

Ministry of Education, Research and Youth

**EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT
National Report on ROMANIA**

2008

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1. THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FACING THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY: OVERVIEW

1.1. The main reforms and innovations brought to the educational system

1.1.a. Organization, structure and administration of the educational system

Public school in Romania, although paid for by the national government, largely operates independent of state control. Starting with the academic year 2003-2004, compulsory education increased from eight to ten years. The educational system consists of five “units”: preschool, elementary, secondary, post high school and “higher”. The scope and functions of these units are summarized as follows:

The **preschool education** (ISCED 0), meant for children 3–6 / 7 years, is organized in kindergartens that offer parents three types of programs - a short schedule, a long schedule and a weekly schedule. The last year of this education level (School Preparation Class) is generalized, the activity taking place so that the child is easily adjusted and integrated into the first grade.

The **elementary school** (ISCED 1) has a 4-year duration (grades I to IV) and is part of the compulsory education. Starting with the academic year 2003 / 2004, the admission age into an elementary school went down from 7 to 6 years, based only on the parents’ consent.

The **secondary education** includes the junior secondary education (ISCED 2) and senior secondary education (ISCED 3). The junior secondary education is divided into two successive levels: gymnasium (grades V to VIII) and junior high school (grades IX to X) / SCT (grades IX and X). The gymnasium provides a general training, with a curriculum that is common for all the students. The junior high school and the Schools of Crafts and Trades are regarded as a first level of education for the preparation of the students, being done differently:

- in high schools – modules (theoretical, vocational and technological) and programs, providing general training and / or specialized training;
- in SCT – professional skills, providing professional training ending with a 1st Level Training Skills Certificate.

Starting with the academic year 2007 / 2008, the passing from the gymnasium to the junior high school is done based on the results obtained for the unparalleled subject tests, taken in grades VII to VIII, as well as on the results obtained throughout the gymnasium years for all the subjects.

The senior secondary education includes the senior high school (grades XI to XII / XIII) and the supplementary year for the SCT graduates. The supplementary year ends with a 2nd Level Training Skills Certificate and provides students with the opportunity to continue their education in high school on the technological module (the progressive professionalization version) or, as the case may be, the professional inclusion. The senior high school ends with the baccalaureate diploma and, for the graduates of the technical high schools, with a 3rd Level Training Skills Certificate. This level of education provides the graduates with the opportunity to continue their education in the post-high school system or, as the case may be, the professional inclusion on the labor market. The supplementary year, attended after graduation of the SCT, ends with a 2nd Level Training Skills Certificate and provides the opportunity for the students to continue their education in the senior high school system (the progressive professionalization version) or, as the case may be, the professional inclusion.

The **post-high school education** (ISCED 4) lasts for 1-3 years and is organized at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth), upon the proposal made by the authorities of the local public administration and / or of the interested companies. All the graduates of the high school system can attend the post-high school education, with or without a baccalaureate diploma. The passing of the final graduation exam allows the obtaining of an advanced 3rd Level Training Skills Certificate.

Starting with the academic year 2005 / 2006, the structure of the Romanian **higher education** has undergone significant changes. Now it includes 3 cycles, a structure putting it in line with the European educational systems, in accordance with the principles of the Bologna process. The high school graduates who pass the baccalaureate exam can have access to this level of education. The new structure of the higher education includes: the 1st cycle (3 - 4 years), ending with a bachelor exam and degree; the 2nd cycle (2 years), ending with a dissertation and the obtaining of a master degree; the 3rd cycle of doctorate studies (3 years), ending with the public presentation of a doctor's thesis. The educational system is correlated with the European educational system, the application of the European system of transferable credits being compulsory for all the universities in Romania.

1.1.b. The purposes and objectives of education for each level of instruction

The completion of education, focused on the formation of the autonomous and creative human personality, is detailed in the *Law on Education no. 84 / 1995* (art. 4) +including current revisions and amendments. It is done in each level of education through specific objectives described below.

The **preschool education** sets the bases for the child's formation and development and contributes to his / her integration in the context of school. The objectives set for this level of education are focused on: the child's free, complete and balanced development; autonomous and creative formation; differentiated stimulation for his / her intellectual,

social – emotional and mental – motive development. For the achievement of this goal, specific objectives were set for each category of activity that is part of the preschool education.

General objectives are defined for the other levels of instructions per curricular cycles (that do not totally correspond to the structure of the educational system at each level). The introduction of this curricular cycling has as purpose the assurance of coherence and continuity from one school level to another and also the correlation of the educational system structure with the students' psychological ages. For each curricular cycle a set of objectives was decided; they point out to a series of dominant features for each school phase, reflected in the totality of the school syllabuses.

The fundamental acquisition curricular cycle includes the School Preparation Class of the kindergarten and the grades I to II. This cycle is focused on:

- the learning of basic elements of the main conventional languages (writing, reading, counting);
- the child's stimulation so that he / she could perceive, know and master the near environment;
- the stimulation of the child's creative potential, of his / her intuition and imagination;
- the formation of the motivation for learning, understood as a social activity.

The development curricular cycle includes grades III to VI. Based on the knowledge learnt during the previous cycle, it is focused on the formation of the skills necessary for studies to be continued:

- the development of linguistic acquisitions and the encouragement of the use of Romanian, the mother tongue and also the foreign languages for expressing various communication situations;
- the development of a structured thinking and of the skills to put the solving of a problem into practice;
- to become familiar with a multidisciplinary approach of knowledge fields;
- to create a uniform set of values with a democratic and pluralist society;
- to encourage talent, experience and expression in various forms of art;
- to shape responsibility for the students' own development and health;
- to shape various attitudes of responsibility towards the environment.

The observation and orientation curricular cycle includes grades VII-IX and grade IX of the SCT. It is focused on the school and professional orientation as well as on the optimization of the choices. It is the time when students are put to test (the invariable subject tests) and based on these assessments they go to high school or vocational units. This curricular cycle is focused on:

- the discovery made by the student on his / her own affinities, aspirations and values for him / her to build a positive imagine of himself / herself;
- the formation of the ability to analyze the set of skills achieved by learning for orienting to a certain professional career;
- the development of communication skills, including various specialized languages;

- the development of autonomous thinking and of the responsibility of integrating into the social environment.

The advancement curricular cycle includes grades X to XI of high school, grade X of the SCT and the supplementary year. It is focused on the consolidation and advancement of the knowledge in the specialization chosen, without overlooking the basic training in the other curricular fields. The objectives of this cycle are focused on:

- the development of cognitive knowledge allowing the creation of a relation between fields related to knowledge;
- the development of social and cultural skills allowing active integration in various social groups;
- the formation of positive and responsible attitudes towards the personal actions having an impact on the social environment;
- practicing the imagination and creativity as sources for a quality personal and social life.

The specialization curricular cycle includes grades XII to XIII. It is focused on the preparation of the student for the optimal integration in the higher education or the labor market pointing to:

- the obtaining of self confidence and a positive image for the personal success;
- the making of adequate decisions in the context of social and professional conditions;
- the understanding and use of the operation and social change patterns of the society.

1.1.c. Curricular policies, educational contents and teaching and learning strategies

One of the basic constituents of the Romanian education reform was focused on the preparation and implementation of a new national curriculum. As part of the extension of the compulsory education duration to 10 years, the curricular policies were redefined from the perspective of the following principles: turning the education from being centered on content to the development of skills, values and attitudes; the assurance of a flexible educational offer based on formation modules and programs; the assurance of the opportunity to design individual school routes depending on peculiarities, interests and personal needs; the introduction of new ways to select and organize the content of the subjects; the adjustment of the contents to the demands of daily life and the characteristics of the labor force market (according to the *National Development Plan 2007-2013*, 2005, page 130).

The need to adjust the national curriculum to the changes in the pre-university educational system was completed by the need to comply with the European documents regarding the acquisition of the key-skills as part of the compulsory education – so Romania assumes the *Detailed work program on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe* (Barcelona, 2002) and the *Statement of the European ministers of education and professional training and of the European*

Commission regarding the consolidation of the European cooperation in professional training (Copenhagen, 2002).

The curricular documents (the new education frame-plans, the frame-programs specific to each of the subjects, the alternative books) were used by taking into account these aspects for the maximization of the education quality and efficiency, the maximization of the number of graduates and in the attractive features of the school syllabus. Therefore, the national curriculum is divided into three parts: a common interest section (an educational offer composed of common subjects for all the students up to a certain type and level of education), differentiated curriculum (the educational offer determined centrally, with specific features for each module, program and specialization) and curriculum decided by the education unit (an educational offer for each education unit).

The preparation and implementation of the curricular policies have to be done by the National Center for Curriculum and Assessment in pre-university Education, established based on the Government Resolution no. 231 / 2007, following the reorganization of other public institutions involved in the field. It has to conduct various activities regarding: the design, development and revision of the national curriculum; the coordination and organization of the national exam and assessment system; the coordination of the school book assessment; the selection, preparation, stimulation and capitalization of the potential the young people have for best results.

One of the principles of the national curriculum is the compliance with diversity. In this context, for the formation of the students for a society characterized by cultural diversity, the *Order no. 1529 / 2007 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth regarding the development of the diversity in the national curriculum* supports the capitalization and development, as part of the curriculum, of the aspects related to the cultural diversity (ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.). For the achievement of this goal, it was determined that the programs of school subjects (of the common interest section and, of the differentiated curriculum respectively) to include aspects regarding the cultural diversity, for the diminishing of the ethnic and national stereotypes, for the prevention of xenophobic behavior, for increasing the level of mutual tolerance and acceptance. Moreover, optional subjects were proposed, being included in the curriculum upon the school decision at various levels of education, which promote the ideal of all the nations, ethnicities, religious living together (for instance the Human Rights, the Contemporary Migrations – the 20th and 21st Centuries, Intercultural Education, A History of Communism, Ecologic and Environment Protection Education). By their contents, these subjects are focused on the following: learning about, for and through human rights; the students becoming familiar with the variety (ethnic, linguistic and religious) and with the democratic values; the students' preparation for actively participating in the democratic society, the active reflection and implication in the analysis of the world they are living in. The Order of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth mentioned above also stipulates the formation of a teaching staff for the promotion, knowledge and acceptance of diversity and differences.

Regarding the teaching and learning strategies promoted by the new curriculum, these are based on the following principles: the orientation of the teaching system towards the student's activity (by using active-participative methods); the approach of the contents from the perspective of the reference objectives / specific competencies of the school syllabus (by correlating the level of approaching the content with their specifications from mono- and interdisciplinary perspective); focus on the functional, practical, applicative features of the content (by using specific methods and by capitalizing the students' learning experience, achieved in various contexts); the diversification of assessment methods and instruments (by promoting complementary assessment methods).

1.1.d. Legal Frame

During the reference time of this report, various regulations completing the legislative frame specific to education were approved. Therefore, the *Law no. 354 / 2004 for the amendment and revision of the Law on Education no. 84 / 1995* promotes a new system for the financing and administration of the pre-university education units and brings on various step-by-step changes regarding the introduction of new formation profiles, the management and administration of the education units – actions having an impact on the maximization of efficiency and quality in education, including the access of various groups to the educational services.

Over the last years, new regulations regarding the teaching staff were also issued (*Law no. 349 / 2004 for the amendment and revision of Law no. 128 / 1997 regarding The Status of the Teaching Staff*). From the perspective of the topic of interest of the Report, the provisions regarding the introduction of teaching positions of teaching staff-mentors and of teaching staff-tutors in the pre-university education units are important and the study conditions that have to be complied with when occupying them.

Law no. 288 / 2004 regarding the organization of the academic studies, amended and revised by Law no. 346 / 2005, established a new structure of the higher educational system and achieved the correlation between the structure of the Romanian higher education and the systems in the European Union.

Taking into account that Romania is among the few countries in Europe that had no regulating mechanism for assuring education quality, the Government Urgency Ruling no. 75 / 2005 was issued, being approved *Law no. 87 / 2006 regarding the assurance of quality in education*, applicable to all the organizations providing education in Romania. According to it, the quality of education is a constant priority for the providers of education. Moreover, this law also regulates the ways to organize the Commissions for the assessment and assurance of quality, their duties as well as the authorization and operation of the providers of education.

1.1.e. The objectives and the main features of the current and future reforms

Following various phases and level of changes, implemented after the '90s, now the educational system in Romania is on the verge of new reform actions with the following objectives:

- the maximization of quality and efficiency of the compulsory education by changing the age for the beginning of the compulsory education from 7 years to 6 years;
- the assurance of basic education for all people by shaping basic skills correlated with the key skills promoted by the European documents;
- relying the learning process throughout the students' entire life on basic education by the appropriate formation and orientation of the students as part of the compulsory education;
- the assurance of social and professional inclusion – through the professional skills achieved during the last years of the compulsory education and of high school – on the professionalization route;
- the assurance of inclusion and the control of marginalization by the social protection of families that cannot keep their children in the educational system until they are 16 years old, the legal age when they are allowed to work (according to *The Reform of compulsory education in Romania*, 2003, page 11);
- the decentralization of the educational system and the introduction of financing per each student.

For the achievement of the strategic objectives for education and for the improvement of the strategic educational system in its entirety, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth issued projects for several **regulatory acts in the field of education**: the *Law on pre-university Education*; the *Law on higher education*; the *Law regarding the status of the teaching staff*. These projects, currently on public debates, suggest changes in the organization and operation of the educational system in Romania. Among the mentioned changes there are: the introduction of early education, the inclusion of the preschool education in the compulsory education; the extension of the duration of elementary school to 5 years, with the inclusion of the School Preparation Class; the extension of the duration of the junior secondary education to 5 years, including also grade IX; the generalization of the high school education; the support of the Parliamentary decision-making role regarding the establishment, transformation or closing of a university.

