LEAP
Local Adult Education Policy

2020-1-SK01-KA204-078381

Intellectual Output 2

Trends & Dynamics in AE Local Policy Making

Country Snapshot – ROMANIA

Table of contents:

Introduction

''Several initiatives have been introduced to promote adult learning, but there is still little policy innovation in this area.''[1]

Recent data and statistics on AE availability is relatively limited. However, at national level, several new strategic documents addressing AE/LLL appeared during the last few years, showing an increase of interest on the side of policy makers.

In 2020, a project was launched by the National Authority for Qualifications aiming to simplification and systematization of the national registry for qualifications.

In April the same year, the Ministry of Labour announced the organization of a selection procedure for the "National Coordination Group Concerning Adult Learning"[2], under the framework of an Erasmus+ project – ''Adult learning, a step forward for all''. The National Coordination Group has been officially established through an order issued by the Ministry of Labour (1203/28.07.2020). Its aim is to "bring together all policies, activities, measures, initiatives in the field in adult education, in order to integrate them in a coherent way, taking into consideration current national and educational strategies.[3]"

The Coordination Group consists of 50 members, considering geographical coverage (at national/regional/local levels) – representatives of public central administration, employers' organisations, trade unions, sectoral committees and non-governmental sector.

The activities foreseen for the Group are related to improving and extending the transparency of decision making in the field of adult learning, increased participation and consultation of all stakeholders, establishing a discussion forum and a platform for exchange of good practices, periodical meetings and discussions on topics of adult learning such as labour market skill requirements, flexible learning paths, financing, quality assurance and evaluation, establishing a virtual office (hosted by the Ministry of Labour's website) to disseminate results, materials, resources.

For 2021, through a project[4] under the framework of the Operational Programme "Administrative Capacity", whose beneficiary is the Ministry of Education, a national strategy for continuous and adult education for 2021-2027 is expected to be elaborated.

---

[1] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Education and Training Monitor 2020 – Romania;

[2] Announcement published by the Ministry of Labour concerning the selection of memebers for the National Coordination Group for Adult Learning, available at:
https://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Anunturi/Anunt_Organiz_proced_selectie_membri_Grupncia_13042020.pdf,
accessed on June 15, 2021;

[3] Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Metodology concerning the organization of members form the non-governmental sector in order to establish the National Coordination Group for Adult Learning, available here (Romanian language only):
https://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/transparenta/anunturi/5875-anun%C8%9B-organiz-selectie-membri-sect-neguv-grup-coord-invatare-adulti-13042020, accessed on June 15, 2021

[4] Noi instrumente pentru strategia privind educatia continua a adultilor din Romania, Edu-C-Ad, more details here:
https://www.edu.ro/educad

On the other side, overall participation rates in AE (formal and non-formal) remain low (1.3% according to the Education and Training Monitor 2020, far below the EU average, and the interest level on the side of final beneficiaries (adult learners) seems to have decreased (this aspect is mentioned into the Agenda for Competences – Romania 2025 issued by the Ministry of labour- based on Eurostat data dating back in 2016, no more recent data available).

A report[5] published in 2017 by the National Institute for Statistics shows a better situation in terms of informal learning (defined as intentional but non-institutionalized/structured learning) – 64% participation rate in 2016, with television, radio, and video materials as preferred method/source especially among those with a lower education level. Learning from family members or colleagues was the second most popular method, preferred especially by the younger and those from rural areas. Learning though guided museum or other objectives (historical, natural) tours or by visiting learning centres was the least preferred method. The target group of the study was formed of adults aged 25-64 from 10296 households.

Data from Eurostat, cited by the National Institute for Scientific Research in the Field of Labour and Social Protection in a report[6] compiled within the project 'Agenda for Competences, Romania 2020-2025' show the following general tendencies on the side of beneficiaries:

- Decreased participation on all age segments, but especially among the 25-34.
- Lowest participation rates are registered among the low-skilled/people with a low level of formal education.
- Visible decalages between rural (0.5%) and urban (2.3%) areas
- Participation levels are higher among the unemployed, but the negative trend is visible also within this category.
- More than 75% of the population has never participated in AE and does not intend to, showing lack of information and awareness. 76% of the adults considers they do not need any other training. There are also other motives invoked not to participate such as: costs related to training (36%), family responsibility (34.8%), daily schedule (29.4%), health and age (25.9%).

