

Project “QualiMoVET – Quality Signet for Modular VET for Disadvantaged Young People”



Study on educational programmes and modules for socially disadvantaged young people

Romania

‘EUROED’ ASSOCIATION

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Education and Culture

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Study on educational programmes and modules for socially disadvantaged young people (SDYP) - Romania

Introduction

The research study emphasizes good practice programmes in Romania concerning methods/operation for quality assurance and quality development currently used for SDYP.

As every country should develop a similar study, the QualiMoVET project will have an overview about programmes/modules what that are good practices, as a base for the development of a quality signet for socially disadvantaged young people (less than 27 years old) and their needs. The common characteristic of the target group in all countries is that they do not have equal chances.

Another result of the project could be related to a possible accreditation procedure of VET programmes that are focused on SDYP, used by accreditation bodies in the future. This would be at the same time an improvement for the target group's situation/integration on the labour market, but would also guarantee more transparency of the specific VET provision.

The central dimensions of the study are:

- Curricula/competency standards;
- Learning support system and infrastructure;
- Preconditions of the target group before entering programmes and modules (institutional level; learner level);
- Process and support of acquisition of competencies;
- Process and support of validation of competencies;
- Methods and tools for encouraging learning (school based; out of school);
- Recognition of partial / full qualifications;
- Employability;
- Methods and tools of social integration;
- Personnel.

Three programmes have been selected as good practice.

Two of them are on-going programmes, implemented at national level.

The first one, the "Second Chance" programme, deal with people who never attended school or early school leavers and who are functional illiterate. The participants are between 11 years old and 50 years old (or over).

The second one, "Competences Assessment Centres", provides the necessary institutional and procedural framework for the assessment and certification of the competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts. The participants are persons of all ages, able to be integrated on the labour market (over 16 years old).

The third programme, named "ARI-BUS", was run between January 2008 and January 2009, at regional level, in rural area, for unemployed people and people working in agriculture with a very low income. Among the participants there were young adults (less than 27 years old).

The methods applied for completing the research study are described for each of the three programmes selected as good practices.

I. "Second Chance" Programme

General description

The "Second Chance" programme has been launched in 1999 by the Centre Education 2000+ (NGO with expertise in education, member of SOROS OPEN NETWORK – ROMANIA) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) for people who never attended school or early school leavers.

A pilot project started in 2001 in 11 schools, with the following results:

- a special curriculum developed – theory and practice – finalized with a diploma for compulsory education and a competences certificate (for qualifications level 1);
- 200 school directors and teachers, 12 monitors, and 19 school mediators trained.

The Ministry of Education has continued the programme with pre-accession funds (Phare Programme): 1,247 students were reported in October 2005 and 7,607 students in February 2007.

The "Second Chance" programme is now running in 158 schools all over the country, under the coordination of MER, in partnership with the National Agency for Employment and different NGOs. The participants are disadvantages people of different ages, from urban and rural areas, from Roma communities, minorities' communities, etc.

Methodology

A recent research has been performed by 'EUROED' Association under an on-going (2008-2010) *Grundtvig Project „MoLeYa – Motivating and encouraging young adults to learn”* on the motivation of students (young adults – functional illiterates) and trainers involved in the "Second Chance" programme.

Two schools from Bucharest and one from Sfantu Gheorghe, the School Inspectorate from Bucharest and the TEGA Company from Sfantu Gheorghe (dealing with streets' cleaning) have been involved in this research.

Under the MoLeYa Project, interviews with students and discussion rounds with the didactical personnel have been organised, as follows:

- Discussion rounds with 8 teachers/trainers; 2 key persons (1 director, 1 inspector); 1 expert (school mediator);
- Interviews with 6 students – age 16-24; 3 male/3 female; classes/years I-IX; 2 Romanian / 4 Roma;
- Interviews with 2 students outside the target group (39 and 52 years old); 2 Hungarian Roma.

Most of the information used for describing the Programme I – "Second Chance" was collected during this interviews and discussions. Other sources of data, consulted also under the MoLeYa project, are theoretical papers on the motivation topic and different documents regarding the "Second Chance" programme.

For completing the information, for the use of QualiMoVET Project, a new interview has been conducted with one of the mediators working within a school from Bucharest. This expert is qualified through different training programmes for working with Roma people, under the "Second Chance" programme. She is a young woman, from Roma community, enthusiastic, very successful in her work and willing to share her experience.

Dimensions

I.1. Curriculum/competency standards

Quality indicators	Description
Are there any specific conditions of the curriculum and the didactics?	The curriculum and the didactics have been developed specially for people who never attended school or early school leavers.
Is access to the programme/module flexible / open?	<p>The access to the programme is flexible and open, but, for not encouraging the early school leaving, the accession age is calculating as follows: the normal age for the school level/class plus 4 years (it means: 11 years old for the first class, 12 years old for the second class, and so on).</p> <p>The participants in the “Second Chance” programme are between 11 and 50 (maybe more) years old.</p>
Is the curriculum competence-oriented / based?	The competences oriented education was one of the reform directions within the pre-university education system in Romania.
Does the curriculum ensure the development of a) key competencies and ? b) vocational competencies?	The curriculum ensures the development of key competences and vocational competences. If the schools involved in the programmes have not a vocational profile, they collaborate with vocational schools or with the Agencies for Employment, or with CVT providers (e.g., NGO “Amare Rromentza” for students from Roma communities) for ensuring the acquirement of vocational competences.
Do the programmes / modules allow flexibility a) concerning the demands of the individual? b) concerning the competencies of the individual? c) concerning the interests of the individual? d) concerning the connectivity of programmes or modules? e) concerning partial and full qualifications?	<p>The duration of the complete programme (levels/classes 1 – 10) is less complex and shorter then the “normal” one: 6 years instead of 10 (e.g., the primary cycle has 2 modules, with a duration of 1 year each).</p> <p>People are assessed at the beginning of the programme and they are assigned to different modules, depending on their competences.</p> <p>The programme is organised by modules and a large flexibility is offered to schools regarding the schedule of the programme. As some of the students are currently working, most of the schools organise evening courses or 3 days/week courses, or even week-end courses.</p> <p>A module can start with at least 8 students. In small communities, there are classes combining more modules for not rejecting the people who want to learn.</p> <p>The final assessment is also organised with a flexible schedule for permitting al the students to participate in.</p>