At the national level, besides the regulations in the field of education various **political frame-documents (plans, strategies) were prepared and they set a series of objectives in the field of education too.**

Therefore, with the accession of Romania to the European Union, the *Post-Accession Strategy 2007-2013* was prepared; it sets the following dimensions in the field of education: the improvement of the quality and efficiency of the education and professional training system; the provision of universal access to education and training;

the opening of the education and professional training system towards the European space. For doing this, the following objectives and means of intervention are defined:

- the assurance of equal chances and a higher participation in education – by: the assurance of fair hygiene and education conditions, the assurance of access to quality education for the students in remote areas, the adjustment of educational offers to the demand of the labor market;
- the development of compulsory education – by: the assurance of the infrastructure and necessary endowments, the assurance of quality in early education and in education for children with special needs, the promotion of institutional assessment based on clearly and objectively determined criteria;
- the decentralization and autonomy of the pre-university educational system – by: the extension of training process for the school managers, the application of the decentralized procedures regarding the management of human resources;
- the underlying of economic competitiveness on research and innovation – by: investments in human resources and materials in the research field, the promotion of enterprise culture, the maximization of quality in the research field;
- the modernization of the educational system in the rural environment – by: the development of the infrastructure, the improvement of material endowment and technical equipment, the permanent training of the teaching staff;
- the development of constant education from the institutional perspective – by: the stimulation of professional counseling, the diversification of the educational offerings, the adults' encouragement to participate in education, the certification of skills achieved by various phases of learning;
- the correlation of the educational system and the research, development and innovation system with the European objectives and landmarks – by: making the skills compatible, the introduction of the supplement to the diploma, the implementation of the transferable credit system, the maximization of investments into research;
- the maximization of quality in education and research for the training of the creative human resources – by: reviewing the assessment and examination of the national system, the application of the provisions of the Bologna process, the promotion of the enterprise culture.

The National Action Plan for 2008 related to the National Plan of Reforms (PNR) suggests various actions that support the strategic objectives of education:

- the development of the students' enterprise spirit through learning interactive methods and strategies such as an exercise company / simulated enterprise;
- the assurance of access to education for the underprivileged groups: school remedial programs, open education programs for the Romani people who want to become teachers, the establishment of resource centers for inclusive education, the training of teachers and school tutors for the facilitation of access to education for the Romani community;
- the recovery of the infrastructure and the improvement of endowments of the education units in the rural environment and the underprivileged areas; the rehabilitation or construction of education units, school workshops, school campuses;

the endowment with basic equipment, specialized equipment or equipment meant for open education;

- the preparation and implementation of the Annual Action Plan for Control of Early Drop Out, starting with the academic year 2008-2009;
- the development and implementation of the National Frame of Skills in the Higher Educational system for the correlation of higher education with the demands of the labor market;
- the preparation of school programs and the preparation of the curriculum in the vocational education based on the demands of the labor market, by updating the regional studies on the labor market, the identification of labor needs the market has for the qualification of the students and the social – professional inclusion;
- the training of teachers and principals of higher education units;
- the completion of information about the educational system;
- the preparation of the learning strategy throughout life.

The need to align Romania to the European development concept has led to the preparation of a *National Strategy of Sustainable Development (2008)* suggesting concrete ways of passing to a new development model based on the interest for knowledge and innovation and oriented towards the constant improvement of the quality of life. As part of this Strategy, the important role played by the educational system for the medium- and long-term achievement of the sustainable development is acknowledged. Therefore, the national objective to be fulfilled until 2013 in the field of education is focused on the development of human capital and on the maximization of competitiveness through the correlation of education and learning throughout life with the labor market and the assurance of more opportunities for future participation on a modern, flexible and inclusive labor market of 1.65 million people. For the achievement of this objective the following topics are taken into account:

- the access to initial qualitative education and training;
- the improvement of the quality in the university and post-university education;
- the promotion of a constant education principle;
- the internalization in the educational system of the principles and objectives of the sustainable development as an element integrating the mixture of knowledge, skills and aptitudes necessary for the integration and adjustment to social life.

The national objective to be achieved until 2020 indicates reaching the average level of performance for the European Union–27 in the field of education and professional training, except for the services in the rural environment and the underprivileged groups, where the targets are the European Union ones for 2010. For the achievement of this objective, the focus is on:

- the restructuring of education cycles based on the specific training profile and the redefinition of training programs;
- the development of institutional capacity and innovation;
- the professionalization of educational and school management and of control through the training of human resources in the field;
- the opening of the formal educational system through the acknowledgement of learning acquisitions in non-formal or informal contexts;

- the development of institutional and logistic basis of the national educational system;
- the maximization of the quality of training process of teaching and management staff in education;
- the preparation of youth so that they can learn throughout their lives;
- the development of various study programs specific to different regions and their needs;
- the extension of qualitative education and professional training in the rural environment;
- the extension of the international cooperation.

For 2030, the national objective in the field of education is focused on placing the educational and professional training system at the level of higher performances in the European Union – 27, as well as trying to get closer to the European Union average level regarding the educational services provided in the rural environment and for the people who are underprivileged disabled. For the achievement of this goal, the following are necessary:

- the inclusion of the sustainable development principles in the educational policies;
- making the educational system profitable on all levels;
- the revision of methodologies for assessment, certification and confirmation of quality in the educational system;
- the extension of international cooperation in the field of education.

1.2. The main policies and achievements

1.2.a. The access to education – actions meant to support the excluded children, youth and adults

The main vulnerable groups envisaged by the educational inclusion policies are represented by: children in the rural environment and the underprivileged areas; Romani children; children with special needs of education; other vulnerable groups (children in institutions, migrants, homeless children, the children suffering from chronic diseases, etc.). The categories of adults considered to be vulnerable are: the Romani people, the people released from prison, the youth leaving the shelters, people over 45 years of age, who are at risk on the labor market etc.

The main **objectives** of the policies for stimulation of access to education for the vulnerable groups are: the maximization of chances to have access to education; the assurance, improvement and diversification of forms of support for sustaining access to education; the extension of the inclusive education principle by increasing the participation in regular / mass education; the prevention and control of any type of segregation / discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, social and economic status, nationality, religion, etc.

For the achievement of the objectives mentioned above, certain legislative documents were issued. Some of them set **the general frame for the participation in education**, insisting on the idea that the education is a universal right and that the basic principle is the one to have an equal chance to be educated. These actions are enforced / facilitated by a **social protection system** that includes: a free education, support and logistic basis, free manuals (for compulsory education), medical care and psychological facilities for the students and the children in the preschool and pre-university educational system; financing / co-financing from the state budget (full financing of school fees for the School Preparation Class for school; co-financing the boarding of preschoolers and of students in boarding schools, houses and canteens); subsidizing of transport fees for the students going from one place to another; the improvement of the school infrastructure and the endowment of schools with specific furniture and equipment, the provision of a daily free meal / snack for the students in the elementary schools and preschool units and gymnasiums. The educational policies addressing the stimulation of the access to education as well as a description of their problems are widely described in Chapters 2.2. and 2.3.

For the categories of adults considered to be vulnerable, the most important policies have been focused on the implementation of various occupationally active actions, such as the participation in programs for professional training, qualification and requalification which occupy a significant portion. The vulnerable categories' participation in the actions are carefully monitored based on various specific indexes prepared by the Ministry of Labor, Family and Equal Chances, the National Employment Agency, the National Agency for Romani people.

1.2.b. Intervention in the early and preschool education, as a means of support for the child's development and of transition to the elementary school

In Romania, the current educational system for children under the age of 6 includes the preschool education (3 – 6 years). The new Legislative Package includes the introduction of the early education (0-3 years) in the educational system. As part of the preschool education, there is also one year for preparation for school, meant to facilitate the children's access to the 1st grade.

In the '90s, the **early education** was an important topic for the debates and analyses, covered both by the Government institutions in charge of it and by the civil society. The main concerns were, on the one hand, the passing from a system focused on care and protection (where the medical services were a priority) to a system taking into account more educational aspects specific to this period of early development of the child's personality. On the other hand, the discussion moved also to the important structural and systemic topics such as: the preparation of the staff in the early education units, the financing and administration of such units, and community support in the assurance of a quality education for children.

The most important **difficulties** in the way of restructuring the early educational system in Romania were the following:

- the lack of a coherent policy in the field of early education for children age 0-3 years, that includes all the aspects of the child's development (care, protection, education);
- the lack of a national curriculum for early education for children of 0-3 years;
- the lack of an initial and permanent training system for the teaching staff in the field of early education and for those working with children of 0-3 years respectively;
- the difficulties regarding the infrastructure and coverage of the network including early education units, especially in the rural environment or in the remote communities.

In the absence of a legislative frame that is specific and appropriate to early education, the efforts during the last years have been centered on the implementation of various sector programs providing a point of departure for the preparation, in 2006, of a *Strategy regarding the early education*. As part of the convergent Strategy regarding the child's early development, its objective is to provide each child with the right to full education and development so that he / she could have the opportunity to reach his / her full potential. The Strategy shall provide the frame for the development of projects and programs that lead to the achievement of the following **objectives**:

- the development of the opportunities of early education for children aged 0-3 years, including for children who are part of underprivileged / vulnerable groups;
- the assurance of training for the teaching staff (both initial training and permanent training);
- the assurance of equal access to a quality education during the early education of the children who are part of underprivileged / vulnerable groups;

The main **activities** to be carried out for the assurance of fair access for the children who are part of the ethnic minorities and of the underprivileged groups (children in the rural environment / remote localities, children who are at risk or who were removed from the system):

- the development of summer kindergarten type programs of at least 45 days for the children from the underprivileged areas, who were never in a kindergarten and who are to be enrolled in the 1st grade;
- the facilitation of certain incentives for attracting children in the groups of national minorities or in the vulnerable groups of the educational system by providing free meals, writing materials, bilingual education (especially the Romani language for the Romani children who are the largest minority group, etc.);
- flexible schedules (weekend kindergarten, etc.);
- the identification of the issues related to the mental health of children under the age of 6 in the vulnerable groups for actions to be taken for preventing and treating them;
- in the rural / remote areas, the development of a community / family educational alternative and / or of satellite units around the already existent kindergartens;
- the establishment of multifunctional centers for children, especially in the rural / remote areas where health and educational services are not available.

The main **projects** for implementation of the provisions stipulated by the Strategy are the following:

- *The project for the reform of early education (2006-2011)* – It has the following objectives: the rehabilitation / building of new kindergartens and the development of the infrastructure; the endowment with furniture; the training and improvement of the kindergarten staff (teaching staff, staff in the daycare centers, caregivers / nurses / medical staff, managers); the development of the ability the system has in providing quality services: the endowment of the kindergartens with teaching material (maps, drawings, moulds), educational games, books / brochures; the establishment of the Network of Resource Centers for Education and Development (CRED); the establishment of specific services for children aged 0–6 years, who are disabled and have special needs; the maximization of the ability the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth has and also that of the local authorities in monitoring, assessing and developing educational policies.
- *The project for inclusive early education (PETI)* – The project wants to achieve the following objectives: the rehabilitation and development of the infrastructure; the training of the educational and caretaking staff working with children under 6 / 7 years in the selected early education units; the training of managers in the selected early education units; the preparation of the specific training curriculum and modules for the assurance of professional training for the teaching and caring staff, as well as the training of managers and parents; the preparation of the human resources in inclusive early education; the development of specific curriculum and the assurance of teaching – learning materials; the maximization of capacities for having access to European funds for service providers in early education; the promotion of integrated services and of alternative solutions for early education and intervention; the monitoring and assessment, the achievement of information, communication and capacity creation activities in the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth.

Regarding the **preschool education**, over the last years it has benefited from various programs meant to provide more chances for personal development of the child and for facilitating the passage to the elementary school. The main **actions** implemented up to this moment can be summarized as follows:

- the national curriculum has been revised so that the principles of the activity focused on the child could be included;
- between 1992 and 2002, the Resource Centers for the education of parents and for their information on the issues of early education were established (with the support provided by UNICEF Romania); as part of this effort, educational programs for parents have also been developed and implemented by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, NGOs and the local authorities;
- efforts have been made for the improvement of access the children in the rural environment have to preschool education (however these efforts were rare and without long-term planning or programming);
- still some progress was made regarding the access to preschool education for the children in the underprivileged groups and the minorities, especially the Romani minority; however, there is still a big difference in the coverage of the preschoolers and those coming from the vulnerable groups.

In order to support the participation in preschool education for all categories of children, *The Social Inclusion Program (2007-2011)* also included a component of inclusive early education, implemented by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth in cooperation with the National Agency for Romani People. The program is focused on: the maximization of access to the early education (for children aged 3 to 6 years) and the creation of educational opportunities for children aged between 0 and 3 years, including children who are part of a socially underprivileged group.

1.2.c. The results of the learning process from the point of view of the activities carried out for the improvement of school success and for reducing inequalities

The improvement of the results of the learning process has represented an important objective for all the programs focused on the stimulation of the participation in education and the equalization of the chance to success for those in vulnerable categories. The information regarding the impact of programs on the results of learning as part of the implemented programs are still only partially available at this moment. For example, it is difficult to assess what is the impact – at national level – of the programs addressed to the Romani children on the academic results because the available statistical data are not – from this point of view – desegregated for ethnicity. Moreover, some of the national programs (for example, *The Phare Program Access to education for the underprivileged groups*) have not been finished and this is why we have no data regarding the assessment of their impact on the academic results of the target groups. For other programs with a narrower coverage, quantitative information is available, information that is especially focused on the participation in education, but not including the performances obtained by the students.

