



ERASMUS+ KA2 PROGRAMME 2022 COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS IN THE ADULT EDUCATION SECTOR KA220-ADU
INTRA -INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES OF RESPONSIBLE AUTOMATION
2022-1-IT02-KA220-ADU-000085744



REPORT ON REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES ON ADULT EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

1ST PROJECT RESULT – REPORT 1B (31/03/2023)



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INTRODUCTION

Adult education is the major theme that is addressed in this important project that aims to promote lifelong learning, supporting adults in knowing how to orient themselves, in having greater self-knowledge, in self-evaluation, in being aware of their being and skills acquired by learning passively or actively, with particular attention to policies and measures to support adults with low levels of skills and qualifications to access training opportunities.

It is unfortunately a fact that less qualified adults are those less likely to participate in education and training than those with higher qualification levels, and this is a cause for concern, especially in today's times of rapid change, economic and social pressures, increased digitalization, and the consequences of the pandemic. The project therefore aims to encourage a broad and inclusive participation of adults in training and self-assessment activities.

In this paper we will analyze the origins of the term adult education and lifelong learning by making a historical excursus on the birth and legislation of the issue in Romania. We will touch on training in the public and private sectors with a specific reference to the current Romanian reality. We will do this by making a distinction of target and territorial context, highlighting the various critical issues. We will also try to deepen the most recent legislation issued by the European Union, concluding with the good practices already in place in the country together with the intentions for the future.



I. DEFINITION OF ADULT EDUCATION

The expression “Education of Adults” (EDA) is intended to identify the set of activities, public and private, aimed at the cultural and professional education of an adult public.

Today we mean that complex of educational interventions directed to the adult population with multiple purposes, including:

- Continuous training (*lifelong learning*);
- Possibility of recovery for those who have not had the opportunity to complete their study curriculum at the time;
- Teaching of basic knowledge useful for entering the world of work;
- Updating aimed at professional retraining;
- Other forms of non-formal teaching.

It is therefore the type of training which is intended to involve people regardless of age and employment status. It is in fact a constant learning, whose purpose goes beyond the typically scholastic one and extends to a broader concept that wants to create a participatory, active, and constructive citizenship. Therefore, the EDA assumes that even those who have already acquired a qualification at school and/or university need continuous updating to keep up with the ever-changing needs. Another prerequisite is that culture is a fundamental right of the citizen.

Adult education is formed by the set of formal educational opportunities (promoted by school and vocational training) and non-formal (cultural, social, health education initiatives or linked to the different aspects of associative life), intended for citizens in adulthood.

These activities are aimed at guaranteeing the right to lifelong learning, while promoting the full exercise of the right of citizenship.



EDA activities, certifiable and usable throughout life, are aimed at:

- Encourage the return of adults to the education and training system by allowing an expansion and consolidation of specific knowledge and skills;
- Promote the acquisition of new skills useful for the exercise of professional activity or for integration into social life.

In Romania, the National Education Act 1/2011 provides the general regulatory and integration framework for lifelong learning. As we will see later, lifelong learning means all learning activities carried out by each person throughout life in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, with the aim of acquiring or developing skills from a multiple perspective or personal, civic, social, or professional.

Lifelong learning includes:

- The education and care of kindergarten
- School education
- Higher education
- Adult education
- Continuous training

The main objectives of lifelong learning concern the comprehensive development of the person and the sustainable development of society together with the acquisition and development of key competences and competences specific to a field of activity or qualification.

According to the specific legislation on adult education, adults are defined as people of an age that allows them to maintain employment relationships and can participate in training programs provided for by law. Adults have equal rights of access to training, without discrimination based on criteria based on age, sex, race and ethnic origin, politics, and religious affiliation.

The Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Law 202/2002) stresses the equal right of both sexes to participate in training programs and to benefit from counselling and career guidance. Access to training for adults, employees, or jobseekers (defined under Law 76/2002) is a right guaranteed



by the Labor Code (Law 53/2003). Vocational training for adults, supplemented by educational or university degrees with national recognition and/or certificates of professional competence, is an activity of general interest within the national vocational education and training system.



Lifelong learning

The concept of lifelong learning, also known as lifelong learning, is lifelong learning, i.e. it identifies the set of lifelong learning processes.

Lifelong learning aims to ensure the social and labor inclusion of individuals, without any difference of gender or social background.

