

Issues of HRD and VET in Central and Eastern European countries, in the light of recent R&D projects

Contribution to the CEDEFOP supported project on “Promoting European Perspectives in VET and HRD Research”

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Foreword

The starting point for this contribution is the Cedefop supported project on “Promoting European Perspectives in VET and HRD Research”, carried out in the context of the European Research Overview (ERO). Two studies^{1 2} were prepared, as part of this project, which trace patterns of research and development (R&D) in vocational education and training (VET) and human resource development (HRD) across all EU countries. While these comparative analyses already reveal significant characteristics of R&D in Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC), a more focused study is required to identify the actual issues of HRD and VET related to the socio-economic process of transformation in these countries.

The following contribution takes this objective up by analysing issues of HRD and VET addressed in R&D projects carried out by CEEC institutions. The contribution consists of two interrelated parts:

- first, an analytical overview of current R&D projects which highlights issues of HRD and VET addressed in CEE countries (Part 1 - prepared by Sabine Manning) and
- second, a case study which focuses on the relation between European and national issues of HRD and VET from the perspective of Romanian R&D project work (Part 2 - prepared by Liliana Voicu).

The conclusions drawn on the basis of these studies are intended to enhance the awareness of both the specific requirements and the dynamics of HRD and VET developments in CEE countries which are reflected in R&D projects.

¹ Manning, Sabine. Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe: Issues arising from an institutional analysis - Theses for discussion. Berlin: Research Forum WIFO 2006, at: <http://www.b.shuttle.de/wifo/vet-hrd/theses.htm>

² Manning, Sabine. Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe: Thematic patterns derived from a project analysis. Berlin: Research Forum WIFO 2007, at: <http://www.b.shuttle.de/wifo/vet-hrd/patterns.htm>

Part 1: Issues of HRD and VET addressed in Central and Eastern European countries - an analytical overview of current R&D projects

1.1 Introduction

This analytical overview highlights issues of HRD and VET which are addressed by current R&D projects carried out in CEE countries. It starts out from three questions:

- What are the major issues of HRD and VET identified in CEEC based projects?
- To what extent do the CEEC based projects reflect EU priorities for VET and HRD?
- Which themes of HRD and VET are particularly taken up in the EU supported projects coordinated by CEEC institutions?

The overview is based on data provided by EU country reports (ERO National Research Reports - ENRRs) which were supplied by the Cedefop network of experts - ReferNet. The outcomes of these reports have been presented in a synopsis³ available on-line.

The task of the national experts preparing the ENRRs was to compile, for each country, about ten projects regarded as important in the national context of HRD and VET. These could be either national projects or EU supported projects carried out by an institution in the country concerned. Altogether, a total of 80 projects, mostly referring to the year 2005, were put forward by nine CEEC based reports. The following countries are involved: Cyprus [CY], the Czech Republic [CZ], Estonia [EE], Hungary [HU], Latvia [LV], Lithuania [LT], Poland [PL], Slovenia [SI] and the Slovak Republic [SK].

Prior to this overview, an analysis of R&D projects in HRD and VET was carried out across all EU countries⁴. The outcomes of this comparative analysis suggest that the projects from the 'new' EU countries (identical with the CEE countries in this overview) have similar thematic patterns as those from the 'old' EU countries. Nevertheless, there are certain specific features which have been identified among projects of the new countries, including the following:

- The topics showing marked differences are, on the one hand, 'competence' and 'learning' favoured by the old countries, and on the other hand, 'continuing vocational education' favoured by the new countries. The specific focus of the new countries on 'continuing vocational education' may result from their special needs of economic and societal reconstruction (p. 7).
- The projects of the old countries focus on the 'process' aspect (including processes of learning, training, competence development), while the projects of the new countries are unique in emphasising both the 'system' aspects (including systems of vocational education, adult education, human resource development) and the 'process' aspect (p. 11). This emphasis reflects the present objective among the new countries to establish or rebuild the provision of vocational education and training at various levels.
- While the old countries have high proportions in both VET and HRD-LM (HRD related to the labour market), the new countries are particularly concentrated on VET, followed by

³ Research on VET and HRD in Europe: Synopsis of national research. Pilot version. Cedefop/ Research Forum WIFO, at: <http://www.b.shuttle.de/wifo/vet-hrd/=synopsis.htm> (last update: 25/05/2007)

⁴ Manning, Sabine. Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe: Thematic patterns derived from a project analysis. Berlin: Research Forum WIFO 2007, at: <http://www.b.shuttle.de/wifo/vet-hrd/patterns.htm>

medium-level proportions of both 'education' (including lifelong learning) and HRD-LM (p. 15). This specific pattern may be explained by the particular need, recognised in the new countries, to promote vocational education and training as part of both the educational reform and the development of the labour market.

As a follow-up to the above analysis, the present overview intends to look more closely at the thematic issues addressed in R&D projects carried out in CEE countries. Moreover, the themes of these CEEC projects are analysed in the light of the EU priorities guiding VET and HRD developments in the Lisbon-Copenhagen-Maastricht process. Finally, the overview highlights the specific thematic profile of EU supported projects that are carried out by CEEC institutions.

Throughout this overview, the projects are presented in terms of their objectives and partly their results, both of which are stated in the original descriptions (contained in the ERO Base⁵ - the general resource for the ENRRs). Aspects of their implementation or impact in the countries concerned are outside the scope of this analysis.

1.2 Major issues of HRD and VET identified in CEEC based R&D projects

To start with, the CEEC projects are analysed according to major thematic issues. These issues have been identified on the basis of descriptors developed for mapping the contents of R&D resources in VET and HRD⁶. For each project, one (most important) descriptor was selected from the total set of 25 descriptors. The outcome of this analysis was synthesised by forming five thematic groups, each representing a major issue. of similar size. This approach of course entails overlaps of project themes between these groups, but helps to identify the thematic priorities.

The major issues are presented, at a first glance, in the list below. For each issue, a brief name is selected, with explanatory details of the thematic components (based on the descriptors) provided in addition. The number of projects selected under each group is given in brackets.

- (A) **Learning**: issues of learning, training, curriculum development, knowledge and competence development (**15**);
- (B) **VET**: issues of promoting vocational education and training, in particular the initial stage, as part of educational provision (**23**);
- (C) **LLL**: issues of lifelong learning, adult education, continuing education and training, and higher vocational education (**10**);
- (D) **Pathways**: issues of transition within education and between education and work, of qualification structures, certification and accreditation (**19**);
- (E) **Labour market**: issues of education/training in relation with business, the labour market, management and finance (**13**).

This thematic grouping already shows the broad spectrum of issues addressed by CEEC projects. So far, however, the issues have only been identified by descriptor terminology.

⁵ ERO Base: Information base of the European Research Overview. Cedefop: European Training Village, at: http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/Ero/base.asp

⁶ Descriptors for mapping the contents of research resources in VET and HRD. In: Gateway to research on education in Europe. Website provided by Research Forum WIFO, at: <http://www.b.shuttle.de/wifo/vet/desc.htm> (last update: 30/12/2005)

What are the specific issues, i.e. the real themes, which the CEEC projects address within each group? The following overview provides the details for each of the issues, starting with a brief outline of the project themes involved, followed by selected examples taken from the national reports.

The individual examples are presented according to a common pattern applied throughout this contribution. Each example includes three components: first the country code as prefix, then the project title printed bold, and finally the objectives of the project. These objectives and other details of the individual projects are contained in the ERO Base - the information base of the European Research Overview, which served as a data resource for the national reports (ENRRs).