<p>Is the curriculum work-process oriented?</p>	<p>The vocational part of the curriculum is practice/work oriented.</p>
<p>Which forms / methods of evaluation are used a) to measure output requirements? b) to measure the acquisition of competencies? c) to measure the competencies and applicability of the pedagogical personnel?</p>	<p>In Romania, the initial VET curricula and the CVT curricula provided by accredited providers are developed on the basis of occupational standards and are competences oriented. The key-competences are part of the occupational standards (besides the vocational ones), so the curricula ensure the acquirement of both key-competences and vocational competences.</p> <p>The assessment is competences based, too. The key-competences are usually assessed together with the vocational competences.</p> <p>The graduates receive competences certificates.</p>

I.2. Learning support system and infrastructure

<p>Quality indicators</p>	<p>Description</p>
<p>Is there any counselling provided before students enter the programme/module?</p>	<p>The counselling has a crucial role in persuading disadvantages people to restart learning.</p> <p>All the people entering the "Second Chance" programme are counseled by a specialized person: the psycho-pedagogue of the school or the mediator. The mediator is a counselor who deals usually with the Roma people and in most of the cases is a Roma ethnic, specially trained for this work.</p>
<p>Is there to clear the situation of the target group / individual before introducing a programme or module (Something like assistance: e.g. if there are family, drug etc. problems)?</p>	<p>Usually, the target group of the "Second Chance" programme has a difficult family situation. They come from poor or very poor families, live with parents, brothers and sisters and, even if they work, they have a low income. Some of them have their own family, including children.</p>
<p>Does the possibility exist to embrace / rely on the culture / environment of the individual?</p>	<p>The counsellor has to deal with a large variety of obstacles in motivating the target group to come to school. For Roma people, for example, the cultural aspects are very important. This is the reason that the most of the schools involved in the "Second Chance" programme hire Roma ethnic mediators, specially trained for this work.</p>
<p>Is any assistance provided for the target group / individual to reveal if they have entrance problems before starting the</p>	<p>It is the responsibility of the mediator/counsellor and of the teachers through the initial assessment.</p> <p>In the minorities' communities there are language problems. For example, there are some Roma –</p>

programme or module (e.g. language problems etc.)?	Hungarian communities where people do not speak Romanian, but Rromani and Hungarian. These people learn Romanian as a foreign language.
Is the target group involved in decision making about the programme (e.g. necessary support etc.)?	The programme is as flexible as possible, taking into consideration the needs of the target group, but also the resources of the schools and of their management capacity.
Is the programme accessible for the target group? (e.g. Are local factors taken into consideration?)	There are 158 schools involved, at the moment, in the programme. In Bucharest, some of these schools are located in the area where the target group lives, for facilitating the access and for making easier the promotion of the programme. As presented before, the programme is a flexible one (as content and schedule) aiming to facilitate the access.
Is any assistance provided to remove psychological barriers of learning?	Both the counsellor of the school and the mediator provide assistance for removing psychological barriers of learning (fear of failure, embarrassment, bad previous experience, lack of self-esteem, lack of awareness considering the value of learning, cultural psychological barriers, especially for Roma girls, etc.)
Is any individualized pedagogical assistance / guidance / support provided for the target group / individual (e.g. coaching, advice)?	The counselling is individually provided. The pedagogical support is provided depending on the available human resources and their involvement.
Is individualized feedback regularly provided? If yes, how (in what form) is this organized and provided?	Without a permanent communication between the target group and the teachers, counsellors, mediators, the probability of dropping out is very high. Most of the teachers and mediators interviewed try to have a permanent contact with the students not only on professional issues, but also on personal/family/work problems.

I.3. Preconditions of the target group before entering a programme/module (institutional level, learner level)

Quality indicators	Description
Do selection procedures for the target group exist before they start a programme or module, e.g. analysis of competencies? If yes, is the selection subject-oriented?	There is an initial assessment for evaluating the level of knowledge/competences. Depending on the assessment results, people are assigned to different modules.
Do associated programmes	There are special programmes for parents (e.g., "School

<p>for parents (other family members) exist?</p>	<p>of parents”). The counsellors and mediators are responsible for these programmes.</p> <p>But most of the work with the family is done informally, when the members of the family come to school with the students or when the mediator, the counsellor or the teachers visit the student’s families.</p> <p>The work with the families is crucial for the success of the “Second Chance” programme (especially in Roma communities). There are situations when parents and children participate in the programme, sometimes in the same module.</p>
<p>Are the members of the target group functional literate? Have the members of the target group the basic skills (writing, reading, arithmetic)?</p>	<p>Some of the members of the target group are functional illiterate, some not. Some of them start with the first module for learning to read and write.</p>
<p>Have the members of the target group IT skills / competencies (e.g. to be engaged in E-learning programmes)?</p>	<p>It happens to have some IT skills, but not very often.</p>

I.4. Process and support of acquisition of competences

Quality indicators	Description
<p>What competencies can be acquired during the programme or the module? If yes, what specific methods are used?</p>	<p>As presented before, the programme ensures the development of key competences and vocational competences. If the schools involved in the programmes have not a vocational profile, they collaborate with vocational schools or with the Agencies for Employment, or with CVT providers for ensuring the necessary conditions (teaching expertise, appropriate spaces, equipments, materials, etc.). The vocational curricula have a consistent part of practical learning.</p>
<p>Is it possible to develop vocational competencies by completing this programme or module? If yes, what specific methods are used?</p>	<p>If the students are able to finish the last module, they receive a competences certificate. The qualifications depend on the profile of the schools or of the associated training providers.</p>

