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## Conference Paper

Migratory flows and their demographic and economic importance in the Romanian regions. An analysis with special reference to the North-East and South-East Regions

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**Migratory flows and their demographic and economic importance in the  
Romanian regions. An analysis with special reference to the  
North-East and South-East Regions**

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**Key words: demographic changes, migration, labour market**

**JEL Classification: J 10, J11, J61**

*Abstract*

*The presentation intends to analyse population change in Romania after 1989 in a regional prospective. Absolute population change and the changes in the age structure as well as internal and international migrations are put into relation to the labour market changes.*

*In the last two decades the Romanian regions experienced a decline of fertility and an increase in the share of the working age population. The share of the population 65 years and older is still relatively low. This demographic situation, combined with a weak labour market (low labour force demand) leads to various forms of underemployment of the active population and to high emigration. Romanians are the most numerous EU-immigrants to EU-27 Member States. The demographic and economic importance of these migration flows will be analysed and their mid- and long-term sustainability will be discussed.*

*The demographic outlook for the future decades and the possible consequences for the labour force supply are based on the various scenarios and international and national population projections for Romania at regional level. The steep population decline projected in some of the scenarios could cause considerable challenges for the economic and social situation of the Romanian regions.*

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Romanians represent approximately 19% of the total of people recently exercising freedom of movement within the EU and who have resided in another EU member state during the last years, according to the Communication from the Commission of the European Communities of 18 November 2008. In the same source there is stipulated that the Romanian migrants represent approximately 2.5 % of Romania's active population.

Their main destination country was Spain, destination of over 50% of the Romanians who left their country, followed by Italy (approximately 25%) and by Germany.

At the same time we can observe also an intensification of the phenomenon of immigration in Romania.

Intensity of migration flows depends between other factors, on geographical proximity and linguistic (Italy) and historical ties (for example the existence of a strong German minority in Transylvania, Center and West sides of Romania).

Permanent legal immigration has an opposite way comparing to that of permanent migration: after 1991 migration decreases, and immigration is steadily rising, with the exception of a temporary decline in 2004-2005. The two migration flows tend to equalize in the 2007, the final loss of indigenous population being compensated by definitive immigration through change of address.

The actual extent of migration is difficult to estimate for Romania, the records providing statistical data only for final migration. The official figures for migration reflect only a small fraction of the actual size of the phenomenon. For example, Spain, although it is not among the first destinations of permanent emigration flows is with Italy, the largest receiver of temporary emigration for Romanians.

Many Romanian citizens already emigrated to the EU for work during the past years, which indicates the fact that many of the ones who intended to emigrate have already emigrated and that there is a limited potential for new emigration waves. Taking into consideration the current economic condition, it is possible that a future decrease in the demand for labour force in the EU will reduce immigration and will even lead to the return of some emigrants back to their country, for example Romania.

During the transition period in Romania, the labour force emigration intensified, regardless of the risks that migrant workers are exposed to. Many Romanian professionals (doctors, researchers, IT specialists, nurses) emigrate to the European Union member states (EU-15, EU-25), mainly to Spain and Italy, but also to Canada and to the U.S.A.

From a demographical perspective, this movement is to Romania's disadvantage: on one hand, because it loses a significant number of highly trained professionals, and, on the

other, because of the rather high costs involved in bringing professionals from other countries to occupy certain positions.

Since emigrants are joined very often by their family members, the negative effect of losing working age population is amplified through the loss of future potential working age population (children),

On the other hand, the immediate advantages of the labour force emigration cannot be underestimated:

- emigrants leave vacancies behind or decrease the unemployment rate;
- the increased income of the emigrant population and the remittances lead to an improvement in the standard of living in Romanian regions, to an rise in the building of private homes and in acquisition of appliances and goods to equip them, and to an increase in car purchases.

In Romania, as compared to West European countries, the aging of the population was delayed. The phenomenon of demographic aging of the population is a result of decreased fertility and increased life expectancy. The combined effects of the two processes lead to a reduction in the young population and an increased share in the older population. A continuation, in the near future, of the fertility decrease phenomenon (of the young population share within the total population, respectively) and an increase in number and share of the older population (due to a life expectancy higher than the present one), will lead to an older population larger than the younger one, which situation can be qualified as serious demographic imbalance with effects on the economic situation, as for the example the increase of the old age dependency ratio.

In the period between 1992 and 2002, the impact of the transition and the economical decline lead to a serious reduction in the economic activity and occupation rates, to a steep rise in the unemployment rate and the job safety decreased. During this period, as a “solution” in the fight against unemployment, the number of people on anticipated retirement increased, further (because of a permissive legislation. This lead to an increase by 7.4% in the share of retired people in the inactive population at the 2002 Census of Population and Housing as compared to 1992.

The threefold increase of the inactivity rate with the population of 65 and older, from a 5.5% in 1992 to 15.2% in 2008 intensifies the process of demographic aging of the active population in Romania, under the circumstances that the share of young employed is in a continuously decrease.

The strong internal and external migratory flows of the population after 1989 lead to a massive depopulation of the rural environment, taking into consideration the size of these population flows (especially the younger population) from the rural to the urban, during the first years after the revolution (for example, the number of rural population decreased in the first five years after 1989 with almost 3% in the Romanian Macroregion 2).