It is important to highlight that we are not referring only to the professional dimension but also to the political, economic, and cognitive dimension.

In fact, adult education was born as a concept of modern pedagogy in which education is a constantly evolving process, which does not only concern the age group linked to the growth of the individual but the whole life.

We can affirm that ongoing formation develops based on three fundamental principles:

- The principle of participation
- The principle of globalization
- The principle of equal opportunities

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It is therefore intended to guarantee all individuals, regardless of gender, socio-economic status and culture of belonging, the same opportunities to participate in education and training courses aimed at the realization of the self in its entirety, that is, in the work, personal and social sphere.

The goal of “learning to learn” becomes the essential condition for an increasing number of people as well as a resource for the community.

Continuous training allows the development of professional skills understood as knowledge that can be immediately spent in work contexts, in organizational ones, in the most general life situations. It is necessary to reverse the traditional teaching/learning scheme as the classroom is no longer a place of transmission of notions but a space for work and discussion among peers. In the management of an ideal training course, the adult education expert provides all the materials useful for the autonomous exploration of the subject of study. These active learning experiences will be carried out



autonomously and outside the formal learning contexts, and then continue with colleagues and trainers in the classroom. With this teaching strategy, adults are free to face the study at their own pace and in their own ways. This methodology really allows to carve out the training event around the needs of the individual. The trainer becomes a tutor, a facilitator, a guide. With this system, activities are proposed that not only aim at learning but also at experience. In this reasoning it is appropriate to introduce the identification and enhancement of the added value that can derive from experiences and good practices tested at several levels. Evaluating previous training experiences, satisfaction ratings and the results of evaluations already carried out allows us to reason not only about the strengths and weaknesses of the planned training process but also about the motivation, expectations, and characteristics of the target audience.

The topic of motivation deserves specific study, since a person in training achieves satisfactory results if he has a good motivation towards learning. This also applies to adult education. In people in training, often, the intrinsic motivation is lacking, which allows everyone to spontaneously invest the right energies to obtain the best result. At the didactic level you can provide a contribution to motivation if you work with teaching aids close to the interests of the students. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is supported with positive reinforcements that come from outside. Lifelong learning and skills development are key elements in responding to the current economic crisis, demographic ageing, and the broader economic and social strategy of the European Union. It is in this context that the European initiative that is spreading the culture of active ageing is inserted, the adoption of a set of measures aimed at improving the lives and participation of older generations through tools such as continuous training and involvement in socialization and voluntary initiatives.



II. HISTORICAL NOTES AND CONSTITUTIVE NORMATIVE REFERENCES IN THE ROMANIAN TERRITORY

Romania is considered a country with a tradition of continuing education. The testimonies date back to the 20s and 30s, a period in which the concept of “social pedagogy” was developed and implemented in rural areas of Romania. At that time, social pedagogy was aimed at different categories of students, including inhabitants of rural areas, disadvantaged people, women, and young people. It can therefore be said that in Romania there has always been a need for educational activities outside the formal education system, being recognized its role as a fundamental base for the development of Romanian society.

Romania's transition from a planned economy to a market economy, together with the country's integration into the European Union, has imposed new demands on the population, such as mastering new skills that qualify them to successfully cope with a rapidly changing environment and the pressures of globalization. The acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences by the population is considered a duty of the Romanian education system, which has been in continuous structural reform since the fall of communism in 1989. The structural changes of the Romanian education system aim to improve its efficiency with a view to a more rapid development of Romania through the development of its human capital for the knowledge economy to be implemented in the future. However, updating the education system requires the design of a strategy for its development that contains a vision of the long-term objectives to a plan for the long and medium-term actions necessary for their achievement.

The reform of the education system in Romania aimed to incorporate the concept of lifelong learning into educational policy, especially after the country's accession to the European Union. Before 2005, several legislative measures aimed to create a lifelong learning system in Romania, aiming at the development and regulation of “continuing vocational training” for adults.



Among these measures, the most relevant are:

- Government Ordinance No. 102/1998 regulating the organization and operation of lifelong learning in educational institutions;
- Law no. 132/1999 on the establishment, organization and functioning of the National Council for Adult Education;
- Government Ordinance No. 129/2000 on Vocational Training for Adults, as amended by Ordinance No. 76/2004;
- Law no. 279/2005 on apprenticeship in the workplace;
- The methodology for the authorization of adult vocational education centers;
- The methodology for the certification of vocational education for adults;
- The framework of qualifications for which targeted programs with certificates can be organized;
- The procedure for the assessment and certification of professional competences, obtained through informal and non-formal education.