I.5. Process and support of validation of competences

Quality indicators	Description
<p>Are competencies recognized / validated on the basis of how they are</p>	<p>After every module, the students participate in an assessment/exam. The assessment organised by the</p>

formed?	<p>"Second Chance" school consist in a written exam and an oral exam. The vocational competences are assessed by the vocational schools or the vocational training providers.</p> <p>For facilitating the participation in the assessment, the exams are organised during a period of two weeks.</p>
Are they tested in a valid and objective way?	<p>They receive one mark from the "Second Chance" school and one from the vocational school or provider.</p> <p>Obviously, there is some flexibility regarding the assessment for encouraging the target group to continue, not to drop out.</p>
Are special tools used to recognize / validate informally or non-formally acquired competencies? If yes, what tools are used?	<p>The initial assessment does not take into consideration the ways of acquiring the competences. Most of the people who never went to school are able to read, write and make simple calculation. If they demonstrate the needed knowledge/competences, they are accepted in the second or even in the third module.</p>
Who (what kind of organization) recognizes / validates informally or non-formally acquired competencies and how?	<p>See above</p>

I.6. Methods and tools for encouraging learning (a. school based; b. out of school)

Quality indicators	Description
Is counselling provided through the programme or module?	Yes, as described before.
Do individualized learning pathways exist? If yes, what kind of and how are they structured?	<p>Yes, at the beginning, as presented before.</p> <p>For acquiring the vocational competences individualized learning pathways could be also possible, through different training providers.</p>
Do practice based methods (e.g. workplace-based learning, project work) exist?	The vocational training is practice based.
Is reflection on the learning process encouraged? If yes, in what way?	The reflection on the learning process is permanently encouraged for maintaining the motivation and for not abandoning again.

I.7. Recognition of partial/full qualifications

Quality indicators	Description
Are modules connected to	The 'Second Chance' programme is connected with

develop vocational competencies? Does the programme or do the modules aim for the development of vocational competencies?	vocational schools or CVT centres which provide competences oriented programmes, based on occupational standards.
Is it possible to get to know different workplaces during the placement?	Yes, especially for the students participating in vocational training organised through the agencies for employment.
Does the possibility exist to get a certificate from the companies on the basis of the placement?	The competences certificates are provided by the vocational school or the training providers, even if the practice is performed within a company. But there are examples of companies which organise literacy programmes for their employees in cooperation with the schools ¹ .
Does cooperation with other institutions / providers of similar programmes or modules exist?	Yes, as described before. There are also NGOs which are involved in facilitating the vocational training or even for providing a financial support (didactic materials, the cost of transportation to school, the salary the students-workers are losing during the school time, etc.)

1.8. Employability

Quality indicators	Description
How are regional labour market demands taken into consideration when introducing a programme or module?	The qualifications are chosen taking into consideration the demands on the labour market. Both the vocational programmes provided by vocational schools and CVT providers are based on occupational standards which are developed by sectors' experts and validated by the sectoral committees, so they are supposed to reflect the labour sectors' needs.
Are the demands of the regional labour market satisfied?	The vocational training organised by the employment agencies and by the CVT providers are supposed to be selected for responding to the labour market needs. Even the profiles of the vocational schools (which are part of the initial education system) are discussed (more or less successfully) in local and regional commissions/consortia with the social partners and other actors on the local/regional labour market.
Do any partnerships with companies exist to realize / help the transition from learning to working?	All the agencies for employment, many CVT providers, and even some vocational schools have partnerships with the local companies.

¹ TEGA Company from Sfantu Gheorghe organize literacy courses for its workers (most of them Roma-Hungarian ethnics) (Grundtvig Project 'MoLeYa – Motivating and encouraging young adults to learn')

Is there any assistance provided to help with finding a job (e.g. job centers)?	Yes, it is part of the counselling programme – 2hours/months for each module – provided by counsellors/mediators.
Does counselling exist after the end of the programme or module?	The interviewed schools did not yet finish the programme.
Does follow-up exist after the programme or module?	The interviewed schools did not yet finish the programme.
Do cooperations with companies exist? If yes, a) how is this organized? b) are companies anyhow rewarded for their willingness for cooperation or workplace provision?	As described before.

1.9. Methods and tools of social integration

Quality indicators	Description
Is the certificate at the end of the programme or module recognized by a) the companies? b) the society?	They are issued by the Ministry of education, so they are generally recognised.
Does vocational / occupational mobility and cross company flexibility exist?	As presented before, some of the students are hired even during the “Second Chance” programme.
Is it possible to find a job for the target group / individual – providing employment for a longer period of time? In which sectors are members of the target group mainly employed?	Some of them are able to find a job even during the “Second Chance” programme if they graduate a CVT programme organised by the agencies for employment or a CVT providers. These vocational programmes are shorter than the vocational schools’ programmes. For the qualifications level 1, the duration of the CVT programme is of 360 hours. Domains: constructions, mechanics, hospitality, body care, etc.
Does an advancement of voc. mobility and flexibility of the target group / individual exist after programme / module completion?	After the graduation of the “Second Chance” programme the students receive a diploma for compulsory education and a competence certificate for a qualification level 1. With the diploma for compulsory education they are allowed to enter a qualification level 2 programme.

1.10. Pedagogical personnel

Quality indicators	Description
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<p>What special qualifications do those dealing with the target group have (e.g. teacher, tutor etc.)?</p>	<p>School manager; teacher, trainer (at CVT providers), counsellor, mediator, school inspector</p>
<p>What special competencies are needed to work with the target group (e.g. minority cultural etc.)?</p>	<p>The competences are described by the occupational standard of "School mediator".</p>
<p>Where and how are these competencies developed? How are they trained to be able to deal with the target group?</p>	<p>The results of the programme depend on the school's management capacity and on the quality of people directly involved (counsellors, mediators, teachers).</p> <p>The schools' managers, teachers, counsellors and mediators participated in different training programmes for dealing with "Second Chance" programme. These courses have been organised at the beginning by NGO "SOROS OPEN NETWORK – ROMANIA" in partnership with the Ministry of Education, then by the Ministry of Education under the Phare Programme for the reform of vocational education in cooperation with other NGOs.</p> <p>There is a variety of training programmes for mediators, with different duration (from 1 year to 3 months). Usually, the access condition is to have the baccalaureate, but for some courses are accepted people with less education.</p> <p>The interviewed mediator graduated a one year training programme and has an international "Mediator" diploma (can work all over the world as a mediator for Roma communities).</p> <p>Probably, in the future, this specialty will be included within the pedagogical high school curriculum.</p>
<p>Is the personal appropriateness of the pedagogical personnel validated? If yes, how is this done?</p>	<p>Usually, the mediators who work with Roma students belong to Roma communities for being familiar with Roma culture and able to understand their specific problems.</p>
<p>Is the pedagogical personnel involved in target group relevant decisions?</p>	<p>As described before, they are deeply involved.</p>
<p>Is any special encouragement for the pedagogical personnel provided?</p>	<p>The encouragement comes mainly from the target group itself then from the management or administration.</p>
<p>How and how frequently is their further training organized?</p>	<p>There is not a periodicity and the forms of training are very different, as described before.</p>

