The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning

2015 – 2020
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Abbreviations

NAQ  National Authority for Qualifications
NAWE  National Agency for Workforce Employment
NACPFEVT  National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training
NAPSI  National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection
CPLC  Community Permanent Learning Centers
ECs  Evaluation Centers
EC  European Commission
TC  Training Centers
CCCI  County Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CCREA  County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance
NQF  National Qualifications Framework
NCQ  National Council for Qualifications
NCDTVET  National Center for Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NTCA  National Training Center for Coach
NCP  National Commission of Prognosis
NTCS  National Training Center in Statistics
RCO  Romanian Classification of Occupations
RTCA  Regional Training Centers for Adults
SC  Sectoral Committees
ESIF  European Structural and Investment Funds
ESF  European Social Fund
GoR  Government of Romania
HEI  Higher Education Institutions
CSI  County School Inspectorates
SME  Small and Medium Enterprises
NRIS  National Research Institute of Sport
NSRILSP  National Scientific Research Institute for Labor and Social Protection
NIS  National Institute of Statistics
IVET  Initial Vocational Education and Training
VET Vocational Education and Training
CVET Continuing Vocational Education and Training
LLL Lifelong Learning
RIAE Romanian Institute for Adult Education
IES Institute of Education Science
MC Ministry of Culture
ME Monitoring and Evaluation
MESR Ministry of Education and Scientific Research
MEF Ministry of European Funds
MPF Ministry of Public Finance
MH Ministry of Health
MYS Ministry of Youth and Sports
MLFSPE Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
NRP National Reform Programme
PLA Preliminary Knowledge Level Assessment
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
ESL Early School Leaving
MIS Management Informatic System
NSLLL National Strategy for LLL
SSPC Schools with Second Chance Program
ICT Information and Communication Technologies
EU European Union
UE10 EU10 comprises Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia
UE27 EU27 comprises Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Executive summary

Lifelong learning (LLL) is a continuous process of flexible learning opportunities, linking learning and competencies acquired in formal institutions with skills development in non-formal and informal contexts, notably the workplace. This reflects a notion of uninterrupted learning, always and everywhere. Although the concept has changed over time, the basic rationale remains the same: people need to refresh their knowledge, skills, and competencies as individuals, citizens, and employees. This is essential to sustain competitiveness in the technology-based global knowledge economy, and to promote social integration and participation in democratic society.

Demographic and migration trends underpin the need to expand opportunities for LLL in Romania. Aging and emigration have led to a declining working age population in Romania, which represents a huge challenge to sustaining long-term economic growth.

Promoting LLL is also essential for achieving a number of key European and national objectives. It is important to address the aims identified in the Europe 2020 Strategy: for smart growth, by improving education and training levels; for inclusive growth, by focusing on LLL to reduce unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion; and even for sustained growth, by emphasizing resource efficiency and competitiveness through LLL.

Only 1.6% of adults (aged 25-64) in Romania participated in LLL, compared with the EU27 average of 8.9%, in 2011. Between 2007 and 2013, the adult participation rate in LLL increased somewhat, from 1.3% to only 1.8%. Romania’s national goal for lifelong learning is to increase participation to 10% by 2020.

The low participation in adult education and training in Romania can be explained by the existence of disconnects between employers, workers, and education and training providers. These disconnects result in an unresponsive, under-performing lifelong learning system, in which employers, workers, and education and training providers make choices and act in isolation, and do not sufficiently interact with each other. Expanding lifelong learning in Romania requires addressing the constraints that cause these disconnects, namely (i) imperfect and asymmetric information among actors; (ii) weak incentives to participate in education and training activities; and (iii) inadequate capacity of these actors. These causes reflect what are known as market failures.
An incomplete or poor quality education, especially for specific socioeconomic groups, impedes the development of foundational skills required for LLL. Although the rate of Early School Leaving\(^1\) had been declining over the last decade, it increased in conjunction with the global financial crisis in 2008-2009, and was 18.5% (3\(^{rd}\) quarter of 2014), one of the highest ESL rates in Europe. Students from rural areas and low-income households, as well as Roma and other minority students are most at-risk of leaving school before they have acquired the foundational skills that are essential for lifelong learning.

In the labor market, workers often do not have access to information about training opportunities, and employers have weak incentives to provide training. Workers have limited access to information about training opportunities, especially older workers and those with lower levels of education.

Despite the low participation rate, the legal foundation for LLL in Romania is well-established. The Law of National Education no. 1/2011, modified and completed, provides the legal framework for LLL in Romania, including major aspects of education and training and also roles and responsibilities of other ministries. Other relevant laws include those on apprenticeship, traineeship for pupils and students, traineeship for higher education graduates, volunteering, and adult training.

This document is consistent with the requirements of the General ESIF Regulation 1303/2013 (Art. 19, Annex 11 respectively) on Ex-Ante Conditionalities and the specific fulfillment criteria, and thereafter with the requirements of the Partnership Agreement and Operational Programme Human Capital. In this context, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research has developed the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2015-2020, benefiting from technical assistance of a team of experts of the World Bank within a European funded project through the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development, Priority Axis 7 – Technical Assistance.

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\(^1\) Early school leaving (ESL) is defined in Romania as the percentage of 18-24 year olds who have completed at most lower secondary education (equivalent to grade 8) and are no longer in education or training.
I. Situation Analysis

1.1 National Context

Romania finished the year 2013 with the highest percentage growth in the European Union, according to the Eurostat data. This increase of 3.5% over the previous year is a result of the following factors: (i) increasing consumption; (ii) very good agricultural production; and (iii) increasing non-residents’ direct investments in Romania.

Although it declined dramatically, Romania’s poverty rate is still among the highest in the EU, to the level of 40.4% in 2013. A large share of the poor resides in the two poorest regions: Romania’s northeast and southwest. The western region is wealthier than the east and more integrated into Western Europe’s supply chains.

Only just over 4 million jobs, out of existing 8.4 million jobs in Romania, are salaried. Additionally, the high level of self-employment (around 25% of all jobs) relates more with subsistence agriculture and the lack of alternatives, than with entrepreneurship. Other 1.4 million jobs are of the unremunerated family labor, a category that barely exists in the more developed economies of the EU. Less competitive industrial sectors account for some 1.2 million jobs, which is close to 70% of all jobs in industry. This diverse sector comprises extractive and primary processing sub-sectors, as well as utilities and manufacturing, but is weighted towards less advanced forms of manufacturing. Retail services account for almost half of the total business units and just over a fifth of all jobs, which is close to the EU27 average. Within this, tourism directly supports about 193,000 jobs (2.3% of total employment), while its contribution maintaining employment in related sectors is estimated to be more than twice as high.

There is a clear territorial character to economic activity in Romania. Growth over the past decade has been heavily skewed in favor of Bucharest-Ilfov, which has become a mainstream functioning market economy, with a mix of manufacturing and service employment, and a GDP per capita that exceeds the EU average. However, in the other seven regions of development, growth and diversity of economic activity is


3 Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 Programming Period (Ministry of European Funds of Romania).

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
much lower and the prospects for business growth are much more challenging. Small and medium enterprises have limited growth orientation and are locally focused\(^6\).

Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture account for almost 30% of employment, vastly in excess of the average for the EU. The contribution to GDP is relatively small, at just under 7%. There is a pressing need for diversification and growth at the local level to absorb the presently underemployed labor resource in agriculture. Land and agriculture still represents an important safety valve in Romanian economy and society. Subsistence agriculture may be inefficient, but it supports a large population that otherwise would be destitute\(^7\).

Romania’s shifting demographics will require a balance between policy reforms aimed at education and the economy. As mentioned previously, the population of Romania has declined significantly in the last two decades and, similar to European peers, Romania has an aging population. Between 1990 and 2011, Romania’s population declined from 23.2 million to around 21.3 million. Complicating matters, over two million people of working age (25% of the labor force) are estimated to have emigrated in search of better job opportunities in Europe and elsewhere. The majority of Romania’s emigrants settle in Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Spain, and the United States.

