

VALUE: Romanian National Report
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This document reports on the interaction between University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and volunteering in Romania

1. Overview of volunteering – university interaction

1.1 Volunteering in Romania

Volunteer activities re-emerged in Romania after 1989. In the years following the fall of the communist regime the first international volunteers arrived with the help of international organizations such as the Peace Corps or Voluntary Service Overseas and other major international non profit organizations set up branches in Romania. Among the first donors to finance the development of volunteering one can point out names such as Open Society Foundation, C.S. Mott Foundation, the European Union or USAID.

2001, declared by the UN as the International Year of Volunteers, represented a turning point in the development of the volunteer movement in Romania. It was in this year that the Law on Volunteering nr. 195 was adopted. The Law was later subject to further modifications in 2002 and 2006. Also starting with 2001, the Humanitarian Association Pro Vobis changed its mission and name thus becoming the first independent volunteer centre in Romania, dedicated to promoting and developing volunteering. In addition the web portal www.voluntariat.ro was launched; containing resources on volunteering and numerous volunteer involving organizations come together to attend the first edition of what was to become a yearly event, namely the National Conference on Volunteering. In addition the 4 volunteer centres functioning at that time formed the national Network of Volunteer Centre.

At the present time the volunteer movement follows the growing trend that started with 2001. In this sense the National Network of Volunteer Centres now has 15 active members and the number of volunteer involving organization has increased considerably. However there is no definitive data available on the total number of volunteers in Romania. A study of the Public Opinion Barometer in 2007 indicates that a total of 14.4% of the adult population in Romania are involved in volunteer activities. We must not neglect the volunteer involvement is very large among youngsters, especially those under 18; this is why this particular percentage is not entirely correct.¹

¹ For an in depth view on the context of volunteering in Romania please consult the National Report on volunteering which resulted from a study on volunteering commissioned by the European Commission. The report can be found at the following link:
<http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/eyv2011/doc/National%20report%20RO.pdf>

1.2 University Life Long learning (ULLL) in Romania

The negotiations on EU membership and then the full membership from 1st January 2007 accelerated the development of lifelong learning. There is, however, lack of an integrated and coherent approach towards lifelong learning, with a view on the whole educational progress of an individual. Each of the educational levels and segments and active unemployment measures have developed their own legal framework, which includes some principles of lifelong learning. But they do not link to a common framework of public policies.

The Romanian education system is characterised by a high degree of national regulation. Thus, in terms of the scope of lifelong learning provision at Romanian universities, this mainly encompasses government funded part-time provision in the form of:

- Other further and continuing education
- Supplementary courses for access to two-year Masters programmes
- Full-time education provided part-time

In addition, universities offer extension as well as other short courses, lectures and seminars and engage in internal staff development activities, all of which are research-based but typically non-credit bearing. There are little examples of tailor-made courses for vocational/work-based education provided in close cooperation with (public and private) employers. In addition ULLL provision in Romania includes open, distance and e-learning,

This should be seen in the context of the low rate of participation in adult education in general in Romania (for instance, the percentage of persons aged 25-64 participating in LLL in Romania is 1.6 percent, as compared to 9.9 percent in EU 25 countries)²

1.3 The political and legislative context in Romania

1.3.1 Volunteer policy

There is a general consensus that there is no main public body currently responsible for the monitoring and regulation of voluntary activities and institutions in Romania.

A number of public bodies are involved in the voluntary sector. However, it is important to note that this is often on an ad-hoc basis: the Ministry of Environment; the Ministry of Work, Family and Social Protection; the Governmental Department of Relations with the Associative Domain (*Directia Relatii cu Mediul Asociativ*); the Agency for Governmental Strategies; and the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (*Agentia Nationala pentru Programe Comunitare in Domeniul Educatiei si Formarii Profesionale - ANPCDEFP*), which works under the tutelage of the Minister of Education, Research and Innovation.

Romania is one of the countries that have adopted a legislative act that establishes a regulatory framework for carrying out volunteer activities. The

² Romania - Education Policy Note; World Bank

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRomania/Resources/EducationPolicyNote.pdf>

Romanian Law of Volunteering (Legea Voluntariatului) was adopted in Romania during the United Nations International Year of Volunteers, in 2001. Since then it has had several amendments to it, however there have been no major changes. The Law on Volunteerism gives a definition as to what volunteering means, highlighting several principles of volunteer work, namely participation of the volunteer based on freely expressed consent and on his/her own initiative, the performance of volunteer activities without expectations of any financial gain and involvement of the volunteer in community life. In addition, the law provides guidelines for the content and use of the volunteer agreement or contract, states the rights and obligations of a volunteer and also mentions cross border volunteering. However the law bears a number of unclear content and is, in some ways, outdated. It is for these reasons that, in 2009 Pro Vobis National Volunteer Centre has initiated a wide public consultation campaign to find out what is the opinion of the actors interested in the volunteer movement in Romania about the law and what they would like to change about it. Conducting a series of round table type of discussion that brought together the volunteers, volunteer involving organizations, volunteer centres and other stakeholders, combined with an online consultation Pro Vobis National Volunteer Centre has put together a document that contains the set of changes that emerged during the consultation period, document that will be presented and debated during the National Conference on Volunteering, held in Bucharest in October 2009.

