

ROMANIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND CONCERNS

TOMA SMARANDA-NICOLETA-CRISTINA

*PHD LECTURER, THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
POLITEHNICA BUCHAREST, PITEȘTI UNIVERSITY CENTRE, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND
LAW, DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION*

e-mail: smaranda.toma@upb.ro

MIHAI DANIELA-MELANIA

*PHD ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
POLITEHNICA BUCHAREST, PITEȘTI UNIVERSITY CENTRE, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND
LAW, DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION*

e-mail: daniela.mihai1106@upb.ro

Abstract

This paper analyzes the numerical evolution and structure of Romania's population, focusing on the significant demographic changes over the last 30 years. More than 30 years after the political, economic and social changes that marked Europe at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the economic and social landscape of Central and Eastern European countries (including Romania) has changed radically, influencing the demographic developments. Romania has experienced a negative demographic balance after 1989, both natural and migratory. Romania's population has decreased by 3.7 million people in the last 30 years, due to natural deficit and emigration. The average life expectancy in Romania is among the lowest compared to the European Union average of 81 years. The structure of Romania's population by age group highlights the trend of population aging, amid a decline in the birth rate and an increase in the number of young and adult emigrants. Population aging raises concerns about the sustainability of social and economic systems, especially in terms of healthcare, social assistance and labor market. Studying the numerical evolution and structure of Romania's population is necessary to substantiate demographic policy measures based on respecting the rights of individuals and communities, to define the role and place of each person in the process of population reproduction, economic activities and social organization.

Keywords: *population, demographic changes, demographic concerns, Romania*

J.E.L. classification: *J10, J11, J21, E24, O15.*

1. Introduction and context of the study

Population ageing in Europe raises concerns about the sustainability of social and economic systems, especially in terms of healthcare, social assistance and labour market. The growing share of older people may put pressure on the pension systems, the healthcare and long-term care services. The shrinking adult population could lead to a labour shortage and reduce the economic growth (Eurostat, Ageing Europe - looking at the lives of older people in the EU, 2020).

The Europeans are living longer than ever before, with an average life expectancy of 81 years. The demographic ageing means that the share of working age people in the EU is falling, while the number of elderly people is increasing; this pattern will continue over the next two decades as the post-war „baby-boom” generation completes its transition into retirement.

At the beginning of 2019, 20% of the EU-27 population were elderly people aged 65 and over (90.5 million). The trend is expected to increase, reaching 129.8 million people (29.4% of the total population) in 2050. Population ageing has resulted mainly from declining fertility and increasing life expectancy (longevity), the latter being the result of several factors:

- reduction in infant mortality;
- advances in public health and medical technologies;
- increased awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle;
- transition from hard work to tertiary occupations;

- improved living conditions.

These changes have led to an increase in the number and share of older people, and this demographic ageing process can be considered, in many ways, a success story. Older people are often more satisfied with their lives, have relatively good health and feel stronger connections to their families, friends and local communities.

However, the growing number of older people within a society raises a number of economic challenges. Some analysts suggest that population ageing is likely to put pressure on the economic growth, reduce the labour supply, lead to higher (age-related) social costs and impact the sustainability of the public finances. These arguments are based on the assumption that the old-age dependency ratio – in other words, the number of older people relative to the size of the working-age population – will continue to increase. As this ratio increases, the size of the potentially available workforce to “take care” of older generations will decrease. This is already leading to an increase in the burden on the public finances, changes in the legal retirement age and lower levels of the pension insurance.

Other researchers argue that population ageing does not necessarily hinder the economic growth and that, on the contrary, it can provide an incentive for the development of new goods and services, for example, housing or transport adapted to the needs of an ageing population or new social care services. Compared with younger generations, an increasing share of older people is found to face fewer risks of poverty or social exclusion; this pattern has become even more evident in the wake of the global financial and economic crisis, with real wages stagnating or falling for a large part of the working population. In some EU Member States, this has led to a growing proportion of relatively affluent older people, which could lead to a ‘demographic dividend’, as ageing persons can choose to spend more. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a much greater impact on the health of older people, as the risk of illness and death increases with age (Eurostat, Ageing Europe - looking at the lives of older people in the EU, 2020).

