



TESEUS Country snapshot:

ROMANIA

Provided by:

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND MAIN FINDINGS

Although the legal framework, tax system and fiscal requirements are not the most predictable and stable, and the typical start-up founder dedicates 10 hours a day to growing the business, Romania is not entrepreneurship-adverse. It is among the countries whose youth are open to the idea of becoming entrepreneurs and has a high number of self-employed people.

The educational system is preoccupied by introducing entrepreneurial education across all the training levels – in different formats – including compulsory and optional disciplines within the curricula, extracurricular activities, inter-disciplinary approaches, regional and institutional initiatives, projects and competitions.

A wide range of free training materials is available and, in some cases even financing mechanisms.

The 'practice enterprise' method proved to be a success among technological high-school students and there are also a few powerful social actors outside the formal education system who are providing free entrepreneurial education opportunities and resources.

All those elements represent a great advantage - however - a series of limitations which cannot be ignored are still present.

The Romanian education system is a centralized one, but this doesn't necessarily mean there are no great disparities between different regions and especially between rural and urban IVET institutions. Many resources do exist and can be implemented as extracurricular activities – but this depends entirely on teachers' volunteering and willingness to get involved.

On the other hand, most of the approached are mainly theoretical – training courses, counselling, etc. However, VET students could seriously benefit from more practical approaches – such as prototyping centers within IVET training schools (those, with few exceptions, only exist within universities). They could create innovative products according to their professional qualification and then apply the theoretical entrepreneurship knowledge to create a business, sell them and raise capital for further activities. However, there is no clear legal framework for such approaches, and in most cases neither financing opportunities or material base as many of the technological schools have poorly equipped laboratories and no resources to invest in raw materials.

Another aspect is represented by the fact that some programs, including the 'practice enterprise' are only accessible to technological high school students from specific specializations (such as economic, services, commerce), although students with basic qualifications could also benefit from setting up social enterprises within their communities or becoming self-employed – as in some cases, rural areas do not provide massive employment opportunities.

The IVET system could benefit from more practical, hands on approaches, also addressed to students enrolled into basic qualifications programs – which would be complementary to the already existing initiatives.

B. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF IVET SYSTEM IN ROMANIA

Development of the IVET system in Romania is ensured by CNDIPT - Centrul National de Dezvoltare a Invatamantului Profesional si Tehnic (National Centre for Professional and Technical Education Development) - a public institution, subordinated to the Ministry of Education, established since 1998. Among other attributions, CNDIPT is responsible for elaborating and proposing to the Ministry of Education (MEN) policies and strategies for IVET development, mechanisms of organization and consultation of partnership structures necessary to develop IVET locally and regionally, coordinates the elaboration of professional preparation standards and IVET curricula. Also, it ensures the adaptation of IVET quality assurance instruments, proposes certification system for IVET, develops and implements professional trainings for IVET teachers and coordinates the elaboration of the training materials (curricular auxiliary manuals) used into the teaching process within the VET System.

CNDIPT operates at 3 main levels: *national* – proposing policies, strategies, legislation, etc. to the Ministry of Education, *regional* – through 8 Regional Consortia (responsible for elaborating action plans for regional development of education) – by providing consultancy and support, implementing quality assurance strategies, school development projects, and *local* – with 42 Local Committees for Social Partnership Development, working directly with IVET schools, School Inspectorates, economic operators/companies and social partners. Moreover, CNDIPT is coordinating the implementation of ECET principles within the IVET system.

The Romanian education system is still a centralized one, coordinated and controlled by the Ministry of Education – however, this doesn't mean there are no significant disparities among regions, and especially between urban and rural schools.

The Romanian education system and implicitly the IVET system suffered numerous changes and 'reforms' during the last decade. However, since 2012, the IVET structure, with about 450 qualifications available, is the following:

-tertiary (non-university)– with a maximum of 3 years duration, approximately 200 qualifications;

-upper secondary – technological high-school – 4 years, 69 qualifications;

-professional training, 3 years, 131 qualifications;

-dual VET, introduced in 2017, with a 3 years duration

Through the 3 years professional training, students can obtain a level 3 EQF professional qualification certificate, after passing a certification exam.