Nevertheless, there are various programs accompanied by a constituent for the evolution assessment of the project results, such as *The Project for Rural Education*. Therefore, for the assessment done in 2007 (in the middle of the project performance time), the tests for the assessment of school performances obtained by the students in the rural environment led to the following conclusions:

- the **math** test showed the worst results obtained by the students in the rural environment both in the initial assessment in 2005 and in the one conducted in 2007. However, if in 2005 they solved, on an average, only half of the test, the assessment in 2007 showed that the level of solved exercises rose to 59%.
- In both assessments, the **Romanian language** test showed the best results of the three subjects. In this field, in the 2005 assessment only one third (approximately 36%) of the tasks were solved, but in 2007 there was a significant improvement as the students solved more than half of the tasks (57%).
- In the **science** test, the results obtained by the students in 2007 were better than the ones in the initial assessment. (61% in 2007 compared to 58.7% in 2005).

Nationally the information regarding the progress made in the students' performances in the rural environment are presented in annual reports regarding the status of the

educational system. In the report of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth *The Condition of Education in Romania* of 2007, the main trends regarding the results of the students in the rural environment are the following:

- **The test after the 4th grade** – In all the subjects assessed, there are significantly higher performances obtained by the students in the schools in the urban environment, compared to those going to school in the rural environment. In comparison with 2005, these discrepancies tend to exacerbate.
- **The National Test at the end of grade VIII** – Although the participation rate and the promotion rate for the national tests by the students in the rural environment easily improved (1-2 percentage points), however their results continue to be far away from the results obtained by the students in the urban areas: in the rural environment only 72.5% of the students enrolled in grade VIII participate in the National Test of 2006 / 2007, compared to 81.6% in the urban areas; in the same academic year, participation rate in the national exams is of 52.8% in case of the students in the rural environment, and of 70.5%, in the urban environment respectively.
- **The results obtained from the international assessments** – At the **PISA** assessments in 2006, the students in Romania obtained scores lower than those of 2001 for all the subjects tested, irrespective of the residence environment (reading: 2001 – score 428, 2006 – score 396; math: 2001 – score 426, 2006 – score 415; sciences: 2001 – score 441, 2006 – score 396). Following this drop of the results nationally, the results of the students in the rural environment tend to be worse and worse. However we have to mention that in case of the small towns the average scores obtained for math and sciences are lower than the ones obtained by the students in the rural environment. Compared to the **PIRLS** assessment in 2001, at the assessment in 2006 the results of the students in the rural environment dropped by approximately 37 points, from an average score of 499 to 462. Moreover, the same discrepancy between the students' performances depending on the residence environment remains, not in favor of the students in the rural environment.

1.2.d. The training of the teaching staff, recruiting, the standardization, work conditions and the professional development

The priorities of the current educational policies regarding **the training of the teaching staff** is focused on the assurance of equal and increased access to the permanent professional training for the teaching staff.

The development of a professional training and development system for the teaching staff, correlated with the individual and institutional beneficiaries' needs and interests is done through:

- the rethinking of the status the teaching staff has and the extension of the areas of application of the national development Strategy of the initial and permanent training system;
- the improvement of the methodologies and programs regarding various types of training;

- the assurance of an initial training that is better adjusted to the various educational needs;
- the stimulation of the development of a competitive and transparent market in the field of constant training for the teaching staff and the diversification of the types of programs and providers of training for the teaching staff (including the Network of Regional Training Centers);
- the training of the teaching staff through national programs, including for the implementation of the inclusive school concept;
- the development of support actions for the beginning of the teaching career including by the promotion of new forms of assistance (the teacher-mentor, the teacher-tutor);
- the definition of profiles for new relevant occupations for the educational system (instructor, school mediator).

For their implementation, during the period of time that is of reference for this report, various provisions of the main legislative regulations for the training of the teaching staff and the conditions for occupying different positions and for carrying out the activity were amended and revised:

- *Law on Education no. 84 / 1995* – it stipulates regulations regarding the categories of teaching staff and auxiliary teaching staff, the specific demands of the professional training, the staff selection and recruiting, the permanent training and the institutions authorized to conduct the permanent training, the work conditions;
- *Law no. 128 / 1997 regarding the status of the teaching staff* – it decides the positions, skills, duties, obligations and rights of the teaching staff, the necessary qualifications for the teaching positions, the conditions of the ways the teaching positions are occupied and how the specific functions are fulfilled; the system of permanent training and the ways to assess the teaching staff, conditions for the appointment of the staff working in schools etc.

At the level of the initial training of the teaching staff, the implementation of the objectives of the Bologna process to the Romanian higher education (starting with 2005) led to a series of changes regarding the organization and the duration of the psychological-pedagogic training module, which conditions the occupation of a teaching position.

At the level of the constant training of the teaching staff, the changes brought to *the status of the teaching staff (Law no. 349 / 2004)* as well as other regulations in the field (for example, *the Order no. 4611 / 2005 of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth*) were focused on:

- the introduction of new categories of providers offering permanent training to the teaching staff, as well as new types of activities acknowledged as permanent training activities;
- new regulations regarding the methodology for the accreditation of the permanent training programs for the teaching staff in the pre-university educational system.

The permanent training of the teaching staff was supported by a series of programs and projects conducted over the last few years (*The project for Rural Education, The TVET*

Phare Program, The Access to Education for Underprivileged Groups Phare Program, The Phare Program called Technical Assistance for Supporting the Activity of the National Center for Training of the Staff in the pre-university Educational system), which had important constituents regarding the training of the teaching staff and which contributed to the policies in this field.

Other relevant information about the training programs addressed to the teaching staff can be found in the section regarding the training and preparation of the teaching staff in order to answer the various expectations and needs of the students (sub-chapter 2.4.).

Moreover, during the period of time that is of reference for this report new regulations were promoted in the field of **teaching position occupation** and of the management positions, guidance and control, as well as changes of the teaching standardization system (for the staff occupying management positions).

Regarding **the work conditions** of the teaching staff, the fact that stands out is that the average level of wages in the educational system is close to the average wage nationally. However, the wage earned at the beginning of the career in education is significantly lower than the national average level, which creates a certain deficit of candidates for certain subjects. Such an example is the teachers of computer science or foreign language, who can earn a higher wage in the private field. Moreover, over the last few years the level of investments into the improvement of the learning conditions in schools rose (infrastructure, teaching materials and equipment, etc.), but there is still a wide share of the education units that continue to operate without fulfilling the hygiene and sanitary standards as well as schools with an insufficient level of financing.

The legislative projects regarding the pre-university educational system, the university education and the status of the teaching staff (under public debate since December 2007) also suggest various important changes regarding the permanent training system, the hiring and activity conditions for the teaching staff.

1.3. The role of the educational system in controlling poverty as well as other forms of social exclusion and cultural marginalization – concepts, contributions, strategies

Equity is a major mandate for the legislative framework of the public policies in Romania. From the perspective of this fundamental value, the Romanian educational system promotes various **general principles** directly relevant for the control of any form of social exclusion and cultural marginalization such as:

- the assurance of equal, universal and free access to education, the orientation of education towards the free and harmonious development of the individual and the preparation of the autonomous and creative personality of each student.
- The promotion in the socially underprivileged areas and segments (the rural environment, the Romani population, the marginalized people or the very poor) of various specific policies meant to lead to the maximization of the opportunities of

school attendance and professional training and to the assurance of a qualitative education.

- The improvement and diversification of the forms of support and of the social facilities for children with special needs of education; the extension of the inclusive education principle by maximization of the participation in the mass education.
- The elimination of any form of discrimination and exclusion based on race, language, nationality or religion and the development of the values specific for the inclusive education.

The general values representing the basis of the educational system, the equity and the principle of equal chances translate into effective policies by **social general actions** meant to assure the access to education and by **affirmative actions** involving legislative / institutional instruments and strategies oriented towards the vulnerable groups: the Romani community, the rural environment, children with special educational demands, national minorities, etc.

The main contributions of the educational policies to the elimination of the severe social exclusion situations and the promotion of cohesion, inclusion and social development explicitly highlighted by the national development programs prior to and after accession as well as the national strategies for poverty control refer to the following **objectives**:

- the absorption of the educational deficit of the young and adult generations by alphabetization / completion of studies by the people who abandoned the educational system beforehand;
- the maximization of personal, social and professional relevance of school by curricular innovations and a better relation with the employers on the labor market;
- the graduate generalization of the participation in the professional and high school education, which involves the diversification of the pre-university professional training offer;
- the maximization of opportunities for children in the underprivileged groups to go to school after gymnasium; the vocational development and the maximization of the participation in the mass education for people with special educational demands;
- equal educational chances by minimizing the school failure and the maximization of the educational opportunities for the children in poor families, the rural environment, Romani people, etc.

Other fields of intervention in the educational field are promoted by *The National Development Plan 2007-2013* (the most important instrument for quick reduction of social and economic development disparities compared to the European Union) and refer to the maximization of chances for occupation for the vulnerable groups and the people at risk of social exclusion by the assurance of the equal learning opportunities throughout their lives and the promotion of inclusive dimension of the labor market. Therefore it is focused on the assurance of the opportunities for learning and initial and continuous professional training for the groups at risk of being excluded, the attainment of knowledge, skills and other resources necessary for the development of occupation skills and the improvement of chances to find a job for the integration into the society.

Moreover, in accordance with the priorities determined throughout Europe (the Lisbon Agenda, Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2007-2013), *The Operational Sectorial Program – The development of Human Resources 2007-2013* anticipates the support for people belonging to vulnerable groups by various forms of assistance (the facilitation of access to services of education and training, school and professional counseling and guidance, correct preparation of the teaching staff, etc.). The general objective of this program consists in the development of the human capital and the maximization of competitiveness through the correlation of education and learning throughout their lives with the labor market and the assurance of increased opportunities for future participation on a modern, flexible and inclusive labor market for 1.65 million people by the establishment of a priority axis with major fields of intervention based on a synthetic approach of all the major Government strategies and the identification of the opportunities and weaknesses on the point where the educational system meets the labor market: The Priority Axis 1 – *The education and professional training supporting the economic growth and the development of the society based on knowledge*; The Priority Axis 2 – *The correlation of learning throughout their lives with the labor market*; The Priority Axis 6: *The promotion of social inclusion*.

The social actions addressed to the vulnerable groups (especially those in the field of education) represent a transversal dimension of **most of the global strategies** and of the policies for long-term economic, social and institutional development (see also the *Romanian Government Strategy for the Improvement of the Romani People's Status 2001-2010*, *the National Strategy for the Protection, Integration and Social Inclusion of the Disabled 2006 – 2013* „*Equal Chances for the Disabled – Towards a Society Without Discrimination*”; *The National Strategy Regarding the Social Inclusion of Youth over 18 Years, Leaving the Child's Protection System 2006 – 2008*; *The Convergent Strategy Regarding the Child's Early Development 2008-2015*). Therefore the “Mainstreaming” represents the main instrument for the promotion of objectives in the educational field throughout the entire collective intervention complex.

The strategic documents prepared at level of the educational system also assumes explicitly the role of education in fighting poverty and other forms of social exclusion and cultural marginalization. Such an example is the *Strategy of the Decentralization of the pre-university Educational system 2008*, which is focused on the assurance of access and of equity in education by the maximization of autonomy of the education units (institutional, administrative, curricular and financial). The focus is placed on the capacitating of the school units so that they provide a better coverage of the educational needs of the students (according to their ethnic and cultural background, the social and economic diversity / discrepancies) and the development of a financing system that takes into account the risk situations different schools are in.

Irrespective of the type of approach, the most important challenge assumed by the debated strategies is the **balance distribution of resources** between:

- the supporting policies having an immediate effect on the underprivileged groups (the mobilization of resources for the facilitation of access to education, the financial support regarding the acquisition of wiring materials, school transport, aids for

- financially underprivileged families, compensations for the disabled, in the rural environment etc.), which usually compensate for the effects of the severe poverty;
- the strengthening policies (the development of human capital with prioritization of the underprivileged groups, the facilitation of the competitive access on the labor market for the rural environment, inclusive education for the disabled children, the social and cultural development and integration of Romani people etc.), designed as efficient instruments for real and sustainable social integration.

2. EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION: PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

2.1. Approaches, guidelines and contents

2.1.a. How is the education for inclusion turned into concept? Which is the current vision on the education for inclusion?

According to the *Government Resolution no. 1251 / 2005 regarding various actions for improvement of the activity for learning, training, compensation, recovery and special protection of children / students with special educational demands as part of the special integrated educational system*, **the inclusive education** represents the “permanent process for the improvement of school institution having as purpose the exploitation of the existing resources, especially of the human resources in order to support the participation in the education process for all the people within a community”. The same legislative act defines **the inclusion** as being “the process for the preparation of the education units in order to include in the education process all the members in the community, irrespective of their characteristics, disadvantages or difficulties”. This is why, the inclusive school is “the education unit where education is provided for all the children and represents the most efficient way for fighting the discrimination attitudes. The children in these education units shall benefit from all the social and educational rights and services according to the principle: ‘The Resource Follows the Child’”.

