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THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL MIGRATION ON THE LABOR FORCE IN ROMANIA
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Abstract:

In Romania, external migration has become a large-scale phenomenon in recent decades, significantly affecting the labor force. The departure of young people and qualified people abroad has led to a decrease in the active population, a lack of specialists in essential fields, but also to a reduction in economic productivity in all sectors of activity. In addition to the economic effects, migration also causes demographic imbalances, contributing to the aging of the population and pressures on social and pension systems. Rural areas and small towns are among the most affected, as they lose young and active human resources, which leads to economic and social decline. Although remittances sent by Romanians abroad temporarily support the economy, the loss of human capital limits the long-term development of the Romanian economy.

• Introduction

External migration represents a complex and dynamic phenomenon with major implications for Romania's economy, society, and demographic structure. In the context of globalization and the free movement of labor within the European Union, an increasing number of Romanians choose to build their future in other countries, attracted by better professional opportunities and a higher standard of living. Although this process brings individual benefits and economic contributions through remittances, it has profound effects on the domestic labor market, influencing the availability of human resources, demographic balance, and the country's socio-economic development.

According to Juravle D., "emigrants represent a considerable loss, reflecting the Romanian economy's limited capacity to generate jobs and provide adequate remuneration." Therefore, analyzing external migration and its consequences on the labor force is essential for understanding current challenges and for developing effective policies that support the retention and optimal use of Romania's human capital.

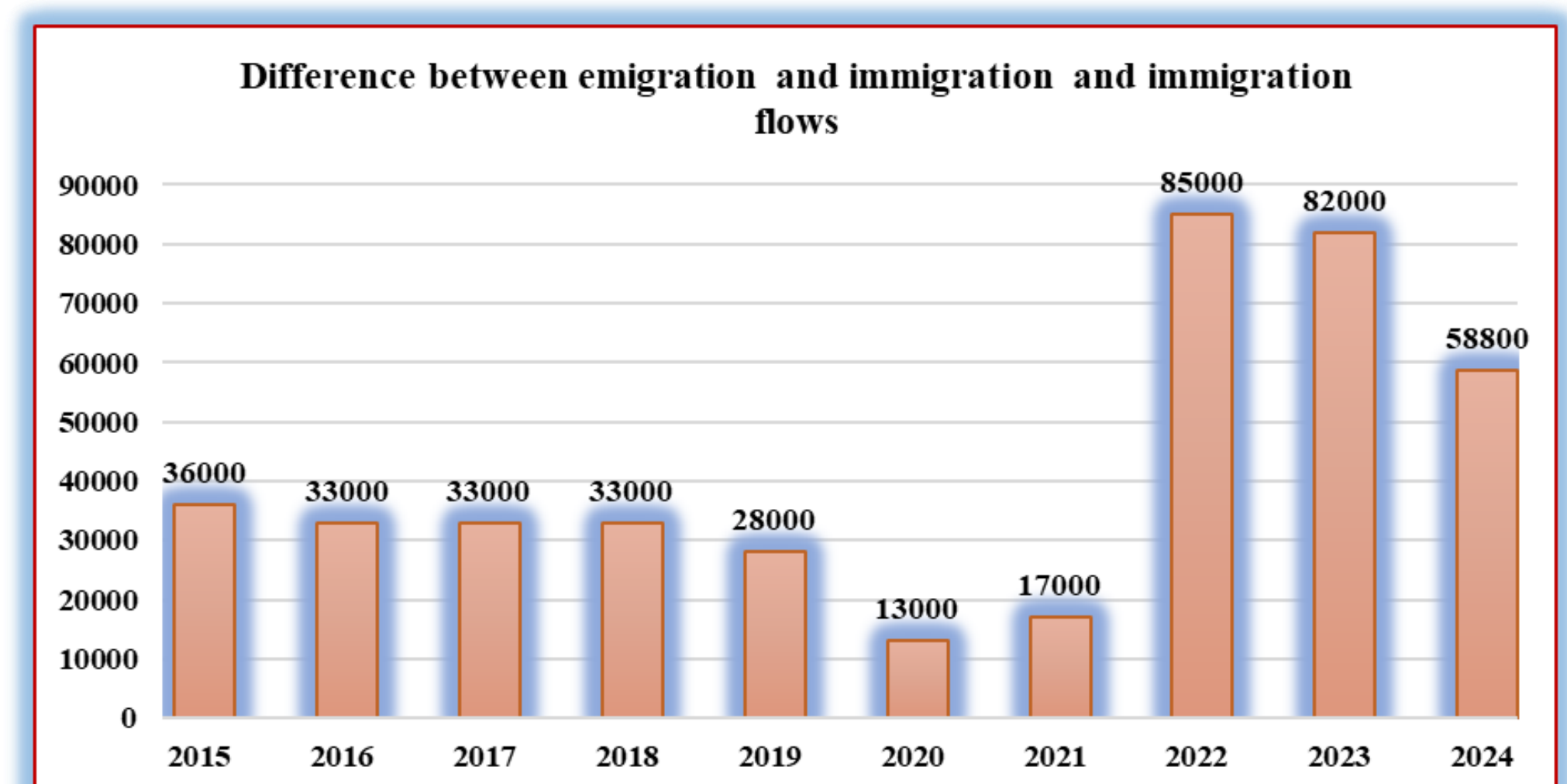
• Material and method

In their research, the authors used official information sources from the National Institute of Statistics, other statistical data sources, as well as specialized books and journals in the field. The research methods employed included data collection, processing in the form of tables and graphs, and their subsequent analysis and interpretation.

