

Analysis of the policy context addressing 25+ NEETs

COUNTRY REPORT – ROMANIA

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IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT 'LOST
MILLENNIALS – TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH
NETWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF INITIATIVES
TARGETING 25+ NEETS'

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Project summary:

The project 'Lost Millennials' focuses on a regularly neglected group of the generation of Millennials: young people aged 25-29 neither in employment or education and training (25+ NEETs). This generation started their working life shortly after the economic crisis of 2008, perceiving uncertainty and lack of security for work and well-being, they are more likely to be inactive or in precarious jobs. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the successful integration of 25+ NEETs to the labour market through increasing knowledge on the effects of employment initiatives on 25+ NEETs, building capacity of stakeholders to perform impact studies and thus improving the quality of labour market interventions. This objective will be achieved through the creation of the transnational research network which will share know-how and good practices, the evaluations of governmental and community-based initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs, as well as the engagement of stakeholders to increase the policy-relevance of project results.

For more information, please visit our [website](#), contact us on lm.leadpartner@hetfa.hu and follow our [social media](#).

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Implemented by:



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1. Introduction

According to the latest EUROSTAT data (2021), the percentage of 25-29-year-old NEETs in Romania (24.8%) is considerably higher than the EU average (17.3%) (EUROSTAT, EDAT_LFSE_29 database). Beside this general statistic, there are several dimensions where there are huge discrepancies between different groups. One of the main differences is the gender gap, as the percentage of female NEETs (36.1%) in this age group is more than twice as of the males (14.2%). The residence type also creates striking differences: while in the cities, the percentage of this population was 11.9%, the towns and suburbs registered 27.8%, and in the rural areas this percentage was 33.8%. Combining these two dimensions, the female NEETs (25-29 years) in rural areas register a striking 52.4% (EUROSTAT, EDAT_LFSE_29 database).

The high percentage of the Roma ethnic minority among the NEETs is also an important issue, as 77% of women and 52% of men are considered NEETs in the 16-24 cohort in Romania in 2016 (Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Roma – Selected findings, p.21).

2. Overall policy context

The main youth employment strategy in Romania is the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2017-2020 (MLSS, 2017), part of the National Employment Strategy. Initially, the latter strategy defined NEETs as the 15-24 age group. Still, the strategy's developers stressed the need to amend the legislation by broadening the age category of the NEET's target group and using it as a reference for youth measures (MLSS, 2021a). Subsequently, the Emergency Ordinance No 101 of 15 September 2021 (for the amendment of art. five pct. IV⁴ of the Law no. 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and employment stimulation, as well as for the modification and completion of the Law no. 416/2001 on the guaranteed minimum income) defines the concept of a young NEET as a person aged between 16 and 30 years old, not in education, employment, or training. After the entry into force of the emergency ordinance in Romania, young NEETs are understood as above (EO, 2021).

The Youth Guarantee programme was implemented in 2014-2015 and 2017-2020. Although the policy analysis (Toderiță, A., Damian, A. & Meiroșu, 2019) identified several shortcomings, the first of the proposals is to extend the programme beyond 2020. At the same time, the Employment Strategy considers it essential to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee Programme. However, it acknowledges that several conditions are necessary to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee, such as mobilising partnerships, improving data collection and monitoring, and using complete and optimally available funds. The reinforced Youth Guarantee ensures that all young people under 30 are offered quality employment, further training, apprenticeships, or traineeships within four months of becoming

unemployed or leaving formal education by Principle 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (MLSS, 2021).

The National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 is a strategy for the employment for the general population, but applies to 25+NEETs as well (MLSS, 2021a). Under specific objective 2, it aims to increase the degree to which the economic potential of young people (including NEETs) is exploited. Action line 1 refers to improving youth employment and promoting sustainable work within the objective, including implementing the reinforced Youth Guarantee (MLSS, 2021a). Under the National Plan for Investment and Economic Recovery, the measure *Jobs for young people* aims to ensure the work integration of young people aged 16 - 29 by creating new jobs, introducing young people to entrepreneurship, and providing qualifications programmes and apprenticeships at work, offering them a second chance (GR, 2020).

There are no regional strategies targeting NEETs; regional institutions in general fulfil an executive function in the national programmes. There are shortcomings too in the design of strategies and policies concerning youth entrepreneurship and its application to NEETs, despite the fact, that after 2020, more European funded programmes are dedicated to encourage entrepreneurship among young people (Startup Nation, Startup Student etc.).