2. Research methodology

The theoretical research, the analysis and the synthesis were used in drafting this paper. The theoretical research consisted in the study of the specialized literature. The study was conducted based on the analysis, processing and interpretation of the most significant demographic indicators (the population’s number, the demographic, social and economic structure). The data were taken from reliable sources, such as the official statistics of the National Institute of Statistics of Romania for the last 4 population censuses (1992, 2002, 2011 and 2021), the chapters dedicated to population in the Statistical Yearbooks of Romania (1990-2024), Social Trends (2021, 2023), Eurostat and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (World Population Prospects, 2024). Using descriptive statistics, the data tables were interpreted to conclude on the evolution and structure of the main demographic indicators of Romania.

3. Results

3.1. The number and numerical evolution of Romania's population

According to the 2021 general population and housing census (National Institute of Statistics), Romania's population reached **19,053,815 inhabitants**, down 5.6% from the previous census in 2011, when Romania had 20,121,641 inhabitants, and down 19.7% from the 2002 census, when Romania had 21,680,974 inhabitants (in the 1992 census, Romania had 22,810,035 inhabitants). This is a significant loss of over 3.7 million people over 30 years, due to the negative values of the natural balance (natural deficit), but especially to the emigration.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Romania's population reached 12 million inhabitants. In the first half of the 20th century, the demographic growth was slow due to the two world wars and their consequences (increased mortality, decreased birth rate). Due to the pro-natalist demographic policy in the second half of the 20th century, the population continuously grew (Table no. 1), reaching a maximum

of 23.1 million inhabitants in 1989; after that, it has continuously decreased to 20.1 million inhabitants in 2011 and 19 million inhabitants today (2021).

The natural growth reached high values (11-16 ‰) in certain periods: 1920–1939, 1949–1958, 1967–1970. The contingent of people born in 1967 (over 500,000 people) was the largest in Romania's history. Low values of the natural growth (below 8 ‰) were recorded in the periods: 1940–1947, 1962–1966 and 1980–1990. After 1989, due to the liberalization of abortions and the decline in the standard of living, the natural demographic balance recorded negative values, with minimum values in 2018 (-3.3 ‰), 2021 (-7 ‰) and 2022 (-7.9 ‰).

Table no. 1. The numerical evolution of Romania's population and natural demographic balance in the last century

Year (* census year)	Population (inhabitants)	Natural demographic balance (‰)
1912	12,768,000	15.0
1930	14,280,000	14.8
1948*	15,872,624	8.3
1956*	17,489,450	14.3
1966*	19,103,163	6.1
1977*	21,559,910	10
1987	22,940,000	5.6
1988	23,053,000	5.5
1989	23,151,000	3.0
1992*	22,810,035	-0.2
2002*	21,680,974	-0.9
2006	21,584,365	-1.8
2011*	20,121,641	-2.2
2018	19,472,072	-3.3
2021*	19,053,815	-7.0
2022	19,038,098	-7.9
2023	19,051,562	-3.7
2024	19,064,409	-4.4

Data source: Statistical Yearbooks of Romania, 2000-2023; census data from 2002, 2011, 2021; National Institute of Statistics, www.insse.ro; Mișcarea naturală a populației 2024 comparativ cu 2023, Buletin informativ, insp.gov.ro

According to the 2021 census data, the following demographic indicators are significant (Social Trends, 2021, National Institute of Statistics):

- **birth rate 8,2 ‰** (decreasing);

In 2021, the number of live births registered at the civil status offices in Romania was 180,735, the lowest number of live births since 1930. Compared to 2020, in 2021 there were 21,114 fewer births. In 2021, more than half (51.3%, or 92,794 children) of the total births were boys, and the male-female ratio was 106 boys per 100 girls. The decrease in the number of births occurred in both areas of residence. In the rural areas, 9,113 fewer children were born than in urban areas and 7,098 fewer than in 2020. The birth rate was 8.2 births per 1,000 inhabitants in 2021, down from 2020 (when 9.1 births per 1,000 inhabitants were recorded).

