

SIVSEN

Social Enterprise Comparison Survey

Romania National Context Report

2021



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

SIVSEN Social Enterprise Comparison Survey is part of the SIVSEN (Social Innovation through VET and Social Enterprise Networks) project, which is developed under the Erasmus+ programme by five partner organisations based in the UK, Italy, Sweden and Romania: City College Plymouth, Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (UK), Foreningen Urkraft (Sweden), Materahub (Italy) and Fundatia Danis (Romania).

The SIVSEN project learns from the social enterprise sector to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and mindsets applicable to working in a social enterprise are embedded in Vocational Education to create enhanced opportunities for growth and internationalisation of social enterprises.

SIVSEN Social Enterprise Comparison Survey is coordinated by



Romania National Context Report is developed by

FUNDAȚIA DANIS
pentru Dezvoltare Managerială

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Introduction

The SIVSEN Comparative Analysis, respectively Social Enterprise Comparative Survey are aimed to explore the transition from education (e.g. vocational college, universities) into a social enterprise workplace, including international programmes that exist within the partner organizations, other sectors, VET and higher education institutions.

During the spring and summer of 2021, the SIVSEN partners conducted research on the social enterprise sector and their interaction with the education system and work placement programmes run for learners by VET and higher education institutions, with a special focus on work placement programmes in social enterprises.

First, the partners researched already available data, reports, and studies on the topics mentioned above. They prepared four reports on their national contexts and one comparative analysis for the UK, Sweden, Italy, and Romania. Further, they wanted to explore the relationship between the social enterprise sector and the VET and higher education organizations in more depth. Thus, they organized focus groups and online surveys with 51 social entrepreneurs or representatives of social enterprises and 46 representatives of universities, high schools, public or private VET providers, etc.

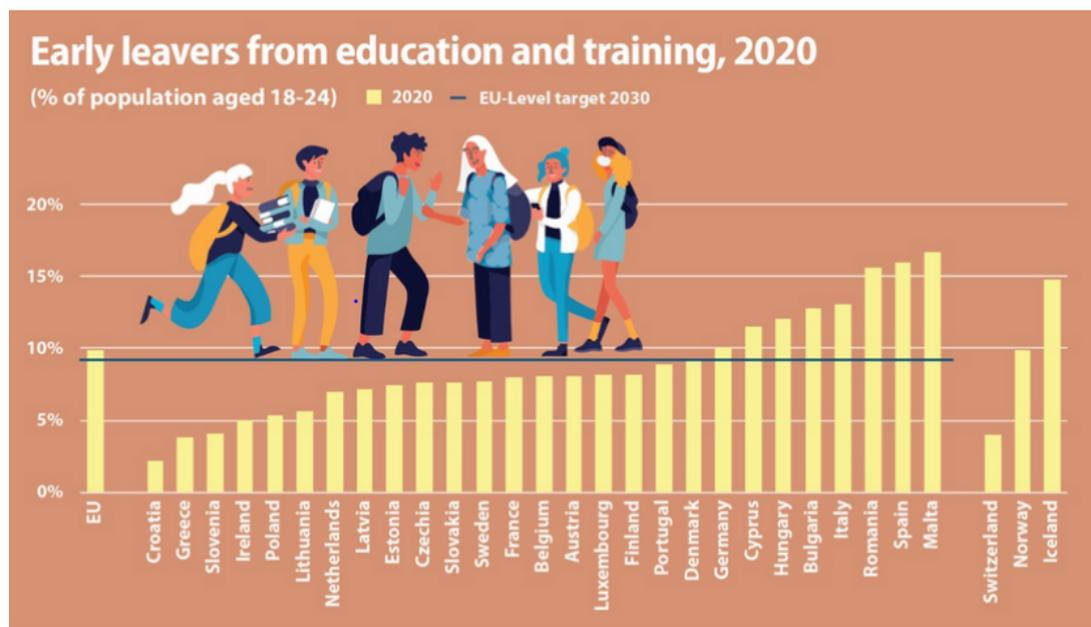
This report here presents the national context for Romania, looking at three key areas relevant for the SIVSEN research and its objectives: 1) the educational system; 2) the apprenticeship system; 3) insights into education and apprenticeships in the social entrepreneurship sector.



1. Educational system in Romania

Romania has made significant progress in recent decades in modernising its education system and raising students' learning levels. But student outcomes indicate that many Romanian children do not achieve their potential. 16% of 18-24 year olds Romanian young people (figure 1) continue to leave education early and without mastering basic competencies for life and work (Kitchen, H., et al., 2017; Eurostat, 2020).

Figure 1. Early leavers from education and training



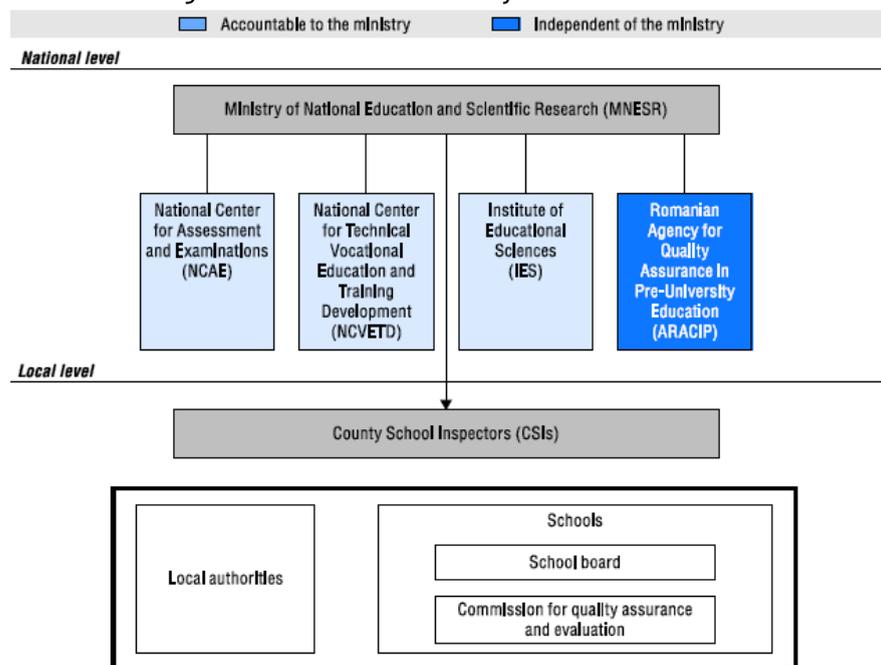
Source: (Eurostat, 2020)

