

## Overview on the state of children and youth in Romania

By Octav Marcovici

Freelance expert

### Introduction

This study has been produced under the project “**Developing and reinforcing structures of civil society in the context of children and youth work in Danubian countries**”, with the aim to enable better understanding by partner organisations (especially the German partners, but also local Romanian organisations involved in the project) of the situation and needs of children and youth from Romania, in a view to identify areas of intervention for civil society structures as well as gaps that might be filled out through improved children and youth work based on the transfer of knowledge and good practice achieved under the project.

It is based on information and data available from public statistics and recent research/policy reports on children and youth situation in Romania. Most of these studies have been aimed at informing policy reforms and therefore had a special focus on risks and vulnerabilities that children and youth have been facing in nowadays Romania. This is particularly relevant for our project since youth and children work carried out by the structures of the civil society often aims at mitigating vulnerabilities and helping children and youth to overcome the difficulties they are confronted with.

In line with the UN Convention on Child’s Rights, the Law no. 272 of 2004 (updated in 2008) on the protection and promotion of child rights defines children in Romania as people aged 0-18 y/o, while the (Youth) Law no. 350 of 2006 defines youth as people aged 14-35 y/o. Hence, the two demographic categories overlap, which suggests that a youth and children policy approach would be more suitable for addressing the issues relating to their transition to adulthood. However, the adolescents (10-19 y/o) with their very specific transition issues remain unaddressed properly by either children policies or youth policies and therefore youth work in Romania should pay a special attention to this category. In consideration thereof, as far as available information allows, this overview will also envisage the specific features of adolescents.

One cannot speak of a concept of youth work in Romania, so less of children and youth work. The Youth Law (Law no. 350/2006) defines instead the concept of “youth activity” as “any form of action organised with the purpose of improving the necessary conditions for socio-professional integration of young people, according to their needs and aspirations” (Art.2, para. 2b). However, the occupation of “youth worker” (code 341205) is listed in the Classification of the Occupations from Romania under the category “specialists in social assistance and assimilated”, but without job description<sup>1</sup>. This does not mean that youth and children work does not exist in Romania, but only that it is not carried out within a legal/institutional framework. It is mainly done by youth and youth related organisations<sup>2</sup>, as well as by nongovernmental organisations working

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. COR 2014 – *Clasificarea Ocupatiilor din Romania / Classification of the Occupations from Romania* , available at [http://www.rubinian.com/cor\\_5\\_ocupatia.php?id=3412](http://www.rubinian.com/cor_5_ocupatia.php?id=3412)

<sup>2</sup> The Romanian legislation (Youth Law) distinguishes between “nongovernmental youth organisations”, defined as legal entities ruled by the private law and not for profit that function according to the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 regarding associations and foundations, which fulfil the following criteria: a) the goal stated in the statute targets directly the youth domain and most of the objectives assumed for the purpose of achieving the goal target young people; and b) at least two third of their members are young people. The “nongovernmental organisations for youth” are defined by the same law as legal entities ruled by the private law and not for profit that function according to the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 regarding associations and foundations,

in the social field, with main focus on vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups. Unfortunately, there is no systematic record of such activities at either national or county level, so that there is no scientific ground for undertaking an analysis of youth and children work in Romania. However, several studies on vulnerable/disadvantaged children and youth contain references to projects carried out by such organisations, especially as examples of good practice.

Children and youth work is actually also done by public bodies, such as schools (through extracurricular activities organised by class masters and/or in cooperation with youth NGOs, children camps etc.), children's clubs, youth centres and student houses. These are more or less overseen by the education/youth policy authorities and it is difficult to assess the extent to which they provide enough room for the initiative of children and youth themselves.

A special role play the youth foundations established on the basis of the Decree-Law no. 150/1990 and further ruled by the Law no. 146/2002, which provide facilities and financial support for the activities organised by youth associations without interfering in the design of such activities. Unfortunately, in the conditions of not benefitting from any support by either local or central authorities responsible for youth, many of them have exhausted the resources they were endowed with by law at their setting up and have either ceased the activity or remained more or less inactive. The public authorities responsible for youth policies have not come (yet after so many years) to a proper understanding of the role that these institutions could play, as their partners, not only in supporting civil society's initiatives but also in the implementation of youth policies. Nevertheless, a relevant number of these foundations have succeeded to survive and continue to play an important role in supporting youth associations at local level.

## Demographics

Children in Romania, in total amount of 4,076,917 persons, represented 19.14% of the total population in January 2013 (last available data), with 51.33% boys and 48.67% girls; their distribution by urban/rural residence is very balanced (49.95% and 50.05% respectively). 27.25% of them (14-18 y/o) also belong to "youth" category as defined by the Romanian law; in their case, the gender distribution is similar to the general group, but the distribution by areas of residence is less balanced, with 46.64% living in urban area and 53.36 living in rural area<sup>3</sup>.

Adolescents (10-19 y/o), in total amount of 2,203,808 persons, represented 10.34% of the total population in January 2013, with 51.24% boys and 48.76% girls; their distribution by urban/rural residence is not as balanced as in the case of children in general (46.89% and 53.11% respectively). This distribution is similar to that corresponding to the 14-18 y/o age group above referred to. Also considering commuting cases, this suggests lower participation opportunities for adolescents from rural areas in secondary education and particularly in upper-secondary education, such schools being mostly located in urban areas. It also suggests lower employment opportunities for rural youth, which is often constrained to work in subsistence agriculture economy.

---

which fulfil only the criterion a) above mentioned. The law also refers to the youth foundations established by the Decree-Law no. 150/1990, but does not include them in either "youth organisations" or "organisations for youth". The organisation and functioning of these foundations has been ruled by the Law no. 146/2002, which defines them as legal entities ruled by the private law and of public interest, autonomous, nongovernmental, non-political and not for profit, whose goal is to develop, organise and finance specific programmes and to educate, train and coach the youth in the spirit of humanistic traditions, of democracy's values and of the aspirations of Romanian society.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. National Institute of Statistics (INS), Tempo On-line, <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

The young population of Romania (14-35 y/o) amounted at 6,554,045 persons, which represents 30.76% of total population as of January 2013. The distribution by gender is balanced, with 51.18% males and 48.82% females; 56.16% lived in urban areas, while 43.84 lived in rural areas. One may easily notice that in this case the weight of those living in urban areas is much higher as compared to previous age categories. This is most likely an effect of the labour market, with more employment opportunities in urban areas as compared to the rural ones.

### Legal and institutional framework

One may say that the legislative framework in Romania is well developed in what concerns education and access to quality education, the protection of child's rights, the social assistance for vulnerable/disadvantaged groups, the provision of health services, including special measures relating to HIV/AIDS and drug addiction, but pretty poor in what concerns enforcement of corresponding obligations for ensuring access to and enjoyment of these rights by intended beneficiaries, with main weakness in the area of setting appropriate sanctions. This results in a lack of law effectiveness in some regards, which provides room for risky behaviours (e.g. selling alcohol, tobacco and drugs to the underage) and limited access to rights and welfare/protection services (e.g. home education for disabled, access facilities for disabled, welfare services at local level, proximity services for street children, drug addicts and victims of trafficking in/sexual exploitation).

Nevertheless, a lack of sufficient/appropriate legislation may be evoked in the fields of inclusive education, especially with regard to children with disabilities, of special protection and assistance for children with parents working abroad, of special protection of the victims of trafficking in human beings and for drug addicts (especially with regard to harm reduction), of providing fair opportunities for educational advancement for adolescents in child care system and for those from poor families and/or from poor rural/remote areas.

Beside but in connection with aspects of lack/ineffectiveness of legislation, one may notice a lack of co-ordination mechanisms between responsible bodies (including NGOs) in areas that require joint interventions, such as assistance/support for children and youth with disabilities, for children and adolescents from poor/disrupted families (including Roma), for children and youth with risky behaviours etc. A certain political instability may be also evoked, especially with regard to high decision making positions, but also with regard to intermediate and local managing positions, which hampers development and follow out of strategic visions, and sometimes also continuity of programmes' implementation. The lack of vision often results in interventions that target effects rather than causes of youth and children vulnerabilities.

In connection with both legislation and co-ordination mechanisms, it has to be pointed out that public resources dedicated to social assistance and protection (both human and financial) are mostly concentrated at central and county levels, while the needs that these resources are aimed to respond to are concentrated at local level. This weakens the effectiveness of welfare services, which results in persistence of vulnerabilities and undesirable proximity factors that lead to risky behaviours among children and youth. Besides, the lack of correlation between the place of the offer and the place of the need with regard to public welfare services along with the lack of adaptation of working methods to the profile of intended beneficiaries lead to both restricted access and ineffectiveness of such services.

According to a recent document published by the Ministry of European Funds<sup>4</sup>, the number of active social workers in Romania is nearly 5,000, which means one social worker for 1,732 inhabitants, while according to the law one social worker should provide services to not more than 300 beneficiaries. The document also points out that “In general, at community level, identification and early intervention services and referral systems for the most vulnerable groups are poorly developed or completely missing”<sup>5</sup>.

