

Is Romania in a social and economic crisis caused by emigration? The new policy of the Romanian state on migration

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Abstract

Romania is a major labor force exporter, especially for other European Union states. Starting with 1990, more than three and a half million people left Romania, almost a quarter of the population of this state. The Romanian Government has witnessed this phenomenon for many years, often seeing it as a positive phenomenon, although experts in the field have warned on the devastating effects of the phenomenon on long-term. The presentation focuses on answering a question: Is Romania in a social and economic crisis caused by emigration? Analyzing the socio-economic situation, the answer is undoubtedly "Yes". The effects are devastating: demographic decline, decrease of workforce, emigration of doctors and highly qualified specialists, children left home without protection and many others. In this context, in the last three years, the Romanian state has begun to apply an aggressive policy to attract back the Romanian emigrants and to fill the labor market deficit with workers from other countries.

Keywords: *emigration; immigration; Romania; migration policy.*

1. On the external migration of the Romanians and the effects on the internal labor market

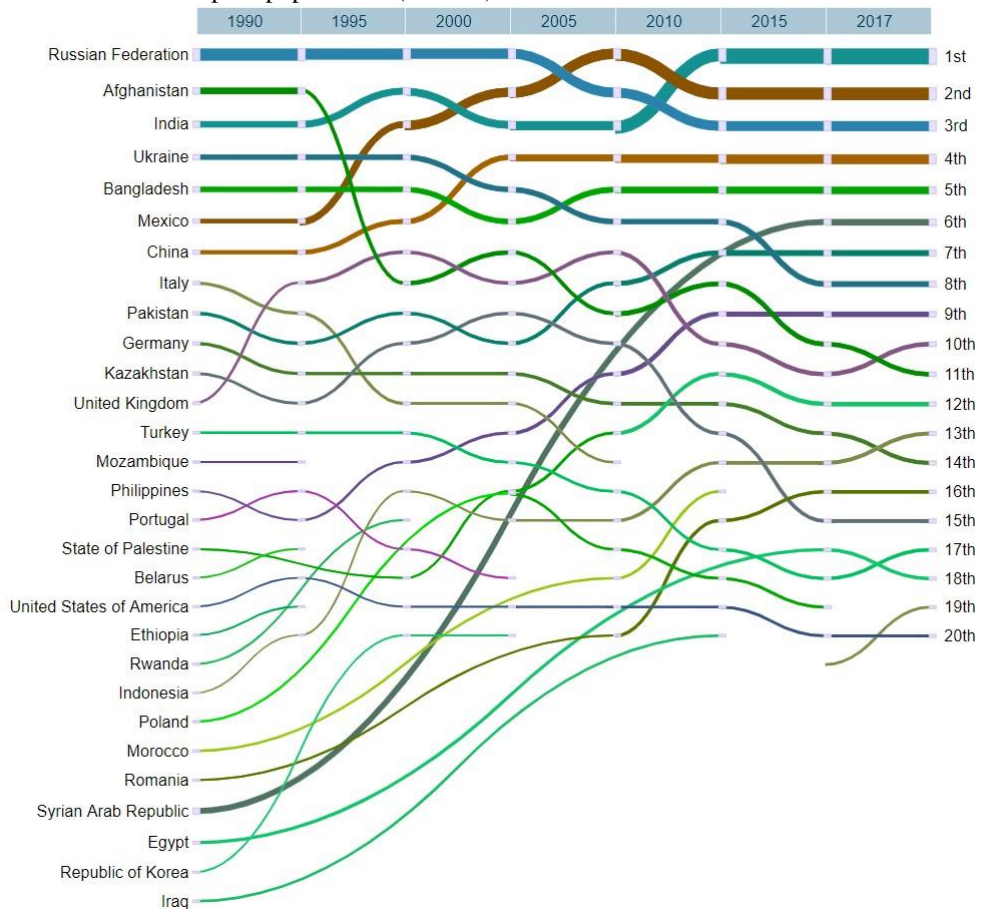
The external migration of the Romanians is a phenomenon that has grown since the Revolution of 1989. In the thirty years that have passed since the fall of the communist regime and the establishment of democracy, the Romanians began to emigrate in increasing numbers. In different stages we find different preferred destinations for the Romanians, as well as different migratory behaviors.

In the period 1990-2006, migration is primarily based on migration networks (a person arriving in a particular destination country facilitates the arrival of others known in that country), is circulatory (most emigrants come and depart regularly from the destination country returning in Romania) and temporary. Moreover, in the first fifteen years after the revolution, most of the emigrants are those without higher education, who were employed in the secondary sector of the workforce (housekeeping, cleaning, agriculture, construction). We find in this period different states preferred by Romanians, as countries of destination. Initially, it was Israel, Turkey, Hungary and Germany, then Italy, Germany and Hungary, and finally, in the years 2002-2006, Romanians migrated massively to Italy and Spain (Fundatia pentru o Societate Deschisa 2016: pp. 18-19; Ilie 2014: p. 66).