Key features of the education system in Romania

The education system is administered at the **national level** by the Ministry of National Education (MNE) in cooperation with other ministries (e.g. Ministry of Public Finance for budgeting the system, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, for internship/apprenticeship programs, etc.) and institutional structures subordinated to the Government. **Ministry of National Education** organizes and leads the national education system, education, scientific research, technological development, and innovation in partnership with both subordinate institutions and institutions under the coordination. Also, MNE ensures the **relationship with the Parliament, Economic and Social Council, and the representatives of the civil society** in matters specific to its field of activity. At the **local level, the pre-university education** is managed by the county school inspectorates, as subordinated local institutions to MNE; while public universities have academic autonomy (Eurydice, 2021). At the same time, at the local level, in the pre-university education system, the local councils are responsible for managing the local network of schools and schools' infrastructure, as part of the decentralisation reforms (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The education system in Romania



Source: Kitchen, H., et al., 2017

According to Romania's profile on Eurydice (2021), the key features of the national educational system are the following:

- **Public-school education is free** at the pre-university and at the university level.
- **It has an open character**, allowing the mobility of pupils, by transfer from a school unit to another school unit, from a class to another class, from a field of study to another field of study, and from a pathway to another pathway.
- **It has a pluralistic character** (public or private schools, in educational alternative system) and it provides schooling methods in the official state language (the Romanian language), in the native languages of the pupils/students belonging to the main national minorities, or in languages widely used at international level.
- The state ensures **equal rights of access to all levels and forms of pre-university and higher education**, as well as to lifelong learning, without any form of discrimination, to Romanian citizens, as well as to the citizens of the other European Union member states, of the states belonging to the European Economic Area and of the Swiss Confederation.
- The general **mandatory education** includes primary education (0-4 grades), lower secondary education (5-8 grades), and the first 2 years of upper secondary education (9-10 grades).
- The forms of organization of pre-university education are frequency education (compulsory education) and reduced frequency education.

A detailed study of the Romanian educational system published in 2017 by OECD (Kitchen, H., et al., 2017) reveals **other significant characteristics** of the national education system:

- **The European Union has an important influence on national policy**

The European Union's Jobs and Growth Strategy for 2010-20 plays a major framing role for educational reforms in Romania.

- **Financing Public spending on education is very low**

Romania's public expenditure on primary and secondary education is the lowest of all the EU countries, both in relative and absolute terms.



- **Frequent changes in leadership and management**

The MNE has had over 20 education ministers since 1989. Also, there has been an absence of a strong cadre of professional civil servants, which made it difficult for the ministry to achieve coherence and consistency in policy making. Political change at the ministerial level is mirrored by frequent institutional re-organisations and personnel changes at the management level, undermining the continuity of policymaking and opportunities to develop professional skills and staff expertise.

- **Romania is in the early stages of a major curriculum reform**

Apart from some minor changes, the curriculum currently in effect in Romania has remained unchanged since 1998. A major feature of the new curriculum reform that started in 2008, but it was not finished, and the discussion was restarted in 2019 (MNE, 2019).

- **Most of Romania's teachers entered the profession before major modernization reforms**

In common with trends across Europe, Romania has a female-dominated and aging teaching profession. In 2014, about 89% of primary teachers were women and about one-third of primary and secondary teachers were aged over 50.

- **School principals play a limited role in leading school improvement, pedagogical leadership, and school improvement.**

The lack of objective criteria to guide selection, principal appraisal, and conditions for dismissal to date have created instability in the role and have not ensured that principals have the skills and capacity that school leadership requires

- **Selection and tracking start early, at the age of 14**

At the end of lower secondary education (Grade 8), Romanian students take a national examination, which assesses their performance in mathematics and Romanian language and literature. Students may be assigned to one of three types of high school: technological (45%), theoretical (47%) and "vocational" (7%) (INSSE, 2017).

- **Selection via high-stakes examinations hampers student progression**

Romania's use of national examinations to select students passing from lower to upper secondary and upper secondary to tertiary creates successive barriers to student progression, fueling early leaving and limiting access to tertiary education for most Romanian students. High-stakes examinations put pressure on teachers to "teach to the test", which limits students' learning opportunities and narrows the curriculum. Another consequence of the pressure for academic success is the prevalence of private tutoring in Romania.

- **Repeated policy changes have weakened vocational education and training at the secondary level**

Vocational education and training in Romania has been subject to changes and reversals since 2011, which has limited the provision of relevant, high-quality VET. Romania is now trying to revive its vocational education, to provide a genuine alternative to academic programmes and fill the gap created by the dissolution of the Arts and Crafts Schools. Students are able to follow a VET programme in the technological high schools, beginning in Grade 9 for three years. These programmes provide specialized vocational education developed in close collaboration with the business sector to offer an alternative to high school. Graduates can directly enter the labour market or post-secondary non-tertiary training.

Regulatory frameworks

Learning stages and qualifications in formal and non-formal learning contexts

The **2006 Quality Law** and the **2011 Education Law** set out the key principles governing Romanian's education system which include quality, fairness, decentralisation, and the



involvement of all stakeholders. Below figures summarise the levels of education in Romania (figure 3) and VET in the Romanian education and training system (figure 4)(Eurydice, 2020/21; Cedefop, 2019).

