



## Youth Policy and Participation

Potentials of participation and informal learning in young people's transitions to the labour market. A comparative analysis in ten European regions.

### National Case Study Report – Romania

### YOYO WP 6

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# 1. Introduction

Under the circumstances of economic restructuring, the Romanian labour market has faced a real crisis of employment. Privatisation and restructuring, besides their contribution to the economic reform, have resulted in massive layoffs and proliferation of unemployment, which the emerging market economy could not absorb. Decline of national economy and unemployment growth have affected first of all and more acutely the young population. The discrepancies between the training offered by the formal education system and the skills and knowledge requested by employers, the insufficiency of job offer, the employers' view of young people – considered to be inexperienced, as well as the difficult access to information regarding labour market, and the deficit of professional orientation and counselling have been identified by youth research as main problems that young people encounter during the transition from education to labour market. These problems have induced a pressure on policy makers and on non-governmental organizations as well to initiate and promote policies/projects aimed at addressing them.

For the purpose of our project, we have selected three cases/agencies that have been carrying out projects aimed at addressing some of the key problems above referred to, such as information and counselling, coaching institutionalised young people for independent living, and vocational training/re-training.

While selecting the case study agencies, we focused on nongovernmental/non-profit organizations and public services carried out in cooperation with such organizations, which are perceived by youth as more flexible and adaptable to new tendencies as compared to governmental institutions.

As regards the fields of interventions, we have tried to cover both the “soft” sector of youth work and the “hard” sector of labour market oriented projects.

If relating the findings of our analysis with the main features of the social-economic context of youth transition in Romania as briefly described above, it is obvious that all three cases analysed within our project were aimed at helping young people to easier overcome difficult and often critical problems in their transition to adulthood, with special emphasis on accessing the labour market. Although not explicitly referred to as turning points by our interviewees, contacts with case agencies and experiences with their projects have resulted in positive changes both at the subjective level of

motivation and empowerment, and at the objective level of their (re)gaining a foothold on the labour market. Additionally, through their innovative approach based on non-formal education and informal learning, the analysed cases proved to be closer to young people expectations, as revealed by the interview analysis. One could also mention that the different way of approaching the attendees by case agencies has offered a good practice example to public agencies, which external experts from such agencies have welcomed.

If taking into account the increasing number of projects in the fields of youth information and counselling, vocational training/re-training, and disadvantaged youth from childcare institutions, one could say that our selected cases reflect in micro the main trends in youth transition focussed projects at national level. They might be not among the most successful projects in respect of their social impact, but in respect of their level of implementation and with due consideration of the resources available to the case agencies, they can be considered relevant for the specific fields of intervention. The three cases analysed are:

1. The Youth Association for Education and Science SOLARIS.

The “project” we have considered for the purpose of our analysis is in fact a dimension of SOLARIS activity that can be categorized as vocational training scheme. In consideration of their tailoring the training schemes to the actual demand of the local labour market, as well as of their preoccupation to find employment for their attendees, the project can be placed in the “hard” sector of youth policies, as defined in the YOYO Working Paper 1.

SOLARIS is located in Pitesti City (Arges County), but has branches in neighbouring counties, so that their training activities exceed the Arges County area.

2. Youth Information and Counselling Office (SZINFO)

SZINFO was established in June 1993 as a project supported by the Local Council of Odorheiu Secuiesc City, based on the initiative of some young people. It is a public service aimed at helping young people from Odorheiu Secuiesc to overcome the problems they are confronted with through provision of information and professional counselling. When opening its doors to the public, in early 1994, SZINFO was the first public information and counselling centre for youth in Romania. It is a typical youth work project.

The project is being implemented in cooperation with SZINFO Foundation, which was established in November 1995, with the main aim to support the functioning of the information and counselling office. Additionally, it provides support to young people and their organizations, as well as to other institutions and associations whose activity aims at improving the situation of youth.

3. “We Want To Become Independent”- a project carried out by the Community for Child Support Association (CCSA) in Bucharest

The project is part of series of projects aimed at preparing young people from orphanages for independent living and improving their employment perspectives. This project was also aimed to serve as a didactic example for educators working in childcare institutions on how to develop skills required by the independent life among their attendees. Among these skills they focused on social skills (good behaviour, how could someone make friends, how to resolve a social incident and so on), practical skills (how to cook, how to go shopping, how to make a personal budget) and communication skills (how to communicate with others, how to obtain an interview for a job, how to write a CV, how to begin and maintain a relationship and so forth). On the continuum between “soft” and “hard” measures/policies, this project is closer to the “soft” sector but through its objectives related to social prevention and improvement of employability it touches the “hard” sector as well.

## **2. Context of Youth Transitions**

### ***2.1 Characterisation of transition system***

The most credible recent document regarding the social-economic situation in Romania after the fall down of socialist system is, in our opinion, The National Plan for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion, prepared by the Commission for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion at the Romanian Government, under coordination by professor Catalin Zamfir, correspondent member of the Romanian Academy, and approved through Governmental Decision. While preparing the above document, the Commission has undertaken large consultations with academic institutes, governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. It includes both analyses of the main dimensions of transition in Romania during the last 12 years

and measures/strategies to combat poverty and promote social inclusion. The information in this section regarding social-economic context in Romania is mostly taken from this document<sup>1</sup>.

### **Economic context: stop of the economic decline and re-launching of the economic growth.**

The evolution of macro-economic indicators illustrates a sinuous evolution of the economic activity after 1990, showing that the reforms having been implemented were not always the right ones. After 1990, the Gross Domestic Product has also had an oscillatory evolution, the periods of growth having not ensured recovery of diminution accumulated during the periods of economic decline. In 2001, the second year of economic growth after three years of decline, the GDP has grown by 5.3% and in 2002 by 4.9%.

The economic decline has been stopped in 2001 through new macro-economic policies implementation, which have resulted in growth of the GDP and re-launching the investments and exports. Re-launching of economic growth has become a top priority of the new government, which has opted for a more pragmatic approach in respect of both meeting the accession criteria for EU and improving the living standards.

As regards the structure of the Romanian economy, the weight of the services sector has raised, while the weight of the other sectors has diminished. The contribution of the private sector units to the creation of GDP has been rising each year, up to 67.1% in 2001, as compared to only 16.4% in 1990 (higher weights in 2001: agriculture – 97.8%, constructions – 81.1%, and services – 75%).

Another characteristic of the Romanian economy during the period 1990-2000 was the high level of inflation. The economic disequilibria over the transition period, the slow advancement of the reform, the persistence of financial indiscipline, the lack of a real competition between economic agents and perpetuation of monopolist positions of some of them, are some of the factors that explain this high level of inflation. However, beginning with the year 2000 the inflation is obviously decreasing.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Plan Concept, Government of Romania, July 2002, (available in Romanian on [www.gov.ro](http://www.gov.ro))

## **Social Context – poverty and social exclusion**

The confuse and disjointed transition period after 1989, on a feeble social ground that has suffered 15 years of sacrifices, has generated an accentuate impoverishment of large categories of population. Social exclusion is probably the process with the worse social effects, because of its paralysing effect on the straighten up capacity. Extreme poverty generates social exclusion through perpetuation and reproduction at the level of young generation. There are also other processes that could lead to exclusion, such as criminality, street children, evolution in closed communities based on marginal patterns, which hinder the capacity to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the modern society.

Labour market context: deficit of employability that affects nowadays young generation, which is mainly linked to educational deficit, qualification deficit and professional experience deficit.

The potential of employability in the context of the new economic configuration has significantly decreased as well. The employability depends upon, on the one hand adequacy of qualifications to the labour market demand, and on the other hand the availability of work places. This dependency should not be seen only from a quantitative perspective, but also from a structural perspective. We would assert that this second perspective should be given priority in the current circumstances, when business start-ups and subsequent job creation depend mainly upon infrastructure and business facilities, and less upon availability of labour force. The potential for territorial mobility of the labour force is severely limited by poor housing opportunities in places where more jobs are available along with lack of financial resources, which affects mainly young people looking for employment. Additionally, the impoverishment of population has affected both education attendance, with consequences on the qualification dimension of employability, and the potential for mobility of young people. It is difficult to estimate the actual level of attendance of post-secondary education in the context of a real boom of private universities and colleges in Romania, for which consistent data on the structure of attendees are not available, but it seems that young people from rural areas are less and less attending the upper-secondary school (lyceum) and almost do not continue their education over this level any more. One could say that a deficit of employability affects nowadays

young generation, which is mainly linked to educational deficit, qualification deficit and professional experience deficit.

Privatisation and restructuring, besides their contribution to the economic reform, have resulted in massive layoffs and proliferation of unemployment, which the emerging market economy could not absorb. Decline of national economy and unemployment growth have affected first of all and more acutely the young population.

## **2.2 The main problem groups**

Although marginalization is a concept quite frequently used in both political discourse and social scientists' milieus, no operational definition has been developed so far in Romania and no official/accredited records of such groups exist. References that are more usual regard social groups that are vulnerable to marginalization and/or social exclusion. We will therefore refer to vulnerable youth groups and try to reveal current official approaches in this respect.

While referring to vulnerable youth groups, we embrace the approach of the second trends report (1999) prepared by the Research Correspondents' Group at the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe. Based on this approach, vulnerability is defined as "the scarce response capacity of certain persons and groups inside society to confront, adapt or cope with specific economic, social, cultural and political challenges to which they are permanently exposed"<sup>2</sup>. We then call vulnerable those groups of young people that are confronted with "severely restricted opportunities for secure employment, social and economic advancement and personal fulfilment"<sup>3</sup>.

It is important to notice that the above approach was embraced by the former Ministry of Youth and Sports<sup>4</sup> as well, while developing the National Action Plan for Youth, so that we can assume having an official definition of vulnerable youth. In this document, "Categories of Youth in Situations of Integration Risk" have been defined as follows: "represent subgroups (micro-groups) facing special situations:

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<sup>2</sup> apud: "Vulnerable youth: perspectives on vulnerability in education, employment and leisure", Council of Europe, Youth Directorate, 1999, p.6

<sup>3</sup> cf.id.

<sup>4</sup> Within the government restructuring that took place during summer 2003 the Ministry of Youth and Sports has been dissolved, its responsibilities in youth field being taken over by the newly established Ministry of Education, Research, and Youth.

- poor people:
- from areas with a precarious social and economic development, from poor families, living below poverty threshold;
- have no possibilities and means of sustenance”<sup>5</sup>

Some groups that are exposed to a high risk of social exclusion are being mentioned in the National Plan Anti-poverty and for Promoting Social Inclusion: street children and young people, young people brought up in orphanages, families having lost their lodging and having little chances to get a new one, disorganized families, families with long lasting unemployed, victims of alcohol and drugs abuse, a significant part of Rroma population.

### ***2.3 Policy discourses and strategies to include unemployed youth***

The objectives and strategic guidelines of governmental policy in youth field have been stated under chapter 6.6 of the Governing Program and further developed in strategic documents prepared by main governmental agencies responsible for social policies, than approved by Government Decisions.

### **Employment Policy**

Within the period 1990-2000, the institutional system of the labour market has been restructured, taking advantage of international assistance as well. During all these years the system diversified and improved, becoming a public service for employment.

The main institution responsible for labour force related policy is the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity, and Family (M.L.S.S.F.), which draws up the strategies and policies of vocational training-retraining, employment and social protection. M.L.S.S.F. carries out its attributions by means of its organisms and institutions, namely: the National Agency for Employment (N.A.E.), County Agencies for Employment (C.A.E.) and the Municipal Agency for Employment in Bucharest (M.A.E.); the General Directorates of Labour, Social Solidarity, and Family, the

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<sup>5</sup> National Action Plan for Youth, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Bucharest, June 2001, p. 9

National Council of Vocational Training for Adults (N.C.V.T.A.), Labour Inspection (L.I.).

In respect of their fields of action and specific functions performed, the institutions of the labour market can be grouped into four categories:

- institutions of the demand (economic agents, governmental organisations and public administration, third sector);
- institutions of the offer (family, school, non-formal educational institutions);
- institutions of balance of the labour market (Government, trade unions, business unions, NGOs),
- institutions of the social protection (Government, governmental agencies for employment and social solidarity, NGOs).

The Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family has recently developed a National Action Plan for Occupation of the Labour Force (PNAO)<sup>6</sup> consistent with the European strategy in the field of employment. PNAO is a political document enacted by the Romanian Government, which streamlines the governmental policy in the short and medium run towards increasing participation of the labour force and decreasing unemployment, supporting lifelong learning, ensuring labour market efficiency and flexibility in respect of rapid economic changes, and avoiding discrimination and social exclusion. While preparing the PNAO, the horizontal objectives of the European strategy for occupation of the labour force have been observed. Thus, similarly to the above mentioned strategy, PNAO is grounded on four pillars, namely:

- I. Improvement of employability;
- II. Development of entrepreneurship and creation of work places;
- III. Promoting adaptability of entrepreneurs and of their employees;
- IV. Ensuring equal opportunities for men and women.

For the fulfilment of governmental objectives, the National Agency for Employment elaborates annually the National Program for Occupation of the Labour Force.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. National Action Plan for Occupation of the Labour Force, [www.mmss.ro](http://www.mmss.ro); information within this paragraph has been selected from the above document.

