

## SHORT INTROSPECTION IN FORMATION PROGRAMS FROM ROMANIA AS EU STATE MEMBER

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### **Abstract:**

*The present paper intends to present the situation of continuous formation programs in Romania, including them in the strategies and Directives of the European Union. This field is poorly researched and analysed in Romania, present studies being elaborated by state institutions, which are trying to fold to the requirements of EU, that wants to become the most competitive and dynamic economy based on knowledge from the world, motive that imp oses investments in human resources development with the purpose to encourage the employees to obtain new competences and to accept occupational mobility. Unfortunately, in Romania and all Member States, training is seen as a cost, which must be minimized, and not as an investment. In the present situation, given by the financial and economic crisis, the sole solution for the development of this sector is strong involvement of the Government and its institution.*

**Key words:** continuous formation, training, lifelong learning, qualification, occupation

**JEL classification:** M12

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the paper is to analyse the need of training/professional formation in Romania, resulted from the new context as member state of European Union. Labour market in Romania has undergone significant transformations in the context of economic transition, manifested in particular by reducing the active population and employed population, by maintaining at a relatively constant rate of unemployment and by increase of the long-term unemployment, being particularly affected by limited ability to create new jobs. The slow process, but continuous, of the aging demographic, has resulted in an increase of "pressure" of older population on active adult-potential population and on some important systems from the society (health, social assistance, social insurance budget).

## **TRENDS OF FORMATION PROGRAMS IN ROMANIA**

Current structure of the population employed by level of education reflects a shortage of people with higher education, in these conditions, even the few sectors with high added value of the Romanian economy facing with problems in meeting the demand for skilled labour. This justifies the need to move the focus to investing in education and training, especially in continuous formation.

As a result, the training itself has a weak structure, most of the elements being ad hoc construction, directed to the achievement of short-term goals rather than to develop a long term strategy. The quality assurance system, if put into practice, are in an incipient stage of development. Many providers do not yet see the need to adopt them, because they think that the market is not prepared to cover their costs and thus investing in these expensive systems will provide only small returns. Cooperation with commercial agents is still a weak point being limited to the conventions of training practice. Typically, employers are involved very little or at all within training. The only exceptions are the training courses held by companies but, even they seem to have a very narrow guidance and not structured as it should be. Trainers of such courses do not have teaching experience of any kind.

The strategy on short and medium term training continues 2005 -2010, made in accordance with the Government Program 2005-2008, which provides as the major objective of educational policy and training, the investment in human capital as the most profitable long -term investment, has set itself a target for Romania the average of participation in the process of learning throughout the life of 7% until 2010, for the adult population (age group 25 -64 years).

In the present everybody leads to the fulfilling the Lisbon strategic goal: European Union to become until the 2010 "***the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with better jobs and more and greater social cohesion.***" In this context, lifelong learning must be approached as an objective necessity imposed by the transition to an economy and a knowledge based society.

Orientation to a knowledge based society involves investment in development of human resources in order to encourage employees to acquire new skills and to support occupational mobility. Meanwhile, it is important to promote the quality of supply of training and to ensure its relevance in relation to skills, knowledge and individual needs.

Trends of the continue training market revealed by the study *The continuing vocational training in the technological development process* from the Romanian economy are:

- The entrance in EU will lead to further amendments and new restructures of the sectors of Romanian economy, and implicitly of their under-summative occupations;
- Development of new sectors of activity, penetration into new markets or market niches, developing and expanding private sector, reengineering, to adapt to customer needs, increasing competition in the field, adjusting the legal framework with the EU, will determine changes in structure and content of occupations;
- Trend of evolution towards a flexible, quality employment, especially for the area of services, because:
  - occupation perforation is developing on new areas (on market niches) with high demands on the level and quality of necessary skills
  - occupation perforation tend to be charged with the partially work program or contract with fixed-term employment,
  - how it increase the added value of economic activity carried out, increases the possibility to motivate employees by flexible time or by ways of reconciling family life with work.
- There is a relatively low awareness on the changing content of the activity.

Foreseeable effects on economic and social environment include:

- Can show deficits of skilled labour in the new activity / new occupations, un -correlations between the offer and demand for labour and employment at non -European level;
- Appears the need for training - the need to update the skills of labour force by training;
- There is a risk of exclusion from the labour market for people without financial opportunities to keep pace with changes and the elderly, which is most pregnant, the phenomenon of lack / shortage of skills / qualifications.

