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**Strategy**  
**for enhancement of the VET institutions’**  
**BG-RO cross-border activity**  
**and providing of tourism related**  
**educational services in the region of**  
**Dobrudza**



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## General Information

The purpose of the framework strategy is to consider opportunities for cross-border activity of VET Centers and educational services providers operating in the RO-BG cross-border region and outlining of measures for enhancing the provision of educational and training services in the region of Dobruzha, that meet the needs of the stakeholders on both sides of the Romania-Bulgaria border.

The strategy is a result of the research work of the experts of the Center for Labor Mobility, established in the frame of project "Integrated Solutions for Employment in Culinary Arts and the Restaurant Sector for a Qualified and Inclusive Bulgarian-Romanian Cross-Border Region".

It's focused on the VET provision and training offers delivered in the region of Dobrudja – both in Bulgaria and Romania since these are the areas where the tourism sector is well-developed and tourism related high quality education and training is crucial for the economy growth of the region.

Dobrudja region is located in southeastern Romania and northeastern Bulgaria, between the lower reaches of the Danube and the Black Sea. The main cities are Constanta and Tulcea in Romania, Dobrich and Silistra in Bulgaria.





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\*Map of Romania and Bulgaria with Southern Dobruja is highlighted in yellow. Northern Dobruja is highlighted in orange.

The Euroregions comprising the Administrative-territorial unit of the cross - border region are the following:

Euroregion/year/area	Country	Content	Cities
Danube – Dobruja 2002 24 177 km <sup>2</sup>	Romania	3 counties (Calaras, Constanța, Ialomița)	Constanța, Călărași (Calarasi), Slobozia, Mangalia
	Bulgaria	2 areas (Dobrich, part of Varna region)	Dobrich, Silistra, part of region of Varna

The region is served by 3 international airports in Romania: Constanta (important during the summer season when taking flights from Paris, Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Bergamo, Pisa), Craiova (flights from London, Cologne / Bonn, Bergamo) and Bucharest-Otopeni is closest to the border. In Bulgaria, the closest airports are in Sofia and Varna, but most of the population living close to the Bulgarian northeast border area regularly uses the airport in Bucharest.



## Main characteristics of the sectoral structure of the economy

The economic structure of the region is divided into three branches:

- primary (agricultural);
- secondary (industrial);
- tertiary (services);

Agriculture and tourism make up the major parts of the region's economy. Dobrudja is one of the largest producers of agricultural products in Bulgaria, Romania and the Balkan Peninsula. The economy is directly related to agriculture and livestock breeding, mainly concentrated in agricultural cooperatives, tenants and charterer, private farmers. Favorable climatic and soil conditions determine the economy of the area, which is a traditional producer of wheat, sunflower, corn and other crops. A direction of perspective is the greenhouse production of vegetables, which, along with some technical crops, has the potential for future development by increasing the occupied fields and diversifying the cultivated production.

**The tourism sector**, like in all other EU countries, is a leading employer, especially for young people and women (with about 23% of the total number of employed in Romania starting their careers in tourism), but is characterized by with unevenness and seasonality, dependent on the fragile market divided between the Black Sea, known for its resorts for mass summer tourism - Constanta and Dobrich.

The structure of the industry in the region is determined by the sub-sectors of food industry (production of edible oils and sausages), light industry (women's clothing, shoes and leather goods) and mechanical engineering (production of automobile filters).

## Characteristics of the workforce in the region

For the last decade the average age of the EU population has increased by 2.7 years, reaching 42.8 years on 1 January 2017, which is a natural result of life expectancy and the observed low fertility rates.

The average age of the population has risen in every single from the EU Member States, with particularly rapid changes in the age structure of Greece, Portugal and Romania. On 1 January 2018, the lowest average age among Member States was registered in Ireland (37.3 years), while the highest average age was recorded in Italy (46.3 years). For Bulgaria the value of this indicator is 43.9 years and for Romania the value of this indicator is 44.1 years. The figures are higher than the EU average (43.1 years).

