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RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNAL POPULATION MOVEMENT

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Abstract: *According to the possibilities offered by the existing resources, rural development in Romania is still difficult to achieve. The economic-social gaps between the urban and rural areas are among the highest in the EU and relatively at the same amplitude for many years. The recent period, marked by multiple crises (of a sanitary, economic and social nature) has shown that the development of the rural area is reduced, on the one hand due to the economic structure and labor resources inadequate to changes and shocks, and on the other hand due to income inequality, respectively of the low remuneration in agriculture, compared to non-agricultural activities. The demographic developments in recent years, relatively contradictory, flows of young population to certain localities in the rural areas, simultaneously with a more pronounced aging in many other rural areas, require differentiated policies and programs for each area depending on the specific local demographics. The lack of an approach adapted to local demographic developments reduced the effectiveness of rural development programs. The study will highlight the dependence of demographic developments in rural areas on the level of development; in the rural environment of the less developed counties, the aging of the population is accentuated by the emigration of young people. The more developed areas benefit from an influx made up mostly of the young population who have migrated from the urban environment and contribute to the development of the adopted localities. After 2015 the rate of internal migration from urban to rural was high in relation to the flow between rural and urban. For example, in 2020, the peak pandemic year, the migration rate from urban to rural was 12.1 per 1000 inhabitants compared to only 6.2 per 1000 inhabitants the migration rate from rural to urban. The study also highlights the correlation between the specifics of demographic developments and progress in the employment of rural labor resource. In this context, we underline the fact that the incomes of rural households were around 62% of the average income per person in urban households.*

Keywords: rural development, gaps, demographic developments, income, labor force.

JEL classification: J60, O13, R11, R21

INTRODUCTION

The European Commission supports rural areas, to help them become dynamic and sustainable, developing in this sense programs to support member countries in order to achieve rural development objectives such as: knowledge transfer and innovation in rural areas; competitiveness in the field of agriculture through innovation, technology and sustainable management of the forest fund; efficient use of resources and support the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors; and last but not least to promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

On the other hand, the European Partnership for Innovation on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (PEI-AGRI) supports rural development objectives by encouraging innovation in agriculture and rural communities.

According to the European Commission, for a sustainable future, rural development actions need to be able to adapt more easily to current and future challenges such as climate change and the renewal of generations, and at the same time support farmers, sustainability and competitiveness in agriculture.

However, it is important to emphasize that the agricultural sector can play an important role in the economies of many countries, including by ensuring food security and exporting agricultural products. In addition, the industrial sector can be an important driver of economic growth through job creation and technological innovation.

It is important to note that there are many factors that influence economic growth, including government policies, natural resources, the level of investment and exports, education and technological innovation. In addition, different countries and regions may have unique priorities and conditions, which can lead to significant differences in the impact of economic factors.

At the national level, both changes of residence in the rural or urban environment, as well as the salary level, determine significant influences on economic growth.

Labor migration plays a special role in the evolution of the demographic situation and continues to be an important problem in the medium and long term.

Internal migration in Romania is a complex and dynamic process that has been influenced by a number of political, economic and social factors. Prior to 1989, internal migration was heavily controlled by the regime at the time, and movement between towns and villages was limited by the housing allocation regime and labor mobility regulations.

However, after the 1989 Revolution, internal migration in Romania accelerated. In the first years of transition, migration focused mainly on movement from rural areas to cities, as a result of economic restructuring and the closure of some agricultural and industrial enterprises. At the same time, the increase in unemployment and poverty caused a migration of workers from Romania to other European countries.

In recent decades, internal migration in Romania has also been influenced by the process of decentralization and regionalization, which has led to an increase in regional disparities and economic and social inequalities between the different regions of the country (Pîrvu et al, 2022). At the regional level, in the North-West and Bucharest Ilfov regions, internal migration had a positive influence leading to economic growth and contributing especially to the development of rural areas. Thus, in recent years, there has been an increase in migration from poorer regions such as South-West Oltenia to more developed ones, such as Bucharest Ilfov where the average age of the population according to residence in the rural area decreased in 2020 by 0, 2 years compared to the one registered in 2012.

Studies on growth poles in Romania (Ionescu-Heroiu et al, 2014; Burduja et al, 2014) have identified the fact that the distance from developed cities influences the level of development of the administrative-territorial units in the vicinity. Thus, it is estimated that the migrant will opt for the destination locality (referring to the rural area) depending on its distance from the most developed city in the region (Sandu, 2017).