## Youth policy

One cannot speak about a theoretic official definition of youth policy in Romania. However, we can find a descriptive definition in both Governing Program and National Action Plan for Youth (NAPY). Therein youth policy is presented as integral part of public policy aimed at achieving a lasting social, economical and cultural development. The main objectives to be achieved are included in the Governing Program, while specific strategies to achieve these objectives are detailed in National Action Plan for Youth (NAPY). The implementation of NAPY is explicitly based on partnership with the structures of the civil society and social research is given an important role in both streamlining the strategies and providing feedback to be taken on board for the purpose of corrective measures.

The NAPY is meant to be a tool for implementing the governmental policy in this field, aiming to create conditions for developing the innovative abilities of young people, through “increasing their participation into the economical life, promoting a training system in order to facilitate the transition of young people from the education system to the labour market” (Policy in the youth field, Governing Program 2001-2004), taking into account that, in the current conditions of economy’s globalisation, the initiative and entrepreneurship are basic premises of the economical and social development.

The goal of the NAPY is to get Romania closer to the EU countries standards regarding the social and economical participation of youth, as well as the implementation of specific measures for fighting marginalization and social exclusion. Its general objectives are:

- facilitating/stimulating the youth participation (with all its aspects);
- decreasing the impact of the risk factors upon youth;
- harmonizing the legal framework in youth field with the E.U. one<sup>7</sup>.

### Main structures involved in youth policy

At governmental level, the main responsible authority is the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, which has de-centralized services in each county. A National Agency for Supporting Youth Initiatives has been established in 2002. It has

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. National Action Plan for Youth, Ministry of Youth and Sports, June 2001

incorporated the three already existent specialized units at national level: Youth Information and Counselling Centre (INFOTIN), National Agency for the EU “YOUTH” Program (EUROTIN) and Youth Studies and Research Centre (CSCPT), which became departments within the Agency and a newly created Department for Supporting Youth Initiatives.

For the purpose of coordination between governmental authorities involved in youth policy implementation, an Inter-ministry Committee for Youth has been established.

The lower Chamber of the Parliament has a special Committee for Education, Science and Youth.

Some county councils and local councils have also committees for (inter alia) youth problems.

At non-governmental level, a lot of youth and youth related organizations have emerged after 1989, some of them having developed regional and national levels networks. Although several attempts have been undertaken towards setting up a “National Youth Committee”, no successful achievements could be mentioned so far. It is important to notice that both the governmental responsible authority and the parliamentary committee responsible for youth are willing to have such a non-governmental partner and are doing now their best to support the initiative of main political and non-political youth organizations towards setting up such a representative body. Youth organizations within main political parties are quite active and seem to have reached some influence on youth policy.

## **Education policy**

The necessity to create a partnership, a new interaction, between schools and universities on the one hand and the economic, administrative and cultural environment, on the other hand, was pointed out in the first streamlining documents on the education reform. This means permanent adaptation of the education system to the labour market demands.

The school and vocational orientation of pupils is structured on two directions:

- within the frame of the curricula activities, especially by counselling and orientation classes;
- within extra-curricula frame, especially by the psycho-pedagogical assistance centres.

The difficulties faced by youth in the professional insertion, unemployment, the exigencies of the mobility and vocational training have led to a true explosion of the orientation and counselling functions, resulting in its moving from the periphery of the educational system to the centre. As a result, a curricula area of counselling and orientation was created, which can help pupils to consciously orient to various types of way out of the education system.

The Ministry of Education, Research and Youth has received strong support from World Bank and Phare program (European Union) to implement a wide reform in the field of education. In what regards the school programs, within the frame of the Phare-Vet Program, for reform of vocational and technical education, the program for orientation and vocational counselling – for vocational schools, program for Vocational informing and orientation, respectively, were developed from 1997.

The Romanian Government has adopted in April 2001 the Strategy for Improving the Condition of Roma<sup>8</sup>. Its objectives include the promotion of equal opportunities and eliminate any kind of discrimination, in a climate of collaboration between central and local authorities and representatives of the Roma communities, with a focus on decentralized implementation of the national strategy through local authorities and participation of non-governmental organizations.

## ***2.4 Dominant types of trajectories***

Despite the positive evolution of the economic context during last years and the efforts to accelerate the education reform as previously referred to, one cannot speak about structuring of dominant types of trajectories from school to work. Although our research experience and available research information do not allow generalization, we may assume that young peoples' trajectories to labour market in Romania are more or less similar to one of the types revealed by our cluster analysis (see below).

## **3. Sample description**

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Government Strategy for Improving the Condition of Roma, 2001, [www.gov.ro](http://www.gov.ro).

The sample of young people interviewed included 44 people, recruited with the support by the three case study agencies. 31 young men and women were interviewed within WP2 (two people interviewed as trendsetters, who had no relevant relation with the projects, have been not considered for this analysis), of whom 11 were re-interviewed within WP5. 13 young men and women were interviewed within WP5. In respect of the projects/cases the interviewees were related with, one could see in the table below that those related to the CCSA project were younger than those related to the other two cases. This can be explained, one the one hand, by the specific target groups of the respective projects, and on the other hand by our focus on young people who are closer to labour market related issues, which has been considered by the case agencies while selecting the interviewees.

**Table 1: Interview sample by Gender and Age Groups**

<i>Project</i>	No. persons interviewed	Gender		Age Groups		
		Male	Female	14-18	18-21	Above 21
SOLARIS	21	10	11	1	10	10
SZINFO	13	7	6		2	11
CCSA	10	7	3	3	5	2
Totals (per column)	44	24	20	4	17	23

The most difficult to re-interview young people from WP2 proved to be in the case of SOLARIS, where only a few of the project attendees use to keep in touch with the implementing organization. Although they have felt this organization close to them and sensitive to their problems, as revealed by our interviews, most of the attendees seem to perceive it as a service provider, which one can apply to when necessary. Nevertheless, feed-back from our interviewers and from SOLARIS management as well has revealed that some of young people initially interviewed simply did not see any relevance/usefulness of their participation in the interviews, and therefore considered this would be a waste of time. Some “failures” have been registered in the other two cases as well, but in Bucharest it was about two girls who had left the country to join their mother in Greece, and in Odorheiu Secuiesc only two people actually refused, while one had left the city and another two were not available for personal reasons.

The sample was quite balanced in respect of gender and included members of the main ethnic minority in Romania. However, this didn't provide for significant findings in respect of social differences.

**Table 2: Interview sample by Education and Occupation**

<i>Project</i>	Achieved Level of Education				Occupational status				
	At most primary	Lower Secondary (gymnasium)	Upper Secondary (high school/vocational)	Higher	(continuing) Training/education	Unemployed	Employed	Of whom Unskilled	Of whom Skilled
SOLARIS		2	18	1	9	3	9	5	4
SZINFO		1	7	5	1	5	7		7
CCSA		6	4		3	3*	4	2	2
Totals (per column)		9	29	6	13	11	20	7	13

\* Were in the process of concluding the hiring forms at the time of being interviewed

As revealed by the table above, most of young people in our sample had achieved upper secondary education or higher. Is this accounting for resources, and could we subsume these young people to one of the constellations of high (or at least sufficient) resources referred to in YOYO Working Paper 2? If considering the poor family background of most of our respondents, along with the lack of employment opportunities often determined by the inadequacy of training received as compared to the labour market demand, we would rather say no. As regards their level of “engagement”, except some young people with a certain “trendsetting” potential, our respondents range closer to the “disengagement” side of the continuum rather than to the “trendsetting” one.

It is no matter of course to subsume the whole sample to one or another “constellation”. What we are trying to emphasize is that our findings based on the analysis of answers received from young people in our sample could rather apply to social constellations of “low-low” and “low-high” types than to the ones of types “high-high” or “high-low” (Cf. YOYO Working Paper 2, chapter 3).

### **3.1 Clustering**

In our attempt to cluster the sample we have first looked at the types of trajectories that our respondents have followed since graduating compulsory school. We have found on the one hand “classical” trajectories (classical only in respect of sequences, as employment trajectories have been no more linear) meaning compulsory education, followed by additional education (higher and/or vocational education), then by employment, or only continued education, and on the other hand “yoyo trajectories”, meaning formal education followed by zigzagging between employment and unemployment, eventually with short-term vocational training/re-training attendance. Secondly, we have looked at the impact that labour market has had on these trajectories. This led us to sub-cluster the sample in respect of both types of trajectories above referred to. Among young people with “classical trajectories” we have found one cluster consisting of people who had no direct contact with the labour market (just continuing education), and one cluster consisting of people who had successfully gained a foothold on the labour market after their school graduation. Among those with “yoyo trajectories” we have found two clusters as well: one consisting of young people whose trajectories were mainly marked by unemployment, with short periods of employment, and one consisting of young people whose trajectories were mainly marked by employment, with short unemployment periods. As one could have expected in consideration of both our sampling methodology and the national context of youth transitions to the labour market as described above, the largest cluster is that including young people with “yoyo trajectories” and mostly affected by unemployment (almost half of the sample). The next larger cluster includes young people continuing education, which also corresponds to a still widespread pattern in Romanian society, although in rural areas economic difficulties have more and more obstructed participation of young people in post-compulsory education. The other two clusters, including young people with more successful trajectories (of both classical and yoyo types) are smaller. They mostly include young people whom we have either interviewed as trendsetters or assigned “trendsetting potential” and re-interviewed them as such.

The clusters and exemplary biographic portraits for each cluster are presented above.

Name, gender	Age	Education	Transition steps										Particular background
<b>School, followed mostly by unemployment combined with temporary jobs</b>													
David, male	18	Vocational school	unemployed	Book-keeping courses								Abandoned by the family	
Cezar, male	21	High-school	2 years of faculty (abandoned)	unemployed	Bar-tender, waiter courses								
Lavinia, female	22	High-school	Has worked occasionally	Various courses	unemployed	Tailoring courses	Employed as dressmaker						
<b>Dragos</b> , male	19	Pupil, 8th grade	Drop-out	Has worked as a mechanic	Resumed his education	voluntary activities	continues education in high school - evening school					School abandonment	
Flavius, male	25	High-school	occasional jobs	confectionary courses									
Corina, female	22	High-school	unemployed	temporary employment	qualification courses - shoes maker	employed							
Daniel, male	27	High-school	occasional jobs	employed for 6 months, than laid of because of firm bankruptcy									
<b>Amalia</b> , female	20	High-school	unemployed	2 years of faculty (abandoned)	Re-qualification courses	employed	voluntary activities	English courses	advertising agent				
Gina, female	23	post-high-school	occasional jobs	unemployed								Separation from the family	
Octavian, male	21	post-high-school	unemployment										
Serban, male	21	post-high-school	Vocational school	unqualified worker	unemployed	High-school at evening classes	Bar-tender						

Name, gender	Age	Education	Transition steps									Particular background
Lavinus, male	23	post-high-school	unemployed	employed for 6 months, than resigned	unemployed							
Titus, male	28	High-school	unemployed	Post-high-school	employed	married	recently resigned	unemployed				
Florina, female	23	student	unemployed	Occasional jobs								
Manole, male	21	Vocational school	occasional jobs	continues studies	employed as cooker within a social assistance project							abandoned
Andrei, male	21	Vocational school	Courses (chef)	Employed 6 months	Unemployed; voluntary activities	Involved in artistic projects	continues studies in vocational high school	works as cooker and lives with "Life and Light" Foundation				Disorganized family
Aurel, male	19	graduated compulsory school	took waiters courses	occasional jobs	now is preparing employment forms							disorganized family
Gore, male	20	Pupil, 8th grade - remote education	occasional jobs	2 years employed with salubrity service	now employed as unskilled worker							disorganized family
Costin, male	20	Vocational school	occasional jobs	took cooker courses	now is preparing employment forms							disorganized family
Constantin, male	19	left school in the 10th grade (high school)	occasional jobs	now is preparing employment forms								disorganized family
Florian, male	20	Vocational school	took cooker courses	occasional jobs	now employed as unskilled worker							disorganized family

Name, gender	Age	Education	Transition steps										Particular background
<b>School, followed mostly by employment with short unemployment periods</b>													
Ionica, female	26	High-school	Worked as a shop assistant	unemployed	Post-birth leave	Works as manufacturer							
Stefanita, male	25	High-school	unemployed	employed	courses							Parents' divorce	
Radu, male	27	Vocational school	Courses of oboe	employed	unemployed	Occasional jobs	Courses of stoker (at present)					Suicide attempt	
Sorana, female	22	Post-high-school	unemployed	employed	Book-keeping courses	secretary	Occasional distributor Oriflame	secretary (other employer)					
Carmen, female	20	High-school	unemployed	employed									
Mirel, male	22	Vocational school	unemployed+ course of re-qualification	High-school at evening classes	Post-high-school	Occasional jobs in Hungary	Own company (utilitarian mountaineering)	have a baby	self-employed				
<b>Continuing education (without work experience)</b>													
Alina, female	17	pupil	voluntary activities										
Andreea, female	20	Student											
Maricica, female	20	Student											
Elvira, female	19	Student	Did not find an adequate place of work									Parents' divorce	
Tiberiu, male	18	Student										mono-parental family	
Georgian, male	18	Student											

Name, gender	Age	Education	Transition steps									Particular background	
Marta, female	18	pupil											
<b>Alexandra</b> , female	16	Pupil, 10th grade	Still in school	now living in a social dwelling									disorganized family
Betty, female	14	7th grade											disorganized family
Rodica, female	16	7th grade											disorganized family

**School, followed by employment**

Costache, male	18	High-school	At present, courses of plumber	employed									
Lorena, female	24	High-school	particular activities	employed (bar)	employed (car painter)	Employed (drawing teacher)	At present secretary						
Raluca, female	19	High-school	courses of foreign languages and PC user	employed as assistant manager									
<b>Laurentiu</b> , male	23	post-high-school (Hungary)	Employed (Hungary)	salesman	Works on the black market	temporarily employed (2 months)	employed as PC operator						
Eduard, male	21	High-school	employed	employed (Radio Star)									
Eugenia, female	21	student	worked one year as make-up editor	now working as secretary	married								
Izabela, female	29	High-school	courses of dress-maker, typewriter, PC operator, and masseuse	had worked as PC operator	had worked in Hungary	employed with a textile factory in Romania	vendor in a book-shop	employed for 3 years as masseuse in a hospital	College, which she abandoned after 6 months	worked on a cruise-ship in Italy	took the Cambridge test for medium level		

Note: Young people re-interviewed have been marked with bold. The age of respondents has been not updated for those interviewed only once.