As compared to the dimension of youth and children needs for protection and assistance/support in order to (fairly) benefit from their prescribed rights, the public budgets in Romania proved to be significantly insufficient. Additional resources used to be provided by international donors, especially via the NGOs, until its accession to European Union. Afterwards, most likely based on the assumption that Romania not only had met political, legislative and institutional EU requirements, but had also reached the economic development level that would allow for welfare services similar/close to the EU average, these donors have limited or cancelled their financial support for direct interventions. On the other hand, the EU funds aimed at supporting Romania’s integration have not had a noticeable impact on improvement of services addressed to vulnerable youth and children, especially in what concerns proximity services. Many NGOs have reported bad experiences with EU funded projects, which in several cases have led to ceasing activity by proficient NGOs.

In spite of NGOs being more proficient and pro-active in reaching out to vulnerable children and youth as compared to most public services, little opportunities exist for their access to public funding. Besides, administrative and financial barriers are often evoked by the NGOs with regard to their endeavours to mitigate adverse effects of vulnerability among children and youth.

### Living standard

Poverty and social exclusion have remained key issues for Romania also after its accession to the EU. The already evoked Partnership Agreement highlighted that Romania has remained subject to extensive poverty and social exclusion, with high levels of deprivation in rural areas and urban pocket, as well as with low quality and unequal access to health and social services<sup>6</sup>. Among the most vulnerable groups from this point of view, the document lists children and youth from poor families, children with parents working abroad (at the end of 2011 there were 83,658 children in this situation), children in residential or family-based child care institutions (23,240 residential and 41,127 family-based in 2011<sup>7</sup>), single parent households (51,776 families) and households with three or more children (50,425 households). According to this document, some 320,000 children (0-17 years) were living in extreme poverty in 2010, the most affected being children in rural areas and Roma children (the urban child poverty rate in 2010 was only 3.5% while in rural areas was 12.4%; rates are significantly higher for Roma children: 27.3% for Roma children in urban areas, compared with 2% for Romanian children, and 41.1% compared to 10.6% in rural areas)<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of European Funds, Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 programming period – second draft, March 2014, available at [http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/res/filepicker\\_users/cd25a597fd-62/2014-2020/acord-parteneriat/AP-17.03.2014.EN.pdf](http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/res/filepicker_users/cd25a597fd-62/2014-2020/acord-parteneriat/AP-17.03.2014.EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.36

<sup>6</sup> Cf. ibid. p.30

<sup>7</sup> The document does not provide figures in this respect; figures have been taken from INS Tempo-online application, <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

<sup>8</sup> Cf. ibid. p.32

According to a recent study on children commissioned by UNICEF Romania<sup>9</sup>, around 3.2 million households from Romania had dependent children in 2009. Most of these households (35.9%) comprised three or more adults (multi-generational households), 29% were formed of two adults and one child, and other 22% included two adults and two children, while single parent/caretaker households represented 6% of households with children. However, the study has revealed (yet being not based on a statistical representative sample) that 15% of children lived in households in which no parent was at home and other 23% lived with only one parent (most often, the mother), which means that as much as 38% of children included in their sample had to face dysfunctional family environments, in which one or both parents were missing<sup>10</sup>. Although these findings should be interpreted with caution, since low income households and households with parents working abroad were overrepresented in their sample, they reveal a significant need for additional care and support among a large category of children and adolescents, which NGOs working with/for children and youth may provide.

The main indicator of poverty and social exclusion is the composite indicator of ‘at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion’. This indicator is based on three sub-indicators of poverty: at risk-of-poverty, severe material deprivation and living in a household with very low work intensity. People at risk of poverty and social exclusion are defined as the share of the population that is at least in one of the three situations described in the three sub-indicators. For this indicator we have data for both children and youth (at the level of total population and by some age groups)<sup>11</sup> as of 2011:

- Total population EU27: 24.3%; RO: 40.3%
- Less than 18 y/o: EU27: 27.3%; RO: 49.1%
- 18-24 y/o: EU27: 29.9%; RO: 44.4%
- Less than 16 y/o: EU27: 26.9%; RO: 48.7%
- 16-24 y/o: EU27: 29.9%; RO: 45.9%

Unfortunately, breakdowns for the 25-29 y/o and 30-35 y/o age groups are not available.

As one may easily notice, the values of this indicator are much higher for Romania as compared to EU27 in all selected age groups. The figures also reveal that the situation is worse in the case of young people than in the case of children, which may be explained by the fact that young people in this age group start leaving the parental home and try living on their own, in the conditions of a difficult access to the labour market.

An in-depth analysis of this composite indicator would exceed the purpose of this paper. However, since housing has a major relevance for a successful transition of young people to independent living, it is worth mentioning the housing situation, as reflected by the severe housing deprivation rate (the percentage of population living in a dwelling which is considered as overcrowded, while also exhibiting at least one of the housing deprivation measures: households with a leaking roof, no bath/shower and no indoor toilet, or a dwelling considered too dark). Breakdown by age groups are only available for “less than 18” y/o and “18-64” y/o. Hence we may only compare the situation in Romania versus EU27 and the situation of under 18 y/o versus 18-64 y/o. Figures reveal, on the one hand, that the severe housing deprivation rates are much higher in Romania than in EU 27 for both age groups (36.9% in RO against 7.6% in EU27 for under 18 y/o and 21.5%

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Stanculescu M.S. (coord.), Marin M., Popp A., *Being a Child in Romania. A multidimensional Analysis*, Vanemonde Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012, p.15

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid. p. 17

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Eurostat database,

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/income\\_social\\_inclusion\\_living\\_conditions/data/database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/income_social_inclusion_living_conditions/data/database)

in RO against 5.2% in EU27 for 18-64 y/o<sup>12</sup>), and on the other hand that the situation is much worse in the case of children.

In the case of young people (14-35 y/o) it is also relevant the extent to which they still live with their parents. Here the estimation is based on the findings from Public Opinion Barometer on Youth (last conducted in 2012)<sup>13</sup>. The survey data reveals that 57.4% of young people were still living with their parents in 2012 and other 5% were living with mother/father-in-law, which suggests that almost two third of Romanian youth had not succeeded to have their own dwelling by the age of 35 y/o.

The self perception of the state of health (often used in social sciences as a proxy indicator) is largely positive (76% of young people satisfied or very satisfied with their health status, according to the Youth Barometer<sup>14</sup>). In the case of children, the perception of parents, as revealed by the UNICEF study on children, is even better, with an average of 8.8 on a scale from 1=very bad through 10=very good<sup>15</sup>.

The general assessment by young people of their daily life, as revealed by the Youth Barometer, is rather positive, with 45% assessing it as “good” and 35% as “neither good, nor bad”. However, only 6% have assessed their daily life as “very good”<sup>16</sup>.

## Education

The main issue regarding children’ access to and participation in education relates to ante-pre-school education (children aged 0-3 y/o). While this is currently considered part of the national education system, crèches are still regarded by parents and local authorities as child care units, with little emphasis on education. Yet subsidised by local authorities, they incur costs for the parents, which often act as economic barriers for low income families. Besides, it is officially acknowledged a high deficit of affordable crèches (also referred to as nurseries), which along with associated costs have led to a very low enrolment rate (only 2% of children aged 0-3 y/o in 2011)<sup>17</sup>

An improving trend has been noticed with regard to participation in preschool education (3-6 y/o), from 82.1% in 2010 to 86.1% in 2012 (yet still below the EU27 average of 92.3% and well short of the Education and Training 2020 strategic framework’s benchmark of 95%)<sup>18</sup>. However, there are significant ethnic (mainly Roma) and territorial disparities in participation. More than a third of Roma children (38.5%) do not attend kindergarten, compared with 13.3% of children from non-Roma households. Participation is also notably lower in rural areas mainly because the percentage of kindergartens coverage in the rural area is only 7.44% out of the number registered at national level in the school year 2012-2013<sup>19</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. id.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012, conducted by IRES upon request by the National Authority for Sports and Youth, available only in Romanian language at

[http://www.djtmehedinti.ro/userfiles/IRES\\_ANST\\_Barometru%20tineret\\_Raport%20%20grafic%20si%20interpretari.pdf](http://www.djtmehedinti.ro/userfiles/IRES_ANST_Barometru%20tineret_Raport%20%20grafic%20si%20interpretari.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Cf. id.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Stanculescu M.S. (coord.), Marin M., Popp A., *Being a Child in Romania. A multidimensional Analysis*, Vanemonde Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012, p.55

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012 (available only in Romanian),

[http://www.djtmehedinti.ro/userfiles/IRES\\_ANST\\_Barometru%20tineret\\_Raport%20%20grafic%20si%20interpretari.pdf](http://www.djtmehedinti.ro/userfiles/IRES_ANST_Barometru%20tineret_Raport%20%20grafic%20si%20interpretari.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ministry of European Funds, Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 programming period – second draft, March 2014, p. 42

<sup>18</sup> Cf. id.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 44

As officially acknowledged, “investment in both infrastructure and institutional development for pre-school education remains very low and leads to limited availability, inconsistent quality and affordability of early and preschool education that has consequential effects on compulsory school enrolment and performance, and also represents a barrier to labour market participation by parents. The legal framework adopted in 2013 regarding the organization and the functions of nurseries requires new investments in institutional development and systematic initial and continuing training of staff for this level of education.”<sup>20</sup>

The school enrolment rates are higher in primary education (93.1% for 7-10 y/o in 2012) but decreases for the subsequent levels of education (91.7% for 11-14 y/o and 81.9% for 15-18 y/o); for the 19-23 y/o and over the enrolment rate was only 53.7% in 2012<sup>21</sup> (breakdowns are available only for age groups, but they roughly correspond to lower-secondary, upper-secondary and tertiary cycle, respectively).