In the current understanding, **integration** has various shapes and refers to a complex of aspects:

- the physical dimension (by facilities for using in common the classrooms, the teaching materials, the minimization of the physical distance between their homes and the school, etc.);
- the functional dimension (as joint attendance of the educational processes);
- the school community dimension (as participation in the life of school or extracurricular activities);
- the social dimension (as assumption of active roles within the society).

The philosophy of the programs implemented by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth in this field (for example, *The Access to Education for Underprivileged Groups Phare Program*) regards the **special educational demands** (CES) as indicating those specific demands or needs compared to education – whether or not they are derived from a deficiency – which are supplementary and also complementary to the general objectives of education. The phrase shapes a continuum of the special problems in education, including a wide range from the deep deficiencies to the slight learning difficulties. Therefore, the children with CES can be children whose special needs (demands) derive from certain mental, physical, sensorial, language, social – emotional and behavioral

deficiencies or any combination therefore, irrespective of how serious they are, as well as those showing other causes of difficulties of learning and / or adjusting in school etc.

The typology of CES categories includes: emotional and behavioral disorders, mental deficiencies / retardation, physical / motion disorders, eyes problems, hearing problems, language disorders, learning disorders / difficulties / disabilities. The current educational policies explicitly support the idea that without the correct approach of these special demands we cannot talk about real equal chances / premises for access to, participation in and integration into school and society.

An alternative formula is the **special needs / demands** formula with a semantic area that often is wider, including besides the criteria mentioned above other criteria too, respectively groups of children / students such as: children coming from social environments and underprivileged families, children / youth who are at least three years over the age for integrating into the mass educational system (repeated failure, school drop out, late beginning of school, lack of preoccupation from the family, etc.), children in institutions / protected in residential units (from the orphanages) or after the time they spend in institutions, delinquent children, children belonging to various ethnic and religious minorities, homeless children, children who are physically and mentally abused or violated, children suffering from chronic diseases (TBC, HIV-AIDS, diabetes, etc.).

The key principles of inclusion, explicitly promoted by the Romanian educational system take into account the following elements: the capitalization of diversity; the right to be respected; the dignity as a human being; the individual needs understood as individual demands; the planning; the collective responsibility; the development of professional relationships and cultures; the professional development and equal chances (according to OECD, 2007, page 14). The school units have to provide compliance and development of certain inclusive policies derived from these principles by specific interventions among which:

- the promotion of efficient strategies / programs for the identification of students with CES as soon as possible;
- the promotion of strategies for minimizing drop out, absenteeism and disciplinary expulsions, the attempts to intimidate or abuse over the students and among the students;
- the development of strategies for the preparation of the curriculum that capitalizes the diversity of students regarding the cultural, linguistic, gender-based and religious differences;
- adjustments of the physical space and of the means of education in order to assure the access and participation of all the students in the learning activities (including the extra-curricular ones);
- the promotion of an individualized teaching system and of an assessment system appreciating – in a correct manner – the progress and achievements of all the students;
- the development of educational partnerships and the promotion of various special intervention programs for different categories of students with CES.

2.1.b. Which are the main challenges for assuring the educational and social inclusion? How have these challenges changed over the last few years?

The schooling of the children with CES is done in the special and mass educational systems. Children with the most severe disorders are schooled in **the special educational system**, where the teaching staff has the necessary psychological and pedagogical training and where there is complex assistance (medical, psychological, social, educational), and the children with the slightest problems are integrated into **the mass educational system** (with the help of the County Centers for Educational Resources and Support and the roving / tutors). The children coming from socially and economically underprivileged environments, the Romani children, those with chronic diseases are schooled in the mass education, but special actions are taken to their support (the adjustment of the study program, the reorganization of the school curriculum, etc.).

The special educational system is focused on the provision of support to the students with CES for them to reach a level of individual development that is as close as possible to the regular one, by attaining the necessary experiences in school and in the social environment, by the development of the necessary skills for learning, by the attainment of knowledge and useful aptitudes for the social and professional integration and for the cultural life as part of the community and by the assurance of opportunities and conditions for learning throughout their lives at different levels of education.

The current educational policy of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth is explicitly focused on the modernization and reconfiguration of the special educational system in order to reach the fundamental goal of the educational, professional and social integration of children with special needs and for them to fit the community life. For achieving this goal, certain **intervention directions** were identified; they are consistent with the main challenges the current educational system is facing for the assurance of an inclusive education:

- right from the beginning, the schooling of the children and youth with CES in a mass education unit as close to home as possible;
- the elimination of the obstacles in learning and the assurance that all the children at risk of exclusion and marginalization participate in the education process;
- the development and diversification of qualitative support services for this category of students.

For achieving these objectives, the **concrete actions** for the maximization of the quality of the children's education are focused on:

- the training of teachers in the mass education in the field of educating children with special needs and the inclusive education;
- the development of educational services for psychological and pedagogic and specialized support;
- the flexibility of schooling forms (for example, schooling at home, low attendance schooling);

- the development of specialized services network for speech therapy and psycho-pedagogic counseling;
- the assurance of the appropriate resources (financial, material) for the units schooling the children with special educational demands.

The minimization down to elimination of all the forms of exclusion in education, at least at the level of basic education, is one of the fundamental objectives of the current educational policies, and the identification of the appropriate actions for the assurance of access, participation and success of learning in the qualitative basic education, for all children, is therefore the main challenge for this purpose.

2.1.c. Which are the specific regulations or the legal frame referring to the education for inclusion? Which groups are considered to be excluded from these regulations and how are they defined?

Romania ratified and complies with the regulation **international frame** regarding the education of people with CES: *The UN Convention regarding the child's rights*; *The Salamanca Statement*; the *Standard Rules regarding the Special Educational system*; the *World Statement on Education for All*; *The UNESCO Convention regarding the Fight Against Discrimination in Education*. Internally, the main legislative documents and relevant regulations for the issue of education for inclusion are those referring to the **special educational system**:

- *The Romanian Constitution, revised and republished in 2003* (art. 50) – explicitly stipulating that the disabled enjoy the special protection and that the State assures the preparation of national policies for equal chances, prevention, treatment, readjustment, education, training and integration for the disabled, in compliance with the rights and duties of the parents and guardians.
- *The Law on Education no. 84 / 1995, republished, including current revisions and amendments* – stipulates the legal structure and the conditions for the performance of the special educational system in Romania. In the chapter dedicated to the children / students with special needs, it is stipulated that “the special educational system is organized by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth for children (preschoolers and students) with mental, physical, sensorial, language, socio-emotional and behavioral deficiencies for their training and education, recovery and social integration” (art. 41). This chapter also regulates the duration of the compulsory special educational system, the structure and the contents of the special educational system (education plans, school syllabus, manuals, teaching methodologies, and educational alternatives), the conditions for the provision of services for school guidance and re-guidance towards the mass school or from the mass school. The Law also stipulates that the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth assures the specialized schooling and the psycho-pedagogic support of the children and youth with physical, sensorial, mental deficiencies or any combination thereof.
- *The Law no. 349 / 2004, for the amendment and revision of the Law no. no. 128 / 1997 regarding the status of the teaching staff* – regulating the criteria, conditions and

ways to the standardization and include the teaching staff in the special education units.

- *The Government Resolution no. 1251 / 2005 regarding some actions for the improvement of the activity of learning, training, compensation, recovery and special protection of the children / students / youth with special educational demands in the special and special integrated educational system* – detailing various aspects regarding: the specific terms and expressions regarding the special and special integrated educational system; the structure, organization, forms and types of institutions, as well as the staff in the special and special integrated education units; the standardization and inclusion of the teaching staff, auxiliary teaching staff, medical and administrative staff.
- *The Order no. 4925 / 2005 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth for the approval of the Rules for the organization and operation of the pre-university education units* – setting the ways the special educational system is organized and operates.
- *The Order no. 3372 / 2004 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth for the approval of the Frame Plan for Education in Schools of Crafts and Trades – special educational system.*
- *The Order no. 4928 / 2005 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth for the approval of the Frame Plan for the Education of special education classes / groups / units schooling children / students / youth with serious, severe, advanced or related deficiencies.*

These regulations have created a frame for the development of various educational inclusive services on two main directions:

- the careful assessment of the activity in the special education units and their passing through a process of reorganization, restructuring both as educational activity and as objectives and finalities;
- the beginning of a wide process for the extension of the special educational systems in the public school by: the early expertise, diagnosis and assessment of the children's deficiencies so that there could be an early, opportune and efficient intervention; the inclusion of the children diagnosed as "having problems" in regular kindergartens; the beginning of the children's schooling period in the public school that is the closest to their homes; the transfer of students with slight and medium deficiencies from the special school to the public school; the provision of educational support services in the process of school adjustment and social integration; turning various special schools into open schools for all the students in that respective community.

For achieving these wide changes, the legislation in the field has been completed with standards, methodologies and regulations having as purpose the clarification, indication and concretization of activities carried out in the field of education. At the same time, various new **regulations going beyond the area of the special educational system** were approved, **as they have a larger coverage and by taking into account multiple target groups:**

- *The Law no. 448 / 2006 regarding the protection and promotion of the rights the disabled have* – regulating the rights and obligations of the disabled, which are granted for their integration and social inclusion.
- *The Government Resolution no. 1175 / 2005 for the approval of the National Strategy for the Protection, Integration and Social Inclusion of the Disabled between 2006 and 2013 "Equal chances for the disabled - towards a society with no discriminations"* – The strategy is focused on the disabled person, who is a citizen with full rights and obligations.
- *The Government Resolution no. 1217 / 2006 regarding the creation of the national mechanism for the promotion of social inclusion in Romania* – The regulation stipulates the main duties (coordination, monitoring, assessment of actions, etc.) of the public central authorities, in relation to the specific features of the field of business.
- *The Notice no. 29323 / 2004 made by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth on the desegregation in the schools with Romani population* – Starting from the idea of segregation as intentional or unintentional physical separation of the children belonging to a national minority from the rest of the children in schools, classrooms, buildings and other facilities, the notice suggests various actions meant to impede that the number of Romani children compared to the non-Romani children in a school to be unusually higher than the percentage represented by the Romani children of school age from the entire population of school age in that respective local administrative unit. Moreover, the document points to the fact that a consequence of the segregation process is the uneven access of children to qualitative education, the maintenance of separation in education based on ethnic criteria with negative impact both on the Romani children and on the Romanian society in general.
- *the Order no. 5418 / 2005 given by the Ministry of Education and Research for the approval of the Rules for the Organization and Operation of the County Centers / Bucharest Centers of Resources and Educational Support and of the Frame-Regulations of the Subordinated Units* – This order also approves the frame-regulations for the organization and operation of the School Centers for Educational Inclusion, of the County Centers / Bucharest Centers of Psycho-pedagogic Support and of the Centers and Offices for Speech Therapy.
- *The Order no. 5160 / 2005 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth regarding the application of the program called "The Second Chance" elementary school, in the academic year 2005-2006.*
- *The Order no. 5333 / 2005 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth regarding the application of the program called "The Second Chance" junior secondary education, in the academic year 2005 -2006.*
- *The Order no. 1540 / 2007 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth regarding the interdiction of school segregation of Romani children and the approval of the Methodology for the Prevention and Elimination of School Segregation towards the Romani Children* – The methodology provides a list of indexes meant to initially identify and analyze the cases of school segregation and another list of indexes for school inclusion.
- *The Order no. 1529 / 2007 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth regarding the development of diversity issues in the national curriculum* – According

to it, the curricular policies shall promote the capitalization and development of the aspects regarding the cultural diversity, as part of the national curriculum.

The detailed analysis of the groups at risk of being excluded is detailed in the next chapter.

2.2. Public policies

2.2.a. Which are the current dimensions of the phenomenon of exclusion in the educational system?

According to the legal frame, as well as to the international statements signed and undertaken by Romania, the public educational system is free of charge and every citizen has access to it, without discriminations. The equity is a major finality of the public policies in Romania, having the following specific objectives:

- the assurance of equal and universal access to education for all the citizens of the country, irrespective of their social, ethnic, sexual affiliation, religion, area of residence; the maximization of the educational chances for the areas and segments that are socially underprivileged (the rural environment, the Romani population, the marginalized people or the people who are extremely poor);
- the maximization of the opportunities to attend school and professional training programs, the assurance of a qualitative education including for the areas and categories of underprivileged population;
- the professionalization of those graduating from compulsory education units for their actual inclusion on the labor market;
- the improvement and diversification of the forms of support for the people with special educational needs; the extension of the inclusive education principle by the maximization of the participation in the mass education.

The main educational vulnerable groups had in view by the policies of Social Inclusion are represented by:

- **the population in the rural environment and in the underprivileged areas**

Over the last few years we could observe a series of improvements regarding the participation of students in the rural environment to the preschool and elementary education, together with the significant growth of the level of inclusion in the high school and vocational education, as an effect of the extension of the duration of compulsory education from 8 to 10 years. Nevertheless, despite the policies and programs supported by the improvement of education in the rural environment, the level of disadvantage for the students in these areas compared to that in the urban environment is still present for most of the indexes regarding the participation in education and the academic results. Therefore, the level of inclusion in the secondary education (high school and vocational

education) of youth in the rural environment is of approximately 71%, compared to the level of 96% in the urban areas. If we take into account only the high school education, the level of inclusion of the students in urban environment is approximately twice or more as high as the one in the rural area: 80.3%, compared to 49%. Moreover, the ratio of mass school losses is significantly higher for the students in the rural environment, compared to that in the urban areas. As for the number of students graduating the gymnasium in the academic year 2006 / 2007, for example, the mass losses in the rural environment account for approximately 23%, comparatively to 8% in the urban areas. The level of graduation with the passing of the final exams by the graduates the gymnasium (calculated as a percentage of the population aged 14 – the official age for finishing the gymnasium) was, at the level of the academic year 2006 / 2007, of 45% for those in the rural environment, the value of the index for the students in the urban environment being of approximately 78%. Regarding the results, the average scores made by the students in the international assessments point out a constant disadvantage for the schools located in the rural environment compared to those in the urban areas, highlighting the fact that the school results depend on the specific social and economic factors in the rural environment.

