



NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Group 1: Access and Progression

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Introduction

Throughout the past years, the landscape of the Romanian education law framework has been very dynamic. Apart from the inherent changes and perpetual modifications in law, the effort of aligning the educational standards to those of the European Union has led to a multiplicity of directions of development in education, which are not always coherently created. A general legislative framework on education has been created, but the concepts of University Lifelong Learning and Access and Progression for disadvantaged groups are not distinctly approached. In this paper, we have selected and analyzed those provisions of the Romanian Laws on Education which address the issues of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and Access and Progression. Through some concrete examples we seek to illustrate the application of these legal provisions and their consequences, expressed in statistical data. Thus, we found out that there are still several obstacles in applying these legislative provisions. There is still an important gap between the legal and organisational efforts, the offer in Lifelong Learning and the interest of the communities, especially of the targeted groups. We have also analyzed those provisions of the law in relation to scientific research in Romania, even if they are not focused on ULLL or Access and Progression issues. However, some national institutes, universities and associations approached such topics in their research projects. The paper includes some examples of research projects related to ULLL or Access and Progression and points out the paths used to create a dialogue between research and practice, or to disseminate the research.

1. Methodology

This document represents a national overview of Lifelong Learning (LLL) in Romania, focused on University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and Access and Progression of disadvantaged groups at ULLL. The documentation for this national overview implies online sources and published works representing some of official Romanian documents on public-policy education. We also used some analysis of these official documents and statistical data provided by specialised European or national websites. We combined data representing the opinions of the decision makers', the researchers or the practitioners involved in the ULLL and access and progression issues. Data interpretation and the conclusions represent the author's point of view on the analysed issues.

2. Facts and Figures on LLL and ULLL

Globalization and diversity represent some key-features for different domains of the contemporary world including education. Lifelong Learning, Adult Education or Access and Progression are concepts widely used in education, in most countries of the world, but with different meanings and applying policies. Currently, the terminology of lifelong learning embraces many concepts, including initial education for disadvantaged groups, continuing education and training for well-qualified graduates, and post-retirement opportunities for cultural enrichment and it is subject to considerable local, regional and national interpretation¹.

Lifelong Learning is defined by the current Romanian Education Law as representing all the learning activities achieved by each individual during his/her lifetime in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, in order to train and develop all the necessary skills from a personal, civic, social or professional perspective. Lifelong Learning focuses on training and developing the key-skills and also the specific skills necessary to a field of activity or qualification. It includes early childhood education, secondary and higher education and continuous professional training².

University Lifelong Learning is implied but it is not defined as a distinct concept by the Romanian legislation on education. It was first used during a 2007- 2009 survey developed by The European Association for University Lifelong Learning (EUCEN) for its project „Beflex”. According to this survey the concept *University Lifelong Learning* (ULLL) has been defined as representing:

- the provision by higher education institutions of learning opportunities, services and resources for personal and professional development of a wide range of individuals lifelong and life wide;

The concept is presented and extensively developed in research bases and the regions³ on the needs of the learners and it is often developed and/or provided in collaboration with stakeholders and external actors.

The current Romanian Education Law includes some principles related to *Access and Progression* for specific groups, such as national minorities, people with special needs or religious groups. However, the terms *Access and Progression* are not explicitly defined in any Romanian official document, but they are defined in some other national systems of education, as for instance the Irish one. According to *The Qualifications Act in Ireland*:

„access is gaining entry to and participation in education and training institutions or programmes. In certain circumstances before admittance is granted certain criteria may need to be fulfilled. Some examples may include a requirement for a particular qualification (award), education level, skills or work experience etc. from the awarding body”.

From the same perspective, *progression* is defined as:

¹ European University Association, 2008, *European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning*, Brussels, from http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/publications/eua_charter_eng_ly.pdf.

² *Legea educației Naționale (The National Education Law)*, Monitorul Oficial al României, no. 1 of 5 January 2011, from <http://www.edu.ro/index.php>.

³ *University Lifelong Learning*, from http://www.lifelonglearningobservatory.eu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7&Itemid=11.