Conversely, the dropout rates are increasing according as education cycles are higher (primary: 1.6%, lower-secondary: 1.9%, upper-secondary: 4.2%)<sup>22</sup>.

Early school leaving (ESL) has remained a persistent issue in Romania, with a negative trend relative to the EU 2020 target, since the onset of the economic recession to 2010 (i.e. from 15.9% in 2008 to 18.4% in 2010) and a stationary trend from 2011 up to 2012 i.e. 17.4%. Children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, students from rural areas (especially boys in 11-14 age group), the Roma and those who have special educational needs (SEN) are categories at highest risk. There are considerable regional variations, with rates exceeding 20% in Central, South-East and South Muntenia Regions. However, high intra-regional disparities are also observed, counties with lower economic development and high share of rural population being particularly affected. The underdeveloped systems of educational and vocational guidance and counselling are additional causes for ESL phenomenon. A further cause of high early leaving rates is related to limited availability of non-formal alternative education such as School-After-School (SAS) or "Second Chance" for students at risk of early leaving. Similarly, there are limited opportunities for early leavers to re-enter the educational system because of its chronic under-funding and the lack of incentives<sup>23</sup>.

The findings from the Youth Barometer reveal that participation of young people in education is also discouraged by a lack of trust in the potential of school to prepare them for the labour market. Thus, 80% of respondents assessed that school education responds to the needs of the labour market “to a little extent” or only “to a certain extent”.<sup>24</sup> This has resulted, *inter alia*, in low enrolment rates in initial vocational education and training (IVET) in the last decade, which has led to the progressive closing of arts and trades schools since 2009, instead of promoting policies aiming at improving the relevance of IVET. Fortunately, policies regarding IVET and VET are currently being reconsidered, with higher emphasis on the relevance of the vocational education in respect of the labour market requirements, as well as on career education and counselling for young people. In this regard, the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 refers to an important upgrade of the IVET system, so as to promote skills acquisition linked closely with labour market demands and private sector needs; developing and supporting upper-secondary and post-secondary education; extending the use of a credit transfer system (i.e. between upper-secondary vocational education and the post-secondary education); providing the possibility to complete at least one vocational training programme by low-achieving secondary education graduates less than 18 years old, who have previously left

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 43

<sup>21</sup> Cf. National Institute of Statistics (INS), Tempo On-line, <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ministry of European Funds, Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 programming period – second draft, March 2014, p. 44

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

school; and stipulating the acquisition of appropriate qualifications in accordance with National Qualification Framework (to be provided free of charge by state VET schools)<sup>25</sup>.

After a long period of continuous increase of the number of students in tertiary education (from 192,810 in 1990 to 907,353 in 2007) the trend has reversed, so that in 2012 only 464,592 persons were enrolled in tertiary education<sup>26</sup>. Emergence and development of private universities, with much easier or no admission requirements (except the high school graduation diploma of “bacalaureat”, imposed by law) as compared to public universities, have substantially contributed to that increasing trend starting with the year 1997. In their case, the increasing trend continued until 2008, but after that the number of students in private universities has sharply decreased (by circa 100,000 per year). This has been most likely due to the significant toughening of the conditions for passing the “bacalaureat” exam during the last years, which has led to almost half of the graduates failing to pass this exam. Nevertheless, one may assume that the decreasing trend of the number of students in both public and private universities has been also influenced by the deterioration of family revenues during the recession period, by the lack of clear employment perspectives for university graduates, as well as by students realising that they had made a wrong choice (especially in the cases when going to university had been seen as a solution for postponing the confrontation with the labour market); additionally, this might have been influenced by the external migration of young people.

As compared to the EU27, the tertiary educational attainment in Romania (the share of the population aged 30-34 years who have successfully completed university or university-like (tertiary-level) education with an education level ISCED 1997 of 5-6) is much lower (22.8% in 2013, as compared to 36.8 in EU27)<sup>27</sup>. It is also far from the Europe 2020 strategy's headline target to increase the share of the 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40% in 2020. However, the main problem in Romania for the time being is to achieve consistency between the IVET system and the labour market demand, along with providing young people with suitable education and career guidance. In the field of education and career guiding the children and youth work should play a major role.

Mobility of students to and from Romania is another challenge for an attractive and quality tertiary education. While the proportion of Romanian students attending university in another EU country increased from 4% in 2007 to 7% in 2010, this remains half of the level aspired to in the relevant ET 2020 benchmark. In parallel, enrolment of students from other EU Member States in Romania's higher education institutions also remains very low (0.2% in 2007 and 0.4% in 2010)<sup>28</sup>.

However, participation in formal education is far from being enough for a successful transition of young people to adulthood. Linear transitions are already a matter of history; in late modern societies they have become de-standardised and learning in non-formal settings has become a necessary complement to the formal education. Unfortunately, in nowadays Romania this has not been properly understood by either young people or education and youth policy makers.

National statistics do not help us with assessing children and youth participation in non-formal education. Hence, we have to rely on findings from research and information contained in policy reports. In the case of

---

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ministry of European Funds , Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 programming period – second draft, March 2014, pp. 43-44

<sup>26</sup> Cf. INS, Tempo On-line

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Eurostat database, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/main\\_tables](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/main_tables)

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ministry of European Funds, Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 programming period – second draft, March 2014, p. 45

school children, as revealed by the UNICEF study, participation in non-formal education refers mostly to extracurricular activities organised by schools and children's clubs; the most common extracurricular activities are sports, particularly soccer and karate, followed by dance or ballet as well as music, painting, foreign languages and creative classes. Participation of children in extracurricular activities depends first and foremost on parents' level of education, residential area, number of children within household, and rank of child. The higher the level of education of parents, the more likely is the child to take part in more trips, camps, performances, dance classes and other such activities. This is because well-educated parents see the benefits of such activities for a child, even when money is scarce. Probability of children to participate in extracurricular activities is much higher in urban areas, which supplies more such opportunities compared to most villages. Children from households with three children or more, particularly the younger ones, have a significantly lower probability to participate in extracurricular activities. It is a matter of scarce money, but also one of mindset, as parents fail to see in which way their child could gain from this experience<sup>29</sup>.

Another recent study<sup>30</sup>, also commissioned by UNICEF Romania and targeting the adolescents, concluded that "the adolescents spend about seven hours every day involved in these types of activities: television, Internet, and video games. Half of them are involved daily in all three types of activities, spending over eight hours every day. This should have a significant impact on other activities they could do and, of course, on their development. It may as well be that children lack other means of spending their free time and socialising with peers"<sup>31</sup>. It also found out that adolescents made extensive use of social media networks (circa 85%), to a larger extent those over 14 y/o and those from urban areas as compared to those under 14 y/o and those from rural areas<sup>32</sup>. Although these activities do not belong to non-formal education, the information on media consumption and Internet usage by adolescents gives us some indications on their participation in/exposure to informal learning. It also suggests that little room remains in their time budget for participation in non-formal education.

The EU Youth Report 2012<sup>33</sup> provides some data regarding the participation of young people in non-formal learning at EU level as well as at countries' level. Here it should be pointed out that the authors of the report refer to the Eurostat classification and definition of learning activities, with non-formal learning relating to adult literacy, basic education for out of school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture<sup>34</sup> (i.e. activities that are not designed so as to lead, upon successful completion, to a learning achievement that can be positioned within the National Framework of Qualifications). According to this document, the proportion of young people aged 15-24 y/o from Romania having participated in non-formal learning activities in 2011 was 1.1% (males 1.2%; females 1.0%), while at EU27 level this was 9.0% (males 8.7%; females 9.3%)<sup>35</sup>.

However, the data collected through the Youth Barometer in 2012 reveals a pretty different situation, yet with reference to the 14-35 y/o age group. According to this research, the proportions of young people having participated in non-formal learning activities range between 5% and 20% (international youth exchanges – 5%; counselling activities – 8%; community projects – 8%; arts and culture workshops – 10%;

---

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Stanculescu M.S. (coord.), Marin M., Popp A., *Being a Child in Romania. A multidimensional Analysis*, Vanemonde Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012, p. 64

<sup>30</sup> Abraham D. (coord.), Abraham, A.; Dalu, A.M.; Fierbinteanu, C.; Marcovici, O.; Mitulescu, S.; Plaesu, A.; Sufaru, I., *State of Adolescents in Romania*, Bucharest, 2013, available at [http://www.unicef.org/romania/UNICEF\\_Study\\_State\\_of\\_adolescents\\_in\\_Romania.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/romania/UNICEF_Study_State_of_adolescents_in_Romania.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Id. p. 38

<sup>32</sup> Cf. id.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, *EU Youth Report 2012*, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/eu-youth-report-2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/eu-youth-report-2012_en.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.41

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 42

conferences/debates – 12%; information campaigns – 15%; youth camps – 19%; voluntary activities – 20%)<sup>36</sup>. Additionally, some 18% of respondents declared that they had participated during the last years in vocational training activities (out of school qualification/re-qualification or qualification upgrading courses).<sup>37</sup>

The Youth Barometer also provides information on Internet usage and media consumption, yet not so detailed as in the case of the study on adolescents above referred to. It reveals that 81% of young people (14-35 y/o) use the Internet at least several times per week (60% daily) and that 45% of those using the Internet do it for information purposes (which according to Eurostat classification would fall under “informal learning”). Besides, 79% of respondents declared that they were watching TV daily, while 14% declared that they were reading newspapers/ magazines daily (which according to Eurostat classification would fall under “random learning”, i.e. non-intentional learning)<sup>38</sup>.

