EN

Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

ROMANIA

Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

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Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the proportion of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programmes in Romania was above the EU average: 60% in 2013 (European Commission, 2015, p. 8) against 48.9% in the EU; 57.2% in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 117); 56% in 2015 compared to 47% in the EU ([1]). However, the employment rate of recent VET graduates was low: 62.4% in 2015 (European Commission, 2016, p. 8), compared to the EU average of 73%. Adult participation in lifelong learning was also low: 1.5% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 8) and 1.3% in 2015 compared to 10.7% on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 117) (Table 1).

VET in the country face the challenges of improving the labour market relevance of programmes, reducing drop-out in high schools, re-engaging early leavers, improving quality assurance, increasing the quality of teaching staff, and boosting adult participation in lifelong learning. Steps were being taken to reinforce VET and apprenticeship. In 2013, the initial vocational education and training (IVET) system had been reformed, restructuring programmes over three years and introducing agreements with companies for organising work-based learning as well as subsidies for companies involved in apprenticeship and opportunities for student progression to higher VET. The apprenticeship system was also reformed in 2013-14. A proposal for a two-year dual system was being submitted to Parliament in December 2014. A new strategic framework for VET was being prepared, aiming to strengthen social partners' and companies' involvement, and to bring VET closer to labour market needs.

([1]) Eurostat, data for 2015.

Table 1. **Framework data: score on VET indicators in Romania and in the EU: 2010, last available year and recent trend**

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	RO [f]	EU [f]	Yr	RO [f]	EU [f]	Range	RO	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	57.2 [b]	48.0 [b] [E1]	'13-'14	▪ -2.8	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14		34.0 [b] [E2]			
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	94.2	69.2 [E3]	'13-'14	▪ -1.9	▪ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	18.0	38.0 [e]	'10	18.0	38.0 [e]			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	10.0	20.0 [e]	'10	10.0	20.0 [e]			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	1.4		'15	1.3	10.7 [b]	'13-'15	↘ -0.3	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	24.0	66.0 [e]	'10	24.0	66.0 [e]			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	48.8 [b]	42.7 [b] [E1]	'13-'14	▪ -2.7	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	6.0	25.0 [e]	'10	6.0	25.0 [e]			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	44.6 [b]	33.0 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -3.5	▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)		5.3	'15	0.3	6.9	'11-'15	→ 0.0	↗ 0.5
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	0.3 [u] [C]	4.3 [b C]	'13-'14	▪ -0.1	▪ 0.0
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	2.1 [u]	9.5 [b]			
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	[u] [B]	9.5 [e] [B]	'11	[u]	9.5 [e]			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	81.7 [B]	80.2 [e] [B]	'11	81.7	80.2 [e]			
Skill development and labour market relevance								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.05 [b]	0.56 [b] [E4]	'12-'13	▪ 0.01	▪ -0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	0.3 [b]	6.4 [b] [E5]	'12-'13	▪ 0.1	▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.4	0.8 [e]	'10	0.4	0.8 [e]			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	2.0 [b]	1.0 [b] [E6]	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	43.1 [b]	30.0 [b] [E7]	'13-'14	▪ -4.5	▪ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first-time tertiary education graduates			'14	0.0 [z]	9.3 [E8]	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	36.3	41.5 [E9]	'12	24.6	41.6 [E9]	'10-'12	▪ -5.9	▪ 0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	75.6 [b]	77.2 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -1.9	▪ 0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	6.9 [b]	5.3 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -0.4	▪ -1.0

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	RO [f]	EU [f]	Yr	RO [f]	EU [f]	Range	RO	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	16.4 [b]	23.7 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -1.7	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	91.8	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	40.4	55.2	'15	50.4	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 2.0	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)	19.3	13.9	'15	19.1 [C]	11.0 [C]	'10-'15	→ 0.0	↘ -0.6
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	18.3	33.8	'15	25.6 [C]	38.7 [C]	'10-'15	↗ 1.5	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)	20.7	16.6	'15	22.6	15.8	'10-'15	↗ 0.3	↘ -0.1
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)	10.6	13.1	'15	10.3	12.9	'10-'15	→ 0.0	↗ 0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	71.2	77.4	'15	68.1 [C]	76.9 [C]	'10-'15	↘ -0.9	↘ -0.2
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	26.1	27.3	'15	25.0 [C]	23.5 [C]	'10-'15	→ 0.0	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)	64.8	68.6	'15	66.0	70.0	'10-'15	↗ 0.3	↗ 0.3
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	55.3	53.4	'15	53.3 [C]	52.6 [C]	'10-'15	→ 0.0	↘ -0.2
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	77.4 [D]	82.8 [D]			

[A] UOE (UNESCO OECD Eurostat) back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED (international standard classification of education) 2011 not yet available.