While Romania has seen sound economic growth, it performs less well than most other EU member states on many Europe 2020 targets, like productivity. Romania has seen strong productivity growth since 1990, but productivity levels relative to the United States remain low compared with other Member States. The challenge is thus not only how to increase labor force participation but also how to make the labor force more productive.

### 1.2 Education and Training Context

**Education and Training**

The education sector in Romania is integral to the Government’s strategy to achieve Europe 2020 targets. Most EU targets focus on improving the education sector due to its influence on economic growth through productive employment, skills, training, and student retention. Table 1 shows four education-related targets for the EU in 2020, Romania’s targets, and the country’s progress up to 2013/2014.

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\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Ibid.
Table 1. Europe 2020 Strategic Targets

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Europe 2020 Targets</th>
<th>România</th>
<th>România în 2013/2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed</td>
<td>70 %</td>
<td>65.4% (4th quarter 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The share of early school leavers should be under 10%</td>
<td>11.3 %</td>
<td>18.5% (3rd quarter 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 40% of 30–34 year-olds should have completed tertiary education</td>
<td>26.7 %</td>
<td>23.8% (3rd quarter 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 15% of 25-64 year-olds should participate in lifelong learning</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>1.8% (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission.

If current projections hold, the number of students will decline by 40% in 2025, prompting the need for education reforms that address quality, efficiency, equity and relevance. Human capital is critical to Romania’s service and agriculture sectors, which account for the largest share of the country’s employment.

The rural population has a much lower participation rate than their peers when it comes to education and training at various levels. Roughly 45% of all Romanian youth live in rural areas, but according to current data from the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, only 24% of students come from rural areas. Early school leaving is essentially a rural problem in Romania. At the secondary school level, the dropout rate was about 1.5 times higher in rural schools than in urban ones. As students progress in the education system, there is significant underrepresentation of rural youth in higher education.

The results of the latest round of the Programme for International Student Assessment from 2012 show that, despite significant and sustained improvements since 2006, Romania’s 15 year-olds continue to perform well below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average in mathematics, reading and science. In 2012, the gap between the OECD average mathematics score and Romania’s score was equivalent to about 1.5 years of schooling. Data from PISA also show a high percentage of Romanian students aged 15 who are functionally illiterate/innumerate (37.3% and 40.8%, respectively, in 2012). Romania also continued to face a wide performance gap between students from the most and least disadvantaged socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, Romania’s performance had improved in all three subjects, with significant gains in top performers in mathematics and reading, paired with marked decline in share of functionally illiterate/innumerate.

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* Compared with 2005 levels.
Inequalities of opportunities are sizeable, which means that socio-economic conditions of children matter for their academic achievement. For example, disparities between Roma and non-Roma are considerable. At least half of the performance gap in reading of minority language-speaking students could be eliminated, especially by reducing social segregation in schools. Spatial disparities are also significant as students living in big cities and urban centers are more likely to benefit from a more favorable school environment than those living in rural areas. Expanding access to pre-primary education and improving the quality of teaching practices in rural schools could partially reduce the gap.\(^9\)

Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) is unattractive because it does not meet the needs of the labor market. Since 2009, Romania has seen a progressive closing of schools of arts and trades, which has directly affected disadvantaged students living in isolated rural areas. Since 2014, vocational schools of 3 years have been re-established for the 8 grade graduates. Restructuring IVET is highly recommended to sustaining long term economic growth in Romania.

Tertiary education faces challenges in delivering needed job-specific skills. While unemployment of tertiary education graduates is still significantly lower than for graduates of lower education levels, employers increasingly raise concerns about the lack of appropriate job-specific skills, but also cognitive and socio-emotional skills (e.g. the ability to organize work and learning processes, communication and organizational skills).\(^{10}\)

Employment rates for graduates aged 20-34 who left education dropped from 77.6% to 69.4%, from 2009 to 2012.\(^{11}\) It is true that tertiary education often cannot and should not be very tightly linked to employment – universities will be more concerned with equipping graduates with broad high-level competencies – but there is a major need to reviewing and improving the relevance of the programs. Training should be closely linked to the labor market, and its perceived lack of relevance is an immediate challenge. Only about one third of high school and vocational training graduates had found a job one year after graduation.\(^{12}\) Training courses are required to be organized according to the occupations that exist in the Romanian Classification of Occupations, but this is not yet fully aligned with labor market needs.

\(^9\) The figures of this paragraph and additional information can be found in the report Europe 2020 Romania: Evidence-based Policies for Productivity, Employment, and Skills Enhancement (World Bank, 2013).

\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) Education and Training Monitor for Romania (EC, 2013).

\(^{12}\) Needs Analysis on Education and Vocational Training in Romania (MoNE, 2013).
Skills

Workforce skills remain a major challenge for promoting employment and productivity in Romania. Skills gaps exist in all regions and several sectors, including those that have experienced recent growth in employment. Analysis by occupational group reveals the highest vacancy rates for skilled workers and related workers (3%), plant and machine operators and assemblers of machinery and equipment (2.5%) and skilled workers in agriculture and fishing (1.8%). Recruitment difficulties were highlighted particularly in occupations requiring Technical and Vocational and Education Training qualifications.\(^{13}\)

The supply of skills is partly conditioned by the traditional requirements of Romanian industry, with its focus on labor intensive and low value adding activities. In manufacturing, the share of highly qualified labor is about half of the EU27 average. Nevertheless, since 2006, the gradual increase in the share of highly-skilled in labor force shows a shift to a more knowledge-based economy and an increase in medium and highly-qualified jobs at the expense of low-skilled.\(^{14}\)

The availability of skills has been adversely affected by the large scale emigration of skilled workforce in the past decade, a phenomenon that has also been reflected in the ageing of the workforce. More than two million workers emigrated to look for better jobs. Additionally, the Romanian working age population is expected to decrease by 30% by 2050.

The proportion of enterprises providing vocational training to their employees also affects the availability of skills. This proportion is only 40% in Romania, compared to the EU average of 58%. Romanian micro firms are even less inclined than their peers in other EU countries to ensure that their employees participate in LLL activities.\(^{15}\)

Romania lacks information on skills needs and mechanisms to make this information available to the adult population. Romania does not participate in the OECD’s Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). These are important elements to inform policy and provide inputs to an enhanced dialogue between relevant stakeholders.

Success in the labor market is driven by different dimensions of a person’s skill set, combining cognitive, socio-emotional and job-specific skills (see figure below). These skills are acquired along the life cycle, with evidence suggesting that cognitive and

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
socio-emotional skills start being accumulated most intensively early in a person’s life. Strong cognitive and socio-emotional skills provide a foundation for subsequent aggregation of job-specific skills in vocational education and training, in higher education and in lifelong learning.

**Fig. 1 – Multi-Faceted Skill Sets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COGNITIVE</th>
<th>SOCIO-EMOTIONAL</th>
<th>JOB SPECIFIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking</td>
<td>Soft skills, social skills, life skills, personality traits</td>
<td>Involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw problem solving ability vs. knowledge to solve problems</td>
<td>Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extra-versions, agreeableness, emotional stability</td>
<td>Technical skills developed through vocational schooling or acquired on the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal ability, numeracy, problem solving, memory (working and long-term) and mental speed</td>
<td>Grit, self-regulation, perseverance, decision making, interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Skills related to a specific occupation (e.g. engineer, economist, IT specialist, etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Gender and Equity Issues**

Romania remains a relatively unequal society, with extensive gender segregation in power structures and the labor market, not only in urban, but also in rural areas, as well as large disparities in terms of education, health and opportunities. Elder people and people with disabilities are recognized as disadvantaged, but the practical responses are inadequate to their needs.

Over the population as a whole, men have higher levels of education than women. But this is changing, as in the 2011/2012 academic year, over one third of women aged 19-20 were in education, compared with only a quarter of men. Young women also perform better in PISA than young men. Additionally, tertiary education graduation rates of women were significantly higher. However, female economic activity rates are still relatively low in Romania. On the other hand, older women have fewer qualifications and their economic activity rates are particularly low.

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16 Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 Programming Period (Ministry of European Funds of Romania).

