ASPECTS REGARDING THE EVOLUTION OF THE RURAL POPULATION IN ROMANIA (1990-2009)

ASPECTE PRIVIND EVOLUȚIA POPULAȚIEI RURALE ÎN ROMÂNIA (1990-2009)

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Abstract:*The economic conditions in general and the precarious medical services in particular, especially in rural areas, may have lead to the low birth rate. Rural population is a major source of village development. The information on human resources quality and quantity is decisive for the establishing of rural development policies. The dynamics of the rural population points to the labour resources in rural communities.*

Key words**:** *rural communities, rural environment, rural development*

INTRODUCTION

Administratively, the rural environment is made up of 2,860 villages that include 12,956 hamlets. For Romania, this environment has great social and economic importance, as 44.9% of its inhabitants live here. The density of the rural population is 41 inhabitants km^2, much lower than in the urban environment.

The resources of the two residential areas determine the profile of the economic and professional activity. The rural environment uses mostly the primary resources: land, forests and earth. It is dominated by agriculture, silviculture and fishing, while the urban area is characterised by industrial and commercial activities and services. This difference in economic activities is illustrated by the social and professional structure of the population. Most of the rural inhabitants are self-employed, while the urban inhabitants are wage-workers.

Compared with the urban environment the Romanian rural area is

also characterised by a deficit of infrastructure, welfare and living standard. The housing conditions are precarious, and so is the supply of long-employment items.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The indicators of the political decision-making factors are the level, the dynamics and the structure of the population both on the entire rural area and in every village. Rural dynamics identifies the labour resources in rural communities, while the level of education allows the estimation of the human capital in a village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In 2009, Romania's rural population represented 44.9% of the total population. In the North-East, South-Muntenia and South-West Oltenia the share of the rural population is over 50%; in the West, Centre, North-West and South-East it is below 50% and in Bucharest-Ilfov it is less than 8%. (Table 1)

Table 1

Regional population per residential areas in 2009

Development regions	Total population (number of people)	Urban (number of people)	% of urban population within the total population	Rural (number of people)	% of rural population within the total population
Romania	**21,469,959**	**11,823,516**	**55.1**	**9,646,443**	**44.9**
Macroregion 1	**5,243,139**	**2,949,333**	**56.3**	**2,293,806**	**43.7**
North-West	2,718,648	1,449,002	53.3	1,269,646	46.7
Center	2,524,491	1,500,331	59.4	1,024,160	40.6
Macroregion 2	**6,526,805**	**3,154,287**	**48.3**	**3,372,518**	**51.7**
North-East	3,714,050	1,605,008	43.2	2,109,042	56.8
South-East	2,812,755	1,549,279	55.1	1,263,476	44.9
Macroregion 3	**5,527,750**	**3,432,882**	**62.1**	**2,094,868**	**37.9**
Bucharest-Ilfov	2,256,543	2,077,430	92.1	179,113	7.9
South-Muntenia	3,271,207	1,355,452	41.4	1,915,755	58.6
Macroregion 4	**4,172,265**	**2,287,014**	**54.8**	**1,885,251**	**45.2**
South-West Oltenia	2,250,565	1,074,789	47.8	1,175,776	52.2
West	1,921,700	1,212,225	63.1	709,475	36.9

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2010

In 2009, there were 9,646,443 rural inhabitants, distributed in 2,860 villages that included 12,956 hamlets. On average, a village had 3,459 inhabitants and a hamlet had 755.

In 1990-2009, a constant decrease was registered in the rural population, as shown in Table 2. The number of rural inhabitants decreased from 10,597,876 in 1990 to 9,646,443 in 2009.

In 2009, about 9,65 million people lived in the rural environment. On the whole, the share of the rural population decreased from 45.7% in 1990 to 44.9% in 2009.

The factors that contributed to this decrease are demographic, economic and administrative. The major factor was migration, a phenomenon that determined the evolution of both the evolution of the rural inhabitants and the demographic structure of the rural area.

Table 2

Evolution of rural population in 1990-2004

Specification	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
Population (number of people)	23,206,720	22,680,951	22,435,205	21,623,849	21,537,563	21,504,442	21,469,959
Population dynamics (1990 = 100%)	100	97.7	96.7	93.2	92.8	92.7	92.5
Rural population, % of the total	45.7	45.1	45.4	45.1	44.9	45.0	44.9

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses, Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

In 1992, the dominating migration flow in the residential areas (rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-rural, urban-urban), was the rural-urban one (39.2%); in 2009 the situation changed radically and the urban-rural and urban-urban flows became dominant (29.2%). (Table 3)

Table 3

Structure of migration flows in residential areas (1992-2009)

Migration %	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**1998**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
Rural-urban	39.2	30.4	24.6	21.9	19.5	24.5	22.4	23.1	21.0	22.1	22.5	21.4	30.2	21.2
Rural-rural	22.7	25.5	24.5	23.5	23.0	20.0	21.6	19.3	21.1	20.2	19.2	21.5	20.2	20.4
Urban-rural	13.7	18.4	23.4	28.5	33.8	27.9	30.1	30.2	31.8	29.6	28.1	31.6	32.1	29.2
Urban-urban	24.3	25.6	27.4	26.0	23.7	27.5	25.8	27.3	26.1	28.1	30.2	25.5	27.6	29.2

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses, Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

The measures concerning the reorganisation of the rural enterprises, the increased unemployment rate, the expensive houses and public utilities and the land restoration were just some of the reasons for which an increasing number of people left the towns.

