

# THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ROMANIANS' EXTERNAL MIGRATION

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**Abstract:** *The migration phenomenon is one with deep roots in human existence. Over the years, migration has undergone a very extensive process of transformation, changing and taking on new forms; if at the beginning it was in the form of a regional phenomenon, a phenomenon that was generated by economic, political or social factors, today it takes the form of a global phenomenon. Currently all countries are involved in this process, they have multiple qualities, such as origin, transit or destination. In this article I aimed to analyse the impact, both socially and economically, that has the external migration of the Romanian rural population, all based on the quantitative analysis of existing data, but also the analysis of theories on migration.*

**Keywords:** *rural migration, impact, migration directions, effects, Romania*

## 1. Introduction

Migration is one of the most widespread phenomena that has influenced and has had, at the same time, major consequences on individuals and societies, which continues to grow day by day. It is the amplitude of this phenomenon that arouses the interest of study and understanding of many specialists in various fields; the studies we find today are more and more numerous and remarkable.

The phenomenon of migration is the object of study for specialists in fields such as: demography, economics, geography, history, anthropology, sociology and so on; they seek to identify issues such as the root causes, but also the conditions that favour this phenomenon.

Dumitru Sandu defines migration as “an essential component of development processes. The different forms of this phenomenon are correlated with changes in the economy, social structure and quality of life. Under certain conditions and under certain aspects, migration appears as a reaction to these changes; in turn, that reaction can have effects in the areas of economic life, quality of life and social structure”. (Sandu, 1984: 4). Viewed from this perspective, the phenomenon of migration appears as a life strategy.

Professor Lazăr Vlăsceanu defines the concept of migration in the *Dictionary of sociology* as a “phenomenon consisting of the movement of crowds from one territorial area to another, followed by a change of residence and/or employment in a form of activity in the area of arrival”. (Vlăsceanu and Zamfir, 1998: 351)

According to the *International Organization for Migration* (IOM Romania), migration is the movement of a person or a group of people, either across an international border or within the same state. It is a movement of the population that can include any kind of movement of people, regardless of its duration, composition or

causes; this includes the migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants and people moving for other reasons, including family reunification.

*Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* states that “migration involves (more or less) permanent movement of individuals or groups across symbolic or political boundaries into new residential areas and communities”. (Gordon, 2003: 598) In this regard, it is necessary to note that migration is not just a simple movement from one territory to another, but involves much more than that, turning into a complex process that produces effects in the social, cultural, economic plan and so on.

In the chapter *International migration*, Adrian Otovescu points out that “although international migration is a phenomenon with deep roots in the history of human society, still, so far, no single and unitary theory has been developed to capture this phenomenon in its many manifestations.[...] The sociological approach to migration has, from the very beginning, circumscribed the genesis, causality, mechanism and effects of the spatial mobility of the population. 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 motivation of each migrant - impulses and social meanings that cannot be approached or understood without a permanent reference to the socio-cultural context of mobility”. (Otovescu, 2010: 609-610)

The migration phenomenon is presented as a phenomenon with global dimensions, being present, in one way or another, in all countries of the world; this is a current reality that will not disappear as long as there are major discrepancies between different parts of the world, being seen, in most cases, as a chance to achieve their own aspirations as long as the country in which they live cannot provide this opportunity.