17 Needs Analysis on Education and Vocational Training in Romania (MoNE, 2013).
1.3 Lifelong Learning in the European Union

In 2009, the EC drew up the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training. This strategic document highlights the decisive role of education and training policies for high productivity and sustained growth. The ET 2020 recognizes high-quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and vocational education and training as fundamental to Europe’s success.

The long-term strategic objectives of EU education and training policies are: (i) to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality; (ii) to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training; (iii) to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; and (iv) to enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training. Clearly, the first objective refers directly to LLL. However, the three others are also relevant to LLL, so all these objectives should be seen as overlapping.

The required strategic frameworks overlap and should be coordinated with each other. Tackling the early school leaver problem means laying a more secure foundation for LLL, since those who do not succeed in their initial education are less likely to take part subsequently in any form of adult learning. On the other hand, tertiary education has a key role to play in any LLL strategy, in the extent to which it offers adults opportunities to carry on learning on a flexible basis. If tertiary education focuses mostly on young people coming straight on from school, this represents a huge lost opportunity for implementing LLL.

1.4 Lifelong Learning in Romania

Legal Framework

The Law of National Education no. 1/2011, modified and completed, has laid the foundation for LLL in Romania, which includes the major aspects of education and training in an integrated and coherent manner and also identifies roles and responsibilities. This law includes requirements for the recognition and certification of skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal education.

The Law no. 279/2005 on Apprenticeship, modified, has created a framework to promote employment among young people and the quality of professional qualifications.

The Law no. 258/2007 on Traineeship for Pupils and Students, modified and completed, gives young people a chance to gain work experience before graduation. The preliminary stage of practice aims to help pupils/students choose their specialization.
The Youth Guarantee Scheme is an initiative financed by EU funds, which intends to stimulate and facilitate youth transition from school to the labor market through mobility bonuses, job subsidies, professional guidance and entrepreneurship counseling, business stimulation, apprenticeships, traineeships, and partnerships between schools, universities and other organizations.

The Law no. 335/2013 on Traineeship for Higher Education Graduates, modified and completed, ensures the transition of university graduates from the education system to the labor market.

The Law no. 78/2014, on Volunteering Activities: (i) regulates the relationship between the volunteer and the host organization through a framework agreement, (ii) recognizes volunteering as professional experience, and (iii) provides a certificate of competences acquired through volunteering (the certificate contains eight key competences according to the National and European Qualifications Framework, similar to the Youthpass Certificate).

The Law no. 76/2002 on the Unemployment Insurance System and Employment Stimulation regulates the training of persons seeking employment and persons working in rural areas with no income or income lower than the reference social indicator in force, and who are registered at the agencies for workforce employment.

The Government Ordinance no. 129/2000 on Adult Training, approved by the Law no. 167/2013 (modifying and completing the Government Ordinance no. 129/2000 on Adult Training) ensures the legal framework on adult training. Adult training ending with a qualification certificate, a completion certificate and/or a certificate of professional competence is an activity of general interest and is part of the national education and training system.

Institutional Actors

The Ministry of Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and the Elderly are two of the main institutional actors of LLL in Romania. The following are some of the key responsibilities of these two actors in terms of LLL:

- **MESR**: has the overall responsibility for vocational education and training within the formal education system; it regulates, together with MLFSPE, the Europass and Youthpass that facilitate access to education/training or employment; it regulates, together with MoLFSPE, the general, institutional and conceptual framework for the LLL counselling and career guidance.

- **MLFSPE**: develops, promotes and updates the national strategy in the areas of
employment and training of the workforce, based on the national and European requirements, together with other institutions and bodies involved in the area; examines proposes changes and approves yearly the National Training Plan, initiated by the NAWE; monitors, controls and evaluates the implementation of workforce employment and training policies by the NAWE.

The National Agency for Workforce Employment is organized and operates under the principle of tripartism. The NAWE is a public institution of national interest, with legal personality, subordinated to the MLFSPE. One of its main objectives is to stimulate employment and to increase the workforce employment. The NAWE applies policies and strategies for workforce employment and training of persons seeking employment, developed by the MLFSPE.

The National Authority for Qualifications is responsible for developing the National Qualifications Framework based on the European Qualifications Framework. The NAQ reports to MESR and has other responsibilities in the LLL arena, like:

- managing the National Qualifications Register, the National Register of Adult Training Providers and other training-related registers;
- accrediting evaluation centers and evaluation bodies;
- regulating the training market; and
- coordinating the quality assurance of CVET and the activities of Sectoral Committees.

The Sectoral Committees are social dialogue structures, are coordinated by the NAQ and have representatives in the National Council of Qualifications, a consultative body at the level of the NAQ. Since 2013, sixteen Sectoral Committees have been established and are fully operational, comprising representatives of employers, trade unions, professional associations, training providers, ministries and NGO. The main roles of these committees are to validate the qualifications and the associated operational standards, and to develop the framework for training, evaluation and certification. However, these committees do not participate in skill needs assessments, which is a common role of similar bodies of other European countries.

The National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training is responsible for managing the Erasmus +, a new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport for 2014-2020, which replaces several EU programmes, covering all sectors of education: (i) the LLL Programmes Erasmus (higher education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational education), Comenius (school education), Grundtvig (adult education), and Youth in Action; (ii) and five international programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the programme for cooperation with industrialized countries). The number of adult
exchanges for the period 2007-2012 was 9,145 and funds were provided by the EU programs Comenius, Grundtvig and Leonardo da Vinci. The Europass National Centre was founded in 2007, as part of the activities carried out by this agency. The total budget for 2014 was €50 million.

**Service Provision**

Any public or private institution with a training role in their legal status can offer continuous training programs on the market, but only authorized organizations can issue nationally recognized certificates. Employers may also organize training for their employees, but they are not allowed to issue nationally recognized certificates, unless they are legally authorized for each specific program. In Romania, there are 42 *County Authorization Commissions* operating within County Offices of the National Agency for Payments and Social Protection, which report to the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly. These commissions authorize training providers for specific training programs. The training providers are authorized for a period of four years, based on evaluation criteria for each qualification, occupation and group of skills for which they organize training programs.

LLL service providers operating in Romania include public and private training institutions, employer associations, chambers of commerce and industry, unions, non-governmental organization, and popular universities. At present, more than 2,000 training providers are offering training programs across the country. Around 60% of them are private providers, 20% are NGO and 20% are organizations financed by public funds. More than 1.3 million certificates have been issued by authorized providers since 2004. Nowadays, the participation of higher education institutions in the market of LLL service provision is limited, despite plunging enrolments in the past years and the opportunities of the LLL market.

Other weaknesses observed in the existing qualifications system include obstacles for progression from Initial Vocational Education and Training to Continuing Vocational Education and Training and tertiary education. There is a need to create a clear path for the recognition of learning and improve the participation of representatives of the labor market in the development of qualifications.

**1.5 Disconnects in Lifelong Learning in Romania**

*Low participation rate in LLL.* The LLL goal for Romania is to increase the participation rate of adults (ages 25-64) to 10% by 2020. Between 2007 and 2013, Romania did not make significant progress regarding this rate, which increased from 1.3% to only 1.8%. The latter represents the average rate calculated from household labor force surveys
carried out by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) of Romania, which measure the participation of adults in education or training activities in the four weeks prior to the investigations (which is consistent with the definition of Eurostat). The rate in 2011 was significantly below the EU27 average of 8.9%. The gap between this rate and the one set by Romania for 2020 remains high and it is even higher compared with the EU target set at 15%, according to ET 2020. The figure nr. 2 shows Romania’s performance in terms of the adult participation in LLL compared to the participation in other Member States. Romania has one of the lowest average increases in that participation rate and is performing below the minimum progress required by the EC.

**Fig. 2 – Participation of Adults in LLL in EU Member States (2009-2012)**


The participation rate in LLL in Romania is unequally distributed along several dimensions. The participation rate in *formal education* decreases with *age*, from 8.5%, for individuals aged 25 to 34, to 0.1%, for those aged 55 to 64. The participation rate in non-formal education follows the same trend of the rate in formal education, i.e. with higher rate for adult aged 25-34 (6.7%), compared to those aged 55-64 (2.4%). There are discrepancies related to residence and gender with training participation rates lower in rural than in urban areas and among males compared with females.

