Overview

Romania has made steps towards the modernisation of its system. Nevertheless, there is not yet a systematic, comprehensive and coherent approach to the reform process. To date, the vocational education and training system is characterised by a high degree of centralisation, a weak school infrastructure (due to under-investment for a long period), a lack of well trained administrative staff in the bodies responsible for vocational education and training, a lack of well trained teachers/trainers and an outdated and narrow curricula in the majority of schools. Limited financial resources are one of the major constraints for the continuation of reforms.

Major challenges include developing a legal framework for vocational education and training, institution building, and investing in equipment and human resources.

Financing vocational training

The education budget is 4% of GDP. In 1995, the budget for vocational education and training (provided within the frame of the formal education system) was 0.52% of GDP. The main source of financing is the central budget. Local public administrations also contribute to building, repairing and maintaining schools.

Continuing training of the unemployed is financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection out of the Employment Fund, made up largely of employers’ contributions (5% of their overall gross payroll costs) and employees (1% of their gross salaries). About 20% of the fund is used for continuing training of the unemployed. Budget subsidies also contribute to cover funding gaps.

Continuing training

Training activities are planned on the basis of an annual national framework programme which brings together individual programmes developed by each county. Continuing training courses are organised within County Training, Re-training and Further Training Centres, schools or other training units. The new government has planned a rapid restructuring of the economy which is expected to increase unemployment. Therefore, it also planning to support training for the workers who will become redundant and promote the training of the employed in order to adapt their skills to the new requirements of the economy.

International support activities

PHARE has supported developments in vocational education and training particularly with a 25 million ECU programme on vocational education and
training reform (1994-1997). The programme focuses on the national level and the policy framework of curriculum development, assessment and standards, teachers for vocational education and training strategy reviews, etc. At school level it supports implementation of new curricula and teaching methods, development of new teaching and learning materials, specification of appropriate school equipment for the new curricula, etc. A number of other programmes had vocational training components, such as the programme for Active Employment Measures, the Repede programme on management development, the Labour Market in Romania programme, and the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Regional Development programme.

Within its programme on education reform, the World Bank Project (including a loan of US$ 50 million) has helped to establish the Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment. The World Bank has also started a programme on Employment and Social Protection (1996-2000) components of which concern the development of continuing training (with a loan of US$ 14.6 million, matched by a Romanian contribution of US$ 6.5 million) and career counselling for young people and adults (a loan of US$ 6 million).

A number of bilateral programmes have supported the setting up of training centres for the unemployed (Germany) and for management and business development (the USA, the UN and the UK).

National priorities

The main priorities for the government are to:

- build a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for vocational education and training;
- decentralise the management of the system;
- increase financial resources through a participatory financing system, which will pool funds from the central budget, budget of local authorities and other state and private agents and set up a vocational training fund;
- develop an information system and mechanisms for optimising the demand and supply for vocational training at national, regional and local level;
- base the training system on vocational standards as benchmarks for quality.

Establishment of the National Observatory

The European Training Foundation has supported the establishment of a National Observatory in Romania (hosted in the Institute for Educational Sciences (37, Stârbea Voda str., sector 1 Bucharest). The National Observatory gathers and analyses information on developments of the vocational training system and the labour market. On the basis of this information the National Observatory and the Foundation periodically produce country reports on vocational training developments in Romania.