



Vocational education and training in Romania

Short description





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Please cite this publication as:

Cedefop (2019). *Vocational education and training in Romania: short description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/256780>

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It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019

PRINT ISBN 978-92-896-2855-6

doi:10.2801/714548

TI-04-19-220-EN-C

PDF

ISBN 978-92-896-2854-9

doi:10.2801/256780

TI-04-19-220-EN-N

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Foreword

‘Connecting education!’ is one of Romania’s priorities during its first Presidency of the Council since it joined the European Union (EU) in 2007. It is underpinned by principles engaging with each other like cogs, across all levels and types of education and training from early childhood education to adult learning: excellence, inclusion and mobility.

Vocational education and training (VET) for young people and adults has a strategic role to play in this endeavour. The Presidency’s focus on excellence and key competences, as well as upskilling and reskilling of adults, highlights crucial features for VET: open to all, of high quality, responsive to current demand and forward looking.

Romania’s challenges and its national priorities for initial and continuing VET – improving its relevance and quality – are closely linked to those at EU level. By constantly adapting its diverse VET system with vocational, professional and technological paths, the country aims to reduce early leaving from education and training and boost participation in adult learning; these are two areas with considerable scope for improvement in relation to other Member States. Promoting upskilling programmes, reintegrating adults into education and training through second chance programmes, and expanding apprenticeships and other work-based learning schemes are measures that have the potential to bring about change.

The country’s national strategic VET objectives to provide counselling services for all initial VET learners, strengthen key competences, and promote and reward excellence in initial VET mirror the leitmotif of the European vocational skills week, making VET a first choice. Increasing the social partners’ role in policy-making and establishing mechanisms to track graduates’ careers complement the ambitious set of goals.

With this short description, drawn up in collaboration with Cedefop’s national ReferNet partner, we offer a taste of Romania’s VET to a wider European audience. Our overall aim is to help readers understand VET in its specific country context, as a prerequisite to building bridges between VET systems and encouraging learner and teacher mobility across Europe. By fostering understanding of VET’s different facets, we aim to demonstrate that inclusiveness does not mean second-rate but the contrary.

We hope that the information in this publication will be a source of inspiration for policy-makers, researchers, VET providers and other readers across Europe and beyond.

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Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by Cedefop, Department for vocational education and training systems and institutions, under the supervision of Loukas Zahilas. Dmitrijs Kuļšs, Cedefop expert, was responsible for the publication.

Cedefop would like to thank Elena Cerkez, Gabriel Radu and Dana Stroie from the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development (ReferNet Romania), without whom this publication would not be possible. Thanks also go to representatives from the Ministry of National Education and National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Ciprian Fartuşnic from the Institute for Educational Sciences, Ana Radulescu from the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, Nela Plugarescu from the National Agency for Employment and Gabriela Petre from the National Authority for Qualifications for their valuable input and discussions.

The publication was peer-reviewed by George Kostakis, Cedefop expert.

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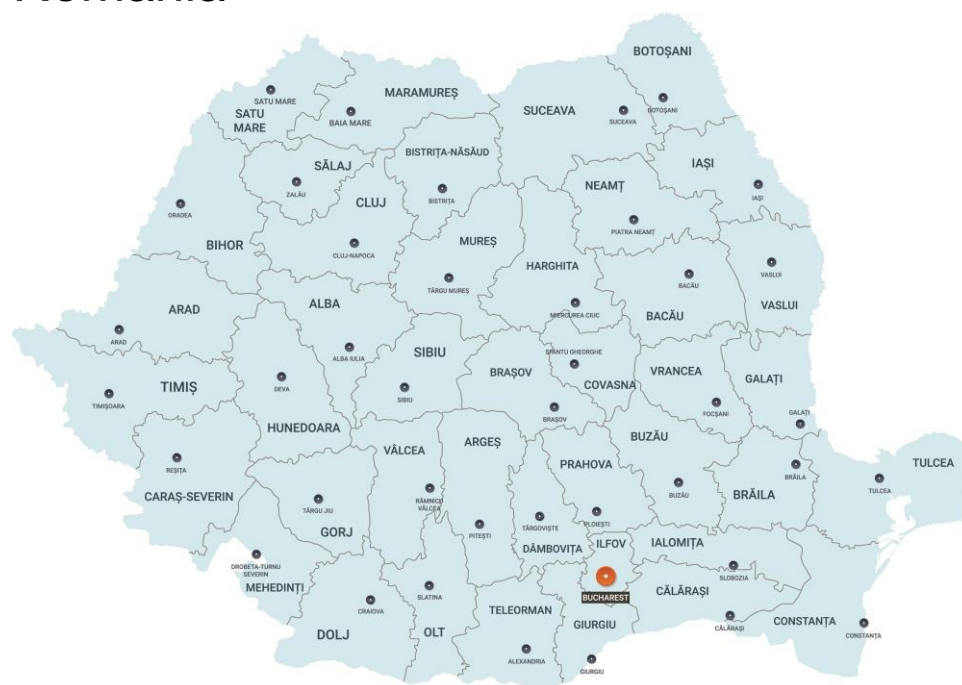
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Romania



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Area	238 397 km ²
Capital	Bucharest
System of government	Republic
Population (2018) ⁽¹⁾	19 523 621
Per capita gross domestic product (GDP) (current prices, 2017) ⁽²⁾	EUR 9 600
Legislative power	Parliament (Senate and Chamber of Deputies)

In this report, vocational education and training (VET) is referred to as 'education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market' (Cedefop, 2014), including 'vocational' programmes that are formally not part of VET according to the national legislation ⁽³⁾.

A dedicated section at the end of this publication provides links to legal documents referred to in the text.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, tps00001; provisional data [extracted 9.8.2018].

⁽²⁾ Eurostat, nama_10_pc; provisional data [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽³⁾ Education Law No 1/2011 of 5 January 2011.

CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing VET



1.1. Demographics

Romania's population is 19 523 621 (2018) ⁽⁴⁾. Its area of 238 397 km² comprises 42 counties, 103 municipalities, 217 cities, 2 861 communes and 12 957 villages ⁽⁵⁾. Almost half of population (46.2%) resides in rural areas ⁽⁶⁾. The population is decreasing (5.4% since 2008) due to negative natural growth ⁽⁷⁾ and emigration ⁽⁸⁾.

As in many EU countries, the population is ageing. The share of people aged 65+ has increased from 15.4% in 2008 to 18.9% in 2018; the share of the working age population (15 to 64) decreased from 68% to 66% accordingly; in rural areas, however, it has slightly increased ⁽⁹⁾.

The old-age dependency ratio ⁽¹⁰⁾ is increasing. It is expected to increase by 32 percentage points by 2060 compared to 2015 (Figure 1).

Demographic changes have an impact on vocational education and training (VET). Participation in secondary education has been decreasing, leading to optimisation of the school network: merging and sometimes closing schools. Since 2012/13, the number of VET upper secondary schools has decreased by 8.5% ⁽¹¹⁾. School network optimisation required offering additional transportation for learners; this issue is addressed by local authorities.

⁽⁴⁾ Eurostat, tps00001; provisional data, usual resident population as of 1 January [extracted 9.8.2018].

⁽⁵⁾ National Institute of Statistics (INS) - TEMPO-online database: usual resident population as of 1 January, ADM101A [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽⁶⁾ INS – TEMPO-online database: usual resident population as of 1 January, POP105A [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽⁷⁾ -3.6 per thousand (-71 125 people) of the total usual resident population in 2017 (19 644 350). National Institute of Statistics - TEMPO-online database: usual resident population as of 1 January, POP105A, and natural increase in the usual resident population, POP241B [extracted 17.9.2018].

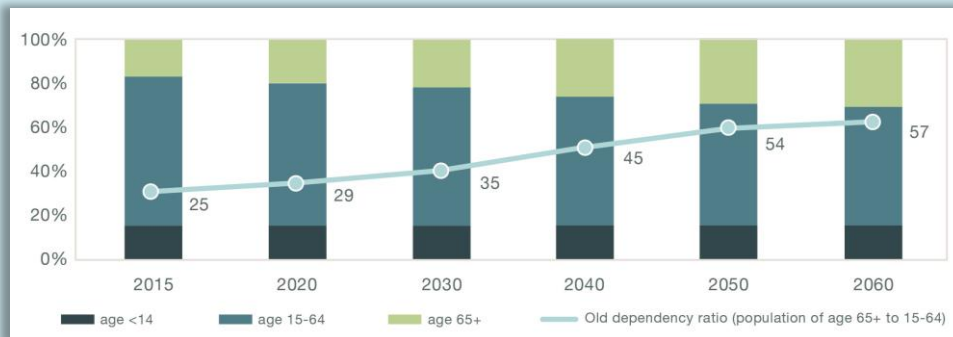
⁽⁸⁾ Net migration -0.33% (-64 832 people) of the total population in 2018 (Eurostat, proj_15ndbims [extracted 9.8.2018]). Currently, 3 219 878 Romanian citizens are usually resident in another EU/EFTA country as of 1 January 2018 (Eurostat, migr_pop9ctz [extracted 12.9.2018]).

⁽⁹⁾ INS – TEMPO-online database: usual resident population as of 1 January, POP105A [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽¹⁰⁾ The ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of persons of working age (15-64).

⁽¹¹⁾ INS – TEMPO-online database: education units, by categories of units, ownerships, macro regions, development regions and counties [SCL101A] at the beginning of school year; exclude 'vocational' high schools (military, theology, sports, music, visual arts, theatre, cultural heritage, choreography, pedagogy).

Figure 1. Population forecast by age group and old-age dependency ratio



Source: Eurostat, proj_15ndbims [extracted 9.8.2018].

According to the most recent census, 88.9% of the population declared themselves as Romanians, 6.1% as ethnic Hungarians and 3% as Roma ⁽¹²⁾. Their residential density varies across the country.

1.2. Economy and labour market indicators

Most companies are micro and small. Employers value formal qualifications that are often a prerequisite for hiring qualified staff.

Services are the main economic sector in terms of contribution to gross value added to the national economy, their contribution reaching 62% in 2017. The share of industry was 26.7% and agriculture 4.8% ⁽¹³⁾.

The main export sectors are ⁽¹⁴⁾:

- (a) machinery/mechanical appliances; electronics, electrical equipment and its parts (28.4% of total export in 2017);
- (b) transportation means and associated equipment (18.1%);
- (c) base metals and their products (8.5%).

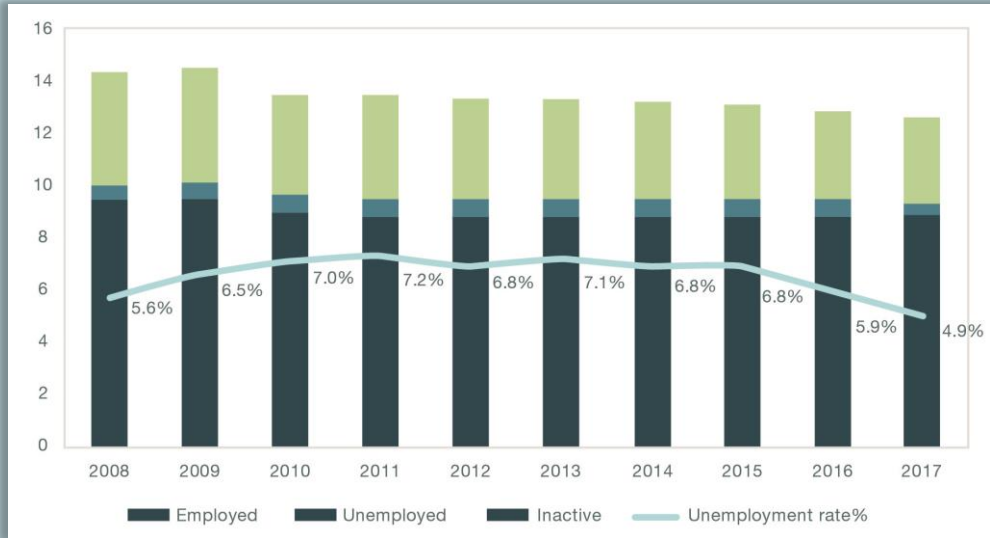
The main export destination countries are Germany (22.9% of total export in 2017) and Italy (11.2%) ⁽¹⁵⁾.

⁽¹²⁾ INS (2011). *Recensământul Populației și al Locuințelor* [Census of population and housing], available at http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/REZULTATE-DEFINITIVE-RPL_2011.pdf

⁽¹³⁾ Eurostat, nama_10_a10: provisional data [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽¹⁴⁾ INS – TEMPO-online database: export value (FOB) according to CN sections and chapters EXP101E [extracted 17.9.2018].

Figure 2. **Employed, unemployed and inactive population (aged 20-64) in 2008-17 (millions)**



NB: Unemployment age group 20-64; unemployment rate % of active population.

Source: Eurostat, lfsi_emp_a, une_rt_a, lfsa_igan; une_rt_a [extracted 1.10.2018].

The employment rate for the 20 to 64 age group increased from 64.4% in 2008 to 68.8% in 2017, approaching the 2020 national target of 70% ⁽¹⁶⁾ and the EU-28 average (72.2% in 2017). In 2017, the employment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 was 24.5%, lower than the EU-28 average of 34.7%, particularly for females (20.4% compared with 32.9% EU-28 average) ⁽¹⁷⁾.

