

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT: REVIEW OF TRAINING
PROGRAMS IN ROMANIA IN THE
CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

EDUCAȚIA CONTINUĂ ȘI DEZVOLTAREA URBANĂ: CURSURILE DE FORMARE PROFESIONALĂ CONTINUĂ DIN ROMÂNIA ÎN CONTEXTUL INTEGRĂRII EUROPENE

Alina-Irina POPESCU

Lecturer Ph.D., Faculty of International Business and
Economics, Bucharest University of Economic Studies
E-mail: alina.popescu@rei.ase.ro

Abstract

The paper presents the evolution of the demand for continuing training courses in Romania, over the period 2007-2011. The general aim was to discover possible impacts of Romania's accession to the European Union on the demand for qualifications. Findings reveal a re-orientation of trainees from lower-qualification courses to higher qualification courses, in particular courses for specialisation and improvement of competences required by the economic integration of markets and technological developments.

Keywords: continuing education, continuing training, labour market, European integration.

JEL CODES: M12, M53, M51

Rezumat

Lucrarea prezintă evoluția cererii pentru cursurile de formare profesională continuă în România pe perioada 2007-2011. Scopul general a reprezentat identificarea impactului potențial al aderării României la UE asupra cererii de calificări. Rezultatele indică o reorientare a cursanților de la cursurile pentru obținerea calificări reduse către cursuri de calificări superioare, în special cursuri de specializare și perfecționare de competențe cerute de integrarea economică a piețelor și dezvoltărilor tehnologice.

Cuvinte cheie: educație continuă, pregătire profesională, piața muncii, integrare europeană.



Proceedings of the eighth Administration
and Public Management International
Conference

1. INTRODUCTION

The European integration raised multiple challenges for Romanian labour market. Integrated in the European labour market and under the greater influence of globalisation, rapid technological developments and demographical evolution, the Romanian labour market undergoes major structural changes that generate insecurity. At European level, the need for the flexibility of workers and jobs' security emerged under the form of a new concept: flexicurity. Flexicurity implies contractual agreements on the labour market, comprehensive strategies for continuing training throughout the entire lifetime, efficient policies for the labour market, and updated systems for social security. Hence, continuing training through lifelong learning gains a major importance in ensuring workers' employability, flexibility and mobility on an integrated European labour market.

2. METHODOLOGY

Continuing training (CT) programs were analysed after Romania's accession to the European Union, to capture eventual changes the accession has determined on the demand for qualifications in Romania.

The general research objectives were: the investigation of the qualifications and specialisations required by Romanian individuals from selected counties of Romania over the period 2007-2011, and the capture of potential changes in the structure of the demand for continuing training programs after Romania's accession to the European Union.

The demand for continuing training programs was analysed using the number of graduates of continuing training programs. Data were collected from the Committees for Adult Professional Training, for 13 counties with different economic development: Alba, Arad, Argeş, Bistriţa Năsăud, Braşov, Galaţi, Gorj, Hunedoara, Ialomiţa, Prahova, Satu Mare, Suceava, Vâlcea. These counties were selected according to the geographical distribution of the industrial activity in Romania. Results presented in this working paper refer only to these counties.

3. FINDINGS

The need for skilled employees has determined the training providers, NGOs, and public institutions to offer a wide range of continuing training programs to cover the needs of Romanian employees.

According to the national certification body (CNFPA), there are five types of continuing training courses: for initiation, for qualification, for re-qualification, for specialisation, and for improvement. The initiation represents the acquisition of minimum knowledge, skills and abilities to perform an activity. The qualification represents the set of professional competences that allow an individual to perform activities particular to a job or profession. The improvement consists of the development of professional competences within a qualification. The specialisation is a particular form of training that aim the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a narrow area of a profession. The re-qualification consists of the acquisition of specific competences of a different profession than the initial profession.

The requirements for specialised skills have generated an increase of the demand for continuing training for specialisation and improvement after Romania's accession to the European Union (Figure 1).

