

PROGRAMME CONCEPT NOTE

EEA Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021

Document date: 05.12.2016

Version No. : 01 / **Updated:**

Basic information

Programme title: *Education Programme financed under the EEA Financial mechanisms 2014-2021*

Programme Area : *C: Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship*

Area(s) of support: *[Programme area n°3-Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship]*

-Enhancing the quality and relevance of education and training in the beneficiary countries at all levels of education

-Higher education student learning mobility and staff mobility between donor and beneficiary countries

-Cooperation and partnerships between education and the world of work

-Professional development of teachers

Specific concerns in the MoU: *The programme shall focus, inter alia, on tertiary education and vocational education and training.*

Higher education student and staff mobility shall be addressed in the programme.

Social inclusion shall be targeted at non-higher education levels.

Democracy and citizenship education shall be included in the programme.

This programme shall contribute to the improvement of the situation for the Roma population.

Synergies shall be ensured with the programmes: Research, Business Development, Innovation and SMEs, Renewable

Energy, Energy Efficiency, Energy Security, where relevant.

Programme Grant:

<i>Total</i>	14 117 647 Euro
<i>EEA Grants</i>	12 000 000 Euro

Programme Operator:

National Agency for Community Programmes in the Fields of Education and Vocational Training (Erasmus+ Agency)

Donor Programme Partner(s):

Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)

National Agency for International Affairs (AIBA)

Other Programme Partner(s):

n/a

* Either mechanism or both

Programme description and justification

Description of the national context in education and training

National policy context for education and training in Romania is currently defined by a set of legal and strategic documents aligned to the main EU policies under the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training - ET 2020 and Country Specific Recommendations(CSRs) issued every year. The new ESF programme in Romania for 2014-2020 represents also an area of new strategic developments in the key areas of education and training in the perspective of 2020. The main policy strategic framework that shapes the current reforms and future steps in the field of education and training is described below:

- **The National Law of Education (no.1/2011), created a new framework for major reform initiatives in all key areas of the system, setting a long term agenda for upgrading the quality of education at all levels** and placing an important role to building up the administrative capacity, promoting effective quality assurance mechanisms and improving the skills and competences of graduates for the labour market needs. These have included curriculum reforms, restructuring the vocational education system, modernizing and internationalising the universities, developing alternative education and training pathways, etc.
- **The Specific Country Recommendations (SCRs) in 2014,2015 and 2016** stipulate that Romania should take action to:
 - “Increase the quality and access to vocational education and training, apprenticeships, tertiary education and lifelong learning and adapt them to labour market needs. Ensure better access to early childhood education and care.” (CSR 5, 2014)
 - „Increase the provision and quality of early childhood education and care, in particular for Roma. Adopt the national strategy to reduce early school leaving. [...]“ (CSR3, 2015 and 2016)
- **National Reform Programme 2016** was published in April 2016. The part addressing the education is based on the Strategies adopted in 2015 to accompany the Partnership Agreement with the European Commission for the ESF programming period 2014-2020 (The Strategy for combating the Early School Leaving, The Strategy for Lifelong Learning, the Strategy for Tertiary Education).

As far as the education is concerned, the following figures represent a basis for the measures included in the programme: national target for early school leaving: 11.3% by 2020, while actual figure (2015) is 18.9%. As a result, the following action lines have been foreseen:

- expanding of the pre-school education
- modernising the school curriculum
- increasing the quality of the primary and secondary education
- **strengthening the VET education**
- **expanding the measures for prevention and intervention for the pupils being at risk of early school leaving**
- improving the infrastructure in education

For the tertiary education, the following figures form the basis for the action lines: national target: 26.7% percentage of the population aged 30-34 years having graduated from tertiary level, by 2020; while the actual figure (2015) is 25.5%. The following action lines are foreseen:

- supporting the students coming from rural areas, from disadvantaged groups and non-traditional students for participating in tertiary education
- integrating the research and university systems
- **developing the institutional capacity and increasing the internationalisation of universities, including through increasing mobility of students and staff**
- increasing the quality of tertiary education and its connection with the labour market
- creating and developing a framework for lifelong learning open and accessible for all

- **National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS).** Romania’s National Roma Integration Strategy defines the roadmap for public policies in the area of the social inclusion of the Roma. It aims to gradually eliminate poverty and social exclusion by devising policies in the areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing. The involvement of the Roma themselves is seen as crucial, as well as awareness raising and promoting the fight against discrimination. The strategy relies on the co-operation of all stakeholders involved in the process of Roma inclusion, including NGOs, the media, academia, and the Roma themselves. In Romania, the Roma are an officially recognised ethnic minority with representation in Parliament. The strategy’s goals include ensuring that Roma children go to school, with a special focus on girls, and combating segregation in schools. It also aims to improve Roma access to public services and basic infrastructure.

In February 2014, World Bank launched the report “Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania¹”. This report presents a comprehensive diagnostic of living conditions among the Roma in Romania, including separate chapters on education, employment, social protection, health, discrimination, housing, and an overview of institutions and policies available to address Roma inclusion. The report combines quantitative and qualitative evidence, and outlines a set of policy measures to foster productive participation and contributions of Roma, as well as to improve their wellbeing.

