

# Consortialization strategy as a technique for the streamlining of the relationship between education and vocational training and the labour market

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***Abstract:** The present study aims to examine the variables of the relationship between education and continuous vocational with the labour market in the context of new priorities and regional development dimensions. This approach attempts to provide a new perspective on the streamlining of these relationships by introducing and substantiating a new socio-educational strategy, that of consortialization.*

## I. The european context

Education has always had a strong formative influence on society; however, its tools have taken new dimensions as a result of globalization and the revolution of knowledge. Each long-term strategy to increase

economic competitiveness, of prosperity and social cohesion in the EU is based on education and training. Here are some of the main landmarks of EU policies and programs.

**1. The Stockholm European Council (2001)** – approves the Report on the objectives

of the education and professional training systems in the member countries, noting that “improving basic skills, particularly those regarding the information technology (IT) and digital technology, is a priority for the EU to make European economy the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy.”

## 2. The Barcelona Process (2002) –

During the meetings of the European Council in Barcelona in March 2002, it was established that education and training systems must become reference fields for quality by 2010 and defined a series of targets – “benchmarks”. The five benchmarks in education and training, adopted by the Council in May 2003, still represent a challenge for these systems:

- EU average rate of early school leavers should not exceed 10%;
- functional illiteracy rate for 15-year-olds should drop by at least 20% compared to 2000;
- at least 85% of those aged 22 should have completed at least upper secondary education;
- in 2010 the EU average participation in lifelong learning should be at least 12.5% for the population in the age group 25-64 years;
- number of graduates in mathematics, sciences and technology in the EU should increase by 15% by 2010 and any gender gap in these areas should be eliminated.

**3. Europe 2020 Strategy** – The European Commission launched on the 3rd of March 2010 a vision for Europe’s social market economy in the next decade which is based on three priority areas, which are intertwined and mutually stimulating:

- Intelligent economic growth, the development of an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- Sustainable economic growth, promoting a competitive economy, with low-carbon emissions and an efficient use of resources;
- Inclusive economic growth, promoting an economy with a high degree of employment on the labour market, which should generate social and territorial cohesion.

Progress towards these objectives will be measured against five benchmarks representative at the EU level, which the member states will be invited to translate into national benchmarks that reflect the starting points:

- 75 % of the population aged between 20-64 years should be employed;
- 3 % of the EU GDP should be invested in research and development;
- The climate and energy objectives “20/20/20” must be achieved;
- The quota of early school leavers should be below 10%, and at least 40% of the younger generation should have university studies;
- The number of persons at risk of poverty must be reduced by 20 million.

**4. European Human Capital Index, Lisbon Council, 2007** – the landmarks to be taken into account to assess the overall situation are the following:

Table 1 - Landmarks

Landmarks			
Human capital stock	Using the human capital stock	Productivity	Demography
Investment per capita for education and training of the employed population	Occupancy rate	Contribution of the human capital relative to the created added value	Increase or decrease
Composition of human capital depending on the type and level of education	Unemployment rate	Quality of education and professional training	Migratory trends
Health status	Rate of connectedness to multimedia communication networks	Lifelong employability	Calculated impact on the labour market
	Participation in income- or value-producing activities	Investments in research and development	

**5. European Employment Strategy (EES)** – was devised as an essential tool for the necessary guidance and to ensure the coordination of priorities in the field of employment policies, endorsed by all the EU member states. The achievement of an average of the overall occupancy rate of 70% and of the female employment rate of 60% by 2010 were established as global objectives at a European level. As a priority of the European Employment Strategy, an increased investment in human capital and lifelong learning requires:

- ambitious policies for raising human capital to increase investment in research and development and to promote entrepreneurial attitudes and skills through education at all levels;
- shared costs and responsibilities between public authorities, companies and individuals, and reviewing the incentives for increasing investment in human capital and companies;

- reduce school dropout levels and improve training offers in order to increase access to continuing vocational training, especially for those who need it most, namely for the under-skilled and older workers, taking into account the future needs of the labour market;
- develop innovative methods of learning and training (such as via a computer/ electronics) and investing in skills related to information and communication technologies.

## II. National context

**6. Integrated strategy for human resource development from the perspective of lifelong learning 2009-2020 (SIDRU)** – So far there is no database and no organized way of informing the public about adult education programs offers (bidding institutions,

types of programs, certification mode, etc.). All these aspects indicate a need for institutions responsible for adult education, whether those institutions will be an inter-ministry agency, department, or whatever formula may be considered more feasible, but the need for a research institute that provides the scientific argument for educational policy decisions is real. The educational programs offers on the market belonging to adult education institutions has had a chaotic development, with offerings that were not always designed based on quality criteria. Furthermore, training quality is often questionable and the very low percentage of participation shows that the educational offer providers fail in their endeavour to have attractive offer, adapted to adults' needs and interests.

