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The Demographic Country Profile of Romania after 1989

Challenges and Perspectives for Policy Makers

1. Introduction

Since the 1989 Revolution, Romania has been experiencing unprecedented dramatic demographic trends: population decline, population ageing and massive emigration (including brain drain).

To some extent, Romania's situation subscribes to the regional context, Europe (with its inner regional differences) being perhaps the most affected continent in the key dimensions of the demographic transition:[1]

Numerical dimension. Europe has three types of countries: with a low population growth (but still a population growth due to migration), with stagnating or slowly declining population and with a very acute population decline (mostly in the former Eastern Bloc countries). Romania is in the third category, with dynamics specific to the ex-Eastern Bloc countries, being marked by acute trends of population decline.

Age-structure dimension. All European countries will experience the phenomenon of demographic ageing. There are still some differences, but not that notable in terms of how fast populations are ageing: the average Eastern Europe is expected to age slower than the rest. But Romania will age faster compared to the East, and even though until 2040–2050 this process will be slower than the European average, following this period it is expected to accelerate, even surpassing the European average.

Migration dimension. This aspect applies to two opposite types of European countries: host countries which attract migration (the phenomenon started decades before the refugee and migrant crisis in 2015, and culminates currently with this major challenge posed by it) and countries of origin (even though some of them have an acute population decline, at the same time, they experience significant emigration of the economically active population − situation characteristic mostly for the former Eastern Bloc countries). Unfortunately, before the refugee crisis, Romania was the 2nd origin and source country

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[1] When speaking of "demographic transition", different approaches on variables exist. Therefore, we relate to this in terms of the three theories which cover the main and topical demographic phenomena: 1st transition (the classic one) based on changes in birth rates and mortality rates (initiator: W. Thompson and F. Notestein; important contributions: Jean-Claude Chesnais); the 2nd transition based on fertility control (Dirk J. van de Kaa); this process brings into attention dynamics such as ageing (important theory: Malmberg Bo and Lena Sommestad discuss about the transition based on age structure dimension of population dynamics); the 3rd transition: based on migration dynamics (David Coleman). In 2012, John F. May: makes a synthesis of these three types of transitions.

for the European immigrants, even though being confronted with one of the most acute population declines worldwide.

To conclude, Romania follows the regional trends, but with its own particularities, being one of the most acute European demographic cases. Ionel Muntele remarks: "Even if the problem is, in *general present* at a European level, the situation in our country, according to the trends described, is much worse" (MUNTELE 2010, 85). He integrates this dynamic in the 7th category of demographic transitions out of 8 (the last two being the most acute ones), characterising Romania's situation by: an abrupt completion of the demographic transition; a faulty adaptation to the post-transitional model and the risks related to the demographic challenges, such as short-term chronic population ageing, the pronounced decline in the labour force without an equilibration from the migration contribution; the risk of devitalising as a result of massive emigration (MUNTELE 2010, 76).

This research aims to draw an accurate demographic profile of Romania and to analyse the answer of the Romanian state to these significant long-term challenges.

2. Population and demographic trends since 1989

2.1. Causes of acute developments

In Romania's case, the current demographic profile was shaped by a complex combination of economic and cultural changes (SOBOTKA 2003) and challenges occurred immediately after the 1989 Revolution, common to the ex-socialist Eastern countries.

The economic challenges were: the uncertainty of the population due to hyperinflation, unemployment, risk of poverty, dramatic decrease of living standards and governments' low capacity of guaranteeing basic social security; the new characteristics of jobs (much more flexible, but much more insecure); the new opportunities to increase standards of living abroad (SOBOTKA 2003, 691–715; STRZELECKI 2003, 15; NEYER et al. 2013, 4–6).

The cultural and identity transformation meant important changes in lifestyles by prolonging education duration (extending the higher education among youth population, in order to increase the chances of having a well-paid job), by a delayed contraceptive and sexual revolution, by postponing marriage, by a new culture of choice and opportunities (transitioning to a consumer society associated with the importance of free time, increased individualism and avoiding long term commitments; focusing on the satisfaction obtained from new goods as a substitute for the life style centred on children) (SOBOTKA 2003, 691–715; STRZELECKI 2003, 15; NEYER et al. 2013, 4–6).

In addition, an abrupt shift happened from the previous pro-natalist policies, specific to the communist regime, and their replacement with social and family policies greatly influenced by economic evolutions (job insecurity, but also the emergence of new opportunities arose from opening towards Western Europe), abandoning the centralised housing distribution system, the liberalisation of contraception and abortion, people's movement and cultural globalisation, all this facilitating the change of values among young people (SOBOTKA 2003, 691–715).

Tomáš Sobotka states that all these have begun to compete with the decision to bring children to the world. He argues that the effects produced by crisis-related factors (the first

category of causes) can be reversed if an economic and social recovery is produced. But the effects of cultural and identity changes are irreversible and have a long-lasting effect. Therefore, the situation is acute in the former Eastern Block region (Romania inclusively) and is expected to have long term implications, probably irreversible ones (Sobotka 2003, 691–715).

Romania shifted, as Vladimir Trebici and Ion Ghinoiu remarked even since the mid-1980s, from a natalist (pro-birth) family planning to anti-natalist one (Trebici–Ghinoiu 1986, 17–18). The country underwent profound socio-economic changes after the 1989 Revolution, associated with the period of transition from a socialist country to democracy, from a centralised economy to a market economy. Therefore, along with European trends that affected the traditional family (postponing marriage, the growth of the education period duration, increasing individualisation, increasing women's autonomy and the advocacy for family planning, etc.), it went to particular developments emerged from the transition to democracy, that came with a series of socio-economic and cultural challenges. If we take into consideration that after the 1990s Romania suffered both types of causes mentioned by Tomáš Sobotka, one can assert that it is highly likely for the demographic transformations to be irreversible with a great societal long term impact.

2.2. Demographic decline in Romania from 1989 to 2100

Before 1989, Romania's demography was overall characterised, by positive developments: the population of the territory increasing more than 3.5 times in the last century. But 1990 represents a historical turning point. Starting with the 1990s, Romania's population experienced a considerable and constant population decline. By 2018, the demographic decline in Romania has been going on constantly for 29 years.

Table 1

Total population of Romania according to the censuses conducted after the 1989 Revolution

Population and housing census 1992/2002/2011			
Date of the census	7 January 1992	18 March 2002	20 October 2011
Population	22,810,035	21,680,974	20,121,641

Source: National Institute of Statistics 2018

Romania's population declined with 14.89% between 1989–2016,[2] from 23,151,564 in 1989 to 19,703,494 in 2016 (National Institute of Statistics 2018) (Figure 1). UN estimates show a slightly higher decline (15.37%), from 23,489,000 in 1990 to 19,877,000 in 2015 (UN-DESA 2017).

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[2]   2016 is the last estimate that can be found in the *Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2017.* At the time of the research, it was the most actual Statistical Yearbook of Romania.
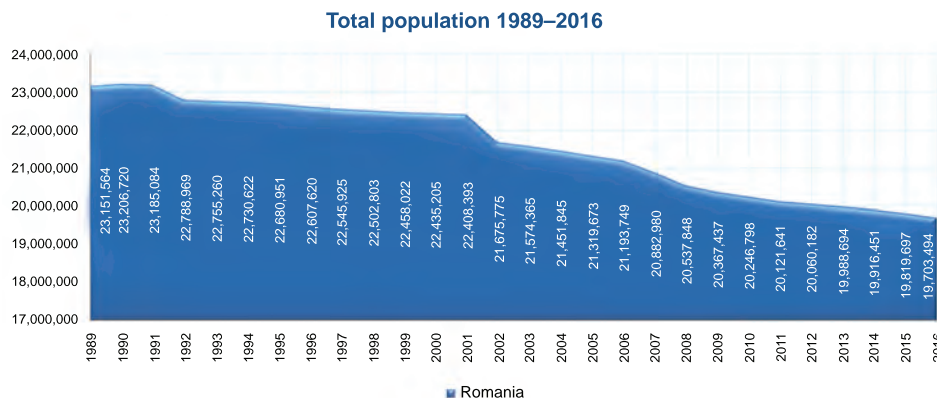
Total population 1989–2016

Figure 1

Romania's total population decline from 1989 to 2016

Source: National Institute of Statistics 2017

Thus, all reliable national and international sources of data show that Romania lost about 3.4 million inhabitants from the 1989 Revolution to the present days.

In terms of prognoses, Romania will be in the top 10 most acute cases globally of demographic decline by 2050 (UN-DESA 2017). Its dramatic population decrease can turn into depopulation, with varied risks associated in different areas of society (most of all in terms of social infrastructures: labour market, the education and health care systems, etc.). According to the Romanian National Institute of Statics, Romania will have 18,047,000 inhabitants by 2030, and 12,946,000 by 2060 in the medium variant predictions that include the external migration component. This means a decrease of 35.7% by 2060. The optimist scenario shows a decrease of 30.6% and the pessimist one a decrease of 40.7% by 2060. Without the component of external migration, the medium variant shows a population of 18,121,000 inhabitants by 2030 and 13,232,000 by 2060 (a decrease of 34.2% by 2060). The optimist variant represents a decrease of 29.1% and the pessimist one a decrease of 39.4% by 2060. (INSSE 2017). One can conclude that external migration contributes to the long-term decline to a little extent, with less than 1.5%, for the rest being responsible mostly the levels of fertility and births rates. UN estimates the decrease will continue by 2100, in the medium variant with 17.50% by 2050 and with 39.21% by 2100 (UN-DESA 2018).[3] In the pessimist variant, Romania's population will drop even below 8 million in 2100 (UN-DESA 2017).