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In 2005, the Romanian government recognized the importance of continuing education and published *“The Strategy for Continuing Vocational Training in the Short and Medium Term 2005-2010”*, one of the policy documents that laid the foundations for the lifelong learning system in the country. The strategy proposed a revision of the legislative framework to address the main obstacles identified in pursuing continuing education, namely the lack of flexibility of the learning system; the lack of correlation between qualifications acquired in the formal education system and those obtained in informal and non-formal systems; employers' perception that continuing education costs are a cost and not an investment and finally the lack of awareness of workers' needs.

Further progress in the development of the lifelong learning system in Romania has been made with *“The Integrated Strategy for the Development of Human Resources in the Perspective of Lifelong Learning 2009-2020”*. The document was developed as part of a project launched in 2006 by the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection. While the document has the nature of a project and not a legislative provision per se, it provides useful conceptual clarifications, an extensive list of



challenges of the education system from the perspective of various experts and consultants, as well as recommendations and initiatives for policy development.

Education Law No 1/2011 is the first law to align Romanian education with the European vision of lifelong learning. This legislation uses the term 'lifelong learning' for the first time. Art. 328 states that *“Lifelong learning represents all learning activities carried out by each person throughout life in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, aimed at the acquisition and development of skills from multiple perspectives: personal, civic, social and professional.”* The definition of lifelong learning and its approach consistently follow the European direction established by the European Commission in the *“Memorandum on Lifelong Learning”* (2000) and in the *“Making the European Lifelong Learning Area A Reality”* (2001).



III. CONTEXTUALIZATION OF TRAINING IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IN ROMANIA

Target audience

Demographic and migratory trends support the need to expand lifelong learning opportunities in Romania. Population ageing and emigration have led to a decline in Romania's working-age population, posing a huge challenge to sustain long-term economic growth. Between 1990 and 2011, Romania's total population decreased significantly, from 23.2 million to about 21.3 million. Over the same period, the employed population fell from 10.8 million to around 9.1 million. By 2050, it is estimated that the population aged over 65 will account for almost 30% of the total population, compared to the current level of 15%, and that the working-age population will decline by more than 30% compared to 2010, three times faster than the Western European average. In addition, it is estimated that more than two million working people (25% of the workforce) will have emigrated in search of better job opportunities in Europe or elsewhere in the world. Other challenges include a persistently low employment rate, which at 64.7% (2014) is among the lowest in the European Union, a low level of productivity compared to other EU Member States, skills shortages, and a high level of functional illiteracy (37.3% according to the results of the *Program for International Student Assessment*, 2012), which illustrates weaknesses in the education system.

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In Romania, the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports supports the organization of “Second Chance” education programs. This program serves to correct early school leaving of children, young people and adults who have dropped out of school before finishing compulsory education. Participating in this program is the only way for young people or adults who left school early to obtain a nationally accepted certificate.

The Romanian National Employment Agency (ANOFM) offers free vocational training courses for adults. Most of these courses require basic reading skills and basic math skills, as well as a certificate proving that participants have attended school and already possess these skills.



Several NGOs also offer pathways for adults where they teach reading, writing and mathematical skills. Unfortunately, in most cases the certificates that students obtain from these courses are not accepted by other national institutions.

Various free vocational training courses are also available at various NGOs. These education projects are only available in certain towns or villages. Hence, they are only accessible to adults living in these areas and localities.

Territorial context

The participation rate in vocational education and training in Romania is unevenly distributed across different areas. The participation rate in formal education decreases with age, from 8.5% for 25-34-year-olds to 0.1% for 55-64-year-olds. The participation rate in non-formal education follows the same trend as for formal education, i.e. a higher rate for adults aged 25-34 (6.7%) than for those aged 55-64 (2.4%). Discrepancies were found in terms of residence and gender, with lower participation rates in vocational training in rural areas than in urban areas and among men compared to women.

In terms of employment status, there is also a discrepancy in the participation rate in formal education as it is lower for the unemployed (0.9%) than for the employed (4.2%). There is also a difference between those living in rural and urban areas; in fact, the participation rate in non-formal education is higher in urban areas (6.4%) than in rural areas (2.5%).