- **The VET strategy in Romania during 2016-2020 –adopted in 2016** – is the framework document for the policies in the initial and continuous vocational/professional training field. The vocational training strategy proposes the development of a competitive system, which is to provide a relevant and fast response to the requirements of the economy, in a pro-active approach and by measures implemented in various partnerships, especially with actors from the world of work. At the end of 2016, another regulatory framework was adopted, concerning the dual VET system in Romania, as foreseen in the Strategy.
- **ESF programming documents for 2014-2020 are also setting up specific priorities and targets for education and training system in Romania.** The Partnership Agreement sets down the strategy for the optimal use of European Structural and Investment Funds in the country's regions, cities and people. These investments will help tackle unemployment and boost competitiveness and economic growth through support to innovation, training and education in cities, town and rural areas. They will also promote entrepreneurship, fight social exclusion and help to develop an environmentally friendly and a resource-efficient economy.

Priorities for the ESF in Romania. The key priorities selected by Romania for ESF support include youth employment, improving the labour-market relevance of vocational education and training, addressing poverty and social exclusion of the Roma minority and improving efficiency and quality in public administration and the judiciary. Interventions will be aligned with Europe 2020 objectives and priorities and the projected results include:

- Substantial effort on social inclusion, tackling the severe social challenges faced by Romania and contributing to the objective of reducing by 580000 the number of people at risk of poverty or exclusion (compared to 2008);
- Increase labour market participation, with a particular focus on young people, with the aim of reaching the 70% national employment target;
- Contribute to reducing the early school leaving to 11.3% and increasing the participation in tertiary education to 26.7%.

Thus, the following interventions domains were set for education and training:

- **Improving the access, participation and good quality of early and pre-school education** through actions aiming at increasing its availability, quality, flexibility and affordability. The focus will be on integrated (transsectoral approaches) early childhood education and care services (ECEC) and, also, on promoting access for disadvantaged groups.
- **Strengthening the access, quality and learning achievements in compulsory education.** Under this priority, prevention, early intervention and compensation measures to address attendance, with the focus on rural and disadvantaged communities, and on Roma minority.
- **Intensive interventions to address the educational needs of groups at risk of exclusion** through interventions tailored to their specific needs
- **Improving quality and relevance of vocational education and training (both initial and continuous) and tertiary education to practical labour market needs.** The focus will be on promoting partnerships and networks among social

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/romania/OutputEN.pdf>

partners, companies and training providers in order to increase access to and relevance of education and training for the labour market needs, especially in future growth potential sectors.

- **Enhancing access to and supporting participation in tertiary education**, particularly for students from rural areas, Roma minority, special education needs, non-traditional students and other categories with a social and economic disadvantaged background. In the same time, the focus will be on flexible curriculum adapted to the labour market demands and ensuring a better access to research and innovation programs of students and teachers;
- **Enhancing access and quality of learning provisions for adults, with focus on relevant basic and transversal skills** delivered in flexible formats, valorising non-formal and informal learning contexts. A special focus will be on supporting the validation and certification system by increasing the institutional capacity of the centres active in the area of skills assessment/validation, counselling and certification.
- **Improving educational and training infrastructure.**

Needs analysis of the national context in education and training

A general overview of the strategic framework described above leads to the following needs analysis concerning the education and training systems in Romania (there have been selected the needs concerning the human capital, not those related to infrastructure):

- a. **The need to improve quality of education and skills.** According to Country Specific Recommendation 2014, *Romania faces a major challenge in raising the quality of its education and training system.* With very low scores in mathematics, reading and science for youngsters of 15 years old (according to PISA reports 2012), Romania remains in the bottom of the classification (the 45th of 65 countries).
- b. **The need to reduce school drop-out and early school leaving and reduce the geographical and socio-economic disparities on school participation.** Early school leaving is a persistent challenge. For the 2015 year, National Statistics Institute (INS) data shows an ESL (early school leaving) rate of 19.1 % , even higher than in 2014 (18.1%), while the national target for 2020 is of 11.3%. Problems persist especially in rural and remote areas. The main vulnerable categories are children and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged families, those who belong to the Roma minority and those who have special education needs. Concerning Roma children, the following statistics show the situation at national level (extracted from the report of the World Bank): ¼ of the total Roma population are illiterate (they do not know to read and to write); only 37% of the Roma pupils are enrolled in pre-school education (compared to 63% of their neighbors non-Roma); only 10% of the Roma adults have graduated 12 grades, (compared to 58% of their neighbors non-Roma); only 23% of the Roma students in 9-th grade reach the 12 grade (compared to their neighbors non-Roma); and at 16 years, only 29% of the Roma boys and 18% of the Roma girls are still enrolled in a for of school.
- c. **The need to better match skills with labour market demand.** Skills mismatches are characteristic of a large proportion of vocational and tertiary education programmes, with the poor level of vocational skills being a specific challenge.
- d. **The need to increase enrolment and participation in initial VET.** In the school year 2014/2015, 22,933 pupils have been enrolled in the 2-nd year of vocational and technical education/training (craft schools) and 26,315 pupils have been enrolled in the 3-rd year, based on signed contracts with more than 2,550 companies that ensure the pupils' practical training. For the school year 2015-2016 the educational offer is based on the request of a number of 3,468 companies, for 34,984 places in the 3-rd year of VET 3 year schools. In total, in 2015-2016 there were 68 700 students enrolled in the new 3 year VET programmes, meaning only 9.44% of the total number of students enrolled in upper secondary education in Romania. This situation tends to become a real barrier in the economic development of Romania, since the employers continuously claim the lack of qualified workforce in many key areas of the economy; moreover, although there are around 470 arts and crafts schools having concluded partnerships with companies, for the traineeships of the students in the company, in most of the cases the partnerships are not effective and the practical training of the students in companies is superficial, due to the fact that there are no incentives for the companies to ensure a quality traineeship (for example, the tutors are not paid and, especially in SMEs, there is a problem to ensure the replacement of the tutor in the working hours when he is coaching/monitoring the students).
- e. **The need for improving the counseling and educational and vocational guidance.** The counseling and guidance system is still under developed in terms of covering the needs of all students and there is a lack of methodological coordination of counsellors; in addition, the opportunities for continuous training and updating the competences are poor . This fact has a major effects on the school drop-out and also leads to a challenging transition period of young people to labour market.