„the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another where each programme is of a higher academic level than the preceding programme”⁴.

Formal, non-formal and informal contexts of education are also defined by the Romanian Education Law. Thus, in *formal contexts* learning is organized and structured. It is realised on an institutionalised framework and is based on explicit curriculum and teaching. It has some associated learning objectives, specific duration and resources and ends with institutional certification of the acquired knowledge and skills.

Non-formal learning consists of planned activities, based on specific objectives but without explicit curriculum. This type of learning depends on the intention of the learner but does not automatically lead to the acquired knowledge or skills certification.

Learning in *informal context* is the result of daily activities, related to work, family or leisure. It is not organized or structured in terms of objectives, duration or support for learning. It is not dependent on the intention of the learner and does not automatically lead to certification of the acquired skills.

In April 2008, The European Parliament recommended to EU Member States to promote the validation of non-formal and informal education and to pay special attention to those citizens who are most at risk of becoming unemployed or to those whose employments are insecure. Such an approach could contribute to improved participation in lifelong learning and access to labour market⁵. The Romanian authorities in education had to implement a coherent national strategy as there was a lack of an integrated and coherent approach towards lifelong learning, during the last decade. A recent survey on *Lifelong Learning*, Romanian policy underlined that, despite of a little progress in regulating the validation of prior learning that has been made during the past years, the insufficient use of the existing legal framework remained one of the weak points in the process of introducing a lifelong learning approach to education. Each of the educational levels, segments and active unemployment measures have developed their own legal framework, which included some principles of lifelong learning, but they did not link to a common framework of public policies⁶.

The effects are well illustrated by statistics indicating a low rate of participation in ULLL for the Romanian people. Thus, while the number of the Romanian students attending the tertiary education continuously rose in Romania until 2009, reaching 1,098.2 thousands, in percent of 3,7% of the entire population, the percentage of people aged 25 to 64 years participating in the tertiary education (levels 5 and 6, formal or non-formal education and training), was of only 2,8% in 2010, much lower than that in the EU (27 countries) rate of 16,7%.

⁴ National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, *National Framework of Qualifications*, from http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/about_NFQ/access_transfer_progress.html.

⁵ *European Parliament and Council Recommendation from 23 of April 2008, establishing the European Qualifications for lifelong learning* from <http://www.cnfpa.ro/Files/eurodoc/Recomandare%20EQF%20RO%2023%20aprilie%202008.pdf>.

⁶ Ramona Dragomir, *National Report for Romania*. Pro Vobis Volunteer Centre, January 2010, from <http://www.eyv2011.eu/resources-library/item/271-university-lifelong-learning-and-volunteering-in-romania-value-2010>.

Table 1: Participation in education and training by type, age group and educational attainment (first and second stage of tertiary education- levels 5 and 6, age 25 to 64)

Geo / Time	2008	2009	2010
EU (27 countries)	17,5	16,9	16,7
Belgium	11,6	11,7	11,9
Bulgaria	2,8	2,4	1,8
Denmark	39,5	39,8	41,1
Germany	12,7	12,1	11,9
Spain	19,4	18,9	19,3
Romania	2,7	2,6	2,8

The same source indicates that the percentage of the Romanian persons aged 25 to 64 years who stated that they received education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey about participation in lifelong learning in 2010 was of only 1,3 % ⁷:

Table 2: Percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

Geo / Time	2008	2009	2010
EU (27 countries)	9,4	9,3	9,1
Belgium	6,8	6,8	7,2
Bulgaria	1,4	1,4	1,2
Denmark	30,0	31,6	32,8
Germany	7,9	7,8	7,7
Spain	10,4	10,4	10,8
Romania	1,5	1,5	1,3

Statistics also indicate the existence of disabled people or socially disadvantaged groups which could benefit of ULLL or Access and Progression in Romania. Thus, according to statistical data offered by The Romanian National Authority for People with Disabilities in November 2011, the number of disabled adult people, with medium and minor degrees of deficiency who theoretically could attend a ULLL programme was of 66, 572 persons⁸.