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According to data from the National Statistical Institute - Bulgaria, persons of working age between 15 and 64 years are:

POPULATION AS OF 31.12.2018 BY STATISTIC REGIONS, AGE, RESIDENCE AND GENDER									
									(number)
Statistical region	Total			Urban			Rural		



Age	total	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women
<b>Northeastern</b>	<b>929035</b>	<b>452747</b>	<b>476288</b>	<b>682177</b>	<b>329318</b>	<b>352859</b>	<b>246858</b>	<b>123429</b>	<b>123429</b>
15 - 19	43767	22440	21327	30773	15849	14924	12994	6591	6403
20 - 24	40962	21325	19637	29318	15306	14012	11644	6019	5625
25 - 29	55919	28863	27056	41790	21190	20600	14129	7673	6456
30 - 34	63706	32458	31248	49582	24763	24819	14124	7695	6429
35 - 39	66149	34063	32086	51447	26159	25288	14702	7904	6798
40 - 44	75168	38537	36631	58637	29699	28938	16531	8838	7693
45 - 49	71279	36781	34498	54263	27536	26727	17016	9245	7771
50 - 54	62384	31615	30769	46269	23014	23255	16115	8601	7514
55 - 59	62687	30833	31854	45918	22108	23810	16769	8725	8044
60 - 64	62155	29215	32940	44730	20551	24179	17425	8664	8761

\* The data are as of December 31, 2018. Official data for 2019 have not yet been published.

In 2018, the economically active persons in the region aged 15 and over are 306 130, and their relative share of the population aged 15 and over is 47%, below the national average of 53.3%. The economic activity rate is 46.9% (54.6% for men and 39.6% for women). In 2019, economically active people aged 15-64 were 192 249, or 62.8% of the same age population. The total number of employees over 15 years in the region is just over 85 thousand.

The distribution of employees by economic sectors in 2019 is respectively:

- primary (agricultural) - 2.4 %;
- secondary (industrial) – 34.1 %;
- tertiary (services) – 63.5 %.

There are significant differences in the educational structure of the population in the ethnic area. While 72.7% of the self-identified as Bulgarians have secondary or higher education (22.7% with university degree and 50.0% with secondary education), only 30.2% have secondary or higher education in the population of the Turkish ethnic group (4.1% with university degree and 26.1% with secondary). Even more negative are the data on the educational structure of the Roma ethnic group, where only 0.6% have completed higher education and one in every 10 people has never attended school (9.7%).

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The employment rate of working age population (15-64 years) was 64.8%, having higher values for men (73.2%, as against 56.2% for women) and close values for the two residence areas (65.8% in urban area and 63.5% in rural area). 24.7% of young people (aged 15-24 years) and 46.3% of elderly people (aged 55-64 years) were employed. The highest level of employment rate for working age persons was registered among graduates of superior level of education (88.4%). As the level of education decreases, the employment rate also decreases. Thus, 68.6% of persons with medium level of education and only 42.6% of those with low level of education were employed. The employment rate for the population aged 20-64 years was 69.9%, at a distance of 0.1 percentage points compared to the national target of 70% set in the Context of



Europe 2020. Employment rate had higher values for men (78.9% as against 60.6% for women) and for persons in urban area (70.3% as against 69.3% for persons in rural area).

The unemployment rate was 4.2%. By gender, the gap between the two rates was 1.2 percentage points (4.7% for men as against 3.5% for women), while by residential area it was 0.9 percentage points (4.7% for rural area as compared to 3.8% for urban area). The unemployment rate had the highest level (16.2%) among young people (aged 15-24 years). The unemployment affects to a greater extent the graduates of medium and low level of education, for which the unemployment rate was 4.3%, respectively 5.8% higher as compared with the rate registered for unemployed with superior level of education (2.1%).

The long-term unemployment rate (unemployed for one year and over) was of 1.8%. The share of persons being under unemployment for one year and over in total unemployment was 44.1%. The long-term unemployment rate registered differential values by gender (47.1% for men as compared to 38.6% for women), but very close by area (45.0% for persons living in urban and 43.2% for rural area). The long-term unemployment rate for young people (aged 15-24 years) - under unemployment for six months and over - was 9.3% and the incidence of long-term unemployment among youth was 57.2%.

