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***INTERNAL MIGRATION IN ROMANIA IN THE POST-COMMUNIST  
DECADES: EVOLUTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES***

**Laura Diaconu (Maxim), Assist. Prof., PhD, Cristian C. Popescu, Assoc. Prof.,  
PhD, Andrei Maxim, Assist. Prof., PhD**

*Abstract: Nowadays, migration is a subject of great interest, as people continually look for better living conditions. The present study approaches the Romanian migration issue in close relationship with the demographic changes involved by this phenomenon. The data we used were collected from various secondary sources such as statistical yearbooks and reports, and was subsequently analysed and interpreted in accordance with the established objectives. We intended to identify in our analysis the main reasons of migration, the areas from which the individuals are leaving and the regions towards which they are directing to, the evolution of the migration flows from the beginning of the '90s until present times, as well as the positive and negative consequences of internal migration, in each region of the country. The conclusions of the study reflect the fact that the individuals are motivated to migrate especially by the quality of the medical and educational services, by the easiness of finding a job and by the higher incomes they could get in the destination areas. As expected, during the analysed period, the main migration flows were directed towards the areas with a high economic development. Thus, the West and Bucharest-Ilfov regions have a positive migration balance, while the North-East, South East and South West areas show a negative balance. We notice that, unlike in the 1990s, when the internal migration was from rural to urban areas, after 2008, in the context of the economic-financial crisis, the direction of migration flows has changed.*

*Keywords: internal migration, economic development, demographic changes, social changes, human capital*

#### **4. Introduction**

The transition is a complex phenomenon, generating significant substitutions in the socio-economic structures, during a certain period of time. At the same time, transition is a comprehensive process aimed to achieve specific objectives. In the case of Romania, it involved the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market one and from an undemocratic socio-political system to a democratic one, in the Western meaning of the word. It was not an easy process, as a number of impediments have hampered and delayed the reform steps. But, as Mises said, "there are no shortcuts to an earthly paradise. It takes time and work" (Mises, 1998). However, after 25 years of major changes, the Romanian society seems to be sufficiently changed not to resemble the country of the 1980s. But this result involved sacrifices, failures, incoherencies and regrets. From all the shortcomings, those that struck the citizens' wellbeing had the highest impact. Development inequalities between Romania and other countries and among Romanian regions have generated an adjusting

effect, manifested by strong migration flows. There is nothing abnormal in the case of the individuals who were looking for a marginal remuneration consistent with their expectations (Haris-Todaro, 1970; Stark, 1991; Yap, 1977; Williamson, 1988). It is necessary to mention that Haris and Todaro (1970) considered the income differences between regions to be more important. Moreover, according to Hicks, the differences in net benefits, especially in wages, are the main cause of migration (Hicks, 1932). Borjas (2008) also agrees with this statement, saying that the expected earnings have to exceed the costs of migration. Unlike the neoclassical approaches, which assume that migration occurs prior to find a job, the so called searching theories assume that the migration takes place during or after finding a job at the destination.

Migration occurs, most of the times, as a consequence of some economic, social, political or even personal constraints. According to Miftode (1984), migration means movement both within the social systems and between them, representing a "spatial expression" of the desire for mobility. Other approaches see migration as a *life strategy*, offering "a perspective of the sustainable relationship between goals and means" (Sandu, 2000), or as a form of protest to the changes and of abandonment of a society where one does not find a suitable place.

If, most of the times, migration involves benefits for the migrants, at least material ones, it is not very clear what the effects of migration are on the origin and destination regions. Most of the approaches regarding migration address this issue from the cross-border perspective. However, we should not neglect the internal migration, such as rural-urban, urban-rural and underdeveloped-developed regions. This type of migration is determined, most of the times, by aspects related to the labour market. Some authors believe that the migration decision is also influenced by the opportunities offered by the destination region (Korpi and Clark, 2013). Following this approach, Mariangela (2012) considers that prices of real estates and rents, pollution, population density and crime rate are equally compelling reasons to take the decision of moving to another region.

Trying to synthesize, the International Organization for Migration divides the migration determinants in two categories (Deshingkar and Grimm, 2005): push factors (low living standard, lack of jobs and poverty) and pull factors (high wages, higher living standard, individual freedom and possibility of finding a better job).

