



COUNTRY STUDY

ROMANIA

Country monitoring report 2016

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Additionally, with the support of the Youth Employment Initiative, the government plans to support young people under 25 years old living in remote areas, due to spatial inequalities their chances to thrive and not fall into poverty and exclusion are much more limited as of their counterparts in big agglomerations.

All of Romania’s actions to support unemployed and/or NEET youth are delivered under the Youth Guarantee program by providing packages of personalised services. However, so far they do not have the expected impact nor are there any high quality results. This results from a fundamental challenge of not having NEETs registered with the employment services, through which they have problems reaching out to them. Only when this step is taken, Romania will be able to focus on better integration into labour market and further training.



ROMANIA

Promoting access and participation in Lifelong Learning

Romanians' participation in Lifelong Learning (LLL) continues to be among the lowest in the European Union. Despite a period of slight increase, participation in Lifelong Learning activities dropped again to 1.3%, which is far below the EU average of 10.7 % in 2015. Adult's participation in Lifelong Learning is very much depending on the educational level of a person. The highest level of participation (3.1%) is recorded amongst people with upper secondary education qualifications, while the lowest (0,3%) amongst those with lower secondary education. The *National Observatory for Permanent Learning Development* narrowed down the profile of least likely to participate in education and training to a group of employees with low levels of education and professional qualification, working in companies with less than 10 employees and aged over 40. Training participation rates are also lower in rural areas than in urban areas and for men, compared to women. This situation of course reinforces the educational inequalities and low skills trap, and is particularly striking for a group of older and low-educated people.

It is worth noting that in June 2016 Romania has adopted a National strategy for Lifelong Learning. This document aims at improving people's access and participation in Lifelong Learning, and enhance its correlation with the labour market. The strategy focuses on reaching out to groups who are furthest removed and have limited access to learning opportunities. Special measures will target older workers, low-skilled people, Roma, people with disabilities, people living in rural areas and woman as well as youth in transition from education to work.

Evidently other groups such as teachers, adult learners, employers and others will not be omitted with regards to broadening access to Lifelong Learning.

Romania must step up its efforts to promote and implement the concept of Lifelong Learning effectively, especially since its 2011 Law of National Education states that "*Lifelong Learning is a right guaranteed by law*", and adults' access to training (regardless of status of employee or work searcher) is as well guaranteed by the Code of Labour (Law 53/2003). The Romanian government adopted the national Lifelong Learning strategy 2015-2020, which was developed with the support of the World Bank and entails a complementary strategy on the reduction of early school leaving. Both of these strategies have been harmonised with the ambitious objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and the National Program for Reform.

Having a sound legal basis, the government must address the standing challenge of lack of systematic coordination between responsible ministries and other relevant stakeholders (as LLL does not only involve central public authorities, but also regional and local authorities, social partners and NGOs). It is clear that the Romanian government as well as the stakeholders need to take real action to implement all the set measures.

Vocational Education and Training

The participation of upper-secondary students in Vocational Education and Training (VET) remains above the EU average (with 60% against 48% in 2014). However, Vocational Education and Training graduates' employability rate is below the EU average in 2015 (with 62.4% compared to a EU's average of 73%). The Romanian Vocational and Training system is challenged by a lot of factors: inadequacy between VET curricula and labour market developments,



underfinancing of the sector, need in investment in development of teachers, and a high level of drop-outs.

To address these challenges, in April 2016, Romania adopted a national VET strategy that focuses on: improving labour market relevance of VET; increasing participation; improving quality; and developing innovation and national/international cooperation in VET. Furthermore, the foundations for the implementation of a dual VET system are being laid down. This will be done in cooperation with the private sector, interested in this process.

Validation of NFIL

Romania's validation system of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) is based on the Governmental Ordinance 76/2004. It laid down the foundation for the validation centres as accredited institutions (by Romania's current National Authority for Qualification) to conduct assessments for the recognition of a professional competence based on occupational standards.