**Structure of population aged 25-64 years by level of education, gender and urban/rural area, in 2018**

	Total	Men	Women	Urban	Rural
<b>Total persons aged 25-64 years</b> (thousand persons)	<b>10825</b>	<b>5467</b>	<b>5358</b>	<b>6218</b>	<b>4607</b>
<b>Level of the graduated school</b>	<i>- in % as against total -</i>				
<b>Superior</b> (short-term and long-term university including master, Ph.D., post-Ph.D. and post-university studies)	17.8	16.5	19.1	26.9	5.6
<b>Medium</b> (post high-school of speciality, high-school and vocational, complementary or of apprentices)	60.7	63.6	57.7	62.4	58.3
<b>Low</b> (gymnasium, primary and without education)	21.5	19.9	23.2	10.7	36.1

The population aged 15 years or over by level of education points out that in 2018, a little over half (52.2%) had medium level of education. Persons with low level of education represented 34.4% of the population aged 15 years and over and those with superior level of education held a weight of 13.4%. Women represented the majority of superior education graduates (52.6%) and also those living in urban area (85.7%). The majority of graduates of medium level of education lived in urban area (59.9%) but, regarding gender distribution the largest share was held by men (52.6%). The population aged 30-34 years with higher education represented 24.6% of the population in the same age group. By gender, the values of this indicator were relatively close (28.1% for women and 21.4% for men), but by residence area the difference was significant (35.9% in urban area compared to 7.6% in rural area). Distribution of population aged 25-64 years by the highest level of education graduated points out that in 2018 most of the persons in this age group (60.7%) had medium level of education. Persons with superior level of education held a weight of 17.8%; by gender, the weights were close (16.5% for men and 19.1% for women). By residence area, significant differences were registered: 26.9% for



persons with residence in urban area, as against only 5.6% for persons living in rural area. Young people aged 20-24 years having graduated at least medium education level represented 81.7% of total young people belonging to this age group. By gender, this ratio had close values:

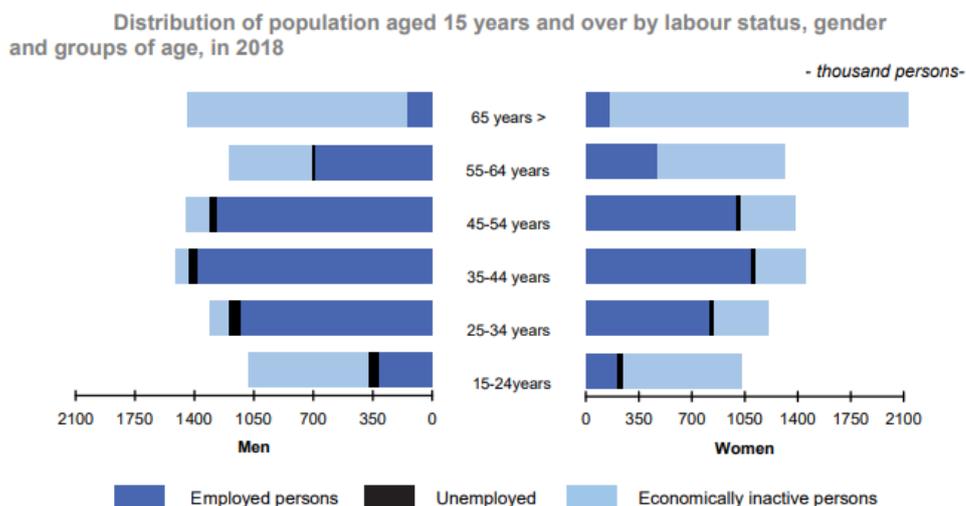
The rate of young people neither in employment nor in education or training, by groups of age, gender and urban/rural area, in 2018

	Total	Men	Women	Urban	Rural	%
<b>TOTAL PERSONS AGED 15-34 YEARS</b>	18.0	11.7	24.6	14.6	21.9	
<b>15-24 years</b>	14.5	11.4	17.8	11.1	17.5	
15-19 years	9.2	8.0	10.4	6.4	11.5	
20-24 years	19.9	14.7	25.3	15.6	23.9	
25-29 years	21.5	13.1	30.6	17.8	26.7	
30-34 years	20.3	11.1	30.3	15.9	26.9	

81.6% in the case of men and 81.7% in the case of women. By residence area, the difference was of 18.0 percentage points in favor of urban area (91.0% compared to 73.0% in rural area).

