



**ACHIEVING THE LISBON GOALS
THE CONTRIBUTION OF
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN ROMANIA**



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ACHIEVING THE LISBON GOALS THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ROMANIA

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1. PROGRESS OF THE NATIONAL VET SYSTEMS TOWARDS MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF LISBON

1

1.1 STRATEGIES FOR AND BARRIERS TO IMPROVING THE STATUS, FLEXIBILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Recent developments

With the extension of the period of compulsory education to 10 years (with effect from the school year 2003/04), major changes are being introduced in the structure of the initial vocational education and training (IVET) system (see also section 1.2 below). Aimed at improving the provision of education and increasing its attractiveness and flexibility, the changes will affect the curriculum, the graduation conditions of various school pathways and the development of the social partnership. The implementation of these changes will be accomplished with major EU financial support (through the multiannual 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 education system. Provisional data provided by the Romanian authorities show, for instance, an increase in enrolments in vocational programmes by 10% in the school year 2003/04 compared to the previous year. However, the increase was only 2.5% in rural areas, where the number of VET schools and specialisations increased by almost 20%.

■ **Development of vocational pathways as a prerequisite for the increasing attractiveness and flexibility of the IVET system.** During the reference period of the present report, the amended Law on Education (Law No 268/2003) established a new structure for the education system (see the annex). The period of compulsory education was extended from 8 to

10 years, and there are currently two pathways of compulsory education at the end of the eighth grade: the lower cycle of high schools and the Arts and Trades Schools. In the school year 2003/04 around 50% of the enrolments at the end of the eighth grade were in theoretical high schools, 43% were in technological high schools and 7% were in other types of high schools (such as arts and sports schools). Many high school graduates pursue their studies in post-high school and higher education. The Arts and Trades School is the product of the merger of the two vocational and apprenticeship schools. At the end of compulsory education (grades IX–X), Arts and Trades School graduates can obtain a level 1 qualification. This qualifies the holder to perform relatively simple work. Level 2 and 3 qualifications, which are in greater demand in the labour market, will require an additional period of further study, of one and three years respectively, following completion of compulsory education¹. The level 2 qualification, which is awarded after grade XI, also represents the 'passport' to 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 latter giving the right of access to higher education.

- **Development of a new IVET curriculum.** The new curriculum, which is only available for the 9th and 10th grades (the final two years of compulsory education in all types of school) 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 competencies.

This structure goes beyond the traditional pattern of vocational training, in which training was limited to speciality skills. The modular structure of the new curriculum and its focus on broader skills offers better prospects for improvements in the quality of vocational training and for the mobility of graduates within the labour market.

- **Improved strategic planning of the IVET provision taking account of regional perspectives.** The Regional Education Action Plans facilitate the adjustment of IVET provision for education to labour force market demand and expand graduates' professional insertion opportunities.
- **Increasing role of social partnership structures.** As the evaluation of the quality of training is a prerequisite for an improvement in the quality of IVET graduates, it is envisaged that the social partners will have an increasing role in the following areas: planning, development and validation of professional qualifications (the training offer), and the correlation of learning with the world of work.

Strengthening IVET as a main pillar

The Phare TVET programme (2001–03) with its two main components – development of institutional capacity and investments – has as its general objectives the restructuring of the TVET system, the improvement of the infrastructure and the supply of up-to-date equipment for education units in the TVET system. The major goals of the programme include an 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 students with special needs, and strengthening the role of career counselling and orientation in VET school units.

¹ Romanian vocational qualifications are based on the European five-level framework as defined in Council Decision 85/368/EEC. A level 1 qualification enables the holder to perform relatively simple work. With a level 2 qualification the holder can perform work which may be independent within the limits of the relevant techniques. A level 3 qualification allows the holder to carry out chiefly technical work which can be performed independently and/or entail executive and coordination duties. A level 4 qualification covers higher levels of knowledge and 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 independent way to assume design and/or management and/or administrative responsibilities.

Remaining barriers

A number of difficulties can hamper the implementation of the changes that are intended to improve VET quality and provision. Despite the fact that the legislation in force refers to the recognition of skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, this system is not yet operational. Delays have occurred in the decentralisation of the education system, though with the implementation of the new funding system (through the amendments to the Education Law that were passed in July 2004), the autonomy of education units is expected to take a step forward without substantial rearrangements. Another difficulty lies in the lack of progress in the development of functional mechanisms needed to monitor professional progress and insertion of VET graduates. This has resulted in the VET system, and hence the education units, missing a valuable tool for regulating 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 was set in 1995.

1.2 REDUCING THE NUMBERS OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

In 2003 the early school leaver 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%, one of the lowest levels in Europe, with a decreasing trend in recent years. Increasing 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 (2004–06)** identifies seven priority axes for intervention, the most important of

these being fostering human resources potential. Within this axis the document proposes five generic types of measure: implementation of active labour market policies and vocational training in order to increase employment; support for the most disadvantaged groups and delivery of actions for ensuring equal chances; support for lifelong learning; improving employability and entrepreneurial skills; and specific actions targeted to support women.

- An important role in promoting social inclusion policies will be played by the joint paper of the Romanian government and European Union – **Memorandum of Social Inclusion (JIM)** – a document that will be adopted in the near future.
- **The Strategy for the Development of Pre-university Education (2001–04, revised in 2002)**. The strategy includes prospects up to 2010, and aims to strengthen 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 Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and the 'Detailed Work Programme on Education and Training 2010' will be integrated into the national curriculum. The decisions were made at the end of 2002, with a phased implementation up to 2007.

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

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

The main steps relating to improved participation in education are being taken within the framework of the following targeted programmes.

