

Evaluation practices assessing the impacts of initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs

COUNTRY REPORT – ROMANIA

Blanka BÁLINT, Balázs TELEGDY, Ede LÁZÁR

2022

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

Please cite as: Bálint, B., Telegdy, B., Lázár, E. (2022) Evaluation practices assessing the impacts of initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs. Country Report – Romania. Sapientia University of Cluj Napoca. Lost Millennials – Transnational Research Network for the Evaluation of Initiatives Targeting 25+ NEETs. Available at <https://lostmillennials.eu>

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 ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#)).

The Lost Millennials project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment.

Implemented by:



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Introduction | 2 |
| 2. General information of evaluation practices | 2 |
| 3. Characteristics of evaluation practices | 3 |
| 3.1 Methodology of evaluation practices..... | 3 |
| 3.2 Types of evaluations and their results..... | 5 |
| 4. Conclusions | 5 |
| 5. References | 7 |

1. Introduction

In Romania, until 15 September 2021, when Emergency Ordinance No 101 was adopted, the definition of NEETs referred only to the 16-24 age group. Consequently, all the initiatives and programs dedicated directly to the 25+ NEETs were started after the date mentioned above. There were programs, initiatives or policies targeting the 25+NEETs persons at a national level. Still, they were indirectly involved because each program or initiative they could fit was not a dedicated program for them.

On the other side, projects and initiatives directly aiming at the 25+ NEETs were implemented before 15.09.2021 by non-governmental institutions. These projects were founded not through the national agencies but Norwegian Grants, and the Romanian implementers were part of a larger consortium. The negative side of this non-governmental application was that these institutions were not obliged to create a full-scale evaluation study - as in the case of the EU-funded programmes – so in these cases, we can only access a final report (or a summary of them) which enlist the achieved result within the frame of the initiative or project.

To conclude, the current comparative report is based on publicly available EU (co)funded programmes and initiatives, where the necessity of creating an evaluation report was compulsory.

2. General information of evaluation practices

According to the European Commission Evaluation website, there were 31 evaluations regarding the programmes between the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming period in Romania. In the related field, which could potentially address the 25+ NEETs, the cumulative results are the following:

Thematic objective 8 – Employment and Labour activity

- 3 evaluations for the 2007-2013 programming period,
- 4 evaluations for the 2014-2020 programming period

Thematic objective 9 – Social Inclusion

- 10 evaluations for the 2007-2013 programming period,
- 3 evaluations for the 2014-2020 programming period

Thematic objective 10 – Education

- 8 evaluations for the 2007-2013 programming period,
- 3 evaluations for the 2014-2020 programming period

From the following list (complemented by other national-level sources), we will present nine evaluations, as in these cases, the evaluated programs and initiatives were indirectly targeting the 25+ NEETs. The presented evaluations are publicly available (the majority of them on a dedicated national website) but unfortunately for a foreign reader, in most cases, they are available only in Romanian. Three of these nine evaluations refer to the 2007-2013 and 6 to the 2014-2020 programming period.

3. Characteristics of evaluation practices

In Romania, a considerable part of the programs, financed from the 2014-2020 funds, are ongoing or have just recently finished. This leads to the fact that the analysed evaluations regarding the 2007-2013 programming period were usually final (two ex-post and one mid-term), while the ones from the 2014-2020 period are usually mid-term evaluations (one, ex-ante, three mid-term and two ex-post).

Regarding the methods used in the analysed evaluations, we can state that most of them used a multitude of research methods, as only one evaluation (an ex-ante one) has used only one type (qualitative) methodology. Still, even there, they were using multiple methods.