Criticality

Critical issues affecting participation in and access to vocational training programs concern insufficient promotion of vocational training programs, the possibility of assessing learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings, counselling for career guidance, the lack of dissemination of examples of good practice, etc.

Adult participation in vocational training is limited by insufficient adaptation and development of forms of support given to the training in question, for people facing periods of transition in the labor market, workers at risk of unemployment, the unemployed, disadvantaged groups, and the over-fifties (packages of personalized active measures, flexible training agreements, specific support measures for disadvantaged people).

As regards career guidance and career counselling, weaknesses are linked to the lack of an integrated national system of information, counselling and career guidance at national/regional/local level, covering both initial and continuing vocational training, weak cooperation between the various actors at national, regional and local level working in the field of vocational guidance and counselling, and the lack of coordination of their actions, the network of information, counselling and career guidance centers, (insufficiently developed especially in rural areas), the low number of online career guidance tools developed and implemented, etc.

As regards disadvantaged groups, a regional Roma survey (UNDP, World Bank, EC, 2011) shows that the participation of women in non-Rom communities in adult education and apprenticeships is five times higher than that of women in Rom communities.

The limited participation in adult education and training in Romania can be explained by dysfunctions between employers, workers and education and training bodies. These dysfunctions lead to an inefficient and unresponsive lifelong learning system, in which employers, workers and training centers act independently and do not interact with each other. Training centers provide programs



and generate graduates with skills that do not fully reflect the needs of employers. Employers and businesses may also not require the types of programs or teaching methods and content needed for Romania's evolving economy.

These problems can be caused by three types of obstacles that are frequently encountered in Romania:

1. Insufficient and unclear information between the institutions involved;
2. Reduced incentives for participation in education and training activities;
3. Inadequate institutional capacity.

The expansion of lifelong learning in Romania requires overcoming these dysfunctions. Government has a role to play in helping to overcome market failures, by increasing the availability and quality of useful information; by creating incentives to increase investment in training; and by helping to remove barriers to institutional capacity. This enabled businesses, workers and education and training bodies to make better decisions and invest more in lifelong learning.

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Quality information, available to all actors involved in lifelong learning, is an essential prerequisite for its effectiveness. Insufficient investment by companies and employees in training may also be due to a lack of information, reflecting market information gaps. For example, they may not have information about the availability and quality of training centers. In addition, without the recognition or certification of skills acquired through non-formal learning, employees cannot demonstrate an increase in productivity and therefore prefer not to invest in training. Indeed, participation in lifelong learning and levels of education and skills are mutually supportive and interconnected. People with higher skills tend to perform jobs that require lifelong learning, which contributes to the development of their skills.

Data from a Eurostat survey in Romania show that insufficient information is associated with low participation in training, especially for less educated and older workers. According to the data, in fact,



only 3.4% of Romanians with primary and lower secondary education have access to information on learning opportunities, compared to 31.9% of those with tertiary education. Similarly, only 6.1% of Romanians aged 55-69 have access to information on learning opportunities, compared to 21.6% of those aged 25-34. On the other hand, analysis of the results of the PIACC program (*Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies*) 2013 shows that low-skilled people in Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, and Poland are five to seven times less likely to participate in forms of work-based learning compared to highly qualified people. In Romania, the lowest rates of participation in vocational training are recorded among people with a low level of professional qualifications, as well as among those working in small companies (with fewer than 10 employees) and people over 40 years of age.

Lack of information can also reduce the interest of vocational education and training recipients in training opportunities. Data from a 2014 World Bank survey on the participation of Romanian workers at risk in continuing vocational training shows that more than 40% of workers with low levels of education and skills do not seek information on training activities. This applies to employees aged 18-24, 43% of whom do not seek this type of information, and those over the age of 40 (45% of them do not seek training information), compared to only 20% of 18–35-year-olds who have obtained a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree. Similarly, the lack of managerial and entrepreneurial skills of managers in small and medium-sized enterprises can contribute to inefficient decisions on workforce training. Without adequate information on the skills needs of enterprises, training providers cannot easily offer attractive programs to companies and individuals. The results of the World Bank's 2014 survey of training providers in Romania show that 48% of institutions believe that the leaders of organizations operating in the country consider the training of the workforce irrelevant or unnecessary.

