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## ASSESSMENT REPORT I

### 1. Introduction. Purpose and Scope of the Assessment report.

This section provides a brief summary of content of the Assessment report, its focus points and researched areas.

The current Assessment Report is a result from cabinet research on already existing analyses and studies, practical experience through dialogue with the researched parties - VET institutions and business and with the support of statistical data and other reliable resources. The main purpose of the assessment is to define how the VET covers the business needs regarding the professional skills on the students. How the business is included in the process for acquisition on these skills.

The scope of research is defined within the perspective of the Romanian Cross-border region with Bulgaria, with particular focus on Constanta County and Dobrich County, relevant for the project's objectives.

The Report provides input on how the VET covers the incumbent skill needs at business environment level and what are the immediate improvement measures. The addressed problems refer to the involvement of business in learning outcomes' evaluation, VET-internships as well as the provision of work-based learning and mentorship in the CB area. The latter is namely in the focus of the Assessment report.

The Report includes the next sections and subsections:

- ✓ **Perspectives and challenges for economic development and employment opportunities in the CB area:**
  - *Main economic sector in Northeastern region of Bulgaria*
  - *Overview of South-East Region of Romania economic status*
  - *Overview of Romanian CB area with Bulgaria*
  - *Functioning economic sites in the area*
  - *Status and potential for tourism development - hotel and restaurant management*
- ✓ **Role and importance of the VET centers:**
  - *Educational opportunities in the cross-border region*
  - *Role and importance of the VET sector*
  - *VET sector and labor market*
  - *VET sector and business collaboration*
- ✓ **Quality of the VET and SWOT of VET in Romania (focus on SE Region) and Immediate improvement measures;**
- ✓ **State of involvement of business in learning outcomes' evaluation, VET-internships**



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- as well as the provision of work-based learning and mentorship in the CB area;  
✓ **Immediate improvement measures.**

Skill needs (both hard and soft) in tourism (incl. restaurant and culinary arts) are already extensively researched. The issues that remain unsolved refer to the involvement of business in learning outcomes' evaluation, VET-internships as well as the provision of work-based learning and mentorship in the CB area.

## 2. Perspectives and challenges for economic development and employment opportunities in the CB area.

### 2.1 *Main economic sector in Northeastern region of Bulgaria*

The main economic sectors in the Northeastern region of Bulgaria according to the National Statistical Institute are agrarian, industrial and service sector. The gross value added by economic sectors is distributed as follows:

- Service Sector - BGN 5,321 million
- Industrial sector - BGN 2,418 million
- Agricultural sector - BGN 605 million
- The persons employed in these sectors are respectively:
- Service sector - 233, 55 thousand
- Agricultural sector - 110, 74 thousand
- Industrial sector - 67, 38 thousand

For the Dobrich region the statistics are as follows:

- Service sector - BGN 712 million
- Industrial sector - BGN 348 million
- Agricultural sector - BGN 197 million

The persons employed in these sectors are:

- Service sector - 35,07 thousand
- Agricultural sector - 31, 13 thousand
- Industrial sector - 11, 44 thousand.

As evidenced by the statistics, the highest number of employees is in the service sector which is the most developed in the region. The sector includes the activities - Trade, transport, hospitality and restaurant management, creation and distribution of information and creative products, telecommunications, banking and insurance services, administrative, educational,



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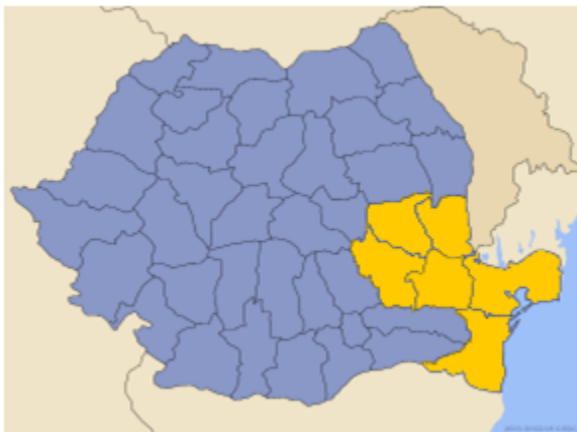
health services and others. Given the location of the region (near the Black Sea), the availability of seaside resorts and the lack of large industrial sites, logically the services sector is leading in the region. For the Dobrich region, the same situation is relevant. The seasonal nature of economic activities is an essential factor in the development of the area. Two of the main sectors - the service and agrarian one are defined as seasonal, although many measures are being taken to extend the season and overcome the seasonal nature. The light and processing industry also occupy a certain share of the market but are generally not the most developed economic sector in the region. In Dobrich region there are enterprises for processing of agricultural products and sea products, footwear and tailoring production, food and beverage production, etc.

The direct foreign investment in the Northeast region has increased significantly in recent years from EUR 2,102,923.2 in 2010 to EUR 2,719,13.70 in 2015. The region ranks fourth in the country in 2015 by the amount of accumulated direct foreign investment. The leading area for attracting investments is Varna - with the highest share of EUR 1,760,956,70 and Dobrich by EUR 202,893,70 thousand. (Data from NSI)

By the indicator of gross value added the Northeastern region is third in the country with BGN 8,344 million after the Southwest region with BGN 36,669 million and the South-Eastern region by BGN 9,356 million.

## 2.2 Overview of South-East Region of Romania economic status

South - East region is located in the southeast side of Romania, covering 35,762 sqkm, or 15% of the total surface of the country, the region being the second by size among the 8 regions of Romania. It contains six counties such as Constanta (cross-border county, neighboring Dobrich Region in Bulgaria), Tulcea, Braila, Galati, Buzau, Vrancea. South-East Region consists of 35 towns and municipalities and 339 rural administrative communities/entities.



In terms of relevant statistical data, an overview of the Region is provided in the table below:



POPULATION	URBAN (%)	RURAL (%)	NB OF CITIES (> 20 000 inhabitants)	DENSITY (people/km2)
2.546.000 inhabitants	54%	46%	11	71

In terms of economic development, it is considered that the specifics of this region are the disparities between the points of consolidation activities in the industrial sector and the tertiary complex industrial centers, tourist areas and grain and vineyard area. In this respect, it is considered that the region has a diversified industry. Almost all industrial branches are represented: petrochemical, metallurgy, machine building, construction materials, food industry and textile industry.

Looking into the macro-data, it is important to place South-East Region within the national context. Therefore, the analysis at the regional level (figured in the bellow Table) helps identify the most important trends in the evolution of the share of the regional GDP in the national one, as follows:

- the period between 1995-2005 reveals a significant increase in the contribution of Bucharest- Ilfov region in forming the national GDP (from 15 to 23%) and a slight/incipient growth of the West region; the other regions record comparable shares in the total GDP, ranging from a minimum of 9.17% in 1995 (in the case of the South-West region) to 8.19% in 2005 (recorded by the same region) but, on the whole, all regions record a decrease in the share of the value of the above mentioned indicator;
- the period between 2005-2014 preserves the same trend, Bucharest-Ilfov region getting to produce 27% of the national GDP, while the other regions continue to experience a decrease in their participation, even though to a smaller extent in comparison to the previous period.

Overall, throughout the whole investigated period, North-East and South-Muntenia regions stand out through the most important drops. The factors behind this trend are manifold, pointing to the difficult period Romania has experienced on its way from a socialist centralized economy to a market one and the efforts it had to make in order to adapt the rigours and commitments imposed by the EU accession. These processes have involved not only significant efforts on behalf of the counties/regions in order to adjust to the new economic environment (Goschin, 2014), but also high social and economic costs, the counties/regions that have failed to adapt effectively lagging behind.

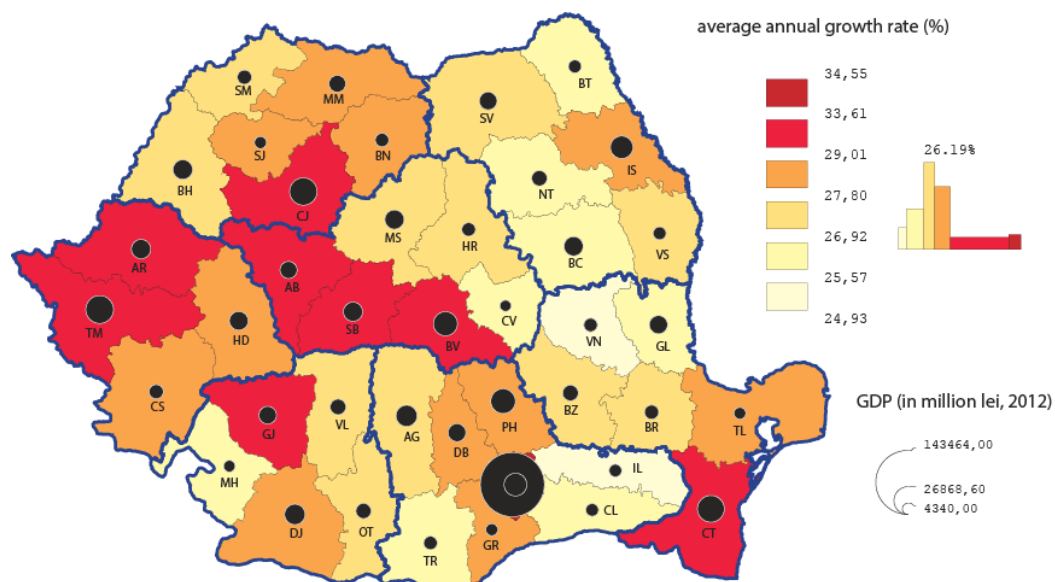
Region	1995	2000	2005	2014	2014/1995 difference
Bucharest - Ilfov	15.15	22.32	23.27	27.01	11.86
Centre	12.33	12.15	11.38	11.22	-1.11
North-East	13.61	11.86	11.36	10.21	-3.40



North-West	11.94	11.50	11.81	11.38	-0.56
<b>South-East</b>	<b>13.27</b>	<b>11.71</b>	<b>11.37</b>	<b>11.17</b>	<b>-2.10</b>
South-Muntenia	15.23	12.27	12.70	11.97	-3.26
South-West	9.17	8.79	8.19	7.51	-1.66
West	9.31	9.41	9.92	9.54	0.23

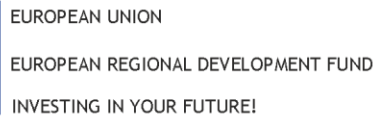
Table. Share (%) of regional GDP in national GDP (national GDP = 100%) (Data source: INS)

Data referring GDP average annual growth rate during 1990-2014 and presented in Figure 1 below reveals a much stronger inter-regional divergence tendency than intra-regional disparities. The carto diagram highlights the penetration from the western part of the country of the foreign capital, which has brought about numerous investments and the speeding up of the GDP average annual growth rate, while the areas with the lowest GDP average annual growth rate (east and **south-east**) overlap the regions confronted with industrial decline and fragile economies, where the shock of competitiveness loss was not undertaken by a satisfactory influx of domestic or foreign capital. An important part is played by transport infrastructure (its precariousness), the low accessibility of certain counties/regions (in the north-east and **south-east**), as well as by the inadequate qualification of the local labour force, which has not experienced a (much necessary) process of professional conversion.



Made with Philcarto - <http://perso.club-internet.fr/philgeo> [discrétisation 'Q6']

Figure 1 - GDP annual average growth rate (%), 1990 - 2014 (Data source: INS)



Sursă: Comisia Națională de Prognoză



Labor productivity for

As per the **percentage of innovative enterprises**, the Southeast Region advanced to the 2nd position with 36.90% of innovative enterprises (1054 of the total), exceeding by this the national average.

An important sector for the region with a significant number of employees is the naval one. There are 5 shipyards in the region, in Braila, Galati, Tulcea, Mangalia, and Constanta. In 2011, in the maritime ports of the South-East Region, almost 20 thousand tons of cargo was loaded, accounting for 53.29% of the total cargo loaded at the seaports and 18 thousand tons of freight, i.e. 46.7% of the total goods unloaded in Romanian maritime ports. Constanta Port is Romania's main maritime port, strategically located to supply Central and Eastern Europe and has recently





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become the largest container port in the Black Sea, also provided with freight unloading docks and a modern terminal for passengers.

In terms of **investments attractiveness**, it is to be mentioned that in 2011, 30.34% of the investments were made by large enterprises, holding the largest share in investments; the sector leader was the metallurgical sector. Large companies in the metallurgical, shipyard, construction and bakery industries have a significant share of the number of employees. Counties in South-East Region presents a differentiated of attractiveness degree for investors. In these areas the companies with foreign capital contributed to the development of the entrepreneurial environment. According to data from the National Trade Register Office in July 2012 in South-East Region were registered companies with foreign capital as follows:

- ✓ Constanta-19 companies,
- ✓ Galati -2 companies,
- ✓ Braila-3 companies,
- ✓ Buzau-1company,
- ✓ Vrancea-1 company,
- ✓ Tulcea 4 companies.'

Currently, the South-East region has 10,726 companies with foreign participation, coming on the 5th position among the eight regions of Romania. Regarding the capital subscribed, South-East is on the 6th position with Euro billion 1.83. In this region, Constanta County is in the top with over 6,000 companies with foreign participation totalizing Euro 768 million in capital. The opposite is Vrancea County with 707 firms, but with a share capital of 14,500,000 euros only. If we take into account only the number of firms with foreign participation, Tulcea County recorded the fewest companies, namely 463.

After the **distribution of SMEs** to 1,000 inhabitants at the national level in 2011, the South East Region occupies the 4th place (with 54,809 SMEs), with an increasing trend also in the number of staff employed, turnover and gross investment.

The **tertiary sector** concentrates 64.11% of the enterprises in the South-East Region and half of the employees in the region, the dynamics of this sector being positive.

**Research and development** activity (R&D) is weak in the region, with the region falling below the national average, relying on the latest positions in the European Union. Intra-regional disparities are important, with more active counties in research and development where universities and research institutes exists. The region has a diversified degree of **business support structures**, as, for example, 1 of the 6 scientific and technological parks in Romania operates in Galati. Business support structures are not found in all counties. We can also note the activity of 2 industrial parks (Galati and Mangalia), 1 business incubator at Mangalia, 4 clusters (2 in Constanta in the field of renewable energy, 1 at Buzau in tourism industry and 1 in Vrancea for textiles sector).

**Agriculture** is significant in the Region, accounting for 15.86% of national production. It has an important share in the economy of the region, with 40.4% of the occupied population of the



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region being employed in this sector. The agricultural land accounts for 65% of the total area of the region. The private sector holds the largest share of agricultural land and produces the bulk of agricultural production (95% in 2011). It is of much importance to mention the fact that the South-East Region ranks first in the country as regards the area of fruitful vineyards, accounting for 40.3% of the country's wine-growing area, largely located in Vrancea County. The region is recognized, both internally and externally, by the quality of wines from famous vineyards, which are found throughout the region: Panciu, Odobești, Pietroasele, Nicorești, Niculițel, Murfatlar, Insurăței.

**Fisheries and aquaculture**, along with fish processing and trade in fish and fish products, are traditional activities in the South East Region, with fisheries sector including:

- ✓ the Black Sea fishing activities practiced along the Romanian seaside;
- ✓ inland fishing activities practiced on the Danube as well as in the Danube Delta area;
- ✓ Aquaculture: there are 129 farms registered in the Register of Aquaculture Units, of which 39 nurseries and 90 farms, the largest number of fish farms being located in Tulcea County (54) and in Constanta County (34).

**Tourism** in the region is characterized by the existence of specific natural resources, such as the Black Sea coast and the Danube Delta, the renowned Spa resorts, agro-tourism hosting facilities (especially in the Vrancea and Buzău mountainous areas and the Danube Delta). Ecumenical tourism is also present in the region, especially through the northern Dobrogea monasteries, the Buzau and Vrancea Mountains, the Galați area, as well as the cultural tourism present through the existence of cultural vestiges (archaeological sites, memorial houses). The Southeastern Region stood in 2011 for about 1/5 of the total tourist hosting facilities at national level, the 974 structures having an accommodation capacity in operation of over 14.3 million places / days (21% of the total capacity at national level) . In the same year, they recorded over 1.13 million tourist arrivals (16.1% of the national total) and over 4.0 million overnight stays (22.5% of the national total).