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18 Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 Programming Period (Ministry of European Funds of Romania).


20 Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 Programming Period (Ministry of European Funds of Romania).
In terms of employment status, a discrepancy is also noted in the participation rate in formal education: it is lower for the unemployed (0.9%) than for the employed (4.2%). Concerning the population that lives in rural and urban areas, there is another difference: the participation rate in non-formal education is higher in the latter (6.4%), than in the former (2.5%)\(^{21}\).

Among the disconnects which impact the participation and access to training programs are: low capacity on promoting training programs, assessing learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, counselling for career guidance, disseminating examples of good practices, etc.

Adults participation in CVET is limited by the insufficient adaptation and development of types of support for adult participation, especially persons struggling with transition to the labor market, workers at risk of unemployment, unemployed, disadvantaged groups and persons over 50 years old (customized active measures packages, flexible training arrangements, specific measures to support disadvantaged persons).

Regarding professional guidance and career counselling, weaknesses are related to the lack of an integrated national information system, professional counselling and guidance at national/ regional/ local level, covering both initial training and continuing training, the poor cooperation between various actors at national, regional and local level, who act in the area of professional guidance and career counselling. Other obstacles are: lack of coordination, poor network of information, lack of counselling centers in rural areas, the reduced number of online professional guidance tools developed and implemented, etc.

Regarding disadvantaged groups, a recent survey\(^ {22}\) shows that the participation of non-Roma women in adult training and apprenticeship is five times greater than their female Roma neighbors. For non-Roma men, the participation in these activities is almost three times greater than those of the Roma population.

The limited participation in adult education and training in Romania can be explained by the existence of disconnects between employers, workers and education and training providers (see figure nr. 3). These disconnects result in an unresponsive, under-performing lifelong learning system, in which employers, workers and

\(^{21}\) Adult Education Survey (National Institute of Statistics, 2008).

\(^ {22}\) Regional Roma Survey (UNDP, World Bank, EC, 2011).
education and training providers make choices and act in isolation, and do not sufficiently interact with each other. Education and training providers may offer programs and produce graduates with skills that do not fully reflect the needs of employers. Workers and firms may not demand the types of programs or teaching methods and content that are needed in Romania’s changing economy.

Fig. 3 – Causes of Disconnects in Lifelong Learning

These disconnects can be caused by three types of constraints that are commonplace in Romania: (i) imperfect and asymmetric information among actors; (ii) weak incentives to participate in education and training activities; and (iii) the inadequate capacity of these actors. These causes reflect what are known as market failures. As explained later in this document, expanding LLL in Romania requires overcoming these disconnects. The government in particular has a role in helping to overcome market failures, specifically by (i) improving the availability and quality of relevant information; (ii) creating conducive incentives for more investment in training; and (iii) helping to remove capacity barriers. This will enable firms, workers and education and training providers to make better decisions and invest in more and improved lifelong learning.
Information Gaps

Good and symmetric information for all actors in lifelong learning is a critical precondition for its effectiveness. Firms and workers may underinvest in training because of information gaps, reflecting the information market failure. For example, they may lack information about the availability and quality of training providers. Additionally, without recognition or certification of skills acquired through informal training, workers may not be able to demonstrate their increased productivity and hence may choose not to invest in training. In fact, the participation in lifelong learning and levels of education and skills are linked in a mutually reinforcing way.

Survey data from Romania show that limited information is associated with low participation in training, especially for initially less educated and older workers: only 3.4% of Romanians with primary and lower secondary education have access to information about learning possibilities, compared to 31.9% of those with some tertiary education. Also, only 6.1% of Romanians aged 55-69 have access to information about learning possibilities, compared to 21.6% of those aged 25-34. In Romania, the lowest percentages of participation in training are of individuals with low levels of professional qualifications, as well as those working in small companies (with less than 10 employees), and among individuals over 40 years old.

Information gaps also have the potential to reduce the interest of LLL beneficiaries in training opportunities. Data from a recent survey on the participation of Romanian workers at risk in continuous training show that more than 40% of workers with low level of education and skills do not look for information on training activities. This is true for workers aged 18-24, given that 43% of them do not look for that type of information, and for those over age 40 (45% of them also do not look for training information), compared to only 20% of individuals aged 18-35 who graduated from theoretic high schools or universities.

In line with this, the results of a recent survey of training providers established in Romania show that 48% of them believe that managers of organizations operating in the country consider their workforce training to be irrelevant or unnecessary.

The national qualifications framework serves as a transparency tool, allowing workers to prove their competencies to employers and to address an information constraint,

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23 Adult Education Survey of 2007 (Eurostat).
24 Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 Programming Period (Ministry of European Funds of Romania).
25 Participation of Workers at Risk in Continuous Training Scheme (Achimescu, Balica et al., 2010).
26 Survey of Training Providers of Romania (World Bank, 2014).
one of the most common failures in training markets. In Romania, there is a need to improve existing initiatives for validation and certification of prior learning. LLL service providers established in Bucharest and Brasov reported difficulties in enlarging their range of certification services due to the lack of institutional capacity of the NAQ.

Weak Incentives
Even if LLL actors benefit from better quality information, firms and individuals may still underinvest in training because they face inadequate incentives. For example, they may underinvest because they are not able to capture all the benefits resulting from their investment in training (externality market failure). Also, firms may choose not to train workers who are expected to be mobile; the higher the risk that a worker will leave a company soon after training (i.e. the “poaching” of trained workers), the more firms will be reluctant to invest in training. In Romania, half of training providers believe that companies do not invest in training for their workforce because better trained workers are more likely to change jobs27.

According to the Adult Education Survey of 2011 (Eurostat), the lack of employer support for individuals aged 25-64 to participate in education and training is a bigger obstacle in Romania than in any of the other 30 European countries involved in this survey. This is an obstacle for 30% of respondents from Romania, compared to only 1.3% from Portugal, and to the EU average of 8%. Romanian firms are also less likely to adopt flexible work schedules that have the potential to promote more participation in training, as shown by the results of the same survey, in which 34.7% of respondents pointed out the conflict with work schedule as one of the main obstacles to training participation, compared to only 4.9% in Slovakia and to the EU average of 18%.

While the existing Romanian Labor Code stipulates that employers shall provide employees with regular access to vocational training, and create appropriate conditions to encourage employees to participate in vocational training programs28, this is not being observed in practice. Survey data from Romania show the absence of firms-sponsored training activities for 41% of employees over age 40 with low level of education and skills, though this rate increases to 50% for individuals aged 18-24 also with low level of education and skills29.

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27 Ibid.
28 For companies with more than 20 employees, this should happen at least once every two years. Otherwise, this should take place at least once every three years.
29 Participation of Workers at Risk in Continuous Training Scheme (Achimescu, Balica et al., 2010).
The Labor Code of Romania\(^{30}\) also requires that firms with more than 20 employees shall set out annual plans on vocational training (after consultation with trade union or employee representatives), which will form a part of the collective labor agreement of the companies. In this regard, the reality is again different, as pointed out by 60% of training providers established in Romania who informed that the absence of training plans is one of the main reasons why firms do not invest in training for the workforce (World Bank’s Survey of Training Providers of Romania, 2014).

On the other hand, education and training providers may not respond to better information on skill needs by employers. Actually, as mentioned in the *Needs Analysis on Education and Vocational Training in Romania* (Ministry of National Education, 2013), the low level of trust among adults in the relevance of training courses for their professional success is one the most important barrier to participation in LLL.

