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Methodology for Working with Young people in Rural Areas and within the Child Protection System

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SOCIAL
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COPii și tineri în situații de risc
Reducerea inegalităților
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Incluziune socială



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List of acronyms

CEA	- County Employment Agency
NAPCR	- National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights
CCERA	- County Centre for Educational Resources and Assistance
EEA Grants	- European Economic Area Grants
EUROSTAT	- Statistical Office of the European Union
Eurydice	- Network on education systems and policies in Europe
GDSACP	- General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection
GDYS	- General Directorate for Young people and Sports
RIQL	- Research institute for the Quality of Life
CSI	- County School Inspectorate
NIS	- National Institute for Statistics
NGO	- Nongovernmental organisation
SOP HRD	- The Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development
SAPS	- Social Assistance Public Service
EU	- European Union

The social and economic integration of young people is one of the European Union's major concerns in the aftermath of the economic crisis that has beleaguered member states since 2007. This can be seen in the measures taken to this effect (the 2010-2018 Young people Strategy, the Young people Employment Package, the Young people Guarantee, the Quality Framework for Training, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, EURES, etc.). The social inclusion of young people is not limited to providing opportunities and resources to the underprivileged, so that they may become economically, socially and culturally integrated and have an improved quality of life. The term also has a broader sense of achieving a person's full potential and of recognising his/her contribution to social development, which can take the form of work, education, volunteering, social participation, etc. (Eurofound, 2015).

In Europe, social inclusion is a multidimensional term encompassing income and living standards, as well as education, social protection, access to various kinds of health services, housing, active citizenship (The European Parliament and the EU Council, 2008). The main factors influencing young people social inclusion are employment, level of education, housing, state of health and social participation (Eurofound, 2015; Eurofound, 2016). Young people development primarily involves the achievement of human and social capital which later allows them to attain economic capital through employment. Young people unemployment impacts not only on future employability, but also on self-esteem and self-confidence, and in the long run can lead to social exclusion. In Romania, the young people categories most prone to social exclusion and poverty are:

- Young people between 18 and 24 years of age who, according to World Bank data, had a 31.4% poverty rate in 2012 (World Bank, 2015);
- Young people in rural areas having difficulties in accessing education and jobs;
- Young people under the child protection system deprived of parental support.

Our approach is to identify and assess measures to support the social and professional integration of young people from disadvantaged groups, namely those from rural areas and within the child protection system. This is part of the project **“A Model of Integrated Services for Young People in Rural Areas and in the Child Protection System”**, implemented under a partnership between Asociatia SOS Satele Copiilor Romania (The Association SOS Children's Villages Romania) and the Federation of Nongovernmental Organisations for the Child- FONPC. The purpose is to draft two methodologies for working with young people in rural areas, as well as with those leaving care. These methodologies are to be used by professionals in the field.

The project sets out to improve the services provided to young people from disadvantaged groups (those in rural areas and those within the child protection system) in the counties of Bacau and Sibiu, as well as in the Bucharest-Ilfov area, aiming at a better social and professional integration. Specifically, project activities concern:

- Improving life skills and employment prospects for 245 young people/project beneficiaries;

- Strengthening the capacity of relevant actors involved in service provision for young people at local and county level;
- Creating networks at local and county level to better meet the needs of young people using methodologies developed under the project.

The results of previous studies carried out under the project (*Study on the Social and Professional Integration Needs of Young people from Rural Areas and from the Child Protection System in Sibiu and Bacău Counties and in the Bucharest-Ilfov Area*, 2015) and of implementation reports have revealed the following:

- Though all young people need professional and social guidance from qualified, benevolent and supportive people, this is not consistently provided in the education system or in child protection institutions;
- Although Law 292/2011 stipulates support services for the social integration of young people from disadvantaged categories, only some GDSACPs have developed support services for the social and professional integration of young people. However, young people within foster care do not benefit from these services;
- Rural young people have a high need of support services, as they are very eager to engage in activities, contrary to young people within the child protection system (residential-type services) who enjoy many more opportunities but are less inclined to engage;
- Most young people study in fields that were circumstantially chosen. Therefore, early vocational counselling and guidance would increase their motivation and resolve to finish school and start working in the respective field;
- Young people need more hands-on professional experience in the field of study. Unfortunately, school studies are most often purely theoretical.

Drafting methodologies for working with young people in rural areas and within the child protection system has involved collecting data from decision makers and/or staff working with young people in relevant public institutions (GDSACP, SAPS, GDYS, CEA, NGOs), as well as from the concerned young people themselves. There has also been an assessment of secondary data regarding the child protection system and young people in rural areas, as well as of various documents, including public policy documents specifying the measures adopted for the social and professional integration of disadvantaged young people.

Data collection and analysis were conducted in August - October 2016 by the Research Institute for the Quality of Life. At the end of October 2016, the report was subject to public debate within a meeting held with representatives of relevant public institutions, NGOs and experts. The report was also e-mailed for consultation to other stakeholders – central and local public institutions having tasks in the

fields of child protection, young people and employment, NGOs, experts, etc. All comments and suggestions were taken on board for the revision of the report.

Working methodology

The methodology underpinning this approach involved the triangulation of data from various research techniques: interviews, focus groups, analysis of documents and secondary data, analysis of public policy.

Purpose and objectives

Purpose:

Drafting two working methodologies for the experts working with young people in rural areas and those working with young people in the child protection system, in order to enhance their capacity to provide quality services that facilitate the social and professional integration of young people from disadvantaged categories.

Objectives:

1. Identifying and assessing the specific methods of working with young people in rural areas that meet this category's specific needs and facilitate their social and professional integration;
2. Identifying and assessing the specific methods of working with young people in the child protection system that meet this category's specific needs and facilitate their social and professional integration;
3. Identifying support measures for the social and professional integration of young people in rural areas and of those within the child protection system as regards employment (choosing a profession, finding a job), and social integration (life skills, social skills, emotional stability).

Research methods

I. Document analysis

I.1. Analysing documents provided by the beneficiary

- Qualitative research report on young people needs achieved under the project "*Study on the Social and Professional Integration Needs of Young people from Rural Areas and from the Child Protection System in Sibiu and Bacău Counties and in the Bucharest-Ilfov Area*";
- Intervention guidebooks, standards and procedures for experts, drafted under the project "A Model of Integrated Services for Young People in Rural Areas and in the Child Protection System";
- Methodologies for working with young people used and approved by the beneficiary (SOS Children's Villages, REGIONAL YOUNG PEOPLE CARE CONCEPT, Securing Children's rights. A guide for professionals working with children in alternative care).

I.2. Analysis of national and European documents (reports, studies, needs assessments, project implementation reports)

- Using Secondary Data in Educational and Social Research, E. Smith, Open University Press, 2006;
- Procedure manual on the social and professional integration of young people leaving the child protection system, Ștefan Dărăbuș (coord.), Bucharest, 2006;
- Young people Barometer 2014, Ministry of Young people and Sports;
- Non-cognitive skill development in adolescents in Romania, UNICEF, 2016;
- Study on the social norms that impact risk behaviours in adolescents - 2014, Romanian Angel Appeal, for UNICEF, 2015;
- State of adolescents in Romania, Centre for Urban and Regional Sociology and the Institute of Education Sciences, for UNICEF, 2013;
- Report on the status of Romanian education 2014, MENCS, 2016;
- EU Young people Report 2015, European Commission, 2016;
- Exploring the diversity of NEETs, EUROFOUND, 2016;
- The contribution of young people work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment, European Commission, 2015;
- Social inclusion of young people, EUROFOUND, 2015;
- Quality Young people Work. A common framework for the further development of young people work, European Commission, 2015;

II. Analysis of national and European public policies on young people and connected fields

- National strategy for the protection and promotion of children's rights 2014-2020;
- National young people policy strategy 2015-2020;
- Strategy for vocational education and training in Romania 2016-2020
- National employment strategy 2014-2020
- Integrated package for fighting poverty 2016-2020
- EU young people strategy 2015 – 2018

III. Analysis of secondary data – available data on young people in rural areas and in the child protection system from the data bases of

- The National Institute of Statistics (NIS)
- The Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research
- The National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development (CNDIPT)
- EUROSTAT
- Eurydice
- NAPCR

IV. Qualitative research

- A. In-depth interviews

- 3 group interviews with members of local project teams (Bucharest, Bacau and Sibiu);
- 3 in-depth interviews with GDSACP representatives (one interview per county);
- 2 in-depth interviews with CEA representatives (Bacau and Sibiu);
- 2 in-depth interviews with CSI representatives (Bacau and Sibiu);
- 2 in-depth interviews with rural town hall representatives (Bacau and Sibiu);
- 2 in-depth interviews with GDYS representatives (Bacau and Sibiu);

B. Focus groups

- 3 focus groups (Bucharest, Bacau and Sibiu) with young peoples, of which:
 - ✓ 1 with young peoples from rural areas in Bacau
 - ✓ 2 with young peoples in the child protection system – Bucharest and Sibiu