II. “Competences Assessment Centres” Programme

General description

In Romania, all the VET programmes, initial (provided by schools from the national education system) or continuing (provided by accredited CVT providers), are competences based. That means that the development of curricula, the assessment and the certification are competences oriented, based on occupational standards.

The **occupational standard** describes an occupation as a combination of competences: key-competences, general competences (common for an occupational area) and specific competences. The occupational standards are developed through job analysis performed by experts from the occupational field, able to apply the job analysis methodology.

But the occupational standards are used not only in the vocational training related to formal learning contexts, but also for the assessment of the competences acquired in **non-formal and informal learning contexts**.

The validation of the prior learning guarantees that a person had demonstrated his/her knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of activities described in the standard used for the assessment.

Since 2003, the validation of the prior learning has been regulated and implemented in Romania, within the CVT system. The competences assessment centres (public or private) are accredited by the National Adult Training Board.

The **certificates of competences**, issued by the accredited centres, are nationally recognized. These certificates specify the competences demonstrated by the assessed person (similar to Europass Certificate Supplement).

The recognition of all the competences associated with an occupational standard or only of a part of these competences allows individuals, SDYP included, to valorise prior work experience and to improve their situation on the labour market. The certificates of competences are usually recognised by the companies.

The system has its weaknesses, for example, the certificates of competences are not recognised by the education system and do not give the right to continue the education through school (through initial VET). But the learning pathway is open within the CVT system, if the access conditions are fulfilled.

The **access conditions** are the same as for acceding formal CVT programmes and could be an obstacle for SDYP: for qualifications level 2 (from 5) - compulsory education accomplished; qualifications level 3 (from 5) - high school graduated. But, there are not any education requirements for attending qualifications level 1 (from 5).

Other obstacles are geographical and financial ones. There is a limited number of competences assessment centres, for a limited number of occupations/qualifications but these numbers are increasing every year (Table 1).

There are not any statistics available by age.

Most of the centres are private and the assessment of competences is a paid service. But there are also centres set up by the public employment agencies where the access is easier for the disadvantaged people.

Table 1

Year	No of accredited competences assessment centres	No of occupations / qualifications	No of certified assessors	No of certified persons
2004	9	25	89	890
2005	19	46	164	2,982
2006	28	60	182	4,714
2007	37	98	326	10,151
2008	39	109	464	17,288
June 2009	51	118	522	Data not yet available

Source: NATB, Bucharest, 2009

Methodology

This case has been chosen because the assessment of the non-formally and informally acquired competences is obviously a need on the labour market and an important opportunity for project's target group.

The research has been conducted by an expert who had been involved directly in the field. The data source is the National Adult Training Board, the institution which coordinates at national level the development of occupational standards and which is responsible for the accreditation of the competences assessment centres and the certification of assessors.

This case of good practice is not a training programme, but an assessment of competences programme. ***For this reason, some of the dimensions/quality indicators were not appropriate and had to be adapted.***

Dimensions

II.1. Curriculum Assessment /competency standards

Quality indicators	Description
Are there any specific conditions of the curriculum and the didactics?	Not applicable – this kind of assessment is linked with non/formal and informal learning.
Is access to the programme/module assessment flexible / open?	The access to the competences assessment is open to all persons willing to participate in the process.
Is the curriculum assessment competence-oriented / based?	The assessment is based on occupational standards, so it is competences based.
Does the curriculum assessment ensure the development	The occupational standards consist of key-competences, general competences (common for an occupational area)

<p>demonstration of a) key competencies and ? b) vocational competencies?</p>	<p>and specific competences. Usually, the key/competences are not assessed individually, but together with the specific competences.</p>
<p>Do the programmes/ modules assessment allow flexibility a) concerning the demands of the individual? b) concerning the competencies of the individual? c) concerning the interests of the individual? d) concerning the connectivity of programmes or modules? e) concerning partial and full qualifications?</p>	<p>The assessment is a flexible process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The candidate agree with the assessment after a self-assessment (by consulting the occupational standard); - The candidate select (from the standard) the competences in relation with he/she want to be assessed; - The candidate can be assessed for a limited number of competences from the standard; - The candidate receives a competences certificate only for the demonstrated competences (one, more or all competences from the standard); - For completing the missing competences, the candidate has the choice to enter in a CVT programme or to continue to work and to ask later for a new assessment.
<p>Is the curriculum assessment work-process oriented?</p>	<p>The assessment is performed in real work conditions. For special situations, the simulation conditions are accepted.</p> <p>To ensure real work condition for the assessment process is one of the accreditation criteria.</p>
<p>Which forms / methods of evaluation are used a) to measure output requirements? b) to measure the acquisition of competencies? c) to measure the competencies and applicability of the pedagogical personnel?</p>	<p>The assessment tools are specially developed to measure the acquisition of competences.</p> <p>The assessment is a (long) process of collecting different proofs/ samples of competences.</p> <p>One of the main methods consists in the observation at the work place.</p>