As far as the occupied population is concerned, the main shifts in economic characteristics of the active population of age groups are:

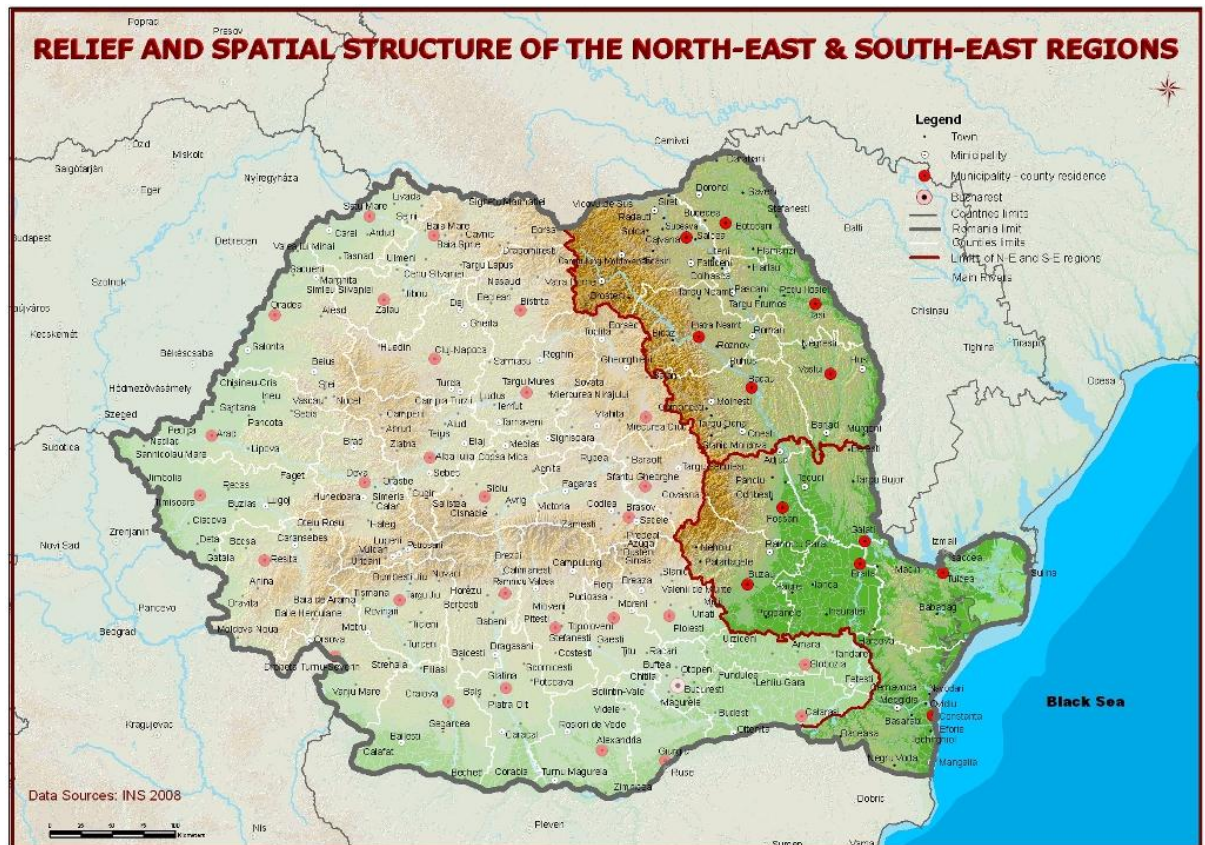
- in agriculture the shares of older employed population (55-64 years, 65 years and older) have higher rates as compared to the other young and adult age groups.
- demographic aging of the occupied population (employed) in the main economic sector, lack of financial resources of the actual land owners, as well as the limited access to irrigation and other innovative related systems, were the major causes why agriculture has faced major difficulties.
- the share of older employed women are higher than the male ones throughout the entire analysed period.

The analysis of the active population according to the level of education shows an increase in the share of economically active and occupied population with higher and average education .

Changes occurred in the structure according to the professional status are significant for the period of economic, social and political transition that Romanian underwent.

All these socio-economic aspects determined a lot of changes also of the demographic situation in the case study area, the Romanian Macroregion 2, which is composed of Nord-Est (Moldova – a former historical province) and Sud-Est Regions.