(A) Learning

Several projects are concerned with e-learning, such as ICT related education in the knowledge economy, e-learning based educational methods for VET teachers, e-learning in continuing education and e-learning network services. Another re-current issue is curriculum development, for example preparation of innovative curricula for vocational education, modernisation of VET programmes and models for the provision of teaching and learning material. Modular approaches are investigated for both learning and curriculum development, as for instance modular distance learning for promoting transnational mobility and development of modular curricula in conjunction with educational technologies. A number of projects focus on enhancing competences and skills, including the identification of key competences of students, transparency of language competences, forming and evaluating psychomotoric skills of technical subject students and defining competences of trainers in adult education.

Examples:

[HU] **Training embedded in employment.** The objective of the project was to support the programme aimed at connecting the employment and training of disadvantaged Roma adults through revealing their competencies and socio-cultural background.

[LT] **Development of a model for provision of VET institutions with teaching and learning materials.** The goal of the project is to create modern teaching and learning materials for VET with the aim to promote the quality of vocational education and training and correspondence of training to the labour market needs. Objectives of the project: to develop a model for provision of VET institutions with modern teaching and learning materials; to practice this model by creating, publishing and testing teaching and learning materials for the profession of motor-mechanics.

[SK] **The key competences of students in technical study branches in national and European context.** The objectives of the project: 1. Identification of key competences of graduates of technical universities and secondary schools on the basis of study and comparative analysis of national and foreign sources, which are dealing with key competences, as well as on the basis of employer requirements of national and foreign corporations and firms presented by job agencies. 2. Diagnostics of the selected key competences of students of technical study branches at secondary technical schools and faculties of the Slovak University of Technology. 3. Proposal of concrete social-psychological training methods and didactic instruments for key competences development.

(B) VET

Most projects in this group aim at developing and improving the system of vocational education and training. Partly they address general objectives such as creating the basis for the continual development of VET and for the continuing vocational training of adults, developing a system of VET standards, cooperation between school and company as the

basis for VET lifelong learning, and combining VET with social partnership. Another basic issue is the innovation of in-service training and of complementary pedagogical study of secondary vocational teachers. Several projects, however, emphasise the issue of quality assurance, for instance in looking at quality in vocational education, working out a methodology for increasing the quality of vocational education, developing and implementing a common quality assurance system in VET, and testing peer review as an instrument for quality assurance. Closely related with quality is the issue of evaluation, raised in a number of other projects, including the evaluation of teachers' in-service training programmes, the verification of pilot school programmes, and a digital portfolio for the evaluation of educators.

Examples:

[CZ] Development and verification of pilot school educational programmes at selected technical schools and secondary vocational schools. The aim of the project is to verify the system of a two-stage curriculum development in selected technical schools and secondary vocational schools.

[LV] Working out of a unified methodology to increase the quality of vocational education and to involve and educate social partners. Objective: Strengthening of co-operation between social partners and educators to ensure compliance of vocational education to requirements of the labour market.

[SK] Innovation of complementary pedagogical study of secondary school vocational subject teachers. The main objective of the project was to propose the innovated complementary pedagogical study (CPS) for secondary school vocational subject teachers, to experimentally verify the adequacy and quality of training within CPS, and based on the results to optimise the content, process and organisation of CPS. The aim was to contribute to innovations by focusing CPS on teacher competences and standards for beginning technical subjects teachers, organisation of CPS in a modular credit system, quality management in CPS, and innovations in the content of CPS, resulting from the strategic education policy paper adopted by the parliament, the National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic for the Next 15-20 Years (the Millennium project), as well as from trends in the OECD countries.

(C) LLL

Lifelong learning is regarded, by several projects, as a broad field which involves vocational or professional education as a component, for instance in dealing with the following topics: implementation of a lifelong strategy, lifelong education and teachers' professional development, e-skills in the process of lifelong learning. More specific is the TNet (training of trainers network) based instrument for the introduction of lifelong learning. Two other broad fields investigated by the projects are adult and higher education, both of which incorporating vocational and professional education. Related themes deal, for instance, with insights of applied higher education, social demands for the higher education of adults, adult education and training in the context of the modern market economy and the learning population. A major topic addressed by the projects is continuing vocational training. At a general level, issues include requirements on continuing training in the knowledge society, the continuing education situation in a specific country, the role of the adult educator in a company, and the study on further education quality factors. At regional, sectoral or subject level, projects look for instance into new strategies for the improvement of the workers' training and mobility in the tourism sector, training needs in a specific region, staff development in the field of advanced technology, and electronic continuous medical education.

Examples:

[CZ] **Knowledge society – requirements on human resource skills and continuing training.** Analysis of the CR's position as to what extent it corresponds to the characteristics of the knowledge based society (KBS). The role of continuing training in approaching KBS will be analysed with particular focus on participation of highly qualified occupation groups in CVT, and on approaches of innovative companies to skill improvements. A medium-term forecast of skill needs will be developed.

[HU] **New strategies for the improvement of training and information within the tourism and hotel sector with the aim of promoting mobility of workers.** This project aims at developing and increasing employability within the tourism, hotel and catering sectors. Specifically, the project will undergo a study to evaluate: current needs in the sectors, the relationship between supply and demand, the required formal and non-formal competencies and the legal framework particular to each of the participating countries. A further objective of the project is to contribute to combating the illegal traffic of workers particularly within the tourism sector. The project's main activities will be the development and introduction of a training and information system to work towards European recognition to increase professional opportunity for all individuals employed in these sectors. The study itself will contribute to the development of teaching and information materials, and a dedicated project website will encourage access to the information in addition to the exchange of good practice and dissemination of the project results.

[PL] **Staff development in the field of advanced technologies of production and maintenance.** The aim of the project is to design innovative solutions of vocational development in the field of advanced technologies of production and maintenance of technical devices, paying special attention to international standards.

[SI] **Evaluation and use of most recent technologies for the development of e-skills in the process of life-long learning with the enforcement of standardisation.** Objectives: Establishment of an expert centre for evaluation, standardisation and counselling by the selection of e-tools for the restoration of e-learning environment; development of e-skills and competences in the frame of preparation of national vocational qualification (NVQ); pilot training in establishment of innovative learning environment in the Podravska, Pomurska and Koroška regions.

(D) Pathways

Projects belonging to this thematic group are, most of all, concerned with analysing and developing the constituting factors and instruments intended to improve the functioning of pathways within the education system and between education and work. Included are general topics such as the analysis of learning pathways, but more typical are specific subjects. These highlight issues such as developing a national qualification framework, providing educational information counselling and vocational guidance, and developing procedures of accrediting courses and institutions, evaluating and monitoring educational achievements, measuring and validating prior learning, and recognising non-formal and informal learning. A few projects also look at the situation of the target groups, for instance the educational barriers experienced by certain social groups and the employment success of vocational schools graduates.

Examples:

[CZ] **Development of a system of external monitoring and evaluation, including installation of a centre for evaluation of educational achievements.** Objectives: To develop a unified part of final examination for secondary vocational schools, to increase quality and transparency of examination, and to increase opportunities of graduates on the labour market.

[HU] **Analysis of learning pathways.** The objective of the project is to describe the learning pathways typical at secondary level and their changes since the beginning of the 1990s, based on data of the representative database compiled in 2000 using questionnaires. The research project is made up of two independent parts: analysis of the data of the Youth 2000 database in terms of the development of student-learning pathways and training needs by age group and educational attainment; making interviews with young people leaving the educational system with secondary level qualifications and entering typical pathways, and preparing case studies based on the interviews.