[B] AES (adult education survey) 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

[C] 2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

[D] Forecast made in 2016.

[E1] Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

[E2] Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

[E3] Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

[E4] Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

[E5] Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

[E6] Partial information for NL.

[E7] Based on 25 countries (missing: HR, IT, UK).

[E8] Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, IE, FR, CY, UK).

[E9] Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

[b] Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

[u] Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

[z] Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

[e] Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked ▪. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p. 117.

CHAPTER 1.
MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

The 2005 apprenticeship Act (^{2}) defined apprenticeships as a special type of labour contract with a company, which should provide work, practical and theoretical training at the workplace. The law was updated in 2013 and the updated provisions put in place in 2014. They aimed to ensure additional funding for employers, quality of the training offer (accreditation of training providers), and nationally recognised qualifications for learners (qualifications at European qualifications framework (EQF) level 1 to 3, according to the duration completed, 12 to 36 months).

In parallel, to improve VET school provision, a two-year work-based programme was introduced in secondary education in 2012-13. The work-based learning component was organised by companies, with approximately 30% of the work-based part carried out in the workplace. In 2013, the programme duration was extended to three years. The programme led to a VET qualification at EQF level 3. It required a contract between the student, the school and the company.

1.1.   Policy priorities for 2016-20

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training (DGVT), are to:
(a) strengthen and support the apprenticeship system by reinforcing the link between VET and occupation;
(b) increase the attractiveness of apprenticeship contracts and improve the image of apprenticeship;
(c) improve the relevance of work-based learning and training programmes for employees and jobseekers;
(d) upgrade work-based-learning elements in school-based VET programmes;
(e) improve the quality of work-based learning in IVET;
(f) improve the accountability of employers/companies in work-based-learning in IVET;

(^{2})   Law No 279 of 2005, Ministry of Labour.

(g) improve financing mechanisms for public/private partnerships for work-based learning.

1.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

1.2.1. The 2015-20 lifelong learning strategy

The strategy was adopted in 2015 ([3]). It addresses the need for strengthening partnerships between VET providers and enterprises in order to increase the quality and labour market relevance of VET. Measures support the take up of apprenticeship contracts for people with low qualifications, with a target set at 125 000 contracts by 2020. Financial incentives (subsidies) are set to stimulate employers to engage in apprenticeship programmes, internships and job placements.

1.2.2. The 2016-20 VET strategy

The strategy for education and vocational training in Romania for 2016-20 ([4]) was adopted in 2016. It aims at the introduction of a dual system in initial VET and developing a quality assurance mechanism for work-based learning. An action plan for the implementation of the strategy was adopted, providing for the creation of partnerships with companies, adapting curricula and training programmes to sectoral needs, accreditation of companies offering training, increased financial resources to support work-based learning, and assessment of learning outcomes.

1.2.3. Introduction of a dual system in initial VET

An amendment to the education Law endorsed in November 2016 ([5]) introduced a dual system in initial VET for qualifications at EQF/ROQF (Romanian national qualifications framework) levels 3, 4 and 5. Implementing legislation ([6]) and general methodology ([7]) for setting dual VET programmes have been set out.

([3]) Government decision No 418/2015.

([4]) Approved by governmental Decision No 317 on 27 April 2016.

([5]) The government emergency Ordinance No 81/2016 on 23 November 2016, amending the Law of national education No 1/2011
http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/ordonan-de-urgen-nr-81-din-16-noiembrie-2016-privind-modificarea-i-completarea-legii-educa-iei-na-ionale-nr-1-2011-emitent-183883.html

([6]) Order of the Ministry of National Education No 3554/2017.

([7]) Order of the Ministry of National Education No 3556/2017.