The real names have been replaced by fictitious ones.

### **3.2 Biographic portraits**

#### **School, followed mostly by unemployment combined with temporary jobs**

##### **Flavius, 25 years old**

Flavius has graduated the Economic High School in Pitesti. He comes from a family with medium level incomes, and has two brothers. His mother works in trade and his father works as military foreman. Now, he's attending a confectioner training course with SOLARIS organization.

After graduation of high school, he got employed in a restaurant but after the trial period he had to look for another job because the restaurants closed down. He worked for two month in a confectionery, after which he accomplished the military service. Following completion of military service he worked seasonally on the sea coast, than registered for confectioner-chef courses with SOLARIS organization.

Since high school graduation Flavius has resorted to several employment services, but without positive effects. *"It was quite difficult; I've got in contact with the world, I've got some experience, but I didn't succeed to have a stable job; I went to some job fairs, but didn't succeed to find a job."* (Flavius – SOLARIS - 25, male, 379)

His actual expectations with regard to finding a lasting job relate to the skills he's going to acquire during present courses as well as to the labour placement agencies. *"After completion of courses, I hope that within following job fairs and with support by the employment agencies, I hope to succeed in finding a job."* (Flavius – SOLARIS - 25, male, 385)

#### **School, followed mostly by employment with short unemployment periods**

##### **Mirel, 22 years old**

Mirel graduated a professional school in tinker-painter profile. He then attended a re-qualification course. After finishing it he graduated the evening high-school. The last graduated school is a post high-school in the informatics profile. At present he is the

owner of a utilitarian mountaineering firm. *“Yes, indeed, the professional school didn’t help very much. It meant only going to school and getting a diploma. Unfortunately, the school couldn’t teach me a job because it didn’t have the necessary equipment for me to make a progress in learning how to do the job.”* (Mirel - SZINFO - 22, male, 189)

Mirel was unemployed for six months after graduating the professional school. *“At first I worked for two years elsewhere, in the first year I worked in Hungary where I learned, the opportunities for promotion and better payment were more frequent there. Afterwards I worked for a year at home. Using the earnings I had made in Hungary, I bought the necessary equipment to start my business and from what I had earned at home I started preparing the papers necessary to set up my firm.”* (Mirel - SZINFO - 22, male, 191) During the period of his studies he continued having occasional activities in Romania as well as in Hungary (during the holidays).

He received support from the SZINFO organization consisting in counselling and career guidance as well as in writing down some documents that were necessary in his life as a young entrepreneur. *“So, in general, I could say that besides the organizations I mentioned earlier, my parents helped me, with advice I mean, not financially, to earn the money I needed to set up the firm, and I consulted my friends, especially the other 4 that make up the team.”* (Mirel - SZINFO - 22, male, 190)

Since the previous interview many positive events have taken place in Mirel’s life. At personal level, his son was born and he has bought himself a dwelling and, on professional side, the utilitarian mountaineering firm he is running has had a developing market. He is optimistic regarding his family and firm because he is self-confident. Everything that he has built up until now was mostly made without financial support from his family, his mother being retired and his father having a small salary.

## **Sill in school (without work experience)**

### **Alexandra, 16 years old**

She comes from a disorganized family and was abandoned in a crèche when she was 2 years old. She has spent her childhood in a placement centre up to the moment of her first interview, when she was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, having benefited thereafter of a

social dwelling under the next phase of the project. The atmosphere here isn't very different from that in the orphanage, she is facing here the same problems she had to face there, only here she is more independent. She doesn't have a very good relationship with the educators. She is continuing her studies, she is in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in a vocational high-school, her interest in school is the same as it was at the time of first interview, but she has noticed an improvement regarding her relationship with classmates and teachers. She thinks she has matured and has become more sociable. In her trajectory Alexandra identifies as positive aspects the contact she had with the project and as negative aspects her parents absence from her life, the only information she has about her family is that her mother is now living somewhere in Greece, "*my mother is still in Greece, but no sign of her. I know she is there somewhere... maybe she's thinking of me.*" (Alexandra - We want to become independent, CCSA - 16, female, 227), as well as the lack of concern of the personnel for the problems of institutionalised children "*So... we simply are not listened to. We may speak for ourselves because anyway nobody listens to us.*" (Alexandra - We want to become independent, CCSA - 16, female, 218)

## **School, followed by employment**

### **Lorena, 24 years old**

Lorena graduated an art high school, in the drawing-graphics profile. After graduation she got married and didn't continue her studies because of this. She then started working on her own, painting icons on wood and glass, a part of which she donated to monasteries. She was employed in a bar, but didn't give up painting. Subsequently she had to give up this work place and she was hired as a painter in an auto service. After some time she was employed as a drawing teacher in an institute for disabled people. "*It was nice, but it was also hard working with them. I've always changed my work place and then done something totally different.*" (Lorena - SOLARIS - 24, female, 12) She used to work as a secretary for the SOLARIS organization, an activity that didn't bring her any satisfaction. "*I've changed many work places and I believe the secretary job wasn't made for me.*" (Lorena - SOLARIS - 24, female, 12)

Lorena didn't benefit from counselling or career guidance services and didn't attend to vocational training courses. She wasn't subjected to unemployment.

A critical moment remembered by Lorena is that she has to financially sustain her family (her husband and her 6 years old son). *“I’ve launched myself in a lot of troubles. I have a six years old son, the needs are numerous for me, for him, for my family, and there are a lot of utilities to pay for.”* (Lorena - SOLARIS - 24, female, 12) About her husband, she considers him not to be a mature person. *“He doesn’t try very hard, he’s immature, he hasn’t matured yet.”* (Lorena - SOLARIS - 24, female, 12)

Her family couldn’t afford to sustain her financially to continue her studies or to practice the artistic activities that enthral her. *“To draw, that’s what I wanted to do but... you need money. Everything is about money. Painting is very expensive. I haven’t had any support from my parents, I’ve always had to work and I couldn’t always count on my salary.”* (Lorena - SOLARIS - 24, female, 12)

## **4. Biographic orientations and experiences before project entry**

### **4.1 Introduction: the idea of turning points**

Both rounds of interviews have revealed that almost all the subjects are thinking of their life trajectories so far in terms of transition from school to work and/or from family dependence to living on their own. Most of them were still looking for the way-out, relying on either continued education or corrective vocational training schemes that may increase their employability. Having as targets secure jobs, their own dwellings, and subsequently own families, children etc. they were not attaching the significance of “turning points” to any of their previous experiences. However, exceptions did exist. One respondent from Odorhei said that his relationship with SZINFO had really changed his life. They helped him to set up a business and even assisted him thereafter with developing that business. In a different life context, a young people from Pitesti having abandoned the compulsory school for earning his own money from occasional jobs found the way with assistance by SOLARIS to both continue compulsory education and qualify himself; the relationship with SOLARIS

was also a good opportunity for him to discover/develop his potential for youth work, mainly in the fields of tourism and charity, so that he continued to act as volunteer with this organization. We were of course in presence of a pragmatic approach: experiences that helped them to either find the way out or to take a big step forward in reaching their goals.

As one could have expected, neither within focus group discussions, nor within individual interviews the issue of turning points could be academically approached, from a psychological perspective. However, a more thorough analysis of these experiences in the context of our interviewees' transitions may reveal the psychological background of the above statements. If considering the main psychological prerequisites of motivation, we may assert that in the first example the subject did not lack the subjective relevance of his goal, but because of the lack of information and advice in his subjective perception the probability to achieve this goal was underestimated. In the second case, the subject was very confident he would succeed to achieve his goal (of becoming economically independent) by himself but education was of any/little relevance for him in this regard, which led him to drop out. In both cases experiences with the projects have contributed to restoring motivation by developing/strengthening the missing/weak prerequisite.

For the young participants in the CCSA project it was already clear at the time of first round of interviews that something had changed in their subjective perception of the probability to achieve their goals by own intervention since project entry, and during the second round of interviews they were better valorising the role of this project for their personal development, so that one could ascribe to this experience the meaning of a turning point.

One could note that experiences with the selected projects were referred to by our respondents as having contributed to enhance their self-confidence and, to a certain extent, their motivation to further apply to information and vocational training schemes through keeping in touch with case agencies.

The transition trajectories of our subjects from Odorhei and Pitesti since their graduation of secondary/high school could be considered quite similar: either alternatively, or in parallel they have combined work with further education. All subjects in Odorhei and almost all in Pitesti have graduated high school, which is quite usual in urban areas from Romania. However, an important difference should be revealed: while young respondents from Odorhei, besides taking short-term

qualification courses mainly aimed at improving employability (typewriting, PC operating, foreign languages) have tried to continue formal education in colleges or universities, most of the respondents from Pitesti have mainly focused on vocational training.

Most of respondents were still living with their origin families, which were in general families with low resources but keen to provide further support to their children, so that these young people were relying on their origin families as main source of security.

Although not numerous, contacts with transition related agencies have been reported by some of our respondents, mainly for employment related services, but as long as these services did not result in secure/long term employment, they were not attaching much relevance to these experiences for their lives. If taking into consideration the findings of WP2 round of interviews as well, one could say that seen through the young graduates' eyes the transition to adulthood looks like a yoyo trajectory between the origin family and employment.

In the case of CCSA project things are very different as compared to the above. Here we have young people with secondary education (compulsory) and at most vocational training thereafter. Their lives before entering the project(s) were shaped according to the institutional rules of childcare system. For some of them finding out who their parents were and in some cases even meeting them have been the main events during this period. However, except for the two sisters having joined their mother in Greece, these experiences did not seem to have any influence on either their redefinition of goals or their subjective perception of chances to achieve them by themselves (one subject, after hearing the mother's story with regard to his abandonment, which he didn't believe, decided to do not have any further relations with her). For these young people living independently, which includes as prerequisites getting a job (yet temporarily) and a dwelling, is really thought about as the most meaningful goal and one could say that their experience with the project has made them thinking they really could do it. As compared to people interviewed within WP2, who attended the "We want to become independent" project, the newly interviewed appeared to be much more blasé and having no longer horizons than employment and housing provided with continued assistance from state social assistance institutions, which initially was the case of the first ones as well.

For young people in social care the whole life up to now has been marked by the contact with the childcare system, sometimes with several childcare institutions, which except in cases of good collaboration/coordination with non-governmental organizations carrying out this kind of projects, could be difficultly called institutions of the transition system.

## **4.2 Aspirations, needs, wishes and plans of young people (meaning of work)**

In respect of their expectations in the short and medium run, the respondents being still in education differ from those being in employment or unemployed. Pupils and students mainly referred to completion of education and getting the appropriate job.

*“To finish my faculty and may be to get a job in the respective field”* (Georgian – SOLARIS - 18, male, 140)

*“After finishing the school I want to work somewhere, to earn my day to day bread, to continue studding at evening school if my job will allow me”* (Manole - We want to become independent, CCSA - 21, male, 257)

The unemployed either referred to getting a job or declared that they have no plans.

*“I cannot make plans, I see no way out yet, it depends on what job I would find, but I still don’t see any way out, if I’ll ever have my own home, I don’t know how it will be, what I will be doing.”* (Lavinia - SOLARIS - 22, female, 79)

*“Usually, the things I’m doing are not planned ... When an opportunity appears I don’t miss it. Plans? ...to go this summer to the sea coast, at least two weeks ...”* (Cezar - SOLARIS - 21, male, 49-50)

However, some unemployed young people were thinking to continuing education and one of them even to starting a business.

*“To successfully graduate the accountability courses and to register in autumn to evening school”* (David - SOLARIS - 18, male, 50)

*“I’d like to live at home, to work at home and to earn my existence. I need money to start a business, to work for myself and to earn more ... I’d like to work some 4-5 years to earn the money I need for starting my own business”* (Laurentiu – SZINFO - 23, male, 166)

The respondents having a job referred to household related issues (refurbishing, buying new furniture etc.) and to travelling.

