

THE EXODUS OF THE YOUNG GENERATION: THE REASONS, IMPACT AND FUTURE OF YOUTH EMIGRATION FROM ROMANIA

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Abstract: *The exodus of the young generation from Romania is one of the most acute social and economic problems facing the country today. The phenomenon of massive emigration of young people, especially to the European Union states, is determined by a number of economic, social and political factors. Among the main reasons for leaving are the lack of job opportunities, low salaries, economic instability, but also the desire to access a higher standard of living and to benefit from better educational and medical systems. The impact of this migration is profound and has consequences on several levels. On the one hand, the departure of young people reduces the skilled workforce, affecting key sectors of the economy and limiting Romania's development prospects. On the other hand, youth migration affects the demographic structure, contributing to the ageing of the population and the pressure on the pension and health systems. In the future, the phenomenon of youth emigration could deepen the economic and social gaps between Romania and developed countries, if concrete measures are not implemented to provide more attractive conditions for the younger generations. The solutions include investments in education, the creation of well-paid jobs, policies to stimulate entrepreneurship and improve the quality of life. Stopping the exodus of young people is essential to ensure Romania's long-term social and economic sustainability.*

Keywords: *emigration, youth, economic impact, reasons, future, solutions.*

1. Introduction

The emigration of young people from Romania has become a persistent and worrying reality, with profound effects on society and the national economy. With limited opportunities on the labor market, salaries lower than the European average and a socio-political system often perceived as unstable, more and more young people are choosing to build a future abroad. The European Union, with its benefits and openness, annually attracts tens of thousands of Romanians who seek stability and professional fulfillment in more developed countries. This trend has significant implications in both the short and long term. Economically, the exodus of young people reduces the active and qualified workforce in the country, hindering the development of certain sectors and generating a shortage of specialists. On the social front, mass migration contributes to important demographic changes, with an increasingly ageing population and increasing pressure on social assistance systems.

This article looks at the main reasons why young people choose to leave Romania, the impact of emigration on society and the economy, as well as possible solutions to reverse this trend. Understanding the phenomenon and implementing appropriate measures are essential for the future of the young generation and for the sustainable development of the country. The exodus of young people from Romania has become a major challenge in recent years, amplifying in the context of easy access to the European market. Youth migration, defined as the movement of young people to leave their homeland in search of a better life, is driven by a number of economic, social and political factors. Romania loses thousands of talented and well-educated young people every year, a phenomenon that influences the country's socio-economic structure in the long term. This research aims to investigate the main reasons for the exodus of young people, the short- and long-term impact and measures that can help stop or mitigate this phenomenon.

One of the main factors is the lack of economic opportunities. Low wages, a lack of stable jobs and an unattractive working environment lead many young people to turn their attention to countries with a more developed economy. For example, average salaries in Western European countries, such as Germany or France, are several times higher than in Romania, while living costs can be similar for certain categories of products and services.

The quality and accessibility of the education system in Romania is another decisive factor. Many young people choose to study abroad because universities in Romania are not always compatible with international standards. Higher education in other states not only provides advanced knowledge but also better employment prospects. The compatibility between universities in Romania and abroad depends on several factors, such as the structure of study programs, accreditations and recognition of diplomas, as

well as the specifics of the educational system of each country. In Romania, universities are aligned with the Bologna Process, a European framework that facilitates the recognition of diplomas and the transfer of credits between member countries, including many outside the European Union.

Compatibility between universities can be influenced by aspects such as:

- *ECTS Credit System*: Universities in Romania use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which facilitates the recognition of studies between institutions in Europe. This system helps to equate courses and recognize credits for students who want to study abroad.

- *Accreditations of study programs*: Study programs in Romania are accredited by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). However, certain fields of study, such as medicine, may have specific rules and equivalence requirements to be recognized in other countries.

- *Mobility programs*: Students in Romania have access to programs such as Erasmus+, which allow students to study a semester or a year abroad without losing their years of study. This proves a form of compatibility between universities in Romania and those in Europe.

- *Recognition of diplomas*: In some cases, the recognition of Romanian diplomas abroad may require additional procedures, such as equivalence or obtaining specific accreditations, especially in countries outside Europe, where educational systems may be different.

There are challenges, of course, but compatibility is not impossible. Many Romanian graduates continue their studies or find jobs abroad, which shows that the Romanian system can be adapted to international requirements, even if it sometimes involves additional efforts.

Political instability, bureaucracy and the perception that the country does not offer a stable framework for personal and professional development are other common reasons. Many young people feel that the Romanian political system is inefficient and corrupt, and this decisively influences the desire to stay in the country. They feel a lack of trust in state institutions, and this dissatisfaction motivates them to want a better life in other countries. The problem is amplified by the economic and social reality in Romania, but also by the lack of personal and professional development prospects that they encounter at home. Corruption in Romania is not just a perception; It is a reality signaled by numerous national and international reports. Transparency International, a global organization that measures the perception of corruption worldwide, consistently places Romania among the most corrupt countries in the European Union. Corruption affects all levels of public institutions, from local administration to the highest political positions. This situation creates a sense of injustice and disappointment among young people, who lose confidence in the state's ability to act in their interest.