II.2. Learning Assessment support system and infrastructure

Quality indicators	Description
<p>Is there any counselling provided before students enter the assessment programme/module?</p>	<p>The first phase of the process is a counselling one. At the moment, the assessor plays also the role of a counsellor.</p> <p>But the results of two different Leonardo da Vinci projects² emphasise the need of enhancing the counselling phase and to assign the role of counsellor and the role of assessor to different persons. The</p>

² Leonardo da Vinci Projects 2006-2008: "VINEPAC – Validation of non-formal and informal psycho-pedagogical competences of adult educators" and "Rear Window – Transparent qualifications in engineering sector"

	counsellor will assist the candidate all the long of the assessment process and will guide him/her at the end of the process.
Is there to clear the situation of the target group / individual before introducing the assessment a programme or module (Something like assistance: e.g. if there are family, drug etc. problems)?	Not at the moment, at least this kind of assistance is not previewed by the procedure. It depends on the assessor, if he/she has some initiative in this respect.
Does the possibility exist to embrace / rely on the culture / environment of the individual?	There is the possibility to establish competences assessment centres for responding to the needs of special target groups, from special communities – for examples: a centre for the assessment of competencies related to traditional crafts in rural area or for Roma communities.
Is any assistance provided for the target group / individual to reveal if they have entrance problems before starting the assessment programme or module (e.g. language problems etc.)?	The role of the assessor in the first phase is to discuss with the candidate and, together, to identify all entrance problems (e.g., the education level required for the specific occupation/qualification).
Is the target group involved in decision making about the assessment programme (e.g. necessary support etc.)?	After the discussion with the assessor and after a self-evaluation of the competences (also assisted by the assessor), the candidate will decide if he/she will participate in the assessment or not.
Is the programme accessible for the target group / individual? (e.g. Are local factors taken into consideration?)	There is a limited number of competences assessment centres, for a limited number of occupations/ qualifications, but the number is continuously increasing and the system is an open one.
Is any assistance provided to remove psychological barriers of learning assessment ?	During the initial discussion between the candidate and the assessor, the assessor explains the process to the candidate, describes the method and the tools used for the assessment of competences. They decide together which competences will be assessed. This discussion removes partially the psychological barriers, but more attention has to be paid to ensure a specialised counselling support.
Is any individualized pedagogical assistance / guidance / support provided for the target group / individual	See above

(e.g. coaching, advice)?	
Is individualized feedback regularly provided? If yes, how (in what form) is this organized and provided?	<p>A systematic feedback is not provided, but some candidates maintain the relation with the centre and ask for a new assessment.</p> <p>There are situations when a company is interested in the assessment of the employees and the process has continuity.</p>

II.3. Preconditions of the target group before entering a(n) assessment process programme/module (institutional level, learner level)

Quality indicators	Description
Do selection procedures for the target group exist before they start <i>the assessment a programme or module</i> , e.g. analysis of competencies? If yes, is the selection subject-oriented?	<p>The first selection regards the education level related to the level of the assessed qualification (e.g. lower secondary education for qualifications level 2; upper secondary education for qualifications level 3). For the qualifications level 1 there are not any special educational requirements. If the qualification/occupation is regulated by a special law, then specific selection criteria could be taken into consideration.</p> <p>The candidate, with the support of the assessor, select from the occupational standards the competences for which he/she want to be assessed.</p>
Do associated programmes for parents (other family members) exist?	No
Are the members of the target group functional literate? Have the members of the target group the basic skills (writing, reading, arithmetic)?	<p>Generally, yes. If the assessor and the candidate conclude that some key competences are missing, the candidate is counselled to follow an appropriate training programme.</p> <p>For the qualifications level 1, the lack of some key competences could be accepted in special conditions, for special target groups.</p>
Have the members of the target group IT skills / competencies (e.g. to be engaged in E-learning programmes)?	<p>Some of them have IT skills, but the access to ITC equipment and to internet connexion is limited with regard to SDYP.</p> <p>There is an e-learning offer, but this type of learning is not very popular in Romania. Most of the learners prefer face-to-face training programmes and a direct communication with the trainer and with the other trainees.</p>

II.4. Process and support of acquisition assessment of competences

Quality indicators	Description
What competencies can be	Only the competences from the occupational standards

<p>acquired assessed during the programme or the module assessment process? If yes, what specific methods are used?</p>	<p>can be assessed.</p> <p>Methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio/collection of proofs (work results before the assessment) - Direct observation during work (in real work situations) - Written and oral examination - Projects, etc. <p>Assessment tools are developed by the assessment centres for emphasising the critical aspects of the qualifications and the capacity of the candidates to deal with. This is one of the criteria for the accreditation of the centres.</p>
<p>Is it possible to develop vocational competencies by completing this programme or module? If yes, what specific methods are used?</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

II.5. Process and support of validation of competences

Quality indicators	Description
<p>Are competencies recognized / validated on the basis of how they are formed?</p>	<p>The assessment does not take into consideration the contexts in which the competences have been acquired.</p>
<p>Are they tested in a valid and objective way?</p>	<p>The objectivity of the assessment is guaranteed by the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The references for the assessment are the occupational standards which are validated by the sectoral committees and are nationally recognised; - The assessment is a long process, consisting in the collection of a multitude of proofs and the observation of the candidates during performing real work tasks, in real work situations; - The candidate is counselled and assessed by an assessor, but the process is verified by a verifier.
<p>Are special tools used to recognize / validate informally or non-formally acquired competencies? If yes, what tools are used?</p>	<p>The described programme regards only the validation of informally or non-formally acquired competences.</p> <p>The procedure, methods and tools are described in the other headings of the tables.</p>
<p>Who (what kind of organization) recognizes / validates informally or non-formally acquired competencies and how?</p>	<p>The assessment and certification of the informally or non-formally acquired competences are regulated by the Government Ordinance no 129/2000 and subsequent acts. The assessment services are provided by competences assessment centres which are accredited by the National Adult Training Board (tripartite body at</p>

	<p>national level).</p> <p>The competences certificates are recognised on the labour market and within the CVT system, but they are not recognised by the Ministry of Education.</p>
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II.6. Methods and tools for encouraging *assessing and learning* (a. school based; b. out of school)