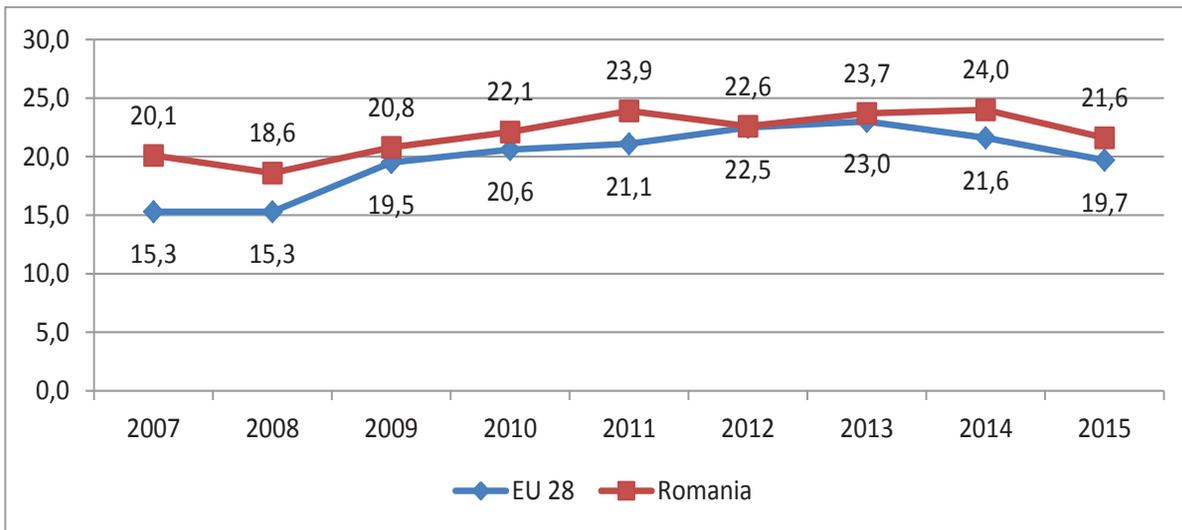
Assessment of the current situation

Although Romania has recorded economic growth in recent years, the quality of life for the general public has not increased at the same pace. The whole population is afflicted by reduced incomes, the scarcity of jobs and housing, inadequacies in health care, education and social services, etc. But one of the categories most affected by these social and economic problems is young people. This report focusses on young people aged 16-26 from rural areas or from the social protection system, as they are the most exposed to the risk of social exclusion (World Bank, 2015).

Belonging to a rural environment significantly impacts a person's (notably a young person's) educational, social and professional path. Access to education is limited because of the system, as well as for other reasons: a less developed educational infrastructure, a lower quality of education, families with no income or with low or inconsistent incomes, lack of job opportunities, of leisure options, etc. Things are yet more complicated for young people from residential child care institutions. First of all, the mere fact that they have ended up in such an institution reveals the absence of a crucial element for their further development: parental support. Despite public and private interventions, financial or otherwise, Romanian special protection institutions seem to be stuck in their ways, oblivious to current reality: their main purpose has remained that of meeting some basic needs for the young people under their care (food, clothing and shelter) ignoring the higher human needs: mental and emotional development, aspirations, skills, etc. These children and adolescents are not encouraged to lead an autonomous life and develop independent life skills; they are kept highly dependent on the system.

In Europe, young people are one of the population groups to have been most affected by the economic crisis that struck EU member states in 2007. Despite their situation improving, they continue to be one of the groups running a high risk of social exclusion. Young people integration in the labour market has been a major issue, with data pointing at a Europe-wide increase in young people unemployment from 15.3% in 2007 to 19.7% in 2015 (Figure 1), while in some countries it exceeded 40% (Greece – 50.2%, Spain – 48.1%, Croatia – 43.6%, Italy – 40.1%). The young people unemployment rate is more than double that of the active age population (9.4%). This calls for measures to increase the employability of this population category. Romanian young people unemployment increased from 20.1% in 2007 to 21.6% in 2015, with the highest rate (24%) in 2014 (Figure 1). In 2015, young people employment (ages 15-24) in Romania was 24, 5%, below the 33.2% EU average (Eurostat, 2016, yth_empl_020).

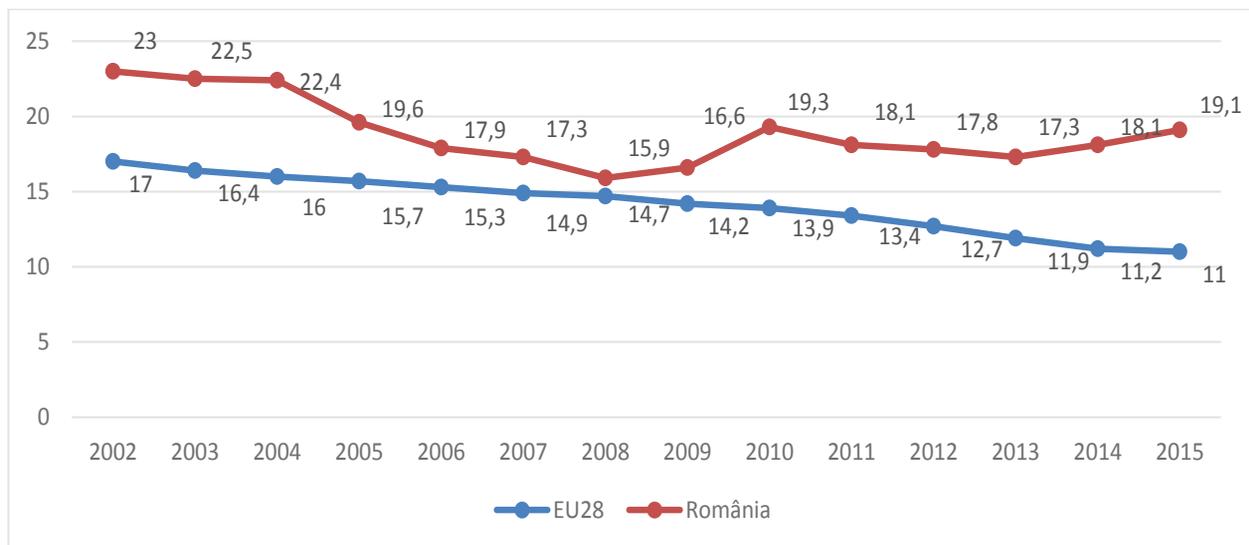
Figure 1. Unemployment rates among young people between 15 and 24 years of age



Source: Eurostat, *Early leavers from education and training, [yth_empl_100]*, October 2016

The low level of education and the high rate of early school leaving among young people aged 15 – 24 is one of the main causes of their poor integration into the labour market (Petrescu et al., 2016). NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training) aged between 15 and 24 years of age account for 12% of all young people within this age group. In Romania, they account for 18.1%, much higher than the European average. While the rate of early school leaving is on a downward trend in Europe (Figure 2), in Romania it is on the rise because of ill-inspired public policy measures in the education sector (closing down vocational schools in 2010), the lack of support measures for students from disadvantaged environments to further their studies, poverty, family environments, etc. . Early school leaving has major effects on the employability of these young people who lack the skills needed to join the labour market (Petrescu et al., 2016).

Figure 2. Early school leaving trend*



*Percentage of population aged 18-24 with no more than lower secondary education, who were neither in education nor in training during the 4 weeks prior to the enquiry.

Source: Eurostat, *Early leavers from education and training, [tsdsc410]*, October 2016

In Romania, in recent years, the population group of 15-29 years of age has been a topic of interest for researchers and experts working in sociology, psychology and economy. Research results paint a bleak picture

of this age category. Thus, according to the Public Opinion Barometer - Young people 2012, most of the young people aged 16-24 believe that the incomes of the households they belong to can only cover basic expenditure (38%), and 37% of young people live in households whose incomes can only afford a decent living. In fact, over half of Romanian young people (55%) mentioned that the main cause for leaving school was the lack of money for education-related costs.; 40% of those who left school did it because they had to win their own bread (Public Opinion Barometer - Young people 2012). Since these are young people who depend on the resources of the households they belong to, the way in which the household budget is allocated directly affects them in the long term.

Romanian young people are not very confident that they will manage to attain the kind of education they wish so that they may get a job more easily. For 90% of them accessing a job is a big problem, and 64% of them have great difficulty accessing education. Consequently, they cannot hope for improved living standards: 83% believe that this is a serious problem (Table 1). Since the households they belong to cannot afford education costs, and society provides insufficient support through its institutions, some Romanian young people choose to leave school and risk social and professional exclusion.

Table 1. Effects of the social and economic context on young people life strategies (%)

	is a serious problem	is a problem	is not much of a problem	is no problem at all	NS/NR
Job prospects for young people	54	36	7	1	2
Accessing the desired education	29	35	27	6	3
Young people living standards	39	44	13	2	3

Source: Public Opinion Barometer - Young people2012 (How would you describe the current situation in our country as regards...?)

Much more recently, in 2014, the results of another young people-related study was published (*Young people in Romania, concerns, aspirations, attitudes and lifestyle*), pointing out that young people believe that the problems our society is facing are too many and too serious for the households to tackle on their own. The list of problems suggested for consideration to Romanian young people is much longer, but for the purposes of this paper we have selected those having received the highest score. We note once again that poverty is mentioned as the most serious of Romanian society's problems: over 90% of the young respondents mentioned this problem as being very serious or serious (Table 2). The other two serious problems – unemployment and job insecurity – are poverty-related problems and the result of a poorly performing economy smothered by a prolonged transition and the world economic crisis, as well as of the lack of response from the society in general and from the responsible authorities in particular.