**Capacity Constraints**

Even if the LLL actors benefit from better quality information and the right incentives, firms and individuals may still underinvest in training because of capacity constraints. Most prominent among those are financial capacity constraints (credit market failure) faced by individuals and firms alike. The cost of training is mentioned as a barrier to the participation in training by 52.5% of the respondents of the Adult Education Survey of 2011 (Eurostat) from Romania (the highest rate of all 30 countries involved in this survey), compared with only 4.7% in Belgium, and the EU average of 13.2%. On the other hand, small firms often find it difficult to mobilize sufficient resources to finance worker training. In Romania, 44% of private companies say that they do not support training activities for their employees due to lack of funds, which is still more critical for companies with less than 10 employees (this rate increases to 49% in this group).\(^{31}\) Additionally, 79% of training providers established in Romania believe this is a key obstacle to increased participation in training (World Bank’s Survey of Training Providers of Romania, 2014).

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\(^{30}\) This Labor Code includes payback clauses (legal provisions that encourage companies to invest in training, by allowing them to bind employees for a certain period of time after training, in return for providing the training) that can be modified in sectoral or company agreements, provided that the conditions of these arrangements are made public and are approved by the Government. The payback clauses state that the period of training or internship must last more than 60 days to be legally paired with a contractual retention period of three years, at a minimum.

\(^{31}\) Participation of Workers at Risk in Continuous Training Scheme (Achimescu, Balica et al., 2010).
Firms and training providers may also suffer from managerial capacity constraints as well as from a lack of training personnel. In Romania, human resources departments of firms are considered sources of information for training courses by less than 7% of employees, who refer to other sources, like the Internet, as mentioned by at least 14% of employees of different groups\(^\text{32}\).

The administrative capacity of the NAQ should be improved for a further developed LLL system. This agency is responsible for key aspects of the system, including the development of the National Qualifications Framework and the certification mechanisms. The NAQ hosts the operation of several registers\(^\text{33}\), but lacks information systems able to produce quality information from these registers.

II. Vision and Goals

*Demographic and migration factors provide the rationale for the proposed strategy on lifelong learning for Romania.* As in other Member States, but to an even greater extent, aging and the decline of the working age population represent huge challenges to sustaining long term economic growth in Romania. Between 1990 and 2011, Romania’s population declined from 23.2 million to around 21.3 million. At the same time, the occupied population shrank from 10.8 million to an estimated 9.1 million. By 2050, it is expected that the working age population would have shrunk by over 30%, relative to 2010, three times faster than the average for Western Europe, with further negative implication for long term economic growth potential and the sustainability of public finances. The number of people aged over 65 will represent almost 30% of the total population in the same year, compared to the current level of 15%\(^\text{34}\).

Over two million people of working age (25% of the labor force) are estimated to have emigrated in search of better job opportunities in Europe and elsewhere. The combination of demography and migration is the single most important factor underpinning the need for a strategy on LLL for Romania.

*The vision for lifelong learning in Romania is to provide all individuals, throughout their lives, with opportunities to participate fully in economic, social and civic life,*

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\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) National registers for: qualifications; qualifications in higher education; evaluators of professional competencies; evaluators’ assessors; certified external evaluators; authorized training providers; and cross-border training providers.

\(^{34}\) The figures of this paragraph and additional information can be found in the report *Europe 2020 Romania: Evidence-based Policies for Productivity, Employment, and Skills Enhancement* (World Bank, 2013).
and to enable them to fulfill their personal potential. The vision encompasses both social and economic benefits of lifelong learning. Achieving this vision requires the development of partnerships between all relevant stakeholders in the lifelong learning arena.

The goals are to increase the participation in lifelong learning and improve the relevance of the education and vocational training systems for the labor market. In line with the European Union goal, Romania’s main target for 2020 is at least 10 percent of the adult population (aged 25-64) participating in lifelong learning activities.

This document presents three strategic pillars of lifelong learning (see figure below) which reflect objectives that together should lead to achievement of the goals:
- Access and Incentives for Participation.
- Quality and Relevance.
- Partnerships for Better Information.

The Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2015-2020 proposes a comprehensive view for the entire education and training system, directly addressing the participants’ needs in lifelong learning.

At the same time, due to the complexity of the education system and multiple needs, the MESR has deepened specific measures to reduce the rate of early school leaving and to develop the vocational education and training in two complementary strategies: Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving in Romania and Strategy for Education and Training in Romania for 2015-2020.

Fig. 4 – LLL Pillars
Pillar 1 – Access and Incentives for Participation
The objective of Pillar 1 is to increase access and participation in lifelong learning for all. Under this pillar, the proposed measures focus on overcoming barriers for individuals and firms to increase their participation in lifelong learning activities, specifically by expanding the demand for and supply of lifelong learning programs.

Pillar 2 – Quality and Relevance
The objective of Pillar 2 is to ensure that lifelong learning is relevant to individuals and to the labor market. The measures proposed under this strategic pillar aim at increasing the relevance and quality of Romania’s LLL programs for individuals and the labor market. Quality issues and skills mismatches with labor market needs affect a large share of vocational and tertiary education.

Pillar 3 – Partnerships for Better Information
The objective of Pillar 3 is to develop lifelong learning in close collaboration with social partners and all relevant stakeholders. Greater collaboration is critical for the achievement of increased access and improved quality and relevance of LLL. In particular, firms should be encouraged to become active players in the market for LLL, both by articulating their needs, partnering with training providers and promoting learning in the workplace.

III. Building a System of Lifelong Learning in Romania
This strategy proposes a range of measures to build a system of lifelong learning in Romania which underpin the strategic goals and the objectives laid out under the three pillars.

Improving the National Qualifications Framework and strengthening coordination between stakeholders. The Sectoral Committees can play an important role in enhancing coordination between all relevant stakeholders to overcome the disconnects in Romania’s LLL system. As mentioned before, these committees are social dialogue structures, whose main roles are to validate the qualifications and the associated operational standards, and to develop the framework for training, evaluation and certification.

The role of the Sectoral Committees should be enhanced in order to support the NAQ and be a main partner in the redesign of the occupational standards and assurance of the correspondence between the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations and the RCO. These committees should also play an important role in quality assurance, being part in the design of a new methodology and implementation process.
The existing process of assessing and certifying qualifications using transparency tools such as the National Qualifications Framework is regulated by the *Government Decision 918/2013* and is based on standards defined for each occupation described in the National Register of Qualifications. More than 750 qualifications are already developed for VET. The NQF of Romania is now compatible with the European Qualifications Framework. Some qualifications are used by LLL service providers for vocational education and training, mainly in the areas of social work, trade and construction. Successful completion and further evolution of the NQF requires full participation of all relevant stakeholders in the LLL system. The observed weaknesses in the progression from initial vocational education and training to CVET and tertiary education must be addressed. The administrative capacity of the NAQ, the agency responsible for developing the NQF, must be strengthened for Romania to achieve the dual objectives of expanding participation and raising relevance of LLL.

**Improving the quality and availability of information.** Empowering and encouraging employers, especially SME, to identify training needs is also crucial for closing existing skills gaps. Once identified, there should be particular efforts to improve information flowing both ways: from firms to training providers on their training needs, and from training providers (public and private) to firms on what is available. Strengthened Sectoral Committees can play an important role in improving the availability and quality of information on training needs and offerings. However, equally important are similar coordination mechanisms at the regional and local levels and tailored specifically to meet the needs of SME. In addition, self-employment figures largely in the Romanian labor market, often in the subsistence agriculture sector. If the self-employed are to flourish, they need training opportunities which recognize their particular situation. These may well come from peer learning as much as from professional trainers.

**Assessing skills needs and developing a broader skillset.** Assessing skills needs and making the outcomes of these assessments available to the public are key characteristics of developed LLL systems. Conducting an assessment of the demand for and the supply of cognitive, socio-emotional and job-specific skills should be one of the top priorities. New economic sectors such as green economy (waste management, biodiversity, control of gas emission and other areas) demand different skillsets and provide good opportunities for both job seekers and training providers. Cognitive, socio-emotional and job-specific skills (see box below) are acquired throughout one’s life cycle, with evidence suggesting that cognitive and socio-

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35 See the Government Decision 918/2013 on the approval of the National Qualifications Framework.
emotional skills are accumulated most intensively early in a person’s life. These skills provide a foundation for subsequent aggregation of job-specific skills in vocational education and training, in higher education and in lifelong learning. The initiatives are required to both assess skills needs and develop a broader skillset.

