



**European Approaches
to Inter-Generational
Lifelong Learning**

**Country Report
ROMANIA
2007**



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EAGLE COUNTRY REPORT

ROMANIA

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1 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Romania can be characterised by paraphrasing Milan Kundera's famous by now statement about Central Europe: geographically 'situated in the Centre, culturally situated in the West and politically situated in the East'. (Kundera, 1997:222).

The country is situated at the intersection of the 45th parallel with the 25th meridian, in the S-E of Central Europe, around the Carpathian Mountains, on the inferior section of the Danube. The country has a surface of 238,391 Km² and borders (3,150 km) Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine and Hungary; it opens towards the Black Sea to the East.

Population

With 22 million individuals, it is the second most populated country in Central and Eastern Europe (after Poland) and larger in population terms than 19 of the 25 current members of the European Union (OECD 2005). Romania's population trend (GEA, 2006: 56/57) has been negative since 1990, with no signs of reversing in the near future.

	1995	2005	2010	2020	2050
Millions	22.7	21.7	21.3	20.3	17.1

Table 1: Population Projections 1995 - 2050

If the trend does not reverse, Romania's population will gradually grow older, similarly to all European countries.

	0-14	15-24	29-49	50-64	65-79	80+
EU 25	16.4	12.7	36.6	19.9	12.5	4.0
Romania	15.9	15.5	36.9	17.0	12.3	2.4

Table 2: Population by Age in 2004 (% of Total Population)

Due to the promotion of early retirement as an alternative to labour shedding, especially in the early years of transition, the ratio of the beneficiaries to the contributors to the PAYG pensions system is well over one, one of the highest in Europe. Therefore, the pension system runs a large and endemic deficit fluctuating around 0.5 - 1% of GDP per year. This has the potential to further increase due to the ageing of the population, if no measures to attract people back into employment are taken.

	1995	2005	2010	2020	2050
EU 25	22.1	24.9	26.3	32.1	52.8
Romania	17.6	21.1	21.2	25.1	51.1

Table 3: Old Age Dependency Ratio 1995 - 2050

Ethnic Diversity and Faith

According to available data from the last census (March 2002), 89.5 percent of the population are Romanians, followed by 6.6 percent Hungarians, 2.5 percent Roma, 0.3 percent Germans, 0.3 percent Ukrainians, and 0.8 percent other (Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Russians, Tartars, Jews, etc.). There are a total of 23 ethnic minorities, representing 10.5 percent of the population. In terms of religion, 86.7 percent are Christian Orthodox, 4.7 percent Roman-Catholic, 3.4 percent Protestant, and 5.2 percent represent other religions.

Internal and External Migration

The phenomenon of migration has to be taken into account when population and population trends are discussed. According to the Group of Applied Economy (GEA, 2006:57) this phenomenon affects asymmetrically different age groups. Young persons have higher mobility and migration probabilities.

The number of legal and illegal workers from Romania employed in the current EU countries is already high. Rough estimates put their number in the range 1.5-2 million people, almost double than the official figures put forward by the destination countries. Romanian workers seem to be concentrated in countries experiencing both shortages of labor and tight labor market regulations, primarily in Spain and Italy (GEA, 2006: 72).

The large and widening economic discrepancies and labor market opportunities between urban and rural areas are expected to fuel external migration, especially as 45% of Romanians and two-thirds of the poor live in the countryside. As the opportunity cost to migrating or commuting to urban localities, where most of the new jobs are expected to be created, such as in the expanding services sector, remains high, external migration seems to remain a better option for the unskilled.

Furthermore, as economic growth expands and labor costs increase, migration is likely to trigger shortages at home, especially in the unskilled sectors and specialized occupations. The shortages and the increased standards of living will gradually make Romania an attractive destination country for migrants from the outside of Europe. Scattered evidence indicates that this is already happening.

Economy

Steady Growth

Romania has improved recently in a number of structural indicators of the Lisbon Agenda. Most notably, GDP per capita, labor productivity, gross R&D expenditure and gross fixed capital formation (business investment) have recorded significant progress (see Table 4 below). These 4 indicators reflect Romania's economic progress, now in the 7th consecutive year of high growth rates. Business investment is a component of GDP, and so is the gross R&D expenditure (GEA 2006:17)

The first half of 2006 has seen the Romanian economy cruising at a quickened pace, beating even the most optimistic expectations. Provisional GDP figures put growth in the first semester at 7.4%, with services and construction sectors bringing more than half of the total sectors contribution to GDP. Dynamic investment, driven by the certainty of EU accession in January 2007, could push the medium term trend GDP growth in the vicinity of 5.5-6%. Real

gross domestic product (GDP) growth has already averaged 5.7% between 2002-2005 and is expected to follow the same trend in the medium term. Although in 2005 GDP per capita was only a third of the EU average, amounting to cca. 6,600 euro, sustained income convergence could see per capita income rising by almost 40% by the end of the decade (GEA, 2006: 40).