To sum up some conclusions regarding the economic status of the South-East Region of Romania, we can note that:

- GDP per capita in South-East Region increased by 14.9%, in 2013 compared to 2007;
- GVA indicate the trend of the regional economy, which means that regional economy is based on services;
- Number of family enterprises has decreased significantly in 2013 compared to 2007;
- Active local units decreased by 13.6% in 2013 compared to 2007;
- Total turnover increased by 17.1% in 2012 compared to 2008;
- The increase of turnover is based on an increase of price;
- Gross investments decreased at a rate of 14%, in 2012 compared to 2008;
- Net investments decreased by 8.2% in 2012 compared to 2008;
- Personnel of active local units decreased by 16% in 2012 compared to 2008;





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- The decline of active personnel in the local units is closely linked to the reduced number of firms operating in the local economy.

It is considered that in order to boost the economic development of the South East- Region the following actions are required (Regional Development Strategy):

- increasing the degree of attraction the investments, especially in counties where unemployment rate is high, by upgrade of infrastructure;
- an appropriate exploitation of natural resources;
- creation of a more flexible labor market in order to adapt job offer to the requirements of entrepreneurs;
- modernization of the agricultural sector and diversifying economic activities;
- increasing competitiveness on medium and long term

### *2.3 Functioning economic sites in the area.*

There are 50,454 non-financial enterprises operating in the Northeastern region, with 8,274 in the Dobrich region. The region is one of the leading tourism developers in terms of the level 2 regions in the country. (Data from NSI).

The number of economic sites in Dobrich region, distributed by municipalities, is as follows:

- Dobrich Region - 5032 economic sites; 93.3% of micro enterprises and 0.2% of large enterprises.
- Municipality of Dobrich - 484 economic sites; 428 micro, 49 small and 7 medium enterprises; 65 agricultural cooperatives, 296 lessors.
- Municipality of Balchik - 1393 economic sites, of which 301 sites for hotel accommodation.
- Municipality of Kavarna - 700 economic sites, of which 9.6% are from the hotel and restaurant sector; 99% micro and small enterprises.
- Municipality of Shabla - 317 economic sites; 94% micro enterprises and 6% small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Municipality of Tervel - 222 economic sites; 90% micro enterprises, 5% small, 3% medium and 2% large ones.
- Municipality of Krushari - 126 economic sites; 81 are in the agrarian sector.

(The data is from municipal strategic documents and references from the respective municipalities of Dobrich region.)

### *2.4 Overview of Romanian CB area with Bulgaria*

The Romanian Cross-Border area with Bulgaria covers seven Romanian counties, located in southern Romania along the national border, which lies between Serbia and the Black Sea. The border is 610 km long, 470km of which are delineated by the Danube River. The 15 administrative units (NUTS III) included into the Programme Area are parts of six administrative regions (NUTS II), as it follows:



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- Mehedinti, Dolj and Olt counties - parts of the Romanian South-West Development Region Oltenia;
- Teleorman, Giurgiu and Calarasi counties - parts of the Romanian South Muntenia Development Region;
- Constanta County is part of Romanian South-East Development.

The surface of these seven Romanian counties represent 14,49% of the total surface of Romania.



The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area includes one of the EU poorest NUTS 2 regions. At a NUTS 3 units level, we can see in the Figure 2 below that all the cross border counties-districts, except Constanta, register less than 50% of the EU average GDP per inhabitant (in PPS).



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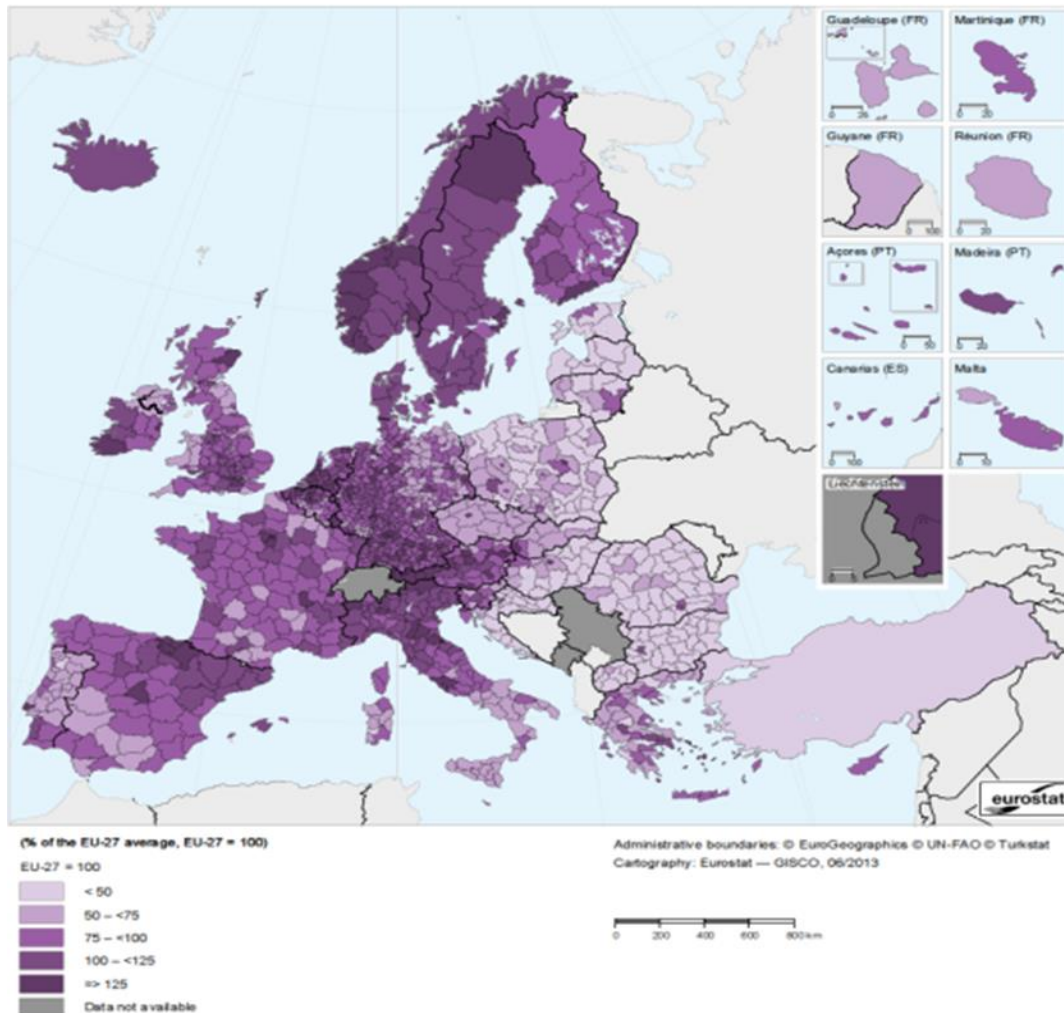
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Gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard (PPS),  
by NUTS 3 regions, 2010 (\*)  
(% of the EU-27 average, EU-27 = 100)



(\*) Turkey, national level.  
Source: Eurostat (online data code: [nams\\_r\\_w3gdp](#))

**Figure 2: Gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard (PPS), by NUTS 3 regions, 2010 (Source: Eurostat)**

The Romanian cross border area share of national GDP is low: it produces less than its relative importance in terms of population and territorial size (the area ratio of the Romanian GDP remained constant between 11%-12% and amounted to 14.7 billion EUR, with a slight increase during the crisis period) (*latest INS figures, expressed in EUR*). The CB area faces also important interior disparities with Constanta and Dolj counties producing several times more than the rest of the counties. The GDP per inhabitant in PPS (purchasing power standard) confirms the low economic development and low productivity levels of the cross-border area.



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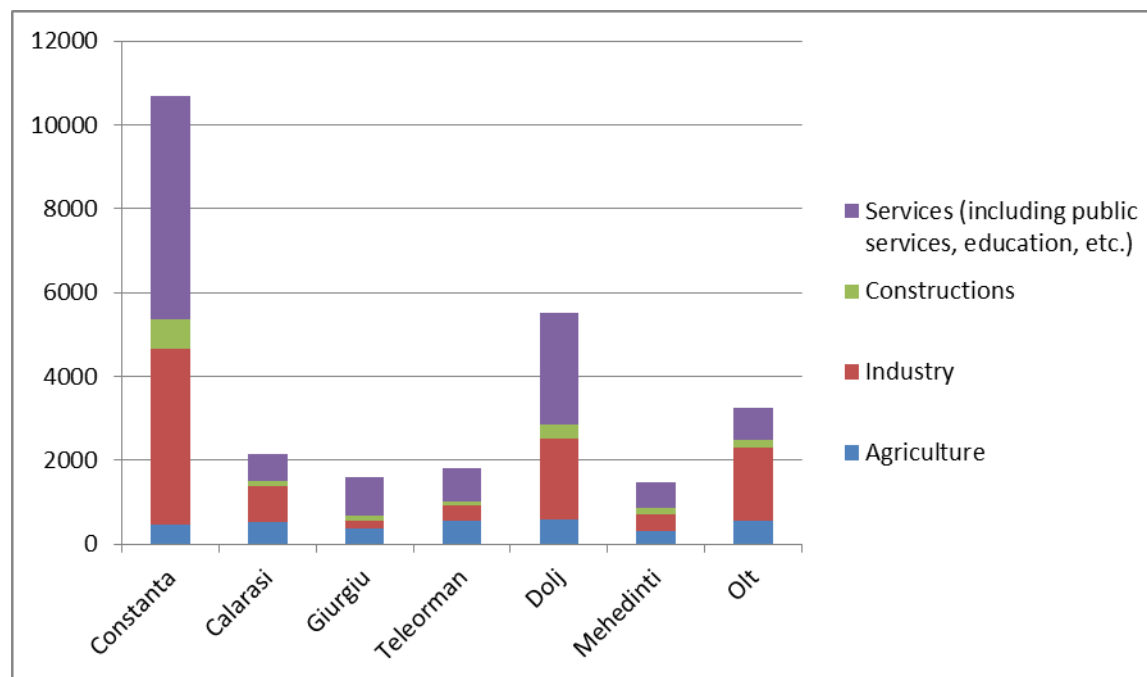
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The charts below present the structure of the economy according to the turnover that companies registered in 2011 in each of the Romanian CB counties:



**Figure 3 - The distribution of the turnover of companies in the Romanian counties between economic sectors - 2011 (Source: NSI)**

Even though there is a general dominance of the services sector, its level of development is still limited compared to Western Europe levels that are much higher. Moreover, considering the importance of the public services in rural areas' economy, it is considered that the part of the private services sector is even less important. This illustrates the primary and secondary sectors constant importance in the overall economy of the cross-border region. The most economically dynamic counties (Constanta, Dolj, Olt) display turnovers for industrial companies that are almost equal and even higher than the turnover in the services sector. With agriculture and constructions being responsible for a small part of the regional economy turnover, this seems to indicate that the economic driver of the area remains the industry. The construction sector is logically more developed in the most developed counties/districts. As in the case of GDP, the turnover figures indicate disparities inside the cross-border region, with many counties and districts displaying overall turnovers that are the tenth or the fifth of Constanta's one. Dolj has the second place with half of Constanta's turnover.

In terms of labor productivity, the counties in the given cross-border area display different productivity levels and evolutions, according to their economic structure and recent evolution in terms of industrial FDI-based facilities. The differences between the counties hint the level of vulnerability of local economies according to their profile: bigger GDP counties with a more dynamic economy and competitive advantages (transport hub) like Constanta were less affected by the national recession or even the drop in international demand than





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counties/districts whose productivity is dominated strongly by one or two industries with little overall diversification or with a strong agriculture sector less flexible and unable to adapt to drops in demand or output prices. Counties with low GDP where services dominate were nevertheless more affected in productivity terms than counties with a stronger industrial base, as productivity in industry managed to better adapt (even through decreasing the cost of labor or firing employees) than a services sector that was highly dependent on the revenue resulting from other sectors as it catered only to the needs of the local population.

Given that Romania is in an efficiency-driven stage from the point of view of competitiveness, the cost of labor remains an important factor in the competitiveness equation and influences the investment attractiveness. The evolution of salaries is thus important in order to understand the competitive stage of the cross-border economy and the possible needs to invest or create the basis for the development of new competitive advantages like new skills for the workforce, new infrastructures, etc.

The average salary in the cross-border area is higher in the Romanian part than in the Bulgarian one, reflecting the overall national differences. Nevertheless both parts of the cross-border area were generally and constantly lower than the national averages in each country over the last years. Only Vratsa displayed better average monthly salaries compared to the Bulgarian average. Even Constanta displays lower salary levels than the national average. Nevertheless, the RO region saw the average salary increase very rapidly during the 2004-2008 period of strong economic growth.

The evolution shows also a divergence between the Bulgarian and Romanian areas during the economic crisis period: if the salaries decreased slightly in the RO part and then stabilized around the 2007 levels, in the BG area the salaries continued to increase. These evolutions are in Euro and can be linked to the existence of a fix exchange rate in Bulgaria while Romanian salaries have suffered from the RON devaluation.

Moreover, salary levels in the Cross Border area depend on the main economic sectors:

- Due to low productivity, land ownership pattern (splitting of land), production pattern (tendency to big cereal productions), the salary levels in agriculture - a very important employer in the Romanian sector and in some of the Bulgarian districts - are some of the lowest in the cross-border economy
- The industrial (manufacturing) salary levels are divergent: they are the highest in the RO cross-border area, while in the BG area they are some of the lowest with the notable exception of electricity production.
- The services display also some of the lowest levels of salaries in the cross-border area
- The knowledge-based economy (quaternary sector) levels of salaries are some of the highest in the whole cross-border area, with the IT industry being the driver, even though their overall weight is still limited

The erosion of the labor cost advantage is a general trend in the area and underlines the fact that the economic development pattern needs to change in the whole cross-border area by



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sustaining other competitive assets. Locals need to develop new skills, the economy needs to diversify and other local resources need to be valorized.

### *2.5 Status and potential for tourism development - hotel and restaurant management.*

According to the Bulgarian Tourist Zoning Concept (Ministry of Tourism - on the grounds of Art. 16, par. 1 of the Law on Tourism), the North-East Region falls in the 8th District of Varna (Northern Black Sea Coast) - City of Varna - 1. Varna Black Sea Coast and 2 Dobrudzha Black Sea Coast - Dobrich region falls into this sub-region.

The expected benefits of creating tourist areas include:

- Filling in the existing gap in marketing and destination management between local level (municipality) and national level (Ministry of Tourism);
- Pooling of resources and concerted actions for development of a complex, diversified and competitive tourist product - through regional interaction, which is a prerequisite for offering an attractive and quality product;
- Regionalization of national marketing - for Bulgaria to promote itself as a homogeneous whole, using the opportunities of the tourist regions, each with its own resources and opportunities for practicing different types of tourism. This can better respond to the expectations, requirements and interests of different market segments;
- More efficient contact with potential tourist markets, especially the distant ones - by presenting sufficiently large areas in scope that are recognizable on the map and known not only for the Bulgarians, but also for the foreigners.

For comparison, Romania has a great natural and cultural tourism potential, which is still not utilized and promoted enough. Unlike Bulgaria, however, Romania has recently successfully presented itself on the international tourist market with its 9 regions. At the same time, tourism has considerably less weight in the country's economy - according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2014) in 2013, the direct revenues from the sector in Romania amount to 1.6% of GDP and the total - to 5.1% of GDP, as for Bulgaria these shares are respectively 3.7% and 13.3%. The directly employed in the tourism sector in Romania are 212,500 people (2,4% of the total employment) and in Bulgaria - 100,100 people (3,4%).