If we consider the advantages and disadvantages of migration, then the approaches can be divided into two categories: optimistic and pessimistic ones.

The optimists, who highlight the benefits of migration, belong especially to the neoclassical school. According to the neoclassical theory, any economic activity reaches an optimal point if the factors of production are marginally rewarded. For example, the owners of the labour are in search of the best remuneration while the employers are looking for the lowest costs. The interaction between supply and demand leads to an increased mobility of the labour and to an equilibrium of the wages. Moreover, mobility eliminates the shortage or the abundance in certain areas, solving the problem of unemployment or that of the unjustified increase of the labour force price. However, some authors consider that migration leads to the accumulation of experience, to the acquiring new skills and knowledge and to the boost of productivity. The remittances are also included among the advantages. The amount of money sent to the families increases the living standards, improves children's education and may

stimulate the investments. The unemployment problem from certain underdeveloped areas can be solved with the help of migration. The social pressure diminishes and, thus, a structural solution for the problem can be found.

The pessimists consider migration a phenomenon which clearly disadvantages the underdeveloped regions, depriving them of one of the most important growth factors: the human capital. Studies show that, on the long term, the periphery to centre and the rural to urban migrations lead to an increase of the development disparities. In most of the cases, internal migration is permanent, the well trained individuals leaving the disadvantaged areas definitively. However, there are several observations to make regarding this approach. According to Borjas (2008), there are two types of individuals: the tide stayers – those people willing to make personal sacrifices in order to stay with the partner who earns more in the current location – and the tide movers – those who follow their partner even if this involves lower revenues for him compared to those earned in the current location. When taking with them their family, the remittance's argument no longer stands, the net loss being clear. Hence, the vicious circle of underdevelopment no longer allows a readjustment of the phenomenon, according to the scarcity of the production factors.

## **5. Internal migration in Romania**

### **5.1. Literature overview**

The internal migration phenomenon in Romania is significant and has amplified after 1990. During the last years of communism, the large urban centres were closed for the migrants. Therefore, the pressure increased after removing these barriers, in 1990. A significant flow of migrants from rural areas has put pressure on the labour markets of the major cities.

According to Zaman and Vasile (2006), the dynamics of internal migration in Romania has been influenced by demographic factors (number of population, population growth rate, urbanization rate, population density, natural increase of population, population structure by age and areas), by economic determinants (incomes and their distribution, structural adjustments, activity rates, unemployment rate, investments, number and types of jobs), by socio-cultural factors (historical relationships, literacy rate, participation rate in secondary education, enrolment rate and consumption) and by political aspects (democratization of the society and the rights/security of minorities).

Sandu (1984) believes that migration has historical roots, with specific features for the analysed period. In a recent study, he shows that shock events, such as the '46-'47 famine, the deportations after the war, the forced industrialization in the '70s, the economic collapse of the '90s have significantly influenced the migration phenomenon in Romania (Sandu, 2010). Other authors, such as Petre (2008) or Horvath (2008), have analysed the migration by age, concluding that migration of young people is a representative feature of this phenomenon, especially after 1990. Thus, as Kupiszewski et al. (1997) also mentioned, in Romania, a large part of the migrants are young people, more often single than married and better educated and prepared to take higher risks than the stayers.

Even though sex differences are not as significant as those between ages, empirical evidences show that in Romania more and more women are migrating for work and not just as

accompanying spouses. In fact, as Deshingkar and Grimm (2005) noticed, the feminization of migration is one of the main recent changes of population movement.