- **the Romani population**

According to the most recent estimates (the Open Society Institute, 2007), the level of participation of the Romani students in education is placed around the value of 76% for the elementary school (age group 7-15 years); 17% for the secondary education (age group 16-19 years), respectively 1% for the tertiary education (age group over 20 years). Moreover, it is estimated that only approximately 10% of the Romani students enrolled in the mass public education have access to special classes of Romani history and language. Another issue that has to be brought up is the extremely low participation of the Romani community members in the preschool education, the rate of inclusion for the Romani children in kindergartens being estimated at approximately 20% (the Open Society Institute, 2007), the national average level being of approximately 77% for the academic year 2007 / 2008. The low level of attendance for the preschool education is one of the reasons for the low participation in the compulsory education and for the high level of school drop out among the Romani students. According to the data provided by the *Barometer for the Inclusion of the Romani* (FSD, 2007), more than 20% of the Romani people aged under 40 years have never graduated any kind of level of education; 23.1% graduated only the elementary school, 38.2% only graduated the gymnasium (grades V to VIII), 4.3% graduated the high school and only 0.4% graduated from a higher education unit.

Another phenomenon pointed out by various studies and researches is the phenomenon of the Romani children's school segregation. Regarding this aspect, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth issued various regulations (*the Order no. 1540 / 2007 given by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth*) defining the term of school segregation and officially prohibit such practices within the mass public education units. Nevertheless, various reports and studies talk about the existence of segregation practices within some education units. Therefore, there are education units where the ratio of

Romani students is significantly higher. Other studies (the Roma Education Fund, 2007) estimate that approximately one fifth of the Romani children are enrolled in education units where the ratio of Romani students is over 50%; moreover, in the case of the schools where most of the students are Romani, the ratio of the unskilled teaching staff is higher than the national average level. Therefore, the Romani students have access to an educational system of lower quality, which is also revealed by the significantly lower ratio of the students who pass the exam at the end of grade VIII: only 44.6% of the students coming from schools with a large number of Romani students unlike the national average level of 68%.

- **the Children with special education needs**

According to *the Report of the NGOs for Children (FONPC) regarding the compliance with the child's right for 2003-2007*, the issues of education and schooling of disabled children continues to be very present. In September 2006, the records of the National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights contained 66674 disabled children. Among them, approximately 50000 are of school age, 22550 being enrolled in special schools and only 10338 being enrolled in the individual system, and 3957 in the mass schools. Therefore, more than 15000 disabled children are not included in any form of education.

The elimination of discrimination of disabled children is one of the biggest challenges of the educational system. The educational offer does not always succeed in providing the conditions of a genuine equalization of chances to access to education for these categories of students. Although there is a specific legislative frame and the actions for the integration of the disabled children into the mass schools have already been implemented, some of the schools still look at this category of students with suspicion. According to the report mentioned above, the main causes of such situations are owed to the inadequate initial and continuous preparation of the teaching staff to work with these categories of students, but also to the lack of motivation from their part in order to change the working strategies.

- **other vulnerable groups (the institutionalized children, the migrants, the homeless children, the children with HIV positive, etc.)**

Over the last few years, a category of school population in difficulty, including in relation to the participation in education, is represented by **the children and youth whose parents are abroad working**. According to the ANPDC data, at the end of 2006, the parents of 59959 children in Romania were abroad working. Among the 41251 families these children are part of, in case of 14543, both parents are abroad, and in 22051 cases – only one parent works abroad, and in 4657 families the only parent providing for the children left to work in another country. Among the children left in the country, 51.23 are being taken care of by the fourth kin of relatives, 5929 are taken care of by other people (neighbors, friends of the parents', etc.), and 1807 are in foster homes, in the special protection system. These categories often face issues related to absenteeism, school drop out, low performances in learning or even deviant behavior – these being phenomena at least partially owed to the lack of family support.

The children and youth infected with HIV / AIDS continue to face problems regarding their participation in education and their social integration. The stigmatization, labeling and marginalization are still present, despite the fact that *the National Strategy for the Supervision, Control and Prevention of cases of infection with HIV / AIDS* explicitly stipulates the aspects focused on non-discrimination. Although the legislation stipulates the compulsoriness that the schools accept such students, there are still restraints not only from the teaching staff, but from the other students' parents. A sustained activity for the improvement of the status of this category of students is now being carried out by the NGOs conducting action programs focused on the social and professional reintegration of these young people and the minimization of discrimination.

2.2.b. What types of indexes and statistical data are being used for the supporting of the policies for education inclusion?

The main sources of statistical data regarding the policies for education inclusion are the following:

- the National Institute for Statistics (INS) – Through the statistical records regarding the education, the INS provides general data on the status of the students, the teaching staff and the material resources of the system at the beginning and end of each academic year; these data being disaggregated on the following criteria: the level of education, the mass education / special educational system, the grade, the age, the residence environment, the area, the county, the gender, the ethnicity, etc.
- the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth and Institute for Education Sciences – prepare each year a Report regarding the Status of Education, which includes specific data and analyses regarding: the expenses borne for education; the human resources of the educational system; the participation in education; the internal efficiency of the educational system; the results of students; the results of education on the labor market. The report includes differentiated statistical data and analyses per residence environments and genders.
- Diagnosis Studies on the Educational System – They are prepared by research institutes on specific topics such as: the Romani children's participation in education, the participation in education of children in the rural environment, the gender share in education, violence in schools, etc.
- the National Authority for the Child's Protection – It provides data regarding the children in difficulty.
- Reports for monitoring and assessment of various programs for intervention into education – They analyze topics such as: the access to education for the Romani children, the access to education for children in rural environment, the decentralization of education etc.

An important contribution to the support of the policies for education inclusion was also provided by various **programs with explicit purpose in the development of a system with indexes for monitoring and assessment of access to education**. Here are several examples:

- *The National Strategy for the Improvement of the Romani People's Status and the National Action Plan for the Romani Inclusion Decade* – The implementation thereof involves the development of specific indexes regarding the action for education inclusion for Romani children and youth.
- *The Project for Rural Education* – An individual constituent was developed as part of this program, having as purpose the establishment of a national system of indexes for the assessment and monitoring of the educational system;
- *The “Child's Rights Monitoring Group” PHARE Program* – The program, coordinated by the “Save the Children” Organization, developed a system of indexes for the monitoring of the child's rights, with a special chapter dedicated to their right to be educated.

2.2.c. Which aspects of the inclusion have been, are or shall be relevant for the educational policies?

Regarding the public policies in the field of social inclusion, we are able to identify the significant efforts made by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, as well as by other Government institutions and non-governmental organizations for the performance of several projects meant for the underprivileged people, with objectives both educationally, as well as in related areas supporting the access to education. Nevertheless, we cannot talk about a coherent policy integrated nationally on the inclusive education, the efforts made so far being rather sector-oriented and having as target only some of the social groups regarded as being at risk of exclusion.

- **Strategies addressing the underprivileged ethnic groups**

- *The Romanian Government Strategy for the Improvement of the Romani People's Status 2001-2010* – promoting the following areas of intervention: 1) the development of stimulation programs for school participation and minimization of school drop out, especially in the poor parts of the Romani population; 2) the analysis of the opportunity to organize various units for the elementary, secondary and vocational education for the Romani population (for professional training and reconversion); 3) the development and implementation of training programs for school mediator and of improvement programs for the teaching staff in the field of intercultural education; 4) the introduction of topics on prevention and removal of discrimination in the curriculum of the common section; 5) the introduction of various teaching modules focused on social and economic issues involving the Romani population in the training programs designed for specialists in various fields; 6) the development and implementation of programs meant to encourage the participation of the Romani parents to the educational processes inside and outside school; 7) the enactment of legislative actions meant to support the offering of facilities for the education of the Romani population and for promoting them for positions in the school administration; 8) the permanent provision of facilities and special subsidized places for the Romani youth attending university colleges and faculties; 9) the obligation of the school units and county school inspectorates to

constantly organize school recovery classes for the Romani population; 10) the attraction of the Romani youth towards the units for training public officers and staff in the public institutions; 11) the stimulation of the access to education through the assurance of one free meal for all the students in elementary and secondary schools.

- *The Decade for Inclusion of the Romani Population 2005-2015* – the initiative represents putting into practice the efforts of cooperation among the State public institutions and the NGOs actively involved in this field. This initiative took the shape of a document conceived as a public engagement assumed internationally by the Governments of nine countries in the region. The purpose of this strategy is the significant *minimization*, over a 10-year period of time, of the social and economic differences separating the Romani population from the rest of the population. Education is one of the priority fields of action, together with health, the labor force market and several welfare-related actions. Regarding the education, the following priorities have been defined: the assurance of access to the compulsory education for the Romani population; the improvement of the quality of the education; the implementation of integration and desegregation programs; the extension of the access to preschool education, the tertiary education (university) and to programs designed for the education of the adults.

- **Strategies addressing the disabled**

These categories of strategies approach the topic of inclusion throughout the entire economic and social system, representing a wider frame for specific inclusion actions in various fields, among which there is the education.

- *The National Strategy for the Protection, Integration and Social Inclusion of the Disabled between 2006 and 2013 "Equal chances for the disabled - towards a society with no discriminations"* – The objective of the Strategy is to provide the disabled with the fundamental rights and freedoms, for the maximization of the quality of their lives by the promotion of their social integration as active citizens who are able to control their life. The specific objectives are focused on: the maximization of institutional and administrative capacity (by the active participation in and access to social services; the consolidation of the public – private partnership; the promotion of provision of qualitative services meeting the individual needs of the disabled person; access to the physical and informational environment, to transport and houses; the correlation of the disabled child's protection system with the disabled adult's protection system); the assurance of support for the families with disabled members (by the identification of the needs and the assurance of family support services) and the maximization of the employment of disabled (actual early support, including by the development of educational system since early ages in relation to the identified needs for the maximization of the level of Social Inclusion; the employers' implication; the improvement of the educational and professional training system; the improvement of support services for employment; the development of support services for the disabled at their workplace).

- **Strategies focused on the improvement of the welfare and public health services, as a premises for the facilitation of the vulnerable groups participation in education**

These strategies and policies approach the issue of poverty, social exclusion and welfare services from a wider perspective, addressing all the causes that could lead to the exclusion of certain social groups. As part of these strategies, the education is defined as a constituent of the social security.

- *The National Strategy for the Development of the Social Security System between 2006 and 2013* – having as purpose the creation of a comprehensive and unitary system of social security nationally and the development of a pro-active and participative culture among the population and the social security beneficiaries, including the groups excluded from having access to such services. In the case of certain social groups with risk of exclusion (for example the disabled), the access to social security is essential especially regarding the support social security. From the perspective of the inclusive education, the support services mean the inclusion in the education units of the support teaching staff, as well as of the counseling and support services for the parents of children with CES. At the moment, these support services, although standardized from the legislative point of view (see the Status of Teaching Staff) do not function nationally.
- *The Strategy regarding the Early Education EE (as part of the Convergent Strategy for the Child's Early Development) 2008-2015* – The main objectives of the Strategy are the following: firstly, the assurance of the child's multiple needs by taking into account his/her health, nutrition, the time when he/she first goes to school, the psychological and social stimulation and, at the same time, the environment where the child lives. The second objective is focused on the assurance of each child's right to education and full development, so that he/she can have the opportunity to reach his/her full potential and the European and international standards. The last focused aspect is the one involving a convergent approach which meets the multiple needs of the child and the family and which leads to the maximization and use of the resources.
- *The National Anti-poverty Plan and Promotion of the Social Inclusion (PNAinc) 2002-2012* – Right after the Government enacted its Strategy between 2001 and 2004, the focus of the social policies in Romania and the European Union shifted from the one-sided control of poverty to a wider process of social inclusion and social development. This new approach led – in April 2001 – to the establishment of the Anti-poverty Commission for the Promotion of Social Inclusion CASPIS, approved by a Government Resolution in 2002. As the main coordination instrument for the social inclusion policies, *The National Anti-poverty Plan and Promotion of the Social Inclusion PNAinc* was enacted by the Government Resolution no. 829 / 2002. This is why the PNAinc fields of action (Chapter 14, "The Romani Population") stipulate eight strategic objectives. A priority in the approach of the objectives is the legal regulation of the dwelling identity, followed by actions in the fields such as education, health, economy, housing (pieces of land for the construction of houses and the distribution of agricultural fields), the changing of the joint self image and of the public image of the Romani population, the eradication of all kinds of

discrimination towards the Romani population and the promotion of a positive overall attitude.