The private sector's contribution to GDP is nearing 70% while it accounts for over 55% of social capital in the economy and more than 70% of the employed population. The steady expansion of the private sector in the economy has been accompanied by more entrepreneurial drive, more capital formation and export orientation. There has also been a significant rise in foreign trade and integration into EU markets; trade with the EU accounts for approx. 2/3 of the overall trade.

	2004	2005	Evolution
GDP per capita in PPP EU 25 = 100	32.9	36.0	↗
Labour productivity per person employed EU 25 = 100	37.4	40.7	↗
Employment rate	57.7	57.6	→
Employment rate of older workers	36.9	39.4	↗
Youth education attainment	74.8	75.2	→
Gross R&D expenditure, % GDP	0.40	0.63	↗
Comparative price levels (EU 25 = 100)	43.2	53.1	↗
Business investment	19.1	22.6	↗

Table 4: Progress in Romania relative to Key Structural Indicators 2004 - 2005

Agriculture still an Important Economic Sector

Agriculture is still an important economic sector, as confirmed by official documents (e.g. OECD 2000): with 14.8 million hectares of agricultural land Romania is the second largest agricultural producer in central and Eastern Europe, after Poland. Both soil and climate conditions in Romania are conducive to efficient agricultural production. In 1998 the share of agriculture in national employment was 36% and its contribution to GDP was 16%, such that agriculture in Romania is more important than in other Central and Eastern European country, except for Albania.

In Romania, agriculture has played throughout the transition the role of the 'employer of the last resort', due to the process of job destruction in the industrial sector, a phenomenon that has not been accompanied by job creation elsewhere; as a consequence laid-off workers have turned to small scale farming as an alternative to open unemployment. In Romania employment in agriculture has risen from 28% in 1989 to 42% of the total in 2001. Since 2001, employment in agriculture has decreased significantly, from 42% to 32% in 2004. The decrease is an anticipated move in the right direction (figures form GEA, 2006:68).

2 EFFECTS OF AGEING

The demographic changes recorded at the European level have negative effects in Romania, too, a slow and continuous process of population decrease being registered. The elements, which trigger this phenomenon, are: low birth rate (from 13.6 ‰ in 1990 to 10.2‰ in 2005), high mortality rate (from 10.6‰ in 1990 to 12.1‰ in 2005), and also the natural spore declining from 3,0‰ in 1991 to 1,9‰ in 2005.

The consequences of these tendencies have built pressure coming from the elderly population upon the adult population, potentially active persons, and also upon the social protection system (employment, health, social assistance, social insurance). The population under 15 years old is continually decreasing, from 19.0 % in 1999 to 15.5% in 2005, while the population of 65 and older increased from 13.0% to 14.8%. The percentage of population over 65 has been 14.8% in 2006, representing less than EU-25 average level which is 16.5%, while the youth population percentage is 15.5%, almost equal with the EU-25 average of 16.4%. (MLSSF, 2006)

Employment and Position on the Labour Market

Recent figures show the dramatic effort of the 50+ population to remain active in order to support themselves financially, due to the low level of social protection and pensions (for figures see Balasa, 2000:3); examination of practices show that although Romanian laws penalise (age based) discrimination, the majority of employers prefer younger staff (between 25-35) in the case of the companies based in Romania; early retirement still affects the economy, although it was a policy/decision specific for the beginning of the 1990's. The trends and tendencies indicate that there is a need for reviews of employment policy and regulations; 'education' of employers and a system of incentives/penalties to stimulate creation of workplaces for the 50+ population, systematic and systemic developments for fostering and developing adequate practices to manage age on the labour market and in the workplace. These measures are on the agenda of the Romanian government already.

Lifelong Learning and Orientation to Inclusive Practices

The 'new economy' is extremely dynamic, having impact on the nature and structure of work, especially in the companies supported by foreign investment; people live longer and elderly population has to stay on the labour market (whether officially or not). There is a gap between the requirements and expectations of the employers and companies in the 'new economy' and the professional profile of the adult and elderly people, who lack some of the 'new key competences' (ICT, foreign languages, literacy and numeracy, etc). This gap, if undolved, leads to unemployment and to social exclusion. Policy makers, education and training providers and employers need to work coherently in order to further develop both policy and practical methodologies that enhance a functional and flexible system for LLL and adult education; at the moment this is still fragmentary and unregulated (especially the non vocational and the basic adult education); teacher training and education should adapt contents and methodology to meet the needs and the profile of the aging population; there is also a need for activation, awareness raising and support activities and networks to sustain elderly people in life long learning activities that help them with work and everyday life; the

acquisition of 'key competences' should be the organising principles for both bottom up and top down approaches to LLL.

Quality of Life and Social Protection

The level of prices for basic goods and services (including food, medicines, household expenses) are extremely high and the level of pensions and state support for retired people are extremely low (the level and the structure of the consumption expenses of old people indicates that old population in Romania is more and more threatened by poverty); these economic and social phenomena impact even more on the life of the aging rural population. There is a need for reviewing the pensions system, making provisions for modernising and adapting the system of social protection and of state funded support in accordance with the need of an aging population that will live more with less support sources.

