



Gearing Adult Education Towards Occupational Mobility (GATOM)

National Assessment Report Romania

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1 Introduction

The typical professional career of the European workforce has traditionally been characterised by working in the initially learned occupation until the end of the professional life. During the last decades, however, the European labour markets have experienced dynamic developments, caused by economic, political, technological, social and demographic changes. These developments imply that a growing number of persons do not find an employment in their initial occupation and need to take on occupations that can be classified as a second career. Furthermore, today's rising skill shortages require companies to rely more on re-qualified workers. Hence, **occupational mobility** can increasingly be observed on labour markets and is also fostered to some extent by national governments and Public Employment Services. At European level, the European Commission designated the year 2006 as the European Year of Workers' Mobility, and Guideline No. 20 of the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Employment (2005 - 2008) calls upon Member States to remove obstacles to mobility for workers.

As there does not exist, however, a standardised and/or commonly applied understanding of "**occupational mobility/change**", a working definition has been elaborated for the analyses of the study on hand. An occupational change is thereby characterised by the change into a new field of professional activity. This includes a substantial alteration of the work contents related to the job before and after the occupational change. In the context of an occupational change significantly different core competences are necessary to fulfil the new job-related tasks and it is not only an enlargement of activities/responsibility in terms of career development. The occupational change may be conducted with or without geographic mobility as well as within the same company or in conjunction with a new employer.

For successfully mastering an occupational change it will, among other issues, in most of the cases be necessary to **acquire new or at least update/strengthen existing knowledge**. Data for Germany, for example, show that about one fifth to one third of the workforce experiences an occupational change (*Seibert, 2007* or *Isaoglu, 2006*), and half of them cannot use their existing competences for their new job (*Hofbauer/König, 1973*). In Italy, the share of people (with apprenticeship training) changing occupation is estimated to be as high as 35 % - 41 %, and for Austria this percentage lies between 15 % and 68 % (depending on the time horizon considered) (*Klicpera et al., no date*).

So, the question arises whether the existing VET/adult education systems provide effective (re-)qualification opportunities geared towards persons intending to change to a job not strictly corresponding to the occupation they have initially been trained for. National research studies have shown that there exist a wide range of (re-)qualification instruments for qualifying the workforce for a second career. However, these are rather targeted at unemployed and hardly ever suitable for persons preparing their occupational change while being employed (e.g. inflexible time schedules, no public support for training costs, no advice from the Public Employment Service concerning the most appropriate measures etc.). In terms of both, the intention to reduce unemployment/foster employment and increase the participation in lifelong learning – both pinpointed by the Lisbon strategy – actively supporting planned and strategic occupational changes to a higher extent would be advisable. This form of occupational change is on average more successful than those conducted out of unemployment (*Mandl et al., 2006*).

So far, little is known, however, about the specific needs and requirements of persons strategically planning and preparing an occupational change while being in upright employment. Furthermore, no assessment has yet been made regarding the coherence of available (re-)training measures with the demand of the mobile workforce and their potential employers. Against this background, the project “Gearing Adult Education Towards Occupational Mobility – GATOM” which has been conducted with the support of the European Commission¹ follows the **objectives** to

- identify the demand of employees and employers with regard to (re-)qualification measures in the context of an occupational change planned/prepared during an upright employment
- investigate on the availability of VET/adult education measures being suitable for the (re-)qualification requirements of the mobile workforce
- analyse in how far the available VET/adult education system corresponds to the needs of people changing occupation
- eventually propose suggestions to gear the available education/training instruments towards occupational mobility

The project covers **eight European countries**. Research is conducted at national level under the co-ordination of the Austrian Institute for SME Research by the following partners:

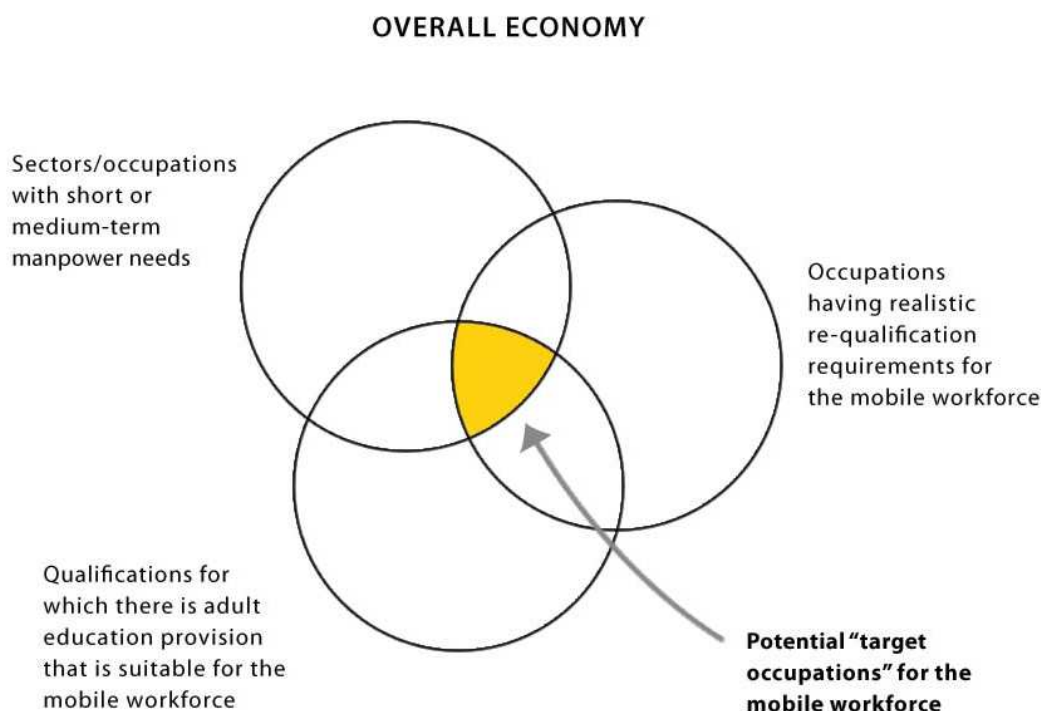
- Austria: Austrian Institute for SME Research
- Finland: Turku School of Economics (TSE)
- Germany: Berufsbildungswerk Gemeinnützige Bildungseinrichtung des DGB GmbH (bfw) – Competence Center EUROPA
- Ireland: Tom Martin & Associates (TMA)
- Poland: EEDRI Institute
- Romania: CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF ROMANIA (CCIR)
- Spain: Ikei Research and Consultancy
- Switzerland: Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung (SVEB)