**Box 1 – Addressing Cognitive, Socio-Emotional and Job-Specific Skills Gaps through LLL**

**Cognitive Skills.** Individuals who lack basic skills of literacy and numeracy are less likely to participate in economic activity and to engage in adult learning. Improving functional literacy is, therefore, crucial for enhancing success in the labor market and providing a foundation for subsequent learning. Given Romania’s challenge on functional literacy revealed, amongst others, by PISA, a sustained effort to improve Romania’s overall levels of functional literacy is required, including as part of the lifelong learning strategy 2015-2020. There is now a significant body of evidence on how to improve functional literacy skills which Romania can build upon, in particular through programs managed by the National Agency for Workforce Employment to focus on disadvantaged youth struggling with their transition from school to work. Staff competencies and capacity of adult learning institutions to develop and implement programs that deal with low functional skills can be supported through the EU Program Erasmus+. In order to break the vicious circle (low success in learning leads to low motivation to learn, which leads to low participation) specific promotional campaigns are needed. Non-formal learning will often be the preferred route for those who want to improve their functional literacy, and civic and community organizations can play an important role.

**Socio-Emotional Skills.** These skills refer to a set of attitudes, behaviors and strategies that underpin success in education and at work, such as motivation, perseverance, and self-control. They are increasingly considered to be as important as cognitive skills in determining academic and employment outcomes. There are promising examples of skills training programs, mostly focused on young people, which combine job-specific skills and socio-emotional skills curricula across the EU and beyond (e.g. the program Youthreach in Ireland or the Jovenes program found in many countries in Latin America). They build on partnerships between training providers and firms, including through internship and equip students with the job-specific skills sought by participating firms and the socio-emotional skills that will help graduates to succeed in the work place.

**Improving the teaching of cognitive and socio-emotional skills in lifelong learning programs requires government intervention through financing as well as greater coordination and regulation.** In particular, it means that teachers, trainers, and leaders need to be equipped through initial and continuing professional development to take on the new roles implicit in such a competencies-based approach. Some higher education institutions could play a key role in delivering professional training for adult educators and trainers.
Peer learning is an important activity in this capacity building process, and should be deliberately supported, at both regional and national level. Activities to learn from peers across European boundaries should be considered. One promising, non-institutionalized, approach would be to foster networks of LLL professionals that are supporting and learning from each other. A culture of pedagogical learning can be promoted, encouraging those involved to exchange good practice and learn lessons from each other’s experience, supported by a team of expert advisers.

**Job-Specific Skills.** Strong cognitive and socio-emotional skills are fundamental for subsequent aggregation of job-specific skills (e.g. the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) in VET, tertiary education and LLL. New or existing LLL providers should address the needs of Romanian workforce to promote employment and increase productivity.

Romania faces a dual challenge of enhancing lifelong learning (i) among the employed population to improve their productivity, and (ii) among the unemployed (and those outside of the labor force) to help them back into employment. Retraining programs for the unemployed usually have predominantly social returns, whereas education and training for the employed generate substantial private returns to both firms and individuals. Both target groups call for variable financing instruments. While full public funding needs to be available for the unemployed, demand-side financing incentives should be made available to firms and individuals to stimulate private spending on training.

Financing is an important instrument to support the expansion of LLL services. Financing for LLL over the long-term should mainly be in the form of demand-side instruments (financial incentives to firms and individuals and financing support to the unemployed) to help ensure the relevance of training offered and provided. However, demand-side and supply-side interventions to expand and diversify provision (incentives to education and training institutions to enter the market for LLL, through setting up new training providers and raising capacity of existing and new providers) are needed simultaneously in the short term, in order to establish a critical mass of providers.

**Financing to enhance demand.** Since financial and time constraints are some of the most frequently mentioned barriers to training in Romania, *demand-side programs aimed at workers and employers* can help incentivize more private investment in LLL and closer partnership between firms and training providers. Examples of this kind of program include tax breaks or vouchers to firms or individuals to take part in continuing vocational education. Other options include paid education leave and
educational savings plans. Such financial instruments can be targeted to particular types of workers (e.g. older, less educated workers) and firms (e.g. SME) currently under-represented in LLL.

**Supporting unemployed and inactive persons, including financial incentives and counselling.** Demand-side tools can also be used to raise participation of unemployed workers. These measures can be supported as an alternative or supplement to supply-driven LLL initiatives. The use of grants and vouchers, combined with intensive counselling to help prospective trainees make sound choices, can help articulate and expand demand for LLL services.

**Financing to diversify provision.** While the primary push for an expansion in LLL participation and an enhancement in quality and relevance should come from expressed demand from workers and firms, public financing can play an important role in expanding supply through careful *investments to expand the capacity of existing and new training providers*. However, opening the market for private and non-profit providers to offer LLL services, including retraining services for the unemployed currently mainly delivered through public training institutes, will require some regulatory revisions to go hand in hand with financial incentives.

*The Law of National Education no. 1/2011, modified and completed,* provides for the setting up of *Community Permanent Learning Centers*, whose core responsibility is to identify and meet the LLL needs of the local community for children, youth and adults. The implementation of these centers depends on further regulation, and it is not decided what form they will take when they become operational. An intermediate step would be to design a pilot initiative, as a first stage, establishing a small number of these centers in different regions. These would have a variety of profiles designed to match local economic and social needs. Those pilot centers would be closely monitored and evaluated, so that their performance continuously improves, and lessons are learned for the establishment of more centers in other parts of the country.

**Consolidating and ensuring financing to foster the lifelong learning market, including improved counselling services.** Public supply-side financing instruments can be used to *incentivize new actors to enter the market for formal and non-formal LLL, to innovate in program design and service delivery, and to raise their capacity to do so*. Such careful financing should be, at least in part, conditional on achieving key agreed results and can be competitive in nature (for example through a competitive grant mechanism for training providers and firms who develop innovative training programs in partnership). Potential new providers include civic organizations and
existing education and training providers currently not engaged in LLL, such as universities and vocational schools. For example, financing can be made available to universities to enhance their managerial and delivery capacity to enter the formal LLL market. Public seed financing can also help existing providers, including universities and vocational training centers, to innovate and diversify provision, e.g. through setting up *distance learning programs or joint ventures with firms*. Cultural organizations and civil society can make an important contribution to expanding the flexibility of learning opportunities in non-formal training.

There is a serious gap in the range of formal opportunities available for youth who have left school after secondary education, but do not wish to go to university (or not immediately), and for adults who wish to update their skills. At the upper secondary level, there are some opportunities for vocational learning in professional and technical high schools, but they do not attract many students. Strengthening the provision of vocational learning should facilitate labor market insertion for upper secondary school graduates. At the non-tertiary university level, vocational training is provided in post-high schools and foreman schools. In many EU countries, there are publicly funded colleges which concentrate specifically on vocational training below university level. They are usually closely related to local labor markets and may specialize in particular sectors, such as construction, agriculture or Information and Communication Technologies. These colleges have strong direct links with employers at the local and national levels and are able to provide a range of qualifications, running from basic skills to higher level diplomas.

The existing counselling initiatives for LLL are fragmented and should be consolidated for beneficiaries to more easily acquire relevant information. The accessibility can be enhanced, for instance through the establishment of “one-stop-shop” initiatives that give access to validation, guidance and tailor-made learning programs. These could be implemented at the *Community Permanent Learning Centers*, as synergies in resource use and efficiency gains can be achieved by better linking different services in the LLL area, like training, validation of competencies and counselling.

**Supporting participation in European mobility programs.** European mobility programs\(^\text{36}\) can help to increase the professional capacity of adult educators. The results of the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education

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\(^{36}\) The concept “mobility” is used in the meaning of the opportunity to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad, with precise reference to the NACPFVT programs, respectively the new EU program, Erasmus+. An exact definition of the concept – (http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_ro.pdf) – Key terms file, pg. 321.
and Vocational Training in programs like Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus, Comenius and Grundtvig demonstrate good practices that should be continued in Romania.

