

REPER NETWORK -ROMANIA

General details

Organisation	The Association for Organization Development – SAH ROM (ADO SAH ROM)
Name of Contact	Rodica Novac
Address	Romania, Bucharest, Calea Mosilor 284, bl. 22A, sc. B, ap. 47, sector 2, cod 020894, www.reper.ro
Telephone no.	0040 21 2107160
Fax	0040 21 2107160
Email address	adosahrom@starnets.ro

Details of activity

Background to the case study	<p>Aims and objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Program „Labour market and trade unions modernisation” responds to the service demand on the labour market, as an alternative to the centralized public service. The overall objective of the program is to contribute to the increase of the employment rate in five towns throughout Romania. • The service centres’ aim is to facilitate the (re)integration into the labour market of people looking for a job, with the help of sustainable organizations that provide an increased level of employability, adaptability and entrepreneurship. <p>Brief rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main challenge of the labour market in many areas of Romania is long-term unemployment, marginalized groups, people which are not registered in The National Agency for Employment offices, with no income or qualification. The public institutions primarily responsible for alleviating these problems cannot always offer a solution. The NGOs are more flexible and respond faster to the beneficiaries expectations. <p>Implementing organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Association for Organization Development – SAH
------------------------------	--



	<p>ROM (ADO SAH ROM), a Romanian non-governmental organization, founded in 2000 is the administrator of the program. The implementing organisations are the local NGOs and one local trade union involved in the program.</p> <p>Founders/ Donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). SDC is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within the Swiss Foreign Ministry. Together with other federal offices, the SDC is responsible for overall coordination of development activities and cooperation with Eastern Europe, as well as humanitarian aid. • Swiss Labour Assistance (SLA). SLA is a Swiss non-governmental organization involved in development and cooperation programs. <p>When did the activity start - end date?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity started in 1998 and it will end on 31 of December 2007 (four different programs: 1998-1999; 2000-2002; 2003-2005; 2006-2007).
Description of activity	<p>Outline of programme / activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership of 5 NGO's and a trade union contributed to the development of 11 service centres on the labour market: 4 job centres; 4 vocational training centres; 2 business centres; 1 unemployed women counselling centre; 1 service centre for organization development and quality management. • The 11 centres established an informal, open, network of service providers for the unemployed, the employees and the employers, named REPER Network. • The service centres are able to accompany the (re)integration of people looking for employment into the labour market. This is being realized by means of offering professional competencies through: vocational training services; information and mediation services; career advice and by helping them develop their own businesses. <p>Origins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many towns in Romania were built around a metallurgic company employing dozens of thousands of workers.



	<p>Concerned about the imminent collective lay offs, in 1996 Metarom Federation¹ negotiated with the employer's organization an agreement for social accompaniment of the dismissed members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service centres were planned to be set up, to assist the members to reinsert on labour market but the financial means were not available, because the existing legislation was not allowing the companies to contribute to such funds. • The first centres were initiated by a consortium formed by local trade unions, companies, public institutions in Hunedoara, with Phare funds (RICOP Program²), in 1996. The unemployment rate in the region was 24%. The program was financed for 6 month. The next 1.5 year the consortium proved incapable to finance the centres and the activity was sustained by the city hall and the local trade union Siderurgistul. • The first project financed by Swiss Labour Assistance and Swiss Solidarity started in 1998. A second project was developed by Metarom Federation in Campia Turzii in 1999. In 2000 the program was extended in another three towns and financed by SDC and SLA. <p>Who was involved in the design, management and delivery of the programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design of the program was made by a team formed by: Cartel Alfa³ trade union representatives from national, branch and local level, the local coordinator of Hunedoara centres and Swiss Labour Assistance' representatives. The long experience of SLA in employment projects was significant in this phase. In the next phase, Metarom Federation, the local trade unions and companies from metallurgy founded 3 local NGOs, which are implementing the program and the Siderurgistul Trade Union set up the vocational training centre. <p>Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The job centres are accredited by The National Agency
--	--

¹ Metarom Federation – The National Trade Union Federation Metarom (metallurgy branch) is affiliated to CNS Cartel Alfa.

