

**SEGMENTS OF RISK IN RURAL SOCIO-ECONOMY AND CAP  
OBJECTIVES CONCERNING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY, IN THE CONTEXT  
OF GLOBAL MARKET CHALLENGES**

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*Abstract: A basic standing objective of socio-economic policies for rural areas and a key theme for the CAP post-2013 is food security. Ensuring the sustainability of food supply for the population in all Member States involves the need to maintain food production potential of the EU and ensure a decent income. From this perspective, the research investigates responsible factors, objectives and policy instruments most appropriate for EU contribution to global food security. The results emphasize the social and economic segments vulnerable to current agrifood global market challenges and long-term risk factors of sustainable rural development.*

**Key words:** *rural, socio-economy, sustainable food security, global market, CAP.*

### **CAP FRAMEWORK RESPONSES TO NEW CHALLENGES**

EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), was launched in 1962, as a partnership between agriculture and society and between Europe and its farmers, with the main aims of improving agricultural productivity, of supplying stable, affordable food for consumers and of ensuring a reasonable living for EU farmers. The EU's common agricultural policy continuously evolved in order to meet the challenges of enlargement waves, the economic circumstances and people requirements in a global, changing context. The policy response has been translated in substantial benefits recognized by the majority of citizens and claimed further by farmers across European Union.

In present, 50 years since, EU has to address more challenges: food security, as food production will have to meet a doubled food demand for 9 billion people in 2050 at the global level; climate change and sustainable management of natural resources; as well as countryside preserving and keeping alive the rural economy across the EU. CAP's purpose is to set the conditions that will allow farmers to fulfill their multiple functions in society, the first of which is to produce food.

In essence, the common agricultural policy works along three interconnected dimensions: *market support* – because of the climate-dependent feature of agriculture which affects the supply amounts and prices response to the consumers demand, public sector plays an important role in ensuring stability for farmers due to business uncertainties, through market instruments used to provide market safety nets; *income support* - through direct payments, that provide basic income for farmers and ensure provision of environmental public goods; and *rural development*, through programs of development established at national, even regional, level in order to address the challenges facing rural areas and their specific needs [1]. The first two dimensions — market support and income support — are solely funded by the EU budget, while the rural development dimension is based on multiannual programming and is co-financed by each Member States.

Even as Member States compose their political agenda from the same list of measures of support, including ‘Leader approach’ that encourages local people and initiatives to address local matters, the post-2013 CAP reform proposals encompass the flexibility to address the economic, natural and structural conditions and priority issues within their respective territory.

Among several concerns is that agricultural and trade reforms might reduce the economic viability of agricultural activity in Europe and lead to further abandonment affecting more the existing marginal agricultural areas [2]. Because farmland has an important double dimension, biophysical and a socio-economic, CAP has been gradually included more environmental requirements linked to the management of agricultural land resources. The policy makers have made increasingly efforts at the EU level to bring closer these two dimensions. Abandonment of agricultural activity is a process identified in many areas in EU in several periods of time. Against the risk of land abandonment, CAP offers two main instruments with the objective of keeping farming in place and thus contributing to maintaining the production capacity of European agriculture:

- Decoupled direct payments contribute to stabilizing and enhancing farm income. Besides this role, direct payments, in combination with cross-compliance, underpin the respect of basic requirements for agricultural activities. Cross compliance consists of mandatory requirements related to the environment, food safety, animal health and welfare. Furthermore, it includes the requirement to keep land in good agricultural and environmental conditions, otherwise, farmer’s direct payments are reduced or entirely cancelled. By connecting direct payments to basic agricultural land management requirements facilitate the protection of natural resources and maintenance of the production capacity.
- Compensatory payments in Areas of Natural Constraints contribute to farming activity maintenance in less profitable areas because of unfavorable natural conditions, like marginal areas or mountainous areas were these payments contribute to avoiding land abandonment and, in so doing, negative effects for the environment and the attractiveness of the concerned rural areas.

