ASPECTS REGARDING THE EVOLUTION OF THE RURAL POPULATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

ASPECTE PRIVIND EVOLUȚIA POPULAȚIEI RURALE ÎN CONTEXTUL DEZVOLTĂRII DURABILE ÎN ROMÂNIA

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Abstract: *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 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.*

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

INTRODUCTION

Romania is Europe's twelfth country in point of size. It covers an area of 238,391 km^2 and lies in the south-east of Central Europe. The country's population decreased from 22.41 million in 2001 to 21.43 million in 2010. The average density also decreased from 94.0 inhabitants/km^2 in 2001 to 89.9 inhabitants/km^2 in 2010. A decline has also been noticed in the number of urban and rural inhabitants: the urban population decreased from 12.24 million to 11.79 million in 2010 and the rural population decreased from 10.15 million to 9.63 million.

Eight development regions were set as territorial units, each made up of 4-7 counties by the voluntary association of the county councils. These regions are the framework for the development, implementation and evaluation of the regional development policy and the economic and social

cohesion programmes.

According to the law on the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics and the requirements of the EC 1059/2003 Regulation on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), for macroregions have been established:

a) Macroregion 1: *North-West* – total area 34,159 km² (14.3% of the Romanian territory). It consists of six counties: Bihor, Bistrita-Nasaud, Cluj, Maramures, Satu Mare and Salaj. It has a strategic geographic position, as it is the gate to Romania from the European Union and Ukraine; *Centre* - total area 34,100 km^2 (14.31% of the Romanian territory), includes Alba, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Mures and Sibiu Counties. It lies in the centre of Romania.

b) Macroregion 2: *North-East* – the largest region of the country, covering 36,850 km^2 (15.46% of the Romanian territory), is made of six counties: Bacau, Botosani, Neamt, Iasi, Suceava and Vaslui; *South-East* – 35,762 km² (15% Romanian territory) and is the second region in size. It consists of the following counties: Braila, Buzau, Constanta, Galati, Tulcea and Vrancea.

c) Macroregion 3: *South-Muntenia* – 34.453 km^2 (14.45% of the Romanian territory); it is situated in the south-east, and includes Arges, Calarasi, Dambovita, Giurgiu, Ialomita, Prahova and Teleorman Counties; *Bucharest-Ilfov* – Bucharest - the capital of the country - and Ilfov County. It lies in the central part of the Romanian Plain, on an area of 1,821 km^2, of which 13.1% is the administrative territory of Bucharest and 86.9% belongs to Ilfov County.

d) Macroregion 4: *South-West Oltenia* – 29,212 km^2; has five counties: Dolj, Olt, Valcea, Mehedinti and Gorj. It coincides largely with the old historical region Oltenia; *West* –32,034 km^2 (13.4% of the country's area) and is made of Arad, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara and Timis Counties. It is part of the Danube-Cris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion (DCMT).

Macroregion is the fourth type of regional divisions created in Romania in 1998 and corresponds to the NUTS I nomenclature of the EU Member States. (Table 1) Like the development regions, the Romanian macroregions do not have administrative stature and a government form of their own; they serve only regional statistics purposes.

Romania's territory is divided into hamlets, villages, towns, municipalities and counties. In each county, the local authorities are

represented by county councils, local, municipal, town and village councils. (Table 2)

Table 1

Administrative divisions of Romania

Macroregions (NUTS I)	Macroregion 1		Macroregion 2		Macroregion 3		Macroregion 4	
Development regions (NUTS II)	North - West	Center	North - East	South - East	Bucharest - Ilfov	South - Muntenia	South - West Oltenia	West
Counties (NUTS III)	Bihor	Alba	Bacău	Brăila	Ilfov	Argeş	Dolj	Arad
	Bistriţa-Năsăud	Braşov	Botoşani	Buzău	Municipiul Bucureşti	Călăraşi	Gorj	Caraş-Severin
	Cluj	Covasna	Iaşi	Constanţa		Dâmboviţa	Mehedinţi	Hunedoara
	Maramureş	Harghita	Neamţ	Galaţi		Giurgiu	Olt	Timiş
	Satu Mare	Mureş	Suceava	Tulcea		Ialomiţa	Vâlcea	
	Sălaj	Sibiu	Vaslui	Vrancea		Prahova		
						Teleorman		

Table 2

Administrative-territorial organisation of Romania

Macroregion/ Development regions	Total surface (km^2)	Number of inhabitants	Number of towns and municipalities	Of which municipalities	Number of villages	Number of hamlets
Macroregion 1	**68,259**	**5,239,908**	**100**	**35**	**760**	**3,588**
North-West	34,159	2,716,456	43	15	403	1,800
Center	34,100	2,523,452	57	20	357	1,788
Macroregion 2	**72,612**	**6,513,804**	**81**	**28**	**861**	**3,861**
North-East	36,850	3,707,600	46	17	506	2,414
South-East	35,762	2,806,204	35	11	355	1,447
Macroregion 3	**36,274**	**5,522,036**	**57**	**17**	**551**	**2,110**
Bucharest-Ilfov	1,821	2,263,261	9	1	32	91
South-Muntenia	34,453	3,258,775	48	16	519	2,019
Macroregion 4	**61,246**	**4,155,550**	**82**	**23**	**689**	**3,397**
South-West Oltenia	29,212	2,238,643	40	11	408	2,070
West	32,034	1,916,907	42	12	281	1,327
România	**238,391**	**21,431,298**	**320**	**103**	**2,861**	**12,956**

