

ASPECTS CONCERNING THE DEMOGRAPHICAL COMPOUND OF THE ROMANIAN RURAL SPACE

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Abstract

Considered both an action and a consume factor, the population bares an important role in the diagnosis analysis of the rural space, mostly because the demographical compound appears as a development potential. Considering the fact that, at the moment, the demographical compound does not offer great hopes for the development of the rural space, the present paper, based on a simple analysis of the Romanian rural space, from a demographical point of view, and by using a variety of demographical indicators, portrays the current situation of the demographical compound of the Romanian rural space. In the beginning of the year 1990, Romania's rural population consisted of 10.6 million souls, a number that has known a severe decrease in the last 20 years. The most recent statistical data shows that the number of inhabitants in rural areas has reached 9.64 million on the first of January, 2010. The paper also identifies the main causes that generated this negative state, like the negative rate of natural increase, the work force's migration abroad and the aging of the population. The population's aging reflects the alterations, in time, of the ratio between the young and the aged population, in the sense of a weight factor growth of the latter, from the population's total. The phenomenon is explained though the evolution of the basic population indicators, which determine alterations in the population's structure, according to age and the territorial movement (migrations). The situation recorded in the present, in the rural space as well as at the level of the entire country, should consist a warning signal for authorities, which should draw their attention towards finding economical solutions that will encourage the growth of the birth rate and slow down, or even stop, the external migration.

Key words: population, rural area

Considered the second new E.U. state member, as size, after Poland, Romania holds a total surface of 238 thousand km² (6% of the E.U. surface) and a population, at January 1st, 2010, of 21.46 million inhabitants (4% of the E.U. population). According to the definition in the national legislation, the Romanian rural space adds up 212.7 km², representing about 89% of the country's surface. In the year 2010, according to data supplied by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, the rural population held a weight factor of 44.9% from the population's total, being represented by 9.64 million inhabitants with residence in 12.956 villages, which are administratively organized in 2.860 communes. This data signals the fact that the rural areas hold a substantial growth potential, having a vital social role.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The informations that form the base of the present paper originate from various sources: speciality literature (books, publications, articles, studies, as well as the Internet), informations obtained by ordinary means, through which

operators make known the situations they run into and the problems they confront (informational bulletines, annual statistics, statistic breviaries) and field research. In the process of information collecting and analysing, economical analysis was used, more exact the analysis of statistical indicators and direct observing, as well as a systematical research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The statistics show a worrying situation, the birth rate is dropping, the death rate is rising, and the number of emigrants exploded. If in the beginning of the year 1990 Romania's rural population was of 10.6 million souls, in the last 19 years the population began to strongly decrease. The most recent statistics show that the number of inhabitants in rural areas has reached 9.64 millions at January 1st, 2010. In the period 1960-2010, Romania's rural population decreased with approximately 2.9 million people, according to the Romania's National Institute of Statistics.

After the year 1960, the rural population recorded a downward evolution, the highest decrease being recorded in the Western half of the

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country, due to migration towards cities, emigration of various ethnic categories or a low birth rate. The migration phenomenon is often seen in groups of young adults, including women and people from under-privileged areas, and is

developed on a background of difficulties concerning restricted access to education and a chronic lack of work places that are necessary or desired by young people.