## **ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RISKS FOR RURAL AND FOOD SECURITY**

According to the European Commission new typology of predominantly rural, intermediate and predominantly urban regions, agreed, in 2010, based on a variation of the previously used OECD methodology [4], predominantly rural regions in the EU represent 52% of the territory and 23% of the population. In 2010 rural areas generated 15.6% of the total GVA and 20.6% of the employment (table 1). The share of rural regions in the territory is comparable in the EU-15 (50%) and in the EU-N12 (57%), however, in terms of population, GVA and employment is significantly higher in the EU-N12 than in the EU-15: in the EU-N12, 40% of the population live in predominantly rural regions (18% in the EU-15), they produce 29% of the total GVA (14% in the EU-15) and account for 36% of total employment (17% in the EU-15). Predominantly rural regions represent more than 80% of the territory in Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Finland. The share of the population in

predominantly rural regions is highest in Ireland (73.0%), Slovakia (50.3%) and Estonia (48.1%).

A high intensity of economic activity, measured in terms of the share of GVA, is concentrated in predominantly urban areas, especially in Belgium, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (more than 70% of total GVA), where less than 7% of the economic activity is based in predominantly rural regions. In Ireland, predominant rural areas generate 57.8% of total economic activity in this country, and more than 35% of the total in Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia, while 32.7% in Romania.

The employment recorded the predominantly rural regions of Ireland (66.3%), Slovakia, Estonia, Romania and Greece (between 40 and 45% in all these four countries) reached the highest shares, while the lowest shares in the Netherlands (0.6%), the United Kingdom (2.8%), Belgium (6.7%) and Spain (7.0%).

A farm structure analysis reveals more insights on the varied structure of European farms, indicating contrasts and segments of risk for food security in several Member States. The results have been produced by comparisons based on Eurostat statistics provided by Farm Structure Survey, Agricultural Census 2010, and by FADN data 2011. Based on Eurostat data, shown in table 2, the analysis of farm structure indicate that the EU farm size was of 33.8 ha of utilized agricultural area (UAA), as a weighted average (14 ha per farm as a simple average). However, across Member States it had significant variations, ranging from 152 ha per farm in Czech Republic to 0.9 ha per farm in Malta, while 3.4 ha per farm in Romania. The smallest farms, with sizes under the EU-27 simple average of 14.3 ha per farm are found in 41% of countries, of which together to the previously named there are added Cyprus (3 ha) , Greece (4.8 ha), Slovenia (6.5 ha), Italy (7.9 ha), Hungary (8.1 ha), Poland (9.6 ha), Bulgaria (12.1 ha), Portugal (12 ha) and Lithuania (13.7 ha).

Table 1. Importance of rural areas in EU-27, in 2010, by Member States (%)