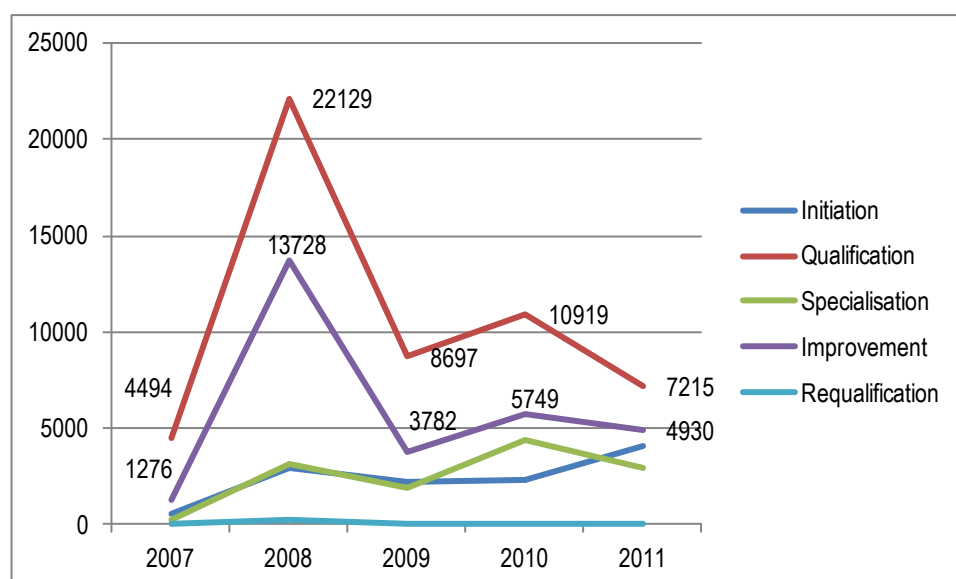


FIGURE 1. - EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF GRADUATES OF CT COURSES PER TYPE OF COURSE
 Source: author's calculation based on CNFPA data

The number of the graduates of continuing training courses for specialisation constantly increase from 2007 (245 graduates) to 2010 (4364 graduates), and then registered a decrease in 2011 (2910 graduates). The number of continuing training courses for improvement had a similar evolution, from 1276 graduates in 2007 to 5749 graduates in 2010; less graduates were registered in 2011 (4930 graduates).

Throughout the period 2007-2011, a single re-qualification program was organised by Automobile Dacia SA in 2008. A number of 242 workers were re-qualified to perform specific jobs at the Dacia factory.

The analysis of the number of graduates per type of training provider indicates an increased importance gained by private providers (Figure 2). Private providers are in general small companies that prove able to adapt to the changing needs of the Romanian labour market. A short look at the environment where they organised continuing training courses reveals a slow but an increased orientation towards the rural environment. Public providers registered a decreasing share in the total number of graduates, from 28 percent in 2007, to 12 percent in 2011. The third category of providers of lower importance as regards the total number of graduates is represented by private providers of public interest. In this category, regional trade and industry chambers were included, due to their establishment as NGOs of public interest.