² RICOP Program financed 66 different service centres around Romania. Hunedoara is relevant from the point of view of the Program “Labour market and trade union modernization”.

³ CNS Cartel Alfa – National Confederation of Trade Unions Cartel Alfa.



	<p>for Employment for two types of services: professional information and counselling⁴ and labour exchange⁵ (according to the law 76/2002 the providers of specialised services for employment stimulation who finance these activities from funds, other than the Unemployment Insurance Fund budget, are accredited by the National Agency for Employment). The centres are reporting to the National Agency for Employment the details concerning the placed persons on monthly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provided vocational training courses are authorized by The National Council for Vocational Training. REPER centres are authorized in this moment to provide 21 courses. But this only means that both kinds of the centres are fulfilling the demand of the legislation, nothing more. • The local companies and the beneficiaries appreciate the quality of the services. In 2005, 72% from the vocational training courses graduates were hired immediately after finishing the courses.
<p>Policy context within which the programme operates</p>	<p>Is there an explicit relationship between policy priorities / local activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Agency for Employment (NAE) is evaluating the service providers and monitoring their activity. In the same time, NAE is the main service provider on labour market, with 300 offices and 19 vocational training centres. Ministry of Labour develops every two years The National Action Plan for Employment. The document for the period 2004-2005 does not mention the accredited service providers on labour market. The Government initiated some consultations in order to work out The National

⁴ Professional information and counselling represents a set of services delivered to the jobseekers having the following purposes: to provide information on the labour market and the evolution of the occupations; to evaluate and self-evaluate people for their professional guidance; to develop the ability and self-confidence of the jobseekers in order to enable them to make decisions on their own career; to train on job-searching methods and techniques (official translation of law 76/2002).

⁵ Labour exchange is an activity through which the employers are connected to the jobseekers in order to establish working or civil service relations. The service consists of: information on the vacancies and the conditions for their employment by way of publishing, posting, organising job fairs; electronic exchange having the purpose to automatically match the supply and demand for jobs with the support of IT; preliminary selection of the candidates according to the requirements of the available jobs and taking into account their training, aptitudes, experience and interests (official translation of law 76/2002).

Development Plan for 2007-20013 but only a small number of NGOs was involved in this process. The single document which is identifying a roll for the private providers in the field is The Short and Medium Term Strategy for Vocational Training 2005-2010. In sum, at the moment, the policy priorities hardly find a place for local service providers.

Is the policy context supportive / prohibitive?

- The Romanian law says that the active measures against unemployment can be carried out “by the employment agencies or other service providers from the public or private sector”. If the providers are accredited by The National Agency for Employment, they “may deliver services financed from the Unemployment Insurance Fund”. The law states also that “the labour exchange can also be provided for a fee by the providers of specialised services from the public or private sector accredited by the National Agency for Employment”.
- On the other hand, there are too many institutions and regulations in this field. This field is regulated by laws, decisions, emergency ordinances and ordinances of the Government, orders of the ministry of labour, Ministry of Education, of The National Agency of Employment and of The National Council for Vocational Training. The law on unemployment and the related regulations change almost every year.
- The access of the providers from the private sector to public funds is very limited. The National Agency for Employment is the main service provider on labour market and the budget available for the private sector represents only a small percentage from the budget.
- The definition of unemployed is restrictive and the result is a statistic saying that the unemployment rate in Romania, at the end of 2005 was 6%. The whole system of statistic indicators concerning labour and unemployment needs to be revised.
- The National Agency for Employment is the single institution in the field which is not making available to the public the information about the accredited service providers. The Ministry of Labour published on its web site the list of the agents for personnel leasing as well as The National Council for Vocational Training, which offers information about the authorized training courses.
- In some areas NAE is sub-contracting accredited service