*“To pay my apartment and to try furnishing it as I wish”* (Ionica - SOLARIS - 26, female, 50)

*“I’m making plans for the future but not in this country because there are no possibilities. Everything is going around money and that’s why I want to work and to have money for setting up a family and to be able to ensure its subsistence with the money I’m earning.”* (Serban - SZINFO - 21, male, 165)

Having their own home has been placed by our respondents mostly in the area of “dreams”, which is quite common among Romanian young people, but the fact that almost half of the respondents interviewed as disengaged have also placed in this area having a family suggests a strong feeling of vulnerability among them.

*“I have (other plans), but it’s like a dream ...I want to have a family, to have my own home, to be no longer dependent upon others...”* (Alexandra - We want to become independent, CCSA - 14, female, 257)

*“My dream? My dream is to have a family, to be very sensitive with each other, so wealth doesn’t matter...”* (Stefanita - We want to become independent, CCSA - 25, male, 143)

*“I have dreams: in five years I should achieve everything. To have a single room apartment, to work, and than to get married and to have a stable job.”* (Gina - SZINFO - 23, female, 166)

The professional accomplishment ranges the second in respect of the frequency of dreams evoked by our respondents. Mainly the respondents being still in education have evoked this kind of dreams. Some of them have specified the profession (geologist, cooker, lawyer, and model).

*“As to myself, I’ve got the dream to become radiologist. The main plan would be to achieve the profession I wish, to go somewhere in Egypt or elsewhere ...to accomplish myself and to ... live there”* (Tiberiu - SOLARIS - 18, male, 139)

Some more “pure” dreams have been evoked as well, but very few (to live in a forest, to become photo model, to have a luxury car, to travel around the world).

As most of the aspirations/wishes and plans evoked by our respondents have been related to achieving a (good) job, the meaning of work and the respondents’ aspirations with regard to a "good job" were also approached in the focus group interviews.

For most of young people included in the disengaged group work means a way of earning money, of earning the subsistence (this instrumental approach has been revealed by some individual interviews with trendsetters as well, but earning money was mainly related in their cases with personal accomplishment rather than with subsistence).

*"I think it means earning your subsistence"* (Betty - We want to become independent, CCSA - 14, female, 223)

*"We need to do it. Not all of us like to work, but we have to do it; because of the lack of money"* (Maricica - SOLARIS - 20, female, 68)

*"On my advice, work means earning money...work is necessary to ensure subsistence..."* (Octavian - SZINFO - 21, male, 158)

If taking into account the average salary in Romania as compared to the cost of living and that most of the jobs available for young people are paid under this level, one could say that this a natural reaction of young people to the unfavourable economic context they are living in.

Nevertheless, more "human" meanings of work have been emphasized by our respondents, such as a mean of personal accomplishment, a way to provide evidence of your capacities, human relationships and team working, making new friends.

*"To prove you are capable to perform the respective job/assignment"* (Andrei - We want to become independent, CCSA - 20, male, 241)

*"...represents a factor of maturation, and when you come to understand it makes you seeing things differently"* (Elvira - SOLARIS - 19, female, 70)

*"...a mean to reach your goal..."* (David - SOLARIS - 18, male, 37)

When explaining what a good job would mean for them, although placing "good salary" as basic condition, the interventions of our respondents were more nuanced. Only two of them stated that a good salary would be enough for them. The majority referred to several conditions, of which most frequently the working ambience, to enjoy what you are doing, and a flexible time schedule. In three cases the only condition was job stability (all three respondents unemployed).

*"... to get a good salary, to allow you being a good example, to be a good team ...and good intercommunication ..."* (Andrei - We want to become independent, CCSA - 20, male, 241)

*"For me the important is to have the feeling that I'm doing what I like to do, to succeed and to accomplish myself, to have the chance to go up even if I'm starting*

*from a lower level, to receive an acceptable salary and to have the satisfaction of worth of my work." (Elvira - SOLARIS - 19, female, 71)*

*"To be a stable job, officially registered ... a job you enjoy to do" (David - SOLARIS - 18, male, 13)*

*"A good job is the one you feel comfortable with, that is not tedious; it would be good if that job allows you to make use of your initiative and professional creativity (...) and when it is consistent with the profession you like. Very important is the remuneration you are receiving" (Amalia - SZINFO - 21, female, 158)*

It is noticeable how complex is the image of these young people, as well as their aspirations with regard to "a good job". We may not exclude the influence that this big discrepancy between what they wish and what they perceive as available for them on the nowadays labour market could have on their disengagement.

### **4.3 How do they perceive (their) transition problems**

The theme of adulthood and related transition problems as perceived by young people was mainly approached in the focus group interviews. Although the theme was inciting and our young respondents got involved in discussions, nobody was able to make up a profile of "the adult". However, all the discussants have "touched" one or another characteristic of the adulthood. The main features referred to were: to be (economically) independent; to have a (permanent) job; to be mature; to assume responsibilities; to be taken into serious by the others. If taken together, being independent and having a permanent job have been considered as specific features of adulthood by more than one third of respondents. More than a half of them have opted for being mature and assuming responsibilities as main features. Some younger discussants emphasized the attention paid by people to what an adult says as compared to the younger voices.

*"A person becomes mature when decides to separate from parents and to live on his/her own, to be no more dependent upon parents, to get employment..." (Lavinia - SOLARIS - 22, female, 59)*

*"...when starting to become independent, to be no more dependent of somebody, to have your money, your home, to build your future as you wish" (Gore - We want to become independent, CCSA - 20, male, 419)*

*“...you are adult when you are mature; and more correctly appraise your personal responsibilities. It is also my opinion that over 20 years old you are adult. However, there are cases when you feel yourself adult but those around you don't think so, because you are still acting like a child ...”* (Amalia - SZINFO - 21, female, 151)

The economic independence has been related by our interviewees mostly to having a secure job in the short run, and to having one's own dwelling in a longer run. From this perspective, the main transition related problem referred to was the difficulty to find a (good) job.

*“On my advice it is very difficult for nowadays youth this transition to adulthood because the opportunities are minimal, integration into society is difficult to be achieved because of the little opportunities to find a job, and therefore it is so difficult for those having graduated a school.”* (Lavinus - SZINFO - 22, male, 152)

Taking into account the perceptions/aspirations in respect of a “good job” above referred to, along with actual difficulties young people are facing in getting such a job, placing this in the first range of transition problems appears as a natural reaction. During this transition period, young people expect to find a job according to their qualifications; the important difference between aspiration and realities often leads to accepting unsuitable situations; so that young people prefer to accept unemployment state benefit rather than to work in a job under their professional qualification; the same effect has the fact that they are regarded as inexperienced and consequently the level of wages they are being offered is very low.

Referring to the problems and needs that young people encounter during the transition from education to labour market, the opinions of project workers, responsables and external experts have numerous common points; these refer on one hand to the existing discrepancies between the training offered by the formal education system and the skills and knowledge requested by employers, to the job offer insufficiency, the employers' view of young people – considered to be inexperienced, and on the other hand they refer to the difficult access to information regarding labour market, professional orientation and counselling.

More than that, project workers pointed out the lack of training programs for independent living, necessary for the young people coming from the disadvantaged groups (from the youth shelters, from the rural areas, etc.), about developing some necessary life habits.

#### **4.4 What are their experiences with institutions**

For ten young people out of 44 included in our sample school (formal education) had been their only experience. Based on their answers one cannot say they loved school very much. However, they were attending school as either a customary activity at their age or a way towards a better occupational status. A small number of good experiences have been evoked, which refer to good teachers and practical exercises, but not by those being still in school, who have either not mentioned any positive example or referred to negative experiences:

*“I don’t like school at all, but I have to attend school and to learn”* (Alexandra - We want to become independent, CCSA - 16, female, 239)

*“...some of our teachers did help us and guided us.”* (Laurentiu - SZINFO - 22, male, 157)

*“In high school we were having practical activities in typewriting and correspondence, which helped me a lot; we have learned how to fill out forms, but they should have ensured our access in enterprises as to see how these forms are being used and to what purposes.”* (Gina - SZINFO - 23, female, 157)

Bad experiences concern mainly tedious classes, inability of some teachers to make themselves understood, and the feeling of learning too general things that are unlikely to be useful in their transition to work:

*“Unfortunately, the profession I’ve learned in school during those four years doesn’t help me because I wasn’t trained properly and now I’m knowing what I used to know beforehand”* (Laurentiu - SZINFO - 22, male, 157)

*“In our case, for example, we were having practical activities but nobody was watching us. We were taking up a certificate from somebody whom we were having good relationship with and this was enough. This way we were learning almost nothing in the profession we were supposed to achieve”* (Serban - SZINFO - 21, male, 157)

*“I have graduated a theoretical high school, wherein we have learned a lot of theory and almost nothing about practice...”* (Amalia - SZINFO - 21, female, 157)

The unbending character of the formal education system has been criticized as well:

*“An open setting works better for me than the rigid one of school. ... If I want to learn something I should have the choice, not the obligation.”* (Laurentiu - SZINFO - 22, male, 165)

These kinds of criticism are quite usual among Romanian young people and not only. The particular feature of the “disengaged” people consists in their little attempt to try alternative solutions. The few cases when such solutions have been tried connect with interviewees who are having some “trendsetting potential” but not enough to cross the border:

*“In addition to school, I have attended specialization/re-qualification courses. Yes, I liked them more because I had a well defined target. I’ve learned what I wished”* (Amalia - SZINFO - 21, female, 165)

*“I haven’t had such experience; I have never attended any course. I wish I’d learn further, for example English and operating PC, but I don’t have the possibility. I tried to learn English by myself at home but it doesn’t work”* (Gina - SZINFO - 23, female, 165)

As regards the support systems, family, friends, NGOs and sometimes school/teachers have been evoked. Some references to public institutions such as ministries/agencies dealing with education, labour, and health have been made, but mainly in terms like “should do more...”

The family is mainly referred to when personal subsistence is concerned, but also as a stimulus for school attendance and keeping up with further education, while friends are more frequently referred to when the need for advice in specific life hypostasis are concerned. Nevertheless, our interviewees have emphasized the negative effects of dysfunctional families as well as of the wrong choice of friends.

*“For me, the main support came from my father with whom I can discuss any problem ...and he is my best friend...”* (Cezar - SOLARIS - 21, male, 9)

*“Family with advices, but these are not every time good ones because we are now leaving in a different world; while they were young it was different; they were receiving lodging, which we cannot have now if we don’t have money. Because than lodgings were granted and now they are not.”* (Gina - SZINFO - 23, female, 155)

*„Usually, although you do not wish, you are doing what you have seen in your family. I do not want to do what I’m seeing in my family either, because I don’t see good things, but most frequently I am surprised to notice that I’m doing the same. Even my father, who is mature, cannot manage with this. He’s giving me money and thinks that that’s all, but it isn’t. For him money is everything, but not for me. I haven’t had a mother as a friend whom I could say <mother, I’ve got my first boyfriend> or to say that I was afraid of something.”* (Maricica - SOLARIS - 20, female, 61)

Although NGOs are quite frequently evoked as support systems, our interviewees haven't had extensive experience with them, except experience with project organizations, which have been helpful for many of them. This was to be expected as the sample consisted mainly of disengaged, who are not likely to get involved with them. Nevertheless, their image on NGOs is a positive one, which means that a more proactive approach of these organizations with regard to the most disengaged young people might have a positive impact on their "activation".

One cannot say the same about institutions. Except the employment services, which some of them have heard about or even have benefited of their activities, and the Committee for Protection of Children Rights, which respondents from Bucharest knew about, the activities of main institutions having responsibilities in the field was very little known. However, many of these young people have been aware that some institutions exist and should pay more attention to their transition problems.

*„They should exist (counselling offices in high school) because some girls start their sexual life from this period. I know that in faculties there are such consulting rooms and the assistance is free. You just go there and ask...”* (Lavinia – SOLARIS - 22, female, 66)

*„There are certain institutions for qualification and re-qualification but not for all domains, too less domains. Not everybody wants to become driver or tailor, or engineer, somebody may wish something else; they should be extended, should ask the public opinion if necessary...”* (Maricica - SOLARIS - 20, female, 65)

Project workers believe that NGOs are closer to their problems due to the fact that people working here have faced these problems themselves, thus understanding better the problems and having an open, interactive and flexible attitude, which NGOs promote; they characterize public institutions as being rigid and hardly adaptable in order to respond to young peoples' needs.

The project responsables consider that access of young people to local authorities is rather difficult, but expectancies linked to finding a work place and a home are related mainly to these authorities due to the fact that the funds these authorities have for these problems cannot be compared to those of the NGOs.

The external experts consider that NGOs have a more attractive offer of jobs, being this way an attraction and the personnel of NGOs deal with young people more personally and not so formalized as those in public institutions.

Most people in our sample who were no more in education (pupils, students) have

experienced unemployment. They have faced unemployment either subsequently finishing school (most of them) or after short-term jobs.