Changing trends of Romanian occupational system, revealed by the study "Evolution of occupations in the labour market in Romania for 2010", will lead to an exacerbated need for adoption of some appropriate policies for continuous training of labour, to keep pace with technical / technological changing and new communication technologies.

Development and implementation of suitable permanent training programs for employment will help to prevent shortages of qualified / competent labour in certain fields and related occupations. It requires a change of mentality in terms of training, to increase awareness about the importance of continuous learning, the degree of motivation for increasing knowledge and developing skills of individuals.

Development of continuing professional education system can not be conceived in the absence of partnerships built with the contribution of all factors that can influence the evolution of the system, in particular the social partners, but also the state and its regulatory authorities, professional associations, training providers, civil society etc.

Variety of training needs arising from profound economic and social changes that had place and to be held in Romania are not evaluated properly, one of the explanations is that, at policy makers level, and society in general, is not still recognized the fundamental importance of training to overcome problems arising from structural changes. Also, there is no evaluation about the continuous training that takes place in present, or about the projected one or about the potential of continuing professional training in Romania.

The following areas will require special efforts:

- Raising skill levels. Poorly qualified individuals are at risk of economic and social exclusion. Persistent cases of early school leaving, low participation in lifelong learning activities of older workers and the low skilled and low skilled migrants is a cause for concern in most countries. In the future, in a knowledge based economy, the labour market will require an increasingly higher qualification from a work force increasingly less numerous. The problem of low qualifications will become a challenge even more important;

- Strategies for continuous learning. Most countries have made progress towards the definition of a coherent overall strategy. In this context, progress is evident in preschool education, qualifications frameworks and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, innovative learning partnerships and sustainable financing in order to education and professional training of high quality, efficient and fair, still lacking in many countries, the more so as increasing investments saw an apparently slow. Ensuring that reforms are implemented effectively represents an important challenge for all;

- The knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation). Triangle of knowledge plays a decisive role in stimulating economic growth and employment. It is therefore important to accelerate the reform, promoting excellence in higher education and university and business partnerships, and ensure that all sectors of education and training play their full role to promote creativity and innovation.

Adapting education and training systems to new requirements of skills through: a better identification of occupational needs and key competences, and anticipation of future skills needs, expanding the supply of education and training; staff support development for transparency of qualifications, their effective recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning; ensure attractiveness, openness and high standards of quality for systems of education and training.

Adult training should provide to the employees and the unemployed the possibility to adapt quickly changes to the demands in continuous change of the labour market. In this context, diversification and increase of the quality of supply of training should be a permanent concern.

## OFFER AND REQUEST FOR FORMATION PROGRAMS

Following the creation of legal and institutional framework for continuing professional training, in January 2004 began the process of approval of providers of training for adults.

Up to date 01.05.2005 were authorized 856 providers of professional training for 2307 training programs, of which 1887 of qualification, 177 of initiation, 177 of improvement and 75 training programs for specialization.

Reducing the tax of authorisation from three average net wages in the economy at two minimum gross salaries, in October 2004 resulted in increasing the number of authorized training providers.

In Romania, the training is based on occupational standards, the legislation providing the obligatory development of training programs subject of authorization on this basis. Insufficient number of occupational standards and the fact that the complex task of their development returns currently to training providers and other interested organizations is an impediment to the authorization of training providers for many occupations, limiting, in some areas, offer of training.

Providers of training are, generally, small institutions, non-specialized, who adapts quickly the offer of training to immediate market needs. In general, they offer programs for Level 2 of qualification, initiation of programs for computer use or acquisition of skills for foreign languages.

There is a low offer of programs for qualifications that require major investments by providers of training.

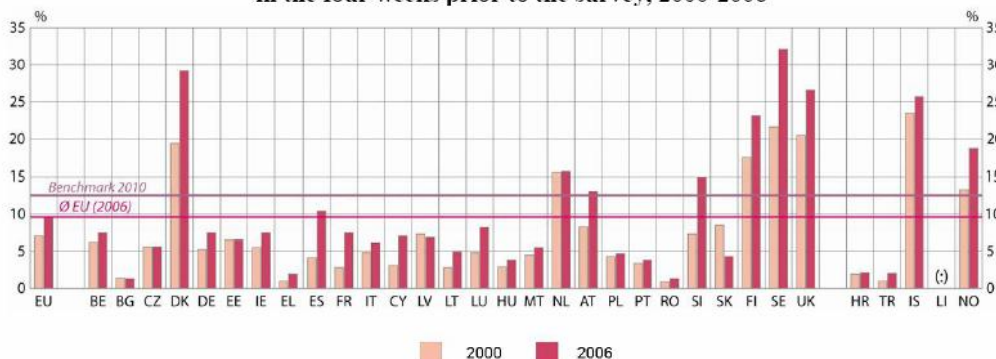
Offer of authorised training programs not reflects only partially the training needs of the job. The most efficient form of linking the training content with the market needs is done when training takes place at the request of businesses, and practice is conducted in real conditions of work or when training providers cooperate closely with businesses from certain sectors. Training at the workplace is the most frequent method of training, being, on the one hand, inexpensive, and, on the other hand, inevitable, required by the development of activity itself.