An Integrated Strategy for Human Resource Development from the perspective of lifelong learning cannot ignore the educational aspect of adult education, their personal development, through an exclusive focus only on training issues. Recent developments in the labour market have often pointed out that these extra-professional skills have led to alternative employment solutions when the opportunities to exercise the basic professional training are absent.

Key message: Human resources development will focus on increasing investment in education and training, integration and maintenance on the labour market of as many people as possible, increasing the offer of quality employment, improving adaptability of workers and enterprises, promoting social inclusion of vulnerable groups. In terms of the economic depression, massive intervention of the public power as the "lender of last resort" becomes a prevalent factor; still this has to be undertaken not from outside the

enterprise and the community and not from "beyond the individual", but as a partnership with the enterprise, the community and the individuals. (SIDRU – page 36).

Action Plan on Adult Learning – It is always a good time to learn developed at the European level in 2007, with actions to be undertaken individually until 2010, has a pointed message referring to the achievement of opportunities to learn for adults in order to advance to a level comparable to that of the EQF referential framework.

Developments on the formalized progress axis have occurred in the relevant ministry (MECTS) in order to insure, for instance, a second chance at education, or the extension of the advisory services. The solutions found, however, as the declarative aspects of the documents, which are not very convincing as a concept, seem to be sufficiently functional and tailored to the needs of lifelong learning in adults. Even the second chance at education offered to unskilled adults seems to not be sufficiently tailored to the adults who already have life experience, even if they are (semi-)illiterate. Transforming schools into resources community centre<sup>1</sup>, implies that the instructors will be enabled and authorised to work with adults, not to risk "reschooling".

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<sup>1</sup>The Resource Community Centre is the main source of learning within a community. Any kind of learning can take place in such a centre and the learning here is available for all age groups. Although the activity in the centre continues to be focused primarily on formal and non-formal learning, it can provide for those interested e-learning and self-learning resources. The centre can also provide access to information, advice and guidance services, and access to information and communication technology equipment.

This is why adult education was introduced under the "Education" heading, in order to signal the need to be seen as part of the national education, which needs more consistent solutions (Integrated Strategy for Development of Human Resources, Bucharest, 2008).

An interesting observation is that the increasing of the participation rate in higher education and of the enrolment rate of adults in lifelong learning programs can compensate for the deficit of skilled labour force for a knowledge-based, competitive and sustainable economy. In addition, from a qualitative perspective, it is imperative to substantially improve the quality of compulsory education.

**7. Sectorial Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (POS DRU) 2007 - 2013** – is a document proposed by Romania and approved by the European Commission defining a development strategy; the European Social Fund intervention supports the achievement of the objectives of human resources development. The general objective of SOP HRD is the development of human capital and the increase of its competitiveness, by linking education and lifelong learning in order to increase and ensure the participation of 1.650.000 people in a modern, flexible and inclusive labour market. The general objective of SOP HRD is supported by a series of specific objectives in compliance with the common objectives at European level, regarding the dispositions for an increased participation in the labour market of a highly skilled and adapted workforce. SOP HRD is an important tool in supporting economic development and structural changes. Sustained investment in human capital supported by SOP HRD 2007 - 2013

will complete and confer sustainability in the long run for the productivity growth. Among the specific objectives listed, the following is also included the Promotion of quality education and initial and continuing training, including higher education and research.

*In what follows we will address four major issues that give us an overview of the prospects of developing the Bucharest - Ilfov development region - closely connected to what is happening at a national and European level. The conclusions presented below are based on data from an investigation conducted under Project ACCESS SOPHRD - Continuous training, qualification-requalification - the guarantee of success in the labour market for employees, a national information and awareness campaign on Continuous vocational training and on data from the Regional Action Plan for Education (PRAI) from 2009 to 2013 for the Bucharest - Ilfov Region.*

#### Aspects regarding Demography

According to data from the National Institute of Statistics published in the Statistical Yearbook 2009, an ageing process may be observed within the population of the Bucharest - Ilfov Region, a phenomenon similar to what happens at national and European level.