According to data from the Ministry of Tourism in the period of January - August 2017 the total number of visits of foreign tourists in Bulgaria was 6,532,994. The growth in the period January - August 2016 was 7.9%. There was an increase in holiday and vacation visits, with 4,276,199 visits and a growth of 8.3%. Guest visits were 457,271 while there was a decrease by -4.7%. Business visits were 994,564, up by 9.3%. Visits for other tourist purposes were 804 960. Visits for holiday and vacation purposes accounted for 65.46% of all tourist visits.

Tourism plays a key role in the development of a number of European regions, particularly underdeveloped regions, due to the considerable benefits and potential for job creation, especially for young people. Tourism is flexible and shows steady growth even during a crisis. Tourism is not included as a thematic objective in the regulations of the European structural and investment funds (ESIF) and is rather a means rather than an objective. However,





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regulations provide a number of opportunities for smart investment in tourism. The European Regional Development Fund supports the competitiveness, sustainability and quality of tourism at a regional and local level. Tourism is closely related to the use and development of natural, historical and cultural assets and the attractiveness of cities and regions as a place to live, work and visit. It also relates to the development, innovation and diversification of products and services that visitors will benefit from. The European Commission's recommendations for investment in tourism are focused on: better valorisation of cultural and tourist assets; supporting entrepreneurship and creating new businesses; tripling the capacity, innovation and internationalization of SMEs and clusters, (cross) cluster activities, including by improving internal and external connections; innovation and diversification of products, processes and services as well as market niche specialization to overcome dependence on low added value and seasonal employment and to ensure economic activity and jobs outside the tourist season. The dynamic development of tourism in Bulgaria and globally is strongly linked to the development of the hotel and restaurant business. These are two of the key elements of the tourism industry. Through them the tourist resources are valorized and included in the tourist supply. They concentrate in themselves more and more tourist activities, as well as an increasing share of tourism revenue. In this way the hotel business turns into the tourism industry's backbone. In the hotel and culinary industry, the main factor for development is the human one. The trend of hotel development in Bulgaria is with a special focus on human resources - proper staff selection, management, evaluation and incentives, regular and consistent staff training, proper use of staff potential. Well-selected staff is the key factor for customer satisfaction and hence for more revenue. Another important factor is to take into account the global and regional trends. The hotel business follows the economic development. Where new markets are opened or are expanding existing business markets, there is a growing need for hotels to serve business needs. Appropriate location is a key factor in quickly and easily developing a hotel. At the same time, the increased interest in the destination also raises an increased interest in the hotel business as a profession. This also leads to an increase in staffing needs and a shortage of qualified staff. Access to jobs in hospitality is now very easy and transparent - the internet, social media, open sources and job agencies allow people to apply for positions at any point in the world. Information is now much more accessible, so everyone can easily find out what positions they are looking for and how much they meet the requirements. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly difficult for a foreigner to obtain a work permit. For example, in most Western European countries there are restrictions on candidates coming from non-EU countries. But for EU member countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, although they are Eastern European countries, this process is much easier. An obstacle to staff mobility is mainly the legislative framework and its specificities in each country. Another obstacle is the different culture and the special attitude towards recruiting from other cultural communities. In spite of these obstacles, the global trends are for hiring the so-called "fresh blood" in the hotel industry. This means attracting talents - students and young people who want to make a career in hotel management. The development of technology requires continuous training of hotel staff, requires them to develop and learn new things. On the other hand, linguistic flexibility is something without which a hotel specialist can not



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develop. Language preparation is the basis on which the further development of each hotel industry is built. It is important to know not only the main European languages, but also languages in major markets - such as Russian and Chinese. Geographic flexibility is also an important condition. Employees must be ready to change destinations because that's what the hotel chains will require. Skills for managing people is another condition for those who want to develop in the profession. One of the most important conditions, however, is the desire to service guests. Regardless of what the preparation is, if one does not service guests willingly, he or she is not suitable for the hotel profession.

According to representatives of the hospitality and culinary industry, the training organizations and the Labor Office, the most sought after professions in the culinary sector are cooks, baker-confectioners, restaurateurs and waiter-bartenders. The biggest investment is for the training of chefs, bakers and confectioners, and the greatest is the turnover in these professions. This is conditioned by several factors: training is costly and labor intensive, professional chefs are getting more opportunities for better realization beyond the borders of Bulgaria and Romania. The situation with restaurant and bartender jobs is similar. In the hotel industry the most sought-after professions are: maids, animators, masseurs, administrators. If for the first group of professions the basic professional skills are essential, for the second group a great importance is placed on the communicative skills, the ability to communicate successfully and to solve problems in a timely manner.

The labor market in the Dobrich-Constanta region in terms of the tourism industry is mainly seasonal as it is tied to sea tourism. Due to the harsh climatic conditions during the winter season, the difficult accessibility to the natural and cultural sites in the region and the sea-relatedness, visits by tourists are very limited and are mainly oriented towards spa, rural and recreational tourism. Most hotels in the region do not work in the winter or open on request for Christmas and New Year holidays. Resorts stop their services until the start of the new season and even if some hotels in the resort do work, as a whole, the place is unattractive to visit because all the accompanying services are not available. The tourist is forced to confine himself to what the hotel offers. Basically the season begins in May and ends at the end of October. This also determines the employment of the personnel in the branch. Businesses can't provide year-round employment for staff, especially those whose work has a direct connection with visits to the main stream of tourists - maids, animators, masseurs, waiters and bartenders. Typically, hotels that work throughout the year maintain a smaller staff outside the tourist season. A large number of hotel and restaurant workers are heading to the winter resorts and thus maintain their professional skills. The flexible approach of the staff is admirable by the business as it contributes to developing and expanding professional skills, improving soft skills and delivering a better service as the end result.

Tourism is an important economic sector for the region's socio-economic development. Given its high positive externalities in transport, retail, leisure services, cultural services and even local agriculture, it can become a catalyst for the improvement of the quality of life of residents. Furthermore tourism is a transversal domain, it is not a sector like any others but



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rather a node where beneficial interactions can be made between distinct development policies. Tourism need skilled workers (trained in language, history or environment), infrastructures (hotels, transportation) and first and foremost a common will to make a destination attractive and a common understanding of its future benefits. Tourism is therefore a potential catalyst for the development of the region but can also be the showcase of its inequalities, flaws and lags.

The cross-border situation is not an exception and the situation of its tourism is a good example of the weaknesses of the area. The first observation is an uneven repartition of this activity, regarding tourism the border is drawn between the Black Sea coast and the rest of the territory. The sea coast is well-known for its resorts for mass summer tourism and attracts most of the visitors during few months in a year.

Besides its uneven repartition, tourism is moreover seasonal; the consequences being that one can hardly find a tourist in the cross-border region in the month of November. The reason for these spatial and temporal limitations is not that the region is completely unattractive besides its sea-shore; it is the lack of valorization of its natural and cultural assets combined with its overall economic and social situation that perpetuated such a waste of its tourism resources.

In a recurrent manner when addressing cross-border issues, one realize that the region is full of opportunities but that the lack of connectivity, of initiatives and the weight of habits and of some self-deprecation did not permit to develop them. For instance, the cross-border area is historically at the crossroads of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine legacies that influenced its culture, architecture, and traditions. It was situated at a strategic point of encounter between leading civilizations and is centered on one of the greatest and oldest transport axis of the classic western world, the Danube. The outside observer can be therefore surprised to find only mass and “low value” tourism on the coast in a region where the river is omnipresent as an asset for eco-tourism, sailing and leisure tourism and as an access vector to all the cross-border area.

The tourism potential of the region is thus obvious, presenting a mix of opportunities for cultural, religious, culinary, adventure and eco-tourism.

In **October 2017**, compared with the same month of the previous year, both arrivals and overnight stays in accommodation establishments in Romania increased by 8.7% and 6.8%, respectively, according to data provided by the National Institute for Statistics. Compared to October 2016, in October 2017, border crossings increased by 25.5% for foreign visitors' arrivals and by 17.5%, for departures of Romanian visitors. Arrivals in the establishments of tourists' reception in October 2017 amounted to 957300 tourists, up 8.7% compared to October 2016. Of the total number of arrivals, the arrivals of the Romanian tourists in the tourism accommodation establishments were 74.3% in October 2017, while the foreign tourists accounted for 25.7%, similarly to October 2016. Regarding the foreign tourists' arrivals in the tourist accommodation establishments, the largest share was held by those from Europe (72.3% of the total foreign tourists), of which 85.1% were from the Member States countries of the European Union. The overnight stays in tourism accommodation facilities in October 2017



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amounted to 2.078.000, up 6.8% compared to October 2016. The average length of stay in October 2017 was 2.3 days for Romanian tourists and 1.9 days for foreign tourists. The net occupancy rate of accommodation places in October 2017 was 30.7% on total tourist accommodation establishments, up 0.6 percentage points versus October 2016. Higher indexes of accommodation use in September 2017 registered for hotels (40.6%), hostels (21.0%), tourist villas (20.9%), tourist boarding houses (19.2%) and agritourists hostels (13.3%). The arrivals of foreign visitors to Romania amounted to 1.085.200 in October 2017, up by 25.5% compared to October 2016. Most foreign visitors come from countries in Europe (88.4 %). Of the total arrivals of foreign visitors to Romania, 54.4% come from the European Union. Among the EU Member States, most arrivals were from **Bulgaria (23.2%)**, Hungary (21.8%), Italy (11.3%), Germany (9.0%), France %) and the United Kingdom (5.1%).

The arrivals registered in the tourists 'accommodation establishments during **January - October 2017** amounted to 10.441.200 tourists, increasing by 10.6% compared to the same period of 2016. From the total number of arrivals, the arrivals of the Romanian tourists represented 76.9% between January to October 2017, while foreign tourists accounted for 23.1%, showing similar shares as for the same period of 2016. Regarding the foreign tourists' arrivals, the largest share was held by the ones in Europe (74.5% of the total foreign tourists), of which 86.1% were from the countries belonging to the European Union. The average length of stay during January - October 2017 period was 2.4 days for Romanian tourists and 1.9 days for foreign tourists. The net use index of accommodation places for January to October 2017 was 32.1% per total tourist accommodation establishments, increasing by 0.3 percentage points compared to the same period of 2016. Most arrivals of foreign tourists accommodated in tourism establishments came from Germany (289100 tourists), Israel (247200 tourists), Italy (207700 tourists), France (147200 tourists), Hungary (137700 tourists).

Focusing on South-East Region of Romania, it is considered that tourism resources offer the most important potential for regional development: Black Sea coast with 13 resorts offering accommodation, treatment and recreation, Danube Delta, which represents a scientific attraction especially after becoming reservation, balneal resources (Techirghiol Lake, Eforie Nord - with curative mud). Other potential types of tourism that can be developed in this region are agro-tourism and recreational tourism (hunting and fishing), mountain tourism with unique attractions (Soveja, Lepşa, Vulcanii Norioşi, Bozioru caves, Focurile Vii) and cultural and historical tourism (getic, roman, greek, byzantine citadels, monasteries). The dominance of the business and transit tourism in the overall accommodated flows is a reality having in mind the average stay duration, which is overall low. The overall decrease trend from already low values, in many counties, indicates the importance of business trips that span 2-3 overnights. The higher average stay of Constanta is obviously due to the importance of seaside tourism with longer stays. The seasonality together with the average stay are some of the key indicators that show the tourism-intensity of a territory and its socio-economic development capacity (i.e. capacity to be a source of stable revenue for a critical mass of residents in either directly tourism linked sectors or indirectly induced through tourists' spending).



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### 3. Role and importance of the VET centers

#### 3.1 Educational opportunities in the cross-border region.

Vocational education and training in Bulgaria provides for the acquisition of secondary education and a professional qualification. The system of VET prepares citizens for participation in the economy and other fields of public life, creating conditions for acquiring professional qualifications and for continuous improvement. The system of vocational education and training includes career orientation, vocational training and vocational education; validation of professional knowledge, skills and competencies. Vocational training can be provided in the form of work-based learning (dual training system).

School VET begins when students are 13 or 14 years old, and WBL (dual training system) begins at 16.

School VET is provided only at a secondary level. Until August 2016, the lowest level of qualification could also be acquired in lower secondary education programmes. Out-of-school adults (16+) can still acquire the lowest VET qualification level (VET qualification level 1, EQF level 2) before secondary education. The Upper secondary VET aims at obtaining a vocational qualification but also comprises a general education part that is required to acquire secondary education. The vocational education and training complies with the requirements of the state educational standards and consists of theory and (study and production) practice. The study practice is conducted during the learning process and is performed mostly in schools. The production practice usually takes place at the end of 11-th and 12-th grade in a real work environment. VET may also be organized as work-based learning (dual training system).

Post-secondary, non-tertiary vocational qualifications (ISCED 2011 level 4, EQF level 5) can be acquired only by people with completed secondary education. The acquired qualification at this level provides access to the labor market but does not provide a higher educational level. The share of VET learners in vocational colleges compared to the total number of VET learners in the country is around 1%.

The VET and higher education systems are regulated by different laws. Higher education providers can however establish vocational training centers and provide vocational training but this is not considered as higher VET. Partnerships between VET and higher education providers ease transitions from VET to tertiary programs. Learning outcomes acquired in VET may be recognized by higher education providers, sometimes allowing VET graduates to enroll in tertiary programs without entry examinations. Some higher education programs even reserve seats for VET graduates.

##### 3.1.1 Universities

Of the 51 accredited higher education institutions on the territory of the country, 9 are located in the Bulgarian part of the cross-border region Bulgaria-Romania. In the cities of Varna, Ruse and Pleven, there are separate structural units for universities and the availability of colleges and branches to higher education institutions in the cities of Dobrich, Silistra and Vratsa gives





access to higher education in these regions as well. Thus, the total number of locations of higher education institutions in the northern cross-border territory of Bulgaria is 21, and there are currently no higher education institutions in the districts of Montana and Vidin, although the Vidin Municipal Council has supported the opening of a university branch at the "Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse.

In the northern cross-border region of Bulgaria there are both highly specialized and broad-spectrum higher education institutions, and the specialties offered are traditional in the region or imposed by the demand for such a type of trained personnel in the particular region.

According to the National Statistical Institute for the academic year 2016/2017 the total number of students in the cross-border region is 12 418 while the number of graduates during the year is 2876.

	Students				Graduated			
Statistical regions	Total number	In college	In universities and specialized higher education institutions		Total number	In college	In universities and specialized higher education institutions	
Regions		Professional bachelor	Bachelor	Master		Professional bachelor	Bachelor	Master
North Central	8049	-	6120	1929	2091	-	1256	835
Ruse	7673	-	5800	1873	2002	-	1188	814
Silistra	376	-	320	56	89	-	68	21
North east	757	757	-	-	181	181	-	-
Dobrich	757	757	-	-	181	181	-	-
North west	3 612	622	1 563	1 427	604	185	284	135
Vratsa	1 033	-	996	37	147	-	147	-
Pleven	2 364	407	567	1 390	407	135	137	135

The total number of trainees from the first to the fourth year in the Bachelor's Degree Program "Professional Bachelor", "Bachelor" and "Master" in the Tourism professional field on the territory of the region is 1227 /data as of 1 March 2017 (<https://www2.mon.bg/AdminUReg/html/rep.asp#/>). The proximity to seaside resorts



determines the higher education in the city with a dominant focus on tourism and its related professional areas.