Table 2. Problems afflicting Romanian society that young people deem serious (%)

Problems	Very serious	Serious	Not very serious	Not serious
Poverty	64,5	31,4	3,4	1,0
Job insecurity	61,2	32,1	5,9	0,9
Unemployment	59,2	36,6	3,6	0,5
Steep inequality between people	42,6	37,8	15,2	4,4

Source: Report Young people in Romania, concerns, aspirations, attitudes and lifestyle 2014: 17-18

Social exclusion and poverty among young people

The *Young people Strategy 2014-2020* points out that, no matter how we choose to measure poverty in Romanian society, young people come out as the poorest category: over a quarter of the country's young population (28,1%) lives in relative poverty, and almost half of it (40,3%) is at risk of poverty or social exclusion (*Young people Strategy 2014-2020*, 2014:14). The data in the government's document are confirmed by those published by European institutions (Eurostat), as well as by the results of studies conducted among Romania's young population (*Public Opinion Barometer - Young people, 2012*; *Report Young people in Romania, concerns, aspirations, attitudes and lifestyle, 2014*). In the EU-28, most countries face this problem, but it has been found that the prevalence of young people risking poverty and social exclusion was on an upward trend from 2010 to 2013 (Table 3). This increase was primarily a consequence of the economic crisis. But compared to other countries, Romania and Bulgaria are among those where young people are in the most difficult situation - over 40% of people aged 15-29 risk poverty and social exclusion – it's even worse than in countries where the economic crisis had much graver negative consequences (like Greece, Spain or Portugal). The explanation can lie with the fact that the percentage of Romanian young people affected by the economic crisis came in addition to those already in difficulty because of the prolonged transition our country has undergone from a centralised to a market economy.

Table 3. Young people (15-29 years of age) at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%)

Countries	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU 28	26,9	27,6	28,8	29
Belgium	20,6	20,8	22,5	22,4
Bulgaria	47,7	48,3	48,7	46,8
Czech Republic	15,7	17	17,4	16,8
Denmark	27,9	30,2	31,2	31,3
Germany	24,3	22,9	22,9	24
Estonia	23	25,2	24,9	22,6
Ireland	23	25,2	24,9	22,6
Greece	31,9	36,9	44,5	46,1

Spain	29	31	34,0	34
France	24,5	23,8	24,4	25,1
Croatia	31,2	32,5	30,9	29,2
Italy	29,7	33,7	36,0	34,4
Cyprus	24,1	23,2	28,8	30,5
Lithuania	36,8	35,2	33,4	28,7
Latvia	37,7	41,8	35,0	33,8
Luxemburg	19	19,7	22,1	22,4
Hungary	34,4	36,3	37,8	39,5
Malta	18,4	20,6	20,9	22,7
The Netherlands	19,6	20,4	18,0	19,6
Austria	20,2	20	21,0	20
Poland	29,3	27,7	27,7	38,3
Portugal	25	24,7	28,4	31,1
Romania	41,2	42,7	45,4	45
Slovenia	15,3	16,1	17,9	19,9
Slovakia	21	21,9	20,6	20,9
Finland	21,1	21,4	20,4	20,6
Sweden	22,5	29,9	21,8	24
UK	25,1	26,4	29,4	29,2
Iceland	16,5	16,8	13,8	15,8
Norway	25,7	26	24,6	25,7
Switzerland	15,1	14,9	16,3	15,1
Sweden	22,5	29,9	21,8	24

* b-break in data series, bu – data with low reliability; : unavailable data

Source: Eurostat, [yth_incl_020], October 2016

Level of education among young people

Regardless of age groups, the main causes of poverty among a country's population are lack of education or reduced access to education, lack of a job or of the skills required on the labour market and/or difficulties in achieving social contacts (lack of social capital), which could be a real and needed support for a vulnerable person. Since 2007, the rate of early school leaving in Romania has been above the EU average and far from the European objective. By comparing the target of under 10% and the actual 17,3%, we conclude that Romania will have to nearly halve the number of young people leaving school early. That's a difficult target to attain given that the rate of early school leaving has been either on the rise or steadily above the EU average. (Table 4)

Table 4. Young people having left school early

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
EU 28	14,9	14,7	14,2	13,9	13,4	12,7	12,0	11,2(b)	11,0

EU 27	15,0	14,8	14,3	14,0	13,5	12,8	12,0	11,3(b)	11,0
Belgium	12,1	12,0	11,1	11,9	12,3	12,0	11,0	9,8(b)	10,1
Bulgaria	14,9	14,8	14,7	13,9	11,8	12,5	12,5	12,9(b)	13,4
Czech Republic	5,2	5,6	5,4	4,9	4,9	5,5	5,4	5,5(b)	6,2
Denmark	12,9(b)	12,5	11,3	11,0	9,6	9,1	8,0	7,8(b)	7,8
Germany	12,5	11,8	11,1	11,9	11,7	10,6	9,9	9,5(b)	10,1
Estonia	14,4	14,0	13,5	11,0	10,6	10,3	9,7	11,4(b)	11,2
Ireland	11,6	11,3	11,7	11,5	10,8	9,7	8,4	6,9(b)	6,9
Greece	14,6	14,8	14,5	13,7	13,1	11,4	10,1	9,0(b)	7,9
Spain	30,8	31,7	30,9	28,2	26,3	24,7	23,6	21,9(b)	20,0
France	12,6	11,5	12,2	12,5	11,9	11,5	9,7(b)	9,0(b)	9,0
Croatia	3,9	3,7	3,9	3,7	4,1	4,2	3,7	2,7(b)	2,8
Italy	19,7	19,7	19,2	18,8	18,2	17,6	17,0	15,0(b)	14,7
Cyprus	12,5	13,7	11,7	12,7	11,3	11,4	9,1	6,8(b)	5,2
Lithuania	15,6	15,5	14,3	12,9	11,6(b)	10,6	9,8	8,5(b)	9,9
Latvia	7,8	7,5	8,7	7,9	7,4	6,5	6,3	5,9(b)	5,5
Luxemburg	12,5	13,4	7,7(b)	7,1	6,2	8,1	6,1	6,1(b)	9,3
Hungary	11,4	11,7	11,2	10,5	11,2	11,5	11,8	11,4(b)	11,6
Malta	30,2	27,2	27,1	23,8	22,7	21,1	20,8	20,3(b)	19,8
The Netherlands	11,7	11,4	10,9	10,0(b)	9,1	8,8	9,2	8,7(b)	8,2
Austria	10,7	10,1	8,7	8,3	8,3	7,6	7,3	7,0(b)	7,3
Poland	5,0	5,0	5,3	5,4	5,3	5,7	5,6	5,4(b)	5,3
Portugal	36,9	35,4	31,2	28,7	23,2	20,8	19,2	17,4(b)	13,7
Romania	17,3	15,9	16,6	18,4	17,5	17,4	17,3	18,1(b)	19,1
Slovenia	4,1	5,1	5,3	5,0	4,2	4,4	3,9	4,4(b)	5,0
Slovakia	6,5	6,0	4,9	4,7	5,1	5,3	6,4	6,7(b)	6,9
Finland	9,1	9,8	9,9	10,3(d)	9,8	8,9	9,3	9,5(b)	9,2
Sweden	8,0	7,9	7,0	6,5	6,6	7,5	7,1	6,7(b)	7,0
UK	16,6(b)	17,0	15,7	14,9	15,0	13,6	12,4	11,8(b)	10,8
Iceland	23,2	24,4	21,3	22,6	19,7	20,1	20,5	19,1(b)	18,8
Norway	18,4	17,0	17,6	17,4	16,6	14,8	13,7	11,7(b)	10,2
Switzerland	7,6	7,7	9,1	6,6	6,3	5,5	5,4	5,4(b)	5,1

* b-break in data series

Source: Eurostat, Source: Eurostat, [edat_lfs_14], October 2016

In order to increase their chances of quickly obtaining a highly secure job providing at least a decent income, young people need to spend as much time as possible in school – preferably, until completing higher education (ISCED 5-6). But to have access to education and later to a job, a young people needs to be supported both by society and by the family of origin. Eurostat data confirm that young peoples who have underestimated the

benefits of education while overestimating its costs have not made the best decision: in all the EU-28, comprising socially and economically highly developed countries as well as developing countries like Romania, the population with a high level of education has the highest employment rate (Table 5).

Table 5. Young people employment rate (15-29 years of age) depending on the level of education achieved (%), 2013

Countries	Minimum level of education (ISCED 0-2)	Medium level of education (ISCED 3-4)	High level of education (ISCED 5-6)
EU 28	25,8	53,5	71,3
Romania	24,9	46,4	66,9
Belgium	16,8	46,8	68,8
Bulgaria	9,5	44,4	70,7
Czech Republic	7,7	56,1	68,8
Denmark	46,1	70,4	77,7
Germany	45,9	70,5	84,3
Estonia	20,4	55,7	75,7
Ireland	12,8	48,6	75,2
Greece	13,4	24,8	50,9
Spain	26,2	30,5	56,2
France	18,3(b)	48,1(b)	71,3(b)
Croatia	3,3(u)	35,6	59,5
Italy	16,9	37,3	44,0
Cyprus	16,3	45,0	65,5
Lithuania	18,3	54,1	80,4
Latvia	8,0	46,2	83,8
Luxemburg	20,4	50,5	68,5
Hungary	9,7	47,1	73,5
Malta	47,5	57,8	85,3
The Netherlands	54,2(b)	74,4(b)	85,5(b)
Austria	38,8(b)	75,5(b)	81,1(b)
Poland	8,5	51,5	71,9
Portugal	29,6	42,7	58,6
Romania	24,9	46,4	66,9
Slovenia	13,7	50,0	70,0
Slovakia	4,8	50,3	57,6
Finland	25,0	65,5	82,6
Sweden	23,4	68,7	74,7
UK	40,8	60,5	81,3
Iceland	67,8	75,7	87,9

Norway	48,8	72,7	81,3
Switzerland	55,0	74,6	84,1

* b-break in data series, bu – data of low reliability; : unavailable data

Source: Eurostat, [yth_demo_040], October 2016

Young people with a lower level of education have lower chances of entering the labour market. For some, low education associates with lack of professional experience, making this age category extremely vulnerable not only professionally (lack of a job as well as lacking prospects to find a job) but also socially (exclusion from the labour market is always accompanied by social exclusion).