Moreover, even if stakeholders in lifelong learning were to benefit from better information, businesses and individuals could continue to invest insufficiently in training due to a lack of adequate incentives. For example, companies and individuals may underinvest because they cannot reap all the benefits of investing in training (market failure in terms of externalities). In addition, it is possible



that some of the benefits gained from the skills recently acquired by an employee, especially skills that are not specific to the company, could come in handy for future employers. Therefore, businesses may decide not to invest in general skills or not to invest at all. In addition, companies may decide not to train “mobile” employees as there is a greater risk of an employee leaving the company immediately after the end of the training period. This view is confirmed by the training centers themselves, which highlight that companies do not invest in the training of the workforce, to avoid losing trained employees. For this reason, companies prefer not to invest in training.

Although the current Romanian Labor Code requires employers to provide employees with regular access to vocational training and to create appropriate conditions to encourage employees to participate in training programs, this aspect is not respected in practice. Data from the survey conducted in Romania indicate the absence of training activities promoted by the company for 41% of employees over the age of 40 and with a low level of education and skills, this rate increases to 50% for people aged between 18 and 24 and with a low level of education and skills. The Romanian Labor Code also requires companies with more than 20 employees to establish annual training plans (after consultation with trade unions or workers' representatives), to be included in the collective labor agreement at company level. In this regard, the reality is still different, as indicated by 60% of training providers in Romania where it is stated that the absence of training plans is one of the main reasons why companies do not invest in training the workforce. On the other hand, education and training centers can choose not to comply with employers' skills needs, without incurring any kind of consequences, precisely because they do not have full autonomy in the decision-making process. As mentioned in the “Vocational Education and Training Needs Analysis” in Romania (Ministry of National Education, 2013), the low importance given by adults themselves to vocational training and therefore to training bodies, is one of the most important barriers to participation and support for lifelong learning.



IV. APPLICATION IN ROMANIAN TERRITORY OF EUROPEAN REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES ON ADULT EDUCATION

The Council of the European Union recently intervened with the Resolution of 17 December 2021, to define a new approach on adult education and training, through a New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030 (NEAALL).

According to 2020 Eurostat data, the “Education and Training Monitoring Report 2020” shows a low level of adult participation (1 in 10), with an EU average of just 10.8% of adults aged 25-64 participating in learning in the four weeks prior to the survey. This percentage appears to have further decreased (9.2%) because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the last decade, since the Resolution of 20 November 2011 on a Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning (EALL), significant steps have been taken towards recognizing this area as a key part of lifelong learning and numerous initiatives have been launched in this direction. Consider, for example, the issuance of the 2016 Council Recommendation “*Upskilling Pathways*” on upskilling pathways, considered the most important legal act among those recently issued by the European Union on adult learning policy. The considerable work carried out in recent years by the European institutions has not, however, produced the desired results in terms of levels of participation in adult learning.

Existing initiatives are likely to have been limited in scope, focusing only on certain groups, rather than on all working-age adults. The 2016 Recommendation, for example, is mainly aimed at low-skilled people and does not recommend providing financial support to individual learners.

Therefore, unless decisive action is taken, adult participation in learning is expected to reach only 49% by 2030, thus remaining well below the 60% target set for the next decade. In light of this forecast, the Commission proposes a new approach to support the improvement of adult skills, in line with the Skills Agenda, which puts people at the center and equips them with the support and tools they need to participate regularly in learning activities.



There are two issues that seem to affect the results achieved in 2020:

1. Insufficient financial support for people participating in training courses. For example, the cost of courses or the loss of income due to the period of absence from work for training, or even the scarce resources to overcome the obstacles that prevent you from finding time to devote to training.
2. Insufficient motivation to attend training courses. For example, lack of awareness of training opportunities or uncertainty as to whether employers will recognize the training acquired.

Annex I of the Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning is important because, in addition to identifying five priority areas on which to focus interventions, namely Governance, Provision and adoption of lifelong learning opportunities, Accessibility and flexibility, Quality, equity, inclusion and success in adult learning, Green and Digital Transition, it intends to reiterate the need to support all adults of working age in accessing the training, including for professional transitions and regardless of their employment situation or professional status, affecting people's incentives and motivation. In addition, particular attention is paid to the age group of over sixty-five, to support their full integration and participation in society.

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With the introduction of the New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030, the Council of the European Union calls on Member States to commit to building shared responsibility by the entire Government. A strong link between relevant ministries and stakeholders is required, strengthened by strong public engagement leading to effective national, regional, and local coordination. The Council also invites the Commission to liaise closely with Member States to ensure the construction of a flexible and efficient governance structure involving the Working Group on Adult Education, the Network of National Adult Learning Coordinators, peer learning activities and other networking activities.