The EU Youth Report also points out that non-formal education and training takes mainly place in the context of youth work (youth work referring to “activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature”<sup>39</sup>). It also reveals that “youth work increasingly deals with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion” and that it “plays a fundamental role in supporting young people in their personal education and fulfilment, and in consolidating their identity among their peers and within society, as they are encouraged to take an active part in any field of interest to them. Youth work activities also sometimes target young people who are especially at risk of social marginalisation and poverty”<sup>40</sup>.

## Employment

Since the minimum legal age for employment is 16 y/o (15 y/o with prior approval by parents for certain jobs), we shall actually refer hereinafter to youth employment. Nevertheless, a pretty large category of so called “economically active children” (children aged 7-14 y/o involved in economic activities for at least one hour in the reference week of the survey) still exists in Romania (especially in rural and small urban settlements), but it is not accounted for in current statistics; a study from 2004 using data from a INS survey carried out in 2003 estimated at circa 19% the proportion of economically active children in Romania<sup>41</sup>. The labour statistics provide data on activity, employment and unemployment rates starting with the 15-19 y/o age group, so as one cannot discern the employment status of those aged 15-18 y/o. However, the fact that 85% of the employed population aged 15-19 y/o (almost 324.000 people) lived in rural areas in Q.3/2013 suggests that a significant number of these young people were working in the (subsistence) agriculture. This assertion is also supported by the data on distribution of employed rural population aged 15-24 y/o by employment status (not available from INS Tempo on-line for the 15-19 y/o age group): 34.38% - salaried workers; 11.13% self-employed; 0.04% - owners; and 54.45% non-remunerated family workers<sup>42</sup> (contributing family workers in Eurostat). This last category is often considered by social scientists as hiding unemployment and precarious employment.

---

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

<sup>37</sup> Id.

<sup>38</sup> Id.

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, *EU Youth Report 2012*, p. 42

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Id.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ghinararu C, *Munca copiilor in Romania (Children' work in Romania)*, RO MEDIA Publishing House, 2004, p. 15 [available at [http://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/Munca\\_copiilor.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/Munca_copiilor.pdf)]

<sup>42</sup> Cf. INS – TEMPO on-line, Labour force

In the following, we analyse some labour market indicators that are most relevant for the purpose of this study, comparing meanwhile the situation in Romania with the situation in EU27. The option for EU27 is aimed at ensuring consistency with other comparisons in this study that refer to periods when EU28 did not exist yet. Besides, since latest data available from INS refers to the third quarter of 2013, we shall use Eurostat data for the same period. The table below synthesises Eurostat data on activity, employment and unemployment rates as of Q. III/2013<sup>43</sup>

Age group	Activity rate		Employment rate		Unemployment rate	
	EU27	RO	EU27	RO	EU27	RO
15-64 y/o	72.3	61	64.6	59.7	10.6	7.3
15-24 y/o	42.3	30.8	33.6	25.3	22.9	23.2
15-19 y/o	22	13.4	15.9	9.2	27.8	31.3
20-24 y/o	62.7	48.4	49.3	38	21.4	21.5
25-29 y/o	82.5	77.1	70.9	69.3	14	10.1
30-34 y/o	85.9	82.7	76.7	77.2	10.7	6.6

The activity rates for young population increase along with age groups at both EU27 level and Romania level, which most likely reflects the decreasing weight of young population enrolled in full time education along with transition from younger age groups to older age groups. However, one may easily notice that the transition from the status of economically inactive to the status of economically active is much faster at the EU27 level than in Romania, especially in the youngest age groups. The “dual system”, which is operational in some European countries and encourages combining education with employment, especially on the vocational route, may explain this difference to a certain extent, but most likely this is also the combined effect of a lack of job opportunities for the younger people (especially while being still in formal education) and of a certain (outdated) mentality of their parents, according to which school and work should be dealt with separately: school first and work afterwards. Besides, as already envisaged above, many young people in Romania see the continuation of formal education as a means to avoid/postpone the confrontation with the (unfavourable) labour market, which often results in dropping out before graduation or failing to pass the graduation exams. This makes even more difficult their access to the labour market, since in most cases they leave formal education without any qualification.

The employment rates among the young active population are still lower in Romania as compared to the EU27 (except among the 30-34 y/o age group), but the differences are not as high as in the case of activity rates. This requires however a special analysis since, as we have already envisaged above, the numbers of “contributing family workers” and “self-employed” in the 15-24 y/o age group in Romania are particularly high. Since the Eurostat provides only numbers (thousand persons) in this regard, we calculated weights from total employed population in the 15-24 y/o age group for “contributing family workers” and “self-employed”.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Eurostat database, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment\\_unemployment\\_lfs/data/database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_lfs/data/database)

What we first noticed is that 11 countries out of the 27 considered did not report data for “contributing family workers” (and most likely do not use this category). Secondly, we noticed that Romania ranges first among the countries that reported data, with 33.57% of employed population in the 15-24 age group classified as “contributing family workers” (followed by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – 27.09%, Turkey – 19.4%, Greece – 16.89%, and Slovenia – 15.70%). Except Poland (with 7.45%), in all other EU27 countries that reported data the weights of “contributing family workers” in the 15-24 y/o employed population is less than 4%.

As far as the “self-employed” young people in the 15-24 y/o age group are concerned, a similar analysis reveals that Romania ranges third (with 9.45%), after Italy (with 12.01%) and Greece (with 10.53%). Yet considering the 25 years of transition to the market economy, a more than double weight of “self-employed” young people in the 15-24 y/o age group in Romania as compared to the EU27 average (4.08%), but also to countries with extensive capitalist history, such as the UK (4.39%), France (22.3%), Germany (1.49%), Austria (1.72%) and many others, is questionable.

The above analyses may also help with understanding the much lower differences between Romania and EU27 with regard to unemployment (both for the 15-64 y/o and the 15-34 y/o age groups) as compared to differences observed in the employment rates.

As one may easily notice from the table above, the youth unemployment rate in the typical 15-24 y/o age group is just a little bit higher in Romania as compared to the EU27 (23.2% against 22.9%), while in the age groups 25-29 y/o and 30-34 y/o the unemployment rates in Romania are significantly lower than at EU27 level (10.1% against 14% and 6.6% against 10.7% respectively). Does this mean better employment opportunity for youth in Romania? Difficult to say so, since with regard to the main problems young people from Romania are confronted with, the Youth Barometer revealed that “young people’s chances to get a job” ranged first (54% of respondents having declared that “it represents a very serious problem” and 36% having declared that “it represents a problem”)<sup>44</sup>. Nevertheless, a 23.2% unemployment rate in the age group 15-24 y/o is a matter of serious concern.

Of high concern should be also the long term unemployment among young unemployed. Both the Eurostat and the European Commission’s youth reports refer to long term unemployment as unemployment that lasts 12 months and over. In consideration of its impact on youth personal development and career paths, youth research in Romania (and not only) often refers to long term unemployment among youth as unemployment lasting 6 months and over. This is particularly relevant in the context of the recently launched Youth Guarantee initiative, which refers to ensuring that all young people under 25 y/o – whether registered with employment services or not – get a good-quality, concrete offer for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or continued education within 4 months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, the focus on the first 6 months following graduation is justified by the fact that the time lag

---

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

<sup>45</sup> Cf. COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, 2013/C 120/01, available at [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?jsessionid=QmvMTgnhnstcnwC8GgDrVIVN1StM03WT92jXh7FhL61gNGyP0661!-1238186976?uri=CELEX:32013H0426\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?jsessionid=QmvMTgnhnstcnwC8GgDrVIVN1StM03WT92jXh7FhL61gNGyP0661!-1238186976?uri=CELEX:32013H0426(01))

between leaving formal education and starting the first job range between 3 and 6 months, with longer time lags in Romania as compared to EU27, as shown in the table below.<sup>46</sup>

GEO/ISCED97	All ISCED 1997 levels	Pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 0-4)	Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)	Upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary, first and second stage of tertiary education (levels 3-6)	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)	First and second stage of tertiary education (levels 5 and 6)
European Union (27 countries)	4.0	4.7	5.8	3.8	4.5	3.2
Romania	5.0	6.0	6.2	4.9	5.9	4.0

Therefore, with regard to this indicator we are using data provided by INS, which allows calculating long term unemployment also for 6 months and over.