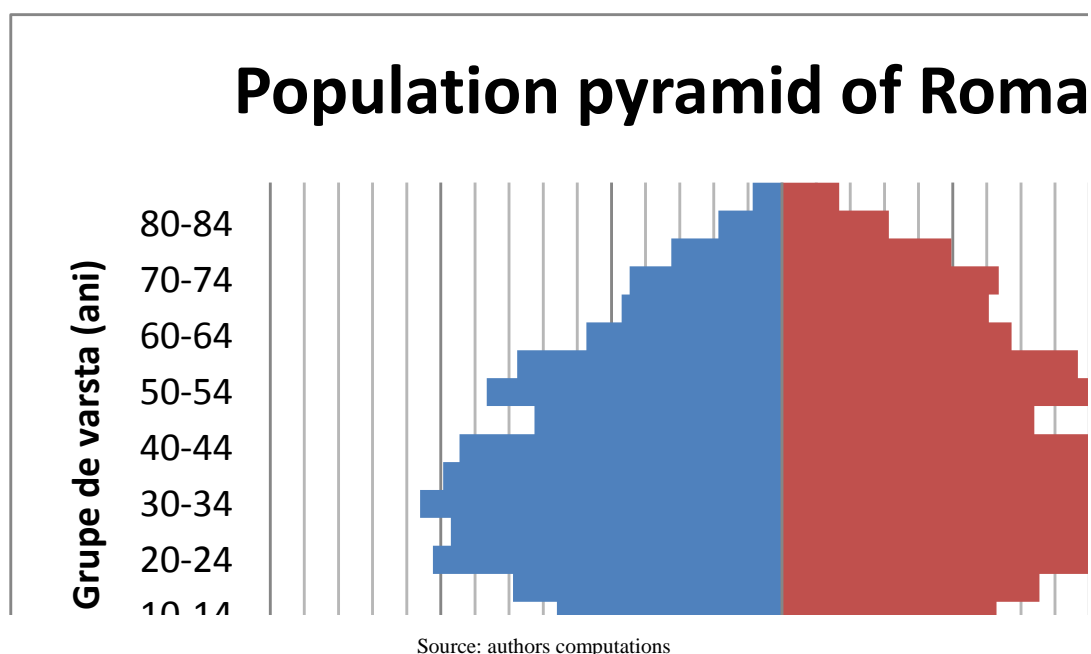
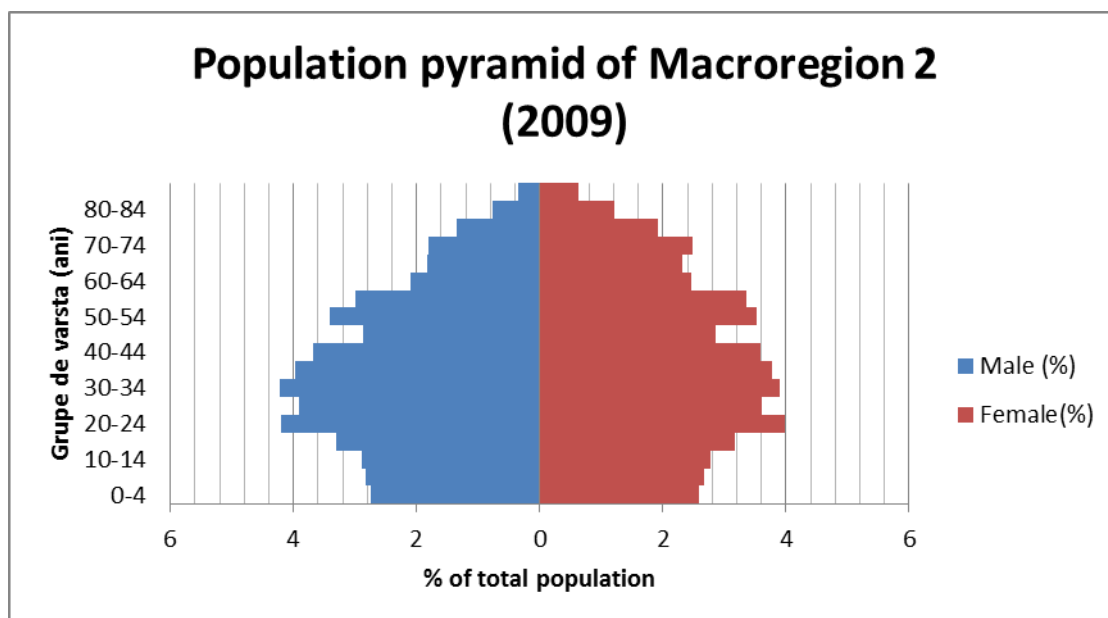
The Macroregion 2 contains all landforms: mountains (appropriate for tourism development), plains (which could offer rich crops with the help of innovative technologies), seaside at Black Sea (245 km) and is crossed by Danube.



In the Macroregion 2 there are 4 from the TOP 10 Romanian cities (Iași, Constanța, Galați, Brăila). The most part of the employed population works in agriculture, which has a long tradition, especially in Sud-Est Region. The land of plains in the south area of Macroregion 2 is suitable for agriculture but its exploitation on small parcels leads to a subsistence agriculture.

Nord-Est Region faces a lot of economic difficulties (over 50% rural population) while Sud-Est Region has a more balanced economic situation, because of the Black Sea and Danube that facilitate the activity of sea and river ports and high tourist flows – to Seaside and Danube Delta. Rhine-Main-Danube Canal is connecting the North Sea to the Black Sea;

Following the general national trend, the population of Macroregion 2 has faced in the last years, mostly a decrease. Regarding the age structure of population in Macroregion 2, we can observe that there are some age categories which had yet an increase generally, as for example the group of population younger than 34 years, the one between 50 and 59 years and the one over 70 years. Another observation would be that the population younger than 34 years in the rural areas of Macroregion 2 has had unfortunately very often a decrease of its number because of an inadequate medical care in most of the cases. Another point which has to be underlined is the fact that at all age categories in the Nord-Est Region the population decreased in the last years.



One of the most discussed indicator could be the fertility rate which has faced a quite dramatic evolution in România and in the Macroregion 2 as well, where its level was from an average fertility of around 60 in '90s to one of around 40 for 1000 inhabitants in 2008. In the Macroregion 2, the fertility rate is mostly higher in the rural area as in the urban one (sometimes it was almost two times higher, as for example 60.6 compared to 32.5 for 1000 inhabitants in 1994). It is also a well known fact that the Nord-Est region has the biggest fertility rate (44.7 for 1000 inhabitants in 2008) from all romanian regions. Some reasons for

this situation are the tradition of large families, level of education, a low level of social assistance (in respect of teenagers assistance), mentality, etc.

The mortality rate in the Macroregion 2 has continuously increased, thus in 2008 it was 11.2 compared with the one in 1990 of 9.5 for 1000 inhabitants . The Nord-Est Region has a lower mortality rate as that of Sud-Est Region. As expected in the rural areas it is much higher as in the urban ones, for example in 2008 it was 13.4 in rural zones compared with 9 for 1000 inhabitants in urban zones.

The Nord-Est Region is the one of the regions with the lowest GDP per capita in Romania and also in the EU. Vaslui County (Nord-Est) has the highest unemployment rate in România. The most developed economic activities are wood processing and tourism in the mountain area of Nord-Est.

The Nord-Est Region as also the Sud-Est Region follow the national trend of population decrease based on a lower birth rate, yet major changes take place through a slow and continuous way in the structure of population per age groups: a lower share of the young population and an increasing share of the adult and the aged population.

Regionally there is a raise of the total population in Nord-Est in the period 1998-2001, followed by a sinusoidal variation during 2002-2008. Surprising is the evolution for the urban-rural segment. Thus, if between 1998-2000 we note a low decrease of urban population compared to the rural one, and in 2001 a pause, 2002 marks a clear decrease of urban population with 8.32% followed by another pause in 2003, a clear raise in 2004, based on converting some large villages in towns, and a low decrease in 2005, followed again by a raise in 2006 and 2008. During the entire period both, the rural population and the urban population decreased as the general trend of romanian population.

From our data, it results that, after 2001, the Nord-Est Region has quite a clear depopulation. The infant mortality rate, although declining in the last years, is still high in 2008 with a value of 11.1 deaths under one year for 1000 inhabitants.