Country	Territory			Population			GVA			Employment		
	Rural	Intermediate	Urban	Rural	Intermediate	Urban	Rural	Intermediate	Urban	Rural	Intermediate	Urban
Belgium	33.6	31.8	34.7	8.7	23.8	67.5	5.5	19.3	75.1	6.7	20.7	72.5
Bulgaria	53.6	45.2	1.2	38.5	45.0	16.5	24.5	35.4	40.2	32.5	42.0	25.5
Czech Republic	48.4	37.0	14.6	33.1	43.2	23.8	27.2	36.6	36.2	31.1	40.2	28.7
Denmark	51.3	47.5	1.2	29.5	48.9	21.5	24.9	43.9	31.3	27.1	45.5	27.3
Germany	38.5	50.3	11.1	16.5	42.2	41.4	13.8	36.9	49.3	15.2	40.3	44.5
Estonia	82.4	7.7	9.9	48.1	12.6	39.3	32.0	8.3	59.7	43.2	10.5	46.3
Ireland	98.7	-	1.3	73.0	-	27.0	57.8	-	42.2	66.3	-	33.7
Greece	82.0	12.1	5.7	42.8	10.6	46.7	34.2	8.8	56.9	41.4	10.2	48.4
Spain	29.4	50.7	19.9	7.4	33.5	59.1	6.5	30.9	62.4	7.0	31.9	61.1
France	53.6	38.5	7.9	29.9	35.2	35.0	22.7	29.9	47.3	27.7	32.3	40.0
Italy	45.2	41.9	13.0	20.3	43.1	36.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	19.1	42.8	38.1
Cyprus	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-
Latvia	62.8	21.1	16.2	37.9	13.3	48.7	22.6	10.3	66.9	36.2	13.3	50.5
Lithuania	64.7	20.4	14.9	43.1	31.3	25.5	30.2	31.3	38.5	39.9	31.5	28.6
Luxembourg	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-
Hungary	66.3	33.1	0.6	46.9	35.9	17.2	34.1	28.0	37.9	39.3	28.9	31.8
Malta	-	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-	-	100.0	-	-	100.0
Netherlands	2.1	53.8	44.1	0.6	27.2	72.2	0.7	25.0	74.3	0.6	25.0	74.3
Austria	79.2	11.9	8.9	44.8	20.7	34.4	35.3	24.0	40.6	39.6	24.2	36.2
Poland	51.2	39.5	9.3	36.0	35.7	28.3	26.0	32.3	41.6	33.5	33.4	33.1
Portugal	81.1	11.6	7.3	34.3	17.0	48.7	28.1	13.5	58.2	33.0	16.5	50.4
Romania	59.8	39.4	0.8	45.6	43.8	10.5	32.7	42.1	25.1	41.8	46.2	12.0
Slovenia	58.6	41.4	-	43.9	56.1	-	36.3	63.7	-	39.6	60.4	-
Slovakia	59.0	36.8	4.2	50.3	38.2	11.5	39.7	32.5	27.8	43.9	36.7	19.4
Finland	82.3	14.8	2.8	41.0	30.6	28.4	34.4	26.9	38.7	38.3	29.0	32.6
Sweden	44.0	54.4	1.5	16.4	62.0	21.6	14.7	55.7	29.7	15.5	59.1	25.4
United Kingdom	27.6	44.5	27.9	2.9	23.4	73.5	1.9	20.1	78.0	2.8	23.8	73.4
EU-27	51.6	38.4	9.9	22.6	35.1	42.3	15.6	30.0	54.4	20.6	33.9	45.4
EU-15	49.8	39.1	11.1	18.1	34.1	47.7	14.3	29.5	56.2	16.7	33.0	50.2
EU-N12	57.2	36.2	6.6	39.8	38.8	21.3	28.7	35.4	35.9	36.0	37.5	26.5

Source: EC - Eurostat.

As resulting the data of land use from table 2, the rented land accounted for 53.4% of total EU-27 UAA, according to FADN 2011 and was most experienced in Slovenia, Bulgaria, France, Czech Republic and Malta, while in Romania was of 54%, closely above the EU average. The land rent accounted for EUR 172.4 per ha, in 2011, as an EU-27 average. Land rents were highest in the Netherlands, over EUR 700 per ha and Denmark, of EUR 596 per ha, but remained under EUR 40 per ha in the Baltic countries. In total, 60% of countries had average land rents under the EU average, among which Romania had EUR 84.8 per ha. There are furthermore discrepancies across types of farming, such as are rent level per hectare of land worked in horticulture and the wine sector which were of 8 to 9 times higher than the rent level of land worked by grazing livestock farms [3].

