

# THE RURAL POPULATION IN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANIA'S REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

*The Romanian rural area has experienced numerous changes from 1989 to the present. The development in an accelerated rhythm of the urban area compared to the rural area encouraged the migration of the population, this action being influenced by the discrepancies registered at regional level. Lately, the rural space is characterized by heterogeneity determined by the unequal process of village development. This paper presents the analysis of the number of inhabitants in rural areas in accordance with a series of indicators with a significant impact on living standards. The research results reflect the current dynamics of rural population migration and the related trend in each region. The concentration of the population in the highly developed areas leads to the depopulation of villages with a low pace of development.*

**Keywords** migration, regional discrepancies, depopulation

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## Introduction

Migration abroad is one of the most significant factors that have determined the reduction of the number of inhabitants in Romania from 1990 to the present, and the immediate post-communist period registered a high number of people who emigrated to other states. Although the number of people who emigrated in 1990 to other countries was not reached, in Romania there was still a high number of emigrants due to the trend of globalization. In recent years, Romania has been a major source of migration in Europe, especially in Western Europe when after 2007 migration was a long-term option for Romanians that offered a stable job and the opportunity to obtain residency (Anghel et al., 2016).

The main purpose of the paper is to determine the situation of Romania in terms of migration flows, as well as to identify their trend. An in-depth analysis of urban-rural, rural-urban, urban-urban, rural-rural, interregional and other countries migration is important because it helps to identify the situation, trends and problems of each flow.

The presence of regional gaps registered in Romania in accordance with a series of factors and events that favoured the emigration of the population led to a process of massive depopulation. The rural environment was the most affected by the migration process, registering a decrease of the population and at the same time its aging since the people who emigrated from the rural area are young people.

The agricultural sector is the main occupation of people in rural areas, this being one of the constraints of the development of the national economy (Istudor, 2006). Although Romania has made progress in terms of economic development at both urban and rural levels, the pace of development has not been the same.

There are significant differences between the standard of living in rural areas and the standard of living in urban areas. These differences in economic development at the national level

have led to a much higher number of emigrants in disadvantaged areas, and the opportunity to migrate to more developed countries has been an opportunity for areas with a high level of poverty. The main hypothesis of the research on the migration of Romanians abroad, especially those from rural areas where opportunities are low is due to the higher standard of living, especially a higher guaranteed minimum wage compared to Romania, in rural areas the average household income is below to national average.

### 1. Literature review

Migration is a phenomenon with significant influence on most countries around the world, the year 1990 was the first year in which they were able to leave the country freely, after a period of about 40 years in which international migration was strictly controlled by the state. (Anghel and Cosciug, 2017) The year 1990 were a critical year for Romania, representing the first post-communist year, registering a huge number among people of Romanian origin who emigrated. (Danacica, 2010) Romania has a large share of citizens leaving the country being a social phenomenon that grew after the 1990s and accentuated after Romania's accession to the European Union (EU) when international mobility was easier to manifest, being a free movement between EU member states. Immigrants from Romania come from both the EU and non-EU countries, especially from neighbouring countries that settle in large urban areas.

Currently, migration is the main cause of Romania's population decline, with a share of 75% (Matei, 2018) migration dynamics determining important socio-economic transformations with long-term effects. (Remus et al., 2016) The rural population was most affected by registered migrations, with most migrants choosing to leave the country, while internal migrants settled in cities. (Herman, 2012)

The impact of emigration is seen especially in rural areas where villages have become depopulated, and the labor force and the level of economic development have decreased considerably. At national level, migrations are managed through 5 legislative documents, and the main managing authority is the General Inspectorate for Immigration.