[LT] **Development of a National Qualifications Framework.** The goal of the project is to create a single and transparent qualifications framework embracing all levels of qualifications and ensuring transition between levels, with a variety of ways for acquisition of qualification and creating possibilities for flexible reaction to requirements of changing environment.

(E) Labour market

Most prominent in this thematic group are issues of linking education and the labour market. Several of these projects address general economic issues, with aspects of education and training just forming part of these, for instance in the following topics: employment trends and forecasts, mobility of human resources in the labour market, economic effects of foreign labour, access of women to the labour market, and support of elderly people employment. Other projects focus on the interrelation between education and labour, with topics such as matching of educational and occupational structures, evaluating schemes of human resource development, anticipating the training needs of different sectors of the economy, competitiveness of higher education graduates in the labour market, development of rural areas through knowledge, public employment services and qualification development. Furthermore, a number of projects look at the business level of human resource development, for example the development of human resource management in organisations and the identification of managerial models concerning the training of employees in SMEs.

Examples:

[CY] **Identification and development of managerial models for small and medium hotel and tourism enterprises. Evaluation of the professional and academic training of employees in Cyprus.** Objectives: Investigation of the academic sufficiency of the management of small and medium tourism enterprises; evaluation of the managerial models/approaches that are implemented in small and medium tourism enterprises; evaluation of the utilisation of employees with academic qualifications; development of a modern and innovative managerial model which will aim to utilise the academically trained staff employed in SME's.

[EE] **Anticipating the training needs over different sectors of the economy.** The goal of the project was to compose a comprehensive methodology including a complete set of techniques for carrying out expert groups in selected sectors. The aim of organising such focus groups is to define key occupations in order to predict the share of these in sector workforce. A pilot expert group for testing the developed methods in one selected sector (hotels and restaurants) was conducted. The project was carried out in co-operation with FAKTUM.

[PL] **Public employment services – qualification development in the implementation of the European Employment Strategy and participation in EURES.** Objectives: To develop a new model of public employment services (PES); to improve the consolidation, collaboration and monitoring of the activities; to increase competencies of public employment services. Results: Database of the National System of Labour Market Monitoring; system of updating vocational qualifications of PES employees; standards of vocational qualifications for key occupations in PES; modular training programmes for selected groups of the personnel of labour offices.

[SK] **Development of human resource management in Slovak organisations in the process of Slovakia's integration to the European Union.** Analysis of the position and importance of an employee in an organisation as its competitive advantage. Aspects: new model of HRM position in the organisational structure, motivation and remuneration, employee participation, change in value systems in Slovak organisations.

1.3 EU priorities for VET and HRD reflected in CEEC based R&D projects

The CEEC related reports (ENRRs) presented their national HRD and VET developments in the context of EU policies, in particular paying attention to the achievement of the Lisbon goals set by the European Council in 2000. Their selection of the most important projects, although primarily based on criteria of national development, also reflected this EU context. It will therefore be interesting to establish, in which respects the CEEC projects take account of major EU policy goals.

The basis of this analysis are the priorities for VET in the Lisbon process, set out in the Cedefop synthesis of the Maastricht Study⁷. Complementary aspects of promoting HRD and VET, according to the Copenhagen/Maastricht goals, in the accession countries are taken up from an ETF working paper⁸.

The set of priorities for VET and HRD, identified in the Maastricht Study (pp. 6-8) and further specified in the ETF paper (p. 10), are listed in brief below. This overview includes the number of those projects (out of the total of 80) whose topics are related to the individual priorities.

- (1) **Enhancing the participation in VET:** raising skill levels of the population; removing access barriers; strengthening vocational streams and work-based learning; providing guidance and counselling (11);
- (2) **Promoting CVT:** increasing participation in LLL, incl. non-traditional learners; recognition of non-formal/informal learning (16);
- (3) **Increasing the mobility in the European labour market:** mutual recognition of qualifications; promoting transparency on the basis of the Europass, setting up national qualification systems (5);
- (4) **Investing in quality VET systems:** raising the level and efficiency of spending on VET; introducing quality assurance approaches (6);
- (5) **Ensuring high quality and appropriately skilled VET professionals (9).**

This initial overview already demonstrates that the CEEC projects are strongly related to the EU priorities: over half of the total projects are involved, with each priority being addressed several times. Also worth noting is that, among those projects reflecting EU priorities, both national and EU supported projects are well represented (two thirds to one third).

The following examples of CEEC projects indicate the main thematic aspects identified for each of the five priorities.

⁷ Tessaring, Manfred; Wannan, Jennifer. Vocational education and training - key to the future. Lisbon - Copenhagen - Maastricht: Mobilising for 2010. Cedefop synthesis of the Maastricht Study. Luxembourg: EUR-OP 2004

⁸ Human resources development in candidate and potential candidate countries. Working Paper. Torino: European Training Foundation (ETF) 2006

(1) Enhancing the participation in VET

Those projects that are concerned with national VET provision clearly focus on qualitative aspects, aiming for instance at the modernisation of VET programmes, the preparation of innovative curricula, the development of modular curricula and competence based programmes, and the enhancement of educational technologies. Several other projects are engaged in promoting learning pathways, educational counselling and vocational guidance.

Examples:

[CZ] **VIP career – education information counselling.** The project is aimed at the development of a system of complex support for careers decisions made in the course of educational and vocational careers. Another goal is to improve the conditions for providing educational-psychological and careers counselling in schools.

[HU] **Analysis of learning pathways.** The objective of the project was to describe the learning pathways typical at secondary level and their changes since the beginning of the 1990s, based on data of the representative database compiled in 2000 using questionnaires. Analysis of the subject was based on a two-fold approach: the objective was partly to identify typical pathways based on data analysis, partly to describe them in more detail through qualitative analysis.

[SI] **The preparation of methodologies and other expert basis for the continual development of vocational education and training.** On the basis of the evaluated research work the main goal of the project is to upgrade and to improve the existing methodologies and to prepare new ones. Professional foundations for the future development of VET will be made according to the technical literature and according to the situation in broader European space. The main issues are the following: 1. The upgrading of the methodologies for modular structures and competence-based educational programmes in VET. 2. The preparation of the credit system model in VET. 3. The national qualification framework. 4. The connecting of the formal education system with the certification system. 5. The implementation of key competences: example of entrepreneurship and learning how to learn. 6. The connecting between practical education in schools with direct working process. 7. The preparation of the expert basis for the adjustment of the programme for students with special needs. 8. Preparation of expert basis for coherent connection between 3 and 4 year education.

(2) Promoting CVT

Contexts in which CEEC projects take up issues of continuing education and training are, most of all, lifelong learning, adult education, human resource development and the knowledge based society (economy). The promotion of CVT is considered at several levels: the overall situation of CVT in a country, the development of staff in highly qualified occupations, and the inclusion of special groups such as women and elderly people in the work force. Specific components emphasised in lifelong learning approaches include recognition procedure of non-formal and informal learning, training embedded in employment, validation of prior learning and e-learning in continuing education. Also, the institutional aspect of establishing CVT is addressed, for example the accreditation procedures of CVT institutions and the cooperation between school and company as a basis for VET lifelong learning.

Examples:

[HU] **Measurement and validation of prior learning.** The objective of the project is to assist adult training providers and the administrative agencies of adult education in introducing and promoting this modern service, including the criteria of ensuring its preconditions.