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2011

Rural, administratively, is composed of 2,861 villages, which are composed of 12,956 hamlets. For Romania, the countryside is a very complex socio-economic importance, where 44.9% of the population lives.

Business and professional profile are determined by the resources that are equipped with two areas of residence, urban and rural. Rural uses intensively primary resources: the land, forest and land resources. Prevailing rural agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and urban industrial activities predominate, trade and services. This difference among economic activities is also reflected among socio-professional structure of the population. Thus, most of the rural agricultural activities on their own, while the professional

status of the employed urban population.

Romanian rural area is known for its infrastructure deficit, and comfort to urban living standards. Living conditions are poor in rural areas and housing endowment with durable goods is poor.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The economic and social changes that have taken place in Romania since the 1990's have determined major changes in the demographic phenomena, and the number and the structure of the population. The constant decrease in Romania's population has several causes, such as low birth rate, high death rate, and internal and intense external migration. This paper provides information about the current state of the rural population and the demographic trends in development regions and macroregions, as these two elements have a great influence on the economic and social development of the country.

Indicators of interest to policymakers are the population dynamics and structure, both across rural and village level. Rural population dynamics shows that will be labor resources of rural communities and the education of the population of localities allow estimation of human capital available to a locality. Within the framework of sustainable development, the medium and long-term objectives of the national strategies and programmes and the regional and district projects must be set in accordance with the demographic prognosis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In 2010, 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 North-West, Center, West and South-East it is below 50% and in Bucharest-Ilfov it is less than 10%. (Table 1)

In 2010, there were 9,632,563 rural inhabitants, distributed in 2,861 villages that included 12,956 hamlets. On average, a village had 3,366 inhabitants and a hamlet had 743. Overall, the share of rural population decreased from 45.7% in 1990 to 44.9% in 2010.

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. Of migration

flows by residence (rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-rural, urban-urban) in 2000 were dominant in the urban-rural (33.8%), in 2010 the situation changed radically, urban-urban flows were the dominant (30.6%). (Table 4)

Table 3

Regional population per residential areas (2010)

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	**21,431,298**	**11,798,735**	**55.1**	**9,632,563**	**44.9**
Macroregion 1	**5,239,908**	**2,943,516**	**56.2**	**2,296,392**	**43.8**
North-West	2,716,456	1,446,905	53.3	1,269,551	46.7
Center	2,523,452	1,496,611	59.3	1,026,841	40.7
Macroregion 2	**6,513,804**	**3,145,082**	**48.3**	**3,368,722**	**51.7**
North-East	3,707,600	1,599,130	43.1	2,108,470	56.9
South-East	2,806,204	1,545,952	55.1	1,260,252	44.9
Macroregion 3	**5,522,036**	**3,430,331**	**62.1**	**2,091,705**	**37.9**
South-Muntenia	3,258,775	1,350,399	41.4	1,908,376	58.6
Bucharest-Ilfov	2,263,261	2,079,932	91.9	183,329	8.1
Macroregion 4	**4,155,550**	**2,279,806**	**54.9**	**1,875,744**	**45.1**
South-West Oltenia	2,238,643	1,073,146	47.9	1,165,497	52.1
West	1,916,907	1,206,660	62.9	710,247	37.1

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2011

Table 4

Structure of migration flows in residential areas (2000-2010)

Migration %	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
TOTAL	**244,507**	**284,332**	**320,819**	**331,747**	**369,892**	**272,604**	**334,025**	**374,156**	**389,254**	**330,672**	**458,995**
Rural-urban	19.5	24.5	22.4	23.1	21.0	22.1	22.5	21.4	30.2	21.2	21.0
Rural-rural	23.0	20.0	21.6	19.3	21.1	20.2	19.2	21.5	20.2	20.4	19.4
Urban-rural	33.8	27.9	30.1	30.2	31.8	29.6	28.1	31.6	32.1	29.2	29.0
Urban-urban	23.7	27.5	25.8	27.3	26.1	28.1	30.2	25.5	27.6	29.2	30.6

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

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 2000-2010 was characterised mostly by the constant drop of the birth rate in both residential areas (Table 5).