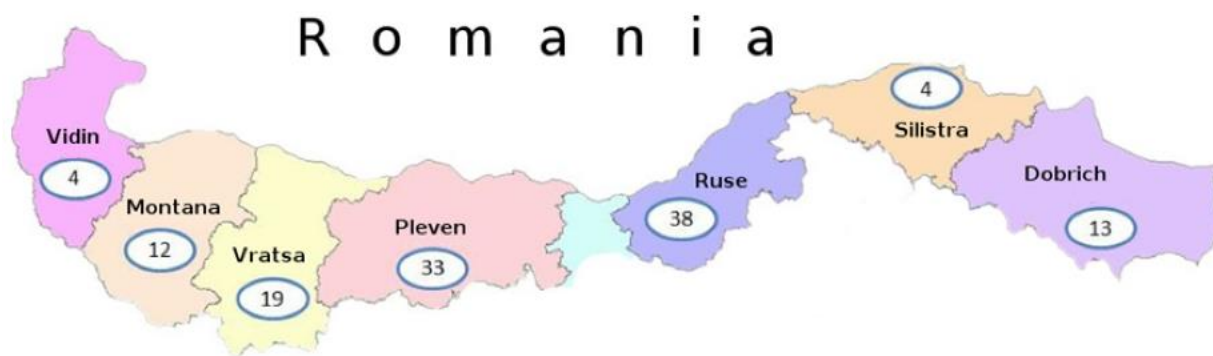
### 3.1.2 VET providers in the area

Developing highly qualified workforce responsive to the needs of the economy, increasing employability and reducing social inequality, the possibility of free movement of people within the EU - these are some of the challenges facing the VET systems. Of crucial importance is also the role of the authorities that formulate and implement policies at national and local level aimed at improving the skills and increasing the investments in human resources.

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), established in 1999 under the Vocational Education and Training Act, plays a key role in the process of modernization of the VET system in the country and in coping with the above challenges.

The advantages of vocational training are laid down in its practical orientation and its proximity to the labor market, both with regard to the short term of study (up to 2 years) and the educational content. This type of training is extremely widespread in Europe, and in many EU countries vocational education graduates have a much faster professional career realization and, last but not least, can continue their education in higher education institutions by building on their already existing knowledge and skills.

As of December 31, 2016, the network in the country includes 1,046 active CVT, as 211 are located in the CB region, including Varna and Shumen.

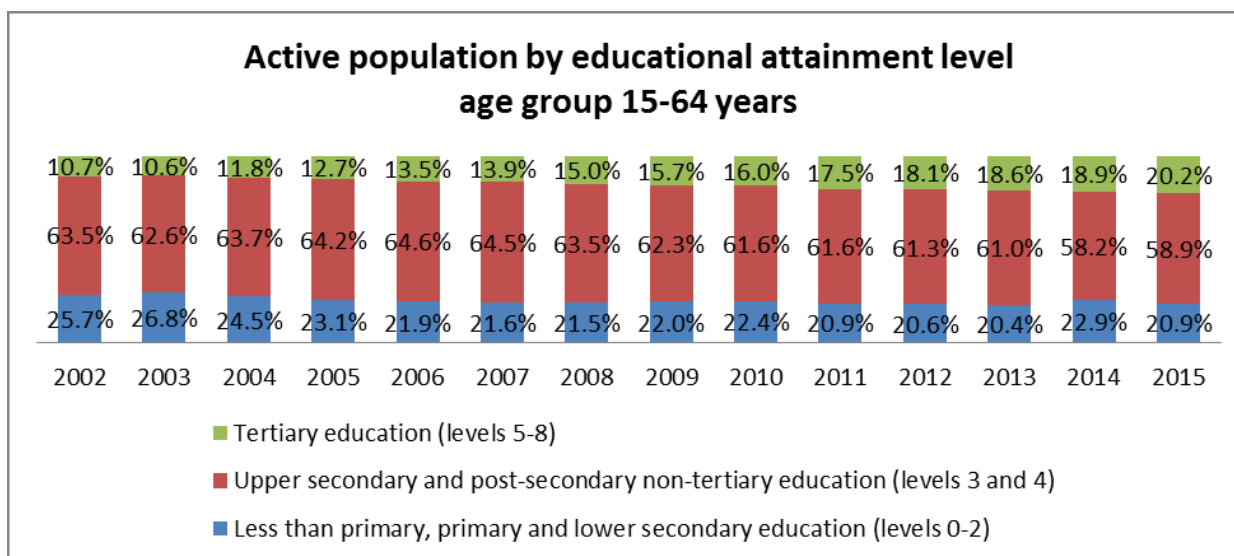


The distribution of the VET providers in the CB region correlates with the population and the overall demand of labor force, as the offered professions in the different centers are defined by the business demands of specific qualified cadres in the region.

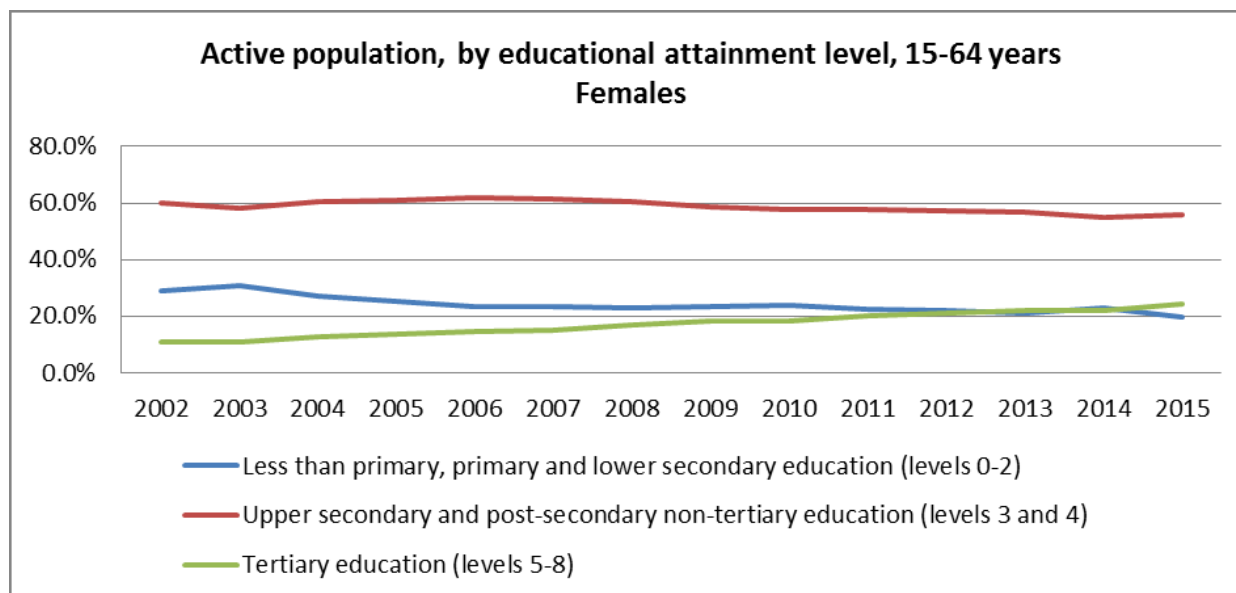
Since 2015 a bigger interest of the candidates for licensing of VTC is observed in the professions offering opportunities for realization on the labor market. These are professions from the following professional fields: "Business management and administration", "Hospitality, restaurant and catering, travel, Tourism and Leisure", "Transport", "Agriculture", "Social Activities".

### 3.1 Overview of Romanian main figures and data for VET

In terms of **qualification level of the Romanian population**, important change to the structure of levels of education attainment for the active population aged between 15 and 64 is worth mentioning. The share of population with tertiary education increased from 10.7% in 2002 to 20.2% in 2015, and the share of active population with level of education less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2) dropped from 25.7% in 2003 to 20.9% in 2015, although still maintained at high values. This change was more prominent for females as their share of those with levels of education 5-8 increased from 9.9% in 2001 to 24.2% in 2015, while for males the increase was from 10.2% to 17.3% (see Figures 4 and 5 below).

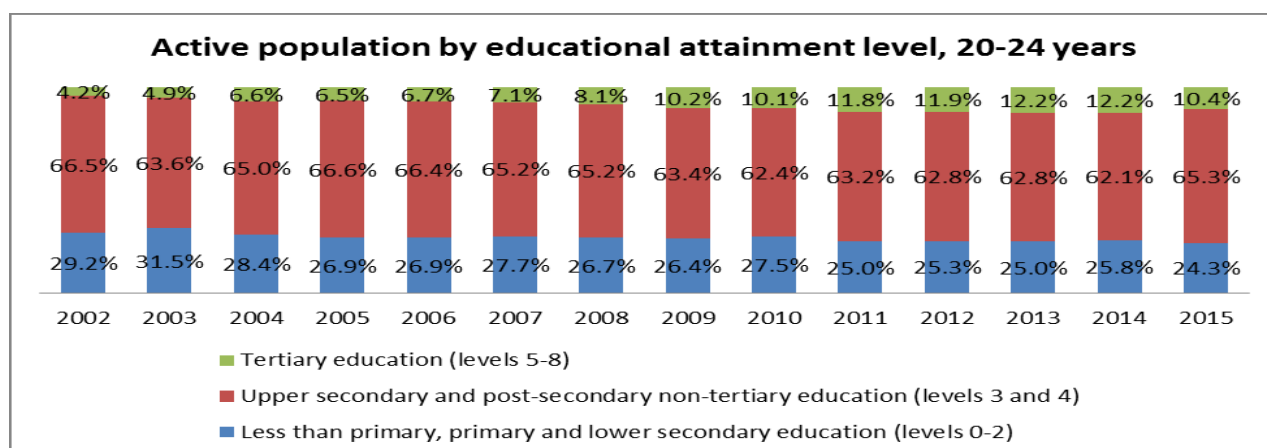


**Figure 4: Active population by educational attainment level - age group 15-64 Source: EUROSTAT**



**Figure 5: Active population by sex and educational attainment level - age group 15-64 years, Source: EUROSTAT**

Regarding young active population aged between 20 and 24, the share of those with tertiary education increased from 4.2% in 2002 to 10.4% in 2015, partly at the expense of those with upper secondary and post-secondary education that dropped from 66.5% in 2002 to 62.1% in 2014 to rise again at 65.3% in 2015. The share of young people with ISCED 0-2 is maintained at a high percentage, around 25% in the last 4 years, but has dropped considerably from 29.2% in 2002. Female population aged 20 to 24 registered a more pronounced increase (from 6.2% in 2002 to 15.4% in 2015) in the share of those with ISCED level 5-8 compared to the male population (from 2.6% in 2002 to 7.2% in 2015). However, it appears that during the last four years the share of the female active population with education level ISCED 5-8 in the age group 20-24 decreased continuously (Figure 6 below).



**Figure 6: Active population by educational attainment level - age group 20-24, Eurostat**

The age group 25-29 is more representative of the changed structure by level of education of the young people in the active population. Within this age group, 28.6% of young people in 2015 have tertiary education attainment level (from 13.9% in 2002) and only 19.3% with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education. For females the increase was more prominent (from 18.9% in 2002 to 37.2% in 2015).

**Early school leaving** negatively affects the quality and competitiveness of the human capital. The early school leaving rate decreased from 23.0% in 2002 to 17.3% in 2013. Still, in 2014 and 2015 it recorded an increase, up to 19.1% in 2015. The rate of early leavers from education and training for males was higher than the rate for females by one percentage point in 2014 (19.5% for males vs. 18.5% for females). **Adults' participation in education and training** did not register significant progress in the period 2000-14, fluctuating between 0.9% in 2000 and 1.3% in 2015.

**The Romanian education system is based on a tuition-free**, egalitarian system. Access to free education is guaranteed by Article 32 of the Constitution of Romania. Education is regulated and enforced by the Ministry of Education and Research. Each step has its own form of organization and is subject to different laws and directives. Since the downfall of the communist regime, the Romanian education system has undergone several reforms which have improved the system and aligned it to the European area of education.

The Romanian education system is designed in compliance with the following laws, rules and regulations which guide and control it. The education system is governed by the following types of laws:

- the Constitution of Romania, passed in 1991;
- the organic laws of education;
- common specialized laws
- government decisions having the force of Acts of Parliament over an established period;
- orders of the Minister of Education.

The national education system includes public and private education units and institutions, has an open character and assures the transfer from one system to another under the conditions stipulated by law.

**The National Law of Education no.1/2011** with its latest revisions and updates provides the general legal framework and describes the general objectives, aims, principles, structure, organization and functioning of the education system in Romania. The Chart describing the national education and training system of Romania is presented at the following page of this report.

The general legal framework has been subject of frequent updates. The latest updates include:



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- the extension of compulsory education to 11 years in total, by introducing the preparatory grade (grade 0 before primary education) and extending the length of compulsory studies from the 8th, later to 9th and presently to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade;
- the professionalization of the teaching career by introducing the Master of Arts for the teaching profession.

Extension of compulsory education had two pursuits:

- ✓ ensuring that young people can benefit from education and training and develop their personal, psychological and competences profile until the age of 15-16, which corresponds to the legal minimum age requirements to enter the labour market (with reduced work-load);
- ✓ decreasing the school drop-out rate.

The objective of VET (vocational education and training for adults) is to provide the necessary knowledge to adults in order to assist them in finding a job or developing their own vocational career paths. To this end, national policies are worked out in every country. The Romanian VET system has undergone a major improvement through a reform carried out in the post-Copenhagen and Lisbon period. The reform was primarily aimed at the alignment of the Romanian VET system to the European VET system.

**The main vocational education and training (VET) opportunities** leading to formally recognised qualifications in Romania are:

- initial VET (IVET), including upper secondary technological programmes, "school- and work-based VET" programmes and post-secondary programmes
- continuing VET (CVET), as part of adult education.

The National Law of Education is complemented by a set of strategic documents in the context of the National Reform Programme elaborated in line with European recommendations in all sectors.



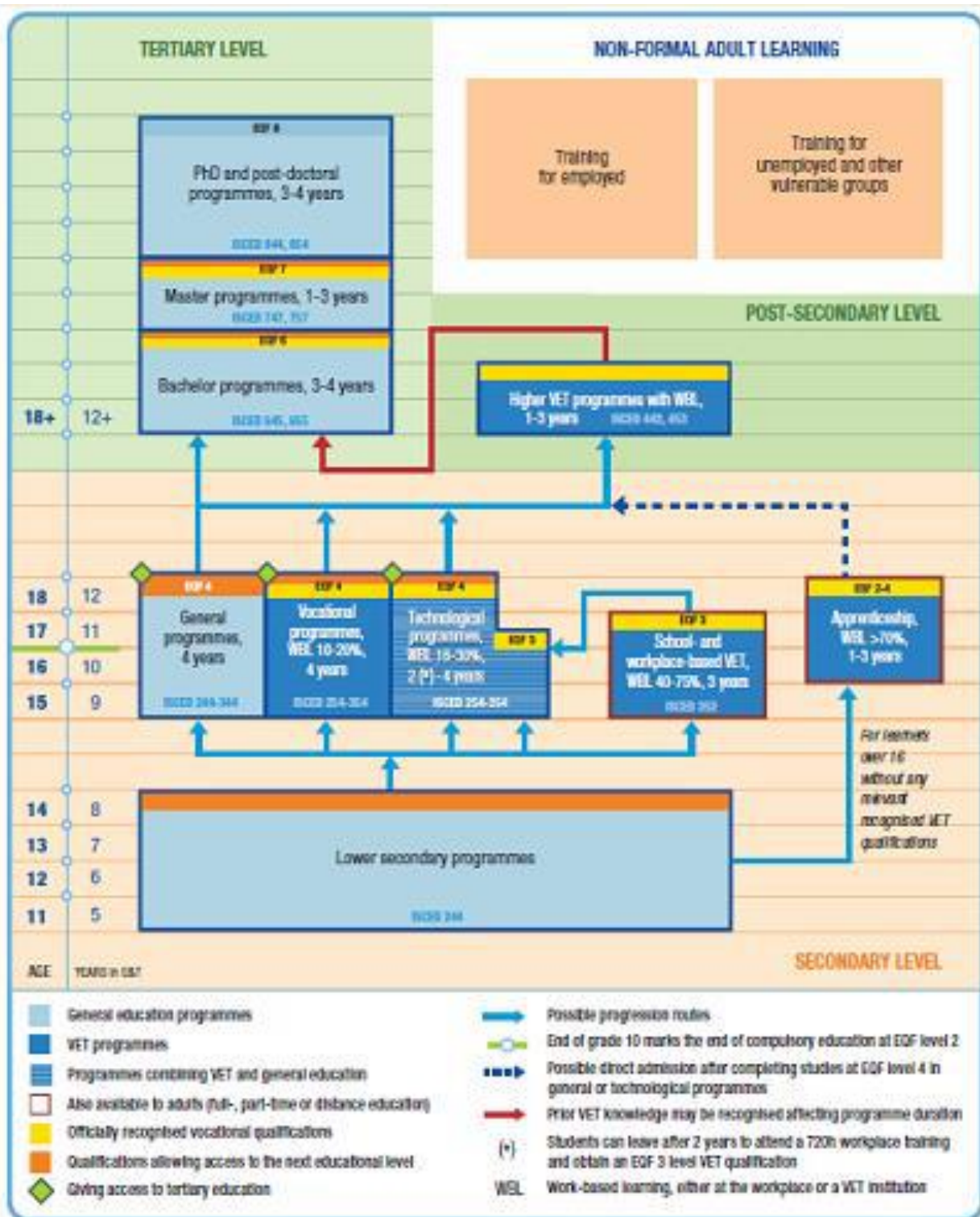


Figure 7: Chart of the national education and training system





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It is important to mention some of these strategic documents as their effectiveness have relevant impact at VET level in Romania:

- **The VET Strategy for 2016-2020** (adopted by Government decision no. 317/27 April 2016), having as main objectives: increasing VET relevance to labor market needs; increasing participation and facilitating access to VET programmes; improving VET quality; developing innovation and national and international cooperation in VET;
- **The National strategy for Lifelong learning for 2015-2020** (adopted by Government decision no. 418/03 June 2015) being structured on three main pillars:
  - access and incentives to participation: access and participation to lifelong learning should be increased for all;
  - quality and relevance: lifelong learning should be relevant to individual and labour market needs;
  - partnerships for better information: lifelong learning should be developed in close collaboration with social partners and all relevant stakeholders.

