

Professional Training in Archives Studies in Romania: Current Status and Development Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

In Romania, as well as in most states, being an archivist is a well-established profession; to carry it out, one is in need of certain professional degrees, specifically a document that certifies the level of professional training. The National Archives, as an institution, is the competent authority regulating the professional recognition of such a degree, which is also valid for the profession of registrar. Starting from this current state of affair, this paper shows both theoretical and practical aspects of the relation between this professional degree, its recognition on the labor market and professional training, be it initial or continuous in Romania. Considering the current trend of the European agencies in the field of professional training to create a unitary framework for the standards in education and professional training, which can be used for initial professional training as well as continuous professional training, we shall describe the instruments needed to put such an approach into practice.

Key words: Romania, professional training, archival studies

Formazione professionale negli studi archivistici in Romania: situazione attuale e prospettive di sviluppo

SINTESI

In Romania, così come nella maggior parte degli Stati, essere un archivista è una professione ormai consolidata; per realizzarla, si ha bisogno di alcuni titoli professionali, specificamente un documento che certifica il livello di formazione professionale. Gli archivi nazionali, come istituzione, sono l'autorità competente che regola il riconoscimento professionale di un titolo. A partire da questa situazione, il presente lavoro illustra gli aspetti teorici e pratici della relazione tra questo titolo professionale, il suo riconoscimento sul mercato del lavoro e la formazione professionale, iniziale e permanente, in Romania. Considerando l'attuale tendenza delle agenzie europee nel campo della formazione professionale per creare un quadro unitario delle norme in materia d'istruzione e formazione professionale, che può essere utilizzata per la formazione professionale iniziale, come pure la formazione professionale continua, si descriveranno gli strumenti necessari per concretizzare tale approccio.

Parole chiave: Romania, formazione professionale, studi archivistici

Trenutno stanje in razvojne perspektive strokovnega usposabljanja na področju arhivistike v Romuniji

IZVLEČEK

V Romuniji, kot tudi v večini drugih držav, je arhivist dobro uveljavljen poklic. Za njegovo izvajanje pa je seveda potrebna ustrezna izobrazba, zlasti dokazila, ki potrjujejo stopnjo strokovne usposobljenosti. Državni arhiv, kot institucija, je pristojni organ, ki ureja priznavanje takšne izobrazbe, ki je veljavna tudi za poklic matičarja na matičnem uradu. Izhajajoč iz tega trenutnega stanja, prikazuje prispevek teoretične in praktične vidike odnosa med to strokovno izobrazbo, priznanjem na trgu dela in poklicnim usposabljanjem v Romuniji. Upoštevajoč trenutni trend evropskih agencij na področju strokovnega usposabljanja, da bi oblikovale enoten okvir za standarde v izobraževanju in poklicnem usposabljanju, ki bi jih lahko uporabljali tako v začetnem usposabljanju, kot tudi v nadaljevalnem strokovnem izpopolnjevanju, bomo opisali instrumente, potrebne za uveljavitev takšnega pristopa v praksi.

Ključne besede: Romunija, strokovno usposabljanje, arhivistika

Formarea profesională în domeniul arhivistic în România: situația actuală și perspective de evoluție

REZUMAT

Profesia de arhivist este în prezent în România, ca de altfel și în majoritatea altor state, o profesie reglementată, exercitarea acesteia fiind condiționată de posesia anumitor calificări profesionale, mai exact de deținerea unui document care să ateste nivelul de formare profesională. Instituția Arhivelor Naționale este autoritatea competentă care reglementează recunoașterea profesională a acestei calificări, lucru valabil și în cazul profesiei de arhivar. Pornind de la aceste realități, lucrarea de față își propune să prezinte sub aspect teoretic și al formelor concrete de manifestare din România relația dintre calificarea profesională, recunoașterea acesteia pe piața forței de muncă și formarea profesională, fie ea inițială și continuă. Dată fiind tendința actuală a organismelor europene în domeniul formării profesionale de a crea o structură unitară pentru standardele de educație și formare profesională (standardele VET), utilizabile atât pentru formarea profesională inițială cât și pentru formarea profesională continuă, vor fi avute în vedere instrumentele de creat pentru punerea în aplicare a acestei orientări.

1 European Prerequisites

The subject matter referring to the development of the national professional qualifications (National qualifications frameworks - NQEs), the necessity for their compliance to the **European Qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF)**, which tends to cover all types of qualifications, on all levels, is not a piece of news anymore.

Qualification is defined as the formal result of a process of evaluation and validation, obtained when a competent institution establishes that a person has acquired results, following his or her education at certain standards. A qualification requires the official recognition of the value of the education results for the labour market - regardless of the type of training (formal, non-formal or informal) - and for the ongoing professional education and training. It gives one the legal right to practice an occupation / trade / profession, and the professional recognition requires taking into account the diploma level at the end of a training stage and the professional experience, materialised in the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired. In most countries, qualifications are based on occupational and educational standards, which are integrated and inter-connected so that they ensure the link with the employment requirements and with a more obvious content of learning (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, (CEDEFOP), 2009, p. 24).