The report on hand constitutes the **National Assessment Report for Romania** providing a comparison between demand (i.e. employees’ and employers’ requirements) and supply of VET/adult education dealing with (re-)qualification for occupational change. Thereby, a focus has been set on **three professions** (plumbers, cooks, assistant nurses²) as target occupations for mobile workers. These jobs are deemed to be characterised by good job opportunities in the future as well as realistic qualification levels (see Graph 1).

¹ Lifelong Learning Programme by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

² ISCO Codes (International Standard Classification of Occupations) of the selected professions: plumbers – 7136, cooks – 5122, for assistant nurses: institution-based personal care workers – 5132 or nursing associate professionals – 3231

Graph 1 Selection Criteria for the “Target Occupations” of the Mobile Workforce



Source: Austrian Institute for SME Research, Tom Martin & Associates/TMA

In Chapter 2, an overview of existing **VET/adult education measures** suitable for (re-) qualification in the framework of occupational change is given. The identification of respective education/training instruments in the investigated sectors was conducted on the basis of the following criteria:

- Location: decentralised offer or e-learning
- Duration: not more than approximately 1 year
- Time schedule: evening/weekend classes, few blocked seminars
- Costs: reasonable with respect to the average income in the target job
- Teaching method and contents covered: focus on practical orientation and no particular specialisation within an occupation (broad, basic qualification)
- Eligibility criteria: no or little previous subject-oriented knowledge/skills required and accessible for adults
- Status of the implementing organisation: private or public
- Preferably certification after the attendance of the training measure

The necessary information was gathered in the form of **desk research** in spring 2008, supplemented by **qualitative interviews** with representatives of the training providers.

To analyse whether the VET/adult education system is generally suitable for people changing occupation during an upright employment the requirements of the enterprises and the workforce have been investigated through **qualitative interviews with mobile workers and concerned enterprises**. On the basis of a semi-standardised questionnaire 15 enterprise interviews in Romania were focussing on small and medium-sized enterprises in the construction sector, tourism and health/ elderly care and analysed their point of view on the qualification needs of the employees and the most suitable ways to acquire them. Similarly, 15 interviews with persons that have already experienced an occupational change (or were planning to do so in the near future) in Romania focussed on their experiences with (re-)qualification courses in terms of fostering and hindering factors, beneficial methods and support as well as potential improvement possibilities. The results of these 30 interviews for Romania (i.e. 15 with entrepreneurs, 15 with the workforce) are summarised in Chapter 3 of the report on hand.³

Chapter 4 derives **conclusions** regarding the suitability of the existing VET/adult education measures for strategically conducted occupational change. Corresponding **recommendations** for relevant stakeholders (i.e. governments, Public Employment Services, training providers etc.) have been pinpointed to better gear adult education towards occupational mobility.

Next to the National Assessment Reports also a **European Assessment Report** has been elaborated, providing cross-national comparisons of the issues under consideration.

The main findings of both, the National and European Assessment Reports are summarised in **Policy Manuals** in the national languages of the countries covered by the project.

Furthermore, at national level **individual training inventories** for the three occupations under consideration have been elaborated in national language aiming to make the training markets more transparent for persons planning an occupational change.

All reports and outcomes of the project on hand may also be downloaded for free on www.mobility-training.eu.

³ Thereby, it is to be considered that the research on hand was conducted in summer 2008, i.e. before the economic and financial crises affecting demand and supply on the labour market.

2 Overview on available training and education measures suitable for supporting occupational change

In general, in Romania, vocational training is of 2 types:

- **Initial vocational training** of adults ensures the necessary training to acquire the minimum required professional competencies for obtaining a job;
- **Continuous vocational training** is subsequent to the initial training and provides adults either with the development of already acquired professional competencies, or with new competencies;

For qualification and re-qualification, a vocational qualification certificate is issued, while the initiation, development and specialization programmes end with a graduation certificate.