Dual VET programmes are organised at the request of employers. A partnership contract is established between the economic operator (company or consortium), the school, and local authorities ([8]), detailing roles and responsibilities. The number of training places will be set annually based on company request. The economic operator is involved in decision-making at school level ([9]). Schools establish admission requirements in collaboration with the company/partner companies. A training contract is signed between the company, the school and the learner (or legal representative). Implementation is planned to start in 2017-18. Dual VET programmes in 2017-18 will be offered at EQF level 3. The methodology for the accreditation of companies offering dual places is under preparation by a working group composed of national authorities (education, labour and economy ministries) and social partners (main county chambers of commerce and industry, employers' organisations and trade unions). In December 2016, tax incentives (deductions) for businesses involved in dual VET were introduced ([10]). Partnership agreements between the Ministry of Education, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania and the general union of Romanian industries have been concluded to support the process.

([8]) Local authorities may vary depending on the administrative geographic area: a city hall, a county or a region.

([9]) Economic operators have equal participation with school representatives in the activities of the school council administration board.

([10]) Complementary regulation following the amendment of the education Law, emergency Ordinance No 84/2016 amending the fiscal code: http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/ordonan-de-urgen-nr-84-din-16-noiembrie-2016-pentru-modificarea-i-completarea-unor-acte-normative-din-domeniul-financiar-fiscal-emitent-184310.html

CHAPTER 2.
MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET ([11])

A quality assurance national reference point (QANRP) was set up in 2006 covering IVET, continuing vocational education and training (CVET)/adult learning, non-formal and informal learning. Quality standards for IVET providers are required by legislation and used as a condition for accreditation. Standards and guidelines are also used to promote a self-improvement culture. In 2006, legislation introduced a national quality assurance framework; a strategy to revise it and to improve quality assurance in initial VET, according to the latest EU and national developments, was devised in 2013. It includes methodology for external and internal evaluation. Annual self-assessment and reports are required. By 2015 most IVET providers had developed successful quality assurance approaches in line with the national framework. Those lagging behind were supported by inter-institutional assistance networks of IVET providers for peer learning and staff training. The national authority for qualifications has implemented a strategic ESF project aiming at developing a national quality assurance system in CVET, in line with the European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) recommendation. In 2015 CVET providers were carrying out self-assessment on their own initiative.

([11]) Sources:
 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop): http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en

ReferNet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet

Priorities reported by Directors General for vocational training for the 2016-20 period;

EQAVET (2016 Secretariat survey, website, newsletters): http://www.eqavet.eu

2016 compendium of EQAVET NRP *Erasmus+* funding;

Council recommendations on the 2016 national reform programmes: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/2016/#

Education and training monitor 2016 country reports: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

Since 2008, surveys in companies have examined skills needs and employer satisfaction with graduate skills. This information was used at system level to adapt programmes. In 2015, graduate surveys considered employability, working conditions, continuing training and job satisfaction. Regional projects aiming to collect data on IVET graduate transition from VET to work, information on employability and on use of acquired skills at the workplace were carried out by school inspectorates in most counties. Data were collected for 49 000 graduates. Company and VET graduate surveys were also used by training providers (in partnership with social partners) to adapt training. Tracer studies one year after graduation have their results analysed at national level to inform qualification and training programme design and learning process/methods. A council for forecasting and statistics relevant to higher education was established. Collection of data on VET graduate employability was financed through ESF (2007-13) and a financial scheme (2010-14). The 2011 education Act and subsequent specific regulation provide the legal framework to use and combine data on learning, labour market entry and career for VET governance. Results from studies for monitoring labour market and demand forecasts for VET related professions up to 2020 are available.

2.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET

The country's priorities in this matter for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to:
(a) promote a quality culture in adult learning/CVET with emphasis on apprenticeship;
(b) improve the quality of learning outcomes certification in IVET;
(c) improve quality assurance in VET at system level.

Between 2013 and 2016, the training standards for IVET (EQF levels 3 to 4) and formal CVET have been revised and in 2016 the revised standards were approved by Ministerial Order. These training standards include a section for the assessment and certification of learning outcomes. Their implementation, including a revised curriculum for the ninth grade of vocational school and technological high-school, started in the 2016/17 school year.