A short review of the European policies that have marked the evolution of the national strategies regarding the qualifications will emphasise how a series of present trends in the field have developed; these trends are also obvious in an analysis oriented towards the education and training in the field of archiving.

“At European level, the set up of qualification frames started with the qualification frame for an educational sector: the Framework for Qualifications of The European Higher Education Area (QFEHEA) was drawn up in 1999 (the Bologna Declaration; the Dublin descriptors were adopted in 2005), while the development of EQF (European Qualification Framework) started in 2005” (European Commission, 2008. p. 9). Both of them deal with the activity field of learning, they are designed to improve transparency from the viewpoint of European qualifications and support lifelong learning and labour mobility. They are actually considered the defining European initiatives in the direction of creating a stronger connection between the framework offered by the university education systems and the larger context / framework of qualifications - yet more anchored to the labour marked necessities - and the number of countries that design them in an integrated manner when they devise the national qualifications plan (CEDEFOP, 2012a, p. 10) is increasing.

However, there are specific differences between the two frameworks, which include the education and / or training areas they cover. While the QFEHEA focuses on aligning the European higher education systems, the result being formal qualification diplomas (by attending a higher education institution and by virtue of existent educational standards)¹, the EQF aims to include the entire range

1. The standard of learning results is confirmed through a process of evaluation or through the successful finalisation of a study programme.

of learning outcomes, regardless of the institutional or educational context. These two cover both work and study situations, the academic and professional environment, as well as the initial and ongoing education or training, i.e. all the formal, non-formal and informal types of learning based on knowledge, abilities and skills stipulated in the professional standards, as well as on related qualifications.

These two major European directions have found their application on national scale. Firstly, through the transformations in the higher education systems, following the Bologna process and the standardisation regarding the schooling cycles at European level which they brought along. Secondly, through the effects of the European initiative of establishing the European Qualifications Framework, from September 2006. The completely new approach of the European cooperation in the field of qualifications consisted precisely in the introduction of a set of levels / descriptors to define the learning outcomes, which include **all** the qualification types and the totality of the qualification levels variety (European Commission, 2008, p. 3). Invited to establish correspondences between the national levels of qualification and the neutral reference of the EQF, the European countries found themselves in the situation of rethinking or reconfiguring their own system of qualifications, according to the new approach (European Commission, 2008, p. 3). The first stage of the implementation, started in 2008, set the year 2010 as deadline for the European countries to establish correspondences between the national systems of qualifications and EQF, while the second stage, consisting in the introduction of a clear reference to the EQF level into the individual qualification certificates, had the year 2012 as deadline. Thus, the national qualifications framework (NQF) has become a powerful instrument of European cooperation, having also a significant impact on the reforms in the education, professional training and qualification systems (CEDEFOP, 2012a, p. 8).

National traditions regarding the education and professional training brought to light situations where the two components had been organised either distinctly or in an integrated manner up to that time, therefore requiring considerations with a view to finding a ground favourable to the various types of learning and to finding an inter-institutional balance, so that the quality of education and training should be ensured, along with the gradation and knowledge transfer from one stage to another, the non-formal education validation etc. General education, vocational training and education and academically- and professionally-oriented higher education required alignment, being reconfigured in the light of the lifelong learning concept.

By reason of this approach, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) emerged (The Recommendation of the European Parliament, 2009). It represents a technical frame of transfer, recognition and, if applicable, accumulation of learning outcomes with a view to obtaining a qualification. Benefiting by the framework of national qualifications systems and by the European validation mechanisms, the system was designed to make the international recognition of qualifications and the transferability of learning outcomes a reality - a European cooperation strategic direction with the year 2020 as deadline (CEDEFOP, 2012b, p. 1).

„ECVET is part of the development of common European tools for education and training: the European qualifications framework and the related national qualifications frameworks, the European quality assurance reference framework for VET (EQAVET) and EUROPASS. It is also linked to the application of the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) in higher education. All these tools are based on and promote learning outcomes as a key principle in the definition and description of qualifications... They also suggest a new relationship between education and training and the labour market. In terms of expectations, ECVET as a European credit system will be flexible enough to accommodate the characteristic features of VET systems and reforms of those systems, to accommodate existing credit systems and arrangements, and to support mobility and lifelong learning” (CEDEFOP, 2012b, p. 8-9).