- f. **The need to increase participation in tertiary education.** In Quart IV 2013, 23.2% of the Romanian population aged 30-34 had tertiary education, increasing significantly from the 2007 level of 13.9%. To move towards the EU 2020 target (26,7%), a priority for 2014-2020 is the enrollment of non-traditional students in higher education programs and provision of support for graduating their studies. The universities themselves need to adapt educational programs to the specific needs of these categories of students, and counter-balance the negative trend of enrollment in higher education from high school, fallen sharply from 53.6% in 2007-2008 to 35.2% in 2011-2012.
- g. **The need to increase the mobility of students** to and from Romania is another challenge for an attractive and quality tertiary education. The percentage of outgoing students for credit mobility remains modest (around 1.3% in 2015-2016, while the EU average is of 1.5-2%) in the absence of additional funds to complement Erasmus+ or other similar programmes; in the same time, the flows outgoing/incoming are not balanced, the number of incoming students for credit mobility in a certain year is less than a half of the outgoing ones, this being an indicator for the attractiveness of the Romanian HE system in general. Regarding the degree mobility, the situation is a little bit different: there are around 6% of Romanian students going abroad for the whole period of studies (this generating a negative phenomenon of brain drain), in the same time there are 3.2% foreign students (excluding Romanians ethnics) enrolled in Romanian HEIs for the whole study period, but only in very few domains (like Medicine is).
- h. **The need for a better transition of graduates to labour market .** According to INS, in 2013 the labour market insertion rate for 25-34 years old people who left education was 33.6% in one year after leaving the educational system. Insertion rate has the highest value for higher education graduates (60.9%) and post-secondary graduates (technical or specialized craftsmen), with a rate of insertion of about 50%. High school graduates and secondary vocational education graduates reach slightly lower insertion rates, only 34.3% and respectively 33.3% of them having a job in one year after graduation. The lowest insertion rates are found in the case of secondary school graduates, primary school graduates or those who have not completed any form of education. Their chances of entering the labour market are very low, only 14.6% of them having a work place in one year after leaving the education system. By residential areas, urban graduates have a significant advantage compared to those in rural areas, in particular in the case of graduates with a medium or high level of education. The EU Education and Training Monitor 2016 provides the opportunity to compare where is Romania situated as compared to the EU average, using the following indicator: “Employment rate of recent graduates by education attainments (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)”, which, for the year 2015 as reference, gives for Romania 59.8%, and for EU average, 70.8% (these rates contain aggregated dates from both secondary and higher education).
- i. **The need to increase lifelong learning participation.** Eurostat data indicates that in 2015, the participation of adults aged 25-64 to LLL was 1.3%, situation that is worse than in 2014 (1.5%). Participation rate of adults in LLL is one of the most important gaps in comparison with EU average.
- j. **The need to increase the organisational capacity of institutions/organisations to ensure an effective inclusion of those coming from the vulnerable groups such as Roma children;**
- k. **The need for additional financial resources in education and a more equity in allocation of funds.** General funding of the educational system in Romania remains a key challenge for participation and students achievements, in particular in the case of integrated measures for the most vulnerable categories of children. In the case of school situated in poor areas, the per capita allocation from the national budget doesn't allow the managers to invest in relevant measures in order to effectively deal with their specific needs, therefore the priorities of ESF 2014-2020 in Romania focus these areas.

As most of these needs are being included in national strategies that accompany the Partnership Agreement between Romania and European Commission for the actual ESF programming period, funds are made available in a consistent manner both from national and European funds, to address them, especially the Strategy for combating the early school leaving (answering need b), the Strategy for lifelong learning (addressing need i), the Strategy for tertiary education (addressing needs c), f) and h), the Strategy for VET (addressing need d). Also, generally speaking, ESF funds and national ones foreseen in the above mentioned strategies will address globally the need k).

Another source of financing, Erasmus+ programme in Romania partially addresses several of those needs a), c), g), k), with a significant contribution in terms of funds (for example, the budget allocated to Erasmus+ Education and training fields in 2017 will be of around 60000000 Euro and it will increase constantly every year, so as to reach around 80000000 Euro in 2020). But Erasmus+ is designed so as to answer needs that are somehow common all over Europe, being an EU programme, that is why only some target groups and only some types of projects could be financed through it; consequently, there are national needs that fall outside the area of Erasmus+ funding opportunities.

Needs analysis derived from the stakeholders` consultation process

Description of the stakeholders` consultation process

The consultation process was designed in June 2016 (the moment when the draft of the Bluebook was available). The implementation of the process started in September 2016 and it comprised several phases:

- 16.09.16-meeting with the network of inspectors in charge with European educational cooperation programmes **(A)**
- 23.09.16-meeting with the coordinators of Erasmus+ offices in HEIs **(B)**
- 26-27.10.16 seminar for curricula developers for IVET and Romanian Dual System **(C)**
- 02.11.16-consultations with several stakeholders involved in national programmes addressing the integration of Roma issues **(D)**
- 04.11.16- national conference for valorization of Erasmus+ and EEA grants Scholarships projects **(E)**
- 07.11.16-bilateral consultation with the PO for Research, on how to ensure synergy **(F)**

(A) The meeting with the inspectors:

Description of the network and its role in the education system in RO:

- the network is established since 1999; in each County school inspectorate there are 1-2 inspectors in charge with European educational projects (actually, there are 48)
- employed by the Ministry of Education, coordinated and trained by the Agency; 1-2 meetings /year
- roles: to promote the programmes, to provide consultation in view of writing projects, to monitor the projects in implementation, to report twice/year to the Agency
- as such, they are the main stakeholders at local level for the following fields: SE, VET and partially AE.