According to Eurostat, recent VET graduates ⁽¹⁸⁾ perform better in the labour market than general education graduates. In 2017, the employment rate of 20 to 34 year-old recent VET graduates from upper secondary education (ISCED levels 3-4) was 67.7% compared with 60.8% of general education graduates who did not

⁽¹⁵⁾ INS – TEMPO-online database: export value (FOB) on partner countries EXP101B [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽¹⁶⁾ Eurostat, lfsi_emp_a [extracted 1.10.2018]. https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/european-semester-your-country/romania/europe-2020-targets-statistics-and-indicators-romania_en

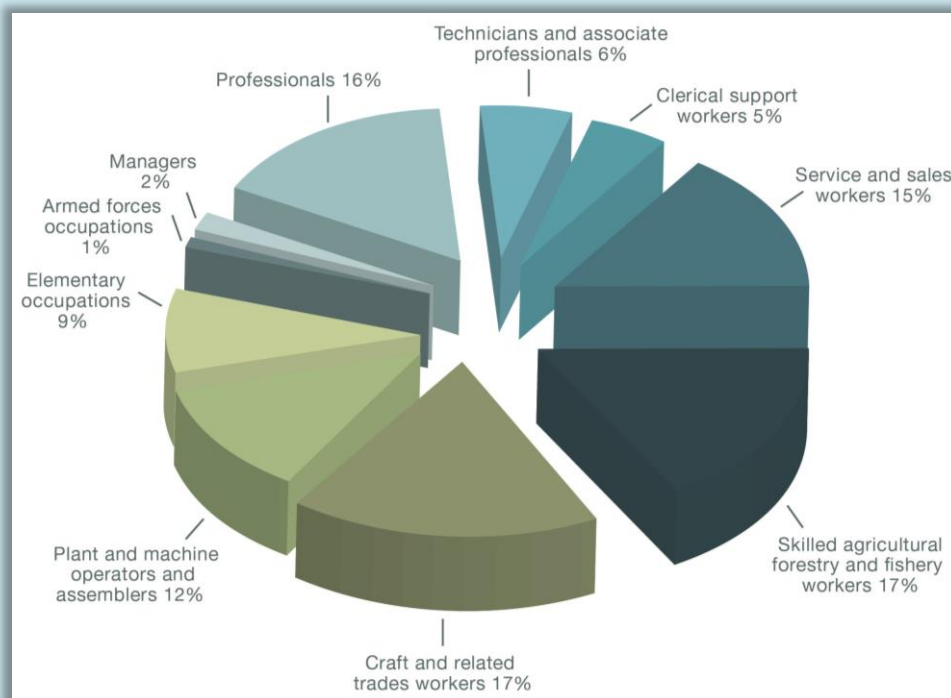
⁽¹⁷⁾ Eurostat, lfsa_ergan [extracted 9.8.2018].

⁽¹⁸⁾ Those who graduated within one to three years.

continue their studies ⁽¹⁹⁾. While it is slightly lower compared with the EU-28 average (76.6%), the rate has increased by 7.2 percentage points since 2008.

In 2017, almost 30% of all employees in the country were skilled non-manual workers (managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals, clerical support workers). Nearly one in every 10 employees worked in an elementary occupation and one in every six was a skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery worker (Figure 3).

Figure 3. **Employment by occupation**



NB: 2017 data; age group 15 to 64.

Source: Eurostat, ifsa_egais [extracted 9.8.2018].

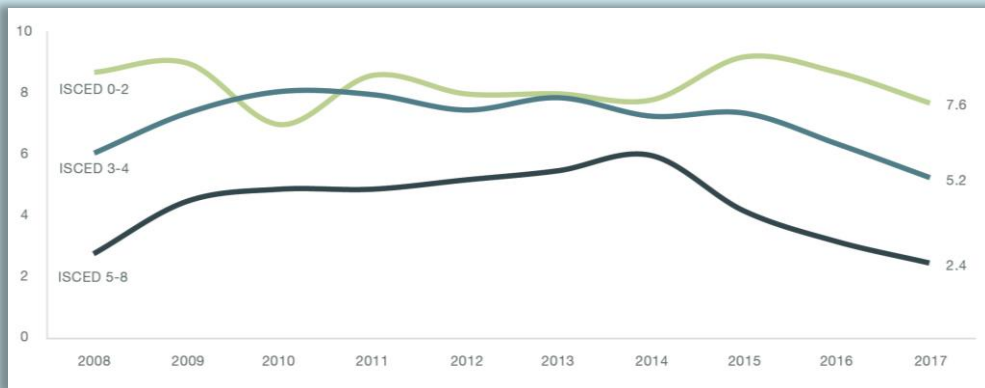
The employment share of skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers fell from 20% in 2008 to 17% in 2017 ⁽²⁰⁾; the share of technicians and associate professionals fell from 10% to 6%. At the same time, there was an increase in employment of professionals (5.2 percentage points), service and sales workers (4.7 percentage points), craft and related trades workers (0.2 percentage points).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽²⁰⁾ Eurostat, ifsa_egais [extracted 9.8.2018].

In 2008-17, the unemployment rate fell from 5.6% to 4.9% (Figure 2). The main reasons are related to recovery from the economic recession (increased job offer), labour emigration (increased demand for employees), and increasing education (including VET) enrolment of the school-age population. In 2017, the unemployment rate was at its lowest in the period 2008-17 (4.9%), as the country had one of highest GDP annual growth rates in the EU-28, offering more employment opportunities for VET graduates. The unemployment rate in Romania is also considerably lower than in the EU-28 on average (7% in 2008 and 7.6% in 2017) ⁽²¹⁾.

Figure 4. Unemployment rate (age 15-64) by education attainment level in 2008-17



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011. ISCED 0-2: less than primary, primary and lower secondary education; ISCED 3-4: upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education; ISCED 5-8: tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, ifsa_urgaed [extracted 9.8.2018].

As shown in Figure 4, unemployment is distributed unevenly by education attainment level. In the 15 to 64 age group, the highest unemployment disproportionately affects those with ISCED level 0-2 qualifications (lowest levels). However, at the peak of the economic crisis in 2010-13, unemployment was, at times, higher for those with upper secondary and post-secondary education, including VET graduates. This is unusual as unskilled workers are usually more exposed to unemployment than others during economic downturns.

In 2017, the unemployment rate of those with medium level qualifications, including most VET graduates (ISCED levels 3-4) fell compared with the pre-crisis years.

⁽²¹⁾ Eurostat, une_rt_a [extracted 17.9.2018].

Labour force demand in the real economy is increasing. Rapid growth in vacant jobs has been registered by labour offices: from 24 825 vacancies in 2013 to 59 987 in 2017.

In 2017, the main job vacancies registered by the labour offices were ⁽²²⁾:

- (a) 26.6% of all vacancies in manufacturing, signalling recovery from the biggest job vacancy falls during the economic crisis;
- (b) 15.3% in human health and social work activities;
- (c) 14.5% in public administration and defence;
- (d) 8.5% in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles;
- (e) 5.5% in transportation and storage;
- (f) 4.8% in administrative and support service activities;
- (g) 4.1% in education;
- (h) 3.4% in information and communication technologies and services.

The share of jobs vacancies in 2017 by group of occupations was ⁽²³⁾:

- (a) professionals (such as science and engineering, health, teaching): 29.1%;
- (b) workers in the field of services: 14%;
- (c) unskilled workers: 13.3%;
- (d) skilled workers and similar: 12.3%;
- (e) installation, machinery operators; machinery and equipment builders: 11%;
- (f) technicians and other technical experts: 8.9%;
- (g) administrative clerks: 6.9%;
- (h) members of legislative body, of executive, high officials of public administration, managers and high officials: 4.3%;
- (i) workers skilled in agriculture, forestry and fishing: 0.2%.

1.3. Education attainment

Romania has the sixth highest share of people with education (ISCED) levels 3-4 ⁽²⁴⁾ in EU. In 2017, 58% of the population had attained this level compared with 46% in EU-28 on average. The share of VET graduates in the total number of

⁽²²⁾ INS – TEMPO-online database: vacancies by macro regions, development regions, activity of national economy at level of NACE Rev.2 section LMV102B [extracted 17.9.2018].

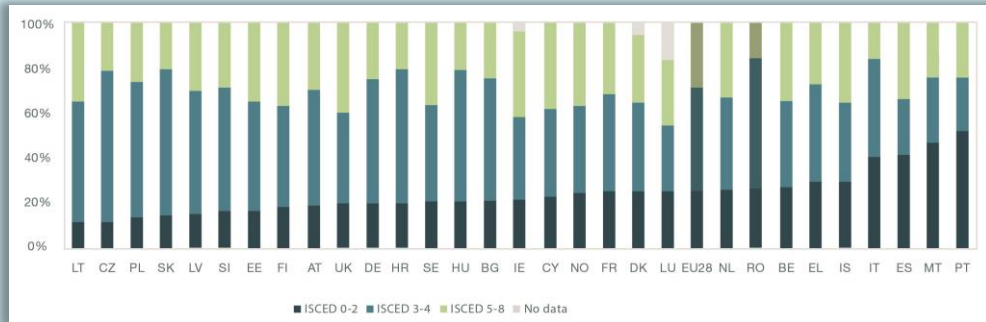
⁽²³⁾ INS – TEMPO-online database: vacancies by macro regions, development regions, groups of occupations LMV102D [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽²⁴⁾ Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 3-4 graduates (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education) was 61.6% in 2017 ⁽²⁵⁾.

The share of those aged 15 to 64 with low, or without, education is 27%, slightly more than the EU average. Just above 15% of the population has a higher education diploma (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Population (age 15-64) by highest education level attained in 2017



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011. ISCED 0-2: less than primary, primary and lower secondary education; ISCED 3-4: upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education; ISCED 5-8: tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, ifsa_pgaed [extracted 9.8.2018].

Over a decade, the share of people with low- and medium-level qualification has decreased by 22% (20% in EU-28) and 15% (3% in EU-28) accordingly. At the same time, the share of those with a higher education diploma has increased by 25% (30% in EU-28).

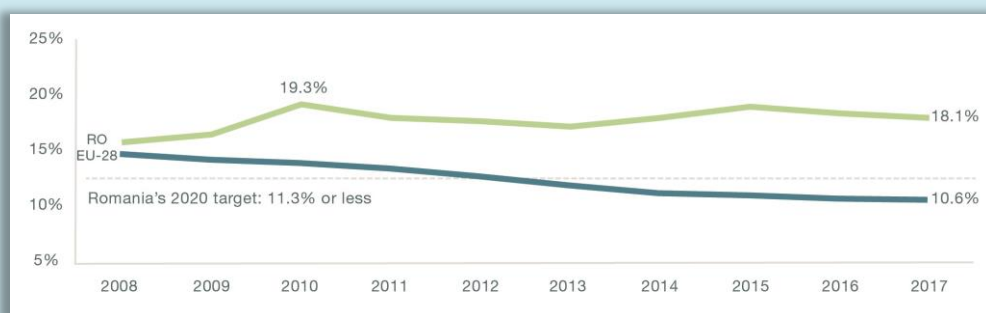
Despite the attainment rates, the share of early leavers from education and training has increased from 15.9% in 2008 to 18.1% in 2017 and is above the 11.3%, the country's target for 2020 (Government of Romania, 2018). Groups at risk of social exclusion, especially those in rural areas, seem to be substantially contributing to the increase (Kitchen, et al., 2017), as is low funding for

⁽²⁵⁾ Data on VET were calculated here also taking into consideration vocational (high school) programmes (which are not formally part of the VET system according to the national legislation). Data sources: INS-TEMPO online database: high school education; end of school year 2016/17 (Table 4. Distribution of graduates, by branches, types of high school and sexes); vocational, post-high school and foremen school education; end of school year 2016/17 (Table 5. Situation of graduates by form of ownership). Extracted on 7.10.2018.

education⁽²⁶⁾. This has a negative impact on the quality and competitiveness of human capital.

Dropout rates⁽²⁷⁾ among VET learners is higher compared with general education and is predominant among groups at risk: young people in rural communities and/or from low-income families, Roma and other minorities, and low-performers who are required to repeat the same grade. There are also disparities between regions. For example, the early leaving rate in the north-east region is 23.6% compared with 11.3% in the west region. It is also 1.5 times higher in rural than in urban areas in lower secondary education⁽²⁸⁾ ⁽²⁹⁾.

Figure 6. Early leavers from education and training in 2008-17



NB: Share of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Source: Eurostat, table tsdsc410; data extracted on 9.8.2018.

There is a 2015-20 strategy⁽³⁰⁾ to address the issue of early leaving from education and training. It combines prevention, intervention (especially at school and learner levels) and compensation measures within four strategic pillars to:

- (a) ensure that all children go to school and receive quality education;
- (b) ensure that all young people complete compulsory education;

⁽²⁶⁾ <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6e709b4c-bac0-11e7-a7f8-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

⁽²⁷⁾ School dropout rate is the difference between the number of learners enrolled at the beginning and registered at the end of the same school year divided by the total number of learners enrolled at the beginning of the school year.

⁽²⁸⁾ Ministry of National Education (2015a). Strategy to reduce early school leaving in Romania, 2015-20.

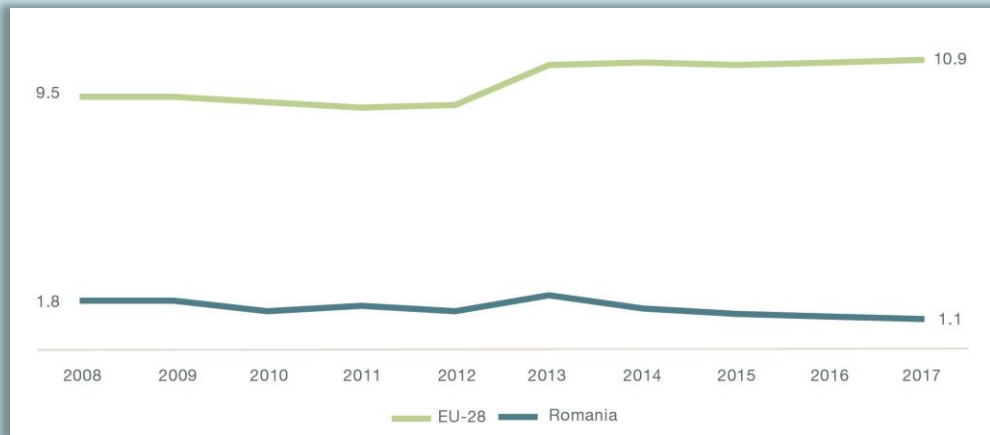
⁽²⁹⁾ Eurostat, edat_lfse_16 [extracted 17.9.2018].

⁽³⁰⁾ Ministry of National Education (2015a). Strategy to reduce early school leaving in Romania, 2015-20.

- (c) bring early leavers back to school;
- (d) ensure adequate institutional support for the government, to improve its capacity to implement the strategy.