[LV] **Development of a lifelong learning strategy and its implementation.** Long term goals: 1. The implementation of lifelong learning according to the demands of the labour market, the development of an integrated and modern educational system and the promotion of employment politics, with regard to the expected decreasing of population in capacity for work in the long term – as advanced goals of the Lisbon Strategy, which is one of the preconditions for the development of a competitive economy and work force. 2. Providing the education in lifelong term according to the population interests, abilities and plans of economic development of the regions. 3. Providing the capacity of the educational field for the implementation of a lifelong learning strategy in the long term.

[PL] **Development of a guide on accreditation procedures of institutions of continuing education after the school system.** The aim of the project is to develop a guidebook on the accreditation procedures of continuing training institutions, enabling accreditation bodies to better prepare themselves for the accreditation.

(3) Increasing the mobility in the European labour market

In this group of projects, several components of enhancing mobility are investigated: the development of a national qualification framework, the qualification of staff for transnational vocational counselling, and the establishment of e-learning network services for education without borders.

Examples:

[CZ] **Development of a National Qualification Framework promoting lifelong learning.** Objectives: 1. To make a proposal for the National Qualification Framework, especially with the following aims: Setting up and definition of complete qualifications (description of qualifications); setting up and definition of partial qualifications (as a part of complete qualifications). 2. To create a definition of evaluation standards for complete and partial qualifications.

[PL] **Transnational vocational counselling.** The main aim of the project is to improve the system of training of vocational advisers and to standardise, on an international scale, some of the forms of training, through the elaboration of a programme of postgraduate training in the field of vocational counselling and guidance of European dimension (Euro-counselling).

[SK] **Modular distance learning for European mobility career counsellors.** Main objectives of the project: Innovation of vocational education and training of experts specialising in career counselling with particular focus on the European dimension aimed at increasing qualification and adaptability and supporting mobility of persons entering the labour market in the area of career counselling; improvement of counselling services in the process of choosing education, vocation and employment in order to enhance employability in the labour market under consideration of recent changes in the area of qualification requirements of the labour market with particular focus on assisting young people in the integration process. Specific objectives of the project: Improvement of skills and competences of experts specialising in career counselling who can positively influence the integration of individuals, especially young people, in the labour market; introduction of a lifelong education system for experts specialising in career counselling which will be based on mutual interaction between social partners and the sector of education, labour, social affairs, and family; application of modern information and communication technologies.

(4) Investing in quality VET systems

Those projects that are aimed at enhancing the quality of national VET systems focus on two aspects: investigating quality standards, such as further education quality factors, and introducing quality instruments, for example external monitoring and evaluation of education

achievements, self-evaluation in vocational and technical schools, a common quality assurance system in VET, and peer reviews as an instrument for quality improvement.

Examples:

[EE] **Study on further education quality factors.** The goal of the project is to outline and analyse the factors which indicate the quality of different educational institutions providing courses for further education in Estonia. The analysis will be done regarding to the existing professional qualifications system. Important parts of the planned outcome of the study are the policy proposals, suggestions to change/develop the state regulation of the field in order to improve the quality of further education.

[HU] **Peer review as an instrument for quality assurance and quality improvement in initial VET in Europe – exchange of experience and development of a European manual.** The current project responds to needs and policies concerning quality improvement and development at national as well as European level by introducing a new instrument for quality assessment and development, peer reviews, to the initial VET sector throughout Europe. The application of peer reviews has repeatedly been recommended by the Technical Working Group on Quality set up by the EC, yet experiences with this promising tool are to date extremely limited within the European VET systems. The use of peer reviews, however, has a long tradition within higher education.

[LT] **Development and implementation of a common quality assurance system in vocational education and training.** The goal of the project is to develop a modern quality assurance system which would cover both initial VET and continuing training. Objectives of the project: To develop a model of quality assurance system for vocational education and training in Lithuania that would be in line with the ideas of “A common quality assurance framework for VET in Europe”; to implement internal quality management systems in vocational education and training institutions; to develop external quality evaluation system for assessment of training programmes and VET institutions; to test the external quality assurance system in IVET and CVT institutions.

(5) Ensuring high quality and appropriately skilled VET professionals

Various aspects of the development of VET professionals are addressed in the projects, including the teachers' professional development in lifelong learning, the role of adult educators in companies, defining competences of trainers, the evaluation of educators, innovating pedagogical studies, evaluating pre-service and in-service training, and the application of e-learning tools in cooperative pedagogy.

Examples:

[CY] **The development of a European digital portfolio for the evaluation of educators.** The aim of this project is the development of a new, dynamic, digital appraisal tool for the collection and presentation of portfolio evidence of an educator's competencies, which can be used in the various educational and appraisal systems throughout the European Union. The project intends to address the self-improvement/self-evaluation of educators (such as teachers, educational administrators, inspectors, teacher trainers and trainees) and their objective and transparent evaluation with the help of new technologies.

[HU] **Defining the competencies of trainers working in adult education.** The objective of the project is to compile a register of trainers' up-to-date competencies.

[CY] **Evaluation of teachers' in-service training programmes offered by the Pedagogical Institute in 2005-2006.** Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of each programme based on its original aims and objectives.

1.4 Themes of VET and HRD addressed in EU supported projects carried out by CEEC institutions

In the previous section (1.3), the total sample of CEEC projects (80) was analysed against the priorities of VET and HRD set by the EU. Now, the analysis is focused on a special group of projects: those carried out by CEEC institutions within EU programmes.

As is evident from the CEEC related reports (ENRRs), the EU programmes for promoting education and training as part of the socio-economic development have been a great stimulus for carrying out R&D projects. The nine countries included in this overview are involved in both CEEC oriented programmes, such as Phare, and general EU programmes, in particular Leonardo da Vinci and the Framework Programmes.

This engagement in EU activities is reflected in the selection of projects, which are regarded as most important for the individual country. Altogether, a third of the CEEC projects belong to EU programmes. Most of these projects are coordinated by an institution of the country concerned; in the remaining ones the CEEC institutions are engaged as partners.

Also noteworthy is the thematic orientation of the EU projects selected in the CEEC related reports. The themes of these projects, taken as a whole, address all the five major issues of HRD and VET (see section 1.2). They are distributed across these issues in similar proportions. At the same time, a considerable number of the themes taken up by EU supported CEEC projects match the five EU priorities (see section 1.3), with about three projects being identified for each priority.

The following examples highlight the thematic spectrum of the EU projects carried out by CEEC institutions (mostly as coordinators, in one case as partner).

[CY] Lifelong education and teachers' professional development. The research project aims at investigating the current situation in regard to teachers' lifelong professional development and at submitting a proposal for the application of strategies that will contribute to the improvement of the quality of programmes for teachers' continuous professional development and will increase the rate of their participation in lifelong professional development programmes. The research project has the following scientific objectives: 1. The development and application of valid inquiring tools (questionnaires, interviews etc) for measuring the factors that influence teachers' participation in lifelong learning programs, the degree of teachers satisfaction of the existing ways of providing continuous professional development. 2. Building of thematic and methodological framework of indicators for the comparison of data in regard to professional development opportunities, to teachers' participation in lifelong learning and to the measurement of teachers' professional development.

[EE] Matching of educational and occupational structures. The coordination and governance of the emergence, diffusion, and recombination of new technological knowledge (TK) are today central issues both in economics and in the economy. The objective is to understand the conditions for the coordination of the generation and the profitable use of TK and to identify the best tools to implement the governance of the learning capabilities.

[HU] E-learning based cooperative educational and pedagogical methods for VET teachers. The essence of the project is to utilise the tools of e-learning in cooperative pedagogy and to identify the professional fields where such tools can be most effectively applied.

