

# THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF BRAIN MIGRATION

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**Abstract:** *This thesis aims to present the social problem related to the migration of doctors from Romania to other countries. In Romania, it began to be noticeable since 2007, when our country joined the European Union. Besides the massive migration of doctors from Romania to western countries, we notice another category made up of graduates in the IT field. Currently, at the level of Romanian society, we can identify more and more graduates who want to emigrate abroad, for work. Thus, Romania is in a continuous loss, from all socio-demographic points of view, and the other countries to which Romanians emigrate enjoy many benefits, such as: increasing the birth rate, lowering the mortality rate, invigorating society with the help of people trained in the fields of activity etc. All these positive aspects occur without investing anything in the training of specialists, they are already theoretically trained in Romania. On the other hand, from an economic point of view, some researchers claim that Romania is also a winner, taking into account the fact that many of their earnings return to the country: migrant workers support their families which were left in Romania (if they decide to stay). This thesis aims to analyse the phenomenon of brain migration from the perspective of health professionals who have left our country, trying to exemplify some of the possible causes, but also some solutions, to reduce the negative effects we feel nationally as a result of the decision to leave the country, in the context in which, we also have a very large number of young immigrants who go annually for work, in addition to doctors, IT specialists, other graduates of higher education etc.*

**Keywords:** *Migration; Brain Drain; Immigrants; Emigrants; Demography*

## 1. Migration. Definitions and classifications

The migration of the Romanian population began when the country opened up its borders after the Revolution of 1990. This historical moment marked by the fall of communism in our country led to an individual freedom that was necessary, but also to certain social problems, one of which was the mass migration of the population.

Thus, from 1990 to 2021, according to some unofficial statistics, researchers who analysed the phenomenon of Romanian migration believe that the number of compatriots living abroad is over 3.5 million people. (Otovescu: 2012. p. 441)

The current phenomenon of population ageing and the problem of our country's declining population must be studied, so we need more information provided in order to establish clear social policies to make citizens remain in Romania. This thesis will analyse the migration of doctors from Romania, our purpose being that of identifying possible solutions to stop this phenomenon.

From a sociological point of view, international migration is an extremely complex phenomenon, which takes place on several levels, with global effects:

- regional - urban-rural;
- national - from one region to another;
- international - from one country to another;
- continental - from one continent to another.

At the same time, migration is a complex phenomenon, which can be analysed from several scientific perspectives, making it very difficult to understand the phenomenon, but also to identify concrete ways to stop it. (Otovescu, 2010. p. 609).

Thus, in sociology we can say about migration that: *"[...] from the very beginning, the genesis, causality, mechanism and effects of spatial mobility of the population were circumscribed. Subsequently, a multitude of conditions and reciprocal links between migration and other social phenomena and processes emerged, revealing that the simple change of residence often hides - beyond the personal motives of each migrant - social impulses and meanings that cannot be approached or understood without constantly referring to the socio-cultural context of mobility."* (Cute: 1978. p. 134)

Specifically, migration can be defined as a mass movement of populations from one territory to another, so that all analyses start from this simple premise. However, depending on its character, migration can have several valences, depending on the factors that determine this action - economic, social, political, natural etc.

The immigrant is defined from a double perspective - positive and negative -, the difference resulting from the type of migration, his actions, but also the social context, among others. A definition provided by certain authors refers to the formalization of the action. If migrants do not have proof and are not registered in the official records of the country to which they migrated, then immigration becomes negative, undesirable. Of course, this does not apply to persons in transit, tourists or other categories excluded from the obligation to declare their arrival in the official records of the country to where they migrated.

In the case of the positive analysis of the term "immigrant", we can define certain behavioural characteristics, such as the desire to settle in another country in the long term and take the necessary steps to obtain legal rights of residence, work frame or other important documents, which attest the purpose for which they immigrated.

However, when we analyse this term in relation to the country he comes from, a Romanian settled in Italy will be defined as an emigrant in Romania (he left their native borders), but they will become an immigrant in Italy (he entered the foreign country's national borders).