There are training opportunities for adults who are early leavers from education and training. However, participation in lifelong learning is the lowest in the EU and also slightly decreasing, the reverse of the EU trend (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Participation in lifelong learning in 2005-17



NB: Share of adult population aged 25-64 participating in education and training.
Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted 9.8.2018].

Discussions between national policy-makers and Cedefop ⁽³¹⁾ have revealed how citizens perceive participation in lifelong learning. While official certificates/diplomas are highly valued by learners and employers, non-formal training not offering such certificates is not always seen by learners as lifelong learning and is possibly not reported as such to the statistical authorities.

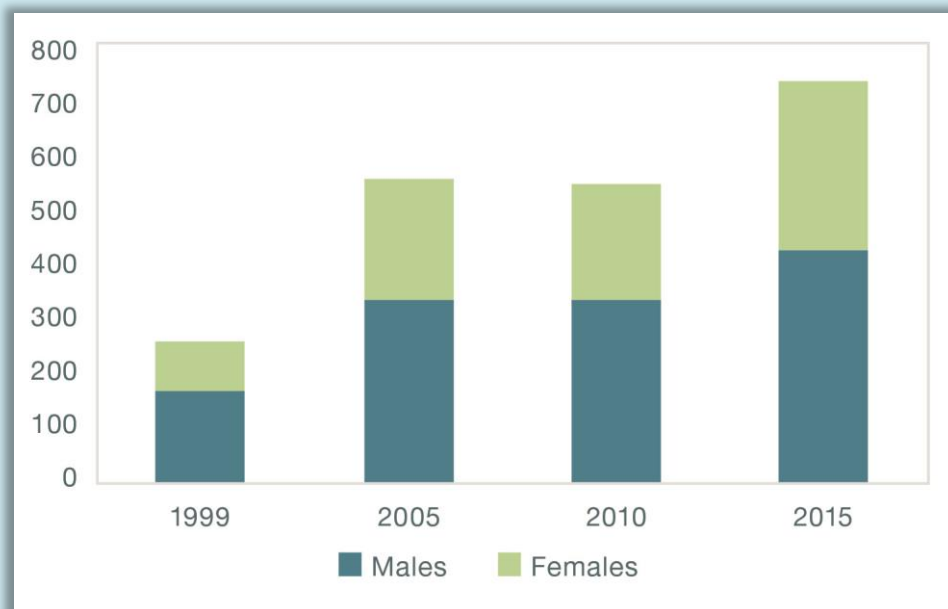
According to national data ⁽³²⁾ the number of adult learners in authorised vocational training programmes has been increasing over the past decade. Approximately 400 000 adults per year currently enrol in 13 815 vocational training programmes from 6 000 authorised providers.

Figure 8 also shows an increasing trend in adult participation in continuing training courses in enterprises during 1999-2015, in contrast with the national lifelong learning data above.

⁽³¹⁾ On 26 and 27 September 2018, in Bucharest.

⁽³²⁾ Data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice.

Figure 8. **Participants in continuing vocational training courses in enterprises (thousands)**



NB: Latest data available. Total number of persons employed having participated in continuing vocational training courses (CVT) initiated by their employers.

Source: National Institute of Statistics – TEMPO-online database; participants to continuing vocational training courses by gender and by national economic activities, FPC102A [extracted 2.10.2018].

Since 2015, participation in continuing training in enterprises has increased by 27% for males and by 40% for females. Despite a positive trend, employee participation in training compared to the total number of employees in the country remains relatively low (21.3% in 2015) compared to the EU-28 average (40.8%)⁽³³⁾. See also Section 2.2.2.2 for data on participation in training organised by the public employment service.

1.4. Employment policies influencing VET

The Ministry of Labour and Social Justice manages measures for promoting and supporting participation in VET and better labour market access. Measures supporting transition from unemployment or inactivity to employment, focus on

⁽³³⁾ Eurostat, trng_cvt_12s [extracted 22.10.2018].

improving the employability of individuals as well as stimulating mobility, including free of charge:

- (a) personalised career information and counselling programmes;
- (b) jobseeker profiling (easy, medium, difficult and very difficult to find a job) based on geographic, demographic, attainment and other criteria. As a result jobseekers are offered a specific set of activation measures, including vocational training programmes, apprenticeship and traineeship;
- (c) evaluation and certification of jobseeker professional competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning;
- (d) counselling and assistance to start an independent activity or to start-up a business;
- (e) insertion bonus for the graduates of education institutions and the graduates of the special schools who get hired, within 60 days from graduation, for a normal working schedule and for a period longer than 12 months;
- (f) activation bonus for the unemployed, registered within the public employment service for at least 30 days, not being entitled to unemployment benefit, who get hired for a normal working schedule for a period longer than three months,
- (g) stimulating internal labour mobility through three types of bonus that are offered to jobseekers willing to work away from the residence area: relocation (first rent programme), establishment and employment bonuses.

To reduce youth unemployment, especially of NEETs, based on the EU Council recommendation of 22 April 2013, the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice developed and introduced the *Youth guarantee implementation plan 2014-15*. This plan brought together key reforms and initiatives designed to create the appropriate framework for the employment of young people. Guidance and career counselling services are mandatory measures included in customised packages of interventions designed for young people.

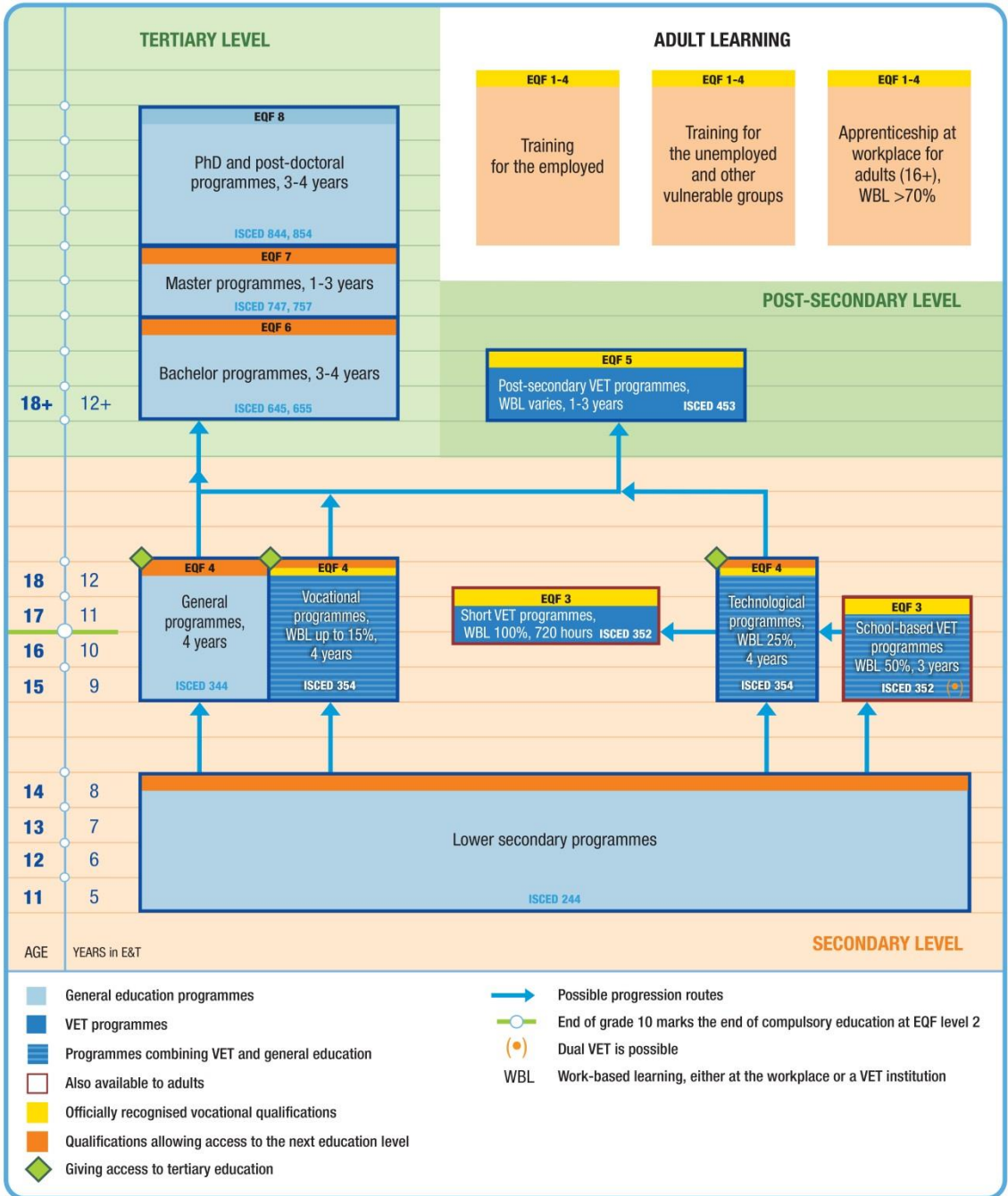
Since 2016, the *Guarantee plan* has put even more emphasis on initiatives that combine employment with training of the workforce, which gives young people the opportunity to improve skills obtained during initial education and to acquire new skills through participation in apprenticeships and traineeships. The new *Youth guarantee implementation plan for 2017-20* includes the continuation of all the measures from the previous plan.

CHAPTER 2.

VET provision



Figure 9. VET in the Romanian education and training system in 2018/19



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Romania.

2.1. Education and training system overview

The constitution guarantees public education, including tertiary, free of charge. General objectives, aims, principles, structure and organisation of the education and training system are described in the National Law of Education (2011). It defines the following education levels:

- (a) early education (age 0 to 6):
 - (i) the before pre-school level (age 0 to 3);
 - (ii) pre-school education (age 3 to 6);
- (b) primary education (ISCED 1):
 - (i) preparatory grade (age 6 to 7);
 - (ii) grades 1 to 4;
- (c) secondary education:
 - (i) lower secondary education (ISCED 2, grades 5 to 8) also called 'gymnasium' (*gimnaziu*);
 - (ii) upper secondary education (ISCED 3) also called 'secondary superior education', comprising:
 - four-year general and VET (vocational and technological) programmes (grades 9 to 12) ⁽³⁴⁾ providing access to higher education;
 - three-year school-based VET programmes (nationally referred as 'professional' programmes and may be offered as dual VET);
 - short (720 hours of practical training) VET programmes;
- (d) post-secondary VET programmes (ISCED 4, *postliceu*);
- (e) higher education (ISCED 5-8).

Primary, lower secondary and first two years (grades 9 and 10) of upper secondary education are compulsory (11 years in total). After completing lower secondary education (*gimnaziu*), learners continue their studies in upper secondary education: general or VET. To enrol, learners need to present their grades in the national exams, lower secondary diploma and a final mark transcript (*foaie matricola*) for all subjects. The national exams comprise the Romanian language and literature, mother tongue (if different from Romanian) and mathematics. If the number of places on offer is lower than the number of gymnasium graduate requests, VET schools may organise entry exams.

Higher education has no formal VET programmes. However, some bachelor and master programmes are more practice-oriented than others. To enrol in higher

⁽³⁴⁾ Or until grade 13 for full-time programmes with evening classes.

education, all upper secondary graduates need to have passed baccalaureate exams.

Ethnic minorities have the right to study in their mother tongue in all types, forms and levels of education (including tertiary). Special needs education is provided based on type and degree of needs identified, either in regular or specialised schools. School boards may decide to provide activities after classes (*School after school* programme). Private education and training is organised by non-profit education institutions, at all levels and forms, according to current legislation.

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

Initial and continuing VET are regulated by the government.

2.2.1. Initial VET

Initial VET is provided at upper secondary and post-secondary levels. Learners may enrol in upper secondary VET at age 15 (grade 9). Qualifications can be acquired in upper secondary VET through vocational, technological and professional (called 'school-based VET' in Figure 9) programmes. While vocational programmes are not officially part of VET according to the national legislation⁽³⁵⁾, for the purpose of this report, however, all types – vocational, technological and professional (including short programmes) – will be referred to as initial VET in line with their characteristics that fit the broad European definition of VET that '*aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market*' (Cedefop, 2014).

2.2.1.1. Programme types

At upper secondary level, there are four types of VET programme:

- (a) three-year professional programmes (ISCED-P 352, *învăţământ profesional*, called 'school-based VET' in Figure 9)⁽³⁶⁾ provide graduates with a professional qualification⁽³⁷⁾ of 'skilled worker' at EQF level 3 (such as cook, welder, baker, carpenter). It is provided by 'professional schools' that cooperate with employers who provide compulsory in-company training for

⁽³⁵⁾ Education Law No 1/2011.

⁽³⁶⁾ Available since 2014/15, approved by the Education Minister Order No 3136/2014.

⁽³⁷⁾ A qualifications certificate and, after passing a qualifications exam, a Europass supplement to the certificate.

learners as part of work-based learning (WBL). In-company training is combined with WBL at school workshops/laboratories. WBL periods are spread across the curriculum. The share of WBL increases with every grade⁽³⁸⁾ and is 50% on average per programme. Graduates undertake a qualification certification exam organised by a VET provider. The programmes open access to the labour market. Graduates also receive a certificate attesting completion of compulsory education that allows access to the third year of EQF level 4 technological programmes. Studies are free of charge for students enrolling up to the age of 26. To ensure alignment of State-funded VET provision with labour market needs, schools are required to have framework contracts with companies that will provide workplaces to students prior to the approval of the number of learners funded by the government⁽³⁹⁾. These contracts establish clear responsibilities for both schools and companies for WBL provision and resources to be provided by the company for training and certification exams. Since 2017/18, a dual form of 'professional' VET has also been available⁽⁴⁰⁾. In this, the municipality (local authority) engages in the partnership agreement alongside the standard contract concluded in regular school-based VET programmes between school, employer and learner (or legal representative). Companies are also obliged to pay dual VET learners a monthly allowance that is not less than that provided by the government (see also Section 4.1.1). Other features are equal to work-based learning in school-based programmes. The share of learners in dual VET is 1.5% of the total VET population enrolled at upper secondary level in the school year 2017/18;

- (b) four-year technological programmes (ISCED-P 354, *liceu tehnologic*) offer graduates an upper secondary school-leaving diploma and the EQF level 4 'technician' qualification⁽⁴¹⁾ in services, natural resources, environmental protection and technical study fields (such as technician in gastronomy, industrial design technician, computing technical supervisor, furniture designer). The programmes comprise lower and higher cycles, two years for each, and are provided by technological high schools and by colleges. The WBL share is 25%. The programmes open access to labour market. Graduates who pass the baccalaureate examination may enrol in higher education. After completing the lower cycle (compulsory education), learners

⁽³⁸⁾ 20% in the first year, 58% in the second and 72% in the third.