Table 2 – Demographic evolution of population, on 2009, 1 July - Bucharest - Ilfov Region

	Total population on 2009, July 1							
	1990	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Romania	23.206.720	21.794.793	21.733.556	21.673.328	21.623.849	21.584.365	21.537.563	21.504.442
<b>Bucharest -Ilfov Region</b>	<b>2.394.284</b>	<b>2.226.457</b>	<b>2.206.479</b>	<b>2.207.596</b>	<b>2.208.368</b>	<b>2.219.532</b>	<b>2.225.932</b>	<b>2.248.026</b>
Bucharest	2.127.194	1.926.334	1.929.615	1.927.559	1.924.959	1.931.236	1.931.838	1.943.981
Ilfov County	267.090	300.123	276.864	280.037	283.409	288.296	294.094	304.045

Source: INS , Anuarul Statistic 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009

To realize the evolution of the aging process we can look at variances between the numbers of persons registered in 2008 and 1990/ 2002, as in the table below:

Table 3 – Differences between 2008 and 1990 / 2002

	Differences between 2008 and 1990		Differences between 2008 and 2002	
	Persons	Percentage	Persons	Percentage
Romania	-1.702.278	-7,34%	-290.351	-1,33%
<b>Bucharest -Ilfov Region</b>	<b>-146.258</b>	<b>-6,11%</b>	<b>21.569</b>	<b>0,97%</b>
Bucharest	-183.213	-8,61%	17.647	0,92%
Ilfov County	36.955	13,84%	3.922	1,31%

The age structure of the population reflects the aging process through a relative and absolute lowering of youth (0-14 years) from 18,3% in 2000 to 15,2% in 2008 and an increase in the proportion of the elderly (65 years and over) from 13,3% in 2000 to 14,9% in 2008. The average age of the population was 38,9 years in early 2007. Population aging is more marked in rural areas, with an average age of 39,7 years; the proportion of people over 65 years is 17,4%, mostly women.

- An economic dependency ratio of inactive people over 60 for every 100 economically active adults (20 - 59 years) was 34, with the prospect of

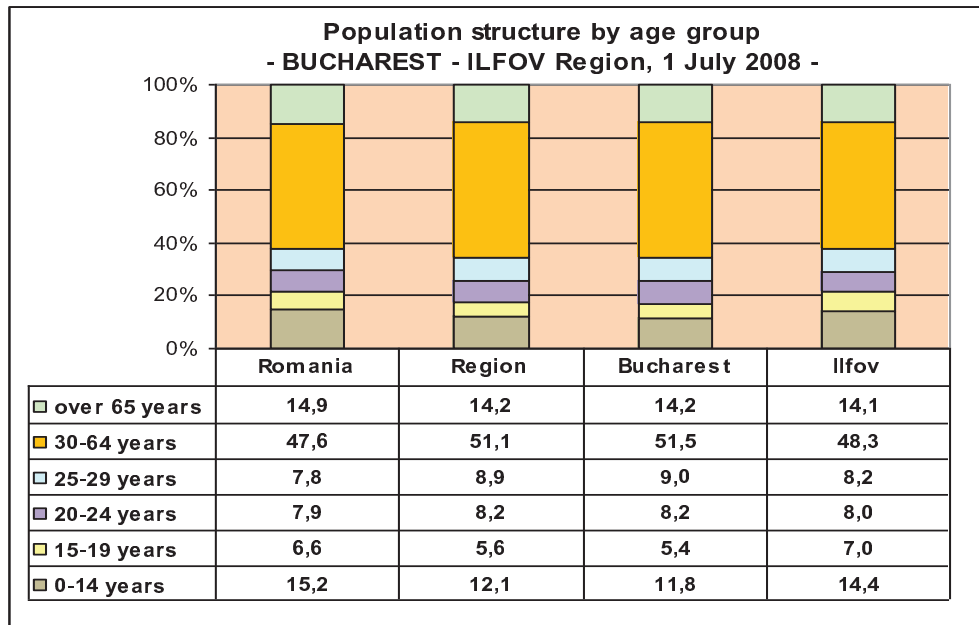
a dramatic increase in the coming decades.

- With a total population of 21,504,442 inhabitants, in 2008 Romania registered a birth rate of 10,2 live births per thousand inhabitants, compared with a mortality rate of 11,8 deaths per thousand inhabitants. During the 1990 - 2008 periods Romania's population decreased by about 1,702,278 people, representing a loss of 7,33% of the human fund, without taking into account the temporary external migration, without change of residence, or migration for work.

- In the 2004 - 2006 periods, life expectancy in Romania was 72,2 years, with significant differences between the male and female population (68,7

years for men and 75,5 years for women) in comparison with the EU - 27 average, which is around 75 years for men and over 80 years for women.

