore an important priority for Romania.

□ ***Increased participation is a central theme in strategic documents***

The following key documents include references to Human Resource Development priorities in Romania:

**The National Development Plan (2004 – 2006)** identifies seven priority axes for intervention, among which one the most important one is fostering human resources potential. Within this axis, the document proposes five generic types of measures: implementation of active labour market policies and vocational training in order to increase employment; support provided to the most disadvantaged groups and delivery of actions for ensuring equal chances; support provided for lifelong learning; improving employability and entrepreneurial skills; specific actions targeted to support women.

An important role in promoting social inclusion policies will be played by the joint paper of Romanian Government and European Union – **Memorandum of social inclusion (JIM)**, document that will be adopted in the near future.

**The Strategy for the Development of Pre-university Education (2001-2004 revised in 2002).** The strategy includes prospects until 2010. The strategy aims at strengthening the links between schools and stakeholders from the wider world, in order to serve the needs of their communities. The document envisages that the competencies recommended by the European Commissions' Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and the "Detailed Work Programme on Education and Training

2010” be integrated in the national curriculum. The decisions were made at the end of 2002 with a phased implementation until 2007.

□ **Targeted measures to enhance the participation of disadvantaged groups and rural population**

With regard to **initial vocational education and training (IVET)**, the Romanian policy now aims to integrate the special needs and disadvantaged groups in regular education. Policies and special programmes for this purpose have started in 2002 and are implemented with the financial support of two Phare programmes (RO-0104-02 and RO2002/000-586.03.01) The programmes support regular schools in the provision of individualised training for special needs students.

The major steps related to the improved participation in education are being taken within the framework of the following **targeted programmes**: The *Access to Education of the Disadvantaged Groups* programme (2002-2004), focussed on the Roma population. The programme is implemented in 10 counties and will be extended in other 12-15 counties. The European Union Phare and the Government of Romania jointly finance the programme. The main objectives are: improving the quality of pre-school education, encouraging students to complete their basic education (prevention of early dropout) increasing participation in distance education as a second chance offered to those having failed to finish compulsory education.

The *Education in Rural Area* programme (2003-2009), jointly financed by the Government of Romania and the World Bank, envisages the improvement of the teaching – learning process in rural areas, the development of the partnership between the school and the community, as well as the development of the management, evaluation, and policy-making capacity. At present preparatory actions are being taken. The Romanian Government is offering 1000 scholarships for those students coming from the rural areas.

In addition, given the reduced participation in education of the Roma population (61.4% of the total Roma population aged 7-16 in 1998<sup>2</sup>), various **actions** were taken, such as:

- The subsidized study places expressly retained for Roma candidates to higher education have increased in numbers to about 400 places.
- General schools and teacher training colleges have set up classes/ groups for the instruction of the future teachers/institutors of Roma or other ethnic origin who will be working with Roma students;
- Each county school inspectorate has Roma school inspectors (of Roma origin or for Roma students);
- Starting with the 1998/1999 academic year, the Faculty of foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Bucharest set up a department for the study of the Romani language and literature;
- Beginner or refresher courses in the Romani language are being developed. The target group for this course is the qualified or non-qualified teaching staff of Roma or non-Roma ethnic origin;
- Syllabi, textbooks, and auxiliary material for the study of the Romani language, ethnic history, and traditions are prepared etc.

### 3. Increasing VET at Tertiary and Post-secondary Level

Formally there is no distinction between vocational and academic oriented programmes in universities. At the beginning of the 1990s, Romanian higher education experienced a series of significant changes, particularly in terms of student participation, university structure, and academic network.

In the first half of the decade, there was a significant increase in the numbers of students in higher education (ISCED 5-6). After having reached the demographic peak, the student numbers have

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<sup>2</sup> *Indicatori privind comunitățile de romi în România* [Indicators on Roma Communities in Romania]. Bucharest: Expert Publishing House, 2002.

become stable over the 1995-1998 period. In recent years, the numbers have been on the rise again, despite the demographic decline.

The higher participation in higher education was also favourably influenced by the **expansion of the network of higher education institutions**, especially following the **development of the private alternative**. At present, the expansion of the numbers of institutions is strictly regulated by the accreditation procedures based on quality criteria as stipulated by the dedicated Law 88/1993.

With reference to the instruction fields, the nineties witnessed a **decline in the weight of the technical and agricultural profiles** in favour of the Humanities, Economics, and Law. Similarly, Economics, Law, Philology and/or Theology also prevailed in the educational provision of the private institutions.

Following the establishment of university autonomy, admission to higher education has grown to be more flexible. Admission is based on the results obtained by the candidate at the Baccalaureate examination and each higher education institution has set up new selection criteria, in tune with the profile and specifications of the selected university route.

Tempus programme assisted in the development of short cycle of higher education and post-graduate courses that were especially aimed at the labour market. The programme also played an important role in aligning curricula in regulated professions.

#### □ **Changes following the Bologna Process**

The Bologna Process, where Romania is a founding country, has inspired the most important changes experienced by the higher education system. It is about the following actions:

- The designation of long- and short-term programmes, with the clear distinction made between Universities and Colleges, the latter being independent institutions or, more often than not, university-incorporated. Graduates of short-term higher education may continue their studies in long-term higher education by taking differentiation examinations with the recognition of already obtained study credits.
- Study programmes were much more accommodated with the provision of optional pathways and the gradual increase of the individual study time, simultaneously with the application of the ECTS, a process that started in the 1998-1999 academic year and continued over the following years.
- Starting with the 1998-1999 academic year, the system of open and distance education was introduced. The development of the institutional assessment and accreditation system, as well as of the internal and external evaluation of study programmes with a view to authorization and accreditation (National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation).

#### □ **A growing interest for post-secondary non-tertiary education**

It was also in the nineties that the system of Post High School and Foreman School system was set up. Both levels correspond to ISCED 4 (**post-secondary non-tertiary education**). Post High School studies last from 1 to 3 years and lead to level 3 of qualification (*technician*). The Foreman School also lead to a level 3 of qualification and the graduates can also work as instructors in the TVET schools. As previously mentioned the graduates of the Technical High Schools can also obtain the level 3 of qualification. Courses in Post High Schools are organised at the request of companies/enterprises or individuals, and, as such, the annual intake is not steady. This structure offers a fast and specialized vocational training, and thus contributes to the diversification of the post-secondary education offer.