The minimum duration of the qualification programme for which nationally recognized graduation certificates are issued is:

- 360 hours for qualification level 1;
- 720 hours for qualification level 2;
- 1080 hours for qualification level 3.

At least two thirds of the training programme duration is devoted to practical activities.

In Romania, the general education possibilities for the three jobs (plumber, cooks, and nurse assistant) are focused in two ways:

- I. **Continuous studies through Arts and Trades Schools**, which are organized for two-year periods (9th and 10th grades), for 17 fields such as: mechanics, electromechanics, electronics, automations, industrial chemistry, construction materials, electrical, constructions, public installations and works, agriculture, forestry, trade, tourism and food, food industry, wood products manufacturing, textile industry and skin dressing, polygraph techniques, human aesthetics and hygiene.

At the end of the 2nd year, following examination, the graduates of the Arts and Trades School obtain a certificate of vocational competencies – qualification level 1. After completing the two years of the Arts and Trade School, graduates can continue their education by attending the classes of the supplement year, at the end of which they can obtain, following examination, a level-2 certificate of vocational competencies. Graduates of the supplement year can continue their education in the high school higher cycle, on the technological track, at the end obtaining a level-3 certificate of vocational competencies, as well as the possibility to take the baccalaureate exam and continue their education with the university studies.

- II. By attending **qualification/re-qualification courses**, which last for a few months. Such qualification courses can be provided by various institutions authorized for this purpose at the Ministry of Education and Research and by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities.

In order to carry out qualification courses, training providers must obtain authorization from The National Council for Adult Vocational Training with attributions established by Law no. 132/1999, and Law no. 559 of December 7th, 2004 on the modification and completion of the Law no. 132/1999 on the establishment, the organisation and the functioning of the National Adult Training Board.

The adult vocational training is carried out distinctively per levels of training, professions, occupations, jobs and specializations. Training programmes are designed based upon occupational standards (which define the competencies required to practice an occupation), for the occupations included in the Classification of Occupations in Romania and the Framework of Qualifications. The adult vocational training programmes can be initiation, qualification, re-qualification, development, specialization.

According to the type of programme and the forms of training, the authorized provider can issue the following types of certificates:

- Certificate of qualification for qualification or re-qualification courses and for apprenticeship in the workplace;
- Graduation certificate for initiation, development or specialization courses and apprenticeships, as well as upon completing each module.

Authorized providers issue nationally recognized graduation and/or qualification certificates.

Unauthorized providers can organize vocational training programmes, upon whose completion they offer their own graduation documents, but which are not nationally recognized certificates.

The technical secretariat of the authorization commission shall apply an embossed seal, as a safety element, on the qualification certificates issued only by authorized providers.

The National Council for Adult Vocational Training has an advisory role in consolidating and promoting adult vocational training policies and strategies and fulfils the role of national authority for qualifications.

In Romania, according to the Register of Authorized Training Providers, which is managed by CNFPA, there are: 242 providers of cook training courses, 158 providers of plumber training courses, 4 providers of nurse training courses, source: www.cnfpa.ro

The training courses for the three professions (plumber, cook and nurse) just like all training courses generally address employees, unemployed persons or any other persons interested in attending a vocational qualification course who graduated the mandatory education.

This (re)qualification courses are organised in week-end and during the week after 5 in the afternoon.

Depending on the level of qualification the courses are held on a period of 3 – 6 months, during a minimum 360 hours for qualification level 1 up to 1080 hours for qualification level 3.

The training methods used are both theoretical – 1/3 and 2/3 represent practical techniques. This report theory/practice is recommended for authorized programs by National Agency for Employment. Some VET providers consider this structure of the (re) qualification programs to the specific work with adults. Adapting the courses to the requirements of the participants (rhythm, learning, capacity, professional interest etc.) is made during the course, modifying or extending the course and in a few cases based on initial assessments.

There are providers who believe that the courses must not adapt to the needs of participants, but the participants must adapt to the requirements of the course. Other providers believe that the course may adapt to the needs of the participant, but there weren't requests in this regard, the lack of requests being explained usually by the fact that the participants don't know how to express their needs.

The courses takes place throughout the entire year, subject to forming a go up of minimum 15 participants and maximum 28.

The training programs are designed based upon occupational standards (which define the competencies required to the practice an occupation - ex. cook, plumber, nurse)

So, the (re)qualification courses for cooks provides various information about: gastro-technics, work safety and fire prevention and extinction, work organisation, economic calculation and operational records in the kitchen, initiation in searching for a job, initiation in the organization and activity of freelance; a series of specific competences for the profession of cook are also implemented, such as:

Communication at the workplace, team work, supply of raw and auxiliary materials to the workplace, hygienic-sanitary conditions, organizing the general framework of opening and closing the unit's activity, environmental pollution prevention, preparation, cooking and making food.

The courses for nurses provides information about: activity planning, continuing development, multidisciplinary team work, interactive communication, respecting the patient's rights, monitoring the patient's health condition, feeding and hydrating the patient, hygienising the area where the patient is, providing hygiene care for patients, transportation of clothes, transportation of patients.