**Involving higher education institutions in LLL.** Currently focused almost exclusively on traditional degree-length courses for young people, higher education institutions have considerable potential to become important players in the LLL system. After a very rapid expansion in recent years, Romanian universities are now facing falling enrolments given the major demographic change. Entering the LLL market will help put university capacity to new use. Romanian universities could offer services contribute to professional updating and support innovation in providing in-service professional training, e.g. for company managers, medical, legal and other professionals and to play a role in civic education, making their expertise available to a wider public, including their local communities.

**Higher education and vocational education and training institutions could play an important role** in organizing learner-focused training programs, flexible in terms of scheduling, content, and credit arrangements. For example, credit systems are needed to allow adults to access learning opportunities without unnecessary pre-requirements, and which allow them to build up credits over time so that they may achieve qualifications accordingly.

**The Strategic Framework for Increasing Tertiary Education Attainment, Quality and Efficiency in Romania proposes** the development of clear progression routes from vocational and other secondary education types into tertiary education. Multiple pathways from secondary education to career and tertiary education can play a key role in increasing attainment, especially for traditionally under-served students from vulnerable groups or at young ages. Multiple entry and exit points to the educational pipeline offer students more options and greater flexibility.

**Recognizing prior learning, including qualifications obtained abroad.** Recognizing the results of all forms of learning is a pre-requisite to create an open system for LLL and to ensure that the transitions between education sub-sectors are facilitated and their pathways do not lead beneficiaries to “dead ends.” A well-established system for the recognition of prior learning is critical for the effective use of an NQF. Romania needs to improve its model for recognition of prior learning. The administrative capacity of the existing evaluation centers must be improved for them to be able to recognize learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. The limited geographical coverage of these centres is a key barrier for an improved learning recognition structure. Additionally, some measures should be designed to inform potential beneficiaries about the advantages of the evaluation and certification
process, especially for those with a poorer qualification level, for whom skills evaluation and certification could become a real opportunity for improving their situation on the labour market. Public sector organizations also act as providers of training, particularly for government staff. Because the public sector is a large employer and provider of training in Romania, it is important that learning acquired in this environment is also recognized and that training provided by public sector organizations be validated and certified.

Romanians who live abroad are an important target group for whom LLL can play a very significant role in attracting them to return. A specific area for action is the recognition and valuing of qualifications and skills obtained in other countries. This is essential for Romania to be able to capitalize on the outflow of young people to other countries. This measure has two aspects: (i) full recognition of qualifications obtained in accredited institutions in other countries, especially at the higher education level, which is in line with the Bologna framework; and (ii) validation of experience gained at work in other countries, even where this has not led to formal certification abroad. The process of valorizing qualifications and experience gained elsewhere should be part of an integrated package which offers returning Romanians good reinsertion into the labour market, including additional training, as needed. It might also include specific business skills to enable returners to set up their own businesses, enhancing the entrepreneurial capacity of the country. This initiative should be managed in Romania, but with good links to embassies and cultural centers across EU countries and beyond. Encouraging re-immigration is particularly important as young well-educated people are most likely to take part in LLL. As returners, they will drive up participation levels generally, and help develop a stronger culture of LLL.

Establishing a quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation system for LLL. While the NQF is important for the recognition of prior learning, there is also a need to establish quality assurance measures for the LLL system as a whole, in order to better inform the decisions made by the consumers of LLL services. Quality assurance is important for assessing the performance of publicly funded programs and providers, including government agencies which train civil servants and other public sector employees, but also for providing information to consumers on private providers. QA mechanisms can include a combination of external and self-evaluations. The development of online repositories of consumer feedback (e.g. from students in public institutions and from consumers of private training services) should be supported. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities should be designed and implemented, which include the development and installation of a comprehensive LLL monitoring information system.
Romania lacks a designated institution to produce a regular assessment of national progress on LLL and inform the public and policy debate on key issues in this area, as well as to promote the value of LLL to the widest range of stakeholders and participants. This role could be assumed by the MESR/subordinated or coordinated institutions (including the NAQ). It should have a strong policy orientation and strong analytical capacity; a capacity to manage promotional activity; and an ability to evaluate the effects of different aspects of LLL rigorously and independently. It should have the ability communicate effectively with employers, civic society, as well as representatives of other sectors.

As the potential importance of LLL is not broadly recognized in Romania, awareness raising campaigns should be developed and implemented. Campaigns and interventions should be targeted to reach underrepresented groups. One model is to have designated champions of LLL, for instance in the workplace, who could work alongside the low-skilled and encourage them to learn. Another activity that should be supported under this measure is the implementation of the National Festival of Your Chances, which is part of a broader European initiative towards developing a common space for learning, promoting intercultural dialogue, and increasing awareness.

**IV. Setting Priorities**

**4.1 Estimated Costs**

Implementing the strategy in its entirety is expected to cost approximately €1 billion between 2014 and 2020. Of the total amount needed to achieve the targets of this strategy, allocations from the following sources are estimated:

- EUR 133.4 million from the national and local budget for central and local public authorities (including the mandatory contribution of the budget to the EU funds);
- EUR 599.7 million from the Operational Programme Human Capital (OPHC), Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and Thematic Objective 10 “Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning”;
- EUR 300 million from the European mobility program ERASMUS+
- EUR 46.4 million from the Operational Programme Administrative Capacity and the Regional Operational Programme.

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37 This festival is Romania’s version of Adult Learners Week initiative, which is currently running in over 20 countries to raise awareness of the social, personal and economic value of LLL.
4.2 Target Groups

This strategy broadly targets two types of groups: primary beneficiaries of LLL and the implementing organizations and agencies that are expected to play a role in scaling up opportunities for LLL. Although the strategy is intended to benefit the total population, primary beneficiaries generally include the following: persons with recognized competencies, Romanians currently living abroad, staff of higher education institutions, adult learners participating in CVET, education and training staff and higher education students who will benefit from the Erasmus+ program, employees with low levels of qualifications, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups (e.g. the unemployed, early school leavers, Roma population, older workers, the disabled), post-high school students, and the staff of the NAQ and sectorial committees. The implementation of a LLL strategy is expected to benefit approximately 2 million people, between 2014 and 2020. Secondary beneficiaries – implementing organizations and agencies targeted by the strategy – include the MESR, the NAQ, universities, evaluation centers, and community permanent learning centers.

As mentioned in Section I, the UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey from 2011 showed that the participation of non-Roma women in adult training and apprenticeship is five times greater than their female Roma neighbors. For non-Roma men, the participation in these activities is almost three times greater than those of the Roma population. This is partially the result of the low participation of Roma in formal education. Only 1% of Roma aged 30-34 have completed tertiary education, and approximately 6% of Roma youth aged 18-25 are enrolled in education. Given the low participation in education and the national and European objective of promoting Roma inclusion, Roma constitute an explicit target group of this strategy.
Annex 1 – Map of Stakeholders