Health and Long-Term Care

The health system is precarious in Romania and the provisions for long-term care are almost inexistent; life expectation tends to increase, thus the population will live longer and will encounter long term and complex health problems. Institutions, structures, procedures and circuits need to acknowledge the above challenges; alternative community based such structures and procedures should be found; the European principles for long term care (accessibility, quality, financial viability) should be operationalised in practice.

Goods and Services for an Ageing Population

Romania does not have any tradition in providing goods and services specifically focused on the need of elderly people (clothes, household appliances, food, leisure and travel offers, etc). Public and private initiatives need to meet the growing needs of an increasingly ageing population.

3 ADULT LEARNING POSSIBILITIES

Romanian policy and decision makers acknowledge that education has wider and complex aims and that promoting social inclusion is one of these main aims. A 'learning society' is now seen as a desirable social as well as an economic goal and there is greater emphasis on widening participation in all forms of lifelong learning; for the moment this is instantiated especially in laws and regulations, but it is still less visible at the level of practices and concrete activities.

Participation of adults in formal, non-formal and informal learning is low and this has remained an issue despite new government policies aimed to widen participation (the government plans to increase the rate of adult participation in education from 1% in the last five years to 7% in 2010, RG 2007). The Government plans to develop policies to support older workers stay in employment longer, but there are not yet plans for policies to encourage people who have left employment early to return to a workplace.

Government Management

Although immense efforts have been put into reforming the education system in Romania and although a vast number of laws and documents have been issued to regulate education in general, LLL and adult education, so far, there has been no global, integrative and coherent approach to lifelong learning; this is seen in the lack of unity of the educational route of individual learners and in the lack of consistency of the secondary, vocational and continuous education and training.

The institutions responsible for lifelong learning policies are the Ministry of Education and Research for education and IVET, the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family for employment and vocational training and the National Adults Training Board for the adults' vocational training. This institutional separation of responsibilities relating to lifelong learning leads to insufficient cooperation among the decision makers and to a fragmentary vision on the matter. For example the Education Law reflects recommendations of the reforming programmes concerning the initial vocational education and training, while there is a different law regarding the adults' vocational training: the Law of Vocational Training for Adults (Law no. 375/2002).

After 1998 important progress in creating a favourable legislative support for lifelong learning has been made and the way to a common framework for lifelong learning has been opened. However, each of the educational levels and segments (compulsory education, vocational education and training, continuous education) have developed their own legal framework, which include some principles of lifelong learning, but they do not link to one another or to the common framework of public policies. Moreover, there have been inconsistencies in applying the lifelong learning principles even within the same educational cycle/level.

Many studies on the level of implementation and on the impact evaluation, carried out by teams of national and international experts, confirm the significant gap between the provisions of the laws (many of these are often very complex and carefully formulated) and their actual implementation. The EU experts show that, so far, Romania has not reached a partnership agreement on the adoption of a national strategy for lifelong learning, that would

include a comprehensive and integrative approach to all the aspects related to lifelong learning. Decision makers in the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Family agreed the catalyst role is to be played by the Institute of Educational Sciences and the Romanian National Observatory, which involves social partners and other relevant social actors.

Key elements of legislation framing Lifelong Learning include

- 1999: the 1995 Education Act was substantially modified and a number of important laws, regulations and programs on adult learning were issued: 'Programme of adult education in schools and high-schools', 'Eradication of illiteracy', 'Second chance education', 'Forms and structures of adult education' 'Programme of adult ducation';
- 2000: Law no. 133 of 21st July 2000 which approves the Government Ordinance no. 102/1998 on the organization and functioning of the lifelong learning system in the educational institutions;
- 2003: New Education Act.

The policies addressing continuing training and employment, synthesized in the National Development Plan 2004-2006 and in the National Employment Action Plan, mention the lifelong learning as a fundamental principle, but the implementation strategies and the running programmes often ignore the developments occurred in the initial vocational education and training system. Many of the specific mechanisms of lifelong learning, such as career counseling and guidance, evaluation and recognition of competences, training the trainers and teachers are running in parallel.

Law no. 375/2002 on the vocational training of adults (which completes and changes the Government Ordinance no. 129/2000) supports the measures regarding lifelong learning which are specific to continuing vocational training, such as: guaranteeing the access to training for all adults, encouraging the employers to invest in the human resources development, evaluation and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Although the law is modern and is designed with a view to lifelong learning principle, many of the provisions regarding the vocational training of adults are still non-functional in many of the aspects within its remit, especially in those regarding the recognition of learning achieved in non-formal and informal contexts.

Another initiative for promoting lifelong learning is represented by the Law no. 107/2004, which modifies and completes the Law no. 76/2002, on the unemployment insurance system and the employment incentives. The law specifies (article 48) that there are a number of specific incentives for those employers who organize programmes for vocational training for their own workers. The Strategy for Employment for 2004-2010, designed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family brings in some priorities referring to the development of lifelong learning, but they address only to lifelong vocational training, stressing the necessity of developing the institutional partnership and stimulate the participation to lifelong training.