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[3]   Percentage calculation based on UN 2015, 2050, 2100 estimates: UN-DESA 2018.
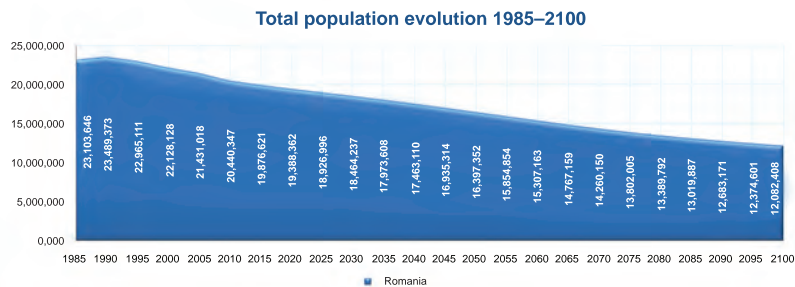
Figure 2

Romania's total population evolution between 1985–2100: estimates and prognoses
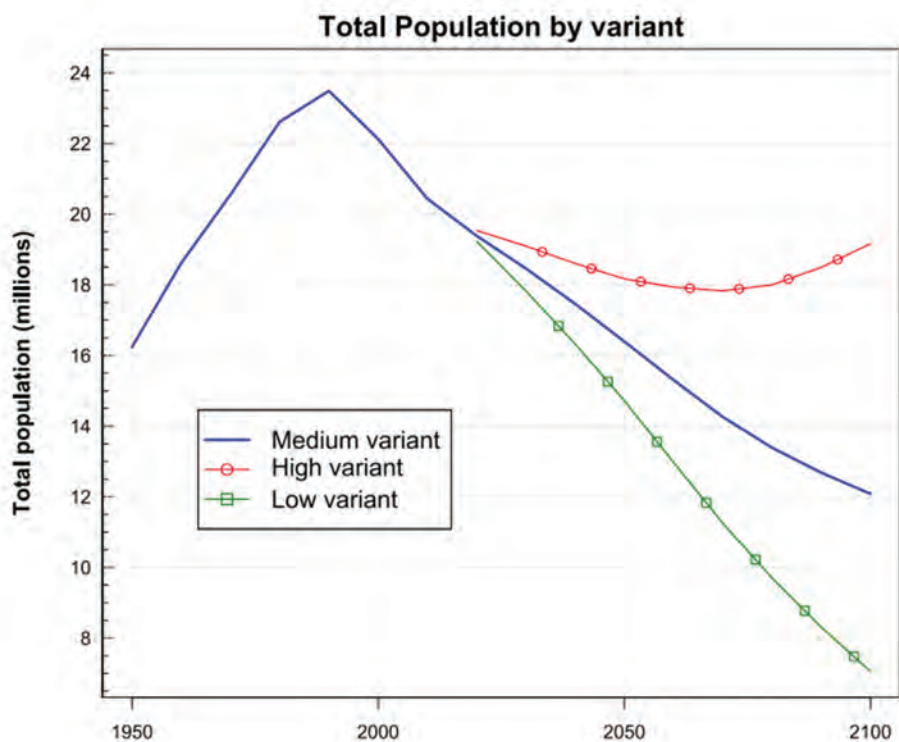
Source: UN-DESA 2018

Figure 3

Romania's population projection according to UN's variants

Source: UN-DESA 2017

Prognoses show Romania's population will decrease with another 3.5 million inhabitants, at least, by 2050 and with 7.7 million by 2100 (INSSE 2017). If the parameters remain medium, Romania is expected to lose around 40% of its population by 2100.

Three demographic coordinates compose the future prognosis: birth rates, mortality and migration. In Romania's case, the main responsible factors for the present and future demographic decline remain the extremely low levels of births (below the generational replacement level) and the emigration of youth and economically active population (INSSE 2012a; Mediafax 2018). At this section we will only analyse birth related indicators, migration being approached in a distinct subchapter of this research.

The total fertility rate (TFR). The states with extreme low values (Eastern Europe, including Romania) will face the risk of severe demographic decline or even demographic depopulation (from this can emerge their inability to maintain a certain level of ethnic homogeneity, if the territory becomes or is already attractive for immigrants; this can bring complex societal challenges) (Figure 4).
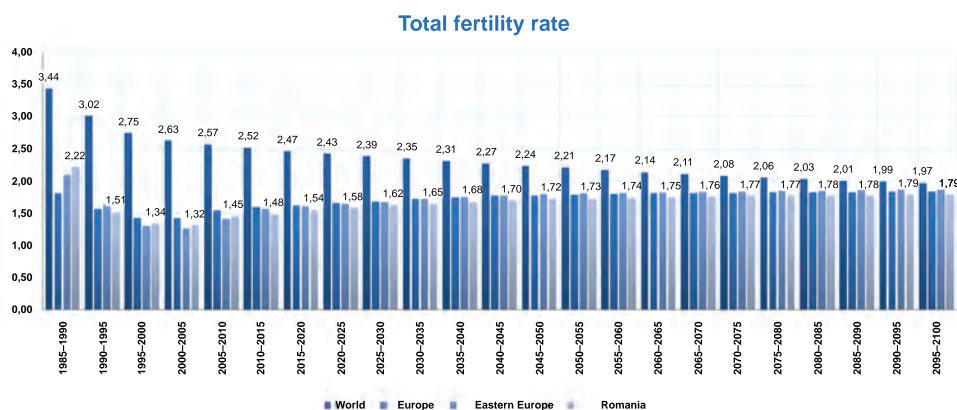

Figure 4

TRF evolution between 1985–2100, at global, regional and national level

Source: UN-DESA 2018

Unfortunately, Romania's TFR average for the period 1989–2016 is 1.4, taking in consideration that after 1995 the TFR was between 1.3–1.2 and only from 2014 started to slightly increase (Figure 5).
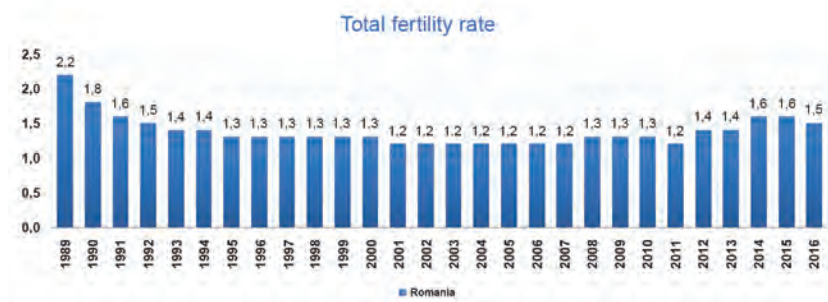
Figure 5
TFR in Romania beginning with 1989 until the present times

Vasile Ghețău[4] asserts that it is highly improbable for the TFR to recover at replacement levels after a period of nearly 20 years of stabilisation at 1.3–1.4 values. In addition, given the current socio-economic conditions, a significant positive change is improbable. He develops a scenario: assuming absurdly that by 2013 TFR would have reached the 2.1 threshold, Romania would still have to deal with negative effects: the population decline would still have continued by 2075 (at this point reaching 17.7 million); it would have taken 65 years for the population of Romania to recover its age structure. If a TFR of 1.6–1.8 would be reached and maintained, the proportions and rhythm of demographic ageing and decline would ameliorate. For this to happen, Vasile Ghețău highlights the need of a different general living standard and adequate resources in order to design, adopt and apply a long-term and long-lasting population policy (Ghețău 2012b, 61–64). We can observe from the current data, that this is not the case for now.

Life-births rates. The number of live-births is in 2016 smaller with about 50% than the number estimated for 1989 (Figure 6).

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[4]   Director of the "Vladimir Trebici" Center for Demographic Research, Romanian Academy.