Out of the population aged 15 years and over, in the month before the interview, 8.6% attended a type of education or training within the national education system (formal education) or outside of it (non-formal education). By gender the proportion was differential: 8.9% for men and 8.3% for women. By residence areas the values were 8.9% for persons with residence in urban area, as against 8.2% for persons with residence in rural area. The participation degree in at least one type of education or training was 1.1% for employed persons, 2.8% for unemployed and 17.7% for economically inactive persons aged 15 years and over. In 2018, the long-life learning (the percentage of the population aged 25-64 years participating in education or training) was of 0.9%. Early school leavers (the ratio of population aged 18-24 years with low level of education, who did not attend any type of formal or non-formal education or training in the last four weeks before the interview, in total population aged 18-24 years) was of 16.4% in 2018. This rate had, in 2018, close values by gender (16.7% for men and 16.1% for women), but registered a significant difference by residential area (24.4% in rural area to 7.7% in urban area). The rate of young people (15-24 years) neither in employment nor in education or training

was





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14.5% in 2018, higher for women (17.8% as against 11.4% for men) and for persons residing in rural area (17.5% as against 11.1% for young people living in urban area).

In 2018, out of the total population: 53.8% lived in urban areas, 46.4% were economically active persons and 44.5% were employed persons. The ratio of economic dependency expressed by the number of the persons not in employment (inactive or unemployed) per 1000 employed persons was in 2018 of 1248‰ decreasing from the previous year (1267‰). The value of this indicator was higher for women (1665‰, as against 932‰ for men), and for persons living in rural area (1303‰ as compared to 1203‰ for urban area). Working age population (12930 thousand persons) represented 66.2% of the total population. Out of them, 64.8% were in employment, 2.9% were unemployed and 32.3% were economically inactive persons. Out of the total population of the country, 84.4% were persons aged 15 years and over and 54.2% of them were living in urban area. Gender structure of the population aged 15 years and over is characterized by a slight predominance of women (1066 women per 1000 men). Figure 2 represents the age structure of the population of 15 years and over for the main categories of the population: employed persons, unemployed and economically inactive persons.

### Analysis of the sectors in which labor mobility is realized

Labor mobility in the cross-border region is a national priority for both Romania and Bulgaria, requiring special political attention and effective policy coordination in this area. The daily cross-border cooperation in the border region between Bulgaria and Romania in the field of labor is characterized by a number of difficulties. They create barriers to the cooperation and impede the cross-border mobility of the workforce. The national media of Bulgaria and Romania can support the development needs of the cross-border labor market. In most cases, the existing information is limited in terms of content, scope, accessibility to different languages, etc.

The following economic sectors, which are represented in the region and have potential for labor mobility:



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- Agriculture, forestry and fisheries;
- Manufacturing;
- Transport, storage and post services;
- Hotel and restaurant management;
- Construction;

These industries are of key importance for the economic development of Bulgaria and Romania. Most of them have great potential for development, the use of which is set as a priority in the strategic programs of the area. Much of the investment and jobs created are in these industries. Seasonality and cyclicity in the nature of the activities of the mentioned industries require flexibility in the demand and supply of labor, and there is a danger of lack of the necessary staff in the period of high demand. In periods of low demand, there is a danger that many people will drop out of the labor market. Opportunities for job mobility, finding and offering another job market will have their quantitative impact on the structure of the employed.

In **tourism**, employment is seasonal. The sector is included in the List of economic sectors, including activities, the implementation of which depends on the change of seasons, approved by order No. RD - 01-47 / 17.01.2017 of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy. This facilitates the procedures for hiring a mobile workforce from the cross-border region of Bulgaria - Romania. The sector is characterized by a high number of employed, but also a high labor shortage, mainly cooks, waiters, bartenders, managers, receptionists, hotel administrators, SPA specialists, maids. Enterprises in the sector have stated their willingness to hire mobile cross-border staff, especially skilled and working people. The workplaces are suitable for seasonal labor mobility of fixed-term employment contracts with or without change of residence. Enterprises in the sector have resources and introductory programs for newcomers, policies and systems for training and advanced training, as well as programs for social and domestic services.

