

Country Profile ROMANIA
Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education

- 1. Basic information** – this should be as short as possible; doesn't need to be in paragraphs or full sentences.

Country name: Romania

Note: in Romania, there are School Inspectorates, at County level, with specific competencies. The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (RAQAPE) has different functions, roles and competencies defined by a specific set of laws and regulations. In this "Profile" we describe the role and functions of RAQAPE within the Romanian education system. For more information about RAQAPE, see:

- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/178en.pdf , p, 144-149.
- Kitchen, H., et al. (2017), Romania 2017, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://www.oecd.org/publications/romania-2017-9789264274051-en.htm>

Structure of Agency: Are you organised centrally or by region/state? Does evaluation regulation or standards vary across regions or states?

Centrally organized, based on a unique set of regulations and standards, valid for public and private educational institutions, all over the country.

Age of Agency: How long have you been established for? What was your predecessor organisation (i.e. who did inspection before you?)

RAQAPE was established in 2005, by law. Before 2005, there was a service, within the Ministry of Education, for the accreditation of private schools. Inspection (as activity) and the inspectorates (as institutions) exist since the beginning of the modern education in Romania.

Size: How many evaluators do you have? How many central/policy staff do you have?

RAQAPE have 20 experts – within the agency, at central level, and about 700 evaluators – external collaborators, selected and trained. They are contracted and paid per activity as external staff.

Remits: What form of education do you evaluate? E.g. early years, schools, universities? Anything that is non-education?

Early years (kindergarten), primary, secondary and tertiary non-university education (post-high-school).

Unit of external evaluation: Do you **evaluate** schools or groups of schools (or both?) Do you **evaluate** teachers, or subject departments? Do you **evaluate** local authorities?

We evaluate schools as legal persons, but also new levels of education, specializations, qualifications and study programmes within established schools. We do not evaluate individual teachers (it is the inspection role), neither departments nor local authorities.

What is your strapline? E.g. Ofsted's is "Raising standards, improving lives"
"For a better school!"

Relationship with government: Do you operate as part of the Education Ministry, or are you independent? Briefly explain the legal relationship you have with the Ministry (e.g. any reporting duties)? Are you allowed to report on government policy? Are you allowed to publish reports without govt approval?

RAQAPE is an autonomous institution, with its own legal personality and budget, functioning under the Ministry of Education. Our main function is external evaluation (for provisional authorisation, accreditation and recurrent evaluation), but the results of our evaluation (e.g. accreditation) is sanctioned by Ministerial Order.

RAQAPE make recommendations for the Ministry of Education, on issues of quality of education, and the Ministry and the School Inspectorates should implement them.

Our reports (general and individual) are published without any previous approval.

Accountability: What are you accountable for delivering? Where is this set out? (e.g. in legislation or in a policy document?) How are you held to account as an organisation (e.g. must you report annually)?

RAQAPE is accountable for external evaluation of schools by issuing individual external evaluation reports (for provisional authorization, accreditation and recurrent evaluation) and general reports on quality of education.

RAQAPE main competencies are established by law – a specific law on Quality of Education.

RAQAPE must publish a yearly activity report and every four years a report on the state of quality at national level.

2. **Evaluation process** – this should be in short paragraphs

Self-evaluation: Do you have a form of self-evaluation (i.e. do you expect institutions to report on themselves?) If so, briefly explain how this relates to external evaluation.

School self-evaluation is compulsory – every school must publish a yearly internal evaluation report on quality of education, based on the same national standards as external evaluation. External evaluation observes, among other aspects, the similarities/differences between internal and external evaluation.

What do you examine during external evaluation? Do you look at finances? Do you look at legal compliance? Do you observe and/or grade lessons?

There are three main areas: institutional capacity, educational effectiveness and quality management (including, in all three areas, financing and legal compliance aspects). Our evaluators observe lessons/learning sequences for compliance purposes, but also for identifying good practices (defined by standards), without grading them.

Do you have an external evaluation framework? Is this a quality or compliance model? Do you evaluate the quality of education or teaching, or report against a series of non-qualitative standards? How does this work?

The internal and external evaluation are both based on national standards, approved by Government Decision. We have two levels of standards: compliance standards (based on regulations) and reference standards (based on best practices), both sets have qualitative descriptors, and the compliance standards, quantitative indicators as well. The compliance standards are the only standards used for provisional authorization and accreditation purposes. Both sets of standards are used in recurrent evaluation (every 5 years) for measuring and overall grading the quality of education offered by school.

External evaluation time and resource. How long are your external evaluations? Do they last several days, or shorter? How many people go on external evaluation? What sort of qualifications/experience do they have? i.e. are they former headteachers, lawyers or accountants?

The external evaluation visit has 1 day (for provisional authorisation) or 2 days (for accreditation and recurrent evaluation). But there are pre-visit activities (the evaluators study the school documents and data via a dedicated platform) and post-visit activities (writing the external evaluation reports). The evaluation team is made from 2 to 4 external evaluators. All of them have teaching experience (extant / retired teachers), most of them with management experience, as well, as headteachers or inspectors.

Frequency of external evaluations: Do you have set external evaluation cycles? How long are these? Are they risk-based or not? If risk-based, what information do you use for assessing risk?

By the law, after establishment (via a two-step procedure: provisional authorization and full accreditation), every school should be visited every 5 years (recurrent evaluation). The external evaluation is not risk based.

Main business: Do you do anything that is not external evaluation? E.g. pre-registration or providers, or other forms of regulation? Are you involved in complaints examination? Do you take part in competition of headmasters?

No other businesses besides external evaluation. We only mention that accreditation of education providers (the two-step procedure mentioned above) is included in the overall concepts and regulations regarding quality assurance and external evaluation.

3. Consequences of external evaluation

Reporting: Do you publish your reports on institutions? If so, who reads them and how are they used? (e.g. to help parents make school choices?)

Internal evaluation reports and external evaluation reports are public. They may be used by all stakeholders, but we do not have any information how they are used.

Grade: Do you grade institutions? If so, how many do you have? Are there any rewards for getting the top grade? Or any punishment for getting the lowest?

We grade schools only at recurrent evaluation (when we use both sets of standards). Based on data collected, we calculate, beside the overall grading, an "efficiency index", reflecting the correlation between resources (including of families) and results (we call it "added value index", as well). Until now, the best schools are not rewarded, but the schools not meeting the compliance standards enter in a legally established procedure, that could end with its closure.

Knowledge sharing: How do you use the findings of external evaluation? Do you use thematic reporting, and publish your findings?

We publish periodical reports on the state of quality.

What happens following an external evaluation? Do schools shut down? Are the weak ones partnered with other schools; the strong ones allowed to flourish?

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What is the stated purpose of your Agency? Do you have a theory of action about how improvement is achieved through external evaluation?

Our stated purpose is external evaluation of quality of education, including school accreditation. We made a longitudinal research on about 700 school externally evaluated and we found out that their "efficiency index" improved more, in time (compared with the other ones, not evaluated). External evaluation helped schools to focus on improvement, by using identified strengths in order to address the identified weaknesses.