Quality indicators	Description
<p>Is counselling provided through the programme or module assessment process?</p>	<p>There are two counselling phases: at the beginning and the end of the assessment process.</p> <p>Before starting the assessment, the assessor explains the occupational standard and the assessment process; after that, he/she assists the candidate during a self-assessment process. The candidate decides if he/she wants to participate in the assessment and for what competences.</p> <p>At the end of the assessment, the assessor communicates to the candidate the decision for each assessed competence: "competent" or "nor yet competent". After that, the candidate receives information and guidance on the possibilities of further accumulation of competences: participation in CVT programmes or continuing to work and to participate in a new assessment.</p>
<p>Do individualized learning assessing pathways exist? If yes, what kind of and how are they structured?</p>	<p>As described before, the assessment is an individualised process.</p>
<p>Do practice based methods (e.g. workplace-based learning, project work) exist?</p>	<p>All the assessment process is work based, as described above.</p>
<p>Is reflection on the learning process encouraged? If yes, in what way?</p>	<p>Not only the non-formal and informal learning is encouraged, but the formal learning, too. After the assessment, the candidate becomes aware about the missing competences and can choose the best way to cover the gaps.</p>

II.7. Recognition of partial/full qualifications

Quality indicators	Description
<p>Are modules connected to assess and develop vocational competencies? Does the programme or de</p>	<p>The assessment is a modular process as long as it is conducted based on occupational standard, competence by competence.</p>

the modules assessment aim for the development of vocational competencies?	The assessment aims also for the development of vocational competences as long as it identifies the missing competences and, after assessment, guidance is provided for possible training pathways.
Is it possible to get to know different workplaces during the placement?	The centres have to ensure real work conditions for the assessment. In this respect, some centres have contracts with different companies.
Does the possibility exist to get a certificate from the companies on the basis of the placement?	There was a competences assessment centre (it didn't ask for reaccreditation) which was set up within a bank only for the assessment of its own personnel.
Does cooperation with other institutions / providers of similar programmes or modules exist?	There are cases when an organisation is accredited as a competences assessment centre and as a training provider, too.

II.8. Employability

Quality indicators	Description
How are regional labour market demands taken into consideration when introducing a(n) assessment process programme or module?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The occupational standards are developed by experts in the occupational field and validated by the sectoral committees; they reflect the competences needed by the sectors; - Most of the competences assessment centres are private organisations; they have been established based on the market needs.
Are the demands of the regional labour market satisfied?	See above
Do any partnerships with companies exist to realize / help the transition from learning to working?	The recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences helps considerably the transition from non/formal and informal learning to work.
Is there any assistance provided to help with finding a job (e.g. job centers)?	Mostly the centres set up by the public employment agencies.
Does counselling exist after the end of the programme or module assessment ?	Yes, within the centres set up by the public employment agencies and within the other centres too, if people come back for a new assessment.
Does follow-up exist after the programme or module assessment ?	
Do cooperations with companies exist? If yes, a) how is this organized? b) are companies anyhow	<p>The centres have to ensure real work conditions for the assessment. In this respect, some centres have contracts with different companies.</p> <p>Some assessment processes are demanded by the</p>

rewarded for their willingness for cooperation or workplace provision?	companies, for their already hired or potentially hired employees. There are also competences assessment centres within some Local Employment Agencies where unemployed people are assessed at the demand of the companies.
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II.9. Methods and tools of social integration

Quality indicators	Description
Is the certificate at the end of the programme or module recognized by a) the companies? b) the society?	The competences certificates are usually recognised by the companies. They are recognised within the CVT system too, but not by the educational system (initial VET).
Does vocational / occupational mobility and cross company flexibility exist?	The competences certificates contribute to the occupational mobility and cross company flexibility
Is it possible to find a job for the target group / individual – providing employment for a longer period of time? In which sectors are members of the target group mainly employed?	Constructions, hospitality, social services (home care)
Does an advancement of voc. mobility and flexibility of the target group / individual exist after programme / module completion?	As said before, the recognition of competences help the target group from vocational mobility and flexibility points of view.

II.10. Pedagogical personnel

Quality indicators	Description
What special qualifications do those dealing with the target group have (e.g. teacher, tutor etc.)?	The person who deals with the target group is the assessor, who plays also the role of a counsellor. The need of enhancing the counselling phase and to assign the role of counsellor and the role of assessor to different persons has been stressed by different studies. The counsellor is supposed to assist the candidate all the long of the assessment process and to guide him/her at the end of the process for continuing the learning process.
What special competencies are needed to work with the target group (e.g. minority cultural etc.)?	There is an occupational standard for the assessor. The assessors are assessed and certified by National Adult Training Board. There is one of the quality assurance criteria for the

	centres' accreditation to ensure equal chances to all the candidates, but there are not any special criteria by target groups.
Where and how are these competencies developed? How are they trained to be able to deal with the target group?	There are training courses for assessors, but there is not any specialised training by target groups.
Is the personal appropriateness of the pedagogical personnel validated? If yes, how is this done?	In view of the certification, the assessors are assessed, too. On this occasion, not only their vocational competences are evaluated, but also their attitude. The activity of the assessor and their behaviour during the assessment process are evaluated by a verifier and is permanently improved. If the candidate is not satisfied, he/she can ask for a new assessment, performed by another assessor.
Is the pedagogical personnel involved in target group relevant decisions?	As presented before, the assessor assists the candidate during the self-assessment and in taking the decision if he/she will continue or not the assessment process.
Is any special encouragement for the pedagogical personnel provided?	Nothing special
How and how frequently is their further training organized?	The assessors are certified after an assessment process (it doesn't matter the way of acquiring the competences). They can be assessed for an additional competence and certified as verifiers.

