

Evolution of participation of the adult Romanian population to professional education and training in Romania, in comparison with the European Union

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Abstract: Education represents a permanent preoccupation for the Governments of all Member States, but the structure of the education systems differs considerably from a country to another. In this context, the European Union is a useful forum for the exchange of ideas and of good practices. The European Union doesn't have a common policy in the field of professional training, on the contrary, its role is to create a real cooperation system between the Member States by maintaining the right of each Member State to decide upon the contents and organization of the education and training systems.

The European cooperation in the field of education and training for the period up to 2020 should be instituted in the context of a strategic framework that should comprise the systems of education and training as a whole, in the perspective of the lifetime learning. The lifetime learning and the mobility assured through high quality professional education and training are essential for allowing people to acquire the aptitudes that are relevant not only for the labour market, but also for the social inclusion and active citizenship. Presently, adult participation to the "process of continuous learning" varies a lot throughout the Union and is unsatisfactory in many Member States.

Key words: lifetime learning; knowledge triangle; key competences; indicators regarding the participation to continuous professional training

JEL Classification: I21, D83, J64

Introduction

Professional education and training is in the centre of the objectives of the Lisbon

agenda for growth and employment, and represent essential elements for continuing its enforcement in the perspective of the year 2020. The creation of a „knowledge triangle“

made up of education, research, and innovation, which would function accordingly, and would help all the citizens to improve their competences is essential from the point of view of the development and employment, but also of the equal treatment and social inclusion. The economic recession brought even more to light the importance of these challenges on a long term. The public budgets and the private ones are submitted to some important constraints, the existing jobs are being abolished, and the newly created ones seldom demand various competences of a higher level. Consequently, the professional education and training systems should become more open and more relevant for the needs of the citizens, for the demand on the labour market, and for the needs of the society in general. Starting 2002, the cooperation at the European level regarding the politics in the field of professional education and training offered a valuable support to the national reforms in the field of education and contributed to the mobility throughout the entire Europe of pupils, students, and teaching staff.

Bases of this approach and with full respect for the responsibility of the Member States related to their education systems, the Council of the European Union signed, in May 2009, a strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of professional education and training.

A general improvement has been seen in the field of professional education and training within the EU. Nevertheless, the majority of the objectives established for the year 2010 will not be reached in time, while in the case of the essential objective related to teaching reading and writing, regressions have been recorded. Reaching these objectives will

imply adopting some more efficient initiatives at a national level.

The economic recession, together with the demographic challenge, intensify the urgent need of making the reforms, continuing at the same time the investments in the systems of professional education and training in order to face the main economic and social challenges.

Indeed, lifelong learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle for the entire framework which is designed to cover learning in all contexts – be they formal, non-formal, or informal – and at all levels: starting with education for pre-school and school children up to upper education, professional education and training and adults' education. Investments in professional education and training are essential as a solution for getting out of the economic crisis, both as an integrated part of the structural reforms on a long term, and for diminishing its immediate social impact. The role of the education and of professional training within the knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) has to be consolidated. The innovation and growth would remain at a low level if they lacked a solid base of knowledge, competences and aptitudes necessary to promote the talent and creativity at a young age and be updated along the adult life.

Applying the lifetime learning programme throughout formal, non-formal, and informal education and increasing the mobility remain a challenge. The professional education and training systems, including the universities, should become more open and more appropriate for the demand on the labour market and for the necessities of the society, in general. A special attention should be given to concluding partnerships between

the field of professional education and training and the field of employment.

Key Competences in the Process of Learning

The European framework related to key competences in the process of lifetime learning identifies and defines 8 key competences necessary in order to fulfil on a personal level the active citizenship, social inclusion and the capacity of professional insertion in a knowledge based society:

- 1) communication in the mother-tongue;
- 2) communication in foreign languages;
- 3) competences in the field of mathematics and basic competences in science and technology;
- 4) computer skills;
- 5) the capacity to teach the learning process;
- 6) social and civic competences;
- 7) initiative spirit and entrepreneurship;
- 8) cultural knowledge and expression.

The need of consolidating the key competences within the Professional Education and Training (PET) for adults.

PET is traditionally focused more on the competences than on general education. Nevertheless, the complete range of key competences, as it has been defined in the European framework, is less approached systematically within the PET systems from most of the countries than within the general education. More attention should especially be given to communication in foreign languages and to the complete range of transversal key competences, which become more and more important in the perspective of the evolution of the demand on the labour

market and of the society's needs. The challenge stands within the curriculum, within the teaching and learning methods, and also within the preparation of teaching staff and trainers of professional education and training.