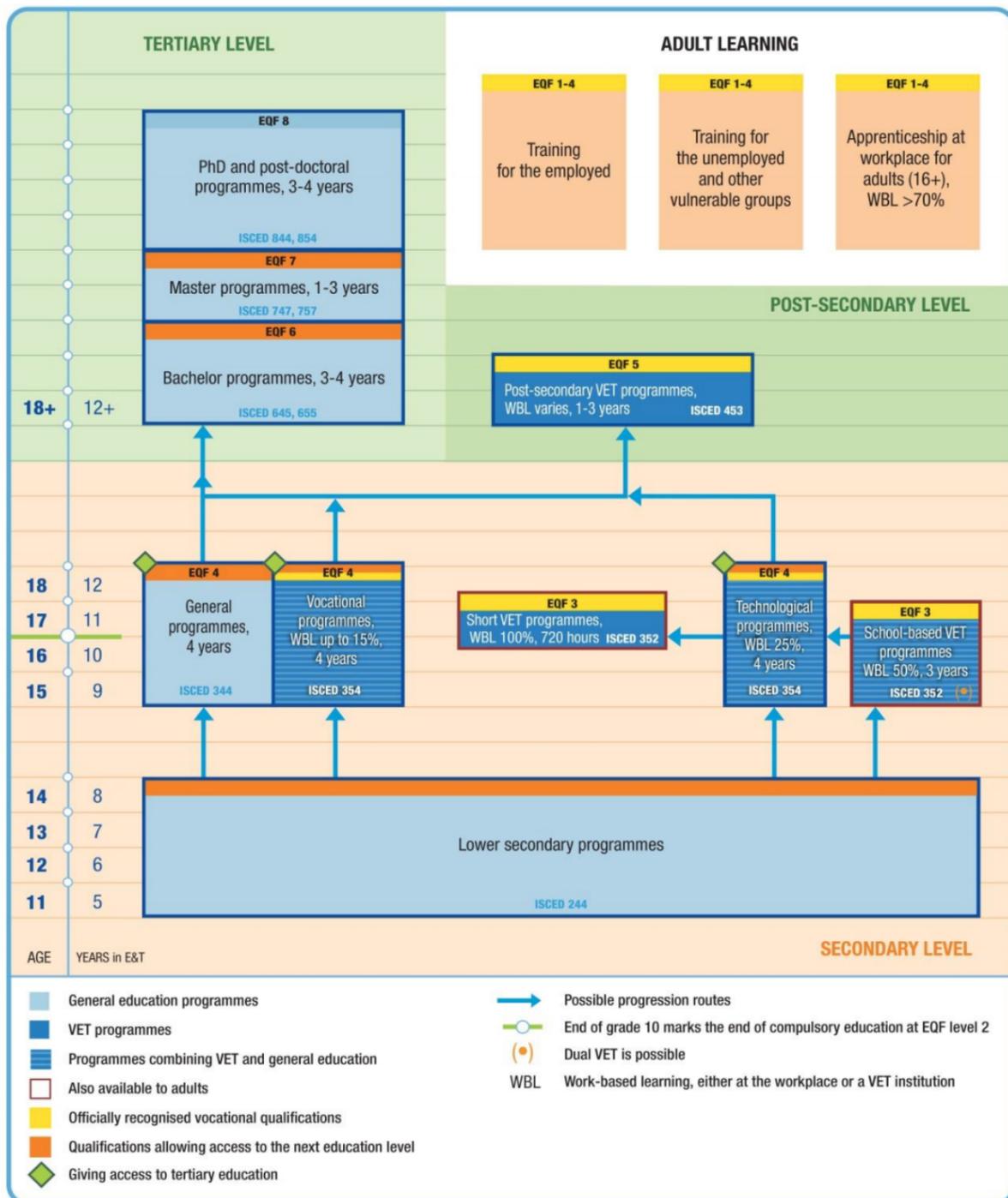
Figure 3. Level of education in the Romanian educational system

EARLY EDUCATION (ISCED 01&02)		
Age 0-5		
before preschool level (0-3 years), ISCED 01	Preschool education (3-6 years), ISCED 02	
take place in nurseries, kindergartens and day-care centers, whether state-owned or private, according to the same educational content and the same national standards	takes place in kindergartens or schools (state or private), which have pre-school groups as a section, following the same curriculum and respecting the same national standards	
PRIMARY EDUCATION (ISCED 1)		
Age 6-10		
the preparatory grade	grades 1—4	
SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED 2&3)		
Age 11-14 ISCED 2 & Age 15-18 ISCED 3		
Secondary lower education or gymnasium (ISCED 2)	The secondary superior education (ISCED 3)	
includes grades 5—8. The access to the higher level is achieved by a national evaluation examination and distribution in upper secondary education units.	high school education	a minimum 3-year professional education
	includes the high school grades 9-12/13, with the following pathways: theoretical, aptitude-based (vocational) and technological	The graduates of the professional education promoting the certification examination of the professional qualification may attend the high school education courses.
POST SECONDARY NON -TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED 4)		
the post-secondary education, professional and technical education		
THE HIGHER EDUCATION (ISCED 5-8) *		
education is organized in universities, study academies, institutes, higher studies schools, referred to as higher education institutions or universities, temporarily authorized or certified. The high school graduates with high school diploma can enroll in the higher education. The admission conditions are different from one institution to another.		
*ISCED 5 type of education does not exist in Romania		
Bachelor studies (ISCED 6)	Master Studies (ISCED7)	PhD Studies (ISCED 8)
THE ADULT EDUCATION		
includes training programmes at all qualification levels, organized in the public or private sector. At public level, the Institute of Education Sciences provides training courses by which it promotes education reforms. The Teaching-Staff Resource Center offers professional development courses with regard to the system of professional and transversal skills necessary to the teacher and to the national and European policies and strategies in the education field.		