#### □ **Recently reported progress on adjusting HE to the labour market**

According to the *Progress Report on the Joint Assessment Paper (JAP) on Employment Policy* Priorities agreed between the European Commission and Romanian Government in 2002, presented in May 2004 following one and a half year after *the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy (JAP)* the adjustment of the higher education system to the labour market demand has been making visible progress. The relevant steps in this direction are:

- A partnership between the Ministry of Education and Research, the National Agency for Employment and the Ministry of Labour has been initiated with a view to analysing the medium- and long-term needs for higher education training. The protocol signed by the two ministries and the agency is the foundation of future research on the labour market demand. Respecting the university autonomy, the content of the provision for education is the responsibility of the individual higher education institutions, with the exception of the minimum core curriculum for regulated medical and veterinary professions (regulated by GD 1477 of 2003, as per EU requirements).
- The ratification by the Government of the draft *Law on the Structure of Academic Studies* aims at facilitating the implementation of the Bologna Process recommendations. As such, it is envisaged to bring about a wider range of the educational provision and increased student and teaching staff mobility.

So far it is too early to make an assessment of the impact of these measures.

#### 4. Incentives for Updating Knowledge and Skills

##### □ **Main challenges**

Over the reference period of the present report, a series of structural malfunctions could be mentioned: the inadequate correlation of the supply and demand for training; an insufficiently developed provision for continuing education; the rather low interest in acquiring and using new skills at the workplace a deficient social encouragement of continuing education.

##### □ **New legislation on the funding of training and employers' obligations**

There are practically no financial incentives for continuing training in Romania actually in use for some time, so it is difficult to evaluate the impact of newly created incentives. Although the Adult Training Law (Law 375/2002) mentions VAT exemption for authorized providers of vocational training, the actual use of this facility is hampered due to technical constraints is still hampered by technical constraints. One of the most recent initiatives is the **Law 107/2004** amending **Law 76/2002** on unemployment compensation and stimulation of the labour force. With regard to employers who provide CVT for their employees (through accredited programmes delivered by authorized service providers), the law stipulates that up to 50 percent of the employer's costs for one annual training programme can be covered by the Unemployment Fund, if at least 20 percent of the personnel participates in such training. The amendment also mentions the free-of-charge services for the vocational training of: the unemployed; those working in rural areas without a monthly income (or an income lower than the unemployment compensation); persons having resumed activity following the end of the maternity leave; persons having finished military service or people whose period until the release from prison is less than 9 months.

Important from this perspective are also the new **Labour Code** (Law 52/2003) requirements, stipulating the employers' mandatory responsibility to ensure a constant access of the employees to training programs (at least one week every two years), based on company's training plans agreed with trade unions. However there are no legal actions foreseen against the employers who don't meet these obligations.

The government is exploring other means to stimulate the access to continuing training such as fiscal facilities. A fiscal facility (regulated by the GO 129/2000) provides for instance tax incentives such as the deduction from the profit tax (for companies) or income tax (for individuals) of the expenditures for training.

In terms of volume, EU funds are the most important incentive. The Phare programme's HRD scheme is preparing Romania for ESF type projects to support the training of employed and unemployed at a regional level. The 1997 HRD "Progress" programme was a pre-phase to the ESF type of projects of the 1998, 2000 and 2002 schemes. From 2004 onwards there will be a yearly grant scheme for CVT. Projects funded under the 2002 scheme will start in 2004.

##### □ **Strengthening the quality control of the CVT provision**

Adult training providers are being accredited since January 2004. Up to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2004, more than 200 training providers have been authorised (the majority are private providers), for almost 700 training programs. The applications for authorisation are increasing.

□ ***Working towards integrated strategies for CVT and Human Resource Development***

***The National Development Plan (NDP)*** for the period 2004-2006 (approved by the Romanian Government through Memorandum 1704/18-12-2003) provides for a precise set of medium-term priorities for IVET and CVT especially in the field of human resources, with a direct bearing on training of employees, unemployed and disadvantaged groups. The priorities are related to improving access in initial education especially in rural areas. It also addresses the provision of adult learning with special attention to public provision.

***The Document on the Phare Programme Planning over the period 2004-2006*** reflects to some degree the priorities mentioned by the Strategy on the Development of Human Resources in Romania (HRD) included in the NDP. It provides the basis for increased EU support for CVT in Romania. The document also pays due attention to the establishment of a national qualification framework as an important element of a more integrated HRD policy and to the support for the development National Qualification Authority. A wider recognition of learning can be an incentive, especially where it facilitates progression routes. .

***The Phare Twinning 2002 Project on Continuing Vocational Training (CVT)***, initiated at the beginning of 2004 by the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity, and Family (MLSSF), will review the current adult learning policies and the identification of new incentives toward the acquisition of new skills by employees. The project will support the institutional capacity building for CVT. Policy recommendations are expected to be available in the summer of 2004.

□ ***Contribution of VET to promoting the social inclusion***

The measures identified in the *National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE)* in 2002 and continued in 2003, including those concerning continuing vocational training (CVT), were also targeted at the disadvantaged groups on the labour market: women, young people, long-term unemployed, Roma ethnics, the handicapped, former detainees, graduates aged 18 and over from placement centres, unemployed persons from areas with a high unemployment rate, from mono-industrial and rural areas where the rate of the unemployed is higher than the average of the total able population at local and national level.

Most of the employment programmes organized by the County Employment Agencies (CEA) and addressing the vulnerable groups have been implemented. However, the targets in some categories (for example, Roma population, former detainees or post-institutionalised graduates aged 18) were rather modest. Target groups were also unemployed persons aged 45 and over, single family supporters, and the long-term unemployed receiving no compensation. In 2002, the last listed category represented 30 percent of the total unemployed that were included in training, conversion, and refresher courses.

Another relevant CEA initiative refers to the setting up, at each regional development level, of counselling centres for the handicapped.

## **5. Meeting the Challenges of an Ageing Population**

□ ***The population over 55 is still relatively active, but mainly in agriculture and lower skilled jobs***

With a view to extending the active life, the trends registered at employment and unemployed level are relevant. The employment rate of older (aged 55-64) workers has increased in 2003 to 38% (EU 25 average 40.2%, Bulgaria 30%, Slovenia 23.5%).

The relatively high employment rate of the population, in general, and of the 50+ population, in particular, can be explained by the high employment rate in agriculture, most of the is characterized as a subsistence one. Thus, in the fourth quarter of 2003, the employment rate of the population aged 54 to 64 years represented 19.9 percent in urban areas and 53.8 percent in rural areas. The

employment rate of the population over 65 years is also high, but decreasing. Data from second (spring) quarter show a rate of 19.6% in 2003 and 25.7% in 2002. The rates for the previous years, based on a slightly different definition were also high 38.2% (in 2000) and 37.5% (2001).