Figure 1



### Aspects regarding the Labour market

In the paper Active Measures on the Labour Market - Employment Policies. Social Security for the Unemployed, Didactic and Pedagogic Publishing House, RA, 2010, authors: professors Eugen Blaga, PhD, and Cristinel Bleandă, PhD, make a very pertinent analysis of labour market structure. After such an analysis a diagnosis is performed regarding state of this social variable. Stagnation, lag, lack of coherence, distortion, and fragmentation are negative marks, according to the authors, and they are due to several factors, among which we may count the following:

- Political involvement. The use of political criteria, rather than the actual

skills of senior civil servants, may create serious distortions in the administrative process;

- Ideological differences. Governing through a coalition may lead to dissension and factually negative effects because of dissensions on specific aspects of implementing various Public Policies;
- Legislative incongruence. Governing requires the formalization of relations, which leads to the development of regulations covering the conduct of business requirements in order to limit arbitrariness. The perverse effect of these rules is a weak convergence capability, a series of legislative acts including provisions contrary to others

already in existence, and this produces confusion and degrades the executive power;

- Limited responsiveness. Due to the structure of political power and the existing division between the legislative, executive and the judicial, the decision is adopted at a rate easily exceeded by the speed with which social space events occur. If this happens under stable circumstances, social conflict outbreaks determine a decrease of the reaction rate of administrative structures, because of the lack of a unified, integrated vision regarding how to solve arising problems;
- Inadequate prioritization. Societal space raises many challenges for any government and this leads to an assumption of a priority list that will be undertaken depending on the limited resources available. The aspect mentioned above becomes relevant from a general point of view (the government adopts a series of wrong priorities in regards to the development objectives and the expectations of the citizens) and from a specific point of view regarding the government structure: ministries may have different work agendas making decisions which need to develop a common view difficult to adopt.

Some diagnosis elements for the labour market situation in Romania, as shown in investigations conducted under Project ACCESS SOPHRD - Continuous training, qualification - requalification, but also based on data from the National Institute of Statistics can be traced in the following:

- In 2007, the labour resources in Romania (population aged 15 - 64

years) were 15.05 million people, having increased by 100,000 from 2002, however a continuous decrease is projected until the labour resources reach 15.01 in 2010, 14.97 in 2013, and 14.87 in 2020.

- The employment rate for the work force was in 2008, 59%, without significant changes to figures of 2002, falling well below the 70% target set by the Lisbon Strategy as an average for 2010 at the EU level . The ratio of persons with higher education in the total employment has increased (from 11% in 2002 to over 14% in 2007) and of those with secondary education (from 62.9% in 2002 to about 65% in 2007), which was reflected in the sustained growth of labour productivity.
- Youth unemployment continues at around 19%. Overall, it is to be noted that Romania has potential untapped labour resources of about 30% of the total population, which creates the potential for short-term partial solution of some of the problems due to labour shortages. There is also a clear trend towards a more efficient use of human capital on the labour market.
- The emergence of the economic crisis prompted a lot of analysis economic-demographic predictions to not correspond anymore.

The existence of potential untapped labour resources is in a percentage of about 30%.

#### **Aspects regarding Education and training**

The analysis of the education and training situation was initiated in 2007 taking into consideration Romania's comparatively to the Lisbon Strategy indicators:



Table 4 - Lisbon strategy indicators

Lisbon strategy indicators <sup>2</sup>	Romania	EU Average
Early leavers of the education system *	19,2%	14,8%
Proportion of population aged 22 to have graduated from the upper secondary education level	77,4%	78,1%
Ration of students aged 15 who fail to meet even the lowest level of performance (PISA 2006)	53,5%	24,1%
Annual growth rate of the number of graduates in the fields of mathematics, sciences and technology (2000-2006)	5,5%	4,4%
Participation of adults in lifelong learning	1,3%	9,7%

Observation: \* The indicator refers to the population ages 18-24 which has only graduated from the lower secondary education (or less) and which does not attend any other form of education or professional training.

**Aspects arising from the investigations conducted within the framework of the ACCESS project** – Continuous vocational training, qualification-requalification:

- Average school life expectancy was in Romania (in 2006) of 15.6 years versus 17.2 years in the EU -27 and the proportion of the population between 15 and 64 contained in the educational system at all levels was 47.5% of the total population. Gross enrolment rate in primary and secondary education registered an upward trend, by 4% of the total population in 2005/2006 compared to the 2002/2003 school year, however maintaining a significant gap (14% of the total population) between urban and rural areas.
- The significant discrepancy between urban and rural areas. In urban areas nearly 80% of students finalize their compulsory education by pro-