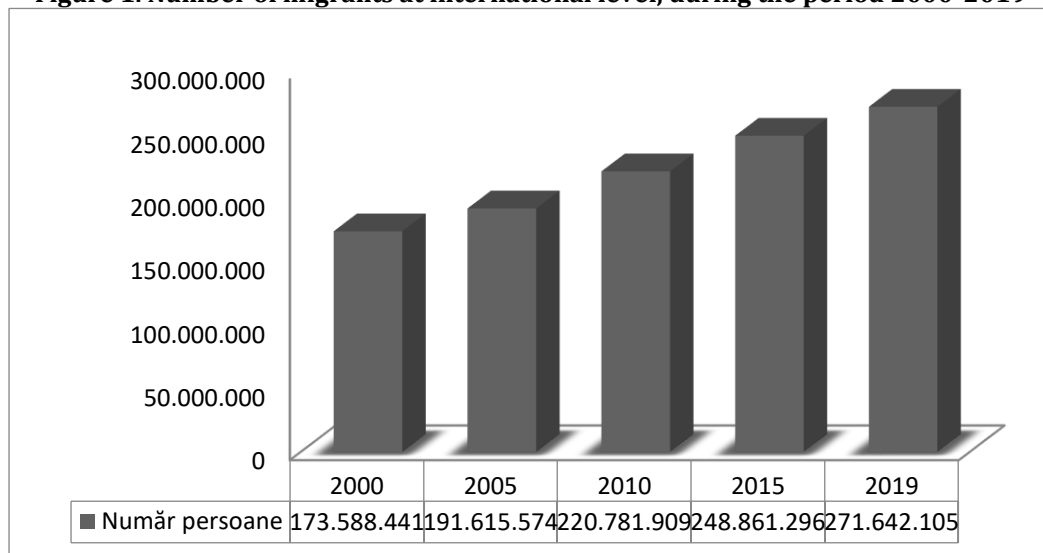
## **2. Evolution and trends of migration**

Internationally, the number of migrants has grown rapidly in the last 19 years; According to an information note published in 2019 by the European Parliamentary Research Service, “the number of international migrants has continued to grow rapidly in recent years worldwide, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 220 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000”. ([https://what-europe-does-for-me.eu/data/pdf/focus/focus04\\_en.pdf](https://what-europe-does-for-me.eu/data/pdf/focus/focus04_en.pdf))

The International Organization for Migration publishes the Migration Report every two years. According to the latest report published in 2020, the number of international migrants was about 272 million people, representing a percentage of 3.5% of the world's population. The figure below shows the graphical representation of the data presented by the International Organization for Migration, on the number of International Migrants, during the period 2000-2019. ([https://publications.iom.int/system/file/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/file/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf)).

In terms of distribution by sex, most migrants, 52% are male, while 48% are female.

**Figure 1. Number of migrants at international level, during the period 2000-2019**



In respect of the migratory flow from Romania, it is found that there were two massive waves of Romanian emigrants; We are talking about the first wave that manifested itself with the fall of the communist regime, 1989, when the borders were opened, the second wave being in the period 2000-2012, which manifested itself against the background of economic growth and visible well-being of Western countries.

The sociological analysis of this phenomenon implies both the establishment of the structure of the Romanian emigrants, but also the share of the emigrant flows. In order to establish them, we need to take into account certain indicators such as: distribution by regions of the country, countries of destination, dynamics, and reasons for emigration, age groups, sex or marital status.

In order to be able to provide an overview and perform a complex analysis of migration, it is necessary to understand the determinants, causes and effects of this phenomenon, given that most data made known to the general public on migration aims at its quantitative dimension.

The statistical data that I will present in the following are those that count the persons who emigrated with legal forms, in the statistical records of *National Institute of Statistics* not being registered the persons who have emigrated illegally.

According to the *National Institute of Statistics*, the resident population of Romania, on 1 January 2021 was of 19,186,201 persons, in continuous decrease compared to 2010 when a number of 20,294,683 persons was included in the national records, the decline in the last eleven years being of 1,108,482 persons, decreasing compared to 2020, the year in which we find in the national statistics a number of 19,328,838 persons. (<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>).

The demographic decline in Romania is based, on the one hand, on the decrease of the birth rate, and on the other hand, the massive emigration, the population becoming more and more aging, given the fact that the vast majority of people who choose to emigrate are part of the young population.