Table 3: Number of adult disabled people by social inclusion and degree and of disability at 30 Nov. 2011:

Adult disabled people	Degree of disability	
	Medium	Minor

⁷ <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>.

⁸ National Authority for People with Disabilities, *Quarterly Statistical Bulletin*, Q 3 2011, from <http://www.anph.ro/eng/categorie.php?idcat=4>.

Non-institutionalised	59,823	4,990
Institutionalised	1,520	239
Total	61,343	5,229
General total	66,572	

3. a. The legal context for the thematic practice

The national legislation on education has included the principles of lifelong learning both in 1995 Education Law and in the National Education Law applied since January 2011. The Education Law in 1995 considered the „permanent education” as a part of the national system of education. It stated that permanent education was coordinated by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, mass-media, religious groups, universities or cultural foundations, to facilitate the access in science and culture of all citizens, regardless of their age⁹. The permanent education and professional conversion system was related to „adult education” which was a new concept in a Romanian official document on education. Continuous education included qualification courses, training courses or conversion training of adults, organized by individuals or by legal entities, with or without collaboration of teaching institutions (including universities). *ULLL* and *Access and Progression* were provided through different organizational forms, such as postgraduate courses in specialty, master studies, postgraduate academic studies, doctoral and specialist postgraduate courses. The Education Law in 1995, updated until 2009 included special provisions regarding teachers’ continuous training. Thus, *ULLL* and *Access and Progression* were provided for the teaching staff in secondary and high schools who had to partake in university courses, organized through faculties and Teacher Training Departments every five years, to refresh their specialty and pedagogical knowledge and skills. They also had to obtain the second and the first teaching degree exams, organized by universities. The continuing training for the teaching staff in higher education was achieved by national and international documentary programs, exchanges of experience, cooperation and scientific research programs or scientific, technical and artistic creation.

Unlike the Education Law in 1995, the current Education Law defines the term of *Lifelong Learning* and states that it includes all levels of intellectual or professional development. The law states that the responsible institutions for the professional training of adults are The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Administration.

Romanian universities are organised as public, particular or confessional institutions. Their mission is to generate and transfer knowledge through: a) initial and continuous training at university level, aiming personal development and professional insertion of individuals; b) scientific research, development, technological innovation and transfer through individual and collective creativity (Art 117). *Access and Progression* in knowledge and professional training are provided by law to all persons regardless of age. According to

⁹ *Education Law no 84/1995*, from http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/84_1995.php.



The National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education, established by the Law no. 288/2004, the university studies, organized at bachelor, master and doctoral degrees meet levels 6, 7 and 8 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)¹⁰. Thus, university lifelong learning includes the higher education with its three cycles (bachelor, master and doctoral studies), but also postgraduate education, meaning postdoctoral programmes of advanced research and postgraduate programmes of training and development. Postdoctoral programmes of advanced research are designed for those who have obtained a PhD degree for most 5 years before and want to continue research and training in other institution than that which awarded their PhD. Postgraduate programmes of training and development are destined for graduates with at least bachelor degree. They can use ECTS and end with an exam for certification of the professional achieved skills, thus they are included in the formal education.

Both acts on National Education contain certain specifications for students with special needs, for those coming from social disadvantaged families and for those belonging to national minorities, in primary, secondary or superior level of study.

The text of the current law specifies that discrimination on grounds of age, ethnicity, gender, social origin, political, religious or sexual orientation are forbidden in higher education, except to the affirmative specifications of the law. Students with physical disabilities are entitled to have certain ways of access adapted to their special needs and facilities for normal academic, social or cultural activities. Students from families with low incomes have the right to receive state guaranteed bank loans for their studies. Orphans can receive discounts on public transport, or discounted rates for access to different cultural activities. Universities can provide funded living places for students from orphanages or from high schools located in rural areas or in small towns. The higher education for the national minorities it realised in faculties, lines or programmes of studies organised at bachelor, master, doctoral and postdoctoral levels in their native language.