- moting the 10 grades of final exams, in rural areas the proportion is below 50% of the total population. In 2006, only 2.9% of the total active rural population had higher education compared by 21.0% in urban areas.
- The enrolment rate in education (ISCED1-5) of the population between 15 and 24 years increased from 37.3% in 1999/ 2000 to 46.1% in 2003/ 2004, but the rate of early school leaving remains alarming, namely 19.2% in 2007, well above the EU -27 average of 14.8% and of the target goal of less than 10% for applying the Lisbon Strategy objectives.
- The proportion of upper secondary education graduates in the age group 20-24 years was 77.4% in 2007 compared to the EU benchmark of 85% for 2010. Participation for early childhood education in 2006 was 75.8% compared to the 90% benchmark EU target for 2010.
- The participation rate of secondary education graduates to higher education increased from 27.7% in 2000/ 2001 to

<sup>2</sup>see "Working paper of the European Commission, Progress towards the goals of the Lisbon Strategy regarding the fields of Education and Training, Indicators and Targets, 2008" - SEC(2008) 2293

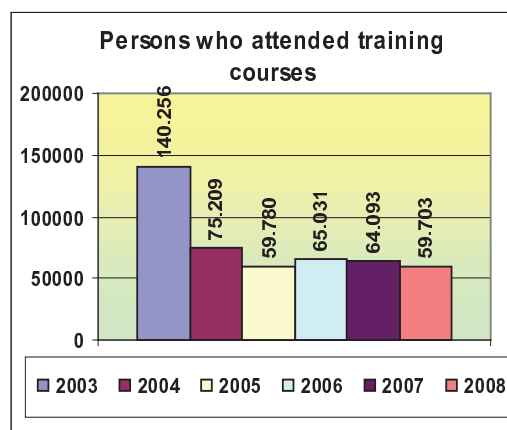
44.8% in 2005/ 2006, but the fact that only 11.7% of adults in the age group between 25 and of 64 are graduates (compared to 27.7% in the U.S., 16.4% in the UK and 15.4% in France) places Romania at a disadvantage regarding the requirements necessary to adjust to a knowledge based society.

- 2007 - 2008, 818.200 students were enrolled, of which 522.600 in public schools and 295.600 in private schools, with an increase of 11% in comparison with the previous year, mainly on account of the entries in the open and distance education system in the private sector (representing 15% of the total students).
- Curricular guidelines were still pointing to the university faculties (31.4% in the public sector and 26.3% in the private sector), economic (23.9% public and 44.3% private), legal (24, 6% in the private sector) and technical 28.1% (public sector).
- The participation rate of adults between 25 and 64 years in educational programs has been since 2007 at the extremely low level of 1.3% compared to the EU-27 average of 9.7% in the public sector and in comparison to the target of 12.5% in the public sector for 2010. Also, this level continues to be still far below the national target of 7% set for 2010 in the short and medium term strategy for professional development, 2005 - 2010.

The 2008 Statistical Yearbook provided by the National Institute of Statistics shows the situation of people participating in vocational training courses. It can be seen from the graph that their number has dropped

significantly from 140.256 in 2003 to 53.703 in 2008. Of the total the unemployed represent a substantial whose numbers has recorded an increasing rate of participation in these courses amounting from 29.992 in 2003 to 55.931 in 2006 then falling to 50.622 in 2008.

Figure 2



### III. Lifelong education and professional training

In 2007, the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family initiated through the Department of Work Force Programs and Strategies, the study “Evolution of Occupations in the labour market in Romania for 2010”, which was conducted by the National Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection with the support of the Centre of Urban and Regional Sociology - CURS SA.

Centralized data show that the development of Continuous vocational training to fit the labour market needs and a knowledge-based economy requires relevant information on the evolution of trades and professions, the labour market trends, the companies’ needs regarding skills and qualifications , the

degree of correlation between the workforce demand and supply and the identification of gaps, the supply of programs by vocational training providers and its appropriateness for the needs of the applicants.

European Employment Strategy sets as a target the following: In the European Union the average participation rate in lifelong learning should be at least 12.5% in the public sector for working age adults (age group 24-64 years). In this sense, the short and medium term strategy for lifelong vocational training 2005 - 2010, approved by GD. 875/ 2005, aims to develop a structured, transparent and flexible Continuous vocational training system, with the support of adequate funding and stronger involvement of social partners to ensure increased employability, adaptability and mobility of labour and to meet the companies' needs regarding the skilled labour force, taking into account future economic restructuring and alignment to the European market.