The QANRP used *Erasmus+* funding in the reporting period to raise public awareness of VET, to support implementation of EQAVET at national level, and to strengthen cooperation with other QANRPs in Europe via peer learning activities.

A quality assurance approach for CVET is under development.

The situation concerning the systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system ('always used' item in Figure 1) has remained unchanged compared to 2013. Romania was below the EU average in IVET and CVET in 2016. The EQAVET indicators, which are systematically used in IVET, include the share of providers applying internal quality assurance systems and those accredited, data on participation and completion rates as well as on mechanisms to identify training needs in the workplace.

Figure 1.   **Use of EQAVET indicators**
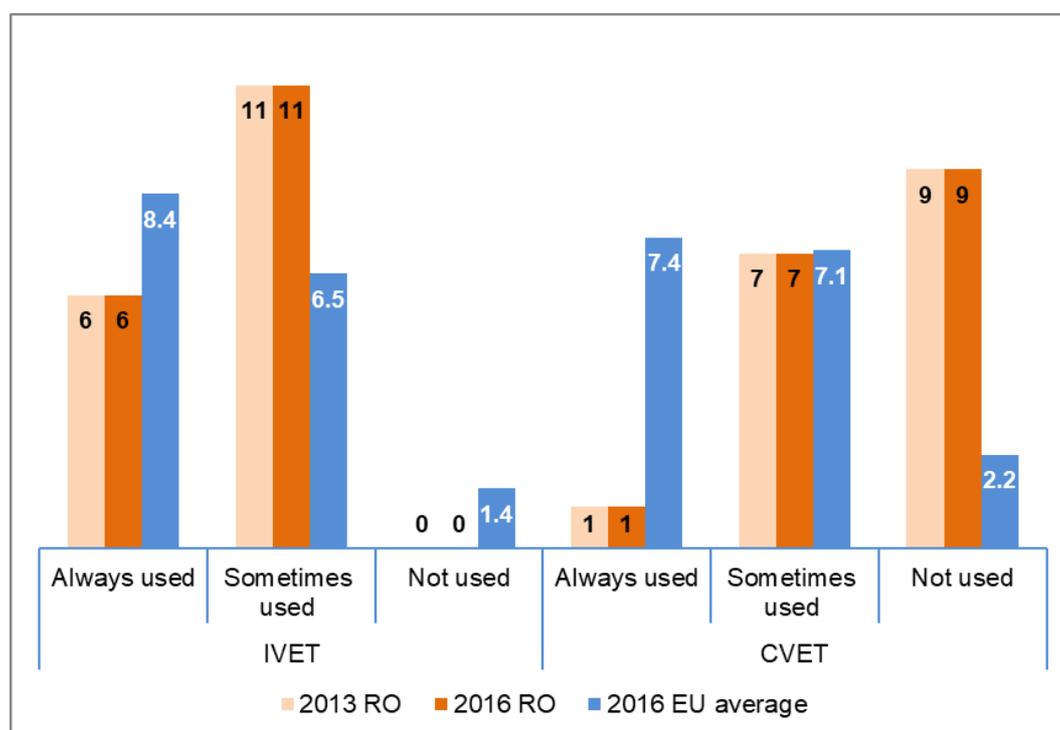
NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, six were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 216 in Romania, compared to 8.4 in the EU on average in 2016.
      EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.
Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretariat surveys for 2013 and 2016 data.

2.2.   Continuous information and feedback loops in initial VET

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to:
(a)   develop a quality assurance mechanism for IVET provision;
(b)   develop school cooperation structures aiming to improve quality assurance at provider level.

The strategy for education and vocational training in Romania for 2016-20 was approved in 2016 (Section 1.2.2). Among its main priorities is to develop a national monitoring mechanism on labour market insertion of IVET graduates and the mechanisms for anticipating skills required by the labour market, in order to review qualifications and update training programmes and curricula.

CHAPTER 3.

MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

3.1.   Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country's priorities in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are two-fold:

(a) for young people:

    (i)   identify young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), register them within public employment services (PES) and create an offer of integrative measure packages;

    (ii)   improve access of young people to IVET, especially of those coming from disadvantaged groups;

(b) for adults, increase adult participation in CVET.