Source: Fundația Danis based on Eurydice, 2020/21

Figure 4: VET in the Romanian education and training system





Source: Cedefop, 2019

Qualifications and validation of non-formal and Informal Learning

In December 2013, Romania adopted the **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** (Government Decision no. 918/2013). The NQF, following the European model, has 8 levels of qualifications that can be acquired through the formal education and training system in Romania and by recognition of learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

At the moment, the methodology allows the validation only for **level 4 or lower** to obtain a qualification through the validation **of non-formal and informal learning**. Validation is still linked



with occupational standards and is not yet operational with regards to formal education (Eurydice, 2020).

An important step was taken in June 2011 when the National Council for Adult Vocational Training and the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment were merged into one single body – the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) – responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive NQF. The NQA is the national contact point for the EQF (EQF-NCP); since 2018 it has also been the National Europass Centre, Cedefop (2019).

Adults with professional competences acquired in other ways than the formal ones (non-formal and informal) can be assessed in the **competence assessment centers** authorized by the National Authority for Qualifications.

Also, according to the Law of National Education, **community centers of lifelong learning** at local level can provide educational services through programs for validating the results of non-formal and informal learning.

The Law on National Education adopted in 2011 emphasises the role of validation of informal and non-formal learning in the context of a broader lifelong learning perspective, based on a learning outcomes approach. The law is promoting a general approach to validation and there are no targeted measures for a specific sector, with the exception of validation of the learning outcomes acquired by teaching staff in non-formal and informal contexts. The validation process is highly focused on qualifications, mostly VET qualifications and has the following characteristics:

- It should be voluntary;
- It should be carried out in accordance with established occupational standards;
- The evidence of professional competences should be gathered through the application of different methods of evaluation applied in various contexts and on different occasions;
- The assessment should be independent of formal professional education and training, meaning that it can take place outside a formal education or training programme;
- The assessment of each unit of competence should conclude with a result for the candidate - *competent or not yet competent*.

The evaluation and validation of the acquisitions acquired by the teaching, management, guidance and control personnel through different programs and forms of organization of the continuous training are carried out on the basis of the **system of accumulation, recognition and equivalence of the transferable professional credits**, elaborated and approved by the Ministry of National Education (Eurydice, 2020).

Alignment to labour market needs

Adjustment of apprenticeship occupational profiles in companies / curricula in schools / training with developing and changing labour needs and demands of labour market and professions

As a response of the vocational training to the growing and diversified labor market requirement and in order to improve the education and training system's response to the economics and social dynamics in Romania, the Dual Vet apprenticeship scheme was introduced in 2017–2018 at



EQF level 3, 4 and 5 (Cedefop, 2019). Initial VET (including dual form) qualifications are based on training standards. Training standards are developed by representatives of the companies from the respective sectors and of the VET providers, with the methodological support of the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, endorsed by National Authority for Qualifications and validated by employers and other social partners through sectoral committees. The revision of standards is carried out at least every five years or at the request of economic operators.

At the same time, partner companies have a role in the design of local curricula. The adjustment of the apprenticeship curricula to the labour market demand and requirements is done especially by one of the two main components of the qualification curricula (the local school curriculum) that is designed by schools and local businesses (employers). Employers are represented in the VET school boards and they help identify training needs, plan the VET offer, design local curricula and certify vocational competences of learners.

Career guidance and advice on apprenticeships provided by schools or by any other national body

Most **guidance and counselling** in the education system is offered by psychologists, teachers, sociologists and social workers. Guidance and counselling include three types of advice: 1. information necessary to plan, obtain and keep a job, 2. education on careers and 3. counselling that helps understating individual goals, aspirations and the skills needed to find a job.

According to the national education law, counselling, guidance and advice is provided by:

- (a) the teacher in cooperation with parents and the school psychologist in **primary education** ;
- (b) by the pedagogical assistance offices in schools with more than 800 pupils, in **lower and upper secondary education**
- (c) by career guidance and counselling centres in universities in **higher education**

Within the **initial VET system**, the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development contributes career guidance and counselling activities aiming to increase the awareness of young students and their parents. In the **labor market**, the county agencies for employment are responsible for guidance/counselling for the unemployed, older workers, young graduates, former convicts and ethnic minorities (Cedefop, 2019).

Quality Assurance

Quality insurance in initial VET

At national level, the law on quality assurance of education (Law No 87/2006) sets a series of basic principles applicable for all levels of pre-university education, including initial VET: focusing on learning outcomes, promoting quality improvement, protecting education beneficiaries (first of all learners), centring on the internal evaluation process (self-assessment) of providers. The self-assessment process is an action of collective responsibility at VET provider level and is coordinated by the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (ARACIP) is responsible for authorisation, accreditation and external evaluation of pre-university education, including initial VET. For all these processes, the agency cooperates with independent experts included in a national register.



Quality assurance in continuing VET

Authorisation of vocational training providers is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice. It is made through county authorisation commissions and gives VET providers the right to issue qualification or graduation certificates with national recognition. Authorisation of the training provider is based on the following criteria: the professional training programme, the resources needed to carry out the training programme and the experience of the training provider and results of previous work. The external evaluation for authorisation is conducted by two independent specialists appointed by the county authorisation commissions. Authorisation of a training programme is based on occupational standards and professional training standards, recognised at national level and with a validity of four years. Periodic monitoring (at least three monitoring visits) of authorised training providers is carried out by external specialists.