The progress recorded places Romania in 2008<sup>3</sup> at a significant distance from the Lisbon objectives for 2010, namely: the overall employment rate for working age population (15 - 64 years) is of 59.7% still 10.3 percentage points away from the 70% objective; the employment rate for women is at 53.1%, 6.9 percentage points away from the 60% target; the employment rate for the 55-64 years age group amounting to 43.6% still has 6.4 percentage points to go until it reaches the 50% target for the public sector. Distribution of employment divided by national economy activities has increased in 2007 showing that 29,5% of the total employed individuals were

<sup>3</sup>The National Institute of Statistics, Employment and Unemployment in the Second Trimester 2008, No. 198 from 3.10.2008, Statistical research on the workforce in households (AMIGO).

concentrated in the agriculture, 31.4% in the industry and constructions and 39,1% in services in services amounting to a balanced structure different structure from the EU - 25 as well as to a great extent from the structure of the new Member States (NMS-10).<sup>4</sup> 6591 thousand were employed in agricultural activities which amounts to an impressive share being held by those operating in manufacturing (29,9%) and trade (17,5%). Compared with 2006, the number of those operating in construction (+21,7%), trade (+9,7%), financial intermediation, banking and insurance (+5,6%) and in activities of real estate, renting and business services (+0,2%) has increased. The number of people employed in activities in the field of electricity, gas and water (-10,9%), mining and quarrying (-8,8%) and public administration (-7,7%) has decreased significantly.

The highest employment rate for people of working age was in the higher education graduates (85,8%). As the level of education decreases, so does employment. Thus, 63,9% of people with medium level of education were employed and only 40,3% of those with low education.

Employees still have the largest share (66,2%) of the total employed population, their number being 30,000 higher than last year. In 2007 the self-employed and unpaid family workers accounted for 32,3% of the employed population. International Labour Office unemployment rate in the second quarter 2008<sup>5</sup> was 5,6%, a level that has

<sup>4</sup>The National Institute of Statistics, Employment and Unemployment in 2007, No. 149 from 30.07.2008, Statistical research on the workforce in households (AMIGO).

<sup>5</sup> In conformity with the International Labour Office criteria.

declined as compared to the first quarter 2008 (6,3%) and compared with the second quarter 2007 (6,5%). The gender gap in unemployment rates between the two was 1.9 percentage points (6,5% for men versus 4,6% for women), and residentially, 2.7 percentage points (6,9 % for urban areas, compared to 4,2% for rural areas). The unemployment rate was the highest (17,4%) among young people (15-24 years).

International Labour Office long-term unemployment rate (unemployed for a year and over) was 3,2% in 2007. International Labour Office long-term unemployment incidence (ratio of persons who have been unemployed for a year or exceeding a year compared to the total number of unemployed) was 50,0%. Long-term unemployment was observed to approximately the same extent by sex (49,9% for men and 50,1% for women), but also residentially (49,4% and 50,3% in rural areas in comparison to urban areas). Youth (15 - 24 years) long-term unemployment rate (unemployed for six months and more) was 13.3% and the incidence of long-term unemployment among the youth amounted to 66,1%.

There are several strategies relating, directly or indirectly to human resource development through education and training. As long as they are applied in a legislative framework which undergoes, at least once a year, cosmetic changes imposed by different circumstances and not a restructuring that would harmonize the laws by integration into a comprehensive vision, the results of the external analyses targeting different performance factors or participation rates in education and vocational training will be the same.

A critical analysis of the provisions governing education and vocational training, and primarily of the proposed texts for the

new National Education Law, highlights the fact that the content of education and vocational training are approached as an end in them, and not as a moral, professional and civic development tool for the individual. Practitioners pointed out that attention is focused on the system and the institutional structure endorsing it, rather than focus on the individual and society as a beneficiary of human, moral and professional qualities of the individual.

“By comparison, it should be noted that all Romanian legal provisions relating to initial or lifelong education and vocational training are concerned explicitly and unilaterally with regulating the system and with its institutional construction rather than the moral, intellectual and professional development of the person, the citizen”. We emphasize this because it can be defined as a symptom that alters the perception of those who must implement the law, moving the focus from personal development, to institution and system regulation. Confusion regarding the definition of the main objectives of the normative acts, confusion over term itself, inconsistency during a legislative act, but also from one act to the next, are all related to a mentality which does not encourage the voluntary participation in adult training and with real financial difficulties both for the individual and the employing institution, and all these factors become barriers in participation in learning and lead to the impression that Romanians have a very low interest in training and education. (Integrated Strategy for Human Resources Development)

### **Social Inclusion**

Another aspect of the field is the nation's social inclusion situation. Analyses

performed on the labour market reveal the existence of significant gender disparities. Thus, the employment rate of women in age group 15 - 64 years is 11,5%, lower than that for men, the same gap is maintained for the main age groups: 7.7% (pp) for 15 - 24 years, 12,6% (pp) for 25 - 54 years and 11,7% (pp) for the 55 - 64 age group. Women's wages in Romania (taking into account the female population employed in all branches of the national economy) accounted for between 82% and 86% of those earned by men for the period. An analysis of the distribution of employees based on gross salary groups for 2003 by economic sector shows that 72,9% of employed women had a salary lower than the gross average wage, this situation is determined by two factors: women are occupied especially in industries with low added value and the number of women is higher in lower paying jobs.