3.2.   Main actions taken in 2015-17

3.2.1.   The 2015-20 strategy for lifelong learning

The strategy for lifelong learning 2015-20 adopted in June 2015 (Section 1.2.1) foresees that a number of IVET teachers and management staff will be trained in adult education to support participation in lifelong learning and diversify the provision of VET. Community centres for permanent learning (219) will be established at national level, starting with 36 pilot centres. A greater number of adults with low qualification levels will be supported to acquire basic and transversal competences.

3.2.2.   The 2016-20 VET strategy

The strategy for education and vocational training in Romania for 2016-20 adopted in 2016 (Sections 1.2.2 and 2.2) seeks to support access to IVET for young people by providing financial aid through scholarships, developing alternative training forms suited to diverse publics, accommodating special educational needs (SEN) learners, offering second-chance programmes for the

young at risk of exclusion, developing mechanisms for recognition of prior learning and quality assurance mechanisms for learning outcome certification.

3.2.3. Permeability and flexibility

Since the 2015/16 academic year, VET has been introduced at tertiary level, so universities can offer VET courses that give access to the labour market. Previously, VET programmes could be offered only at secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels.

3.2.4. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.2.4.1. National qualifications framework ([12])

The Romanian national qualifications framework was adopted in 2013 ([13]). It brings together nationally recognised qualifications from both initial and continuing VET, general education and higher education. The framework has eight levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The ROQF was referenced to EQF in 2014; it is at an early operational stage. In July 2015, an amendment to the 2013 decision approving the ROQF was published ([14]) to clarify correspondence between the ROQF/EQF levels, the qualifications issued and the type of education and training programmes that lead to qualifications at each level, as well as the access requirements for each ROQF level. ROQF implementation activities were undertaken in the project *Financial support for the EQF NCP in Romania* ([15]) funded by the European Commission. A draft of a comprehensive national qualifications register ([16]) was one of the outcomes of this project. An updated version is expected to be submitted to the EQF advisory group in 2017.

([12]) Cedefop, 2017b.

([13]) Government Decision No 918/2013 regarding the approval of the NQF, modified by Government Decision No 567/2015:

http://www.isjcta.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/H.G.918_2013.pdf

([14]) Government Decision No 567/2015 amending Government Decision No 918/2013 regarding the approval of the NQF.

([15]) ReferNet article in Romanian:

http://www.refernet.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106:sprijinire
a-cadrului-naional-al-calificrilor-pentru-invarea-pe-tot-parcursul-vieii-i-corelarea-
acestuia-cu-cadrul-european-al-calificrilor&catid=37:informatii-
diverse&Itemid=55&lang=ro

([16]) http://www.anc.edu.ro/?page_id=146

3.2.4.2. *Validation* ([17])

The 2011 Law on national education ([18]) promotes the importance of lifelong learning with a special focus on the validation of non-formal learning and lifelong learning counselling. A set of specific methodologies on validation were drafted, but not all were in place at the end of 2013. A new platform (*Learn for yourself*) was developed in 2013 to help unemployed adults identify new training opportunities and promote recognition of skills developed in non-formal and informal learning. IVET and CVET are modularised but IVET, CVET and higher education lack coherence and sufficient permeability; an integrated approach between the institutional framework for validation, methods, guidance and counselling and employment is missing. There are links to CVET qualifications; skills and competences acquired at work or informally can be certified by training providers that are accredited as certification centres. Validation is done through exams and based on occupational standards (described as learning outcomes). Legislative procedures in process include measures for free assessment of non-formally acquired competences. Quality procedures currently only relate to validation in CVET. Assessment centres have to fulfil requirements set by the Ministry; quality assurance relates to authorisation and relevance of procedures but not to outcomes. Integration of occupational standards used in CVET with professional standards used in regular VET qualifications is in progress. The 2015-20 strategy for lifelong learning adopted in 2015 ([19]) (Sections 1.2.1 and 3.2.1) provides a foundation for developing validation mechanisms, as well as addressing issues related to financial incentives and counselling ([20]). A dedicated validation facility within the national centre for accreditation has been established. In 2016, the strategy for education and vocational training in Romania (Sections 1.2.2, 2.2 and 3.2.2) foresees development of mechanisms for recognition of prior learning and quality assurance mechanisms for learning outcome certification.

([17]) Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

([18]) National education Law No 1/2011.

