

Youth – Actor of Social Change

“The Second Chance”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at <http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	The Second Chance
Location	Romania
Main theme	Transition of young people with an ethnic minority or immigrant background
Practice/Programme-related keywords	School attendance, access to education, school dropout, vocational training, professional insertion, social integration, cultural diversity, active-participatory learning
Summary of programme/ practice	The programme “The Second Chance” addresses one of the problems that mainly affect disadvantaged communities and especially Roma people, namely existence of big numbers of persons who passed the legal age associated with attendance of compulsory education without having completed this education. The programme aims at mitigating the effects of school dropout and early school leaving among disadvantaged groups through giving them a second chance for completing compulsory education under special settings adapted to occupational and family status of those people. In the meantime, the programme The Second Chance – lower-secondary education. The programme is structured on two levels: The Second Chance – primary education, and The Second Chance – lower-secondary education, which includes a vocational training component. There is no upper age limit for participation in this programme, but there is a condition requiring that participants had passed the legal age for being (re)integrated in the mainstream education. Thus, in

	the case of The Second Chance – primary education, the participant should have passed by at least 4 years the legal age for primary education, and should be in one of the following situations: • have not participated at all in the formal primary education; • have been enrolled in but have dropped from formal primary education, regardless at what time and because of what reason; • have not completed by the age of 14 the formal primary education. In the case of The Second Chance – lower-secondary education, eligible participants should be older than 14, should have passed by more than 2 years the legal enrolment age for the grade in which they could be enrolled in the formal compulsory education, and should be in one of the following situations: • have completed the compulsory primary education (including within The Second Chance – primary education program), but did not continue education afterwards; or • have completed part of the grades of lower-secondary education, but have dropped before completing this education cycle.
Target	1) Target area: 27 counties (Arges, Bihor, Bistrita-Nasaud, Botosani, Brasov, Bucuresti, Buzau, Caras-Severin, Calarasi, Constanta, Dolj, Galati, Giurgiu, Gorj, Hunedoara, Ilfov, Mehedinti, Olt, Prahova, Salaj, Satu-Mare, Suceava, Teleorman, Timis, Tulcea, Vaslui, and Vrancea) 2) Target groups/issues/problems addressed: When first initiated, in the framework of the PHARE 2001 Project “Access to Education of Disadvantaged Groups, with Special Focus on Roma” (2002-2004), The Second Chance programme’s target group consisted only of Roma people, but in its subsequent phases (PHARE 2003 and PHARE 2004) it has been enlarged to include all disadvantaged groups from the target area. Thus, in the current phase almost 50% of participants in the programme are Romanians.
Objectives of programme/ practice	The main objective of the programme is to mitigate the effects of school dropout among disadvantaged groups, thus improving their participation in education. Through its vocational training component, it also aims at improving employment perspectives and access to the labour market of (young) people from disadvantaged groups. In the long run, through tailored counselling services, accent on active-participatory learning and encouragement of lifelong learning, the programme aims at alleviating social integration.
Content of programme/ practice	Main actions/ steps: In its initial phase (2003), the efforts of the Ministry of Education focussed on developing the legal framework, the curriculum and the specific educational materials necessary for programme’s implementation. In the meanwhile, efforts have been done to train the local programme coordinators, at county level.

	Subsequently, the endeavour focussed on the qualitative aspects of the programme. Thus, under the PHARE 2004 Project “Access to Education of Disadvantaged Groups” the Ministry’s efforts were concentrated on providing institutional support and counselling to the schools involved in programme’s implementation (specific training for the teachers involved, as well as for resource persons – inspectors, managers, trainers, development of new information and educational materials, development of websites for schools and for trainees, development of handbooks for main actors – school managers, teachers, pupils/students, evaluators, etc.) The main steps have been: - development of the legal framework; - development of specific/differentiated curricula; - design and production of promotion materials; - design and production of education materials; - training of programme coordinators at county level; - setting up programme teams at county level; - training of programme staff, including TOT; - implementing the program in selected schools; - monitoring and evaluating the programme.
Time scale	Duration/Sustainability: The programme has a standard duration of • two years for primary education (four semesters, corresponding to the four grades in mainstream primary education); • four years for lower-secondary education (covering six grades in mainstream lower-secondary education); The duration may be reduced or extended, depending upon the specific performance of each participant.
Programme/ practice design	Development of programme/practice: The starting point of the programme was the school year 1999-2000, when within a project financed by Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Stability Pact and implemented by the Center Education 2000+, MERI initiated in the compulsory education a “Programme for combating marginalization and social exclusion of young people who had abandoned compulsory education and do not have minimum competencies required for getting a job” (implemented in six counties and Bucharest City). Continuation of this programme in a design applicable at national level has been initiated by the Ministry of Education through PHARE Projects. The first initiated was the PHARE 2001 Project “Access to Education of Disadvantaged Groups, with Special Focus on Roma” (2002-2004), which covered 10 counties. Following successful implementation of the above project, the European Commission approved the PHARE 2003 Project “Access to Education of Disadvantaged Groups”, with a view to extend the already created mechanisms, redefine the target group and define the priority areas of intervention based on socio-economic, cultural