The second demographic factor that had a major impact on the rural population is the natural increase, the difference between the birth rate and

the death rate. The natural movement of the rural population in 1997-2009 was characterised mostly by the constant drop of the birth rate in both residential areas (Table 4).

The rural death rate was both constantly higher than the urban ones. (Table 5)

The general and infant mortality indicators are also the direct indicators of the living standard. They are higher in the rural area, being a sign of a lower living standard. (Table 6)

Table 4

Natural population movement in the rural area

Specification	1997	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Births (1,000 population)	126.9	126.3	112.3	104.9	103.2	100.0	98.4	100.4	100.5
Birth rate (1,000 population)	10.5	10.5	9.7	10.0	10.6	10.3	10.2	10.4	10.4
Deaths (thousand people)	163.3	147.4	156.4	144.6	145.3	141.7	137.4	138.8	141.0
Death rate (1,000 population)	15.9	14.4	15.3	14.7	14.9	14.6	14.2	14.3	14.6
Natural increase (thousand people)	-36.4	-21.1	-44.1	-39.7	-42.1	-41.7	-39.0	-38.5	-40.5
Natural increase rate (1,000 population)	-3.5	-2.1	-4.3	-4.0	-4.3	-4.3	-4.0	-3.9	-4.2

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses, Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

Table 5

Evolution of birth rate and death rate in residential areas

Specification	1997	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Urban (thousand people)									
Births	110.0	108.3	98.2	111.3	117.8	119.5	116.4	121.5	121.9
Deaths	116.0	108.4	113.2	114.3	116.8	116.4	114.6	114.4	116.2
Rural (thousand people)									
Births	126.9	126.3	112.3	104.9	103.2	100.0	98.4	100.4	100.5
Deaths	163.3	147.4	156.4	144.6	145.3	141.7	137.4	138.8	141.0

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses, Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

The decline in the rural population went together with aging. Aging is general phenomenon present in both residential areas, but it is higher in the rural environment. Aging is predominant among rural female inhabitants, a fact indicating that women have a longer life span than men. In 2009, the average life span was 74.16 years in the urban area and 72.23 years in the rural area. The average life span for women was 77.09 years, compared with 69.68 years for men. (Table 7)

Table 6

Infant mortality in residential areas

Specification	1997	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total number of deaths (thousand people)	520.9	437.0	364.8	364.1	262.1	258.1	251.9	253.2	257.2
urban	203.6	174.4	142.6	155.5	116.8	116.4	114.5	114.3	116.2
rural	317.3	262.6	222.2	208.6	145.3	141.7	137.4	138.8	141.0
Infant mortality rate (1,000 inhabitants)	22.0	18.6	17.3	16.8	15.0	13.9	12.0	11.0	10.1
urban	18.5	16.1	14.5	14.0	12.4	11.2	10.2	8.5	8.1
rural	25.0	20.8	19.8	19.9	17.9	17.1	14.1	14.0	12.6

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses, Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

Table 7

Average life span per sexes and residential areas

Period	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
1989-1991	69.76	66.59	73.05	70.39	68.88
1999-2001	71.19	67.69	74.84	71.94	70.20
2000-2002	71.18	67.61	74.90	72.02	70.08
2001-2003	71.01	67.42	74.78	71.81	70.08
2002-2004	71.32	67.74	75.06	72.15	70.34
2003-2005	71.76	68.19	75.47	72.53	70.78
2004-2006	72.22	68.74	75.80	72.98	71.23
2005-2007	72.61	69.17	76.14	73.34	71.64
2008	73.03	69.49	76.68	73.76	72.05
2009	73.33	69.68	77.09	74.16	72.23

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Aging was determined by a number of demographic, social and economic factors such as the evolution of fertility in women and the level of the general death rate (higher in the rural area than in the urban one).

CONCLUSIONS

In the rural environment, the population is decreasing, aging and not so educated as that in the urban area. These characteristics have direct implications on the rural development study. The living standard is influenced by the quality of the population, i.e. the educational level, the opportunity of capitalising the household production factors and other associated factors like the village size. A lower living standard in a household can be related to smaller villages or the long distances from urban localities.

In the past years, demographic migration has become a common fact. The young and mature population migrates from the rural to the urban environment, motivated by the living and working conditions in the urban centres. Consequently, the remaining rural inhabitants are mostly old-aged.

Demography has great influence on regional economic and social development; as a result, the analysis of the demographic situation and the medium and long-term demographic prognosis are the foundation of realistic development plans and strategies. The population changes of the past decades have become a major issue of European and global concern; as many demography experts and economists have already drawn attention to worrying demographic trends such as reduced fertility and birth rates, significant differences among age groups, ageing, and intense external migration.

The EU27 population is also projected to continue to grow older, with the share of the population aged 65 years and over rising from 17.1% in 2008 to 30.0% in 2060, and those aged 80 and over rising from 4.4% to 12.1% over the same period.

The EU27 population is projected to become older throughout the projection period, due in particular to persistently low fertility and an increasing number of survivors to higher ages. This ageing process will occur in all Member States. In 2060, the share of the population aged 65 or more is projected to range from 23.6% in Luxembourg, 24.7% in the United Kingdom and 25.0% in Denmark to 36.2% in Poland, 36.1% in Slovakia and 35.0% in Romania.

As a final point, the low living standard may be the cause of the decline in the number of inhabitants, the reduced birth rate, and the high death and migration rates.

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