1.3.2 Lifelong learning policy in Romania

Lifelong learning is not a subject approached in a coherent and broad manner at the level of educational system and educational public policies. This fact negatively affects the coherence and flexibility of the individuals' lifelong learning plans and objectives. Despite the little progress in regulating the validation of prior learning that have been made in the last few years, the insufficient use of the existing legal framework (except for the case of initial training) remains one of the weak points in the process of introducing a lifelong learning approach to education.

The insufficient development of transfer mechanisms for the validation of prior learning in different learning contexts limit the possibilities for the population, especially the adult population, to obtain a formal accreditation of the acquired competences that could be used on the job market and/or re-entering the formal educational system. In terms of public policy formulation, there needs to be a greater coherence between educational policies, initial professional training policies as well as continuing professional training.

Romania has not finished the development of a national integrated strategy for lifelong learning yet. Nevertheless, the decision-makers' and experts' interest in the development of a coherent national lifelong learning strategy has considerably increased since 1997. In consequence, lifelong learning principles have been included as priorities in education, continuing training and employment policy documents. The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) and the Sectoral Operational Programme for the Development of Human

Resources (SOPDHR) are the main Romanian policy documents for attaining the benchmarks set in the Lisbon Agenda for education, training and employment. Some lifelong learning objectives are also explicitly found in sectoral strategic documents, such as: The National Employment Strategy 2004-2010 (MLSSF, 2004), The Short- and Medium-Term Strategy of Continuing Vocational Training 2005-2010 (MLSSF, NAE, MERY, NATB with support from the Sectoral Committees, 2005), The Ministry of Education and Research Strategic Guidelines for 2006-2008 (2005).³

1.4 The volunteering – university interaction in Romania

Little is known about the interaction of these two fields of activity, responsible for this being the lack of research data available at the present time. The general view is that it is up to the individual university staff member to engage in university-voluntary sector interaction and to involve students in these contacts. In some degree programmes (at the bachelor and masters' level), the curriculum requires an internship, where sometimes the student involved does volunteer work.

In addition, volunteering – university interaction varies from one university to another and in most of the case depends on personal relations that the representatives from universities have with representatives from the volunteer sector; therefore there are no institutional ways of collaboration which acts as a deterrent in the process of interaction.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Initial conclusions and summary

In conclusion, we can say that the situation in Romania is in a paradoxical one: we have potential, people which want to do CE, there are a lot of efforts in this field, we have traditions, experts with international activity and young specialists who want to do something in this field, we have a strong institutional network of education for adults , we have a lot of non-governmental organizations focused on AE and social care, but lack of a national policy in this field makes a systematic and good development of CE in Romania very difficult.

A distinct trend for a good developing of CE is the increasing the importance of national and supranational networks and joint projects in the area of open and distance learning that can be made in the context of stressing the international dimension of the education, in the process of European unification.

We hope that the policy developed by the Ministry of National Education from this year will be a coherent and a systematic one for turning to good account all this potential for CE.

³ National Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme in Romania, MERY, 2007

4.2 Recommendations

In order that the national politics regarding the lifelong learning system to become real and viable some ample actions are necessary, among the followings:

- Cooperation and communication intra and inter ministries from the fields of family, labour, youth, education, social assurance, finance and others;
- State budget financing the programmes dedicated to disadvantaged people and for the dissemination of the lifelong learning programmes;
- Dissemination of the information regarding the right to learn, accessibility and flexibility of the lifelong learning programmes;
- Setting up guiding centers for providing counseling to adults regarding lifelong learning to promote free services regarding:
 - Information dissemination; Help to interpret the information and to make choices;
 - Support in finding what the individuals want, to make choices from the programmes offered, to correlate the educational offer with the personal necessities and possibilities;
 - Dissemination of the positive experiences to help individuals to take the best decisions;
 - Support to contact the institutions providing programmes within lifelong learning system;
- Setting up communities/foundations for lifelong learning financing support by donations and partial government help that could bring together academic people, managers, entrepreneurs and individuals interested in helping the lifelong learning system;

5. Further information

5.1 Bibliography and References

¹ For an in depth view on the context of volunteering in Romania please consult the National Report on volunteering which resulted from a study on volunteering commissioned by the European Commission. The report can be found at the following link:
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²Romania - Education Policy Note; World Bank
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRROMANIA/Resources/EducationPolicyNote.pdf>

³ National Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme in Romania, MERY, 2007

5.2 Further Resources

5.2.1 Websites

www.edu.ro – website of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth

5.2.2 Glossary

- MERY - Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (Ministry of Education and Research)
- MLSSF - Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family
- NAE - National Agency for Employment
- NATB - National Adult Training Board