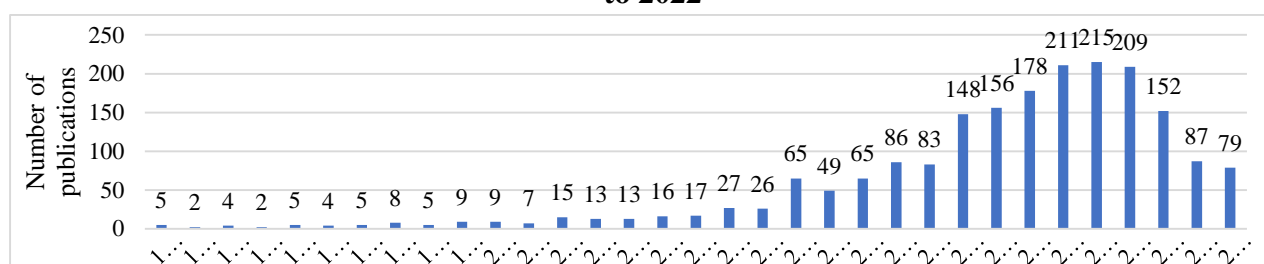
Due to wage inequalities and, sometimes, due to the lack of employment opportunities, the people who chose to migrate from the city to the village mostly kept their jobs, that is why among the main selection criteria of the destination include distance from the city, access to public transport, infrastructure and time spent in traffic.

In this sense, one of the 17 objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development refers to the reduction of inequalities (Objective no. 10) both within countries and between EU member states.

A BRIEF BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF LENS PUBLICATIONS

Over time, researchers have tried to identify links between the development of rural areas and migration. The number of publications between 1990 and 2022 was quite low compared to other themes. According to figure 1, the trend is very irregular, increasing and decreasing and then repeating the pattern at random points. It can only be described in general terms. From 1990 to 2008, interest in the topic was rare, with less than 30 publications being released each year. From 2009 to 2013, there was a newfound interest in the topic, with more than 30 but less than 100 publications coming out every year. From 2014 to 2020, the number of publications exceeded 100, reaching the highest value in 2018. Then the number started to decline from 2019 to 2022.

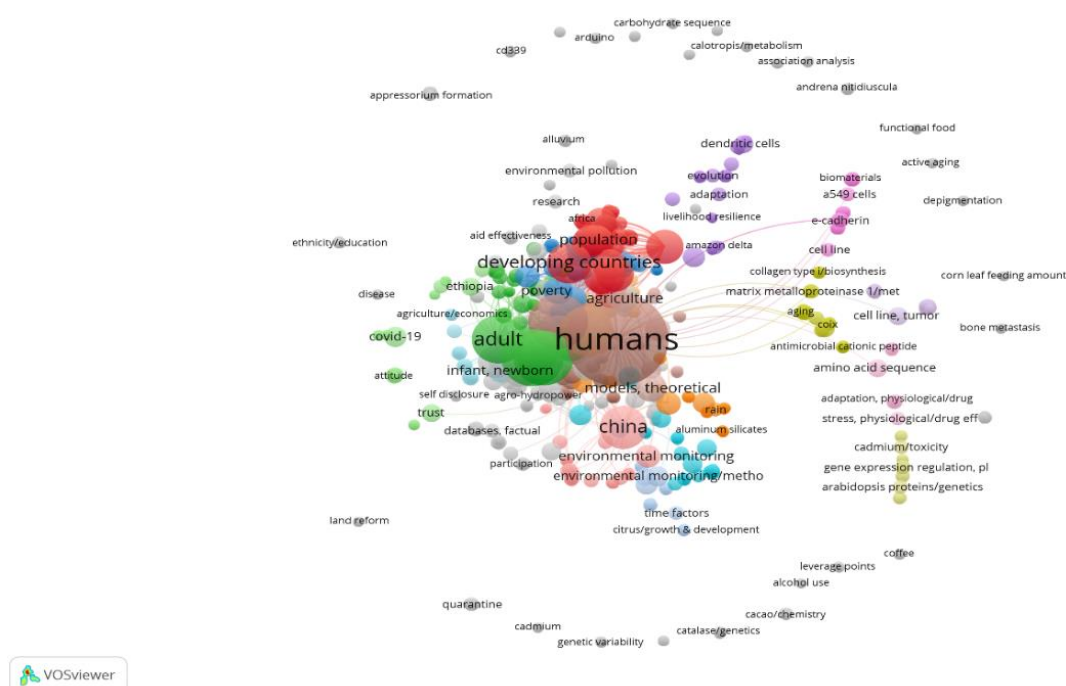
Figure 1. The annual evolution of the number of publications on rural development and migration/internal movement/population movement (excluding animals and birds) from 1990 to 2022



Source: Author's own research based on a Lens database in the Excel program.