Offer of training tends to focus on programs for complete qualifications or on programs for development of general competencies. Also, the offer of professional training is still very fragmented, because it addresses more likely to people and not to companies, orienting on punctual requests of labour market

The system is focused in particular on the provision of certificates and less on development of skills necessary for employment. Long LLL programs, makes them unsuitable for persons placed in employment.

## PARTICIPATION IN LIFELONG LEARNING

Percentage of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training  
in the four weeks prior to the survey, 2000-2006



**Figure no. 1. Participation of the population at continuous training programs**

Source: European Commission

According to data provided by the European Commission (presented in the table above) Romania is on the last place in the population participation to programs of education and training (1.3% of the total population with aged between 25 -64 years), situating much under the average of 10% at EU level.

Another important factor that acts as a brake in the current system of LLL, is that current legislation does not permit certification of partial qualifications, although the demand of labour market training is often oriented to narrow qualifications.

For many employers, especially in industries with low added value, where there is a large supply of labour and workers' wages are low, investment in continuing training is not considered a necessity.

As long as in the Romanian economy will prevail jobs with low wages, which are focused in industries with low added value, where education and training bring little benefits, it is possible that this situation and the perception to continue.

Development of industries with high added value will help change employers' attitudes and mentality towards investment in education and training.

Low income of individual and relatively high costs of the training programs are the main obstacles to access to training, while the offer of training has tended to focus on programs lasting

longer for complete qualification. Both economic units and individuals manifest a greater demand for modular courses of short time, directed by acquiring certain skills.

Employers prefer to hire staff that is already prepared. So, people who have invested in their training are in a better situation than young school graduates, workers with no experience and those returning to the labour market after a period of unemployment.

Training is seen as a cost, which must be minimized, and not as an investment. Investments of employers in human resource development are low and general expenditure of training are covered in particular by individuals.

## RESEARCH IN FORMATION PROGRAMS FIELD IN ROMANIA

This field is poorly researched and analysed in Romania, present studies being elaborated by ten state institutions. These studies are trying to fold to the requirements of EU, that wants to become the most competitive and dynamic economy based on knowledge from the world, motive that imposes investments in human resources development with the purpose to encourage the employees to obtain new competences and to accept occupational mobility. In the same time, is important to promote the quality of formation offer and to ensure its relevance comparing with person's abilities, knowledge and needs.

The studies related to the field are:

- Reports and studies made by the Ministry of Work, Family and Equity, Direction of Programs and Strategies for Working Force, National Observatory of Occupation and Professional Formation of Working Force:
  - *European regulations in domain of working force occupation and professional formation*, Bucharest, July 2007
  - *Continuous professional formation in the process of technologic development from Romanian economy*, Bucharest, April 2007
  - *Evolution of European politics in domain of working force occupation*, Bucharest, August 2007
  - *Present problems of young people from Romania*, Bucharest, May 2007
- Studies made by National Council for professional Formation of Adults and program GTZ for Romania:
  - *Analysis of working market and identification of formation needs*, Bucharest, 2002
  - *Assurance of professional formation quality of adults in Romania*, Bucharest, 2002
  - *Explorative research concerning adults professional formation*, Bucharest, December 2001
- *National Plan for Development 2007-2013*, Romanian Government, Ministry of Public Finance
- *LLL in the service of knowledge, creativity and innovation*, project of common report for 2008 concerning the progress, of the Council and the Commission, regarding application of “working program Education and professional formation 2010” {SEC(2007) 1484}, Bruxelles, 12.11.2007
  - Decision no 970 from 07/26/2006 Published in Official Monitor, Part I no 698 from 08/15/2006 concerning approval of the *National Action Plan in the Field of Occupation PNAO - 2006*
  - *Strategy of the medium and short term for continuous professional formation 2005 -2010*

## REGULATION OF FORMATION PROGRAMS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

Education is a permanent concern of the governments of all Member States, but the structure of education systems differ considerably from country to country. In this context, the EU is a useful forum for exchanging ideas and best practices. The EU has no common policy on vocational training, but on the contrary, its role is to create a system of cooperation between Member States by maintaining the right of each Member State to decide on the content and organization of education and training.