Quality assurance of assessment centres for validation of non-formal and informal learning

Development of a fully functional quality assurance system for the validation of non formal and informal learning is in progress. All assessment centres must have an internal management system for quality assurance and internal monitoring, covering the following aspects: the management of activities, the management of resources, the management of services for assessment and certification of competences and the monitoring and evaluation of the results. The National Authority for Qualifications regularly monitors assessment centres in line with a set of well-defined national standards and performance indicators: these include site visits, data collection about certified candidates, periodic meetings with centres (Cedefop, 2019).

The table below presents some specific aspects regarding the quality assurance and **the conditions governing entry into apprenticeship systems** for each of the two apprenticeship systems that operate in Romania.

Apprenticeship at the workplace	Dual Vet scheme
Who is allowed to be an apprentice? How can he / she get into the system and be trained as an apprentice? Are there barriers for access?	
<p>Persons who are not in formal education or training and wish to obtain a vocational qualification through practical training.</p> <p>Minimum age limits for an apprentice is defined only, 16 years old. There is no upper age limit. (90% of apprentices are adults over 25 years of age and 10% are aged 16-25 (early school leavers or NEETs). More than 50% are adults and the other 50% are early leavers.)</p>	<p>Students entering their 9th year of school, who wish to follow a VET programme with a consistent component of work-based-learning, finalized with a vocational qualification recognised at national level.</p> <p>The students must be lower secondary programmes graduates (usually, 14-15 years old) and under 26 years old. Most students involved are from the current generation of lower secondary programmes graduates.</p>
Who is responsible to ensure qualitative training within the apprenticeship system for training in the company as well as in school? How does it work? Quality assurance system in practice	
<p>The training program is developed by the employer together with an authorized professional training provider with which the employer concludes a service contract for the apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship training program includes theoretical training and practical training. Theory</p>	<p>It is a three-year professional training program of initial VET, based on training standards that describe learning units consisting of learning outcomes and are based on occupational standards.</p> <p>Training standards play a key role in designing VET</p>



and practical training (WBL at least 70%) is provided mainly by companies, in cooperation with authorised professional training providers that also organise qualification exams. Training periods alternate with working time allocated for the tasks specified in the job description; the practical training of the apprentice is performed under the guidance and supervision of the training provider.

The **employer** has the following obligations:

1. to appoint a coordinator to oversee the training of the apprentice;
2. to ensure payment of wages to the apprentice;
3. to ensure the conditions necessary for the training, including access to the theoretical training by means of developing a contract for services with an authorized vocational training provider;
4. to ensure the necessary conditions for the authorized training provider and coordinator to fulfil duties regarding training of the apprentice.

The labour inspectors, local representatives of The Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, control the way of concluding, executing, amending, suspending and terminating the apprenticeship contract.

The employers and the employees' representatives are members in the counties authorization commissions that authorize the training providers and the vocational training programs. The authorization process also involves verifying the training programs, the curricula, compliance with the occupational standard etc.

curricula, assessing learning outcomes and awarding qualification certificates.

Curricula for each qualification has two main components: 1. core curriculum designed at national level by education working groups; 2. local school curriculum designed by schools and local businesses (employers) to facilitate adaptation of the students' professional training to the requirements of the local and regional labour market.

The organisation and functioning of dual education, the access to dual education, **the duration** and content of vocational training programmes, the way of organising and conducting the qualification certification exam are regulated by the National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education, part of the Minister of National Education, after consulting the representatives of the economic sector.

The individual contract of practical training of the student is regulated and it is usually signed for each training year.

The students' training is carried out as follows: theoretical training in school, and practical training in the company, based on a partnership contract between the two partners, together with the local authority. The practical training in the company is carried out according to the educational plans and the schedule established by agreement between the educational unit and the economic partner. It is recommended that the practical training in the company be carried out alternatively with the theoretical training in the school, but it is not mandatory. In the dual VET currently implemented, during the three years of training, it is organised practical training combined with a total duration of 24 weeks, 5 weeks in the first year, 9 weeks in the second year and 10 weeks in the third year.

Even though the Romanian Dual VET scheme was inspired by the German dual education system, the Romanian system does not include evaluation/quality insurance of the work-based training done by the employer. However, the school is authorized and evaluated according to the 2006 Quality Education Law.



2. Apprenticeship system in Romania

As many EU countries, Romania has an ageing population. This has an impact on VET, with an 8.5% decrease in the number of VET upper secondary schools since 2012/13. Efforts are being made to increase student participation, enable access to VET, and improve its quality and its relevance to the labour market. Recent system developments include the introduction of a dual VET form: it complements the work-based learning tradition in school-based programmes and aims at making VET a more attractive option for learners, while adapting training better to employer needs (Cedefop, 2019).

Two apprenticeship schemes exist in Romania, with separate legal basis:

1. **Apprenticeship at the workplace** (supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice) for people over 16 years old outside of formal education, with a tradition of 85 years old and
2. **Dual VET** (managed by the Ministry of National Education), at EQF level 3 in 2019, implemented from 2017-2018, targeting students entering their 9th year of school. Elements of dual training in initial VET were introduced starting with the 2013/2014 school year.

The **“Apprenticeship at the workplace” scheme** [*ucenicia la locul de munca*] is regulated by the Law 279/2005. The main aspects regulated are: granting subsidies to employers who employ apprentices, apprenticeship contracts, quality assurance of the training offer, authorization of training providers, providing the apprenticeship program, duration etc. Data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection indicates that from 2006 until 2019, **6847 apprenticeship contracts** were concluded. From 2012 until 2019 the number of apprenticeship contracts increased from 60 in 2012 up to 2419 contracts for the first six months in 2019 (Cedefop, 2019).

The dual form of ‘professional’ VET (dual VET scheme) is regulated by Government Decree no. 81/2016, regarding the modification and completion of the National Education Law no. 1/2011. The dual VET scheme is based on the idea of a partnership among the school, the employer and the local authority, most of the time a municipality. VET learners receive a scholarship from the government, and the employers also pay them a monthly allowance, based on an individual training contract signed by each learner. This training contract is signed each school year, and the signatory parts are: the student, the employer and the school. The training contract defines the rights and obligations of the parties regarding the practical training organized at the employer the apprenticeship provides.