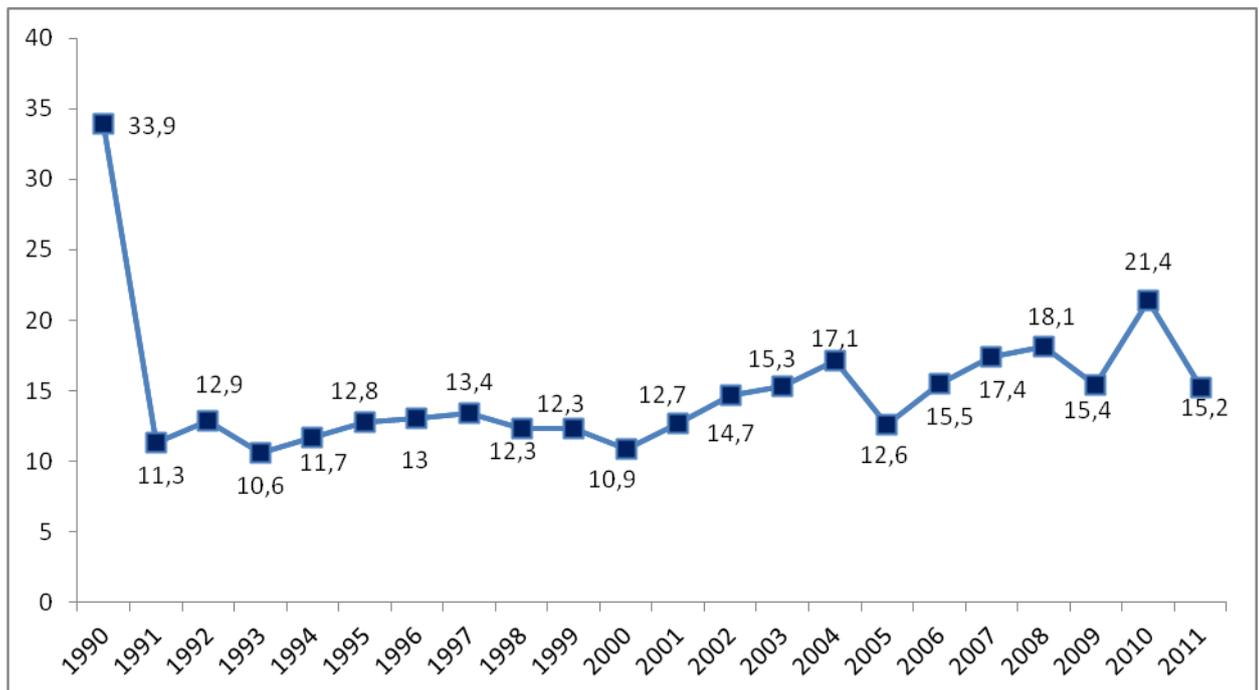
Many researchers consider that, from the demographical point of view, there are several very important and visible effects of migration in Romania after 1989. First of all, we can see that certain regions confront with the demographic aging problem due to the migration of a large part of the young population (especially those between 20 and 35 years old). The impact of this fact is felt by the labour market, because the share of the active population decreases, augmenting the pressure on those who remained home to support the elderly (Bălașa, 2005), and also by the social services and educational systems (Sime and Eșanu, 2005). Secondly, those areas with a large number of emigrants face a declining fertility rate, changes in the gender and age pyramid and in the families' dimension.

### 5.2. *Empirical findings*

In 1990, the internal migration rate registered its highest level from the communist and post-communist period (33.9‰), as a result of the cancellation of some restrictive legislation regarding the free movement of persons (National Institute of Statistics – NIS, 2008). Surprisingly, however, we notice that in 1991 the internal migration rate dropped sharply, to 11.3‰. An explanation for this could be the fact that many of the migrants registered in 1990 were *de facto* residents in those towns, who then had the opportunity to legalize their residence.

Analysing the statistical data, we see that between 1991 and 2000 the internal migration rate had a sinuous evolution, with ups and downs, the average rate being 12.12‰. However, the migratory flows have increased especially after 2001, the highest value of the internal migration rate, since 1990, being of 21.4‰, in 2010 (see Figure 1). Considering that the first effects of the nowadays crisis have been felt in Romania only starting with the end of 2008, we can assume that the unfavourable economic situation from certain regions determined a large part of population to change its residence in 2010, looking for better living conditions.

**Figure no. 1.** Internal migration in Romania determined by permanent residence changing, during 1990-2011 (rates per 1000 inhabitants)



Source: Adapted from NIS (2008) and NIS (2012)

Starting with 1990 and up to 1995, Romania faced the so-called “rural exodus”, the rural-urban flow reaching the highest share in 1990: 69.8% of all migrants (NIS, 2008). Several causes of this phenomenon can be found, such as the willingness to earn more, to have access to a wider range of jobs and to better educational and sanitary systems.

In 1995 and 1996 we can see that the percentage of those migrating from rural to urban, urban to urban, rural to rural and urban to rural are very close. However, the highest value was registered by the flows from rural to rural areas.