	<p>suppliers to provide services financed by public funds but the funds are small and the imposed conditions to access the money are not attractive.</p> <p>Has the policy context changed during the life of the activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1998, when the program started, the Ministry of Labour was the single institution dealing with unemployment. There was no recognition of the private providers and the available funds were only from outside donors. In the last 16 years at least 8 laws on unemployment have been adopted by the Parliament and lots of other regulations. New institutions have been set up and private providers have been recognized by the legislation. <p>Which came first – local activities or policy priorities (i.e. is activity leading or following policy priorities)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cartel Alfa was able to negotiate better with the Government the content of the legislation concerning active measures against unemployment. Cartel Alfa has representatives in the Administration Councils of all the public bodies (at national and local level) dealing with this issue and was able to influence the public policies. 																														
Geographical focus of the case study	On local level, in five towns from Romania: Hunedoara, Campia Turzii, Iasi, Roman and Targoviste.																														
Impact	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At program level the following outputs are expected: center building-up and development, quality assurance through counseling and assistance, model development. • The annual outputs are: <table border="1" data-bbox="544 1429 1390 1982"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2004</th> <th>2005</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total number of beneficiaries</td> <td>7836</td> <td>8735</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clients among local companies</td> <td>782</td> <td>931</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Identified vacancies</td> <td>3200</td> <td>4487</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Participants in vocational training courses</td> <td>663</td> <td>826</td> </tr> <tr> <td>New clients within job centres</td> <td>3223</td> <td>3985</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Professional counselling and training in job-search techniques (number of services offered to beneficiaries)</td> <td>1120</td> <td>3629</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Labour exchange (number of services offered to beneficiaries)</td> <td>5347</td> <td>5120</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Placements</td> <td>1562</td> <td>1460</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Selections and pre-selections of personnel</td> <td>190</td> <td>225</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2004	2005	Total number of beneficiaries	7836	8735	Clients among local companies	782	931	Identified vacancies	3200	4487	Participants in vocational training courses	663	826	New clients within job centres	3223	3985	Professional counselling and training in job-search techniques (number of services offered to beneficiaries)	1120	3629	Labour exchange (number of services offered to beneficiaries)	5347	5120	Placements	1562	1460	Selections and pre-selections of personnel	190	225
	2004	2005																													
Total number of beneficiaries	7836	8735																													
Clients among local companies	782	931																													
Identified vacancies	3200	4487																													
Participants in vocational training courses	663	826																													
New clients within job centres	3223	3985																													
Professional counselling and training in job-search techniques (number of services offered to beneficiaries)	1120	3629																													
Labour exchange (number of services offered to beneficiaries)	5347	5120																													
Placements	1562	1460																													
Selections and pre-selections of personnel	190	225																													



	Information and support for start-up	224	340
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in the capabilities of partner organizations to manage, develop and implement competitive services on the labour market in compliance with the provisions imposed by the laws in force, ensuring, thus, the institutional and financial sustainability until the end of 2007. <p>Any impact at European level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The experience in Romania has been used to develop similar services in three towns from Bulgaria, financed by the same Swiss donors. The colleagues from Bulgaria visited Hunedoara, in 2005, in an experience exchange. 		
Partners' details	<p>Local partners are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iancu de Hunedoara Association, Siderurgistul Trade Union, Prometeu Association, Pigmalion Association, Turnul Chindiei Association, Pro Women Foundation. <p>ADO SAH ROM is responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring.</p>		