Access and Progression is guaranteed by the new Romanian Law of Education for young people and adults who have not completed their compulsory education, young people who left education before obtaining a professional qualification, graduates of high school or graduates of higher education in areas irrelevant for labour market, young people and adults residing in economically and socially disadvantaged communities. These groups are facilitated to reconsider their participation to higher education as they may choose to attend different forms of organization of educational process, such as higher-frequency, low-frequency or distance learning.

The new Education Law in 2011 provides the introduction of the *LL Portfolio*, which is a tool that facilitates the identification, formulation and assessment of personal skills, obtained by an individual during his/her school studies and professional development. The LL Portfolio includes evidence of the learning outcomes achieved in formal, non-formal and informal education. It also contains some European tools that highlight the learning outcomes, such as Euro-pass and Youth-pass.

¹⁰ *Metodologie de realizare a Cadrului Național al Calificărilor. Ghid de aplicare. (Methodology to achieve the National Qualifications Framework in Higher Education. Application Guide)*, from <http://docis.acpart.ro/uploads/Fisiere/Metodologie%20CNCIS.pdf>.

Starting with 1997, Romania has benefited from financing through the European Community programmes in the field of education and vocational training, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci (until December 2006) and Lifelong Learning (in the present). These programmes are managed by the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (NACPFEVT)¹¹. Socrates, the Community programme for cooperation in education, has two different components addressing to adult education: Comenius and Grundtvig. Comenius is the sub-component that allows the teachers involved in school education to attend training courses, organised by training centres in EU countries. The most important component of Socrates (actual Lifelong Learning) is Grundtvig. It addresses an ageing population and to all types of learning, whether these take place in the formal or non-formal system of education for adults. Grundtvig is open to anyone in adult education, including adult learners, teachers and trainers from a variety of organisations, non-governmental institutions or universities¹².

The Romanian authorities' interest in the development of a coherent strategy regarding lifelong learning has constantly increased since 1997. Some important documents related with LLL and *Access and Progression* are:

- The Short and Medium Term Strategy of Continuing Vocational Training 2005- 2010;
- The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP);
- The Sectoral Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources (SOPDHR) 2007-2013.

The Short and Medium Term Strategy of Continuing Vocational Training 2005- 2010 was elaborated under the Phare Twinning Project „Support for MLSSF for CVT” – Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family (MLSSF) from Romania and Ministry of Education from Denmark and was approved by the Romanian Government through G.D. no. 875/2005. Its goal consists of increasing participation in education and training of the population of age 25-64 to 7% until 2010 through strategic objectives which aim to facilitate the access to CVT for all the categories of participants, in a LLL perspective and to increase the CVT quality.

The SOP DHR sets the priority directions and the major intervention areas of Romania in the human resources field in order to implement the EU financial assistance through the European Social Fund for the period 2007-2013. The general objective of SOP HRD is the development of human capital and increasing competitiveness, by linking education and lifelong learning with the labour market and ensuring increased opportunities for future participation on a modern, flexible and inclusive labour market for 1,650,000 people. Some of its specific objectives are related with ULLL and *Access and Progression* issues:

- Promoting qualitative initial and continuous education and training, including higher education and research;

¹¹ International Conference on Adult Education, (CONFINTEA VI), *Romania. National Report on the Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education, May, 2008*, from http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UII/confintea/pdf/National_Reports/Europe%20-%20North%20America/Romania.pdf.

¹²The National Agency for Continuing Vocational Training, from <http://www.llp-ro.ro/llp.php?id=68&d=46&menu=69>.

- Promoting the (re)insertion in the labour market of inactive people, including those in rural areas;
- Facilitating access to education and to the labour market of the vulnerable groups¹³.

Some priority axes included in the SOP HRD such as lifelong connection to the labour market, promotion of active employment measures or promotion of social inclusion are related with financial programmes meant to support the social inclusion of the vulnerable groups, including Roma population.

Other important documents of public policy, focused on social inclusion of vulnerable groups are represented by:

- The Strategy of the Romanian Government to improve Roma population situation (2001-2010), established by the Govern Ordinance (G.O.) no. 430/2001 and updated by the Govern Decision (G.D.) no. 522/2006;
- Anti-Poverty National Plan (2002-2012);
- Joint Inclusion Memorandum (2005-2010);
- Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2010);
- The National Strategy on social protection, integration and inclusion of people with disabilities for the period 2006-2013 „Equal opportunities for people with disabilities-towards a non-discriminatory society”.
- The Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for the period 2012-2020.