Among the measures meant to support acquiring the key competences for adults is the elaboration and revision of the legislative acts, improvement of teaching and managing training courses, and specific financing measures. According to the Plan of action related to teaching the adults, attention is given to teaching how to read and write, to foreign languages and computer skills especially for adults with a low level of qualification, for unemployed people and immigrants.

Nevertheless, in the case of adult education it is also important that professional education and training for adults cover the whole range of key competences, rather than be focused on individual competences such as teaching how to read and write or professional aptitudes. These should also be addressed to all adults, no matter their level of qualification, including people with a low level of qualification, adults with special needs in as far as education is concerned and the elderly people. The competences of the teaching staff specialized in the adult education should be updated accordingly.

Professional education and training destined for the adults should offer real opportunities for all adults to develop and update their key competences throughout their whole life.

Most of the countries emphasize the importance of an efficient education system for adults. The purpose is to convey to adults competences that are more congruent with the labour market, to favour social integration and preparation for an active aging.

Progresses have been recorded related to the increase of the participation of adults to professional education and training, but these progresses are insufficient to reach the objective of 12.5% established for year 2010. During 2008, 9.6% of the European with ages between 25 and 64 had participated to a professional training course within the four weeks previous to the enquiry, and the

probability that an adult with a high qualification participates at a course of professional training was five times higher than in the case of people with a low level of qualification.

To this effect we will make an analysis related to the participation of adult population with ages between 25-64 to professional education and training by presenting the following statistic data:

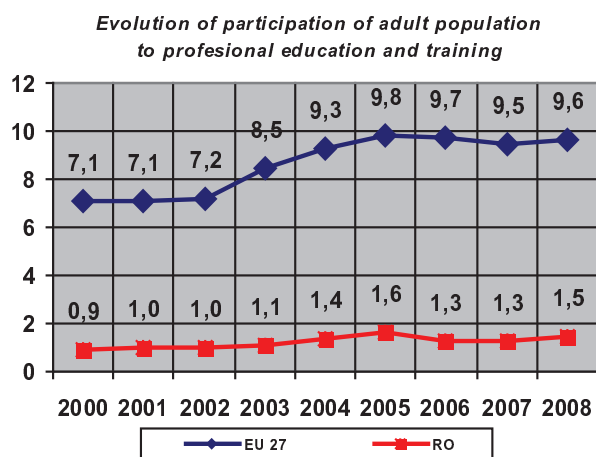
Table 1. Participation of the adult population aged 25-64 in education and training

YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
EU 27	7,1	7,1	7,2	8,5	9,3	9,8	9,7	9,5	9,6
RO	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,1	1,4	1,6	1,3	1,3	1,5

Source: EU Labour Force Survey, Annual averages <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

This data has put to light a complete conclusion related to the comparative evolution of the participation of the population aged 25-64 to professional education and training in Romania and the European Union during 2000-2008, conclusion which is also emphasized in graphic no.1 hereafter.

Graphic no. 1 Evolution of participation of adult population aged 25-64 to professional education and training in Romania compared to the European Union during 2000-2008



Source: EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis 2009 compendium

Compared to the average of participation of Europeans aged between 25 and 64 to professional training courses, the participation of the adults from Romania in 2008 was of only 1.5%, respectively 6.4 times lower. Out of all European countries, the greatest percentage related to adults' participation to professional training courses during 2008 is held by Denmark with 30.2%, and the lowest percentage is held by Bulgaria with 1.4%.

Currently, at a national level, several categories of indicators are being used, and they can be useful in the process of setting the foundations, elaboration, implementation, monitoring and assessment in the field of employment and professional training.

Next we will analyze only one of these indicators, the remaining indicators will be given other profound analyses in the future:

The degree of covering the registered

unemployed population with professional training courses: the weight of registered unemployed people included in professional training courses out of the total of registered unemployed people, expressed in percentage.

$$Dcu = (Nuipt / Nru) * 100$$

Where:

Dcu – the degree of covering the registered unemployed with professional trainings;

Nuipt – number of registered unemployed included in professional trainings;

Nru – total number of registered unemployed people.

Purpose: the indicator gives important information related to the level of de enforcement of this type of active measure in the context of the whole package of support

measures in the process of reintegration of unemployed people on the labour market.