In 2021, the average age of the mother at birth was 28.8 years, and the average age at first birth was 27.5 years, a slight decrease compared to 2020 when the average age of the mother at birth was 28.9 years, and the average age at first birth was 27.8 years.

- **mortality 15,2 ‰**;

In 2021, 334,910 people died, the highest annual number of deaths since 1938. Compared to 2020, there were 36,259 more deaths, respectively 12.7% more in urban areas and 11.5% more in rural areas. The overall mortality rate was 15.2‰ in 2021 compared to 13.5‰ in the previous year, higher in rural areas (17.4‰) than in urban areas (13.5‰).

Given the COVID-19 pandemic context, there were significant increases in deaths caused by some diseases in 2021 compared to 2020. The largest increase was recorded in deaths caused by respiratory diseases (from 38,631 deaths in 2020 to 65,485 deaths in 2021). A significant increase was

also recorded in deaths with pregnancy and childbirth (from 32 deaths in 2020 to 51 deaths in 2021). In 2021, the maternal mortality recorded 28.2 deaths per 100,000 live births, an increase compared to the previous year (15.9 deaths per 100,000 live births).

- **natural demographic deficit -7 %;**
- **infant mortality rate 5,6 ‰** (decreasing);
- **fertility 1,6 children/woman** (compared to 2-3 children/woman during the communist period);
- **life expectancy at birth 75.88 years** (higher in urban areas 77.16 years compared to rural areas

74.24 years and higher for females 79.40 years compared to males 72.41 years). The average life expectancy in Romania was among the lowest compared to the EU average of 81 years. The lowest life expectancy values in the EU are recorded by Bulgaria (74.31 years), Latvia (74.61 years) and Romania (74.78 years), and the highest by France (82.53 years), Italy (82.92 years) and Spain (83.16 years). The annual average at the European Union level is 80.61 years (Murarita, 2025). The sharp process of population aging and the health problems associated with aging represent a major concern.

3.2. Romania's population structure

Population structure refers to the statistical grouping of the population, into groups or classes, according to different criteria (demographic, cultural, socio-economic). The demographic structure changes under the influence of natural movement, the residential structure under the effect of spatial mobility, the economic and social structure under the effect of professional and social mobility, and the educational structure under the influence of educational input (Vert, 2000).

Population structure by age and gender

Knowing the population structure by age is of great demographic, social and economic importance. Educational activities planning, labor force planning and forecasting, service activities organizing, health protection, specific consumption depend on the population size and age structure. Population structure by age groups is influenced by fertility, mortality and migration.

Depending on the population structure by age groups, Romania occupies an intermediate position between the developed countries with an aging population (Central and Northern European countries, Japan) and the least developed ones where the young population dominates. At the 2021 census, the structure of the Romanian population by age groups was as follows: **21.6% young people, 58.9% adults and 19.6% elderly** (Table no. 2). Compared to previous censuses, this structure highlights the population's aging trend, due to the decline in the birth rate and an increase in the number of young or adult emigrants. Romania has registered a negative demographic balance after 1989, both natural and migratory.

Population aging is a global phenomenon, but it characterizes Europe due to a low birth rate and a high life expectancy. Two factors have contributed to the rapid acceleration of population aging in Romania - the decline in birth rates and the increase in international migration.