- The Access to Education of the Disadvantaged Groups programme (2002–04) focuses on the Roma population. The programme has been implemented in 10 counties and will be extended to another 12 to 15 counties. It is jointly financed by the European Union Phare programme and the Romanian government. The main objectives are to improve the quality of pre-school education, to encourage students to complete their basic education (prevention of early dropout) and to increase participation in distance education as a second chance for those who did not complete their compulsory education.
- The Education in Rural Area programme (2003–09), 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 a partnership between the school and the community, and development of management, evaluation and policy-making capacity. Preparatory steps are currently being taken. The Romanian government is offering 1 000 scholarships to students from the rural areas.

In addition, in view of the low level of participation in education of the Roma population (61.4% of the total Roma population aged 7–16 in 1998²), a number of measures have been introduced, including the following.

- The number of subsidised study places in higher education that are reserved for Roma candidates has increased to around 400.
- General schools and teacher training colleges have set up classes and groups for the instruction of the future teachers and trainers who are of Roma or other ethnic origin and who will be working with Roma students.
- Each county school inspectorate has Roma school inspectors (of Roma origin or for Roma students).
- With effect from the 1998/99 academic year, the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Bucharest established a department for

the study of Romani language and literature.

- Beginner or refresher courses in the Romani language are being developed. The target group for this course is qualified or non-qualified teaching staff who are of Roma or non-Roma ethnic origin.
- Syllabi, textbooks and auxiliary material for the study of the Romani language, ethnic history, and traditions are being prepared.

1.3 INCREASING VET AT TERTIARY AND POST-SECONDARY LEVEL

There is no formal 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 networks.

In the first half of the decade there was a significant increase in the number of students in higher education (ISCED 5–6). As the demographic peak had been reached, the student numbers remained stable during the 1995–98 period. In recent years the numbers have been on the increase again, despite the demographic decline.

The higher level of participation in higher education was also favourably influenced by the expansion of the network of higher education institutions, especially following the development of private alternatives. At present the increase in the number of institutions is strictly regulated by accreditation procedures based on quality criteria as stipulated by a specific law (Law No 88/1993).

In terms of subject areas, the 1990s witnessed a decline in the emphasis on the technical and agricultural disciplines in favour of the humanities, economics and law. Similarly, economics, law, philology and theology prevailed in the educational provision of private institutions.

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

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Following the establishment of university autonomy, admission to higher education has become more flexible. Admission is based on the results obtained by the candidate in the baccalaureate examination, and each higher education institution has set up new selection criteria, in line with the profile and specifications of the specific university route.

The Tempus programme assisted in the development of short-term higher education and post-graduate courses that are aimed particularly at the labour market. The programme also played an important role in aligning curricula with the requirements of regulated professions.

Changes following the Bologna Process

The Bologna Process, of which Romania is a founding country, has inspired the most important changes in the higher education system. It concerns the matters described in the following list.

- Long- and short-term programmes have been defined, 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 offer optional pathways, and the amount of individual study time that they include has gradually increased, in parallel with the application of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), a process that began in the 1998/99 academic year and continued through subsequent years.
- The system of open and distance education was introduced with effect from 1998/99. Development of the institutional assessment and accreditation system has taken place, as well as of the internal and external evaluation of study programmes with a view to authorisation and accreditation (National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation).

Growing interest in post-secondary non-tertiary education

It was also in the 1990s that the 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 one to three years and lead to level 3 qualifications (technician). The foreman school also leads to a level 3 qualification, and graduates can also work as instructors in the TVET schools. As previously mentioned, graduates of technical high schools can also obtain a level 3 qualification. Courses in post high schools are organised at the request of enterprises or individuals, and, as such, the annual intake is not steady. This structure offers a fast and specialised vocational training, and thus contributes to the diversity of the post-secondary education on offer.

Recently reported progress on adapting higher education to labour market needs

According to the Progress Report on the Joint Assessment Paper (JAP) on Employment Policy Priorities, which was agreed between the European Commission and the Romanian government in 2002 and presented in May 2004, a year and a half after the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy, the adaptation of the higher education system to labour market demands has made visible progress. The relevant steps in this direction are as follows.

- 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 for future research on labour market demands. With regard to university autonomy, educational content is the responsibility of the individual higher education institutions, with the exception of the 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 to facilitate the implementation of the Bologna Process recommendations. As such, it is envisaged that this will bring about a wider range of educational provision and increased mobility for students and teaching staff.

It is too early to assess the impact of these measures.

1.4 INCENTIVES FOR UPDATING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Main challenges

A series of structural malfunctions could be mentioned in relation to the reference period of the present report: the inadequate correlation of the supply and demand for training; the insufficiently developed provision of continuing education; the rather low level of interest in acquiring and using new skills in the workplace; and the lack of social encouragement to participate in continuing education.

New legislation on the funding of training and employers' obligations

There are practically no financial incentives for continuing training in Romania that have actually been operating for any length of time; it is difficult to evaluate the impact of newly created incentives. Although the Adult Training Law (Law 375/2002) mentions VAT exemption for authorised providers of vocational training, in practice the use of this facility is hampered by technical constraints. One of the most recent initiatives is Law 107/2004 amending Law 76/2002 on unemployment compensation and stimulation of the labour force. With regard to employers who provide continuing vocational training (CVT) for their employees (through accredited programmes delivered by authorised service providers), the law stipulates that up to 50% of the employer's costs for one annual training programme can be covered by the Unemployment Fund, provided that at least 20% of

personnel participate in such training. The amendment also mentions the free-of-charge services for the vocational training of a number of groups: unemployed people; those working in rural areas who do not have a monthly income (or who have an income lower than the unemployment compensation level); persons who have resumed activity following the end of maternity leave; persons who have finished military service; and people whose date of release from prison is less than nine months away.

Also important from this perspective are the requirements of the new Labour Code (Law 52/2003), which set out employers' mandatory responsibilities to ensure that their employees have constant access to training programmes (at least one week every two years), based on each company's training plans as agreed with trade unions. However, no legal actions are specified against employers who fail to meet these obligations.