Interpretation: this indicator reflects both the effort of reintegrating underprivileged people on the labour market made by the Public Service of Employment (ANOFM) and their interest towards this measure which has as a consequence the increase of chances of social reintegration.

Case study: The analysis of the relationship between the total number of unemployed people and the number of unemployed people participating to professional training courses in Romania during 2004 – 2009.

The total number of unemployed people, the total number of unemployed people included in professional training courses, and the number of women included in professional training courses during 2004-2009

YEAR	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total nb. of unemployed	557892	522967	460495	367838	403441	709383
Total nb. of unemployed included in trainings	27475	39932	42565	42234	39448	32329
Women included in trainings	15544	21495	22228	22669	23769	19058

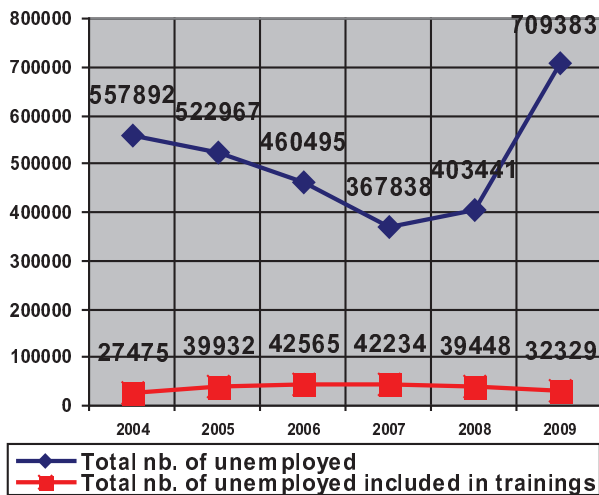
Source: National Agency for Employment (ANOFM)

This data shows that during 2004-2007 the total number of unemployed people in Romania decreased with 51.66%, but with the expansion of the economic crisis their number significantly increased with 75.83%. Regarding the number of unemployed people participating to professional training courses during 2004-2006, an increase has been noticed, and, during 2007-2009, a decrease of 30.63%. If in 2009, because of the economic crisis, the number of unemployed almost doubled compared to 2008, surprisingly the number of unemployed people participating to professional training courses dropped

down. Consequently, the existing measures regarding the professional reorientation and requalification of unemployed people are not given enough publicity in the media and are not efficient enough, thus imposing new legislative measures regarding the stimulation of these activities. In order to exemplify what we have analyzed, we present graphic no. 2.

Analyzing the participation of women in professional training courses, a continuous increase during 2004-2008 can be noticed, with an unfavorable evolution in 2009 of 24.71% when with the expansion of the economical-financial crisis.

Graphic no. 2. Comparative evolution between the number of unemployed included to professional training courses and the total number of unemployed people registered in Romania during 2004-2009.



Source: National Agency for Employment (ANOFM)

Analyzing the participation of women in professional training courses, a continuous increase during 2004-2008 can be noticed, with an unfavorable evolution in 2009 of 24.71% when with the expansion of the economical-financial crisis.

The public expenditures for continuous professional training are also supported, in Romania, from other funds outside the education budget. Therefore, the training of people in search of a job is made out of the unemployment insurance budget. At the level of year 2008, according to the data supplied to the National Agency for Employment (ANOFM), out of the total of public expenditures for the labour market, only 2% represented expenditures for the organization of continuous training courses.

This state of events is explained firstly by the relatively reduced number of unemployed people which benefit from this important active measure of fighting the unemployment compared to the total number

of people in search of a job. The most affected ones remain the categories that are vulnerable on the labour market (young graduates, people belonging to the Romani minority, people registered as having a social-economic underprivileged situation etc.).

Unfortunately there is no data as to the value of contributions coming from the individuals for assuring their own professional training. In this case we suggest that all institutions accredited as suppliers of professional training make up statistic reports after the model of the National Agency for Employment.

Professional training of adults in Romania is regulated by the Government's Ordinance no.129/2000 republished, and is organized by initiation, qualification, requalification, perfecting, and specialization programs, defined as follows:

initiation, represents acquiring one or more competences specific to a qualification according to the occupational or professional training standard;

qualification, respectively the requalification, represents the professional training leading to acquiring a group of professional competences that allow one person to develop specific activities to one or several occupations - perfecting, respectively the specialization, represents the professional training leading to the development or completing the professional knowledge, skills or competences of one person detaining already a qualification, respectively the development of competences within the same qualification, acquiring new competences in the same occupational area or in a new occupational area, acquiring new fundamental/key competences or new technical competences, specific to several occupations.