The leading institutions with competencies regarding NEETs/25+NEETs are The Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Ministry of Education, National Employment Agency/Public Employment Service, Ministry of Investments and European Projects, Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry for Development, Public Works and Administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization.

Several policies existing at the EU level have been implemented in Romania, like Europe 2020 Strategy (MLSS, 2022), Cohesion Policy (GR, 2020; MLSS, 2021a), European Green Deal (GR, 2020; MLSS, 2021a), Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 (MLSS, 2021a), European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience (MLSS, 2021a), or the Common Agricultural Policy (GR, 2020).

3. Institutional framework

The Romanian public administration has a low level of decentralisation: many subordinated institutions are mainly the executives of the decision maker ministries. This is even more so for the county-level representatives of the subordinated institutions. Local governments have independent competencies at the local level.

The institutional framework concerning the issue of NEETs contains several ministries and their subordinated institutions:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Investments and European Projects, Ministry of Sports.
- National Employment Agency/Public Employment Service, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions, National Authority for Qualifications, Labour Inspectorate, Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development, and Innovation Funding, National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education, National Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection, Chambers of Commerce and Industry;
- County school inspectorates, Sectoral committees, County Directorates for Sport and Youth, General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Public Social Services, Local Action Groups, Social partners.

A central role is played by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity (MLSS), which acts as the main initiator of legislation and reforms in the field of labour market and social protection policies and as coordinator of the implementation and monitoring of the whole scheme. Its role is complemented by the National Agency for Employment (ANOFM), under the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which, as the implementing agency for various labour market policies, administers the unemployment insurance system under Law No. 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and employment stimulation, as amended. ANOFM also acts as implementing agency for projects co-financed by EU structural and cohesion funds (in particular, the European Social Fund), exclusively or in partnership with various other organizations. The Ministry of National Education acts as the main body for the implementation of the National Education Act. Under its authority, the National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education (CNDIPT) acts as a specialist body for a variety of programmes and initiatives aimed at the development of vocational and technical education and initial vocational training. The Ministry of Business, Trade and Entrepreneurship plays an important role in promoting entrepreneurship, ensuring the design, management, and monitoring of the implementation of projects and programmes to stimulate the establishment and development of small and medium-sized enterprises and cooperative societies and to increase their competitiveness and efficiency in the competitive environment and the phenomena specific to the market economy. In addition to the central public administration, social partners and non-governmental organizations play an important role in the implementation of various programmes and projects dedicated to employment, in the promotion of youth initiatives, in the provision of training, job placements, apprenticeships and internships. Trade

union confederations, employers' federations, accredited training providers and accredited employment service providers, including various NGOs will play a key role in the implementation of the many initiatives funded under the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020.

Many issues – the situation of NEETs included – are determined and managed by more institutions, and need a well-defined mechanism for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. For example, to achieve its objectives and the specific lines of action, the National Employment Strategy proposes a multi-annual framework plan with measures to be implemented between 2021-2027, and the planned measures will be operationalised through annual action plans. To ensure an adequate institutional framework, an Inter-institutional Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, a working body without legal personality, will be set up. The committee will be composed of representatives of the relevant ministries and their subordinate institutions, as well as representatives of other entities responsible for implementing the strategy, including representative social partners at national level. The results of the monitoring and evaluation processes will be reflected in the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report on the implementation of the Strategy, prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, which will highlight the state of implementation of the planned measures, as well as the evolution of the main variables affecting the labour market, using commonly agreed criteria within the Inter-institutional Monitoring and Evaluation Committee.

4. Supply-side policies

4.1. Education and qualification

The educational system in Romania consists of public and private units and institutions. *'The national educational system is structured into educational levels such as to ensure coherence and continuity of instruction and education according to individual and age particularities of the pupils/students'*.¹ Early education (between 0-6 years) is voluntary, while general education (which contains levels ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and partly ISCED 3) till 10 classes completed (or reaching 18 years) is compulsory.

4.1.1. Compulsory education

In principle, the National Education Law grants equal rights of access for all Romanian citizens to all levels of and forms of pre-university and higher education and to lifelong learning, without any form of discrimination, where the same rights are granted to citizens of the other Member States of the Union.