Results of the consultations

Expectations:

- Complementarity with Erasmus+, not to duplicate the existing opportunities
- There are needs in the School Education sector that could not be addressed through Erasmus+, nor by national or ESF funds: professional development mobility (attending courses, seminars, conferences, job shadowing, study visits) for inspectors, trainers in Teacher Training Houses, counsellors in County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance, all of them being left aside by the actual Erasmus+ mobility projects
- VET needs not covered by Erasmus+, nor by national or ESF funds: support for the dual-VET learning, for the schools that have already formalized partnerships established with companies, but the companies do not receive incentives to allocate tutors for the traineeships and the tutors do not benefit from adequate training;
- From the administrative point of view: they expressed the need to have a programme with simple rules and the use of unit costs

Challenges:

- difficulties in finding enough hosting organizations (course and training providers, suitable courses, hosting schools for job shadowing) in only 3 countries, if the mobilities have to be only between Romania and Donor States
- difficulties in finding partners in the Donor States (need of a platform to facilitate the matching)
- the level of the grant could be a challenge for mobility in expensive countries
- strong difficulties in implementing the projects and managing the funds if the rules are not similar with Erasmus+ (many schools do not have their own financial service/department and in the case they have, usually there is only 1 person)

(B) The meeting with the Erasmus+ coordinators in HEIs

Description of the network and its role in the education system in RO:

- the network is established since 1998; in each HEI involved in Erasmus+ there is one Erasmus+ office; actually they are around 70 coordinators;

- they have the main role in coordinating international mobility in universities and other cooperation projects; they were actively involved in the actual Scholarships programme, being the main implementing actors
- they are employed by the HEIs and they are coordinated and trained by the Agency; 2 meetings/year
- as such, they are the main local stakeholders for HE sector

The results of the consultations (based also on their actual experience with the EEA Scholarships programme) are as follows:

Expectations:

- HEIs want to continue the actual mobility programme (otherwise, RO students cannot go in mobility in the Donor States where the costs of living are very high with Erasmus+ grant, having in mind the fact that in Romania there is no other source of funding for students' mobility)
- complementarity with Erasmus+ for cooperation projects: for example, to finance projects that aim to organise Intensive Programmes, to exchange/transfer knowledge and good practices (without the obligation to create innovative intellectual outputs) or to develop the institutional capacity, which is not possible through Erasmus+
- to maintain the actual level of the grants for mobility (as in the present Scholarship programme)
- to give an incentive/capita for the sending university, not only for the hosting one (like in the actual EEA programme), taking into account the amount of administrative work that has to be done

Challenges:

- the difficulties in finding partners in DS (experienced in the current EEA programme)
- the big differences in size between the HE systems in BS (cumulated!) and those in DS and, subsequently, the competition with the other BS in attracting the same DS HEIs for cooperation
- the lack of interest of DS students to come to RO
- the differences between the calendar of the academic year in RO and DS
- the enormous burden put on the financial services of the HEIs in managing the grants in national currency and through the State Treasury, under the national framework, as compared with the management of Erasmus+ grants
- for the cooperation projects: too complicated to use real costs, as compared to the unit costs in Erasmus+

(C) Meeting with the IVET and dual VET system curricula' developers

There were around 100 participants, VET teachers and experts, members in national committees established by the Ministry of Education to develop curricula for Initial VET for various qualifications. Together with them there were representatives of the central coordinator for initial VET in Romania, the National Centre for Developing the Initial VET.

The results of the consultations are:

Expectations:

- complementarity with Erasmus+, not to duplicate the existing opportunities (not to finance VET placements for initial training abroad, that are substantially covered by Erasmus+, for example, 11 000 000 Euro in 2017)
- to take into account the actual VET needs: support for work based learning in IVET and dual system, joint trainings for VET teachers, tutors from companies, VET schools legal representatives and legal representatives of companies, study visits abroad for the above mentioned persons (in order to support the national policy to modernise this system and to increase its attractiveness)
- from administrative point of view: they want simple rules, unit costs

Challenges:

- difficulties in finding enough hosting organisations in DS for study visits
- low institutional capacity of VET schools to implement complex projects
- too complicated rules of implementing the projects, if not based on unit costs (ESF funded projects have been given as a "bad" practice example)

(D) National valorization conference

Categories of participants (245 participants):

- inspectors in charge with European educational projects
- Erasmus+ coordinators in HEIs

- Erasmus+ network of trainers (there is a pool of 30 trainers, selected by the PO, who are delivering training courses all over the country on how to write projects' proposals under Erasmus+, on dissemination and exploitation of results and on active methods in education)
- evaluators of applications (Erasmus+ and EEA Scholarships programme)
- coordinators of Erasmus+ and EEA cooperation projects, as examples of good practice
- schools or NGOs that have not been involved so far in projects, potential future beneficiaries
- representatives of various central institutions connected with the education in general (including ministries)

Consultations were launched in various working groups and also a focus group was organised, involving representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Centre for the Development of Initial VET, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in School Education, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in HE, Institute for Educational Sciences, National Authority for Qualifications, the PO for Research programme, the Unit for implementing the ESF Human Capital programme in education.