The participants for the plumber courses shall be able to: comply with the occupational hygiene and safety through job-specific norms NTSM – labour safety technical norms, PSI – fire extinction and suppression, ISCIR - State Inspection for the Control of Boilers, Pressure. Vessels and Hoisting Equipment, use the job-specific basic technical vocabulary correctly – communication and calculation, ensure quality execution of job-specific works by knowing and identifying the characteristics of materials used, develop the ability to resort to theoretical notions and principles in approaching a practical issue for the purpose of personal development in order to achieve performance and teamwork, draft installation plans and use conventional signs for installations, equip heating stations and heating units, execute thermal systems and central heating internal installations, operate central heating internal installations, be able to execute works independently, perform construction installations.

At the end of the courses, after taking an examination, participants shall receive a certificate of qualification nationally recognized by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities. The average cost of this type of courses amounts to 100 - 200 €, which can be paid by a single payment or monthly instalments. For the whole payment upon registration, participants receive a 5 % discount from the course price.

3 Requirements of training and education measures in the context of occupational change

According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2008, at national level, the number of persons employed, over the age of 15, who are looking for another job and are ready to start working, is 101 039 (out of a total of 9 118 597 persons employed), most of whom are men 71 412, as compared to 29 627 women.

People employed, who are looking for a job, per groups of age and gender, are presented in the table below, which shows that the interest of Romanians who already have a job in searching for another job decreases with the age.

	People of 15 years and over – total -	15-24 years	25-34 years	34-44 years	45 -54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
People employed	9118597	733942	2500982	2487931	2003388	952946	439408
People employed, who are searching for another job and are ready to start working	101039	26061	34555	26308	12591	*	-
People employed, of male gender	5053907	442527	1367546	1373319	1101137	563232	206146
People employed, who are searching for another job and are ready to start working, of male gender	71412	16845	24934	19004	9105	*	-
People employed, of female gender	4064690	291415	1133436	1114613	902252	389714	233262
People employed, who are searching for another job and are ready to start working, of female gender	29627	9216	9621	7304	*	-	-

Source: INS- National Institute of Statistics

Romania already faced a crisis of employment. In the construction sector, 150 000 employees are needed to meet the demand for skilled labour market, according to the National institute of Statistics, based on the high external migration.

In this situation the universities must prepare an advance strategy by which to refine their educational offer and focus life long learning education. Life long learning education will be a market itself as the labour market will become more specialized.

Construction workers that are very much looked for in the EU countries, have left a gap on the national labour market that can be filled in the increased prices.

The construction sector now faces many problems: the crisis of qualified personnel, the mobility of the work on the black market.

In these conditions one of the most important solutions that could be taken is vocational training/education through re (qualification).

Following the 30 interviews with the SMEs and with employees who intend to or changed their occupation in the three business sectors: construction, tourism, health the following issues can be emphasized as regards the requirements of education in the context of occupational change.

The number of employees of the interviewed companies did not exceed 249 employees and the interviews, at company level, were carried out with the persons in charge from the human resources departments.

The persons interviewed who intend to or changed their occupation were distributed as follows: in the health care sector (nurses), all the interviewed persons were of female gender, just like all the persons interviewed in the construction sector were of male gender; as regards the tourism sector, 2 persons of male gender and 3 persons of female gender were interviewed, therefore the percentage of persons interviewed per gender is approximately equal.

The absence of female population in the investigated group of the construction sector is an indicator of the small number of women employed in constructions, just like the absence of male population in the health care sector, following the activities implied by the jobs in the given field.

From the point of view of age, the persons investigated are distributed to the age group 20 - 53 years old. The largest category is that of young people (20-40 years old - 74%). It is interesting that the upper age limit is 53 years old, much lower than the age at which people can request retirement. This situation can also result from the fact that work in these industries is done under conditions restricting not only the access of women to constructions and the access of men to the health care sector, but also the access of older people.

From the point of view of education, 46% of the persons interviewed graduated a vocational school, while approximately 27% of them mention high school as the latest form of education graduated. One can note a rather high rate of people who graduated only primary school or gymnasium (7%), and they surprisingly come less from older people and more from the age category 20-40 years old.

This situation is consistent with the evolution that vocational training has recorded in Romania in recent times: while vocational school and obtaining a qualification, in general, were highly valued during the communist period, they have become less significant during the post-communist period, when people value less the importance of diplomas in obtaining a job.

As a main feature of the employers' requirements of education measures, we can emphasize the need to carry out internships during qualification courses. SMEs lay a great emphasis on employing personnel based on their practical skills, on the personal experience they gathered. Employers consider opportune to increase the number of hours of practical activities and, as the case may be, to extend the qualification courses with hours of internship in relevant companies. Generally, SMEs hesitate to employ

people who want to change their occupation and approximately 90 % of the interviewed companies said they preferred people with minimum one year experience for holding these positions.

Invoking the mobility of the workforce, employers prefer to hire already specialized workers or unskilled once. Employers do not invest in people. They prefer to use the labor force as it is given.

3.1 Construction sector/Plumbers

In the construction sector, the minimum necessary knowledge that most employers require for holding a position of plumber are: minimum 8 grades completed and qualification in the field or technical vocational schools in the field, minimum one year experience in the field (very few companies accept employees without any relevant experience, who are to be qualified at the workplace. There are companies that require relevant experience of up to 3 years.