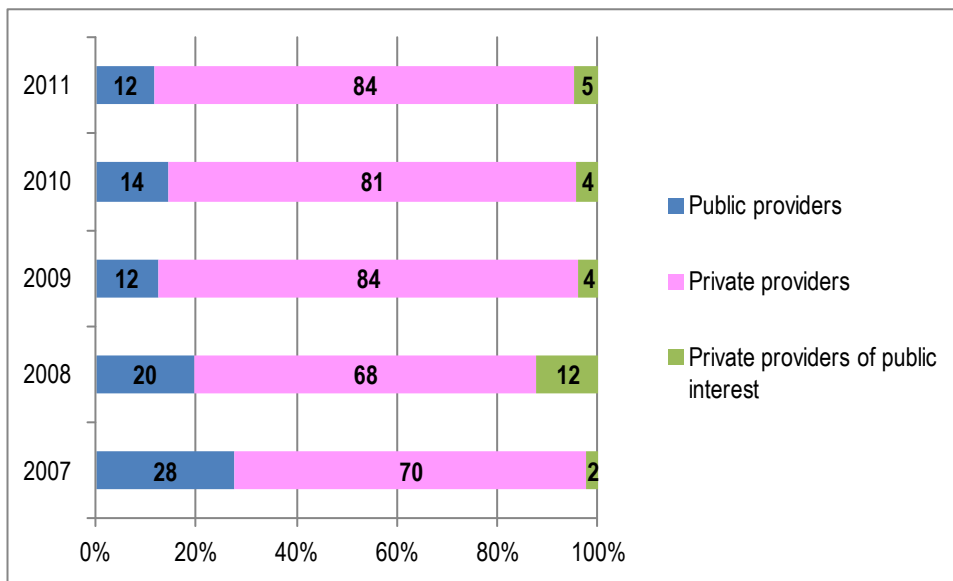


FIGURE 2. - EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF GRADUATES OF CT COURSES PER TYPE OF PROVIDER
Source: author's calculation based on CNFPA data

The workforce development through continuing training courses had been influenced by the availability of funds for human resources development from the European structural funds (Popescu and Popescu, 2011). The structural operational program for the development of human resources (SOP-DHR) made possible the partial or entire funding of continuing training courses. The SOP-DHR Programme is financed by the European Social Fund and is implemented in Romania through 7 Priority Axes in a total number of 21 key areas of intervention (KAI). The 1st Priority Axis "Education and training in support for growth and development of knowledge based society" aimed to enhance the development of flexible lifelong learning pathways and increasing the access to education and training by delivering modern quality initial and continuous education, providing thus a financial support for individuals seeking continuing education.

From a county-level perspective, the demand for continuing training courses varied according to the economic and social conditions in the respective counties (Figure 3). Out of the range, the Gorj County registered a record number of 21031 continuing training courses graduates in 2008. Also, a high number of graduates of continuing training courses were registered in Prahova: 6011 graduates in 2008, 6419 graduates in 2010, and 4314 graduates in 2011. The county of Brasov ranks third from the investigated sample when it comes to the number of graduates of continuing training courses: 3639 graduates in 2008, 1888 graduates in 2009, and 3849 graduates in 2010, and 3942 graduates in 2011.