In this type of IVET, practical (in company training) is taking a total of 24 weeks, 5 weeks in the first year (20% of the total time allocated to the programme), 9 weeks for the second year (60% out of the total programme time), and 10 weeks during the last year (72%).

Technically, tuition figures/numbers of places available/IVET schools are approved and established according to employer's demands.

Since 2016, due to economic operators' requirements, dual VET has been introduced, through a modification to the Law of Education.

How the curricula is created

IVET curricula development is coordinated by the CNDIPT, through a series of regional and local organisms. For each qualification, a Professional Preparation Standard is elaborated and reviewed/updated regularly – usually every 4-5 years. This document contains the description of knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired. Other support materials are also elaborated to correlate the learning contents and timing with the competences. Development of teaching, learning and evaluation materials is also coordinated by CNDIPT. For the practical training, the schools are free to develop their own curricula (however, it has to be approved by the local IVT coordinating organisms and school authorities, and to be in line with the Professional Preparation Standards). This is usually done by the coordinating technical disciplines teachers – and the involvement of companies within curricula creation remains low.

Dual VET involves an active partnership between schools and companies – with more responsibilities on the company's side – including curricula adapted to the labour market requirements. However, as it has been only recently introduced – there is not enough data to measure its success levels.

How IVET schools cooperate with other business sector

Practical training in companies is taking place based on a training contract between the school, the company and the student. Excepting for dual VET and some especially large companies who have the necessary expertise and infrastructure to undertake those issues, involvement from the company's side within student's orientation, evaluation and cooperation for curricula development remain relatively low.

For the future years, a series of centralized initiatives meant to improve the involvement of the companies are planned, such as training tutors (within the companies). Meanwhile, a series of smaller initiatives are already taking place (e.g. as part of Erasmus+ VET Partnership Projects).

Erasmus+ internship experience

Erasmus + mobility projects are representing a real opportunity for VET students to develop their technical and transversal skills and for the schools to compensate for the lack of resources (e.g. poorly equipped in-site laboratories). The most frequent type of internships are short-term, in-company trainings. The competences acquired are then validated and recognized within the home organization of the students, and in many cases the ECVET system is used. As Erasmus+ National Agency's reports show, in 2018 alone, a number of 124 projects have been approved, and a 100% satisfaction level resulted from participants reports.

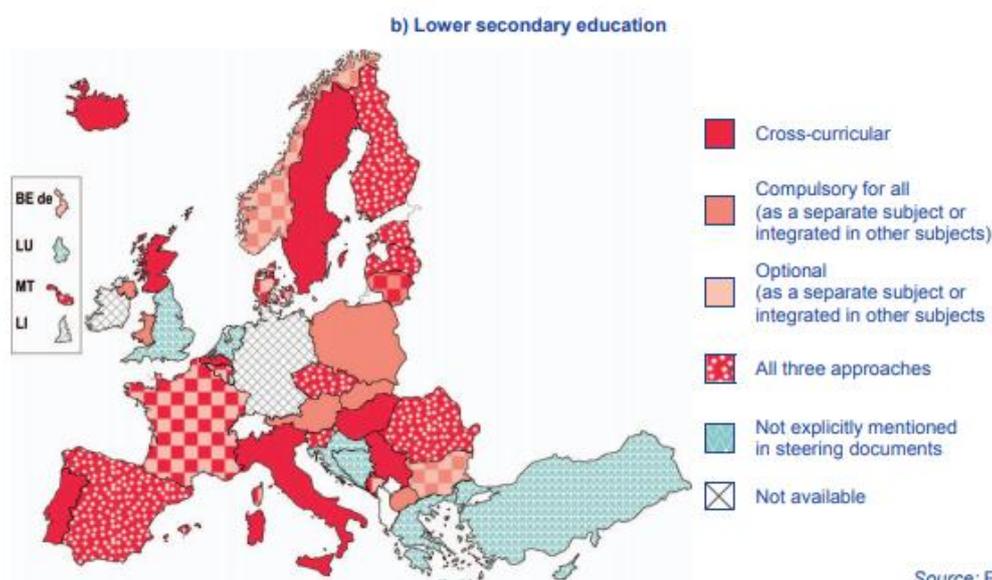
C. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF EXISTING DATA AND ANALYSES FOR ROMANIA

The Romanian IVET system does not benefit from a special entrepreneurship education strategy yet, however, entrepreneurial education is addressed through other strategic documents and initiatives at national level. According to the 2014 Eurydice Report 'Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe', one of the most relevant national strategy is the 'Strategy for the Development of the Small and Medium sized Enterprises Sector' and for the Improvement of the Romanian Business Environment Horizon. Also, entrepreneurship education, also specifically in IVET is mentioned through the Education and Professional Development Strategy in Romania for 2016-2020.