	and educational criteria. Decision-making actors and process: Decision making belongs to the General Department for Management of Pre-University Education at the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation (MERI), which has established a Project Implementation Unit to ensure the overall management of the PHARE 2004 Project, including The Second Chance Programme; a dedicated coordination team has been appointed for this programme, which cooperated with counterpart teams at county schools inspectorates from the counties in the operating area of the programme. At county level, decision making for local implementation issues belongs to these inspectorates. Management and leadership of programme: Ms. Paloma Petrescu – PHARE 2004 project coordinator Ms. Viorica Pop – monitoring and evaluation coordinator Ms. Lucia Copoeru – programme coordinator for “The Second Chance” Mr. Paul Vermeulen – international expert in education, especially second chance type programmes Implementation: Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation – General Department for Management of Pre-University Education, Project Implementation Unit: ensures overall management of the programme, through a dedicated coordination team. County School Inspectorates: ensure coordination of programme’s implementation at counties level and relationships with partner organisations and local communities; provide feedback to Project Implementation Unit. Resource Centres for Inclusive Education and Teachers’ Corp Houses: provide expertise support for programme’s implementation. Legal framework: • MERI Order no. 5160/6.10.2005 regarding the implementation of the Second Chance Programme for primary education and approving the Methodology for organizing the implementation of the Second Chance Programme in primary education; • MERI Order no. 5160/6.10.2005 regarding the implementation of the Second Chance Programme for lower-secondary education and approving the Methodology for organizing the implementation of the Second Chance Programme in lower-secondary education; • MERI Order no. 5735/29.12.2005 for approving the curricula for basic education within the Second Chance Programme – lower-secondary education.
Resources involved	The programme has been implemented with financial support provided by the EU under the PHARE 2004 Project, as well as with financial contribution of the Romanian Government, in a view to assist Romania in improving the access to education of disadvantaged groups, among which large categories of Roma

	population, thus sustaining the process of Romania's accession to the EU and smoothing its European integration. Human resources have been mainly provided by the MERI and the county inspectorates for education, but also supplemented with support by the programme. Logistic support has been also ensured by MERI and supplemented with programme resources.
Evaluation	Monitoring and evaluation is being carried out by the programme teams at central and local levels, under coordination of MERI specialists (Ms. Tania Sandu, Ms. Gabriela Droc and Ms. Adina Stan). A range of methods are being used (among which questionnaire surveys, interviews, round tables with stakeholders). The programme personnel responsible for M&E, especially at local level, has been trained for the use of specific instruments and technique. A monitoring and evaluation report has been produced in 2007 under the coordination of the programme's management team and of the Ministry, which also includes recommendations for further monitoring and evaluating the programme within the PHARE 2005 Project and afterwards. Results / impact of programme: The total number of participants in the current phase of the Second Chance Programme amounts at 7607, most of whom in the age group 16-30 and unemployed. Almost half of these participants have been Romanians, but in spite of the programme having not an ethnic orientation in this phase the initially targeted Roma population has been largely represented in the other half. As regards impacts, the programme being still running, it is too early to draw conclusions. However, the feedback from teachers involved in the programme reveals that an improvement of the cultural capital at community has been already perceivable, not only with regard to the amount of information acquired but also with regard to personal and social competences improvement. Difficulties encountered: The programme's monitoring and evaluation revealed that it has been well designed and responsive to communities' needs. However, a range of difficulties have been noticed with regard to its implementation, among which: - insufficient effectiveness of information flows, especially between county school inspectorates and implementing schools; - availability of necessary support materials not always timely; - some counties being unable to keep the pace of programme implementation; - unsatisfactory attendance by some participants, because of family problems, job related problems in the case of employees, lack of stable residence in case of some Roma, etc.

	- lose of motivation during the programme, mainly relating to learning difficulties, including linguistic difficulties in case of Roma; - insufficient community implication, especially in the case of Roma; - survival of the perception that the programme targets only Roma people (since its initial phase), which discourages some potential participants to apply. Assessment of programme/ action/ practice in terms of sustainability: It is expected that the programme will continue with support of both European funding (PHARE 2005) and local funding (local councils and economic agents). Moreover, the Government's intention is to extend the programme at national level, through including it in a multi-annual programme. Additionally, the community problems that the programme aims to address are, unfortunately, long lasting problems, so that most probably the social support for its continuation will be a strong argument for policy makers.
Lessons to be drawn from programme or practice implemented	Your own judgement: strengths, weaknesses, sceptical comments, transferability, prerequisites, which aspects are good practice?, etc. The lack of / insufficient flexibility of formal education systems accounts to a large extent for (young) people's perception that school attendance does not help very much when it is about their employment perspectives. This kind of programmes contributes to bridging the gap between education achievements and labour market requirements, through enabling those with insufficient/unsuitable education to re-enter the system and correct their deficit. Nevertheless, implementing such programmes through mainstream schools, in spite of large flexibility provided with regard to learning schedule, may often become unsuitable for people much older than typical attendees of those schools, having already families and sometimes children, having a job, yet precarious. It is, therefore, to be thought about ways to involve non-formal education structures in programme's implementation settings, not only as expertise resources but also as implementing agents.
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Other doc related to the programme/ practice	http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/c115/