In school year 2019-2020, at national level, there were **12908 learners** in dual form for initial VET (6970 in the 9th grade, 3816 in the 10th grade and 2122 in 11th grade) and the school plan for the school year 2020-2021 for Romania provides almost 9000 new places in dual VET (Cedefop, 2019).

You may find below a **comparison between these two types of apprenticeships** implemented in Romania (Cedefop, 2019), including the key features of the two schemes:



Apprenticeship at the workplace scheme organised under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	Dual VET Apprenticeship organised under the Ministry of National Education
The National Agency for Employment coordinates the scheme at the national level.	The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, a MNE institution , coordinates the scheme at national level.
It targets persons who are not in formal education or training and wish to obtain a vocational qualification through practical training (more than 50% are adults and the other 50% are early leavers).	It targets students entering their 9th grade, who wish to follow a VET programme with a consistent component of work-based-learning, finalized with a vocational qualification recognised at national level.
Minimum age limits defined only: apprentices must be at least 16 years old. There is no upper age limit.	Minimum and maximum age limits defined: the students must be lower secondary programme graduates (usually, 14-15 years old) and under 26 years old.
The scheme is not included in the ISCED 2011 mapping.	The scheme is included in the ISCED 2011 mapping.
The qualification is included in the National Qualification Framework (NQF). Apprenticeship law stipulates that the apprenticeship at the workplace can be organised for qualifications at levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the National Qualifications Framework, equivalent to the EQF.	The qualification is included in the National Qualification Framework (NQF). Implementation of dual VET is currently only at EQF level 3. The dual training at EQF levels 4 and 5 is not implemented yet.
All apprentices under a contract of apprenticeship at the workplace receive a salary . The apprentices receive a monthly wage (taxable income) by law. This is equal to the country's minimum gross national salary in force for a program of 8 hours a day and 40 hours per week on average, which is 483 Euros/month. This is financed through the unemployment insurance budget, managed by the National Agency for Employment.	The apprenticeships in dual VET are organised entirely in partner companies and all the costs are supported by them. All apprentices receive two types of monthly allowance (not wages): professional scholarship for three years - paid by the government (43 euro/month) & Dual Vet allowance - paid by the company they undergo training (minimum 43 euro/month).
The learners are officially receiving the apprentice status , by law.	The learner keeps, during the theoretical and practical training, the student status , even though they follow an apprenticeship program per se.
The training program is developed by the employer together with an authorized professional training provider with which the employer concludes a contract for an apprenticeship program that includes theoretical & practical training.	It is a three-year professional programme of initial VET. Training standards play a key role in designing VET curricula, assessing learning outcomes and awarding qualification certificates. The curricula for each qualification have two components: core curriculum designed at national level & local curriculum designed by schools and local businesses to facilitate entering the labour market.



The duration of the apprenticeship program must be established according to the targeted level of qualification, but no less than: 6 months for level 1, 12 months at level 2, 24 months at level 3 and 36 months at level 4.	During the three years of training, a practical training is organized, with a total duration of 24 weeks, 5 weeks in the first year, 9 weeks in the second year and 10 weeks in the third year
The legal framework makes a distinction between the training time and working time for the period spent at the workplace.	The legal framework makes no distinction between the training time and working time for the period spent at the workplace.

Information, Advice and Guidance

There are two official definitions of “apprenticeship” in Romania, one for the “apprenticeship at the workplace” which is part of the continuing VET, and another one for the “Dual Vet” apprenticeship, part of the initial VET:

- **The “Apprenticeship at the workplace scheme”** is “the vocational training at the workplace that is conducted on the basis of an apprenticeship contract. The vocational training program through apprenticeship at the workplace constitutes an integral part of the apprenticeship contract.” (Eurydice, 2019)

The Labour Code from 1950 as well as the Laws introduced in 1929, 1950 and 1972 indicate clearly that the apprenticeship scheme was traditionally targeted at preparing apprentices for a specific occupation within a given sector, under the supervision of a foreman. More recently, the apprenticeship at the workplace has been targeted at increasing the level of qualifications among young people and facilitating their entry on the labour market.

Basically, the apprenticeships are developed and then defined and designed based on the company’s needs for the workforce – the employer that starts the apprenticeship programme. Then, the training program is developed by the employer together with an authorized professional training provider with which the employer concludes a service contract for the apprenticeship program. Training periods alternate with working time allocated for the tasks specified in the job description; the practical training of the apprentice is performed under the guidance and supervision of the training provider. The company is the one that selects the apprentices, similar to their regular employee recruitment and selection process.

- **The “Dual VET Apprenticeship”** is “a form of organization of vocational education and training with the following specific characteristics:
 - it is organized on the initiative of interested economic operators as potential employers and apprenticeship partners;
 - it provides increased opportunities for education and training on the basis of a partnership contract and individual contracts of practical training, through practical training organized under the main responsibility of economic operators;
 - the economic operators ensure the practical training of the students, the scholarship at the level of the granted from public funds and other expenses for the students' quality education;
 - it facilitates the involvement of economic operators in the decision-making mechanisms at the level of the partner education unit” (Cedefop, 2019).

A dual VET class is started in a school only if a company or more companies are asking for such a class while proving the needs for the specific qualified workforce. In most of the schools, the companies are also involved in the recruitment and selection process of the learners, the



apprentices that will be trained on the companies' premises. In dual VET partner companies are responsible for implementing the training process together with schools. Companies participate with representatives on the boards of the partner schools, and also contribute to the development of the local component of the school curricula.