Law no. 559/07.12.2004, refers to the setting of the National Authority of Qualifications in charge with the development of the National Qualification Framework. The law stipulates unitary methodologies for qualifications development, assessment and certification, for all qualifications levels, disregarding the training provider category (schools or CVT providers).

Key elements of current policies include:

- Efforts to maximise initial educational attainment;
- Provisions to guarantee access to training for all adults;
- Support and incentives for employers to invest in the training and development of their own worker;
- Provisions for the evaluation and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

A study commissioned by the European commission (EC 2005:17,18) suggests that a possible national strategy for stimulating the participation in lifelong learning, which could bring Romania closer to the European benchmarks, should address a number of directions:

- Increasing the coherence of the efforts made for stimulating the participation in lifelong learning through: (i) the development and validation of a national coherent strategy for lifelong learning, which includes all the educational levels, from pre-primary education to the education for people aged more than 55; (ii) enhancing the institutional cooperation of all the actors having responsibilities for lifelong learning and training taking place in one of the following forms: (i) within the national education system; (ii) outside the national education system, through participation in courses, seminars, conferences; (iii) individual study;
- The incentives for participating in lifelong learning should be focused on some specific problems and groups of beneficiaries: ensuring the coherence between the general programmes regarding the measures, taken at macro-systemic level, for increasing the participation in education, and the programmes focused on some specific groups (low-skilled people, unqualified people - Roma, women, homeless children); creating a legislative framework in order to facilitate the incentive, development and the institutionalizing of the 'second chance' programmes, in a flexible system, adapted to the specific needs of the beneficiaries;
- Stimulate the public interest in lifelong learning and its benefits: intensifying the research and the analysis of lifelong learning field; stimulating the interest in developing systems of recognition the education achieved/ in non-formal and informal contexts, for all the beneficiaries categories; promoting media campaigns for making the employers, the training programmes providers, and the public opinion aware of the importance of the adults continuous training;
- Developing the system of evaluating and monitoring the progresses recorded in the lifelong learning field, through: development of a research and data collecting system with regard to the European indicators in the lifelong education field; participation of Romania in evaluations initiated at European level with regard to participation in lifelong learning;
- Training the trainers, the human resources managers and the experts required for implementing the national lifelong learning development strategy education, set at European level.

Non-Governmental Providers

There are a number of NGOs, employers, voluntary organisations and trade unions that provide education for adults complementing the state funded and regulated system: some of the programmes and courses of these providers have to be accredited and evaluated by the two responsible ministries, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour.

Participation

Although there are many adults interested to develop professionally, to acquire new knowledge in different areas of general interest or to participate in education to meet others and to socialise, the percentage of adult population who participate in formal, non-formal or informal learning is reduced. The EUROSTAT figures for 2003 show that less than 10% of the population aged 25 to 64 participated in any form of education in 2003 (3.3% of the population 25 – 64 with low attainment education, 9.9% of the population 25-64 with medium attainment education and 33.2% of the population with high attainment education). A different EUROSTAT 2006 study, examining the number of population 25-64 who have participated in any form of education in the 4 weeks prior to the survey show that between 2003 – 2006 1% of the population aged 25-64 in Romania have participated in any form of education.

The figures show an extremely reduced rate of adult participation in education, but one cannot say that the general attitude towards learning is necessarily negative; there are economic and systemic factors that lead to low participation (RG, 2007: 55): lack of financial resources of adults, lack of support and interest from the part of the employers, the inconsistent geographical coverage with training and education providers and lack of a framework of competences and of assessment are among these factors.

The challenges that face adult learning for the future include: (i) raising the demand for learning among those who need it most, but are interested in it least, (ii) ensuring that new initiatives aimed at widening participation are not dominated by current learners and (iii) maintaining a commitment to social inclusion and the wider purposes of learning in the face of institutional inertia and conservatism.

Basic Adult Education and 'Second Chance Education'

Formal education: any school, high-school and teacher resource centre in the country can offer courses focused on basic adult education and courses/modules designed around the 'key competences' (ICT, foreign languages, entrepreneurial education, etc); these activities are regulated by an Ordinance of the Ministry of Education (2000); courses are on offer, groups are formed upon request, in different forms; day/evening, attendance/reduced attendance; basic education courses meant to support people become literate and numerate are free; 'second-chance' education was introduced in 2005 as part of a PHARE programme; it aims to support people over 14 who have left school for different reasons before completing primary or lower secondary education; it is a programme combining basic education (mass education curricula) and obtaining a level 1 vocational qualification.