[LT] Facilitating access to lifelong learning through the development of recognition procedure of non-formal and informal learning. The goal of the project was to facilitate, across all age groups, access to recognition of skills acquired during non-formal and informal learning, in order to develop a favourable environment and basis for individual lifelong learning. This was achieved through the development of a package of tools which would

ensure independent evaluation of non-formal and informal learning in the target sector of the retail trade. The evaluation will give recognition to skills acquired during non-formal and informal learning in a working environment.

[PL] **European bank for the development of modular curricula and educational technologies.** The aim of the project was to create an internet portal and a database on the development of modular curricula and best practices connected with the applications of information and communication technologies in the training process. Moreover the project envisaged the establishment of the European and Polish network of modular training providers and elaboration of a system of accreditation of training programmes and certification of training institutions.

[PL] **National resource centres for vocational guidance.** The main objective of these centres is to promote and support educational and vocational mobility of Europeans – citizens of EU member states and associated countries. Specific aims of the project include: collecting, elaborating and disseminating information about education and training opportunities in Europe; promoting collaboration between institutions specialising in vocational guidance; development of an international NRCVG network.

[SI] **Quality in vocational education.** Based on experiences from different countries, the project group will within the project develop an instrument package for self-evaluation in vocational and technical schools, combined with an interactive web page and an electronic expert system.

[SK] **Efficient e-learning network services establishment for education without borders.** The EEDUSER project aims to create a portal of portals for e-learning that will itself offer e-learning training modules and training resources for e-learning network designers and managers. The project further seeks accreditation for a degree level integrated study programme in computer network technology. Initial activity was focused upon the development of a series of models for a pedagogical approach to: developing multimedia, training materials, transforming traditional materials into multimedia format and managing Internet-based training services leading to the introduction of outline methodology for the training of trainers in these environments. Eventual, synchronous and asynchronous modules for teacher development have been produced and a pool of supplementary training resources created, making use of existing case studies developed within previously funded Leonardo da Vinci projects. The training modules have been further integrated into existing degree studies within partner institutions, for further verification and validation with results of this exercise contributing towards revision and production of final training modules.

1.5 Concluding note

Altogether, the analytical overview of R&D projects carried out in CEE countries suggests the following general conclusions:

The requirements of socio-economic reconstruction in CEE countries have a strong impact on all the major issues of HRD and VET addressed in R&D projects. In particular this impact is demonstrated by projects dealing with issues of the labour market and skills requirements (E), issues of promoting (initial) vocational education and training (B) and continuing education and training (C), and issues of transition between education and work (D). While these are primarily systemic aspects, there seems to be less emphasis on process aspects such as learning and training (A) unless these are again linked to system aspects, for example curriculum development and e-learning.

The fundamental effort of developing human resources, as reflected in the CEEC projects, appears to be directed, most of all, to the promotion of the state system of education and

training in close relation to the needs of the labour market. This strategy of HRD can be regarded as a characteristic of CEE countries. Business and enterprises, on the other hand, seem to play a less prominent role in human resource development. Partly, as the projects show, efforts are made to involve firms and social partners in restructuring the public VET programmes. Only a few projects refer to HRD activities carried out by private organisations themselves, in the context of human resource management.

The EU programmes contribute significantly to promoting R&D activities in CEEC institutions. This is not only apparent from the considerable proportion of EU supported projects, included in the selection, but also from the European dimension which is evident in several national projects. Nearly all the EU related projects address significant issues of development in CEE countries. Likewise it can be assumed that CEEC institutions, by engaging in EU project partnerships, also make an impact on R&D in the broader EU context, by enriching the transnational perspective on HRD and VET issues.

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Part 2: The relation between European and national issues of HRD and VET - a Romanian perspective on recent R&D projects

2.1 Introduction

Soon after December 1989, for the young democratic society in Romania, after the moment of celebrating the end of a long dictatorship and the quasi-confusion on deciding what to do with its fresh and demanding freedom, a generally accepted scope emerged: acceding the European Union. This overall goal absorbed the most important part of the national energies: integrating the *acquis communautaire* and defining the Romanian way of being European.

Now we are at the end of this long way and it is normal to pay a special regard on how the human resource is approached, not only because it was the key factor in the shift from a hyper-centralised economy to a free market and from a totalitarian society to a consolidated democracy, but because it is the key factor in attaining the Lisbon goals, to which the Romanian society is now committed. A double sided perspective, where national and European interfere not only in the background, but also in the orienting guidelines.

It is therefore interesting to look on how European and national issues of HRD and VET are reflected in research and development projects, trying to answer a number of questions like: Which key issues of HRD/VET research are addressed in the Romanian projects? To what extent do the EU issues matter for Romania? What is their benefit for Romanian HRD/VET research and policy reforms? What is the value of the Romanian contribution to EU projects? How is the Romanian contribution to EU projects related to national projects in Romania?

In order to answer such questions, this contribution looks closely at a few recent R&D projects, trying to cover a diverse scale of typologies. The selection includes projects with larger or smaller perspective, using national or transnational methodology, based mainly on Romanian or European expertise, oriented more towards HRD or to VET issues. For comparison, a UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) report is also included, in order to offer a broader perspective of comparison, as the theme is much wider than the normal HRD/VET field: human development in Romania.

2.2 Analysis of selected projects

The following projects will be analysed below:

- Support to Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family for CVT development (R&D project – national)
- Monographs – Candidate countries. Vocational education and training and employment services in Romania (research project – national, with European expertise)
- National Human Development Report for 2003-2005 (research project, transnational)
- Skills audit survey (research project, national)
- Quality improvement of adult vocational training in Romania (development project, transnational)
- Further support to active involvement of Social Partners – Enhancing Sectoral Committees (development project)
- Reflective Evaluation (pilot Leonardo da Vinci project)

Support to Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family for CVT development (R&D project – national)

The project goal was to support the Government of Romania in establishing a national policy for CVT development and was run from March 2004 to September 2005. It was financed from the Phare Programme as a twinning project, implemented from one side by the Danish Ministry of Education, in consortium with Aarhus and Hostelbro Technical Colleges and, on the other side, by the Romanian Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, with the contribution of the National Agency for Employment, National Adult Training Board, Ministry of Education and Research, National Institute for Statistics, employers organisations and trade unions representative at national level.

The project aimed at defining a national strategy for the development of a structured CVT system, with an adequate funding system and a strong involvement of social partners in order to raise participation of unemployed, employees and other interested persons in vocational training and a more effective CVT provision. The main outcome of the project was the strategy itself, approved by the Government Decision No. 875/2005.

The activities in the project were numerous and dense, involving very many research and analysis phases – analysis of CVT legal and institutional framework in Romania, analysis of the national qualifications framework, survey on the demand among national employers organisations and trade unions confederations, comparative analysis with respect to CVT systems in Denmark and Spain, analysis of the CVT training offer as perceived by social partners.

Two parts of field research were conducted, one analysing the demand the other one analysing the existing CVT offer.

The survey on the demand was commissioned to the National Institute for Research on Labour and Social Protection Issues, with support from Danish experts, having as objective to assess the overall need for vocational training. 150 enterprises from two regions were visited and questionnaires were filled in by a representative of the employer and a representative of the trade union or of the employees, if there was no trade union in the company. Conclusions draw a picture of the real problems of CVT in Romania, among which:

- training is considered important, by both employers and employees, but employers are reluctant in investing in training, preferring to hire new employees when they need improved skills;
- individuals are considered as responsible for their professional development;
- training is perceived as a cost factor, rather than as investment;
- work-based learning remains the main resource for skills improvement;
- information on training offer is taken mostly out of mass media sources;
- main barriers are considered to be: high costs of training, long duration, overlapping with work timetable, lack of modularised courses;
- there are territorial and sectoral discrepancies, high revenues being correlated with higher training needs.