Figure 2 shows that the clusters with the most relevant terms are brown, green and red.

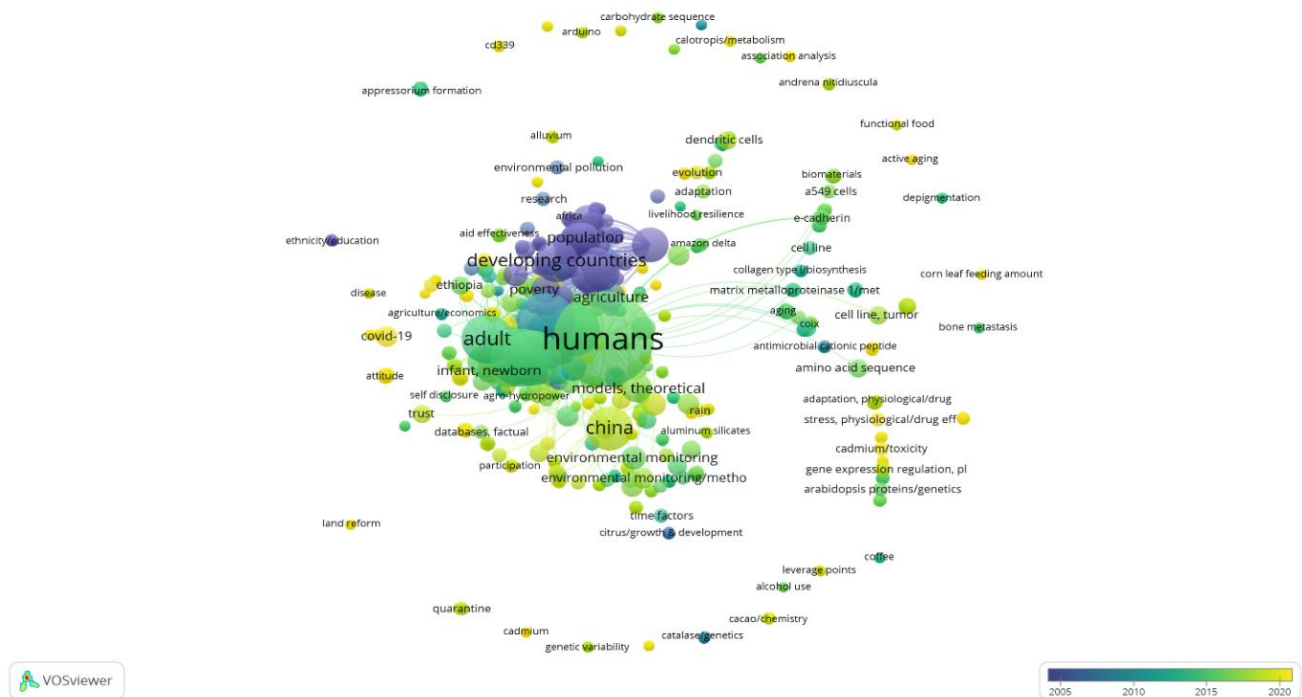
Figure 2. Network map of the most relevant topics, with all 1258 items sorted by clusters



Source: Author's own research based on Lens in VOSviewer.

According to Figure 3, the most relevant subtopics appear in the publications released from 2015 to 2020, while the least relevant appear in the publications released from 2005 to 2010.

Figure 3. Network map of the most relevant topics, with all 1258 items sorted by year