*"After having graduated school I didn't know what I had to do in order to receive unemployment benefit. There were jobs in textile factories but they were requiring experience. Eventually I've got the benefit and meanwhile I looked for a job ... through newspaper advertising, through this organization and through job fairs, and I've found a job, and worked for some months."* (Amalia - SZINFO - 20, female, 162)

*"I've been unemployed since graduating high school. ...Fist I told myself I'd better stay at home, but than I thought finding a job and started to look for in newspapers, to ask neighbours, friends. But everywhere you were required to have experience. ... I took unemployment benefit because I saw this were flourishing ... I made a three month course of tailoring. I've had no idea of tailoring and I thought I would never learn it, but one month later I was working like those having one year, three years of experience. I had to learn it"* (Lavinia - SOLARIS - 22, female, 75)

There have been more lucky experiences as well:

*"I've graduated high school and in a very short time, less than one month, I've found to work in trade and I worked for some years; than I've got married and had a child. I had to stay at home than and I didn't look for job. When my little girl was a little bit over one year old it happened to come a friend to me and say <look, they are employing people there, if you wish ...>. I talked with my husband and decided to do it. I've got a job, I took courses of tailoring because it wasn't in my trade field ...Now I am employed for more than one year and I'm glad it is in the state sector ...so, I've worked for an owner as well and it wasn't bad."* (Ionica - SOLARIS - 26, female, 38)

As revealed in our previous reports as well, both because of the sample size and of the widespread character of the problems identified in this research, it is difficult to discern social differences (in respect of gender, education/class, region, ethnicity etc).

## **5. Case studies analysis**

### **5.1 Introduction (methodology)**

The case studies analysis has been undertaken in several phases, with specific objectives and adapted methods and instruments, based on the Project proposed methodology, further developed within Consortium meetings and refined by Project

Coordination with assistance by the Advisory Group, than adapted by country teams to local context.

Following country analysis and selection of good practice cases, during the second phase of the Project – WP2, our focus was on the target groups of the selected cases, trying to discern the main steps of their transition to work/adulthood, their learning and employment/unemployment experiences, and related support systems, their relationships with the projects, as well as their expectations for the future. Special emphasis was laid on the specific features of those interviewed as disengaged and of those interviewed as trendsetters, with the aim to identify key differences as well as commonalities between interviewed disengaged and trendsetting youth. The main methods we used within this phase were focus group interviews with young people assumed to have a “disengaged” profile, and individual interviews with young people assumed to have a “trendsetter” profile. Nevertheless, some of the focus groups participants whom we associated rather a trendsetter profile than a disengaged one based on their answers and interventions during the focus group interview were re-interviewed individually. The interview guides were developed by the Romanian Yoyo team in consideration of both guidelines agreed upon during Valencia meeting and specific features of Romanian young people to be interviewed. The questions were structured based on the interpretative dimensions provided by IRIS team but discussions within focus groups did not always followed this pattern as the feed-back provided by the interviewees often suggested shifting from a dimension to another as to better capture their opinions and ideas, and to stimulate participation. Less emphasis was put on the projects themselves and on their implementing organizations during this phase.

During the third phase of the Project – WP3, the emphasis was laid on the specific features of the selected projects and their implementing organizations. Project workers, leaders of implementing organizations, and experts from key concerned agencies/local authorities have been interviewed, as to better capture the specific features of the target groups from the respective areas, as well as their views on the impacts these projects have had, and their approaches with regard to youth transition and participation. Documents analysed within this phase have included: statutes, promotion materials, activity and evaluation reports, press clippings, organizational CVs, presentations/descriptions of projects, balance-sheets, applications for funds.

Considerable video material recorded by the CCSA Project team has been provided to our research team, based on which a short video presenting main hypostases of project implementation has been prepared during the fourth phase.

A second round of interviews with young participants in the selected projects has been conducted within the fifth phase, based on the topics discussed during Palermo meeting and in accordance with the guidelines received electronically afterwards. Special attention was paid to the phrasing of questions/stimuli as to enable easy understanding by the Romanian interviewees of the topics as well as of what our focus is within these topics. The structure of the interview guide was so designed as to apply to both newly interviewees and those having been previously interviewed within WP2.

After having analysed the interviews conducted among the target groups of the selected projects, with special emphasis on the specific features of those interviewed as disengaged and of those interviewed as trendsetters, than the specific features of the selected projects and their implementing organizations, we are now trying to synthesize the results of these analyses on a case by case basis, with the aim to draw conclusions and provide recommendations for consideration and action by policy makers.

## ***5.2 Case Study 1: Youth Association for Education and Science SOLARIS***

### **5.2.1 Description**

SOLARIS is a non-governmental, non-profit, and non-political association, established in 1994. Since its setting up, SOLARIS has tried to meet both young people's needs for qualification/re-qualification and the employers need to have competent personnel. Several stages have been taken. At the beginning, SOLARIS were providing qualification/re-qualification courses only in a few fields. The range of services has been extended during the time, so that now they pretend having the most diversified offer of courses and labour market related services at local level. While at the beginning SOLARIS were offering only qualification courses, nowadays the organization is actively involved in social programs, in both rural and urban areas, as well as in leisure programs and ecological projects. Their system of collaboration

relationships with local authorities, NGOs and trade companies has been also considerably developed. Thus, one could say that SOLARIS is playing an important role in the local community.

SOLARIS main statutory objectives are the following:

- Reducing unemployment through improvement of young people access to the labour market;
- Improving youth employability, through both increasing and diversifying their qualifications, and better adapt qualifications to actual demand of the labour market;
- Helping disadvantaged groups by providing material and moral support;
- Stimulating young people's participation in social life, through active involvement in addressing the problems that young generation is facing.

Their target group is youth in general, but they are paying special attention to young people having integration difficulties. Young people willing to improve their qualifications in order to get a better position are also encouraged.

The access to organization's projects is open to all young people from the target group, but in the case of vocational training programme within the ceilings of available places for each training course. As general rule, participants in vocational training schemes are paying for this, but because SOLARIS is a not for profit organization and sometimes benefits of facilities from local authorities or partner organizations their tariffs are cheaper than the market average. Young people from disadvantaged groups are given priority and special support, through covering the related costs by the organization, providing grants and special efforts to find jobs for them.

Basically, SOLARIS is a self-financing organization, their main incomes coming from the qualification/re-qualification courses. Additional funds are being raised from the County Directorate for Youth and Sports<sup>9</sup> for several youth related projects, and sometimes from foreign NGOs, but the level of these funds is quite low.

The association is involved in several programs through activities of social assistance and protection of young people who need help, as well as through scientific and cultural activities aimed at stimulating youth participation in social life.

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<sup>9</sup> Since summer 2003, youth affairs at county level have been taken over by the County Inspectorates for Education; see also note #4 above.

Under current circumstances of local economy, when unemployment affect more and more young people, the main activity of the organization is to qualify and re-qualify youth in several domains of work. They are organizing short-term intensive courses to qualify people in fields required by the local labour market.

The students are provided with basic knowledge of legislation, marketing, and management, which might help to develop their own businesses.

The courses are being organized depending on the demands of trade companies, so that a big part of graduates found a place to work. For a good functioning of courses they are concluding collaboration contracts with specialized firms in different domains, where the students can practice under professional guidance. For every season course the organization grants scholarships for unemployed and young people who do not have enough money.

Currently, they are preoccupied to organize some courses and programs aimed at qualifying young people for traditional activities from villages, such as: animals' breeder, farmer, creator of popular art, handicraft master, for which they have already some applications.

Being a youth association, they also organize different programs in collaboration with other associations and with local authorities to support different people who need help. Since the beginning they have been organizing several symposia, round tables, seminars, shows for youth, camps for youth, charity actions. During last years, SOLARIS has paid special attention to ecological activities, based on the collaboration with a specialized association.

## **5.2.2 Analysis**

### **Participation**

The theme of participation was quite difficult to approach within both individual and group interviews, and with all categories of interviewees. The interviewers tried to get not only the respondents' opinions on what participation means, but mainly their views on the dimensions and role of participation in the young people's transition to adulthood, with special regard to participation in the selected projects. On the one hand this was because one cannot speak yet of a developed but only of an emerging culture of participation among Romanians, in the sense of ownership, identification,

decision-making, etc. On the other hand, this term still recall political stereotypes and therefore encourages stereotype answers, such as <participation means involvement in economic, social, political life>. In fact, except social researchers and some NGO responsables having benefited of training/experience exchanges in western countries, very few people actually think thoroughly about participation. Under these circumstances most of the answers collected by our interviewers have related to general meanings and eventually to roles in youth transitions.

One expert was more specific: *“(involvement) through proposing actions to be undertaken, but mainly through effectively organizing actions and promoting them; it means also involvement in NGOs’ activities” ... “I think it means the interest and attention the young people should manifest in the moment they leave school, regardless the level, for finding a job; the active attitude of young people that must try any opportunity to find a job according to their expertise, even lower paid at beginning; active attitude refers also to using any means to find a job, through different organizations or directly to companies.”* (SOLARIS, director County Agency for Employment, male, 289-290)

Embracing this general approach as well, the case agency responsible added that participation means also *“involvement in taking the decisions which, directly or indirectly affects them”* (SOLARIS, responsible case agency, male, 279)

As regards the meaning of participation in the young respondents’ opinions, besides the fact that this proved to be for them a theme difficult to approach as above said, we have found out that they associate participation with rather attendance than involvement.

*„I haven’t participated in other projects. SOLARIS is the first organization I came in contact with...”* (Flavius - SOLARIS - 25, male, 381)

However, when discussing about experiences with NGOs, the approach changed:

*„I haven’t been quite involved in social activities and I wasn’t interested in civic or political sides of things. I’ve been interested mainly of myself and of my friends. Following participation in SOLARIS activities I understood that each of us can influence the society and if we are fleeing from this responsibility we would never have any excuse in case of failure. ”* (Daniel - SOLARIS - 27, male, 401)

*“...I used to belong to an ecological organization wherein I actively participated in all actions undertaken because ecology is one of my hobbies; I think that all these*

*have an influence on yourself, even if you don't realize it at once*" (Raluca – SOLARIS - 19, female, 391)

This suggests a deficit of participatory approach in the institutions/services young people have been in contact with so far, as well as a quite low level of development of nongovernmental sector and/or of its impact on young people's lives.

Nevertheless, we shall emphasize that the SOLARIS project selected for the purpose of our analysis is not a very participatory one. Although they have tried to encourage the participation of attendees in the design of the training schemes and to take on board the feedback from them for optimising these schemes, no relevant effects on participation have been recorded. Most of the attendees have acted as simple customers.

Despite this quite low level of participation, our analysis revealed that the experience lived by our interviewees with SOLARIS project has induced them the feeling of higher security with regard to employment. They have acquired a certain confidence that alternative solutions might be available in case they would lose (again) their jobs. Thus participation, whatever it subjectively meant to participants, has contributed to developing motivation by changing their perceptions of chances they actually have to manage their relationships with the labour market. One could say that the project has become part of their transition to work.

With regard to young peoples' decision over their own biographies, our respondents seemed to be quite optimistic. Most of them stated that they could decide upon pathways to choose, though with due support by parents and friends, but their main problem in this respect has appeared to be the uncertainty on the suitability of these decisions in the context of changing labour market and lack of/inappropriate institutional support systems.

The opinions of experts were similar: *"it means interest in taking important decisions with regard to personal trajectory; analysing all alternatives and choosing the optimal one, taking into account all socio-economic factors. For example, the passion for a certain field is very important, but as important is also to analyse the opportunities they have in finding a job in the field. Otherwise they are in the situation to graduate a faculty and give up the field to try something new, and sometimes dissatisfaction follows."* (SOLARIS, director County Agency for Employment, male, 290).

## Motivation

The initial expectations of project participants were related to acquiring suitable qualifications that would allow them in the short run to find a job. Once getting in contact with the project, many of them have reconsidered these initial expectations in the sense of improving their employment perspectives in respect of the local labour market demand. This has determined some of them to opt for several courses or to continue attending courses even after finding a job based on the initially achieved qualification. There have been cases when participants in vocational training courses wished to get involved in other projects carried out by SOLARIS. Thus, our analysis has revealed that expectations of project participants, though initially expressing their main need to get a job, were changing in contact with project agencies according as new information had been acquired.

*„After graduating high school I wished to find a job with a firm or something like that; friends helped me as well with advice but without much success. I checked in newspapers, where instead of finding a job (offer) I found the training offer of SOLARIS and I thought I should register, in order for me to easier find a job” (Raluca – SOLARIS - 19, female, 386)*

*“...I had just completed my military service, than I got hired on the sea coast in a pizza shop; (than) I came back and stayed some two months without finding any job, and I registered for SOLARIS courses of pastry-confectioner” (Flavius - SOLARIS - 25, male, 379)*

In the project workers' opinions, youth expectations regard mainly information and professional counselling, guiding and assistance in starting new activities or new businesses, equal chances on the labour market. *“Counselling and assistance for starting an independent activity or a business; equal chances on the labour market; if young people are motivated and think they can solve one of their problems, they take part actively and trust more the NGOs.” (SOLARIS, project worker, male, 283)*

The case agency responsible stated that expectations of young people are oriented towards finding a job according to their needs, but also that there are young people to whom it is not very clear what their expectations are. In these cases project workers try to find out what kind of job would be suitable for them and provide counselling. Disadvantaged groups of youth have expectations at the subsistence level, any job being acceptable to them; they also need a social dwelling. *“They have not the*

*minimal daily food, and sanitary services are inexistent for them. Their expectancies are linked to facilitation of a job, regardless of the field, and of getting a social home.”... “For young people in disadvantaged groups, we offer free classes and priority in finding a job.” (SOLARIS, responsible case agency, male, 276-277)*

The issue of developing the expectations of project participants is not a priority for the case agency, because in the context of local labour market it is difficult for them to meet the existing ones. However, once the attendees come in contact with the case agency the information and counselling services are also available to them and it really happens that new expectations emerge while project participants acquire new information on the opportunities and restrictions of the labour market.