- *The National Strategy of Social Inclusion for the Youth Leaving the Child's Protection System (2005-2008)* – The purpose of the strategy is to create mainly a legal and institutional frame meant to support the social and professional integration of the youth leaving the child's protection system, as well as the implementation of welfare policies and programs meant to assure their right to an independent and dignified life. The main specific objectives of the Strategy are the following: the improvement of the administrative and institutional frame both centrally and locally; the improvement, adjustment and harmonization of the legislative frame; the development of a financing system for the development of welfare actions for the youth; the development of the human resources in the field; the preparation of the youth in the formal and non-formal educational system for an active social life within the community; the assurance of access to various forms of professional training adjusted to the demands of the labor force market; the assurance of non-discriminating access to health protection services; the elimination of any kind of violence, abuse or white slavery; the support of the social inclusion on the labor market, especially by the assurance of a job and the consolidation of the ability the local authorities have for social integration of youth defined in the target group. The strategy addresses the youth coming from the child's protection system and who are – when turning 18 years of age – in a reeducating center or correctional facility, as well as for the homeless youth when turning 18.
- *The National Strategy for the Child's Rights Protection and Promotion 2008-2013* – The need for this Strategy comes from the fact that there is a certain necessity regarding the inclusion of all the issues concerning the child's right in all the areas, which – until now – has never been done at this scale before. The main objective of the Strategy consists in the mobilization of the necessary resources, making the involved factors be responsible and the assurance of an effective partnership for the protection and compliance with the child's rights, as well as the improvement of the child's condition and for increasing his/her value in the Romanian society. Moreover, this Strategy is meant to regulate the aspects related to the children's rights, in general, and also to the provision of equal chances for the fulfillment of these rights for vulnerable groups of children and youth, who are in need of special attention (the children with risk of being separated from their parents, abused, neglected or exploited children, disabled children, children with HIV / AIDS and serious chronic diseases, children belonging to ethnic minorities, etc.). The Strategy main field of interest is focused on the protection and promotion of the child's rights: making the family be responsible for the maximization, caring and educating of their own children; the promotion of and compliance with the children's rights; the maximization of the access to health services and the adjustment of medical services and the promotion of health to the children's needs; the provision of equal access to education for all the children; the compliance with the child's right to rest and the promotion of recreational and cultural activities; the monitoring of the child's rights, the compliance with the child's right to being protected, by multidisciplinary and inter-institutional intervention against abuse, neglect and exploitation; least but not

last, the promotion and support of the professional training for the specialists working in the field of protection and promotion of the child's rights.

2.2.d. What groups are considered the most vulnerable to various forms of exclusion as part of the educational policies? Which are the vulnerable groups not taken into account by the current policies?

The educational policies over the last few years have proven a constant and sustained interest compared to the problems of the vulnerable groups. This interest has been shown both through the initiation and the promotion of the appropriate legislative frame and through the preparation and implementation of specific strategies and programs. The most important vulnerable categories taken into account as part of the educational policies have been:

- **children and youth in the rural environment** – this category has benefited from complex strategies and programs focused both on the improvement of the educational facilities (buildings, teaching materials, books, educational premises with special purposes) and aspects such as: training of the teaching staff, adjustment of the educational offer to the specific to these areas, restructuring of the school network, development of school partnerships;
- **Romani children and youth** – who have benefited from Government and non-Government strategies and programs based on the preparation of a legislative frame meant to facilitate and sanction discrimination, as well as on more complex systems of educational, social and economic support.

Other vulnerable categories taken into account more recently as part of the educational policies are represented by **disabled children and youth**, **children and youth whose parents are abroad working** and **children and youth infected with HIV / AIDS**. Up to this moment, these categories have benefited from the preparation of a legislative and strategic frame allowing the formal integration into the mass education and of punctual needs for the assessment of the needs and intervention. Nevertheless, the strategies addressed to these categories have not yet been implemented by complex programs nationally, which could include systemic educational aspects such as: the appropriate training of the teaching staff, adjusted and specific teaching methodologies, education against discrimination, specific school and professional support and counseling.

2.2.e. How are the aspects related to inclusion approached by the educational reforms?

In the absence of periodical studies and analyses of the impact the educational reforms have over the system and under the conditions of a recent history for implementation of some of them, it is difficult for us to estimate exactly which are the direct and long-term effects various reform actions have had over the vulnerable categories.

On one hand, the educational reforms focused on the entire educational system have also taken into account the principle of assuring equal chances to access generally:

- the restructuring of the national curriculum based on objectives / skills – was meant to guide learning towards objectives and skills adjusted to the needs of a changing society and in accordance with the frame of the key skills developed at European level, having a potential impact on the chances to education several wider categories of students could have;
- the development of an assessment and examination national system for the students' performances – was meant to measure the skills of the students compared to the performance standards set by the national curriculum, capitalizing at the same time the assessment from the formative perspective, by making references to each student's individual progress;
- the extension of compulsory education from 8 to 10 grades – meant to have a direct impact on of the participation in education, the maximization of chances for professional inclusion of youth, as well as on the minimization of the number of early dropouts of the educational system.

On the other hand, other actions of educational reform were based on certain target groups and approached their overall problems emphasizing firstly the improvement of the difficulties and constraints in the field of education, and also the implementation of other categories of support actions (social, financial, material, etc.). This is why the most important aspects related to inclusion and approached as part of the educational reforms are the following:

- the development of an intervention system that assures the access to education for the underprivileged groups – focused on a set of complex actions such as: the preparation of the curriculum and curricular materials (guidelines, methodologies, manuals, teaching media, etc.), the training of the teaching staff, “the second chance” type alternative systems, the establishment of resources centers for the inclusive education, the improvement of the environment educational;
- the re-launching of the education in the rural environment – focused on a direct impact on the infrastructure of schools in the rural environment, on their material resources, on the training of the teaching staff, etc., as well as actions for the facilitation of access to education and maximization of the school performances thereof.

2.3. Systems, connections and transitions

2.3.a. Which are the main obstacles (economic, political, social) faced by the education for inclusion?

In accordance with the regulations and policies specific to Romania, all the children have equal rights to education. In the implementation of the specific actions at the level of the educational system there are constraints and difficulties whose analysis allows for the identification of certain underprivileged categories of children: the Romani school

population, the population in the rural environment, the children with special needs, etc. We shall present below the main obstacles the underprivileged categories face in relation to the access to education, as well as the difficulties for implementation of various educational programs addressed to them.

- **The Romani population**

The analysis of the political documents and of the assessing studies in the field (the *Common Memorandum in the Field of Social Inclusion, Barometer for the Inclusion of the Romani*, etc.) allows the summarization of several conclusions regarding the difficulties the Romani population has to face, which have a direct and long-term impact on the access and participation of the Romani children and youth in education, as well as on its quality:

- economic difficulties: the high level of poverty (characteristic for more than three quarters of the Romani population); the unfit living conditions (the lack of houses, the lack of household endowments, other inappropriate living conditions);
- educational difficulties: low level of training (more than one third of the Romani population is illiterate, high number of school dropouts, high number of children who do not go to school); skill deficit (which leads to the low participation of the Romani population on the labor market);
- social difficulties: limited access to the health and education services determined by the so-called formal exclusion due to the lack of birth / marriage / identification / residence papers;
- cultural difficulties: customs and traditions of the Romani communities which do not capitalize and do not promote the participation in education.

Regarding the implementation of the strategies and programs with objectives in the field of education for the inclusion of the Romani population, after the '90s this process saw various constraints generated by the low level of financial resources or by the low level of development of the skills necessary for the implementation of punctual programs. At the moment, the preparation and implementation of such national programs has allowed the partial overcoming of these categories of obstacles. The periodical assessments of these programs (for example, the *Access to Education for Underprivileged Groups Phare Program*) pointed out the persistency of certain external risk factors making the achievement of the focused objectives more difficult:

- the lack of interest and assumption of various public actions in the field of integration and inclusion promotion – at the level of schools, local communities, decision-makers at county level;
- the weak preparation of the schools for the absorption of funds meant for certain target groups;
- the lack of institutional cooperation between the involved parties, which led to delays and the creation of tensions;
- the lack of time resources, of financial and human resources involved in the program activities;
- the late beginning of the process for the decentralization of the educational administration, which led to various constraints in the implementation of the project.

- **The population in the rural environment**

The first studies regarding the Rural Education in Romania identified a lot of obstacles this category of population has to face educationally: difficulties of the schools in relation to the financial, material and human resources, problems regarding the insufficient involvement of the communities in the support of schools, constraints (family, individual, school) regarding the participation in education.

After the implementation of the *Project for Rural Education*, the periodical assessments of this project pointed out certain significant progresses regarding the improvement of the quality of education in the rural environment, together with the persistency of various obstacles in the assurance of equal chances to education for this category of students:

- the maintenance of certain deficiencies regarding the infrastructure and material resources of the schools: the insufficiency of education facilities with special designation (laboratories, workshops, gym, school libraries); hygiene and sanitary and microclimate conditions that are not the right ones in many of the education units; the lack of endowment with computers in nearly 40% of the rural schools and of the access to the Internet for the students in more than 80% of them;
- problems regarding the quality of the teaching staff: the maintenance of a small number of skilled human resources (over 8%); high number of tutors (31% of the entire teaching staff); a high number of teachers who have to commute (43%);
- difficulties regarding the participation in education and the school results: bad results obtained at the national tests, in comparison with the urban environment; low motivation for the continuation of education to higher levels;
- obstacles regarding the features of the family environment with impact on the access to education for the children: low level of incomes earned by many of the families living in these areas, low level of education some of the parents have, reservations shown towards the school and the role of education.

Other obstacles and critical points regarding the access of children in the rural environment to education, meaning to the preschool education, are pointed out by the *Strategy regarding the Early Education*: insufficient funds given by the local rural authorities for the preschool education; lack of a formal system for supporting alternative or community opportunities for the preschoolers in the rural environment.

- **The population with special needs**

The studies and documents for the assessment of the status of education for children and youth with special needs, prepared over the last few years (the *Study regarding the Education of Children with Autism in Romania*, 2007; the *Policies in Education for Students at Risk and for the Disabled in the South-Eastern Europe*, 2007 etc.), has pointed out to a series of obstacles in the educational system:

- the insufficient development of the educational opportunities and of the support services (material and financial) for this category of children, throughout the communities;
- the lack of communication between the decision-makers with duties in the field;

- the lack of an uniform curriculum nationally (school syllabus, methodological guidelines, standard working instruments), meant for the different categories of children with special needs;
- the insufficient development of the training programs (initial or continuous) meant for the staff (whether or not the teaching staff) working with this category of children;
- the lack of periodical monitoring nationally for the early discovery of the different educational needs, which delays the beginning of the participation in a specific educational program;
- the persistency of mentalities and preconceptions that are not favorable for the inclusion of children with special needs in the mass education.

2.3.b. Which are the most important facilitating factors in the field of education for inclusion?

For assuring the access of all children to education, the legislative frame – detailed above – guarantees the right to education (through means of educational intervention meant for the target groups at risk) and suggests various facilities designed for socially protect them. Some of these **facilities are focused on the entire educational system:**

- free of charge medical care services and logistical basis in the educational system;
- free of charge schoolbooks for the students in the compulsory education;
- free of charge medical care services and psychological support for the students and children in the pre-university educational system;
- full coverage of schooling fees for the School Preparation Class;
- co-financing the preschoolers and students' boarding in boarding schools and canteens;
- financial support for the participation of the teaching staff in the pre-university educational system to permanent training programs;
- financing of the social security meant to protect the child, taken from resources coming from local or county budgets;
- the granting of a daily free of charge snack to the students (the *Cornul si Laptele* Program started for the students in grades I to IV, and later on extended for the preschoolers and the students in gymnasiums too);
- the correlation between the provision of the allowance with criteria that encourage the participation in the senior secondary education,
- financial support for the access of students to the educational activities in non-formal context.

Another category of facilities refers to the specific categories of underprivileged population, at school risk or with low access to education. The most significant facilities focused on the following regulations are:

- the assurance of financial support for the categories of population earning low incomes (the *High school Money* Social Protection National Program);
- the awarding of social grants for the students in the public pre-university educational system, who come from socially and economically underprivileged families, underprivileged areas or areas with high levels of unemployment (The *Rural Scholarships* Program);

- the provision of financial support for the stimulation of acquisition of computers (The *Euro200* Program);
- the assurance of free of charge writing materials for the students coming from low income families;
- the assurance and subsidizing of transport for the students commuting from one place to another and coming from poor families;
- the assurance of special places for the access of various categories of population (Romani population) to higher levels of education and to high school;
- the assurance that the schools in the Romani communities have teachers for their mother tongue, books in Romani and facilitators;
- the assurance of the social protection for the children and students with special educational needs, through the appropriate institutions and staff;
- the rehabilitation of the school infrastructure and the endowment with educational means and materials for the schools in underprivileged areas or the population at risk (the rural environment, the schools with Romani population) for better access and conditions to study.

2.3.c. Which approaches and specific actions have been taken so that the educational system is more integrative?

For the development of an integrative educational system that assures the access to education for the categories of underprivileged population and for the vulnerable groups, various regulations in the field have been issued for the prevention and elimination of the discrimination and promotion of the social inclusion. These regulations have been accompanied by the preparation of national plans and strategies for social inclusion and have been supported by specific actions, such as the development of intervention programs and projects designed for various target groups: people with special needs, Romani children and youth, population in the rural environment, people with HIV / AIDS etc. The most significant such programs shall be presented below.

A first category of specific actions is represented by the **national programs meant for the various underprivileged groups**, which had the role of supporting the implementation of the different strategies and educational policy trends throughout the Romanian educational system.