States of the European Economic Area and of the Swiss Confederation (National Education Law, p.6).

¹https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-64_en
(last visit 28.01.2022)

The educational system in Romania consists of public and private units and institutions. *‘The national educational system is structured into educational levels such as to ensure coherence and continuity of instruction and education according to individual and age particularities of the pupils/students.’²*

Romania has a national strategy entitled *‘Strategia privind reducerea părăsirii timpurii a școlii în România’* (Strategy for reducing early school leaving in Romania) from 2015, which aims to tackle this issue. The policy aims at early school leavers, but it is also dedicated to reorienting NEETs (as persons between 18 and 24 years old) into formal education.

There are policies aimed to tackle early school leaving, at county level (NUTS III), through the County Resource and Educational Psychological Assistance Centres (CJRAE in Romanian abbreviation). They develop psycho-pedagogical assistance and school guidance services and vocational guidance, provided through the county centres and the school counselling offices. The school counselling centres are operated in schools with a minimum of 800 pupils or 400 pre-school children or in groups of pupils of schools/kindergartens; (ORDER No 5555 of 7 October 2011 approving the Regulation on the organization and functioning of the county/urban centres for educational resources and assistance ISSUER: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH, YOUTH AND SPORT, PUBLISHED IN: OFFICIAL MONITOR No. 759 of 27 October 2011).

4.1.2. Vocational Education Training

The decision no. 317 from 27. April 2016, on the approval of the Romanian Vocational Education and Training Strategy for the period 2016-2020, published in Official Monitor No 347 of 6 May 2016 regulates the VET in Romania. The VET strategy is complementary to the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2015-2020 and the Strategy on Reducing Early School Leaving and proposes an overall vision for the development/strengthening of the whole education and training system for lifelong learning participants. At the same time, from the perspective of qualifications and competences, this strategy proposes a linked approach with the strategies developed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection, Family and the Elderly in the field of employment and social equity (Education and training strategy in Romania for the 2016-2020 period, p.3). This policy tries to facilitate access to vocational training in Romania.

In Romania, it is mandatory that the participants in VET have practice activities during the educational period. For example, the Law No 279/2005 on apprenticeships at work, republished, created a framework for promoting youth employment and the quality of vocational qualifications. Assessment

² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-64_en (last visit 16.05.2022)

and certification of vocational training through workplace apprenticeships is carried out in accordance with the legal provisions on adult vocational training and is completed with a qualification certificate. The law provides for the financing of on-the-job apprenticeship activities: employers can receive monthly subsidies from the unemployment insurance fund if they employ apprentices. This legislation complements other legislation on apprenticeships and traineeships. Also, the Law No 258/2007 on pupil and student internships, as amended, offers young people the opportunity to gain work experience before graduation. The purpose of the preliminary internship is to support pupils/students in their choice of specialisation. The Youth Guarantee scheme is an EU-funded initiative that aims to stimulate and facilitate the transition of young people from school to the labour market through mobility incentives, job subsidies, career guidance and counselling for entrepreneurship, business stimulation, on-the-job apprenticeships, internships, and partnerships between schools, universities, and different organizations (National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2015-2020 p.22).

4.1.3. Higher education

The latest National Strategy regarding higher education (National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015 - 2020). This policy aims '1. *strengthening the governance, financing, monitoring and evaluation of tertiary education ('conditions support')*; 2. *encourage and support wider participation in tertiary education, in particular for under-represented groups*; 3. *improving the quality and relevance of tertiary education*; 4. *developing engagement with the economy, especially the link with the labour market and innovation/entrepreneurship*' (National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015 - 2020, p.15).

There are multiple policies regarding the education of NEETs or even beyond this age group. For instance, the National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015 - 2020 aimed to reach and involve 58,000 persons in tertiary education. The Second Chance Programme for primary education also aims to support young people or adults to catch up in primary education, open to all those who have not completed this level of education and who are at least four years over the age of the appropriate school age.

4.2. Labour market policies

Assistance to ease school-to-work transitions is regulated under Law no. 72 of 2007 on the stimulation of the employment of pupils and students, as amended, governs the support granted to employers who employ pupils and students during holidays. Thus, for each pupil and student, employers receive a monthly financial incentive equal to 50% of the value of the social reference indicator. The financial incentive is granted at the employer's request from the unemployment insurance budget for a maximum of 60 working days in a calendar year (Law 72 of 2007). In addition, Law 335 of 2013 on traineeships for higher education graduates, Law 176 of 2018 on the internship, and law 279 of 2005 on workplace apprenticeships also facilitate the transition from school to the labour market for persons aged 16 and over.