All these documents and policies consider some success factors of implementation. One of these factors is the investment in lifelong learning for young people who have left the formal education system. Their participation in a higher education level, focused on less prepared adults is another such factor, alongside with combining training with work experience, requiring shorter and more focused modules, held during shortened time periods¹⁴.

3. b. The current implementation of this legal framework

Analyzing the development and state of adult learning and education, researchers have synthesized the main obstacles facing a coherent lifelong learning Romanian strategy. Some of them were eliminated by the in the new Education Law, but some are still available:

- the lack of a systemic and coherent debate involving ministries, public institutions, civil society and businesses in the development, implementation and monitoring of lifelong learning policies;
- the gap between legal requirements on lifelong learning and their regional and local implementation;
- the lack of correspondence between the priorities of the education policy documents and the financial resources allocated to their attainment;

¹³ Sectoral Operational Programme. Human Resoures Development 2007-2013, from http://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/Document_Files/resurseumane/00000030/rcxgy_POSDRU_engleza.pdf.

¹⁴ Ana Maria Preoteasa, Sorin Cace, Gelu Dumincă, *Strategia națională de îmbunătățire a situației romilor: vocea comunităților*, (The national Strategy to improve the condition of Roma population: the voice of the communities), Editura Expert, 2009, from http://www.publicinfo.gov.ro/library/10_raport_tipar_p_ro.pdf.

- neglect of learning outside the institutional framework (non-formal and informal education);
- significant differences in opportunities between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the problems related to the access to education are caused by few possibilities of physical access, precarious learning conditions, poverty, and relatively high costs of education;
- the limited access to education of those categories of the population which are socially excluded (extremely poor people, people with special needs, Roma population)¹⁵.

Other important vulnerabilities regarding ULLL in Romania and are related with tangible investments, employees investments in training, disadvantaged people or support for adult education. Surveying on tangible investments Elena Doval, a Romanian researcher from Spiru Haret University revealed that the majority of higher education institutions don't have platforms or elevators for people with physical disabilities or techniques for inclusion people with verbal or audio disabilities. They also don't have systems to disseminate the information about lifelong learning programmes to everybody. The same author appreciates that the employees are not ready to invest in training because they consider training is an expense and an individual responsibility and not an investment or a responsibility of the company which they are working for. Despite the fact that the most disadvantaged people in Romania are the poor ones, the social exclusion also reflects the lack of access to work or education and the lack of an efficient system which can offer information about jobs or educational programmes. Although there are some Romanian studies on lifelong learning, they are not well disseminated and effectively used¹⁶.

However, the existing legal framework including the provisions related to ULLL and *Access and Progression* has been applied during the last years and produced some good results. Thus, in case of Roma people, the Social Assistance Centre for Roma was opened in Blaj (Alba county), in December 2007. It has been established with financial support of the United Nation Programme for Development and of National Agency for Employment. Between 2000 and 2008, 300 Roma teachers were trained by the universities of Bucharest, and Cluj-Napoca. Continuing the short programmes training for Roma people in 2007 implied 60 specialists in the methodology of teaching the Roma language and history, 60 teachers of Roma history, 260 teachers of Roma language, 42 inspectors for the integration of Roma in schools, 117 Roma school mediators beyond Phare programmes and 420 non-Roma teachers who work with Roma children and pupils.

There is a Teacher Training Department almost in all public universities which has the role of running the initial and continuing training programmes for teachers. ALE for teachers was financed by the government (public funds), by the participants and from dedicated

¹⁵ International Conference on Adult Education, (CONFINTEA VI), *Romania. National Report on the Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education, May, 2008*, from http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UII/confintea/pdf/National_Reports/Europe%20-%20North%20America/Romania.pdf.