**Table 1. Romanian legislation on migration**

| Legislation         | Legislation name  |
|---------------------|---|
| Anti-discrimination | Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination |
| Asylum Law          | Law no. 122/2006 on asylum  |
| Foreigners Law      | Emergency Ordinance no 194/2002   |
| Integration Law     | Government Ordinance No. 44/2004 on social integration                                      |
| Nationality Law     | Law no. 21/1991 on the Romanian citizenship   |

*Source: EC, 2020*

The balance of external migration is deficient, migration has a negative impact on the Romanian labor market but offers support to economic activities in countries where they are temporarily established through the supply of seasonal labor it offers. (Tomescu, 2020)

Some studies have identified a number of determinants of emigration situation from Romania, as increasing poverty in Romanian rural area, a better livelihood in the destination countries compared to Romania determined by higher wages and a better developed socio-economic environment, opportunities labor market development (Simionescu, 2019; Roman,

2011) at the opposite pole, the social and ethnic barriers were the main challenges of the Romanians who went abroad. (Zodian, 2016)

## 2. Methodology

The methodology of this paper aims to perform a statistical, quantitative analysis, to identify the situation of migration flow from Romania, emigration and immigration both externally and internally. At the same time, the aim is to identify the migration trend in terms of migration between the two areas of residence, interregional migration, temporary migration and population migration between Romania and other states. The database was established based on data collection and processing at the National Institute of Statistics Romania (NIS).

## 3. The migration movement of the population in Romania

Determining the migration situation is done by analysing emigration and immigration both nationally and internationally level, the paper being focused on the migrations of the rural population from Romania. Table no. 2 shows the evolution from 2012-2019 for temporary migrations, on the two areas of residence.

**Table 2. The flow of temporary migration from Romania**

Unit: number inhabitants

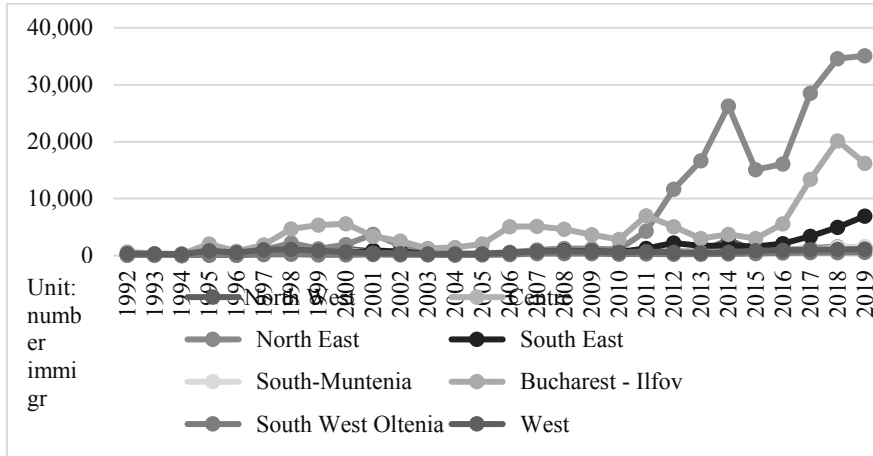
| Temporary   | Area  | 2012    | 2013    | 2014    | 2015    | 2016    | 2017    | 2018    | 2019    |
|-------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| EMIGRATION  | Total | 170,186 | 161,755 | 172,871 | 194,718 | 207,578 | 242,193 | 231,661 | 229,473 |
|             | Urban | 89,986  | 89,895  | 91,894  | 103,507 | 110,184 | 129,361 | 115,431 | 114,341 |
|             | Rural | 80,200  | 71,860  | 80,977  | 91,211  | 97,394  | 112,832 | 116,230 | 115,132 |
| IMMIGRATION | Total | 167,266 | 153,646 | 136,035 | 132,795 | 137,455 | 177,435 | 172,578 | 198,882 |
|             | Urban | 89,366  | 82,069  | 72,664  | 70,931  | 73,421  | 94,775  | 92,181  | 106,226 |
|             | Rural | 77,900  | 71,577  | 63,371  | 61,864  | 64,034  | 82,660  | 80,397  | 92,656  |

Source: NIS, 2020

Analysing the flow of temporary migration from Romania, in the period 2012-2019, it can be said that the trend is an ascending one both from the point of view of emigration and from the point of view of the immigration process. If in 2012, in Romania there were 170,186 people who emigrated temporarily, in 2019 it registers a value by approximately 35% higher. At the same time, the number of temporary immigrants from Romania increased in 2019 by approximately 19%, compared to 2012, reaching the value of 198,882 people.