The survey on the offer was realised by Danish experts and was based on half-structured interviews conducted with 33 training providers. The selection of the providers was done so that different categories were represented, including training centres of National Employment Agency, school units, private training providers, commercial societies and NGOs, accredited and non-accredited. Its main objective consisted of having an inventory of the training

providers and assessing their abilities in furnish training services corresponding to labour market needs.

Findings:

- Most of the courses have a long duration and are run during working timetable – more flexibility is needed.
- Only a few training providers develop their curricula in cooperation with companies – information on evolutions of the labour market and a coherent national system of qualifications is necessary.
- Most of the training providers do not use a pro-active marketing strategy, neither impact evaluation – incentives for participation in CVT would help and a quality assurance system would be needed.
- The great majority think that CVT is different from IVET, previous knowledge and experience of adults having to be considered – trainers' training programmes should be implemented.
- Main barriers were considered to be: lack of funding, lack of financial motivation for developing occupational standards and/or becoming accredited, lack of money for investment in training equipment.

It is easy to see that the two surveys had similar outcomes (when they were not complementary) although they were based in different environments, used different approaches, from different perspectives, and with different expertise – national in one case (with European support) and European in the other (under national supervision). It is true that their background was common – development of a national CVT strategy, that brought them close to the Lisbon agenda, that was supposed to be followed within the design of the Romanian CVT strategy.

Complementary activities were also included in the project – development of an informatic portal dedicated to CVT, training of trainers and managers of CVT providers. Dissemination was assured by means of publication of 2 brochures describing the outcomes of the project and organisation of 8 regional seminars and a national conference.

This project can be considered as a perfect illustration of the general concept of the Phare Twinning arrangements: two institutions are working together, twinned, one being from a candidate country (usually, the most representative for a specific national need in connection with an acceding agenda, which means – integrating the European *acquis communautaire*), another one from a EU Member state, ready to share its experience and views on the matter – in our case: CVT. From this perspective, national and European issues are complementary and synergetic, being approached in tandem.

Monographs – Candidate countries. Vocational education and training and employment services in Romania (research project – national, with European expertise)

The country monograph on vocational education and training and employment services in Romania was one of the last in a series of country monographs realised by the European Training Foundation (ETF).

It was prepared in 2003, by ETF experts, with the collaboration of Romanian and international specialists, based on internationally verifiable data (Eurostat, OECD) and on direct field information.

The work was done in the context of evaluation of the progress of Romania on its way to European integration, the framework for the analysis being set by policies based on the

Lisbon conclusions, such as the lifelong learning initiative and the European Employment Policy. Thus, it focuses more on challenges that need to be addressed than on achievements. The conclusions were discussed early, before its actual publication, with Romanian stakeholders, as a support for the development of adequate policies.

An overview on the general context of economic, demographic and social development states the background for analysing how relevant the problems of VET and occupational policies are, including: late beginning of key reforms, negative growth from 1997 to 2000, GDP far below the EU average (25%), high share of employment in agriculture, lack of a long term strategy for the development of human resources. These are counterbalanced by increased investments after 2000, decrease of share of agriculture in GDP, reduction of unemployment, smaller disparities.

Progresses in institutional framework related to LLL are noted – prolongation of compulsory school, decentralisation of the education system, better vocational schools, stronger cooperation between national stakeholders, increased involvement of social partners, enhanced system for validation of prior learning, focus on CVT quality, new financing system for CVT in enterprises. Yet, resources (and especially funding) remain critical and participation is very low, especially for CVT – actually, the lowest in Europe.

Access to learning needs to be widened. Conclusions are rather neutral, but pointing again to challenges for Romania's integration to EU:

- Romania is changing rapidly;
- lack of vision and policy coordination for HRD;
- CVT – Priority is to do much more;
- PES and active labour market measures – a substantial increase in training measures is needed;
- enhancing systematic data collection and analysis – labour market information and monitoring;
- social partnership bodies – using the added value;
- progress in initial training and higher education, but much remains to be done to ensure better job opportunities for graduates;
- spending on education needs to be raised.

Elaborated in the context of Romania's integration to the EU, the Monograph was based on the concept of European issues in VET and employment and was perceived as burning national agenda by Romanian experts and decision takers. Being discussed in several rounds before finalisation with the main stakeholders, it was accepted by experts and responsible persons in Romania as reflecting the reality of the VET and HRD domain and became a basic reference for all the analyses in the field, both at Romanian and European levels.

National Human Development Report for 2003-2005 (research project, transnational)

The 2003-2005 National Human Development Report (NHDR) for Romania is an independent study commissioned by UNDP, the eighth since 1995. It was developed by contributions from a team of Romanian scholars and from advice and guidance provided by an external Advisory Committee. Methodology included desk research based on data of the National Institute for Statistics and fresh data produced by the Center for Urban and Regional Sociology (CURS) in various surveys.

The report provides a deep analysis on the issues of local governance, considered as a key factor for sustainable human development in Romania, based on the notion that participation of people in decision making processes is the most important element to achieve common prosperity. Trying to elaborate a set of policy guidelines that can help to position some key issues on the public agenda, the report proposes a conceptual and empirical framework, towards a continuing monitoring and analysis of the evolution of local governance in Romania.

It starts with the overview of different general development indicators that place Romania on a low position among EU and even among CEE countries, but finding that the evolution trend is positive, with Romania, since 2002, passing over the critical value that includes it in the group of middle human development countries. Along with components of the human development index (life expectancy, adult literacy and GDP), other development indicators (poverty incidence, unemployment rate, allocation of regional funds) show important disparities between the different regions, Bucharest being constantly on the top. In most of the comparisons with other countries in Europe, Romania remains generally the last or among the last. Romania has equally a weak position on the governance indicators – accountability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law etc.; among these indicators, the ones related to corruption having the tightest link to the factors related to economic performance: Romania's rank of 87 among 144 countries for corruption perception (far behind other CEE countries)⁹ being well correlated with the 63rd position out of 104 countries in the Global Competitiveness Report (ranking countries in terms of conditions for economic and business activity).

Local governance is analysed by means of qualitative and quantitative aspects, underlying the constant positive trend, especially in the years 2000, even if insufficient communication between the local and central levels of public administration and representative organisations is still a problem and measures of improvement are needed, with respect to the socio-economic environment, the political climate and the functional responsibilities of local authorities. Yet, local governance is not seen as an end in itself, but as a means for human development. And this can happen only when it is at the core of a comprehensive strategy, involving complementary actions to stimulate overall economic growth and make the economy work for small people, that is implemented in strong partnerships between public and private actors at national and local level and between these and NGOs & civil society.

According to CURS data, changes in Romania demonstrate a huge dynamic affecting overall 70% of the population, 42% having experienced some social mobility (horizontal or vertical), 24% being affected by social marginalisation and 4% being actively involved in building the new market economy. The different dimensions of the human development show odd evolutions (like the slight increase of rural population) and important disparities between regions. Low participation of citizens in public decisions, deregulated central-local political drives and weak voice of civil society keep important energies out of the process. Trends towards more effective local governance need citizen participation, the development of new mechanisms for citizen consultation, dialogue and oversight of service delivery at the local level. In order to channel central influence and resources in regional and local human development, interactions between actors at those different levels must be enhanced in such a way that catalytic agents are identified and vertical and horizontal mechanisms are used more efficiently.