Both the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2022-2027 and the National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 contain competence development objectives such as developing digital competencies at all levels of education to bridge the digital divide and increase socio-economic inclusion (MLSS, 2022) or supporting adult participation in quality, inclusive, attractive and more flexible education and training appropriate to the digital age and the green transition; and stimulating the acquisition of new skills for employment and the successful management of professional transitions (MLSS, 2021a). In addition, the latter strategy considers it essential to develop volunteering among young people, including NEETs, to familiarise them with job requirements, facilitate the acquisition of new skills and identify potential career paths, including entrepreneurship; and ensure that young people, including NEETs, acquire transversal skills, with a focus on basic digital skills, career management, communication, and teamwork skills, as well as social and green entrepreneurship skills (MLSS, 2021). Within the framework of the National Plan for Investment and Economic Recovery, grants are allocated for employees' training to increase the workforce's level of qualification (GR, 2020).

Encouraging young people and promoting access to internships/traineeships is regulated by three measures: laws for apprenticeship (law 279 of 2005), internships (law 176 of 2018), and traineeships (law 335 of 2013). These laws target people who have reached the age of 16 (apprenticeship and internship) and are graduates of a higher education institution (traineeship). Workplace apprenticeships (Law 279 of 2005) aim to raise the skills level of the workforce by learning and practicing occupations directly in the workplace. Law 176 of 2018 regulates how internship programmes are carried out for persons who have reached the age of 16 to develop the professional skills of interns in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, acquiring professional experience, practical skills, and competencies, and facilitating the transition from the education system to the labour market (Law 176 of 2018). Law 335 of 2013 on traineeships for higher education graduates promotes internships that allow university graduates first to contact the labour market and enhance their professional skills in line with employers' needs (Law 335 of 2013). There are specific types of contracts to promote ease in the transition to employment, such as apprenticeship contracts (Law 279 of 2005), traineeship contracts (Law 335 of 2013), or internship contracts (law 176 of 2018).

Law No 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and employment stimulation, as amended and supplemented, aims to achieve several objectives in the labour market, including supporting the employment of people belonging to disadvantaged categories of the population, stimulating the unemployed to find a job, stimulating employers to employ people looking for a job, improving the employment structure by economic branches and geographical areas, increasing the mobility of the labour force in the light of structural changes occurring in the national economy, as well as protecting people within the unemployment insurance system (Law 76 of 2002). The law covers explicitly young NEETs, now up to the age of 30 as a result of subsequent amendments (Chapter II. Section I. Article 5).

At the same time, in the National Employment Strategy 2021-2027, the first specific objective refers to the promotion of new approaches in the provision of active measures to improve access to the labour market for all job seekers (MLSS, 2021a).

From decision 1071 of 2021 for determining the country's guaranteed gross minimum wage, we can find out that the minimum gross basic salary in the country, guaranteed in payment, is set as a base salary, not including bonuses and other allowances, at the amount of 2,550 lei per month, for a regular work schedule averaging 167.333 hours per month, representing 15.239 lei/hour.

The promotion of the shift of informal workers into formal employment is reflected in two policies. First in the National Employment Strategy, where action no. 4 aims to transform undeclared work into declared work (MLSS, 2021a), and secondly in the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for 2022-2027. An essential objective of the latter is reducing employment in the informal sector, focusing on reducing the number of self-employed and unpaid family workers in agriculture and those migrating for unofficial work (MLSS, 2022).

The main elements of active labour market policies in Romania are

- Job mediation,
- Vocational training,
- Subsidising the employment of unemployed people from disadvantaged groups (45+ and single parents),
- Subsidising the work of unemployed people who have 3/5 years left before reaching retirement age,
- Stimulating the work of unemployed people before the end of the unemployment benefit period,
- Subsidising the work of graduates,
- Stimulating labour mobility,
- Employment allowance for graduates,
- Subsidising the employment of young people at risk of social marginalization,
- Subsidising the employment of people with disabilities,
- Stimulating the work of pupils and students during holidays,
- Subsidising traineeships for higher education graduates,
- Activation allowance for the unpaid unemployed,
- Subsidising the work of young NEETs,
- Subsidising the work of the long-term unemployed (MLSS, 2021a).