⁽³⁹⁾ According to the Order of the Ministry of Education No 3539/2012.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Based on the Government Emergency Ordinance No 81/2016.

⁽⁴¹⁾ A qualifications certificate and, after passing a qualifications examination, a Europass supplement to the certificate.

- may opt out and enrol in a short VET programme (ISCED-P 352) offering a professional qualification only;
- (c) short VET programmes (ISCED-P 352 *stagii de practica*) provide learners, who have completed two years of a technological programme (completed grade 10) with a professional qualification at EQF level 3 (such as cook) in 720 WBL hours. The programmes open access to the labour market. They are coordinated by VET schools and are provided mainly by employers. Young and adult early leavers from education and training can also access these programmes after completing a second chance programme;
 - (d) four-year vocational programmes (ISCED-P 354, EQF level 4, *liceu vocational*) provide graduates with a professional qualification in military, theology, sports, arts and pedagogy as well as with an upper secondary school-leaving diploma. Graduates who pass the baccalaureate examination may enrol in higher education. Most learners use this option. The programmes are provided by high schools and colleges, and the share of WBL is up to 15%.

To enrol in initial upper secondary VET, learners must have at least a lower secondary education certificate.

Post-secondary VET provides one- to three-year higher VET programmes (ISCED-P 453), leading to a professional qualification at EQF level 5; they are organised by technological schools or colleges/universities at the request of companies or learners. They provide secondary school graduates with an opportunity to advance in their qualifications, such as nursing and pharmacy, optician, analyst programmer, meteorologist. Access to these programmes is open to all secondary education graduates, regardless of whether they hold a baccalaureate diploma or not.

2.2.1.2. *Initial VET study forms*

Initial VET learners may choose between the following study forms:

- (a) daytime learning (most popular);
- (b) evening classes ⁽⁴²⁾;
- (c) work-based learning;
- (d) dual form.

⁽⁴²⁾ The three-year professional programmes are organised only as daytime learning.

Table 1. **Participation in initial VET**

	Number of learners in public schools	
	2017/18	2013/14
Three-year professional programmes (ISCED-P 352, <i>învăţământ profesional</i>) ⁽⁴³⁾	87 841	26 361
- of which, short VET programmes (ISCED-P 352)	671	2 056
Four-year technological programmes (ISCED-P 354, <i>liceu tehnologic</i>)	266 031	376 963
Four-year vocational programmes (ISCED-P 354, EQF level 4)	50 915	49 395
Upper secondary education (total including general, vocational, technological and professional programmes)	715 151	786 815
Post-secondary VET programmes (ISCED-P 453)	51 973	55 296

Source: INS, education statistics for school years 2013/14 and 2017/18: high school education at the beginning of school year; professional, post-high school and foremen school at the beginning of school year.

2.2.1.3. *Initial VET providers*

Initial VET providers are:

- (a) technological high schools/colleges (*licee tehnologice/colegii tehnice*), which provide four-year technological programmes leading to EQF level 4 or three-year professional programmes; all high schools fulfilling criteria set by the education ministry ⁽⁴⁴⁾ may apply for a 'college' title, which is recognition of the quality of their education and training programmes:
- (b) professional schools, which provide three-year professional programmes;
- (c) (vocational) military, theology, sports, arts and pedagogy high schools/colleges, which provide vocational programmes.
- (d) post-secondary high schools (or 'post-high schools'), which provide post-secondary VET programmes; these are often independent departments under technical colleges or universities.

⁽⁴³⁾ The figures for 2013/14 relate to the two-year professional programmes organised after the ninth grade of technological high school that have been replaced starting with the school year 2014/15 with the current three-year professional programmes organised after grade 8.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ For example, contribution to the development of education, outstanding results obtained by learners at national/international competitions, education and training provision for over 50 years.

2.2.2. Continuing VET

Continuing VET (also known as adult vocational training) ⁽⁴⁵⁾ is available for learners from age 16. Training programmes help develop competences acquired in the existing qualification, the acquisition of new competences in the same occupational area, the acquisition of fundamental/key competences or new technical competences, specific to a new occupation.

Compared with initial VET, training is often shorter; it is based on different standards ⁽⁴⁶⁾ and focused on a specific occupation ⁽⁴⁷⁾. While there are exceptions, continuing VET does not comprise general subjects. It is provided by authorised private and public training organisations ⁽⁴⁸⁾ considering the needs of employers and basic skills needs of adults in a form of:

- (a) apprenticeship at workplace;
- (b) traineeship for higher education graduates;
- (c) adult training courses.

In continuing VET, practical training is at least two thirds of the total duration of the programme. Qualification programmes are organised at EQF levels 1 to 4 and their duration varies:

- (a) for level 1: minimum 180 hours;
- (b) for level 2: minimum 360 hours;
- (c) for level 3: minimum 720 hours;
- (d) for level 4: minimum 1 080 hours.

For participants already having the necessary set of skills, the duration of the programme may be reduced by up to 50% following initial assessment.

Since 2017, the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice has coordinated the authorisation of continuing VET providers, organised by 42 county authorisation commissions that also keep the provider registers ⁽⁴⁹⁾. Qualification and

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Regulated by Government Ordinance No 129/2000 on adult vocational training and other acts.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Continuing VET qualifications are based on 'occupational standards'; initial VET qualifications are based on 'training standards' (Section 3).

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Initial VET qualifications are broader than those in continuing VET and may prepare simultaneously for more than one occupation. Vocational training programmes are organised for occupations included in the classification of occupations (*Clasificarea ocupațiilor din Romania*).

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Also by individuals (trainers for adults, *formatori de adulti*) acting as vocational training providers.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Government Emergency Ordinance No 96/2016, for the update of Government Ordinance No 129/2000 on continuing VET, Article 37.

graduation ⁽⁵⁰⁾ certificates are issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, through the authorisation commissions.

2.2.2.1. *Apprenticeship at workplace*

Continuing 'apprenticeship at workplace' programmes have been managed by the public employment service since 2005 ⁽⁵¹⁾. They are only available in continuing VET and are legally distinct from the dual form offered in initial VET. Apprenticeships offer adults (16+, minimum legal age for employment) a professional qualification at EQF levels 1 to 4. There is no upper age limit for enrolment. Programme minimum duration varies by qualification level:

- (a) six months for EQF level 1;
- (b) one year for EQF level 2;
- (c) two years for EQF level 3;
- (d) three years for EQF level 4.

All apprentices receive nationally recognised qualification certificates of equal value as in initial VET. They work and acquire a qualification simultaneously: this approach best suits the unemployed and early leavers from education and training.

Theory and practical training (WBL at least 70%) is provided mainly by companies, in cooperation with authorised professional training providers that also organise qualification exams. The apprenticeship scheme is based on a special type of labour contract supporting work and vocational training at the workplace. Employers may apply for the public employment service subsidy of approximately EUR 483 per month (RON 2 250) ⁽⁵²⁾ for each apprentice for up to three years (the duration of the apprenticeship programme) from the unemployment insurance budget or ESF.

Training periods alternate with working time allocated for the tasks specified in the job description; practical training is under the guidance and supervision of the training provider.

The number of apprenticeship contracts increased from 100 in 2012 to 431 in 2017. In the first eight months of 2018, it rose to 1 830. Despite this impressive increase, the numbers are still relatively low as employers often perceive training as

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Graduation certificates are issued at the end of around 40-hour specialisation programmes that do not provide learners with new qualification(s).

⁽⁵¹⁾ Currently apprenticeships are provided according to Law No 279/2005 (last amendments in November 2018).

⁽⁵²⁾ Approximate RON to EUR currency conversion based on Google Finance data (<https://www.google.com/intl/en/googlefinance/disclaimer/>) of October 2018; applies also for other converted currency values in this report.

an additional cost rather than an investment. The 2017-20 *Youth guarantee implementation plan* includes measures to promote apprenticeships, reforms and initiatives to create the appropriate framework for the employment of young people, and measures to support labour market integration. Since 2016, the plan has emphasised initiatives that combine employment with training, giving young people the opportunity to improve skills obtained during initial education and training as well as to acquire new skills through participation in apprenticeships and traineeships.

2.2.2.2. *Traineeship for higher education graduates*

Traineeship for higher education graduates is regulated by the law on traineeships (No 335/2013) and the Labour Code (No 53/2003). After graduation from a higher education institution, learners may take six-month traineeship programmes to practise their profession in a real work environment; this does not apply in some professions, such as doctors, lawyers, and notaries, for whom special legislation provides different opportunities. This process is subsidised by the government. Employers may apply for the public employment service subsidy of approximately EUR 483 per month (RON 2 250) for each trainee for the duration of the programme.

2.2.2.3. *Adult training courses*

Adult training courses are offered by authorised training providers or by employers to adults willing to obtain a qualification, specialisation or key competences:

- (a) authorised courses for the unemployed, employees, people who resume work after maternity leave or long sickness leave, Roma, groups at risk and other groups;
- (b) courses organised by employers for their staff without issuing nationally recognised certificates;
- (c) internship and specialisation, including periods of learning abroad;
- (d) all other forms of training.

The national Agency for Employment offers continuing VET programmes based on analysis of vacancy and jobseeker data and formulated in the annual national plan for vocational training.

Between January 2015 and August 2018, more than 100 000 people participated in the training organised by the agency, most of whom were unemployed. Around 60% completed their training and almost 15% found a job immediately after training. More females participated in the training than males. In 2015-16, most participants were under age 25; in 2017/18, the biggest learner group was above age 45.

The overall participation trend, however, is decreasing (43 000 learners in 2015 and 26 000 in 2017). The most popular training programmes have been in the field of trade, followed by administrative professionals, services and electronics ⁽⁵³⁾.

The programmes are organised by 23 centres for vocational training in county employment agencies and eight regional centres of adult vocational training operating under the National Agency for Employment. There are also authorised public and private providers.

2.2.2.4. *Recent changes in continuing VET*

In 2015-16, the Government decided to improve the coordination, efficiency and relevance of adult training, with the emphasis on:

- (a) monitoring participation: employers now report each quarter on the number of employees who received continuing training;
- (b) increasing active involvement of sectoral committees and national authorities in reviewing the methodology for development, validation, approval and management of occupational standards so that they meet the needs of the labour market;
- (c) transferring the responsibility for authorisation of training providers from the National Authority for Qualifications to the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice.

2.3. Financing VET

2.3.1. Initial VET

In 2009, total public expenditure on education and training reached 4.24% of GDP but fell significantly in 2010-11 due to the economic crisis. It was 3.6% in 2017, although the National Law on Education of 2011 targets 6%; this objective is not likely to be achieved before 2025.

The budget for education and training, including VET, is approved annually. The financing mechanism ⁽⁵⁴⁾ comprises per capita expenditure supplemented by

⁽⁵³⁾ Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Government Decision No 72/2013 on the approval of the methodological norms for determining the standard cost per learner and the establishment of the basic financing of the State pre-university education units, which is ensured from the State budget, from sums deducted from VAT through the local budgets, based on the standard cost per learner (last updated by Government Decision No 30/2018).

coefficients (such as for rural/urban areas, number of students and climate area ⁽⁵⁵⁾, EQF level, type of programme, total number of learners in the school, teaching language). In 2018, per capita financing was (approximate values, based on Euro exchange rate):

- (a) EUR 1 115 for three-year professional programmes (all qualifications) and EUR 1 143 for programmes offered in minority language(s);
- (b) EUR 1 057 for four-year technological programmes (all qualifications) and EUR 1 101 for programmes offered in minority language(s);
- (c) EUR 1 330 for four-year vocational programmes (except music and sports) and EUR 1 403 for programmes offered in minority language(s).

Financing is provided to schools by the education ministry from the State budget (main source: value added tax) based on actual enrolment. It covers:

- (a) wages, allowances;
- (b) staff continuous training;
- (c) learner assessment expenditure;
- (d) materials, services and maintenance.

The basic financing of a school unit is obtained by multiplying the standard cost per pupil with the specific coefficients mentioned above. This is approved annually by Government decision.

VET in public schools is free of charge. The State also provides financing for accredited private and religious education institutions to the same level as for public VET schools. In private education, institutions learners pay fees.

2.3.2. Continuing VET

Continuing VET is jointly financed by ⁽⁵⁶⁾:

- (a) employers/enterprises;
- (b) unemployment insurance budget;
- (c) EU structural and cohesion instruments;
- (d) personal contributions;
- (e) other sources.

Jobseekers benefit from free continuing training financed by the unemployment insurance budget. The budget also provides subsidies to employers who provide continuing VET (apprenticeship, traineeship and vocational training programmes) (see also Sections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2).