¹⁶ Elena Doval, *Issues of vulnerabilities and barriers regarding the Lifelong Learning in Romania*. World Conference, ICDE and EADTU, Maastricht, June 2009, from http://www.ou.nl/Docs/Campagnes/ICDE2009/Papers/Final_Paper_212DOVAL.pdf.

European funds. Every teacher received an amount equal with the total costs of the courses needed for a five years period and could choose the LLL courses according with his/her training needs. According to the cited Romanian *National Report on the Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education*, during the 2007–2008 school year, the number of teachers in the pre-university system was of 259,076. At the beginning of the school year, 98,149 teachers were planned to be included in improvement/ continuous training programmes, out of whom 42,050 teachers signed up for the examination and 56,099 teachers were planned for improvement through accredited programmes.

Before 2000, there were no national regulations regarding adult education and training. The trainer had no professional status, or standards on competencies or performance. The occupational standard for „trainer” was created in 2001. A few number of training courses and programmes for adult education trainers were conducted since 2001, such as the project entitled „Teaching Adult Education in Continuing and Higher Education”, which is based on the curriculum for a European Faculty of Adult Education, or The European Master in Adult Education, developed by a network of universities from several European countries, including The West University of Timisoara (Romania). The West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, Department of Educational Sciences, also created The Romanian Institute for Adult Education (RIAE), which developed some important projects and researches on adult education, and ULLL.

To conclude, we can appreciate that Romanian society has changed a lot during the last decade. The reforms reached all areas of social life, were deep and determined a high dynamic of legislative work. The legislation regarding protection of disadvantaged groups is bushy and is coordinated by a large number of institutions, which causes a lack of legislative coherence to various departments. The legislation framework on education, ULLL and Access and Progression has made important progresses, even if the terms are not always clearly defined. However, there are still large groups of people facing important social problems, who are only able to attend a low level of education. Their priorities are linked to living conditions, working places, low income or access to secondary and high school levels. Despite the existing necessary framework on education, their current social, material, educative status and mentalities are impeding their access and progression through ULLL.

4. a. The legal framework for the thematic research

The term *research* has been defined as a „diligent inquiry or examination in seeking facts or principles; laborious or continued search after truth”(Webster 1913); a „serious and detailed study of a subject, that is aimed at learning new facts, scientific laws, testing ideas” (Longman 1987); or a „systematic observation of phenomena for the purpose of learning new facts or testing the application of theories to know facts (R&D)¹⁷. The official Romanian documents on scientific research don't define the term, even if some of them are defying other related terms.

¹⁷ *Collaborative International Dictionary of English v.0.48*, from <http://onlinedictionary.datasegment.com/word/scientific+research>; *Dictionary of Contemporary English*, Longman, England 1987.

The Romanian scientific research in higher education is regulated both by the Education Law in 1995 and by the National Education Law adopted in January 2011. Other important documents supplementing and clarifying the provisions related to scientific research are:

- The G.O. no 57/ August 2002;
- The G.D. no. 475/2007 on the approval of the National Research and the Development Plan for 2007-2013;
- The G.D. no. 81/2010 on Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation;
- The Emergency Ordinance no. 6/ January 2011.

According to the Education Law in 1995, higher education institutions can organise scientific research activities, technological development and innovation activities, artistic creation, design, consultancy and expertise activities. Fundamental scientific research programmes were funded from the state budget, separate from the education funding process. The funds were competitively obtained, based on assessments made by The National Council of the University Scientific Research.

The G.O. no. 57/2002 clarified some aspects regarding the types of scientific research, the organisation of the national scientific research system, its assessment or financing process. Thus, scientific research included fundamental and applicative research. *Fundamental research* was defined as that type of research aimed to gain new knowledge and to prepare and evaluate assumptions, conceptual models and theories. The *applied research* was the one meant to use scientific knowledge for the improvement or development of new products, technologies and services. The document also defined some new concepts. Thus, a *pre-competitive research* was aimed at transforming the results of an applicative research into plans, drawings or documentation for new products, including the manufacturing of an experimental model. A *competitive research* was aimed at transforming the results of a pre-competitive research into products that can be sold on market. The *National Plan of Research- Development and Innovation* clarified the main objectives and the state policy regarding scientific research in Romania. A *Divisional Plan* was defined as a tool used by ministries and academies to implement the research policy in the domain which they are coordinating. The *core research programme* represented the programme of a national institute which can be funded directly by the National Authority for Scientific Research.