- The *Access to Education for Underprivileged Groups* Phare RO Program – The general objective is to support the implementation of the Strategy the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth prepared for the prevention and control of marginalization and of the social exclusion through the assurance of access to a qualitative education for underprivileged groups. The main activities carried out as part of the program, in various of its development phases, were focused on: the preparation of curricular materials for the inclusive education; the organization of “The Second Chance” type programs for the elementary schools and for gymnasiums; preparation of the staff in the educational system (teachers, teaching staff, school mediators, managers at various levels on the decision-making chain) in the field of inclusive education; creation of an attractive school environment through the

rehabilitation of schools and the endowment with the right educational materials; the stimulation of the community to participate to the education by the development of Resource Centers for Inclusive Education; supporting the integration of the children with CES into the mass schools. In the academic year 2007 / 2008 the actions for the implementation of the 20041 and 2005 Phare RO programs continued in priority areas of the program.

- *The Project for Rural Education* – This is a program carried out between 2003 and 2009, and co-financed by the Romanian Government and the World Bank. The goal of the program is focused on the improvement of the access to a qualitative education for the students in the rural environment and has the following constituent parts: the maximization of the quality the teaching – learning activity has in the rural schools (the continuous training of the teaching staff through training activities carried out in the school; the assurance of optimum conditions for the operation of schools); the improvement of relationships between the school and the local community; the consolidation of the policies for monitoring, assessment and preparation in the field of school attendance. The results of the evolution assessments of the program point out to the improvement of the education process in the rural environment: the maximization of the children's participation in education, the improvement of quality for the teaching staff preparation, the significant improvement of the endowments of rural schools with teaching equipment and materials, positive changes regarding the involvement of the community into supporting the school.
- *The TVET Phare Program 2004-2006 for modernization of the vocational education facilities* – In 2007, the program continued the modernization of the vocational education facilities, being focused on the rehabilitation of the infrastructure for professional initial training and the assurance of the corresponding endowments, the development of the curriculum and training programs (for managers, teaching staff, social partners) in order to respond to the demands for the adjustment of the education and professional training offer to the demands of the labor market. These types of intervention were focused, inter alia, on the maximization of the access to vocational education for the students coming from educationally underprivileged areas (small- and medium-sized towns, the rural environment).
- *The Project for School Infrastructure Rehabilitation* – Is being carried out between 2004 and 2009 and its purpose is to provide equal access to o qualitative education through the improvement of the conditions and material resources in schools. This program continuous the activities carried out as part of the Project for School Rehabilitation (1998-2004), which included 1206 schools in the pre-university educational system in the following activities: works for rehabilitation, consolidation, reconstruction of schools; the endowment with plumbing and heating equipment and water facilities; the endowment with school furniture.
- *The Multiannual Economic and Social Cohesion Phare Program 2004-2006. The development of constant training for the staff in the pre-university educational system* – The target group of the project developed by the National Training Center for the Staff in the Pre-University Educational System, has been made up of staff in the high school educational system in the rural environment. The activities of the project were focused on the following aspects: the assurance of access to permanent training programs for teachers in the rural high schools; the improvement of the quality the

constant training for these categories of population has, by harmonizing it with the specific demands and the offer provided by the training providers; the revision of the standards as teacher or manager in accordance with the demands of the educational system.

Another category of specific approaches and actions is composed of the **punctual intervention programs developed in partnerships** (ministries, national and international state institutions, NGOs etc.). Some of these programs were addressed to the entire educational system and had as purpose the promotion of the inclusion principle globally. Here are some examples:

- The program regarding the promotion of the child's rights *We Too Have Rights* (2006) – Implemented de “Save the Children” Organization nationally, having as purpose the preparation of the students and the teaching staff in the pre-university educational system for knowing, supporting and promoting the child's rights. The project had a direct impact on the curriculum, through the introduction of various optional classes regarding the child's rights.
- The project *My Rights are Your Rights* (2006-2007) – This project was carried out by the Education 2000+ Center and its main objective was to initiate a campaign for the application in education of non-discrimination based on ethnicity or gender, highlighting the compliance with the human and child's rights. The beneficiaries of the project were the students, the teaching staff, the parents, the local authorities, the representatives of the local civil society, the media, etc.

Another set of punctual programs refers to well-defined target groups (the Romani children, the students in rural schools, the disabled children) and had as main objectives: the maximization of the participation in various levels of education for the underprivileged categories; the training of the human resources (students, teachers, parents, members of the community) involved in their education; the development of structures meant to promote the inclusive education; the information and sensitization of different categories of population regarding various aspects of the inclusive education. Here are some examples:

- *The Education for Information in the Underprivileged Rural Environment Project* (2000-2006) – It is a bilateral project of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth and the French Embassy in Bucharest and was developed for the provision of equal changes for access of schools in the rural environment to information and training through the establishment of 264 Documentation and Information Centers in school units of the underprivileged rural environment. The project continued and expanded to the urban environment between 2006 and 2008, when the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth financed and established 852 DICs, both in the rural environment and in the urban environment, providing to the students, the teaching staff and the local community a space for training, communication and information.

The Social Inclusion Program in Romania (2005) – Its objective was the social inclusion of the most underprivileged and vulnerable people in Romania and the improvement of their living conditions being focused on four constituent parts: priority intervention by providing grants for the poor Romani communities;

- the inclusive early education for the underprivileged groups (the Romani population); the assurance of welfare for various categories of groups at risk; through the consolidation of the institutional capacity to have access to the European Union funds. The inclusive early education constituent was implemented by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth in cooperation with the National Agency for Romani People, for the assurance of access to preschool education for the children aged 3-6 years, including those coming from underprivileged groups, such as the Romani minority. The main activities were focused on: the development of the preschool infrastructure educational in the
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- with large numbers of Romani people; the preparation of an inclusion curriculum for preschool education; the training of the staff in the preschool educational system; the promotion of integrated services and alternative community solutions for the preschool education.
- The *Qualitative Need and Equality in Education* Project (2006-2008) – Implemented in 2006 by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth in cooperation with active NGOs in the field of education and protection for the Romani population (Romani CRISS, The Roma Center Amare Rromentza), the project had the following objectives: the maximization of school attendance for the Romani children in preschool educational system; the support for school attendance of Romani students to high school and university systems, the promotion of specific intercultural aspects in their training.
- *The Pilot Intervention Program through the Priority Education Areas System* (2002-2007) – It was implemented by the Institute for Education Sciences, with the financial support provided by UNICEF Romania. The pilot project was focused on the implementation of the PEA system in Romania throughout the communities that are socially and economically underprivileged (more for the Romani population) and involved the following categories of activities: the development of curriculum (for children at school risk and for those who left school early); the training of human resources for the implementation of the PEA system; the assurance of the appropriate material resources; the community development.
- The ROMAin Project (2006) – As part of this project, Romania, through The National Agency for Romani People, established a partnership with three other European countries for the disclosure of the positive practices in the field of social policies regarding the inclusion of the Romani in Europe. The activities of the project were focused on the identification of successful intervention models in the field.
- The *Training of Teachers for Romani Activists* Project (2007-2008) – It was initiated by the Resource Center for the Romani Communities and was designed for the preparation of Romani teachers specializing in organizational management and project management as resource people for the implementation of the Government Strategy for the Improvement of the Romani Status, as part of Romania's accession to the European Union and for the access to structural funds.
- The *Power of the Network – Support for School and Social Inclusion of All Children* Project (2005) – Done by the RENINCO Association in cooperation with UNICEF Romania and with the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, the project was focused on the development of training supports and the performance of training

programs for teachers in all the counties, on the topic of social inclusion for children with special education needs.

- Programs for the establishment of information and intervention centers nationally, regionally and locally, in the field of social inclusion: The *VOCE Center for RENINICO Resources* (2005-2008) – with the role to inform, train and intervene in the field of inclusive education for disabled youth; *The Save the Children Young Voluntary Center* (2000-2008) – with the role to promote the children’s rights through projects and campaigns nationally.
- *The Together for an Inclusive Education Project* (2007-2008) – Financed by The Open Society Foundation, the goal of the project was to promote the inclusive education in Romania through the extension and the development of REI (the inclusive education network) as a force meant to change the mentality and attitude comparative to the integration of the disabled children into regular schools. The main target groups were: the teaching staff, the specialists, the parents, other organizations and institutions working with children with special educational needs.

2.3.d. Which specific approaches and actions are enacted in order to make the educational system more flexible by providing new chances to those who abandoned school or did not reach the appropriate level of qualification?

The comparative data regarding the *rate of early drop out of the educational system* index points to the fact that Romania is below most of the member states or of the state that recently acceded to the European Union. In 2007, the value of the index for Romania was of 19.2%, dropping however by more than 4 p.p. compared to the value of 2004 – 23.6%. It is estimated that the action for the extension of the compulsory education duration to 10 years (which also involves the achievement of the 1st level of qualification) contributes to the continuous minimization of early drop out of the educational system.

For the children and youth who prematurely abandoned school or those who did not reach the corresponding level of qualification, “The Second Chance” type educational programs are organized, the educational system in Romania proving its flexibility this way. Some of these pilot projects were carried out either throughout the central structures or throughout various punctual programs.

- **The “The Second Chance” Program**

The “The Second Chance” Program is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth. In its initial phase (1999-2001) it was implemented as a pilot project by The Education 2000+ Center in 6 counties and Bucharest (11 schools) and was focused on the completion of the basic compulsory education, the gymnasium, providing at the same time a 1st level qualification. The experience gathered as part of this project was continued through the *Access to Education for Underprivileged Groups Phare Program 2003*, through the following actions: the preparation and implementation of a supporting legislative frame, the development of the specific curriculum and educational

materials, the training of the program coordinators in each county. The Phare Program of 2004 continued these types of interventions through actions such as: the support for the schools so that they could implement the project locally, the preparation of informative materials for the promotion and disclosure of the project, the training of the teaching staff and of the resource people to various levels of decision-making (inspectors, directors of the Teaching Staff Associations, teachers).

The target group of the “The Second Chance” Program is represented by the children and youth who never went to school or who left the educational system too early and who are over the legal age necessary for them to be included / re-included into the mass education. This project was implemented in the elementary schools and the junior secondary education (with a 1st level professional qualification component). At the moment, the “The Second Chance” Program includes 216 schools in 27 counties: elementary school – 270 classes with 3993 students; the junior secondary education – 164 classes with 2354 students.

For the maximization of efficiency and for a better adjustment to the specifics and the needs of the target groups, the training program is flexible and proposes: a flexible duration of the studies (depending on the level of the students’ initial training), various forms of organization (daily / in weekends / during school breaks), more than one enrolment periods (twice a year) and the opportunity to choose the study language (Romanian or the languages of the national minorities, upon request).

Besides the specific curriculum for the fundamental and the general knowledge and for the occupational skills respectively, a priority of the program is the counseling part – with an important supporting role for the students who are part of the “The Second Chance” type programs, given their social and family characteristics. Regarding the assessment and certification, at the end of the classes the students receive a graduation certificate (for the elementary school), respectively a 1st Level Training Skills Certificate and personal portfolio certificate for permanent education (at the end of the program).

The overall objective of the “The Second Chance” Program consists in the extension of this type of educational intervention throughout the entire educational system in Romania.

- **The Intervention Pilot Program through the Priority Education Areas System (PEA)**

Another project meant for certain vulnerable groups of children of the right age for elementary schools and gymnasiums was the Intervention Pilot Program through the PEA System, initiated by Institute for Education Sciences in cooperation with UNICEF Romania, between 2002 and 2007. The project addressed the children with learning difficulties and those coming from socially and economically underprivileged environments, including Romani children.

Besides the objectives and activities carried out with the students at risk of school failure, the PEA Project also suggested a set of interventions such as “The Second Chance” for the children who left the educational system before graduating the compulsory education. The objectives consisted in the assurance of certain basic skills and the maximization of chances to secondary education and for professional inclusion of the youth in this category.

The main activities carried out as part of the project were: the preparation of a specific curriculum for the focused target groups (education plans, school syllabus, auxiliary materials for students); the preparation of class supporting media and the organization of training programs for the teaching staff (for the application of the new curriculum and on general education topics – “the school that educates” component); the establishment of a resource center with role in the development of active partnership with the parents and the community (parents’ education, adults’ literacy, counseling for students and their families). Besides these educational interventions, the program also involved other kinds of interventions: the rehabilitation of school premises, the endowment with pre-university educational system, additional teaching materials and equipment, as well as direct actions for the supporting of the students (the assurance of a daily meal and of the necessary writing materials).

The experience gathered as part of the PEA Project (as an alternative for overcoming the various differences and disadvantages in education) was capitalized through *The Access to Education for the Underprivileged Groups Phare* Programs and was promoted afterwards through the strategies of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth in the field of education, as well as through other educational policy documents such as *The National Pact for Education* (2008), proposed by the Romanian Presidency.

2.4. Participants in education and training

2.4.a. Which new approaches / directions are capitalized in teaching and learning for the maximization of the educational opportunity for all, for the improvement of the results of learning and for the minimization of disparities?

One of the important policies promoted by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth for the maximization of the access to education is the development of diversity issues in the national curriculum (see the Order no. 1529 / 2007 given the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth). The main proposed directions of intervention refer to the inclusion in the curricular documents (education plans, programs and schoolbooks) of various study subjects and specific themes regarding the cultural diversity (ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) and the training of teaching staff for the promotion, knowing and acceptance of diversity / alterity.