#### **Actions to be undertaken**

In the paper *Active Steps on the Labour market- Employment Policies. Social Security for the Unemployed*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, R.A., 2010, (page 193), the authors, professors Eugen Blaga, PhD, and Cristinel Bleana, PhD, propose a series of steps to strengthen the institutional and partnership structures in EFPC. The actions the two experts propose to be undertaken could be the following:

- a definition of institutional roles and responsibilities for all functions and structures of lifelong vocational training at all levels of the decision making process, taking into account among other things the avoidance of conflicts of interest;
- a gradual establishment of sectorial committees, for all sectors of activity;
- an improvement of representation and specialization in the field of Lifelong vocational training of the persons designated by the social partners in the social dialogue structures in the field, in conjunction with their roles and responsibilities;
- improvement of institutional communication and of the partnership between the institutions with roles and responsibilities in the field of Continuous Vocational Training;
- strengthening of the planning and implementation of European Structural Funds as an important tool in the development of the labour market and of employment;
- strengthening of the structure of the National Council for Adult Vocational Training to act as a National Qualifications Authority (NCA). The structure must be defined at a central and regional level, determining the responsibilities regarding the authorization and monitoring procedures of the providers of training, qualifications development and quality assurance of training;
- strengthening of the administrative capacity of the National Agency for Workforce Employment (ANOFM) regarding Continuous Vocational Training;
- assisting existing and potential training providers for developing a CVT offer relevant for the training needs identified;
- training of people working in the human resources departments in order to develop skills for identifying

demand and supply of CVT in the companies, for substantiating, drafting and implementing of training plans, assessing the impact of CVT, improving learning environment within the organization.

In this segment our proposal is directed towards a very modern and flexible solution: consortialization as a technique to streamline the relationship between continuous vocational training and education with the labor market.

**IV. The concept of ... Consortialization**

In the Bucharest - Ilfov Development Region we are currently implementing the project "Strengthening of the institutional capacity of the Regional Consortium of the Bucharest - Ilfov Development Region (CRBI), funded by the European Social Fund Priority Axis 3: Increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises, Key Area of intervention 3.3: Development of partnerships and encouraging initiatives of social partners and civil society.

Through its general objective the project aims to correlate the training offer in the Technical and Vocational Education (VET) and Higher Education (HE) with Labour market demand (LMD) in order to increase employment and ensure economic and social cohesion.

Project activities aim to develop the skills for collective action in order to increase group cohesion and efficiency, strategic planning capacity, strengthening of inter-and intra-institutional communication skills as well as consolidation of social partnership between relevant stakeholders at the regional level.

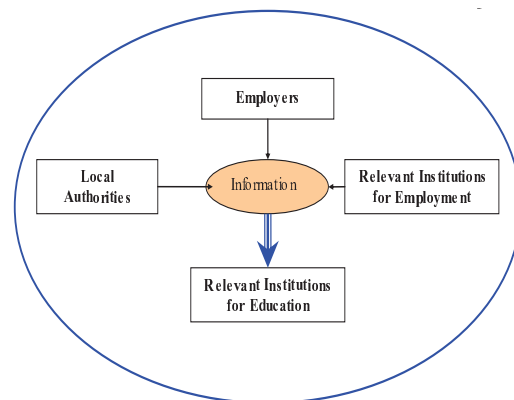
The project activities have conducted to closer connections between the project's

target group members and of the discussions held showed the need to implement a new concept, namely: consortialization as a technique to streamline the relationship between continuous vocational training and education with the labour market.

In order to correlate initial and continuous education and vocational training with the labour market demands we can use existing structures at the regional level which take as their main target the abovementioned aspect. The proposed concept meets a requirement of the population of the Bucharest - Ilfov Development Region to be informed as quickly and efficiently as possible on:

- qualifications/specializations needed in the region;
- vacancies regarding jobs and the necessary skills for occupying them;
- adult training programs conducted in the region;
- institutions providing these programs;
- locations where the programs are conducted.