Live-births 1989–2016
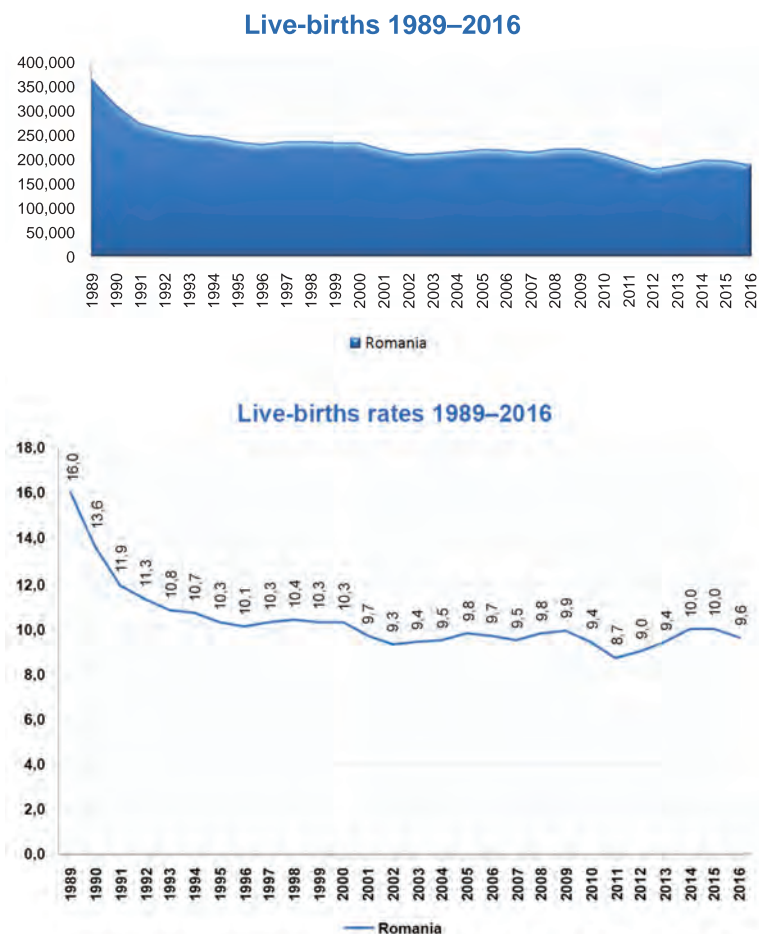

Live-births rates 1989–2016

Figure 6.
The evolution of live-births situation in Romania between 1989–2016

Source: National Institute of Statistics 2018

Massive abortion rates. This component is very relevant because it can impact the population number both directly and indirectly – possible physical and psychological repercussions on women, affecting their future capacity of giving birth – (GHEȚĂU 2012b, 6). From this perspective, Romania has one of the most acute situations globally: it has one of the biggest abortion rates worldwide – 21.3 (UN-DESA 2013) and is number one in Europe by the number of abortions (TOMESCU et al. 2013, 79). Because of abortion, there are approximately 50% less births in Romania annually (GHEȚĂU 2012b, 6). This is so even though in 2017 it experienced a smaller number of abortions compared with the figures of

the 1990s (Figure 7). From 1989 until 2015, a number of 8,026,819 abortions were carried out, meaning more than 8 million unborn children (Pro Vita [s. a.]).

Figure 7

The number of abortions in Romania after 1989 until 2014

Source: Pro Vita (s. a.)

The number could be though much higher because data about abortions carried out in the private sector after 1989 are incomplete or inexistent in some cases. This grave situation is the expression of the 1990s shift in: 1. legislation − from prohibition before 1989 (Decree 770/1966) to abortion being permitted on request without no restriction (UN-DESA 2013); 2. socio-economic conditions.

2.3. Demographic ageing since 1989

For the first time in the history of Romania's population, after the 1989 Revolution, along with the population decline, one can observe the emergence of a new demographic phenomenon: population ageing. In the long term, this is going to be one of the most acute situations regionally and globally.

Median age. Even though, in the long term, differences at global and regional levels tend to reduce, it can be observed that at least until 2050 they will accentuate. Until 2015, Romania was under the European average, but in the long run it will suffer an accelerated ageing, surpassing the European average median age. But regarding the Central East region, starting from the early 2000s, Romania exceeds this region's average.

Table 2

Median age estimations and trends between 1989–2100
Romania's position at global and regional level

Location	1985	1990	2015	2025	2050	2075	2100
World	23.3	24.0	29.6	32.1	36.1	39.0	41.6
Europe	33.5	34.6	41.6	43.9	46.6	46.8	47.8
Eastern Europe	32.4	33.6	39.6	42.3	44.6	45.0	45.7
Romania	**31.6**	**32.6**	**41.3**	**44.5**	**48.0**	**48.1**	**48.6**

Source: UN-DESA 2018

According to UN data, in 1990 the median age in Romania was 32.6 and in 2015 this increased to 41.3 (a jump of 9 years in a period of only two and a half decades). Another 4 to 7 years are expected to be added in the next one to three decades: Romania's median age will be around 45.4 years by 2030, around 48.0 by 2050 and around 48.6 by 2100 (UN-DESA 2018) (Figure 8).
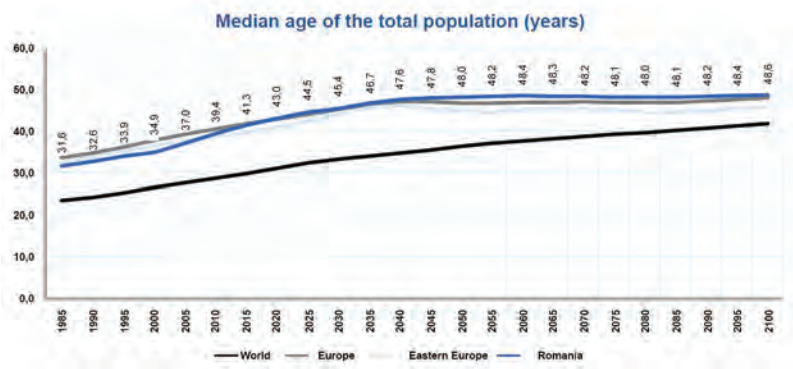

Figure 8

Romania's median age evolution: estimates and trends for 1985–2100
A comparative perspective with global, European and Eastern European values

Source: UN-DESA 2018

Age structure. After 1989, Romania's age structure started to register changes (Figure 9–10), experiencing a decrease in the proportion of children and an increase in the elderly. In the long term, the proportion of children and working-age population is expected to decrease further and the proportion of the elderly to increase (Figure 10).
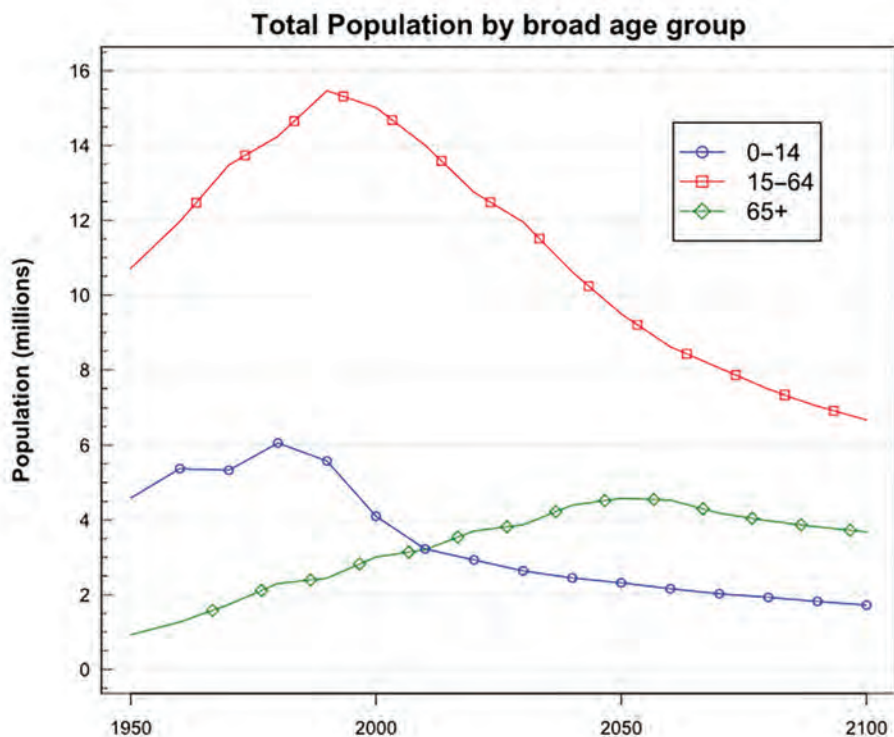
Figure 9
Romania's age-structure evolution between 1950 and 2100

Source: UN-DESA 2017, 634

INSSE prognoses show (Figure 10) an increase of the elderly proportion with 15.2% in 2060 compared to 1992 (first census after the 1989 results).
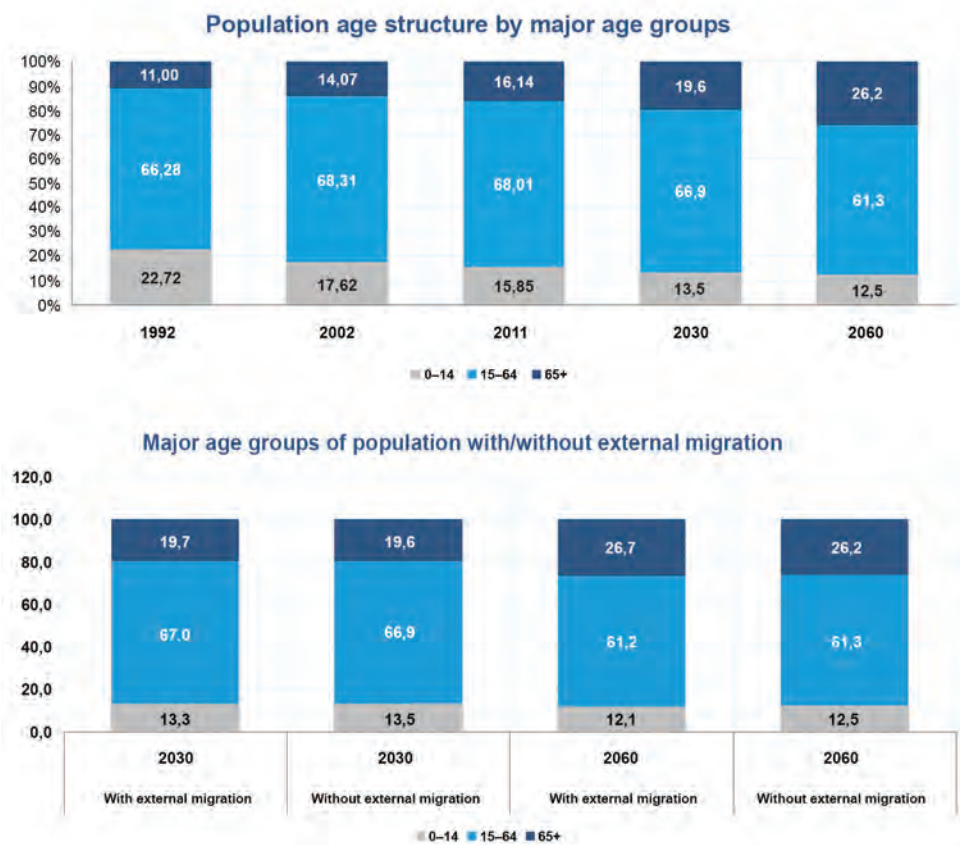
Population age structure by major age groups