The government is exploring alternative means of stimulating access to continuing training, such as the provision of fiscal facilities. A fiscal facility (regulated by the GO 129/2000) provides, for instance, tax incentives such as a reduction of taxes on profits (for companies) and income tax (for individuals) equivalent to expenditure on training.

In terms of volume, EU funds are the most important incentive. The Phare programme's Human Resource Development scheme is preparing Romania for ESF-type projects that will support training for employed and unemployed people on a regional basis. The 1997 Human Resource Development 'Progress' programme was a forerunner of the ESF-type 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 commence in 2004.

Strengthening the quality control of CVT provision

With effect from January 2004 adult training providers are being accredited. By

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20 May 2004 more than 200 training providers had been authorised (the majority being private providers), for almost 700 training programmes. Applications for authorisation are increasing.

Working towards integrated strategies for CVT and human resource development

- **The National Development Plan** for the period 2004–06 (approved by the Romanian government through Memorandum 1704/18-12-2003) provides for a specific set of medium-term priorities for IVET and CVT, particularly in the field of human resources, that will have a direct bearing on the training of employees, unemployed people and those from disadvantaged groups. The priorities relate to improving access in initial education, especially in rural areas. The National Development Plan also addresses the provision of adult learning, with particular focus on public provision.
- **The Document on the Phare Programme Planning** for the period 2004–06 reflects to some degree the priorities mentioned in the Strategy on the Development of Human Resources in Romania included in the National Development Plan. It provides the basis for increased EU support for CVT in Romania. The document also gives due attention to the establishment of a national qualification framework as an important element of a more integrated human resource development policy and to support for the development of a 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, 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 institutional capacity building for CVT. Policy recommendations are already available.

Contribution of VET to promoting social inclusion

The measures identified in the National Action Plan for Employment in 2002 and continued in 2003, including those concerning CVT, have also been targeted towards disadvantaged groups in the labour market: women, young people, long-term unemployed people, those from the Roma population, people with disabilities, former detainees, graduates aged 18 and over from placement centres, and unemployed people from areas of high unemployment, including mono-industrial and rural areas where the unemployment rate is higher than the average for the working age population at local and national level.

Most of the employment programmes organised by the County Employment Agencies to address the needs of vulnerable groups have been implemented. However, the targets in some categories (for example, the Roma population, former detainees and post-institutionalised graduates aged 18) were rather modest. Other target groups were unemployed people aged 45 and over, single family supporters and long-term unemployed people receiving no benefits. In 2002 this last category accounted for 30% of all unemployed people who were included in training, conversion and refresher courses.

Another relevant initiative of the County Employment Agencies concerns the establishment, at each regional development level, of counselling centres for people with disabilities.

1.5 MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF AN AGEING POPULATION

Population aged over 55 still relatively active, but mainly in agriculture and lower-skilled jobs

In the context of extending the active life, the employment and unemployment trends are relevant. The employment rate of older workers (aged 55–64) increased in 2003 to 38% (EU-25 average 40.2%, Bulgaria 30%, Slovenia 23.5%).

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The relatively high employment rate, and of those aged 50 or over in particular, can be explained by the high rate in agriculture, most of which can be characterised as subsistence employment. Thus in the fourth quarter of 2003 the employment rate of the population aged 55–64 years was 19.9% in urban areas and 53.8% in rural areas. The employment rate of the population aged over 65 years is also high, though it is decreasing. Data from the second (spring) quarter showed a rate of 25.7% in 2002 and 19.6% in 2003. The rates for the previous years, based on a slightly different definition, were also high, at 38.2% in 2000 and 37.5% in 2001.

Employment rate (%) of the population over 65 years based on data for second (spring) quarter

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Bulgaria	2.9	2.5	3.0	4.2
Romania	38.2	37.5	25.7	19.6
EU-15	3.3	3.3	3.5	m

Source: Eurostat (New Cronos database)
[m]: Missing data

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.

Employment rate of the population over 65 years by educational attainment

	2000	2001	2002	2003
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 people (aged 55 and over) 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 minimum wage in force at the time – to be granted as an incentive to employers who hire unemployed persons reaching retirement age within three years of the hiring date.

Low participation in lifelong learning among older workers

The data on the participation of persons aged 55 and over in CVT programmes and other forms of lifelong learning are less than encouraging. According to the Characteristics of Lifelong Learning Survey carried out by the National Statistics Institute in 2003, the number of individuals aged 50 to 64 years who had participated in various forms of training was 7.4%; the proportion for those aged 65 and over was 2.9% of all participants. In a general context, however, the registered rate of participation in continuing education of those aged 15 and over was 18.1%. A similar trend is reflected in the data from the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family on the numbers of individuals involved in training, conversion and refresher courses, and by the National Agency for Employment's data on training for the unemployed. In 2003 around 24 000 unemployed people participated in training programmes, of which more than 30% were aged 25 or less.

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

1.6 EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF VET

VET reform aims at broader profiles, better adjusted to labour market needs

The Phare RO 9405 programme that started in 1995 has laid the foundations for a major reform of the vocational and technical training and education system. The outcomes of the programme (which was initially implemented in a limited number of pilot schools) included a new curriculum, the establishment of fewer, though broader, occupational profiles, with the emphasis on core-skills training, and the development of an innovative methodology in vocational training. The curricular reform started well in advance of the development of the occupational standards, which took place within the framework of a project co-financed by the World Bank and government of Romania. Once the occupational standards had been developed, the Ministry of Education and Research revised the training standards and the curriculum in line with the occupational standards. The general implementation of the changes to the IVET system as a whole began in 1999; however, as schools differ greatly in terms of resources and infrastructure, the process is still far from complete.