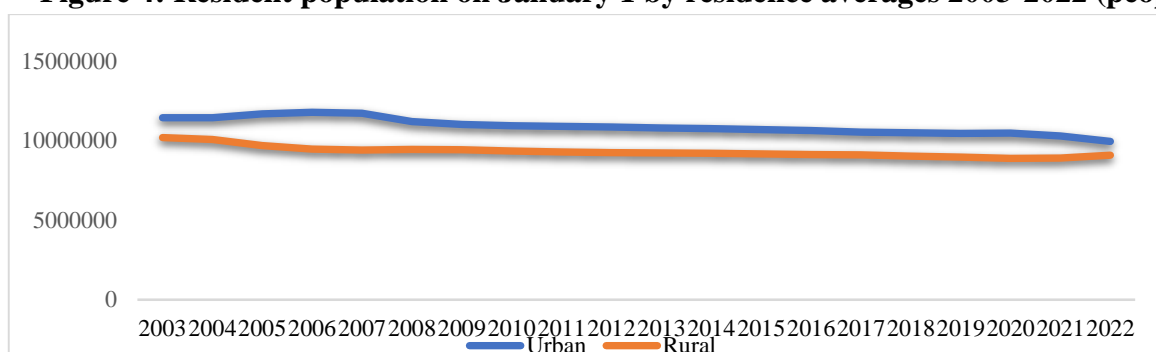
Source: Author's own research based on Lens in VOSviewer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The population by residence in Romania has changed significantly over time. In the 1990s, with the transition to the market economy and the integration into the European Union, there were significant changes in the structure of the population by residence. Although the urban population continued to grow, there was also a significant migration of people from the cities back to the countryside (Sandu, 2018). This was largely caused by economic problems in the cities and rising unemployment.

In general, Romania went through several phases of economic and social development, which significantly influenced the structure of the population by residence (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Resident population on January 1 by residence averages 2003-2022 (people)



Source: INS data.

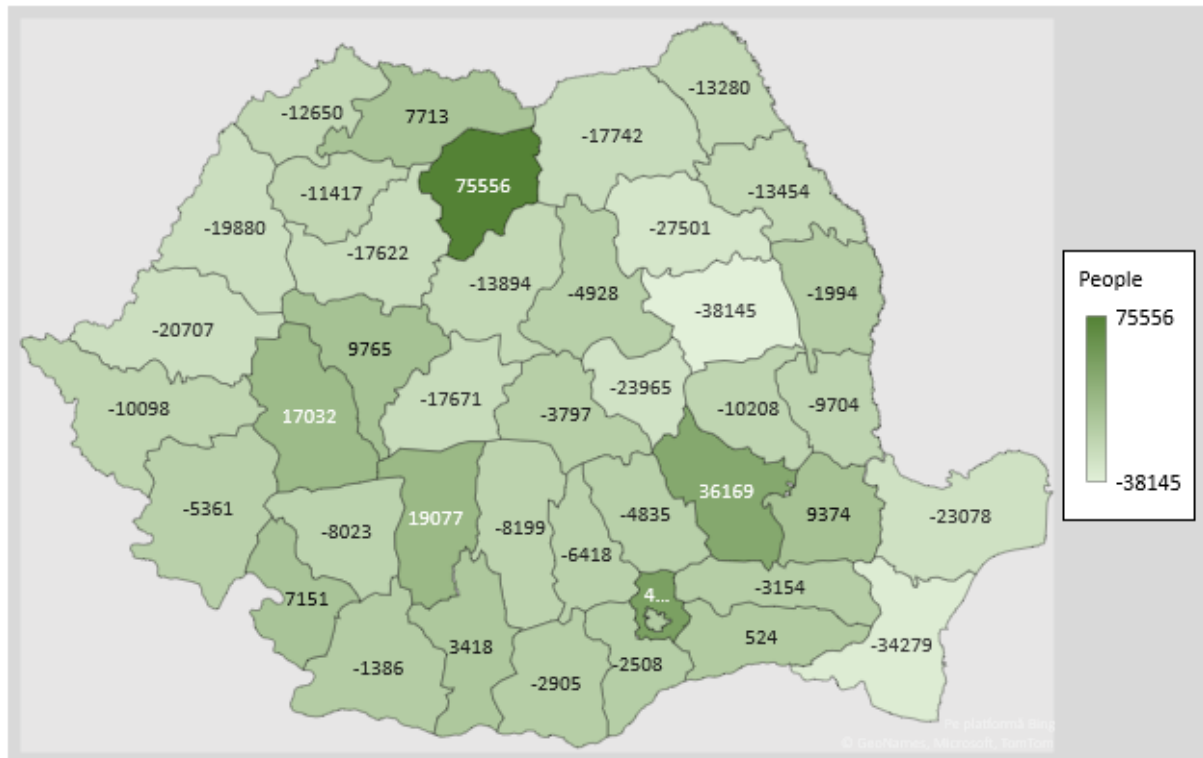
The difference between the population resident in the urban environment between 2003 and 2022 is over 1.47 million people, while in the rural environment it is 1.11 million people, with over 0.3 million people less than in the urban environment.

If in 2003 the difference between the urban and rural population is more than 1.24 million people, while in 2022 this difference is reduced substantially, reaching 0.87 million people, a fact due among other things to the internal movement of the population dominated by the desire to live in the village.