The aging phenomenon has intensified, with the average age of the resident population increasing to 42.4 years (compared to 40.8 years in the 2011 census). In 2021, the average age of the female population was 44.1 years, compared to 40.6 years for men. The region with the youngest population is the North-East region where the average age is 40.8 years, and at the opposite pole is the South-West Oltenia region with an average age of 43.7 years. In Ilfov county, the population is young, with the lowest average age in the country, at 38.6 years. The populations of Iași (39.2 years) and Suceava (39.9 years) counties are also under 40 years old. Teleorman county has the oldest population, with an average age of 46.3 years. The populations of Hunedoara (45.5 years) and Brăila (45.3 years) counties are also over 45 years old.

Table no. 2. Romania’s population structure by age groups in the 2011 and 2021 censuses

Age	2011		2021		Decrease/increase 2011/2021 (thousand)
	thousand	%	thousand	%	
0-19 years old	4298.1	21.4	4113.0	21.6	-185.1
20-64 years old	12575.8	62.5	11214.4	58.9	-1361.4
over 65 years old	3247.7	16.1	3726.5	19.6	478.7
Total	20121.6	100	19053.8	100	-1067.8
The dependency ratio of young and old *	60		69		

* Number of young and elderly people per 100 people aged 20-64

Data source: 2011 and 2021 Censuses; National Institute of Statistics, www.insse.ro

The population aging trend has a profound impact on all future generations and on the economic and social activities: labor market, social protection, education, culture, etc. The demographic aging index for Romania increased from 120.8 (as of January 1, 2020) to 123.9 elderly people per 100 young people (as of January 1, 2021).

The analysis of the **population structure by gender** indicates a slight preponderance of females (**51.5%, 9,812,715 females and 48.5%, 9,241,100 males**), mainly due to the higher male mortality rate. The male-female ratio reaches **94/100**, but is higher at young age and partly at adult age, due to the higher number of male births. In the over 40 age group, the ratio changes in favor of the female population. Depending on the economic profile of a region, the male population is more numerous in counties with heavy industry (Galați); the female population predominates where light industry is well represented or the percentage of the elderly group is high: Bucharest, Arad, Timiș, Botoșani.

Population structure by area (urban/rural)

The urbanization degree of a region is directly related to the degree of development of the secondary sector (industry, construction) and the tertiary sector (services, transport, education, etc.). The share of the urban population increased in the 20th century due to the transition of numerous settlements to the category of cities, high values of natural increase in cities and definitive migration from villages to cities.

At the 2021 census, **52% of the country's population lived in urban areas (9,946,091 people) and 48% in rural areas (9,107,724 people)**. There is also a slight predominance of females in cities (male/female ratio 92/100) and a balance of both sexes in rural areas (male/female ratio 99/100). The counties with high shares (over 60%) of the urban population are: Brașov, Hunedoara, Constanța, Sibiu, Cluj, Brăila, Timiș, Galați and Caraș-Severin, Alba, Maramureș, Covasna, Arad, Prahova, Iași, Mureș, Bacău (over 50%), counties with complex economies (mostly non-agricultural activities).

The ethnic structure

Romania is a unitary national state because, according to the 2021 census data, **Romanians represented 77.68% (14,801,442 Romanians)** of the total population of Romania, and **minorities 22.32%** (Table no. 3). The geographical distribution of Romanians by counties indicates high shares (over 90% Romanians) in Vaslui, Botoșani, Neamț, Vrancea, Vâlcea and Bucharest and shares between 90-99% for most counties in the country. The counties in the center and west (Sălaj, Bihor, Satu Mare, Mureș) have shares of Romanians of 50-90%. The lowest values characterized the counties of Covasna and Harghita with 21.4% and respectively 12.6% Romanians.

Other nationalities have settled in the territory inhabited by Romanians over time (Simoni, 2015). Among the national minorities in our country, the Hungarians (5.26%), the Roma (2.99%), the Ukrainians (0.24%) and the Germans (0.12%) have the largest shares.