Nord-Est region is a predominantly rural area (in 2004 for example 56,8% of the population is classified as rural), but the urban area has slightly changed its decline in the last years.

Actually a strong contraction of the economy took place in the Nord-Est region, in the last years; the average level of education and professional qualification of the working age population is low; most unemployed have a low level of education and are often lacking professional qualifications.



As the second largest Romanian region, the South East Region covers 35,762 Km<sup>2</sup>, representing 15% of the country's total area, and a similar percentage goes to the share of population.

Sud Est Region has a great economic potential ; it poses 47% of the tourist romanian accomodation capacity and 40,2% of the romanian wine area. After București, Constanța has the biggest number of companies.

In Sud-Est Region there are 4 free zones (from the total national number of 6) –which can be seen as “special development areas” that offer customs and commercial facilities.

The Sud-Est region faces some social difficulties as follows:

- The higher share of the population with ages between 0-14 years old in rural areas, as compared to the one in urban areas, in all the counties in the region, points to the problem of adapting the schools network for initial professional training and of implementing efficient measures to assure the access of this school population category to education and professional training, with a view to providing equal opportunities.
- The high share of population aged between 30-64 years old will lead to an increased demand for continuous training. This represents a major opportunity for school units interested in compensating for the diminishing school population.
- The envisaged increase of the population aged 65 and over, will lead, , to an increased demand in the sector of social and medical assistance, and the education system will have to meet this new reality with a training offer, both through schooling plans and an adapted curricula;
- Ethnic diversity specific to the region requires solutions to provide access to education and professional training and support for the disadvantaged ethnic groups, in particular for the Roma population Sud-Est is a region of a high ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity: Roma population (1.7%), Russian community (Lipovans) (0.9%) – amassed in Tulcea area, Greek community (0.1%), Turkish community (1%) – amassed in Constanța area and a small Tartar community amassed as well in Constanța area.

Demographic migration is another social phenomenon found during the past few years in the Macroregion 2, both in Nord-Est and Sud-Est Regions. It can be spoken about internal and external migration.

The internal migration is a phenomenon, especially among young and adult population (19-49 years), from the rural to the urban areas, being motivated by the living and working conditions provided by urban centres, which leads to an aging of the population in rural areas.

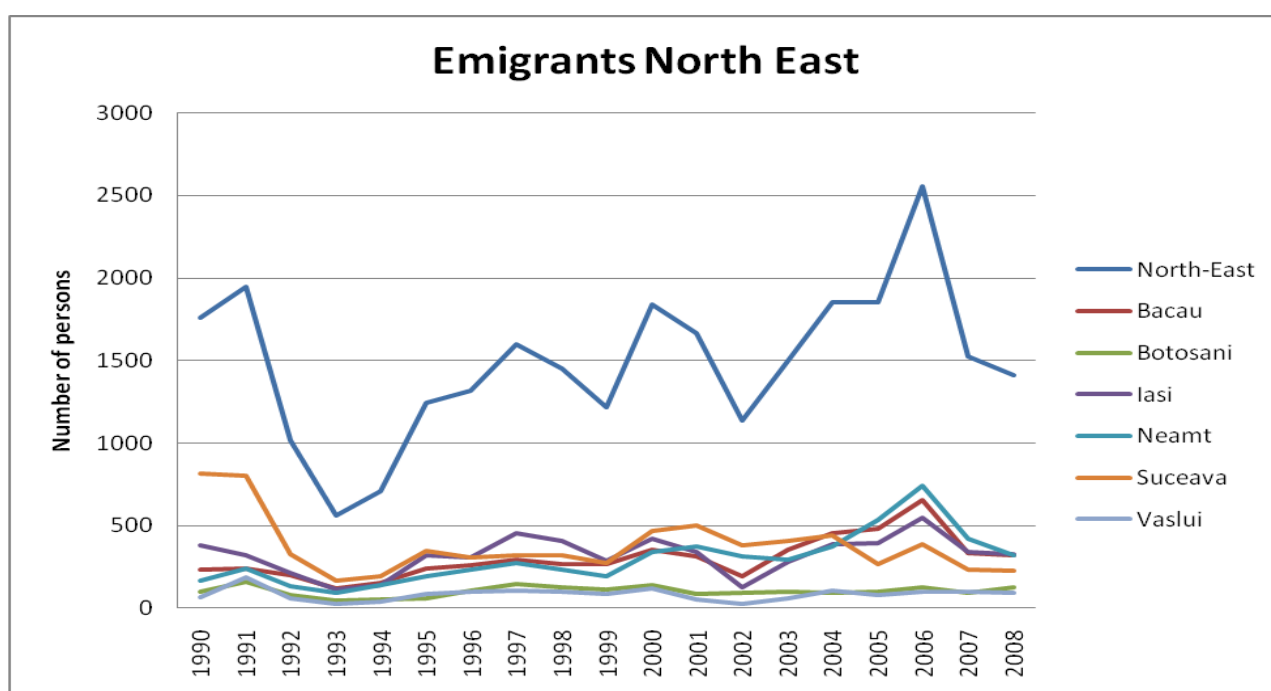
The negative internal migratory balance per counties is caused by a low economic development in Nord-Est Region (Moldova) compared to other regions of the country. Regarding the Sud-Est Region, a positive balance of internal migration, in the total of the population, was recorded in only in Vrancea County. There are significant differences in the distribution on the two residential areas, between the counties in the South East Region, in 2008: counties such as Braila, Constanta, Galati, with a prevalence of population residing in the urban areas and counties such as Buzau, Tulcea and Vrancea, with a prevalence of population residing in the rural areas.