In addition, the inefficiency of the political system aggravates the situation. Frequent changes in governments, internal political struggles and politicians' priorities, which are often in opposition to the real needs of citizens, fuel this perception of instability and chaos. Young people notice how important decisions for the future of the country are postponed or treated superficially, while corruption and bureaucracy make their way into all areas of social life.

The lack of interest of young people in politics and the public system manifests itself in the desire to go abroad. This phenomenon, also known as the "brain drain", has grown in recent years, with thousands of young people choosing to seek their fortune in countries with a stable, transparent government oriented towards the good of citizens (Sandu, 1984). Many of these young people have high professional potential and are well prepared academically, but prefer to work abroad, where they feel there is a more secure future and where their efforts are better rewarded.

In addition to corruption, economic factors also play a significant role. Low wages, lack of career opportunities and economic uncertainty are all aspects that drive young people to leave. Romania's health and education system, which also suffers from inefficiency and corruption, contributes to young people's decision to leave the country. Many believe that in a better organized and transparent system, they would have more chances of success and a better quality of life.

The mass migration of young people from Romania not only affects families and communities at home, but also has major effects on the country's economy and demographic structure. Romania is facing a sharp demographic decline, and the exodus of young people contributes directly to this problem. The lack of a young active population decreases the country's potential for economic development, and the pension and social security systems are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain in the long term. Moreover, the lack of well-trained young people in key areas, such as IT, engineering, medicine and education, leads to a shortage of qualified personnel. This only accentuates Romania's dependence on foreign resources and imported labor. Instead of capitalizing on local talents, Romania is forced to look for

alternative solutions, while investments in education and training are wasted, because many of those trained choose to develop their careers elsewhere.

In order to stop this massive emigration of young people (Cibian, 2021), Romania needs serious structural reforms, aimed at eliminating corruption and improving the efficiency of the political system. It is essential that the governors take real responsibility towards the citizens and promote a transparent and accountable administration. Creating opportunities for young people, encouraging entrepreneurship and implementing sustainable economic policies could be a promising start.

Also, the active involvement of young people in the political process can contribute to changing the system from within. Civic education and stimulating young people's participation in political life are essential elements for the development of a healthy democracy. With the formation of a young generation that is involved and aware of its rights and responsibilities, Romania could change its course and become a place where young people want to live and contribute to building a better future.

In conclusion, the perception that the Romanian political system is inefficient and corrupt is a decisive factor in young people's desire to leave the country. As long as these problems persist, it is hard to believe that Romania will be able to keep its talents. But through real reform commitments and the active involvement of civil society and young people in public life, there is a chance for young people to regain confidence in their country and choose to contribute to its change for the better.

In addition to economic and social considerations, young Romanians aspire to a higher standard of living, which includes access to a quality health system, efficient public services and a more dynamic social life (Teșliuc, 2014). The emigration of skilled and educated young people is affecting Romania's economy, leading to a shortage of skilled labor in sectors such as health, IT, engineering, and education. According to recent data, the annual emigration of young Romanians produces significant economic losses. In addition, the exodus of young people limits long-term growth and contributes to slowing down innovation and technological development.

The migration of young people contributes to the aging of Romania's population, which puts pressure on the pension system and the allocation of health resources. The low working and fertile population reduces birth rates, accentuating the demographic crisis and accentuating disparities between generations. The phenomenon of "brain drain" deepens the lack of specialists and makes it difficult to prepare the new generations.

The massive exodus of young people influences the national identity and the perception of Romanians on their own country. The link between young people who have left and the national culture is weakening, and among younger generations there is a growing tendency to adopt the values and practices of their adopted countries. This can lead, in the long run, to a cultural loss and a more diluted national identity. For a better understanding of the phenomenon, the article may include case studies on the emigration of young people from different regions of Romania (e.g. emigration from Transylvanian counties versus emigration from Moldovan counties). Statistical data and reports from the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank provide a solid basis for comparisons. The creation of attractive jobs, the increase of salaries and the implementation of tax facilities for young people can encourage them to stay in Romania. The government could invest in start-ups and in promoting entrepreneurship, providing financial support and access to trainings for young entrepreneurs.

Adapting the university curriculum to the requirements of the labor market is essential to provide young people with the necessary training in competitive fields. The creation of partnerships between universities and companies, internship programs and international exchanges can contribute to the professional development of young people and their retention in the country. In order to reduce migration, a paradigm shift is needed in terms of transparency and efficiency of public institutions. Increasing government transparency and efficiency can regain the trust of young people and contribute to a positive perception of the future in Romania.

Investments in infrastructure, improved public services, health and affordable housing can help create a more attractive living environment for young people. Equally important is supporting cultural and sports initiatives that contribute to an active and healthy lifestyle. In the absence of concrete and effective measures, the phenomenon of youth exodus will continue and even increase, with devastating consequences for the country's sustainable development. In the conditions of globalization and international competition for talent, Romania must become more attractive for talented and educated young people. Also, reorienting the value system and encouraging constructive patriotism can help keep young people in the country.

The exodus of the younger generation is a complex phenomenon, caused by multiple economic, social and political aspects. The impact of this migration is profound, affecting Romania's economy, demography and culture. Although the challenges are major, there are solutions to attract young people to stay and contribute to national development. The implementation of coherent and long-term oriented policies is essential to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for Romania and for future generations.

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