The average age of the resident population increased in 2021 compared to the values recorded in 2012 at the level of the entire country, by residence, but the biggest differences are found in the urban environment.

The number of resident population in the counties has changed over time (Figure 5), influenced among others by economic reasons. Economic development can often lead to an increase in the number of inhabitants, while economic decline can lead to a decrease in population. Intra-county migration has the highest proportions, in counties undergoing economic expansion through the emergence and development of economic growth poles that attract labor from less economically developed counties.

Figure 5: The balance of the resident population by county in 2022 compared to 2012 (people)



Source: Author's calculations based on INS data.

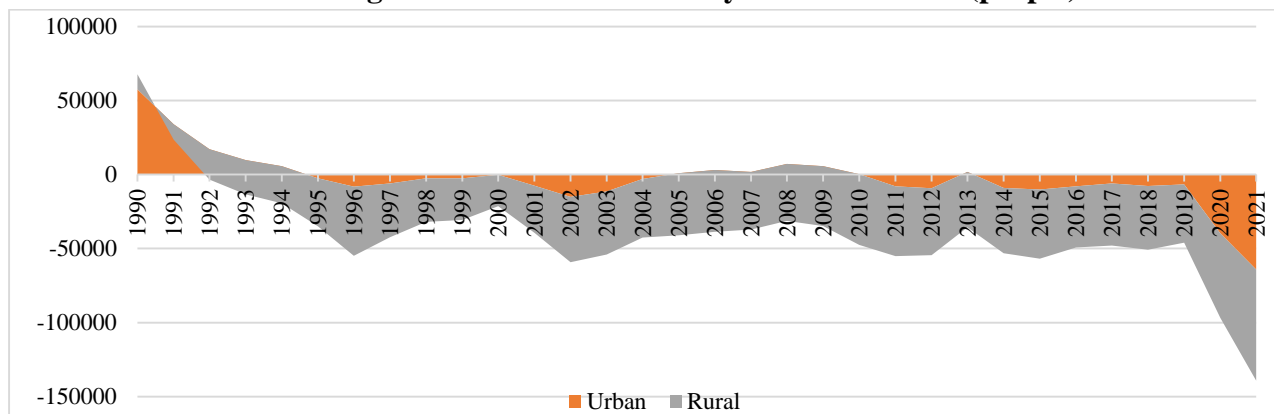
At the level of 2022, the resident population of counties such as Ilfov, Cluj and Timiș has increased compared to 2012, while on the opposite side are the counties of Teleorman and Olt whose population has decreased by over 34,000 people.

Natural population decline has much more complex causal factors and mechanisms than migration, with economic, social, cultural, medical and environmental origins, factors and mechanisms that shape population birth and death rates over time.

In recent decades, the birth rate has steadily declined while life expectancy has increased, resulting in an aging population. This phenomenon is caused by several factors, such as urbanization, migration, increasing education levels, changing values and lifestyles.

Starting from 1992 until 2021, our country registered a negative natural increase (Figure 6), caused by the low number of births and the high number of deaths, although over time solutions have been identified in order to treat diseases that often led to high mortality (INS, 2012). In 1990, Romania had a positive natural increase of over 67,000 people, but over 30 years later, in 2021, it has a negative value of approximately 139,000 thousand people.

Figure 6: Natural increase by residential area (people)



Source: INS data.

Another important cause of the decrease in natural growth is the fact that the number of families with only one child has increased significantly. Many parents choose to have only one child for financial reasons or to focus more of their attention and resources on raising and educating that child. In addition, women choose to have children later in life, which can also affect fertility.

In contrast to the mortality rate that was higher in rural than in urban areas, in the period 1990-2020, the birth rate was lower in urban areas compared to the value recorded in rural areas.

Due to the emigration of mainly young people of working age, the aging process in certain areas of the country is accelerated. As a result, demographic decline, especially among the young population, can lead to lower incomes and higher poverty rates, with a negative impact on living standards.

Both external migration and internal population movement (from village to city) have contributed over time to the depopulation of the rural environment. The socio-economic impact of emigration, especially of temporary migration contributes to the massive depopulation and reduction of the resident population due to the large number of people who choose to leave the country for at least 12 months, without knowing when and if they will return.