	1992	2002	2011	2030	2060
65+	11,00	14,07	16,14	19,6	26,2
15–64	66,28	68,31	68,01	66,9	61,3
0–14	22,72	17,62	15,85	13,5	12,5

■ 0–14 ■ 15–64 ■ 65+

Major age groups of population with/without external migration

	2030 With external migration	2030 Without external migration	2060 With external migration	2060 Without external migration
65+	19,7	19,6	26,7	26,2
15–64	67,0	66,9	61,2	61,3
0–14	13,3	13,5	12,1	12,5

■ 0–14 ■ 15–64 ■ 65+

Figure 10

*Romania's age structure by major age groups evolution and trends:
the results of the three censuses after 1989 and 2030 and 2060 estimates*[5]

Source: INSSE 2012a; INSSE 2017

The elderly population increased from 2.44 million in 1990 to 3.37 million in 2015 and it is expected to reach 4.57 million by 2050 according to UN data (UN-DESA 2018) (Figure 11).

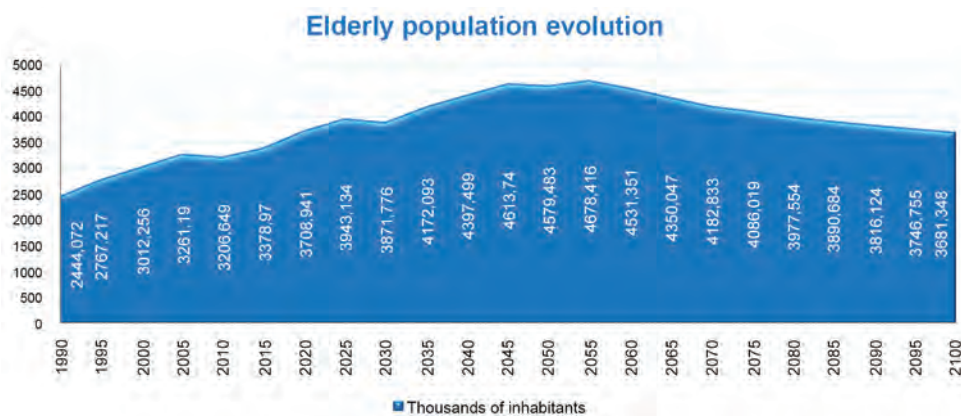[5]   The first figure does not include the migration component.

Figure 11

Romania's elderly population evolution and trends from 1990 until 2100

Source: UN-DESA 2018

Working-age population. From an economic perspective, if the number of the elderly is growing and the number of the working-age population is decreasing, this is the worst situation. According to UN estimates and prognoses, this population group started to decrease in the 1990s and it is expected to be halved by 2100: from 15,466,748 in 1990, to 13,433,330 in 2015, to 9,496,385 in 2050 and to 6,677,671 in 2100 (UN-DESA 2018) (Figure 12).
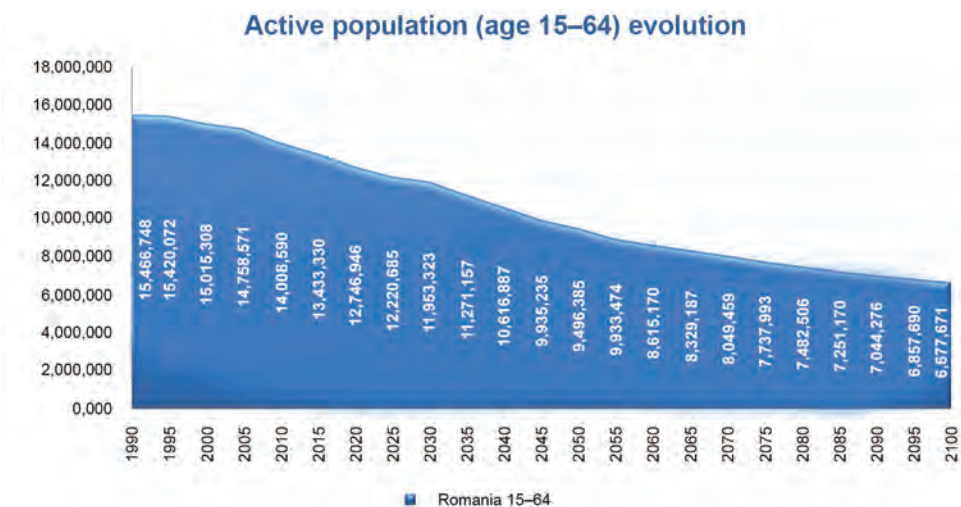

Figure 12

Romania's working-age population evolution and trends between 1990 and 2100

Source: UN-DESA 2018

According to the INSSE the decrease of the working-age population is forecasted to be slightly higher (Table 3).

Table 3

Romania's working-age population group estimates and trends between 2002 and 2060 (in thousands)

	2002	2011		2015	2030		2060		Changes 2060–2015	
15–64 years old resid. Pop.	14,810.6	13,684.2		13,413.4	11,985.2		7,506.1		–5,907.3	–44.0%
		+ext. migration	– ext. migration		+ext. migration	–ext. migration	+ext. migration	–ext. migration		
		13,684.3	13,684.3		12,099.1	12,131.6	7,921.9	8,116.1		

Source: INSSE 2017, 9–17

Old-age dependency ratio. This indicator offers a perspective on the socio-demographical pressure that ageing is expected to have on the future Romanian society. After 1989, a considerable increase of this indicator can be observed, a tendency to be continued for the next decades. On the horizon of 2060, INSSE estimates that it will almost double, reaching a value of 44 elderlies at 100 working-age population (Figure 13).
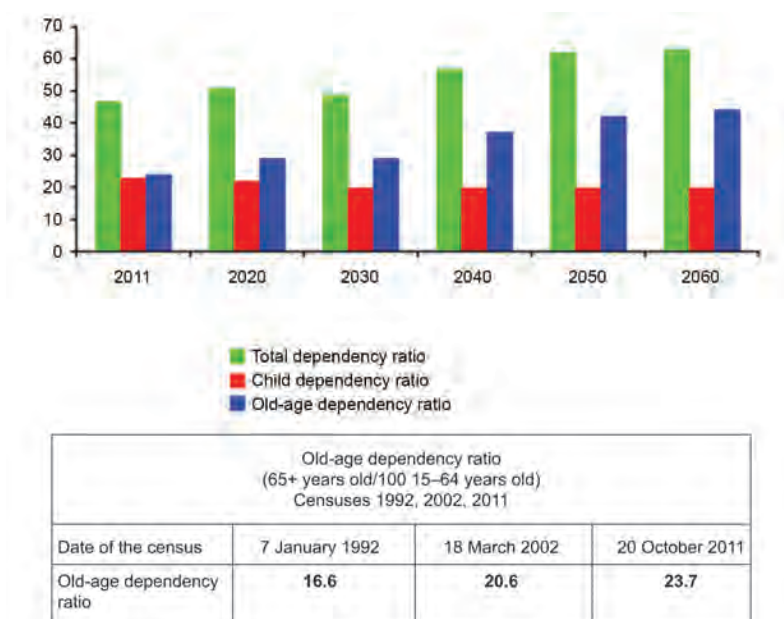

Old-age dependency ratio
(65+ years old/100 15–64 years old)
Censuses 1992, 2002, 2011

Date of the census	7 January 1992	18 March 2002	20 October 2011
Old-age dependency ratio	16.6	20.6	23.7

Figure 13

Old-age dependency ratio evolution in Romania
From the first census after 1989 until 2060