Consecutively, a roadmap for local governance, decentralisation and human development in Romania is designed, built on 5 main objectives:

- to create an adequate framework for the decentralisation/ deconcentration of public services;

⁹ According to the 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International – NHDR, 2006, p. 30.

- to clarify the competencies of the different levels and structures of the public administration;
- to strengthen the financial independence of local authorities;
- to modernise the institution of the prefect and to redefine its competencies;
- to strengthen the capacity of the local public administration to implement the *Decentralisation Strategy* and to manage structural funds.

Four policy areas are identified for the establishment of a long term strategy:

- institutional design (enhancing capacity at local and regional level);
- assignment, distribution and control of resources (assuring finances corresponding to the functions and bringing access to alternative resources for enlarged options);
- decision-making and accountability (reducing arbitrary power in distribution of equalisation and investment funds);
- inequality (reducing growing disparities from unequal distribution and side effects of good/bad processes at local level by national transfer mechanisms).

Finally, some key elements are recommended to be taken into account when designing and implementing a local governance strategy:

- commitment of the central government to strengthen local governance and encourage community participation;
- the existence of strong local actors, both government and non-government;
- the application of a vigorous local governance system;
- financial support and access to technical assistance;
- ownership of the local governance process at both central and local levels;
- enhanced local capacity and adequate politics of scale;
- inclusive participatory approach, addressing the concerns of the local groups and minorities;
- integrated and multi-level approach;
- transparent information and easy access;
- multi-stakeholders partnerships and strategic alliances, promoting shared responsibility among citizens, Government, NGO's and the private sectors.

Even if the project is structured at a much wider scale than strict HRD&VET, it was important to notice that the issues underlined are similar or complementary to the ones approached in national and European projects.

Skills audit survey (research project, national)

Commissioned by ETF to the Romanian National Observatory, the study was realised by a team of Romanian researchers from the Institute for Educational Sciences.

The survey covered a total of 100 enterprises/companies in the North-Eastern region and in Bucharest, the purpose being to analyse how employers identify training needs and what their strategy is with respect to staff training and skills development. The methodology combined a questionnaire based survey with an interview based survey and documentary

analysis. The questionnaire was adapted upon a model developed by the UK Department for Education and Employment and recommended by ETF, built around the following issues:

- operating environment and the impact of external change on companies;
- workforce characteristics and staff turnover;
- characteristics and trends of workforce skills;
- recruitment and filling vacancies;
- company policies in human resource development and training activities.

The selection of the companies was intended to assure a balanced sample against several objective criteria: area of activity; type of company; company size; history; form of ownership according to the type of capital. To these a subjective one was added: employers' willingness to take part in the survey, that affected slightly the distribution and induced limitations in the extension of the conclusions. For comparative reasons, along with the 80% of the companies located in the North-Eastern region (having the highest rate of unemployment at the time of the survey), 20% were selected from Bucharest, with no significant difference noticed.

The findings are appreciated as significant by the authors, especially as they confirm results from other studies carried out on similar themes:

- increased awareness of the need for investment in HR as a prerequisite for performance and competitiveness;
- growing interest of employers for CVT – 54% of the companies which declared having offered training to their staff¹⁰; training programmes are longer, more comprehensive and better organised for highly qualified employees; for operational staff, training is rare, random, short, addressing immediate needs;
- limited number of companies with systemic HRD approach;
- high awareness of changes in business environment – adapting a reactive, survival strategy rather than a proactive, success strategy;
- relative high degree of innovation;
- optimistic attitude towards skills needs – skills shortage considered to be a short time problem;
- little use of IT (10% compared to 80% predicted by a CEDEFOP study);
- focus almost only on the Romanian market (90% of the companies);
- outsourcing support with respect to skills deficit when introducing new technologies & procedures;
- development of recruitment strategies – not considered a problem;
- preference for internal recruitment for operational staff, but for external recruitment for management positions;
- low interest in recruitment of graduates because of their lack of experience;
- little interest in collaboration with training organisations;
- tolerance against high turnover of personnel (mainly voluntary).

The study offers a good comparison basis between attitudes of Romanian companies on important issues related to HRD, very often approached in European HRD thematic. A

¹⁰ CVTS 2 recorded only 11% of the companies surveyed declared having assured training for their companies – the definition of training more precise in Skills survey, the companies included declared they are interested in HRD.

description of the economic and social context is also offered, in order to better understand the significance of the analysed aspects.

If the overall conclusion is not optimistic with respect to the preparedness of Romanian economic management to become competitive on the European market affected by globalisation, the topics and the approach are consistent with other HRD studies, which are even used for direct comparison within the analysis. The study underlines the specificity of how Romanian companies are functioning, and offers a good basis for potential corrective policies, especially from the perspective of Lisbon strategy, to which Romania is supposed to bring its share of a EU State Member.

Quality improvement of adult vocational training in Romania (development project, trans-national)

The project was co-financed by the German and the Romanian Governments and implemented from February 2004 to January 2006 by Abu Consult, commissioned by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in collaboration with the Romanian Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family (MLSSF), the National Agency for Employment (NAE) and the National Adult Training Board (NATB) in Romania.

The main objective of the project was to support the reform of adult vocational training in Romania by establishing a model for the development of core curricula and applying it in 4 occupational families according to quality principles: correspondence to labour market requirements, competence based, modular approach, professional methodology. In addition, supporting activities were added: development of occupational standards, design of trainers training measures, consultation at national level for legal framework development.

4 occupational domains¹¹ were selected against criteria established with the main beneficiaries, among which:

- labour market demand;
- estimated economic growth (for the next 5-10 years);
- good practice of existing training institutions;
- interest of social partners/ enterprises in the regional context;
- availability of national experts in the region (branches specialists);
- conditions for monitoring the potential training centres;
- system interest at MLSSF, NAE and NATB.

6 pilot centres were established, the work being set on a bottom-up approach, including the selection of the basic qualifications, 1-2 per occupational domain, for which curricula were later on developed for the qualification levels 1 to 3, according to the new concept in action in initial training, in a hierarchical pyramid of the competences.

The process included the following steps:

1. Verifying relevant occupational standards;
2. Clarifying integration in the National Qualification Framework;
3. Checking the corresponding offer/concept in the initial training;
4. Analysis of the requirements of the labour market;

¹¹ During the project, the sectors were defined by NATB and sectoral committees were established for most of the domains approached (a part from electronics).

5. Actual development of the core curricula;
6. Discussing the results with:
 - other training providers in the region (both IVET or CVT considered);
 - enterprises in the area with regard to their role in:
 - assessment of the relevance of the curricula against the requirements of the labour market (valid for their own employees);
 - potential partnership for implementation of training programmes (including facilities for work based learning);
 - hiring graduates of the training programmes (rol de clienți);
7. Analysis of the requirements for trainers training accordingly;
8. Implementing the related trainers training programme;
9. Testing accredited training programmes developed on the ground of the core curricula;
10. Introduction of regional experiences in debates on the CVT framework and in methodological work at national level.

- The final results of the project were two occupational standards elaborated and approved at national level (for electronics and brick laying) and 17 core curricula developed for qualifications in tourism, textiles, constructions and electronics.