Motivational problems with the project did occur, both with regard to project participants and project workers.

There have been cases when certain participants lost motivation, thinking to abandon the training scheme and try other solutions. Efforts were made by both project workers and case agency responsables to convince participants to conclude their studies.

More serious motivational problems have been encountered with the case agency personnel. Concentrating on the target group has sometimes led to losing sight of own personnel. *“We concentrated more on young people taking part in different activities and lost sight of Solaris’ employees.”... “From our experience, we learned that we must take care of our own personnel” (SOLARIS, responsible case agency, male, 278)*

They have actually lost some members due to insufficient motivation.

All those interviewed have agreed that there is a strong and direct relation between motivation and participation, both in the case of project participants and in the case of project workers. *”Definitely yes! The more motivated they are, the more interest young peoples show in different actions; this is tested on myself, and is true also for the youth outside the organization that take part in different actions; due to concentration on youth outside organization, I neglected motivating my personnel and confronted with losing important persons who had acquired valuable experience in working with young people.” (SOLARIS, responsible case agency, male, 280)*

*“I used to attend some courses for foreign languages, also with the (SOLARIS) organization. As regards the informatics course I’m attending now, I’ve found out from newspaper, where I saw some advertisements, but I think that mostly my*

*girlfriend has influenced me....” (Raluca – SOLARIS - 19, female, 386) “The fact that I participated in this project has made me eager to get more involved in several activities, which I believe will contribute to my further accomplishment in all respects.” (Raluca – SOLARIS - 19, female, 393)*

With regard to development of active participation, the opinions of project workers and external experts have been that implication in social partnerships and taking into account observations and suggestions/solutions given by partners would increase active participation.

*”I think that through different actions the active implication could be raised: developing partnerships, raising level of implication, campaigns of sensitising about own trajectories, stimulating the participation in interesting and useful activities, are some objectives that could increase participation. With regard to youth in Pitesti City, their initiatives are taken into account and backed by local government. There is a problem still to solve and that is granting the places/spaces for NGYOs so they can activate in optimum conditions; also, companies should be encouraged to sponsor these NGOs.” (SOLARIS, director County Agency for Employment, male, 290)*

### **Personal relationships between young people and project workers**

From both sides relationships between young people and project workers have been described in positive terms. These are prerequisites of success, as young people’s motivation often results from good relationships with project workers. If these are not motivated this will affect relationships negatively.

*“...for me, there have been new things, so that I liked it, but I’ve been impressed by the teachers’ effort/interest for our acquiring as much as possible knowledge” “It was a very good cooperation, of mutual support” (Raluca – SOLARIS - 19, female, 391)*

*“It was a friendly relationship, unlike the teacher-pupil relation in school” (Flavius - SOLARIS - 25, male, 384)*

*“It was rather a friendship relation than a teacher-learner relation...or, anyway, closer to friendship. They seemed to me committed to their work, as well as to helping young people to find their life pathways” (Daniel – SOLARIS - 27, male, 402)*

## Learning

For most of our interviewees from Pitesti City participation in the SOLARIS vocational training schemes has been the only experience of non-formal education. Forms of informal learning, such as learning from friends/peers and from their origin family, have been also largely evoked by our respondents, for whom these have been the main “support systems” in respect of their transition to adulthood. One of them had some experience with another NGO and some had participated in other activities of the case agency, which they have highly valorised as learning experiences.

As training scheme, Solaris project subject to our analysis belongs to non-formal sector of education. However, their collaboration with the public employment service in the area, and the need to have certified their courses by official institutions supervising this kind of activity have imposed observance of basic formal education standards (minimum curricula, minimum number of classroom training, qualification of trainers, etc.). Their main area of flexibility has concerned selection of qualification fields, of trainer and of trainees, the balance between theoretical and practical training, the time schedule, and the methodology. One could easily observe that these are the most important aspects for flexibilization of the education system as to better respond to the changing labour markets.

*“I’ve found interesting the way of giving courses and the way project workers relates with trainees. Providing practical training was very important for the future but also for the understanding of phenomena.... So, beside the training relationship with regard to mechanics, I have benefited of counselling with regard to my future. ”*  
(Daniel – SOLARIS - 27, male, 397)

*“NGOs offer to young people what public institutions in education do not offer, through non formal education: initiation classes, qualifying, re-qualifying, in which young people take part hoping that graduation will help them get a job that is requested on labour market and in which they do not have any qualification after graduating school.”* (SOLARIS, project worker, male, 284)

*“As we stated earlier, through the diplomas the young people receive for graduating different classes, in which Ministry for Education and Research is partner, the non formal learning experiences are recognized.”* (SOLARIS, expert County Directorate for Youth and Sports, female, 296)

## **5.3 Case Study 2: Youth Information and Counselling Office (SZINFO)**

### **5.3.1 Description:**

The Youth Information and Counselling Office (SZINFO) was established in June 1993 as a project supported by the Local Council of Odorheiu Secuiesc city, based on the initiative of some young people from Odorheiu Secuiesc who have thought that besides creating youth associations young people need an institution aimed at helping them to overcome the problems they are confronted with.

Through successful participation in several contests for project funding, as well as through receiving grants from donors, SZINFO has succeeded to obtain almost all office equipment and furniture they need for successfully perform their activity. Currently, the Office is functioning on permanent bases, with a rigorous time schedule. Its activity is based on the European Chart on Youth Information, as well as on the Ethical-Professional Code of IFINET (Union of Youth Information and Counselling Centres), whose founding member it is.

The personnel have acquired large expertise during the nine years of activity with SZINFO, and has also benefited of training programs in Romania, Hungary and other European countries.

SZINFO main objectives are the following:

- To give a helping hand for resolving the young people's everyday problems and satisfy their information demands and queries.
- To help the formation of young people's autonomy, and the process of undertaking the responsibility for themselves.
- To facilitate relationships between young people and servicing institutions.
- To facilitate smoother social integration of young people and help them to cope with the disadvantages of age and social status, which certain categories of young people are facing.
- To provide feedback for policy making at local level.

Their organizational structure includes 1 head of office and 3 executive positions. The executive positions are: information officer, PR officer, and labour mediation officer. Short-term staff may be employed if necessary. Volunteers are welcome to

supplement these human resources. The employees have the same status as the mayoralty employees, but there are no access rules for volunteers.

The Office is open for public each working day, at least 25 hours weekly. The daily programme is adapted to the young people available time, so that they can benefit of the Office's services both in the morning and in the afternoon.

The Office has a distinct budget line within the Local Council's budget. Based on the proposal documented by the head of the Office, the Local Council allocates annually financial resources for personnel salaries, services and expenses for materials. These budget lines range between 6,000 and 10,000 Euro per annum. Additional funds are being raised through SZINFO Foundation, either for projects or as grants/donations.

SZINFO defines its target group as young people aged 14-35, but according to their statutory regulations nobody can be excluded from benefiting of their services based on age, gender, and ethnic or social-cultural origin. However, due to local characteristics, most of their customers are young people of Hungarian origin, aged 18-21.

SZINFO offers to young people and other visitors information from the following domains: leisure, culture, economy, job opportunities, work related issues, education, vocational training, institutions, medical services, travel and holidays etc. It offers counselling services in fields as law, psychology, and medicine, provided by specialists in the respective matters. Additionally, the Office provides other services, such as labour mediation, advertising, selling of performance tickets, assistance with documents preparation/writing, organizing seminars, workshops etc. on issues that are of interest for young people. It also participates in several programs/projects for youth, and supports the setting up of other information offices for youth.

### **5.3.2 Analysis**

#### **Participation**

This was a theme our interviewees had difficulties to answer. Our comments above (see 5.2.2.) apply accordingly. Additional difficulties were incurred by conducting the interviews through interpreter. As regards the meaning of participation, it was associated by young respondents mainly with attendance and by experts and project

workers with the need of getting involved, with having the sense of responsibility, and with young people consciousness of their role in influencing what is going on. However, while discussing about their concrete experiences with SZINFO many respondents came closer to a participatory approach. Thus, they referred to interaction with project workers in identifying the most suitable information in respect of the attendee query, to a “self-service” system which young people who have had previous experiences with SZINFO are encouraged to make use of while searching for information, to cases when attendees have offered their help to project workers as volunteers. One can say that motivation has increased according as participation became more active and relationships with project workers closer, which has resulted in continued participation.

Although public information and counselling services are not usually quite participative, we can say, based on our interviews with young people, and on our discussions with project workers and external experts, that SZINFO project is a participative one. We have found among young respondents people who felt “at home” at SZINFO, for whom it has become part of their lives, though they were not conceptualising this as participation.

With regard to the means for improving participation, the experts referred to the need of higher confidence in young people, to improving communication with them and to their direct involvement in projects implementation (assuming responsibility).

According to the organization responsible the active involvement of youth in the project is ensured through their participation in collecting information and through numerous volunteers helping SZINFO.

## **Motivation**

The expectations of young people coming to SZINFO, as revealed by our analysis, relate mainly to obtaining information and advice with regard to career opportunities, for either continuing education or finding better employment, or both.

*“For example, I started the course of operating PC based on the information from the Office. (It was) the same with the Cambridge exam. My starting point is always the Centre. I checked for courses of Italian and English. Always I’m going further based on the information found here.” (Izabela - SZINFO - 29, female, 350-351)*

The project worker said simply “to get the information they need” (SZINFO, project worker, female, 322). The organization responsible referred to the relationship between expectations and the specific situation of the addressees, emphasizing that the more difficult their problems are, more expectations towards the project they have. She referred e.g. to people needing both employment and housing.

As to wherefrom this motivation comes, only a project worker gave an answer: “*School and family cannot offer them the information they need*”. (SZINFO, project worker, female, 323)

In this respect, the experts’ views were different. It has been said that young people are not motivated because they have no models to follow and that their main motivation is related to leisure time.

Here we have one of the most relevant difference of approach between those who work in direct contact with a lot of young people and those who are looking from outside. This may contain a part of the explanation for young people trusting more NGOs and looking for more support from them as compared to public/governmental institutions.

With regard to how motivation is developed/promoted, the project worker referred to the extension of their services through providing more and new kinds of information, which in her thinking would result in higher motivation of the addressees to access the Office services.

One of the external experts raised a very interesting problem: “*the shortage of financial resources to implement the initiatives borne within the project has a demotivating effect on the personnel.*” (SZINFO, expert Young Forum, male, 315)

### **Participation – motivation - link**

The relation between participation and motivation was approached only by the experts. Their common approach was participation as attendance, but they referred to different aspects. One of them focussed on external incentives for participation, such as benefits and facilities. Another one referred to the need for better involvement of school, of the NGOs and of young people themselves. The third one said that the

NGOs have their limits and that only high school pupils are participating in their activities.

Yet not conceptualised as such, based on the information provided by our young interviewees one could assert that a relation between their participation in the project and their motivation does exist. Thus, if comparing the general perception of our interviewees during the first round of interviews with regard to the role of SZINFO in their lives, which was rather one of service provider, with the perceptions revealed during the second round of interviews, which was closer to a support instance in their transition, to which one may apply whenever needed, it is clear that something has happened in their motivational construction. Participation has facilitated better understanding of the role of information in taking suitable decisions upon their pathways to follow, and has developed their ability to deal with information sources, which of course have resulted in their mobilizing additional psychological resources to take advantage of them.

Trust and empathy in personal relationships between young people and project workers have also played a role in both developing motivation and enhancing participation.

*“There are no similar services in town where you can go with any problem. It’s an open organization, there are no formalities, you shouldn’t be official, and people are friendly and sensitive as compared to other institutions that are very official”* (Mirel – SZINFO - 22, male, 347)

*“The personnel were very kind. Always very kind”* (Eugenia – SZINFO - 21, female, 359) *“...all wished to help me. They called me, they are helping me whole-hearted”* (Marta – SZINFO - 18, female, 359)

*“Since the first time they received me carefully, friendly, kindly...They are not involved in politics, it (SZINFO) seems to me clean...”*(Eugenia – SZINFO - 21, female, 361)

*“...they are) mature, communicative, earnest. They help us. We don’t have disputes. The relationships developed towards friendship. I don’t know, I think I fully trust them. They are helping people without asking anything“.* (Marta – SZINFO - 18, female, 361)

In this respect, the project responsible said this is a matter of attitude and motivation: *“The NGOs personnel is voluntarily trying to understand their problems, as*

*compared to the public institutions' staff for whom working there is only a matter of doing a job". (SZINFO, responsible case agency, male, 307).*

"They are coming to the NGOs like at their home." (SZINFO, expert Young Forum, male, 315-316)

## **Learning**

SZINFO is not mainly an educational project, but rather a support instance. However, it is a suitable place for informal learning. Besides counselling, searching for information by themselves, though with guidance by project workers, interaction with other attendees, sometimes with similar problems, contacts with employers and institutions, etc. are all opportunities for informal learning. Nevertheless, practical training is being provided as well on e.g. how to make a phone call (in Romanian), how to introduce yourself to an employer, how to write a CV, which mean already non-formal education.