The National Authority for Scientific Research (NASR) exercises the responsibilities of the state authority for research-development and carries out its activity in compliance with the provisions of the Government Ordinance No. 57/2002 on the scientific research. The Authority's mission is to ensure the elaboration, application, monitoring and evaluation of the policies in the field of research-development and innovation. One of its important attributions is to approve the divisional plans of research and development for other public authorities. *The National Council of Scientific Research in Higher Education* represents another institution empowered to assess the ability to conduct research activities in higher education. Its role and attributions were established through the same document in 2002 and were diversified through Government Decision in 2007.

The National Education Law in 2011 brings new provisions related to scientific research in Romanian universities. Thus, the law specifies that university scientific research

also includes the art creation and sports performance. Scientific research represents the most important criterion in classifying universities and ranking their curricula. Romanian universities are classified in three categories: focused on education, universities of education and scientific research and advanced research and education universities. *The National Council of Scientific Research* (NCSR) is a consultative body of the Ministry of Education that supports fundamental research in all fields of science. The research supported by NCSR is selected through competitive, merit-based review. Quality assurance in university scientific research is an obligation of the university and of its teaching staff.

4. b. The current implementation of this legal framework

Despite of a well-defined framework regarding the scientific research, the Romanian legislation doesn't explicitly approach the problems of Access and Progression or that of ULLL. However, some of the national research institutes, associations or individuals authored some studies under international or national projects, sometimes having only theoretical aims. Thus, The Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) in Bucharest has participated in some European projects approaching objectives relating ULLL or Access and Progression. This is the case of the „Virtual Guidance” project (2009-2011), the main object of which is to increase the use of ICT among practitioners in providing the necessary guidance, training and skills. Two national projects developed by IES during the last years: „Support for youth autonomy and their participation in active life. Lifelong Learning Portfolio” (2009), and „Implementation of Lifelong Learning Programme- Interim National Report 2007-2009” (2010) are also approaching the issues of ULLL and Access and Progression. Designed for the education and training institutions, companies and NGOs, the two projects aim to update and increase the implementation of lifelong learning portfolio as a tool for personal development, empowerment and support of youth autonomy, to analyse the results of the LLP achieved so far, or to provide recommendations for improving the current LLP. The research products consist of two publications: „Research Report: The L.L. Portfolio” and „The National Assessment Report of LLP Impact”¹⁸.

The Romanian Institute for Adult Education (RIAE), funded out of the initiative of the West University of Timisoara participates in some European projects or conducts its own research through national projects related in some cases with ULLL or Access and Progression. Thus, the aim of the 2010-2012 collaborative project „Fundamental Rights Education in Europe” (FREE) is the cultivation of the criminal justice personnel professional ethos on fundamental rights, by providing an integrated theoretical and good practice instrument for their professional training, which may be adopted by universities, professional schools and academies at both national and European level. „The Romanian Report on Human Rights Teaching and Training in the Institutions Educating Judges, Police and Penitentiary System Staff” will be the Romanian researching product of this project which approaches the issues of ULLL in the field of higher education in justice. The „Benefits of Lifelong Learning” project (BeLL), 2011-2013 is dedicated to documenting the complexity of the wider benefits of non-formal adult learning, both for highly educated or lower

¹⁸ The Institute of Educational Sciences. Research projects, from <http://www.ise.ro/Departamente/ConsilieresiInvatarePermanenta/ProiectedeCercetare.aspx>.

educated, adult learners, who form the target group and have participated in non-formal educational courses. „Learn in Green: New approaches to developing key competences through environment (L-Green)” represents another European project during 2010-2012, which implies RIAE as a partner. The direct target group of L-Green project is composed of trainers and teachers in the adult education field (the practitioners); the indirect target group includes low-skilled adults, low qualified or without qualification, school drop-out young adults or immigrants. The project aims at improving and supporting trainers in their approach to the target group and facilitating the access of the target groups to new jobs. The project outcomes, „Tool Box” and „Trainers Guide” will promote the use of informal learning situations and active learning methods, closely related to the indirect target group members’ workplaces. RIAE was also a partner in other completed European projects in which themes and target groups were related with Access and Progression or ULL, such as:

- Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education- INCLUD-ED (2006-20011);
- The Creation of New Occupational Patterns for Cultural Minorities: the Gypsy Case-Workalo (2001-2004);
- Content Embedded Literacy Education for New Economy-CELINE (2007-2009);
- Inter-Generational Learning: from Diagnostic to Impact Evaluation- CROSS AGES (2007-2009).

RIAE has also published numerous studies representing the results of the projects it collaborated to, theoretical approaches, methodological supports or praxis in adult education related with ULLL or Access and Progression¹⁹.

There are also researches and projects related with ULLL and Access and Progression, developed by the national professional associations such as The Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association (RWCT Romania)²⁰. Currently RWCT Association is involved in the 2010-2012 multilateral project „Assessment and Evaluation in CLIL” (AECLIL), and has just finished the 2010-2011 project „Create-Motivate-Learn” (CreMoLe), which are both focused on teachers’ continuous training. The RWCT Romania has also published theoretical papers, related to both pre-university and university levels with LLL and Access and Progression. The National Agency for Roma also conducts structural projects involving initial research for the argumentation of the project needs, and ongoing or final national reports. It is the case of the project „The School-a chance for everybody”, developed from 2007 to 2013. The target group includes non-Roma teachers who are prepared to work with Roma and facilitate their social inclusion. Thus, the project is also related with LLL and Access and Progression for teachers. A recent study critically analyzing the results obtained by the implementation of „The National Strategy to improve the condition of Roma People” concludes that there has been created an elite of Roma, employed on important positions at central, county or local levels; the existing mechanisms of implementation the strategy are rather formal, their employees have no capacity of decision or solving problems; the

¹⁹ Romanian Institute for Adult Education. Research and Development, from <http://www.irea.ro/en/development-a-research/projects-in-progress/156-fundamental-rights-education-in-europe-free.html>.

²⁰ Romanian Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Association (RWCT Romania), from <http://www.alsdgc.ro/proiecte/view/id/31/lang/en>.

action plans which should have become useful tools in implementing the strategy are not commonly used; Roma minority staff is not qualified and it is very difficult to identify qualified experts in Roma problems. Thus, the practitioners appreciate that both educational measures and measures aimed at integration Roma people on labour market are still necessary to be focused²¹.

Summarizing, the Romanian legislative framework for scientific research is clearly defined, through legislative documents, including the National Education Law in 2011. There are scientists, working in academies or in research institutes on basis of well defined plans, programmes and projects. There are also university staff members who have both teaching and research duties. They can be both researchers and practitioners on different scientific or educational issues, including ULLL and Access and Progression. Excellence is encouraged in scientific research through grants allocated on competitive criteria from European or national funds. Scientific research is mainly engaged through international or national projects, but may also take the form of individual enterprises. The research outcomes are assessed and quantified and can be disseminated through projects, web-sites, national reports, communications at scientific conferences, or different publications like books, articles or practical guides.

5. Practical links between research and practice on the thematic. How is it applied

During the last years, the Romanian society has undergone a comprehensive reform process that has led to important legislative changes in all areas, including education. The scientific research outcomes are directly exploited in this process, by using them for the preparation of the national policy documents, text of laws or regulations. Thus, the results obtained during some of the projects listed above have been included or used to formulate the provisions of the new law of education or of other documents related to lifelong learning, or protection of disadvantaged groups, such as Roma or disabled people.

Every research project that is proposed by national institutes, universities, professional associations, NGOs or individuals involves the development of some scientific research, meant to demonstrate its usefulness and feasibility. The project becomes eligible and requires European or budgeted funding, based on this research, with punctual, practical purposes.

The scientific outcomes are also indirectly exploited through publications like academic courses, practical guides and collections of best practices, including data that can be applied by readers in their professional or daily activity.

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