People's Universities and Local Culture Centres

Non-formal education: there is a National Association of Popular Universities (www.anup.updalles.ro) whose members are 100 of the 360 popular universities and local culture centres existent in Romania (in 1993); the organisation aims to promote LLL and to

train teachers and educators for LLL and adult education; since 2000 it organises yearly the 'Festival of Your Chances. The week of permanent education [LLL] in Romania'. In reviewing the courses and programmes of many of the above institutions I could notice that no 'basic literacy and numeric' courses are on offer, however most of them offer ICT courses, foreign languages course, a range of courses that can be labelled as 'entrepreneurial education' and some courses that can belong to 'intercultural and democratic citizenship' courses. Participants pay for the course. Anyone, irrespective of age, profession and educational background can participate in these courses. Although culture centres exist in most of the rural communities, they are less and less functional because of lack of funding and resources, including staffing.

Popular Schools of Arts and Crafts

Non-formal 'permanent' education: there is such a school in each of the 41 counties of Romania; they are public institutions under the administrative authority of the county councils and whose educational and certification activities are regulated by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of culture; any person irrespective of age, background or profession can attend the school after paying an annual fee and after passing entrance aptitude test; the schools have curriculum and syllabi approved by the two Ministries and the graduates are certified by the Ministry of culture; music, visual arts, performance arts, different traditional crafts can be studied.

Regional Centres of Adult Education

Non-formal education: there are 16 such Centres in different parts of Romania; they are constituted in the National association of Regional Centres of Adult Education; the centres were created and are still supported through a project initiated by the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association; the Centres offer courses to anyone irrespective of background and age, but there are courses where pre-requisite conditions are in place; the Centres are involved in methodological activities and in formal and informal promotion of LLL activities; they lobby for legislation and reform in adult education; the courses they offer are paid by the participants and are meant to develop some of the key competences, especially 'entrepreneurial competences', foreign languages and ICT; other courses offer vocational qualifications.

Open and Distance Learning Centres

Formal and non-formal education: there are 7 such Centres in Romania established in the main state universities (Bucuresti, Brasov, Iasi, Cluj, Timisoara, Sibiu) and in one NGO in Bucharest and affiliated to the European Training Foundation; they have been created through an international project and have been recognised through a 1998 Ministerial Ordinance. The Centres offer courses of initial education, post university education and LLL. The Centres have affiliated support centres in different towns in their region. LLL courses are especially focused on ICT, foreign languages, counselling. The participants pay a fee that includes course materials, tutorials and exams and they have to be at least high-school graduates.

4 POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Strategic Report concerning Social Protection and Social Inclusion

The Strategic Report concerning Social Protection and Social Inclusion published in 2006 by the Ministry of Labour (MLSSF, 2006) presents the main strategic steps which must be followed in order to coherently develop social protection, through an approach based on partnership, assigning precise responsibilities for all social partners.

The report has four sub-sections: a General Strategic approach establishing the principles underpinning the system of social protection in Romania, as well as the key messages for all the stakeholders involved, the National Action Plan for social Inclusion (part II), the National Strategic Report on Pensions (part III) and the National Strategy for Health and Long Term Care (part IV).

The report is formulated in general terms and is written in a tentative language which makes its operationalisation and progress evaluation difficult. When it comes to strategic planning of the fields covered by the Report, the objectives that frame the medium and long term development of social protection and social inclusion are not SMART and, although indicators of progress are included, measurable impact becomes difficult.

In terms of how all the policy documents included in the Report represent and refer to adult and elderly people with their needs, roles and with the systems of support meant to lead to a better social protection and inclusion for these groups of population, it can be noted that only in very few cases direct and explicit reference is made to these groups. These two categories of population are not covered systematically in all the policy documents and in all sections of these documents.

General Strategic Approach & Key Messages

The document states that 'the struggle against social exclusion will be based on developing integrated measures, taking into consideration the multi-dimensional character of the phenomenon and the socio-cultural aspects, the housing situation, the education level, the health state. In this context, having as purpose the integration in society of vulnerable persons in risk of social exclusion, vocational training programs, associated with social services and with consolidated partnerships at the local level, will be developed' (MLSSF, 2006: 8).

The aim of the policies for social protection and social inclusion is to improve the quality of life for all citizens through better jobs and through a global approach of all social policies (social inclusion with its multidimensional aspects, pensions, health and long term care). Among the key messages that frame the social protection and social inclusion policies are (i) strengthening the institutional capacity for assuring the promotion of social inclusion policies in national policy and for improving coordination between ministries, public institutions and governmental institutions and civil society, (ii) attention for diversifying social inclusion services that addressed to disadvantaged persons, in residential centres as well as in their own homes, (iii) measures to decrease the poverty, (iv) the continuation of measures meant to raise the rate of employment, with special attention for disadvantaged groups and (v) development of an adequate and modern pension system.

National Action Plan against Poverty & Social Exclusion 2007

The social services system started to be developed within an institutionalised framework in 2004, when the legislative framework for this domain was elaborated, including an evaluation system of the social services quality. In Romania, the highest number of social services providers belongs to the non-governmental sector. Implementing the national strategy for social services, as well as the sectoral strategies for the social field, represents, for the next period, the major preoccupation for all the institutions involved in this field. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is built around three priorities:

Priority 1 - General raise of population's living standard and labour income stimulation by facilitating employment and by promoting social inclusive policies

Under this priority the NAPSI envisages support for employers when employing persons who are more than 45 years old and the organization of free of charge qualifying and re-qualifying courses for persons registered at employment agencies as a jobseeker.