It refers specifically to IVET underlining the need to extend the activities already implemented in order to develop students' entrepreneurial spirit and creativity. Also, one of its strategic targets is to increase the number of students involved in entrepreneurship training from 40000 in 2011 to 50000 in 2020. Increasing the number of students participating in international mobilities is also a target (4600 in 2020 from 2800 in 2014).

The same Eurydice Report 'Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe' shows that Romania is not entrepreneurship-adverse – by contrary being one of the countries with the highest number of people willing to become entrepreneurs (33% of respondents) and one of the highest rates of self-employment (11.2%).

In Romania, entrepreneurship is taught as a compulsory separate discipline, as an optional discipline and there is also a cross-curricular approach.



D. STATE OF EXISTING START-UP PROMOTION AND FIRM CREATION SUPPORT FOR IVET STUDENTS IN ROMANIA

Formation of entrepreneurial competences among VET students - within the context of the EU 2020 Strategy implementation-is a key objective in IVET, according to a 2017 report of CNDIPT. The same document states that all the qualifications include learning outcomes (specific to each qualification level) which have as main aim the 'creation of the premises to entrepreneurial competences formation', such as communication in a foreign language, critical thinking and problem solving, interpersonal relationships management, PC use and information management, professional career development, numerical data processing, business initiation and team work.

Entrepreneurial education-related disciplines are embedded into the curriculum within IVET – such as civic/entrepreneurial education (1 h/week during the first year of professional training-9th grade), applied economy and entrepreneurial education (1h/week for the 3rd year of study, 2 hours for economic/commerce related specializations), entrepreneurial education (12th grade, upper secondary level – technological high school).

One of the most popular methods for entrepreneurial competences development is represented by 'practice enterprise', a concept initially introduced in Romania since 2001 – as an interactive way to develop initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, while making use of an inter-disciplinary approach. The equivalent concept is applied with university system, as 'simulated enterprise'.

During 3 hours of training/week, the students can practice their business negotiation skills, marketing strategy development, financing and planning. However, all the transactions, including payments, are virtual, no real money involved.

Since 2006, this method has been introduced into the national curriculum, being accessible to all the technical schools/high-schools with 'services' qualification profiles. In 2017, a number of 1225 of exercise firms were active, in 270 schools from 230 localities.

The 'practice enterprise' method is accessible to the students in the last 2 years of training within a technological high-school with 'services' profile (yet unavailable for those in technological/professional schools or with other profiles).

Setting up a practice enterprise is a relatively easy procedure, involving filling in an online form through the ROCT website (Centrala Rețelei Firmelor de Exercițiu/Întreprinderilor Simulate din Romania) which is also a department of CNDIPT. Also, active practice enterprises can take part into national and international events and fairs (e.g. 2019 Youth Business Summit New York, NY).

Another strong actor in the field of entrepreneurial education (although not necessarily focused on IVET only – therefore no specific data available in their reports-but on all pre-university levels – and therefore also involving VET schools) is represented by Junior Achievement Romania (a member of JA Worldwide), reaching a total number of 4000 teachers and a quarter of a million students every year through their programs. They provide free training materials, consultancy, certificates – on different levels of school education – and subjects – including financial and entrepreneurial education.

Implementation of a JA program within the school is on a volunteering basis, depending on a coordinating teacher. As in the case of 'exercise firm', these types of programs are more popular among high-school students rather than to those in 3 years professional trainings.

More VET-oriented projects implemented by JA Romania are – *national*: Agribusiness in schools, Professional Success in Food Sector, Digital Professions, and *international*: Innovation based entrepreneurship within the raw materials sector, Enterprise without Borders (financially sustained by FedEx).

