

EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "LIFELONG LEARNING" PROGRAM IN ROMANIA, WITH REFERENCE TO THE 2007-2013 PERIOD

PITORAC RUXANDRA

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER, WEST UNIVERSITY OF TIMISOARA

e-mail:ruxandrapitorac@gmail.com

ASPRONIU (CODREAN) ANDREEA

PHD STUDENT, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, WEST UNIVERSITY OF TIMISOARA

e-mail:codreanandreea@gmail.com

Abstract

The main objective of this article is to study the effects of the implementation of the “Lifelong Learning” Program (LLP) in Romania, during 2007 and 2013. The employment policy in Romania involves implementing programs, plans and strategies set at EU level and the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) is part of the mentioned strategies and plans. Our research paper also aims to highlight the influence of this program on employment by continuing the adults’ professional training and it starts with a presentation of the LLPs sub-sectorial and transversal programs. To achieve the objectives, we studied the cross-sectorial sub-programs included in the LLP obtained by Romania compared to the total of the European Union, and we achieved a correlation between employment and the total amount of grants registered in Romania.

Keywords: *Lifelong Learning Program, Romania, European Union, employment*

JEL Codes: *E24, I20, I25*

1. Introduction

Both at EU level and at national level the emphasis is put on a pragmatic approach to the problem of employment, noted being the concern for developing and implementing employment policies regarding employment, for finding appropriate solutions to harmonize the guidelines, strategies and action plans in the EU Member States.

The employment policy involves a large number of actors and factors influencing the labor market, of which dominate the educational factors - through various training programs aimed at training and re-training individuals to become more employable, factors which contributes to reducing unemployment and increasing the employment rate.

Lifelong Learning induces the challenge to understand, explore and provide new dimensions of education, such as self-directed learning, learning on demand, collaborative learning and organizational learning. A theory of lifelong learning should investigate learning’s new frameworks required by the accelerated changes in the nature of work and education, of which [2]:

- An increasing prevalence of “high technology” jobs, which require support for learning on demand, as it is impossible to cover all concepts
- The inevitability of change in the development of the professional life
- The widening gap regarding opportunities provided to educated individuals compared to the ones provided to the less educated individuals

The main characteristics of the lifelong education may be revealed by the comparison with the traditional education [3]: if in the case of the traditional education the teachers are the sources of knowledge and they transmit the knowledge to the individual learner, in the case of the lifelong education the teachers guide the students towards sources of knowledge and they learn acting in groups, and from each other.

In this regard, our research presents and analyzes the lifelong education program, „Lifelong Learning”, and also analyzes the effects of applying this program on employment in Romania, referring to the period 2007-2013.

2. The Lifelong Learning Program

The Lifelong Learning Program is a program regarding education and training, of European funding. It allows individuals to pursue learning opportunities at all stages of their lives. It consists of four sub-sectorial programs, each focusing on different levels of education:

- *Comenius* - for schools,
- *Erasmus* – for higher education,
- *Leonardo da Vinci* – for vocational education and training,
- *Grundtvig* – for adult education.

Four transverse programs complete the above mentioned ones, to ensure getting the best results:

- *The cooperation and innovation policy* (KA1),
- *Foreign Languages* (KA2),
- *Information and Communication Technologies* (KA3) and
- *The dissemination and exploitation of results* (KA4).

The Comenius program focuses on the first stage of education (preschool, primary and secondary) and follows the improvement of skills and competences necessary for the personal development of young people and the teaching staff, to improve mobility between different Member States, to enhance partnerships between schools, to encourage language learning, to enhance the European quality and dimension of teacher training as well as to improve tutorial approaches and school management. [5]

The Erasmus program was launched in June 1987 and it is one of the most popular community actions addressed to formal and vocational higher education and the professional training at tertiary level. It supports the accomplishment of a European Higher Education Area and it strengthens the contribution of the higher education and of the vocational education to the process of innovation [6]

The Leonardo da Vinci program focuses on the education and professional training, other than the one at tertiary level. It addresses the needs of both the learning and the teaching and as a result it is addressed to all parties involved: students, teachers, trainers, learning institutions and organizations, companies and other bodies related to lifelong learning or employment. [9]

The Grundtvig program was launched in 2000 and it aims to provide adults ways to improve their knowledge and skills, to help them keep mentally fit and have a greater potential for employment. In addition to adult education it also includes teachers, trainers and facilities that provide these services (research centers, NGOs, enterprises). [7]

The transversal programs are complementary to the presented sub-programs and aim to ensure obtaining the best results. They promote European cooperation in two or more sub-programs. In addition, they seek to promote the quality and transparency characteristic to the Member States' educational system.