Immigrant masses can be defined, from the point of view of the United Nations, as:

- Long-term immigrants (at least one year, they have a residence permit to live in the country);
- Short-term immigrants (under one year, engaged in permanent working activities);
- Short-term emigrants (persons who have previously lived in the country, for one year during which they worked);
- Nomads (persons without a clear residence, who enter a country in order to live in it)

Another category of immigrants that makes it difficult to analyse the magnitude of migration-related events is that of illegal immigrants. They migrate internally and externally without being officially registered either as persons who have left their native national territory, or as immigrants in the reports of the country to which they emigrated.

According to Vasile-Adrian Cămărășan's writings, migration is a phenomenon that has attracted the attention of analysts and specialists in several fields of study, who have decided to research all aspects of daily life that are influenced by this phenomenon. The author emphasizes that the effects are not negligible, migration leaving its mark on countries, communities and even the mechanisms of state-community relations.

Thus, migration is approached in different ways, some tend to be more restrictive, others tend to be more permissible, from this point of view, migration is a useful tool to research and explain some social dynamics, such as intra-community relations, or inter-societal.

In Romania, according to the definition of the authors Louis Ulrich, Ștefan Stanciugelu, Viorel Mihăilă, Marian Bojincă, the following things must be considered: *"Romanian migration is a widely debated topic both nationally and internationally, still representing one of the basic interests of the Romanian political and public discourses. In the period which immediately followed communism, when the country opened up its borders, the phenomenon of migration has become increasingly accessible for those eager to venture as the protagonist of mobility."* (Alexe; Cazacu; Ulrich et al.: 2006. p. 9)

It's easy to identify the link between mobility and migration, but we must understand that these terms cannot be confused with each other. Mobility is the ability and availability of individuals to move on a geographical scale, referring not only to individuals but also to factors of production or resources available from a geographical and / or individual point of view.

The relationship between migration and mobility involves quantitative and qualitative aspects, this attracting several variables, some of which cannot be controlled. Thus, quantitative aspects mean the mobility of individuals and groups on a geographical scale, and qualitative aspects mean the mobility of legal entities (companies) and capitals - this category also including brain migration.

Another important factor that we must consider in this analysis is the fact that migration has two forms, namely: emigration and immigration, From the perspective of the destination, the migrant is defined as an immigrant, as a person who enters a society new to him, being a bearer of his own characteristics: labour force - more or less qualified - cultural specificities and social status." (Cămărășan: 2013. p. 26).

Cultural differences between countries make it difficult for immigrants to adapt when they have to take on the new social demands imposed by the country. From this point of view, a person migrating to another country may never be fully integrated, cultural differences being a problem for the person in transition, most often being solved by the second generation., which is born and raised in accordance with the social requirements of the state.

A person fully integrated in society is a person who was born, raised and lived according to social norms and cultural values which leave marked their first stage of personal development, these values and norms being preserved throughout their whole life. Thus, the first generation of immigrants will adapt to social and cultural norms, but only their children will be fully accepted in that society - sometimes, depending on how strong the family's cultural roots are, not even the second generation will be able to be fully integrated, as the differences may be too great.

## 2. Brain migration

Brain migration, as a concept, is defined by the authors Dodani and LaPorte as “[...] *the migration of health personnel in search of better standards of living and quality of life, higher salaries, access to advanced technology and more stable political conditions in different places worldwide.*” (Dodani; LaPorte: 2005)

Nationally, the phenomenon spread out since 2007, a moment celebrated nationally for joining the European Union. For this reason, it became easier for citizens to leave the country for work, thus seeking a better life that is offered by Western countries. By analysing these actions as beneficial or not, we will identify divided opinions, differing from the point of view of the respondent - in terms of the migrant, this decision is beneficial to him, but not beneficial for our country, from an economic, social and demographic point of view.

The main reason why Romanian society suffers from this phenomenon is that the elite we trained in Romanian universities and high schools do not remain in their country, which is why society will face a shortage of people trained in certain fields, such as medicine, given that Romania has invested financial and human resources in their training, without being able to enjoy any social gain.

Thus, returning to the dilemma of the cost-benefit analysis regarding the way in which the native country is affected by the migration phenomenon, in relation to the state to which they migrated, we can say that Romania's population decreased, according to World meters, from 23,489,160 million inhabitants in 1990, to 19,237,691 inhabitants, in 2020. However, specialists estimate that 16 million inhabitants live in Romania. Also, the rural environment, from a demographic point of view, is in a continuous demographic decline, so that over 100 settlements disappeared in just a few decades (almost all of them are from the rural areas). (Crăițoiu: 2019)

Next, we will present the results of the research elaborated in 2010 on this topic, research conducted by Louis Ulrich, Ștefan Stanciugelu, Viorel Mihăilă and Marian Bojincă.