In Romania the **organizations which are responsible for VET** are:

- The Ministry of Labour whose responsibilities are to elaborate policies and programs in the field of vocational training and control the way in which these programs are implemented;
- The Ministries of various economic and social sectors which seek to ensure the continuous vocational training of the employees who operate in these sectors;
- The National Council for Vocational Adult Training, a council which works under the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, determines the medium and long term needs of vocational adult training and collaborates horizontally with others organizations involved in vocational adult training;
- The National Agency for Occupational and Vocational Training is a national public institution whose role is to organize and finance employment-related services. In addition, it also acts as a mediator between employers and the people who need a job and administrates the budget for the payment of unemployment benefits;
- The National Agency for Qualifications is a national organ which elaborates and approves new occupational standards or modifies and cancels the existing ones. Its role is to represent and support Romania's interest regarding the certification of vocational competences at an international level;
- The Commissions for Authorization of Training Providers is in charge with the authorization of the training providers whom they provide with counselling and all the in-training they need and also monitors the latter's activity.

The main forms of adult vocational training are: initial, qualification, further education, specialization and re-qualification, where:



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- (a) Initial training (basic training) is aimed at the attainment of a minimum amount of knowledge necessary for the completion of a low-level vocational activity. This form of training leads into a certified qualification;
- (b) qualification training modules offer a limited range of vocational competences which enable an individual to undertake and carry out certain activities;
- (c) further training/education contributes to the development and consolidation of vocational competences related to the same qualification;
- (d) specialization courses seek to develop vocational competences in a restricted field of activity;
- (e) Re-qualification modules are second chance training opportunities oriented towards the acquisition of job-specific competences.

In Romania, **IVET qualifications** (technological programmes, 'school- and workbased VET' programmes and post-secondary VET) are delivered based on the **training standards**, which are developed in close cooperation with the social partners and are validated by the Sectoral Committees. All IVET qualifications and their duration are registered in the National Qualification Register and are approved by law. A training standard is a document which describes the learning outcomes that participants in a technological programme or in a 'school- and work-based VET' programme should acquire and be able to demonstrate. The training standard is based on the relevant occupational standards in force and is the regulating document with the most important role in designing VET curricula. It also stands as general basis for the assessment of learning outcomes and the award of a qualification certificate.

Referring to **Quality Assurance in VET in Romania**, it is to be mentioned that at national level, the Law No. 87/ 2006 on quality assurance (QA) of education created the legal institutional framework for developing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms in education, at system and provider level. The Law sets a series of basic principles that are applicable for all levels of pre-university (including IVET) and higher education: focusing on learning outcomes, promoting quality improvement, protecting education beneficiaries (first of all students), giving importance to the internal evaluation process (self-assessment) of providers. By law, each VET provider has to set up a Quality Assurance and Evaluation Committee, responsible for preparing and implementing a School Action Plan - SAP (a strategic planning document with a 5 years perspective and yearly operational plans), for coordinating the self-assessment process. The self-assessment of VET providers and of VET programmes is performed on the basis of a set of quality descriptors (input, process and output), grouped in seven areas, several of which have a direct effect on the content of training (LDC) and the qualifications acquired:

- Quality management: the management develops the mission, vision and values of the organization following consultative processes; the Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance develops the quality manual (the sum of all policies and procedures, strategic and operational plans and documentation regarding quality assurance) and monitors the implementation of the procedures.



- Management responsibilities: the management gets actively involved in quality assurance of learning programmes; partnerships with stakeholders are developed and maintained; relevant information is collected, stored, analysed regularly and communicated to stakeholders; there is an effective financial management.
- Resource management (physical and human): the organization provides students with a safe and supportive environment; learning facilities are properly equipped and meet the collective and individual needs of students; resources, teaching methods and related premises allow the access and active participation of all students; staff is employed according to clear criteria (minimum standards regarding qualifications and experience) of recruitment and selection; the organization defines job descriptions; evaluation of staff performance is transparent; there is a staff policy, that includes induction procedure and continuing training programmes.
- Design, development and revision of training programmes: the organization is continuously concerned with the improvement of training programmes, to meet the needs of students and staff (internal stakeholders) and of employers and the community (external stakeholders); the training programmes are student centred.
- Teaching, training and learning: the organization provides equal access to learning programmes and supports all students, preventing any form of discrimination; students receive complete information about the training provision and benefit from effective counselling and career guidance; student rights and responsibilities are clearly defined; student-centred teaching and training methods are mainly used; students are encouraged to assume responsibility for their own learning process.
- Assessment and certification of learning: the organization develops and uses effective processes of assessment and monitoring of learning, in order to support student progress; teachers participate regularly in activities of assessment standardisation; assessment and certification meet national standards and legislation requirements
- Evaluation and improvement of quality: performance of the organisation is evaluated and monitored; following identification of weaknesses through the evaluation process, improvement measures are developed; these are implemented and monitored, as part of a new cycle of quality assurance.

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (ARACIP) and the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) were set up and are responsible for the authorisation, accreditation and external evaluation of all education and training providers.

**The higher education system** in Romania has a three-cycle structure, following the Bologna system: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate. Moreover, the National Education Law (Law no.1/2011) foresees post-university continuing training and personal development studies leading to the certification of specific vocational competencies acquired during the respective study programme. Qualifications acquired by higher education graduates are attested by the following types of diplomas: Bachelor / engineer/ medical doctor, urban planner diploma, Master diploma and PhD diploma. Competences acquired through postuniversity continuing

training and personal development programmes are attested by certificates and other documents. All these diplomas, certificates and documents may be issued only by accredited higher education institutions for accredited study programmes and modules (programmes may have a modular organization) and are similar for the same study programme, irrespective of the modules of study. Moreover, all these diplomas and certificates are issued upon graduation of a study cycle, which means that the learning outcomes they attest correspond to the level of qualification indicated by the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The government provides core funding for accredited universities; the funding process is based on the standard cost per student according to the Ministry of Education methodology.

In 2015, the rate of tertiary educational attainment in Romania was 25.6%, far from the EU target of 40% by 2020. The national target of 26.7% can be achieved and even exceeded given the continuous annual increase from 8.9% in 2003 to 25.6% in 2015. Nevertheless, this is a relatively low percentage compared to the EU-average (38.7 % in 2015) and is the second lowest in the EU. Against this background, Romania has one of the highest proportion of graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction in the EU (21 % compared to 14%), but also one of the highest proportion of graduates in social science, business and law (42 % compared to EU-average of 34 %). The proportion of graduates in science, mathematics and computing was 6 % in 2014 (EU-average 10 %), while 2 % graduated in agriculture and agronomy. The employment rate of recent tertiary graduates increased by 5 percentage points in 2015 reaching 77.1 %, but remained below the EU average of 81.9 %.

Traineeships for higher education graduates are foreseen by the Labour Code (Law no.52/2003 with subsequent changes) for the first six months after graduation, with the exception of professions for which special legislation provides differently (e.g. doctors and other medical personnel, lawyers, notaries). Conditions for this form of training are set by Law no.335/2013.

Plagiarism, especially at doctoral level, has been high on the public and political agenda. Several cases of plagiarized PhD theses, including by prominent politicians, increased public pressure on the Ministry of Education to change the legislation, to simplify and de-politicize plagiarism assessment. The planned evaluation of doctoral schools was postponed.

Several further challenges persist in tertiary education in Romania (Ministry of Education 2015):

- the financing mechanisms are not flexible enough to offer incentives for efficiency, modernisation, innovation or equity;
- the quality of education, in particular in private universities and non-university tertiary education, is unequal;
- the participation of students from rural areas, poor families and minorities is low;
- insufficient labor market relevance, including the fact that courses tend to provide limited opportunities to acquire the kinds of transversal skills that are valued on the labor market.

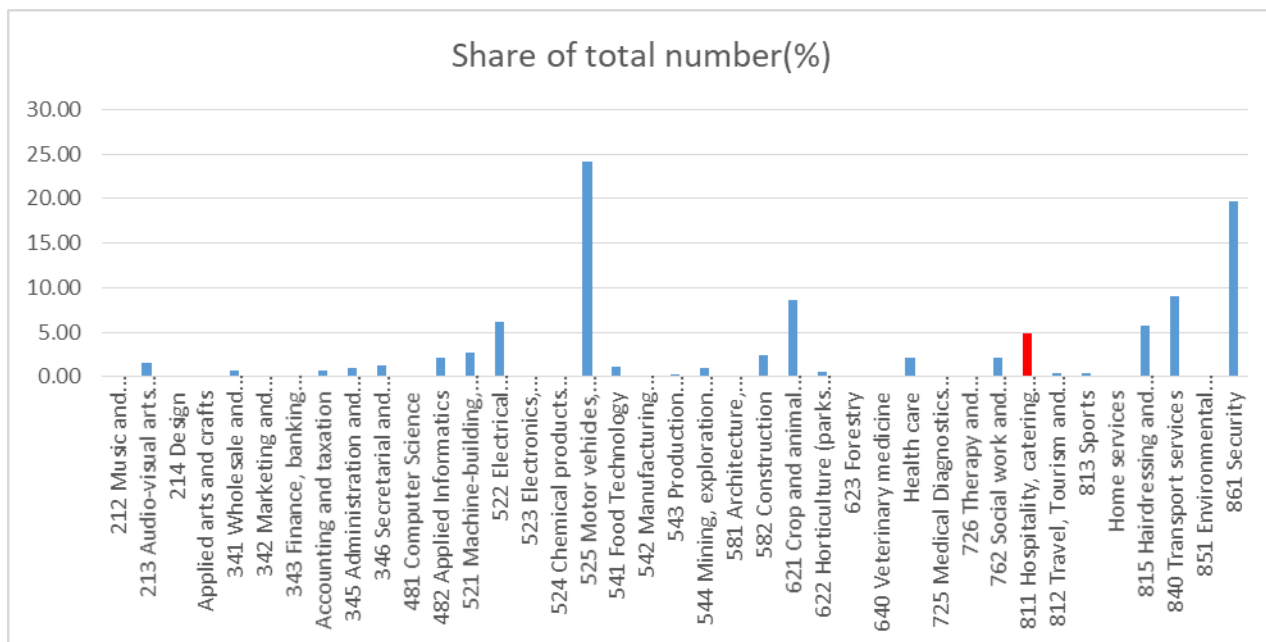
**Wrapping up the overview** on Romanian main figures for education system and especially for VET structures, it is considered that currently:



- Romania is modernising school curricula towards competence-based learning.
- Early school leaving continued to increase and is currently the third highest in the EU.
- Students from rural areas, poor families and Roma are particularly exposed to the risk of drop-out and educational poverty.
- Participation in pre-school education is expected to increase following the introduction of cash-conditional transfers for children from poor families.
- Tertiary educational attainment has risen so that it is now very close to the national target, but it is still one of the lowest in the EU and ensuring labor market relevance of higher education is a challenge.
- Vocational education and training (VET) qualifications and curricula are not sufficiently attuned with labor market needs and adult participation in lifelong learning is the lowest in the EU.
- Despite some improvements, public expenditure on education continues to be very low.

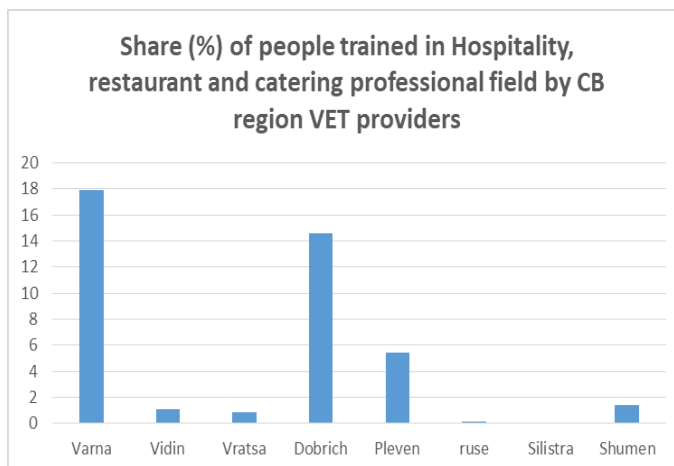
### 3.2 Role and importance of the VET sector

According to NAVET statistics for 2016, 68,742 people have received a Vocational Training for a part of profession, as the people who have completed vocational training in the professional field related to Hospitality, Restaurants and Catering are 3310 or 4.82% of all the VET users for 2016.





The number and percentage of the trained in these professions have remained relatively constant since 2013 which is in correlation with the supply and demand of labor force in the country as a whole. In 2016 the VET centers located in CB region of Bulgaria have provided Vocational Training Certificate in Hospitality, restaurant and catering professional field for 30% of the people, as Varna and Dobrich together constitute 25% of that share.



A Vocational Training Certificate is issued to a person who has completed vocational training and has successfully passed a qualification examination for a part of the profession, updating or expanding the professional qualification. It provides partial qualification in professions and has a lower status than the Certificate of Professional Qualification.