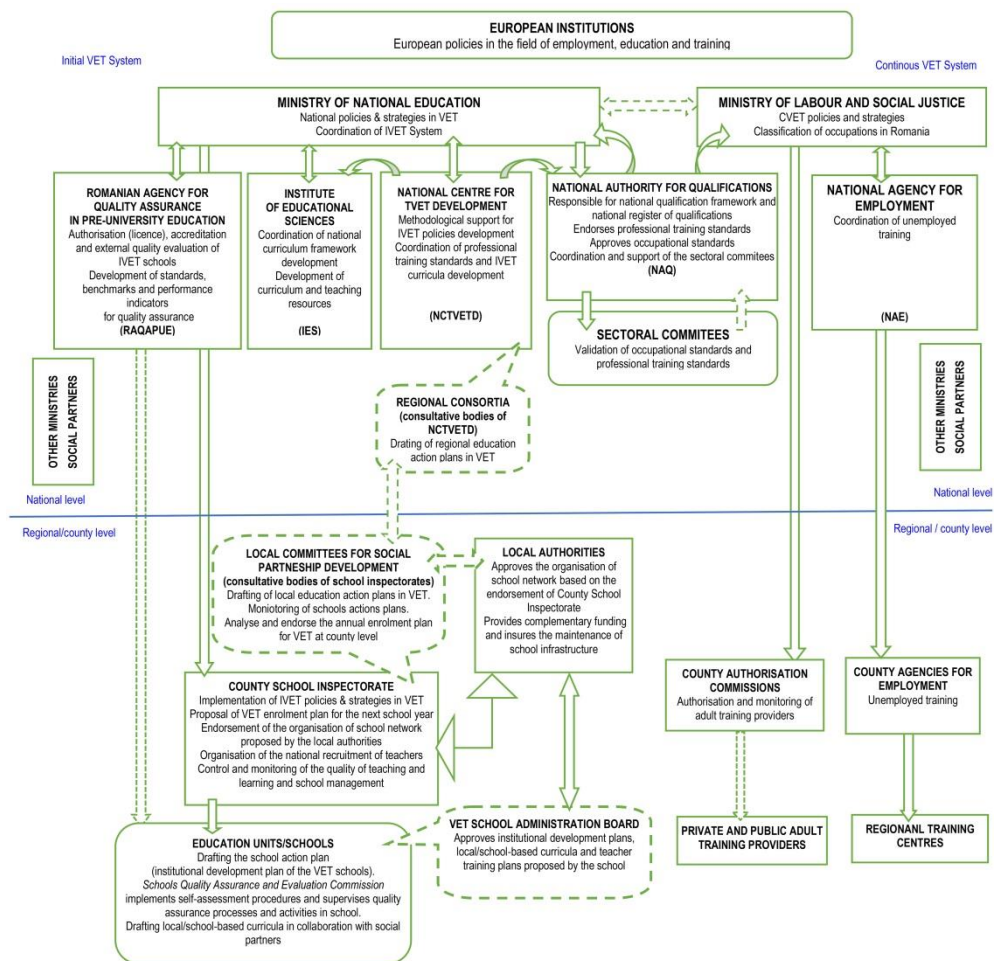
⁽⁵⁵⁾ This refers to geographic areas with difficult weather conditions especially during winter.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ According to Government Ordinance No 129/2000.

2.4. VET governance

National, regional and local levels all have a role in some form of VET governance (Figure 10).

Figure 10. VET governance at national, regional and local levels



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet Romania.

2.4.1. Governance in initial VET

2.4.1.1. Ministry of National Education

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the development and implementation of national education and training policies and strategies, including those on initial VET. The ministry designs and executes legislation in cooperation

with stakeholders (academia, trade unions, teachers associations, students, parents, public administration, businesses and NGOs). It also approves financing and enrolment plans, monitors, evaluates and controls, directly or through competent bodies, the education system and the functioning of education providers, and coordinates the work of inspectorates.

The education ministry also awards VET certificates (both in initial and continuing ⁽⁵⁷⁾ VET) and coordinates national exams. It approves methodology for teacher enrolment, career advancement and transfers, and approves curricula through subordinated bodies, including school inspectorates.

2.4.1.2. *National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development*

The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development is accountable to the education ministry. The centre's main responsibilities in initial VET are to:

- (a) evaluate and suggest changes to policies and strategies, and coordinate their implementation;
- (b) coordinate the design, implementation and review of national curricula, assessment and certification for the initial VET component;
- (c) supervise the development of professional training standards for qualifications validated by sectoral committees (coordinated by the National Authority for Qualifications) and approved by the education ministry;
- (d) ensure the development and functioning of stakeholder partnerships at national, regional and local levels;
- (e) develop methodologies for the quality assurance and monitoring of programmes;
- (f) implement continuing professional training programmes for teachers/trainers.

2.4.1.3. *Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education*

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education is in charge of authorisation (licence), accreditation and external quality evaluation of schools at pre-university education level, including initial VET schools. The agency develops standards, benchmarks and performance indicators for quality assurance, institutional assessment methodology and accreditation of new schools. It is also in charge of implementing the assessment and evaluation tools.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ For continuing VET, certificates are awarded by both labour and education ministries.

2.4.1.4. *Institute of Educational Sciences*

The Institute of Educational Sciences is a national institution for research, development, innovation and training in education and youth. It actively contributes to innovation in education by expertise, training, education and research. Its mission is to provide scientific support necessary to the latest approaches in education, for authentic, motivating, active and creative learning. The institute aims at playing a key role in curriculum and teaching resources development, and providing relevant, tailored and flexible in-service training for the education system's stakeholders. It participates in coordinating the national curriculum development by:

- (a) establishing and coordinating working groups for the development and periodic review of the national curriculum component;
- (b) developing various learning and curriculum resources.

Other departments of the institute relevant to VET are education policies, counselling and guidance, education management, and youth studies

2.4.1.5. *Regional consortia* ⁽⁵⁸⁾

Regional consortia are advisory partnership bodies of the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, without juridical status, having as main roles to:

- (a) update, implement and monitor regional education action plans;
- (b) monitor execution of the local education action plan and assist school inspectorates and the local committee for the development of social partnerships in developing and implementing it;
- (c) contribute to the development and monitoring of execution of the regional employment action plans.

The consortia include representatives from the:

- (a) regional development agency;
- (b) county councils;
- (c) county employment agencies;
- (d) school inspectorates;
- (e) employers' associations, chambers of commerce;
- (f) trade unions;
- (g) universities;
- (h) the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ According to Order of the Ministry of Education No 4456/2015 for the approval of general framework of organisation and functioning of consultative partnership structures in VET.

2.4.1.6. *County school inspectorates*

School inspectorates, in cooperation with advisory partnership bodies at local (county) and regional levels (local committees for the development of social partnerships and regional consortia) propose to the education ministry (in January-February) the VET enrolment plan for the next school year; this is based on proposals from schools and taking into consideration labour market needs, defined through direct requests from employers. The inspectorates also organise the national recruitment (selection) of teachers, including VET. Teachers obtaining the minimum required score are entitled to an indefinite work contract with a specific school; others receive fixed-term offers. Inspectorates also collect information about teacher demand from schools, based on the anticipated number of classes.

The county school inspectorates monitor quality assurance using self-assessment reports and taking into consideration specific methodologies for quality assurance in initial VET.

The inspectorates also provide the data to the education ministry on teachers.

2.4.1.7. *Local committees for development of social partnerships*

The local committees for the development of social partnerships are advisory managerial structures that aim at improving VET relevance and quality. The committees include representatives of local authorities, the county employment agency, employer associations, trade unions, school inspectorates and NGOs. Their main objectives are to:

- (a) update and execute local education action plans;
- (a) monitor school action plans;
- (b) assist schools in developing and executing school action plans;
- (c) analyse and endorse the annual enrolment plan for VET at county level;
- (d) endorse the local part of the VET curricula.

2.4.1.8. *Teaching staff resource houses*

The Teaching Staff Resource House (*Casa Corpului Didactic/CCD*) is a pre-university education-related unit, operating in each county and in the municipality of Bucharest. It is an institution subordinated to the Ministry of National Education that organises continuing teacher training in so-called pre-university education, including teachers in initial VET.

2.4.1.9. *County centres for resources and education assistance*

There is a County Centre of Resources and Education Assistance in each county and in Bucharest. The centres are subordinated to the Ministry of National Education. They are coordinated by the county school inspectorates/School

Inspectorate of Bucharest. The centre supports learners with special needs, including those in VET.

2.4.1.10. *Local authorities*

The main initial VET responsibilities of the local authorities are to:

- (a) support the implementation of national strategies on education;
- (b) ensure the joint financing of projects sponsored by the EU and other funds used by and for the schools;
- (c) develop school network at local level;
- (d) maintain school infrastructure;
- (e) participate in school administration boards;
- (f) inform the local community about the education offer, including VET.

2.4.1.11. *VET school administration boards*

VET school administration boards comprise seven, nine or 13 members according to the size of the school ⁽⁵⁹⁾. They include teachers, the director (chair), representative/(s) of the mayor, local authorities and employers. The boards approve institutional development plans, local/school-based curricula and teacher training plans proposed by their schools.

Employers in the school administrative boards help identify training needs, plan the VET offer, design local curricula and certify vocational competences of learners.

2.4.1.12. *Commissions for quality assurance and evaluation*

In each VET school, a Quality Assurance and Evaluation Commission is appointed to supervise all quality assurance processes and activities, in line with the quality assurance law (87/2006). The commissions:

- (a) coordinate institutional self-assessment procedures and activities;
- (b) carry out an annual self-assessment of the quality of education in that school;
- (c) formulate quality improvement proposals for annual self-assessment that is mandatory for all education providers; quality assurance law requires that all self-assessment reports must be made available to beneficiaries/stakeholders.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ National Education Law No 1/2011 with its latest updates, Chapter VI, Section 2, Article 96, (2) e: https://legestart.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/legea-educatiei_actualizata.pdf

The reports are submitted for approval to the school boards and recommendations for improving the quality need to be integrated in the revised school action plans.

2.4.2. Governance in continuing VET

2.4.2.1. Ministry of Labour and Social Justice

Ministry of Labour and Social Justice develops and promotes policies in continuing VET (adult vocational training), including training for the unemployed, apprenticeship at the workplace, actions for NEETs (not in employment, education and training) and traineeship for graduates of higher education.

Since 2017, the ministry has coordinated the authorisation of continuing VET providers. It also manages and updates the Classification of occupations in Romania (a nomenclature of general interest) and the Nomenclature of qualifications: this includes all professional qualifications of EQF/NQF levels 2-4 and will be used until approval of the National register of professional qualifications).

Vocational training for the unemployed is monitored, analysed, controlled and evaluated by the ministry. It follows the vocational training policies of the public employment service and the National plan of vocational training, drawn up annually and approved by the Minister. The plan also includes the apprenticeship at workplace programmes. The execution of the plan by the public employment service is analysed and monitored monthly by the ministry. Each year a managerial performance contract is concluded between the head of the public employment service and the Minister for Labour and Social Justice, which sets performance indicators.

2.4.2.2. National and county agencies for employment

The National Agency for Employment coordinates vocational training of jobseekers at national level; this is carried out by the county employment agencies through their vocational training centres, regional centres for adult vocational training and other authorised public and private vocational training providers.

Implementation of strategies and policies related to VET by the national agency is coordinated by the Ministry for Labour and Social Justice.

2.4.2.3. National Authority for Qualifications

The National Authority for Qualifications is responsible for the:

- (a) national qualifications framework;
- (b) national registers of:

- (i) qualifications in higher education;
- (ii) professional qualifications;
- (iii) centres for the evaluation and certification of professional competences obtained outside formal education;
- (iv) evaluators of competences, external evaluators and evaluators of evaluators.

The authority ensures the link between the standards used for defining qualifications and labour market needs, provides methodological assistance for development of occupational standards, and registers the standards in the national register of professional qualifications in education.

The authority also approves the occupational standards for continuing VET, and endorses the professional training standards used in initial VET programmes, designed under the coordination of the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development. The professional training standards are sent to the Ministry of National Education for final approval ⁽⁶⁰⁾ through ministerial order and placed in the national register of professional qualifications in education.

The National Authority for Qualifications is also responsible for authorising the centres for the evaluation and certification of professional competences obtained outside formal education and for quality assurance of the qualifications system.

2.4.2.4. *County authorisation commissions*

County authorisation commissions are set up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice. Each commission consists of five members, including representatives of the county administration, trade unions and employers' organisations. They are in charge of authorisation and monitoring of training providers and deciding on the examination commissions at country level.

2.4.2.5. *Continuing VET providers*

Adult vocational training providers are authorised, in line with Government Ordinance No 129/2000, to carry out vocational training based on occupational/vocational training standards after authorisation by the county commission.

The authorisation is valid for four years, during which suppliers are monitored to see if they meet the initial assessment criteria from the authorisation. Authorised

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Ordinance No 3023/2018 regarding the control of professional training standards and inclusion within the national register for professional qualifications in education.

training providers are enrolled in the national register of authorised suppliers, which is public, available on the website of each county authorisation commission.

All authorised training providers have obligations regarding their training programmes: these follow the conditions provided by the legislation in force, quality assurance, data reporting, and the use of human resources with appropriate qualifications.

2.5. Teachers and trainers

2.5.1. Teachers and trainers in initial VET

There are two teaching positions in initial VET:

- (a) teacher;
- (b) practical training instructor (*maistru instructor*).

Requirements for VET teachers are the same as for teachers in general education.

At upper secondary and post-secondary VET, teachers require both:

- (a) a master degree in a field related to VET qualification(s) they teach;
- (b) two psycho-pedagogical modules, totalling 60 ECTS⁽⁶¹⁾, that can be obtained either during higher education studies (by enrolling for one module of 30 ECTS during the bachelor programme and for the second module of 30 ECTS during the master programme), or after graduation, by enrolling for both modules within a Department for Teacher Training.

Practical training instructors (*maistru instructor*) must have a post-secondary education diploma in a field related to VET qualification(s) they teach and psycho-pedagogical training of 30 ECTS provided by a higher education institution⁽⁶²⁾.

To become a certified teacher, new employees have two class inspections and produce a professional portfolio; this is an eliminatory stage, followed by the so-called teacher-confirmation exam (*Definitivat*) (in the subject they will teach and its methodology) 12 months after their initial employment. To be declared successful teachers need a final mark of minimum eight out of 10. During this period, they are supported by an experienced mentor and enjoy the same rights as other teachers with a labour contract. If they fail to pass the exam after 12 months, they may have

⁽⁶¹⁾ Ministry of National Education (2017), Order No 3850/2017 regarding the mandatory certification of teaching competences.

⁽⁶²⁾ Usually by the Department for the Teaching Staff Training within an accredited higher education institution.

another two attempts within a five-year period. The share of qualified VET teachers and instructors (vocational theoretical subjects or practical training) is 98.75% of the total teaching staff in initial VET ⁽⁶³⁾.