Regarding transparency and recognition of diplomas and qualifications for academic purposes was created, in 1984, at the initiative of the European Commission, a network of National

Centres for Recognition of Diplomas that are found in all EU Member States and the European Economic Area as and all the associated States of Central and Eastern Europe. They provide advice and information on recognition of diplomas and periods of study undertaken abroad. Regarding transparency and recognition for professional qualifications is currently creating a network of National Information Points for vocational qualifications which will be a first point of contact for issues related to professional qualifications.

This field, particularly important for the concept of the single European market, is regulated at the level of Directive.

Following the request made by the European Council from Stockholm in March 2001, the European Commission proposed a new Directive on recognition of professional qualifications in order to create a more uniform, transparent and flexible frame to modernize the entire European system of recognition of qualifications.

Proposal for a Directive aimed to bring together the 15 existing directives - 3 of the general system of recognition of qualifications and 12 sectoral directives relating to the professions of doctor, nurse, dentist, veterinary surgeon, midwife, pharmacist and architect – for who are set for different systems of recognition. It is estimated that this Directive will contribute to the relaxation of labour markets, to accelerate liberalization of the provision of services, to encourage automatic recognition of qualifications and to simplify administrative procedures.

Therefore in 7 September 2005 have been approved the Directive of the European Parliament and Council no. 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications which are repealed the Directives 77/452/EEC, 77/453/EEC, 78/686/EEC, 78/687/EEC, 78/1026/EEC, 78/1027/EEC, 80/154/EEC, 80/155/EEC, 85/384/EEC, 85/432/EEC, 85/433/EEC, 89/48/EEC, 92/51/EEC, 93/16/EEC and 1999 / 42/EC.

The Directive applies to all citizens of Member States who wish to pursue a regulated profession, as employees or self-employed, in a Member State, other than where they obtained their professional qualifications.

Is not covered by this regulation the directives relating to the right of free circulation of services and for lawyers (Directives 77/249/EEC and 98/5/EC), because they are not relate to recognition of qualifications, but the authorisation of law practice. Recognition of professional qualification of lawyers was previously covered by Directive 89/48/EEC and, therefore, is covered by the new directive.

Recognition of professional qualifications allows the recipients to engage in the host Member State the profession who have obtained qualifications in the Member State of origin, and the right to carry out this work under the same conditions as nationals of that State, where the profession is regulated.

Directive makes a distinction between "freedom to provide services" and "freedom of establishment", based on criteria identified by the European Court of Justice: duration, frequency, regularity and continuity in services.

In the first case, the person may provide services in temporary and occasionally based on the original qualification document, without the need for recognition of his skills. If the profession is not regulated, the service provider must prove also professional experience of 2 years.

In the second case, involving the establishment in another Member State, the Directive provides for three systems of recognition:

□ **General system of recognition of professional qualifications** - Chapter I: The system applies to all professions where there are no specific rules for recognition, and if the person does not meet the conditions laid down in the other scheme of recognition. This general system is based on mutual recognition, subject to compensatory measures where there are large differences between individual preparation and necessary training to conduct business in the host Member State. These measures may relate to an adaptation period or an aptitude test.

□ **The system of automatic recognition of qualifications attested through professional experience** - Chapter II: The industrial and commercial, craft activities listed in the Directive are

subject, in the conditions set by this, to automatic recognition of qualifications attested by professional experience.

□ **The system of automatic recognition of qualifications for certain professions** - Chapter III: This recognition can be done when performing a cumulative minimum of training in the following professions: doctor, nurse, dentist, dental practitioner, veterinary surgeon, midwife, pharmacist and architect.

As regards the requests of knowledge of the language of the host Member State, the Directive provides the possibility of fulfilling this necessary condition for activity unfolding. Assessing the knowledge of language is separable from the recognition of qualification and it can be done on the basis of tests adapted to the knowledge of linguistic level necessary to service provision.

Directive also contains provisions relating to certain administrative aspects relating cooperation between Member States.