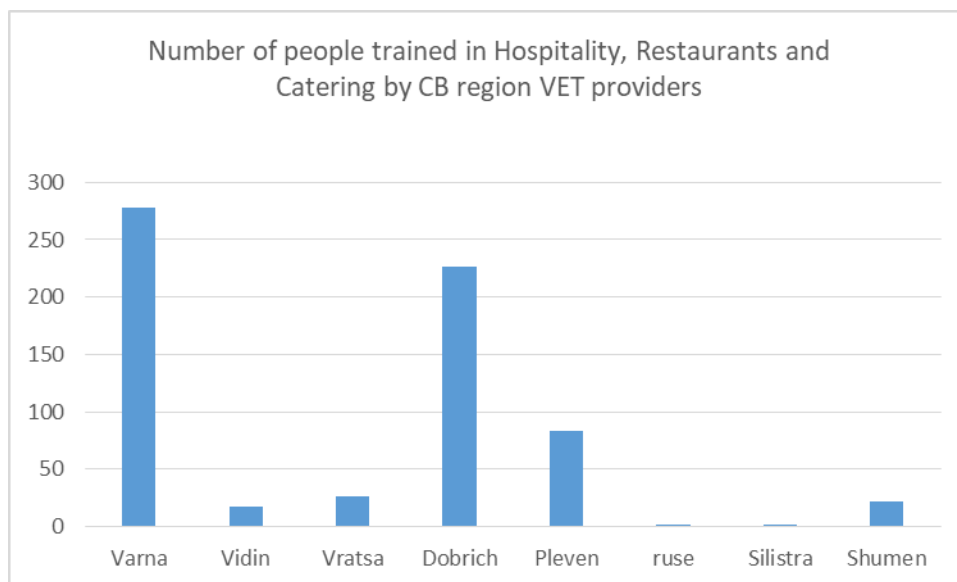
The VTC is awarded after successful examinations at a committee and completed a vocational training course for part of the profession, for example:

- After completing one module (one subject) of a profession
- After completing training on part of a subject or module
- By recognized professional experience of not less than six months of work experience and attached documents proving it.

The number of people trained to obtain a certificate of professional qualification in 2016 are 9,743, as 1,555 persons or approximately 16% of all the certificates acquired in the country are in Hospitality, Restaurants and Catering professional field.

The CB located VET providers have trained 659 persons (42% of all) in professions relevant for the culinary and restaurateur business, as Dobrich and Varna constitute 77% of the share.





A certificate of professional qualification is issued to a person who has acquired a professional qualification according to the state educational requirements for vocational education and training and the state educational requirements for acquiring qualification in professions.

It is issued on completion of a training which covers a first, second or third degree of professional qualification for a particular specialty. (For example: "Production of culinary products and beverages" - II degree of professional qualification, training in the subject " Organization of hotel services " - III- degree in professional qualification, etc.)

Different grades have a different workload:

- training with not less than 300 academic hours for the first degree
- training with not less than 660 teaching hours for second degree
- training with not less than 960 teaching hours for third grade

In order to issue a CPQ to a single person, he/she must have passed the state examinations for acquiring professional qualifications. The testimonies of the disciplines studied, as well as the assessments of the state examinations, shall be entered in the certificate. State examinations in the specialty are held in open form, in front of a committee that evaluates learners. They are always 2 in number - one in theory and one in practice in the specialty. The first exam is written. The practical state examination always includes a practical task in the subject. If the student does not pass the exams, he/she has the right to attend a corrective session of the state exams.

For different specialties there are different requirements for completed education before starting the training. In addition, the course must have included practical training in the specialty (or the person must have at least 6 months of internship on it) - so this is also a mandatory condition for issuing a CPQ.

### 3.2. VET providers in the Romanian CB area, with a focus on SE Region

Following data provided by EU Commission within the Education and Training Monitor 2016 for Romania, the participation of upper secondary students in VET remained above the EU average (48 %), being at 60 % in 2014. However, the employment rate of recent VET graduates was well below the EU average in 2015 (62.4 % compared to the EU average of 73 %). Adult participation in lifelong learning is the lowest in the EU, standing at 1.3 % in 2015. In general, participation in lifelong learning is positively correlated with the education level (3.1 % for tertiary graduates in 2015 vs 0.3 % for those with lower secondary education at most). This situation reinforces existing discrepancies and the low skills trap, particularly for older people with lower levels of education.

The most recent survey of Romanian National institute for Statistics published in 2017, on Adult Education, shows that at national level a total of 7.235.000 people, representing 65.4% of the total adult population, participated in one or more learning activities in formal, non-formal or informal education, during the period September 2015 to September 2016. Of these, 8.8% participated in two forms of education or even all three.

By regions of development, the highest rates of participation in formal education were registered in the 2.5% in the South-West Oltenia region (2.5%) and in the West Region (2.2%). In the **South East Region, the rate of participation was 1.7%.**

The rate of participation in non-formal education has reached the maximum value in Northwest region (7.4%). High values were also recorded in Bucharest-Ilfov Region (6.7%), Central Region and South Muntenia Region (both 6.4%). The lowest rate was observed in the South-West Oltenia region (3.0%). In the **South East Region, the rate of participation was 4.5%.**

The participation rate in informal education had the highest value in the North-East region (71.1%) and **the lowest in the South-East region (53.8%)**. In four other regions (Bucharest-Ilfov, South-West Oltenia, North-West and Center) the participation rate in informal education was over 65%. The informal education considered in the survey consisted in assessing population learning on their own in the family, at work or at other events in everyday life.

As an overall perception, the survey shows that of the 769 thousand people who participated in a formalized or non-formal education between September 2015 and September 2016, 316 thousand (41.1%) would have liked to participate in more such educational activities, and another 98,000 (12.7%) although they would not have liked to participate more, still recognized that they would have needed for more VET activities. The most frequently cited reason for non-participation in both formal and non-formal education was the cost of participation, indicated by 36.3% of respondents. The higher frequency of this response was recorded in the case of persons residing in the rural area (41.5%) and the unemployed (53.8%). Another barrier blocking the participation in education, indicated by 34.8% of people, is responsibilities related to familial situation, being more frequent for female respondents. Not just external factors can prevent people from attending education; sometimes the reasons for non-participation are more of personal context. Thus, age was considered a barrier to participation in education by



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21.7% of respondents. For people aged 55-64, this response was provided by 61.3% of people. A percentage of 12.3% of people mentioned the lack of support by the employer, and another 17.5% did not (more intensely) participate in education, for personal reasons.

Starting with the 2014-2015 school year, graduates from lower secondary education have the option to follow a three-year professional education programme. This includes a significant component of practical training carried out at a school or in a company. Practical training represents about 20 % of the total learning time in the first year, while in the second and third years it increases to about 60 % and 72 % respectively. Companies may also offer scholarships to trainees, conditioned by frequency and high grades. A new set-up for professional training standards in professional education (upper secondary level) was adopted in 2015. On this basis, 200 professional training standards for ISCED levels 3 and 4 were designed and applied starting with the 2016-2017 school year.

In April 2016 Romania adopted a national VET strategy structured around four key objectives:

- improving labour market relevance;
- increasing participation;
- improving quality;
- developing innovation and national/international cooperation in VET.

VET is making progress, but remains characterized by insufficient correlation of qualifications and VET curricula with labor market developments, and inadequate quality assurance mechanisms. The underfinancing of the sector, the quality of teaching staff, drop-outs and graduation rates are additional challenges.

For the **South East Region**, we will mention the most important data, provided by the National Institute of Statistics.

Thus, regarding higher education in the Region, it is worth to take note of the following data for 2015-2016:

County	No of universities	No of Faculties	Students enrolled	Teaching staff
Constanta	5	27	23692	906

### 3.3 VET sector and labor market

The main purpose and advantage of vocational education is its ability to create a direct link between the job seekers and the labor market. Quality vocational education produces skilled staff who provide competitive advantages to any economy. People who have acquired professional qualifications have higher economic activity and form higher employment and lower unemployment rate. The shortage of staff with professional education and the time and resources that employers and workers devote to continuing vocational education are the main weaknesses and omissions in vocational education and training in Bulgaria including the Hospitality, restaurant and catering sector in the CB region.



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A study conducted by the Institute for Market Economics of the link between vocational education and the labor market showed that:

- Vocational education brings a number of advantages to the workforce, businesses and the economy as a whole;
- Vocational education suffers from many weaknesses associated with unsatisfactory quality and declining reputation;
- Opportunities for vocational education include its modernization and universal application of the dual education system, which will further interweave the acquisition of vocational qualifications with the labor market;
- The main threats to vocational education are related to the rigidity of the system and the still low interest of employers in practical training.

The need for qualification and retraining requires training on the initiative of employers, employees, the workforce (including the unemployed), as well as national and regional training and qualification programs (including Human Resources Development Operational Program - HRD OP), which provide vouchers for training.

### 3.4 VET sector and business collaboration

The participation in VET is encouraged by information campaigns. The 8th National panorama event in 2016 gathered learners from 161 vocational gymnasiums from all (28) regions around 11 skills' competitions. Companies and higher education institutions support it. Representatives of employers' and branch organizations participate in committees for assessing the knowledge, skills and competences demonstrated and for the ranking of the participants. The business representatives ensure the logistic support and awards for members and winners. The higher education institutions offer the winners places in their programmes and the companies - jobs to the best VET learners. Information about VET may be obtained through the public register of the education ministry, including State, municipal and private providers. A national VET portal also provides information on initial and continuing VET providers, State educational standards, curricula, legislation and more. The information system of the National Agency for VET provides access to information on licensed vocational training centers (and upcoming courses) and on centers for information and vocational guidance. After the 2015 amendments in the VET act, all qualification certificates issued by the vocational training centers are uploaded in an online public register that allows their authenticity check.

According to data from the National Social Security Institute and the rating system, the application of the acquired higher education in the field of tourism is the lowest compared to all other professional fields. Only 19.7% of graduates with such diplomas work in their specialty with an average of 47% for all fields. These data show that in tourism there is a surplus of specialists with higher education. At the same time, the industry needs staff with secondary education. At present, 10 state and four private higher education institutions in the country train a total of 4854 students in the Tourism field, which exceeds the request of the nationally



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representative employers' organizations, which have declared the necessity of 1800 specialists with higher education in this field

(<http://www.investor.bg/ikonomika-i-politika/332/a/niskata-kvalifikaciia-na-kadrite-veche-e-problem-1-za-turizma-ni-139432/>).

In surveys of BIA (Bulgarian Industrial Association), about 65% of employers said they had a serious problem with finding staff with secondary vocational education;

- There is an increasing shortage of about 170 professions (List of professions for vocational education and training) and middle-class jobs - machine and equipment operators, technicians, technologists, mechanics, fitters, welders, turners, drivers, craneists, chefs, etc.;
- This deficit is most evident in the mining, chemical, metallurgy, wood processing and food processing industries, machine building, construction, energy, transport, car maintenance, trade and services, hotels and restaurants;
- The shortage of staff with secondary vocational education in the regions of Plovdiv, Varna, Bourgas, Stara Zagora, Yambol, Blagoevgrad and others is the most acute.

For twelve years, the number of students in vocational schools has been decreasing by about 30%, and the tendency increases for young people to "escape", especially in professions related to manufacture. In the majority of professional high schools are enlisted young people with low success and lack of motivation, while because of low interest and incomplete admission, classes and high schools with a developed material base and with proven training capacity for important professions and qualifications, are being closed down. On the other hand, the European network of career guidance centers (not only MES) works on a totally ineffective level. There are no policies for early career guidance in order to attract in various forms of vocational training those at risk of dropping out and leaving the school system. One of the main problems is the lack of an information system tailored to the student needs, with a database of labor market characteristics, structured enterprises in the regions, the peculiarities of the individual professions to support their career guidance and transition from learning to work. There is no information system with a database of vocational high school graduates to assist employers in recruiting them. The network of vocational high schools does not meet the profile and needs of individual regional economies. Inadequate quality of vocational training in high-tech professions is reported. The trend of "aging" and feminisation of the teaching staff in vocational education deepens - for 15 years the number of young teachers (up to 34 years) has decreased from 23% to about 8% and in the next 7-10 years over 50% of teachers in vocational high schools will retire. There is no regulation and conditions for mandatory recurrent qualifications of teachers, especially teachers of special subjects. There are no regulated economic and other incentives for employers to introduce dual training. A normative number of operational issues are not regulated: contractual relations between the parties; indemnities for non-respected contracts; special requirements for enterprises and jobs provided for dual learning; workplace change and secondment of trainees; qualification and certification of





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mentors; minimum time credit for fulfilling the obligations of mentors; control of the implementation of the commitments on dual training contracts.

As a conclusion we can say that the professional training of the staff does not correspond to the requirements of the business and this leads to a difficult labor market, both for the realization of the trained and for the finding of suitable qualified workers by the employers. The proposals for the measures offered by the Bulgarian Industrial Association are:

### 1. Strategic Restructuring and Improvement of VET System and Infrastructure:

Revision and update of the VET development strategy;

- Establishment of a Vocational Education and Training Directorate at the Ministry of Education and Science;
- Creating a public council on VET issues at the Ministry of Education and Science;
- Optimization of the network of vocational high schools on a regional basis and a gradual transition to their subordination to the local self-government bodies;
- Revision of the financing system for vocational schools by combining delegated budgets with additional criteria on the deficit, the need for the regional economy by the relevant qualification, the quality of training and realization;
- Creating a rating system for vocational schools;
- Encourage the establishment of regional programs for cooperation between education, business and local authorities regarding the development of the material and technical facilities of vocational schools;
- Complementing and improving the regulatory framework to encourage employers' and local authorities' initiatives to create sectoral and regional qualifications and vocational training clusters;

### 2. Enhancing the attractiveness of vocational education:

- Implementation of national and regional studies of the motives and barriers for young people to refer to vocational education;
- Development of national and regional programs, incentives and stimuli for young people to focus on "non-reputable" but important jobs for the economy;
- Exploring European practices and introducing models and systems of social partnership in the early orientation of children to professions typical of the regional economy;
- Improving extra-curricular training, promoting competitions, contests, events in scientific disciplines and professions;
- Expand the database and functionalities of the National Portal for Career Guidance of Students (regional labor market maps, profiles of leading companies, etc.).

### 3. Balancing the demand for and supply of qualifications:

- Establishment and implementation of a system for determining and forecasting the needs for qualification for the needs of the regional economy;



- Regulating the criteria for defining and introducing a list of state-protected professions included in the SPPOO (List of Occupations for Vocational Education and Training);
- Implementation of European countries' experience in defining and partnering sectoral qualifications frameworks;
- Adoption of the state admission plan in order to put an end to the unjustified increase of classes in language and other types of schools at the expense of admission to vocational schools;
- Updating the List of Occupations for Vocational Education and Training and bringing it into line with the National Classifier of Occupations and Positions;
- Revision and updating of the National Qualifications Framework in its part for
- the requirements for the fourth and fifth qualification degrees.

#### 4. Improving the quality of vocational education and training:

Implementation of a system for external evaluation of VET quality;

- Normative regulation of audit procedures by employers on the quality of VET;
- Taking measures to encourage the involvement of academics, teachers and specialists in the creation of textbooks and methodological aids in the study of special subjects;
- Updating the SER (State Educational Requirements) in line with the requirements of the labor market and the professional standards of the business;
- Establishment and implementation of a program and curriculum management system in vocational highschoools in accordance with the results from training (regulated by the SER(State Educational Requirements)) and the requirements of the labor market;
- Optimization of curricula and programs of vocational schools by increasing the classes for special subjects, second language learning and practical training.

#### 5. Introducing a dual learning system:

- Normative regulation of incentives and stimuli for employers investing in the vocational education system involved in the introduction of dual learning;
- Adopt a separate dual training law to harmonize and align with other regulations;
- Establish a system for registration of enterprises and jobs provided for dual training;
- Establishment of a national register of dual training contracts;
- Establishment of a system for the certification of mentors in dual learning;
- Development of methodological materials and guidelines for secondary schools and enterprises;
- Creation of a national (regional) information portal for dual training.

#### 6. Improvement of pedagogical staff:

- Introducing a regulation on compulsory recurrent qualifications of teachers in the vocational education system;
- Development and implementation of partnership models between higher education institutions, businesses and vocational schools in updating the knowledge of the technicians and technologists in the modern industry;



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- Regulating the opportunities for exchange of staff, business specialists, researchers and lecturers from higher education institutions to carry out part of the training in high-tech professions;
- Adopting national and regional programs to direct young professionals to the teaching profession.