Integration in the labour market

In the EU-28, young people employment is under 50%, demonstrating once again the need for intervention to increase young people integration in the labour market. It is even more worrying when we assess by type of occupation and find that many more young peoples have a temporary occupation (31,1%) than a part-time job (22,9%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Type of young people employment (%), 2013

	Part-time	Temporary occupation
EU 28	22,9	31,1
Belgium	3,6	9,7
Bulgaria	8,1	19,1
Czech Republic	51,7	19,7
Denmark	21,4	39,1
Germany	12,6	7,7
Estonia	30,2	22,2
Ireland	13,9	19,8
Greece	26,5	49,3
Spain	18,1(b)	39,2(b)
France	3,7(bu)	35,6(b)
Croatia	23,2	39,6
Italy	19,2	18,2
Cyprus	8,6	6,3
Lithuania	9,8	5,0
Latvia	16,9	22,4
Luxemburg	6,4	18,0
Hungary	15,2	13,1
Malta	63,3(b)	43,9(b)
The Netherlands	20,2(b)	24,4(b)
Austria	9,6	50,6

Poland	15,8	48,0
Portugal	10,9	3,6
Romania	21,7	48,7
Slovenia	5,4	13,0
Slovakia	27,0	34,3
Finland	36,6	41,7
Sweden	29,8(b)	10,9(b)
UK	39,0	28,8
Iceland	43,8	31,7
Norway	24,6	39,5
Switzerland	:	:

** b-break in data series, bu – data of low reliability; : unavailable data*

Source: Eurostat, [yth_empl_050; yth_empl_060], October 2016

Atypical occupations (temporary or part-time) are an opportunity for young people to get accustomed to the labour market, earn an income while studying, gain professional experience, etc. For a country's economy, this type of job offer relieves the pressure on the social security budget (fewer beneficiaries of unemployment benefits and allowances). But it's very important to monitor the long term effects of this type of occupation on the social and professional trajectory of young people. More precisely, is it a springboard towards full professional integration or a trap door to precariousness and marginalisation? (Booth & all, 2002, apud Blasco et Givord, 2010: 75). The same question applies to society: will this short term alleviation of pressure on the labour market and social security budget as a result of young people mostly taking atypical jobs bear positive or negative effects on the economy and on society at large in the medium and long term?

This is to be assessed in each individual country, looking at the national social and economic context. In some EU member states (like Denmark, which has suggested this employment policy measure) – atypical employment, especially among young people, has proven to bear positive effects. However, an assessment of how a certain type of work contract relates to living standards in Romania reveals that most people working part-time have lower incomes and run a higher risk of poverty (Preoteasa, 2013:142). To conclude, for the Romanian public, part-time or fixed-term work contracts are sooner a trap door to precariousness than a springboard to professional success. To make things worse, having an occupation – even with a standard eight-hour work day – does not result in financial independence and social and professional stability for many young Romanians. The National Young people Strategy points out that Romania holds the highest level of poverty among working young people: 30,7% of working young people 18-24 years of age are poor, compared to 11,2% in the EU-28 (National Young people Strategy, 2013:16).

In a society with general social and economic deficiencies, particularly in terms of the labour market, young people have to put much more effort into professional integration. They also need to identify as many professional integration options as possible: attend school up to the highest level, develop an active job-seeking behaviour, engage in extra-curricular activities, volunteer work, etc.

The most recent study performed in Romania - "Young people in Romania: Concerns, Aspirations and Lifestyle", carried out by the Centre for Urban and Regional Sociology - CURS, for Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Romania (FES) in 2014 – addresses topics of major interest for the whole of Romanian society, not just for certain age groups. The study assesses the relationship between young people and the labour market, and its results should be taken into consideration by the authorities in charge of promoting and implementing professional integration policies. Employment types among the 15-29 age group are diverse but not too different from those of other age groups. According to these data, over half of young Romanians aged 15-29 perform no economic activity (Table 7). Most of them are still in the education system, but those already working clearly reflect some peculiarities of Romanian society: a preference for standard (full time) jobs and inequalities in accessing the labour market between the two residential environments (rural and urban), as well as between development regions (the employment rate is higher in socially and economically developed regions and lower in poor regions).

Table 7. Types of employment among young people (15-29 years of age) by residential environment and historical region (%)

	Full-time	Part-time	Occasional	Not working	Other
Total sample	31,4	3,3	6,8	56,4	2,1
Urban	34,7	4,0	5,1	53,7	2,6
Rural	27,1	2,3	9,1	60,0	1,4
Moldavia	27,6	3,7	10,7	54,8	3,3
Wallachia	29,3	3,5	6,7	59,6	0,9
Transylvania	31,0	3,1	5,8	58,6	1,5

Source: Report "Young people in Romania: Concerns, Aspirations and Lifestyle" (2014)

Lack of information and limited financial resources make it difficult for them to access training and retraining services. On the other hand, the training and retraining courses on offer do not appeal to them, as there are no job offers for those qualifications in the rural environment they live in. The dominant occupations in rural areas are agricultural, whereas the institutions providing training focus on the services sector. Another hurdle in implementing integration policy measures is that these young people are not included in the statistics on the target population (the unemployed) used by the institutions that promote and implement such measures.

One of the solutions young people resort to is requesting social protection measures. If we were to profile the young people frequently benefitting from social protection measures, we would find that they typically have a low level of education and professional training, limited and patchy professional experience and belong to a disadvantaged social, economic and family environment (most often, from a rural area or from social protection institutions). For the young people fitting this profile, professional integration policies should act in several directions: education and training, employment, financial aid, retraining, etc. But whatever the professional integration policy measure, its purpose is not to prolong the status of support policy beneficiary, but to shorten as far as possible this stage in the person's social and professional path. Income from the social

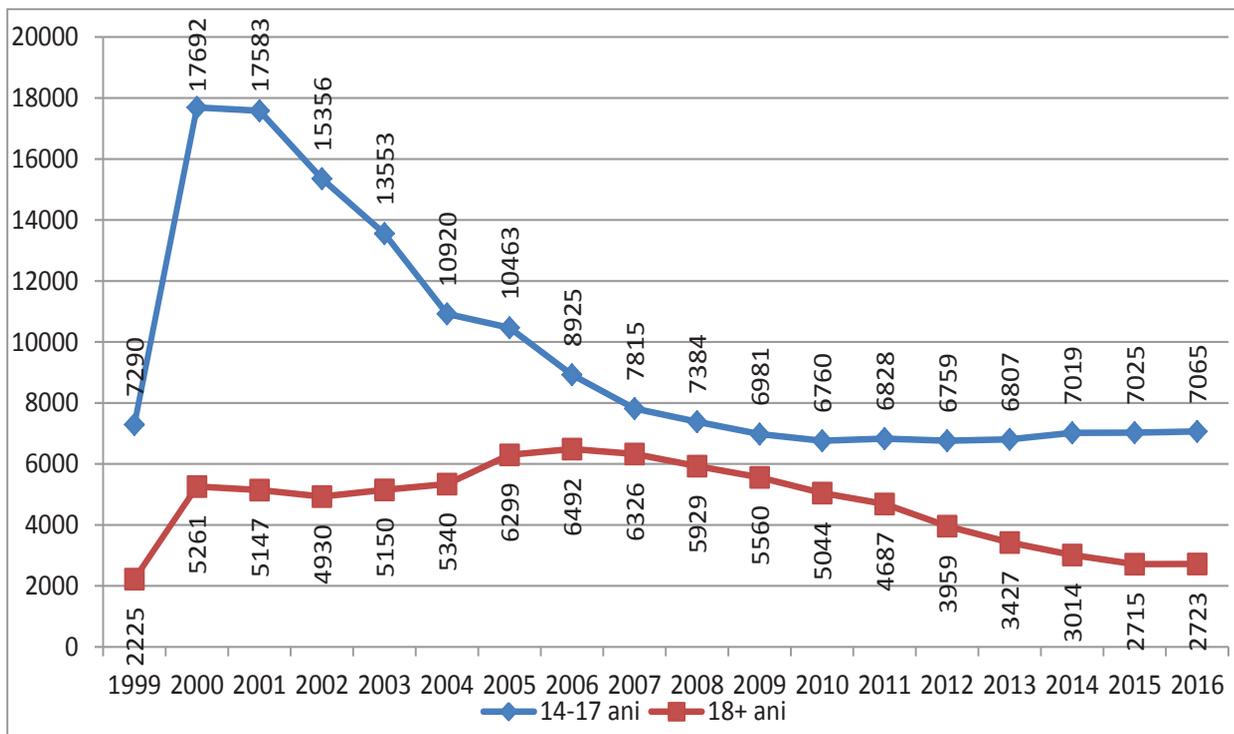
protection system (unemployment benefits, minimum guaranteed income – VMG, etc.) are granted for a short time, are of low value and are not accompanied by active professional integration measures. Therefore, many people, including young people, prefer to find their own solutions to make ends meet: working in the informal economy, temporarily migrating to Western European countries, etc. This population category has a limited capacity to escape poverty and social exclusion, because their existing or newly acquired occupations are temporary, and their incomes are fluctuating and low.