Regarding the external migration, the comparative analysis between the natural growth and the migratory growth (permanent migration) indicates the following:

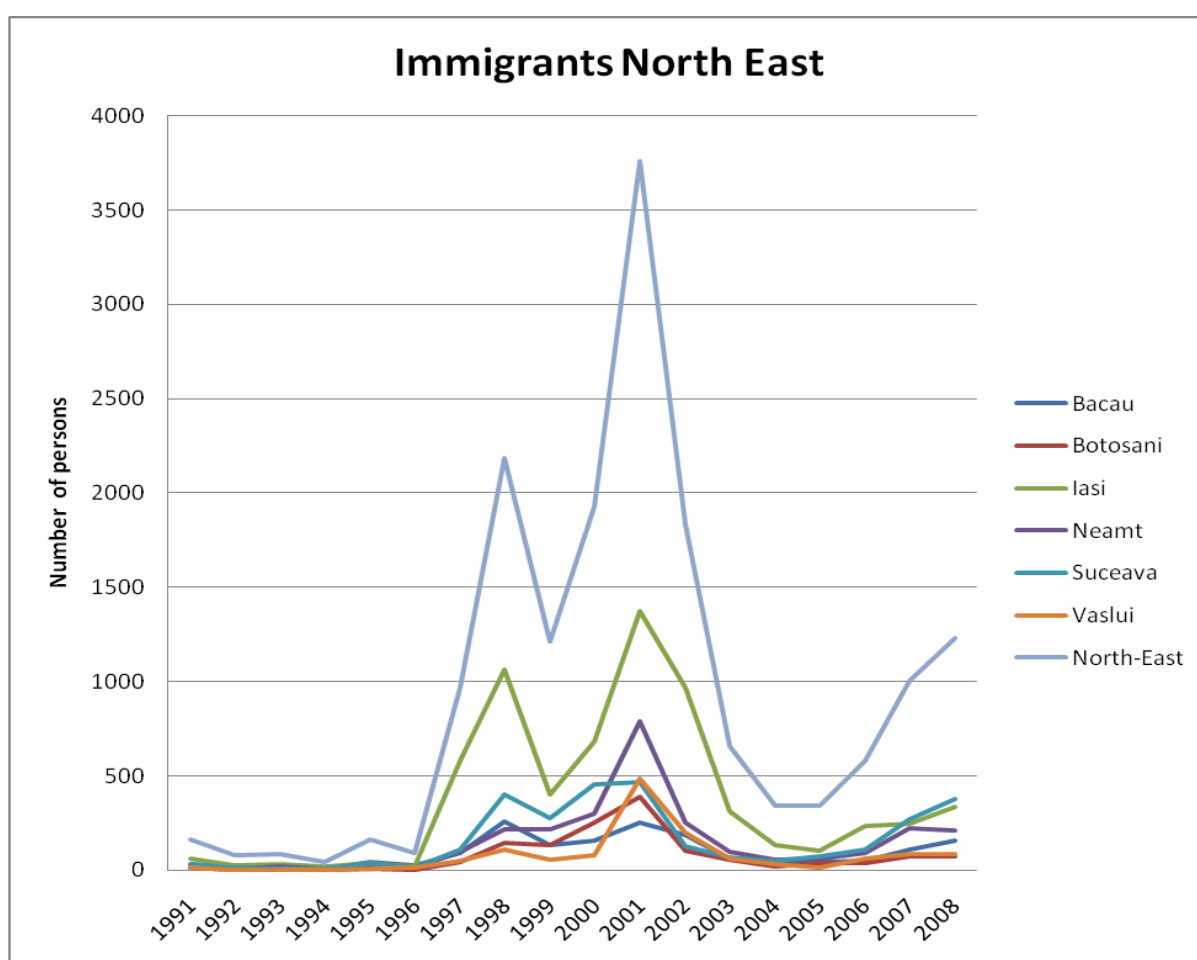
- the total population is declining especially due to the negative dynamics of the natural growth, rather than migratory growth;
- losses cumulated during the last period do not exceed 3% of the population of Romania registered at the last census;
- from a quality perspective, the negative migratory growth is more “expensive” for the society, that the natural growth, as the investments into the human capital (through education, etc.) made by the time of the migration and the related working potential is transferred at no cost to the destination country, adjusting, on long term, the national economy growth and the sustainable human development.

It is notable however that in most cases we’re talking about temporary labour migration. The profile of the Romanian migrant can be basically described by the intention of financial and material gain, through a job abroad, with the stated intention of returning to the extended, traditional family, that the members of all generations are part of.