The project objectives were matching the Romanian needs of the moment, being approached from a European perspective. The influence of the project could be felt far beyond the pragmatic development of these products, which still remained very necessary for the improvement of the training offer – training providers in CVT lacking the expertise for their own curriculum design, many times borrowing curricula from initial training, even if their contents are planned for wider objectives and longer duration than the ones foreseen in CVT. The activities of the project influenced the process at national and local level, by facilitating the clarification of CVT concepts with relevant stakeholders and the establishment of a model for curriculum development in CVT, based on labour market requirements, in a modular approach, and a hierarchical construction of the qualification contents.

The products of the project are now in use, the core-curricula being considered as models for curriculum design, the only ones elaborated and approved at national level until now – see <http://www.cnfpa.ro/index.php?lang=ro&l=prog>.

Further support to active involvement of Social Partners – Enhancing Sectoral Committees (development project)

This development project was financed by ETF, under the agenda *Institutional building 2004-2005*, and implemented with the support of the Romanian National Observatory and the National Adult Training Board.

The main aim of the project was to offer the opportunity to stakeholders at national and sectoral level to explore the possible roles of sectoral committees that were to be established, being designated to play an important role, together with the National Qualification Authority in Romania, in the development of a coherent qualifications system in Romania.

Instead of focusing and limiting the activity only to the area of the development and maintenance of qualifications, the project had a wider perspective, trying to support the strengthening of sectoral cooperation on a bipartite basis in the area of lifelong learning,

based on genuine sector interests. 4 possible roles fulfilled by sectoral bodies in EU countries were explored within 4 seminars, organised in Bucharest, involving specialists from Romania, ETF and some EU experts in each of the topics (roles) identified:

1. Development and maintenance of qualifications: defining skills needs (November 2004);
2. CVT organisation and financing (February 2005);
3. Assessment and quality assurance (June 2005);
4. Apprenticeship and work based learning (September 2005).

Two sectors were selected, having sufficient representation by employers' organisations and trade unions and raising genuine skills concerns with the development of the sectors:

- manufacture of machinery and equipment, fine mechanics;
- food industry, beverages and tobacco.

The seminars benefited from the contribution of key European and Romanian experts in the topics under discussion, being enriched by presentations from the national relevant institutions – NATB, Ministry of Labour, National Agency for Employment, National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education, National Evaluation Service. Concepts were clarified, the European experience, described from the first source, was discussed and plans for structural developments in Romania became more operational, since in both sectors sectoral committees were established, through bipartite agreements.

In addition, two study visits were organised for participants from the Machinery Building sector in The Netherlands (March 2005) and from the Food Industry sector in the United Kingdom (October 2005).

To ensure good dissemination, a brochure was elaborated for each seminar, reflecting the contents of the discussions, and extended reports were prepared for the study visits. To complete the image, two publications were elaborated: a glossary and a guideline for the revision of the qualifications list.

The project was filling gaps in the national developments, providing assistance for key developments, for which the conceptual and institutional framework was designed, but without the needed resources for implementation. It offered quality information on European trends and occasioned documented discussions on the themes proposed, but equally on the general strategy of the approach towards establishing a coherent system in Romania between representatives of social partners, and between these ones and experts from the main institutions involved in the process. Moreover, strategic plans could be developed to that respect, the two sectoral committees being among the first to be established in Romania.

All the publications were used for introduction in the thematic of the sectoral committees of all the other sectoral committees¹² and they constituted an information basis for the methodologies to be put in practice for the elaboration of the National Register for Qualifications.

Reflective Evaluation (pilot Leonardo da Vinci project)

The project „Reflective Quality Development for Teachers and Trainers in CVT“ (abbreviated: „Reflective Evaluation“) is a Leonardo da Vinci pilot project that focuses on the quality

¹² In Romania, 23 sectors are defined by the National Adult Training Board, for which 21 sectoral committees have been established, from February 2005 to October 2006.

development and improvement of Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) courses through self-evaluation of teachers and trainers within the CVT sector.

Coordinated by the Institute for Vocational Education and Training – Biat – University of Flensburg (Germany), "Reflective Evaluation" includes partners from 6 countries, that develop further national networks, including different institutions and experts in the field: Danish Institute for Vocational Training of Vocational Teachers - DEL (Denmark), Prisma Center for Development and Studies, University of Panteion (Greece), Academus (Portugal) AxA Consulting (Romania), Pontydysgu, Centre for Research and Educational Development – CRED (Wales, UK). One institution is assigned to conduct a systematic and continuous evaluation – the Institute for Education and Technology – ITB – University of Bremen (Germany).

The overall project aims at the designing of a flexible and interactive web based self evaluation tool which teachers and trainers are assumed to use within their respective institutions. In the focus of quality development are CVT courses of independent CVT providers but with the expected high flexibility of the self evaluation instrument, it is also intended to reach public institutions, company based retraining courses and social partners and chambers.

The project's duration is 24 months, from 2005 to 2007. It started with the definition of a common concept of self evaluation quality (assurance) and empowerment evaluation, on the background of national analyses in the partner countries.

The envisaged flexible and interactive web-based instrument for self evaluation is under development with the contribution of all partner institutions in the project and it is currently being tested by teachers and trainers and stake holders in all participating countries. The instrument will be modified according to the test results. The partners will reconstruct it before designing a final version that will be translated in all languages of the participating partners and become available for free download throughout all EU member states.

The product, meant to be transnational, "European", is built in such a way that significant differences with respect to culture, educational system and implementing institutions may be taken into account, allowing the addition or variation of individual criteria.

The role of the Romanian experts in the project has been to equally contribute to the development of the tool, run the test in Romania and assure that genuine cultural elements are considered in the final version of the instrument. Actually, they integrated the common work, fulfilling the same tasks as the rest of the partners in the project.

Such a project may seem to be of small scale and not very representative. Many other examples could be brought instead (or along with), Romania's participation to the European community programmes for lifelong learning being very active. We only wanted to illustrate that such a project, defined on European priorities and undertaken in a European context, match very well Romanian views, with Romanians having a normal part in this kind of work. The objectives of the project and the contents of the actual self-evaluation tool are considered very relevant for the Romanian public (trainers in CVT and experts in trainers' training) – a lot of interest was shown in the first part of the testing phase, still running, and no special attitude could be noticed, in comparison with the effects in other partner countries in the project. The Romanian contribution is at the same time neutral, equal to other experts in the team, and specific, the cultural elements being very important for the European horizons!

2.3 Conclusions

As can be noticed from the examples above, the image offered by the Romanian projects match very well the analytical overview of R&D projects carried out in CEE countries.

Apart from this, it can be said that Romanian projects address issues that are relevant as well at European level. On the one hand, this is because, in the process of EU integration, Romania spent huge energies to meet the requirements of the accession built on the European agenda, that Romania was committed to adopt anyhow at the end of the process. On the other hand, due to the important assistance of the European expertise, EU issues were embedded in the approach and background elements of the methodologies applied. At the same time, Romanian experts in HRD & VET were connected to the European discourse in R&D and were affected by the trends "in fashion" – European programmes to which Romania was included from early times had an important role in this respect.

Romanian HRD & VET research and policy reforms benefited from these evolutions. Romania's way to access the EU was speeded by the HRD & VET reforms, and other elements of the integration were also eased by these reforms. Now, participation of Romania in European processes comes natural and has already a common background. Romanian contribution can matter only from this perspective, only when common understanding can underline the specific differences that are to be taken into account. Which means that not only Romanians try to adopt European ways, but the Romanian way begins to be European.

Generally, national projects seem to be more concrete and relevant to developments in Romania. Yet, it is equally important that Romanians contribute in a normal way to European projects, not least because their participation in European HRD & VET projects will influence their approach to the national projects as well. Especially as, from now on, for Romania, European is also national!

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