Young people from the child protection system

One of the young people categories most affected by the economic changes and at risk of social exclusion is that of young people leaving care or still being in alternative care. Some of the most important problems they face are: poorly developed or even lacking independent life skills, emotional and behavioural problems, lack of skills for integrating into the labour market, poor education and homelessness.

The reform of the Romanian child protection system has focussed on deinstitutionalisation, either by reintegration into the extended family, or by replacing residential-type protection with foster care. The number of children in residential care has thus dropped steadily after 1999, reaching 19832 in June 2016, while the number of children in foster care rose from 1997 to 2004 (from 11899 to 50239 children), then dropped, reaching 37620 in 2016. As regards young people in residential-type services, their numbers dropped in the 2000 – 2016 period thanks to the deinstitutionalisation measures taken. Thus, there are 7065 young people between 14 and 17 years of age, and 2723 over 18 years of age (Figure 3). (The only available data are for these age categories.)

Figure 3. Trend in the numbers of persons between 14-17 years of age and over 18 years of age in residential-type services



Source: NAPCR, Statistics on the special protection system, www.copii.ro/statistici/, October 2016

The maternal assistance system provides a viable alternative for the deinstitutionalisation of children, but there are insufficient maternal assistants to meet current needs. Moreover, the large number of young people in residential-type services indicates that there not enough maternal assistants for them. In some cases, the requirement by GDSACPs that maternal assistants take on more than one child has led them to relinquish the children they were already caring for.

There are differences in terms of independent life skills among the young people in the three types of protective measures: the public residential services, the residential services of NGOs and maternal assistance or placement with a family and kinship. According to respondents, young people placed with a family or maternal assistant display a higher degree of independent life skills, as they come across real life situations and carry various responsibilities within the family caring for them. Previous studies pointed to the higher efficiency of family/maternal assistant units for young people care, as the young people are encouraged to get more involved in household matters and in solving daily problems, and the family environment makes them more optimistic and better prepared for independent life (Câmpean, 2010; Ilie, 2014).

In the case of children and young people in social protection services, more emphasis should be placed on the development of independent life skills. This is seen to be an important component of non-formal education delivered within protection services, which complements the education received in educational establishments (Order 14/2007 approving the mandatory minimum standards for the Independent Life Skill Development Service and the corresponding methodological implementation guide). Although the development of independent life skills is covered by legislation, and despite the existence of relevant services and corresponding standards to this effect in GDSACPs, public institutions are short of qualified staff for assessing the independent life habits, skills and resources of children and young people (Dan et al., 2016).

All these young people more or less benefit from various activities carried out under various projects, but those in residential services start showing reluctance to involve in new projects. They become uninterested, and many only take part if there are immediate benefits. This is due to the large number of projects that have targeted them in recent years, in which youngsters were involved regardless of their individual needs. Thorough needs assessments and individual plans should underpin local or county level strategies and action plans. The general motivation of young people, as well as the quality of the courses they attend or are invited to attend could also be called into question.

The study identified some difficulties in the social and professional integration of the young people within the system:

- There is an uneven development of support services for the young people leaving residential care and a lack of specific social and professional integration programmes for them. These do exist in some counties, especially in large cities or county seats, but can only cover a part of the needs.
- Child protection public institutions have insufficient staff for case management, as well as experts for independent life skill development;
- The existing staff of public residential centres need training to stay abreast of new administrative requirements and to adequately respond to young people needs;
- There is insufficient vocational counselling in public residential centres. Consequently, young people do not pursue the educational institutions or qualifications for which they have the necessary skills and knowledge;
- The marginalisation/exclusion of young people from residential centres, both in school and upon hiring;
- The public system provides insufficient psychological and financial support to foster carers assisting young people;
- Social and professional integration services are poorly developed;
- Independent life skill development services are poorly developed;
- Lack of support for NGOs in developing social and professional development services.

According to the law on education, eighteen-year-olds pursuing a form of education may remain within the protection system up to the age of 26. Knowing the social and professional integration problems awaiting them upon leaving the residential institutions, many young peoples in the protection system prolong their stay as much as possible by pursuing some form of education (Câmpean, 2010). Staying in the system after the age of 18 puts a label on these young peoples, extends their dependence on the system, and thus hinders their social and professional integration. A national programme would be needed to help them become autonomous and independent of the system. Such a programme could stimulate both public institutions and NGOs to develop support services for young people leaving the system. These support services are not limited to reimbursing housing costs, but also include social services such as: psychological and vocational counselling, job mediation and assistance, socialising activities, etc.

The vocational counselling of children and young people throughout the Romanian education system as a whole is insufficient, with one counsellor per 800 students and 18 working hours per week, of which 4 hours are for teaching. This vocational counselling is crucial for choosing the educational establishment that the children/young people are to pursue in the future. While children/young people living with families benefit from parental advice in picking the educational establishment and qualification to pursue, those within the protection system have more need of specialised vocational counselling and guidance services. Even when the children/young people in the protection system choose the educational establishment themselves, the latter often does not match their skills and knowledge, which bears consequences on their integration into the labour market, as they lack the skills needed to secure a job allowing them to lead an independent life. (Câmpean, 2010; Ilie, 2014).

Acquiring independent life skills requires young people to take part in the administrative and housework activities involved in food preparation and the cleaning of bathrooms and kitchen areas. However, the current legislation precludes this (Order 1955/1995 – Art. 1d), as it would require health testing the young people prior to each entry into the kitchen facility. The hygiene norms to be complied with are so strict, that residential centre staff choose to ban the access of pupils into their food preparation facilities.

Furthermore, health education, which should also cover healthy eating, is only provided under school extracurricular activities. This only happens sporadically in schools, and if not backed by a similar approach in residential centres, it will have no bearing on young people eating habits.

A major hurdle in identifying and analysing the problems that young people face after they leave institutions is the lack of quantitative and disaggregated data on their status and of a mechanism for collecting such data. According to current assessments, residential centre staff believe that only 10 to 30% of young people within the system achieve social and professional integration (Câmpean, 2010). However, comparative studies are needed regarding the social and professional integration of young people from foster care services, from NGO residential centres and from public residential centres in order to suggest improvement measures.

Analysis of support measures for social and professional integration

European Union measures

In Europe in the early 1970s, the concept of social inclusion replaced that of poverty in public policy debates. The 1970s marked the shift from policies focussed on reducing poverty and ensuring decent living conditions to public policies based on the inclusion of each individual or group into the society they live in, whereby they accept its values and norms, and are granted the same access to services, infrastructure, education and health as any inhabitant of that country.

Another important milestone was the adoption by the European Union, in 2010, of the **Europe 2020 strategy**. It had a broad scope which included measures to reduce poverty among children, reach a 75% employment rate for the 20-64 age group, and reduce school dropout rates to 10% in member states. In 2001, the European Commission drafted the report "**A new impetus for European young people**", comprising four young people-related priorities: active citizenship and participation, consolidation of information addressed to young people and instruments used in young people-related services, promotion of volunteer work (among young people) and an increased encouragement of young people-related knowledge. These four priorities were important benchmarks for the Europe 2020 strategy, while also leading to the adoption of the European Young people Strategy 2010-2018. The European Young people Strategy is based on inter-sectorial co-operation and, besides funds, this co-operation focuses on evidence-based policies, mutual learning and structured dialogue, as well as reports, dissemination and monitoring. The progress made under the EU Young people Strategy is published at the end of each three-year cycle as an EU Young people Report. The strategy has eight fields of action: education and training; employment and entrepreneurship; health and welfare; participation; volunteering; social inclusion; young people in the world; creativity and culture.

Amidst concerns regarding the high rate of unemployment among European young people, in 2012 the European Commission launched the **Young people Employment Package-YEP**, a set of active measures for ensuring young people access to the labour market. Among others, the package contains measures concerning:

- **The young people guarantee.** Every member state is to develop such a programme nationally to support young graduates, upon their request, within four months of completing the studies.
- **Training quality standards.** The European Commission has established a framework and a set of minimum quality indicators, so that each member state can monitor the quality of training conducted at national level.