([19]) Government Decision No 418/2015.

([20]) Measures are foreseen to support about 210 assessment centres and provide technical assistance to the national authority for qualifications in recognition, validation and certification of prior learning. Methodology for recognition of prior learning (RPL) will be reviewed and quality assurance (QA) mechanisms will be developed.

3.2.5. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups

The strategy for reducing early school leaving ([21]) adopted in June 2015 promotes social inclusion measures for children at risk, including school after school, and networks of second-chance programmes in urban and rural areas. The strategy emphasises quality of materials, quality of staff training, counselling and career guidance services available to:

(a) teachers, school mediators and professional school counsellors;

(b) to children/students.

The *Youth guarantee* implementation plan for 2016-20 focuses on initiatives to reach the most disadvantaged groups of young people on the labour market. Measures include financial incentives for employers offering apprenticeships and traineeships.

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([21]) Adopted through Government Decision No 417/3.6. 2015.

MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

Compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have stronger science and technology skills, and weaker (ranged by priority):
(a) foreign language speaking;
(b) cultural awareness;
(c) mathematical skills;
(d) digital skills (Figure 2).

Figure 2.   **Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET**
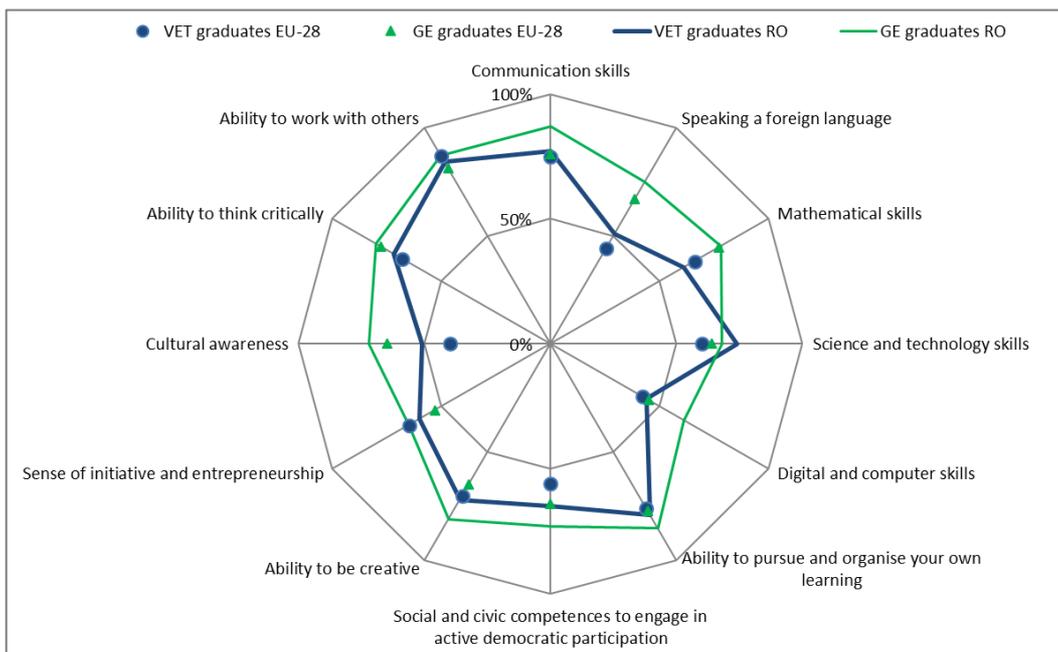
NB: GE stands for general education.
Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.
Source: Cedefop, 2017c.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by an increasing share of young low achievers in reading and science, and decreasing share in maths compared with 2012 (Figure 3). The share of low achievers in Romania was much higher than in the EU on average, where the trend is similar.