#### 7. Effective use of public funding to carry out the necessary reform of the VET system:

- The funding provided under the new "Science and Education for Smart Growth" Operational Program provides a unique chance for the partnership between all stakeholders to be realized so as to bring about real change and achieve quality and sustainable results over time. European funding should be used directly to implement reforms, not to maintain the status quo.

In order to implement these actions and measures, the legislative changes are only a first step in overcoming the challenges facing the vocational education system in Bulgaria. Their resolution requires integrated and targeted action by all stakeholders: Ministry of Education and Science, Vocational Schools, Business and Employer Organizations, Students and Their Parents.

#### 4. Quality of the VET

- The legislative framework for VET in Bulgaria includes: the new Pre-school and School Education Act (2016) and the Vocational Education and Training Act (1999). The latter sets out the normative framework for the organization of IVET and CVET with a view to guaranteeing the quality of VET in accordance with labor market needs and EU trends. The VET Act regulates conditions ensuring the functionality and development of the VET system based on cooperation among VET and government institutions, local authorities and social partners.
- The Report of Bulgaria, spring 2016, has been drafted by the EQAVET National Reference Point of Bulgaria and describes the main quality assurance arrangements in vocational education and training.  
National Framework for quality assurance in initial VET
- The two bodies responsible for VET in Bulgaria are the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP). MES has overall responsibility for the entire school system and is the main policy-making body with budgetary responsibility and control for IVET.
- Several further challenges persist in tertiary education in Romania (Ministry of Education 2015):

the financing mechanisms are not flexible enough to offer incentives for efficiency, modernisation, innovation or equity;

the quality of education, in particular in private universities and non-university tertiary education, is unequal;



the participation of students from rural areas, poor families and minorities is low;

insufficient labor market relevance, including the fact that courses tend to provide limited opportunities to acquire the kinds of transversal skills that are valued on the labor market.

- The Recognition of Vocational Qualification Act (2008) regulates the conditions and rules for the recognition of vocational qualifications, acquired in other EU member states, or third countries, in order to gain access to and practice in regulated professions. The Employment Promotion Act (2001) sets general policies for employment, methods to gather information about employment, promotion of employment, and it formulates the transition from passive social assistance towards active measures in the labor market, in order to increase employment and raise the qualification level of the labor force. The Crafts Act (2001) regulates the conditions and rules for training crafts, including training at a craft enterprise workplace and determines the basic degrees of the craftsmen training.
- *Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in initial VET systems* - According to the VET Act, the MES implements the state policy in VET by adopting the State Educational Requirements for acquiring professional qualification for professions; approving the List of Professions for VET; proposing for approval to the Council of Ministers the List of Regulated Professions; approving the state admission plan for state and municipal schools; approving programmes for qualification in VET; allocating financial resources and controlling their utilization; analyzing the results and the efficiency of VET. The Regional Inspectorates for Education of MES implement the state policy in VET in its respective region by coordinating the interaction between the schools, the local government and regional structures of the social partners. The MLSP participates in implementing state policy in VET by determining the needs of VET through analyzing the tendencies in the development of the labor market; participating in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquiring professional qualification; participating in the coordination of the List of Professions for VET. The branch ministries are involved in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquiring professional qualification; in the development, coordination and updating the List of Professions for VET as well as in the coordination of the state admission plan for the schools they finance.
- The employers' organizations participate in the development, updating and coordination of the List of Professions for VET; propose changes in the register regarding the institutions in the VET system; participate in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquiring professional qualification; participate in the organization of examinations for acquiring professional qualification and propose representatives for participation in the examination commissions. The employee's organizations on a national level participate in updating the State Educational Requirements for acquiring professional qualification, and in the development, updating and coordination of the List of Professions for VET.
- Branch trade union organizations represent the interests of trainees connected with the employment and practical trainings in the enterprises; participate in organizing and holding



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- the examinations for acquiring professional qualification and propose representatives for participation in the examination commissions.
- *Identification of training needs* - According to the VET Act the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy determines the needs of VET by analyzing the tendencies in the development of the labor market. The Regional Inspectorates for Education of MES, municipalities, employers' organizations contribute to the process.
  - Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in CVET systems. There are several institutions that share the responsibilities for decision-making and planning in CVET. The Council of Ministers determines the policy of the state in the field of education and employment. MES guides, coordinates and controls the accomplishment of the state policy in VET. The Ministry regulates and methodologically guides the CVET. MLSP develops, coordinates and implements the state policy to promote and maintain employment. MLSP together with the MES, develops and coordinates public policy for the training of adults; creates conditions for the assessment and recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies of adults acquired through non-formal and informal learning. The Ministry is responsible for elaborating of the annual National Employment Action Plan and for identifying and forecasting the training needs of adults.
- Branch Ministries participate in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualifications for professions; nominate their representatives on the Managing Board and in the expert commissions for all professional fields in NAVET. The representative organizations of employers and the organizations of workers and employees at national level participate in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for the acquisition of qualifications by professions; nominate their representatives on the Managing Board and in the expert commissions in NAVET; participate in the examinations for the acquisition of vocational qualifications with their representatives in the examination commissions.
- For the purpose of quality assurance and control of adult training organized by the Employment Agency and financed by the state budget for active policy on the labor market and Human Resources Development Operational Program - a Mechanism approved by MLSP is applied. The Mechanism defines procedures for organizing, conducting, authentication and verification of the results of adult training, including control activities. It identifies a set of criteria to evaluate the quality and the participation of the institutions involved. Based on analysis of the collected information an assessment of the current situation is prepared as well as of the progress identified, the gaps and weaknesses in the organization, implementation and certification of training. Measures to enhance the quality and effectiveness of adult training at system and institutions levels are undertaken. The CVET alignment to labor market needs is ensured through surveys conducted annually by the Employment Agency among employers in order to identify their labor force needs. On this basis the Employment Agency develops lists of professions for training of unemployed persons. MLSP elaborates a short-term forecast (for July 2015-July 2016), a medium-term forecast (for the 2016-2020), and a long-term forecast (until 2030) for labor market developments in Bulgaria, which are made available to all institutions interested in the





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development and implementation of sectoral policies in the socio-economic field. Among the main objectives of NAVET is to assure and maintain quality in the VET system for young people and adults according to the labor market needs. NAVET, jointly with the National Employment Agency, carries out administrative control and monitoring of providers, based on the documentation required for licensing, and of training. NAVET conduct both administrative and quality control of the vocational training provided by VET centers. The Centers for Vocational Training are expected to identify the needs of training by researching the needs of employers in the sector and the profession. In some cases, the employers approach Centers to ask them to organize and conduct training for their needs. The competition among the Centers for Vocational Training for learners and training programmes triggers a demand driven approach and motivation. The vocational schools, vocational secondary schools and colleges, as well as the licensed Centers for Vocational Training, certify the completed vocational training in documents complying with the Ordinance for the documents in the system of public education. According to the VET Act, the examination commissions should include representatives of the educating institution, of employers and of employees, and for art schools there should also be representatives of the respective higher art schools, on a tri-partite principle. The employer representatives should have a qualification in the respective professional sphere and employee representatives should have a qualification and least four years' experience in the respective profession. Employers' representatives and social partners take part in setting up and updating the List of Professions and in developing the State Education Requirements.

- The analysis of the VET quality assurance system shows that there are significant and deep deficiencies in the quality assurance system for VET in Bulgaria - there is no definition of VET quality; there is no systemic regulatory framework for quality assurance in VET; there are no professional standards; there is no national quality assurance concept for VET; there is no awareness of the need for quality of VET by institutions at a system level and at a VET provider level, and in particular by employers; the quality cycle for VET is not applied; the application of quality descriptors (in their European context) is superficial; the applied VET indicators only give a distant indirect quality assessment of VET; there is no system for maintaining and enhancing the qualification of teachers and VET teachers; there is an outdated and underdeveloped material base and training materials and tools for VET; VET links with the business are symbolic; there is no professional orientation; the performance of VET is unattractive; there is no system for studying, identifying, analyzing and forecasting VET needs; there is no effective social partnership for VET, including for VET quality. In addition, the analysis of the quality assurance system of VET shows that there are certain achievements in Bulgaria - a general regulatory framework for VET is formed; there are established institutions at a system level and at a VET provider level; there is a certain VET planning practice; a system of planning, implementation of the plan, performance appraisal and review, is implemented at a VET-provider level (more in vocational schools and in very small part of CVT), resulting from the feedback to the results of the implementation of the plan; certain VET indicators apply; in vocational schools and in very small part of CVT there are internal rules for VET evaluation (albeit only in paper



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version); in vocational schools and in a very small part of VTC there is (although only in book version) a plan for the training of teachers/trainers; there is an experience in developing and implementing SER (State Educational Requirements), framework programs, curricula and programs, national exams; there is an order issued by the Ministry of Education and Research to apply criteria and indicators for quality assurance of VET in vocational schools. These positive conditions, together with the fact that our country is a member of the EU and as such, albeit on a voluntary basis, should implement the Recommendation of the EP and the Council to establish a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET, as well as the presence in the country of expertise in VET, foreign investment, including new models for staff management and a requirement for VET quality and the evolving labor mobility within the EU and especially in Bulgaria, are the objective reason to expect positive development regarding the system quality assurance of VET in Bulgaria. In accordance with the Guidelines on Quality Assurance for VET, three main VET quality approaches are applicable:

- quality assurance;
- improvement of quality;
- quality control.
- The objective conclusion required by the analysis of the quality assurance system for VET in Bulgaria is that our country lags behind the EU at a conceptual level of VET quality. The existing practice in our country and in the regulatory environment, in the actions of the institutions and in the behavior of VET providers and the social partnership is within a system that does not promote VET and does not promote the quality of VET. The business involvement in the overall system for quality education and training is poorly motivated, formalized and poorly developed. The labor market shows that there is a great need for an active and quality partnership with the business.

#### 5. State of involvement of business in learning outcomes' evaluation, VET-internships as well as the provision of work-based learning and mentorship in the CB area.

Vocational education and training in the country is regulated by the Law for the Vocational Education and Training, adopted in 1999, with a last amendment in 2015. Vocational education is provided by vocational schools. Vocational training, initial and continuous, is provided by vocational schools and vocational training centers for adults. Practically vocational training centers are the main provider of continuous vocational training. They are licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training. According to the Law for the Vocational Education and Training the main documents that regulate the training for acquisition of vocational qualification are - List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training and State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualifications in professions. Both documents are developed and updated by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and approved by the Minister of Education and Science after a consultation with branch ministries and nationally representative organizations of employers' and employees. Curricula are developed in compliance with State Educational Requirements. The procedure for elaboration



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of State Educational Requirements ensures participation of employers in the author team, as well as involvement of representatives of employers' and employees organizations in the Expert Committees that discuss their content. This way the needs of the respective branches are fulfilled. According to Bulgarian legislation, the places where practical training can take place can be of the following types - training facilities, training and workshop facilities of schools and enterprises of legal and physical entities. Training practice takes place in school environment (training rooms in vocational schools, workshops, laboratories, etc.), as well as in real work environment, provided by companies on the basis of a contract signed between the vocational school and the respective employer. Production practice is in fact the placement in a real work environment. In order to provide such placements the vocational school signs a contract with one or a number of employer organizations, according to which the employer should secure the necessary conditions for the production practice of the students. One of the national priorities in the field of education and science, reflected in the Bulgaria 2014-2020 Program for Vocational Education, concerns the improvement of the VET links with the business (data of the Analysis on the effectiveness of the existing state of the VET system). Part of the amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act are aimed at the participation of the business in the process of professional training and assessment of staff. It is envisaged to introduce a modular organization of the learning process as well as the possibility of carrying out the vocational training through the means of training through work (dual training in effect from 01.08.2016) with the aim of closer cooperation of the vocational schools and business and practical oriented learning. The role of the social partners in vocational education is expanding by enhancing the presence of employers and trade union organizations in terms of participation in the development and updating of vocational training curricula, participation in the provision of training and production practices, provision of conditions for implementation of the dual training in enterprises, participation in the training of teachers, trainees and mentors, participation in the quality assessment of VET. Employer organizations participate in the development, updating and coordination of the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training, participate in the development, coordination and updating of the state educational requirements for acquiring qualification in professions, participate in organizing and conducting the exams for acquiring professional qualification and offer representatives in the examination committees. The existing legislative framework does not encourage the participation of employers in the process of organizing practical training. The dialogue between the two parties has become more active in recent years, the vocational schools being the more active part. The school managements are actively seeking partnerships with the companies. The opinion of the business sector is that students acquire a very good theoretical practice in vocational schools, whereas their practical skills are inadequate. This requires additional training at the work place in order for the employees to perform the activities they have been hired for. This fact hinders the quick entrance and full participation of the young people in the labor market and makes it difficult for employers to find opportunely suitable workforce. In current conditions vocational schools find it impossible to provide modern equipment, machinery, raw materials and supplies, which companies use. The business is of the opinion that the number of the training hours for practical training should be greater. The Bulgarian business is still not



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convinced that it should participate actively in the process of education and is critical in most cases with respect to the quality of vocational training in the VET system. According to VET legislative basis and the practice in the last 15 years all policy and programmer documents, as well as elaboration and updating of legislation have been developed on a tripartite principle. All working groups and consultative bodies at national level are composed of representatives of the state (Ministry of education and Science, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Economy and branch ministries, NAVET and other government agencies), nationally representative employers' and employees' organizations. Representatives of employers and workers in the respective branch are invited as members of the examination committees for the provision of state exams in theory and practice. There is no official data whether employers and workers really participate in these committees but the truth is that many VET schools directors share that this happens very rarely. At regional level, employers participate in the councils that take decisions regarding enrolment plans for the VET schools in the respective region, as well as in development of regional plans for development of VET. More problematic is the involvement of employers in providing places for practical training of students studying in VET schools.

The Employment Agency prepares the measures for hiring unemployed people by employers for apprenticeship with the support of a mentor. The employers get money for salaries, and social security for the hired person and the mentor from the Agency. This is one of the measures which stimulate the employers to be included in the process for professional education and employment. Production practice is carried out according to a curricula and time schedule, approved by the school director and corresponds to the particular conditions for its organization. The curricula and the time schedule are agreed with the enterprise where the production training will be carried out.

The comments of employers about implementation of dual training, which in fact is partnership VET school - enterprise, published in e-edition *Investor.bg* of 2013 of 26.06.2015, states that the business is not ready to implement dual training. In the publication, data about a survey carried out by one of the nationally representative employers' organization (Bulgarian Industrial Association) is provided. The survey involved 207 employers and directors of 120 VET schools in 11 regions. Only 19% of employers and 32% of VET schools know about dual training but for them the issue of financing is not clear. 2/3 of pedagogues are skeptical about dual training, while sharing that the employers are not interested which poses a serious obstacle. Some specialists think that the VET students' motivation is low. 23% of employers think that the business is interested in implementation of dual training. The survey results outline deficits of workers in 200 professions and occupations. These are low qualified and qualified workers, technicians, assemblers, machine operators etc. The highest deficits were identified in construction, chemical industry, machine building, information technologies, energetics, transport, food and beverage production, furniture production, trade and tourism. The Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) concludes that introduction of dual training requires serious preparation in enterprises and ensuring conditions for training through work. The most important factor according to the opinion of 82% of employers is ensuring qualified mentors.



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Employers and pedagogues think that implementation of dual training should be implemented with professions for which there are conditions in the respective region.

The Ministry of Education established a partnership model "Vocational High School - Enterprise" on the basis of the Vocational Education and Training Act, based on a contract between a vocational high school and an enterprise and on the basis of a signed Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and Science and an interested branch organization of employers (or a sectoral advisory council on employment and skills) and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipality. The objective of the model is to increase the quality of the pupils' competences and to guide them towards career development in the acquired profession in the partner enterprise. Initially, the model is scheduled to be applied across multiple partner networks. The key players are Vocational High School, Enterprise, Municipality, Industry Branch of Employers (or Sectoral Advisory Council on Employment and Skills), Ministry of Education and Science. What is the model?