III. "ARI-BUS" Programme

General description

Analysing the situation of persons living in rural areas, including the young people, after counselling sessions sustained by counsellors from the Local Employment Agency (Dambovita County), it was concluded that some important competences needs can be easily covered:

- a) Digital competences (using the computer) – they don't know how to use a computer, how to write a document (CV or a letter of application), how to access a web page specialised in labour placement, how to use the e-mail services.
- b) Business competences – only a small amount of the population understands correctly the most important notions with which an economic agent works with; they don't have even minimal economic knowledge, accountability knowledge, juridical knowledge, they are not able to calculate the costs regarding their agricultural activities or to make a minimal business plan.

c) Competences in human resources field – they don't have minimal knowledge regarding the work legislation, the content of a work contract, the rights of the employees and the duties of the employers, they do not know how to negotiate a work contract and to ask for free training adequate to their professional profile, they don't know that there are accredited training providers and how to find them, they have not any techniques of searching for a job and do not know how to write a CV.

The ARI-BUS Project has been implemented during a period of 12 months (2008-2009) by the Employment Agency from Dambovită County (which is also provider of vocational training programmes), in partnership with 'EUROED' Association from Bucharest (accredited for internationally recognised training modules Xpert-IT and EBC*L). The project was financed from European pre-accession funds (Phare programme).

The name of the project has the following signification: **A** from “antreprenoriati – entrepreneurship”; **R** from “resurse umane – human resources”; **I** from “informatică – IT skills”; **BUS** from the fact that the equipments (computers, video-projector, flipchart, other didactical materials) were arrive to the villages with a mini-bus.

The general objective of the project was to increase the chances of persons living in rural areas, young people included, to find a job or to develop a small business. The specific objective consisted in the increasing of the level of aptitudes, knowledge and competences for 220 persons from rural area, in IT, business and human resources field.

Methodology

The programme was chosen as a good practice because 125 from the total of 220 participants were under 27 years old and lived in rural areas where the opportunity to get a job are reduced. Most of them managed to acquire IT and business competences which are key-competences on the labour market. Besides, they received certificates recognised not only nationally, but also in different European countries.

The programme is also a good example of cooperation between the local authorities, public institutions (agency for employment) and training providers.

As 'EUROED' Association was directly involved in the project as a training provider, the data were easily accessible.

Data have been completed for the use of this research through interviews with one of the trainer and with one representative of the Employment Agency from Dambovită County.

Dimensions

III.1. Curriculum/competency standards

Quality indicators	Description
Are there any specific conditions of the curriculum and the didactics?	The curriculum for IT and business programmes were in conformity with the European certification standards Xpert IT and EBC*L, and the curriculum for human resources management (HRM) programme was developed based on the national occupational standard.
Is access to the programme/module flexible / open?	The access was open to all unemployed persons and to people from rural area with very low income (subsistence agriculture).

	The selection of the 220 was done by the town/village halls from 10 rural localities.
Is the curriculum competence-oriented / based?	The Xpert IT and EBC*L are modular and competences based programmes. Being developed on the occupational standard basis, the HRM programme was also competences oriented.
Does the curriculum ensure the development of a) key competencies and ? b) vocational competencies?	IT and entrepreneurship competences are key competences; HRM competences are vocational ones.
Do the programmes / modules allow flexibility a) concerning the demands of the individual? b) concerning the competencies of the individual? c) concerning the interests of the individual? d) concerning the connectivity of programmes or modules? e) concerning partial and full qualifications?	The programmes are modular and allow the flexibility. During the selection, people were assisted for choosing one or more training modules, depending on their competences and interest.
Is the curriculum work-process oriented?	Especially Xpert IT and EBC*L are practice/work oriented. All the 3 programmes aim to develop practical competences.
Which forms / methods of evaluation are used a) to measure output requirements? b) to measure the acquisition of competencies? c) to measure the competencies and applicability of the pedagogical personnel?	The assessment is organised after each module (theoretical and practical tests) for following the progress of participants.

III.2. Learning support system and infrastructure

Quality indicators	Description
Is there any counselling provided before students enter the programme/module?	Counselling was provided during and after the selection period regarding the content and utility of the programmes. After the end of programmes the graduates have been

	assisted by the Employment Agency from Dambovit County for finding a job or for starting a small business.
Is there to clear the situation of the target group / individual before introducing a programme or module (Something like assistance: e.g. if there are family, drug etc. problems)?	Not applicable
Does the possibility exist to embrace / rely on the culture / environment of the individual?	The project was relied to the culture of the target group. The local administration was involved in the selection process, the counselling was provided by specialised persons from the Agency for Employment who usually deal with disadvantage people and the trainers tried to adapt their performance and practice work to the specific context.
Is any assistance provided for the target group / individual to reveal if they have entrance problems before starting the programme or module (e.g. language problems etc.)?	Due to the specific of agriculture work, there were some problems with the presence.
Is the target group involved in decision making about the programme (e.g. necessary support etc.)?	The target group was involved in the establishment of the schedule and less in the establishment of the content.
Is the programme accessible for the target group? (e.g. Are local factors taken into consideration?)	Not all the trainees were able to finish the programmes and to obtain the certificates of competences.
Is any assistance provided to remove psychological barriers of learning?	No. The experience demonstrated that this kind of assistance is necessary.
Is any individualized pedagogical assistance / guidance / support provided for the target group / individual (e.g. coaching, advice)?	Yes, at the beginning and at the end of the training.
Is individualized feedback regularly provided? If yes, how (in what form) is this organized and provided?	Feed back questionnaires were also used for evaluation the satisfaction of trainees.

III.3. Preconditions of the target group before entering a programme/module (institutional level, learner level)

Quality indicators	Description
Do selection procedures for the target group exist before they start a programme or module, e.g. analysis of competencies? If yes, is the selection subject-oriented?	The participants have been selected from 10 rural localities with the support of the local authorities (town/village halls). During the selection, people were assisted for choosing one or more training modules, depending on their competences and interest.
Do associated programmes for parents (other family members) exist?	Not applicable
Are the members of the target group functional literate? Have the members of the target group the basic skills (writing, reading, arithmetic)?	All the participants had the basic skills, they were functional literate.
Have the members of the target group IT skills / competencies (e.g. to be engaged in E-learning programmes)?	No. They have acquired IT competences during the Xpert IT programme.