<b>Employment rate of the population over 65 years based on data for second (spring) quarter</b>				
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Bulgaria	2.9	2.5	3.0	4.2
Romania	38.2	37.5	25.7	19.6
<b>EU-15</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>m</b>

Source: Eurostat (New Cronos database)

A closer look at the employment rate by educational attainment for the age group over 65 years shows that the rate is higher for low-skilled persons. Taking into consideration the over-employment in agriculture it is very likely that many low-skilled workers are registered as being employed in this sector.

<b>Employment rate of the population over 65 years by educational attainment</b>				
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Lower secondary or below (ISCED 0-2)	44.7	44.2	30.7	23.0
Upper secondary (ISCED 3 or 4)	11.7	11.2	6.4	7.0
Tertiary (ISCED 5-6)	8.1	4.2	3.5	4.9

Source: Eurostat (New Cronos database)

With regard to encouraging older (55+) people **to remain at work longer**, the new regulations of *Law no. 107/2004* amending *Law no. 76/2002* on the system of unemployment compensation and employment incentives are relevant. Article 85 (5) of the law specifies the Unemployment Fund amount – the equivalent of the national gross minimal wage in force – to be granted as an incentive to employers having hired unemployed persons reaching retirement age within three years from the hiring date.

#### □ **Participation in LLL among older workers is low**

The data on the participation of 55+ persons in CVT programmes and other forms of lifelong learning are less encouraging. According to the *Characteristics of Lifelong Learning Survey*, carried out by the National Statistics Institute in 2003, the rate of individuals aged 50 to 64 years having participated in various forms of training was 7.4 percent; the rate of those aged 65 and over was 2.9 percent of the total participants. In the general context, however, the registered rate of participation in continuing education of the population aged 15 and over was 18.1 percent. A similar trend is reflected by the MMSSF data on the numbers of individuals involved in training, conversion, and refresher courses and by the National Agency for Employment (NAE) data on the unemployed training. In 2003 about 24,000 unemployed participated in training programmes of which more than 30% were aged 25 or less.

The data reflect, on the one hand, the relatively low interest of older people in vocational training and the absence of incentives; on the other hand, the data also reflect employer reluctance to invest in labour force training, in general and in particular, in the training of labour force pertaining to this age group.

## **6. Effectiveness and Efficiency of VET**

#### □ **VET Reform aims at broader profiles, better adjusted to LM needs**

The *Phare RO 9405 Programme* started in 1995 has laid the bases of a major reform in the vocational and technical training and education system. The outcomes of the programme (implemented initially in a limited number of pilot schools) included a new curriculum, the establishment of a fewer, yet broader, occupational profiles, with the stress laid on the training of core skills, the development of an innovative methodology in vocational training. The curricular reform started well in advance before the development of the occupational standards, which took place. In the framework of a project co-financed by World Bank and Government of Romania. When the occupational standards were developed, the Ministry of Education and Research has revised the training standards and the

curriculum according to the occupational standards. The general implementation of the changes in the entire IVET system started in 1999; however, as schools greatly differ in terms of resources and infrastructure, the process is far from having been completed.

The National Reform has started to affect positively the attractiveness of the VET system, which had seen a decline in recent years. An indicator in this regard is the constant proportion of enrolments in vocational routes (as part of upper secondary education). For the graduates of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade the proportion was constantly about 45% in the last three school years. An important factor is also the balance between the theoretical and practical training. The ATS curriculum reserves a proportion of 43% to practical training. In addition, 10% of the practical training activities represent the minimum duration of the training that have to take place within the enterprise. This unequal division of practice inside schools and companies is an indicator that it is more difficult to re-establish the link with the local labour market than improving the curriculum. The attractiveness of IVET is expected to profit from better planning in the school year 2004-2005 owing to the Regional Education Action Plans (REAP), developed by the Regional Consortia.

□ ***Public investment in VET and CVT has been insufficient***

Funding for IVET has been insufficient in recent years. The IVET is financed from the state budget, local budgets and other sources of income according to the legislation in force. In 2001 out of the average costs per student, over 80% came from the State Budget (representing teachers' salaries), about 16% from the local budgets and 2.4% was supplemented by school units from the extra-budgetary resources. The large part of funds (almost 90% in 2001) from local communities is spent on school infrastructure (i.e. repairs, electricity and heating bills); the proportion of the other expenditure is minimum (10.4% investments and less than 1% on books and publications). The spending patterns may vary considerably by county and areas of residence but, in general, education is not seen as a priority, that is the local authorities tend to spend less than 10% of the revenues collected locally on education. In 2000 only 2.9% of GDP was allocated to education, the lowest level among new member states and candidate countries. Provisional data for 2002 shows that only 3% of the GDP went on education (down from 3.1% in 2001). The recent amendments on the Education Law foresee the increase of the education budget to 6% of GDP by 2007. It is hoped that the recent incentives granted to companies will stimulate company funding of training programmes and partnerships between the private and public sectors.

The funds allocated for labour market training in 2002 amounted to 4% of the Active Labour Market Measures (ALMM) budget while actual expenses on this measure amounted to 2.6% of total ALMM expenses<sup>3</sup>. There is an under-utilisation of the funds allocated for training, since a third of the available budget was not used.

The **cost of CVT courses for employees** in enterprises is at the lowest level by comparison with the EU. In cash terms, the costs are about € 160 per participant in 1999, which is much less of the lowest average cost in the EU of approximately € 950 in Portugal. The costs of continuing training courses as a proportion of total labour costs (0.5%) are still much below the best performing EU Member States.

□ ***EU support has already become a substantial source of funding***

EU funding has become a very substantial financing resource designed to stimulate the development of initial and continuing vocational training and education. The current programs assisting the development of human resources within the Social and Economic Cohesion Programme are contributing to the preparation of Romania for European Structural Fund, in particular to European Social Fund (ESF). Another important Phare project in this field is "Progress" Programme implemented up to the year 2000. ESF-type projects were already financed in 1998, 2000, and 2002. Until 2007, the EU financial aid to Romania for the development of human resources is estimated to be stepped up and the number of the public-private partnerships in the field, as well.