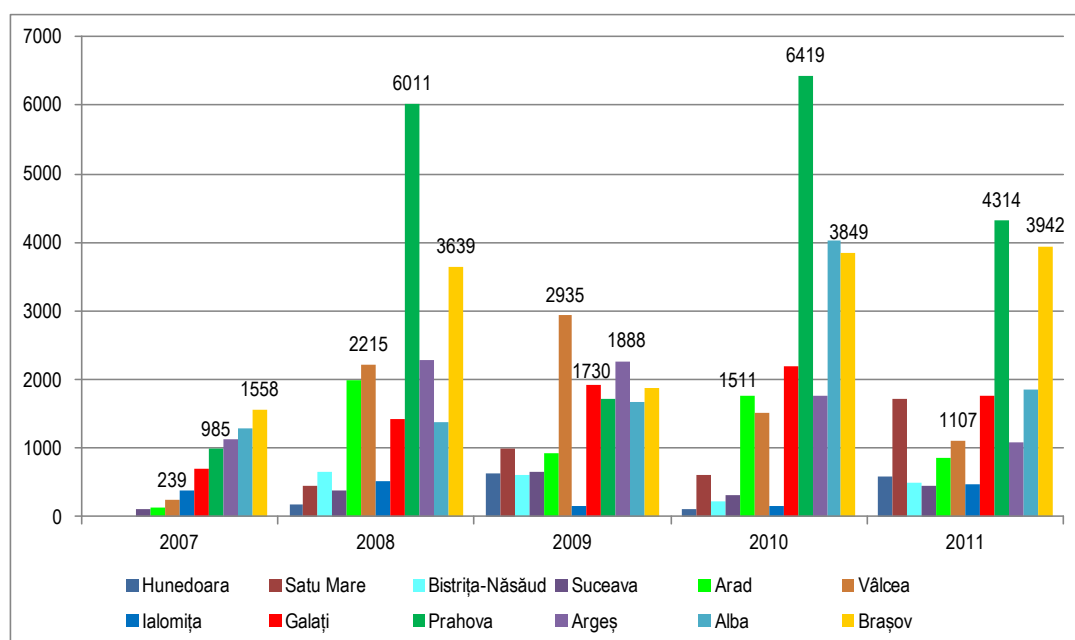


FIGURE 3. - EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF GRADUATES OF CT COURSES IN SELECTED COUNTIES
 Source: author's calculation based on CNFPA data

A selection of several continuing training courses and the number of their graduates over the investigated period is presented in Table 1. Agriculture plays a major role in Romania's economy, role that could be easily demonstrated by the share of the employment in agriculture of 29.1 percent in 2010 (INSSE, 2011). Qualifications in agriculture were requested over the entire analysed period, although a decreasing trend is to be noticed in the last years. As of 2008, an explosion of the demand for basic computer skills was registered in the analysed counties, explosion that tempered in 2011. The interest for foreign languages gradually increased, showing that competences for communication in English were the most requested by Romanian workers. German emerged as the second foreign language in terms of the number of graduates. The management of public funds obtained as grants required particular skills and competences, like project management skills, trainer and public procurement expert certification.

TABLE 1. - EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF GRADUATES FOR SELECTED CT COURSES

CT course	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Apiarist	1128	522	222	441	354
Fruit grower	289	165	0	167	64
Farmer	446	2397	315	161	167
Horticulturist	200	342	132	701	185
Chef	293	14	281	144	300
Chamber maid	98	17	233	17	118
Hairdresser	89	163	148	217	365
Waiter	130	40	249	81	142
Trade worker	67	2397	645	669	490
Data input, processing and validation	82	1282	1232	1315	175
Computer and network operator	11	479	96	343	28
Trainer	24	2092	643	1056	744
HR inspector	255	12	1315	763	1518
Work security inspector	285	43	141	184	268
Work security and health inspector	0	2172	810	138	108
Project manager	115	706	566	884	249
Communication in English	32	611	336	881	72
Communication in German	0	4	14	725	51

Source: author's calculation based on CNFPA data

4. CONCLUSIONS

The interest of Romanian individuals for the continuing training programs increased gradually, since the accession of Romania to the European Union. The economic and financial crisis has also impacted on the demand for qualification programs. A major determinant of the interest paid to this type of professional development programs was the financing available for human resources development from European structural funds. In addition, new legal requirements for several positions were introduced, and led to a boost of the demand for several qualifications and specialisations. In conclusion, the challenges for flexicurity of the Romanian labour market that rose in the context of European integration may be partly addressed though offering continuing training to workers, that find themselves in the continuous need to update and upgrade their skills and competences.

Acknowledgment

This work was co-financed by the European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, project number POSDRU/1.5/S/ 59184 „Performance and excellence in postdoctoral research in the field of economics in Romania”.

REFERENCES

- CNFPA (2012): "National Registry of Authorised Professional Training Providers". Retrieved from: <http://www.anc.gov.ro/index.php?page=registrul-national-al-furnizorilor-autorizati>, accessed 31 May 2012.
- INSSE (2011). *Statistical Yearbook of Romania for 2011*, Bucharest.
- Popescu, A.I., Popescu, L. (2011). "The Contribution of the European Structural Funds to the Development of Human Resources in Romania from a Regional Perspective", *Crises after the Crisis. Inquiries from a National, European and Global Perspective, Proceedings of the 18th International Economic Conference IECS*, Sibiu, Romania, May 19-20, 2011, CD-ROM Collection, Editura Universității "L. Blaga" din Sibiu, pp. 320-327.