III.4. Process and support of acquisition of competences

Quality indicators	Description
What competencies can be acquired during the programme or the module? If yes, what specific methods are used?	IT and entrepreneurship competences are key competences; HRM competences are vocational ones. The methods used were interactive and practice oriented.
Is it possible to develop vocational competencies by completing this programme or module? If yes, what specific methods are used?	For IT and entrepreneurship there are modules for improving the acquired competences. There are also programmes for developing the social and organizational competences.

III.5. Process and support of validation of competences

Quality indicators	Description
Are competencies recognized / validated on the basis of how they are formed?	The competences acquired through the HRM programme are nationally recognised ('EUROED' Association is accredited for this programme).

	The Xpert IT and EBC*L programmes are implemented in different European countries with the same curricula and the same evaluation and certification system (European licences).
Are they tested in a valid and objective way?	For the HRM programme, the final exam respect national regulations which are compulsory for the accredited CVT providers. For the Xpert IT and EBC*L programmes, there is a common assessment procedure, applied in all the countries, with certified assessors and supervisors.
Are special tools used to recognize / validate informally or non-formally acquired competencies? If yes, what tools are used?	The programmes are modular and the customisation of the training is possible, if necessary.
Who (what kind of organization) recognizes / validates informally or non-formally acquired competencies and how?	An initial assessment is necessary or a competences certificate issued by an accredited competences assessment centre ³ .

III.6. Methods and tools for encouraging learning (a. school based; b. out of school)

Quality indicators	Description
Is counselling provided through the programme or module?	Yes, as described before
Do individualized learning pathways exist? If yes, what kind of and how are they structured?	The individualized learning pathways are possible as the training programmes are modular.
Do practice based methods (e.g. workplace-based learning, project work) exist?	Yes, project work mainly
Is reflection on the learning process encouraged? If yes, in what way?	Through evaluation questionnaires

III.7. Recognition of partial/full qualifications

Quality indicators	Description
Are modules connected to develop vocational competencies?	Yes, as presented before

³ See programme II "Competences assessment centres"

Does the programme or do the modules aim for the development of vocational competencies?	
Is it possible to get to know different workplaces during the placement?	It wasn't practice during the project.
Does the possibility exist to get a certificate from the companies on the basis of the placement?	Not applicable
Does cooperation with other institutions / providers of similar programmes or modules exist?	No

III.8. Employability

Quality indicators	Description
How are regional labour market demands taken into consideration when introducing a programme or module?	The analysis realised by the Employment Agency from Dambovita County and the National Strategy for Rural Development have been taken into consideration.
Are the demands of the regional labour market satisfied?	Yes, from the point of view of competences acquired through the training programmes
Do any partnerships with companies exist to realize / help the transition from learning to working?	Not in this project, but the Agency for Employment has cooperations with the companies.
Is there any assistance provided to help with finding a job (e.g. job centers)?	The assistance to help for finding a job has been provided by the Employment Agency. The Agency organised also job fairs and there are info kiosks for information purpose.
Does counselling exist after the end of the programme or module?	Yes, provided by the Employment Agency
Does follow-up exist after the programme or module?	Yes, by the Employment Agency
Do cooperations with companies exist? If yes, a) how is this organized? b) are companies anyhow rewarded for their willingness for cooperation	Not in the framework of this project

or workplace provision?	
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III.9. Methods and tools of social integration

Quality indicators	Description
Is the certificate at the end of the programme or module recognized by a) the companies? b) the society?	The certificates obtained through HRM programme are nationally recognised ('EUROED' Association is accredited for this programme). The Xpert IT and EBC*L certificates are recognised in different European countries (European licences).
Does vocational / occupational mobility and cross company flexibility exist?	The acquired competences and the certificates contribute to the mobility on the labour market.
Is it possible to find a job for the target group / individual – providing employment for a longer period of time? In which sectors are members of the target group mainly employed?	The IT and business key-competences and the HRM competences offer more employment possibilities in public administration or in companies.
Does an advancement of voc. mobility and flexibility of the target group / individual exist after programme / module completion?	As described above

III.10. Pedagogical personnel

Quality indicators	Description
What special qualifications do those dealing with the target group have (e.g. teacher, tutor etc.)?	Trainers, IT specialists, assessors
What special competencies are needed to work with the target group (e.g. minority cultural etc.)?	Adults' training competences and experience in working with disadvantages people
Where and how are these competencies developed? How are they trained to be able to deal with the target group?	The trainers are certified in the training fields, in adults' training and also for Xpert IT and EBC*L programmes. The assessors are also trained and certified for Xpert IT and EBC*L programmes.
Is the personal appropriateness of the pedagogical personnel	Not formally, but through a long cooperation between the trainers and 'EUROED' Association

validated? If yes, how is this done?	
Is the pedagogical personnel involved in target group relevant decisions?	Not under this project
Is any special encouragement for the pedagogical personnel provided?	No
How and how frequently is their further training organized?	Every 6 months

Short comparison of the three programmes

The “Second Chance” and the “Competences Assessment Centres” are both on-going national programmes launched in Romania under the reform of the education system.

The “**Second Chance**” programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Education, but is a good example of partnership between the government and the civil society. It is also a successful programme aiming the inclusion of the disadvantaged minorities’ group of all ages, young adults included.

The “**Competences Assessment Centres**” programme is under the responsibility of the government, but also of the social partners. The recognition of the prior learning, independently of the context of learning, is an emerging process not only in Romania, but all over the world and the appropriate solutions are of interest in all the European countries. People of all ages can benefit of this opportunity. For the disadvantaged young adults who had not any possibility to complete their studies but had accumulated work experience, this programme could be a way to verify and validate their competences.

The “**ARI-BUS**” was a regional programme, but it has an important multiplication potential. It demonstrated that is possible to bring the learning resources in the rural area and to persuade people from villages to participate in learning programmes for acquiring new competences. A similar “ARI-BUS” can be driven all over the rural areas.

These three programmes are not aiming specially the target group of the QualiMoVET Project, but all of them come across the needs of the **socially disadvantaged young people** and all of them provide verified solutions for **modular VET**.