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After 2007, with the accession of Romania to the European Union, there is a major change in the typology of migration. Of course, as the easy access to the European labor market and the facilitation of the conditions for mobility and employment, increased the flow of migrants in the European countries (Porumbescu 2018; Ilie Goga 2014). We are mainly talking about a migration that tends to be long-lasting and so in many cases it becomes permanent (Ilie: 2013) and we are talking more about amplifying the phenomenon of brain migration, migration of the highly skilled workforce, the so-called "brain drain". Countries of destination preferred by Romanians now, include France, Great Britain and northern European countries, such as Germany, Benelux, Denmark and the Scandinavian countries. Thus, in 2019, according to the corroborated statistical data, we find around three and a half million Romanian emigrants outside the country's borders (Ilie Goga 2019: pp. 90-91). According to United Nation. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in 2017 there were 3.6 million Romanian emigrants (UN DESA 2017), and Romania ranks 16th among the "top 20 countries or areas of origin in the world with the largest diaspora populations" (UN DESA 2017), as we can notice in figure no. 1.

Figure no. 1. Romania among the "twenty countries or areas of origin with the largest diaspora populations (milions)" - Rank 16th with 3.6 million



Source: UN DESA (2017) "Twenty countries or areas of origin with the largest diaspora populations"

We observe the critical situation of our country, from a population of 19.5 million inhabitants (NIS 2018a) we have 3.6 emigrants, gathered in the last three decades. And the Romanians' emigration plans do not stop. In a survey conducted by Gallup Word Poll in 2010-2015, it appears that 3.4% of the Romanian respondents surveyed expressed their willingness to move permanently to another state in the next 12 months (Gallup 2015 apud Migration Data Portal 2019). The social and economic effects are devastating: demographic decline (Niță 2016; Niță and Ilie Goga 2014), a deep deficit in the labor market (Motoi 2019: p. 8), with about a million people (Hot News 2018) in the secondary and primary sectors, the pension system is affected, we are witnessing a continuing depopulation of rural areas, and an accelerated aging correlated with declining birth rates. Professor Vasile Ghețau predicted that by 2050, Romania will lose over 4 million inhabitants, and for 100 active people there will be 145 inactive people, with 29 more than in 2005 (Ghețau 2007: p.17).

The positive side of external migration, as it was exposed by past governments of Romania, came from the fact that we are reducing the unemployment rate by exporting it, and developing the country by means of remittances. It seems that the only thing favorable at this moment in Romania, is the migrant remittance inflows. Thus, according to World Bank, in 2018, the "personal remittances received" (as % of GDP) was 2.2% and having a gross value of 5,244.91 (US\$ million) (World Bank 2019).

Table no. 1 "Migrant remittance inflows (US\$ million)".

Romania 1995-2018					
Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Migrant remittance inflows (US\$ million)	11	9	18	16	49
Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Migrant remittance inflows (US\$ million)	96	96	116	143	124
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Migrant remittance inflows (US\$ million)	132	952	1,160	1,624	1,702
Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Migrant remittance inflows (US\$ million)	682	641	694	733	3,519
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Migrant remittance inflows (US\$ million)	3,381	3,085	3,489	4,299	5,245

Source: World Bank (2019) "Migration and Remittances Data. Annual Remittances Data. 2019"

So we see an increase in GDP, along with the remittances (Puglisi and Șerban 2019). The question that arises now is the following: How long will this "advantage" persist? With the increase in the number of Romanians who have permanently left their origin country to relocate to their destination countries, it is estimated that remittances will also decrease. So, we will have to balance all the long-term disadvantages of the

Romanians' external migration with the benefits of remittances. Surely the answer is that over the next three decades the country will be in a real economic and financial crisis and the effects we see now will be alarmingly amplified. We notice that we will have a much diminished value of remittances, an aging population, the pension system far outweighed by the contributory-pension ratio and a labor market with a major staff shortage.

2. The new policy of the Romanian state on emigration and immigration

The situation outlined above, with all its negative consequences, has been an issue on which experts in the area of migration have revealed in the past, but the Romanian executive did not have the desire to listen and act accordingly, being satisfied with the short-term effects and completely ignoring the long-term effects. There was a complete lack of migration policies in our country, until the executive and legislative powers, facing some serious problems, had to act. Also, the emigration intentions is a problem that could "focus the attention of policymakers on developments related to migration" (Tjaden, Auer and Laczko 2019: p. 38) so they could develop action lines. In the following section, we will present some of the actions carried out in recent years by the Romanian government as integral parts of an emigration and immigration policy that is beginning to emerge.