All these evolutions and trends anticipate a larger variety of training providers and institutions involved. To the same extent we may speak about a convergence between the educational qualifications obtained within formal education and the qualifications viewed in occupational sense, usually identified with professional qualifications, grounded on the national occupational standards and better connected to the actors in the labour market. These standards may be - and in many cases they were - milestones in adjusting the higher education institutions' curriculum for a better adaptation to the knowledge requirements that come from the labour market, under the circumstances of mismatches between the skills formed within the higher education institutions and employers' requirements.

2 From Macro to Micro... Romania's Example

From the viewpoint of the recommendations and systems highlighted above, the objectives that link the professional qualification, its recognition and the initial and ongoing professional training are quite difficult - even ambitious, here and there - to apply on national scale.

As far as Romania is concerned, it has not enjoyed a coherent legal frame to regulate the qualification system, applied both in initial professional training and in ongoing training². The lack of a structured education and professional training system on the VET model is also visible in the application of the two major European initiatives regarding the qualifications framework for the educational sector (higher education), and in the compliance with the European Qualification Framework respectively. They evolved and developed as parallel sub-systems, involving distinct institutional actors. In the first case, we refer to the National Agency for Higher Education Qualifications and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment (ACPART), which in 2009 finalised the specific methodology to define the higher education qualifications. In the second case we refer to the Council for Adult Professional Training, a three-party institution made-up from representatives of the Government, patronage and unions with a significant role in drawing-up the policies and strategies for adult professional training. Since 2005, this organisation has played the role of national authority of qualifications, coordinating the framework to make up the National Registry of (professional) Qualifications and their evaluation system (CEDEFOP, 2012a, p. 214).

Therefore, we may speak about “fragmentary” results and evolution, and ensuring a complementarity between the two sub-systems is due to bring extra coherence to the general framework of qualifications in Romania. A significant progress in the direction of strengthening an approach in this view was the unification of the two main actors for the evolution of the problem matter, ACPART and CNFPA, into a single National Authority for Qualifications (ANC), in June 2011, which was also assigned as a national node for Coordination for the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework. As a first result we mention the finalisation of the National Registry of Higher Education Qualifications (RNCSIS)³ and its inclusion into the National Registry of Qualifications (RNC) at the end of 2011, our country being one of the first 10 countries which accomplished this⁴.

In strict reference to the framework of development of the professional training in Romania, we must specify that it is based on occupational standards, as the legislation stipulates the obligation to develop professional training programmes to be certified on this basis. The insufficient number of occupational standards and the fact that the complex task of drawing them up is assigned to training providers or to other interested organisations are obstacles on the way of authorising training providers for many occupations, in many fields the professional training offer being thus limited⁵.

Consequently, the authorised programmes offer reflects the training needs at the level of actual jobs only partially. From the theoretical point of view, the most efficient way to correlate the training contents to the needs of the labour market is accomplished when the training is carried out at the companies' requests, and the practice is done in real work conditions, or when the training providers have a strong connection to companies from certain activity fields. Workplace training is the most frequent method of training, being, on one hand, less costly, and, on the other hand, unavoidable, as it is required by the development of the activity itself. In practice, though, it is rarely done in an organised way, because of the training costs, prolonged duration and lack of local offers.

2. According to *Short and medium term strategy for ongoing professional training, 2005-2010*, published in the Official Journal no. 747 of 17 August 2005, available online at <http://www.anc.edu.ro/index.php?page=strategii>. Retrieved on 07.04. 2014.

3. RNCSIS is a software application, a national database that comprises all the qualifications given by the higher education institutions in Romania, being a useful tool for universities, students, social partners. More details at www.rncis.ro.

4. ANC finalised the National Framework of Higher Education Qualifications (CNCIS), by developing and finalising, in October 2011, the strategic project “*Development of an operational system of higher education qualifications in Romania - DOCIS*”, ID 1622. See <http://docis.acpart.ro/>.

5. Short and medium term strategy for ongoing professional training, 2005-2010. In: *Official Journal*, n. 747 of 17 August 2005, available online at <http://www.anc.edu.ro/index.php?page=strategii>. Retrieved on 7 April 2014.

An important limitation of the ongoing training system is related to the recognition of qualifications: either complete qualification of nothing at all. At present there is no system of recognition for partial qualifications, so that the training providing might be more flexible and consequently more accessible to adults. This limitation is related to the long duration of training for a complete qualification, an aspect which is incompatible to having a job.

Another important aspect that should be emphasised is the lack of correlation between the qualification acquired within the formal system and that acquired in the non-formal and informal system, as far as the recognition of skills is concerned. Establishing a legal framework for the individual skills evaluation centres, starting from occupational standards in use, did not help very much in this direction, as it did not create an integrated system, but an operation system parallel to the VET system. The non-formal / informal learning outcomes, materialised in skills certificates, are useless for the admission into the formal education system, as well as for the mobility within the latter (higher education institutions, for instance) (CEDEFOP, 2012a, p. 214).