Source: INSSE 2012a; INSSE 2017; UN-DESA 2018

UN data shows Romania had a quite equilibrated ratio of 18.1 in the year 1990 and by 2015 it has experienced a growth with almost 10%. According to UN, by 2050 old-age dependency ratio will double, reaching 52.7 and by 2100 it is expected to be at 60.6 (UN-DESA 2018). These values make Romania one of the worst cases worldwide and regionally (Figure 14).
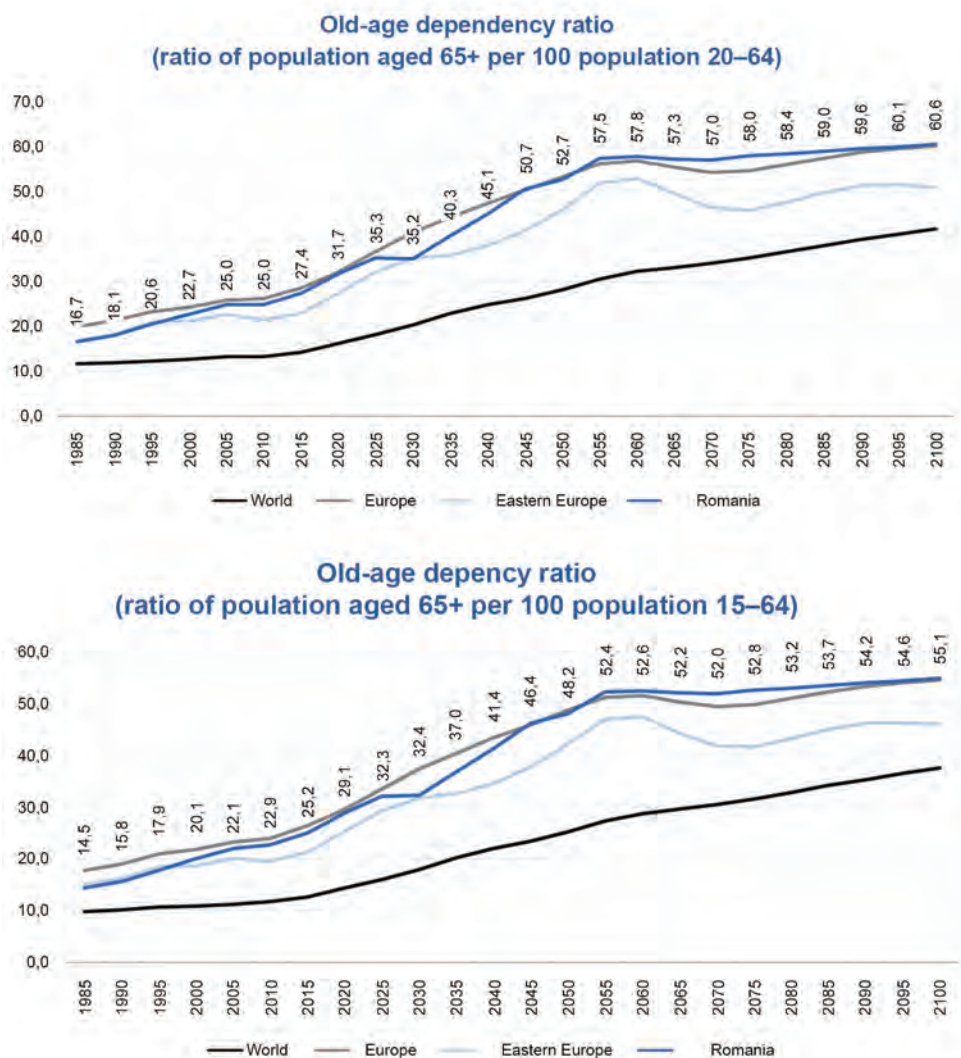
Old-age dependency ratio
(ratio of population aged 65+ per 100 population 20–64)

Old-age depency ratio
(ratio of poulation aged 65+ per 100 population 15–64)

Figure 14
Old-age dependency ratio:
Romania in comparison with the global and regional dimensions

Source: UN-DESA 2018

As one can observe, the social pressure of ageing is about to double and if trends confirm, Romania will have to adapt its social infrastructures in order to cope with this phenomenon.

2.4. Migration

In its modern history, Romania was an emigration country: emigration flows were significantly bigger than the immigration ones. Currently the situation remains the same; therefore, an important part of this chapter will focus on emigration.

2.4.1. Emigration from Romania after 1989

Internal and external events and processes that have happened after 1989 have led to boosting emigration at very high levels. Internally, the fall of the communist regime and the economic transition led to job insecurity. The restructuring of some economic sectors generated massive job losses − around 2 million between 1990–2000 (BĂLTEANU 2005, 260) and 3.4 million estimated in 2010 (Comenius Project 2010, 35–38). The labour market was not mature enough and ready to assimilate the majority of workers in need of reorientation and the employed population decreasing with 44% (Comenius Project 2010, 35–38). Externally, geopolitical changes (USSR collapse) facilitated Romania's opening towards Western countries, after a period of harsh restriction for emigration. After the end of the Cold War, the migration flow from East towards West has become one of the most important routes of migration (LAUMER 2009), including Romania's case. The flow accelerated with Romania's accession to the European Union (GEORGESCU 2006, 310). Furthermore, the desire to have access to better living conditions, a positive example from successful first wave emigrants encouraged others to follow this path.

After 1989, the phenomenon of emigration gained magnitude, but also a distinctive characteristic through different periods, forming four major emigration waves (ULRICH et al. 2011).

Table 5
Post Revolution emigration waves of Romania

	Period	Motivation	Emigrant's profile	Type of emigration	Main destination countries
The 1st wave	1990–1995	political; political instability; the opening of the borders	ethnic emigration (Transylvanian Saxons and Swabians; flows oriented mainly towards Germany; highly qualified professionals	mostly permanent emigration	Germany, Canada, the USA, Turkey, Israel, Hungary
The 2nd wave	1996–2001	economic motivation; work migration	Romanian emigrants (90%), mostly men, married, previously employed in the industrial sector becoming unqualified workers in the host country	Temporary/ circular migration	Germany, Canada, the USA, Turkey, Israel, Hungary

| The 3rd wave | 2002–2006 | economic motivation; work migration | emigrants (men, women) with previous emigration experience, working in sectors such as: construction, agriculture, domestic activities | Temporary/ circular migration | Italy, Spain |
| The 4th wave | 2007– present | economic migration; recognition of professional status | a new category emerges: highly qualified emigrants ("brain drain" phenomenon) | Long term oriented; risk of becoming permanent | Italy, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom |

Source: Ulrich et al. 2011; INSSE 2018[6]

In terms of number, according to INSSE, 527,170 persons emigrated permanently between 1990–2016 and 1,850,066 people emigrated temporary, from Romania between 2008 (first year with estimates available on Tempo online) and 2016.
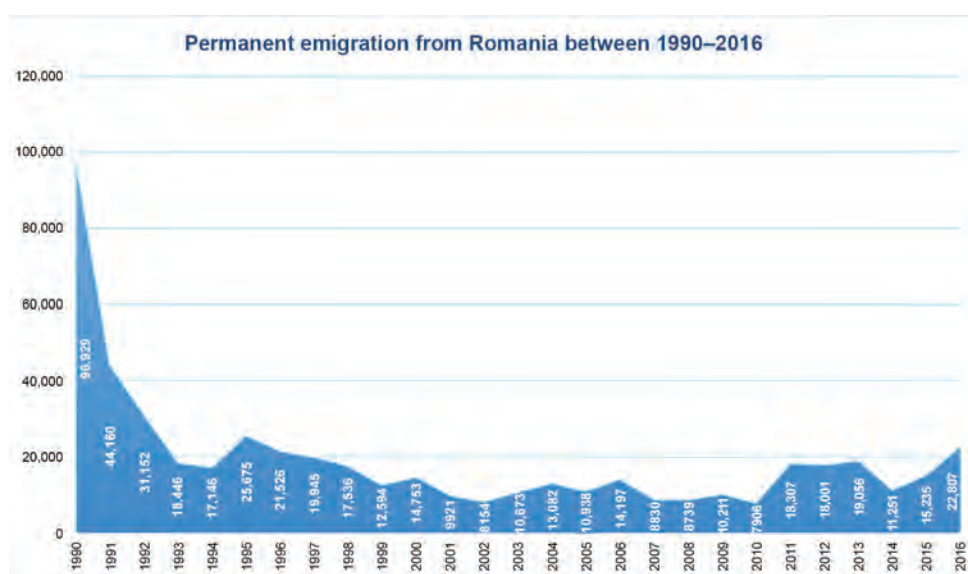

Figure 15
Number of permanent emigrants from Romania between 1990–2016

Source: INSSE 2018

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[6] Data from the Ulrich et al.report were combined with the analysis of indicators from INSSE's platform Tempo online and with other literature sources.

