

## ASPECTS REGARDING THE EVOLUTION OF THE RURAL POPULATION IN ROMANIA

### ASPECTE PRIVIND EVOLUȚIA POPULAȚIEI RURALE 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 dynamics of the rural population points to the labour resources in rural communities.

**Rezumat:** Populația rurală reprezintă o resursă potențială importantă pentru dezvoltarea satelor, iar informațiile privind cantitatea și calitatea resurselor umane sunt hotărâtoare pentru definirea politicilor de dezvoltare rurală. Dinamica populației rurale ne arată care vor fi resursele de muncă ale comunităților rurale.

**Key words:** rural communities, rural environment, rural development  
**Cuvinte cheie:** comunități rurale, mediul rural, dezvoltare rurală

#### INTRODUCTION

Administratively, the rural environment is made up of 2,827 villages that include 12,957 hamlets. For Romania, this environment has great social and economic importance, as 45% of its inhabitants live here. The density of the rural population is 41 inhabitants km<sup>2</sup>, 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 2004, Romania's rural population represented 45% of the total population. In the North-West, South and South-West the share of the rural population is over 50%; in the West and Centre it is below 50% and in Bucharest-Ilfov it is less than 10%. (Table 1)

In 2004, there were 9,777,730 rural inhabitants, distributed in 2,827 villages that included 12,957 hamlets. On average, a village had 3,459 inhabitants and a hamlet had 755.

Table 1

## Regional population per residential areas in 2004

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
<b>Romania</b>	<b>21,673,328</b>	<b>11,895,598</b>	<b>54.89</b>	<b>9,777,730</b>	<b>45.11</b>
North-East	3,738,601	1,629,448	43.58	2,109,153	56.42
South-East	2,850,318	1,582,142	55.51	1,268,176	44.49
South	3,342,042	1,384,906	41.44	1,957,136	58.56
South-West	2,317,636	1,094,772	47.24	1,222,864	52.76
West	1,939,514	1,235,006	63.68	704,508	36.32
North-West	2,738,461	1,444,677	52.76	1,293,784	47.24
Central	2,539,160	1,524,022	60.02	1,015,138	39.98
Bucharest-Ilfov	2,207,596	2,000,625	90.62	206,971	9.38

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005

In 1990-2004, 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 9,777,730 in 2004.

Table 2

## Evolution of rural population in 1990-2004

Specification	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Population (number of people)	23,206,720	22,680,951	22,435,205	22,408,393	21,794,793	21,733,556	21,673,328
Population dynamics (1990 = 100%)	100	97.7	96.7	96.6	93.9	93.7	93.4
Rural population, % of the total	45.7	45.1	45.4	45.4	46.7	46.6	45.1

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005

In 2004, about 9.8 million people lived in the rural environment. On the whole, the share of the rural population decreased from 45.7% in 1990 to 45.1% in 2004.

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.

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 2004 the situation changed radically and the urban-rural flows became dominant (31.8%) (Table 3)

Table 3

## Structure of migration flows in residential areas in 1992-2004

Migration %	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Rural-urban	39.2	35.0	30.4	25.1	24.6	22.6	21.9	21.0	19.5	24.5	22.4	23.1	21.0
Rural-rural	22.7	25.0	25.5	27.9	24.5	25.6	23.5	21.7	23.0	20.0	21.6	19.3	21.1
Urban-rural	13.7	14.6	18.4	20.8	23.4	26.8	28.5	30.7	33.8	27.9	30.1	30.2	31.8
Urban-urban	24.3	25.3	25.6	26.1	27.4	25.0	26.0	26.5	23.7	27.5	25.8	27.3	26.1

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2005

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 1997-2004 was characterised mostly by the constant drop of the birth rate in both residential areas (Table 4).

Table 4

Natural population movement in the rural area

Specification	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Births (1,000 population)	126.9	127.1	126.1	126.3	118.0	112.3	111.6	104.9
Birth rate (1,000 population)	10.5	10.5	10.4	10.5	9.8	9.7	9.8	10.0
Deaths (thousand people)	163.3	156.4	154.0	147.4	149.5	156.4	154.3	144.6
Death rate (1,000 population)	15.9	15.3	15.1	14.4	14.6	15.3	15.2	14.7
Natural increase (thousand people)	-36.4	-29.3	-27.9	-21.1	-31.5	-44.1	-42.7	-39.7
Natural increase rate (1,000 population)	-3.5	-2.9	-2.8	-2.1	-3.1	-4.3	-4.2	-4.0

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses

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

Table 5

Evolution of birth rate and death rate in residential areas

Specification	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Urban (thousand people)								
Births	110.0	110.2	108.5	108.3	102.4	98.2	100.9	111.3
Deaths	116.0	112.7	111.2	108.4	110.1	113.2	112.3	114.3
Rural (thousand people)								
Births	126.9	127.1	126.1	126.3	118.0	112.3	111.6	104.9
Deaths	163.3	156.4	154.0	147.4	149.5	156.4	154.3	144.6

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses

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 6

Infant mortality in residential areas

Specification	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total number of deaths	5,209	4,868	4,360	4,370	4,057	3,648	3,546	3,641
urban	2,036	1,907	1,650	1,744	1,594	1,426	1,381	1,555
rural	3,173	2,961	2,710	2,626	2,463	2,222	2,165	2,086
Infant mortality rate (1,000 inhabitants)								
urban	22.0	20.5	18.6	18.6	18.4	17.3	16.7	16.8
rural	18.5	17.3	15.2	16.1	15.6	14.5	13.7	14.0
rural	25.0	23.3	21.5	20.8	20.9	19.8	19.4	19.9

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses

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 2001-2003, the average life span was 71.81 years in the urban area and 70.08 years in the rural area. The average life span for women was 74.78 years, compared with 67.42 years for men. (Table 7)

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

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).

Another phenomenon that influenced the decrease of the rural population was the migration of the young people, mostly the educated ones. The rural learning population is lower than the urban one. (Table 8)

Table 8

Learning population in residential areas

Specification	1997/ 1998	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005
Total population	4,643,351	4,631,164	4,578,383	4,565,279	4,554,466	4,496,786	4,472,493	4,403,880
Urban %	68.5	67.8	67.3	67.3	67.4	67.4	67.0	67.3
Rural %	31.5	32.2	32.7	32.7	32.6	32.6	33.0	32.7

Source: Social Trends. Statistical Studies and Analyses

## CONCLUZII

In the rural environment, the population is decreasing, aging and not as 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.

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.

## LITERATURE

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