## Evolution of emigrants and immigrants in North East Region

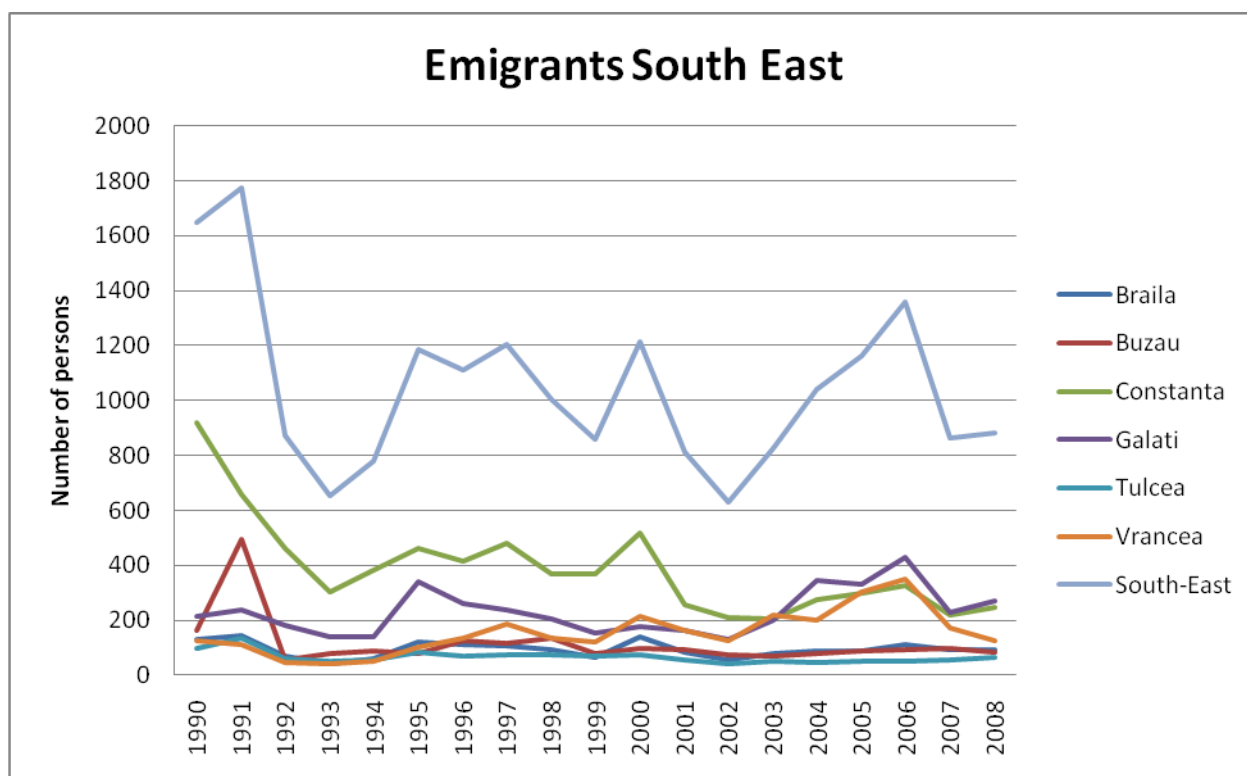


Source: Annual Statistic Record of Romania 1990 - 2009

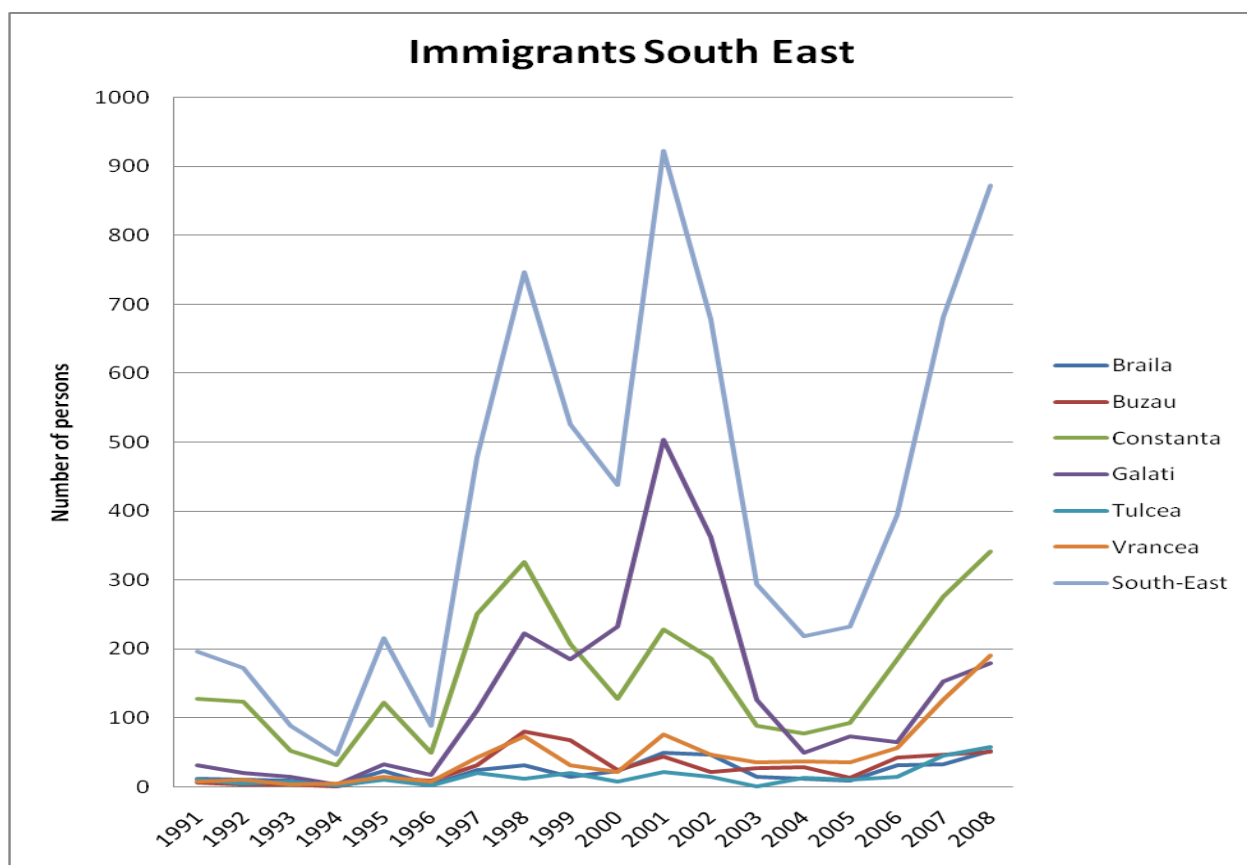


Source: Annual Statistic Record of Romania 1990- 2009

## Evolution in the number of emigrants and immigrants in South East



Source: Annual Statistic Record of Romania 1990 - 2009



Source: Annual Statistic Record of Romania 1990 - 2009

“Which is the direction of Romania’s population<sup>3</sup> is the title of a prestigious international conference, which took place in Sibiu, 2007. By this occasion, optimistic and pessimistic scenarios regarding the evolution of Romania’s population were presented.

This subject is debated not only in our country, but also abroad. Even the United Nations have developed demographic forecasts for Romania in optimistic and pessimistic versions. According to the medium version, the Romanian population will reach approximately 16 Millions in the year 2050. This figure is also found in the forecasts of Professor Ghetau - a well known Romanian specialist in demographical problems.

Regarding the elaborated scenarios of the DEMIFER Project, there are to be mentioned several general notices.

The total number of North-East and South-East migrants will decrease continuously until 2050. It is to underline that the number of migrants to other destinations than Europe will be smaller than the one of migrants who feel attracted to Europe.