Table no. 3. Romania's ethnic structure in the 2002, 2011 and 2021 censuses

2002 census			2011 census			2021 census		
Ethnicity	Number of persons	Share of total population (%)	Ethnicity	Number of persons	Share of total population (%)	Ethnicity	Number of persons	Share of total population (%)
total resident population	21,698,181	100.0	total resident population	20,121,641	100.0	total resident population	19,053,815	100.0
Romanians	19,409,400	89.5	Romanians	16,792,868	83.5	Romanians	14,801,442	77.68
Hungarians	1,434,377	6.6	Hungarians	1,227,623	6.1	Hungarians	1,002,151	5.26
Roma (Gypsies)	535,250	2.5	Roma (Gypsies)	621,573	3.1	Roma (Gypsies)	569,477	2.99
Germans	60,088	0.3	Ukrainians	50,920	0.3	Ukrainians	45,835	0.24
Ukrainians	61,091	0.3	Germans	36,042	0.2	Germans	22,907	0.12
Lipovan Russians	36,397	0.2	Turks	27,698	0.1	Turks		
Turks	32,596	0.2	Russian-Lipovans	23,487	0.1	Russian-Lipovans	20,945	0.11
Tatars	24,137	0.1	Tatars	20,282	0.1	Tatars	19,394	0.10
Serbians	22,518	0.1	Serbians	18,076	0.1	Tatars	18,156	0.10
Slovaks	17,199	0.1	Slovaks	13,654	0.1	Serbians, Croats, Slovenes	16,868	0.09
Jews	5,870	*	Bulgarians	7,336	0.0	Slovaks	10,232	0.05
Bulgarians	8,092	*	Croatians	5,408	0.0	Bulgarians	5,975	0.03
Croatians	6,786	*	Greeks	3,668	0.0	Greeks	2,086	0.01
Greeks	6,513	*	Italians	3,203	0.0	Jews	2,378	0.01
Czechs	3,938	*	Jews	3,271	0.0	Czechs	1,576	0.01
Polish	3,671	*	Czechs	2,477	0.0	Polish	2,137	0.01
Italians	3,331	*	Polish	2,543	0.0	Armenians	1,213	0.01
Chinese	2,249	*	Chinese	2,017	0.0	other ethnicity	26,117	0.14
Armenians	1,780	*	Armenians	1,361	0.0	unavailable information	2,484,926	13.04
Csangos	1,370	*	Csangos	1,536	0.0			
Macedonians Slavs	731	*	Macedonians	1,264	0.0			
Albanians	520	*	other ethnicity	18,524	0.1			
Ruthenians	262	*	unavailable information	1,236,810	6.1			
Caravans	207	*						
Slovenes	175	*						
Gagauz	45	*						
other ethnicity	13,653	0.1						
unreported	5,935	*						

Data source: National Institute of Statistics, census data from 2002, 2011 and 2021 (* below 0.1%), www.insse.ro

The mother tongue is one of the criteria for defining a nation, it ensures the transmission of culture and maintains the cohesion of human groups (Truți et al., 2000). **The linguistic structure is very important in terms of the unity of the Romanian nation, since 80% of Romania's population (15 million inhabitants) declared Romanian as their mother tongue.** Hungarian (5.45%), Romani (1.04%), Ukrainian (0.21%) and German (0.08%) are also added with greater shares.

The confessional structure

Religion, the expression of the cultural and moral life of a population, has influenced and continues to influence the way of life, as well as some demographic and social characteristics of a nation (Vert, 2000). The church has played an important role in the life of the Romanian people: it has united the population of the same faith and language from the entire territory between the Carpathians, the Danube and the Black Sea. The Romanian Christianity dates back to the 2nd-4th centuries, a fact attested by the paleo-Christian basilicas in Dobrogea, the episcopacies of Morisena (Cenad), Biharea, Alba-Iulia. After the Revolution of December 1989, the religions are free, the Romanian state recognizes, respects and guarantees all their rights, as the religion is considered an important component of the spiritual life (Simoni, 2015).