*"I'm not only receiving information, I'm getting involved...I'm learning how to use the information."* (Lavinus – SZINFO - 23, male, 354)

*„I wrote my first CV based on the information from SZINFO. Or, from the communication point of view, I have studied several materials - how to dress for an interview, etc."* (Izabela – SZINFO - 29, female, 350)

Very few people have a clear image on the difference between informal and non-formal learning. The organization responsible referred to both of them. He referred to mass media, wherefrom young people learn about issues that are not dealt with in either school or family. He also referred to courses organized by NGOs, mainly in the field of vocational training. The external experts referred only to qualification courses organized by other entities than school.

While asking how these learning experiences are being approached within the project, only respondents involved in the project were able to answer, as expected. The project worker talked about how young people are trained by the office personnel to do certain practical things, from simple ones such as making a phone call or writing a CV, to more complicated things such as preparing a project, filling in an application form for funding, or how to raise funds: *"we are teaching them how to make a phone call, because we have here young people who have never made a phone call in Romanian language"* (SZINFO, project worker, female, 323) The organization

responsible referred to the above activities as well, but his main emphasis was on job finding techniques.

It was obvious that both personnel and management at SZINFO are conscious of their important role in providing non-formal education to young people.

When asking how these learning experiences could be evaluated, valorised and developed, only the experts tried to give some answers, such as *“I don’t know how the mayoralty, the Local council could get involved, have efficient local policies in this respect, in this youth policy, for example”* (SZINFO, counsellor Odorhei Mayoralty, male, 313). Another expert said he didn’t know whether such evaluation criteria exist, but *“if they exist it is for sure that they are not compatible with the evaluation system within formal education”* (SZINFO, expert Young Forum, male, 315)

With regard to having them formalised, both project worker and one of the experts said that they should be and referred to the school, which they were considering that should provide career counselling (project worker) and practical preparation of pupils (expert). The organization responsible was more nuanced, saying that in certain fields they should be formalized, but less in the social field where the NGOs would better act, as they were set up just to respond necessities that are not satisfied by the state.

### **5.4 Case Study 3: “We Want To Become Independent”**

#### **5.4.1 Description:**

“We Want to Become Independent” is a project carried out by the Community for Child Support Association (CCSA) in 3 childcare institutions from Bucharest („placement centres“).

CCSA is a nongovernmental, non-profit and non-political association. Its main objectives are to train and influence the frameworks of the local community that provide various types of services for population in order to ensure a good standard of living for child and his family. CCSA aims also to be an active support for parents in general and for families with specific problems related to children’s attendance and upbringing, as well as for children/teenagers from childcare institutions.

In accordance with CCSA main objectives, there are two categories of target groups: people who need help – disadvantaged children and young people (including orphans, dropouts, children from poor families, disabled etc.), and people dealing with

education, training and support for the above groups – teachers, educators, future specialists (students).

CCSA develops and provides services for children and young people at risk along with formative activities for parents, educators, and teachers. They militate for improvement of education methods, as well as for more suitable relationships between educators/trainers and children.

The CCSA project in Bucharest was a typical non-formal learning project, carried out within a very standardized formal education system. Besides providing young people from placement centres with basic skills for independent living, one of the main aims of the project was to put on formal educators' view a different and more effective way of doing education, with due consideration to the specific social and psychological profile of institutionalised youth. Elements of informal learning were also taken on board, mainly through putting participants to act together in certain life contexts (shopping, cooking, preparing a party, job seeking, etc.), which have encouraged learning from each other. Peer learning was given preference versus teacher learning. To the extent this was possible, participants and volunteers were selected from among those having participated in a previous project/stage (“We have grown up”), as to facilitate interpersonal relationships.

Within this project liaison with the target group was easy to establish, as they have previously worked with teenagers from the respective orphanages/placement centres. The only problem in this respect was the age difference between boys and girls, the average age of boys was around 20 years, while in case of the girls the average was around 15 years.

In this project have worked 4 volunteers from the association, a scriptwriter, a cameraman, six actors (teenagers from three orphanages, three boys and three girls. The youngest was 14 years old and the oldest was 20 years old) and a technical adviser.

This project has been implemented with financial support provided by EUROTIN (the Romanian Agency for „Youth“ Programme).

### **5.4.2 Analysis**

The project this analysis refers to is “We want to become independent”, which has been completed before our WP5. Being part of a series of projects having as target

group young people from childcare institutions and basically the same purpose (i.e. facilitating the transition of those young people to independent living), during WP5 we have interviewed some participants in the new phase (“The Anchor”) as well. Because on the one hand these two phases differ significantly in respect of our analysis dimensions, and on the other hand the available information on the actual phase do not allow such an analysis, we have to limit ourselves to the first one.

## **Participation**

Like in the other cases, in-depth considerations on participation have been not obtained from either project workers/experts, or project participants. However, for this project participation was a prerequisite of success, as learning by doing was the main method of education. The project participants were encouraged to actively assume their roles in the project, which they actually done. Although an educational scenario had to be followed, in all stages of the project implementation participants were consulted and operative decisions were made together with them.

Therefore, the project responsible referred to the involvement of NGOs within the child protection system as a factor that strongly influences participation: *"the easier they can penetrate (the system), not as projects but as professionals working together with educators from orphanages, the higher participation would be."* (We want to become independent, CCSA, responsible case agency, male, 271)

*"Participation represents for young people earning experience"* (We want to become independent, CCSA, head of department – Child Protection Department, female, 333) said one of the experts. *"Experience and a success factor"* said another one. (We want to become independent, CCSA, director of orphanage, female, 335) *"This is a certain hypostasis of young people, when hi/her is being involved in the decision making process as well. Participation means that the individual agrees with the system's objectives, with the system's goals, and is trying to bring his own contribution to the well functioning of the system. ...In general participation of youth is a problem, not only here, but also in whole Europe, and than solutions are being looked for: openness of institutions, looking for dialogue, involvement of youth in the decision making/evaluation/information institutions. This way better participation could be achieved"* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 345-346)

This project has been the closest related to youth transition out of the three cases subject to our analysis. The participants' transitions have been severely marked by their living in a much formalized institutional system, where very little room was available for participation in decision making over their pathways. Even their educational careers have been often decided upon in a rather administrative manner (registration in high schools or vocational training schools where planned numbers of pupils were unlikely to be completed based on free options of graduates from ordinary compulsory schools). Providing them with basic necessary skills for independent living, including access to the labour market, has brought those people closer to their peers living in "natural" social contexts. Although this might have been not enough to enable them deciding on their own trajectories, a big step forward has been taken.

The project responsible's opinion was that the decision on one's own biography is mostly related to the relationship with the family and to the importance of specialized advice (psychologists) in this regard, while one of the experts was convinced that *"over the age of 16, it's up to them to decide whether to graduate or not the school, and what career to chose"* (We want to become independent, CCSA, director of orphanage, male, 329). Another expert put much emphasis on the role of family: *"We're having a paternalist culture. Traditional culture takes less account of the teenager's opinion, and as the institutions are concerned it is clear that school is very little preoccupied of this. Consultancy, advices are...quite inexistent. They don't push it in this respect either. They are disinterested, but actually they are not encouraged to do it."* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 346)

## **Motivation**

During the eight months of work with teenagers from six orphanages, the CCSA trainers could find out that these people suffer mainly of the lack of suitable motivation. Not knowledge and information are the main things these young people are missing, but the behaviour models and positive values. Therefore, the project workers tried to use a very flexible manner of working with teenagers, to eliminate didacticism and official rhetoric, and to get closer to their real life problems.

*“The most important aspect is linked to leadership, than to project workers, location, logistics, participants, and on the least range the content of courses”* (Florian - We want to become independent, CCSA - 20, male, 412)

As regards the expectations of the participants in the project, the project worker and the external experts were unanimous to say that they are related to material advantages. This was not the case of the project responsible. On his advice, the expectations of these young people are related to the society, and therefore more difficult to be met. They really expect that the others offer them more, but this is because they are actually the disadvantaged ones. But they are not optimistic in this regard: *“young people said they were convinced that this project will not change anything, that although somebody comes and ask them what is really happening with them, those people cannot change anything”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project responsible, male, 269).

It would have been interesting to analyse the answers of the project worker and of the experts as to where the expectations previously referred to come from. It is not the case, as they didn't actually answer this question. However, the project worker said something about the lack of special attention by educators, which is not consistent with the expectation for material advantages. We may therefore admit that the project responsible has had a more pertinent approach. Indeed, taking into consideration the material conditions from these orphanages in comparison with what most of poor families can provide for their children, it is difficult to second the approach of the project worker and of the external experts above referred to.

As to how motivations could be developed, the project worker and the external experts have no more had a common position. While the project worker remained with her initial approach, saying that motivation could be developed through material incentives, the experts referred to social aspects, such as more frequent meetings with these youngsters, involving them in various activities, assuming responsibilities, and offering more room for their initiatives.

According to the project responsible, they haven't had motivational problems within the project: *“Their motivation was intrinsic, because they had met the project workers before and were willing to show they could be as normal as any teenager of their age from the community”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project responsible, male, 269).

## **Participation – motivation - link**

Only external experts tried to answer this question. One of them referred to a close relationship: *“The more motivated they are, the more they get involved in the project”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, director of orphanage, female, 335), while another one was very sceptical: *“One can’t even think that at the level of school or of a mayoralty their active opinion would be taken into consideration. We don’t have mechanisms for direct participation. We have only (youth) parliaments and councils. I refer to leaders, to persons with a certain status. ...I haven’t heard...”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 346)

In this respect, the opinions were divergent. The project worker thought that better project advertising would improve participation, which reveals a quantitative approach in terms of attendance, while the project responsible referred to improvement of professional standards within the system (educators from orphanages) and to giving way to more freedom for NGOs and professionals from the private sector.

One of the external experts gave a more nuanced answer. He stated first that participation should be encouraged, but this would be possible when the power holders had understood this necessity, which was not the case so far. *“Everything relates to elections and that’s all. Maybe the necessary pressure from civil society doesn’t exist. A culture of participation, of responsibility doesn’t exist either”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 346). With regard to the project, the expert thought that probably it has some mechanisms that ensure participation: *“People actually working in the project have some practice, an interactive pedagogy. There are sociologists, psychologists... While the institution’s style is authoritarian, the project’s style is more flexible...I don’t know whether or not they have developed participation mechanisms such as discussions groups, meetings in which opinions can be exposed...”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 346).

Another project worker stated that young people from orphanages are afraid of public institutions because of their lack of information, having therefore a rejecting or at least avoiding attitude. In her opinion, NGOs are being associated in their minds with *“receiving something”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project worker, female, 340).

The project responsible referred to the specific approach and type of relationship: *“It is about different rapports established by those from private sector, who are closer to the age of orphanage people and therefore they are relating with them as partners.”*

(We want to become independent, CCSA, project responsible, male, 270)

The position of experts in this respect was similar: *“Youngsters consider that NGOs are much more serious than public institutions. They are convinced that these ones are having more funds and are more committed; that they are respecting them and take account of their opinions. The NGOs services offer is much more diversified”*

(We want to become independent, CCSA, head of Child Protection Department, female, 332)

Deficiencies in the institutions’ working style were also invoked: *“Probably there are some deficiencies of these institutions. The NGOs personnel are special, having a different behaviour, much more sensitive with regard to young people. Institution is more bureaucratic. This is a signal, if young people have such reactions...”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 345)

### **Personal relationships between young people and project workers**

Almost all respondents from among participants in the “We want to become independent” project have positively appraised their relationships with project workers (which was not the case of those newly interviewed during the second round, who were participating in the subsequent project). They referred to project workers as people who make you feeling good.

In the opinion of the project worker, the basic features of a good project worker would be: availability, steadfastness, good communication skills, and persuasion skills.

For the project responsible emphatic capacity is the main feature of a good project worker. However, the project worker should be able to make the difference between the status of friend and the status of professional worker, because emotional involvement may obstruct the establishment of a natural relationship. The project worker should also have the capacity to work *“in a project that never ends”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project responsible, male, 272).

In this respect, the external experts tried to make up a detailed profile of the good project worker. *“Patience and pedagogical tact, to be good listeners and to know how to make themselves listen, to cultivate trust and friendship in young peoples’ souls, to*

*be good organizer and animator, to be good observer, to have a high level of general culture."* (We want to become independent, CCSA, director of orphanage, female, 335). *"Communication is probably the most important; flexibility, responsibility, and seriousness"* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 346)

## **Learning**

With regard to previous informal learning experiences that young people from the orphanages might have had, the project worker referred to experiences that some of them had in their family of origin and to leisure activities, which are being frequently organized. The project responsible added the short-term qualification courses they are attending, but in their case one cannot say that these courses are not part of the specific formal education in which they are included.