Advice and Guidance system in Romania

The aim of guidance and counselling in Romania is to provide tailored personal development interventions and to facilitate transitions of individuals between different stages of the educational system and of working life. The current setup of the guidance and counselling services in Romania was created in the 1990s, with successive updates afterwards. The main providers of these services are schools, universities and the public employment offices. Guidance and counselling include: information necessary to plan, obtain and keep a job; education on careers; counselling that helps understand individual goals, aspirations and the skills needed to find a job (Cedefop, 2020, Euroguidance, 2021).

The learners entering the VET dual scheme receive counselling and advice through the **school counselling and guidance** services. In K-12 education in Romania, the counselling and guidance activities are taking place either within **school counselling offices** or as a distinct **school subject included in the National Curriculum**.

Moreover, within the initial VET system, the **National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development** promotes career guidance and counselling activities aiming to increase the awareness of young students and their parents. There is a national website dedicated to promoting initial VET: <https://www.alegetidrumul.ro/>, targeting students, parents, teachers and companies.

At the same time, the learners entering the apprenticeship at the workplace scheme can ask for guidance and counselling from the **Public Employment Offices coordinated** by the National Public Employment Service (NPES), under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, as a free service for unemployed persons. These offices provide information about training, job opportunities and an individual job matching plan for every job seeker. Or, the learners from this system could access private providers of counselling and guidance, such as specialized companies, or NGOs offering such services to diverse vulnerable groups.

Employment outcomes

The benefits for employers and apprentices regulated by national norms in the "Apprenticeship at the workplace" scheme

All apprentices under a contract of apprenticeship at the workplace receive a salary. The basic monthly salary set by the apprenticeship agreement is at least equal to the country's minimum gross national salary in force for a program of 8 hours a day and 40 hours per week on average. This is financed through the unemployment insurance budget, managed by the National Agency for Employment, or from other funding sources, if available, such as EU funds, sponsorships, donations, etc.

Thus, the employer is reimbursed for the salary costs paid to the apprentice, while benefiting from the work done by the apprentice. Employers may apply to the public employment office for the public employment service subsidy of 483 Euros/per month for each apprentice, for up to



three years (the duration of the apprenticeship programme). Finally, authorised VET providers are exempt from paying value added tax for the training operations. Companies may also deduct the training costs from their taxable income (Cedefop, 2019).

The benefits for employers and apprentices regulated by national norms in the “Dual Vet” scheme

In Dual Vet scheme, the students (apprentices) receive two types of allowances:

1. a type of professional scholarship for the entire period of three year professional programmes. This type of allowance is a national social protection programme that offers EUR~43 per month.
2. a Dual Vet allowance that is provided by the company where the apprentice undergoes the training. The value of this allowance is at least 43 euros, but the employers can pay more. Companies also pay for work equipment of learners, their insurance and medical examination.

The practical stages in Dual VET are organised entirely in partner companies and all the costs are supported by them, costs that the employers may deduct from their taxable income:

- economic agents can deduct from the taxable income expenses incurred on the basis of the contracts concluded with the schools for organising and carrying out the vocational education and training (including dual VET);
- they recover from the tax point of view, by deducting the depreciation, the expenditures related to the fixed assets and the investments, made on the basis of the contracts concluded with the schools, for the organisation and the performance of the vocational education and training (including dual VET) (Cedefop, 2019).

Certification and accreditation

Type of qualification obtained through the “Apprenticeship at the workplace” scheme

The article 3 of Government Decision 129 / 2000 stipulates that the vocational training of adults, finalised with certificates of vocational qualifications, is recognised nationally and is part of the national system of vocational education and training. Apprenticeship law stipulates that the apprenticeship at the workplace can be organised for qualifications at levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the NQF/EQF. Apprenticeships at the workplace can be organised for the qualifications established by the legislation in force and for the occupations included in the Occupation Classification in Romania, for which professional training standards or occupational standards exist. All apprentices receive nationally recognised qualification certificates of equal value as in initial VET (Cedefop, 2019).

Type of qualification obtained through the “Dual VET” apprenticeship scheme

According to the law that regulates this scheme, vocational and technical education, including dual, is organized to acquire knowledge, skills and competences predominantly for employment for professional qualifications at Levels 3, 4 and 5, according to NQF/EQF. After successfully passing the final qualifications exam, the graduates obtain a certificate for a professional qualification EQF level 3 and Europass supplement to the certificate (the supplement does not stipulate that the certificate was obtained in dual VET). The graduates in dual VET also receive a certificate of practical training in dual education attesting to the activities carried out by the students during the practice and the results of the learning acquired through these activities. This certificate is part of the student's personal portfolio (Cedefop, 2019).



3. Insights into education and apprenticeships in the social entrepreneurship sector in Romania

In Romania, social enterprises are regulated by Law no. 219/2015 on social economy. According to the law, the main objectives of the social economy are: strengthening economic and social cohesion; employment; and the development of social services. In order to achieve the objectives of the social economy, **the entities of the social economy carry out**, mainly, activities of general interest: the production of goods, the provision of services and / or the execution of works that contribute to the well-being of the community or its members, the promotion, with priority, of some activities that can generate or ensure jobs for the employment of the persons belonging to vulnerable groups, including the **development of professional training programs dedicated to people from vulnerable groups** and the **development of social services in order to increase the insertion capacity of the vulnerable groups in the labor market**.

The main source of funding for starting social enterprises is the European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Programme managed by the Ministry of European Funds (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2021). Most of the time, these funds are accessed by NGOs or NGOs are selected as grant operators for these funds supporting social entrepreneurs to start their social businesses.

In this context, in Romania, the NGOs and the social enterprises, many of them developed by NGOs, are the ones that assume the primary role in the development of training programs for social enterprises' employees. The NGOs that support vulnerable groups have opened social enterprises with the aim of providing jobs for the people they serve, and with European funds they have also created special training schools for their social enterprises' employees.