For the integration of young people into the labour market under the Youth Guarantee programme, AJOFM offered the following active measures: subsidizing employers to provide a job for young graduates, funding employers to offer apprenticeships to young people, supporting employers to offer internships to graduates, information and career advice, vocational training, mobility allowances for young people, including the long-term unemployed, granting of installation allowances for young people, including the long-term unemployed, personalized support for young people at risk of social marginalization, including subsidizing employers who take on people in this category, assessment of skills acquired in non-formal and informal systems (MLSS, 2017).

Within the framework of specific objective 2, action direction 1, which refers to *Increasing youth employment and promoting sustainable work of the National Employment Strategy*, is intended to develop youth centres (currently under the coordination of the County Directorates for Sport and Youth), which will be made, to a certain extent, by staff identified, selected, and activated from among young people (especially NEETs). These centres aim to contribute to a better understanding of NEETs and prepare an offer tailored to the needs of young people. The strategy aims to implement actions organised according to national, regional, and local circumstances, paying attention to NEETs' gender perspective and diversity, and providing personalized support services (MLSS,2021a). And to respond individually to the needs of each beneficiary, case management tools will be developed, aiming at a multidisciplinary approach to cases, considering the client's problems and/or needs, and creating personalised action plans (MLSS,2021a).

In the Romanian labour market, there are gendered (predominantly feminised or masculinised) fields such as education, health, and social work, in which mainly women work or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields in which there is many men (MLSS, 2021b). Another important aspect that needs to be considered is the gender gap (in disfavour of women) in employment rates (MLSS, 2022). For this reason, employment policies pay particular attention to reducing gender gaps in labour market participation, which must be a priority for short and medium-term measures and actions to enable full participation of the available labour force. Thus, specific object 1, action direction 4, refers to reducing the gender gap in employment (MLSS, 2021). These measures and actions for the labour market will particularly target the activation of the female workforce in regions such as South-East, Centre, West, and South-Muntenia. This attention is also directed toward young NEETs to integrate the female population (MLSS, 2021a).

4.3. Entrepreneurship

In order to realise the importance of entrepreneurship among the NEETs in Romania we can consult the statistics of the National Trade Register Office, a subordinated office of the Ministry of Justice. Based on

data from 2019 only 126,636 companies had shareholders or associates younger than 30 years, representing 9% of total companies (National Trade Register Office, 2019).

The National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 addresses the issue of youth entrepreneurship. Objective 1 (Direction of Actions 2) of the four main objectives deals with promoting, developing and consolidating entrepreneurship and social economy initiatives / opportunities aimed at creating quality jobs. There are various target groups, especially disadvantaged people. These objective states that initiatives are needed to help develop a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, especially among people who are underrepresented or disadvantaged in Romania's entrepreneurial ecosystem (e.g., young people, women, unemployed people with low levels of education, etc.) and to increase the number of those who see business development as a viable career choice. At the same time, there is a clear need to implement a mix of financial and non-financial measures to provide support both in the pre-start-up and start-up phases, tailored to the needs of different target groups, especially disadvantaged people (e.g., 'Start-up Rural', 'Start-up Diaspora' etc.).

Entrepreneurship is affected in the specific objective concerning the broad process of transition to the 'green economy', namely: Specific Objective 1 - Stimulate entrepreneurship and green job creation with a focus on sectors of increased competitiveness identified in the National Competitiveness Strategy 2014 - 2020 and the National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2014 – 2020.

A course of action was released by the Minister of Education and Research who signed in 2019 the Partnership Agreement 'Pact for Entrepreneurial Education', which introduces entrepreneurship courses in the compulsory curriculum of schools, and which will enter into force this year. It is a step in the right direction if these courses are practice-oriented enough and if they will be taught by people with entrepreneurial experience.