The 1992 census recorded, for the first time in 60 years, the confessional structure of the population. The Romanian state recognizes 15 religious denominations and 120 religious associations. These can be grouped into 3 major religions: Christian (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant), Muslim and Mosaic. Most of the country's inhabitants are **Orthodox Christians (14,025,064 people, 73.61%),**

followed by Roman Catholics (741,504 people, 3.89%), Protestants (495,433 people, 2.60%) and Pentecostals (404,475 people, 2.12%). Added with weights of less than 1% are: Greek Catholics, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Plymouth Brethren Christians, Old Believers, Lutheran Evangelicals, Serbian Orthodox, Evangelicals, Evangelicals of the Augsburg Confession, Mosaics, Armenians, other religions, people without religion, atheists (Table no. 4).

Table no. 4. The confessional structure of Romania's population at the 2021 census

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Number of believers</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Orthodox (Romanian Orthodox Church)	14,025,064	73.61
Roman Catholic	741,504	3.89
Protestantism (Reformed Church)	495,433	2.60
Pentecostal (Pentecostal Christian Cult - Apostolic Church of God)	404,475	2.12
Greek Catholic (Roman Catholic Church United with Rome)	115,457	0.61
Baptist (Baptist Christian Cult)	103,213	0.54
Seventh-Day Adventist	65,861	0.35
Muslim (Muslim Cult)	58,347	0.31
Unitarian (Hungarian Unitarian Church)	47,992	0.25
Jehovah's Witnesses	43,340	0.23
Plymouth Brethren Christian	36,374	0.19
Old Believer	28,362	0.15
Lutheran Evangelical (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania)	20,026	0.11
Serbian Orthodox	17,159	0.09
Evangelical (Romanian Evangelical Church)	7,690	0.04
Evangelical of the Augsburg Confession	3,739	0.02
Mosaic (Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania - Mosaic Cult)	2,708	0.01
Armenian (Armenian Archdiocese)	806	0.00
Other religions (religious associations or religious groups)	23,956	0.13
No religion	71,430	0.37
Atheist	57,229	0.30
Agnostic	25,485	0.13
Unavailable information	2,658,165	13.95

Data source: National Institute of Statistics, 2021 census data, www.insse.ro

Population structure by level of education

The level of education of the population has social (fertility, infant mortality, nuptiality) and economic (increase in national income, female activity rate, structure of the employed population by activity sectors, degree of industrialization) implications (Simoni, 2015).

At the 2021 census, **43.5% of the total population of Romania had an average level of education** (post-secondary, high school, vocational, complementary or apprenticeship education), **40.5% had a low level** (preschool, primary, secondary or no schooling) and **16.0% had a higher level**.

More than a third of the inhabitants of Bucharest (35.2%) and about a quarter of those in Ilfov (25.2%) and Cluj (24.6%) counties have higher education. At the opposite end are the counties of Vaslui, Călărași and Botoșani, where the share of the population with higher education is less than 8% (7.2%, 7.4% and, respectively, 7.9%). The smallest share of the population with a low level of education is recorded in Bucharest (28.4%), opposite to the counties of Giurgiu and Vaslui with more than half of the inhabitants with a low level of education: 51.6% and 50.3%, respectively.

The economic structure

From the economic point of view, only part of a country's population is active (the labor force); this is the adult population, which includes people who carry out a paid economic activity, people looking for a job, the unemployed, and self-employed workers. The share of the active population by activity sector can also indicate the level of development reached by a state (Erdeli, Dumitrache, 2001).

The economic and political transformations after the year 1989 also influenced the structure of the labor force. At the 2021 census, **the active population was 8,185,000 people (43% of the country's total population), of which 7,689,200 were employed and 495,800 were unemployed.** The inactive population counted 10,868,800 people, of which pensioners and social assistance beneficiaries represent two-fifths (39.5%), and pupils and students almost a third (32.0%).