Continuing professional development of teachers and instructors is a right defined by the Law of National Education ⁽⁶⁴⁾ that supports career advancement and professional development. Advancement in teaching career is ensured by acquiring the relevant degrees:

- (a) the second teaching degree is awarded after at least four years of service (after passing the *Definitivat* exam), undergoing at least two school inspections and passing an exam in methodology and main subject ⁽⁶⁵⁾;
- (b) the first teaching degree is awarded after at least four years after awarding the second degree, undergoing at least two school inspections and defending orally a written thesis ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

Professional development is compulsory by participation in accredited training courses (teachers have to gather minimum 90 ECTS every five years). The training is provided by public and private education institutions and by NGOs, and can be partially or fully covered by the State budget.

2.5.2. Teachers and trainers in continuing VET

Continuing vocational training programmes are provided by trainers with a profile or specialisation relevant to the training programme. They should have:

- (a) the national qualifications framework level of education equal to or higher than the level of the training programme they undertake;
- (b) a qualification in the training programme's field of activity;
- (c) any form of certificate for the following occupations: instructor/trainer/trainer of trainer or the certificates for the teaching profession (60 ECTS, as in Section 2.5.1).

More information is available in the Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspective on teachers and trainers ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

⁽⁶³⁾ Based on data from the National Institute of Statistics for the school year 2017/18.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Education Law No 1/2011, Title IV, Chapter 1, Section 2: *Initial and continuous teacher training; the teaching career*.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ The Ministry of National Education provides rules for promotion and methodologies for the exams.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Regulation No 1/2011, Article 242.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Cerkez, E.B. (2016). *Supporting teachers and trainers for successful reforms and quality of vocational education and training: mapping their professional development in the EU – Romania*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/ReferNet_RO_TT.pdf

2.6. Other forms of training

According to Government Ordinance No 129/2000 (and latest updates) on adult vocational training, employers that are not authorised training providers may organise training for their employees and issue certificates of graduation that are not nationally recognised. Such certificates, however, must include the name of employer and employee, duration of the programme, related occupation and competences acquired.

Other forms of training (online courses or distance courses) are not covered by the legislation on adult vocational training, but can be organised by any organisation/agency/company.

Training programmes for the regulated professions are organised according to the conditions determined by the regulatory authorities in the field and by special laws regulating these professions.

2.7. Recent policy changes

- (a) In 2012, initial three-year professional programmes (ISCED-P 352, *învăţământ profesional*) were reintroduced, after a three-year break.
- (b) In November 2016, the dual form of initial VET at EQF levels 3, 4 and 5 were introduced, endorsed in April 2018 by amendments to the education law. Implementation of dual VET started in 2017/18, currently only at EQF level 3.
- (c) In 2016, new training standards for initial VET qualifications at EQF levels 3 and 4 were approved by the education ministry. The standards are compatible with occupational standards for continuing VET.
- (d) In 2017, the methodology for the certification exam for qualifications at EQF level 3 was revised and a skills demonstration component (practical examination) was introduced, aiming to increase the certificate's relevance to the labour market.
- (e) In 2016, the VET Strategy 2016-20⁽⁶⁸⁾ was developed under the coordination of the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development and approved by the Government. It sets up a vision for the following years: *'by 2020, the Romanian vocational education and training system will meet the demands of the labour market and the needs of the direct beneficiaries, by making use of human resources' competences and skills'* (Ministry of National Education, 2016, p.19). The strategy defines the priorities

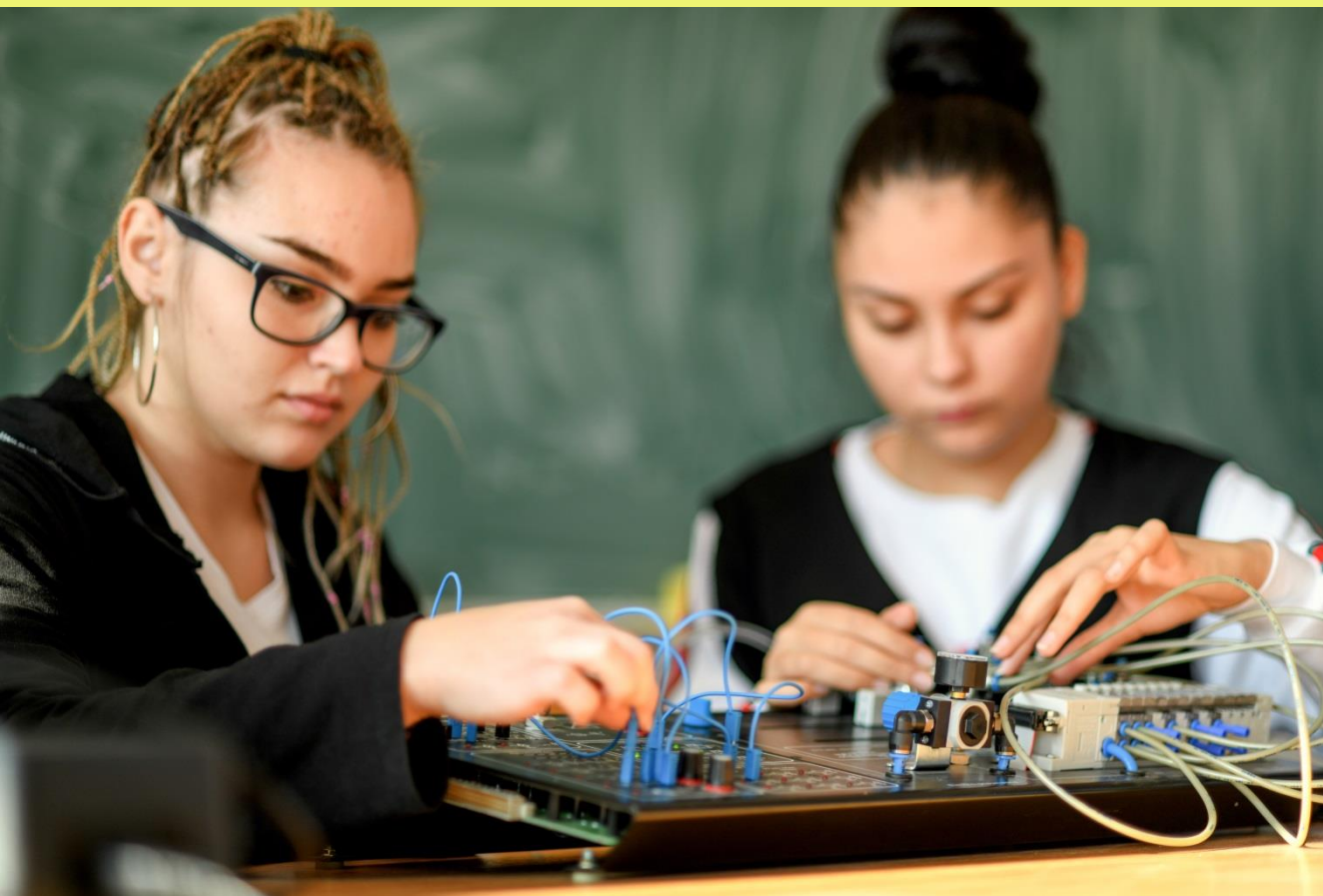
⁽⁶⁸⁾ Education and training strategy 2016-20, approved by Government Decision No 317/2016.

for new developments and initiatives in vocational education and training and includes four strategic objectives:

- (i) improve relevance of VET systems for the labour market;
 - (ii) increase participation and facilitate access to VET programmes;
 - (iii) improve VET quality;
 - (iv) develop innovation and cooperation in VET.
- (f) In May 2018, the Government updated the methodology for the development, validation and approval of occupational standards.
 - (g) In July 2018, the qualifications authority and the labour ministry introduced qualification level 1 in the national qualifications framework.
 - (h) In November 2018, the labour ministry developed a list of elementary occupations for which level 1 qualification programmes can be organised for unskilled adults.

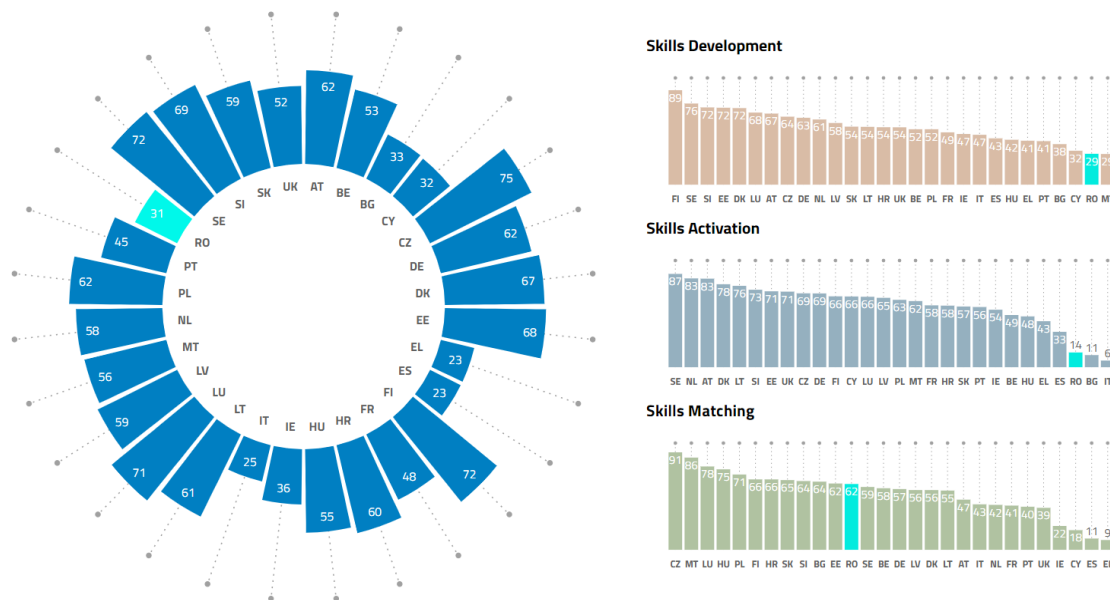
CHAPTER 3.

Shaping VET qualifications



Measuring the performance of the national skills system and comparing it to other systems can be useful to see how the country is doing in terms of skills development, activation and matching. Cedefop's European skills index measures countries' 'distance to the ideal' performance (Figure 11).

Figure 11. European skills index across Member States



NB: 2016 data.

Source: European skills index: <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/indicators/european-skills-index> [data accessed 2.10.2018].

As shown in Figure 11, Romania performs relatively well in skills matching: this represents the degree of successful utilisation of skills and the extent to which skills are effectively matched in the labour market. It does not do so well in skills activation that indicates the transition from education to work, and in skills development, representing the training and education activities of the country and the immediate outputs of that system in terms of the skills developed and attained. The overall index also shows there is a considerable room for improvement, while the overall performance may point towards a low skills equilibrium in the country.

3.1. Anticipating skills needs

To supply the labour market with VET qualifications that are relevant, the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development,

supported by stakeholders and experts, has developed a strategic planning model for VET supply, approved by the education ministry. Its main objective is to increase the contribution of VET in an efficient transition to inclusive, participatory, competitive and knowledge-based economy that relies on innovation.

The term 'strategic planning' refers to a medium-term (five to seven years) forecast. The model analyses the relevance of supply to the (forecast) labour market demand from quantitative and qualitative perspectives and using the following sources:

- (a) regional education action plans;
- (b) local (county) education action plans;
- (c) school action plans.

Regional education action plans set out by the regional consortia (Section 2.4.1.5) and local education action plans from the local committees for development of social partnerships (Section 2.4.1.7) include:

- (a) analysis of the regional/county context from the point of view of demographic, labour market and economic changes and forecasts;
- (b) analysis of the capacity of VET to serve the identified needs of the labour market in the regional/county contexts;
- (c) priorities, targets and actions for VET development at regional/county level;
- (d) the contribution of higher education to regional development.

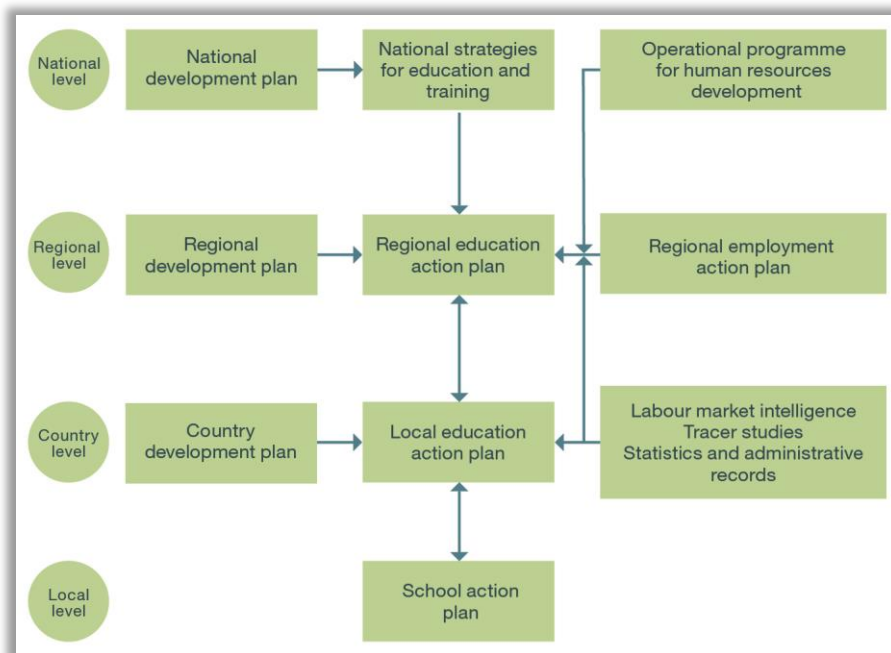
Desk research is carried out by regional consortia and local committees for development of social partnerships members who analyse:

- (a) national development plan;
- (b) national strategy for human resources development;
- (c) regional development plans;
- (d) VET strategies and action plans;
- (e) national strategy for employment;
- (f) labour market and training demand and supply forecasts;
- (g) company surveys on short-term (6 months) labour demand.