Figure 3. **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**
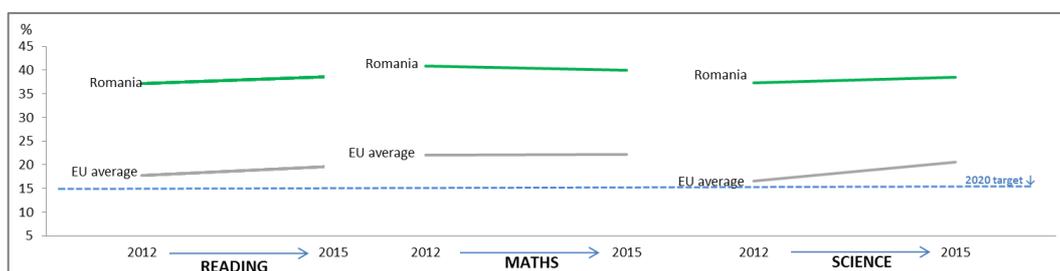
NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale.
Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

As VET enrols 56% of all upper secondary learners in the country ([22]), this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes. However, this is happening against a background of promoting the acquisition of eight key competences in the 2011 national education Law that defines the key competences as outcomes of primary and secondary education, including VET (Article No 68). Challenges that policy-makers are still facing are the need for better teacher training (initial and continuing), adequate learning materials, evaluation tools and cohesion with the expansion of work-based learning ([23]).

4.1. Key competences in initial VET

The country's priority in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to strengthen key competences in VET curricula.

The 2016-20 VET strategy (Sections 1.2.2, 2.2 and 3.2.2) foresees updating occupation standards and VET curricula and reviewing qualifications based on learning outcomes, including eight key competences defined by the 2006 EU framework. In 2016, new initial VET standards for qualifications at EQF levels 3 to 4 were approved by the Education Ministry. These standards are based on units of learning outcomes, each comprising key competences. Consultations with companies and other stakeholders resulted in developing new training standards for 131 initial VET qualifications at EQF level 3 and 59 qualifications at

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([22]) Calculated from Eurostat; data for 2015.

([23]) For more information on key competences in VET see Cerkez et al., 2016.

level 4. The standards were approved by the Education Ministry in 2016 ([24]). The curriculum for grade 9 of vocational schools and technological high-schools was revised using these standards ([25]). In 2017, curriculum revision continues for grades 10 and 11 for vocational school and for 10, 11 and 12 grades. The new training standards and qualifications support acquisition of key competences in a professional context.

In December 2015, a national jobs competition was launched. In the first round, it included 68 schools (gymnasium and technological high schools) from three (of eight) regions. The competition is an opportunity to demonstrate and evaluate key (life) competences of learners. Since 2015, business plan competitions and international fairs of training firms have also nationally promoted entrepreneurship.

4.2. Key competences in continuing VET

The 2015-20 lifelong learning strategy (Sections 1.2.1 and 3.2.1) addresses the acquisition and validation of basic and transversal competences that help early leavers from education to find jobs. The measures include revision of the validation methodology, quality assurance, and training of staff in assessment centres of prior learning. The allocated financing allows 45 000 adults to acquire basic and transversal competences.

The Youth guarantee initiative (2015) supports training of adults with low skills and early leavers from education through continuing VET. Evaluation of their skills is available for free in the assessment centres that can receive financial support, similar to the authorised training providers.

([24]) Ministerial Order No 4121/2016, developed based on the methodology for the elaboration of tools for the description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes in initial VET (2015).

([25]) Ministerial Order No 4457/2016, to be introduced in 2016/17.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

Access to the teaching profession is subject to holding a bachelor or master degree. Graduates have, for one year, the status of a prospective/beginner teacher and can start their insertion/induction period enjoying all rights of fully certified teachers. The system includes mentorship as a vital element of teachers' initial training.

5.1.   Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools

Although a master degree has been legally required as a condition for entering the teaching profession since 2011 (organic Law of education), the actual implementation of these requirements did not start in 2015-16 as planned. Therefore, the provisions still have an optional nature. The law was revised in May 2015 and emphasised the organisation and implementation of a master of arts (MA) degree for the teaching profession. The MA programme should be structured as two years of academic studies and include subjects for in-depth study and synthesis, practical training (throughout three semesters) and research (linked to the MA dissertation). The operationalisation of these provisions remains a strategic project for the education and training system. A programme had been elaborated based on the *Professional standards for the teaching positions*, but several attempts to implement it have been unfruitful.