“The research we present in the work “Al patrulea Val”. Brain Migration on the Romania-West route started from a methodology focused on tools for collecting qualitative information - over 30 interviews that followed the opinions of the elite of Romanian experts in the field of migration. ” (Alexe; Cazacu; Ulrich et al.: 2006. p. 9)

According to the results of the research of the above-mentioned experts, we can say that the trend of brain migration in Romania is directed towards well-developed countries, such as: United States, Great Britain and Germany - these countries occupying the first three places on the list of Romanian doctors that are in search of a country in which they can emigrate and start working in the field they studied for years. Approximately 2000 doctors leave the country annually, out of a total of approximately 50,000 doctors who studied and trained in Romania (2010).

Western countries are aware of the benefits they have when hiring young people from less developed countries. The people chosen for employment excel in the fields they study, because the selection process is quite rigorous, and the payment of immigrants is generally lower. At the same time, in the case of inventions or patents developed by foreign doctors in another country, the beneficiary is the country in which they emigrated, but not the native one.

*“The more the Romanian public institutions are organized and function as a unitary and coherent system, the more efficiently the immigration phenomenon in*

*Romania is managed. [...] The phenomenon of Romanian emigration, especially labour migration, in conditions of progressive liberalization of the field by lifting restrictions and the emergence of multiple possibilities of information on the place and type of work for which Romanians wanted to go abroad, along with experiences attesting the ease of movement by minibuses and public, private, regular or occasional forms of transport, to which are added the major difficulties of controlling labour migration with the accession to the European Union, made us abandon institutionalist perspectives and we place ourselves in a rather liberal-non-state perspective in formulating research hypotheses. "* (Alexe; Cazacu; Ulrich et al.: 2006. p17)

Romania understood how harmful these migratory masses of experts are, so low taxation policies for the IT field have already been implemented to stimulate the market absorption of graduates, and more and more steps have been taken for doctors, such as increasing their salaries and providing certain benefits to motivate young people to stay in the country after graduation.

The effects of medical migration can best be felt on the African continent, where enough young people graduate from higher medical education each year to meet national needs, but the countries of this continent still suffer from a significant shortage of doctors.

*"Africa is an exemplary model for the worst thing that can happen to a society in which the migration of health personnel affects the survival resource of a national community - In this case regional-continental. There are countries that lose the medical resource formed during a year for the most part - Migration to countries with a higher salary being - in fact - the purpose for which students prepare in their medical careers. For example, in 2015, Africa will need 800,000 health workers, as their numbers continue to decline, with the current proportion of the community's survival resource being 2 doctors and 26 nurses per 100,000 inhabitants, as is the case in Malawi."* (Alexe; Cazacu; Ulrich et al.: 2006. p33)

In mass media, in 2018, Romania was presented in a European context, similar to that encountered in Africa: *"Romania occupies the penultimate place in the European Union in terms of doctors per capita, the last place being occupied by the Poles. Eurostat data show that in Romania, there are 276 doctors per hundred thousand inhabitants, while Greece has more than twice as many doctors as our country. The second place in this chapter is occupied by Austria, followed by Portugal. Bulgaria ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the top of the countries with the most doctors per capita. The situation is not much different from 7 years ago, when Romania occupied the penultimate place. Poland also took last place, while Greece, Austria and Portugal also took the first place at EU level. "(Digest 24)*

### **3. Statistical data: Evolution and analysis**

Nationally, in 2016, The College of Physicians from Bucharest conducted a sociological study to identify the main causes leading to migration to other countries.

On average, between 2010-2020, approximately 3000 medical staff starts their careers in the Romanian medical system, but 3,500 leave it for various reasons - migration being one of them. Thus, every year, in Romania the deficit in the system increases by 500 medical staff (on average).

The study of about 700 medical students and residents revealed some information about the intentions and motivation of young experts - 52.8% of

respondents considered that they are considering the possibility of emigration, and 29.5% certainly want to emigrate. (CMDMB: 2016)

Thus, over 80% of future graduates and residents intend to leave the country after completing their studies / training. Given this high rate, we can talk about a real national exodus of doctors, and what seemed to be, at first, a possible social problem, has acquired indescribable valences and became a real scourge.