□ ***Decentralisation and policies to make a better use of available funds are advancing gradually***

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<sup>3</sup> National Agency for Employment (2003), *Activity Report 2002*

Until recently, the local authorities hold some additional responsibilities such as: school units budgeting, controlling the budgetary execution, the administration of all schools, covering the costs related to school infrastructure. These measures (actually the system of budgetary execution through the local councils) were not accompanied by any effort to direct local council funds towards upgrading the school facilities (included the equipment) and for the most part local communities funds went to maintenance expenses. The school units obtained in a way a still limited financial autonomy and may generate and further use their own extra-budgetary resources. The County School Inspectorates are unable to assist the day-to-day school management sufficiently, especially in the field of finance and accounting. As a result, the school units are not always aware of the amount of funds entitled to get and, therefore, unable to set the priorities accordingly. The budgetary execution is done by town halls or budgetary centres, which prevent any potential savings of the school funds to be further, used by the respective school.

A series of decentralising measures are currently being implemented in financing and education school management in accordance with the new legislative framework adopted by the Parliament in June 2004, modifying the Education Law and the Law on the Statute of teachers. The foreseen changes will be piloted in 5 to 7 counties starting with the school year 2005/2006 and will be generalized within the whole education system starting with the school year 2007/2008. The new legal framework is supporting school financing and education management decentralization, a more coherent institutional distribution of responsibilities referring to schools and local public administration in order to improve education services effectiveness and accountability. Local councils now undertake all expenditures. Financing allocations will be based on student standard costs formula adapted to peculiar schooling situations described through specific criteria as no of enrolled students belonging to ethnic minorities, demographic trends within the locality.

## **THEME II. INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES**

### **7. Improvement in Learning Processes and Contents**

#### **□ *More attention has been given to improve learning outcomes and curricula.***

VET Reform is a continuous process in Romania that started in the mid-nineties with the definition of competency based training standards and new curricula. While this process is still continuing, recently more attention has been paid to new methods of planning and improving links with local enterprises and addressing individual training needs. Currently important changes are planned to make the system more flexible, creating horizontal and vertical progression routes, strengthening the links between TVET, higher education, CVT and non-formal and informal learning. Moreover, attempts are being made to bring learning closer to home, through a better coverage of the TVET and CVT system and the development of open and distance learning. The development of a system for training and continuous retraining of teachers is also a priority. New learning methodologies are being promoted. Policies and legislation are continuously evolving to incorporate these developments, but implementation on the ground is lagging behind, partially due to lack of resources, in spite of unprecedented support to VET reform from EU through the 1994, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 Phare allocations. It is therefore not yet possible to speak of system-wide changes. Many actions were taken towards establishing and revising the legal basis but when it comes to actual results limited progress can be acknowledged so far.

#### **□ *Harmonisation of levels, development of qualifications, and opening progression routes***

Relevant developments are:

- *Occupational and Vocational training standards have been developed with the involvement of the social partners.* Between 1995 and 2001 competency-based more than 300 occupational standards have been developed, that have been used for the definition of training standards. The developed training standards include: core skills and specific skills, qualification level, value of earned credits, performance criteria and instructions as to their applicability, assessment tests. The 221 standards that were developed have been subjected to a validation process by the representatives of the social partners and are available to any VET provider. Conditions have also been created for the application of similar standards to CVT, defining Framework Curricula, but to

what extent the training standards developed for IVET can be also used for CVT remain as an issue.

- *Recognition and harmonisation of the levels of vocational qualifications.* Romanian vocational qualifications are based on the European five levels framework as defined in Council Decision of 85/368/EEC. The qualification levels from 1 to 3 have been recognised and used in accordance. The use of level 4 and 5 qualifications are hampered by the fact that only universities are allowed to issue them, hence these levels are not yet used commonly, although they are imbedded in the legislation. These higher levels will be identified in the next stage of the Reform Programme.
- *Correlation of qualification levels in vocational and technical education system, promoting progression towards a level 3 qualification.* There exists the possibility to successively obtain the level 2 and 3 qualifications, through the Arts and Trade Schools following the complementary school year leading to level 1.
- *Development of a Romanian System of National Qualifications* During 2003-2004, the basic principles have been laid down to develop a Romanian National System of Vocational Qualifications (NSVQ). This should integrate formal and non-formal learning, TVET and CVT. The policy principles for the system have been agreed between the government and social partners and legislation is in preparation.

□ ***Introduction of new curricula, core skills and learning methodologies***

The changes undergone by TVET system in the framework of the Phare TVET RO 0108.2001 Programme (which started in 2003) were directed at the development of an innovative **curriculum**. These innovations are a continuation of changes started by the Phare VET RO-9405 programme, (which ran between 1995-1998) and are strongly influenced by the new regulations on the extension of compulsory education to 10 years.

- *A tree structure based on broader profiles:* Starting from the training standards, the written curriculum (school curriculum and programs) was designed by the Programme Management of the Phare 9405 programme and developed by Vocational Boards established according to occupational families. Curriculum units were organised based on the following principles: organisation of activities by study modules which ensure a passage from basic training (1st year) to general training (2nd year) and finally to special profile training (3rd year of study); making vocational training more flexible by ensuring the possibility to change the order of approaching study modules and the introduction of new knowledge in view of continuous adjustment to educational needs; modernising the system of evaluation.
- *System-wide implementation started:* In 1999 the implementation of new curriculum structure that was developed under the Phare RO-9405 programme, started to be implemented beyond the network of the 75 pilot schools. The lack of the proper conditions and resources in many TVET schools, as well as insufficient retraining efforts have so far limited the impact of these measures.
- *Additional changes: new curricula for Arts and Trade Schools* The extension of compulsory education and the creation of a progressive VET pathway through the Arts and Trades Schools required the adaptation of curricula for all schools, starting with qualification level 1 courses in 2003. 47 qualifications and curricula at level 1 were developed by the running Phare TVET 0108.2001 programme during 2003 in order to start the new TVET compulsory programme. The implementation of the new curriculum for ATS is taking place gradually. Level 1 courses started in school year 2003/04 and the second year of Level 1 is bound to start in the school year 2004/05. Support measures for the implementation of the new curriculum such as teacher training activities are only systematically provided to the 122 pilot schools in the Phare TVET 0108.2001 programme. In order to facilitate the increased enrolment in VET as a result of the extension of compulsory education the number of schools and units has been increased, including a number of schools that used to offer only 8-year compulsory education (gymnasia) which have adopted the 2 additional years for compulsory VET.
- *The introduction of a flexible model for the design and development of a skill-focused and modular curriculum.* The curriculum for the last two years of compulsory education (grade 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in the new system) has been approved in December 2003 for all types of schools

(ATS, high schools). The skill units are divided into two categories – core skills (social) and technical and vocational skills (general and specialised) – with different loads according to the qualification level. Core skills include the skills recommended by the *Memorandum on LLL* and *The Detailed Work Program Education and Training 2010* and refer to: communication in a modern foreign language, computer literacy and information processing, individual development for performance attainment, team work, the transition from school to the world of work, entrepreneurial skills.