In some regions there is a higher rate of urban-rural migration than in others due to the short distance to the nearest city, developed infrastructure, etc., which allows people to have access to jobs, educational opportunities and an environment more culturally diverse. The evolution of the population in the Bucharest-Ilfov region does not fit into the general trend. According to INS data, in the period 2007-2021, the share of people living in rural areas in this region increased, a fact due to the trend of increasing the number of people from rural areas and not necessarily the decrease in the number of people from urban areas. At the level of 2021, the share of the urban population in the total

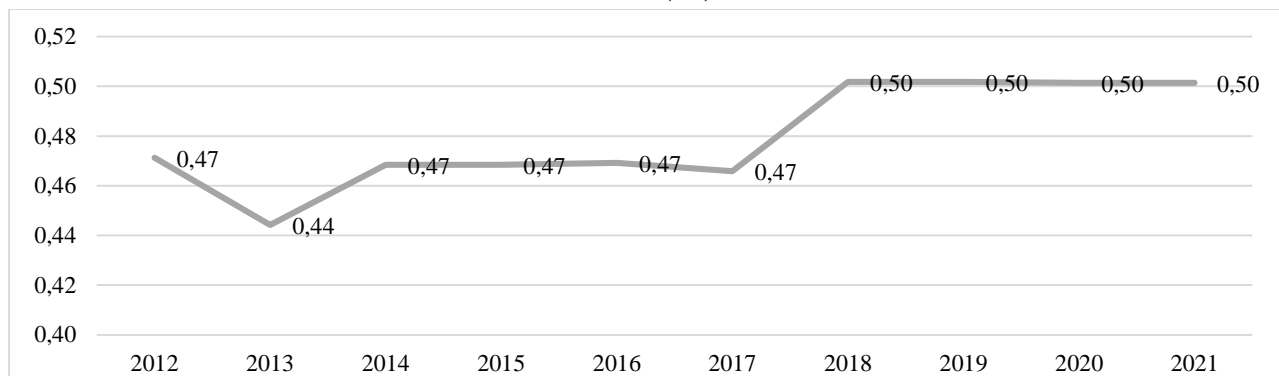
resident population was approximately 88%, while the share of the population living in this environment exceeded 90%.

In general, rural-urban migration can be associated with greater accessibility to jobs and services, which can lead to increased productivity and income. Also, better wages can lead to a resizing of consumption and investments, contributing to economic growth.

In counties such as Bacau, Iasi, Vaslui, Braila, Constanta, Galati, Alba, Bistrita-Nasaud, Covasna located in the regions where the migration processes were the most intense in the last 20 years, there was a greater migration trend in among young women than among men, which led to deficits in the female population. The departure of these young women from the villages is due to the lack of jobs for women and the lack of age-specific services and facilities.

Although the share of the rural resident population in the total population (in 2003 – 47%, 2012 – 46%, 2021 – 46%) is lower than that of the urban environment, the number of temporary emigrants from the rural environment generally has close values from those in the urban environment (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Share of temporary emigrants from rural areas in total temporary emigrants 2012-2021 (%)



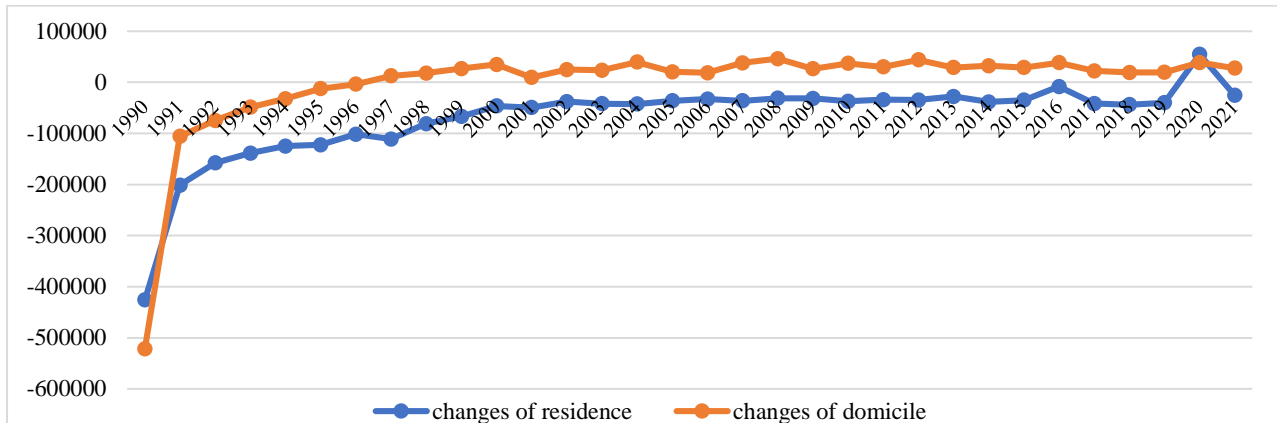
Source: Author's calculations based on INS data.