Priority 2 – Facilitating the Access To Resources, Rights and Services

Under this priority the document acknowledges the need for a modern system of social services that has the capacity of providing quality and sufficient integrated social services, capable of fulfilling the needs of a higher number of persons in difficulty. The document also refers to the need to take into consideration the attitude changes within the family, where the children's willingness to take care of the older generations is continually reducing. The measures envisage the development of social services infrastructure in order to insure a better connection between the responsibilities of the families, the state, the private sector and voluntary organizations.

Priority no.3 –Improving the Life Conditions of Roma Population

This priority does not make any explicit and specific reference to adult and elderly belonging to the Roma population and to the needs of these age groups in terms of the quality of life and lifelong learning provisions.

Good Governance

After signing The Joint Inclusion Memorandum on June 20th, 2006, the role of coordinating the policies for social inclusion was attributed to The Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family. In this respect, through Government Decision no. 412/2005 concerning the organization and functioning of The Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family, with subsequent additions and amendments, The Directorate for Policies, Strategies, Programs of Social Inclusion was created, with the main attributions of supervising and coordinating the implementing of priorities identified in Joint Inclusion Memorandum, as well as collecting the qualitative and quantitative data in the field. The system and mechanisms created cover both the national level and the local, county level and it will create the premises for a better coordination of the elaboration and implementation of social inclusion policies, as well as for making the funds allocated for this purpose efficient.

At central level:

- Setting up The National Commission for Social Inclusion, with the task of establishing the national priorities for social inclusion and monitoring the implementation of these priorities.

- Creating a social inclusion unit in each central institution with responsibilities in the field. The social inclusion unit collects and analyses the sector social indicators, creating the premises of elaborating periodical reports of the recorded progress.
- Supplementing the personnel of The Directorate for Policies, Strategies, and Programs of Social Inclusion within MLSSF in order to elaborate social statistics.

At county level:

- Setting up county commissions for social inclusion in prefectures, with the responsibility of periodical evaluation of the degree of implementation of the social inclusion measures on the local level.
- Supplementing the main tasks of The Social Inclusion Compartment within The Directorate for Labor, Social Solidarity and Family with the actions regarding the monitoring of the process; supplementing the number of posts in the Compartments.

The National Strategic Report on Pensions

The national Strategic Report on pensions envisages measures that cover two main dimensions: the reform of the pension system and the revision of the exit age for people on the labour market in order to retain adult and elderly people for a longer period as active.

The new system of pension is based on 3 pillars: public pensions compulsory private pensions and optional private pensions; this new system will become functional gradually over the next 5 years and it is meant to assure better social protection through a more sustainable and equitable system.

In terms of employment and employability, the NSRP envisages the raising of the exit age by three years, both for men and for women (the introduction of this measure is going to be made gradually over the next years). Increasing employment (especially for older workers) from its current fairly low level will be crucial for the long term sustainability of the pension system. Romanian Government is committed to adopt a proactive strategy aimed at encouraging employers to hire and retain workers over 45 as well as those close to retirement through the use of subsidies. The emphasis should be to encourage working up to and beyond the statutory retirement age and the reward for long contributory histories should be reflected in the pension amount, respectively in higher pensions rather than early exits.

The recent reforms to the system have still retained the principle of early retirement, though with clear restrictions based on ensuring complete contributory records. The possibility of early retirement, of up to 5 years before the legal age, on a full pension, is available and requires an extra at least 10 years of contributions above the current full limit.

The National Strategy for Health and Long-term Care

The objectives of national health system were based on developing those programs through which equal chances between citizens were ensured, guaranteeing the access to basic medical care. The provision for a proper financing was one of the 2005 challenges, the budget of the Unique National Fund for Health Insurance registering a deficit of 880624,5 thousand RON, which was covered by available assets from the budget of the unique fund in the previous years and from the reserve fund formed in previous years. The objective of the health system reform was to achieve a balance between primary and community health care, provided at local level, including home assistance and specialized medical services.

For the Ministry of Public Health an important aspect regard increasing the access to the medical assistance services for disadvantages groups: population form rural area, families with many children, persons and families in need, persons not covered by insurance system.

Starting with 2006, the consolidation of national policies regarding social protection is established by extending the long term care, especially for elderly. The demographic changes from the latest decade have contributed to an integrated approach of employment policies, together with the welfare policies. Within these integrated policies, promoted for developing the long term care services, the fiscality guarantees efficiency and balance between material and human resources. A major objective in economic, human and social development is represented by the integrated policies of social inclusion through a permanent fitting for solving the social needs and problems concerning the employment and education.

Intergenerational Policies & Programmes

There is an increasing recognition by the national government and the local authorities that social cohesion, citizenship and the ageing of population are major issues that have to be approached coherently through policies and programmes. The official documents and the legislation, including the National Programme for Reforms issued by the Romanian Government in 2007 envisages measures meant to attract and maintain elderly people on the labour market, support programmes for the re-activation of elderly unemployed population and the increase of participation of adult and elderly population in lifelong learning programmes, i.e. support to enable elderly citizens to be active in an inclusive society.