- ❑ *Strengthened local relevance of the curriculum.* The recent VET curricula have reconsidered the relationship between the national curriculum (the common trunk) and the local development curriculum (LDC). LDC, developed in partnership with the economic agents, is designed according to the training needs of the local labour force market and is assigned a high curricula rate: from 15-20 percent for grades IX and X, to 35-40 percent for grades XI and XII/XIII.
- ❑ *Completion of the new ATS curriculum* The adaptation and development of qualifications and curricula at level 2 and 3 have started and training standards and syllabi are available but implementation will not start before the school year 2005/06 (Level 2) and school year 2006/07 for Level 3. Moreover, the linkages that should facilitate progression routes within the VET system as a whole are only planned. As the process is at a relatively early stage much relevant and comparable information on the implementation and the impact of the new curricula is missing.
- ❑ *An improved relation between the theoretical vocational training and the specifics of the work place.* The training standards for each qualification take into account the correlation of the contents of learning with the demand of the work place through the following core skills: training with a view to work place insertion, transition from school to the work place, organization of the work place, labour hygiene and security. The key skill related to work experience is mandatory for all qualifications. Nevertheless, the work-based training is still the weakest part of the curriculum in qualitative and quantitative terms.
- ❑ *A student-focused teaching methodology, individualized educational offer.* The new curriculum model, focussed on skill acquisition and ECTS implementation, upholds modern teaching/learning methodologies, is student-centred and pays more attention to individualized teaching and the duration of instruction, with a view to building up adjustment to the labour market and promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit, critical thinking, communication and team work abilities.
- ❑ *The implementation of transferable credits along the vocational training route.* Each skills unit has been assigned a number of credits to thus ensure the flexibility of the education system and the organization of individual training routes.

## **8. Improving the Integration of Different Learning Sites; Integration of Formal and Informal Learning**

- ❑ ***The links between VET schools and enterprises are insufficiently developed to take a central place in the VET reform process***

The new curricula for the **vocational and technical training and education** include a large number of hours (on average 43% of the curriculum of which 10% in-company training) allocated to the practical training, with load differences between the two vocational routes, *i.e.*, ATS and technological high schools. However, as described above most of the practical training is taking place in schools, although the new curriculum offers the students the possibility of practical experience for their field of study through the organization of practical training periods at the work place, as well as the development of activities of hands-on learning in the school formal framework, through projects.

The Romanian IVET system suffers from an unsatisfactory integration of school learning and enterprise training. At present, systematic contacts among schools and enterprises, at least in the case of some training profiles and especially in rural areas, are inexistent. Practical placements in enterprises are often performed in groups of students under the supervision of an instructor teacher, and therefore fail to signify a real insertion in the world of work. The growth of the small companies

makes it more difficult to find practical placements for students. In the tourism and public administration field, the practical training includes a system of training firms that simulate the practical activity of larger companies.

Given the difficulties, a major goal of the current TVET reform is the **association of the school offer for education with the labour force demand**; likewise, at the local level, **an improved relationship among VET schools and employers**. With these goals in view, strengthening the partnership and the collaboration among school and economic partners has been declared priorities of the Regional Education Action Plans (REAP). The schools included in the Phare RO TVET 0108.2001 Programme have established partnerships with local economic agents, based on institutional agreements, in order to ensure the quality, access to up-to-date equipment, and improved abilities for work insertion. The partnerships also envisage an improved information system on the labour market, counselling and career orientation services. In spite of these examples of good practice practical training in enterprises needs to be reinforced in terms of contents, duration, forms and numbers of practicing students and thus become a significant means facilitating the transition from school to the work place.

#### □ **Accreditation of prior learning is developing, practices exist and a law is in preparation**

With respect to the **integration of formal learning with non-formal learning**, the devised model to extend compulsory education to 10 years envisages the introduction of learning standards common to all students. Based on the common standards, both learning assessment and end-of-cycle testing are to be organized. The testing is to be organized at local level based on national standards and the LLL **portfolios** will be taken into account. The portfolios include student results obtained in formal and non-formal learning contexts. This is important to reintegrate dropouts in the education system.

The Adult Training Law foresees the possibility of accreditation of prior learning but there are no official arrangement established yet of linking informally acquired knowledge, skills and competencies with national qualifications. The labour legislation obliges enterprises to record the function of employees only on the basis of formally recognised qualifications in their staff registers. Enterprises are not allowed to validate competencies developed at the work place. Although the legislation is not very clear in the area of validation of prior learning, the assessment of competences based on the existing occupational standards is practiced in some companies (e.g. Banca Commerciale Romana, and McDonalds) and in a limited number of training centres, which have been accredited by COSA, using a loop-hole in the legislation on accreditation. Any person, young or adult can be assessed against occupational standards in the centres and will receive a COSA certificate, which is recognition of professional competence. The NAE's Regional Adult Training Centres (RTCs) (See Chapter 3) are currently supported to become occupational assessment centres using the COSA experience. This could enable RTCs to accredit informal learning among unemployed and allow them to offer personalised accelerated training.

## **9. Evaluation and Quality Assurance of VET Provision**

In the framework of the IVET and CVT reform, the changes in the evaluation, certification, and accreditation processes have determined the move from the traditional evaluation practices to a system based on evaluation standards and focussed on learning outcomes. The changes were aimed at the increased transparency and quality of the VET system and at the increased labour market mobility.

### **• Evaluation at the individual level**

In the field of *initial vocational training*, the reform supported by the Phare VET RO 9405 has advanced a new approach of evaluation. The final evaluation of the in the VET system is carried out, as in the rest of the training pathways, by the National Assessment and Testing Service. The evaluation of vocational skills – during the school year and at the completion of studies – follows the vocational training standards devised on the bases of the occupational standards. Student assessment aims at certification of learning outcomes. At the end of the study cycle, the VET graduates are issued a vocational training certificate indicating the level of qualifications and including a list of the acquired vocational skills, proven in the evaluation process. The involvements of the social partners in the development of the vocational training standards as well as their presence in the final assessment panels are important features of the new evaluation model. The new model provides for the efficient training of VET graduates and offers multiple opportunities for their vocational insertion.