It can be said that the evolution of internal mobility in Romania in the period 1990-2020 was marked by significant transformations, generally caused by the economic and social changes that took place during this period (Pîrvu et al., 2022).

In the early years after the 1989 Revolution, there was a significant movement of the population from rural to urban areas, primarily due to the economic and social changes that occurred during this period. With market liberalization and privatization of state-owned enterprises, many of them were closed or restructured, leading to job losses in rural areas. At the same time, the opportunities for employment and personal development in the cities attracted people like a magnet.

However, since the 1995s, the internal migration trend has changed and an intensification of urban-rural migration flows has begun to be observed. The shift to urban-rural migration has had significant implications for both urban and rural areas. Urban areas have had to adapt to a declining population and a changing economic landscape, while rural areas have seen an influx of new residents and a shift to service-based industries. This trend has been influenced by a number of factors, including rising costs of living in cities, financial constraints, job shortages and technological developments in recent years that have allowed people to work from home or in rural areas (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Balance of changes of residence and domicile in rural areas 1990-2021 (people)



Source: INS data.

The cause that contributed to the imprinting of the growth trend was, mainly, the cessation of migration to the cities and even the increase of migration to the countryside. Between 1991 and 1997, the number of people who left the city and settled in the countryside increased 3 times. After 1995, the balance became positive in favor of rural areas.

In general, it is a return of the urban population that initially migrated from the countryside, which is not due to the increase in the quality of life in the countryside, but is the consequence of the difficulties faced by the people laid off by the restructuring of the urban economy (Dona et al, 2005).

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected society at different levels, and beyond the health aspect, it has produced important economic and social effects that vary from one country to another. Although the scale and complexity of the true consequences will be known in time, according to studies to date, the dual health and economic crisis has led to an explosion in unemployment, economic uncertainty (by shrinking business activity and disrupting supply chains) and deepening inequalities social, gender or ethnic (Copley et al, 2020; Lambert et al, 2020; Reichelt et al. 2020; CE, 2020), a fact that contributed to the increase in the number of people who chose to establish their domicile and especially their residence in the countryside.

At the beginning of the 90s, most settlements in rural areas (except for the group of people under 15) were registered for the 20-24 age group, a fact that contributed to the growth and rejuvenation of labor resources in rural areas, constituting an opportunity for the development of the rural economy, however, over time, this trend changed, so that, in 2020, the highest values were recorded for the age groups 25-29 years, respectively 30-34 years.

Thus, we can conclude that there is a tendency of young people to postpone this decision. The change can be explained by the fact that young people prefer to improve their level of education and find a job. In addition, there are other factors that have contributed to this change, such as the rising costs of buying a property or purchasing a motor vehicle.

As a result, it is extremely important to address labor resource issues and plan for long-term labor resource requirements, as these are essential to ensure a skilled and prepared workforce for current and future labor market needs (Agapiou et al., 1995).

At the same time, salary income differs according to forms of ownership, categories of employees, activities of the national economy, sexes and residential areas. In general, rural earnings are lower than in urban areas and are seen as a barrier to the rural labor market (Monk & Hodge, 1995), as they limit the incomes of those working in this environment and may lead to a reorientation of the population to better paying jobs in nearby cities and may even cause out-migration for work.

The evolution of the population is one of the most frequently encountered subjects in the specialized literature when reference is made to the rural area. In order to facilitate the repopulation of villages and to prevent the loss of labor in favor of developed countries, it is necessary to create employment opportunities for the population in villages and communes.