## Analysis of educational service providers

Education services are usually defined in four categories: basic education services; secondary education services; higher education services; and adult education.

Education as a service is aimed at meeting the needs of users to acquire knowledge by learning specific and specialized programs. The needs of the user or student are the main focus. All marketing activities should therefore be targeted at them. But educational services are intangible, non-proprietary, and they must be a tool to fill a gap in the industry of a country. Services are those clearly distinguishable, essential intangible activities that provide the satisfaction sought and are not necessarily tied to the sale of another product. Education is a service that focuses primarily on the consumer market.

The education services sector is regarded as a heterogeneous sector composed of institutions and organizations involved in the provision of educational services, mainly on a fee or contract basis. These services include the private economic activities of public institutions and



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community-based organizations, which often operate on a cost recovery basis. This market or industry has four components:

- Companies that specialize in education and training programs, as well as their products and services, such as training courses, curricula, trainers, and training needs.
- Businesses in other industrial sectors (eg accounting, engineering, management consulting and telecommunications) provide educational services either as an addition to their core product or as a standalone service.
- Private schools and educational institutes;
- Public educational institutions such as colleges and universities.
- Vocational training centers;

## The specifics of VET and determining the most relevant for the labor market professional areas

The Vocational Educational Training centers (VET center) provide vocational training to persons over 16 years of age. The training is aimed at acquiring, updating and refining a professional qualification or retraining for profession or part of a profession with I, II and III level of professional qualifications.

A survey conducted by BIA shows that about 200 majors are deficient in the labor market. These include operators of machinery and equipment, technicians, technologists, mechanics, welders, lathes, drivers, cranes, cooks and more. A key problem for the labor market, highlighted in the Employment Agency's annual survey for the region, is the mismatch between labor supply and demand with certain characteristics. In recent years, one of the major difficulties facing employers has been the lack of suitable workers for the jobs they have announced. The most deficient are the following positions: all from tourism and service staff - cook; waiter; animator; hotelier; sales consultants; driver; builders; administrators and even highly qualified staff as a doctor; nurse; x-ray laboratory assistant. The shortage of executive staff is deepening. A large number of employers are ready to invest in their staff to receive the necessary education and qualifications. Vocational Education Centers offer quality services that can meet the needs of both the market and consumers.

The quality of vocational education and training is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, dependent on:

- environmental quality - economic, social, psychological, informational, technological, VET traditions;
- quality of the resource - material, financial, human, methodological, didactic, technical;
- quality of management and organization of the process;
- institutional-administrative structure and bodies, methods of management;



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## Strategic measures for the development of VET at the institution level

Strategic measures for the development of VET at the institution level are directly related to the need to provide highly qualified personnel for business, as well as to overcome the early drop-out of education of children from socially disadvantaged families. VET enables adults to qualify for a specialty in vocational high schools and vocational training centers in order to enter the labor market.

It is of particular importance to provide quality and effective vocational education and training through work (dual training). It is implemented through a partnership between vocational schools, colleges or vocational training centers and one or more employers. Thus, along with the improvement of practical training, the adaptability and employment opportunities of trainees will be improved. Prerequisites will also be created to improve the training material base, which will be adapted to the modern requirements for training in the respective profession.

Another important aspect is the improvement of the system for validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal learning and self-study. To support the process of introducing a single credit system in vocational education to facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individual learning outcomes.

Through monitoring and forecasting skills needs at national and municipal level, to periodically update and supplement the List of Professions with new professions and specialties.

Communication with other institutions, including NAVET, MES, Employment Agency and other interested parties, will lead to updating of working methods, training and introduction of new professions as needed.

Framework strategy is consistent with the objectives of the strategy "Europe 2020" National Strategy for lifelong learning for the period 2014 - 2020, Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015-2020, Cross-Border Program INTERREG VA Romania - Bulgaria 2014-2020, Updated NAVET 2019-2021 Strategy.

### Sources used:

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National Statistical Institute <http://www.nsi.bg/>

National Statistical Institute of Romania <https://insse.ro/>

National Agency for vocational education and training  
<https://www.navet.government.bg/>

Open Data Portal of the Republic of Bulgaria <https://data.egov.bg/>

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