The National Reform has begun to have a positive effect on the popularity of the VET system, which has suffered a decline in recent years. One indicator of its lack of popularity was the enrolment rate for vocational routes (as part of upper secondary education), which remained relatively constant. For graduates of the eighth grade the proportion remained at around 45% in the last three school years. An important factor is the balance between the theoretical and practical training: 43% of the Arts and Trades Schools curriculum is allocated to practical training, and only 10% of the practical training activities must take place within enterprises. This imbalance between practical activities in schools and in companies is an indicator that it is more difficult to re-establish the link with the local labour market than it is to

improve the curriculum. The popularity of IVET is expected to benefit from better planning in the school year 2004/05 owing to the Regional Education Action Plans, developed by the Regional Consortia.

Insufficient public investment in VET and CVT

Funding for IVET has been insufficient in recent years. IVET is financed from the state budget, local budgets and other sources of income according to the legislation in force. In 2001 over 80% of the average costs per student came from the state budget (representing teachers' salaries), about 16% came from local budgets and 2.4% was supplemented by school units from extra-budgetary resources. The largest proportion of the funds from local communities, almost 90% in 2001, is spent on school infrastructure (such as repairs, electricity and heating bills); the proportion of the funds spent on other items is minimal (10.4% on investment 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: the local authorities tend to spend less than 10% of the revenues collected locally on education. In 2000 only 2.89% of GDP was allocated to education, the lowest level among member states and candidate countries. Provisional data for 2002 show that only 3% of GDP was spent on education (down from 3.28% in 2001). The recent amendments to the Education Law foresee an increase in 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 budget, while actual expenditure on this training amounted to 2.6% of total Active Labour Market Measures expenses³. There is an under-utilisation of the funds allocated for training, since a third of the available budget was not used.

³ National Agency for Employment, *Activity Report 2002*, 2003.

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The cost of CVT courses for employees in enterprises is low compared with the EU. In cash terms, the costs were around €160 per participant in 1999, much less than the lowest average cost in the EU, which was 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 programmes assisting the development of human resources within the Social and Economic Cohesion Programme are contributing to the preparation of Romania for the European Structural Fund, in particular for the European Social Fund (ESF). Another important Phare project in this field is the 'Progress' programme implemented up to 2000. ESF-type projects have already been financed in 1998, 2000, and 2002. Until 2007, EU financial aid to Romania for the development of human resources is expected to be increased, as are the number of public-private partnerships in the field.

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

Until recently, the local authorities held certain additional responsibilities such as budgeting for school units, controlling the implementation of budgets, the administration of all schools, and covering the costs relating to school infrastructure. These responsibilities (actually the system of budgetary execution through local councils) were not accompanied by any

effort to direct local council funds towards upgrading school facilities (including the equipment), and in the main, local community funds went on maintenance expenses. School units have now been given limited financial autonomy, and may generate and use their own extra-budgetary resources. The County School Inspectorates are unable to give sufficient assistance in day-to-day school management, especially in the field of finance and accounting. As a result, school units are not always aware of the amount of funds to which they are entitled, and are therefore unable to set appropriate priorities. Budgetary execution is carried out by town halls or budgetary centres, a process that prevents schools from utilising any savings they are able to make from school funds.

A series of decentralising measures are currently being implemented in financing and education school management, in accordance with the new legislative framework adopted by parliament in June 2004, modifying the Education Law and the Law on the Statute of Teachers. The changes will be piloted in five to seven counties starting in the school year 2005/06, and will be widened to the whole education system from 2007/08. The new legal framework supports school financing and education management decentralisation and a more coherent institutional distribution of responsibilities with regard to schools and local public administration, and is expected to improve education services effectiveness and accountability. Local councils now undertake all expenditure. Financing allocations will be based on the student standard costs formula adapted to particular school situations using specific criteria such as the number of enrolled students belonging to ethnic minorities, and demographic trends within the locality.

2. INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

2

2.1 IMPROVEMENT IN LEARNING PROCESSES AND CONTENTS

More attention given to improving learning outcomes and curricula

VET reform is a continuous process in Romania that started in the mid 1990s with the definition of competency-based training standards and new curricula. While this process is still continuing, more attention has recently been given to new methods of planning and improving links with local enterprises, and addressing individual training needs. Important changes are planned in order to make the system more flexible, creating horizontal and vertical progression routes, and 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 because of a lack of resources, in spite of unprecedented support to VET reform from EU through the Phare allocations in 1994, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. It is therefore not yet possible to speak of system-wide changes. Many actions have been taken towards establishing and revising the legal basis for reform, but when it comes to actual results, limited progress can be acknowledged so far.

Harmonisation of levels, development of qualifications and opening progression routes

The relevant developments are as described in the following paragraphs.

■ **Development of occupational and vocational training standards** with the involvement of the social partners.

Between 1995 and 2001 more than 300 competency-based occupational standards have been developed that have been used for the definition of training standards. In addition, about 221 training standards have been also developed, based on the occupational standards when these were available. The training standards include: core skills and specific skills, qualification levels, values of earned credits, performance criteria and instructions as to their applicability, and assessment tests. The training standards have been subject 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 also be used for CVT remains an issue.

■ **Recognition and harmonisation of the levels of vocational qualifications.**

Romanian vocational qualifications are based on the European five-level framework as defined in Council Decision of 85/368/EEC. The qualification levels from 1 to 3 have been recognised and used accordingly. The use of level 4 and 5 qualifications is hampered by the fact that only universities are allowed to issue them; hence, these levels are not yet widely used, although they are embedded in the legislation. These higher levels will be identified in the next stage of the reform programme.

■ **Correlation of qualification levels in the vocational and technical education systems,**

promoting progression towards a level 3 qualification. There exists the option to obtain the level 2 and 3 qualifications successively through the Arts and Trades Schools, following the complementary school year that leads to level 1.