Table 2. Structural indicators of agriculture in EU-27, by Member States

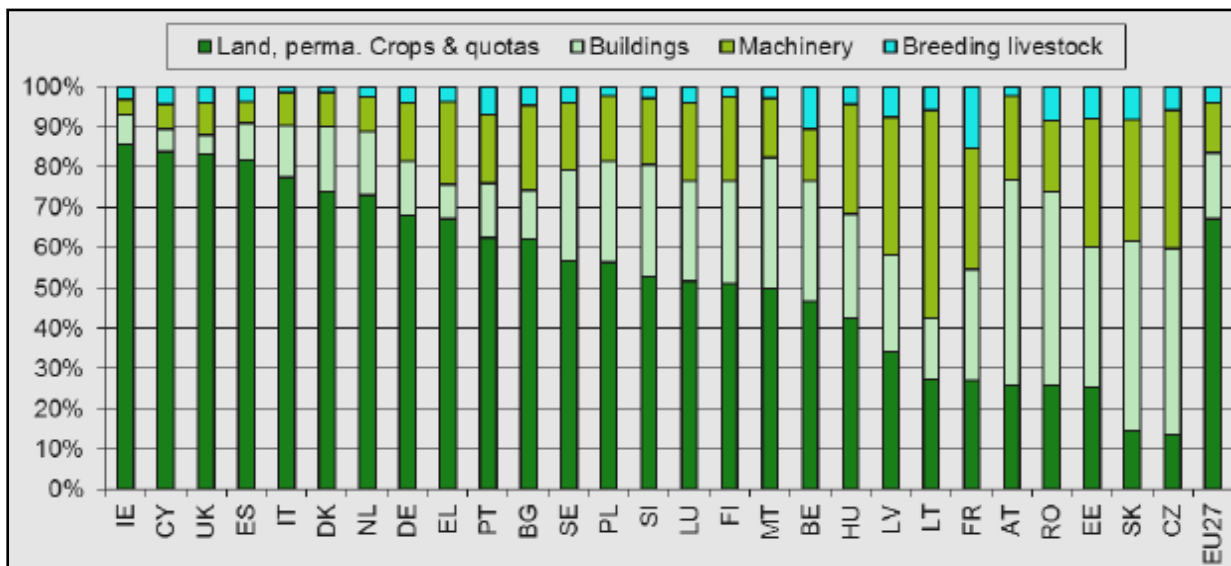
Indicator/ Country	Farm Structure					Land use		Labour force				Total assets
	Farms	Average size	% of farms in different size classes			Rented land, share *	Rent level*	Employment in Primary sector		Labour input		Average value *
	No of farms (1000)	ha per farm	< 5 ha	>= 5 - < 50 ha	>= 50 ha	%	EUR per ha	(1000 persons)	(% of total)	(1 000 AWU)	(AWU per farm)	(1000 EUR per farm)
Belgium	43	31.7	22.6	56.4	21.1	73.8	268.8	58	1.3	62	1.4	613
Bulgaria	370	12.1	91.4	6.4	2.3	89.5	133.3	656	19.2	407	1.1	95
Czech Republic	23	152.4	15.4	54.7	29.9	83.6	63.8	163	3.2	108	4.7	885
Denmark	42	62.9	7.3	59.5	33.3	29.2	595.6	68	2.5	52	1.2	2537
Germany	299	55.8	9.1	62.4	28.5	68.3	227.8	645	1.5	546	1.8	777
Estonia	20	48.0	33.7	52.0	14.3	61.7	18.1	27	4.3	25	1.3	211
Ireland	140	35.7	6.9	74.8	18.2	18.2	255.8	107	5.7	165	1.2	778
Greece	723	4.8	77.1	22.0	1.0	50.3	216.8	504	12.9	430	0.6	114
Spain	990	24.0	53.1	36.4	10.5	35.9	112.3	742	4.3	889	0.9	310
France	516	53.9	26.9	35.9	37.2	87.4	162.2	749	2.8	780	1.5	424
Italy	1621	7.9	72.9	24.3	2.8	41.4	176.3	901	3.7	954	0.6	382
Cyprus	39	3.0	89.6	9.5	0.9	62.8	170	14	3.9	19	0.5	225
Latvia	83	21.5	33.9	59.7	6.4	50	18.3	68	7.6	85	1.0	118
Lithuania	200	13.7	58.7	37.0	4.3	55.3	36.5	109	8.4	147	0.7	109
Luxembourg	2	59.6	17.3	34.1	49.1	53.3	209.6	4	1.1	4	1.7	1107
Hungary	577	8.1	87.0	10.6	2.4	58.3	101.5	291	7.1	423	0.7	154
Malta	13	0.9	97.8	2.2	0.0	82.5	67.5	5	2.9	5	0.4	176
Netherlands	72	25.9	28.6	55.7	15.7	41	707.1	220	2.6	162	2.2	2196
Austria	150	19.2	31.6	60.9	7.5	29.1	223.1	190	4.5	114	0.8	415
Poland	1507	9.6	55.2	43.1	1.8	27.4	61.9	1858	12.0	1897	1.3	149
Portugal	305	12.0	75.6	20.9	3.4	30.1	89.6	475	10.5	363	1.2	122
Romania	3859	3.4	93.1	6.3	0.5	54.1	84.8	2753	30.0	1610	0.4	37
Slovenia	75	6.5	60.8	38.6	0.6	95.3	41.1	77	8.4	77	1.0	1035
Slovakia	24	77.5	64.4	23.4	12.2	33.4	91	70	3.2	56	2.3	188
Finland	64	35.9	9.7	67.4	23.0	35	203.2	113	4.6	60	0.9	408
Sweden	71	43.1	12.6	63.5	23.9	53.6	190.9	105	2.2	57	0.8	834
United Kingdom	187	84.0	8.9	52.5	38.7	41.4	128.6	348	1.2	266	1.4	1495