The number of people participating in the validation of NFIL has increased in the last years. This may be explained by the fact that people could benefit from informational activities, adequate guidance and from mediation in the internal labour market, and this all free of charge. However, this is not enough and more needs to be done. There are still many excluded people such as Roma minorities, young people from rural areas etc, who simply cannot participate in validation because they do not fulfil the required conditions. As the requested level of education is usually secondary level, many people from disadvantaged groups who do not have reached this level are excluded. A telling example are the Roma, since the majority of this group has not the required the compulsory level of education.

As commented by SOLIDAR Foundation partners in Romania, flaws in the current VNFIL come from a poor development of sectoral Committees (social dialogue structure, whose main role is to validate qualifications and associated operational standards and to participate in the development of the framework for training, evaluation and certification). They need to be improved and to become a real partner of the current *National Authority for Qualification*. Furthermore, they have to help revising and updating the occupational standards, in order to make them compatible with the labour market necessities and the European occupations. Also, the administrative capacity of the responsible agency for the development of the National Qualification Framework has to be improved.

This is important since the Romanian government wishes to enhance its youths' labour market integration with the use of validation of skills and qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Therefore, following the challenges such as: the selection and development of validation practitioners, improving funding arrangements, setting up monitoring practices, targeting key groups and improving methodologies, must be addressed. So far Romania has not developed specific policies or initiatives directed towards the validation of skills for migrants and/or refugees. Although, the new Lifelong Learning strategy includes a measure for the validation of skills acquired by individuals with work experience from abroad. This gives i.e. migrants an equal right to enter the labour market "under the same conditions of the law as Romanian citizens, including all the rights regarding training".¹ The Strategy is still at an early stages of its implementation therefore practical ways to making it operational are still to be defined.

Early-school Leaving

The phenomenon of early school leaving (ESL) is

¹ https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_RO.pdf



prevalent in Romania among certain groups at risk, such as young people in rural communities, young people from families with modest incomes, Roma and other minorities, and pupils who have repeated at least one year or simply abandoned school. Of all the groups at risk mentioned above, the rural population is the most affected. In 2015 the rate of early school leavers was at 19.1%, which represents a continuous increase in comparison with previous years and goes beyond EU average rate of 11%.

Problem of early school leavers is not experienced at the same level across the entire country. Particularly exposed are young people who live in rural areas. At lower secondary level, the dropout rate is 1.5 times higher in rural schools than in urban ones, and in some regions dropout rates goes beyond 25%. This happens due to the lack of preventive measures in place, difficulties with transition between different levels of education in rural areas, high drop outs levels in upper secondary education, and overall insufficient provision of second/further chance educational programs. Moreover lack of financial resources to support costs related to education are one of the motives behind early school leaving. Other drivers include insufficient provision and access to quality education, insufficient support services, or discriminatory attitudes in particular towards Roma, students with disabilities or children with special educational needs.²

In June 2015, the government approved the strategy on reducing ESL, a programmatic document containing mechanisms and measures to be implemented by 2020 in order to reduce the percentage of young people aged 18-24, who have completed at most the eighth grade and do not follow any other form of education or training. The objective of the Strategy is to reduce the ESL rate by 6 %, from 17.3% in 2013 to 11.3% in 2020.

The strategy contains four pillars and six representative programs that include prevention, intervention

² https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-ro_en.pdf

and compensation measures. These four pillars are ensuring access to education and quality education for all the children; ensuring the completion of compulsory education for all children, reintegrating the early school leavers in the educational system; and developing appropriate institutional support. The strategy also aims to ensure that every child has access to education until the age of 16 at least and graduation of the 10th grade.

NEETs

The proportion of young people neither in employment, education, or training (NEETs) was 19.9% which lies above the EU average and has grown in comparison to previous years. Only 8.1% of Romanian NEETs are registered within the public employment services, and less than 5% receives any financial assistance.³ This is the lower share of NEETs registration and being taken care off by safety nets across the EU. This situation directly impacts the unprecedentedly high risk of social exclusion of young people in Romania.

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Additionally, with the support of the Youth Employment Initiative, the government plans to support young people under 25 years old living in remote areas, due to spatial inequalities their chances to thrive and not fall into poverty and exclusion are much more limited as of their counterparts in big agglomerations.

³ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef1602en2.pdf>



All of Romania's actions to support unemployed and/or NEET youth are delivered under the Youth Guarantee program by providing packages of personalised services. However, so far they do not have the expected impact nor are there any high quality results. This results from a fundamental challenge of not having NEETs registered with the employment services, through which they have problems reaching out to them. Only when this step is taken, Romania will be able to focus on better integration into labour market and further training.

Citizenship education

Citizenship education is viewed in Romania from the perspective of equipping young citizens with skills and values needed to participate in a democratic society, understand problems faced by their community and being able to effectively engage in solving them. Students can explore its contents during separate classes at primary and secondary level, and as an integrated one, at upper secondary level. The compulsory number of years for the teaching of citizenship education is about four years in Romania.

With regards to citizenship education at the secondary level, at least one hour to two hours per week are provided, but in reality the classes are opting for the minimum number of hours. In high school, citizenship education as an independent course is optional. The responsibility for stimulating civic skills is mainly attributed to teachers of history, philosophy or sociology. It also important to mention that the contents of the Paris Declaration from 2015 has been integrated in the curriculum proposal for fifth to eight graders.

There are also a number of programmes for encouraging student participation in activities related to citizenship education outside school which promote projects between schools and the local community. In other words to foster civic and social skills through non-formal and informal learning.

Council recommendations

"Romania faces challenge especially in relation to the high rate of young people not in employment, education or training and there is limited outreach to activate them effectively and has one of the highest risks of poverty or social exclusion in the EU. Romania still faces education challenges. Several strategies cover lifelong learning, vocational education and training, tertiary education and early school leaving. However, the early school leaving rate remains well above the EU average, in part due to significant implementation delays of the strategy approved in 2015. Prevention and remedial programmes are limited. Vulnerable groups such as Roma and children from poor families continue to face obstacles in accessing and completing quality education, especially in rural areas. In early childhood education and care, Romania has taken action to support the participation of disadvantaged pupils in kindergarten (4-6 year-olds). Provision of early childhood services for 0-3 year-olds remains limited. Participation in upper secondary vocational education and training is above the EU average, but the dropout rates remain high. The tertiary attainment rate is increasing, but the quality and labour market relevance of higher education is limited. Participation in adult education is very low."

"Romania's key development disparities are between urban and rural areas. Employment, social, health-care and educational outcomes are lower in the latter and people face much lower access to education, medical services, basic utilities, and public services due to low and fragmented local administrative capacity."

"In this context Council has recommended Romania to strengthen the National Employment Agency's services to employers and jobseekers, in particular by tailoring services to jobseeker profiles, better linking them with social services and reaching out to unregistered young people. Take action to prevent early school leaving and increase the provision of



quality education, in particular among Roma.”

[Source: EUR-Lex, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2016.299.01.0073.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2016:299:TOC]

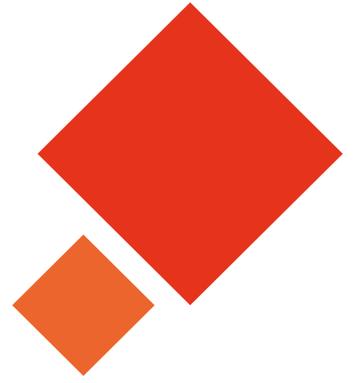


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As part of the Lifelong Learning Watch SOLIDAR Foundation has developed 12 country studies in 2016 covering the status in different Member States when it comes to; Promoting access and participation in Lifelong Learning, Vocational Education and Training, Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (NFIL), Early-school Leaving, NEETs and Citizenship education in reference to 2016 Council's country-specific recommendations.

The SOLIDAR Foundation is the cooperation platform of SOLIDAR; a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR brings together 60 member organisations based in 25 EU member states and in 6 candidate countries. We work together in Social Affairs, International Cooperation and Lifelong Learning. The Building Learning Societies pillar includes 23 members, covering 18 EU member states.

SOLIDAR Foundation engages through member and partner organisations citizens in EU decision making processes, empowers people through lifelong learning and VET, and voices their concerns to the EU institutions by carrying out active lobbying, project management and coordination, policy monitoring, research and awareness-raising.



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