A plumber must be acquainted with, install, put into operation, diagnose and repair all types of installations and machines used for cold and hot water supply, sewage, fire extinction, which are specific to civil and industrial constructions. A plumber must have some absolutely necessary skills in order to meet the requirements related to this occupation (care, dexterity, correctness, team spirit, ability to analyze and make decisions, adaptability to new situations, resistance to stress factors).

Besides the skills, a central heating and gas plumber must have theoretical and practical knowledge in the following fields: mechanics, heat engineering, welding technique, measurement of nonelectrical measures, mechanical treatments, construction materials, material resistance, etc.

Therefore, in general, a plumber must meet a series of:

- Fundamental competencies, such as communication in the workplace, team work;
- General competencies, such as applying labour safety and fire extinction rules, supplying materials to the workplace, drafting specific documents, improving professional activity, planning activity;
- Specific competencies: diagnose and repair of defects in thermal installations, execution and installation of heat carrier transport networks, fitting central heating internal installations, fitting heat sources for central heating, putting into operation and adjusting central heating installations.

The predominant methods recommended by SMEs for obtaining these competencies are the qualification courses and personal experience.

As regards qualification courses, SMEs consider that only 25 % of the course duration should be used for theoretical teaching methods and the remaining 75 % should represent practical teaching methods, the content of courses should be adapted to the occupational standard and the duration of courses should be between 6 months and 1 year in order to acquire as many practical skills as possible.

As regards the “ideal” training/education measures for re-qualification, SMEs consider that, for the assessment of such measures, in Romania there are institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities and the Employment Agencies, where people planning to change their occupation can go to request such information.

Regarding the employees point of view, the respondents were all men, which is an indicator of the fact that women’s access to work in construction, especially as a plumber is difficult.

Most people included in the sample population graduated a vocational school or high school.

The reason that most of the people interviewed invoked with regard to occupational change is the possibility of promotion at work, the possibility of obtaining a better salary or may be after they will work in this field for a year or two they will have the opportunity to work in another country.

The occupation previously held by the respondents was in the same activity sector as: workers, masons, painters.

Most of the interviewed people consider that the qualification courses that they followed were useful, the theoretical part of the course is well structured, the trainers were generally well prepared. Respondents consider that the theoretical part should take less, the qualification courses should be focus on the practice.

They also consider that this qualification courses take too much time.

Work colleagues are the most important source of information about qualification/re-qualification courses in the sample population.

They consider that the Employment Agencies should offer more detailed information about the qualification courses to be more accessible for those who are interested. The Employment Agencies and the Ministry of Labor are supposed to address in the same time to unemployed but also to the people who want to change occupation.

The main obstacle perceived by the persons interviewed as regards participation in a course are difficult access to the institutions organizing such courses, as well as the hours when these courses take place. There are a few training providers that organize (re) qualification courses in the evening and in week-end.

3.2 Tourism/Cooks

In the tourism sector, the requirements imposed by employers for holding a position of cook are the same as in the 2 other industries examined: the holders of this position must have graduated minimum 8 grades (mandatory elementary school) and attended a qualification course for obtaining a diploma certifying the knowledge and skills acquired and a mandatory requirement is that such courses are authorized by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities. Persons preferred for holding such a position must be: careful with the company’s assets, well-organized, patient, willing to learn, honest in the relation with colleagues and customers, creative (new menus, ornament techniques), have a team spirit, kind, scrupulous, careful to details (preparation, ornament, seasoning), efficient

in fulfilling work tasks, skilful, tolerant to criticism, with aesthetic sense. People with at least 1 year of relevant work experience are also preferred. Persons with no experience may also be employed and they are to qualify in the workplace, being generally employed for the position of assistant cook.

The reason that most of the people interviewed invoked with regard to occupational change is like in the construction sector: the possibility of promotion at work, the possibility of obtaining a better salary or may be after they will work in this field for a year or two they will have the opportunity to work in another country.

A significant percentage of those who completed only 10 grades or less exist in the sample population of this activity sector. We should also note that those who completed only primary school or gymnasium are situated in the age groups of 20-30 years old. This aspect can be a result of the value placed on vocational school before 1989, as well as a signal regarding the perceived quality and importance of such forms of education in recent years.

Although most people value life long learning, only a few of the persons included in the population sample consider that they acquired knowledge or skills important for their job during such training or qualification courses.

This is an alarm signal as regards the quality of these courses, which needs to be correlated to the excessive importance given to the qualification diploma to the detriment of the actual knowledge acquired during such programmes.

Half of the persons interviewed from this sector of activity obtained information about life long learning programmes from work colleagues, a network that needs to be further developed and promoted for disseminating such information. The information in this respect should aim at changing this attitude so that workers would come to consider training courses a permanent component of the personal career plan.

They (such as the respondents from construction sector) consider that the theoretical part of the qualification course should be a quarter from the hours allocated to the course and the rest should be focused on the practice in the national restaurants. Some of them told us that the providers should take in consideration some period of practice to restaurants abroad, of course for the most talented students.

3.3 Health and elderly care/Assistant nurses

In the health care sector, the requirement for holding a position of nurse in an institution is to have the mandatory elementary school (8 grades) graduated and to have attended a qualification course recognized by the relevant bodies. Another requirement, which is not mandatory, is to have a minimum 1-year work experience.