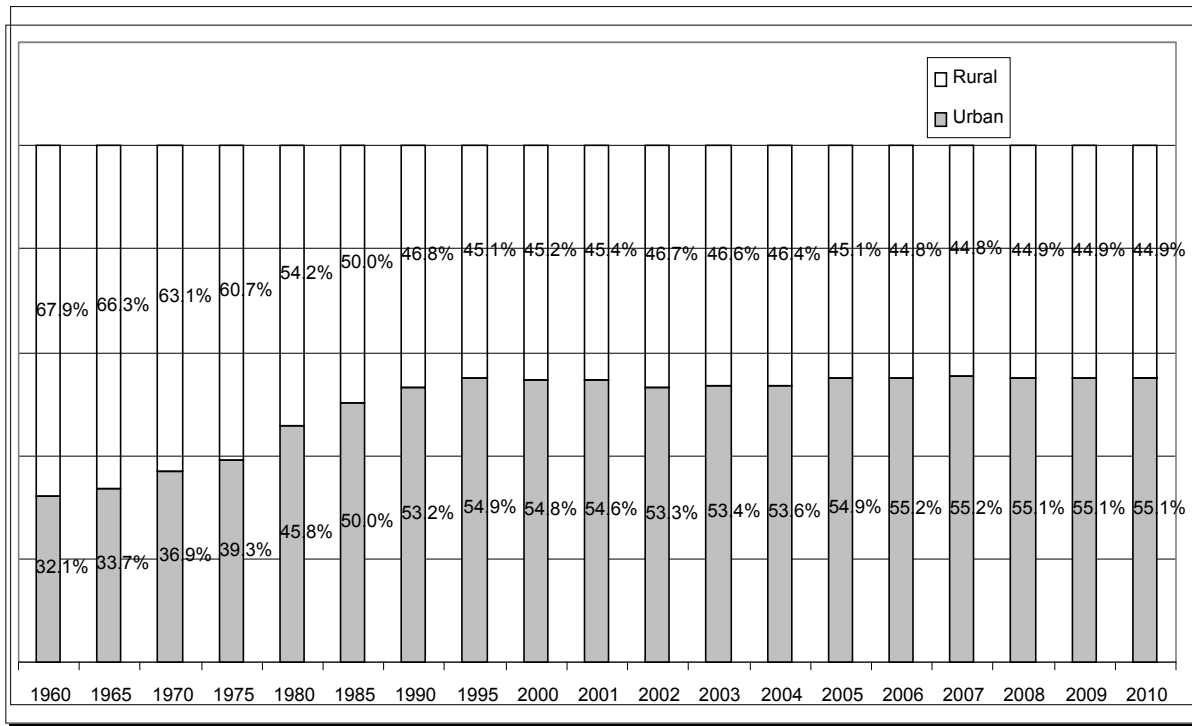


Figure 1 Evolution of population structure by area (1960-2010)

Source: Romania's Annual Statistic, 2008, www.insse.ro, Romania's population in localities, at January 1st, 2010

Starting with the year 1990, the rural areas and their population entered a new model of behavioral demographical evolution, due to changes that appeared after 1989 in the political and social Romanian system. These changes were materialized in legislative regulations that allowed the free circulation of people. The evolution of the rural population between 1990 and 2010 was subscribed in an alternate succession of growth and decrease. Speaking in numbers, beginning with 1990, the rural population is in a slight, but continuous decrease, so that from 10.5 million inhabitants in 1990, the rural population reached a number of 9.64 million inhabitants in 2010. This demographical decline of the rural space is mainly owed to a negative rate of natural increase, the work force's migration abroad and the population aging. Under the aspect of the weight factor held by the population, after 1995, we can observe a stabilization of the rural population, which can be explained with the stopping of mass migration towards cities in certain rural areas, so that, beginning with 1996, the migration sold belongs to the rural, a phenomenon that can be explained by the consequences of restructuring and retechnologizing the industry. The return of young people in the rural environment has special

positive implications for the development of the production activity, their enterprising spirit being easy to shape and form, with priority, towards nonagricultural activities that have to be established and developed in village communities. In these conditions, there would be an increase in life quality, a limitation in migration and a fading of social issues, among which reducing unemployment in the rural area. Also, the rate of occupancy for women would grow, them usually being easier to adapt to nonagricultural activities.

The population's density forms an element with high viability in space, being the result of geographical, historical, economical and social conditions of each area. This economical indicator is expressed through the number of inhabitants per km² and represents the population's distribution on the administrative territory at a certain moment. (Nicoleta Mateoc-Sîrb și colab., 2003).

At the level of the year 2010, the population density in the rural environment was of 45.3 inhabitants/km². The population's density in the E.U. - 27 varies from 36 inhabitants/km², in predominately rural areas, to 548 loc/km² in predominantly urban areas. (Rural Development in the European Union. Statistical and Economic Information, 2009).

As far as the population's density is concerned, there are big differences at the level of development aregions, the area where the density is the lowest being the West Region (25.5 loc/km²). At the opposite pole we have the Bucuresti - Ilfov region, with a population density of 121.06 inhabitants/km², mostly due to the high number of inhabitants in the Metropolis. According to statistics regarding gender structure, at January 1st, 2010, the female population held 50.16% of the total rural population's weight factor, the situation being similar to the year before, when 50.2% of the rural population was

represented by persons of the female gender, while the males held a weight factor of 49.8%. This shows a slight tendency towards a balance, in comparison with the year 2008, when females held a 51.2% weight factor and the males 48.8%, which means we can talk of a slightly higher percentage of females in the rural population. Although the number of people that were born males is higher than of those born females, the higher female number is explained through a higher life expectancy in the case of the female gender, so that in time, females outnumbering males.

