# The Socio-Economic Political Context for Addressing Youth Employment in Romania

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## Introduction

This report aims to analyse youth policies in Romania. It provides a multi-level analysis of actual policy making in relation to disadvantaged youth. Young people represent a highly important social group in nowadays Romania, not only because of their number / share in total population but because even they represent the future for Romania, they are one of the most excluded groups. The actual high rate of social exclusion of young people (especially from the labor market, but also from adequate / correlated education and other significant spheres of public life such as involvement in making decisions related to their future) it’s partly a result of inadequate / neglected policies in the last 24 years focusing youth.

## Methods

The research process comprised three levels: a) Literature review at national level; b) Official public policy documents envisaging young people integration; c) Based on a semi-structured guide interview were taken 20 interviews (including over the phone) with various stakeholders having relevant experience to the in focus topics.

## National definitions

Although the share of young population in Romania is above the EU27 average of 25.1% (2012), the decrease in the last 10 years is more pronounced in Romania. EUROSTAT projections show it expects a sharp decline by 2060 the share of young people in the total population. Romania is among the countries heavily affected by this trend. According to the „National Strategy for Youth Policy 2014-2020” in Romania, the categories of disadvantaged young people affected by social exclusion are: young homeless people, young people that are leaving public residential care institutions, young people from territorially compact poor communities, young Roma people, teens with at least one parent working abroad, young people living with HIV / AIDS, victims of labor exploitation with sexual purposes, youngsters discriminated on grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, young people with disabilities.

## Policies, instruments and levels of intervention

"National Development Plan 2007-2013" proposed by the Government establishes the issue of integration of young people into the labor market as one of the priorities for action, as a result of rising unemployment rates. Government documents set the labor market integration of young people in close correlation with the ability of the education system to provide relevant skills and qualifications tailored to the market needs. Consecutively, the

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National Youth Strategy 2014-2020 addresses the situation of youth and policies for youth 14-35 years, as stipulated by Youth Law. Outside the National Development Plan, the Romanian legislation does not elaborate, however, a stable framework regarding labor market integration of young people in the sense that there is no specific law in this area.

Policy making, implementation and participation

From an institutional perspective and in close connection with the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the main institutional actors are MECTS, MMFPS, MECMA and MADR. Through subordinate structures at regional, county and local level they implement programs aimed at both young people in general and those in rural areas. MECTS is responsible for implementing the law of education as well as sports and leisure activities for young people. MMFPS support youth employment in particular through ANOFM, organizing job fairs and providing grants to employers. MECMA through AIPPIIMM support youth entrepreneurship in particular by the START program launched in 2011 to develop entrepreneurial skills among young people and facilitating their access to finance. Eligible youth must be aged up to 35 years and to establish for the first time a company with limited liability. MADR finances through APDRP a program named “Installation of young farmers” for farmers of up to 40 years. At the end of 2013, there has been a debate on youth involvement in decision making at high level, debate organized and coordinated by youth delegates of Romania to the United Nations. In this debate has presented a new initiative for youth involvement in decision-making processes: Program Youth Delegate to the UN. In short, the program has five main objectives: 1) Direct involvement of young people in international youth policy development; 2) Sustainable development of society and democracy by facilitating youth participation at all levels of decision; 3) Promoting youth policies, mechanisms for youth policy coordination among young at a national level and the importance of youth programs as part of socio-economic; 4) Familiarize young people in Romania with global development issues and opportunities of involvement they have in this regard; 5) Support activities and initiatives of the youth of Romania.

Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy

Social innovation takes several forms adapted to the specific of particular public institutions. For example, the National Agency of Public Finances (ANFP) aims social innovation in 3 directions: administration between systemic constraints and development of the human factor; social media - a mechanism to facilitate dialogue with citizens; partnership - the formula for successful performance institutions for citizens. Theoretically, in the last 4-5 years the legislative and institutional framework in Romania feature / support implementation of the greater social innovation. But implementation of innovative ideas and initiatives is difficult sometimes because of lack of experience of the implementers, and the lack of support and know-how, assistance and continuous monitoring. Competitions for grants that help to implement ideas and new solutions to social problems of young people (and others) are not always fair play. There are people specialized in writing projects ("soldiers of fortune") which charge a fee of 10-25% of the total value of the project if it is funded. Unfortunately in many cases the winning institution / organization have no real capacity of implementation and execution, or to assure sustainability, and finally positive effects on target groups are negligible.

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Discussion and conclusion

The fieldwork and policy/documents reviewing process drove to some significant, particular findings (conclusions) regarding social exclusion/disadvantage the Romanian youngsters are facing nowadays. The actual high rate of social exclusion of young people (especially from the labour market, but also from other significant spheres of public life such as involvement in making decisions related to their future) it’s not only the result of the actual deep economic crisis started in 2008 and/or a consequence of our “communist totalitarian heritage” but also to inadequate policies (or neglected policies) in the last 24 years envisaging youngsters. Social exclusion of young people is a cumulative result of some structural/systemic factors the adversely affected this social group. The main factors (and consecutively areas of urgent intervention) are: a) Increasing public social expenditures, mainly in the area of education/labour market/jobs creation; b) Focus of support policies on disadvantaged individuals living in deprived areas, such as rural area, small towns and the deprived neighbourhoods of big cities. Reducing youngsters’ dependency by the social support/welfare through active employment (and consecutively citizenship) is a key factor not only for avoiding dependency trap but for a flourishing independent way of life which could be a strong example to follow for the next generations; c) Diminishing the gap/lack of correlation between educational system and what the labour market is looking for.