The innovative approaches / directions in the plan of education for all are promoted throughout the system and through certain specific programs and projects of intervention, which are focused on the assistance of underprivileged categories of students, among which: the children in socially and economically underprivileged environments; the students in the rural environment; the children belonging to national minorities, especially the Romani minority; the children with special education needs. Therefore, the strategies of innovative teaching-learning promoted by the current educational policies (OECD, 2006) and specific programs (detailed in Chapter 2.3.c) have led to the preparation and development of:

- actively-participating methods and techniques of learning, based on the experiential learning – usable both for the mass education, and for the education of different categories of underprivileged population;
- specific models and practices specific of the “The Second Chance” type education and of the remedial education – applied for the children and youth at school risk or who left the educational system too early;
- support methodologies for the teaching staff in teaching – learning centers, independent projects, learning contracts, working means being focused on the flexible use of time depending on the student’s needs, the provision / request of multiple perspectives on the ideas and events, the cooperation student-student and student-professor in solving problematic situations, the development of varieties of problematic contexts in learning, the approaching of difficulties in learning as opportunities for the development of better practices, the adjustment of the teaching process to the individual features and the differences between children;
- new forms of organization of the teaching activity – interdisciplinary teams of teachers, individualized training programs, teaching per groups of students, collaboration and cooperation activities, classroom as an interdependent community, organization of heterogeneous classrooms as far as capacities are concerned, individual support granted to students depending on their learning needs;
- new means of education – educational guidelines addressed to the students, the teaching staff, the school managers, the community representatives, including new approaches and directions for the promotion of an inclusive education (classroom management elements, individualized / differentiated teaching-learning strategies, application of the specific curriculum for various target groups); the use of modern technologies in the teaching activities or carried out outside school, as part of the community;
- new instruments for monitoring and assessment of the different aspects and indexes regarding the education inclusion (school attendance, graduation, school results, etc.);
- new training programs for the staff with duties in the field (teaching staff, support staff, specialists in various specific therapies for compensation and rehabilitation, school managers, representatives of the public institutions or the NGOs activating in the field) – for the application of the new curriculum, new methodologies and teaching instruments, counseling and education techniques for the underprivileged groups.

Other interventions indirectly contributing to the promotion of the inclusive education throughout the educational system refer to the following aspects:

- the development of structures meant to eliminate the school segregation and to promote qualitative education – the establishment of support centers for information, counseling and consultancy, being focused on the implementation of the principles of inclusion throughout the educational system; the redefinition of tasks and responsibilities of the staff working in the institutions with duties in the field;
- the organization of campaigns and programs for the promotion of values the inclusive education shows for the underprivileged communities;
- the promotion of new ways of communication and information – web portals for the promotion of the inclusive education, information and training networks in the field, practice communities, debate forums for specialists, parents and the large audience;
- provision of support services for the children with special education needs who go to regular schools: interschool speech therapy centers for children with speech disorders and learning difficulties, psycho-pedagogical support centers for children with behavioral disorders and adjustment difficulties, support educational services through the support / roving teaching staff for children with deficiencies, diagnosed in the child protection commissions.

2.4.b. How is the curriculum conceived and organized so that it can respond the diversity of students?

The principle of equal chances and the principle of flexibility have represented fundamental guidelines representing the foundation of the national curriculum. Regarding the design, development and implementation of the curriculum in the teaching activity, these principles were put into practice through specific ways for structuring the curricular documents (education plans, school programs, schoolbooks, etc.) and for the organization of the teaching activity providing the opportunity to respond to the variety of students.

Therefore, **the education frame-plans** are prepared depending on time (minimum / maximum number of study hours per week) and structure – nucleus curriculum (common section), differentiated curriculum (specialized, throughout the senior secondary education) and curriculum upon the school decision – providing the opportunity to adjust the school offer to various situations.

For the same purpose, regarding **the school syllabus**, both the nucleus curriculum, and the differentiated curriculum provide equal chances for all the students who are part of a study level, through a common learning offer. Moreover, the curriculum upon the school decision provides the education units with the opportunity to prepare their own curricular projects, which allows for the differentiation of the learning evolutions, meaning that they are adjusted to the students' needs and specifics. This can be done in different ways:

- the development of an advanced nucleus curriculum, meant for the recovery of the students who cannot reach the minimum level of objectives stipulated by the school syllabus; it includes compulsory reviewed and advanced contents elements through the diversification of experiences and learning activities;

- the preparation of an expanded curriculum meant for the students who can go beyond the level of the nucleus curriculum, therefore enriching the learning offer through additional contents;
- the development of a curriculum at the school level providing the chance to define special learning routes for students and which allow for the adjustment of the educational offer through optional subjects.

Moreover, the use of the **alternative schoolbooks** supports the same idea of providing the opportunity to choose, through the compliance with and the promotion of diversity.

Beyond the structural aspects described above, the current national curriculum provides the **responsivity towards** linguistic **diversity** (by the opportunity to study the mother tongue), ethnic (through the study of history and culture of the ethnical minorities) and religious (through the study of religion as a predominantly confessional subject, with the possibility to obtain dispense). Moreover, the education for the students with special education needs benefits from a specific curricular offer for the elementary schools and gymnasiums, the rights school syllabus and teaching-learning methodologies that are adjusted to this category of students.

At the same time, the regulations of the last few years (the Order no. 1529 / July 18th, 2007 given by the Ministry of Education and Research) explicitly supports the promotion of cultural diversity (ethnical, linguistic, religious, etc.) in the national curriculum through specific actions, among which:

- the inclusion of the aspects regarding the cultural diversity in school syllabus for all study subjects, per objectives, skills, learning contents, values and promoted attitudes (for example, in the History subject syllabus, debates on the history of all the minorities in Romania);
- the preparation of central offers of optional classes promoting cultural diversity (for example, the History and traditions of the minorities in Romania, intercultural education, etc.);
- the preparation of support materials designed for the orientation of the teaching staff in the application of cultural diversity issues as part of the teaching process;
- the introduction of specific modules regarding the cultural diversity in the curricular habilitation classes.

Besides these explicit provisions throughout the school curriculum, the educational policies in Romania support the promotion of diversity and inclusion through syllabuses and specific actions developed outside school (competitions, clubs, summer camps, etc.) on specific topics involving teachers and students alike.

2.4.c. Regarding the time allotted for teaching, how many training hours are betaken per year to learning how to read at the beginning of elementary school? For how many years?

The fluent, correct and expressive reading of a familiar / unfamiliar piece of text of variable size is set as goal, as a reference objective, in grade 1 and is prefigured through the activities carried out in kindergarten, in the School Preparation Class. The time allotted for teaching-learning reading throughout a school year is of 280 hours. During this time, the school syllabus mentions integrated activities for the reception of the verbal and written message (reading), as well as activities for verbal and written expression. (according to *The School Syllabus for Romanian Language and Literature for Grades I and II*).

For the *Romanian Language and Literature* subject, which is part of the curricular area *Language and Communication*, the frame-**objectives** for the elementary classes reflect the preoccupation for: the development of the ability to receive the verbal message; the development of the ability to express themselves verbally; the development of the ability to receive the written message (reading) and the development of the ability to express themselves in writing. Regarding the learning of reading, the specific objectives are focused on the following concrete aspects:

- to identify letters, groups of letters, syllables, words and phrases in typed texts and in handwritten texts;
- to find the connection between the text and the images accompanying it;
- to associate the graphic look of the word with its meaning;
- to find the overall significance of a given text;
- to read fluently and correctly familiar fragments;
- to read at his/her own pace a short familiar text;
- to show interest for reading.

Regarding the **contents**, the training of the ability to read is associated with contents units such as:

- the book – volume, cover, sheet, page, page numbering, directions of orientation on the page;
- small letters and capital letters. Groups of letters. The alphabet;
- reading words;
- reading sentences;
- reading texts.

These contents are approached gradually, between pre-alphabet / pre-spelling book period (which lasts for 7-8 weeks at the beginning of grade 1), to the alphabet / spelling book period (lasting until the end of the second semester and taking into account the particular features of the team of students) and in the post-alphabet / post-spelling book period (the end of grade I). The process of learning the continuous of reading – writing and in the next grades (grade II, grade III and grade IV), through specific objectives,

adjusted to the level of students' development, in total being 4 years for the development of reading skills.

2.4.d. How can be teachers be better trained and prepared so that they can answer the various expectations and needs of the students?

The training of the teaching staff for a better response to the various expectations and needs of the students is done both through initial training, and through permanent training programs.

Within the **initial training**, the study programs include a series of relevant classes which deal with the aspects regarding the intercultural education, the multicultural education, the children's psychology, the psycho-pedagogy of children with deficiencies, the psycho-pedagogy of children with specific skills. Also part of the initial training, the teaching staff preparing for the special educational system / field of special educational systems benefit from specific training (module of special psycho-pedagogy).

Throughout their careers, teachers attend, depending on their personal interests or the educational environment they work in, classes of **permanent training** approaching various topics in the field of inclusive education. Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth has been preoccupied over the last few years with the training in the field of special psycho-pedagogy for the teachers working in the mass education where children with special education needs learn: kindergarten teachers, elementary school teachers, tutors, specialists in various specific therapies of compensation and rehabilitation. Such training offers for the teachers in the field of inclusive education were developed both by public institutions with duties in the field (Teaching Staff Associations, Departments for Preparation of the Teaching Staff attached to the universities), and by the NGOs with activity in the field of inclusive education.

Another way to train the teachers for a better response to the various expectations and needs of the students was provided by a series of programs and projects carried out in the field of education, promoting models and examples of good practice in the field:

- the programs carried out nationally (*The Access to Education for Underprivileged Groups Phare Program, The TVET Phare Program, The project for Rural Education, The Social Inclusion Program in Romania*) have implemented important constituent parts of training for the teachers. The developed modules were focused on the preparation both in areas of general interest in the field of education or on the implementation of certain reform-related actions, as well as in specific areas of the inclusive education: the assurance of access to education for underprivileged groups, the ways to adjust the teaching activity to the expectations and needs of the students, the involvement of the community into supporting the inclusive schools, the development of networks for information and counseling in the field;
- some punctual projects involved interventions highlighted specific aspects of the inclusive education and were directly focused on the education units / target groups

facing issues regarding the inclusion, providing counseling and support for the improvement of the school strategies for this purpose;

- other types of projects involved in the preparation of teachers for the promotion of education inclusion were based on the development of networks for communication and information in the field, with insight for the promotion of cooperation and exchange of expertise.

2.4.e. How could the formal and non-formal learning environments be organized in a more effective way so that they could guarantee the inclusion of all the students?

Correlated to the other factors providing the optimization of the educational activity for the assurance of inclusion for all the students, the environment (both the formal and the non-formal) holds a special share in the architecture of the process intended.

The results of the different programs developed nationally, with objectives meant to assure equal access to education (for example, guidelines developed as part of the *Access to education for underprivileged groups 2004 Phare Program*) provide support to the teachers in the effort to make the **formal learning environment** an effective one, providing suggestions and examples of good practice for this exact purpose. Therefore, the teachers are familiarized with new ways of organization for the formal learning environment, so that there are guarantees that all the students shall be included, both physically and relationally.

The physical environment has to be an interesting, comfortable and pleasant, friendly and stimulating environment organized on criteria focused on:

- the decoration of the classroom depending on the students' age, the types of activities (individual or group) to be carried out, the personal learning style, the physical aspects of the room, the kind of relationship between the teacher and the students, with the students getting involved in the decoration of their classroom;
- the decoration of the space with attractive elements and colors representative for the cultures the students are affiliated to;
- the functional organization of the space, the display of furniture and materials so that all the students have equal access to them;
- the creative and effective use of the display areas in order to support the learning process;
- the organization of shows with the activity products for all the students, therefore cultivating self-esteem, mutual appreciation, empathy, respect, the sense of community in the classroom, the feeling of each child that he/she belongs to the group and the development of learning communities.

For the optimization of the relational learning environment, the following actions are being recommended:

- the encouragement of the mutual respect between students;

- the cultivation of cooperation in order to keep all students interested and to encourage the various perspectives;
- the provision of equal chances, irrespective of ethnicity, status, etc.;
- the stimulation of all students and the maximization of their performance;
- the promotion of intercultural aspects and the active implication from the community;
- the cultivation of pragmatic values of the activities carried out;
- the stimulation of students to share their personal experience with the others and the capitalization of their diversity;
- the posing of questions / issues stimulating for the students and generating a pleasant feeling while doing the activity, meant to cultivate self-confidence;
- the provision of individual additional support for the students;
- the promotion of positive attitudes compared to the learning process;
- the cultivation of open relationships between the teacher and his/her students;
- stimulating the students to be responsible for their own progresses and making them acknowledge such progresses;
- the use of simple and direct salutation formulas in the relationship with the students;
- the implication of the parents and guardians in the official decision-making process;
- the preparation of optional classes based on a process of consultation with the community (for example: *Multicultural Education; Oral History; Community Development; Our Environment; My Rights, Our Rights; Education for the Child's Rights*).

The **non-formal** learning **environment** can be regarded both as support for the formal environment, and as its alternative and complementary function as part of the education process. Regarding the facilitations provided for the inclusion of all the students, the non-formal environment can be organized in a more effective way in a variety of ways:

- the capitalization of a diversity of locations in the performance of different types of activities; selecting them based on the same principles of security, comfort, pleasant, open and stimulating mood, just as for the formal learning environment;
- the implication of the families and communities and making them responsible for the design, organization and assessment of the non-formal activities;
- the encouragement of the community members to attend the non-formal activities (for example, concerts, sports competitions, trips), to organize and coordinate some of them; the stimulation of the voluntary activities;
- the provision of community services: the use of school as a basis for sanitary and social services coordinated by public institutions or NGOs;
- the cooperation between agencies, institutions and NGOs with duties and interests in the promotion of educational inclusion.

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