An interesting opportunity provided by JA Romani and also accessible for the students within VET high schools is represented by the Entrepreneurial Skills Pass – The European Certificate for Entrepreneurial Competences – a certification which is recognized within 6 states and supported by top companies. Such a certification can be obtained by the students which have carried out a practical activity within the field of entrepreneurship – through the JA educational programme 'Mini-company'.

'It's My Future' Erasmus+ project implemented by JA Romania produced another series of free online resources for entrepreneurial education which can be used by VET students as well.

On the other hand, a variety of trans-regional, regional, local and institutional initiatives are being implemented or have been already and produced useful resources.

E.g. the inter-regional project for the 'Development of active employment measures, stimulation of entrepreneurship initiative of individuals and labor market placement in South East, North East, South Muntenia and Bucharest Ilfov regions' was implemented by the County Agency for Employment (CAE) in Bacău – in 2015 – aiming to improve transition from school to labor market by equipping VET graduates with career and entrepreneurship skills.

Other entrepreneurship opportunities (including training and micro-grants for start-up) are implemented by various organisms in each county/region– most often by the Chambers of Commerce. Although they are not exclusively addressed to IVET graduates – they are open to them as well as to any other recent graduate. For example, The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Neamt County is implementing, between 2018 and 2021 the SUCCESS+ Project (under the Operational Programme Human Capital) – aiming to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment – through creating 43 new companies and training 350 people.

Business incubators are also available (although more popular among tertiary level students). As in other cases, they are not exclusively dedicated to the VET sector students but accessible to them as well.

Individual and institutional initiatives are also present – e.g. extracurricular/optional training courses on entrepreneurship for IVET students, developed by teachers as an outcome from their participation in international mobilities (e.g. Erasmus+ KA1 mobility projects for school staff). Those individuals volunteer to deliver those courses to their students as complimentary activities.

TESEUS Country snapshot (IO2, task 2): Romania

The national education strategy foresees for the immediately following period a series of measures aimed at improving the access to entrepreneurship education for IVET students through extending the learning methods aimed at developing entrepreneurial competences, organizing competitions and fairs at regional, national and international levels, and developing the concept of entrepreneurial high-school.

E. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC EXAMPLES FROM ROMANIA

CARdio drive

“CARdio drive” is a project developed by the students from Colegiului Tehnic „Grivița” – Bucharest, supported by Politehnica University from Bucharest, and also guided and instructed by a team from JA Romania on how to develop a business plan and promote the product to the potential clients. The product they have developed is an electronic device which monitors driver’s pulse and oxygen saturation and is able to safely stop the car and signal the emergency situation – into the context of the large number of accidents due to driver’s loss of consciousness caused by cardio-vascular disease. The students and their invention received multiple awards at national and international competitions such as „Skills for the Future”, and they are now continuing collaboration with JA Romania and Hyundai Motors.

Idee-exe.ro (Idea for a Knowledge-Based Society)

This trans-national project has been implemented by the Institute for the Development of Educational Assessment in partnership with SIGMA Publishing House and „EXE – Expertiza pentru o societate bazata pe cunoastere”.

The project involved 2 development regions and it had as a target group a number of 700 ISCED 3 IVET students and setting up 70 ‘practice enterprises’. Although the project has been implemented under the POSDRU program, it is still sustainable and continues to produce results. It also produced a useful free online training on how to set-up an run a practice enterprise.

The educational business incubator JA BizzFactory.

Implemented by JA Romania, it is open to secondary and tertiary level students for a wide range of fields, from agribusiness to engineering. The participants benefit from consultancy (blended-learning type) from real business specialists.

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Idea for a Knowledge-Based Society Project Website

<http://idee-exe.ro/ce-este-firma-de-exercitiu/>

Strategia educației și formării profesionale din România pentru perioada 2016-2020

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INTERESTING LINKS AND FURTHER READING

JA Romania Factbook (Romanian language)

<https://www.jaromania.org/uploads/factbook-2018.pdf>

Idea for a Knowledge-Based Society Project Website (Romanian language)

<http://idee-exe.ro/ce-este-firma-de-exercitiu/>