■ **Development of a Romanian National System of Vocational Qualifications.**

During 2003/04 the basic steps have been laid down in the development of 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 being prepared.

Introduction of new curricula, core skills and learning methodologies

The changes carried out in the TVET system in the framework of the Phare TVET RO 0108.2001 programme (which began in 2003) were directed towards 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 and 1998), and are strongly influenced by the new regulations on the extension of compulsory education to 10 years.

■ **Tree structure based on broader profiles.** Starting from the training standards, the written curriculum (school curriculum and programmes) 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: the organisation of activities by study modules that ensure a passage from basic training (first year) to general training (second year) and finally to special profile training (third year of study); making vocational training more flexible by offering the option of changing the order in which study modules are taken, and introducing new knowledge in the context of continuous adjustment to educational needs; and modernising the system of evaluation.

■ **System-wide implementation commenced.** In 1999 the new curriculum structure that was developed under the Phare RO-9405 programme began to be implemented beyond the network of 75 pilot schools. The lack of appropriate conditions and resources in many TVET schools, as well as

2. INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

insufficient retraining efforts, have so far limited the impact of these measures.

- **Additional changes: new curricula for Arts and Trades 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 level 1 courses in 2003. A total of 47 qualifications and curricula at level 1 were developed by the Phare TVET 0108.2001 programme during 2003 in order that the new TVET compulsory programme could commence. The implementation of the new curriculum for Arts and Trades Schools is taking place gradually. Level 1 courses started in school year 2003/04 and the second year of level 1 will commence in 2004/05. Support measures for the implementation of the new curriculum, such as teacher training activities, are only provided systematically to the 122 pilot schools in the Phare TVET 0108.2001 programme. In order to foster 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 (gymnasia) that previously offered only eight-year compulsory education, and that have adopted the two additional years for compulsory VET.
- **Introduction of a flexible model for the design and development of a skill-focused and modular curriculum.** The curriculum for the final two years of compulsory education (grades IX and X in the new system) was approved for all types of schools (Arts and Trades Schools and high schools) in December 2003. The skill units are divided into two categories – core skills (social) and technical and vocational skills (general and specialised) – with differing contents according to the qualification level. Core skills include those recommended by the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and the Detailed Work Programme 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, and 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. The local development curriculum, developed in partnership with the companies, is designed according to the training needs of the local labour market and is assigned a significant weighting in the curricula: from 15–20% for grades IX and X to 35–40% for grades XI and XII/XIII.
- **Completion of the new Arts and Trades Schools curriculum.** The adaptation and development of qualifications and curricula at level 2 and 3 have begun, and training standards and syllabi are available; however, implementation will not commence before the school year 2005/06 for level 2 and 2006/07 for level 3. Moreover, the linkages that should facilitate progression routes within the VET system as a whole are still only in the planning stages. As the process is at a relatively early stage, little relevant and comparable information is available on the implementation and the impact of the new curricula.
- **Improved correlation between the theoretical vocational training and the specifics of the workplace.** The training standards for each qualification take into account the correlation of the contents of learning with the demands of the workplace through the following core skills: training with a view to workplace insertion, transition from school to the workplace, organisation of the workplace, labour hygiene and security. The key skill relating to work experience is mandatory for all qualifications. Nevertheless, work-based training is still the weakest part of the curriculum in qualitative and quantitative terms.
- **Student-focused teaching methodology and individualised educational offer.** The new curriculum

model, focused on skill acquisition and European Credit Transfer System's implementation, upholds modern teaching and learning methodologies, is student-centred and gives more attention to individualised teaching and the duration of instruction, with a view to facilitating the transition to the labour market and promoting an entrepreneurial spirit, critical thinking, communication and team-work abilities.

- **Implementation of transferable credits along the vocational training route.** Each skills unit has been assigned a number of credits to ensure the flexibility of the education system and the organisation of individual training routes.

2.2 IMPROVING THE INTEGRATION OF DIFFERENT LEARNING SITES – INTEGRATION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Links between VET schools and enterprises 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 amount of time allocated to practical training (on average 43% of the curriculum, of which 10% is in-company training), with load differences between the two vocational routes, i.e., Arts and Trades Schools and technological high schools. However, as described above, most of the practical training takes place in schools, despite the fact that the new curriculum offers students the opportunity to gain practical experience in their chosen area through periods spent in the workplace, as well as the development of hands-on learning activities through projects, as part of the formal school framework.

The Romanian IVET system suffers from a lack of connection between school learning and enterprise training. At present, systematic contacts between schools and enterprises, at least for some training profiles and especially in rural areas, are non-existent. Practical placements in

enterprises are often performed in groups of students under the supervision of an instructor teacher, and therefore fail to represent a real insertion into the world of work. The increasing number of small companies makes it more difficult to find practical placements for students. In the tourism and public administration field, practical training includes a system of training firms that simulate the practical activities of larger companies.

Given these difficulties, a major goal of the current TVET reform is the alignment of educational provision in schools with labour market needs; similarly, at local level, there is a need for an improved relationship between VET schools and employers. With these goals in view, strengthening the partnership and the collaboration between schools and economic partners has been declared a priority of the Regional Education Action Plans. 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 access to up-to-date equipment and improved facilities for work insertion. The partnerships also envisage an improved labour market information system, and counselling and career-orientation services. In spite of these examples of good practice, practical training in enterprises needs to be reinforced in terms of its contents, duration, forms and numbers of practising students, and thus become a significant means of facilitating the transition from school to the workplace.

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 model devised to extend the period of compulsory education to 10 years envisages the introduction of learning standards common to all students. Based on common standards, both learning assessment and end-of-cycle testing are to be introduced. The testing is to be organised at local level based on national standards, and lifelong learning portfolios will be taken into account. The portfolios

2. INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

include student results obtained in formal and non-formal learning contexts. This is important for reintegrating dropouts into the education system.