Figure 16
The number of temporary emigrants from Romania between 2008 and 2016

After the first years of 1990, the permanent emigrants were in majority Romanians (Figure 17): 269,359 Romanians emigrated permanently between 1990 and 2010 (last year's available data) (INSSE 2018).
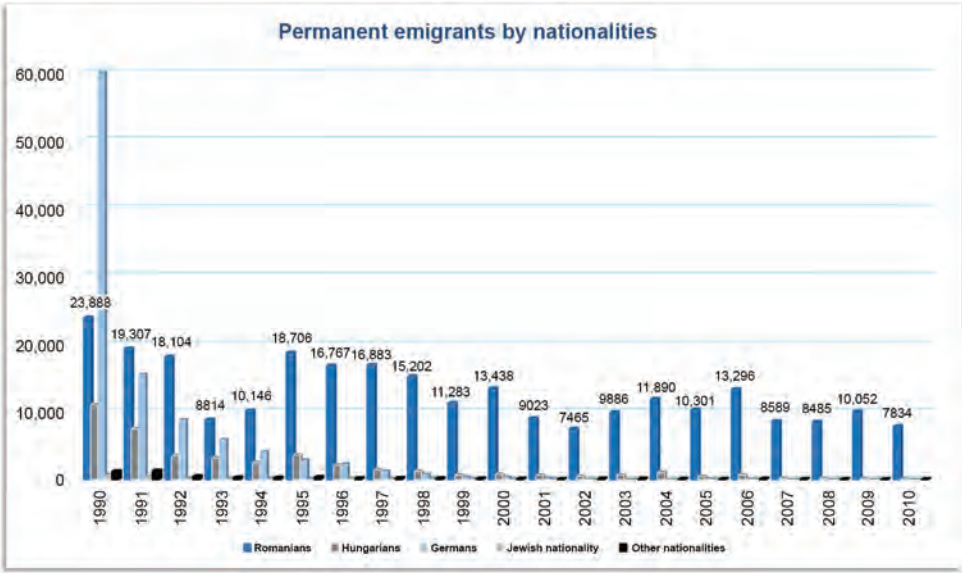

Figure 17
Permanent Emigrants from Romania by nationality,
between 1990–2010

The real data could be in reality much higher than the official estimates of INSSE. Specialists advance different figures: 2,213,000 emigrants between the 2002 and the 2011 censuses (GEŢĂU 2012a, 12; 27–28); 3.4 million people between 2007 and 2017 (Mediafax 2018). As a matter of fact, Romanian emigrants form one of the largest groups of immigrants within the EU countries (Eurostat 2018). In 2017, Romania had the 16th largest diaspora worldwide (UN-DESA 2017).

In terms of destination, INSSE data for permanent migration are in accordance with the remarks within Table 5. The situation can be observed in Figure 18.
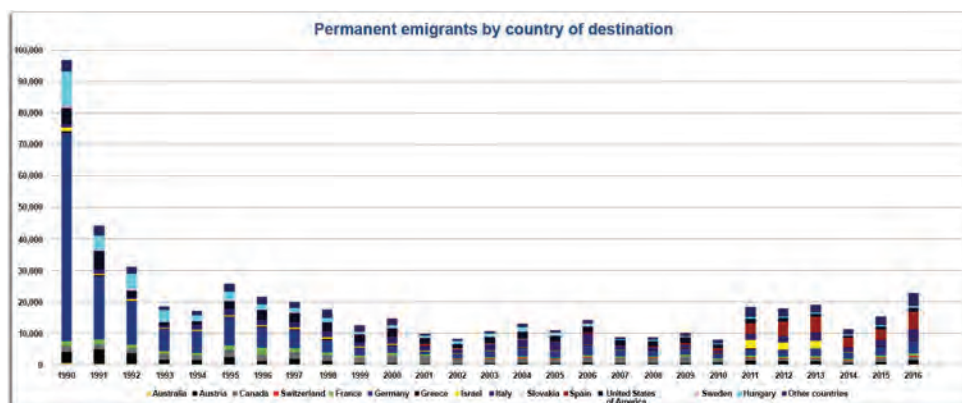

Figure 18
The evolution of destination countries of Romanian emigrants after 1989

Source: INSEE 2018

In the latest years, the main destinations were Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy and Belgium (National Institute of Statistics 2017, 101).

Given the magnitude of the phenomenon two associate issues have arisen:

Negative implication of emigration experience on children having one or both parents abroad − depression, impairing school performance, psychological and behavioural effects etc., emerging from a long period of separation from the parents, or even from the divorce installed within the family − (GEORGESCU 2006; TOTH et al. 2007; TOTH et al. 2008; ULRICH et al. 2011; BARA-TALPAŞ 2011). Their healthy and harmonious evolution is very important, as they are the future human resource of Romania.

Brain drain phenomenon, manifested mostly after 2007. According to a recent study, the most affected fields of activity are: research (15,000 Romanian researchers are active abroad which can have a circulatory character; in the last 10 years 300,000 students had decided to study abroad, which can reduce significantly the base of future research generation in Romania), medical system (15,700 doctors work abroad, mostly in Germany, Great Britain, France; the deficit of specialist doctors is about 4,700; their migration tends to be permanent) and information technology (less data are known about this category; they emigrate especially to Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium, the USA and Canada) (LĂZĂRESCU et al. 2017). The highly qualified personnel do not emigrate only because of low incomes,

other important reasons are: corruption at national level, lack of professional development opportunities, career advancement on professional merits, bureaucracy in public institutions and lack of modern infrastructure/equipment (Lăzărescu et al. 2017). This phenomenon deprives Romania of a substantial human resource responsible for innovation, change and economic growth, this being at active age and specialised in key sectors for the development of any society.

Specialists believe significant flows of emigration will continue to exist at least for the next 10 to 15 years, given the socio-economic conditions in Romania, the development gap between the country and the Western European states and the emigration intention confirmed by recent researches in the field (Ghețău 2012b).

2.4.2. Immigration in Romania after 1989

Romania does not have a modern history marked by major immigration flows. Since 1989, Romania has been most of all a country of transition for immigrants, in order for them to arrive into Western European countries.

In terms of stocks, in 2017 Romania's immigrants (135,825) had as main origin countries: the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Hungary, the Russian Federation, Spain, Greece (UN-DESA 2017). Eurostat 2016 data show that the foreign born population in Romania had as major citizenship: Italian, Moldavian, Turkish, Chinese, French and a great proportion of other citizenships (Eurostat 2016). Other national source of data shows a number of 60,000 legal immigrants are coming from outside the European Union, the European Economic Area and the Swiss Confederation. The main countries are: the Republic of Moldova (9,500), Turkey (8,800), China (7,500), Syria (4,500), Israel (2,600), Iraq (2,300), the US (2,100) (Lăzărescu 2016).

According to the INSSE, in 2016 the permanent immigrants were 0.14% of the estimated population of Romania.[7] The Oxford University estimated that Romania had 0.75% foreign-born people as a share of the total population (Migration Observatory Oxford University Project 2018). This statistic may include much more than the permanent immigrants. Whatever the source of data and its complexity, immigrants are less than 1% of the total population, which is a very small group compared to the developed European countries.

After 1989, the number of permanent immigrants has increased gradually (Figure 19). The EU accession increased the attractivity of the country as a destination for East Eurasian and South Asian economic migrants (Stoicovici 2012; Cervinschi 2011).

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[7]   This percentage is the result of a calculus that took into consideration: the 2016 estimated total population of Romania and the number of permanent immigrants in Romania for 2016 − INSSE.
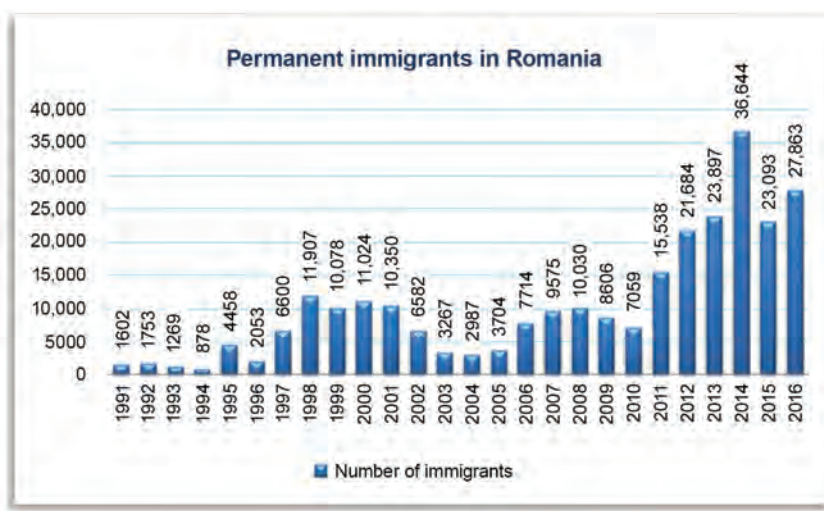
Figure 19
The evolution of permanent immigrants' number in Romania after 1989

Source: INSSE 2018

The biggest group of permanent immigrants is formed by Moldavians (Figure 20), due to their special status for migrating in Romania (STOLERIU et al. 2001), profound cultural and identity ties that makes their adaptation a facile one.
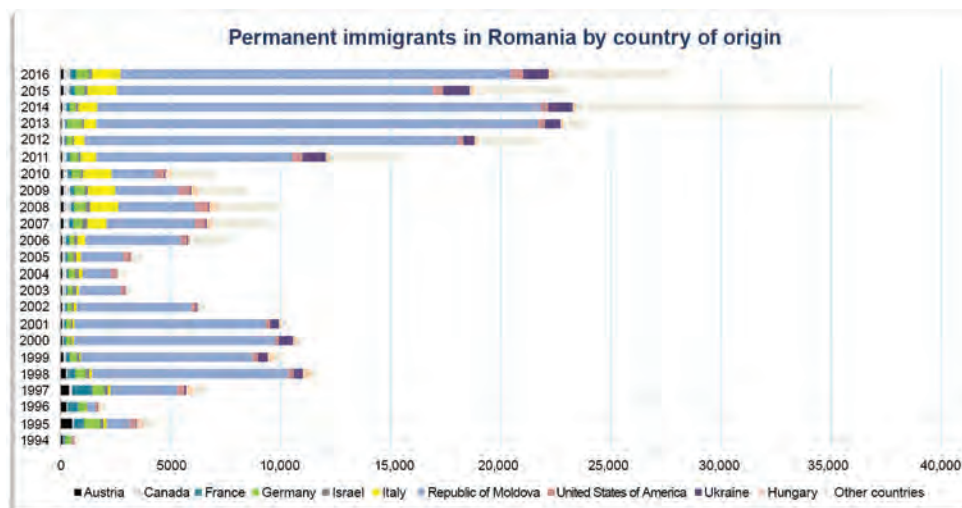