According to the interviewed companies, nurses must assist medical assistants and physicians, provide the basic care of patients (hygiene, prepare patients for examination and/or surgery), administer certain simple treatments, provide first aid to patients in case of losing vital functions, in intensive care units or at the place of the accident – ensure the application of disinfection and sterilization (namely the use of disinfectant substances), take care of beds and other equipment and materials in the health care units, take care of the hospital bedding (transport of the used bedding to safe places and its replacement), handle biological materials (blood, urine etc.), wash the

instruments in the health care units, maintain contact with the patients and encourage them, provide help in case of natural disasters or in case of emergency, ensure the transportation of sick and dead people.

They must have communication skills, team spirit.

The interviewed institutions consider that the best methods to obtain these skills and acquire the necessary knowledge for practicing this occupation are training courses followed by internship periods, that courses should be carried out for average periods between 6 months and 1 year and, as regards the methodology, it should contain 50 % theoretical information and 50% internship, preferably in health care units.

Health care institutions lay a great emphasis on the employee's practical experience. They also recommend training courses organized by the Order of Nurses and Midwives in Romania.

The point of view of the employees is the same with the employees from the other two sectors of activity.

Conclusions:

Employers prefer "already qualified" workforce, they usually tend to employ only people already "suitable for the job" and with "relevant experience", avoiding to employ people with no professional experience for the given position.

They also consider that people are "responsible" for their own professional training and development.

The certification of the training is very important for both employees and employers. However, if the training courses are organized by the employers (the companies) the current legal framework does not allow the release of nationally recognized certificate if the company was not officially certified as a training provider. There is a significant distance between the request (courses with a short, highly specialized and a modular structure) and the existence of the current offer on the market (long term courses, often costly, which offers a full qualification)

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Assessment on the suitability of the available VET/adult education measures for supporting occupational change

4.1.1. Current demand of Continuous Vocational Training/CVT

The economic restructuring process that Romania is going through at present generates profound effects not only in the production area, but also in the social life. One of these effects is the social-professional situation of a significant number of persons who need to reorient in order to acquire new competencies and abilities in a given field of activity. Studies conducted so far regarding the use of adult vocational training programmes and preferences expressed by the people directly interested indicate the large majority's tendency to appreciate the use of these forms of training as an additional chance for the person in question to build a career. This tendency is more significant among pre-qualified young people, who prove to be more mobile from the point of view of professional reconversion, but there is a need to articulate the system of lifelong vocational training with the educational and the initial vocational training system. There is only a small difference between the country's economic branches or regions as regards investments in human resources. One can note that, in the more developed economic regions, there is a tendency among the economic operators to allocate larger funds for training their personnel. In the less developed economic regions, vocational training is done especially in the form of "training on the job", the cheapest way of training at company level. Although the Labour Code stipulates the employers' obligation to draft annual vocational training plans by consulting the trade unions or, as the case may be, the employee representatives, this is not a current practice. There are few economic units willing to train or re-qualify their employees in view of or following restructuring processes in the company. At present, industries with a low value added have the largest contribution to the economic growth and, as long as this situation continues in Romania, the general framework for vocational training will not be very favourable. For a large number of employers, especially in industries with a low value added, where there is a large offer of labour force and low-waged workers, the investment in continuous vocational training is not considered a necessity. As long as poorly paid jobs prevail in the Romanian economy, concentrated in the industries with a low value added, where education and training bring few benefits, this situation and perception may continue. The development of industries with a high value added will favour the change in the employers' mentality and attitude as regards investment in education and vocational training. The individual low income and the rather high costs of vocational training programmes are the main obstacles to the access to training, while the training supply tends to focus on long-term programmes for complete qualifications. Both economic units and natural persons have a greater demand for short-term modular courses, orientated toward acquiring certain competencies. Employers prefer to employ already qualified personnel. Therefore, people who invested in their own training are in a better situation than young graduates, inexperienced workers and people who return to the labour market after an unemployment period. Vocational training is seen as a cost, which needs to be minimized, and not as an investment. Employers' investments in human resources development are small and expenses generated by vocational training are mainly covered by natural persons.

4.1.2. Current supply of CVT

Adult vocational training should provide people with the possibility to rapidly adjust to the continuously changing labour market requirements. In this context, diversifying and increasing the quality of the vocational training supply should be a permanent concern. Following the creation of the legal and institutional framework for continuous vocational training, the authorization process for the providers of adult vocational training started in January 2004. Until 01.05.2005, 856 providers of vocational training were authorized for 2307 vocational training programmes, of which 1887 of qualification, 177 of initiation, 177 of development and 75 programmes of specialization. The decrease in the authorization fee from three national average net wages to two minimum gross wages, in October 2004, resulted in the increase in the number of authorized training providers. In Romania, vocational training is based upon occupational standards and legislation stipulates the obligation to develop the vocational training programmes subject to authorization based upon the same. The insufficient number of occupational standards and the fact that the complex task of drafting them presently falls to the training providers or other institutions concerned represents an impediment to the authorization of training providers for as many occupations as possible, in certain fields limiting the vocational training supply. Generally, vocational training providers are small, unspecialized institutions, which rapidly adjust their training supply to the labour immediate requirements. In general, they offer programmes for level-2 qualification, computer initiation programmes or for acquiring foreign language skills. There is a small supply of programmes for qualifications that require important investments by the training providers. The supply of authorized training programmes reflects only partially the training needs at the level of jobs. The most efficient form of correlation between the training content and the labour market requirements is achieved when the training takes place upon the request of economic agents, and practice is done under real work conditions or when training providers closely cooperate with the economic agents in certain lines of business. Training on the job is the most frequent method of training, on the one hand, not expensive, and, on the other hand, unavoidable since it is required by the development of the activity itself. The vocational training supply tends to focus on programmes for full qualifications or on programmes for the development of general competencies. Also, the vocational training supply is still very fragmented since it is designed rather for persons than for companies, being guided by punctual labour market requirements. The system is mostly focused on the supply of certificates and less on the development of competencies required for employment. The long duration of CVT programmes makes them inadequate for persons employed. Another important factor operating like an obstacle in the current CVT system is the fact that the current legislation does not allow the certification of partial qualifications, although the demand for training in the labour market is often focused on narrow qualifications.