Analysing in depth the number of temporary emigrants from Romania we can say that out of the total of 1,610,435 people who emigrated temporarily in the period 2012-2019 approximately 48% are people from rural areas, however the number of temporary emigrants from rural areas recorded values higher than those in urban areas in 2018 and 2019. Of the total temporary emigrations registered in the period 2012-2019, approximately 51% of them were represented by female persons, and the age range with the highest share registered in the total temporary emigrations of was 20-29 years old (age range representing about 32%). Looking at the temporary immigrants registered in Romania, it can be said that the urban environment predominates this time as well, representing approximately 53% of the total immigration registered in the period 2012-2019, for the entire period registering higher values compared to the rural environment. Approximately 56% of people who have temporarily immigrated to Romania are represented by males, and 32% of people who have temporarily immigrated are between 25 and 34 years old.

**Figure 1. The flow of permanent migration from Romania – Definitive immigrants**

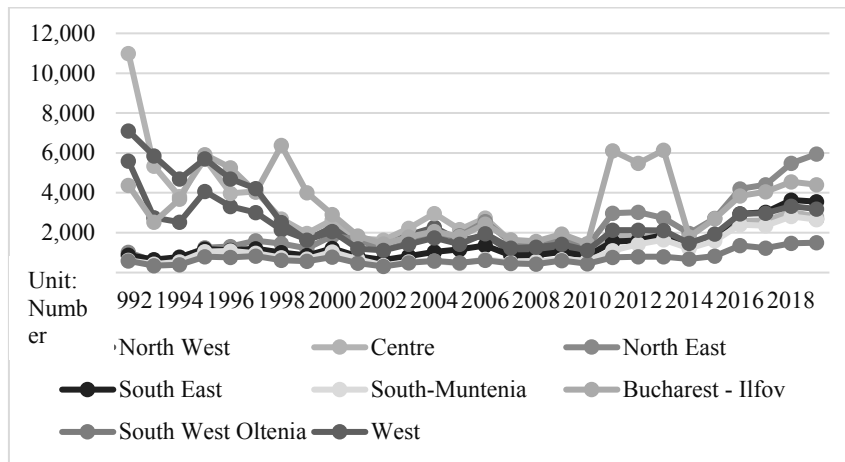


Source: NIS, 2020

Analysing the number of permanent immigrants from Romania, there is a significant increase in the number of people registered in 2019 compared to 1992, an increase of approximately 3.578% (in the period 1992-2019, 448,969 people immigrated permanently).

The North-East region is the region that registered the largest increase in the number of immigrants in 2019 compared to 1992, it is also the region with the highest share in terms of the total number of immigrants nationwide in 1992-2019 (representing approximately 46%). The Bucharest-Ilfov region is also a region that registered a significant share of the total number of people who immigrated permanently in the period 1992-2019 (approximately 29%), this being followed by the South-East Region (8%), the North Region -West (5%), West Region (4%), Centre Region (4%), South-Muntenia Region (3%) and South-West Oltenia Region (1%).

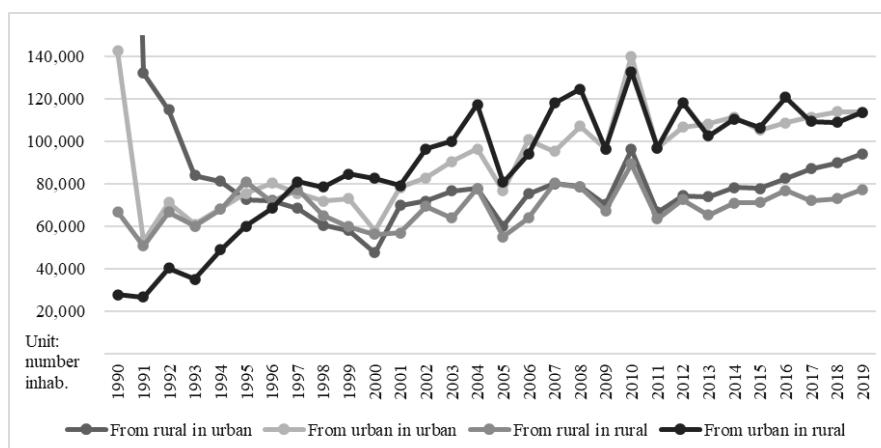
**Figure 2. The flow of permanent migration from Romania – Definitive emigrants**