3.1 Methodology of evaluation practices

Table 1. Research methods used for evaluating programmes and initiatives targeting the 25+ NEETs population in Romania between 2007 and 2021

| Research method / Evaluation title | Case study | Questionnaire | Focus groups | Interviews | Statistical analysis | Evaluation Impact | Counterfactual | Other |
|---|------------|---------------|--------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------|
| Ex-post evaluation study of the National Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 | X | X | X | X | | X | | |
| Ex-ante evaluation study of the National Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 | | | | | | | | X |
| Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020 - Evaluation of labour force occupations interventions | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Ad-hoc evaluation of the intervention of POSDRU regarding the Roma population - Evaluation Report | X | | X | X | X | | | X |
| Report on the Evaluation of Public Policies in the Field of Youth, with an Emphasis on Apprenticeships | X | X | | | X | | | X |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020 – Evaluation of the Education interventions | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) 2014-2020 – Evaluation Report for 2019 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020 Lot 1: Evaluation of social inclusion interventions (POSDRU) | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) 2014-2020 – Lot 1: Evaluation of social inclusion interventions (POCU) | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

Source: authors' own compilation

Analysing the above-presented evaluations, it can be concluded that they usually follow a general pattern.

Also, there are some common aspects of the presented evaluations, like:

- Besides the multitude of the applied methodology, we realized that there is very little publicly available information regarding the effective application of the different methods (especially in the case of the early evaluations). But as we saw, in the majority of the cases, this is not because of the evaluators but rather because of the evaluated institutions, as in the tale of the content figures, the different annexes which (we think from the annexes titles) should give detailed information about the methodology, only these annexes usually are not uploaded along with the evaluation report.
- Regarding the quantitative methods, we can see a multitude of approaches: usually, the evaluations of the Human Capital Operational Programme (Romanian abbreviation: POCU) use a large number of respondents, and in most cases, the research is done on a representative sample. On the other hand, in the evaluations regarding the Operational Sectoral Programme Human Resources Development (Romanian abbreviation POSDRU), the quantitative methods are not so strictly implemented, or, at least, this information is missing, especially the ones which were realised before 2020.
- As an interesting fact, it must be mentioned that many evaluations explicitly used GIS software to highlight the regional differences or similarities of the analysed programmes.

Finally, regarding the evaluator teams, it can be stated that external partners conducted most cases (eight out of nine). In one case, we saw that the analysis was performed by a combined team of internal and external experts.

3.2 Types of evaluations and their results

Based on the analysed evaluations, in Romania, there is a real discrepancy between the aims of a given programme or initiative and its effect in the studied field. The basis of our statement is that the majority of the evaluations (five out of eight) concluded that the initiative was generally evaluated as relatively unsuccessful, and three could be considered rather successful (in the case of the ex-ante evaluation, this qualification has no meaning).

We can differentiate between general and specific recommendations in all the presented evaluations. The typical recommendations are usually targeting the enlargement and the proficiency of the programme or initiative implementers, the simplification of the legal framework of a given programme or initiative, the clarification at the start of the agenda of the indicators for a correct and coherent evaluation and a clear-cut definition of the programme's beneficiaries. Another general problem is the highly bureaucratized administration of the projects. Generally, the high level of mistrust toward the state and its institutions creates a real obstacle to fruitful cooperation between national agencies, economic factors, and citizens. Also, digitalisation was a frequent and returning recommendation, where digitalisation refers both to the digitalised and online administrative platforms and to the creation of a collective database where the basic information, the list of participants etc., can be quickly and openly reached. And finally, a recurring problem was the lack of information and interconnection between the past and current programmes and initiatives, which had – at least partially – the same target as the evaluated programme.

In the case of the (relatively) unsuccessful programmes and initiatives, one of the main problems was the unrealistic target setting at the beginning of the program, as they were somewhat too optimistic. Another general problem was detected in the field of dissemination, as in many cases, the target group has not possessed the knowledge (both of the given programme/initiative and the general contextual knowledge, as the national laws) to apply successfully or to implement the projects within the programmes or initiatives. A significant impediment in the applications was the discrepancy between theory and practise and the need for more interaction between the different institutions (e.g., universities and private companies, like in the case of Evaluation of the Education interventions).

In conclusion, the recommendations in the analysed evaluations are always targeted to overcome the abovementioned problems and impediments of the analysed programmes and initiatives.

4. Conclusions

As presented in the introduction, the available evaluations targeting the 25+ NEETs populations indirectly were (partially) EU founded. Even if we know that Romania implemented initiatives and

projects directly targeting the 25+ NEETs population, as private or non-governmental organisations conducted them, they lack the systematic evaluation (usually they only elaborated – internally – a final report where they present the results and the main challenges in the implementation of the projects).