The insufficient participation in CVT is determined by a series of obstacles:

- The lack of flexibility existing in the current CVT system. An important constraint is the recognition of qualifications: either full qualification or nothing. At present, there is also no recognition system for partial qualifications, so that the provision of training might be more flexible and, therefore, more accessible for adults. The constraint is related to the long duration of the training for obtaining full qualification, an aspect incompatible with having a job.

- Another important aspect which needs to be emphasized is the lack of correlation between the qualification acquired in the formal system and that acquired in the non-formal and informal system as regards the recognition of competencies.
- The explorative study regarding the demand for CVT*2) clearly shows that employers and persons deal with difficulties as regards access to continuous vocational training. The three main reasons are: (1) cost of training, (2) duration of training and (3) lack of available supply at local level.
- The wrong perception of employers, which consider vocational training expenses rather a cost and not an investment, the lack of awareness as regards the benefits of training, both among employers and employees, represent obstacles in increasing participation in CVT.
- It is necessary to reconsider the services of vocational information, counsel and orientation provided at present, by extending them to vocational training providers and companies. At present, since these services are mainly provided in the Ministry of Education and Research and the ANOFM network, the need for information, counsel and orientation cannot be covered entirely. It is important to emphasize that the two institutions have a good geographical coverage and a well-consolidated experience for professional counsel, which represents a solid basis for increasing the quality of the vocational guidance and counsel services provided by these institutions.

As regards the insufficient quality in providing the CVT services, difficulties refer to:

- The insufficient institutional capacity for consolidating, implementing and monitoring the CVT policies and the insufficient delimitation of responsibilities and tasks between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities as regards CVT.
- The insufficient involvement of social partners might represent an important obstacle in consolidating the CVT system in the future. It is necessary to establish responsibilities and allocate the necessary resources to industry committees and other national, regional and local bodies, which include social partners. Industry committees will need administrative personnel and specialists per activity sector for performing periodic investigations and analyses, as well as the support of external consultants. Yet, even with funds from the State budget for the existing industry committees and with a sufficient personnel working for them, the complex tasks of industry committees will require considerable investments in human resources by the organizations of employers and employees.
- The existence of a weak institutional framework of continuous vocational training public providers. Vocational training institutions could be developed in order to meet future demands. The only great risk related to the institutional context is the lack of financial resources. The network of vocational training private providers is insufficiently developed at national level and does not cover all the industries/ fields of activity adequately. Unfortunately, both private and public CVT providers are mainly situated in the big towns and this make access of rural population to vocational training difficult.

- There are approximately 1200 providers of initial vocational education and training (VET). These are not sufficiently involved in adult vocational training. The network of the National Agency for Employment has 13 vocational training centres in the subordination of its county agencies and 6 regional centres for adult vocational training. A decision was made to create 7 more vocational education centres, which are currently under a process of rehabilitation and equipment.
- The existence of an authorization process for vocational training providers, focusing on the control of entries rather than the control of results.
- The lack of financial and human resources for developing and updating occupational standards.
- The insufficient coherence of the current initial and continuous vocational training system, as regards lifelong learning. The creation of a transparent system of qualifications in vocational training is required.
- The small percentage of self-evaluation and results obtained by training providers in relation to authorization criteria, the absence of quality assurance instruments measuring the satisfaction level of the CVT recipients.

4.1.3. Examples of Good Practices:

1. Mr. Dragomir Ioana, from Bucharest was working for 12 years in making clothes (textile sector) since she finished the technical school. The low wage, the hard work and the overtime hours made me to look for another job. But other qualified work besides making clothes she did not know.

One day she saw an advertising poster with the qualification/training courses that Leonardo Murialdo Foundation organized. Because it was close to her home and work she said that she had nothing to lose if she tries to take a qualification course. So she decided to change her initial qualification.

She thought to take the cook qualification course since she already does this for her family and besides she loves to cook.

She was surprised when she saw that the qualification course was very good, with a serious training programme and at a reasonable price. She took the course and she worked at the same time and then came the time for the entire class to conduct the practice stage in a good restaurant in Bucharest. Immediately after the practice stage and graduation of the cook qualification course it came up the opportunity to be hired in very good conditions to the restaurant that she just finished the practice stage and certainly she didn't hesitate to take this opportunity.

