

ROMÂNIA



PREȘEDINTELE ROMÂNIEI

Message from the President of Romania, Traian Băsescu
to the International Conference "Effective Investments in Early Education"

I congratulate the International Step by Step Association for organizing in Bucharest their tenth annual conference on educational issues entitled "Effective Investments in Early Education".

Education is at the heart of any democratic nation's project of society. Today's event is an opportunity to articulate a public debate on identifying and formulating flexible and dynamic solutions to enhance the quality of education at European and international level.

In recent years we have faced a serious crisis in Romania's schools, with an increasingly precarious educational performance. Starting from this reality, in 2006 we established the Commission for Analysis and Policy Making in Education and Research in Romania, consisting of leading experts in this field. The work of this committee focused on thoroughly and lucidly analyzing structural deficiencies of the educational system and providing solutions. The main lines of reform in education have been taken by signing the Pact for Education by all political parties, as well as by trade unions and non-governmental organizations. These lines of reform, especially those related to early education, are found today included in the new National Education Law.

A key principle of this law is that *education never starts too early*. I believe that investing in early education is the primary condition to effectively ensure *equal chances*. Competences formed in the first years of life are essential for school success and developmental issues which are not addressed at this age get worse later on, leading to school drop-out or failure.

Early education, often ignored or circumvented by partial reforms of the past, regains in the new legislative framework the recognition of its major role in shaping future generations. The introduction of a compulsory preparatory year before school and the fact that core funding follows the child, whether we talk about public or private education, means that we see increased competition among providers of education services and increased performance among them. In the framework of the new law, the link with the family has a central place. Resource centers for parents may be organized in nurseries, kindergartens or in centers for education and early intervention, and parents are constantly invited to judge the quality of education received by their children.

The debate on education is far from being exhausted. It must be said that although laws are tools by which problems are solved in a sustainable manner, by themselves they do not ensure the success of a modernization project. The use of domestic and international expertise is required, budgetary priorities need to be made and, last but not least, we need to constantly adapt to a changing world and society. Today's Conference, aimed to find the most effective ways to use available resources to ensure quality education services, is an opportunity to do so.

I wish success to all participants!

Traian Băsescu
President of Romania