The 2021 Resolution highlights educational and learning approach centered on the needs of the learner, unlike the previous 2011 Resolution where the term need is not used at all. This approach takes the form of encouraging adults to express affinities, desires, and preferences. Education and training programs offered in the context of adult learning should focus more on the needs of the



learner and their specificities: knowledge, skills, competences, and previous experience. The need to improve the offer through personalization that creates new opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal learning for all, but that are made ad hoc for everyone, seems to be paramount.

In line with this approach, the European Commission has put forward a proposal for a Recommendation to establish Individual Learning Accounts, which aims to ensure that every person has lifelong access to training opportunities adapted to their needs. The accumulation of individual training rights for a given period in a “personal account” allows individuals, regardless of whether they are employed or not, to undertake longer or more expensive training, to train for transitions between different jobs or to respond to emerging skills needs during times of crisis and in the context of the green and digital transitions.

Member States are urged to provide effective and efficient funding of adult learning initiatives through cooperation and partnership between stakeholders at national, regional, and local level.

Among the implementation instruments, continuous and regular funding is suggested, alongside which grants related to projects and funds to support the implementation of NEAALL 2030 must be guaranteed, as well as relevant European Union instruments (Erasmus+, the European Social Fund Plus, etc.) Member States are also invited to provide, where possible, that financial, fiscal, and other social benefits or compensatory measures at employer level result in a greater commitment by the employer to adult learning. In addition, consideration is given to the introduction of other financial and support measures, as well as concrete actions to support learners, for example in the form of financial incentives, such as loans, grants, and tax relief.

The 2021 Resolution aims to reiterate support for the professional development of educators and trainers. Professionalization, in the context of adult learning, is essential for the quality of education and training offered. In NEAALL, it calls for improving employment status and improving the initial and continuing education and training of educators and trainers, including by promoting the use of integrated (online, remote, hybrid) approaches and innovative resources (ICT infrastructure and equipment).



Increasing adult mobility opportunities means improving the quality of learning and promoting multilingualism. The Resolution encourages the use of the new Erasmus+ Program which offers many new opportunities to promote the mobility of teachers and learners in the field of AL. The further development and implementation of EPALE is recommended, as it is an important tool to support the Erasmus+ program for those wishing to present a mobility project or a strategic partnership in the field of adult learning by offering a dedicated partner search and project space.

The call for Member States to promote more flexible and modular learning opportunities, providing short learning experiences to acquire or update specific skills, is an important element of novelty compared to the past. This suggestion to national governments also appears to be based on the innovative learner-centered approach and goes beyond the approach that EU policy initiatives should focus on designing adult education and training provision (supply side), rather than on the process of making it accessible (demand side) that encourages adults to use it.

In line with this approach, in the NEAALL reference is made to the concept of Micro-credentials, for the promotion of which the Commission has put forward another proposal for a Recommendation. Through the establishment of Micro-credentials, it will be possible to promote the quality, transparency, and recognition of short training programs. This will help people adapt to changing labor market needs and ensure that current and future employers recognize their efforts to attend individual training programs. This initiative, together with the Individual Learning Accounts initiative mentioned above, complements several tools mentioned in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan of March 2021 and can contribute to expanding and strengthening lifelong learning opportunities.

The monitoring system of the adult learning sector took its first steps in 2011, as reflected in the EALL Resolution, in which it appears weakly recalled. In NEAALL, the monitoring of the process and results is well defined, and a precise strategy is outlined in this regard. It is no coincidence that the entire Annex II is dedicated to “Targets and Indicators at EU level” with the aim of establishing precise indicators to assess the average European performance in adult learning. By 2025, at least 47% of



adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning activities in the previous 12 months. By 2030, the level of participation is expected to reach 60%.

Only by monitoring progress with comparable and reliable data, considering the different situations in individual Member States, will it be possible to identify challenges and contribute to evidence-based policymaking to support the strategic priorities outlined in NEAALL 2030. The Commission is invited to present to the Council a systematic overview and roadmap, regularly update policies, cooperation, and funding instruments on planned and ongoing initiatives at Union level, such as upskilling pathways or Erasmus+, which contribute to the realization of the New Agenda.