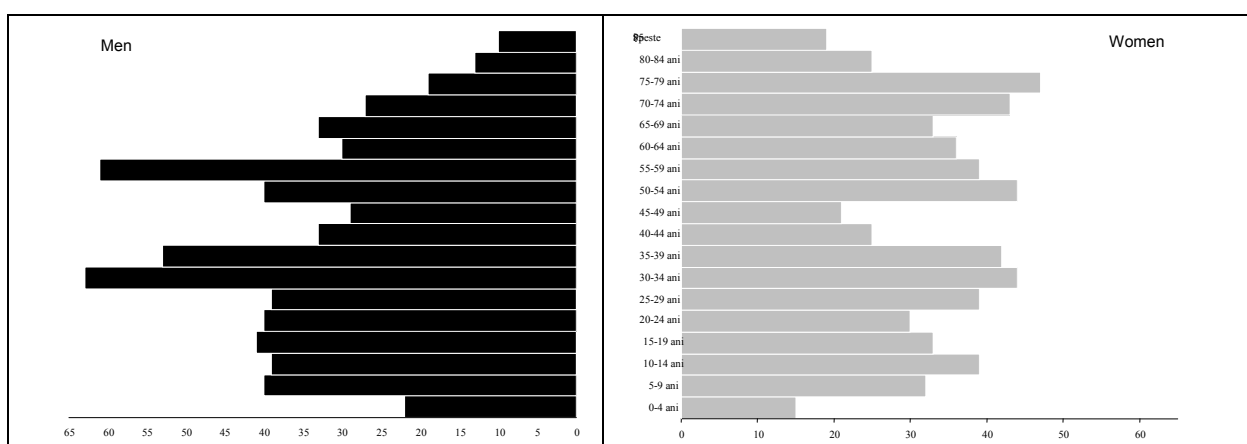


Figure 2 Distribution of rural population by age group and sex on January 1st, 2010

Source: www.statistici.insse.r

The population's structure by age groups reflects a slow but steady process of demographical aging, mainly determined by the decrease of the birth rate, which has led to an absolute and relative reduction of the younger population (0-14 years) and an increase of the weight factor belonging to the elder population of 65 years of age and above. In 2009, in the rural environment, the young population numbered 1.657.719 inhabitants, representing 17.15% of the total rural population, while elder people numbered 1.796.330 (18.58%). At the level of the E.U. the situation is slightly different, the younger group holding 16.5%, while people over 65 years old and above hold 16.2%.

The average age of the rural population is in a continuous growth, even if in the year 2000 it was 38.12 years, reaching 39.53 years in 2009. The female population is older than the male one, in the case of the female gender the average age being 41.16 years and in the male gender being 37.88 years. In relation to the urban environment, the rural population's average age is bigger with 1.4 years, this value featuring countries with an „adult” population.

By analysing the structure on age and gender groups belonging to the rural environment,

important disbalances can be observed between the two genders, on superior age groups, especially people over 60 years of age, because, as mentioned before, life expectancy is higher in females. The average life length in the case of females is of 76 years, while males in the rural environment live about 68 years (table 1). If we trace the evolution of this indicator, it can be determined that, during 40 years, the average life expectancy rate has grown with approximately 4 years (from 68 years in 1970 to 72 years in 2008). In comparison with the E.U.'s situation, the average life expectancy rate in Romania is much smaller, at the level of the E.U. being 80.8 for females and 74.6 for males (Eurostat yearbook 2009).

The increase of life expectancy, combined with the birth rate's decrease, leads to a demographical aging, its consequence consisting of a growth in the number of elderly people that have to be supported by active people. The population aging reflects the alteration, in time, of the ratio between the young and old population, with an increase in the latter's weight factor from the total population. The phenomenon is explained through the evolution of basic population indicators (birth rate, death rate, natural increase rate), which determine alterations in the population structure by

age and territorial movement (migrations). AT the level of the year 2008, the young population (0-14) represented 17.5% of the rural population and the adult population 64.27%, while the elder one (over 65%) represented 18.58%. Demographical aging is usually preceded by a downward evolution of the birth rate on a longer period of time and a decrease or relative stabilization of the death rate in a certain period, affecting all age groups. The migration also acts within the open type

populations, conducting to alterations at a general and medium level.

The parameter for population aging is used in the analysis of this phenomenon. It is calculated as the ratio between the population over 60 years old and above an the population up to 14 years of age. This parameter expresses the community's ability or disability to regenerate its demographics. (Nicoleta Mateoc-Sîrb și colab, 2003).