Source: EC – Eurostat, Farm Structure Survey 2010; \* EC – FADN 2011.

The average number of persons employed in the EU-27 was of 1.3 AWU per farm. Across Member States it ranged from 4.7 AWU per farm in Czech Republic, to 0.4 AWU per farm in Romania and Malta (table 2). In horticulture, which (the sector with the highest labour input, the average number of workers per farm was roughly 2.4 times higher than in permanent crops other than wine holdings, which is the sector with the lowest labour input [3]. Family labour force accounted for 78 % of the total labour force in the EU-27 and represented the most prevalent form of labour in all Member States except for Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Estonia. In these Member States, the proportion of family labour in the total labour force was below 50 % [3].

As presented in table 2 and fig. 1, total assets per farm in the 27 Member States, covers significant variations across EU, reflecting disparities in the structure of national agricultural sectors. The average value of total farms assets in EU accounted for EUR 312 thousand per farm, in 2011. The highest average asset value per farm was in Denmark and in the Netherlands, respectively, of EUR 2.5 million and EUR 2.2 million, reflecting very high prices of land and the importance of certain sectors, including dairy, granivores and horticulture, which usually require substantial investments [3]. In contrast, while the land price level in the Bulgaria and Romania was much under the EU-27 average, farms in Romania had the lowest total asset values, of EUR 37 thousand, because of low prices of land, small sizes of farms and less capital-intensive type of farming.

Figure 1. Structure of fixed assets in EU-27, in 2011, by Member States (average EUR per farm)



Source: DG AGRI EC-FADN

As observed by certain researches [5], [6], the process of land abandonment was observed in many regions of Europe and at different periods of time, bearing significant social, economic and environmental consequences in rural areas. The risk of farmland abandonment is estimated through statistical analysis of key drivers or supporting indicators, such as are: weak land market; low farm income; lack of investment in the farm; high share of farm holders over the age of 65 years; high share of farm holders with low qualification; low farm

size; remoteness and low population density; low share of farms committed to specific schemes linked to continue farming).

Farmland is at higher risk of abandonment as an economic resource when it ceases to generate a sufficient income. Abandonment of the farmland is more likely to occur when farmer population is aging, close to the retirement age, as well related to the high share of low training of the farm manager. By the ratio between farm holders above 65 years and the total number of farm holders, the estimation for the distribution of the farmers' age population indicates risks associated to an unfavorable age ratio in Portugal, most of Italy, southern Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania with 40 % or more of the farm holders' population above 65 years old. To these is adding the lacking agricultural qualification, as is noticed to be of major alert in the new acceded countries, where over 85 % of farm managers have only practical experience, as are in Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta and Hungary, but also in Greece, Portugal and Spain (table 3).