The issue of social inclusion is not made a generic reference, as in the previous Resolution, but an important part of the Priority Sector is dedicated to it. Member States are invited to allocate adult learning resources in a balanced manner, considering funding models based on shared responsibilities and strong public engagement. The aim is to protect groups of adults from a disadvantaged background, or who have disabilities, or who are exposed to other factors that can generate exclusion. It is suggested that incentives be considered to remove obstacles to the participation of such groups (lack of time to study, low basic skills, poor professional skills, inaccessibility, low levels of motivation, etc.).

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It is therefore clear that the Council of the European Union wanted to give a driving force to the change of an obsolete model. The new paradigm reflects the social changes that have taken place over the last decade and highlights the progress made in the development of the adult education sector. Certainly, the ongoing pandemic, climate change, the development of technologies is contributing to a rethinking of adult education and training and increasing awareness of the importance of making choices aimed at lifelong learning more concrete, so that it can be affirmed as a lifestyle shared by all.



V. GOOD PRACTICES AND FUTURE RESOLUTIONS

In Romania, according to Education Law No. 1/2011, formal education is provided by the following institutions or organizations:

- Education and training activities of ministries or local public authorities;
- Public and private education and training bodies certified/accredited by law;
- Either governmental or non-governmental organizations offering programs authorized by law;
- Employers who offer their own training programs to employees (e.g. workplace placements).

“Teachers' houses” are resource centers and educational and managerial support for teachers and teaching assistants and can be accredited as lifelong learning providers.

Non-formal adult learning can be provided by various organizations such as workplaces, cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, cultural centers, libraries, documentation centers, cinemas, cultural centers, professional and cultural associations, trade unions, NGOs.

Community Lifelong Learning Centers may be set up as public bodies of local subordination or as additional activities to a local subordination body entirely financed from the local budget, if they fall within the maximum number of posts of the territorial administrative unit, approved by the Council of budget. They can be financed with local authorities' own revenues, contributions, or other forms of internal and/or external financing, sponsorships, participation fees, which are recognized as special quotas. Although they can be attended by both children and adults, their main objective is to encourage adults between the ages of 25 and 64 to participate in lifelong learning activities.

Funding for lifelong learning (including adult education) is provided through public and private funds, based on public-private partnerships, funding and co-financing from employers, non-governmental



organizations, grants for European programs, lifelong learning accounts and contributions from beneficiaries.

Publicly funded programs focus on the following target groups:

- Students and adults who have not completed compulsory education;
- Pupils who have left school before obtaining a vocational qualification and are not enrolled in any type of vocational education or training;
- Non-vocational education or those who have obtained higher education qualifications or qualifications in sectors of little relevance to the labor market;
- To those with special educational needs;
- Minors and adults returning after a period of work abroad;
- Workers and adults living in economically and socially disadvantaged communities;
- Employees over 40 with a low level of education, urban and rural residents, low-skilled or unskilled.

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Vocational training courses consist of qualification/retraining, initiation, further education, or specialization programs. To be officially recognized, courses must be offered by an approved vocational training institution. Depending on the type of program and the way it is carried out, the authorized vocational training institution may issue the following types of certificates:

- Vocational qualification for qualification or retraining courses and apprenticeships on the job
- Degree certificate for preparatory courses and internships, as well as for advanced or specialization courses and internships

For the completion of basic education, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research may approve the organization of “*Second Opportunity*” educational programs to promote primary education (primary education includes the preparatory class and grades 1 to 4) for people who are 4 years older than the expected age. For a certain grade and who, for various reasons, did not complete



this level of education at the age of 14. In addition, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, in collaboration with local administrative authorities, through school inspectorates, can organize “Second to Opportunity” educational programs to promote secondary education for people who are 4 years older than the corresponding age of that grade and who, for various reasons, have not completed secondary education. For people who are 3 years older than the age corresponding to a certain class, compulsory education can also be organized part-time, according to a methodology developed by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research. These types of programs are designed for the so-called at-risk population, i.e. people who have not attended school, young people who have dropped out of school or people who have completed primary education but lack basic knowledge.

Publicly funded programs for obtaining recognized qualifications are offered through the Second Chance Program, within the lower secondary level. Project-funded programs (e.g. ESF-POCU funds) are also available to support and encourage adults to retrain and improve their skills. The classification of qualifications for which courses can be organized through the provision of qualification certificates, was approved by Decree of the Minister of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family and the Minister of Education, Research and Youth no. 35/3112/2004. The updating and revision of this classification are carried out periodically, at the request of users, by the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection, Employment and Wages Directorate.