The four key activities are:

1. *The cooperation and innovation policy* (KA1) is designed to support the policy of development and cooperation within the Lisbon process, the working program Education and Training 2010, and the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. Its objectives are to obtain comparative analysis of educational systems in the European Union and support activities concerned with the development of measures on lifelong learning and on cooperation networks. [10]
2. *Foreign Languages* (KA2), this activity aims to increase awareness on the acquisition of language skills, increasing access to language learning resources and develop teaching materials [11]
3. *Information and Communication Technologies* (KA3), by using of which the aim is to improve the learning environment and experiences. These include issues such as the use of simulations, learning by discovery, attracting back to education those who dropped out, learning outside the school environment and reducing the digital partition between those with access to technologies and relevant skills, compared to those without the respective access. [12]
4. *Dissemination and exploitation of results* (KA4), promotes setting up a framework for the effective exploitation of LLP results at sectorial, regional, national and European level. The objective of these activities is to ensure that the results of the program are properly recognized and widely implemented [13]

Another program included in the LLP is the Jean Monnet Program, which aims at stimulating teaching, the reflection and debate on European integration in higher education institutions. [8]

3. Results and discussions

Below we present the Lifelong Learning Program in Romania during the 2007-2013 period, considering the grants obtained on key sub-programs and activities in accordance with European statistics.

As can be seen in Table 1, only the Jean Monnet Program and the Grundtvig Program received funding in all the 7 years of study, the foreign language program KA2 had no funding at all, the programs KA1 (policy cooperation and innovation) and KA3 (information and communications technologies) received funding only for the duration of

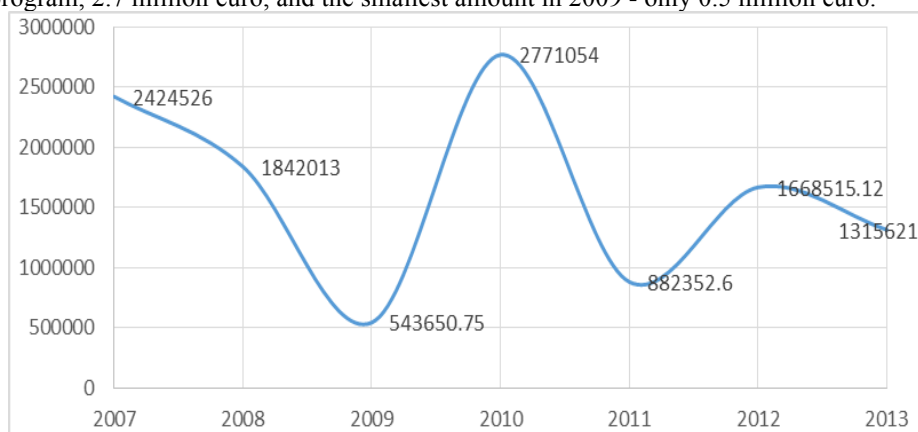
two years in 2012 and 2013, respectively in 2008 and 2010, and the program KA4 (Dissemination and exploitation of results) received funding only in 2010.

Table no.1. The value of LLP grants accomplished by Romania (euro)

Grants	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Jean Monnet program	161,280	70,760	287,120	169,176	256,182	231,383	320,546
Comenius	179,343	277,543	0	137,170	0	0	99,200
Erasmus	924,864	0	0	488,494	0	280,785	0
Leonardo da Vinci	309,435	277,534	0	335,365	346,543	351,804	0
Grundtvig	849,604	825,928	256,531	261,500	279,628	548,573	590907
KA1	0	0	0	0	0	255,970	304,968
KA2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KA3	0	390,248	0	827,526	0	0	0
KA4	0	0	0	551,823	0	0	0
TOTAL	2,424,526	1,842,013	543,651	2,771,054	882,353	1,668,515	1,315,621

Source: Lifelong Learning Programme – Statistics, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results_projects/statistics_en.php

Studying the LLP overall value we can observe (Figure no.1) that in 2010 Romania was granted the most money for this program, 2.7 million euro, and the smallest amount in 2009 - only 0.5 million euro.



Source: Table no.1

Figure no.1. The dynamics of grants received by Romania

In order to have a better analysis we present below the total value of grants accessed to at EU level on key sub-programs and activities (Table no.2) during 2007-2013, according to EU statistics. We note that for this period the program had a foreseen budget of 7 billion euro.

In the first two years, 2007 and 2008, the Grundtvig program had the highest value in the program's total - of 21 million euro and respectively 19 million euro, and the next period 2009-2014 the Erasmus program was placed first among the accessed programs.