Birth rate in urban areas was always higher than in rural areas and rural mortality was consistently higher than in urban areas. (Table 6)

Table 5

Natural population movement in the rural area (2000-2010)

Specification	2000	2001	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Births (1,000 population)	126.3	118.0	112.3	104.9	103.2	100.0	98.4	100.4	100.5	94.3
Birth rate (1,000 population)	10.5	9.8	9.7	10.0	10.6	10.3	10.2	10.4	10.4	9.8
Deaths (thousand people)	147.4	149.5	156.4	144.6	145.3	141.7	137.4	138.8	141.0	142.1
Death rate (1,000 population)	14.4	14.6	15.3	14.7	14.9	14.6	14.2	14.3	14.6	14.7
Natural increase (thousand people)	-21.1	-31.5	-44.1	-39.7	-42.1	-41.7	-39.0	-38.5	-40.5	-47.7
Natural increase rate (1,000 population)	-2.1	-3.1	-4.3	-4.0	-4.3	-4.3	-4.0	-3.9	-4.2	-4.9

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

Table 6

Evolution of birth rate and death rate in residential areas

Specification	2000	2001	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Urban (thousand people)										
Births	108.3	102.4	98.2	111.3	117.8	119.5	116.4	121.5	121.9	117.8
Deaths	108.4	110.1	113.2	114.3	116.8	116.4	114.6	114.4	116.2	117.6
Rural (thousand people)										
Births	126.3	118.0	112.3	104.9	103.2	100.0	98.4	100.4	100.5	94.3
Deaths	147.4	149.5	156.4	144.6	145.3	141.7	137.4	138.8	141.0	142.1

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

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 7)

Table 7

Infant mortality in residential areas

Specification	2000	2001	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total number of deaths										
(thousand people)	437,0	405,7	364,8	364,1	262,1	258,1	251,9	253,2	257,2	207,8
urban	174,4	159,4	142,6	155,5	116,8	116,4	114,5	114,3	116,2	913
rural	262,6	246,3	222,2	208,6	145,3	141,7	137,4	138,8	141,0	116,5
Infant mortality rate										
(1,000 inhabitants)	18.6	18.4	17.3	16.8	15.0	13.9	12.0	11.0	10.1	9.8
urban	16.1	15.6	14.5	14.0	12.4	11.2	10.2	8.5	8.1	7.7
rural	20.8	20.9	19.8	19.9	17.9	17.1	14.1	14.0	12.6	12.3

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

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 rural areas, population aging is more pronounced for the female population, which may be associated with higher life of women than men,

78.54 years to 68.45 years. (Table 8)

Table 8

Average life span per sexes and residential areas (years)

Period	**Total**	Male	Female	**Urban**	Male	Female	**Rural**	Male	Female
2002-2004	**71.01**	67.42	74.78	**71.81**	68.62	75.70	**70.08**	66.67	74.41
2003-2005	**71.76**	68.19	75.47	**72.53**	69.04	76.01	**70.78**	67.12	74.83
2004-2006	**72.22**	68.74	75.80	**72.98**	69.56	76.34	**71.23**	67.69	75.13
2005-2007	**72.61**	69.17	76.14	**73.34**	69.96	76.64	**71.64**	68.13	75.50
2008	**73.03**	69.49	76.68	**73.76**	70.29	77.16	**72.05**	68.42	76.05
2009	**73.33**	69.68	77.09	**74.16**	70.58	77.67	**72.23**	68.51	76.36
2010	**73.47**	69.76	77.30	**74.38**	70.78	77.91	**72.26**	68.45	76.54

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

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).

Socio-economic changes that led to the reconfiguration of rural areas, the last two decades, had different effects on different population groups or villages. The process of social change in rural areas was thus oscillating, fragmented and often contradictory, leading to increased social differentiation at both the individual and local level.

Rural areas face problems related to aging, low birth and fertility, strong external migration and depopulation of certain areas. Significantly reducing the number of births immediately after 1990 and external migration for work, especially after 2000 and contributed to changing the structure of rural population by reducing the staff and increased demographic aging. [1]

Population differentiation recorded at localities is influenced by their level of socioeconomic development. Growing communities located in metropolitan and tourist areas, which are attractive residential areas, are characterized by positive demographic and predominantly urban-rural migration movement. On the other hand, isolated communities, located far away from urban centers that have the characteristics of traditional employment, are facing problems related to growing aging population, migration and depopulation intense.

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. Recent socioeconomic changes have made the Romanian rural evolve differently, the uneven development became a reality in contemporary Romanian society.

Demographic and employment of rural population outlines two of the dimensions of the process of redefining the current rural environment. If in terms of demographic developments in the last 20 years are recorded national trend, maintaining regional and even the same requirements by enrolling in the European model of development, in terms of employment encounter an unusual situation, described by large number of people working in subsistence agriculture. In these conditions, between employment and poverty and underdevelopment in agriculture creates a vicious circle in which rural people can not come only through the development of small industries in rural areas and traditional agricultural restructuring.

Finally, areas with declining population, declining birth rate, mortality and migration of local growth may be in this situation because of declining living standards. Medium and long term objectives and strategies of national, regional and the sectoral context of sustainable development should be adjusted according to demographic projections forecast.

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