**Table no.1: Distribution of the Romanian population by areas of residence, 2010/2021**

Areas of residence	Year	
	2010	2021
	Number of persons	Number of persons
<b>Total</b>	20,294,683	19,186,201
<b>Urban</b>	10,942,040	10,285,960
<b>Rural</b>	9,352,643	8,900,241

Analysing the administrative organization of Romania on 31 December 2020, we can conclude that the rural environment is predominant, the number of communes and villages being 2862 and 12958, respectively, while the number of towns and municipalities is of 319 units. ([https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/romania\\_in\\_cifre\\_2021.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/romania_in_cifre_2021.pdf))

Regarding the rural-urban distribution, in 2021, according to the data presented in the table above, we can see that, in Romania, we find a higher concentration of people in the urban area, 53.61%, while the rural population represents 46.39% of the total resident population of Romania. "In terms of territory, the population by domicile is not evenly distributed. Geographical factors, but also economic polarization gradually led to a demographic polarization. Thus, in the Municipality of Bucharest is concentrated almost one tenth of the population residing in Romania (9.6%). In 2019, the counties with large population are Iasi (4.3%) and Prahova (3.6%). At the opposite pole, there are counties in which the concentration of the population is lower: Sălaj, Tulcea (1.1%) and Covasna (1.0%)". ([https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/tendinte\\_sociale.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/tendinte_sociale.pdf))

In order to have an overview of the phenomenon of migration of Romanians abroad, it is important to analyze its evolution over several years, the period presented in the table below being between 1990-2020, the data being taken from the publications of the National Institute of Statistics. (<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>).

**Table no.2: The dynamics of the definitive emigration of the population from Romania during the period 1990-2020**

No.	Year	Number of persons who left Romania	Percentage of the total number of migrants
1.	1990	96929	<b>15,50%</b>
2.	1991	44160	<b>7.06%</b>
3.	1992	31152	<b>4.98%</b>
4.	1993	18506.	2.95%
5.	1994	17146	2.74%
6.	1995	25675	4.11%
7.	1996	21526	3.44%
8.	1997	19945	3.19%
9.	1998	17536	2.80%
10.	1999	12594	2.01%
11.	2000	14753	2.36%

12.	2001	9921	1.59%
13.	2002	8154	1.30%
14.	2003	10673	1.71%
15.	2004	13082	2.09%
16.	2005	10938	1.75%
17.	2006	14197	2.27%
18.	2007	8830	1.41%
19.	2008	8739	1.40%
20.	2009	10211	1.63%
21.	2010	7906	1.26%
22.	2011	18307	2.93%
23.	2012	18001	2.88%
24.	2013	19056	3.05%
25.	2014	11251	1.80%
26.	2015	15235	2.44%
27.	2016	22807	3.65%
28.	2017	23156	3.70%
29.	2018	27229	<b>4.35%</b>
30.	2019	26775	<b>4.28%</b>
31.	2020	21031	3.36%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>625.361</b>	<b>100%</b>

Regarding the migration flow from Romania, it is found that there were several massive waves of Romanian emigrants; we are talking about the first wave that manifested itself with the fall of the communist regime (1989), when the borders were opened; The data presented indicates a percentage of 27.54%, which means that more than a quarter of Romanian emigrants, out of the over 30 years subject to analysis (1990-2020), left the country in the first 3 years after the fall of the communist regime.

The next period is characterized by a stabilization of this phenomenon, being years in which the number of people who decided to leave Romania is below 8,000 people, a very small figure compared to 1990, where we find 96,929 people on the list of those who have left the country.

As a result of Romania's accession to the European Union, after 2007, we can observe a new increasing trend of the wave of Romanian emigrants.

Significant percentages are also concentrated in the current period, the years 2018-2019 being marked by percentages exceeding 4%.

The year 2020, the year in which the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, brings with it only a slight decrease in this upward trend that has manifested itself in the last four years, but not big enough as it has been circulated in the current press where we find articles mentioning the fact that approximately 1.3 million Romanians would have returned to the country, according to the declarations of the Minister of Labor of that period (May 2021), the source of the data presented by him being an external one.