In the year of admission of a new class of students to the vocational high school (after completion of grades 7 and 8), the enterprise makes a forecast estimate of its needs by qualified professionals by the year of graduation (after 4 or 5 years of training). The Vocational High School declares a request for the planning of the state reception plan agreed with the enterprise. The State-Admission Plan for the Vocational School is negotiated with the municipality, taking into account the number of the 7th and 8th grade pupils and their distribution by sex, as well as the possibilities for regulating the intake according to the priorities of the municipal economy. The State Plan-Admission is planned for a class / profession (26 students). With exception, training in two professions or majors in one class may be planned when the enterprise needs it and the cost of the maintenance of the class is financially provided by it. Vocational training of students is carried out according to a curriculum, whose section B (Vocational training) has been developed jointly by the partners - school and enterprise - and is in line with the needs of the enterprise. Curricula are also developed jointly by the partners with guaranteed realization of the learning outcomes provided in the State Educational Requirement for Qualification in the respective profession. The 11th and 12th grade teaching and production practices take place in the enterprise at specific workplaces, with students being appointed mentors who can be both engineers and prominent workers who have attended a training course on teaching methodology. Pilot launch of the model was scheduled for the 2013/2014 school year. Detailed information about the Vocational High School - Enterprise is taken from the Ministry of Education and Science website, but how the model has not been developed.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, the number of students admitted to the specialty "Hospitality, Restaurant and Catering" for the 2013/2014 academic year is the following: admission plan - 5409 students, realization of the admission - 4011 students. 14.62% unrealized places than expected. The data show that even in a professional field with a relatively high reception rate such as "Hospitality, Restaurant and Catering" the unrealized





reception plan is relatively high. The distribution according to professional directions shows that firstly there is a professional field in the sphere of services - "Hotel, Restaurant and Catering" by number of classes and number of students. The assessment of the availability of staff in the professions and majors sought is directly dependent on the sector of the economy to which the relevant sectoral network is linked. From the point of view of the branch organizations there are clearly expressed problems in several directions - loss of qualified staff, quality of education and level of competences, developed professional skills, the available vocational schools do not correspond to the professions that are sought in the region or the number of graduates in majors is not enough. There is one vocational high school in Dobrich that prepares potential staff in tourism. Regarding the relationship between the employers in the industry and the trainees, the question of the production practice is solved by providing opportunities for practicing in various restaurants in Dobrich and hotels and restaurants in Albena Resort.

According to Employment office data, the biggest hunger for staff is in the hotel and restaurant business and the construction business. In the Northeastern region, including the Dobrich region, there is a tendency for staff shortages in the sphere of tourism, in particular, chefs, bartenders-waiters, hoteliers, maids, animators. This is determined by the direct connection of the tourist business with the seaside resorts and the seasonal employment. Trained staff in tourism are highly sought after, and given the lack of employability throughout the year, most of them are redirected to places where the season is longer or higher pay is offered.

As a result of the survey, there are several main problems regarding the relation between vocational education and training and the business:

- Mismatch between the skills of the VET graduates and the labor market needs - lack of foreknowledge; the skills of graduates do not meet the requirements of employers;
- Lack of information on the possibilities of training through work - better career guidance;
- Lack of shared responsibility between training organizations and partners (branch organizations and businesses) to ensure quality education and for the staff to meet the requirements of business;
- Lack of prepared mentors and instructors in enterprises who will educate through work;
- Poor activity by the business in the process of professional training of the staff.
- Illustrative measures to overcome the weaknesses:
  - Refine the foreknowledge of labor market needs in terms of qualifications, knowledge, skills and competences of the graduating VET;
  - Synchronize reception in vocational schools with the needs of the labor market;
  - More active involvement of employers in the preparation of apprenticeship training programs;
  - Strengthening the activity of the relationship between vocational training and employers;
  - Extension of the training period in enterprises;



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- Raising awareness of students and parents about training through work in enterprises;
- Creating and maintaining a register for companies providing training through work;
- Periodic updating of the curricula with the active participation of the business;
- Organization of fairs and exchanges for vocational education and training at various levels - locally, regionally;
- Organization of regular business visits to support professional orientation to facilitate the selection and participation of enterprises in providing career guidance;
- Ensure adequate training of mentors - training organizations, curricula, funding;
- Creating and strengthening local and regional partnerships between training organizations, employers' organizations and management bodies;
- Adequate state-funded policy;
- Maintain up-to-date and accessible information on the cross-border labor market, stimulate mobile employment, responding to market needs;
- Overcoming barriers to cross-border mobility - language preparation, legal basis, alignment of educational requirements, etc.
- Motivating the business to ensure the employment of the graduates;
- Upgrading the system for horizontal and vertical career development of young teachers in vocational training - creating opportunities for higher start-up pay with possible business involvement, providing opportunities for complementary qualification, incl. with the active participation of business organizations;
- Synchronizing vocational education and training with the requirements of the national, regional and local economy - changes are needed to increase the participation and responsibilities of the sectoral ministries in the implementation of state policy in the field of vocational education and training;
- Enhance the inclusion of adults in vocational training and its continuous updating as well as to acquire key competences to complement the professional knowledge and skills in line with the adopted National Lifelong Learning Strategy for the 2014-2020 period.

Over the last decades, the conviction that vocational education and training (VET) is a key factor for sustainable socio-economic development in Europe is growing. The preparation of human resources with qualifications that correspond to the needs of the national economy requires new approaches in the field of vocational education and training. In the last three years (according to the Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association), tourism accounts for the need for staff but not for senior positions for which higher education is needed. Therefore, attention should be paid to the vocational high schools for tourism, which prepare executive staff for tourism. Occupational education in the branch is carried out in 130 schools, including 85 vocational schools, 25 secondary schools, 16 boarding schools, social-pedagogical boarding schools and 2 schools for children with hearing impairment (Ministry of Education and Science (MES)). The trend is to increase the number of admissions by professions in occupational fields - 811 in Hotel, Restaurant and Catering and 812 in Travel, Tourism and Leisure Time in the last 3 years, despite the demographic problem with relative retention of the correlations between vocational training for first, second and third degree of professional qualification from 20,987



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to 22,052 in the past year. Practical training in the tourism sector should be increased by introducing compulsory specialization between 2 and 6 months during active seasons. According to industry sector representatives, sector programs need to be changed because they continue to be more theoretical. The field needs high-quality staff to be trained while still at school in a real environment. Businesses should be more actively involved in the planning of admissions for vocational training in tourism, depending on regional development plans, as well as helping to improve the qualification of teachers in vocational education and training, modernizing and updating the material and technical base, and for schools to participate in projects together with the tourism business. These are the main points of the requirements of representatives of the tourism industry. These requirements also fully correspond to the problems and measures formulated by the vocational schools, the administration and employers' organizations as a whole for all branches. In the cross - border region of Dobrich - Constanta the problems are similar, while taking into account the obstacles that are specific to the region.

#### 6. Immediate improvement measures.

The 2020 perspective set out in the Bruges Communiqué from a meeting of EU Ministers responsible for Vocational Education and Training (VET), the European social partners and the European Commission emphasizes the strengthening of European cooperation in VET. There are 76 million people in Europe with low qualifications or no qualifications. Against the backdrop of growing competition on a global scale for the low-skilled or non-educated, it is increasingly difficult to find a job. High-skilled workers are getting higher salaries, while the pay of unskilled workers is declining. In addition to dealing with competition in the global economy, Europe is also faced with the challenges of an aging population. In order to improve this situation, older workers need to update their skills and learn new ones through further training. Vocational training should provide an incentive for adults to update their skills throughout their professional lives. Approximately 50% of young people in Europe complete their education and enter the labor market thanks to their vocational education and training, accessing a wide range of jobs both in industry and in the service sector. In order to keep Europe competitive, it is essential to implement reforms in the field of vocational education and training. For future jobs, highly skilled people will be needed. Under the current economic climate, Europe needs to provide all young people with skills to help them enter the labor market. Qualitative and adequate training is the best opportunity for employers to hire qualified employees to help businesses prosper. In 2020, vocational training should be easily accessible and practical. All vocational training courses should include a practical part held in a company or enterprise. In cooperation with employers, training organizations should provide support to learners who show less interest in academic learning. This should reduce the number of people leaving school prematurely. The international aspect should become a common element of vocational training. The acquisition of qualifications should include foreign languages and international cooperation between institutions should encourage the use of new approaches to teaching and learning. Students in an international environment should be better equipped to start working in such an environment. For this perspective to become a reality, the involvement and input of all stakeholders is needed. Support for training organizations, their staff, school leaders and

teachers as well as for business trainers is essential for the introduction of change. National, regional and local authorities also have a role to play in reforming vocational training systems. Benefits are allocated to several beneficiaries:

- Students will benefit from better training. They will receive guidance on choosing training and the most appropriate profession depending on their skills. They will complete some stages of their studies abroad or will study with foreigners. Once qualified, they will have better chances of finding a job or having a successful career because their training is adequate and practical. Once in the labor market, they will also be able to take advantage of flexible opportunities to support their ongoing training.
- Teachers in the field of vocational training will have more opportunities to work with colleagues abroad. Their work environment as well as their teaching and learning methods will be different, they will use modern teaching materials reflecting the latest innovations in industry and business.
- Learning institutions will more easily implement international cooperation through European-wide approaches, including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), which facilitate learners in the transfer of learning between different organizations. Thanks to closer contact with businesses, training institutions will benefit from access to modern equipment and will be able to hire teachers and trainers who are well versed in real life. Lastly, by providing more flexible learning pathways, institutions will enjoy greater interest from learners.
- Undertakings will be better able to hire qualified workers as training will be better adapted to their needs. This change will encourage them to provide more opportunities for their employees and increase their engagement with the development of the workforce qualification. Workers entering the labor market will be better prepared because the content of the trainings will be designed and shaped with the involvement of enterprises. They will also be involved with the practical aspects of learning by offering internships for learners.

The Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020 is fully in line with the European-level prospects for this timeframe. Trends and objectives directly concern the development of VET and in Romania as a member of the European Union and its responsibilities and memberships. In this sense, the further development of VET in the cross-border region Romania - Bulgaria will be guided by the same strategic objectives and measures to achieve them. At the same time, the problems in both countries are identical to those formulated for Europe as a whole in terms of demographic, economic, social, environmental issues affecting in one way or another vocational education and training and successful implementation on the labor market.

According to a study by the Bulgarian Industrial Association, the following issues are outlined in terms of VET:



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- about 41% of students over 15 are functionally illiterate. Low interest and outflow of young people from vocational education and training. For 10 years, students in vocational high schools have decreased by 25%. Classes and high schools with a well-developed material base and proven capacity for training in industry-relevant professions and majors are being closed down;
- with the delegated budgets, the student turns into "money". Unregulated competition between different types of schools, of which the main loser is the vocational high schools. An unjustifiably increasing number of classes in language schools, general education and other "elite" schools;
- a lack of a system for forecasting the needs for qualifications linked to the state reception plan;
- delay of the regulation on "state-protected professions";
- lack of a clear normative regulation and incentives for the introduction of dual learning;
- a non-optimized network of vocational high schools in a regional aspect;
- The EC determines the quality of vocational education in our country as insufficient;
- overstated and unbalanced curriculums, diverse subjects, a large amount of material piled in a small number of hours, a low share of the hours of technical and special subjects and practical training;
- obsolete or missing textbooks on special subjects;
- limited application of modular organization. Absence of credit systems to be applicable to the transition from vocational education to higher education;
- the aging of teachers, the need to update teachers' knowledge of special subjects in line with technological developments;
- depreciated material base;
- insufficient funding, inequalities between private and public schools.

Together with the obvious problems that VET needs to address, there are also strengths:

- The existing legislative framework in VET is relatively good and is in line with the European one;
- Dual training projects are being implemented, despite the small number and the support of external financing;
- Relatively good facilities for training are created;
- Availability of qualified teachers;
- Presence of modern channels for timely information and opportunities for fast communication;
- Reduction of the language barrier - the young generation generously uses at least one foreign language;
- Easy access of branch organizations and enterprises to information provided by VET;
- The presence of good traditions in VET.

Threats:

- Economic crisis - European trend;





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- Aging population - European trend;
- Language barrier for the aging population and a proportion of young people with low levels of literacy;
- Early dropping out of education and low educational level;
- Dynamically evolving technologies and outdated curricula;
- Unwillingness for active partnerships on the part of employers, lack of awareness regarding the benefits of the partnership;
- Legislative framework.

On the basis of the review, the following tri-partite measures can be outlined to stimulate the active inclusion of businesses in vocational education and training:

#### ***National and local public authorities***

- Adequate state policy with secured funding - active measures for the realization of the dual training;
- Refine the forecasting of labor market needs in terms of qualifications, knowledge, skills and competences of graduating VET;
- Creating and strengthening local and regional partnerships between training organizations, employers' organizations and management bodies;
- Maintain up-to-date and accessible information on the cross-border labor market, stimulate mobile employment, responding to market needs;
- Enhance the inclusion of adults in vocational training and its continuous updating as well as to acquire key competences to complement the professional knowledge and skills in line with the adopted National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020.

#### ***Organizations providing vocational education and training***

- Synchronize the reception in vocational schools with the needs of the labor market;
- Strengthening the activity of the relationship: vocational training - employers;
- Raising awareness of students and parents about training through work in enterprises;
- Periodic updating of the curricula with the active participation of the business;
- Organization of fairs and exchanges for vocational education and training at different levels - locally, regionally;
- Organization of regular business visits to support professional orientation to facilitate the selection and participation of enterprises in providing career guidance;
- Ensure adequate training of mentors - training organizations, curricula, funding;
- Overcoming barriers to cross-border mobility - language training, legal basis, alignment of educational requirements, etc .;
- Upgrading the system for horizontal and vertical career development of young teachers in vocational training - creating opportunities for higher start-up pay with possible business involvement, providing opportunities for complementary qualification, incl. with the active participation of business organizations;
- Synchronizing vocational education and training with the requirements of the national, regional and local economy - changes are needed to increase the participation and



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responsibilities of the sectoral ministries in the implementation of state policy in the field of vocational education and training;

### ***The Business***

- A more active involvement of employers in the preparation of apprenticeship training programs;
- Extension of the training period in enterprises;
- Creating and maintaining a register for companies providing training through work;
- Motivating the business to provide employment for the graduates of vocational education - projects and modular training;
- Upgrading the system for horizontal and vertical career development of young teachers in vocational training - creating opportunities for higher start-up pay with possible business involvement, providing opportunities for complementary qualification, incl. with the active participation of business organizations;
- Synchronizing vocational education and training with the requirements and needs of the national, regional and local economy - changes are needed to expand the involvement and responsibilities of the sectoral ministries in the implementation of state policy in the field of vocational education and training.

The Dobrich-Constanta cross-border region has a number of advantages that contribute to the joint development of vocational education and training in the direction of business development and economic growth. One of the important advantages is good connectivity in the region. The major road arteries connecting the districts were also built and renovated. There are two roads that can be reached through Kardam and Durankulak. Both road sections are well-maintained, the movement is fast and timely. The two districts are also connected with the Black Sea - Constanta port, Balchik yacht port, Varna port, which is in close proximity to Dobrich. Economic comparisons show that employment in the region is concentrated in similar areas - services, agriculture and manufacturing. This also results in the need for trained staff to be hired by local businesses. From the service sector, the tourism industry and trade are the most developed. That is why the focus of the organizations providing vocational education and training is oriented towards specialties that meet the needs of the market. There are many perspectives for co-operation with training organizations and business in the region - joint trainings, teacher exchange, exchange of curricula, program combinations, exchange practices, joint skills demonstrations, etc. Overall, the prospects for the development of VET in the region are fully oriented towards the common European priorities for professional qualification and realization.

The content of this material does not necessarily represent the official position of the European Union.