Source: NIS, 2020

Analyzing the number of people who emigrated, in the period 1992-2019, we can say that it reached the value of 463,241 people throughout the period, in 2019 registering approximately 14% fewer people who emigrated compared to the base year 1992. The region with the highest number of people who emigrated is the Bucharest-Ilfov Region, representing approximately 21% of the total number of people who emigrated at country level, this being followed by the Centre Region (17%), the North-East Region (13%), North-West Region (13%), South-East Region (9%), South-Muntenia Region (6%) and South West-Oltenia (4%). Reporting the year 2019 to 1992 we notice the fact that the North-West Region and the Center Region registered lower values than in 1992, by approximately 52% and 74% less respectively. The North-East region registered the highest increase in 2019 compared to 1992, an increase of 486%.

**Figure 3. The evolution of the rural and urban migration flow from Romania**



Source: NIS, 2020

Regarding the flow of rural and urban migration in Romania since 1990, it can be said that during 1990-1994 the largest number of people migrated from rural to urban areas, in 1995 the highest value was recorded in the transition rural-rural, and since 1996 registering the highest value the number of people who migrated from urban areas to both rural and urban areas. Starting with 1997 until 2005, most people migrated from urban to rural areas, due to the disappearance of jobs in the industry present in urban areas. The period 2006-2019 registering oscillations regarding the maximum number of people who migrated from urban to rural and from urban to urban.

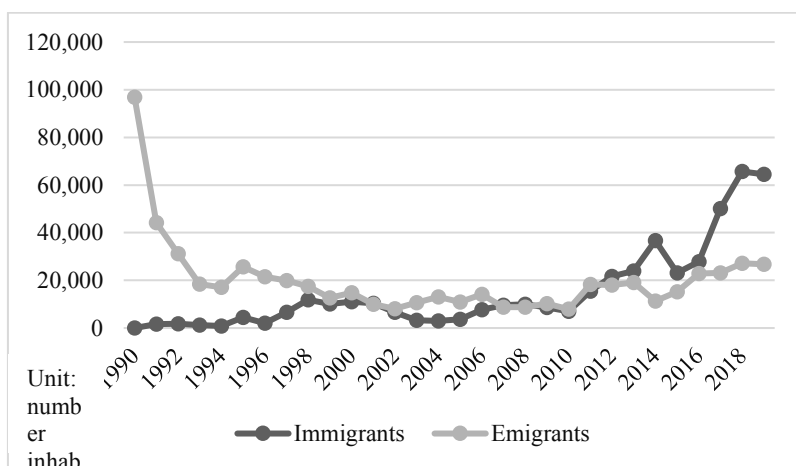
Regarding the migration of people from rural to urban areas, it can be said that it decreased significantly from 1990 to 1991, registering a gap of about 315%, and compared to 2019 a gap of about 482%. The year 1990 registering the highest value of people who migrated in this segment. Migration from urban to urban areas also recorded the highest value in 1990, 2010 being very close to reaching the value recorded in 1990 of 142,671 people, registering a gap of only 2%.

On the segment of migration of the population from rural areas to other rural areas, the highest value being registered in 1995 (80,948 persons), and reporting the year 2019 to 1990 there is an increase in the number of people who migrated in the analyzed segment, a 16% increase.

The phenomenon of migration of the population from rural areas to other rural areas is mainly due to the gaps registered at regional level.