In order to have a much clearer picture of this phenomenon, that of migration, it is important to distinguish in relation to the criterion of length of stay, the typology being as follows: long-term migrants and short-term migrants.

According to the methodology of the National Institute of Statistics, migrants with a change of address are persons (of Romanian citizenship) who emigrate abroad. Emigration is the action by which a person renounces his domicile in Romania and establishes his domicile on the territory of another state. The person's domicile in Romania is the address at which he/she declares that he/she has his/her main residence, entered in the identity document (Identity Card/provisional Identity Card/identity bulletin), as it is registered with the administrative bodies of the state.

**Table no.3: The dynamics of the temporary emigration of the population from Romania during the period 2015-2020**

Areas of residence	Year		
	2015	2019	2020
	Number of persons	Number of persons	Number of persons
<b>Total</b>	194,718	233,736	192,631
<b>Urban</b>	103,507	116,466	96,056
<b>Rural</b>	91,211	117,270	96,575

If we previously analysed the situation of permanent emigrants, the table above shows the dynamics of temporary emigration of the population from Romania during the period 2015-2020, according to data from the publications of the National Institute of Statistics. (<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>).

We must emphasize that migration statistics show only ordinary emigrants who change their permanent residence or for a period exceeding 12 months.

According to the data presented, if we analyse the year 2015 compared to 2020, we can conclude that in the last 5 years the phenomenon of temporary migration from Romania shows a downward trend.

Given that the year 2020 coincides with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, a year in which traffic restrictions were imposed both in the country and abroad, the number of people who left the country was low compared to the previous year. If in 2020 the number of Romanian migrants was only 192,631 people, the year 2019 was one that shows us the upward trend of migration, a not at all encouraging trend, 233,736 people choosing to migrate to other countries, even in pandemic times. It should be noted that the urban-rural distribution is one that does not show major differences, the year 2020 being marked by a difference of about 500 people in favor of the rural environment.

### **3. Social and economic effects of migration**

The phenomenon of migration is a complex one that involves social, economic and cultural consequences for all parties involved, whether we are talking about countries of destination or countries of origin. Thus, it is currently seen as a key element in the changes that are taking place globally. "Bernd Schulte (1998) pointed out that migration has, first and foremost, a direct economic impact, but also affects the labour and social spheres, the social protection system, national culture and policies, international relations, inevitably leading to greater ethnocultural diversity in all states". (<https://dokumen.site/download/brain-drain-a5b39f00aebc81>).

In the current public agenda, at the international level, migration is a major issue. The analysis of this phenomenon reveals the way in which migration has evolved over time. In the past, at European level, the management of this phenomenon was the responsibility of the authorities of each country; At present, in the context of the emergence of the European Union, a new management of migration has developed, the member countries losing their sovereignty over this phenomenon.

In an attempt to manage this phenomenon as effectively as possible, the European Union has sought to identify the main pillars on which to build an EU-wide migration policy, as migration is a phenomenon to be managed jointly. Thus, the Member States of the European Union represent, to a greater or lesser extent, countries of origin, transit or destination; the large number of immigrants forcing the treatment of this phenomenon as an integral part of the economic and social reality.

As mentioned earlier, the phenomenon of migration is influenced by economic, political and social factors that act both in the country of origin of the migrants, the so-called *impulse factors*, as well as in the country they choose as their destination – *pull factors*.

Approaches to migration from a sociological point of view are focused on the social relations of migration, but also on the role of social networks as factors for initiating, supporting and ending the migration process. “Due to the proliferation of migration studies, theories often become a heuristic mechanism and a multitude of new conceptual frameworks emerge. Migration changes the social structure of destination states, so migration or migrants can be studied from multiple perspectives: sociological, political science, anthropology, urban studies, human geography, economics, history, etc.” (Anghel and Horvath, 2006: 39)

In Romania, the phenomenon of migration has produced both favourable and unfavourable effects at all levels of society: personally, in local communities, but also at national level.