Table 3 Training and education in EU-27 agriculture, by Member States

Country/ Indicator	Farm managers with agricultural training			Farm managers only with practical experience
	Basic training	Full training	All training	
Belgium	21.4	26.4	47.8	52.2
Bulgaria	2.6	0.8	3.4	96.6
Czech Republic	19.6	37.1	56.6	43.4
Denmark	43.6	5.0	48.5	51.5
Germany	55.2	13.3	68.6	31.4
Estonia	14.0	22.5	36.5	63.5
Ireland	15.1	15.9	31.0	69.0
Greece	3.2	0.3	3.5	96.5
Spain	13.8	1.5	15.3	84.7
France	28.7	21.6	50.3	49.7
Italy*	90.8	4.2	95.0	5.0
Cyprus	5.3	0.4	5.7	94.3
Latvia	12.4	26.1	38.5	61.5
Lithuania	17.5	12.5	30.0	70.0
Luxembourg	14.5	45.9	60.5	39.5
Hungary	11.3	3.3	14.6	85.4
Malta	8.5	1.4	9.8	90.2
Netherlands	64.6	6.6	71.2	28.8
Austria	22.4	25.6	48.0	52.0
Poland	21.3	24.6	45.9	54.1
Portugal	10.4	1.6	12.0	88.0
Romania	2.1	0.4	2.5	97.5
Slovenia	26.7	8.9	35.6	64.4
Slovakia	15.0	8.8	23.8	76.2
Finland	34.8	9.2	44.0	56.0
Sweden	12.1	18.8	30.9	69.1
United Kingdom	10.4	12.3	22.7	77.3
EU-27	22.2	6.9	29.1	70.9
EU-15	41.3	7.0	48.2	51.8
EU-N12	8.0	6.9	14.9	85.1

Source: Eurostat - Farm Structure Survey 2010.

Farmland abandonment is likely to occur in remote areas with insufficient transport infrastructure and access to basic services of healthcare, school, and other services, as well as seldom marketing opportunities and facilities, for the research requires data available to further insights and investigations [2].

The estimated results underline that due to social, economic, structural, or difficult factors at regional level, farmland abandonment have a higher risk in the southern EU Member States, namely in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Romania and in northern Europe where the risk is higher in the Baltic States, northern Finland and Sweden and in north-western Ireland [2]. Consistent with the source of investigations, among the EU regions, the share of holdings with farm-type 'grazing livestock' is higher, about 30 %, has been identified with the higher risk of farmland abandonment.

To these threats there are several other indicators that add awareness, as they are related to risk phenomena for socio-economic stability in rural areas, with further implications for food security.

According to the Human Development Report of United Nations of 2014, that contains the estimations of an index (Gender Inequality Index, a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.) designed to reveal the extent to which human development achievements are eroded by gender inequality at the national levels, there countries like Romania (0.32), Hungary (0.25), Latvia and Malta (0.22) and Bulgaria (0.21), which presents the highest levels of disparity in achievements of women compared to men.

According to Romanian National Institute of Statistics (NIS) data, cited in the Report of the Presidential Commission for social and demographic risk analysis in 2009<sup>1</sup>, the social gaps between urban and rural areas remains strong, registering a poverty rate three times higher in rural areas, while the share of people with higher education was only 3% in rural areas (while 23% in urban areas). As well, as shown in table 5, a phenomenon of youth unemployment rise was identified in several EU countries, and the dynamics underline the major risks.

Table 5. Dynamics of youth unemployment rate (people under 25 years old)

Country / Time	2005	2008	2011
Spain	19.6	24.5	46.2
Greece	25.8	21.9	44.7
Slovakia	30.4	19.3	33.7
Lithuania	15.8	13.3	32.6
Latvia	15.1	13.6	31.0
Portugal	20.0	20.5	30.3
Hungary	19.4	19.9	26.1
Poland	36.9	17.2	25.8
Bulgaria	21.0	11.9	25.0

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.presidency.ro/static/CPARSDR\\_raport\\_extins.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/static/CPARSDR_raport_extins.pdf) (pp.331).

Romania	19.7	18.6	23.7
Cyprus	13.9	9.0	22.4
Estonia	15.1	12.0	22.4
Czech Republic	19.3	9.9	18.1
Slovenia	15.9	10.4	15.7
Malta	16.1	11.7	13.3

Source: Eurostat<sup>2</sup>

The statistics of the year 2011 indicate Spain, Greece, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Portugal with the, followed by Hungary, Poland Bulgaria and Romania, with unemployment rates of people under 25 years old, between 26.1 and 23.7 per cent.