The Adult Training Law foresees the possibility of accreditation of prior learning, but there are as yet no official arrangements for linking informally acquired knowledge, skills and competencies with national qualifications. Labour legislation only obliges enterprises to record employees' formally recognised qualifications in their staff registers. Enterprises are not allowed to validate competencies developed in the workplace. Until this year the legislation was not very clear in the area of validation of prior learning, the assessment of competencies based on the existing occupational standards is practised in some companies (e.g. Banca Commerciale Romana and McDonalds) and in a limited number of training centres accredited by the Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment (COSA), using a loop-hole in the legislation on accreditation. Currently the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family have issued regulations on the accreditation of prior learning. Any person, whether young or an adult, can be assessed against occupational standards in accredited centres and will receive a certificate from the National Adult Training Board (NATB), which is recognition of professional competence. There are also moves to make the National Agency for Employment's Regional Adult Training Centres occupational assessment centres in line with the COSA/NATB experience. This could enable Regional Adult Training Centres to accredit informal learning among unemployed people and allow them to offer personalised accelerated training.

2.3 EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF VET PROVISION

Within the framework of IVET and CVT reform, the changes in the evaluation, certification and accreditation processes

have brought about the move from the traditional evaluation practices to a system based on evaluation standards and focused on learning outcomes. The changes were aimed at increasing the transparency and quality of the VET system and at increasing 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 to evaluation. The final evaluation of the VET system is carried out, as in other training pathways, by the National Assessment and Testing Service. The evaluation of vocational skills – during the school year and on completion of studies – follows the vocational training standards devised on the basis of occupational standards. Student assessment is directed to the certification of learning outcomes. At the end of the study cycle, VET graduates are issued with a vocational training certificate indicating their level of qualification and including a list of the vocational skills acquired, as proven in the evaluation process. The involvement of the social partners in the development of vocational training standards, as well as their presence on 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 evaluation of CVT. In the public system, CVT is organised by the National Agency for Employment and attested by a certificate of vocational training recognised in the labour market. Attestation by private providers is not officially recognised unless providers are enrolled in the official accreditation process that commenced in January 2004.

Proposed framework for institutional evaluation

One 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 for 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. The School Action Plans include priorities relating to internal and external management aspects of the quality assurance framework (including resources, projects and development, teaching and learning, and knowledge evaluation and certification). They also describe the means by which the school concerned should contribute to the achievement of local and regional priorities, respond to local and labour market needs, and improve the quality of student training and education. School Action Plans will be instrumental in the external evaluation of vocational education units. The system of quality assurance will be piloted in 22 VET units in the school year 2004/05, and the outcomes will be disseminated in the whole VET system.

System evaluation

A draft Law on Quality Assurance has been designed for the education system at national level. The law refers to quality assurance at system, institution and process levels through a common set of standards, norms and performance indicators. In this context, 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 harmonised with European quality indicators with a view to developing capacity for quality management and evaluation. The national indicators will serve as the starting point for the development of educational policies.

With regard to CVT, the methodology on authorisation of providers of adult vocational training and the methodology on certification of adult vocational training,

approved in October 2003, provide a series of evaluation standards that relate to the quality of CVT content and learning process. These cover the following areas:

- identification of the objectives included in the professional skills to be acquired by each participant in the training programme, according to the national occupational standards;
- standards for the design of training programmes: training plan, issues of organisation, strategies for programme implementation, the proportion of practical activities (which should occupy at least two thirds of each programme's allocated time);
- standards concerning the issuing of vocational qualification certificates and of the certificate supplement (which gives details of the professional skills acquired by the course graduate).

CVT in the public system is currently recognised using either a Certificate of Vocational Qualification, issued by the National Agency for Employment for qualification or conversion programmes, or a Certificate of Graduation issued for initial training or specialisation programmes and on completion of each training module. According to the new (October 2003) certification method for vocational training, a list of vocational qualifications achieved or a Certificate Descriptive Supplement detailing the holder's acquired vocational skills accompanies graduation certificates.

These measures are expected to add to the quality and educational value of CVT. In addition, it is expected that the development of a Romanian National System of Vocational Qualification bring about substantial improvements in the quality of IVET and CVT provision. In this respect, the first elements are already in place, linked to the existing vocational training standards, which are 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 an improved correlation between IVET provision and that of CVT.

2.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

Improvements in learning processes and the role of teachers have not yet reached a critical volume

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

Priority for teacher and trainer training and retraining 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 Teaching Staff and Managers in Education. The strategy objectives for the 2001–04 period are: the professionalisation of the teaching career through the establishment of a system of occupational standards based on proficiency; the revision of the theory–practice link in teacher training; the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System; the development of an educational market for continuing training programmes; and the development of adequate institutional structures.

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

GD No 604/June 2002 stipulated the establishment of the National Centre for the Training of 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 programmes relating to the continuing training of teaching staff and trainers. Training providers in fields other than education are to be accredited according to Law No 375/2002 on Adult Education.

Because universities have substantial involvement in teacher training, all activities in the near future will be influenced by the changes brought about by the Bologna Process. A new Law on the Organisation of Academic Studies (No 288/2004), in line with the recommendations of the Bologna Process, was passed in July 2004.

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

■ **Promoting access to education for disadvantaged groups, with the emphasis on the Roma population.**

The training programmes were innovative in the context of the Romanian training system and were aimed at Roma school inspectors, institutors, schoolteachers and intermediaries. The topics included focused mainly on the school–community relationship and ways of involving the community, local authority and civil society representatives in activities that would benefit schools.