- **The European alliance for apprenticeships.** Its role is to promote apprenticeships and the transition from school to workplace by encouraging the skills that are relevant to the EU labour market and the improvement of skills among young Europeans.
- **The integrated young people mobility plan.** Via the EURES portal (the European job portal), young Europeans between 18 and 30 years of age are encouraged to seek jobs within the European Union, not just in their countries of origin.
- **Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage.** On February 20th, 2013, the European Commission adopted Recommendation 2013/112/EU – Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage, as part of the Social Investment Package. The recommendation is an essential instrument placing children’s rights and interests, equal opportunities and support for the disadvantaged at the heart of the effort to fight poverty and social exclusion. It recommends focussing on children at a higher risk due to multiple disadvantages, such as Roma children, children of immigrants or of ethnic minorities, children with special needs or disabilities, children in alternative care or street children, children whose parents are imprisoned, as well as children in households facing a higher risk of poverty, such as single parent families or large families. In addition, the chapter on the quality of alternative care services recommends ensuring that children deprived of parental care also have access to quality services (both standard ones and specific services) as regards health, education, jobs, social assistance, security and housing, including during their transition to adulthood.

National measures

National support measures for the social and professional integration of young people from vulnerable groups comprise legislation, programmes and projects run by public institutions (NAPCR, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and the Elderly, the Ministry of Young people and Sports), as well as programmes run by NGOs.

The legal framework for stimulating young people professional integration is based on:

- **Law No.76/2002**, updated by Law No.250/2013 and Law No.233/2010 – provides the measures for achieving the strategies and policies aimed at protecting people at risk of unemployment, reaching a high employment rate and adapting the labour force to labour market demands. The National Employment Agency provides services free of charge, covered by the unemployment insurance budget, in the fields of professional information and counselling, job-finding mediation and training.
- **The implementing rules of Law No. 116/2002** on preventing and fighting social marginalisation, approved by Government Decision No.1149/2002. These rules comprise the following supporting instruments:

a) **measures guaranteeing job access** applied by the National Employment Agency, by concluding solidarity contracts over a period of up to 2 years but no less than one year, whereby young people between 16 and 25 years of age in difficulty and facing professional exclusion enjoy customised social support. This is done through career counselling and mediation by agency experts, followed by job placement with the insertion employers who have concluded conventions with county agencies.

b) **measures guaranteeing access to housing** (people up to 35 years of age who cannot afford purchasing a home). This is the task of county councils which, within the limit of available funds and based on a priority list, must cover either the down payment for purchasing a home, or the rent for period of up to three years, in the case of a rented home.

c) **guaranteed access to health care for young people** from families benefitting from the guaranteed minimum income. To this effect, the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family pays the health insurance contributions.

d) **guaranteed access to education**, by granting scholarships for furthering the education of young people in secondary and tertiary education.

CEA understaffing limits the activities performed, in that the institution only deals with the cases/persons coming to its venue and undergoing the registration stage. Counselling, career guidance and qualification courses (the theoretical parts of courses/programmes) are organised by CEA on its premises, while the practical side of the courses is organised (depending on course characteristics) at the companies with whom CEA have collaboration protocols. Field work is hindered by CEA understaffing, as the high existing workload requires the deployment of all the institution's human resources for resolving the cases already registered. The activities deemed traditional, whereby CEA staff go to the community, consist of job fairs (for young people, Roma or non-Roma) and activities performed in partnership with other institutions: with county school inspectorates – the “Școala altfel” week (School differently); with companies – open door days, etc.).

The Young people Guarantee, financed by the Government of Romania, is another programme targeting young people under 25 years of age. Its main objective is reducing unemployment among young people between 16 and 24 years of age, by facilitating access to quality jobs. Specifically, the programme sees that young people under 25 years of age, having lost their job or not finding a job after graduation, get good offers, either for employment, or for furthering their education or entering an apprenticeship or traineeship. Such offers are to be received within 4 months of registration with employment agencies. All measures under the Young people Guarantee scheme are backed by various forms of financial support provided either to future employees, or to employers.

In Romania, the Young people Guarantee programme is not yet operational. The Ministry of European Funds postponed the financing of a programme component for November 2016, which roughly amounts to a 14 month delay, because of malfunctions in the IT system for managing European funds (MySMIS). The component was opened for funding under a non-competitive project (the fund manager is the National Employment Agency, together with the CEAs, and entities interested in accessing these funds may only participate as partners of these institutions) and comprises the identification of persons and the setting up of a single register-type database (recording personal identification numbers) of young people who are neither employed, nor in some form of education or training (NEETs).

Whenever this NEETS database is up and running, the Young people Guarantee programme may be deemed operational, given that there will be current statistical data on this vulnerable group to substantiate public policy decisions addressing young people, especially as regards their access to the job market and to qualification and/or apprenticeship programmes.

The assessment of the main strategic documents on young people social and professional integration – the National Strategy for Young people Policy 2015-2020 and the National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015-2020 – reveals the following measures that are to be implemented:

Education

- Extending school and vocational counselling by diversifying counselling networks (not just in schools, but also in young people centres), as well as by the compulsory coverage of students starting with forms VII and VIII;
- Dampening the effects of early school leaving by developing young people work and non-formal learning opportunities;
- Increasing and diversifying non-formal education offers that meet young people's needs: volunteering, activities initiated by NGOs, training and extra-curricular education in schools, non-formal education offered by young people centres and school-based sports clubs, engaging young people in the preparation and implementation of innovative projects, online learning offers, conferences and workshops on topics requested by young people, opportunities to learn foreign languages and acquire transversal skills (digital, communication, etc.)
- Raising awareness among governmental and non-governmental organisations and local communities, as well as mobilising and guiding them with a view to establish partnerships and a viable co-operation in developing the system of non-formal educational establishments and complex/integrated services focussing on young people needs;
- Important actors such as young people workers, career counsellors and trained trainers shall be acknowledged and supported as a significant source of relevant support.

Integration in the labour market

- Young people work and non-formal learning shall be further recognised and supported as significant sources of support in attaining the skills and competences needed to ease young people access to the labour market, thus contributing to the fulfilment of the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives.
- Tax incentives for job creation: a one-year exemption (payment from the state budget) from social contributions for employers if they hire young people under 25 years of age based on a work contract of at least two years duration.
- Rental subsidies for young people moving to a different county on their first job.
- A multi-dimensional approach to the support for the (re)integration of young people not in education, training or employment (NEET), through education, professional training and employment opportunities.
- Implementation of the Young people Guarantee: providing all young people with quality offers for employment, furthering education, apprenticeship or training programmes within 4 months of leaving school or registering as unemployed. Quickly drafting a Young people Guarantee implementation plan in regions with young people unemployment above 25%, followed by an implementation plan for the other regions, and submitting them to the European Commission. This plan is to include apprenticeship reform measures.
- Extending eligibility for professional qualification courses to persons who have not graduated compulsory education, accompanied by special training courses on basic skills for these persons, so as to cover risk groups such as people in poverty or Roma.

Countering social exclusion

- Enhanced focus on prevention, the most efficient and viable way to fight poverty and social exclusion, and on early intervention to avoid the situation where people falling into poverty remain trapped in ever more difficult and problematic social and economic situations.
- A shift in the approach to fighting young people poverty from patchy social assistance intervention to measures of social development and constant investment in young people, to be implemented throughout the whole life cycle.
- Improved access to social assistance for young people in need, so that they may avail themselves of their rights; support activities informing and educating young people on their rights.
- Devising new programmes for building or adapting social housing, to allow the implementation of legislation that entitles disadvantaged young people to a home, such as the law on social marginalisation.
- Extending the powers of young people centres, to make them institutions acting as local resource centres for socially excluded or marginalised young people, integrating the

intervention of local authorities with sectorial responsibilities in implementing young people policies.

Programmes run by NGOs comprise two tiers: work performed in the residential system (for example, SOS Satele Copiilor), and financial support for young people leaving the social protection system. The work performed in the residential system is based on identifying young people needs and creating and developing independent life skills. This is accompanied by ensuring access to education and training, to provide them with a chance of employment and, ultimately, self-sustainability. The financial support given to young people leaving the social protection system mainly has to do with covering rental and utility costs, but also transportation or food costs, accompanied by psychological, vocational and financial counselling, as well as mentoring, in some cases.

The social and professional integration of young people from rural areas and from the social protection system – trends and challenges

The analysis of research data revealed a series of shared problems for the two young people categories studied – young people from rural areas and young people from the child protection system, as well as some distinctive problems for each category. The problems have been grouped into two main tiers: professional integration and social integration.

Professional integration comprises the main challenges having to do with joining the labour market and education. Social integration comprises issues of social capital, social participation, independent life skills and social environment.

The main professional integration problems

Shared problems

- Career counselling and guidance in school is deficient for the following reasons:
 - ✓ Uneven filling of school counsellor positions at county level. The situation is worse in rural areas, where these positions are not filled.
 - ✓ Insufficient number of school counsellors in lower secondary education: the legislation provides for 1 counsellor / 800 students. Furthermore, out of the 18 hours of psycho-pedagogical assistance, 4 hours must consist of teaching, which further reduces the time dedicated to counselling and guidance.
 - ✓ Because of the low wages, many school counsellor positions are not filled by qualified staff, especially in rural areas.
 - ✓ The purpose of these activities is frequently diverted: most often, counsellors manage pupils' emotional and behavioural problems.
 - ✓ Most of the time, guidance and counselling work is assigned to form tutors, who perform it occasionally (for example, in the "School Differently" week).
- Lack of coordination of support measures for young people social and professional integration. Whether it has to do with education, social assistance and protection services or employment services, the study highlights the individual way in which each relevant institution acts. There is patchy collaboration at county level (young people job fair, social camps), but it does not cover current needs. Joint action would be needed from the relevant institutions (GDSACP, CEA and GDYS) to address the current problems.
- Public as well as private institutions run projects setting out and managing to ensure professional qualifications for many rural young peoples. However, the actions of these institutions are limited for objective reasons. On one hand, project initiators have to consider

the job offers in the respective rural communities, where agriculture is the most frequent occupation. On the other hand, they are limited by the resources allocated to the project, so that the work performed usually covers fewer young peoples than would be needed in the community, or a limited number of courses. Besides that, young people in the protection system have benefitted from so many training courses that they are no longer interested to attend unless they obtain immediate benefits, mostly material ones. They have been included in such courses without an assessment of their needs.