Conclusions

All Member States of the EU acknowledge lifelong learning as key factor for growth, professional insertion and social inclusion. An important aspect in this way is the level of participation of people aged between 4 and 64 to the professional education and training, this level recording an increase in almost all countries of the European Union.

In most of the countries, explicit lifetime learning strategies have been adopted. Great efforts have been put for elaborating instruments meant to support the flexibility of the teaching ways between different parties of the systems of professional education and training.

The enforcement of the European framework of qualifications enters a new crucial stage. In most of the countries significant progress is recorded related to elaborating the national qualification frameworks to cover all levels and types of professional education and training and related to the compliance of the national frameworks to the European framework of qualifications until 2010. This process is linked to the extended use of the results of learning for defining and describing the qualifications and validating the non-formal and informal education.

Supplementary development measures have also been adopted for the systems of lifetime orientation, especially for adults. However, it is still necessary to have a better coordination of the different systems of orientation in order to help the young finalize their education and training and to facilitate their insertion on the labour market.

Enforcing and developing the lifetime learning strategies remain a major challenge.

The strategies are coherent and wide only in certain cases, and some of these are still axed on certain sectors or target groups rather than on the entire life cycle. In order to be efficient, these strategies have to cover sufficiently long periods of time, to present opportunities for all ages and to be reviewed and developed permanently.

In order to achieve the four strategic objectives within „ET 2020“, identifying the proprietary fields for a certain work cycle should improve the efficiency of the European cooperation in the field of education and training and reflect, at the same time, the individual needs of the Member States, especially in the context of the coming up of new situations and challenges.

If the Member States find it necessary, the activity in the specific priority fields can go on within the following working cycles:

Strategic objective 1: Enforcing the lifetime learning and mobility

Continuing the activity related to:

– Lifetime learning strategies: finalizing the process of enforcing the national lifetime learning strategies, giving a special attention to validating the non-formal and informal education, but also to the orientation.

– The European framework of qualifications: in compliance with the recommendation of the European Parliament and European Council since April 2008, adjustment of all national qualification systems to the European Qualifications Framework (CEC) until 2010 and encouraging the use of an approach based on the results of learning in the matter of standards and qualifications, assessment and validation procedures, transfer of credits, programs of education and Quality Assurance.

Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training

Continuing the activity related to:

– Teaching the foreign languages: allowing the citizens to communicate in two foreign languages besides their mother tongue, in order to promote the teaching of foreign languages, where it is relevant, within the professional and adults' education, and to allow the immigrants to learn the language of their host country.

– Professional evolution of the teaching staff and trainers: concentrating on the quality of the initial education, on the early support in carrier for the new teachers and on growing the quality of possibilities for a continuous professional evolution for teachers, trainers and other teaching staff (for instance those involved in activities of management or orientation).

– Governance and financing: promoting the project of modernizing the upper education (including the curriculum) and the framework for assuring the quality of professional education and training and the development of the offer quality, including the staff, from the sector adults' education. Promoting the politics and practices based on the actual elements, with a special emphasis on elaborating some arguments in the favor of sustainability of public investments and, where it is necessary, of private ones.

Strategic objective 3: Promoting equal treatment, social cohesion and active citizenship

Continuing the activity related to:

– Early school abandonment from the systems of education and training: consolidating preventive approaches, developing a

more tight collaboration in the sector of general education and the professional education and eliminating the barriers out of the way of returning to education and training for young people having abandoned school.

Strategic objective 4: Stimulating innovation and creativity, including the entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

– Transversal key-competences: In compliance with the recommendation of the European Parliament and Council from December 2006, taking into consideration, to a greater extent, the transversal key-competences in the curricula, the evaluations and the qualifications.

It will be essential to reach the objectives provisioned by the new strategic framework „Education and training 2020“ and to assure an important role for education and training within the Lisbon Strategy after 2010.

In the phase of a slower pace of the global economic growth, it is essential that Europe uses to the dull the potential of each individual and goes on promoting more substantial investments, more efficient and better oriented for a quality education and training. Improving and adapting the knowledge and aptitudes to all citizens are fundamental for preparing our way out of the crisis and for achieving the long-term challenges related to global economical competitiveness, employment, active citizenship and social inclusion.

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