The INS data for the third quarter of 2013<sup>47</sup> reveals that 65.37% of young unemployed in the age group 15-24 y/o and 67.95% of young unemployed in the age group 15-34 y/o were in this situation for 6 months or over. Likewise, 42.95% of young unemployed in the age group 15-24 y/o and 48.46% of young unemployed in the age group 15-34 y/o were in this situation for 12 months or over. This means that 65.71% of the young unemployed for 6 month and over in the 15-24 y/o age group and 71.31% of the young unemployed for 6 months and over in the 15-34 y/o age group were actually unemployed for more than 12 months, which suggests that the causes of youth long term unemployment are of a structural nature rather than of a contextual nature. Such causes may relate to a lack of correlation between the offer of the formal education system and the labour market demand, but also to a lack of career counselling/orientation, which leave room for misleading education trajectory options among both young people and their parents, as above referred to.

Besides, a considerable number of young people, both in the age group 15-24 y/o and in the age group 25-34 y/o had given up searching employment in the third quarter of 2013 (52,242 and 70,663 respectively). This is mostly the case for young people living in rural areas, where the availability of career counselling services is much scarce as compared to urban areas (76.06% in the age group 15-24 y/o and 69.21% in the age group 25-34 y/o<sup>48</sup>).

Also relevant for the perspective of accessing and remaining/advancing on the labour market is the early school leaving rate among young people aged 18-24 y/o; this was 17.3% in Romania in 2013, as compared to 12% at the EU27 level<sup>49</sup>.

Besides, especially with regard to young peoples' chances of advancement on the labour market, the rate of participation in education or training of people aged 25-34 y/o and 25-64 y/o is also very relevant; in

<sup>46</sup> Data source: Eurostat database

<sup>47</sup> Cf. INS TEMPO On-line

<sup>48</sup> Id.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Eurostat database

Romania it was 13.1% and 8% respectively in 2011, as compared to 48.5% and 40.3% respectively (estimates) at EU level<sup>50</sup>.

A special matter of concern, relating to both education and labour market but mainly to the transition from education to employment, is the NEET phenomenon. This refers to factors and processes that either leave young people, for shorter or longer periods of time, out of the education and training systems as well as out of the labour market, or determine them to opt out of these systems, in both cases resulting in a significant number of young people being not included in education, employment or training (generically called NEETs) at an age span (15-24 y/o) when typical young people are included in either education, or employment, or in a training scheme, or a combination thereof.

From the perspective of the scientific endeavours to explain the phenomenon and inform the related policies, one may assert that a suitable body of knowledge regarding the NEET phenomenon, which could inform an evidence-based policy making in the national contexts is far from being developed by the research community. NEET is rarely referred to in the existing studies as a phenomenon and analysed as such; instead, it is approached and analysed as a category of young people, which most researchers have tried to describe and draw attention on disadvantages they are confronted with. Under these circumstances and in consideration of the rather descriptive than analytical character of this paper, we shall limit ourselves to present the statistical figures. For the typical age group (15-24 y/o), the NEETs rate in 2013 was 17.2% for Romania, while at the EU27 level it was only 12.9%. Since some studies refer also to the 15-29 y/o age group, we present also the figures for this age group: 19.6% for Romania and 15.8% for EU27<sup>51</sup>.

## Leisure

The studies on children and adolescents that we have already mentioned do not provide detailed information on how they use their leisure time, except media consumption and Internet usage by adolescents, which have already been presented under the education section above. In brief, one may say that children spend their free time by participating in extracurricular activities (to the extent this is voluntary), playing with peers, watching TV and surfing/gaming on the Internet. While a more detailed analysis is not possible based on available data, the long hours spent with watching TV and surfing the Net suggest that not much room remains for active spending of the leisure time.

Regarding young people (14-34 y/o), the Youth Barometer provides a little bit more information, yet without breakdown by age groups. According to its findings, there are significant differences among young people regarding the length of leisure time, which most likely reflects their professional status, but since the database behind these findings has not been made public one cannot make scientific affirmations. Thus, with reference to the working days of the week, 35% of respondents declared that they had some 3-4 hours leisure time per day, 29% declared having 1-2 hours per day and 22% declared having 5 hours or more leisure time per day; only 5% declared having no leisure time during the working days. The situation is different during the weekends, as expected: 57% had 5 hours or more leisure time, 21% had 3-4 hours leisure time and 9% only 1-2 hours leisure time, while 2% declared having no leisure time during the weekends (differences up to 100% represents “don’t know”/“don’t answer”)<sup>52</sup>.

---

<sup>50</sup> Id.

<sup>51</sup> Id.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

While looking at what young Romanians were doing during their leisure time, we first notice that there were five types of activities that more than 50% of young people were not doing at all (“participating in activities of cultural organisations” – 72%, “participating in activities of youth associations or clubs” – 72%, “participating in sports clubs' activities” – 63%, “going to theatre, opera, ballet, classical music concerts” – 61%, and “visiting museums or art galleries” – 56%) and only two types of activities that more than 50% of young people were doing daily or at least 2-3 times a week (“watching TV” – 92% and “spending time with friends” – 55%). Significant percentages for activities done on a daily basis or at least 2-3 times a week have also been registered for “reading newspapers/magazines” – 39%, “doing sports/physical exercises or activities” – 34%, and “reading literature” – 28%. From among the leisure time activities undertaken 2-3 times a month or 2-3 times a week, significant cumulated percentages have been registered for “going to bars/terraces/coffee shops” (39% for 2-3- times a month and 22% for 2-3 times a week) and for “going in clubs/discos” (31% for 2-3- times a month and 8% for 2-3 times a week).<sup>53</sup>

The above figures reveal a low level of cultural participation among young Romanians and a low level of participation in activities organised by civil society organisations (youth associations and clubs, cultural associations, sports clubs), which suggests a high need for youth work. They also reveal that most of the leisure time activities undertaken by Romanian youth are of a passive nature.

### Social capital

The study on adolescents that we have already referred to reveals that adolescents rely mostly on their parents and grandparents when they need help, but also on teachers and friends/colleagues. The persons to whom adolescents turn when they look for support vary to some extent according to age group and more to the type of issue involved. Differences have been noticed between the younger ones (10-13 y/o) and the older ones (14-18 y/o) in the sense that the younger rely on parents and teachers to a larger extent when being in difficult situations, while the older rely to a larger extent on friends in such situations. Institutional actors (social assistance/emergency services) did not appear to play a significant role for either younger or older adolescents.<sup>54</sup>

With regards to the type of problems for which adolescents look for support, the study reveals that for health problems adolescents rely almost exclusively on their parents/grandparents (88%), while for learning problems they mostly rely on parents/grandparents (60%), but also on teachers (26%) and colleagues/friends (9%).

When it comes to problems with colleagues, the support is sought from all main actors, yet to a larger extent from parents (parents/grandparents – 42%, teachers – 30%, and colleagues/friends – 23%).

When having problems with parents, in most cases (36%) the adolescents try to sort them out within the family, but almost to the same extent they apply to colleagues/friends (32%) and only to a little extent they apply to teachers (6%).

For love related problems, adolescents rely mostly on colleagues/friends (40%) but almost to the same extent

---

<sup>53</sup> Id.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Abraham D. (coord.), Abraham, A.; Dalu, A.M.; Fierbinteanu, C.; Marcovici, O.; Mitulescu, S.; Plaesu, A.; Sufaru, I., *State of Adolescents in Romania*, Bucharest, 2013, p. 37

on parents/grandparents (39%), while teachers are not mentioned at all.

What is important to point out from the perspective of children and youth work is that “social assistant” and “someone else” were rarely evoked (“social assistant” – 2% and “someone else” – 16% for all types of problems)<sup>55</sup>, which suggests little availability of children and youth work, if any, in the settlement where adolescents live.

The Youth Barometer sought to identify support instances that young people rely upon while being confronted with the following situations: choosing a profession, finding a job, making major decisions in life, and facing financial difficulties. Its findings revealed<sup>56</sup> that in all cases the main support instance was the family (choosing a profession – 61%, finding a job – 47%, making major decisions in life – 80%, and facing financial difficulties – 81%), followed by “friends” (choosing a profession – 4%, finding a job – 13%, making major decisions in life – 4%, and facing financial difficulties – 9%) and “teachers” (choosing a profession – 5%, finding a job – 1%, making major decisions in life – 0.4%, and facing financial difficulties – 1%). Other support instances, such as “psychologist”, “public institutions/services”, “priest/monk”, and “other person/institution” have registered very low scores (up to 2% for all types of problems, except for “finding a job”, in which case 13% of respondents mentioned “public institutions/services” and 5% mentioned “other person/institution”).<sup>57</sup>

These findings also reveal a lack of youth work services in the proximity of young people living environment, along with little confidence in the support that public services may provide in difficult life situations.

### Civic and political participation

A recent research carried out by the Institute of Educational Sciences has attempted to assess whether or not and the extent to which the school provided pupils with necessary knowledge and skills for active civic and political participation<sup>58</sup>. The research included, *inter alia*, a questionnaire survey among upper-secondary school pupils (N=760), which without being statistically representative offers relevant information on how school curriculum and school environment are assessed by school pupils from the perspective of preparing them for active citizenship. It also gives some hints regarding school pupils’ perceptions of and attitudes towards the political environment in Romania and regarding their involvement in civic activities.