The new Phare TVET 2001 Programme is reviewing the evaluation and quality assurance practices in the teaching process and, in consequence, the continuous and final assessment processes.

Each service provider carries out the evaluation of the continuing vocational training and education. In the public system, CVET is organized by the National Agency for Employment (NAE) and attested by a certificate of vocational training recognized on the labour force market. Attestation by private providers is not officially recognized unless providers are enrolled in the official accreditation process that has started in January 2004.

- **Proposed framework for the institutional evaluation**

An objective of the new Phare TVET RO 0108.01 Programme is the development of a pilot system of quality assurance in vocational training, based on the European Framework of quality assurance. As a component of the system, VET educational units are conducting self-assessment, following, among others, the measures included in the School Action Plans (SAP). The SAPs include priorities as regards the quality assurance framework in internal and external management (resources, projects and development, teaching and learning, knowledge evaluation and certification, etc.). They also describe the means by which the concerned school should contribute to the achievement of the local and regional priorities, respond to the local and labour force market needs, and improve the quality of student training and education. SAP will be instrumental in the external evaluation of the vocational education units. The system of quality assurance will be piloted in 22 VET units in school year 2004-2005, and the outcomes will be generalised in the whole VET system.

- **System Evaluation**

At the level of the national education system, a draft *Law on Quality Assurance* has been designed. The Law refers to quality assurance at system, institutional, and process levels, by making reference to a common set of standards, norm and performance indicators. In this respect, a set of national indicators for education is being devised in the framework of a programme jointly financed by the World Bank and the Government of Romania. The national indicators are to be harmonized with European quality indicators with a view to developing the capacity for quality management and evaluation. The national indicators will serve as the starting point in the development of the educational policies.

With regard to the **continuing vocational training and education**, the methodology on the authorization of the providers of adult vocational training and the methodology on the certification of the adult vocational training, approved in October 2003, provide a series of evaluation standards concerning the quality of the CVT content and learning process:

- Identification of the objectives included in the professional skills to be acquired by each individual included in the training programme, according to the national occupational standards;
- Standards for the designed training programmes: training plan, organization forms, strategies for programme implementation, the load of applied activities (which should occupy at least two thirds of the programme allocated time);
- Standards concerning the issuance of the vocational qualification certificates and of the certificate supplement (which gives details as to the professional skills acquired by the course graduate).

At present, the continuing vocational training in the public system is recognized either through a Certificate of Vocational Qualification, issued by the National Agency for Employment for qualification or conversion programmes, or by the Certificate of Graduation released for initial, training, or specialization programmes and at the completion of each training module. According to the new (October 2003) certification method in vocational training, released vocational qualification or a Certificate Descriptive Supplement detailing the holder's acquired vocational skills accompanies graduation certificates.

The above methodologies are expected to add to the quality and the learning contents of CVT. Also, the development of a Romanian National System of Vocational Qualification is envisaged to bring about in-depth changes in terms of the quality of the IVET and CVET educational offer. In this respect, the first elements are already in place linked to the existing vocational training standards applicable to both IVET and CVT. The credit system, on which the new IVET curriculum has been developed, its modular structure and the development of transferable core skills are expected to contribute to the correlation of the provision for initial vocational education with that for the continuing vocational education and training.

## 10. Professional Development and Status of Teachers and Trainers

- ***Improvement in learning processes and the role of teachers has not yet reached a critical volume.***

The regulations for continuing teacher training are in place since 2001, but so far only 1% out of the total number of teaching staff and approximately 2% of school decision making staff completed. The continuous training in 2003 through accredited continuous training programmes. This is an additional indication that the changes in terms of improving learning processes are mainly concentrated in those schools that have been participating in the Phare VET reform process.

- ***The priority for training and retraining of teachers and trainers is acknowledged and embedded in law, but implementation is lagging behind***

In 2001, the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research adopted the *Development Strategy for the System of Initial and In-service Training of the Teaching Staff and Managers in Education*. With reference to the 2001-2004 period, the strategy objectives are: professionalization of the teaching career through the setting up of a system of occupational standards based on proficiency; revision of the theory-practice link in teacher training; ECTS implementation; development of an educational market for continuing training programmes; development of adequate institutional structures.

For the first time, the manager in education has been recognized as a profession and the need for adequate training in the field has been underlined. Also, modular programmes for the continuing training of the teaching staff have been designed.

GD no. 604/June 2002 stipulated the setting up of the National Centre for the Training of the Teaching Staff in Pre-university Education as an agency for quality development and assurance in teacher training. The centre is responsible for the accreditation of the programmes concerning the continuing training of the teaching staff and trainer. Training providers in other fields than education are to be accredited according to Law no. 375/2002 on Adult Education.

Taking into account university involvement in teacher training, all near-future activities in kind are influenced by the changes entailed by the Bologna Process. A new *Law on the Organization of Academic Studies (no.288/2004)*, as per the recommendations of the Bologna Process passed in July.

With respect to the provision of continuing education of the teaching staff, two recent developments of the current Phare Programme for Romania are worth mentioning:

- Access to education of the disadvantaged groups, with emphasis on the Roma population. The topics included in the training programmes, having an innovative character within the Romanian training system and the beneficiaries of which were Roma school inspectors, institutors, school teachers and intermediaries, were mainly focussed on the school-community relationship and ways of involving community, local authority, and civil society representatives in activities for the benefit of schools.
- The training offer was addressed to school principals, teaching staff and social partners, as the main actors. The major topics included in the offer concerned:
  - *teaching staff*: support granted to student-focused learning / modern classroom teaching methods; production and use of learning auxiliary material for student-centred training; education of special-needs students; work place insertion / integration of learning and practical training; vocational orientation; IT and website construction;
  - *school principals and social partners*: partnership / co-operation with enterprises; school action plans; quality assurance; planning custom education.

- ***The status of teachers is currently low, but career prospects are improving***

Despite the new developments, the teaching career fails to be considered an attractive profession, considering that the gross salary of a senior school teacher is 20 percent lower than the average salary in the economy. A recent regulation envisages an average increase of 5% of the teaching staff

salary in pre-university education, a too low insignificant amount from the perspective of increasing the appeal of the profession.