Indisputable for her Murialdo qualification course have been a successful business.

4.2. Recommendations

For the year 2010, Romania has undertaken the strategic target of a 7% rate of participation in vocational education and training for the age group 25 – 64 years old, by adopting the “Short and medium-term strategy for continuous vocational training 2005-2010”, which aims at developing a structured, transparent and flexible system of continuous vocational training, with an adequate funding and a strong involvement of social partners, which would result in the increase of labour force employment, adaptability and mobility, as well as the development of lifelong learning by taking into consideration economic restructuring and alignment to the European market.

Romania has recorded significant labour market dynamics as regards internal geographical and occupational mobility. In the context of labour market diversification, the process of adjusting training services in compliance with the employers' requirements and the prospects of development and occurrence of new occupations should be continued so that skilled people could pass easily from one occupation to another by acquiring new competencies.

Recommendation towards policy makers:

- To introduce a system for certification of partial competences and qualifications, which would allow people to practice one or several occupations and obtain complete qualifications, including the development of people's capacity to carry out activities independently.
- In order to improve the VET programmes in Romania the organizational culture and the legal framework should be strengthened in order to motivate companies to invest and become involved in establishing the necessary training and curriculum development. Most companies haven't allocated a fund for training and where it was doesn't cover the real needs of education
- Most of VET programs are concerned about the individual needs of the beneficiaries and don't respond to the institutional needs of training. The programmes are compact, un-modular and aren't based on competences. This fact makes the certification of partial skills impossible. This type of certification would be possible for modular programs, which wasn't operational until now to the VET network providers. This happened because of the lack of coherent legislation and methodologies in the field development of a flexible and transparent VET framework based on skills that will enable people to acquire the necessary skills to access the labor market. But also updating and improving skills, through further training, in order to meet the specific requirements of employment or through requalification in a new occupational sector. A modular VET system will also facilitate people to obtain partial or complete qualifications, through participation in (re)qualification courses and prior accreditation of learning
- Permanent concern for quality in training by improving an unique system of quality that includes indices and indicators of customer satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness
- Finding ways to provide facilities for companies that hire persons that changed their initial qualification
- Creating of information services on qualification opportunities for people who work and want to change their occupation

- Achieve valid occupational standards at European level that can be used by training providers throughout Europe.
- Raising the awareness regarding professional guidance programmers which take into account the skills but also the most request jobs at regional and national level
- Taking some actions in order to implement a civic attitude, since there is a lack of pride and respect for certain jobs
- Changing the mentality of people, employers, social partners and VET providers should be considered a precondition for the successful implementation of VET strategy. It is necessary to empower all the key actors, including companies, local authorities, all those working in training education professional associations and civil society and last but not least, the citizens themselves
- Developing information, counseling and career guidance services that should answer to people's needs with a variety of methods, techniques and tools by which they can access, analyze and interpret a variety of information's, assisted by specialists in the field. In this way the career chosen to be in accordance with the real training/educational opportunities and labor market.
- To ensure the necessary conditions for evaluation validation and recognition of prior experience and learning, including skills acquired in a non-formal and informal learning context
- Establish an efficient evaluation and certification system that will allow skills, partial or total qualification recognition, regardless of the context in which they were acquired: formal, non-formal or informal education but also customize further training, resources rationalization (time, money etc) and facilitating career development
- VET development in order to answer the labor market needs requires relevant information on jobs and of professions evaluations, labor market trends, companies needs for skilled and qualified workforce, the correlation between the offer of training providers and the request
- Improving the existing lack of flexibility in the current VET system: the qualification courses last too long in order to obtain a complete qualification, which is incompatible with having a job
- Changing the wrong perception of employers who see the training budget as a cost and not as an investment. The governments together with the training providers have to raise the awareness among employers regarding the benefit of training.
- Improving the authorization of training providers in order to put accent not only on the imputes but also on the control of results
- Development of financial and human resources that have to update and develop occupational standards (in this moment is a lack of such resources)
- It should be improved the poor consistency between the laws that cover the initial training and life long learning

Recommendation towards training providers:

- improvement of the vocational training offer in order to increase access to continuous vocational training, especially for people who need it most, namely under-qualified people and older workers, taking into consideration the future requirements of the labour market; development of innovative learning and vocational training methods (such as by means of computer/electronics) and investment in skills related to the use of information technology and communication
- The training courses must be in the concordance with the potential beneficiaries educational level so that they can legally occupy a positional job on the labour market
- Development a database with the training providers of which qualification courses have managed to employ a high proportion of participants
- To achieve a more detailed analysis of the local labour market to determine the specific and needs of the work force in local area depending on which the training providers to make their offers of (re)qualification courses
- The qualification courses must be correlated with educational programs like "Second chance" to give beneficiaries practical skills (reading-writing) and formal in order to access the labour market.
- Developing studies, research and analysis to improve VET
- Developing, upgrading and maintenance of databases including the application of VET and qualifications required in the labour market
- Exchanging best practices, organizing study visits, organizing seminars
- Qualification courses must offer the possibility of rapid adaptation to changing demands in the labour market
- Training courses should be held for a shorter period it should be very specific and with a modular structure.

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