The highest employment rate is in Ilfov county and Bucharest, where more than half of the population works: 52.2% and 50.8%, respectively. The lowest employment rate, where less than a third of the population works, is in Vrancea (31.6%) and Mehedinți (32.9%) counties. **The unemployed represented 6.4% of Romania's active population** in 2021. The lowest share of the unemployed population is in Bucharest (1.1%), and three other counties record a low value, 1.3%: Cluj, Timiș and Ilfov. In contrast, Vaslui county records the highest share of the unemployed population, 5.1% of the resident population of the county. Regarding the economically inactive population, the highest share of the household population is found in Suceava county (9.9%), and the lowest in Bucharest municipality (only 1.6%). Pensioners are the least numerous in Ilfov county (where they represent 15.0%), but in Hunedoara county their share doubles (29.6%).

Table no. 5. The evolution of the structure of the employed population by activity sectors in the last 65 years

Year	Primary sector (agriculture) %	Secondary sector (industry and construction) %	Tertiary sector (services) %
1956	69.9	16.6	13.7
1966	57.1	24.6	18.3
1977	36.8	38.8	24.4
1992	23.0	44.6	22.4
2002	28.3	32.6	39.1
2011	29.1	28.2	42.7
2021	11.61	32.32	56.07

Data source: Statistical Yearbooks of Romania, 2000-2023; census data from 2002, 2011, 2021; National Institute of Statistics, www.insse.ro

Due to the decrease of industrial activity, the population employed in this sector fell from 44.6% (in 1992) to 32.32% (in 2021); the share of the population employed in the primary sector increased (from 23% in 1992 to 29.1% in 2011 - as a result of the restitution of agricultural lands and forests, then a significant decrease was recorded in this sector, to 11.61% in 2021) and of the population employed in services (trade, transport, tourism, finance and banking, public administration), from 22.4% in 1992 to 56.7% in 2021 - a phenomenon characteristic of developed countries (Table no. 5).

The population active in agriculture exceeds 50% in the plain areas, in the north and center of the country. The share of the population employed in the secondary sector exceeds 35% in the large cities, in the center and southwest of the country, in the Eastern Carpathians and the Moldavian Subcarpathians, in the area delimited by Argeș and Buzău. In some areas, the population employed in the tertiary sector exceeds the national average: Bucharest, the Black Sea coast, the resorts on the Olt and Prahova valleys, etc. (Truși et al., 2000).

3.3. Romanians from abroad

The spatial mobility of population is an important factor in the growth or decline of population numbers. Being a consequence of inequalities in the spatial distribution of population and resources, it should be seen as an attempt to reduce the existing imbalances between its number and resources (Erdeli, 2001).

There are approximately 10 to 15 million Romanians living outside the country's borders, most of them in neighboring territories. The largest number (approximately 80%) are located north and east of the Prut river and especially in the Republic of Moldova (a territory inhabited mainly by Moldovan Romanians). After 1940 (the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact), the Soviet leadership resorted to reprisals against the Romanian population (organized famine, imposition of Russian as the state language and

prohibition of the Latin script), massive deportations (even to the northern circumpolar lands - Siberia, Kamchatka, Sakhalin) and a new administrative-territorial division (the counties of Hotin, Ismail, Cetatea Albă, as well as northern Bukovina and the Herța region were included in Ukraine) in order to split the ethnic unity (Truți et al., 2000).

A significant number of Romanians are also living in the territories of other neighboring states: Hungary (especially in the border area), Serbia (Timok-Morava, Vojvodina areas), Bulgaria (Danube valley), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Greece, Albania, Austria. Although they bear different names (Aromanians, Istro-Romanians, Macedonian-Romanians), they have a common ethnic background and are characterized by the traditions of Romanian culture and civilization, the religious community of Romanian life in general (Neguț et al., 2002).