In terms of topics addressed, most of the national level policies and initiatives seem to remain focused on low level qualification and training programs addressed to the low skilled.
COVID 19 indeed brought attention on digital skills development, and ad-hoc private initiatives/online trainings were put in place by training providers – data on participation rates correlated with profiles of participants is missing.

The Agenda for Competences for Romania for 2025 lists digital competences as a priority for connectivity and the labour market, as well as being key competences for life, but, for the moment '…in

---

[5] Iagar M. et. al., Educatia Adultilor in 2016, Institutul National de Statistica, 2017;
[6] Institutul Național de Cercetare Științifică în domeniul Muncii şi Protecţiei Sociale, Raport 5 Agenda pentru competențe România la orizontul anilor 2025, January 2019;

general, adults have to pay to acquire or improve their digital competences, unless they are taking part in dedicated projects or using open educational resources.' [7]

The National Reform Program (2020) mentions a series of projects (currently in implementation) carried out under the framework of the Operational Programme Human Capital and Operational Programme Administrative Capacity which could be of interest and have a relevant impact on AE, e.g.:

- OPAC project implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection – one of the objectives is to 'simplify the procedures necessary for authorizing adult professional training providers, by developing a digitalized system'

- another project implemented by the Ministry of Labour and the National Authority for Qualifications, titled 'increasing the Administrative Capacity of the Ministry of Labour and National Authority for Qualifications through systematization and policy simplification in the field of qualifications' foresees measures to support the recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, as well as the correlation between the available qualification programmes and the needs existing on the labour market.

- trainings for farmers carried out by the Agency for Financing Rural Investments, through the National Programme for Rural Development

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (adopted in April 2021) does not explicitly address or mention 'adult education', providing only some 'hints', e.g., '78% of adult Romanian population is financially uneducated', '…less than 60% of adults used the internet on a daily basis in 2018', '…very low level of training opportunities for adults is representing an important problem…'

Education and Employment Operational Program[8](2021-2027), under the framework of ESF, managed by the Ministry of European Funds includes clearer objectives related to adult education as one of its investment priority is "Strengthening population participation in lifelong learning process to facilitate transitions and labour market mobility", proposing measures such as "Expanding and diversifying opportunities / offer for participation in lifelong learning process, also by financing participation (establishment / development of lifelong learning centers), Facilitating the acquiring of a qualification for the people who left school early; Increasing the access and participation of adults in programs for the development / increase of the level of key competencies; Training packages for employees adapted to the needs / requirements of the market: "Basic package", "Keep up"; "Digital access for all", collaborative training programs, continuous training of employees in accordance with the needs identified by employers in order to meet the challenges in the field of activity."

---

[7] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Education and Training Monitor 2020 – Romania;

[8] Ministry of European Funds (2020), Education and Employment Operational Program, October 2020 version, available at http://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/e96733c0a68d30a9c92a78e29d169caa-1.pdf

How are AE policies are defined at local level in Romania?

Local public authorities and decision makers such as Local and County Councils, City Halls, Municipalities could be considered the principal policy makers at local level. Other actors playing a significant role in strategic development and policy making at local level are the Regional Development Agencies (non-governmental organizations of public interest), Territorial/Local Employment Agencies and School Inspectorates (coordinating the activity of Second Chance Schools – providing formal education to adults, youth and teenagers who have not completed compulsory education).

After analysing various current and recent national AE/LLL - related policies, documents, and action plans, we found references to local authorities – but rather with attributions in implementation and support than in policy design.

Local authorities are involved in AE activities such as European projects – either as partners or beneficiaries, and sometimes, more or less concrete references to AE or LLL (e.g. "facilitating access to continuous education and training", "providing support services for adults through multi-functional access centres - such as employment support, counselling for socio-professional insertion (…) entrepreneurship counselling") can be found within the Strategies for Integrated Local Development, Strategies for Integrated Urban Development.

Objectives related to adult education can also be found within regional development strategies (designed by Regional Development Agencies) - e.g., 'increasing access and participation of adults to programmes for key competence development' or within Regional Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3) – while analysing funding programs (e.g., Education and Employment Operational Program[9]).

Without the pretence of an exhaustive analysis, during the secondary research we couldn't identify AE dedicated policies or strategies designed by a local authority, nor any training and AE needs analysis carried out at local level by directly reaching the local community members.