The European Council recommendation of 30 October 2020 on *A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee* replaces the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee 2020/C 372/01. This document contains recommendation for entrepreneurship as well. '*A reinforced Youth Guarantee can contribute to creating youth employment opportunities, promoting youth entrepreneurship and help to harness the opportunities arising from the digital and green transitions. It can help to reduce persistent labour market scars from the severe slowdown by encouraging firms to hire unemployed youth, including those who were unemployed prior to the pandemic, and by providing training that facilitates the matching of unemployed and inactive youth to vacancies.*'³

³ https://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j4nvk6yhcbpeywk_i9vvik7m1c3gyxp/vldi9e2npka3 (last visit 25.07.2022)

Another European initiative available in Romania, too, is the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, which provides aspiring European entrepreneurs with the skills necessary to start and/or successfully run a small business. New entrepreneurs gather and exchange knowledge and business ideas with an experienced entrepreneur, with whom they stay and collaborate for a period of 1 to 6 months⁴.

4.4. Work-life reconciliation policies

The main elements governing the work-life reconciliation in Romania are as follows:

1. Paternity leave. Regulated by Law 210 of 1999, it establishes that the father of a new-born child is entitled to 5 working days of paternity leave. Paternal leave is granted on request during the first eight weeks after the birth of the child, supported by the child's birth certificate showing that the petitioner is the father. If the father of the new-born child has obtained a certificate of completion of the childcare course, the duration of the paternal leave granted under the conditions of Article 2 shall be increased by ten working days. The allowance for paternity leave shall be paid from the unit's salary fund and equal to the salary for the period in question (Law 210 of 1999).
2. Parental leave. Covers the right to parental leave for children up to the age of 2 years (3 years in the case of a disabled child) and a monthly allowance. Persons entitled to parental leave are entitled to a taxable income and are entitled to an insertion incentive (EO 26 of 2021).
3. Flexible working arrangements. The National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 proposes measures promoting, developing, and supporting flexible working time schemes, teleworking or home working to ensure access to employment and work-life balance, and the provision of support services for the labour market integration of single parents and/or people with children under 12, especially those from rural areas (MLSS, 2021).

The concrete actions are as follows:

1. Promoting atypical forms of employment, which allows the assumption of care responsibilities for dependent persons while respecting work-life balance;
2. Providing support services for the integration into the labour market of people who are the sole breadwinners in single-parent families and/or people with children under 12 years of age, especially those from rural areas;
3. Support employers in providing facilities for the supervision and care of pre-school children to ensure a work-family balance for employed women (MLSS, 2021).

⁴ <https://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu>

4.5. Health/ Social Insurance policies

The basis of the Romania health care system is the public health care system. In principle, any contributor (with the exceptions when a person is not employed but it has a co-assured status, e.g., children under 18 years, students up to 25 years, husband/wife, or parent of a contributor etc.) is entitled to receive any medical assistance for free (ORDER No 1549/2018 of 29 November 2018 on the approval of the Methodological rules for the establishment of supporting documents concerning the acquisition of insured status. Issuer: National Health Insurance House, published in: Official Monitor No 1036 of 6 December 2018). Otherwise, if a person does not have the assured or co-assured status, the medical assistance in Romania is not free except medical urgencies.

The Romanian health care system, despite this public effort, is very underfinanced in comparison with the EU member states.

The general framework regarding disability and employment is the law of social assistance no. 292/2011, which grants access to all public facilities. This law also grants a specific allowance for people with disabilities and specific needs. This law also grants that persons who have lost more than 50% of their working capability should receive a personalised help plan.

4.6. Other supply-side policies

The National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for 2022-2027 draws attention to the disparity between urban and rural areas. It proposes developing and expanding access to the labour market for the rural population (MLSS, 2022).

The 'Second Chance Programme' is an initiative of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, whose methodology was approved by Order No. 5248 / 31.08.2011, which aims to support young people or adults who have not completed compulsory education and who want to complete their studies. This programme contains two sub-programmes, one for primary education and one for lower secondary education.

The Second Chance Programme for primary education aims to support young people or adults to catch up in primary education, open to all who have not completed this level of education and who are at least four years over the age of the appropriate school age.

The Second Chance Programme for Lower Secondary Education aims to support people over 14 years of age who have not completed secondary education. Through the programme, they have the opportunity to finish their secondary studies, as well as have training for a vocational qualification in a specific field, thus combining basic education training with vocational training in vocational qualification. (Order No 5248 / 31.08.2011 of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research).

Regarding ethnic minorities, there is a specific policy aiming at the integration of the Roma population ('DECISION no. 18 of 14 January 2015 (*updated*) approving the Romanian Government Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2015-2020').