- Reduced collaboration between organisations implementing projects locally. If each organisation acts individually, project impact is reduced, whereas if there is coordinated action and communication/collaboration between the various institutions, the impact on the community is higher, and the positive results far superior. Thus, labour force qualification does not attract investors in rural communities, and the investment in training either migrates, or depreciates through lack of use.
- CEA representatives inform young people on employment opportunities and job mediation services in the final years of upper secondary school or during vocational training. Unfortunately, this is not enough. It should start in the lower secondary (forms VII and VIII-), so that young people attend an educational establishment and pursue a qualification that allows them a quick integration into the labour market.
- The poor quality of professional training provided under programmes by SOP HRD, CEA, etc. leads to a continued poor integration of young people in the labour market. Neither are these programmes adapted to local labour market demands, nor are there any quality employment assistance services to inform trainees about job opportunities elsewhere the country.
- Lack of a working culture among young people, both in rural areas and in the protection system. Many such young peoples lack work discipline, frequently change jobs, are reluctant to follow rules at the workplace and their salary expectations are very high compared to their professional qualifications.

Distinctive problems of young people in rural areas

- Deficient access to the education and professional training system for rural young people. The causes of this problem can be found both outside the system (family environment, household living standards, poverty) and within the system (lack of support measures for students to continue their studies).
 - ✓ The poverty confronting most rural households does not allow them to support their children in school. Therefore, aware as they may be that their children can only overcome future difficulties if they attend school up to the highest level, they do not have the resources to support this path.
 - ✓ The problems of rural young people in accessing education are also maintained by the system. Educational establishments have been shut down in many rural communities,

but support measures for school children have not been as efficient or as quick as school activity downsizing. The longer the distance between home and school, the higher the risk of dropping out among rural young people. Knowing that that they cannot support their children further than the lower secondary level – which is not of much help for their professional development anyway – and sometimes, beyond primary school, parents are not interested in school, and their children do not even attain a minimal level of knowledge/skills.

- ✓ Lack of support measures for continuing studies after the completion of 8 forms. Although there are scholarships being granted to students attending high school (offered under the programme “High School Money”¹) or vocational school (the vocational scholarship²), their value is too low compared to the needs of young people in rural areas. Restrictive conditions apply to granting the “Highschool Money”, requiring that the income per family member does not exceed 150 lei/month, which rules out a significant number of students from poor families. This should be accompanied by other financial support measures (reimbursement of transportation costs, money for school supplies, etc.) for students from disadvantaged families or environments, enticing them to continue their studies. Although stipulated in Law 1/2011 on national education, the reimbursement of transportation costs³ for rural students is not done in all cases, because it is dependent on local funding, or it is delayed (People’s Advocate, 2013).
- ✓ Schools in rural areas, regardless of level, do not appeal to most teaching staff. Consequently, one of the problems facing schools in rural areas is their incapacity to ensure qualified teaching staff for all the levels and subjects. The differences between urban and rural areas as regards the proportion of qualified staff vary between 2-5% to the detriment of rural schools (Apostu et al, 2014:11). Another typical problem for rural areas is the fluctuation of teaching staff, who either leave the educational system, or change the school (usually by choosing an urban school). Such changes occur not only at the beginning of the school term, but also throughout it. Deficiencies in the level of professional and teaching training, as well as the frequent changing of classroom teachers affect the quality of the teaching-learning process and consequently, the quality of rural students’ training. Students in rural areas often have to adapt to new teaching styles and requirements, which mostly affects them in their final school years.
- ✓ The quality of education is also affected by the characteristics of the school environment (the type of population attending school, the attitude of students and their

¹ Order of the Minister of Education and Research No. 4839/2004

² Government Decision 1062/2012

³ Emergency Ordinance No. 69/2016 supplementing Art. 84 of the National Education Law No. 1/2011 and Art. 45 of the Law on Local Public Transport Services No. 92/2007 and repealing Art. 15 of Government Ordinance No. 29/2013 regulating some budgetary measures

families to learning, order, discipline and safety in school, etc.). Studies conducted so far conclude that the impact of school on students' access to education and educational success is much higher in developing countries like Romania, than in developed countries, because "in poor countries, the school context outweighs family factors, mostly because the former has a higher variability than the latter" (Heyneman, 1986 apud Duru-Bellat, 2003: 9). In other words, since the vast majority of rural students are from disadvantaged social and family environments, their chances of educational and personal success would be enhanced if schools provided them with better conditions.

- ✓ In Romania, almost a quarter of teachers (28%) teach in schools where over 30% of students are from disadvantaged social and economic environments, compared to the international average of 20% (TALIS, 2013:19). In Romania, the highest proportion of schools with a disadvantaged school population is in rural areas. According to the same report, teachers with less professional experience and thus, less prepared to meet the needs of their students, end up teaching in schools attended mainly by students from disadvantaged environments (TALIS, 2013:19). The effect of the school environment on the educational, and later, on the social and professional path of the individual has been demonstrated by the most representative research in education sociology. Researchers conclude that the likeliness of students furthering their studies beyond compulsory education is linked more to the category of school attended than to the level of social and economic deprivation of their origin (Bissonnette et al, 2005).
- Poor information available to young people regarding support measures allowing them to have access to training and professional integration. There are various measures supporting professional integration or training at national and county level, but they are insufficiently advertised among the young people population.
- For girls in rural areas, some of the results of not continuing their studies and/or not getting employed are early marriage (documented or not) and early motherhood.
- Dependence of disadvantaged young people on social benefits. These benefits are not conditional upon finding a job. Many rural young peoples prefer to receive the minimum guaranteed income while working as day labourers in agriculture.

Distinctive problems of young people in the child protection system

- One of the major problems confronting young people in the social protection system is the lack of transversal skills needed for professional integration. Employers demand not only job-specific skills, but also expect a young person to possess transversal skills such as the capacity to analyse and summarise, communication, networking, teamwork, decision-making, etc. All these skills are assessed by the company based on the candidate's CV, cover letter or interview. Interview preparation, job-seeking and sustaining a job interview with everything that entails are issues that this young people category has only come across during school holidays or under projects

financed by structural or cohesion funds (SOP HRD, EEA Grants). Many such young peoples take them lightly believing that they can obtain this information online.

- Another important aspect is the lack of quality information on what is involved in job-seeking and getting hired, the rigors of a workplace, as well as the benefits it entails. In this respect there is a vicious circle which could be described as follows: the legislation has provisions to protect and support this vulnerable group in integrating in the labour market (Law 116/2002), but the number of CEA counsellors dealing with young people in the social protection system is very low (1 per county), and young people believe that employment automatically means leaving the protection system. This vicious circle stems from the system's failure to provide tailored knowledge and information for young people in the social protection system, the latter's poor understanding of legislation (despite believing that they know their rights very well) and, most importantly, the protection system's incapacity to develop a predictable path for each young people in the system, which would mean preparing them for the stage of professional integration and self-reliance. In this respect, supporting young people for employment over the school holidays is a first step. However, this should be doubled by the preparation for a permanent job, and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences that allow both professional training, and employment.
- The lack of adequate psychological and vocational counselling in public residential centres. Young people feel the lack of a permanent and sustained vocational counselling in public system centres.

The main social integration problems

Shared problems

- There is no complex and comprehensive monitoring system for assessing the needs of the disadvantaged population which eliminates assessor subjectivity. Thus, local team members have found that a large portion of rural young people were not benefitting from social services because they had a favourable social, economic and family situation according to the social enquiry that had been performed "in the office", not in the field, using superficial data instead of concrete evidence. Local team members emphasised that, for example, having one parent working abroad does not automatically mean a monthly income that can pull the young people and his/her family out of the social assistance and services system.
- A reduced number of sports and leisure activities for young people in rural areas and small towns. Many of these activities take place in large cities, making access difficult for young people from disadvantaged environments because of travel costs.
- Reduced awareness of young people centre activities among young people from rural areas and from the protection system.

- A low level of social capital manifested as a low level of association and volunteering. The lack of an active young people associative framework – there are extremely few young people organisations at county level and they are poorly known by young people. Such organisations are all but absent in rural areas.

Distinctive problems of young people in rural areas

- There are some social integration problems due to the environment they live in. Some live in families marked by violence, abuse, etc. This gives them a lack of self-confidence, adaptation and communication problems, etc.
- There are no adequate leisure facilities in rural areas. Rural young people do not have such places to meet other people. There are very few young people-dedicated cultural, sports, environmental protection or other activities.