Figure 20
Permanent immigrants in Romania by country of origin after 1989

Source: INSSE 2018

Temporary immigrants exceeded 135,000, between 2008 and 2016 (Figure 21), and their number was each year at least four times higher than the number of the permanent ones.
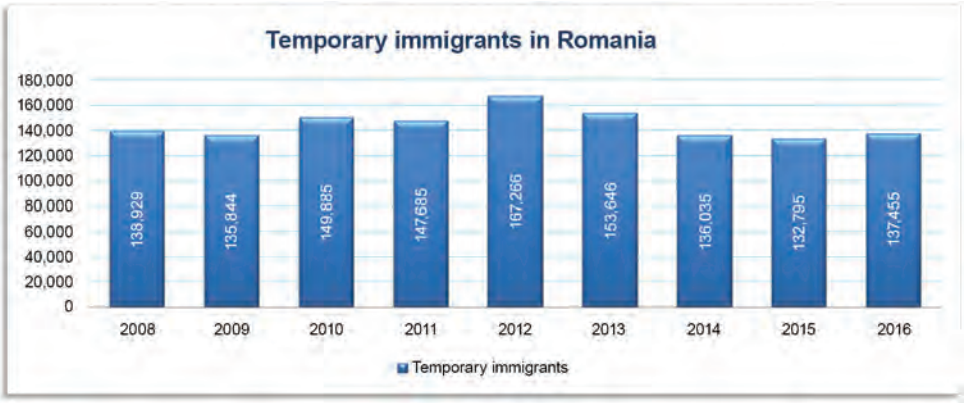

Figure 21
Temporary immigrants in Romania

Source: INSSE 2018

As for the origin of the temporary migrants, Romania attracts mostly workforce of nationalities as Moldavians, Turks, Chinese, Frenchs, Germans, Italians, Greeks, Albanians, British, Russians, Serbians and Indians (CHINDEA et al. 2008; ALEXE et al. 2011). But besides work (which is the motive of immigration for only 10%), other two important reasons are studies and family reunification (LĂZĂRESCU 2016).
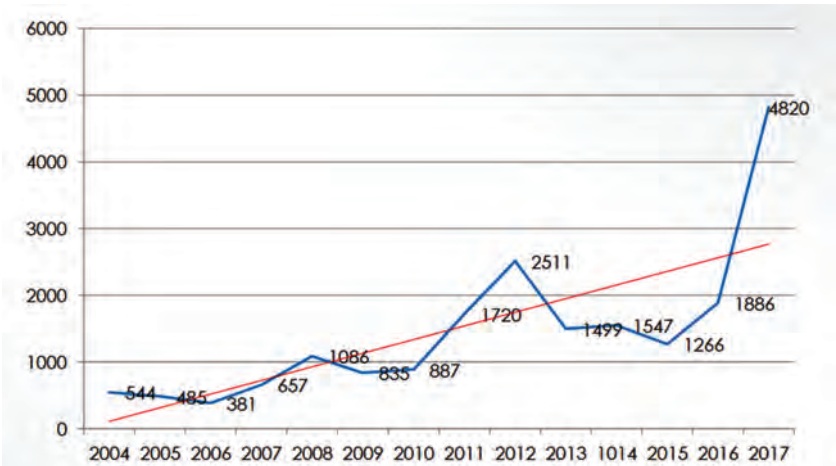

Figure 22
Asylum application in Romania after 1989

Source: General Inspectorate for Immigration 2018

Even though Romania is not dealing yet with great flows of immigration, it has experienced illegal forms of it, which were included as priorities within national strategies of security and defence. In recent years, specialists observed an acceleration of the phenomenon, mainly after 2011 (Stoica 2011; Barna–Pişleag 2014). In 2017, 3,580 illegal persons were traced and 1,568 returning decisions were issued (General Inspectorate for Immigration 2018).

In terms of asylum applications, these had increased constantly since the first years of 2000 (Figure 25). The main countries of origin of the applicants are Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran (General Inspectorate for Immigration 2018).

2.4.3. The impact of the European migration crisis on Romania

Analysing the events and statistical data, we can assert that Romania, so far, has been less impacted by the migration crisis. It was not included in the routes of migration for these flows. The geographical conditions and the fact that our country is not part of the Schengen area did not encourage immigrants toward this direction (Sarcinschi 2017, 78).

According to the mandatory refugee quotas, Romania should have received 4,000 refugees by the end of 2017, but due to a much smaller number of transfer eligible, Romania received 710 persons (in majority Syrians) relocated from Greece and Italy (Mediafax 2017). The first ones came in March 2016 (Sarcinschi 2017, 98). In 2017, 172 individuals were transferred from Greece, other two from Italy and 43 from Turkey (General Inspectorate for Immigration 2018). For the moment, Romania is not a transit or a destination country for the current wave of immigration (Sarcinschi 2017, 109).

2.4.4. Immigration forecasts

In terms of predictions, it is rather difficult to assert for sure that Romania will gain attractiveness for immigrants, evolving from transit country into a destination one. But in 2010, a research pointed out that in the long term, Romania could shift from a transit country to a destination one, because of: 1. The demographic crisis Romania is facing; 2. The labour market imbalance; 3. The economic growth of Romania and its European Union membership; 4. The evolution of the migration rate in Romania from strong negative ones (–4.04%) in 1990 to values around 0 in reality; 5. Precedent cases based on a similar logic, such as Spain, Italy and the recent evolution in this direction of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland − from negative values of migration rates to positive ones (Neguţ et al. 2010). If this scenario will become reality, it is important to observe if it will have the potential to bring changes in the ethnic structure of the country, to what extend and of what origin.

3. Awareness and answers to major demographic challenges

In the latest years, one can observe the existence of awareness regarding the major demographic challenges. Academic specialists regard Romania's demographic situation as

a "latent demographic crisis" (Ghețău 2007), "demographic implosion" (Muntele 2008) and even as "the most serious demographic crisis in its [Romania's] contemporary history" (Surd et al. 2014, 809). In the latest years, national mass media has increased the approaches of demographic crisis related topics, using such terms as: "clock bomb", "demographic crisis", "disequilibrium" etc. The last two presidents of Romania (Traian Băsescu, Klaus Iohannis) spoke publicly about the demographic challenges (Frățilă 2013; Blada 2016). Even so, the decision-makers had a less comprehensive and uniform approach of the matter, showed by the content of the 14 governance programs after 1989 (available on the CDEP and Lege5 sites and the official site of the Romanian Government). None of these refer to a distinct demographic policy. Demographic issues were approached with little continuity (some aspects were mentioned in certain programs, some appeared in others) and not of an integrated manner from a program to another (not in a specific chapter, but rather disparately within other ones). We identified mentions about demographic decline, ageing, brain drain, illegal immigration, but not all together approached within the same program (the only exception being the 2005–2008 one), rather in different years and in various combinations.

At strategic level, demographic challenges started to be approached mostly after 2006. Since then all three national strategies of defence and security have mentioned these kinds of developments. In the current Strategy, *The National Defence Strategy for the Period 2015–2019,* demographic challenges are mentioned both within the risks (demographic decline, work force emigration) and vulnerabilities chapters (demographic decline, migration of the specialised work force). Furthermore, out of 7 directions of action, one specifically includes demography, being mentioned the need of taking coherent measures in order to ameliorate the deterioration of the demographic situation (Romanian Presidency 2015). Other demographic issues are addressed along the document: the illegal migration within the Euro–Atlantic dimension of the security chapter (in relation with the organised cross-border crime) and within the sub-chapter specific to the direction of action in the public order sector (securing the borders, countering illegal immigration) (Romanian Presidency 2015, 13, 16, 20).

After 1989, Romania's answer to the major demographic transformations has been a predominately reactive one instead of a proactive one. The state took measures and developed strategies mostly after the effects had started to be visible. Some specialists named the situation in the field of demographic policies after 1989 as a non-intervention one (Mărginean 2010, 3). Furthermore, we did not identify any program document entitled Demographic Policy of Romania. Without an integrated strategic approach of the major demographic transformations, clear goals and significant results are difficult for a state to accomplish. Thus, the decision makers started to approach, even at the surface level, the demographic issues and some examples can be seen below.

3.1. The numerical dimension: The demographic decline

Even so, since 1990 there have been some legislative measures meant to attenuate the demographic sideslip and these focused mainly on maternity leaves (currently being of two years) and allowances (fluctuating over time, but currently being at 85% of the average net income earned in the last 12 months) (Simion 2014, 12; Lege5 2005, EuroAvocatura [s. a.]).

However, these measures were unsteady, being influenced by economic and political developments and without significant achievements (Simion 2014, 12), even though Vasile Ghețău highlighted that some of them had a certain result among employed women (Ghețău 2012). For visible results, specialists emphasised the need of a complex set of measures: mentality changes (restoring family with children status and prestige); financial assistance (child allowance, public spending for family assistance, tax deductions, etc.), health and education services (including a better access and quality of reproductive health service and family planning); support families in order to better blend the family and professional development (facilities for children: kindergartens, nearby nurseries with a prolonged program, flexible work program, parental leave and access to housing); reviving demographic research and creating a high-level institutional structure for managing such important issues (Ghețău 2007, viii, 86; Ghețău 2012b; INSSE 2012b).