Most respondents indicated that the main demotivating factor is the low salary for the medical staff in Romania, represented by approximately 24% of the total registered responses. The second reason was related to the lack of environmental conditions in the medical units (23%), followed by the lack of support for research activities (15%).

Other reasons given by the respondents are:

- Lack of family support (14.4%);
- Poor social conditions (13.9%);
- The necessity of professional affirmation (11.9%);
- Long hours (8.2%) etc. (CMDMB: 2016)

Another factor that could lead to considering emigrating after graduation is that an impressive percentage of over 90% of respondents receive financial support from their families, only 4% of respondents considering themselves as financially independent.

When asked what could determine them to stay in the country after graduation, most respondents indicated that they would like a higher salary and better equipped hospitals. This motivation may seem superficial, but as indicated in the report provided by the College of Physicians of Bucharest, the duration of studies that a doctor must pursue is very long - 6 years of theoretical training and 4 years of practical training. Thus, doctors are, practically, at the beginning of their professional career when the majority of the Romanian population is starting a family (25-30 years old). The long work hours and the need for continuous training and improvement cause them to greatly delay the age at which to start a family, and when even the financial earnings do not seem to be enough to counteract the negative effects of this personal sacrifice, demotivation and national affiliation seems to be fading.

Perhaps the most important study conducted on this issue is that of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which shows, with concern, that by 2020 Romania would become one of the countries providing the largest number of trained doctors who emigrate for work (over 30% of graduates and doctors). (OECD: 2020)

The data revealed by the College of Physicians of Bucharest seem to describe the real national situation, which can lead to the processing of social policies at national level to eradicate this scourge.

More and more frequently, in the national press, we find articles signalling the massive departures of doctors abroad, and national policies seem to have minimal effects on the scale of the phenomenon.

## **5. Conclusions**

In conclusion, we can say that the migration of doctors is a real social problem in Romania, reaching a level that affects our lives. Society will end up facing more and more scenarios such as those we encounter in African countries, where the shortage of

doctors is worsening, and professional pressure on specialists is causing a vortex of shortcomings in the medical system. From a statistical point of view, Romania has exceeded the rates of any other state in terms of medical migration, so we need to stop this phenomenon immediately, minimizing long-term costs to address a problem that can still be solved without massive financial losses.

National studies are not enough, and the elimination of institutional causes in the public medical field seems to be left on a secondary level, sometimes even ignored. The increase in doctors' salaries has been beneficial, and the effects of these measures have been somewhat effective, but, nevertheless, doctors' problems are also related to other situations, such as the need to work in properly equipped medical units or to receive support while studying, for them to gain a financial independence as soon as possible.

Another proposal, this time of a qualitative nature, is to find out the level of academic training of medical staff when they leave the country. It would be of interest for the Romanian state to identify whether the medical elites choose to stay or to emigrate, here taking into account the performance of emigrants, the graduation average, the scientific contributions of recent years etc.

Thus, a legislative project could be generated according to which the elites should be paid extra for their scientific approaches, the need to promote research being one of the demotivating factors identified by doctors in the sociological studies presented. Promoting excellence also promotes positive internal competition, and in this context, considering the long time we must devote to scientific research, especially in the medical field. We may have some remarkable results in relation to the absorption and maintenance of medical graduates in Romania.

From another point of view, we could also say that this migration of doctors brings certain benefits to Romania, whose label has always been a denotative one. A new image is promoted for our country internationally with the help of young graduates, who bring professional recognition and merit to theoretical training in the national medical field.

We can take as an example the experiment of Asch, who offered his subjects a list of features of fictional people. In this experiment, some subjects received lists that began with the positive traits of the subjects, and other participants received lists that began with negative traits.

Asch proposed to the subjects to make a free description of the person in question, the results of this research showing that people who received the positive lists chose to characterize the person in a similar way.

At the same time, those who received the list of negative traits at the beginning, described the same person in a less positive way.

*"In Asch's opinion, this result shows that features in isolated (separate) appearances become "solidary" with each other. The significance of a feature depends on the feature network from which it is inserted"* (Drozda-Senkowska: 2000. p. 111)

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