■ **Training provision for school principals, teaching staff and social partners.** The major topics included in this training were:

- for teaching staff: student-focused learning and modern classroom teaching methods; the production and use of auxiliary teaching materials for student-centred training; education of students with special needs; workplace insertion and the integration of learning and practical training; vocational orientation; and IT and website construction;
- for school principals and social partners: partnership and cooperation with enterprises; school action plans; quality assurance; and education planning.

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Teacher status is currently low, but career prospects are improving

Despite the new developments, teaching is still not considered an attractive profession; the gross salary of a senior schoolteacher is 20% lower than the average salary in Romania. A recent regulation specifies an average salary increase of 5% for teaching staff in pre-university education, an amount that is not sufficient to increase the appeal of the profession.

The low salary level has also brought about a certain depreciation in the status of teaching staff, in particular in urban areas, together with a decline in professional motivation. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the decline of the Romanian industrial

sector, many engineers and supervisors have chosen a career in teaching, attracted by its job security. Over the past 10 years the number of teaching staff (teachers and teacher instructors) has increased at all teaching levels (by around 30% in high school education and by almost three times in post-high school education). With reference to the pre-service requirements for VET teacher instructors, a new condition has been laid down: studies in short-term academic education must have been completed. As a result, it is expected that there will be on the one hand, a better quality of practical training, and on the other, an increase in the professional status of teacher instructors (including in their remuneration) and multiple career-development opportunities.

3. BUILDING EUROPEAN COMPETENCIES FOR A EUROPEAN LABOUR MARKET

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3.1 CHALLENGES AND POLICIES IN RELATION TO THE LISBON EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Employment rate has decreased in recent years, but employment policies are developing more and more towards active intervention

Labour market developments in Romania have been quite different from those in most other EU member and future member states. In 2002 the labour force participation rate of the population aged 15–64 was 58.6% overall, though there were sizeable differences between genders: 52.8% for women and 64.5% for men. 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 urban employment has been accompanied by job growth in agriculture. Unemployment has

not risen sharply. However, in 2002 more than 35% of employed persons worked in agriculture (with 31% in industry and construction and 34% in services).

Law 76/2002 substantially extended the range of Active Labour Market Measures. Most of the increased budget for Active Labour Market Measures is spent on various types of job subvention through recruitment subsidies and credits to employers. However, between 1999 and 2002 there was a decrease in training activities, with a small recovery in 2003, though still 10% below the 1999 level. In 2002 only 2.5% of unemployed people completed a training course. Moreover, most training activities seem to be strictly linked to work reintegration requirements. The introduction of targeted policies to motivate individual clients, in line with the European Employment Strategy and as intended by the new law, is in continuous development.

ACHIEVING THE LISBON GOALS THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ROMANIA

In recent years Romania has developed a series of policy documents relating to the preparation of the employment system for participation in the European Employment Strategy. The major documents are described below.

The Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy Priorities, signed in November 2002, was an important element in the process of preparing the Romanian system for participation in the European Employment Strategy. Formulated by the government of Romania and the European Commission, the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy Priorities identified the priorities of Romanian employment policy, including the following.

- Improved access for the rural population to second-chance education programmes and to secondary and tertiary education is a necessity.
- There is a need for improved access to vocational training programmes, for both employed and unemployed people.
- Active employment measures should make possible, test and assess labour market changes.
- Local employment services should have sufficient staff to provide early assistance to persons looking for employment, in line with the new employment regulations.
- The new measures concerning social and employment benefits should be monitored and correlated with active measures for employment and with existing policies on equal employment opportunities.
- A more active stakeholder role should be expanded, primarily through bilateral dialogue.
- The arrangements for the European Social Fund must be accelerated, as should the development of both a human resource strategy and an employment strategy.
- Priority must be given to both the National Action Plan for Employment prepared in 2002 and adopted through GD No 759/18 July 2002 and the National Action Plan for Employment prepared in 2004 and adopted through GD No 588/2004.

The specific measures undertaken toward the implementation of the National Action Plan for Employment's objectives are as follows.

- **Measures concerning improved equal employment opportunities and the promotion of social cohesion** are to be implemented through the integration of the employment priorities into the goals of the Phare programmes developed in Romania. These are the 2004–06 Phare programmes 'Active Employment Measures Mainly Directed at Young People and the Long-term Unemployed' and 'Support for the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family with a View to Preparing for the Role of Management Authority', and are expected to promote increased efficiency of the active measures of fund allocation and support for those employed in agriculture to change their occupations.
- The **upgrading of the public employment service** will be achieved through programmes designed to expand the National Agency for Employment's institutional capacity, namely the development of the employment service's human resources and the establishment of a national centre for the training of its personnel in the framework of the twinning project. With effect from 1 March 2004 the new information system of the National Agency for Employment became operational, facilitating the relevant data processing and flow in the field of employment. Measures aimed at improving the quality of the services provided consist of a set of working standards for basic activities.
- The **promotion of active policies on the labour market** will be achieved through various programmes, including those targeted at career mediation, information and counselling, employment programmes for the young and long-term unemployed and SME credit loans.

According to the conclusions presented in several recent studies and reports⁴, the

⁴ ETF, *Monograph, Vocational Education and Training and Employment Services in Romania*, 2003; *Progress Report on the Implementation of the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Priorities*, Government of Romania, Bucharest, May 2004.

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main obstacles to meeting the Lisbon goals currently confronting Romania include:

- the reduced participation in training courses of those searching for employment;
- the reduced participation of employees in CVT, particularly those with low levels of qualifications and skills, and the relatively low level of interest among employers in financing programmes aimed at this category of worker;
- the high rate of early school leavers aged 18–24 and the high rate of graduates who do not succeed in finding employment;
- the insufficient training of staff in public employment services as regards the implementation of the new active policies focused on the specific needs of the target groups;
- a low level of literacy (at level 1 or below on a five-point scale), as measured using the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2003 (over 40% of all 15 year-olds);
- a very low level of participation by adults in lifelong learning; latest data from the Labour Force Survey for 2003 suggest that 1.3% of adults in Romania aged 25–64 participated in education or training in the four weeks prior to being surveyed, with the EU-25 average being around 9% (though the best-performing countries reported rates of over 18%).