The model is based on a decentralised decision-making at regional, county and local levels. Strategic planning is characterised by the collective action of multiple social partners, representing the interests of employers, professional associations, employees/trade unions, public administration, relevant government and civil society organisations.

The model combines top-down and bottom-up decision-making processes as demonstrated in Figure 12, involving regional consortia at regional level, local committees for development of social partnerships at county level, and school boards at local area level.

Figure 12. **Anticipating skills: planning levels**



Source: National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development.

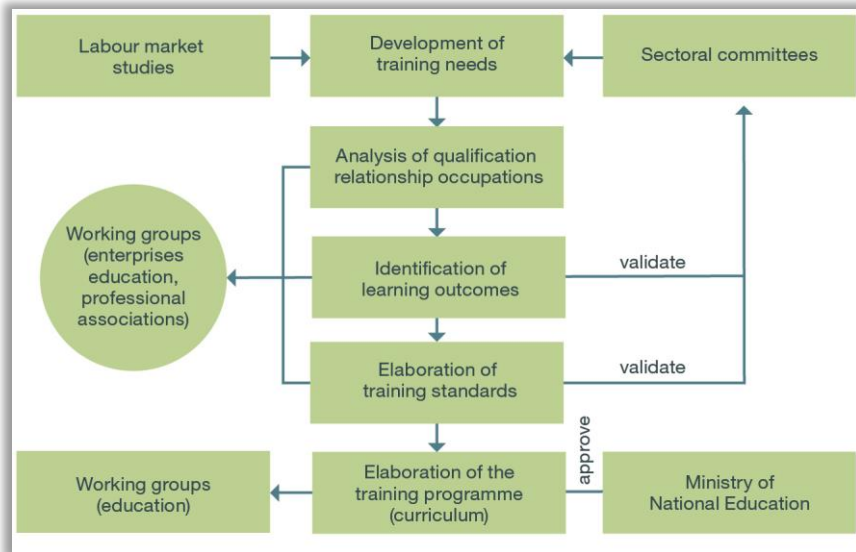
3.2. Developing VET qualifications

3.2.1. Initial VET qualifications

Initial VET qualifications (excluding vocational programmes) are based on training standards. The national qualifications register currently comprises 131 qualifications at EQF level 3, 69 at EQF level 4 and 203 at EQF level 5.

Training standards (*standard de pregatire profesionala*) describe learning units consisting of learning outcomes and are based on occupational standards. Training standards are developed by representatives of companies from the respective sectors and of VET providers, with the methodological support of the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, endorsed by National Authority for Qualifications. They are validated by employers and other social partners through sectoral committees. The revision of standards is carried out at least every five years or at the request of economic operators.

Figure 13. From training needs to curricula



Source: National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development.

3.2.2. Training standards

Training standards play a key role in designing VET curricula, assessing learning outcomes and awarding qualification certificates.

To design the training standards and to establish units of learning outcomes in its structure, one or more occupational standards concerned with the qualification need to be analysed as a starting point.

Each training standard comprises:

- (a) introduction: description of qualification, occupation(s) the standard leads to;
- (b) list of competences as in occupational standard(s) or considering recommendations of the sectoral committees, company representatives or other interested parties;
- (c) learning outcomes units (a learning unit consists of a coherent set of learning outcomes) for the qualification:
 - (a) general (e.g. maths, language, sciences) and occupational learning outcomes;
 - (b) minimum equipment requirements for each learning outcome unit;
 - (c) assessment standard for each learning outcome unit.

3.2.3. Core and local curricula

Curricula for each qualification have two main components:

- (a) core curriculum designed at national level by education working groups;

- (b) local (school) curriculum designed by schools and local businesses to aid adaptation of the students' professional training to the requirements of the local and regional labour market.

The share of national and local curricula varies by qualification level. At EQF level 3, 20% of learning time is reserved for the local curriculum and 80% for national; at EQF level 4, the share is 30% for the local curriculum and 70% for national. At EQF level 5, all curricula are national.

3.2.4. Continuing VET qualifications

Continuing VET qualifications are based on occupational standards, validated by the sectoral committees and approved by the National Authority for Qualifications.

An occupational standard is a national instrument describing professional activities and requested abilities, skills and competences necessary to practise a specific occupation, defined in terms of autonomy and responsibility, and capacity to apply specific knowledge and understanding at the workplace. Occupational standards stipulate two types of requirement:

- (a) requirements linked to labour market needs in terms of skills:
 - (i) occupation;
 - (ii) identification number from the classification of occupations;
 - (iii) qualification level;
 - (iv) specific activities to be carried out at the workplace;
 - (v) skills and competences required to practise the occupation;
- (b) requirements for provision of professional training:
 - (i) established learning content;
 - (ii) duration of training and specific requirements for the assessment;
 - (iii) access/entry requirements;
 - (iv) necessary resources to organise the training.

3.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Since 2000, legislation on the national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning has been gradually developed and put in place⁽⁶⁹⁾. The National Authority for Qualifications, through the newly established National Centre for

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Government Ordinance No129/2000, Article 45; Law of National Education No 1/2011, Article 340-34; Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour joint Order No 468/2004 on validation procedures; Ministry of Education Order No 3629/2018 on national register of evaluators.

Accreditation ⁽⁷⁰⁾ coordinates and monitors the validation process. The centre is a specialised structure within the authority responsible for:

- (a) authorisation of the assessment centres and staff involved in validating non-formal and informal learning of adults;
- (b) coordination of assessment centre activities;
- (c) quality assurance;
- (d) managing the national register of the authorised centres and national register of evaluators (including evaluators of competences, evaluators of evaluators of competences, and external evaluators).

The centres are local private or public bodies authorised to conduct validation procedures, for one or more occupations, developed at national level. The validation procedures consist of well-defined national standards, criteria and guidelines. The centres develop their own assessment instruments, based on national occupational standards and/or training standards, to evaluate the candidates. They are responsible for providing validation services following specific requests by beneficiaries/candidates who can acquire full or partial qualifications at EQF levels 1, 2 and 3. Certificates of competences are nationally and internationally recognised. Also, as part of the validation process the centres offer information and counselling to the candidates.

Currently, there are 37 fully functioning local assessment centres that can validate prior learning of candidates mainly in services, construction and agriculture.

The development of a fully functional quality assurance system for validation of non-formal and informal learning (Section 3.4.3) is in progress. The National Authority for Qualifications uses a top-down approach in monitoring and coordinating the activities of the assessment centres, which have to report their activities regularly and to apply periodically for authorisation for the specific qualification/occupation they need to assess.

Quality assurance is being actioned through:

- (a) monitoring activity of the centres (visits, data collection about certified candidates, periodic meetings with centres);
- (b) national register of evaluators;
- (c) national assessment instruments for each occupation (under development).

The National Authority for Qualifications has also been involved in raising awareness of validation and its benefits through its website and published brochures, as well as through international projects such as the European agenda national coordinators for adult learning.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Government Emergency Ordinance No 49 of 26.6.2014.

3.4. Quality assurance

In 2006, the national group for quality assurance in VET (GNAC), an informal structure that functions as the VET quality assurance (QA) national reference point was set up as an advisory inter-institution coordinating body, without legal personality. It operates nationally in quality assurance in vocational training.

The main responsibilities of GNAC include:

- (a) aiding inter-institutional coordination of an integrated approach to vocational training;
- (b) drafting proposals and recommendations on quality assurance in vocational training;
- (c) informing stakeholders about EQAVET network ⁽⁷¹⁾ activities;
- (d) providing national support to the work programme of the EQAVET network;
- (e) supporting the implementation of EQAVET ⁽⁷²⁾ in the national context;
- (f) increasing stakeholders awareness of the benefits of using the principles, criteria and indicators proposed by the EQAVET;
- (g) strengthening cooperation (including through peer learning, peer review and benchmarking) between training at European and national levels.

The group includes experts from national institutions including the education and labour ministries, pre-university education QA agency, the qualifications authority and the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development.

3.4.1. Quality assurance in initial VET

At national level, the law on quality assurance of education (Law No 87/2006) sets a series of basic principles applicable for all levels of pre-university education, including initial VET: focusing on learning outcomes, promoting quality improvement, protecting education beneficiaries (first of all learners), centring on the internal evaluation process (self-assessment) of providers.

Quality assurance in initial VET comprises:

- (a) VET school self-assessment;
- (b) programme and provider authorisation and accreditation;

⁽⁷¹⁾ EQAVET is the European Network for Quality Assurance in VET established in October 2005 by the Commission following the favourable opinion of the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training. Its members have been designated by Member States, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries and the European Social Partners' organisations, in accordance with an explicit procedure.

⁽⁷²⁾ EQAVET is the European quality assurance reference framework adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009.

- (c) programme and provider external evaluation;
- (d) programme external monitoring;
- (e) monitoring of the quality of vocational certification exams.

Self-assessment is a cyclic process, with the results outlined in an annual self-assessment report. Judgment of performance is based on solid evidence collected by VET providers throughout the year. In order for the evidence to be considered solid, it must be valid, quantifiable, sufficient, actual, and reliable. The purpose of self-assessment is to lead to improvement of the entire activity of the VET provider, and mainly of learning outcomes. The self-assessment process is an action of collective responsibility at VET provider level and is coordinated by the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation.

The Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education is responsible for authorisation, accreditation and external evaluation of pre-university education, including initial VET. For all these processes, the agency cooperates with independent experts included in a national register. Any person wishing to be in the register has to be selected (through a transparent procedure) and to graduate from a specific agency training programme.

Authorisation and accreditation are compulsory for each initial VET programme:

- (a) authorisation (licence) grants the right to carry out the education process and to organise admission to new education and training programmes. It gives the right to operate for up to three years ⁽⁷³⁾ after first graduation from the programme ⁽⁷⁴⁾;
- (b) accreditation follows authorisation and grants the right to issue diplomas/certificates recognised by the education ministry and to organise graduation/certification exams. Accreditation is compulsory after three years from the date of the first graduation from the programme.

Accreditation assures that providers and programmes meet standards approved by the government and defines requirements for:

- (a) institutional capacity: administrative/management structures, logistics, and human resources;
- (b) education effectiveness: learning facilities, equipment, human resources, the quality of the locally developed curricula, the quality of the teaching-learning-evaluation processes, financial activity;

⁽⁷³⁾ Before June 2018, two years (Government Emergency Ordinance No 48/2018).

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Until the programme is accredited, examinations and issuing diploma/certificates take place in another (accredited) school.

- (c) quality management (strategies and procedures for quality assurance, procedures concerning the design, monitoring and review of the school action plan).

Accreditation is granted by education ministry order, based on the recommendation of the quality assurance agency.

Every five years following accreditation, initial VET providers have to be externally evaluated by the quality assurance agency. External evaluation of VET providers and programmes is a multi-criteria assessment of the extent to which a VET provider and its programmes meet the quality standards. These standards describe the requirements that define an optimal level, compared to the accreditation standards that describe the minimum level for the existence and functioning of a VET programme/provider.

School inspectorates offer guidance and support to VET providers about the quality assurance process of initial VET. It is called external monitoring and comprises:

- (a) validating VET providers self-assessment reports;
- (b) verifying that quality requirements are met;
- (c) proposing and approving improvement measures to address the identified quality assurance issues.

Monitoring the quality of vocational certification exams also ensures objectivity in the examination process. Examination and certification of professional competences takes place in examination centres, with a commission formed by teachers who have not been involved in teaching/training of the student and representatives of the companies in the student's field of training, at the decision of the general school inspector. A member of the commission is responsible for monitoring the exam in terms of quality by analysing:

- (a) the correlation between the complexity of activities (number of schools allocated to the centre, number of candidates per centre, number of qualifications per centre, number of commission members) and mobilised resources (material resources, human resources by activities, time allocated to the activities of the commission, participation of partners in the exam);
- (b) compliance with procedures and content of the exam (particularly for projects);
- (c) quality of graduate evaluation (argumentation of grading, judgement of the degree of achievement).

Self-assessment of VET providers and programmes is based on a set of quality descriptors (input, process and output), grouped in seven areas, several of which have a direct effect on the content of training and the qualifications acquired:

- (a) quality management;
- (b) resource management (physical and human);

- (c) design, development and revision of training programmes;
- (d) teaching, training and learning;
- (e) assessment and certification of learning;
- (f) evaluation and improvement of quality.

3.4.2. Quality assurance in continuing VET

The principles for quality assurance in adult vocational training are as follows:

- (a) quality assurance is an integral part of the internal management of training institutions;
- (b) quality assurance includes regular assessment of institutions, their programmes or quality assurance systems through external control bodies;
- (c) the external quality control bodies are subject to regular controls;
- (d) quality assurance includes information on situations, contributions, processes and outcomes, while focusing on effects and learning outcomes;
- (e) quality assurance initiatives are coordinated at national and county levels to ensure the supervision, coherence, synergy and analysis of the whole system;
- (f) quality assurance is a collaborative process involving all levels and systems of education and training and all stakeholders at national level.

The quality assurance system includes:

- (a) clear and measurable objectives and standards;
- (b) guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement;
- (c) adequate resources;
- (d) coherent assessment methods, associating self-evaluation with external review;
- (e) reporting mechanisms and improvement procedures;
- (f) results of widely available evaluation.

Quality assurance comprises:

- (a) programme and training provider authorisation;
- (b) programme and training provider external evaluation;
- (c) training provider self-assessment;
- (d) programme external monitoring.

Authorisation of vocational training providers is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice. It is made through county authorisation commissions and gives VET providers the right to issue qualification or graduation certificates with national recognition. To become authorised, training providers must meet certain eligibility conditions. Authorisation is based on the following criteria:

- (a) professional training programme;
- (b) the resources needed to carry out the training programme;
- (c) experience of the training provider and results of previous work.

For authorisation, the training provider completes a self-assessment form that contains the name of the training programme, the occupation/qualification code, the level of qualification, the access conditions, the objectives expressed in the competences, the duration, the training plan, the evaluation modalities, the curriculum, the necessary material, and financial and human resources.

The external evaluation for authorisation is conducted by two independent specialists appointed by the county authorisation commissions. The specialists are selected from the list drawn up each year of those whose training and experience are directly related to the occupation for which authorisation is requested.