Theme-Specific Questions

Who was targeted by the programme?	<p>The main target group of the program are: People with low income & people trying to reintegrate in the labour market: unemployed, graduates, dismissed people after collective lay offs etc. These people receive services free of charge.</p> <p>We also offer services to clients: People who want to change their career by re-schooling & attending vocational training courses & local employers etc. These people are invited to pay a small contribution.</p>		
Which levels of government were involved, informed or consulted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We tried to develop a relationship with the structures of the National Agency for Employment (NAE). Every year we send our annual reports to the stakeholders of the projects and we invite the representatives of the public institution to visit our centres or to attend to our events. As a result of this there is a certain collaboration with the local branches of NAE. The National Agency for Employment receive monthly reports from the accredited 		



	<p>centres with data about the placed persons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authorized vocational training courses are monitored by the local structures of The National Council for Vocational Training. <p>Both institutions (NAE and the National Council for Vocational Training) are entitled to withdraw the accreditation/ authorization if the demands of the legislation concerning the activity of the service centres are not fulfilled.</p> <p>The relationship with The National Council for Vocational Training is good. We received training, guidance, information and assistance in the process of developing training courses and obtaining the authorizations.</p>
<p>What actions resulted in mainstreaming?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cartel Alfa put pressure on National Agency for Vocational Training to reduce the tax for the authorization of the courses (which happened after few months). • The job centres are invited to participate in or to co-organize the job fairs organized by the National Agency for Employment (4-6 events per year). • The experience of the first two years in Hunedoara and Campia Turzii has been replicated in the other three towns.
<p>Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service centres are making big efforts to become sustainable. All REPER network members accessed other grants, provided by: European Union, World Bank, National Agency for Employment, International Labour Organization etc. • We tried to impose the decision to ask the beneficiaries to pay a small contribution for the received services. But we know now as a fact that forcing the segment of the paid services to grow would result in a significant change of the target group (from low income individuals to people with a certain income). In the case of small companies, it led to the loss of them as a client. • The maximum the centres got from selling services to the local clients was 15% from their budgets. These sums are coming mostly from the vocational training centres, because paying a small contribution became a method to reduce the fall-out rate. • The stakeholders of the local organizations and the founders (other than the trade unions) are not interested in contributing to the service centres' sustainability, even though they value the necessity and the quality of the



	services.
Successes / lessons learned	<p>Successes: the duration of the programs; the level of investments; the involvement of the trade unions; the dedicated staff; the quality management system; the training program of the service centres' staff; the strong networking among the service centres; the flexibility/ adaptability of services to meet the market demands; the autonomy and the management of local organizations; the monitoring system.</p> <p>Lessons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have learned that our main important value is our capacity to adjust to the needs of each beneficiary or client and the quality management system has an important role in this process. It is important that REPER centres are better connected to the local environment, less bureaucratic and can spend more time to find a solution to the problems of each beneficiary. They offer services to all persons searching for a job, not only to the people defined by the law. They are more flexible and offer also other services, which are not defined by the law, in a complementary way to the public system. In some area, they imposed their quality standards, which are higher and better accepted by the beneficiaries. • The concept of offering complex services, in the same space, to increase the clients' chances to insert on labour market constitutes a model which should be replicated, as well as the networking, which should be expanded to other similar centres. However, the costs are high and the local community cannot afford to support them. The interest of the clients, especially small companies, is diminishing if they are asked to pay even a symbolic sum for the received services. The access to public funds is very limited and restricted by the imposed conditions. The sustainability of the organizations is easier to secure than the sustainability of the service centres in this field. <p>What would you do differently next time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial concept of the program was to develop centres able to cover the whole range of services which will conduct to the reinsertion of the person on labour market: professional information and counselling, labour exchange, vocational training and business consulting. Later on we decided to reduce the number of the centres/ services in the new projects and this was probably a mistake.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The weak points of the program have been: dependence on external donors, dependence on a large local company and the city hall, which are providing the offices for the local projects, a relatively low capacity of the partner organization to adjust to change (a lack of entrepreneurial spirit within the staff, a lack of expertise in other related fields such as social assistance, social inclusion and work with minority groups). A second important problem was the not well-developed relationships with the stakeholders. If we would be able to start again, we would have to address better to these issues.
--	---