3.2 INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS

Many structures for stakeholder involvement exist, particularly for social partners, but opportunities for dialogue are not sufficiently exploited

Romania has a diversity of institutions that embrace the participation of social partners and other stakeholders in the field of vocational employment, education and training. The added value of consulting the social partners is not currently exploited fully. For example, the sectoral aspect of the social partnership is not taken into account sufficiently, as social partnership

representation at sector level is rather weak. Also, links between schools and enterprises need to be improved in terms of the content, duration and availability of practical placements.

In the field of IVET, the 1995 Phare VET programme supported the establishment of regional and local structures with stakeholder involvement, thus playing a part in the development of VET for employment. Regional Consortia, set up with stakeholder participation, are responsible for the development of Regional Education Action Plans, and play a part in all Phare-funded activities relating to human resource development. At the local and county levels, social partners have been involved in the establishment of the Local Development Councils, and their advisory role in IVET has thus been assured. Local Development Councils also include representatives of the County Employment Agencies. These bodies participate in the planning process at county level, approve the local component of the curriculum, and nominate social partners for the evaluation commissions for IVET graduates.

With effect from the school year 2004/05 the planning of student numbers in the IVET system will be informed by the Regional Education Action Plans, developed by the Regional Consortia (see also section 2.2). 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 promotes the interests of stakeholders in the development of adult learning policies. As well as the NATB, the National Agency for Employment and the Economic and Social Council are the most important tripartite bodies. With a view to implementing the new system of assessment and accreditation of training, providers' tripartite local commissions connected to NATB have also been set up. These commissions are also expected to play an active role in the implementation of the Law on Adult Training.

3.3 TRANSPARENCY, RECOGNITION AND MOBILITY

Introduction of the European Credit Transfer System

Within the framework of the TVET programme, Romania has begun to develop curricula based on transferable credits. In line with Appendix No 6 to Order of the Minister of Education and Research No 5723/23 Dec. 2003 on the endorsement of the framework curriculum for grades IX and X, it is anticipated that the curriculum structure and number of credits will relate to the Vocational Training Standard. Based on its two categories of skills units, core skills (social) and technical and professional skills (general and specialised), vocational training comprises different numbers of credits, depending on the qualification level:

- Level 1 – 30 credits, of which 15 are for core skills and work experience and 15 for technical and professional abilities;
- Level 2 – 15 credits, of which 5 are for core skills and work experience and 10 for technical and professional abilities;
- Level 3 – 30 credits, of which 10 are 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 taken in the academic system with regard to the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System. According to the new Law on the Organisation of Academic Studies No 288/2004, the new academic education structure, based on cycles, is correlated with the functioning of the transferable credits system. As a result, academic studies will be structured in three cycles (see also section 1.3), including a given amount of transfer credits:

- Cycle I – Undergraduate academic studies over a period of three to four years: 180–240 credits;
- Cycle II – Master's degree academic studies: 120–60 credits;
- Cycle III – Doctoral studies over a period of three to five years.

According to the Adult Training Law adopted in 2002, the transfer credit system will also be introduced in the CVT system. However, to date it is not yet operational in Romania.

Towards a single framework of qualifications in Romania

A first stage in the development of a new system of occupational standards in Romania was the establishment, 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 incorporated into the NATB and thus the tasks of standard development and the evaluation procedures have been united under one 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. The outcomes of the reform include fewer though wider occupational profiles, postponement of specialisation to the final school years, an emphasis on core skills, and new training methods. The 2001 Phare TVET programme is reviewing the quality assurance and evaluation practices.

A decision was recently taken to extend the responsibilities of the NATB and convert it 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 CVT. The debates have also highlighted the necessity of opening the qualifications system so that knowledge acquired in non-formal and informal contexts can be recognised. The concept of the framework of vocational qualifications has been

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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 Europass

The recent reforms in IVET have also related to the development of a new certification system based on skill assessment. In addition to the Study Diploma, the IVET graduate is also issued with a Certificate of Vocational Training appropriate to the qualification level attained, accompanied by a Statement of Vocational Skills. The certificate is issued along with a Supplement. The initiative to issue the Supplement to the training or graduation certificates, as evidence of skills acquired, be they in the formal or non-formal system, is an important element for Romania's future participation in Europass.

In the case of some specialisations within the high school theoretical and vocational⁵ profiles, graduates could receive a certificate of professional competency.

According to modifications to the 2003 Law on Education, it is envisaged that specific

vocational abilities could be recorded by means of an individual portfolio for lifelong learning, which should also in the future include skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts.

In relation 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 172/2 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 the types of skill the graduate has acquired. The Administrative Appendix was introduced through Order of the Minister of Education No 3659/20 April 2003, following the unique European model. On the initiative of the Agency for SMEs the government is currently about to decide on the introduction of the European Curriculum Vitae.

The Single Framework of Vocational Qualifications, the development of which, as already stated, is Romania's current priority, will further facilitate the process.

⁵ In this case the vocational profile refers to: military, pedagogy, art, sport and theology.

ANNEX

The national education system in Romania (school year 2003/04)

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

¹ Qualification level 1 is awarded to School of Arts and Crafts graduates (grades IX–X).

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

³ Professional qualification track up to three years, open to high-school graduates (including high-school graduates without the Matura exam).

LIST OF ACRONYMS

COSA	Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment
CVT	Continuing vocational training
ESF	European Social Fund
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISCED	International standard classification for education
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
NATB	National Adult Training Board
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
VAT	Value added tax
VET	Vocational education and training