Thus, for the application of Directive:

□ Each Member State should designate a coordinator to ensure the uniform application of the Directive;

□ Each Member State shall designate points of contact not later than 20 October 2007. These contact points will have the role of informing citizens in this area and assist them in exercising the rights established by the Directive;

□ Each Member State shall designate a representative to the Committee for the recognition of professional qualifications.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

Within the LLL process and continuous formation field, the European Commission established in October 2005 The European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ENQA-VET), in order to support the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration. The main purpose of the Network is to create a structured and sustainable platform for member countries to exchange information and experience, learn from each other and build consensus on quality assurance issues in vocational education and training (VET).

The ENQA-VET Work Programme, working on the principles of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) within the Lisbon and Copenhagen processes, provides support to member countries to work together towards the achievement of common priorities and objectives. This is achieved by establishing best practice, common principles and guidelines and using indicators to evaluate activities and monitor progress.

The thematic groups are a major pillar of ENQA-VET's work. They contribute to policy development and the achievement of the Network's strategic objectives, through the production of a range of material which will contribute to evidence-based policymaking, within Member States and at EU level.

The groups build on the previous work undertaken as part of the Network and provide the backbone to ENQA-VET's current work. Each group has a specific mandate consistent with the strategic objectives of ENQA-VET and brings together experts from the Member States and the Social Partners.

Current thematic groups address the following topics: Making VET more attractive, Quality Indicators, Guidelines for supporting quality in VET systems and Peer Review.

### **Making VET more attractive**

**Host country: Malta**

The role of this thematic group is to support ENQA-VET in its reflection on the role of quality assurance in making VET more attractive. It is working on development of concrete suggestions which will support policy implementation within national and/or regional systems as appropriate.

The group's deliverables are to provide:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium term analysis of successful measures which are needed to ensure that VET is seen as an attractive option for learners and</li> <li>• Longer term stock-taking report to contribute to policy development at European and Member State levels.</li> </ul>
<b>Quality Indicators</b> <b>Host country: Czech Republic</b>	<p>The mandate of this thematic group on indicators is to support the work of ENQA-VET in its reflection on the choice and use of indicators, to measure progress in relation to the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework. In particular the group's work will focus on the indicators proposed in the European Commission's "Proposal for a Recommendation on the Establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework" published in April 2008.</p> <p>The deliverables for this group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reflection on the feasibility of the indicators proposed in the European Commission proposal</li> <li>• A reflection on the use of indicators to measure progress in quality assurance of VET and in particular an examination of the feasibility of the longer standing VET related indicators developed by the Standing Group on Indicators.</li> </ul>
<b>Guidelines for supporting quality in VET systems</b> <b>Host country: Netherlands</b>	<p>This thematic group is examining the use of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) and the experience of Member States in using the framework. The group will look at how policy is turned into practice with a particular focus on supporting systems and key factors in developing a culture of quality assurance.</p> <p>Agreed deliverables for the group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion papers and monographs on various issues relating to the practical implementation of the EQARF;</li> <li>• Presentations of practices which support the use of EQARF in a variety of VET contexts in Europe and</li> <li>• Guidelines which will facilitate the use of EQARF in Member States contexts.</li> </ul>
<b>Peer Review</b> <b>Host country: Austria</b>	<p>This group will prepare a strategic vision of how to most appropriately in VET through sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice proposals for developing a system of European peer review in Specific deliverables for this group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a proposal for a process and structure for peer reviews at</li> <li>• Prepare a strategy for the further development of the European peer mutual learning from European peer review in higher education</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSIONS

European Union to become until the 2010 *"the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with better jobs and more and greater social cohesion."* In this context, lifelong learning must be approached as an objective necessity imposed by the transition to an economy and a knowledge based society. Unfortunately, in Romania and all Member States, training is seen as a cost, which must be minimized, and not as an investment. Investments of employers in human resource development are low and general expenditure of training are covered in particular by individuals. Interjects here the regulations of European Union given by the Directive 2005/36/EC, which sets the basis of qualification recognition at European level, the fact that should motivate and impulse the employees and employers to participate and develop lifelong programs.



At institutional level, Romania should take some measures, like powerful stimulation of companies to invest in human resources, to develop their potential as a main source of profitability. The new European regulations in this sector are very little observed in Romania, all activities being in stage of idea. In the present situation, given by the financial and economic crisis, the sole solution for the development of this sector is strong involvement of the Government and its institution.

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