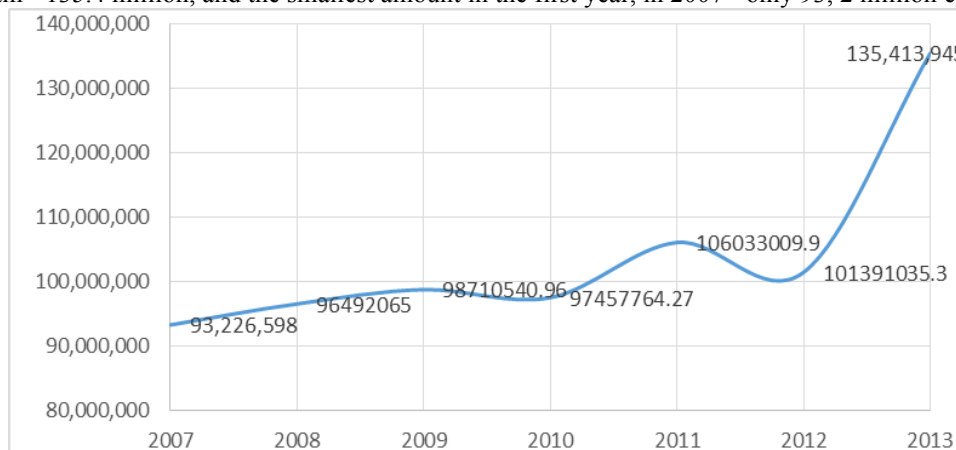
Table no.2. The total value of the Lifelong Learning Program at EU level (euro)

Grants	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Jean Monnet Program	3,285,747	4,338,404	4,769,559	5,714,933	8,252,144	8,189,545	10,156,036
Comenius	11,896,538	12,874,893	13,538,346	12,981,460	14,633,108	13,272,157	23,150,598
Erasmus	17,465,207	18,648,036	19,602,010	19,260,813	21,330,587	19,890,082	28,447,010
Leonardo da Vinci	14,519,858	15,323,477	15,812,046	15,597,156	18,720,247	17,522,917	17,120,176
Grundtvig	21,173,103	19,409,224	17,453,851	15,381,144	18,477,209	18,878,646	19,316,925
KA1	2,707,790	3,404,158	3,517,069	3,684,131	2,119,367	1,984,525	15,360,972
KA2	9,817,651	10,135,124	9,872,639	9,392,574	9,395,697	9,790,076	8,532,750
KA3	9,386,303	9,624,002	10,684,862	12,557,199	11,291,101	9,835,562	10,627,419
KA4	2,974,401	2,734,747	3,460,159	2,888,354	1,813,550	2,027,525	2,702,059

TOTAL	93,226,598	96,492,065	98,710,541	97,457,764	106,033,010	101,391,035	135,413,945
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Source: Lifelong Learning Programme – Statistics, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results_projects/statistics_en.php

Studying the LLP value at EU level there can be seen in Figure no.2 that in 2013 the most funds were accessed for this program - 135.4 million, and the smallest amount in the first year, in 2007 - only 93, 2 million euro.



Source: Table no.2

Figure no.2. The dynamics of grants accessed at EU level

By making a comparison between the total grants accessed by Romania in the European Union total we can see that our country has reached very little of the total amount allocated to the program - an average of 1.62%. The highest percentage was recorded in 2010, of 2.84%, and the lowest percentage was recorded in 2009, of 0.55%, as shown in Table no.3.

Table no.3. LLP grants access by Romania in the total EU (%)

Years	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
RO/UE rate	2.6	1.9	0.55	2.84	0.83	1.65	0.97

Source: Table no.1 and Table no.2

Thus, it can be seen that Romania accessed on average 1.62% of the programs granted by the European Union, values above the average were recorded in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012, and values below average were recorded in 2009, 2011 and 2013.

As it is known, this program is of particular importance in continuing the vocational training of adults, as it provides increased and diversified professional skills, leading to greater mobility and (re) integrating them into the labor market, leading also to increased employment. It is actually the hypothesis which was tested in this research.

According to the results obtained in the research, a correlation was made between the LLP grant value and employment, but the correlation coefficient that resulted was of only 0.435. It is a low coefficient, which can be attributed to the fact that the amount of grants was not significant.

4. Conclusions

In Romania, in recent years, the educational offer was greatly diversified satisfying labor demands; however, the lack of a structure regarding monitoring every educational system has brought about major imbalances, such as narrow specializations, a wider than necessary offer for some occupations considered to be better paid, fewer offers for other areas financially ignored, the lack of consideration for alternative educational services or private investment in the field. [1]

Lifelong learning is a necessity imposed by the transition to a competitive economy, adapted to the new demands of the modern society, of a society based on knowledge. Increasing skills at all levels is a condition for employment, ensuring equal opportunities and social cohesion.

An important role is played by education, which must be alert to signals from the labor market in this respect, the training systems being obliged to provide training opportunities tailored to different target groups at different stages in life - which must adapt both to societal demands and to the needs to increase the level and quality of jobs.

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