As far as the school curriculum is concerned, the research report concluded that it does not represent a sufficient ground for providing pupils with necessary knowledge and skills for becoming active citizens, mainly because the civic education is misplaced (i.e. in the grades VII and VIII, when children are too young for proper understanding of the subject matter) while in subsequent grades it is included among optional disciplines, mostly decided upon by schools (in consideration of available teaching staff) and parents (mostly in consideration of the end-of-cycle examination disciplines), and because the text books are too

---

<sup>55</sup> Id.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

<sup>57</sup> id

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Mitulescu S. (coord), Dalu A.M., Dalu C., Marcovici O., Plaesu A., Lazar M., Manu M., Stefanescu I., Iftode O, *Pregătire pentru participare și comportament participativ în mediul școlar – Raport de cercetare/ The participation learning and participatory behaviour in school – Research Report, ISE 2013*, available at [http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Raport\\_participare\\_civica\\_sinteza.pdf](http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Raport_participare_civica_sinteza.pdf)

theoretical,<sup>59</sup>.

With regard to school environment, the survey data suggests that almost half of the pupils perceived it as favourable to learning participation (48% opted for “to a very large extent” or “to a large extent”) and only 10% perceived it as unfavourable (“to a very little extent” or “not at all”) while 35% opted for the middle of the scale (“sufficiently”). These findings should however be taken with caution (along with the research team) since, besides the lack of statistical representativeness of the sample, the survey was conducted in the school environment (classrooms)<sup>60</sup>. Additionally, the answers to the subsequent question, asking respondents to assess their school environment from the perspective of whose opinion matters the most, revealed a rather different situation: teachers – 38%, pupils – 30.8%, parents – 20%, other – 11.2%<sup>61</sup>.

A practical exercise of representative democracy in schools consists of the setting up (by law) of “pupils’ councils”. This is rather a top-down exercise, organised by education authorities, than a community based initiative. They are not legal entities but their representatives are entitled to participate in the administration boards of the schools. The opinions of pupils having participated in the survey as to how these councils actually function in their schools were rather reserved, with 33.4% opting for “don’t know”; 27.6% declared that the pupils council in their school was very active, 24.5% declared that it was just a little active, while 10.3% assessed it as just formal (the remaining 4.2% said it was not the case since there were no pupils’ councils in their schools)<sup>62</sup>.

The interest of secondary school pupils for the political decisions at both local and national levels, as revealed by the research findings, was rather low (only one third of respondents had shown some interest), which seems to reflect their perception on the attitudes of public authorities towards their initiatives (less than a quarter believed that public authorities were actually interested of their initiatives and willing to follow them up, while around 70% believed that these authorities were either not interested of their initiatives or not willing to follow them up in their decisions)<sup>63</sup>.

With regard to secondary school children participation in non-governmental associations the research revealed an unexpectedly high rate (28%<sup>64</sup>), which compared to the findings of the Youth Barometer (4% at the whole sample level<sup>65</sup>), conducted on a statistically representative sample, is not reliable. This might be an exception at the level of selected schools but one cannot exclude a misunderstanding of the meaning of NGO among the surveyed children.

According to the same research, the trust of secondary school children in political organisations is very low (almost no trust in political institutions at central level and only some 20% in local authorities<sup>66</sup>), which in this case is consistent with the findings from the Youth Barometer, as we are going to see below. However, before passing on to the findings from the Youth Barometer we have to point out that comparisons between the two researches are risky because on the one hand they rely on different samples and on the other hand

---

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.9

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *ibid.* pp. 10-11

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 12

<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 15

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Mitulescu S. (coord), Dalu A.M., Dalu C., Marcovici O., Plaesu A., Lazar M., Manu M., Stefanescu I., Ifode O, *Pregatire pentru participare si comportament participative in mediul scolar – Raport de cercetare/ The participation learning and participatory behaviour in school – Research Report, ISE 2013*, p. 16

because, unfortunately, the Youth Barometer report made public does not contain breakdowns by sub-age groups (i.e. 14-18 y/o, 19-24 y/o, 25-29 y/o and 30-34 y/o).

Among the larger category of “youth” the trust in political organisations is also low, but more nuanced. Thus, they trust to a small extent the Government, the political parties, the Parliament and the Presidency (7%, 5%, 6% and 11% respectively of the respondents to the Youth Barometer declared they trusted these organisations “much” or “very much”) while more than two third declared the opposite (70%, 72%, 68% and 65% respectively declared that they didn’t trust at all or that they trusted only “a little” these organisations) However, between 16% and 19% opted for a neutral attitude (neither trust, nor mistrust) and some 6-7% had no attitude or didn’t answer.<sup>67</sup> Their level of trust in non-governmental organisations is also rather low (12% for “much” and “very much”) but in this case more neutral positions have been observed (26%) and the weight of those who didn’t know/didn’t answer was also high (9%); this was actually the highest weight of don’t know/don’t answer options among all proposed institutions and organisations, which may suggest that the actual weight of young people who don’t trust non-governmental organisations is even higher. This may be also explained by the fact that only 16% of the respondents were aware of the existence of any NGO acting in their locality of residence<sup>68</sup>.

Local public authorities (municipality/city hall), with 21% “much” and “very much” trust<sup>69</sup>, appeared to be much more trusted than central political organisations and NGOs, which might be due to the fact that they are perceived by citizens as having administrative functions rather than political functions .

The mass-media have reached a higher level of trust among young people as compared to both central political organisations and local public authorities, with 23% “much” and “very much” trust and only 42% mistrust or little trust.<sup>70</sup> Since they belong to civil society, this sounds encouraging from the perspective of our project topics but to my best knowledge they are not very supportive with regard to the NGOs, often preferring to publicise bad practices rather than good practices. Besides, advertising their programmes and projects through mass-media incurs costs that NGOs can hardly afford.

The organisations having reached the highest levels of trust by young people were the Church (49%), the School (42%) and the Military (38%), which are legally out of the political parties’ influence. Higher levels of trust as compared to political organisations have also reached the Police and the Judiciary (29% and 25% respectively)<sup>71</sup>, which officially are also out of the political parties’ influence but this is often questioned in mass-media and public discourses.

In consideration of the foregoing, one should not be surprised that the interest of young people for the political life is low. As revealed by the Youth Barometer, almost 40% of young people are not interested at all by the political life, at both local and central levels, while only circa 10% are interested “to a large extent” and “to a very large extent”. The percentages of “don’t know/don’t answer” are also very high (23% for local level and 25% for central level)<sup>72</sup>, which most likely also reflects the low level of trust above referred to.

---

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

<sup>68</sup> Id.

<sup>69</sup> Id.

<sup>70</sup> Id.

<sup>71</sup> Id.

<sup>72</sup> Id.

Participation of young Romanians in the representative democracy, namely in the elections, as revealed by the Youth Barometer 2012, was also rather low (with 65% having participated in elections and 55% having participated in referendums<sup>73</sup>) if considering the information provided by the EU Youth Report 2012 (quoting the Youth on the Move Barometer 2011) , according to which “some 80 % of eligible voters aged between 16 and 29 voted in local, regional, national or EU elections in the preceding three years”<sup>74</sup>.

Much lower appeared to be the participation of young Romanians in forms of direct democracy, such as participating in political meetings, signing on-line petitions, getting involved in electoral campaigns (11%), or participating in civic actions organised by NGOs or labour unions (5%)<sup>75</sup>.

Participation of young people in voluntary activities also appeared to be very low (13%<sup>76</sup>) as compared to the EU27 average of circa 25%<sup>77</sup> in 2011. If looking at the percentage of young respondents who declared that they wished to participate as volunteers in the activities of an NGO (29%<sup>78</sup>) we may conclude that there is still a large need for better informing young people on existing opportunities for volunteering within youth NGOs as well as on the advantages in terms of non-formal and informal learning of participating in such activities.

The percentage of young respondents who declared that they would like to register with a non-governmental organisation is also low (9%) but is more than the double of those already registered (4%)<sup>79</sup>, which represents a good ground for improving youth civic participation. This requires more and better awareness raising campaigns by the existing NGOs, especially those most preferred by potential applicants for membership. As suggested by the findings from the Youth Barometer, these are organisations acting in the following fields: education/vocational training, humanitarian issues, environment, arts/culture, volunteering, tourism, and sports<sup>80</sup>.

### Risky behaviours

Proper knowledge of risky behaviours among children and youth is particularly important for the civil society structures and especially for those carrying out children and youth work since in most cases they are much more able to reach out to people at risk and to properly address their needs for support as compared to public authorities/services. Therefore, it makes sense to include in this study some key aspects regarding risky behaviours, as revealed by research. While the study on the state of adolescents already referred to has allocated a whole sub-chapter to this issue, the Youth Barometer only gives some hints regarding consumption of some unhealthy products and regarding smoking. This does not incur relevant limitations from the perspective of our project objectives since adolescence is the most critical period for the initiation of such risky behaviours and early intervention is the most effective solution to discourage/fight these behaviours.

Prior to going through the findings of the study on adolescents we have to point out that the survey from

---

<sup>73</sup> Id.

<sup>74</sup> EU Youth Report 2012, p. 77

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer 2012

<sup>76</sup> Id.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. EU Youth Report 2012, p. 86

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer 2012

<sup>79</sup> Id.