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Jobseekers may participate in training programs organized by the National Employment Agency, through subordinate vocational training centers and regional adult training centers, as well as in training programs organized by public or private vocational training bodies authorized by law. For example, in November 2019, ANOFM, the National Employment Agency, had made available 146 vocational training programs at national level. In that case, unemployed people registered with the agency were encouraged to participate in training programs because otherwise they would lose unemployment benefits.



Vocational training for the unemployed is financed from the unemployment insurance budget and is organized by the National Employment Agency, being partly provided through its own centers. Continuing training for this target group is specifically regulated by Law 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and employment incentives, with subsequent amendments and additions. The benefits to be provided by the employer prior to a dismissal include facilitating employee participation in short-term training programs. Certain categories of people, whether employed or unemployed, benefit from free vocational training and other facilities. Employers must take all necessary measures to ensure that their employees have access to training programs. The rights and obligations of employers and employees for the period in which employees participate in training programs are set out in collective and/or individual employment agreements. To training employers, employers should consult trade unions or workers' representatives to develop training plans in accordance with development programs and sectoral and territorial strategies.

Demographic and migratory factors lead to a strong motivation for a lifelong learning strategy in Romania. As in other Member States, but to an even greater extent, Romania's ageing and declining working-age population are enormous challenges to sustaining long-term economic growth. Recent projections show that the working population in Romania will continue to decline rapidly in the coming decades. By 2050, the active population is expected to shrink by more than 30% compared to 2010, three times faster than the Western European average, with negative implications for long-term growth potential and the sustainability of public finances. Also, by 2050, people over the age of 65 will make up almost 30% of the population, compared to the current figure of 15% (data provided by the Europe 2020 - Romania report "*Evidence-based Policies for Productivity, Employment, and Skills Enhancement*"). It is also estimated that more than two million active people (25% of the workforce) will have migrated in search of job opportunities in European countries or other parts of the world. The combination of demographic and migratory factors is the most important element supporting the need for a lifelong learning strategy in Romania. The strategic vision is to offer all people, throughout their lives, the opportunity to participate fully in economic, social, and civic life and to enable them to exploit their personal potential. This vision encompasses both the social and



economic benefits of lifelong learning. Achieving this requires the development of partnerships between all stakeholders in the field of lifelong learning.



CONCLUSIONS

The adult is called to progress in adapting his studies and profession to the changing demands of life, not only for his personal emancipation but also for the progress of society. In fact, society is the educational context that provides cultural tools and general guidelines. This means that it is necessary, in the construction of training paths, to promote educational success which is a concept that is not limited only to the school experience but has to do with the more global concept of personal and professional fulfillment, with respect to his social roles.

Education is a continuum that is distributed throughout the person's existence. The existential task of man and the related educational commitment are declined in every age. The person develops at different ages, which do not simply follow one another in a sequential and linear way since each phase of life finds nourishment from the previous one. Only in this sense can we speak of human life as education a search for perfection of man in every age.

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The need for specific intervention in the adult segment arose when the institutions of change were felt most strongly. The changes in society are evident and require the individual to build tools and strategies that allow him to make the fundamental choices of life in full awareness, responsibility, and autonomy. Furthermore, since there is a very strong link between society and the educational and training agencies, so that the changes in one influence the other and vice versa, it is necessary to manage educational and training processes effectively so that the complexity of today's society can be managed strategically.

Quality basic education is essential to foster lifelong learning in a complex and rapidly changing world. Training as a linear path no longer corresponds to the needs of today's society. Adults must therefore be able to reflect day after day on the learning achieved and to identify strategies that integrate what is still considered lacking. This reflection can become the instrument through which the adult comes to exercise his right to lifelong learning.



The right to learn even in adulthood is underlined by the awareness that humanity can survive and overcome the challenges that from time to time present themselves only if we are faced with conscious and informed men and women. Persons who can exercise this right are able to guarantee full participation in social life as citizens. Lifelong learning offers more economic opportunities, is essential for general well-being, is indispensable for personal growth.

Lifelong learning and skills development are key elements in responding to the current economic crisis, demographic ageing, and the broader economic and social strategy of the European Union.

The world is changing, and education must also change. Everywhere, societies are undergoing a profound transformation, and this requires new forms of education to promote the skills that societies and economies need, today and tomorrow.



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