Main topic for discussions:

Having in mind the needs of the educational system as a whole in Romania, the most recent policies, the existing financial instruments (Erasmus+, ESF, national funds), where do you see most relevant needs to finance measures from the new EEA grants programme?

(E) Consultation with several stakeholders involved so far in national programmes addressing the inclusion of Roma children in education (UNICEF, the Foundation “Together”, Roma Education Fund, the Association “Save the Children”, the National Agency for Roma)

During the discussions, we made an overview of the existing programmes ran at national level, the budgets available, the measures financed, the lessons learnt, what are the most suitable interventions. The conclusion was that in this particular field we should focus on to replicate some of the measures that went very well in other programmes, rather than imagine something complementary, and to concentrate on the **educational** features of our future programme, not on the social assistance component, which is beyond the areas of expertise of the PO.

(F) The consultation with the PO for the Research programme led to an agreement to introduce in our programme (the area of mobility of students in HE), of a dedicated component strictly in connection with the projects that will be financed under the Research programme (master level students involved in the financed Research projects will be financed for mobility from our programme).

Needs to be addressed by the programme

Based on the description of the whole education and training system state of play and on the results of the stakeholders consultation, on one side, and taking into account the existing funding opportunities provided by other financing schemes (ESF, Erasmus+, national ones) on the other side, the following needs to be addressed have been chosen:

1.The need to improve quality of education and skills

2.The need to increase the mobility of students

3.The need for improving the counseling and educational and vocational guidance

4.The need to better match skills with labour market demand

5.The need to increase the organisational capacity of institutions/organisations to ensure an effective inclusion of those coming from the vulnerable groups such as Roma children

Of course, taking into consideration the limitations of the budget available, (i.e. around 2300000 Eur/year), these needs will be only partially addressed and the statistics available at national level correlated with them (as indicators) will not be influenced by this programme. **To be realistic, our expectations are to influence indicators at institutional or at community/local level.**

Description of the programme` areas of intervention

The most relevant areas of intervention for the new programme are designed according to the chosen needs, so as to support the actual national policies in education training, without duplicating the existing instruments/programmes.

These interventions will be materialised through the following types of projects:

For HE sector:

a) mobility projects for students and staff between RO and DS, with a dedicated component for mobility of master students who will be involved in the future selected Research projects teams; these will address the needs to improve the quality of education and skills in HE and to increase the mobility of students (more specific, to **facilitate the access to mobility in DS, which wouldn't be possible under Erasmus+**).

b) cooperation projects between Romanian universities and DS universities, which could be of 2 types: strategic projects, aiming at modernising /innovating the curricula, creating new modules, etc. and small size cooperation projects, aiming at exchange of good practice in the field of teaching methodologies and organising Intensive programmes (short term) for students.

The general objective of the Programme, i.e. to enhance the human capital and knowledge base in Romania, materialised in HE system through those areas of intervention will have a direct impact on the development of personal and professional skills of the students and academic staff. It is expected that they will gain better employment perspectives, and, generally speaking, more skilled professionals becoming active on the labour market will have positive influence of sustainable development of the society as a whole. At institutional level, the mobility of students and staff will have an impact on the internationalization of the university and the cooperation projects will produce long lasting effects through the improvements brought to curriculum and teaching methods.

Direct target group: HEIs involved in projects

End beneficiaries: HEI's students and staff

For SE sector: mobility projects for professionals/experts of the institutions that are part of the education system according to the national law (but are not schools) with the role of supporting the schools in increasing the quality of education: County School Inspectorates (they are responsible for ensuring the quality of education at pre-university level), Teacher Training Houses (they are responsible with the continuous training of the teachers, being the main continuous training providers for teachers), County Centres for Resources and Educational Assistance (they are responsible with counselling of the pupils and parents and vocational guidance). We have chosen these categories due to their role of **multipliers** (among the teachers) of the new knowledge and skills acquired through participation in DS at courses, job shadowing, seminars, study visits, etc. and thus ensuring the sustainability of the results, through cascading the learning outcomes to the teachers in the system -with the general aim of increasing the quality of education and to contribute to professional development and institutional development. Those categories are not covered through Erasmus+ (Erasmus+ covers, for the pre-university system, only the mobility of the teachers, only schools could apply to this type of projects). Thus, the needs to improve the quality of the education and skills and to increase the access to to counseling and educational and vocational guidance will be addressed.

A special mention is to be added: as part of this area of intervention, a certain category of teacher trainers (i.e. working at Teacher Training Houses) will be encouraged to attend courses in the field of **democracy and citizenship, human rights education**, so as to be able, once back home, to design training modules to be included in the training offer of the respective Teacher Training House, to be delivered to those teachers in the County who are the “tutors” of the classes (in Romania, each teacher shall have this role in a school, i.e. to be the main tutor of a particular class of children, being responsible to monitor their school results, their behaviours and maintaining the regular contact with the parents and with the other the teachers of various subjects, who teach to the respective children).