Data concerning the dynamics preceding development of AE national policies development is also relatively scarce. Reference to consultations with local policy makers and AE providers can be found within the Agenda for Competences – Romania 2025.

- The documents states that the consultations took place in December 2019, under the format of 3 workshops, attended by "public institutions with expertise in the field of competences, AE&T providers, companies, civil society representatives."
- The following types of stakeholders were listed: Ministry of Education, National Authority for Qualifications, Sectoral Committees, Employment Agencies, Education and Training providers (universities, associations, professional training centres), companies, NGOs.

Interesting references can be found within the methodology for accreditation of Community Lifelong Learning Centres (HG 598/August 2017). Community centres are supposed to be public entities, subordinated to the local public authorities, working in partnership with education providers (including AE providers) to answer the LLL needs of the community and implement national policies at local level.

---

[9] Ministry of European Funds (2020), Education and Employment Operational Program, October 2020 version, available at http://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/e96733c0a68d30a9c92a78e29d169caa-1.pdf.

- The activity of these centres should be related to: periodical identification of training needs at local level, correlation of studies and policies to local strategic development documents, offering actualized and complete information concerning training opportunities.

- Developing nonformal and informal education opportunities for the local communities, developing competences of the community members, promoting volunteering and active ageing, promoting cultural, European, and national values, addressing the needs of those at risk of exclusion, gathering actualized data concerning the education and training activities, coordination and creation of networks.

Nevertheless, no information concerning the concrete activities of such centres is currently available. Only four such centres were established under the framework of a project implemented between 2015-2018 by the Romanian Institute for Adult Education in partnership with three other foundations and no stable financing mechanism has ever been foreseen[10].

A common framework seems to be missing, and AE elements are not often explicitly approached within local policies, although EU agendas are to some extent reflected into the concrete activities implemented at local levels – as most of them depend on EU funds and therefore they are designed in accordance with the priorities of current funding programs.

The EEOP (Education and Employment Operational Program) 2021-2027 represents a great opportunity for local authorities to develop their AE policies and implement concrete measures, as they are listed among the eligible applicants (Local authorities / institutions and public services with attributions in the field (decentralized services of MMPS, MEN, ANOFM etc.[11]).

AE policy making remains to a high extent a centralized process, with most of the responsibilities shared among the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Education, National Authority for Qualifications (coordinated by the Ministry of Education), Ministry of European Funds, Ministry of Culture (to a smaller extent) and Ministry of Justice (in case of special situations such as education for people in probation system or prisons).

---

[10] Ministerul Educatiei si Cercetarii, Strategia privind Digitalizarea Educatiei in Romania (document in public consultation), 2020, available at: https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/SMART.Edu%20-%20document%20con
sultare.pdf
[11] Agentia pentru Dezvoltare Regionala Sud-Est, Strategia Regională de Specializare Inteligentă a Regiunii Sud-Est 2021-2027 (SRSI SE), available at: https://www.adrse.ro/Documente/Planificare/RIS3/SRSI_SE_2021-2027_eng.pdf

How AE policies are implemented at local level?

The range of training services provided by local AE programmes and main stakeholders

The main actors implementing AE policies at local/regional levels and providing AE training opportunities:

- *Local/Territorial Employment Agencies* (operating at county level, subordinated to the National Employment Agency- public institution of national interest) – focused on the unemployed, providing lower-level qualification programs.
- *Chambers of Commerce and Industry*, addressing a broader range of people, and providing various trainings, but mainly short-term specialization courses, authorized by the National Authority for Qualifications (paid by the beneficiary if not financed through a specific project). Topics most addressed: HR, Trainer, Project Management, Entrepreneurship, Quality Assurance, ICT, accounting, data protection, data entry, environment responsible, innovation management.
- *Regional Development Agencies* (public utility NGOs, 8 at national level). Examples of training opportunities offered by the North-East Regional Development Agency:
   - On site: project management, public acquisitions, HR management, structural funds expert (mainly paid by the user, coming with a nationally recognized specialization certificate)
   - Online: Including Digital Education within AE, Digital Competence Development, Smart Housing, Business Financial Management, 3D printing, Basic Digital Instruments for Low Skilled Adults, Online Security, Senior Tourism Expert, Tourism Energy Manager (Green tourism), Cultural Heritage Opportunities for Tourism SME (mainly free courses developed as OER in Erasmus+ projects)
- *Specialized institutions providing continuous professional development to certain professional categories (*e.g., teachers, educational staff)
- *Cultural Organizations* such as *Public Libraries* (lecture clubs, activities for seniors, digital skills, exhibitions, organization of cultural events)
- *Second Chance Schools* (formal education providers for adults who have not completed compulsory education);
- *Private Providers (NGOs and SMEs)* – specialization trainings, qualification trainings, on-demand trainings on various topics (either paid by the user or financed through various projects)