Firstly, the migration of the medical staff has profoundly affected the Romanian health system. According to the statements of the Romanian Health Minister, "43,000 doctors left the country in the period 2007-2016, and the loss is even higher, given that the costs of the 6 years of faculty amounted to about 770 million euros. Hospitals face a major shortage of staff and there are localities that do not have a family doctor. The average number of doctors and nurses in Romania is much below the European average" (Cotidianul 2018). It seems that, over the past 15 years, more than 14,000 doctors have permanently settled abroad (Ilie Goga and Ilie 2017: p. 96 apud. DC News 2016). Thus, according to the National Institute of Statistics, there are 344 patients in a single doctor in Romania, 1,199 persons at a dentist and 1,147 at one pharmacist (Cotidianul 2018; NIS 2018b). In this situation, starting with March 2018, the salary legislation for the medical staff has changed, so that the average salary for a doctor has increased greatly, reaching from a gross salary average of 1,100 euros at an average of 2,500 euros, and for nurses reaching over 1,000 euros (Ministerul Sănătății. Ministry of Health 2018). In these favorable wage conditions, it seems that the satisfaction of the medical staff, related to the salary incomes, increased. In a survey applied in 2018 to 1554 employees in the medical system in Romania, we can see that about 50% of the respondents declared themselves satisfied and very satisfied with the salaries obtained and 46.92% considered that wage increases have led to a decrease in the emigration intention and have amplified the decision to remain in the country (Rotilă 2018: pp. 20-21).

In order to cover the existing deficit in the labor market, the Government of Romania, in the framework of the "National Strategy on Immigration for the period 2015-2020", pointed out that it seeks to attract citizens from other states, of course, taking into account the potential risks that may harm national security, thus considering aspects such as "promoting legal migration", "strengthening the legality status of third-country nationals' residence on the territory of Romania" and "improving the national asylum system" (Government of Romania 2015). But among the objectives of the strategy, we find: - "Facilitating the access of third-country nationals to the needs of

employment on the territory of Romania (creating the legal framework for attracting and maintaining the labor force according to the identified needs); - "favoring the access of third-country nationals to higher education institutions in Romania for the areas and professions identified as deficient"; - "facilitating the admission and residence of citizens from third countries for the development/development of business on Romanian territory in accordance with the national economic interest"; - "providing better information to third-country nationals on legal immigration opportunities and conditions" etc (Government of Romania 2015).

The Ministry for the Romanians Abroad, implements policies for diaspora, creates partnerships with institutions where Romanians are settled, finances programs, projects and actions in support of Romanians everywhere. The return and reintegration of Romanians from the diaspora to Romania is an objective of the "Ministry for the Romanians Abroad", found in the "National Strategy for the Romanians everywhere 2017-2020". In this respect, we find in the strategy actions of the ministry, such as: "Providing counseling to facilitate socio-professional integration in the Romanian society of the citizens who want to return to Romania. Constant updating of the "Return Guide", including practical information on the procedures and steps required for reintegration after re-establishment in the country"; - "Promoting business and investment opportunities through InvestRomania"; - "Elaboration of information packages and dissemination campaigns on topics of interest, such as opportunities to access non-reimbursable funding from European, national or fiscal facilities for business start-ups, investments, including agriculture, training, education in Romania"; - "Facilitating the valorisation in the country of the experience and expertise of senior professionals from the diaspora, by promoting their involvement in central or local government"; - "Supporting the processes of equivalence of the diplomas and qualifications acquired by the Romanian citizens in the countries from which they came back"; - "Support of recognition of accumulated years of service on labour market to provide facilities to support entrepreneurship or employment" etc. (Ministry for the Romanians Abroad 2017: pp. 18-19).

A good practice model for attracting Romanians abroad, was the "Diaspora Start-Up" program. The program helps those who have left the country to put into practice the experience they have accumulated since emigrating abroad, by starting new business. The European Union and the Government of Romania are funding this program dedicated exclusively to the development of entrepreneurship and the setting-up of startups through the Human Capital Operational Program (POCU) 2020. Under this program, 76 million euros have been approved through Diaspora Start-Up. There are 32 such projects managed by administrators of grants, through which Diaspora entrepreneurs can receive non-reimbursable funds with a maximum of 40,000 euros and can attend entrepreneurial training programs (including e-learning type) (Ro-Win 2017).

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