Figure 3



## V. Structures responsible of implementing the concept

In the Bucharest - Ilfov Region a partnership management structure called the Bucharest - Ilfov Regional Consortium (CRBI) is operating on a voluntary basis as an interface between the Regional Development Council (RDC) and the institutions of Bucharest / Ilfov County and this consortium is responsible for human resources development.

The Bucharest - Ilfov Regional Consortium (CRBI) comprises representatives of the following institutions:

- Regional Development Agency Bucharest - Ilfov Regional Consortium (ADRBI)
- Employment Agencies for the City of Bucharest and Ilfov County (AMOFM and AJOFM Ilfov)
- School Inspectorate: Municipality of Bucharest and Ilfov County
- Universities
- Local Committees for the Development of Social Partnership (CLDPS)
- Consultative Councils of AMOFM/AJOFM
- Municipalities
- Bucharest Prefecture
- Ilfov County Council
- National Centre for the Development of Professional and Technical Education (CNDIPT)
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bucharest
- Alliance of Romanian Employers' Confederations

The Bucharest - Ilfov Regional Consortium (CRBI), as a consultative

structure at a regional level, takes as its objectives:

- 1) Identification of priority areas for vocational training by correlating the training offer in the Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) and Higher Education (HE) with the demand of the Labour Market (DLM), in order to increase the employment and to ensure social and economic cohesion in the Bucharest – Ilfov Region. CRBI must identify the priority areas of vocational training through vocational and technical education and the higher education under the provisions of the relevant documents to determine the potential for regional growth and regional development forecasts, for the medium and long term. The priority areas associated with professional qualifications can be made available to all key actors in the region, considering the importance given to the relevance of training for the regional development.
- 2) Identifying the Integrated Measures for Education and Vocational Training in the context of regional development that will serve to organize and implement of the policies for education and the annual drafting of the Action Plan. CRBI must identify how to provide specific vocational training programs to ensure the necessary human resource to fill vacancies in the region. At the same time, it is necessary to involve all the institutions in the Consortium in order to ensure the optimal conditions for the implementation of these

programs (the location of establishments where you can conduct the programs, providing the materials, if required, etc.).

#### VI. Current activities of the Bucharest-Ilfov regional consortium structure

In order to achieve the objectives and fulfil their responsibilities, CRBI is involved in data collection and interpretation, and as a result of these activities CRBI members make recommendations to develop education according to the development directions of the region mentioned in the PRAI document by the relevant actors at a regional level.

Upon completion of the action plan designed to achieve these objectives, CRBI members participate in monitoring the implementation of actions proposed through PRAI.

Systematically, the main activities of CRBI are the following:

- Developing recommendations regarding the direction of education based on the regional development directions;
- Updating, implementing and monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Education (PRAI) in the Bucharest – Ilfov Region;
- Monitoring the implementation of the Local Action Plans for Education (PLAI) in the city of Bucharest and Ilfov county;
- Assisting School Inspectorates and CLDPS in the development and implementation of PLAIs.

#### VII. Necessary tools for the implementation of the concept

In order to implement the consortialization concept as a technique to streamline the relations between continuous education and vocational training with the labour market we may use a tool that is already well-established in the field, namely the Regional Education Action Plan (PRAI). Regional decision factors are very important in implementing this concept because by implementing an integrated system for knowing the development potential of the region we may achieve the expected result. The concept is fairly simple:

- By dialoguing with representatives of the Municipality of Bucharest, of Bucharest Prefecture and of Ilfov county, district mayors, the Regional Development Agency, Ilfov County Council we may specify any projects to be undertaken in the region;
- by dialoguing with representatives of the Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and of the employers we may be able to identify the requirements of the employers (in terms of vacancies, of skills expected from prospective employees, training programs required for their own employees );
- by dialoguing with representatives of employment agencies we may be able to prevent issues affecting employment rates in the region and various negative issues that may arise in the field of employment and social inclusion;
- by dialoguing with representatives of the Inspectorates we may be able to plan where to conduct vocational training programs and what skills are



needed to optimize the rate of insertion in the labour market after completion of the courses;

- by dialoguing with representatives of the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training we may be able to make detailed proposals in order to improve the correlation of vocational education with Labour market requirements.

### VIII. Instead of conclusions – why is the implementation of this concept necessary?

Using this concept within CRBI we may be able to identify areas of intervention in order to develop new projects aimed

at increasing investment in the human capital, social inclusion of vulnerable groups, increasing the adaptability of the workforce to the changes in the labour market, social economic development, modernizing the public employment service and sustainable development.

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