Table 1

Life expectancy, by gender

	Total	Rural		
		Total	Male	Female
1970	67.33	66.63	64.40	68.83
1975	69.58	68.99	66.74	71.18
1980	69.21	68.59	66.21	71.03
1985	69.70	68.95	66.14	71.85
1990	69.56	68.70	65.70	71.80
1995	69.40	68.46	64.70	72.66
2000	70.53	69.53	65.93	73.49
2001	71.19	70.20	66.57	74.17
2002	71.18	70.08	66.35	74.20
2003	71.01	70.08	66.41	74.14
2004	71.32	70.34	66.67	74.41
2005	71.76	70.78	67.12	74.83
2006	72.22	71.23	67.69	75.13
2007	72.61	71.64	68.13	75.50
2008	73.03	72.05	68.42	76.05

Source: Annual Statistic of Romania, 2009

The aging parameter for the population in the rural environment has increased from 123 elder people and 100 young people in 2000 to 138 elder people to 100 young people in 2009. This raises an issue for the authorities, that should allocate bigger funds for social insurance and retirement pensions. The phenomenon of population aging is also observed at the E.U. level, where the population of 65 years of age and above holds a weight factor of 15.9% (Eurostat yearbook 2009).

The main contributing factors to the socio-demographical evolution are as following: the birth rate, the death rate and migration (table 2).

The decreased birth rate is one of the main causes of the population reduction, due to the elimination of familiar planning restraint. The birth rate in the rural environment has decreased from 14.3 born alive at 1000 inhabitants in the year 1990 to 10.4 born alive at 1000 inhabitants in the year 2008. In relation to the year 2007, there was recorded a slight increase in the birth rate (table 2).

After 1989, Romania, like other countries in transition, suffered a demographical shock that originates from the depth and the toughness of changes that intervened in the former communist countries. The birth rate decrease was determined, alongside the economical situation, of profound changes in society and a new attitude of the young couple concerning marriage, family and child birth. The Western European model, according to which the young couple decides to have a small number of children, brought onto the world at an advanced age, is beginning to gather way in our country. Actually, we can discuss a change in the child's position within the young couple's economy, as a hierarchy according to priorities. At the present time, the child competes with a well paid career and other assets a young couple can acquire (a living place, a car, vacations, etc.) On the other hand, the costs necessary for raising a child are increasing.

Table 2

Rates of the main demographical indicators (per 1000 inhabitants)

Crt. No.	Year	Born Alive	Death	Natural increase	Marriage	Divorce	Born dead at 1000 born alive	Death at under 1 year of age at 1000 born alive
1	1990	14,3	13,4	0,9	7,5	0,67	6,4	29,7
2	1995	12,3	15,4	-3,1	6,8	0,86	6,1	23,9
3	2000	12,3	14,4	-2,1	5,5	0,80	6,1	20,8
4	2005	10,6	14,9	-4,3	5,0	0,97	6,5	17,9
5	2006	10,3	14,6	-4,3	5,2	0,96	6,0	17,1
6	2007	10,2	14,2	-4,0	8,8	1,06	5,2	14,1
7	2008	10,4	14,3	-3,9	5,4	1,12	5,2	14,0

Source: Romanian Annual Statistics, 2009, <https://statistici.insse.ro>

The average marriage age knows a tendency in increasing, reaching, in 2008, 26.4 years at females and 30.5 years at males. The average age at the first marriage has also increased in the year 2008, thus confirming a postponing tendency in ending the first marriage. The average age at the first marriage was of 24.5 years at females and 28.7 years at men.

The fertility rate (the number of born alive children at 1000 women between 15 and 49 years of age) is also decreasing. If in 2000 the number of born alive children at 1000 women was 58.48, in 2008 it dropped to 47.

In Romania, in 2008, the mother's average age at giving birth (27.1 years) and at giving birth for the first time (25.5 years) has known a slight increase in comparison with the precedent year (27.0 years, respectively 25.3 years), maintaining a tendency of postponing child birth. The women in the rural environment have continued to give birth at a younger age (25.9 years), in comparison with the ones in the urban environment (28.1 years). The inequality between the urban and the rural is also preserved in consideration of the age of women at their first child birth (27.0 in the urban environment and 23.1 in the rural environment).