Direct target group: Education institutions whose role is to support schools in the national education system

End beneficiaries: level1 - staff of those institutions (trainers, counsellors, inspectors) involved in projects

level 2 -(indirectly)- teachers who will be trained/supported by the staff in the 1st category, pupils and parents who will benefit from better counselling and guidance

For VET sector: projects dedicated to VET schools that have concluded partnerships with companies for the practical stages of the students (traineeships), financing 2 types of measures: one national component for providing, on one side, incentives for the staff of the companies who are acting as tutors of the students during the practical stages and, on the other side, to provide adequate training for them and one transnational mobility component, to allow small teams composed by the tutors from companies and the responsables from the VET schools to run study visits in similar VET schools in DS-accompanied by one translator. Through this type of projects, together with Erasmus+ placements for the VET students, the need to better match skills with labour market demand will be addressed. In Romania, the economic sector is under development and the actual companies, especially the SMEs, do

not have experience and tradition to formulate the needs regarding the necessary competences for the labour market and to providing adequate work based learning; therefore both the companies and the VET schools need to learn from similar partners from DS and to identify examples of good practice. There is to be mentioned that currently, in Erasmus + there is no possibility to finance this particular type of projects.

On medium and long term, the cooperation within these projects will strengthen the link between the VET schools and their partners companies and their capacity to organise a work based learning of an increased quality, so as to increase the employment rate of the students in the end.

Direct target group: VET schools and partner companies involved in projects

End beneficiaries: level1 - staff from companies and schools who will be trained

level2 - (indirectly) the students of these schools involved in projects, who will benefit from better quality traineeships

For the conditionality related to Roma: national projects submitted and implemented in consortia, composed from one coordinator (usually, one organisation having strong experience and expertise-proven by a portfolio of projects/programmes- in this field) and 6-7 schools situated in disadvantaged communities, where there is a significant percentage of Roma children, the focus of the projects being on 3 levels:

- adequate training for the teachers, on topics concerning teaching approaches centred on the pupil, what is the inclusive school and teaching in a multicultural environment; here there will be included the development of new teaching materials, curriculum, transferable to other schools in the same situation, but not benefiting from the programme;
- organising learning activities with the parents, both for Roma parents and the Romanian ethnics parents, together
- organising extra-curricular activities for the children (Roma and Romanians together) in order to develop social competences for them

Through this type of projects, the programme addresses the need to increase the organisational capacity of institutions/organisations to ensure an effective inclusion of Roma children, thus ensuring also sustainability of the results obtained in the projects.

In this respect, it is important to mention that many programmes/projects implemented so far focused especially the Roma children and their parents, which was good but not enough; the inclusion and non-discrimination is equally a problem of the majority population; the discriminatory attitudes of the Romanian colleagues towards their Roma colleagues are an important cause for school abandon of the Roma pupils, and this attitude comes mainly from their parents. Moreover, teachers in schools did not benefit, in their initial training in Romanian universities, from special psycho-pedagogic modules dealing with teaching in multicultural environment or inclusive school; these topics are very new and they started to be introduced in few universities in the last 4-5 years.

Direct target group: the schools involved in projects

End beneficiaries: level 1 - Roma pupils and parents

level 2 - Romanian pupils and parents in these schools

level 3 - the teachers in these schools

Shortly, the division of the budget among those areas is estimated as follows:

1. HE sector: Mobility projects for students and staff-around 1 000 000 Euro/year (100 students for 6 months/mobility as an average, 75 teachers for 2 weeks mobility as a maximum)
Cooperation projects: 500 000 Euro/year for 8-10 projects (2 types, large size and small size)
2. Pre-university sector: Mobility projects for educational professionals supporting schools (teacher trainers, inspectors, counsellors): 180 000 Euro/year for 60 approx. mobilities of 2 weeks, attending courses, job shadowing, study visits)
3. VET sector: Cooperation projects VET school-company including 5 mobilities /project: 320 000 Euro/year for 15 projects, 75 mobilities
4. Roma component: 120 000 Euro/year to finance projects addressed to schools in disadvantaged areas where the percentage of Roma pupils is high (around 5-6 schools, 15-20 000 Euro/school)

N.B. In order to address the need expressed in the meetings with all stakeholders (i.e. the need of simplifying the administrative and financial management of the projects) and based on the Article 8.4 (1a) of the

Regulation, all types of projects described above will be essentially based on scales of unit costs; only those expenditures that cannot be covered by scales of unit costs but are necessary for the projects will be allocated as real costs. Annex 3 to this document contains all the unit costs applicable to this Programme.

For comparison, the current programme i.e. Scholarships and inter-institutional cooperation in the higher education system, financed under EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 shows the following figures:

Total budget: 5000000 Euro (EEA grant+ national contribution)

After deducing the Management costs (300 000 Euro) Complementary and other small costs (78000 Euro), the rest was spent as follows:

ONLY HE sector:

Mobility projects for students and staff-around 3 149 000 Euro, for 2.5 years, for ~300 students and ~ 200 teachers

Cooperation projects: 837 000 Euro for 12 projects

Bilateral funds: 636 000 Euro for 23 Preparatory Visits, 12 small size cooperation projects, 5 Study Visits

Estimated absorption rate: 85% (the main reasons of not having comparable rates with Erasmus+, for which Romania has an absorption rate of 98.5%, are the difficulties caused to the possible cooperation between institutions from Romania and Donor States by the limited capacity of the DS universities to receive high numbers of students coming from 12 BS, on one side, and, on the other side, by the national regulatory framework from administrative and financial point of view, extremely complicated as compared to the implementation of Erasmus+).