Needs analysis and how programs are designed

We could not find any common coherent framework for needs analysis at local levels, each actor is responsible for carrying its own research. Aggregated/centralized/structured data is difficult to find.

As most of the free programmes depend on financing through various projects (mainly under the framework of the Human Capital Operational Programme and Erasmus+), they are mostly designed according to the priorities of those financing mechanisms rather than following a specific need analysis at local level.
Each provider is promoting its training offer individually, sometimes more visible institutions are supporting those within the dissemination process (e.g., Chamber of Commerce publishing press

releases or forwarding information to their emailing lists concerning training opportunities developed by its members), but no common promoted database could be found.

Conclusions and Takeaways

At national level, an increase of interest on the side of AE policy makers can be remarked. However, the involvement of local authorities in AE policy making is limited in all phases (consultations, needs analysis, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) as the process is centralized to a high extent. At the same time, the participation levels and interest on the side of users (adult learners) remains relatively low.

The national policies, designed by specialized national organisms, although in line with EU agendas and recommendations are sometimes based on general appreciations and suppositions or older statistical data as no more actual information as no live, real time data gathering mechanism (neither in terms of needs and interests, nor in term of impact/monitoring) is available, and there is little contact between the policy makers and end beneficiaries (adult learners/employers). Results and impact data of previously implemented policies and strategies are not made easily available to the public.

Private AE providers appear to be very adaptable, being able to provide a wide range of training opportunities, but they do not benefit of much support at local level, depending mainly on EU financing and on projects they access themselves. Although various initiatives are taken, many of them have limited sustainability (some disappearing after the project implementation, and consequently financing).

Considering that more new and promising policy and funding opportunities are expected for the immediately following period (a national strategy for adult education and continuous training, a national coordination group for adult learning, various funding programmes, e.g., the Education and Employment Operational Program), it could be a very favourable moment for the local actors to have their say in the field of AE policy making. As until now the process was preponderantly a centralized one, it is very probable they will be confronted to challenges and in need of appropriate support and tools to make the first steps for change.

Some of the identified challenges local policy makers are confronted to are the following:
- Terms such as adult education, professional training, and lifelong learning are used interchangeably, there is no commonly agreed upon operational definition of AE.
- There is no 'tradition' of policy making at local level, the process used to be centralized to a very high extent.
- There is no platform to provide a systematization/organization/categorization of EU and national policies and resources (studies, statistical data, financing sources, good practices) in the field of AE and LLL – no 'mind map' for the local actors – documents are scattered across various websites of central authorities and other stakeholders.
- No specialized tools or trainings to support local policy makers in developing AE policies.
- Training opportunities are available, but effective 'marketing' mechanisms need to be engaged to increase visibility and potential learner's interest.
- No primary data gathered from direct beneficiaries at local levels – what would they be interested in? What sort of training programmes do they need?

Local authorities could play an active role in:

- Making national and EU policies more 'digestible' for local AE ecosystems (e.g. by periodically publishing briefs and infographics/factsheets/activity reports/results summaries);
- Accurately identifying the needs of local communities in terms of AE and LLL and representing their real interests within the relationship with central authorities.
- Explicitly integrating national and EU policies into their strategic objectives or by designing dedicated local AE and LLL policies that are relevant for the real development of local communities and citizens.
- Act as moderators to promote dialogue and cooperation among all the local AE stakeholders – public and private – citizens, training providers, business actors, public institutions;
- Motivating population to attend existing opportunities;
- Valorising and promoting informal learning opportunities;
- Gathering real time data in all stages – from need analysis to impact monitoring and making it available to the public in a structured and easy to use manner;
- Supporting AE providers in promoting and deploying their trainings
- Increasing the visibility and credibility of OERs and online learning opportunities
- Becoming AE providers themselves;

What can empower local authorities

- Working definitions of AE related taxonomy/terms;
- Data gathering tools/examples (modular, which can be merged in larger databases);
- Transparency tools to promote AE initiatives, resources, data;
- Ideas and inspiration on how to motivate local population to attend trainings;
- Cost-benefit analysis and training needs forecasting tools;
- Ready to use templates (even pre-filled with explanations or examples) and step-by-step guidelines to develop strategic documents/dedicated AE policies applicable at local levels, in an accessible manner so they can be used not only by them as policy makers but also by all interested parties (practitioners, training providers, prospective learners, employers);

How can we empower local authorities?