<sup>80</sup> Id.

which data has been drawn was rather small (N=706) and the assumed margins of error were  $\pm 3.9\%$  at a 95% confidence interval. This requires special caution in extrapolating its findings at the level of sub-samples (under and over 14 y/o, gender, and area of residence). Nevertheless, these findings are relevant as indications for the extent and incidence of risky behaviours among adolescents from Romania.

The incidence of alcohol consumption among adolescents, as revealed by the research findings, was pretty high (42% had drunk an alcoholic beverage at least once in their lifetime), with higher incidence among boys (57%) as compared to girls (27%), as well as among adolescents aged 14 y/o and over compared to the under 14 y/o; the incidence was also higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The average quantity drunk during the last 30 days before the survey (calculated only for those who had ever consumed alcoholic drinks) was 513 millilitres for boys and 204 millilitres for girls (in the days they had a drink) and almost double in rural areas than in urban areas<sup>81</sup> (this should not surprise if taking into account that the drinks mostly consumed by adolescents are beer and wine, and in rural areas drinking home-made wine is very familiar). If one correlates these figures with those showing that 33% of the adolescents aged 14 y/o and over and 20% of those under 14 y/o had received remarks from people around them regarding their alcohol consumption behaviour, this suggests that between 3 in 10 adolescents aged 14-18 y/o and 2 in 10 adolescents aged 10-13 y/o were drinking excessively<sup>82</sup>.

As far as the larger category of young people (14-35 y/o) is concerned, the Youth Barometer only tells us that 3% used to consume alcoholic drinks daily, 11% some 2-3 times per week, 25% some 2-3 times per month and 22% some 2-3 times per year, while 37% had not consumed alcoholic drinks at all.<sup>83</sup>

Smoking is another risky behaviour with worrying incidence among adolescents. As research data revealed, the smoking incidence (percentage of adolescents who smoked at least one cigarette in their lifetime) was 23% (approximately 32% among boys and 16% among girls) and the smoking starting age was 14 y/o for boys and 15 y/o for girls. However, it was much lower among adolescents aged 10-13 y/o (6%) as compared to those aged 14-18 y/o (33%). In the past 30 days, younger smokers smoked 12 days a month and 10 cigarettes daily on average, while older smokers smoked 20 days a month and 20 cigarettes daily, on average.<sup>84</sup> Like alcohol consumption, the smoking habit is more widespread among urban adolescents; around 28% of adolescents living in urban areas smoked, compared to 19% of those from rural areas. However, in this case no relevant differences have been noticed between urban and rural areas: urban teenage smokers smoked 21 days over the past month and 20 cigarettes daily on average, while rural teenager smokers smoked 18 days out of 30 in the last month and 22 cigarettes daily on average.<sup>85</sup>

With regard to the whole young population (aged 14-35 y/o), the Youth Barometer revealed that 31% of respondents declared that they were “smokers” and 66% declared the opposite, while 3% did not answer this question.<sup>86</sup>

The incidence of drug consumption among adolescents, as revealed by the study on the state adolescents in

---

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Abraham D. (coord.), Abraham, A.; Dalu, A.M.; Fierbinteanu, C.; Marcovici, O.; Mitulescu, S.; Plaesu, A.; Sufaru, I., *State of Adolescents in Romania*, Bucharest, 2013, p. 30

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 31

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Abraham D. (coord.), Abraham, A.; Dalu, A.M.; Fierbinteanu, C.; Marcovici, O.; Mitulescu, S.; Plaesu, A.; Sufaru, I., *State of Adolescents in Romania*, Bucharest, 2013, p. 31

<sup>85</sup> *Id.*

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

Romania, is not very high (3.8% for 10-18 y/o and 5.4% for 14-18 y/o) but this is one of the most risky consumption behaviour, especially at early ages. However, if considering only the adolescents aged 14 y/o and over from urban areas, the weight of drug consumers raises at 7.5%, which is already worrying<sup>87</sup>. Moreover, according to another survey, conducted by the National Antidrug Agency in 2011 among high school pupils aged 16 y/o and over and quoted by the authors of this study, the incidence of drug consumption was 10% (which considering that high schools are mostly located in urban areas, is not far from the estimation done on the basis of the survey among adolescents)<sup>88</sup>.

Coming back to the findings from the study on adolescents, we notice that 2.3% of adolescents declared they had consumed cannabis, while ecstasy, the so called ‘new substances with psychoactive effects’ (also known as ‘ethno-botanical’ substances), sleeping pills, sedatives, hallucinogens and inhalants had been consumed by 1% of the respondents each. Drug consumption seemed to be more widespread among boys, especially hard drugs, while the use of pills appeared to be more common among girls; girls also seemed to start using drugs at an older age than boys (15-17 y/o and 11-14 y/o respectively), while the incidence of drug consumption raises along with the age. It is also important to point out that none of the adolescents less than 14 y/o and only 0.3% of the older adolescents injected illicit drugs and that drug consumption was quite uncommon to rural adolescents.<sup>89</sup>

The Youth Barometer only asked respondents whether or not and how often they consumed light drugs. The answers suggest that only 7% of young people aged 14-35 y/o had ever consumed light drugs (1% each daily or 2-3 times per week, 2% 1-3 times per month, and 3% 1-3 times per year, while 2% didn’t answer)<sup>90</sup>. These findings are not consistent with those from the surveys above referred to, but since this is a sensitive matter it is difficult to assess whether this relates to methodological differences or to the ability of field interviewers.

The study on the state of adolescents has also explored the sexual behaviour since this also incurs risks, especially at early ages. The research findings revealed that 15% of adolescents declared themselves as sexually active (23% of boys and 11% of girls). By age-groups, one quarter of adolescents over 14 y/o and just less than 1% of those younger than 14 y/o were sexually active. On average, adolescents had their first sexual relation at the age of 15.5 y/o. As of the time of the survey, sexually active adolescents had had 2.3 partners on average and 68% of them had a steady partner. Likewise, 84% of sexually active girls said they had a steady partner as compared to 60% of boys. The age of their first sexual contact was 15, with a marginal difference between boys and girls (in months). None of the interviewed adolescents had experienced motherhood/fatherhood as of the time of survey.<sup>91</sup>

Out of those who were sexually active, some 4 in 10 said they had had sex with a casual partner in the past 12 months (1.9 casual partners on average) and only 60% of them used a condom each time. Casual sex appeared to be rather common among boys; around 49% of sexually active boys and 20% of girls had sex with a casual partner in the past 12 months while only 53% of these boys and 71% of these girls used a condom each time. Only 5% of sexually active adolescents said they had had sexual relations with a

---

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Abraham D. (coord.), Abraham, A.; Dalu, A.M.; Fierbinteanu, C.; Marcovici, O.; Mitulescu, S.; Plaesu, A.; Sufaru, I., *State of Adolescents in Romania*, Bucharest, 2013, pp. 31-32

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 32

<sup>89</sup> *Id.*

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Public Opinion Barometer – Youth 2012

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Abraham D. (coord.), Abraham, A.; Dalu, A.M.; Fierbinteanu, C.; Marcovici, O.; Mitulescu, S.; Plaesu, A.; Sufaru, I., *State of Adolescents in Romania*, Bucharest, 2013, p. 34

commercial/paid sex partner in the past 12 months and all of them had used a condom the last time they had sexual contact with a commercial sex worker.<sup>92</sup>

When asked how often they had used a condom with their steady sex partner in the past month, almost half (47%) of the adolescents who were sexually active said they had always used a condom, while 20% stated having used a condom with their steady sex partner most of the times. Girls seemed to be more careful when it comes to protection, more than half of them using always condoms with their steady partner as compared to 43% of boys. The percentage of adolescents saying they had used a condom with their steady partner only sometimes or rarely was however pretty high (17%) and so was the percentage of those stating that they had never used this particular method of contraception and protection with their steady partner (16%). As regards the reason for using the condom, the respondents mentioned mostly the prevention of pregnancy (63%) and the protection against sexually transmissible diseases (19%), while as reasons for not using the condom with their steady sex partners 47% of adolescents mentioned the discomfort associated to using it, 20% not having a condom at hand and 7% another reason.<sup>93</sup>

The study concluded that most adolescents had accurate knowledge (information) about the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and unsafe sex. However, it pointed out that there was a significant share of respondents whose knowledge (information) was uncertain: about 20% were not convinced that condom use reduces the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and only 77% were aware of occasional drug use dangers.<sup>94</sup>

The amount of information and the variety of information sources adolescents have access to in nowadays seem to have a positive impact as well. Thus, adolescents' awareness of the risks associated with drinking, smoking, drug consumption and sexual behaviour is very high, especially among adolescents aged 14 y/o and over. However, the authors noted that the younger adolescents are the less informed and less aware of these risks, especially with regard to sexual behaviour and drinking. On the other hand, awareness levels with regard to the risks incurred by drinking, smoking and sexual behaviour are only slightly different in respect of gender and between urban and rural adolescents.<sup>95</sup>

#### Concluding remarks on the relevance of the foregoing from the perspective of project's objectives

While in the areas of poverty reduction, employment, welfare, health and formal education (often referred to as belonging to "hard policies"), the civil society structures cannot have substantial contributions to the improvement of current situation as above described, in areas such as non-formal education and training, active leisure, civic and political participation, and risky behaviours' harm reduction the interventions of civil society's structures, especially through children and youth work, are often the most effective and sometimes the only means to mitigate the adverse impact on young people's lives and their development perspectives of the socio-economic conditions in which many of them live. Therefore, we shall point out in the following how civil society structures may contribute to the improvement of the situation of children and youth from Romania, in respect of each topic discussed above.

