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Rural Population in Romania. Development and Tendencies (2000 – 2010)

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Abstract

Demography is among the top factors which exert an undeniable influence upon the economic environment. Therefore, the populace - through its dynamics and characteristics - leaves an imprint upon the social and economic landscape, being a keen barometer and contributing to economic progress. The relationship demography-economy is extremely tight, since the populace is perceived as being a true representation of what characterizes our economy. Romania originated as a country with an agriculture-based economy – a fact which translated in its major rural population; nowadays, due to a sum of various developments, the rural populace is undergoing a decreasing trend. The situation is all the more problematic, as the Romanian agriculture after 1989 finds itself in a continuous deadlock with a very affected rural component, far from exploiting its potential, which ultimately led to a negative influence upon the general economic situation.

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Between the two world wars, as the agriculture had a predominant role in the country's economy, Romania's populace was mainly rural. In 1920 the number of rural populace amounted to 12.087.612, a percentage of 77.8 of the entire populace. At that time, the urban population numbered 3.453.812 people with an equivalent of 22.2%. A decade later, figures indicated a similar percentage: 79.8% for the rural populace versus 20.2% the urban populace, respectively 14.405.909 persons versus 3.651.039 persons. 1939 statistics confirmed the same situation with a

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superior percentage for the rural populace: 81.8% (16.312.136 persons), as compared to the urban populace: 18.2% (3.621.666 persons).

Nowadays, due to the changes which occurred in the economic development, one has to remark the superiority in figures of the urban percentage versus the rural percentage. It originated in the industrial development of our country, though slow and late; the difference between the urban populace versus the rural populace was acute during socialism and this trend was maintained up to our times.

In the period of the Romanian revolution of December 1989, Romania had 53.2% urban populace and 46.8% rural populace, the following developments being a similar one and being around the same percentages: 54.6% versus 45.4% in 2000 and 2001; 53.3% versus 46.7% in 2002; 53.4% versus 46.6% in 2003; 54.9% versus 45.1% in 2004 and 2005; 55.2% versus 44.8% in 2006; 55.1% versus 44.9% in 2007, and 55.0% versus 45.0% in 2008 and 55.1% versus 44.9% in 2009 and 2010 (Statistical Yearbook of Romania 2011, p.41).

All the above data highlight a consistency, thus, all changes being negligible. Moreover, the surplus of urban population versus rural population is a perfectly logical fact, the urban environment, the city, being an important hub for the workforce generated by the rural environment, too, offering higher living conditions.

The decrease of rural population from the total population is mirrored by the yearly decrease of the rural inhabitants (there were 10.893.761 people living in the countryside in 1989; in 2010 there were 9.632.563 people living in the countryside, with 11.1 % less than in 1989, and 5.4% less than in 2000).

The same tendency is to be found at the national level, sending alarming signs to official organizations. Thus, statistics show a constant contraction of the populace in Romania, from 23.151.564 inhabitants in 1989 to 22.435.205 inhabitants in 2000 and up to 21.431.298 in 2010 (a decrease of 7.4 % as compared to 1989 and of 4.4 % as to 2000).

The data above confirm a constant decreasing tendency in the context of negative natural increase rates, of natural migration and the lack of an encouraging policy towards boosting the birthrate, contributing factors bound to have a long-term negative impact upon labor.

Table 1. Evolution of the population, the average.

Year	Number of people (total)	Number of people		Representation of the percentage by area	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
2000	22.435.205	12.244.598	10.190.607	54,6	45,4
2001	22.408.393	12.243.748	10.164.645	54,6	45,4
2002	21.794.793	11.608.735	10.186.058	53,3	46,7
2003	21.733.556	11.600.157	10.133.399	53,4	46,6
2004	21.673.328	11.895.598	9.777.730	54,9	45,1
2005	21.623.849	11.879.897	9.743.952	54,9	45,1
2006	21.584.365	11.913.938	9.670.427	55,2	44,8
2007	21.537.563	11.877.659	9.659.904	55,1	44,9
2008	21.504.442	11.835.328	9.669.114	55,0	45,0
2009	21.469.959	11.823.516	9.646.443	55,1	44,9
2010	21.431.298	11.798.735	9.632.563	55,1	44,9

Source: Romanian Statistic YearBook, 2011, p. 44.

The decrease of rural inhabitants is not the only factor which characterizes the nation's rural landscape in our contemporary times. Another extremely alarming factor is linked to an accelerated ageing rate of the rural population. The analysis of the statistical data from the perspective of the three main categories of the populace: young populace (up to 18 years), adult populace (19-60 years) and ageing populace (over 60 years), reflects the fact that the rural populace of Romania is aging, threatening the Romanian village with a gradual extinction.

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