The above policies are confirmed by the new legislation to be promoted in the short and medium future, in addition to the existent one (Ministry of Education plans to present in December 2007 to the Parliament the Project for the Law of Continuing Education, the Ministry of Labour is due to present in October 2007 the Project for the Law of Lifelong Professional Training and the government will implement, between 2008-2011 the National programme for Supporting the employment of adult and elderly persons).

However, in approaching ageing, social inclusion and citizenship the potential of intergenerational work is not yet acknowledged formally by the national and local authorities and at this moment there are no policies in place that promote or enhance learning and social inclusion through intergenerational work. Although, intergenerational practices appear in educational and professional processes initiated and implemented by public bodies or professional ones (the system of apprenticeship in VET education, the system of mentoring in the pre and in-service training of future teachers and lawyers, citizenship education as part of the compulsory component of the New National curriculum for primary and secondary education), the potential of such work is not yet apparent in policies and in national programmes.

Sources of Investment & Funding

The analysis of the intergenerational projects and programmes realized for this National Report indicate that the main funding streams for intergenerational learning projects and programmes are:

- Funding from Local Authorities;
- Own contribution (organisations funded the projects from their own resources);
- Partnership funding (organisations undertook projects with partner organisations – public and private ones; the partner organisations (co-)financed the projects).

5 INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

General Status of Intergenerational Programmes

Romanian society has traditionally grown around and encouraged intergenerational communication and learning, as most European societies have, both within the family and within the rural communities or small town communities: knowledge and skills have been shared between generations in the case of parents and children, teachers and pupils and masters and apprentices in different professions and occupations. These activities continue to underpin the functioning of Romanian society. However, intergenerational learning programmes that have an intergenerational learning dimension are not very easy to identify in order to map the phenomenon nationally: projects and activities may happen, but they are usually grass-root initiatives and information about them is not always disseminated efficiently.

Examples of Projects

The Newly Qualified Teacher Induction Project: In-service Mentoring in Education (ASMERO/Med)

The project was initiated in 2001 by the British Council (www.britishcouncil.ro) and the National Association of Romanian Mentors – ASMERO (<http://asmero.ro>) and its aim has been to assist the newly qualified teachers of English in their professional development in the period of transition between initial teacher training to the actual teaching career. The project had a pilot phase between 2001 – 2003 when the procedures were put into place and the support tools and instruments have been designed and developed; a number of 20 mentors have worked with 35 mentees, all teachers of English, in two regions of Romania (around two university towns: Cluj and Timisoara). After 2003 the project has been extended nationally and ASMERO now works with the Romanian Ministry of Education for the consolidation and further development of the project.

The process of intergenerational learning at the center of this project is located in schools belonging to the national education system and it involves teams of mentors and mentees who interact in a structured manner for two academic years, until the newly qualified teacher receives their certification as teachers. The mentor – mentee interaction is structured as a constellation of learning practices: mentee lesson observation by the mentor and mentor lesson observation by the mentee, structured time for reflection based on the NQT mentee portfolio, guidance from mentor, mentor-mentee common socialisation activities involving other social actors with a role in school life. All these activities are mainly based on a downstream flow of knowledge, know how and information, but there are instances when the flow is bi-directional (especially when in what ICT and research into teaching).

The Creativity Workshop: The Romanian Peasant Museum, Bucharest

The Museum of the Romanian Peasant (www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro) functions in Bucharest and the mission of the institution are to preserve and promote the traditions and crafts specific to the Romanian villages. The 'Creativity Workshop' is a project of the Museum initiated in 2002 that involves experienced folk artists, elderly peasants or museum staff, who



work with young people and children interested to learn the traditional crafts and to become familiar with traditional instruments, tools and techniques of producing pottery, textiles, woodwork, painting, etc. Besides concentration on arts, the learning activities can be built around preserving cultural heritage and oral history (the 'Village school'). Children with disadvantaged backgrounds and homeless children institutionalised in social care institutions are especially encouraged to participate in these activities.

Children can express themselves through arts and storytelling while becoming familiar with the history and traditions of the Romanian villages; they also acquire competences and skills which enable them to create art and to talk about it. The elderly or more experienced artists feel valued while sharing their knowledge and teaching the children produce traditional products.

The activities are organised on the Museum premises – workshops and outdoor spaces – are funded through a public-private partnership and they take the form of regular meetings between October and June (mirroring the school year) or as summer camps during the summer vacation.

The Council of Seniors – The Municipality of Timisoara

It is a project that has started in 2004 at the initiative of the Mayor's Office (www.primariatm.ro) of the city of Timisoara with the explicit aim to facilitate intergenerational communication and learning among the different generations of citizens in order to preserve and/or re-vitalize the spirit and the traditions of the city. The Council of the Seniors functions as an associative structure funded publicly and formed of citizens of the city who are over 53 years old and who volunteer to be members of the Council; the members represent the community of the city socially and geographically and they work in four distinct committees: 'collective memory and traditions', 'third age population', 'public relations' and 'intergenerational issues'.