The low salary level has also induced a certain depreciation of the teaching staff status, in particular in the urban environment, alongside a decline in the occupational motivation. Notwithstanding, in the aftermath of the decline of the Romanian industrial sector, many engineers and foremen have chosen a teaching career, given its job security. Over the last ten years, the teaching staff (teachers and teacher instructors) increased at all teaching levels (by about 30 percent in high school education and about three times in post high school education). With reference to pre-service of VET teacher instructors, a new requirement has been created: the completion of studies in short-term academic education. As a result of this, the expectations are, on the one hand, a better quality of practical training and, on the other hand, an increased professional status of teacher instructors (remuneration included) and multiple career development opportunities.

### **THEME III. BUILDING EUROPEAN COMPETENCES FOR A EUROPEAN LABOUR MARKET**

#### **11. Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy**

- ***The employment level has decreased during recent years, but employment policies are developing more and more towards active intervention.***

Labour market developments in Romania have been quite different than in most other EU or candidate countries. In 2002, the labour force participation rate of the population aged 15-64 was 58.6% overall, but with sizeable differences by gender: women 52.8% men 64.5%. This last figure was close to the average of the 10 new EU Member States (61.9%). The employment rate has been falling by about 1 percentage point every year since 1997. The decline in the urban employment has been accompanied by job growth in agriculture. Unemployment has not risen sharply. However, in 2002 more than 35% of the employed persons worked in agriculture (with 31% in industry and construction and 34% in services).

With the Law 76/2002 the range of ALMM has been extended substantially. Most of the increased budget for ALMM is spent on different types of job subventions, through recruitment subsidies and credits to employers. However, between 1999 and 2002 we observe a decrease in training activities with a small recovery in 2003, but still 10% below the 1999 level. In 2002 only 2.5% of the unemployed completed a training course. Moreover, the main share of training activities seems to be strictly linked to the requirement of reintegration. The introduction of targeted policies to activate individual clients in line with EES and as intended by the new law is in continuous development.

Over the last years, Romania developed a series of policy documents with a view to preparing the employment system for participation in the European Employment Strategy. The major documents are:

***The Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy Priorities (JAP)***, signed in November 2002, an important element in getting the Romanian system ready for participation in the European Employment Strategy.

Prepared by the Government of Romania and the European Commission, *The Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy* (JAP) identified the priorities of the Romanian employment policies, among which:

- The necessity for improved access of the rural population to second-chance educational programmes and to secondary and tertiary education.
- The necessity for improved access to vocational training programmes, both for the employed and the unemployed.
- The active employment measures should make possible, test, and assess labour force market changes.
- Staff numbers in local employment services should be sufficient for the provision of early assistance to persons looking for employment, as per the new employment regulations.
- The new measures concerning social and employment benefits should be monitored and correlated with active measures for employment and with the already existing policies on equal employment opportunities.

- The more active stakeholder role should be expanded primarily through bilateral dialogue.
- The arrangements for the European Social Fund must be accelerated, as well as the development of a human resources strategy and that of an employment strategy.
- *The National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE)*, prepared in 2002 and adopted through GD no. 759/18 July 2002;
- *The National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE)*, prepared in 2004 and adopted through GD no. 588/2004;

The specific measures having been undertaken toward the implementation of the NAPE objectives are:

- **Measures concerning improved equal employment opportunities and promotion of social cohesion** to be implemented through the integration of the employment priorities into the goals of the Phare Programmes developed in Romania: The 2004-2006 Phare Programme *Active Employment Measures Mainly Directed at the Young People and the Long-term Unemployed*; The 2004-2006 Phare Programme *Support for the Ministry of Labour Social Solidarity and Family with a View to Preparing for the Role of Management Authority*, are expected to promote an increased efficiency of the active measures of fund allocation and support for the professional conversion of the population employed in agriculture.
- **Upgrading of the public employment service** through programmes designed to expand NAE institutional capacity: development of the employment service human resources and the setting up of a National Centre for the Training of its personnel in the framework of the twinning project. Starting with 1 March 2004, the new information system of NAE has become operational, which allows the relevant data processing and flow in the field of employment; measures aimed at the growing quality of the services provided consisting of a set of working standards for basic activities.
- **Promotion of active policies on the labour market.** The varied Programmes are targeted at career mediation, information, and counselling; employment programmes for the young and long-term unemployed, SME credit loans, etc.

According to the conclusions of several recent studies and reports<sup>4</sup>, the main obstacles confronting Romania at present in meeting the Lisbon goals include:

- The reduced participation in training courses of persons in search for employment;
- Employee reduced participation in continuing vocational training (CVT), mainly of those with a low level of qualifications and skills and the modest employer interest in financing programmes aimed at this category;
- The high rate of early school leavers aged 18-24 and the high rate of graduates who do not succeed in finding a work place;
- The insufficient training of the staff in public employment services with a view to implementing the new active policies focussed on the specific needs of the target groups.
- A low reading literacy skills (at Level 1 or below on a 5 point scale) as measured in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2003 (over 40% of the all 15-year olds)
- A very low participation by adults in life-long learning. Latest data from the Labour Force Survey for 2003 suggest that 1.3% of adults' aged 25-64 participated in education or training in the four weeks prior to being surveyed. The EU-25 average is around 9% but the best performing countries reported more than 18% in 2003.

## 12. Involving stakeholders

- ***Many structures for stakeholder involvement in particularly for social partners exist but the added value of dialogue is not sufficiently used***

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<sup>4</sup> EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION, *Country Monograph on the Vocational Education and Training and Employment*, 2003. *Progress on the Implementation of the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy*, May 2004.

Romania has a diversity of **institutions embracing social partners and other stakeholders' participation in the field of vocational employment, education, and training.** (At the moment, the added value of consulting the social partners is insufficiently exploited. For example, the sectoral aspect of the social partnership is inadequately taken into account, as social partnership representation at the sector level is rather weak. Also, the school-enterprise links should be improved in terms of practical placements contents, minimal duration, and number of places.

In **the field of IVET**, the Phare Vet 1995 Programme supported the setting up of the regional and local structures with stakeholder involvement, thus playing a part in the development of VET for employment. At the regional level Regional Consortia (set up with the stakeholders' participation) are responsible for the development of the Regional Education Action Plans (REAPs) and play a part in all Phare-funded activities for human resources development. At the local/county level, social partners have been involved in the setting up of the Local Development Councils (LDCs) and their advisory role in IVET has thus been ensured. LDCs also include representatives of the County Employment Agencies. These bodies are participating in the planning process at the county level, are approving the local component of curriculum, and nominating social partners in the evaluation commissions for IVET graduates.