The Romanian official statistics estimate the annual international migration flows based on the provisions of Regulation (EC) No. 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection. Romanian emigrants and their descendants are located in some European countries (Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Great Britain, Greece, Austria, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands), but also in America (U.S.A., Canada, Venezuela, Argentina, Mexico), Australia (Sydney-Melbourne-Adelaide, Perth) or Asia (Israel – Jews of Romanian origin).

The significant emigration of Romanians after the year 1989, especially the young adults (the active and reproductive population), had negative effects such as the numerical decline and the aging of the resident population. The year 2007, when Romania became a member state of the EU, marked a historical maximum in the flow of emigrants (over 500,000, almost three times more than in the previous year). In the following years, the number of people who emigrated from Romania decreased, with a minimum recorded in 2013 (162,000 people). The distribution of emigrants in a territorial profile signals the existence of emigration pools, especially from the counties with the very large population. For example, a large number of emigrants are registered in Bucharest, but also in the counties of Iași, Prahova, Cluj, Timiș, Suceava and Constanța. The dominant age of emigrants is between 30 and 34 years for men and 20-24 for women.

The impact is felt especially on the labor market because the decrease in the active population increases the pressure on the remaining population to support the elderly, dependent population, with implications for the social, health and education service systems; also, emigration has produced changes in the evolution of some demographic phenomena, especially on fertility, structure by age, gender and family composition. Another unfavorable effect of the international migration was the total or partial depopulation of some villages (Social Trends, 2021, National Institute of Statistics).

European Union's population has the freedom to move and reside in different EU member states. In 2022, the most EU citizens living in other EU member states were Romanians (3.1 million or 23.3% of all EU citizens living in another EU country), followed by Poles (1.5 million or 11.6%), Italians (1.5 million or 11.1%) and Portuguese (969 thousand or 7.3%).

4. Conclusions

Romania is in the final stage of the demographic transition characteristic of developed countries (relative stagnation or depopulation). The change trends of the general characteristics of the European population are: the increase in life expectancy, the decrease in birth rate and the demographic aging. Romania also records a decrease in population due to a significant flow of emigration, especially after the country's accession to the European Union.

The increase of the public debt in the European Union since 2008 and the budgetary pressures generated by an ageing population are mutually reinforcing and make the fiscal sustainability a pressing policy challenge. The ageing of the European population has profound implications, not only for individuals, but also for governments, businesses and civil society, impacting, among others, on health and social care systems, labour markets, public finances and pension entitlements.

The latest demographic projections published by Eurostat are those of June 2023, based on 2021 data. The time horizon of these projections is 2019-2100. The demographic projections allow the analysis of the long-term economic and fiscal implications caused by the aging of the European population. Eurostat projections show that Romania will lose over 23.3% of its population (4.4 million inhabitants) by 2100, reaching 14.6 million inhabitants. The decrease in Romania's population will be accompanied by a change in the age structure of the population. The young population aged 0-14 will experience a significant decrease in the period 2022-2100, of about 1.1 million people, and the share of young people in the total population will decrease from 16.2% (in 2022) to 13.5% (2100). The working-age population aged 15-64 will experience a decrease by 4.2 million people by 2100. The share of the elderly population in the total population will increase sharply from 19.5% (in 2022) to 31.6% (in 2100), which will lead to an increase in the degree of demographic aging of the Romanian population. The total dependency ratio of the young and elderly population will increase from 55 young and elderly people (in 2022) to 82 young and elderly people (in 2100) per 100 adult persons aged 15-64 (Social Trends, 2021, National Institute of Statistics).

Romania, as a member state of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), has expressed its adherence to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. Romania's national strategy for sustainable development emphasizes supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities, young people and women in development policies. Eradicating poverty requires decent employment opportunities, while preventing and avoiding social exclusion requires social cohesion policies. The strategy is based on the premise that the sustainable development presents a thinking framework that, once adopted by the citizen, will help create a more equitable society, defined by balance and solidarity and able to cope with the changes brought about by current global, regional and national problems, including the demographic decline.

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