3 Professional training in the field of archiving

The general features mentioned above can be found in the professional training segment in the field of archiving and have influenced it for a long time. The historic retrospective on the matter sends us to the initiative of creating, in 1980, of a Professional Improvement Centre for the staff of the State Archives system, within the General Direction:

- a. "Training and instruction of the new specialised personnel of the State Archives, on archival matters, within a 6-months course, in stages;
- b. Specialisation of personnel working with written documents in various palaeographies... through intensive 3-months courses;
- c. Periodic (4-5 years) recycling of the whole personnel through courses up to 30 days long" (Mihail-Lungu et al, 2006, p. 392-395).

This was the frame of initial and ongoing training in force until 1991, when the Professional Improvement Centre became the National School of Archivistics, having the same main goal: initiating the training of high-education personnel - that came from other fields - in the archiving field, as well as the professional improvement of the archivists within the State Archives system (See Chelaru, Rafael Dorian, 2013, p. 127-134).

The Law of the National Archives no. 16 / 1996 established the obligation of training and certification of the persons working in the National Archives as well as of the personnel with archival duties within the institutions that create and hold archives, through the Faculty of Archivistics and the National School of Archivistics. This monopoly was juridically⁶ maintained until the issue of the amendments to the 1996 Law - in 2013 (Law 138, Official Journal no. 253/7, May 2013) - even though in the general evolution in the field of professional training the previously mentioned transformations had taken place. The methodological norms regarding the application of the provisions of the Law of the National Archives no. 16/1996, with subsequent additions and amendments (Official Journal nr. 619/4 October 2013), stipulates that: "The ongoing training of the specialised personnel in the field of archiving is carried out within professional training centres adjoining professional associations of archivists from Romania, as well as within other institutions, according to the law⁷.

The new provisions stipulate a new development direction towards an approach oriented more to the actual occupational side, as compared to the one that has prevailed so far - of academic nature and extra theory. In support to this trend comes the draw-up of the occupational standards for the professions of archivist and archive clerk, initialised by the National Archives - the competent authority that regulates the professional recognition of these qualifications⁸ - an initiative that started in 2008, though materialised at a later date, after the institutionalisation of the standards (as late as 2013

6. At the level of higher education institutions there were other initiatives to create training programmes in the field of archiving - bachelor's or master's degree - parallel to the Faculty of Archival Studies, but they did not resist; many of them did not pass the test of time in the landscape of educational offers.

7. Article 14, paragraph 2.

8. According to the Law no. 200/2004, with subsequent additions and amendments.

for archive clerks). In the next stage, the definition and draw-up of associated qualifications is necessary, as “the occupational standard give the experts in the field information regarding the possibilities to define more qualifications, according to the various occupational roles that the persons qualified in the labour market may have” (M2: Methodology for, 2007), p. 3).

From the point of view of necessary infrastructure, it is required that the professional associations of archivists should initiate the training activity component, starting with setting-up accredited professional training centres that would operate in parallel to other training providers, competitors in the field. In order to reach an optimal scope for this activity - meant to exploit the results of non-formal or informal learning - the accreditation of these centres as evaluation centres as well would be necessary.

Unfortunately, the start for a devise and set-up of specific professional training in the spirit of VET standards and ECVET system was missed. The qualification in the archiving field, as it appears in the National Registry of Higher Education Qualifications, was defined without a real consultation with the competent authority for profession regulations, and the academic orientation was maintained - far from the learning requirements that appear from the area of the employers. However, the institutionalisation of occupational standards and subsequently of associated qualifications creates the orientation tools appropriate for the adjustment of the higher education institutions' curriculums that contain this qualification, with a view to diminishing such an orientation's effects, in favour of an orientation better anchored to the dynamics of the profession. Essentially, the professional training and education system (VET) based on occupational standards and qualifications has the purpose to align the National Framework of Qualifications (CNC) to the European framework (CNC) la cel european (EQF).

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SUMMARY

Starting from the presentation of the main European initiatives that have marked the evolution of the problem matter regarding the professional education and training and continuing with the manner in which they reflected at national scale, this paper was focused on the analysis of the way that these realities had an impact on the professional training in the field of archiving in Romania. The present stage of the matter - determined by the amendments in the autochthonous legislation and by the new instruments that appeared or are about to appear in the process of alignment to the European Qualifications Framework - is opening new prospects of evolution. Setting up professional training centres affiliated to archival associations will lead to a diversification of training providers in the field and to an approach closer to the present dynamics of the profession. In the same time, the strengthening of a professional training and education (VET) based on occupational standards and associated qualifications comes to support the necessity of aligning the National Qualifications Framework (CNC) to the European one (EQF).

Typology: 1.02 Review article

Submitting date: 10.01.2014

Acceptance date: 07.02.2014