3.2. The age-structure dimension: Population ageing

Given the possible long term socio-economic effects, it started to be addressed in strategic documents. In this respect *The National Strategy for Promoting Active Ageing and Protection of the Elderly 2014–2020* has 3 main objectives: 1. To prolong the active life; 2. To promote the social participation and ageing with dignity; 3. To achieve a greater degree of independence and security for individuals with long-term care needs (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly 2014, 5). Two transversal objects are also added: 1. Delaying the physical ageing and the occurrence of chronic diseases; 2. Preparing the medical system to cope with a growing elderly population. These two transversal objectives contribute to "achieving a longer, healthier life and in fulfilling all three general goals" (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly 2014, 22). The strategy highlights the implementation of policies in active ageing must be based on a cross-sectorial and inter-sectorial systemic approach and an action oriented on multiple areas: health, education, labour market, transport system, agriculture, public finances (World Bank 2014, 19; Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly 2014, 29).

In terms of prolonging the active live, World Bank asserted that developments are significant, but the plans for continuing them in this area are not so ambitious (World Bank 2014, 12).

3.3. The migration dimension

3.3.1. Emigration

Due to its magnitude and how the labour market has been developing (at times going through difficulties), specialists asserted that it would not be desirable for the state to set its stopping as goal. Dumitru Sandu sees the encouragement of the circular migration as an alternative (and not transforming it into a definitive one) by reducing costs and increasing benefits in the origin and destination countries (Ulrich 2011, 57–58). Juravle emphasised that Romania did not prepare solutions for an effective migration policy and highlighted

the need of economic stimulants to support the return of emigrants in the origin country or to support circular migration (JURAVLE 2013, 10). Currently, emigration is approached as a risk factor within the *National Strategy for Employment in the Labour Marker 2014–2020,* destabilising the labour market most of all after the EU accession, because of its magnitude in a short period of time (Romanian Government 2014).

A special category of emigrants forms the brain drain phenomenon. For attenuate it, along with increasing the wages, the improving working conditions (including modern technical equipment) and recognition of professional status at society level need to be addressed. Therefore, in the short and medium term, brain drain is quite hard to be attenuated. For example, in case of medical personnel, a very important category for any state and one prone to brain drain, the lack of stability and continuity in this sector after 1989, lead to systemic problems (the main being the financial issue) (MOISE 2016). This motivated massive emigration in this sector. In 2015 an ordinance was emitted, in order to increase the salary level in the system to ameliorate the emigration of personnel (OUG 35/2015). In 2018 the Government approved a budget which had priorities as health care, education and investments sectors (Romanian Government 2017).

Because this phenomenon will continue to be relevant at least for the next 10 years and because of significant diaspora emerged after 1989, there had been created structures for strengthening the connection with these communities and for maintaining the cultural ties with them. As a matter of fact, the Ministry for Romanians Everywhere, the Inter-Ministerial Group for Romanians Everywhere and the Council of the Romanians Everywhere are responsible for *The National Strategy for Romanians Everywhere for 2017–2020* (Ministry for Romanians Everywhere 2017). This has 4 objectives: 1. To preserve, develop and affirm the Romanian identity outside its borders (by: language, Romanian mass media abroad, promoting the cultural and spiritual Romanian values); 2. To strengthen the associative Romanian environment from abroad; 3. To support the integration and defence rights of Romanians abroad (including their integration at the place of living, work or study, increasing the capacity of capitalising the strategic potential of the Romanian community, supporting the process of Romanians returning and reintegration); 4. To strengthen and make more efficient the institutional framework in the field of Romanians Everywhere (adapting the legislative framework, increasing institutional transparency, establishing an efficient dialogue between the Romanians everywhere, the Romanian State and the host countries).

3.3.2. Immigration

Even though Romania is not yet confronted with significant challenges due to immigration, this subject has been approached by the Romanian state at strategic level, due to its geostrategic position (a possible transit country for illegal migration). Therefore, the *National Immigration Strategy for the period 2011–2014* and the *National Immigration Strategy for the period 2015–2018* were created. The last one has as its main goal the development of the necessary mechanisms for the inter-institutional cooperation, in order to identify the best solutions for managing both legal and illegal immigration (Romanian Government 2015). The main body responsible for implementing the policies of migration, asylum

and integrating foreigners, the *General Inspectorate for Immigration,* in its 2017 report mentioned the following as its strategic objective for 2017: assuring an adequate management in legal migration regulation, strengthening the coordinating role of the IGI in preventing and combating illegal residence, work and voluntary repatriation, forced return, assuring access to asylum procedure and improving the national system in this respect, modernising in order to better response to challenges and assuring a higher degree of absorption of EU funds and other sources of finance (General Inspectorate for Immigration 2018).

Regarding the 2015 refugee and migrant crisis, even though Romania is not yet confronted with the same challenges as some European countries are, it had reacted since the beginning of the crisis. The Romanian President expressed his solidarity with the EU states and in September 2015, he asserted that Romania could receive 1,785 refugees, underlining opting for voluntary refugee quotas in the European Council talks and rejecting the mandatory quota version (Neagu 2015). Two weeks later he changed his position and emphasised that Romania could shelter 4,837 refugees and was voting against the mandatory quotas along with Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, being in favour of a balanced answer − between solidarity and responsibility (Neagu 2015). In 2016, the President affirmed that Romania's position was not based on a refusal to receive immigrants, but on questioning the procedure. He emphasised the role of dialogue in identifying a solution and criticised bureaucratic approaches (ProTV 2016). In March 2016, Romania supported the agreement between the EU and Turkey regarding immigrants (Lazăr 2016). On the other hand, regarding infrastructure efforts, by the end of 2020 Romania will be equipped with 36 camps for situations of need (accommodation, food). They are designed to meet national needs (cases of disasters) and the need brought by massive movements of migrants across borders (Brumar 2018). Therefore, even though Romania is not confronted with challenges of magnitude as are the Western European countries in terms of immigration, from this perspective it has started to be proactive, so far with a good result.

4. Conclusions

Romania's demographic profile has specific characteristics in all three dimensions of demographic transition and is in line with the regional general trends of the former Eastern Bloc states, having also its own peculiarities as a distinctive case:

Numerical dimension: since 1989 Romania is facing a continuous population decline, as a result, it has already decreased with about 15% from 1989 until the present days. This will become even more acute in the coming decades; it will manifest even until the horizon of 2100, by that time losing almost 40% of its population, if the demographic parameters remain the same.

- Age-structure dimension: demographic ageing is an emerging and new phenomenon for our country, and until the 2060s the demographic pressure caused by the elderly will double as a result of this process.
- The dimension of migration: Romania is currently a country of emigration, although faced with an acute population decline. On the other hand, a relatively small number of people choose Romania as an immigration destination.

- Emigration. After 1989, emigration flows intensified both as a result of internal and external developments and then because of positive experiences of previous emigration waves. Romania became one of the main sources of EU immigrants. From 1989 until the present more than 2.5 million people emigrated circulatory or permanently, mostly Romanians. Besides the direct demographic impact in the total population number, two other particularly important aspects are to be noted: a) the negative impact of emigration towards the family (the children affected by the migration of one or both parents, their harmonious development is essential they being the country's future human resource, vital especially under the current population decline); b) brain drain, especially after 2007, in key areas (medical, research, ICT, etc.), with possible negative implications (given its key role in economic development and innovation) and being expected to continue the next 10 years (given the existing development gap between Romania and the Western countries).
- Immigration. Romania has a small number of immigrants compared with the Western European countries; they account for less than 1% out of the total population, even if in recent years it can be observed a gradual increase in the number of immigrants and of those individuals seeking different forms of political and social protection (asylum seekers). This brings the challenge regarding illegal immigration. As a matter of fact, the following immigrant communities are much more significant than others: Moldovans, Turks, Chinese, Syrians, Iraqi, Italians and Americans. As far as the European refugees and migrant crisis are concerned, these did not affect Romania, not being on the routes used by migrants. However, as a sign of solidarity with the countries affected by these dynamics, Romania is hosting several hundred refugees since 2016. Overall, regarding immigration trends, it is difficult to anticipate whether Romania will shift from a transit country to a destination one, although there are specialists who consider this transformation as possible in the long term.

A second part of the paper focused on the analysis of how the state has perceived and responded to these dynamics. We can assert that, while academics and the media have apprised on significant demographic trends, political decision-makers have had less constant and comprehensive approaches to demographic issues and responses to the challenges in the field.

However, those significant developments for the demographic profile of the country are addressed at the strategic level within the documents of the national strategies: at a general level in the national security and defence ones and then specifically on different issues (the strategy in the field of active ageing, migration, Romanians everywhere etc.).

At the level of actual actions, we can assert that in most situations, after 1989, Romania had a reactive approach, coming up with measures after a phenomenon or its effects became visible, and the best example in this regard are those that concern demographic decline and brain drain. A higher degree of proactivity can be observed regarding demographic ageing and immigration. Taking into account the current socio-political and economic context and the demographic developments, as well as the measures taken to improve some of them, Romania's demographic profile is not expected to improve in the near future.

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