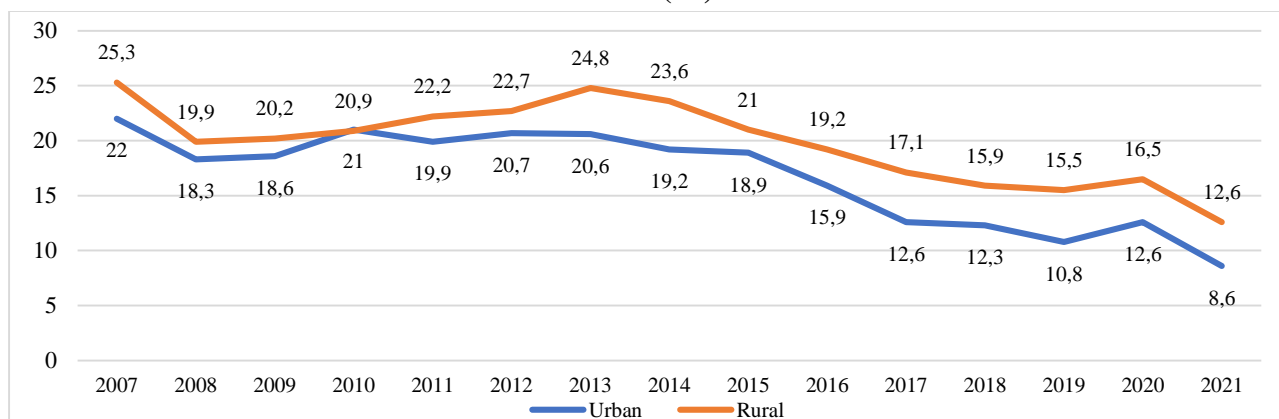
A significant part of the population in rural areas, especially in areas further away from large cities, obtains low incomes, an aspect that has led over time to the migration from the village to the city or even the migration out of the country of the young workforce, situation in which the share of emigrants between the ages of 15-45 in the total of emigrants of working age was over 75% in the period 2012-2019 (Oprea et al, 2021).

In residential areas, a trend of rural population growth is observed, but many rural areas are still facing the phenomenon of depopulation due to poverty and lack of opportunities. At the same time, there is a decrease in the number of people active in the labor market, which has the effect of reducing the number of people who produce income to support the country's economy.

Poverty is the situation in which those people find themselves whose incomes are so low that it is impossible for them to reach a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live, face multiple disadvantages related to unemployment, low incomes, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to access to education, culture, sports and leisure.

In rural areas there is a greater number of households that face difficulties in meeting current expenses than in urban areas (Figure 5). This is due to several factors, among which we specify: the low level of income, which in many cases is below the national average; the lack of alternative sources of income, such as those offered by the informal economy or rural tourism; limited access to services and infrastructure, which can lead to higher costs in certain areas (such as transport or utilities); youth and labor migration, which can reduce the number of people contributing to rural household income.

Figure 5: The structure of the facing households with great difficulty current expenses 2007-2021 (%)



Source: INS data.

These problems can be amplified in the case of households located in disadvantaged or geographically isolated areas. In these cases, there is a need for public policies that support the economic and social development of the rural environment, as well as the creation of new sources of income and jobs.

In the context of the analysis of possible alternatives for the development of rural areas, many researchers highlight the importance of tourism in these areas (Haller, 2010) with the help of which the local population can have access to new jobs and, as a result, to additional sources of

household income. On the other hand, in addition to the economic effects, over time, social effects have also been identified due to the interaction with other people and the increase in the level of education as a result of the graduation of some forms of professional training for adults.

The main objective of rural tourism is the revitalization and development of Romanian villages by creating new jobs in rural areas. With proper financing, the development of rural tourism can bring direct benefits to rural communities, by creating economic and social opportunities that operate in a balanced, integrated and sustainable way, which justifies the interest in its development as an economic branch.

In order to repopulate and at the same time develop rural areas, it is necessary to increase the level of well-being which could be achieved through: stopping the migration of the population from the village to the city, by creating alternatives that motivate their existence and stimulate their action initiative to ensure the necessities of life; combating poverty; stimulation and diversification of services; ensuring minimum living conditions for the rural population compared to the urban population; the right to a better life, to health protection, education and social protection.

The sustainable development of rural regions must take into account the finding of viable solutions for the multitude of problems identified on a social level, based on the rural infrastructure that allows and outlines a minimum of comfort for the members of a community.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, population decline caused by natural increase and negative migratory increase can have a significant impact on the economy and society. For the sustainable development of rural areas, it should find solutions for many problems identified in the socioeconomic area, based on infrastructure and services that allow a minimum of comfort for the members of a community.

A proper approach to workforce planning can help avoid skills shortages and shortages of skilled personnel, which can lead to problems in terms of productivity, competitiveness and economic growth. Therefore, proper workforce planning can ensure better opportunities for employees and business people and contribute to a healthier and more sustainable economy in the long run.

Also, by training and retraining employees, companies can be more flexible in adapting to changes in the labor market and find solutions to skills shortages and lack of qualified personnel. This can include investing in training and development programs that can help employees develop their skills and improve their chances of finding a job.

In conclusion, proper labor resource planning is essential for a healthy and sustainable economy in the long run. Companies should invest in employee training and reskilling to build a skilled and prepared workforce to meet the demands of an increasingly complex and diverse labor market.

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