In the period 1990-2004 there is an ascending trend of migration of people from urban to rural areas, the year 2004 registering with 324% more people who migrated on the urban-rural segment, compared to 1990. The increase of 311% recorded in 2019 compared to the base year 1990 indicates the maintenance of the number of people who migrated on the analyzed segment approximately constant in the period 2004-2019. The transition of people from urban to rural areas is mainly due to the deindustrialization of urban areas after the domination of communism, and maintaining the large number of people migrating from urban to rural areas is due to rural development, mainly rural areas around major metropolises.

**Figure 4. The flow of external migration from Romania during 1990-2019**



Source: NIS, 2020

Analysing the migration flow between Romania and the other countries we can say that the total number of people who emigrated from Romania compared to the number of people who immigrated to Romania, in the period 1991-2019, is approximately 11% higher. However, the number of immigrants registered an upward trend in the period 2007-2019 (with Romania's accession to the European Union), reaching that in the period 2012-2019 to register only values higher than the number of emigrations from Romania (2019 registering approximately 141 % more immigrants than emigrants)

Regarding the immigration of people to Romania, we can say that during the whole period analyzed, the largest number of immigrants comes from the Republic of Moldova, only in 2019, out of the total of 64,479 people who immigrated to Romania, approximately 59% are represented by people from Moldova. This significant share of immigrants from the Republic of Moldova is mainly due to the knowledge of the Romanian language, the opportunities Romania had with EU accession, the development at a much faster pace than Romania and the creation of the middle class. Besides the people who immigrated from the Republic of Moldova, countries such as Italy and Ukraine also had a significant contribution, in the period 2017-2019 approximately 20,000 people immigrated from Ukraine to Romania.

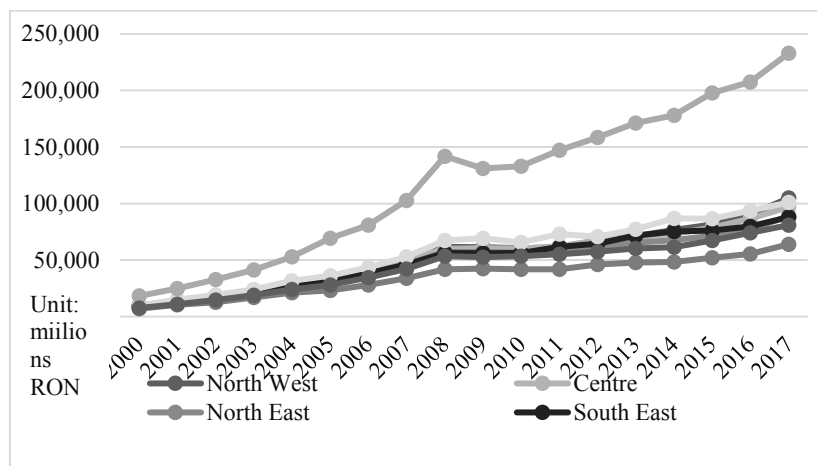
The year 1990 registered the highest number of people who emigrated from Romania to other countries (96,929 people) due to the fact that it is the first post-communist year,

approximately 68% of people who emigrated from Romania went to Germany. Analysing the period 1991-2019 in terms of emigration of people from Romania, Germany retains its leading position of the entire period 123,145 people emigrating to this country. However, the preferences of emigrants changing in the last period, in 2019 about 22% of them went to Spain, 19% to Italy and only 14% to Germany.

#### 4. Living standard factor of influence of population migration in Romania

The economic situation and social aspects are important features in the analysis of population migration, especially in rural areas where living standards differ considerably from those in urban areas, with multiple discrepancies between rural areas in different development regions.