According to NIS, in Romania there are over 6 million young people between 15 and 34 years, with a total population share of 28.6% in 2012, but the trend in the previous decade of steady decline. Among the factors that affected young people more than other age groups are declining birth rate and emigration. Although the share of young population in Romania is above the EU-27 average, of 25.1% in 2012, decreased within the last 10 years, is more pronounced in our country.

Eurostat projections show a perspective to decrease sharply by 2060 the share of young population in the total population, while Romania is among the countries particularly affected by this trend; although the 2015 data for Romania falling below the EU27 average, the gap is likely to stress by 2060 [6].

Children and young people have been the age categories constantly most exposed to poverty in recent decades. More than a quarter of young people between 18 and 24 years are in relative poverty (28.1% in 2011), which places Romania among the three countries with the worst situation in the EU-27 [6]. Relative poverty rate is rather an indicator of inequality and economic resources available do not indicate on the needs of the people but only about income distribution nationwide. However, its level was increasing in recent years and young people under 18 (28.6% in 2010), of all age groups, have been put at greatest risk of persistent poverty. More than a third of young people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, i.e. 40.3% versus 24.3% in the EU-28 [6]. Young people are at greater risk and in terms of absolute poverty indicator that measures the subsistence resources compared to a threshold established officially, being poorer even than children. After the severe material deprivation young people 16-24 years in Romania, with a rate of 32.9%, are three times more affected than the EU [6].

The Presidential Commission Report on the 2010 demographic risks shows that young people involved in informal sector, mainly in subsistence agriculture, is one of the most vulnerable social segments. The report shows that over 40% of people employed in the informal sector are young people with ages of 15-34 years. Whereas in Europe is likely that young people be included in the forms of temporary employment or part-time employment contracts, although might be at the same time an opportunity and occupational vulnerability,

<sup>2</sup>[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une\\_rt\\_a&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en)



Romanian youth face a rigid labor market without flexible forms of employment available to allow further training.

Only one young Romanian of 100 decides to start a business on their own, compared to 1 in 4 young people in the Czech Republic, Poland or Hungary; the most common causes claimed are lack of money and bureaucracy; the European statistics indicate that Romania gives a quite reduced importance to entrepreneurial education, so less than 10% of those who initiated and developed a business have a theoretical basis in this respect compared to the European average of 30% [6].

## **FINAL REMARKS**

Food security is one of the major challenges of the future, from the perspective of growing global demand facing supply uncertainties linked to unpredictable economic and political, climatic and biological developments. Among the most threats, land abandonment is considered a major risk for rural economy and for food security, being a process driven by a combination of social, economic, political and environmental factors. Therefore, EU has a reasonable awareness and strategic interest to maintain the production potential of its agriculture in view of short and long-term food production for human and animal needs, concluded in the new reformed CAP. However, the deeper insights of researches and analysis of the socio-economic indicators underline a complex process of risk facing the rural security as a wider concern, including food security and efficient management of natural resources, which is caused by land abandonment and farms scarcity of income providing and of assets. The social dimension is of key significance, standing behind all action in the economic sphere. The main risks identified for rural sustainability and food security are related to the young population and their socio-economic inclusion, as well as of women.

Given the drastic reduction of births in the last two decades and the trend of declining youth population, much higher in Romania, highlights the need of intensifying policy and advocacy efforts, based on analysis to provide empirical foundations for and projects focused on achieving the demo-socio-economic balance. In particular it stresses the need for measures to promote the inclusion of young people, mainly targeted towards the poorest and most isolated areas of the countryside and to categories of young people with a lower standard of living. However, considering the gender inequality and disparities disadvantaging women, especially in rural areas of Romania where women represent almost 75% of young inactive labor market is required more attention to supporting the socio-professional insertion of young mothers. Foremost, the political support for inclusion women and youth through sustainable measures should be established on a permanent basis.

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