MESR MoLFSPE MoEF MoH (RCoP) MoYS (SCH, NRIS, NTCC)
NACPEPD NCDTVET NAQWE NAPSI MoEF MoH (RCoP) MoYS (SCH, NRIS, NTCC)
MoCMoPFPOLICY
CSI (42) SC CPLC EC RTCA (8)
LCSPDVT CCRAE NASC
NIS NCP CRDS (42)
PRIVATE PROVIDERS (COMPANIES)
NGO PROVIDERS AND FOLK UNIVERSITIES
HEIS POST/DOCTORAL STUDENTS
ASSOCIATIONS (NAFU) AND UNIONS
Implemention
POLICY
Monitoring
MOH (RCoP)
MoEF
MoYS (SCH, NRIS, NTCC)
MoCMoPFPOLICY
CSI (42) SC CPLC EC RTCA (8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Instituții responsabile</th>
<th>Indicatori</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 1. Recognizing prior learning, including qualifications obtained abroad</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Support approximately 210 evaluation centers and provide technical assistance to NAQ to develop the mechanism for recognition, validation and certification of prior learning (3 stages: design, piloting, and implementation)</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, local authorities</td>
<td>Number of accredited evaluation centers The mechanism for recognition, validation and certification of prior learning is operational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Implement campaigns/actions to promote and inform and create a department within NAQ’s information center to encourage the return of persons who have acquired skills abroad and need national accreditation</td>
<td>NAQ</td>
<td>Number of campaigns/information actions Number of participants in LLL programs with competencies certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Support the participation of 151,200 persons in counseling activities, skills evaluation and/or validation</td>
<td>MESR, MLFSPE, evaluation centers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Provide training for 36,540 persons to develop entrepreneurial competencies</td>
<td>NAQ, CPLC, local authorities, training providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 2. Involving vocational education and training and higher education institutions in LLL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 Provide support for 7,800 teachers participating in training on adult education</td>
<td>MESR, school inspectorates and higher education institutions</td>
<td>Number of teachers and managerial university and vocational education and training staff trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Train 596 school and university managerial staff to ensure a good management of training programs</td>
<td>MESR and higher education institutions</td>
<td>Number of CVT providers benefiting from capacity building measures to deliver quality programmes relevant to the labor market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Accredit training programs in schools or universities in partnership with private CVT providers or NGOs</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ and higher education institutions, vocational education and training institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Provide skills training and certification for 75,000 adults</td>
<td>Higher education institutions, vocational education and training institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 3. Supporting participation in European mobility programs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1 Provide access to ERASMUS+ mobility programmes, financed through EU-LLL programme, for 25,000 adults (university and pre-university staff, principals, counsellors, trainers, inspectors, youth workers etc.)</td>
<td>MESR, NACPEPD</td>
<td>Number of participants in EU mobility programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEASURE</td>
<td>Instituții responsabile</td>
<td>Indicatori</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Provide access to other mobility programmes to acquire practical/technical skills for 38,000 students</td>
<td>MESR, NACPEPD</td>
<td>Number of persons (participants) in internships abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 4. Financing to diversify provision</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Create 36 CPLCs in a pilot phase (provide grants to cover provisions of personnel and operating costs, campaigns to promote services, local partners, training activities for personnel and local community beneficiaries)</td>
<td>MESR, MLFSPE, local authorities</td>
<td>Number of Community Permanent Learning Centres (CPLCs) (national coverage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Create 219 CPLCs in the national phase, following the pilot phase</td>
<td>MESR, MLFSPE, NAQ, local authorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Support the setup of a coordination body/department for CPLCs</td>
<td>MESR, MLFSPE, NAQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Train 127,500 persons, community members, in skills acquisition (500 persons * 255 CPLCs)</td>
<td>CPLC and local authorities</td>
<td>Number of people receiving training through CPLCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 5. Financing to enhance LLL demand</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Support participation of 45,000 adults, early school leavers with low levels of qualifications to acquire basic or transversal skills</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE, CPLC, training centers</td>
<td>Number of persons receiving subsidized apprenticeship contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Support participation, in order to conclude 125,000 apprenticeship contracts for persons with low levels of qualifications</td>
<td>MLFSPE, NAQ</td>
<td>Number of low-skilled employees and other adults participating in training for traversal skills with the support of financial incentives/subsidies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Provide financial incentives/subsidies for 100,000 employees with low levels of qualifications to acquire transversal skills</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE, CPLC, training centers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 6. Supporting unemployed and inactive persons, including financial incentives and counselling</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Provide financial incentives/subsidies for integrated counselling services for 250,000 unemployed and inactive persons (these will cover screening services and career guidance)</td>
<td>MLFSPE</td>
<td>Number of unemployed counselled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Provide financial incentives/subsidies to employers to recruit 125,000 new employees</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE, CPLC, training centers</td>
<td>Number of unemployed who have found employment (cumulative from 2014 to 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Provide financial incentives/subsidies to employers to recruit unemployed and inactive persons into apprenticeships, traineeships, or other forms of job placement</td>
<td>MLFSPE, companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Measure 7. Consolidating and ensuring financing to foster the lifelong learning market, including improved counselling services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure 7.1</th>
<th>Create and support 130 partnerships between vocational education and training institutions, higher education institutions, employers, research institutions, and training providers to provide counselling services and training programs</th>
<th>Higher education institutions, employers, research institutions, and training providers</th>
<th>Number of partnerships developed between VET institutions, HEIs, employers, research institutions, and/or training providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure 7.2</td>
<td>Support counselling activities for 65,000 persons, members of marginalized communities, benefiting of integrated services (both online and face-to-face, 8 hour programmes including screening and counselling)</td>
<td>Counselling centers</td>
<td>Number of persons counselled and trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 7.3</td>
<td>Support training activities for 65,000 persons, members of marginalized communities, benefiting of integrated services (distance/flexible learning, ICT, entrepreneurship, critical thinking etc.)</td>
<td>Training centers</td>
<td>Number of persons from underrepresented groups counselled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 7.4</td>
<td>Provide financial incentives for 250,000 persons from underrepresented groups (young persons in transition from school to work, early school leavers, job seekers) for counselling services</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE, counselling centers</td>
<td>Number of counselling services providers involved in specific activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 7.5</td>
<td>Provide small grants to 500 organizations and/or departments to offer high quality counselling services</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
<td>Number of counselling services providers involved in specific activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 7.6</td>
<td>Provide financial incentives/subsidies for 180,000 students in vocational education and training to participate in training</td>
<td>MESR, NCDTVET</td>
<td>Number of students supported to participate in LLL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 7.7</td>
<td>Develop a mechanism for anticipating skills needed on the labor market</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE, NCDTVET</td>
<td>The mechanism for anticipating skills needed on the labor market is developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Measure 8. Improving the quality and availability of information

<p>| Measure 8.1 | Design and develop an information portal for firms and training providers to improve the availability and quality of information | NAQ, MLFSPE, NAPSI | Number of users accessing the information portal, disaggregated by type of user |
| Measure 8.2 | Implement a campaign to disseminate information on the use of the information portal | NAQ, MLFSPE, NAPSI | Number of persons from sectorial committees and NAQ trained |
| Measure 8.3 | Provide training for 200 staff of the Sectorial Committees and the NAQ, especially related to ICT and statistics | NAQ, MLFSPE, NAPSI | Number of persons trained in ICT and statistics |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MEASURE</strong></th>
<th><strong>Instituții responsabile</strong></th>
<th><strong>Indicatori</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 9. Assessing skills needs and developing a broader skill set</strong></td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
<td>Number of studies, publications, reports with enhanced data related to LLL programmes and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Establish and ensure the functioning of a body to conduct regular skills needs assessments, tracer studies, M&amp;E activities (through provision of legal assistance, recruitment, logistics, and funds necessary to cover other start-up costs)</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
<td>Mechanism to assess and track skills in line with PLA (Preliminary Knowledge Level Assessment) or other suitable mechanism is implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Conduct skills analysis (covering employers, training providers, education institutions, and individuals)</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 10. Establishing a quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation system for LLL</strong></td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1 Develop a single IT system at the level of NAQ to maintain consistency between registers</td>
<td>NAQ</td>
<td>The QA system for LLL is established and functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 Assess the performance of publicly-funded LLL projects and programmes</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
<td>The MIS is operational and generating reports to inform policy for accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Create a quality assurance mechanism</td>
<td>NAQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4 Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation activities</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5 Conduct communication campaigns on the motivation and participation in LLL (for approximately 5 million adults in total)</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE, NAPSI</td>
<td>Percentage of the population aware of LLL related services and programs in their geographic region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure 11. Improving the National Qualifications Framework and strengthening coordination between stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>MESR, NAQ</td>
<td>The system is operational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1 Develop a mechanism for correlating qualifications received in the country and abroad</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ</td>
<td>Number of standards revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2 Implement media campaigns related to non-formal and informal education</td>
<td>NAQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3 Support networks and partnerships amongst LLL stakeholders</td>
<td>MESR, NAQ, MLFSPE, NCDTVET</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4 Correlate Romanian Classification of Occupations with new National Qualification Framework (revision of 2000-3000 standards)</td>
<td>NAQ, sectoral committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>