As was previously mentioned, the formal educational system in Romania is connected to companies through the apprenticeship system: vocational schools, the new dual VET system, technological high schools and universities organize apprenticeship and internship programs in companies. However, there is no specific program dedicated to social enterprises and we could not identify a formal educational program focused on providing work experience in the SE sector.

At the same time, the private VET providers are actually disconnected from the labor market. They have some basic contracts with companies where people do the required apprenticeships and internships, but not necessarily with social enterprises. The private VET providers are not necessarily interested in serving specific vulnerable populations, or understanding the labour market needs or community's needs. Their main goal is to enroll people for their courses and provide them the basic work experience required by law.

In this context, the examples presented in the tables below do not include formal training initiatives for work experience placements social enterprises, but only non-formal programs organized by NGOs serving vulnerable groups and opening social enterprises, as explained above.



Formal training initiatives for work experiences placements in SE sectors

Name of promoting / provider organisation / network (e.g. high schools, universities)	Type of training initiative (courses, programmes, projects, case studies, etc.)	Objective/s of the training initiative	Links / references	Notes
No relevant initiative was identified	NA	NA	NA	NA

Non-formal (VET) training initiatives for work experiences placements in SE sectors

Name of promoting / provider organisation / network	Type of training initiative (courses, programmes, projects, case studies, etc.)	Objective/s of the training initiative	Links / references	Notes
Humanitarian Organisation Concordia	<p>Vocational training program for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are no longer in the formal education system and who do not have the means of self-support to obtain a qualification.</p> <p>The CONCORDIA Vocational School organizes professional training courses lasting 10 months (75% representing practical training and 25% theory) for specializations in bakery, cooking, catering and horticulture. Upon completion of these courses, following an examination, graduates receive a diploma recognized in Romania and EU.</p> <p>In addition to the courses, the organisation offers support in job finding for the young people and has established partnerships with various companies and counseling for job interviews.</p>	<p>The objective of the training initiative is the social and professional (re) integration of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, gaining professional experience and social skills for employment.</p> <p>CONCORDIA Bakery is a social enterprise, the economic branch of CONCORDIA Humanitarian Organization.</p> <p>Graduates of the bakery courses can remain employees of CONCORDIA Bakery or gains some work experience, before getting in full employment.</p>	<p>https://www.nesst.org/concordia</p> <p>http://www.concordia.org.ro/intreprinder-e-sociala/brutaria-concordia</p> <p>http://www.concordia.org.ro/scoala/cum-te-inscrii</p>	<p>The funds for the startup come from CONCORDIA Social Projects in Austria, which supports the projects of the CONCORDIA Humanitarian Organization in Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Bulgaria.</p>



<p>The Close to You Foundation Romania (Alaturi de Voi - ADV Romania)</p>	<p>ADV Romania is one of the biggest social enterprises in Romania, built around the one stop shop principle, according to which a disadvantaged individual can access a package of services addressing several issues: social and psychological services, educational services, professional orientation, qualification, employment and assistance and the workplace. They developed several products for an integrated approach in the field of social economy, such as UtilDeco that started in 2008. UtilDeco is a work integration social enterprise, which generated over 150 workplaces. UtilDeco offers archiving and document storage services, work protection and safety services, printing services, and it produces work protection equipment.</p>	<p>The objective of their qualification services is the integration of people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups in the labour market.</p>	<p>https://alaturi-devoi.ro/en/about-us/</p> <p>https://www.utildeco.ro/de-spre-noi/</p>	<p>ADV Romania is the EY Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2016 and they are included on the EC website as a model of social enterprise (26 employees, of which 15 are people with disabilities). More than 1000 vulnerable persons benefited from vocational guidance and qualification.</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



Bibliography:

- Cedefop (2019), European Inventory on NQF 2018, Retrieved from https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/romania_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf
- Cedefop (2019), Understanding of Apprenticeship in the National Context, Retrieved from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/country-fiches/romania>
- Cedefop, (2019), Apprenticeship at the workplace, Retrieved from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches/apprenticeship-workplace>
- Cedefop (2019), Vet in Dual System, Retrieved from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches/apprenticeship-workplace>
- Cedefop (2019). Vocational education and training in Romania: short description (Educația și formarea profesională în România: descriere succintă) Luxembourg: Oficiul pentru Publicații, Retrieved from <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/256780>
- Cedefop (2020). Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices-Romania. CareersNet national records, Retrieved from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-romania>
- CNRED,(2019), Education System in Romania, Retrieved from <https://cnred.edu.ro/en/Education-System-in-Romania>
- Euroguidance (2021). Guidance System in Romania, Retrieved from <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-system-in-romania>
- Eurostat (2020). Early leavers from education and training, Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training&fbclid=IwAR2-4fVGVoktjeCnT5ATsMI_IlqPG2VgDrQ0EhxXxbfYQm5rLH_YUIhpomul
- Eurydice (2020, 2021), Romania Overview, Retrieved from https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/romania_en
- Eurydice, (2020), Validation of Non- formal and Informal Learning, Retrieved from https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-61_en
- INSSE (2017), Romanian Education System Data, Retrieved from https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/sistemul_educational_in_romania_2015_2016.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3-0tBulLl2JwIJS2LngFp4jENLqlcdB3BrUicF2HNZhwBBE Qy822iGTac
- Kitchen, H., et al. (2017), *Romania 2017*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264274051-en>, Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/romania-2017-9789264274051-en.htm>
- Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (2021), Retrieved from <https://mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/2014-domenii/munca/economia-sociala>
- Ministry of National Education (2019), Repere pentru proiectarea, actualizarea și evaluarea Curriculumului național (Guidelines for the design, updating and evaluation of the National Curriculum), Retrieved from https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/DPC_31.10.19_consultare.pdf)