Beginning with the school year 2004/05 the planning of the student numbers in the IVET system will be informed by the REAPs developed by the Regional Consortia (see, also, item 9). The employers are involved in the validation of qualifications acquired through IVET.

In the **field of CVT**, the main advisory body is the National Adult Training Board (NATB), which has a tripartite structure and takes forward the stakeholders interests in the development of adult learning policies. Besides the NATB, the National Agency for Employment (NAE) and the Economic and Social Council (ESC) are the most important tripartite bodies. With a view to implementing the new system of assessment and accreditation of the training providers tripartite local commissions connected to NATB have also been set up. These commissions are also expected to play an active part in the implementation of the *Law on Adult Training*.

### **13. Transparency, recognition & mobility**

#### **• Introduction of ECTS**

In the framework of the TVET Programme, Romania has started to develop the curricula based on transferable credits. As per Appendix no. 6 to OMoER no 5723/23 Dec. 2003 on the endorsement of the framework curriculum for grades IX and X, it is envisaged for the curriculum structure and number of credits to relate to the Vocational Training Standard (VTS). Based on its two categories of skills units, *core skills* (social) and *technical and professional skills* (general and specialized), vocational training entails a variable number of credits, function of the qualification level:

- **Level I – 30 credits**, of which 15 for core skills and work experience and 15 for technical and professional abilities;
- **Level II – 15 credits**, of which 5 for core skills and work experience and 10 for technical and professional abilities;
- **Level III– 30 credits**, of which 10 for core skills and work experience and 20 for technical and professional abilities.

In the aftermath of the Bologna Process, important steps have also been made in the academic system with a view to ECTS introduction. According to the new *Law on the Organization of Academic Studies no.288/2004*, the new academic education structure, based on cycles, is correlated to the functioning of the transferable credits system. As a result, academic studies will be structured by three cycles (see, also, item 3), including a given amount of transfer credits:

- Cycle I – undergraduate academic studies over a period of 3 to 4 years – 180 - 240 credits;
- Cycle II – Master's degree academic studies – 120 - 60 credits;
- Cycle III – Doctoral studies over a period of 3 – 5 years

According to the *Adult Training Law* adopted in 2002, the transfer credit system is to be introduced in the CVET system too; so far, it is not yet operational in Romania.

- **Toward a Single Framework of Qualifications in Romania**

A first stage in the development of a new system of occupational standards in Romania was the setting up, in 1994, of the Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment (COSA), as a tripartite body responsible for the implementation of the system of evaluation and certification of professional abilities based on occupational standards. As a result of COSA activities, a data bank has been created; it contains 300 occupational standards and information on evaluation processes. Through *Law no. 235/2003*, COSA was included in the NATB and thus, the tasks of standard development and the evaluation procedures have been merged within one and the same structure.

In IVET, the vocational training standards and the school curriculum have been defined according to occupational standards. Evaluation standards are included in the vocational training standards. Among the outcomes of the reform have been fewer, but wider occupational profiles, postponement of specialization to the final school years, emphasis on core skills, and new training methods. The Phare TVET 2001 is reviewing the quality assurance and evaluation practices.

A decision was recently adopted to extend the responsibilities of the National Adult Training Board and its turning into a National Authority for Qualifications. The new institution will be instrumental in the development of the qualifications system, including the maintenance of a national register of qualifications. In this regard, Romania is to develop a National Qualifications Framework, which should make reference to both IVET and CVET. The debates have also rendered evident the necessity of opening the qualifications system towards recognition of knowledge acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. The concept on the framework of vocational qualifications has been devised by the Phare TVET RO 0108-01 Programme. The new system of qualifications is expected to entail in-depth changes at the level of quality assurance and evaluation processes.

- **Steps for the Introduction of the EUROPASS**

The recent reforms in IVET have also concerned the development of a new certification system based on skill assessment. In addition to the Study Diploma, the IVET graduate is also issued a Certificate of Vocational Training, as per the qualification level attained, accompanied by a Statement of Vocational Skills. The certificate is issued along with a Supplement. The initiative of issuing the Supplement to the training or graduation certificates, in evidence of skills acquired, be they in the formal or non-formal system, are important elements to be incorporated in the future in EUROPASS.

In the case of some specializations within the high school theoretical and vocational<sup>5</sup> profiles, the graduates could receive a certificate of professional competencies.

According to the modifications to the 2003 *Law on Education*, the possibility is envisaged to record specific vocational abilities by means of an individual portfolio for lifelong learning, which should also include in the future skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts.

With reference to academic education, in April 1997, Romania signed the Lisbon *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Acquired in Higher Education*. The Convention was ratified through *Law no. 172 / 02 Oct 1998*. Section IX, Art. 3 of the Law provides for the introduction of the **Diploma Supplement**, in the Administrative Appendix of the Diploma, which is to specify in detail all types of the skills the graduate has acquired. By Order of the Minister of Education No. 3659/20 April 2003 the Administrative Appendix has been introduced, following the unique European model. At the present, upon the initiative of the Agency for SMEs the government is about to decide on the introduction of the European Curriculum Vitae.

The Single Framework of Vocational Qualifications, the development of which, as earlier cited, is the current priority of Romania, will further facilitate the process.

## NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ROMANIA (SCHOOL YEAR 2003/04)

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<sup>5</sup> In this case the vocational profile is referring to: military, pedagogy, art, sport, theology.

Age	Grade s	ISCED	Educational level		Qualification level	Type	
>19		6 5	Post-university		5 4	Post-compulsory	
			University				
		4	Post-high school <sup>3</sup>		3		
18	XIII	3		High school – upper cycle	3	Post-compulsory	
17	XII		High school – upper cycle	Completing year			2 <sup>2</sup>
16	XI						
15	X	2	High school – lower cycle	Arts and crafts school	1 <sup>1</sup>	Compulsory	
14	IX		Lower secondary school (Gymnasium)		Lower secondary education		
13	VIII						
12	VII						
11	VI	1	Primary school			Primary education	
10	V						
9	IV						
8	III						
7	II						
6	I	0	Pre-school education		Pre-school education		
5							
4							
3							

<sup>1</sup> Qualification level 1 is awarded to School of Arts and Crafts graduates (grades IX-X).

<sup>2</sup> Qualification level 2 is awarded to School of Arts and Crafts graduates after finishing the completing year (grade XI).

<sup>3</sup> Professional qualification track up to 3 years, open to high-school graduates (including high-school graduates without Matura exam).