The death rate has increased from 13.4 deaths at 1000 inhabitants in the year 1990 to 14.3 in 2008, as shown by statistics, but in the last years a slight decrease of the death rate can be observed. This reduction is influenced by the individual's behavioral change, who has become more careful about what he eats and drinks, the time he allocates to resting and adopting a healthier lifestyle. Changes have intervened in the nutrition structure, more and more people reducing the meat's weight factor in favour to vegetable, fruit and dairy products. The possibility of using the latest generation pharmaceuticals, more efficient and with reduced side effects, is another factor that contributed to the death's rate reduction. The cardiovascular progress has dramatically reduced the death rate and has begun to be noticed in Romania.

The large number of deaths among children up to one year old is alarming. Although in comparison with the year 1990 it almost reduced to half, the infantile death rate is sadly maintained at a high value. In 2008, in the rural environment, 14.0 deaths of children up to 1 year old at 1000 born alive were recorded. At the European Union's level, this indicator is 4.7 (Eurostat yearbook 2009). This indicator is the faithful expression of the spiritual and material civilisation degree of the population. At the level of this death rate it can be observed the society's exact capacity of interfering and protecting life at an early age. Almost a quarter of the infantile deaths are caused by respiratory tract diseases. This is an expression of the economical situation, the way of live, the living conditions, the cultural level and the medical assistance. Another quarter of deaths is determined by digestive diseases, which are the expression of a certain economical, social and cultural state. From the data in *table 1* it can be noticed that, in the last years, the infantile death rate has not increased, the tendency being a continuous decrease.

Another aspect that has to be taken in consideration when analysing the demographical situation of rural areas is the internal migration. Excessive industrialization from the communist period is just one of the explanations of the population's migration towards cities. In 1930, over 78% of the country's population lived in the rural environment and in 1985 its weight factor decreased to 50%.

According to statistics, at the present time, 44.9% of Romania's population lives in the rural area. However, in the last year a reverse tendency can be noticed in the drawback of townsfolk towards villages. After 1992, in the context of an increase in urban unemployment, the cost of housing and utilities has grown, starting to form a return current from urban to rural. In 1997, for the first time in Romania's social history, the migration flux from urban to rural was higher than the reverse flux, from rural to urban.

At the level of the year 2008, the number of those whom arrived from the rural area was of 203.306, from which 124.828 come from the urban area, the rest also being from the rural environment. According to statistical data, the persons that establish in the rural area are young people that should be beneficial for the agricultural sector. But it is highly possible that the mass of Romanians that are living abroad is mainly formed from the population that migrated from urban to rural, where they could not make a living and therefore left to other countries.

Another translation for the population decrease is the external migration. Once the borders were opened after 1989, many Romanians went abroad to work. Definitively moved or just working abroad, the phenomenon has known a particular ampleness in the past years. The E.U.'s need for work force is the effect of the birth's rate decrease after the 1960's. The external migration has always been negative in Romania and there are no arguments for anticipating a change in the external migration's dimension anywhere in the near future. The demographical perspective of the external migration embraces many negative aspects and forms a price that must be paid. Statistically speaking, at a national level, eurocommuters are young people: approximately 40% left in the period 1996-2006 and approximately 50% left in the years of the mass exodus in 2002-2006. The proportion of the unmarried population is of 82% among those with ages between 15 and 24 years and of 23% among those with ages between 25 and 29 years. Gone abroad, many of them postpone marriage and implicitly bringing children into the world. The highest danger is that once they get abroad a part of them do not wish to return anymore, making all the efforts to regularize their stay and obtain documents for unlimited indwelling (they even turn to mixed or conventional marriages).

CONCLUSIONS

In the framework of a birth rate that maintains its actual level, the population's decrease will take dramatical dimensions and Romania's

population will reach 18.1 million inhabitants in 2050. Considering the situation in which the general death rate and external migration cannot be controled so that the actual demographical situation is rectified, the only alternative for diminishing the demographical deterioration is through birth rate rectification. In order to achieve this, a variety of factors is needed, alongside the improvement of the economical situation. However, the young couple has changed its behaviour and postpones bringing a child into the world, and also deciding to have fewer children. The number of 18.1 million must be looked upon with circumspection, because migration is not taken into consideration, being impossible to quantify for the forthcoming years. Migration will emphasize the demographical decline. With the actual level of fertility, it is certain that Romania's population will know a dramatic downsize, but in the context of this decrease the population's structure by age is going to deteriorate. From these all the negative evolutions are derived, in chain, in the future. The fertile population will downsize, thus decreasing the number of children born alive. After the cyclity of this mechanism will be established the deterioration could be higher and higher. For diminishing the rythm of the demographical decline the authorities should take a greater interest in finding economical solutions that will encourage the birth rate. There should be a open debate from the political class, specialists, universities, churches and the public opinion concerning the demographical situation.

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