---

<sup>92</sup> Id.

<sup>93</sup> Id.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Id. P. 36

<sup>95</sup> Id.

## Legal and institutional framework

While legal and institutional framework is being established by political bodies, civil society can play an important role in influencing the political decision by raising awareness on the lack of effectiveness of certain legal provisions and/or certain public services relating to ensuring full access of children and youth to their rights (including through mass-media). They can not only draw attention on such aspects but also provide examples of good practice from their direct interventions as well as from experiences of their partner organisations from other countries. The project under which this study has been produced has already proved to be a good framework for sharing experiences among children and youth organisations from Romania and Germany and learning from each other how certain issues have been addressed in their national or regional contexts. This kind of projects should be further encouraged and supported, including with regard to extending the areas of cooperation, both in what concerns the areas of intervention of participating organisations and the countries involved.

Additionally, civil society structures are often compensating the lack of effectiveness and/or limited availability of public services through their direct interventions. However, in a view that public and private resources to be directed more largely and more focussed to supporting direct interventions of children and youth organisation, as well to supporting further capacity building among these organisations, their activities and potentials should be better known by sponsoring entities. Research on this topic should therefore be also encouraged and supported.

## Living standard

Fighting poverty and social exclusion is mostly a matter of “hard policy” and largely depends upon the level of economic development. Nevertheless, the distribution of poverty and of social exclusion phenomena is mostly known in terms of statistical features, while the NGOs acting at local levels often know better where the most critical cases are located and how these cases should be addressed as to avoid further negative impacts on children and youth personal development. Reaching out to most vulnerable groups often requires the involvement of youth workers and at least for the time being most of the youth workers in Romania act (often on voluntary basis) within non-governmental organisation focusing on children and youth. Projects that support experience sharing and capacity building among these organisations, especially with regard to children and youth work, may have a substantial contribution in mitigating the impact of poverty among the most vulnerable groups.

Encouraging social economy, especially through transfer of knowledge and good practice experience sharing, may also increase the potential of civil society structures to address poverty and social exclusion issues.

## Education

Although the fact that quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) significantly contributes to further educational achievements and to reducing the risk of early school leaving is largely acknowledged in public

discourse, the situation in Romania as previously described is almost critical in this regard for the lower age group. Besides, it came out from our analysis that even for preschool children little opportunities exist for participation in non-formal and informal learning, especially for the large category of those from low-income households. This project has already revealed a high potential to provide transfer of knowledge and experience sharing in the area of ECEC, but in a view to take full advantage from this potential further projects should be developed and submitted for funding to relevant sponsors (including EU funds). In doing so, the project may extend its scope (and try to obtain additional funding accordingly) as to also include technical assistance for participating organisations in developing good project proposals.

Our analysis has also revealed that participation in formal education is far from being enough for a successful transition of young people to adulthood and that learning in non-formal settings has become a necessary complement to the formal education. It also revealed that in the field of education and career guiding the children and youth work should play a major role. On the other hand, we learned from statistics that the proportion of young people aged 15-24 y/o from Romania having participated in non-formal learning activities was extremely low and much lower than at EU27 level.

Since non-formal education and training takes mainly place in the context of children and youth work, which plays a fundamental role in supporting young people in their personal education and fulfilment, as well as in consolidating their identity among their peers and within society, it is obvious that civil society structures should do their best to encourage children and youth taking an active part in any field of interest to them. Moreover, our project so far has revealed that not only learning in non-formal settings has become very important for easing young people's transition to adulthood, but also alternative teaching and learning methods may contribute to improving educational achievements, especially in the cases of children and youth with special education needs.

## Employment

At its current level of development in Romania, civil society cannot do very much in the area of job creation, although if putting more emphasis on development of social economy it may substantially help with young people (especially from disadvantaged groups) gaining some work experience, which later on has an enabling effect on their access to the labour market. It could play, however, an important role in better informing young people on the requirements of the actual labour market (not only in the residence country but also in the countries known as preferred destination for migration flows), in providing them with job search skills through non-formal education schemes, as well as in providing them with career counselling/orientation services so as to enable their informed decision while choosing education and/or employment trajectories. This type of services may be particularly helpful for young people discouraged to further search jobs.

The international cooperation between the civil society structures opens, *inter alia*, excellent opportunities for designing and carrying out projects aimed at ensuring better integration in host communities of the young migrants, along with reducing hazardous migration through providing potential emigrants with accurate information on the labour market requirements in the intended destination countries, on social norms and practices within host communities, as well as on the risks incurred by relying on unofficial networks that offer migration assistance services, especially of becoming victims of the trafficking in human beings and of the underemployment. Such projects may also aim at helping the victims of hazardous migration to overcome its effects and to resume their life trajectories from a better informed position.

Although this might not fall under the Eurostat definition of non-formal education, several NGOs are already active in providing vocational education and training, thus contributing to bridging the gap between the offer of the formal education system and the actual demand of the labour markets. This might be encouraged since such training schemes are much flexible and adaptive as compared to formal education schemes.

### Leisure

The analysis on leisure time activities of children and youth has revealed a low level of cultural participation and a low level of participation in activities organised by civil society organisations. If also considering the low level of awareness among Romanian children and youth with regard to NGOs and their activities, one may conclude that there is still much work to do by civil society structures for both raising awareness on their potential to help children and youth in many areas where public services are ineffective or unavailable and trying to reach out to a larger range of people in need for such support. With regard to leisure, they should focus on activities that require/ensure active involvement of participants and learning outcomes that are relevant for children and youth (e.g. social skills, participation skills, intercultural understanding and cooperation, mobility skills etc.). International cooperation between civil society structures may provide a wealth of examples in this regard.

### Social capital

Civil society organisations represent one of the best social environments for building and developing social capital. However, young people from Romania do not seem to understand and take advantage from this. It might be an effect of social transformations that came along with the transition to a capitalist regime, with late modern propensity to individualisation, but one may presume that it also reflects a persisting mistrust in organisational structures (partly inherited from the previous political regime, partly generated by the conduct of current public institutions and services, which show little consideration to citizens). There is also an extensive reluctance with regard to associative forms of activity (including in economic area), largely due to the experiences lived during the socialist regime, when most associative frameworks were compulsory.

This can be hardly reversed in the short run but civil society structures should do their best to raise awareness on the advantages (also in terms of social capital) of acting together and relying on each other while pursuing activities of common interest. Examples of positive outcomes of solidarity and joint action, as well as examples of cases when an NGO has been more effective than other support instances in helping young people to overcome difficult situations, may have a good impact in this regard.

### Civic and political participation

As we have already learned from our analysis, formal education does not help very much with learning civic participation. If also considering the reluctance above referred to with regard to participation in associative structures, one may assume that family is not a favourable environment for learning civic participation either. Hence, the civil society structures remain the main civic education provider, both in terms of theory and practice. The problem is that financial resources for this activity are scarce and NGOs cannot support it from

their own resources, especially in the circumstances of the increasing need for intervention by children and youth in difficult situations. Moreover, as previously pointed out, funding for NGOs by private sponsors has sharply decreased following Romania's accession to the EU, while funding from public sources has been always scarce in Romania. Besides, one may hardly assume a political interest in funding civic participation since political parties are mostly concerned with supporting their own youth organisations. Hence, there is little chance for NGOs to continue supporting civic education in non-formal settings. However, small projects based on international cooperation between youth and children organisations are still a chance, as already initiated under this project.

Supporting political participation without civic education by the structures of civil society is not advisable since it should be based on civic values and oriented towards citizens' interest. Hence, we are not going further with this issue. The important is that civil society continues to play its traditional role of watch dog.

### Risky behaviours

As revealed by our analysis, risky behaviours among children and youth should be of high concern for both public authorities and civil society. The research findings referred to in our analysis have shown that public services are hardly reaching to the most at risk children and youth, which is compensated to a certain extent by NGOs. Besides, in the conditions of decreasing assistance by international donors for Romanian NGOs, especially after Romania's accession to the EU, many of them had to focus on most vulnerable children and youth at risk. For many children and youth in such situations the NGOs are the only trusted support structures (e.g. drug addicts are very reluctant in using public services and often the only accepted persons to help them are volunteers from the NGOs). Differently from public services, the NGOs start with harm reduction measures and only afterwards move to recovery and rehabilitation measures. Experience sharing and dissemination of good practice regarding children and youth work within national and international cooperation are essential for the success of these interventions.

The conclusion of these conclusions is that the project "Developing and reinforcing structures of civil society in the context of children and youth work in Danubian countries" is well oriented with regard to the role that civil society is expected to play in the context of children and youth situation from Romania and that it has the potential to address many of the problems they are currently facing according as financial resources can be ensured.