**Figure 5. Evolution of the value of GDP by development regions from Romania**

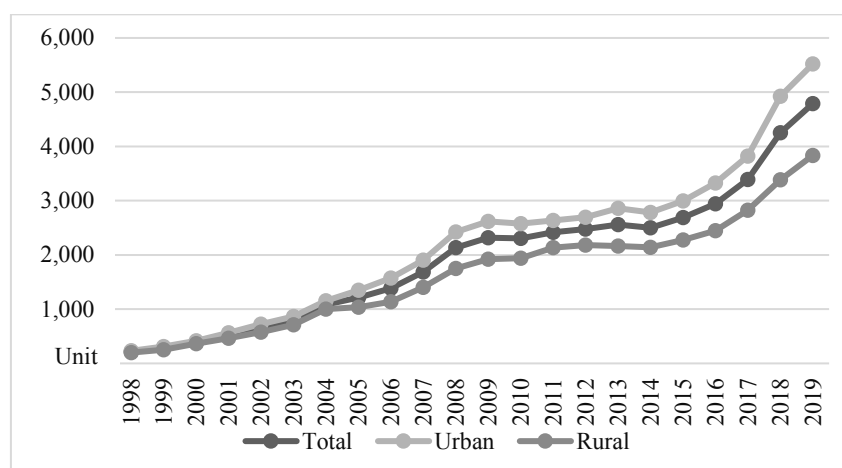


Source: NIS, 2020

Analysing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Romania in the period 2000-2017, we notice a significant increase, both at the level of the entire country and at the level of each region. Throughout the analyzed period, the Bucharest-Ilfov development region, although it represents the smallest region from the point of view of the surface, had the highest contribution on the GDP of the whole country, a contribution of approximately 26%, while the other regions did not. they managed to record individually not even half of its value.

Reporting the year 2017 to 2007, the year of Romania's accession to the EU, we note the fact that Romania registered a GDP growth of approximately 102%. At regional level, the highest increase was registered by the Bucharest-Ilfov Region, an increase of 127%, followed by the North-West Region (105%), the North-East Region (93%), the Centre Region (92%), West Region (92%), South-East Region (91%), South-Muntenia Region (91%) and South-West Oltenia Region (88%).

**Figure 6. Average monthly income per household in rural and urban areas from Romania**



*Source: NIS, 2020*

Carrying out an analysis on the average monthly income from a household in the period 1998-2019, we notice a significant increase, these increasing in 2019 compared to 1998 by approximately 2123%. During the entire analyzed period, the average monthly income from a rural household registered lower values than the urban environment. Reporting the year 2019 to 2007, we notice an increase of approximately 184% of the average monthly income from a household at national level, in rural areas there was an increase of 174%, while in urban areas the increase was 189%.

The year 2018 is the year in which the biggest difference between the two areas of residence was registered in terms of average income from a household, in the urban area registering a value about 45% higher than in rural areas (compared to the national average, in rural areas there was a gap of about 20% while the urban value compared to the national average was 16% higher). The smallest difference of the average monthly income from a household was registered in 2000, the year in which the average monthly income from urban areas was 15% higher compared to the average monthly income from a rural household.

### Conclusions

With the fall of communism, Romania registered a huge wave of emigration of the population abroad. The year 1990 registered 96,929 people who left the country, and about 68% of them were destined for Germany. Over time, the preferences of emigrants have changed, currently the most favourite destinations are Spain and Italy, but Germany remains the country to which the largest number of people emigrated in the period 1990-2019. Considering the hypothesis that says that Romanians from rural areas emigrate for a better life, it is noticeable that the main countries where they emigrated are developed countries, with a higher income and GDP than Romania.

Fortunately for Romania, although globalization and globalization of the labour market have significantly influenced society, since 1991 and until now Romania has not registered in any year even half of the total number of persons registered in 1990. In connection with immigration of persons to Romania we can say that it is on an upward trend, which is gratifying for it.



The rural environment has been and continues to be the most affected by population emigration. Free movement to more developed countries of the European Union in accordance with a high degree of poverty in some areas has led to the depopulation of villages and the aging of the population in those areas. The least affected rural areas were the areas around the main cities, their population having access to a much more complex labour market, and we still must focus largely on semi-subsistence agriculture.

The significant increase of the Gross Domestic Product of each region, the increase of incomes from both urban and rural areas, regional development and diversification of rural activities made Romania pass into a recovery stage compared to the immediate post-communist period and to become more attractive both for its own population and for other nationalities.

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