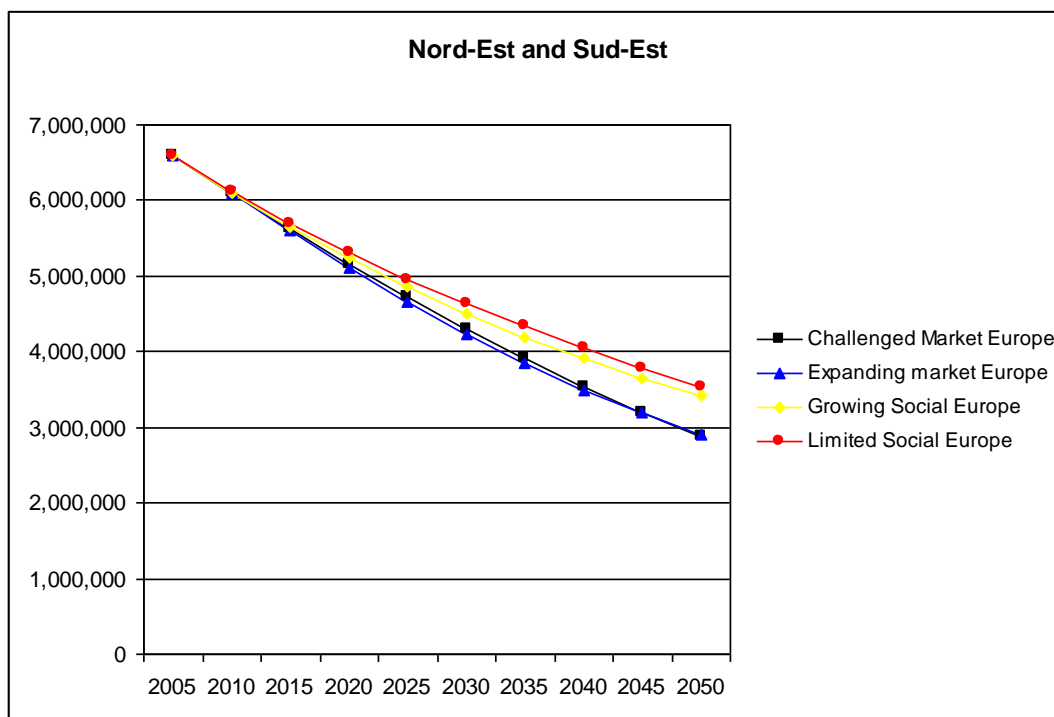
According to the scenarios of all the 4 Policy Scenarios<sup>4</sup>, the number of population based on age group generally follows a descending trend. Exception is the very old age group over 89 years, as a result of life expectancy increase. The labour force evolution follows the same descending trend. The drop of population for the young age group - in the case of all the 4 Policy Scenarios - will determine in both regions the increase of the “old age dependency ratio” and of the “economic old age dependency”. The value of these indicators is higher in the South-East Region, compared to North-East. One of the causes is the migration of the young population to more developed regions of Romania, or west-european countries, especially Italy and Spain.

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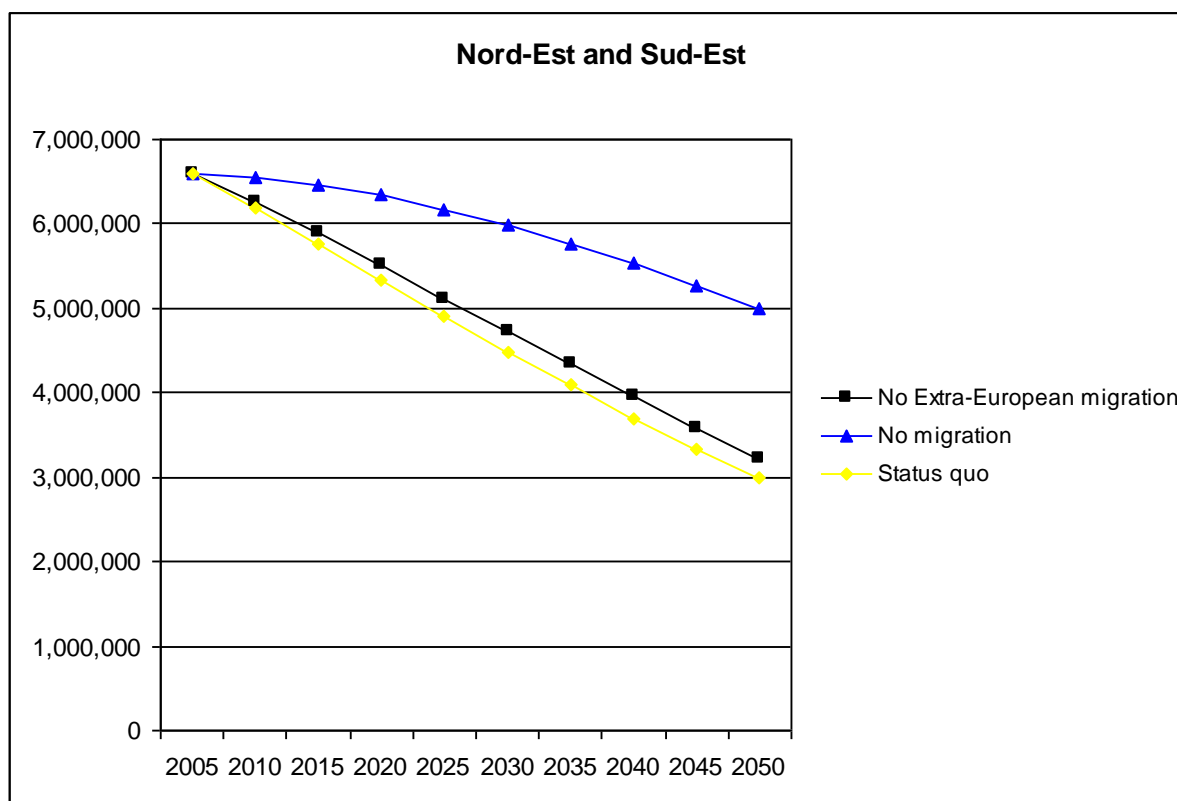
<sup>3</sup> The original title is “Populatia Romaniei incotro ?”