Official statistics confirm that Romania is one of the countries with a significant volume of emigrants. The data presented by Eurostat indicates that, in 2020, Romania had the largest share in the European Union of citizens living in other EU Member States, followed by Poland, Italy and Portugal. Also, the communiqué on migration, published by the National Institute of Statistics in August 2021, presents Romania as still a country of emigration, the emigration phenomenon being the second main cause of the reduction of the country’s population.

The European Institute of Romania has carried out a research program on the perspectives of migration policy in the demographic context in Romania. Thus, in terms of demographic impact, research has shown that “Romania’s population decline is a constant in recent decades, and declining birth rates and increasing the number of elderly people (over 65 years) confirm the process of demographic aging (given mainly by the age structure of the population). The registered data shows both long-term trends in fertility and mortality and the short- and medium-term effects of migration and demographic policies. The demographic and economic effects of this evolution will be felt over time and will bring about changes in the school population, the working population”. (Suditu, 2013: 25)

From a demographic point of view, one of the main negative effects of external migration from the Romanian rural area is the loss of population, given the predisposition to stay in the country chosen as a destination, initially seasonal,

emigration countries facing a large process population aging. “The results show that migration from rural areas is considerable, and the scale of both internal and external is alarming. Young people and women in particular leave, either in the towns or abroad for work. Mostly urban people in their second age are migrating to the countryside, thus accelerating the decline of the rural labour force. At the same time, the poor education of young people in rural areas means they are condemned to low-skilled work”. (Zodian, 2017:2, [http://www.doctorat.ase.ro/Media/Default/sustineri%20teze%20doctorat/documente%20doctoranzi/Rezumat\\_teza\\_zodianalexandru\\_RO.pdf](http://www.doctorat.ase.ro/Media/Default/sustineri%20teze%20doctorat/documente%20doctoranzi/Rezumat_teza_zodianalexandru_RO.pdf))

As for the effects that the migration process has on the family, they are part of both the positive and the negative sphere. Although we are going back to the economic zone, one of the positive effects is given by the money that emigrants choose to send to the country, which contributes significantly to improving the living conditions of those who stay at home.

The main negative effect on the family is that of suffering caused by the lack of members who choose to leave the country in search of a better life for both themselves and those close to them, as family relationships also suffer. This effect is also manifested on those who left because of homesickness or lack of loved ones.

The main factors that determined the expansion of the Romanian emigration phenomenon are the economic and social fragility, the freedom of movement, the level of education. Thus, one of the main reasons why the migration flow from Romania has increased has been the one regarding the economic growth and the visible well-being of the western countries.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The analysis of the current Romanian emigration indicates a dynamic of economic reasons as the main cause. Thus, this type of migration has led to an increase in the number of those who emigrate temporarily. The lack of jobs, low wages and, implicitly, the poverty that affects a large number of people are good reasons for this. The publication *Social Trends* of the National Institute of Statistics, which analyses the dynamics of society on the basis of statistical data, presents the impact that international migration, particularly emigration, has on the labour market: “as the share of the working population decreases, the pressure on the remaining population to support the elderly, dependent population increases, but it also has far-reaching implications for social services, health and education systems”. (INS, 2019: 21, [https://inse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/tendinte\\_sociale.pdf](https://inse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/tendinte_sociale.pdf))

If, from an economic perspective, the impact of labour emigration from Romania is mainly positive, we have seen that we cannot say the same from a demographic point of view, the countries providing emigrants facing imbalance and even demographic decline, given the fact that most who emigrate in search of a better standard of living are in the youth category. At the same time, Romania is losing a highly skilled workforce, a process called “brain drain”.

The decision to emigrate comes as a result of a combination of factors that act on the individual, these being both economic, social and political. The departure of a considerable number of citizens abroad produces effects both at national and micro-social level. Thus, the effects that these movements have at the micro-social level are



positive if we look at it from an economic point of view, the negative effects being present at the psycho-affective level.

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