The intergenerational dimension of the project manifests itself on two distinct levels. Firstly, the Council of Seniors reflects on the initiatives of the local authorities evaluating the compatibility of these initiatives with the local spirit and traditions; in this case the members of the council of Seniors are an interface between new initiatives adopted by the authorities and the elderly population who preserves the 'cultural memory' of the city; the learning activities envisage community development together with social inclusion and active citizenship. Secondly, the Council of Seniors organises events and meetings with pupils in schools or participate in informal educational activities aimed at young people in the city (the motto is 'former youth meet the future elderly'); in this capacity the Council concentrates on the development and continuity of societal values. It is interesting that intergenerational learning has both a public dimension (first level described above) and a personal dimension (second level).

The Council of Youth – The Municipality of Timisoara

This is a second project aimed to develop active and democratic participation of the population in the city of Timisoara. The project has started in 2005 and it was initiated by the Intercultural Institute in Timisoara, together with the Pro-Democracy Association and the Mayor's Office. The young councillors are 9th and 10th grade pupils (15-16 years old) elected through a system that emulates real elections. The elected councillors choose a mayor, two deputy mayors and a secretary from among themselves, they have regular meet-

ings and meetings with local authorities and citizens. The Council work in four committees (Education and Arts, Sports and Leisure, Culture and Civilisation and Social Issues).

The aim of the exercise is to initiate the young population in democratic mechanisms and to involve them in social life through a 'learning-by-doing' process. The exchange of knowledge and learning is bi-directional: the young councillors bring their views and their voices into the decisions of the officially elected adult local council and take the information and knowledge from the adults in the local council to their peers in schools and in the community. The inter-generational learning activities that are part of this project envisages mediation and problem solving, community development and active citizenship.

The Actors' House – UNITER Bucharest

This programme is aimed at protecting and supporting elderly actors, financially, socially and morally and it has been initiated and supported by the Romanian Theatrical Union (UNITER www.initer.ro), a professional organisation of the Romanian actors that functions as an NGO in Bucharest since 1990. The programme acknowledges the precarious status and the needs of the retired actors: this group has a tendency for self exclusion (during their professional life their creativity and originality have been under continuous public scrutiny and they consider that after retirement they cannot offer these values to their public and to the community) and many of them do not have a family (16% of the men and 45% of the women are single, divorced or widowed), their financial status does not allow them to satisfy their need for cultural information and socialisation.

A number of projects function under this programme and all of them have a strong inter-generational dimension attached, while attempting to identify means and opportunities to revitalise the creativity of the artists and to value their professional experience in order to fight against their marginalisation, social isolation and exclusion. UNITER has initiated projects in which the retired actors interact with (i) younger actors, (ii) children and youth from different schools and (iii) marginalised and homeless institutionalised children.

'The pleasure to communicate' are series of intergenerational activities that take place in schools and in Centres for institutionalised homeless children that involve elderly retired actors who work with children aged 12-14, helping them to capitalise on their life experiences and to write and stage performances based on life stories. Theatre is used as a common means of communication and as a pre-text for exchanging knowledge and information on different issues: culture, societal values and personal development.

'Animating the textbooks' is another series of intergenerational learning activities in which elderly retired actors participate in counselling and educational classes in different schools and they tell stories or make presentations on issues that children know from their textbooks, but which actors have lived (culture, history, literature, society).

It is interesting to note that some of the intergenerational activities organised under the programme bring together two groups at risk of being marginalised: the elderly retired actors and the homeless institutionalised children; theatre is the pre-text for intergenerational learning and for communication meant to value and to re-socialise both groups. The most recent such activity has taken place between 28 May and 1 June in Sibiu (this year the European Capital of culture together with Luxembourg) and its theme was 'Marginalised youth and the art of performance'. Three four-day workshops were organised in three social care institutions for homeless and marginalised children and the workshops have led to three performances created by the children together with the actors.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In Romania intergenerational practice is at the level of isolated programmes and projects initiated and sustained locally by individual insituions and organisations, private, or, in some cases, public (local authorities). The dissemination of information documenting these existing practices is not done systematically, and there are no channels for this information to circulate on a regular basis.

The only cases of intergenerational practice supported by policy and having a national coverage are those that underpin pre-service and in-service training of teachers and lawyers and the apprenticeship system in VET.

Intergenerational practice is not yet an established field in research, project work or in the decision and policy making processes and sustained work is necessary in order to make this field visible for researchers, practitioners and decision makers.

EAGLE is an important opportunity to open the romanian context for further work in the area of intergenerational practce: the National Report and the collection of Case Studies foregrounding intergenerational work in Romania are baseline studies that can indicate directions for further work and the point of departure for initiating the collection of data and literature, for sustaining practitioners in their work and for raising awareness at the policy and decision making levels.

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