Distinctive problems of young people in the child protection system

- Social integration and life skill development services are poorly developed in Romania, although quality standards and guidelines have been adopted. This is noticeable in the poor capacity of young people under the protection system to integrate socially, and in their poor skills in terms of budget management, personal hygiene, home hygiene, diet, etc.
- Involving young people under the protection system in life skill development programmes at a rather advanced age (17-18 years of age) proves insufficient because of the time need to acquire such skills. Being accustomed to always having a “safety net”, they have difficulty making decisions and taking on adult tasks and responsibilities. Involving them in this type of programmes starting with age 12-13 would give them more time to attain independent life skills. Social protection system decision makers should also consider the individual’s mental and physical development characteristics, as well as the precocity of today’s young people.
- The social integration of young people in the protection system is a difficult objective to reach, mostly because of the institutional shortcomings. Residential centres are understaffed, underfinanced, and activities focus mainly on ensuring living conditions, compliance with internal regulations and solving cases of breach of social cohabitation norms, to the detriment of education for independent life. In this respect, the systems managed by NGOs are the opposite, because the methodology of working with young people involves, from the arrival in the residential campus, the initiation, alongside classical activities, of activities to develop independent life skills: managing a small personal budget, keeping track of expenditure, activities with children and young people of the same age and from the same environment, but from the biological family. The role of these activities is to develop knowledge, habits and skills for independent life and overcome communication and networking barriers between the children and young people of the same age within the campus (the equivalent of the residential centres in the institutionalised social protection system). The analysis of the two social

protection systems demonstrates that the one managed by NGOs has higher success rates, thanks to these activities dedicated to the acquisition of independent life skills.

- In state-run residential centres, children and young people have no access to the kitchen because of the hygiene norms stipulated in the health legislation, and most children do not have their own clothing, as clothing is usually shared by all the children. The absence of a personalised space in these centres, as well as of adequately trained staff for counselling children, lead to a poor development of life skills among these children/young people.
- Finding ways to motivate foster carers to either stay within, or enter the system is one of the needs shown by GDSACP representatives. Training this category of staff is also very important given that the methods of educating and raising children have changed greatly. Today's young people have a different system of values, conceptions and behaviours than past generations, and foster carers are not keeping up with these changes. It is worth noting that a large number of children over 12 years of age were removed from foster carers and put into the residential system because of the ever shrinking number of foster carers. Foster carers are obliged to take on smaller children or more children, leading to the older ones being sent back, without any preparation, to the residential system, making their integration even harder.
- Young people in public residential centres have emotional problems because of traumatic experiences having to do with abandonment. These should be addressed during placement by reducing the number of placements, encouraging the development of significant relationships and organising training on topics such as: attachment, self-knowledge, empathic communication, conscious parenting, building relationships, etc.

Solutions for the social and professional integration of young people from rural areas and from the social protection system

Solving the social and professional integration problems of young people in rural areas and in the social protection system requires, first of all, the adoption of measures at institutional level to increase the capacity of the relevant institutions so that they can better meet the needs of young people at risk, and not only that. This increase of institutions' capacities involves skill development for staff working with young people, a better coordination of young people public policy measures among the various ministries/agencies, setting up a database of adopted and implemented measures, setting up partnerships between public and private institutions, etc. Here are the most important ones:

- Promote and adopt a co-operative and collaborative approach, inter- and intra-institutionally, at both central and local level;
- Increase the number of staff working with young people, both in the child protection system, and in rural areas.
- Organise training courses on methods and techniques of working with young people from disadvantaged environments, to be regularly attended by the staff of institutions dealing with young people in rural areas and in institutions;
- Develop a database and keep it up-to-date on successful measures and solutions identified and applied in working with young people in rural areas and in institutions, to be accessible in real time by the staff of institutions working with disadvantaged population categories;
- Permanent monitoring and assessment of public policy measures aiming at the social and professional integration of young people from disadvantaged environments;
- Organise regular qualitative and quantitative studies on the activities of institutions working with disadvantaged population categories;
- Set up robust partnerships between the relevant public institutions and the business environment or the non-governmental sector;
- Develop integrated services programmes for young people, covering as many of their problems and needs as possible.

Professional integration

Shared solutions

- Improve the quality of career counselling and guidance by:
 - Increasing the number of school counsellors and the number of hours dedicated to career counselling and guidance in the lower secondary level.
 - Spreading career counselling and guidance over a longer period and encompassing: test batteries, study visits, individual discussions with students and their parents.

- Ensure education quality and the acquisition of specific and transversal competences, as well as of independent life skills, so that school may answer the needs of both children and the labour market.
- Create a national mechanism to co-ordinate young people professional integration measures in order to facilitate the provision of an integrated package of measures resulting in young people employment.
- Unlock the implementation of the Young people Guarantee programme by providing funds to universities and NGOs for creating the national database on NEET young people and feeding data into the system, with the Ministry of Funds remaining just the fund provider/monitor or evaluator.

Distinctive solutions for young people in rural areas

- Motivate young people to continue their studies through support measures for young people from disadvantaged families – reimbursement of transportation costs between home and the school venue, free accommodation in school dorms, scholarships, providing textbooks up to form XII (the measure is in place, but has not yet been applied), providing school supplies, etc.;
- Raise awareness on support measures for continuing education and professional integration;
- Make social benefits conditional upon getting a job, together with the development of social services for young people in rural areas.

Distinctive solutions for young people in the child protection system

The solutions for the professional integration of young people from the social protection system cover two tiers: solutions at system level and solutions at individual level.

I. Solutions addressing the system

- A shift towards active measures addressed to young people in the social protection system and the gradual elimination of the individual's dependence on the system by encouraging employment support for these young peoples.
- Provide career counselling and guidance, job mediation and employment support services. Increase the number of CEA staff dealing with the professional integration of young people from the social protection system, needs identification and job skill development.
- Develop alternative services for young people professional integration by increasing funding for NGOs running programmes with and for young people from the social protection system.
- Develop training/qualification programmes, as well as job mediation and employment support programmes for young people from the social protection system. These programmes should address not just drafting a CV or attending a job interview, but also integration/reintegration into the labour market, selection of job offers that best fit the individual young people's

qualification, etc. The programmes are to be applied before the young people leave care, as well as after that date, for at least five years.

- Funding continuous training programmes for GDSACP, CDSACP and CEA staff on working with young people in the social protection system and regular assessment of the staff. The continuous training of GDSACP staff should cover, among other topics, attachment needs/disorders, self-knowledge, disorders of the self, behaviour disorders, empathic communication, building inter-personal relationships and conscious parenting.
- Develop, in all GDSACPs, services for young people independent life skill development, which should include the monitoring of young people after they have left the protection services (this follow-up should preferably cover a 2-3 year period, with increased frequency in the first year).
- Develop and support strategic and sustainable partnerships between child protection institutions and businesses, and grant benefits (exemption from tax and contributions) to businesses actively involved.
- An increased participation of young people in making decisions that concern them by actively involving them in deciding the various educational and professional paths to pursue, as well as in matters of their daily lives. This way, young people can be involved in making important decisions on their future, as well as on day-to-day matters (the menu, budget management, cleanliness, etc.), which would render them more responsible and autonomous.
- Set up advisory groups with young people from the protection system within GDSACPs. These should meet regularly and provide information on issues at hand, as well as solutions.

II. Solutions at individual level

- Establish individual plans in preparation for leaving care for each young people, with their direct participation. The plan shall comprise, but not be limited to, the young people's training/mentoring/internship needs, concrete solutions for the young people to exercise independent life skills, the accompanying persons, etc.
- Attendance of a minimum number of career-oriented professional training and counselling hours before the age of 14.
- Attendance of a minimum number of programmes or activities outside the residential system for each young people in the system.
- Encourage young people to work or engage in volunteer work over the school holidays.

Social integration

Shared solutions

- Stimulate associations among young people to enhance their social participation.

- Increase the number of young people centres in rural areas and small towns, giving young people a place to organise or get involved in various activities.
- Develop vocational training programmes for young people.

Distinctive solutions for young people in rural areas

- Run more cultural and sports activities in rural areas to stimulate the young peoples to participate.
- Awareness campaigns on county young people centres created by County Directorates for Sports and Young people.
- Provide facilities for activities with young people.

Distinctive solutions for young people in the child protection system

- Develop, together with NGOs and academia, a unified methodology for identifying the needs of young people in the social protection system, to be applied nationally, both in the public, and in the non-governmental system.
- Render public policies more flexible, by allowing GDSACPs to develop individual plans for young people transitioning to independent life. Such a plan is to be established for each young people depending on his/her needs. These plans are to be drawn in parallel with activities for independent life skill development and specialised counselling.
- Develop social support/integration programmes/services providing as broad a service range as possible (vocational counselling, psychological counselling, mentoring, etc.) for the young people in the system, both before, and after they leave the system. It is important to provide this support to young people leaving the system for at least 2-3 years, in order to facilitate their social and professional integration.
- Develop programmes for the acquisition of independent life skills and apply them from a much younger age for young people in the protection system. This would ease their transition to employment and society.
- Set up a programme to assess the transversal competences and independent life skills of young people in the protection system (problem solving, negotiation, decision-making, critical and creative thinking, conflict resolution and stress management, financial skills, starting a family and running a home).
- Set up a programme for developing the transversal competences (networking, communication, etc.) of young people through non-formal education, to be implemented in residential centres.
- Shift the system towards increasing young people’s education level and valuing work.
- Finance alternative learning programmes, like non-formal team work activities or activities based on the “learning by doing” principle.
- Provision by the state of a monthly budget for each young people, that he/she is to manage.
- Improve access to social housing or enable home rental at lower prices for a period of time after young people leave the system.

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