LEAP Project should support the local authorities to take an active role and make themselves heard by stakeholders and also by the central authorities. This could involve:

- Simple and effective need analysis tools designed to be used at local level to gather data directly from the local community members;
- A mind map of the main EU and national policies in the field of AE;
- A platform with actualized resources, tools, good practices available in the field of the AE at local level;

- Templates, tools and step by step guidelines on local AE policy making, examples of already existing successful policies;
- Quality assurance, monitoring and reporting tools (for measuring the success and impact of their policies);
- Tools to support local authorities to promote the existing training offers to the final beneficiaries;
- Inspiration and good practice ideas/examples on how they can strengthen the cooperation between different actors in AE at local level;
- Specialized trainings in the field of AE policy making;

As a final remark – it is widely recognized that the Romanian public sector is still confronting with a high level of bureaucracy – therefore we can conclude that any tool or resource providing clarity and promoting simplicity would increase success chances and support local policy makers to become more effective.

Bibliography

Agentia de Dezvoltare Regională Sud-VEST Oltenia, Planul de Dezvoltare Regională (PDR) aL regiunii Sud-VEST OLtenia 2021-2027, 2020;

Agentia pentru Dezvoltare Regionala Sud-Est, Strategia Regională de Specializare Inteligentă a Regiunii Sud-Est 2021-2027 (SRSI SE);

Consiliul Local al Municipiului Piatra-Neamt, Strategia pentru Dezvoltare Locala Integrata Piatra Neamt 2014-2020;
Consorţiul regional al Regiunii de Dezvoltare Nord-Est, Planul Regional de Actiune pentru Invatamant, 2016;

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (European Commission), Education and Training Monitor, Romania, 2020;

European Association for the Education of Adults, Developments: Liberal adult education in the margins-Country report – Romania, 2020

Eurydice, Romania – Adult Education and Training, available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-64_en, accessed on June 14, 2021;

Guvernul Romaniei, Programul National de Reforma 2020, Bucharest 2020;

Iagar M. et. al., Educatia Adultilor in 2016, Institutul National de Statistica, 2017;

Institutul Național de Cercetare Științifică în domeniul Muncii şi Protecţiei Sociale, Raport 5 Agenda pentru competenţe România la orizontul anilor 2025, Bucharest, 2019;

Institutul Național de Cercetare Științifică în domeniul Muncii şi Protecţiei Sociale (INCSMPS), Proiectul Agenda pentru competenţe România 2020, 2025;

Ministerul Culturii, Strategia pentru cultura si patrimoniu national 2016-2022;

Ministerul Investitiilor si Proiectelor Europene, Planul National de Redresare si Rezilienta, Bucharest, 2021;

Ministerul Muncii si Protectiei Sociale, Biroul virtual - Noul pachet Agenda pentru competenţe, available at: http://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/2014-domenii/munca/6149, accessed June 14, 2021

Ministry of Education, Noi instrumente pentru strategia nationala privind educatia continua a adultilor din Romania, 2020, available at: https://www.edu.ro/educad, accessed June 15, 2021;

Ministry of Education, Strategia Nationala de Invatare pe Tot Parcursul Vietii 2014-2020

Ministry of European Funds, Education and Employment Operational Program, 2020;
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Action Plan of the National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 (Project), 2020;

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Strategia Nationala Pentru Ocuparea Fortei de Munca2014-2020;

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Metodology concerning the organization of members form the non-governmental sector in order to establish the National Coordination Group for Adult Learning, 2020;

Ministry of Labour, National Coordination Group for Adult Learning, available at: https://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Anunturi/Anunt_Organiz_proced_selectie_membri_Grupncia_13042020.pdf, accessed on June 15, 2021;

Regional Development Agency North-East, Planul de Dezvoltare Regionala Nord-Est 2021-2027, 2020;
Romanian Government, Government Programme 2020-2024;