In 2016, the Ministry of National Education changed ([26]) the procedure for awarding the teacher-confirmation certificate (*Definitivat* certificate). After completing a one-year period of teaching, prospective teachers take a simplified teacher-confirmation exam. The written test consists of two parts instead of three:

([26]) The Orders of the Ministry of National Education No 5 087/31. 8.2016 and No 5 223/19. 9.2016, published in the Official Journal No 754/28. 9.2016, amended the Law of national education. The new legal provisions can be accessed at: http://edu.ro/ordin-nr-508731082016-privind-aprobarea-metodologiei-de-organizare-%C5%9Fi-desf%C4%83%C5%9Furare-examenului

a part that is focused on the subject in which the candidate specialises (60% of the total grade) and another focused on the teaching methodology (30% of the total grade), while 10% is granted automatically. The minimum passing mark remains the same, but from 2017 onwards the final mark will be calculated based on a formula that includes marks from inspections, marks obtained in the written test and the mark for personal professional portfolio. This new procedure was expected to be implemented for the first time in April 2017 ([27]).

5.2. Initial training for trainers and mentors in enterprises

The 2016-20 VET strategy approved in 2016 ([28]) (Sections 1.2.2, 2.2 and 3.2.2) includes measures aiming at training new in-company trainers. The national centre for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) development and the Ministry of Education through its local representative structures (county school inspectorates) are committed to train 1300 in-company apprenticeship tutors by 2020.

5.3. Continuing professional development for teaching/training staff in VET schools

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to improve the knowledge, skills and competences of teachers and trainers.

The 2015-20 lifelong learning strategy (Sections 1.2.1, 3.2.1 and 4.2) includes continuing professional development (CPD) measures as part of adult education. The 2015 strategy for reducing early school leaving (Section 3.2.5) supports teacher training on innovative methods, career guidance and counselling, and inclusiveness.

The *DALIVET* project, which aims at promoting apprenticeships, was launched in late 2014 and has been implemented during the reporting period.

([27]) More information can be accessed on:
https://www.edu.ro/nout%C4%83%C5%A3ile-examenului-na%C5%A3ional-de-definitivare-%C3%AEn-%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C5%A3%C4%83m%C3%A2nt-sesiunea-2017

([28]) The strategy for education and vocational training in Romania for 2016-20 was approved by Governmental Decision No 317 on 27.4.2016.

The project aims at improving the skills and competences of the teachers and trainers involved in work-based learning, through a pilot training programme. An accredited training course was implemented to increase the competences of 23 VET school teachers (foremen) and 22 in-company trainers involved in apprenticeships. The course was focused on strengthening and updating teaching competences, enhancing job-related communication skills and social competences, various forms of collaborative and interactive activities (team-work, role-play), and specific job-related competences.

5.4. Continuing professional development for trainers and mentors in enterprises

The country's priority in this area for the 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to improve tutors' knowledge, skills and competences on IVET-specific elements, such as training standards, curricula, and pedagogy.

The *DALIVET* project (Section 5.3) also carries out CPD for in-company trainers and mentors.

Conclusion

Since 2015, Romania has developed reform to strengthen its apprenticeship and work-based learning settings, and introduce a dual system in initial VET. Steps have been taken to enhance quality assurance mechanisms and the information tools which may guide the development of initial VET. VET has been introduced into tertiary level education; the Romanian national qualifications framework and the validation system are being reinforced, and training opportunities have been offered to groups in need. Initiatives to support the development of key competences in initial and continuing VET were also taken. The recruitment rules (degree, exam) for VET school teachers are being improved and simplified; progress is being made towards developing their continuous professional development, as well as the initial and continuing training of in-company trainers and mentors.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions and the country's policy priorities for 2016-20 are being addressed. However, information available to Cedefop at the time suggests issues that could benefit from further consideration:

(a)   initiatives in support to guidance;
(b)   developing the information and feedback loop system that could support the strategy for CVET;
(c)   more systematically using the EQAVET indicators to monitor the development of the VET system.

Setting out policy priorities in key competences in continuing VET, and the initial and continuing training of VET school teachers and in-company trainers and mentors, for the remaining period until 2020 could also be considered.

List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DGVT	Director General for Vocational Education and Training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
GDP	gross domestic product
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
MA	master of arts
NEET	not in education, employment or training
PES	public employment services
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QA	quality assurance
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
ROQF	Romanian national qualifications framework
RPL	recognition of prior learning
SEN	special educational needs
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
VET	vocational education and training

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