Authorisation of a training programme is based on occupational standards and professional training standards, recognised at national level and with a validity of four years.

Periodic monitoring of authorised training providers is carried out by two external specialists appointed by the county authorisation commission in the list of specialists drawn up annually. Legislation requires at least three monitoring visits during the four years' authorisation.

The methodology for certification of adult vocational training includes the procedures for organising and conducting, by authorised vocational training providers, the adult vocational training programmes graduation examination; it also covers the procedures for issuing, managing and archiving certificates of qualification and graduation with national recognition. The examination committee includes two independent experts selected by the county authorisation commissions from the lists of specialists approved annually.

In 2018, the labour ministry proposed a new regulation for quality assurance in continuing education and training that was supported by the education ministry and other national stakeholders. This will help identify roles shared between stakeholders.

3.4.3. Quality assurance of assessment centres for validation of non-formal and informal learning

Development of a fully functional quality assurance system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is in progress. According to the legislation ⁽⁷⁵⁾ the principles for quality assurance for assessment centres are as follows:

- (a) quality assurance is part of the internal management of assessment centres;
- (b) quality assurance includes regular monitoring and assessment of centres;

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Joint Order of the Minister for Education and Research and of the Minister for Labour, Social Solidarity and Family No 4543/468/2004, for the approval of the procedure for the evaluation and certification of vocational competences obtained in ways other than the formal ones.

- (c) quality assurance includes information on situations, contributions, processes and outcomes.

Authorisation of assessment centres is the process that entitles them to issue certificates for professional competences, nationally recognised. It includes the following steps:

- (a) procedure for preliminary external assessment of the centre;
 - (i) registration of the request for authorisation;
 - (ii) verification of requirements for eligibility;
 - (iii) validation of the assessment tools to be used by the centre;
 - (iv) preliminary evaluation of the authorisation file;
- (b) external verification (visit at the assessment centre):
 - (i) analysis of the authorisation file;
 - (ii) visit to the centre;
 - (iii) verification that conditions/requirements for obtaining the authorisation have been fulfilled;
- (c) issuing the authorisation.

All assessment centres must have an internal management system for quality assurance and internal monitoring, covering following aspects:

- (a) management of activities;
- (b) management of resources;
- (c) management of services for assessment and certification of competences;
- (d) monitoring and evaluation of the results.

The National Authority for Qualifications regularly monitors assessment centres in line with a set of well-defined national standards and performance indicators: these include site visits, data collection about certified candidates, periodic meetings with centres.

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting VET participation



4.1. Incentives for learners

Incentives are available to support young learner participation in VET. They are mainly offered by the education ministry in cooperation with other national authorities.

4.1.1. Professional scholarship for three-year professional programmes

Professional scholarship is a national social protection programme ⁽⁷⁶⁾ that offers approximately EUR 43 (RON 200) per month for all three-year professional programme learners. This scholarship can be combined within grants provided by training companies. The grants usually cover transportation and meals.

4.1.2. Dual VET allowance

In addition to a professional scholarship, dual VET learners receive at least approximately EUR 43 (RON 200) per month in allowances from the company where they undergo training. Companies also pay for work equipment for learners, their insurance and medical examinations, if obliged to do so by the occupation requirements.

4.1.3. High school scholarship

High school scholarship is a national social protection programme that offers approximately EUR 54 (RON 250 since 2018/19) ⁽⁷⁷⁾ monthly financial support for upper secondary education learners in grades 9 to 12, including those in VET (technological and vocational programmes). The scholarship is linked to family income and is not available for all learners.

4.1.4. Euro 200 scholarship

The *Euro 200* scholarship is a national programme that supports VET and other learners who otherwise cannot afford to buy a personal computer and develop their digital skills. The programme has been in place since 2004 under Law No

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Government Decision No 951/2017.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ See the press release published on the Ministry of National Education portal: *114 million euros of European funds for education through 'High school money' and 'professional bursa'*: <https://www.edu.ro/114-milioane-euro-fonduri-europene-pentru-educa%C8%9Bie-prin-%E2%80%9Ebani-de-liceu%E2%80%9D-%C8%99i-%E2%80%9Ebursa-profesional%C4%83%E2%80%9D?fbclid=IwAR2yMchXsNmQUn2wS4iTeOlzKKIjUrwbpqVYgyc4Z58OKLeTyVJuKMwA3U>

269/2004, granting financial aid based on social criteria. In 2018, the government spent more than EUR 2.6 million on this measure.

4.1.5. Local public transport

All formal education learners, including VET, receive 50% discount for local public transportation (bus, subway and train) up to age 26. Local authorities may also partly reimburse the cost of a monthly pass for learners with special education needs, orphans or those from a children's home/orphanage.

4.2. Incentives for enterprises

4.2.1. Apprenticeship and traineeship cost reimbursement

Employers who sign an apprenticeship ⁽⁷⁸⁾ or traineeship ⁽⁷⁹⁾ contract may apply for subsidies to the public employment service (ANOFM). They can receive approximately EUR 483 (RON 2 250) per month for each apprentice/trainee for the entire duration of the programme (six months to three years in the case of apprenticeship programmes and six months in the case of traineeship). The subsidies are financed from the unemployment insurance budget or ESF.

Employers who employ graduates from initial education are eligible for a public employment service monthly grant of approximately EUR 483 (RON 2 250) for each graduate for a period of 12 or 18 months ⁽⁸⁰⁾, provided the employment is not terminated for 18 months from its start.

4.2.2. Tax exemption

According to the provisions of Government Ordinance No 129/2000 on Adult Vocational Training, authorised VET providers are exempt from paying value added tax ⁽⁸¹⁾ for the training operations.

Companies may also deduct the training costs from their taxable income ⁽⁸²⁾.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Law No 279/2005 on apprenticeship.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Law No 335/2013 on the completion of the traineeship for graduates of higher education.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ 18 months for disabled people.

⁽⁸¹⁾ Article 58 of Government Ordinance No 129/2000.

⁽⁸²⁾ Article 47 of Government Ordinance No 129/2000.

4.3. Guidance and counselling

Two main strands of guidance and counselling are available. They are embedded in the:

- (a) education system (university and pre-university levels);
- (b) labour market services (e.g. public employment service).

Guidance and counselling include:

- (a) information necessary to plan, obtain and keep a job;
- (b) education on careers;
- (c) counselling that helps understand individual goals, aspirations and the skills needed to find a job.

4.3.1. In the education system

The national education law stipulates that:

- (a) in primary education, counselling is provided by the teacher in cooperation with parents and the school psychologist;
- (b) in lower and upper secondary education, guidance and counselling is provided mainly by the pedagogical assistance offices in schools with more than 800 pupils.

In higher education, guidance and counselling is provided by career guidance and counselling centres in universities to aid the transition of graduates from education to work.

Most guidance and counselling staff in the education system are psychologists, teachers, sociologists and social workers. They are trained by the psychology, educational sciences, sociology and social work faculties. Many also follow postgraduate training modules in counselling and guidance, psychotherapy, management and school administration.

The Institute of Educational Sciences supports counsellors through research, working tools and information/training sessions. It is also a member of the Euroguidance network. In 2017, it published several supporting documents ⁽⁸³⁾.

Within the initial VET system, the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development contributes career guidance and counselling activities

⁽⁸³⁾ For example:

- contributions to two publications of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network:
 - (a) *Euroguidance network's highlights 2017: activities and achievements across Europe*, (b) *Lifelong guidance policy development glossary*;
- three reports on national curricula for guidance and counselling: (a) *for grades 0-2*, (b) *for grades 5-8* and (c) *for grades 9-11*.

aiming to increase the awareness of young students and their parents. The *Job orientation – training in businesses and schools* ⁽⁸⁴⁾ project offers training to learners enrolled in the last years of lower secondary education and the first years of technological and professional VET programmes to help make well-informed decisions when choosing the VET or general pathway. The target groups also include teachers and companies involved in VET who need to meet the challenges of continuously changing labour markets.

The novelty in the approach to teaching is in using student-centred methods such as task-based learning, which places students in the centre of their own learning process by setting them clear tasks such as to identify, explore, ask questions, find answers, give solutions and seize and understand the interrelationships between life and work roles, work opportunities and career building processes.

Initially the project was piloted in two schools of one county (*judet*). In 2017, it expanded to 180 schools from 19 counties, involving more than 800 teachers and 9 000 pupils. The duration of the project has been extended until 2019.

4.3.2. In the labour market services

County (*judet*) agencies for employment are responsible for guidance/counselling for the unemployed, older workers, young graduates, former convicts and ethnic minorities. They provide information about training and job opportunities to their target groups.

Employment agencies also draw up an individual job-matching plan for every jobseeker. Professional information and counselling is carried out in specialised centres, organised within the employment agencies, as well as by other centres and accredited public or private service suppliers, who conclude contracts with the employment agencies. With the consent of the employer, employees may benefit from guidance services for up to three months from accepting a new job.

4.4. Challenges and development opportunities

Improving the relevance and quality of initial and continuing VET programmes are main challenges.

Introducing dual form of training in three-year professional programmes in 2017/18 aimed to adapt training better to the needs of employers. Expanding it to EQF levels 4 and 5 is an opportunity being discussed at national level together with

⁽⁸⁴⁾ www.jobsproject.ro

strengthening post-secondary VET that will offer qualifications linked to growing economic sectors.

VET can also contribute to reducing early leaving from education and training. The government envisages setting up a mechanism for early warning and intervention that will help detect young learners at risk of leaving school. The mechanism will be developed within the project *Early warning system to reduce early school leaving*, financed by the structural reform support programme⁽⁸⁵⁾.

With a view to meeting VET strategic objectives, actions and measures have been envisaged in the *VET strategy 2016-20*⁽⁸⁶⁾, aiming to:

- (a) strengthen the role of key competences through improving digital and entrepreneurial skills and creativity and innovation in all initial VET programmes;
- (b) develop a mechanism to identify, reward and promote excellence in initial VET with the aim of promoting initial VET as a first choice;
- (c) develop a mechanism for initial VET graduate monitoring,
- (d) strengthen social partners' capacity to impact decision-making, training provision and skills anticipation;
- (e) develop a mechanism for quality assuring work-based learning and certification of learning outcomes;
- (f) provide counselling services for all initial VET learners, with a focus on career opportunities and on the horizontal and vertical flexibility of initial VET pathways.

Most of these measures will be included in a comprehensive project, funded by structural funds, expected to start in 2019 under the coordination of the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development.

Increasing participation in lifelong learning is another major priority. VET can contribute by offering multiple learning opportunities: short-term upskilling programmes, reintegration of adults into education through second chance programmes, expanding apprenticeships at workplace, dual form of VET and internship programmes.

Adult participation in continuing VET requires attention: there is a need to adapt existing, and create new, support forms to engage adults in training, particularly for those undergoing transition in the labour market and at risk of unemployment, the unemployed, disadvantaged groups and people over 50. A

⁽⁸⁵⁾ The current (second) phase of the project – *Development of an action plan and a methodology for collecting data to prevent leaving school in Romania* – will be completed by end-2019.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ Ministry of National Education (2016). *Education and training strategy 2016-20*.

network of information, counselling and vocational guidance centres make efforts to cover rural areas; the National Agency for Employment makes available the service for the jobseekers to be registered and seeks to provide personalised support based on accurate individual profiles.

The *Lifelong learning strategy 2015-20* ⁽⁸⁷⁾ comprises national actions seeking to support participation in training, improve recognition of prior learning, including non-formal, informal, volunteer and overseas, increase the quality and relevance of training through a new act on quality assurance control in adult vocational training, and coordinate actions between stakeholders.

The quality of VET programmes remains a priority. The Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, supported by the Ministry of National Education, the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, the National Authority for Qualifications and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education have drafted a proposal for a new quality assurance mechanism in continuing VET. This proposal is yet to be discussed and implemented in 2019.

There is also a focus on facilitating access to upskilling for low-qualified/low-educated adults. A first step has already been taken by renaming unqualified worker occupations as elementary occupations, thereby indicating that a minimum qualification is required for the practice of these occupations and allowing for the training of unskilled workers. These changes support the development and approval of occupational standards for occupations at NQF level 1, with involvement of the sectoral committees and of the National Authority for Qualifications. Once the respective occupational standard is approved, training providers can be authorised to deliver training courses for that specific occupation. Validation centres can also be authorised to validate competences for the respective occupation.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ Ministry of National Education (2015b). *Lifelong learning strategy 2015-20*, approved by Government Decision No 418/2015.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European social fund
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GNAC	national group for quality assurance in VET
INS	<i>institutul național de statistică</i> [National Institute of Statistics]
ISCED	international standard classification of education
ISCO	international standard classification of occupations
NEETs	persons not in education, employment or training
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NQF	national qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training
WBL	work-based learning

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Legislation

[URLs accessed 24.1.2019]

This section provides a list of the legal documents referred to in the text, including links to access more information, mostly in Romanian. It has two parts, in chronological order: legislation related to initial VET, and legislation related to continuing VET.

Romanian legislation related to initial VET

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Statistics

The statistical data in this report were extracted from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics and from Eurostat – the statistical office of the European Union – between August and October 2018. The precise subjects and extraction dates are provided, case by case, in the text.

National Institute of Statistics (INS) - TEMPO online, the statistical database:

<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main>

Vocational education and training in **Romania**

Short description

This short description contributes to better understanding of vocational education and training (VET) in Romania by providing an insight into its main features and highlighting system developments and current challenges.

Romanian VET offers diverse paths for learners. It comprises professional and technological programmes, regularly updated to combat low participation in lifelong learning and early leaving from education and training.

As many EU countries, Romania has an ageing population. This has an impact on VET, with an 8.5% decrease in the number of VET upper secondary schools since 2012/13. Efforts are being made to increase student participation, enable access to VET, and improve its quality and its relevance to the labour market. Recent system developments include the introduction of a dual VET form: it complements the work-based learning tradition in school-based programmes and aims at making VET a more attractive option for learners, while adapting training better to employer needs.

4171 EN – TI-04-19-220-EN-N – doi:10.2801/256780



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Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-896-2854-9



9 789289 628549