Bilateral ambitions

The Programme will contribute to foster the development of bilateral relations between Romania and Donor countries through the following elements:

- The mobility projects in the field of HE that will be financed will be based on the bilateral agreements concluded between HEIs from RO and Donor countries, this being the first step towards a fruitful bilateral cooperation between HEIs
- In addition to mobility projects, there will be financed inter-institutional cooperation projects in HE, involving partners from Donor countries and from Romania; after approval, the partner HEIs will conclude partnership agreements for the proper implementation of the projects. These projects represent a further step in the process of enhancing the bilateral relations, because the partners have to work together over a longer period of time, in order to achieve results and products, they have to have a good and continuous communication process, they have to work in teams and therefore they gain trust and mutual understanding, as a basis for future sustainable cooperation in other projects financed under this Mechanism or other funding schemes
- As part of the Mobility projects in the School education field, besides attending training courses organised by Training Centers in DS, Romanian experts/specialists in education could also benefit from job shadowing experiences in similar institutions/organisations in DS, thus strengthening the relations between both institutions, sending and hosting ones
- In the field of VET, there will be initiated relations between the VET schools+ partner companies in Romania and those in DS, where the Study Visits will take place; one could foresee that in medium and long term they could build further projects (for example, Erasmus+ strategic partnerships, by adding some other partners from other countries), based on this initial cooperation

In terms of budget, the part allocated to bilateral relations will be mainly used to finance Preparatory visits (in order to prepare the future projects), attending contact/match making seminars and any kind of activities that could take place between an institution/organisation from Romania and DS, and that cannot be financed under the areas on intervention as described above, but clearly demonstrate in the proposal that will contribute to strengthen the bilateral relations.

A major pillar of bilateral cooperation is the relation between the PO and the DPPs.

In the future programme, the DPPs will be:

- ***The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)***

SIU's area of competence includes a knowledge treasure about internationalization of education in Norway, extensive experience in programme management of a diverse range of programmes, at the national, European and international levels and expertise in the development and promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes funded by EU, Nordic countries and home ministries including the Foreign Ministry and Norad. On the other side, SIU is

part of the network of Erasmus+ agencies, together with the Romanian PO, thus having a long lasting experience in cooperation on many subjects so far.

- **National Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA) in Liechtenstein**

The same as SIU, AIBA is also part of the network of Erasmus+ agencies.

The cooperation between the PO and the DPPs in the current phase (2009-2014) of the Mechanism was a key factor for the success of the programme in Romania (and it based also on the previous cooperation during the 2004-2009 Mechanism, when the PO implemented the 1-st Scholarships programme).

The DPPs assisted the PO even from the beginning, firstly for designing a good quality Programme fiche; then the DPPs contributed to the organisation of a contact seminar in Romania in September 2013, a speed dating seminar in Oslo in 2014 and a study trip to various HEIs in Norway, in Spring 2015, all of them with the purpose of facilitating the contacts between institutions. All the DPPs organised and facilitated meetings with all the POs from all BS over these years of the actual programme, in order to create for us, the POs, opportunities for exchanging good practice and to learn from each other, and also to reach a harmonised view on how the Education programme should look like. As members of the Cooperation Committee, the DPPs were consulted and contributed in a fruitful manner to all the key documents elaborated by the PO, such as call for proposals, Guidelines for applicants, criteria for evaluation, templates for evaluation sheets, templates for applications, for partnership agreements or the draft of the Yearly Reports of the PO.

Also, they were consulted on the selection results, having access to the applications in due time and being given the opportunity to comment and to make suggestions before the final awarding decision was taken by the director of the PO.

As part of the preparation of the future programme, the DPP from Norway participated at the kick-off meeting organised by FMO in Bucharest, with valuable inputs and the DPP from Liechtenstein contributed to the discussions via Skype (17th of November 2016). As agreed during this meeting, they will be consulted further on and requested to add suggestions in the process of developing the Concept Note and the related documents that should be submitted to FMO before the signing of the programme Agreement.

To describe shortly, one of the outstanding results of the actual programme in terms of bilateral relations is the relationship established between the PO and the DPPs, built on strong human and professional connections.

Therefore, we envisage continuing the cooperation with the DPPs based on the same mechanism (in terms of methodology and documents).

Cooperation with international organisations

N/A

Modalities

The programme will be implemented by way of:

	Number of call(s)	Planned Amount (€) (Per call)	Project grant rate (%)	Eligible applicants	Eligible partners
Calls for proposals	6	2 119 607 €	100%	Legal entities from Romania; the types of entities depends on the outcome	Legal entities from Romania, Donor States, other Beneficiary States
Call for proposals –bilateral funds	1, rolling deadline until 2023	150 000	100%	Legal entities from Romania and Donor States	Legal entities from Romania and Donor States

Programme objectives and indicators

	Description	Indicators	Baseline	Target (cumulative, until the end of the programme period, in case of the numbers)
OBJECTIVE	<i>Enhanced human capital and knowledge base</i>			
Outcome 1	<i>Facilitated learning mobility in HE (students and staff) between Romania and DS</i>	1.1 Number of students benefitting from mobility under EEA Financial mechanism 2014-2021 (incoming and also outgoing mobility) with received ECTS credits	300	600
		1.2 Number of staff benefitting from mobility under EEA Financial mechanism 2014-2021 (both flows, incoming and outgoing)	150	400
		1.3 Percentage of staff with increased skills/competencies as a result of the mobility	90%	95%
Output 1.1	HE mobility projects promoted effectively among institutions	Number of promotional events organised by the PO	6	12
		Number of visitors of the new website of the programme	N/A	5000
		Number of mobility projects applications received by the PO	44	90
Output 1.2	Bilateral agreements for HE students and staff mobility formalized/existing agreements prolonged	Number of active bilateral agreements between RO and DS HEIs	50	60
Outcome 2	<i>Strengthened institutional cooperation between HEIs in Romania and DS based on common needs</i>	2.1 Number of joint intellectual outputs created in cooperation projects (studies, curricula, teaching materials, articles published, conference papers, etc.)	8	20
		2.2 Number of joint events organised (Summer schools, intensive programmes, seminars, workshops, conferences, training courses, etc.)	12	20
Output 2.1	HE cooperation projects promoted effectively among institutions	Number of promotional events organised by the PO	6	12
		Number of visitors of the new website of the programme	N/A	5000
		Number of cooperation projects applications received by the PO	15	45
Outcome 3	<i>Increased quality of the services provided to schools by the educational supporting institutions</i>	3.1 Percentage of staff with increased skills/competencies as a result of the mobility	N/A	90% (of those participating at mobilities)

Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021
Annex 5 – Template for Programme Concept Note

	<i>(County School Inspectorates, Teacher Training Houses, County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance)</i>	3.2 Number of dissemination or exploitation of results events organised at county level by the staff benefitting from the learning mobility	0	350
Output 3.1	Facilitated learning mobility between Romania and DS for educational experts supporting the schools (inspectors, teacher trainers, counsellors)	Number of promotional events organised by the PO	0	12
		Number of visitors of the new website of the programme	N/A	5000
		Number of projects submitted for mobility in SE	N/A	200
		Number of educational experts benefitting from mobility for learning purposes (structured courses, job shadowing, study visits, conferences, etc.)	N/A	350
Outcome 4	<i>Increased institutional capacity of the partners beneficiaries (VET schools and partner companies) to provide quality work based learning for their students</i>	Percentage of staff with increased skills/competencies as a result of the mobility	0	90% (of those participating at mobilities)
		Employment rate of the students (at graduation or within year after)	50% (average at national level)	60% (at the level of VET schools benefitting from projects)
Output 4.1	Enhanced cooperation between the VET schools and the partner companies participating in the projects	Number of Memoranda of Understanding	N/A	90
		Number of Training Agreements formalized	N/A	2000
		Number of units of learning outcomes identified and designed in partnerships by the schools and the companies to answer the needs of the local labour market	N/A	70
		Number of Local school curriculum designed by the schools and the companies to achieve the learning outcomes identified	N/A	70
Output 4.2	Facilitated learning mobility between Romania and DS for VET training responsables (traineeships tutors in companies and VET teachers in schools)	Number of promotional events organised by the PO	0	12
		Number of visitors of the new website of the programme	N/A	5000
		Number of projects submitted for VET cooperation	0	100
		Number of VET training responsables and tutors in companies benefitting from study visits in DS	0	350
Output 4.3	Facilitated cooperation between VET institutions from RO and DS	Number of study visits organised in DS through projects	0	90
Outcome 5	Increased organisational capacity of institutions benefiting from projects to ensure an effective inclusion of Roma children	Percentage of teachers with increased skills/competencies as a result of the projects	0	90% (of those participating at training activities)
		Rate of decrease of the number of absences /pupil of the Roma children in the schools benefitting from projects	N/A	15%

Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021
Annex 5 – Template for Programme Concept Note

		Rate of decrease of the perception of Roma children with regard to discrimination attitudes in the schools participating in projects (from the part of the teachers and Romanian colleagues), i.e. rate of Roma pupils who feel being discriminated	n/A	15%
Output 5.1	Trained teachers on topics concerning teaching approaches centred on the pupil, inclusive school and teaching in a multicultural environment	Number of schools involved in the projects addressing Roma children inclusion (at school level)	0	35
		Number of teachers trained	0	350
Output 5.2	Improved curriculum	Number of new optional curricula and teaching materials developed as a result of the projects	0	30
Output 5.3	Parents more aware on discrimination issues	Number of common activities developed with parents both Romanians and Roma, within the projects	0	30
Output 5.4	Changed behaviours of Romanian pupils towards the Roma colleagues	Number of common activities developed in common with both Roma and Romanian children, within the projects	0	100
		Rate of satisfaction of the participants at these activities	n/a	90% (satisfied & very satisfied)
Outcome 5 (bilateral)	<i>Enhanced collaboration between Romanian and DS institutions involved in the programme</i>	Rate of satisfaction within the partnership	n/a	90% (satisfied & very satisfied)
		Percentage of staff involved in cooperation who declare to apply the new knowledge/skills acquired through the cooperation	n/a	90%
Output 5.1	Preparation of the cooperation facilitated	Number of Preparatory visits (including participation at match-making seminars) financed	23	40
Output 5.2	Joint projects implemented by partner institutions	Number of projects based on partnerships agreements (including the bilateral agreements for mobility in HE) financed	68	300

Grant rate and budget

Programme eligible expenditure	14 117 647 €
Programme grant rate	85.00%
Total programme grant	12 000 000 €
Programme grant – EEA Grants (€)	12 000 000 €
Programme grant – Norway Grants (€)	0 €

	Budget heading	EEA Grants	Norway Grants	Total grant	Programme grant rate	Programme eligible expenditure
PM	Programme management	1 190 000 €	0 €	€	85%	1 400 000 €
PA	Outcome 1	4 845 000 €	0 €	€	85%	5 700 000 €
PA	Outcome 2	2 550 000 €	0 €	€	85%	3 000 000 €
PA	Outcome 3	918 000 €	0 €	€	85%	1 080 000 €
PA	Outcome 4	1 870 000 €	0 €	€	85%	2 200 000 €
PA	Outcome 5	627 000 €	0 €		85%	737 647 €
	Total	12 000 000 €	0 €	€	85%	14 117 647 €
	Outcome 6 (bilateral)	150 000 €	0 €	€	100%	150 000 Euro