<sup>4</sup> Made during the DEMIFER Project, in which the authors collaborated

## DEMIFER Policy Scenarios



## DEMIFER Reference Scenarios



Source: DEMIFER Project, [http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_AppliedResearch/demifer.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/demifer.html)

As to the economic decline of Romania, it is only the results of the 2011 census that will give a correct image of the magnitude of the decreasing number of population in this country.

According to what professor V. Ghetau said, well known demographer in Romania, from whatever perspective one might look into the future of Romania's population in this century, the only change<sup>5</sup> that could diminish the magnitude of the deterioration of the whole demographic construction is to put into place adequate policies, measures of stimulating birth rate with the employed women, to give allocations (allowances for children, higher allowances for the third child etc).

Considering that the birth rate and fertility are going down and that ageing is gaining ground, the very age structure of Romania's population will continue to change, in the sense that the number and share of young people will diminish (0-14 years) whereas the number and share of the elderly (+60) will go up.

In several decades Romania will no longer be in a relatively good position with the segment of age between 15-59 representing around 60% of the total population but in a rather critical situation with this segment going down below 50%.

The effects of the ageing process on the development of the economic and social life as well as on the future demographic evolution were felt as of 2005 when a smaller number of generations born after 1990 joined the active population (15-64).

As mentioned above, the demographic decline was accentuated after 1990 by the upward trend of the phenomenon of migration.

Some of the most obvious effects of the phenomenon of migration on the Romanian society are: drastic drop in the birth rate, partially depopulated villages, lack of labour force, disrupted families, jeopardizing traditional values (including religious one), the positive effects of the return home, which are slow or not always up to the expectations. According to specialists<sup>6</sup>, emigration of part of the population of Romania seems inevitable. However, this phenomenon should not be seen as the only solution for the development of the country because from various points of view this risks to become a factor of impoverishment.

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<sup>5</sup> Vasile Ghetau, Declinul demografic si viitorul populatiei României, O perspectivă din anul 2007 asupra populatiei României în secolul 21/ The Demographic Decline and the Future of Romania's Population, The perspective of 2007 on the population of Romania in the 21st Century, Editura ALPHA MDN 2007

<sup>6</sup> Confederația Caritas România și Caritas Italiana 2010, Românii din Italia între respingere și acceptare, Editura Idos, Editura Sinnos, Roma

The idea that the migrants could be an interesting manoeuvre for politicians does not seem to be based on the scientific studies that show a poor (non-existing) – political transnationalism of Romanians abroad<sup>7</sup>. (Eve 2008). No programs of NGO-s to support the reintegration in the country had been identified so far. Consequently, instead of being a potential for development, the Romanian migrants risk to be ignored by politicians, marginalized economically and isolated socially.

The return of the Romanian migrants to the country is still a phenomenon of small proportions even in times of the economic crisis. This is due to the uncertain economic situation on the country and to the lack of special measures that the public institutions could have taken for reintegrating the migrants back home. According to international statistics, the likelihood of. The migrants from Spain to come back is higher, since the Spanish economy and labour market of this country have been affected by the serious crisis in all sectors of activity and led to the increase in the unemployment rate locally to 20% and 30% respectively for the Romanian workers.

The impact of the crisis on the Romanian labour force migration materialized in the decrease in the amount of money sent back home by the Romanians working abroad.

On the other hand, the remittance has had a positive effect on Romania (since in some cases it was the only source of income for families) and similar positive effects were also caused by the financial inflows and related investment, in this period of economic recession.

Considering the wide scope effects of this phenomenon on the economy of the host country as well as on the country of origin of the migrants, the specialists of international institutions and of the NGO-s in the field have underlined the need for some measures both in favour of the migrants and of those who come back home, in their country of origin, after a period of emigration. Here are some proposals regarding the Romanian migrants:

- Drafting of policies for credit granting and/or preferential taxes for the migrants that come back to who continue to work abroad and intend to invest in the community of origin; this could generate a higher development in the communities of origin.
- Improvement of the quality of access to consular services of the most popular states of destination

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<sup>7</sup> Eve, M. (2008) Some sociological bases of transnational practices in Italy. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 24(2), pp. 67-90.



-Providing grants for publications, associations, radio stations abroad; conclusion of inter-state agreements that should facilitate these activities for the purpose of strengthening the connection of the Romanian diaspora with the country.

In the context of the socio-economic crisis that has now covered the European space, and not only, consolidation of the decision-making factors of Romania and of the countries of destination of the Romanian migrants is a priority. The only efficient strategies for avoid the serious consequences of the crisis were only the individual ones belonging to the migrants who went for other regions or states of destination, to increased their employability or came back to the country of origin. Consequently, it is essential to draw up strategies that should regulate and secure an efficient management of migration in a joint effort with all the states.

The strong internal and external migratory flows of the population after 1989 lead to a massive depopulation of the rural environment, taking into consideration the size of these population flows (especially the younger population) from the rural to the urban, during the first years after the revolution.

The construction of an Enlarged Europe cannot be accomplished without a consensus with regards to international migration, without drawing up a common policy on migration. Promoting the spirit of EU migration policy involves: analysis of all process steps belonging migration; capitalizing of its advantages; application of effective measures related to – legal migration, human trafficking and asylum application (in Romania was agreed the National Strategy for Immigration in 2007-2013, HG 1122).

Information on actual migratory flows, on their specifics and dynamics, allows the defining and adjustment of balances in the economic and social environment. Migration can (no longer) be considered a spontaneous, unpredictable phenomenon, as circulation of people is determined by various causes: historical, behavioural, socio-economic etc.

In this context, Romania should undertake its role of eastern European Union border, since it is common knowledge that, from a demographic perspective, as well as in view of the economic difficulties, Asia may be considered as the main migratory reservoir for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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