Starting with 1997, the Romanian demography has faced a historical change: the number of the rural emigrants was constantly surpassed by the number of those who came into this space. Therefore, between 1997 and 2011 the urban-rural migration rate was about 30% of all the internal migrants (NIS, 2008; NIS, 2012). As we can see, the number of those who were attracted by the rural areas has increased not only in the context of the economic-financial crisis, but also during the more prosperous periods. This fact leads us to the conclusion that the urban unemployment has determined a large number of people to return to agriculture and, moreover, that more and more people want to invest in the rural areas.

According to the data offered by the National Institute of Statistics (2008 and 2012), between 1990 and 2011, the most mobile population segment was the working age group 15 to 59, followed by the age group 0 to 14 years, while the share of the elderly population registered the lowest rate of internal migration of all residence changes. We notice that the young persons (15 to 34 years old) have migrated the most, totalling between 64% and 74% of the migrants’ age segment 15-59, during the analysed period.

Analysing the statistical data regarding the internal migration determined by permanent residence change, by age group and area, it is obvious the fact that, if between 1990 and 1991 most of the people, from all age groups, preferred to migrate to urban areas than to the rural ones, the situation has changed since 1992 (see Table 1). During the entire

period 1992-2011, most of those included in the youngest segment moved to the rural areas. Moreover, according to the statistics, after 1995 most of the migrants aged between 40 and 59 have preferred the rural areas.

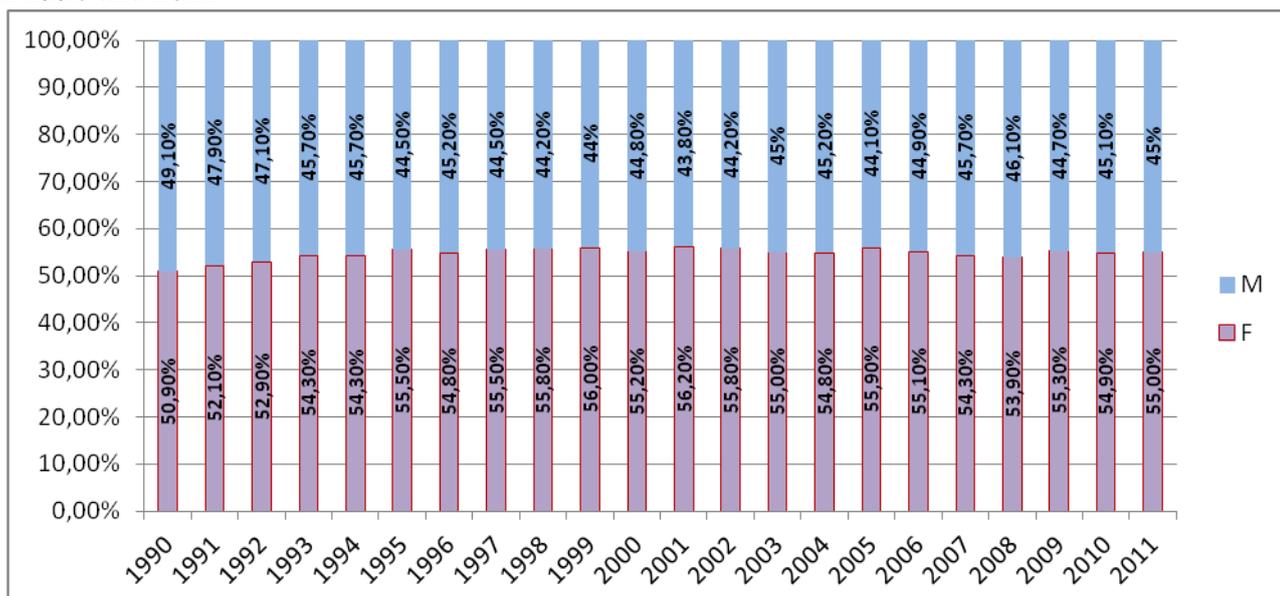
**Table no. 1.** Age groups for which migration to rural areas prevailed during 1992-2011

Years	Age groups
1992-1994	Under 15
1995	Under 19 and between 45-54
1996	Under 19 and between 45-59
1997-1999	Under 19 and between 35-59
2000	Under 19 and between 35 and over
2001-2003	Under 19 and between 40-59
2004	Under 19 and between 40 and over
2005-2006	Under 19 and between 40-59
2007-2010	Under 19 and between 40 and over
2011	Under 19 and between 45 and over

Source: Adapted from NIS (2008) and NIS (2012)

The statistical data collected over time show that, between 1990 and 2011, the internal migration rate was always superior in the case of women than in that of men (see Figure 2). The highest differences between the percentages of the men and women who migrated were registered in 2001, while in 1990 the percentages was almost equal.