A more specific experience has been referred to by the experts: *"black market work...They help several families they have met in the area of the orphanage to carry on domestic works."* (We want to become independent, CCSA, director of Child Protection Department, female, 333). Yet we should admit that this is actually informal education, it may have a dangerous effect on the work mentality of these young people. Black labour market is actually an outlet for many youngsters who either have no alternative, or are willing at any price to live in big cities, but orphanages, as educational institutions, should do their best to avoid such future for their attendees.

It has been also emphasized by the experts the role of NGOs, which involve these young people in several projects contributing to their education.

As the project is concerned, non-formal education is its "genus proximus". "The project has been focused on non-formal. The project responsible has offered some concrete examples of such methods: organizing camps, where the youngsters were put in the position to prepare their baggage according to the season and to the camp conditions, to manage their time, to prepare food and plan the food consumption. The external experts have admitted that people from orphanages are more open in relation with peers while discussing more delicate issues, as well as during non-formal activities. *"Within activities outside the orphanage, in small groups (5-6 persons at*

*maximum) these young people have a relatively normal behaviour"* (We want to become independent, CCSA, director of Child Protection Department, female, 333)

These informal education experiences *"can be developed according as professionals in the matter will better learn their job"*. (We want to become independent, CCSA, project responsible, male, 271) External experts referred to the need for evaluation of the specific advantages of informal/non-formal learning, as well as of the methods used, than to the need for large dissemination of the results among the concerned institutions. One of them referred also to the financial support needed to support these activities and the training for trainers as well.

*"There have been some attempts of formal education but they failed..."* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project worker, female, 341).

## **6. Success**

### ***6.1 What means success for young people themselves, project workers and funders?***

During both discussions in focus groups and individual interviews our focus was mainly on the prerequisites of success and causes of failure, as well as on the support systems. Therefore, based on the information so collected it is difficult to discern definitions. However, we can discern two main perspectives from which our interviewees referred to success. One was the outcome oriented perspective, success meaning achievement of goals (individual goals in case of young people and corporate goals in case of organizations/projects). As individual goals, to have a secure job, to have one's own lodging, to have one's own family, and of course to have money, have been evoked by our young interviewees. As corporate goals, good vocational education, more practical experience, better career counselling have been evoked by both experts and project workers.

*"the approach of the project is a work with wind mills. In the end the results are important, even if they do not reach the standards initially set and thought."* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project worker, female, 339)

The other perspective was process oriented, focussing on successful trajectories/pathways. Successful career, happy wedded life, personal artistic accomplishment, public/social recognition, good living standard, have been referred

to by young interviewees. This approach was particularly embraced by experts and project workers while referring to success of projects. They mainly referred to the projects' contribution in facilitating successful transition of young peoples to the labour market/adult life.

*“So, the success criterion for the project is that as many as possible youngsters have passed as quick as possible to the independent life”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 345).

These perspectives have been not disjunctive, many respondents having embraced both.

## **6.2 Are they successful – in which of these perspectives?**

In all the three projects one category of expectations was more or less related to employment. Many young people entered the project in Odorhei with the aim of getting information on career opportunities (education included) and available jobs, and/or ways to find suitable employment. In Pitesti finding employment through suitable vocational training was the main and sometimes the single expectation. Having a job was thought by young people from CCSA project as the main prerequisite of independent living, so that one of their main expectations was to learn how to find suitable jobs.

Another category of expectations that we could associate with all three projects was related to a different way of dealing with young peoples' needs and problems. Referring to experiences in formal education system, than experiences with state services, and sometimes with local authorities, our respondents expressed their wish to be treated differently, using as examples their experiences with NGOs' projects.

A special category of expectations, specific to the participants in CCSA project, was to recover a certain deficit of socialization that makes them feeling different from children living in normal social contexts (with parents, relatives, friends, neighbours, etc.).

Although it is difficult to discern between outcomes of the projects and outcomes of other elements of respondents' life contexts, may be less in the case of CCSA project, both young interviewees' answers related to their satisfaction with the projects and the positive changes in their lives that have been reported during the second round of interviews stand for the idea of success.

One could say that last year was a good one for most of our respondents interviewed within WP2 and re-interviewed within WP5. In Odorhei all of them were having jobs, though one had recently resigned (but was confident that he would easily find another job). Same in Pitesti, though Dragos still on the black market. In Bucharest, the boys have found employment and leave on their own, while the girl is still in high school (as previously mentioned, two of the girls have left for Greece to live with their mother).

In the case of Bucharest project, it is important to note that the three subjects interviewed for the second time proved to be self-confident and optimistic even to a larger extent than first time. For them participation in the project has really been a turning point.

We could say that young people from Odorhei whom we have interviewed for the second time were more self-confident and more motivated than last time as well. After our focus group interview, during which several issues related to the role of the project in relation to youth transitions were discussed, most of participants have strengthened their relationships with SZINFO making so better use of its services.

In the case of SOLARIS it is more difficult to discern the extent to which the experiences with the project have influenced self-confidence and motivation among young people interviewed during the second round because they appeared to be so since the first round.

One could say that all respondents have experienced their contact and thereafter participation in the selected projects as alternative solutions to find ways out from embarrassing situations related to either personal accomplishment, as in case of CCSA project, or to career improvement/access to employment, as mainly in the other two cases.

Therefore, the most relevant aspects of their experiences with these projects, as referred to during both rounds of interviews, were the appropriateness of services they have benefited from, which in most cases led to finding new/better jobs, as well as a certain personal empowerment, based on the feeling that somebody cares of their problems and that they have found a source of assistance and support, which they can further make use of.

In the case of CCSA project, the connection with personal development and even enhanced capacity to face the transition challenges was more explicitly revealed by respondents. Moreover, as compared to the subjects having participated in the first

CCSA project (“Want to become independent”), the new respondents, beneficiaries of the present CCSA project, appeared much less confident in their potentials and consequently more dependent upon social assistance system.

Nevertheless, yet not explicitly declared, the increased self-confidence and the feeling of having a support instance appeared from many of the interviews conducted in the second round, especially in the cases of subjects having kept in touch with case agencies since last round.

In fact, one could say that besides the help provided to interviewed participants by the selected projects in specific life contexts, what respondents have mainly kept in their memories with regard to these projects was the approach and the working style of project agencies/workers, which we have already described in our WP3 report, namely atmosphere/climate, sensitiveness to their problems, availability and empathy of project workers, etc.

### ***6.3 Critique of young people, project workers, funders, etc,***

Based on the information provided by our respondents during both rounds of interviews, they had very good experiences with project implementing organizations, as well as with project staff, which encouraged them to keep in touch with these organizations after having resolved their initial problem/query, or after completion of the project (in case of CCSA).

Problems encountered have been mainly reported by project workers and responsables of implementing organizations. One general issue was the shortage of financial resources. Local NGOs have little financial resources and there are very few funding opportunities at this level, so that it is very difficult for them to achieve sustainability of their programmes/projects. Access to international funds/donors is also difficult for such organizations. Instead of providing permanent services to targeted communities, they are limited to short-term projects, which preclude them from ensuring continuity and long-term effects.

In the context of little funding opportunities, the competition with other NGOs acting in the same field has been also mentioned as a problem.

The shortage of specialized personnel was also evoked by one of our case agency, not only within the organization, but also at county level. The uncertainty of financial

resources makes it difficult for local organizations to find and maintain available specialists, so less to undertake human resources development programmes.

Another problem reported by a case agency was the lack of similar organizations from which they might have learnt at the beginning of their project. So, they have learnt “on the job”. However, the early contacts with similar organizations from abroad have facilitated their access to training schemes.

The lack of specific means for identification of young people’s needs, which would enable these organizations to better argue for their projects and, consequently, to raise more funds from both local community and donors, has been another problem reported by case agencies.

One case of political disputes that affected the project implementation has been also reported.

#### **6.4 What are factors of success and failure**

While speaking about prerequisites of success, our young interviewees have mainly referred to friends and peers. They proved to be aware of both advantages incurred by having good quality friends/peers and risks incurred by choosing a bad entourage. To a large extent they also referred to the family of origin from the perspective of economic and moral support, but also from the perspective of their connections with influential people. One could say that social capital ranges first in our respondents’ views on prerequisites of success.

*“If you succeed to have a good entourage, you can ask a friend for help. If you have such heart-felt friends to whom you know you can go and say <look man I am in need; could you help me, at least for a while...> you anyway resolve something in your life”* (Alexandra - We want to become independent, CCSA - 16, female, 223)

*“I think friends could be (considered) a success factor. If one has friends with large expertise, than he/she achieves larger views”* (Amalia – SZINFO- 21, female, 155)

Money has been also mentioned as a prerequisite of success. There have been two approaches: *“First of all you should have money”* (Betty - We want to become independent, CCSA - 14, female, 222); and *“First of all you should know how to make money”*

There have been voices evoking personal features, such as ambition, perseverance etc. as well as personal connections with influential people.

*„...besides ambition, I don't know. You should have a little moral support as well...“*(Ionica - SOLARIS - 26, female, 6).

*“...it depends mostly upon the connections and relationships you have, regardless how much you have learned”* (Andreea – SOLARIS - 20, female, 79)

Bad entourage, drug addiction, deficit of resources, and deficit of education for life were referred to as risk factors by our young interviewees.

*„...so, even in school it happens that boys who dope themselves are coming, they simply don't quit, their veins are shattered. So, so many as I've seen ... simply have marked me. But if you fall under their influence and really want to enter (this entourage) you do it on your risk. “*(Rodica - We want to become independent, CCSA - 16, female, 224)

*“...I'm thinking that may be during your teenage or childhood you didn't have what you needed... ”* (Ionica – SOLARIS - 26, female, 6).

*“I know an example. A girl, colleague of mine in compulsory school, was very obedient; she was attending a very good high school and the big surprise was that two weeks ago she had a baby. She who was very obedient, her parents used to hold her tightly, she wasn't allowed to go in town, she wasn't allowed almost anything, and just from this <you're not allowed> something too cruel has emerged.”* (Alina – SOLARIS - 17, female, 61)

As main support systems, our interviewees referred to family, friends and NGOs. Some of those being still in education mentioned the school/good teachers as well.

*“...such foundations are coming sometimes to us. They are coming with some leaflets: <Yes guys, these are the qualifications looked for on the labour market this month. What do you know about them? Which do you think you like? Which do you think you are suitable for...? ”* (Andrei - We want to become independent, CCSA - 21, male, 229)

With regard to the success of projects we are relying on the opinions collected from project workers, case agencies' representatives, and external experts.

Their almost common point was that the success of projects depends mainly upon the available resources (all kinds), the commitment of both project workers and attendees, and good cooperation among related agencies. Good knowledge of the specific needs of the target groups as well as suitable selection of participants in the project have been also evoked by some of our interviewees.

*“It is a two parties relationship; if one party act and the other ignore, there will be no suitable results”.* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project worker, female, 337)

*“The employers should also have a different vision of youth: in order to have a good worker, one should invest in him/her, to motivate him/her, to help him/her. Companies should be open to vocational training. Counselling and support services should be wide open to al young people, mainly to those from disadvantaged areas.”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, expert financing organisation, male, 345).

*“ Our expectations were that participants get involved in the project and act as natural as possible. This really has happened.”* (We want to become independent, CCSA, project responsible, male, 269)

*“...the main criterion is that the youngster should be aware of his/her importance for the society, of being part of it, and that he/her should know its problems and get actively involved in their solving”* (SZINFO, project responsible, male, 306)

As previously emphasized, the shortage of resources available for these kinds of projects at local level makes it difficult for the case agencies to fulfil all their statutory objectives, so less to provide permanent services to targeted communities. They are constrained to carry out short-term projects, which preclude them from ensuring continuity and long-term effects.

## **7. Recommendations on political and policy level**

First of all, our analysis has revealed that there are considerable potentials among nongovernmental youth organisations acting at local level to address transition related problems of young people who, either because of the lack of information or because of their own disengagement, are unlikely to make use of services provided by the existing public institutions. This suggests that partnerships with such organizations should be encouraged by both fund allocations and networking. Local entrepreneurs should be further encouraged to participate in local partnerships/networks aimed at facilitating young people’s access to the labour market. Local NGOs should be also encouraged to extend their labour market oriented services for young people through both grant schemes and fiscal incentives, which may allow them not only to reach the

most disadvantaged groups but also to develop their organizational capacity and to improve the quality of services provided.

Strengthening existing agencies that provide support to youth organizations for carrying out transition oriented projects, including transfer and multiplication of good practice, as well as developing decentralized networks of such support agencies should be a top priority of the decision makers at both national and international levels. Special consideration should be given to strengthening the role of local youth policies, with special focus on active participation and recognition of informal learning.

Identification and transfer of good practice should be given more attention by social research community, at national, regional, and international levels, as a major contribution to policy making process, and to providing NGOs with guidelines and support information for their activities.

International cooperation in youth research should be further encouraged to focus on the issue of good practice transfer from/to different regional, national, and local social-economic contexts, as to enable better focussing of international projects and higher efficacy of subsequent transfers.