Because of the late implementation of the extended NEET concept in Romania, there are no evaluations – at the moment of the creation of this report – which directly evaluates a programme or initiative targeting the 25+ NEETs in Romania.

The actual evaluation reports are publicly available on different national and international websites. Still, in some of the cases, the annexes, which would describe in detail the different research methods implemented through the evaluation, need to be made available.

5. References

The list of the analysed evaluations:

1. Ex-post evaluation study of the National Rural Development Programme 2007-2013: <https://www.madr.ro/docs/dezvoltare-rurala/studii/Studiu-evaluare-ex-post-PNDR-2007-2013.pdf> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)
2. Ex-ante evaluation study of the National Rural Development Programme 2014-2020: <https://www.madr.ro/pndr-2014-2020/implementare-pndr-2014-2020/evaluare-pndr-2014-2020/studii-rapoarte-de-evaluare/raportul-de-evaluare-ex-ante-pentru-pndr-2014-2020.html> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)
3. Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020 - Evaluation of labour force occupations interventions: <http://files.evaluationhelpdesk.eu/Evaluations/ROE39.pdf> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)
4. Ad-hoc evaluation of the intervention of POSDRU regarding the Roma population - Evaluation Report: https://www.fonduri-ue.ro/images/files/studii-analize/57527/Raport_Lot_3_final.pdf (last accessed on 31.10.2022)
5. Report on the Evaluation of Public Policies in the Field of Youth, with an Emphasis on Apprenticeships <http://asociatiacreed.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Raport-de-evaluare-a-politicilor-publice-in-domeniul-tineretului-cu-accent-pe-ucenicie.pdf> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)
6. Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020 – Evaluation of the Education interventions: <https://www.evaluare-structurale.ro/documents/20126/381231/Implementarea+Planului+de+Evaluare+a+Programului+Opera%C8%9Bional+Capital+Uman+2014-2020+-+Evaluarea+interven%C8%9Biilor+POCU+%C3%AEn+domeniul+educa%C8%9Biei+-+evaluarea+retrospectiv%C4%83+a+interven%C8%9Biilor+%C3%AEn+domeniul+educa%C8%9Biei+final%C8%9Bate+%C3%AEn+cadrul+Programul+Opera%C8%9Bional+Sector.pdf/0628b543-5e79-d798-4b44-52ecd658c031?t=1593445419144> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)
7. Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) 2014-2020 – Evaluation Report for 2019: https://www.evaluare-structurale.ro/documents/20126/553378/Raport+de+Evaluare+aferent+anului+2019+-+POCU+2014-2020+%28Vol.+I%29_04.12.2020.pdf/9a435292-b917-3970-0405-02a8bd8b3672?t=1619530436190 (last accessed on 31.10.2022)

8. Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020 Lot 1: Evaluation of social inclusion interventions (POSDRU) <https://www.evaluare-structurale.ro/documents/20126/1253552/1.Raport+de+evaluare+intermediara+POCU+domeniul+incluziunii+sociale+.pdf/1c3b556e-6308-7ee2-fcc7-4ee8e16dcbb0?t=1656418051483> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)

9. Implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) 2014-2020 – Lot 1: Evaluation of social inclusion interventions (POCU) <https://www.evaluare-structurale.ro/documents/20126/694753/I.Raport+de+evaluare+a+interventiilor+POSDRU+in+domeniul+incluziunii+sociale.pdf/61d13948-09b4-a48a-4aab-2dd10b498d65?t=1626788604520> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)

ORDONANȚĂ DE URGENȚĂ nr. 101 din 15 septembrie 2021 (Emergency Ordinance No 101 of 15 September 2021), <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/246420>, last accessed: 25.08.2022

European Commission Evaluations:

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/member-states/ (last accessed on 31.10.2022)

Evaluation of Structural Funds (in Romanian: Evaluare Fonduri Structurale): <https://www.evaluare-structurale.ro/web/guest/home> (last accessed on 31.10.2022)