**Figure no. 2.** Internal migration determined by permanent residence changing, by sex, between 1990 and 2011



Source: Adapted from NIS (2008) and NIS (2012)

Analysing the internal migration among the development regions we found out that the situation did not change too much between 2007 and 2011. Therefore, while the rural migration had a positive balance in all the eight development regions, the urban migration had a negative balance, except for the region Bucharest-Ilfov, where in 2011 a positive balance was registered. This fact indicates that the number of the in-migrants in rural areas is larger than the number of the out-migrants, unlike the urban areas where the situation is reversed.

The region with the highest negative global balance of migration was North-East, both in 2007 and 2011, followed by South-West Oltenia, South-East and, at a far distance, by the Centre region. Among the favourite destinations of the out-migrants from the North-East regions are the Centre, West and Bucharest-Ilfov regions (Daedalus Millward Brown, 2011). Regarding the evolution of the in-migrants in North-East, since it is the poorest region of the country, we notice that most of the population has chosen to move into the rural areas than into the urban ones. In the South-East region, the only county which had a positive global balance of migration in 2007 and 2011 was Constanta. Meanwhile, Braila and Galati recorded the highest negative global balance of migration. A study conducted in 2011 by Daedalus Millward Brown showed that the out-migrants from the urban areas of the South-East region go either to the rural areas from the North-East region or to Bucharest-Ilfov. A large part of those who migrate from South-West Oltenia also go to the capital, looking for a better living standard.

A significant change occurred in the South-Muntenia region in 2011 compared to 2007. If in 2007 the number of the in-migrants was larger than that of the out-migrants, in 2011 a negative global balance of migration was registered. The only regions with positive migration balance both in 2007 and 2011 were North-West, West and Bucharest-Ilfov regions. It is not surprising since they have a high economic development level and offer job opportunities in almost all the fields. However, compared to all other regions, Bucharest-Ilfov has the highest attractiveness, being the largest economic, cultural, educational and political centre.

## 6. Conclusions

After 1990, as a result of the cancellation of the restrictions regarding the persons' right of free movement, the internal migration augmented very much. However, a year after, it dropped sharply, by one-third. Between 1992 and 2000 the internal migration rate had a sinuous evolution, but starting with 2001 it increased very much, the highest level being reached in 2010.

Analysing the information included in various statistical yearbooks and reports, we found out several major aspects related to the internal migration in Romania. First of all, regarding the directions of the migrants, we saw that if during the 6 years after the collapse of communism there was a rural exodus, starting with 1997 the situation has changed. The number of the in-migrants in rural areas overpassed the number of the out-migrants, the urban-rural migration rate being approximately 30% between 1997 and 2011.

Secondly, we noticed that the most mobile age segment of population was represented by the young people, especially those less than 19 years old, followed by those aged between 19 and 34. Most of migrants under 19 years old preferred the rural areas to the urban ones.

Thirdly, during all the analysed period (1990-2011), the internal migration rate was superior in the case of women than in that of men, fact that indicates that women became more mobile and willing to improve their living conditions, not only to follow their partner when moving to another region.

Last but not least, another significant conclusion of our empirical analysis shows that while three of the development regions of the country (North-West, West and Bucharest-Ilfov) had a positive migration balance during the period 2007-2011, other four regions (North-East, South-West Oltenia, South-East and Centre) registered each year a negative migration balance. Looking at the values, we can confirm the fact that the least developed region (North-East) has the highest negative internal migration balance, most of the out-migrants looking for a higher living standard in a more developed region. Meanwhile, the highest positive internal migration balance can be found in Bucharest-Ilfov, the most developed region of the country, which attracts the migrants from all the other regions.

As a final remark, we may say that the consequences for the areas that are losing population are severe on the long term, as the effects are magnified by the loss of reproductive capacity for the original community, transferred by the young people to the benefit of other communities.

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