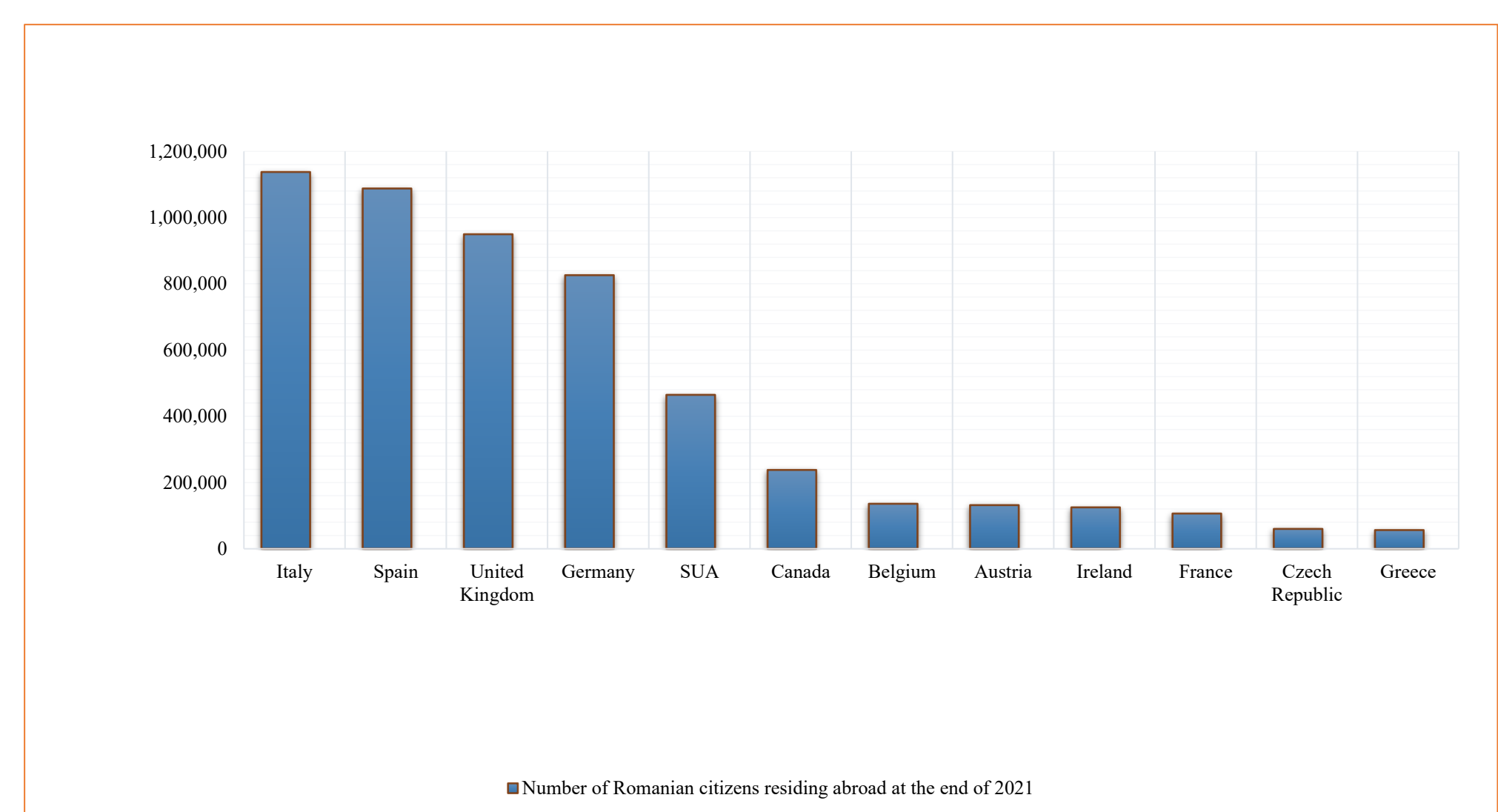
• Results and discussions

Over the past decade, Romania has experienced a continuous population decline, reflecting a persistent downward trend observed over recent decades. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INS), the resident population decreased from approximately 19.86 million in 2015 to around 19.05 million in 2021. By 2025, the population by domicile is projected to reach 21.7 million, of which approximately 18.9 million are expected to reside permanently within the country. This reduction of over one million inhabitants within a ten-year period is attributable to a combination of factors, including substantial emigration, declining fertility rates, and a negative natural increase, with deaths consistently exceeding births. INS reports indicate that in 2024, Romania had 3,104,772 citizens residing in the European Union. Although net immigration remained positive (58.8 thousand people), the total population continued to decline due to a negative natural increase (-102 thousand people). Population aging, low birth rates, and the shortage of skilled workers continue to exert pressure on the labor market, highlighting Romania's need to attract and retain qualified employees and to encourage the participation of both young and older individuals in economic activity.

Migration has had a profound impact on the labor force: massive emigration has led to significant losses of skilled workers and a decline in productivity, while recent immigration partially contributes to offsetting these effects, although it cannot fully counterbalance the natural population decline.



According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the most recent statistical data on the presence of Romanian citizens abroad are available for the end of 2021. According to this information, the Romanian community residing outside the country is estimated at approximately 5.6 million people. The countries hosting the largest Romanian communities are presented in the next figure.



• Conclusions

In conclusion, external migration has had a significant impact on Romania's labor force over the past decade: massive emigration has reduced the number of young and skilled workers, affecting productivity and economic competitiveness, while recent immigration partially helps to offset these losses, yet it cannot fully counterbalance the ongoing negative natural population decline. Thus, external migration represents both a challenge, due to the loss of human capital, and an opportunity, through the mobilization of foreign labor resources. It is, however, essential for public policies to focus on attracting and retaining qualified employees, promoting the active participation of both young and older individuals in the labor market, and adapting the economic structure to demographic and migratory dynamics.