5. Demand-side policies

5.1. Incentives

Based on the Government Emergency Ordinance nr. 60/2018 Art.85, employers who employ certain groups (jobseekers above 45, jobseekers who are single parents, long-term unemployed or NEETs) with an open-ended contract can receive a monthly amount of 2.250 lei/employed person for a period of 12 months. This incentive is worth 455 EUR in May 2022, 88% of the gross national minimum salary. Employers receiving this subsidy have the obligation to maintain employment or service relations for at least 18 months.

The Government Emergency Ordinance nr. 101/2021 finally extended the concept of NEETs: persons between the ages of 16 and 30 who do not have a job, do not attend any forms of education and do not participate in vocational training activities.

5.2. Social security policies

There are no relevant policies regarding social security contributions. All relevant demand-side policies are wage subsidies (see above).

5.3. Taxes

The tax burden on labour in Romania is very high. The tax wedge is one of the biggest in the EU: 41-43% of the gross salary. The income tax is flat-rate: no deductions are applied to low wages, not even to the minimum wage.

6. Orientation

There are general and specific policies regarding orientation and career guidance. A specific policy aiming at the integration of Roma people has included the counselling of the parents to help both their and their children's school integration ('DECISION no. 18 of 14 January 2015 (*updated*) approving the Romanian Government Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2015-2020'). This policy contains elements regarding free counselling to prevent early school leaving.

A general policy is applied at county level (NUTS III), through the County Resource and Educational Psychological Assistance Centres (CJRAE in Romanian abbreviation). They develop psycho-pedagogical assistance and school guidance services and vocational guidance, provided through the county centres and the school counselling offices. The school counselling centres are operated in schools with a minimum of 800 pupils or 400 pre-school children or in groups of pupils of schools/kindergartens (ORDER No 5555 of 7 October 2011 approving the Regulation on the organization and functioning of the county/urban centres for educational resources and assistance, issuer: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, published in: Official Monitor No. 759 of 27 October 2011).

Within the Youth Guarantee Program, as part of 'case management', the process of monitoring the development of the young person both during and after their involvement in a program of active measures is also foreseen (MLSS, 2017).

Public Employment Services offer job information and counselling services for individuals: a set of services provided free of charge to job seekers. These services aim to:

- a) providing information on the labour market and occupational trends;
- b) profiling and classifying the employability level: easily employable, moderately employable, hardly employable, and very hardly employable;
- c) developing the ability and self-confidence of job seekers to enable them to make their own career decisions;
- d) training in job search methods and techniques;
- e) guidance during the socio-professional integration process in the new job (PES, 2018a).

Another service offered by PES consists of advice and assistance for starting self-employment or starting a business. The service is provided, on request, in the form of legal, marketing, financial, effective management methods and techniques, and other consultancy services (PES, 2017).

For marginalised young people, Public Employment Services offer a personalised Social Accompaniment service based on a solidarity contract. The set of services is provided free of charge to young people at risk of social marginalisation (people aged 16-26 who fall into the following categories: are in or come from the child protection system; are disabled; have no family or whose family cannot support them; have dependent children; have served one or more custodial sentences; are victims of human trafficking). These services include vocational information and counselling, job mediation, and job placement (PES, 2018b).

7. Conclusions

In accordance with the principle of harmonisation, the European level strategies are implemented in the member countries. As a conclusion, the main policies which are specifically dedicated for youth in the EU – the Youth Guarantee and the Reinforced Youth Guarantee – are the main commitments to ensure the EU level goals.

Analysing the above-described policies and the institutional framework, we can state that in Romania, there is a relatively high level of centralisation, as a lot of policies are designed for the whole country, so the regional and local differences should be taken more into consideration.

In order to deal with complex social problems – such as the situations of NEETs –, the strategies which are or will be implemented between 2021 and 2027 to ensure an adequate institutional framework, an Inter-institutional Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, a working body without legal personality, will be set up.

We also found that there are several delays in the implementation of the policies which should have been applied between 2015 and 2020.

As a positive conclusion, we can state that the policies aiming to deal with the NEETs in Romania cover all the major fields which aim to reduce the size of this population. We also found that the newly accepted policies try to create partnerships with local or regional level (mainly at NUTS III level) organisations to give a more accurate response to local needs.

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