Depopulation in Romanian rural areas

Key drivers and territorial footprint

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Rural depopulation in Romania

- Which are the drivers of rural demographic change?
- Which are the specific demographic characteristics at different territorial levels?
- Which are the ways for improving the situation of the rural population?
Baseline situation.

Shrinking rural regions within their national context.
Romania is part of a severe shrinkage phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe.

The working age population group entered a downward spiral, while the elderly population increases.

Main rural population changes in Romania, 2014-2020 (in thousand people)

- Further strains on government revenues derived from income taxes
- Increasing demand for healthcare and elderly care services.

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Data provided by the National Institute for Statistics
Rural profile

- The rural population has been constantly decreasing.
- The rural population growth rate has had increasingly large negative values since 1990.
- The rural population has experienced a strong ageing process.
- The main drivers of population decline are the negative natural growth rate and migration.
Rural areas in Romania are organized into 2,861 communes (administrative units) that include 12,373 villages, comprising 46% of the total population.

The 2011 Census:
- 3,172 villages with fewer than 200 inhabitants
- 3.4% of the total rural population (nearly 312,000 people) lives in small villages

Most of these small villages are:
- peripheral within their communes (sometimes situated many kilometers away from the central village)
- have elderly populations

Data source: Population Census 2002
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Socio-Economic Development Index - 2015

Source: Ministry of Agriculture (2015), Study on the Socio-Economic Potential of Rural Areas

Fighting depopulation in rural areas, Soria, Spain, 22-23 May
- Steady downward trend in the number of people (0.8 million inhabitants in the period 1992-2011)

- Population decline:
  - *urban areas*: -6.1% (1992-2002); -6.7% (2002-2011)
  - *rural areas*: -2.1% (1992-2002); -9.1% (2002-2011)

- Migration from rural to urban areas decreased from 50% in 1992 to 20% in 2011

- The cumulative internal migration flows, by source and destination at the 2002 and 2011 censuses

- Urban-rural migration from 10% in 1992 to 30% in 2011

- Higher concentration of rural population in the peri-urban and suburban areas

Deindustrialization  Return migration  Suburbanization  Temporary migration
Natural decline and migration drive long-term shrinkage
Low fertility rates and profound ageing in deep rural areas (Apuseni and Banat Mountains, part of Southern Romania and Danube Delta)

On this background, the emigration of many young people has the potential to speed up population ageing
Negative natural growth rate values in areas with:

1) low accessibility and low economic development level
2) deep ruralism
3) strong industrial decline

Types of villages according to the migration experience:
- high migration experience
- moderate migration experience
- relative immobility

Local Action Groups in Romania as an instrument of community development
Build on place-specific characteristics could improve the performance of development policies

Area-based and people-based interventions must be integrated in a framework of participative community development in order to fight rural decline effectively.

Rate of participation in LAGs:
- 54% small (<2,000 inhab.) and remote communes
- 63% small non-remote communes
- 69% remote communes with >2,000 inhab.
The strategy focused on a participatory model in creating jobs for the inhabitants from Țara Zarandului.

Unemployment is high considering that most locals used to work for coal mining companies which are now closed.

Case study - “Țara Zarandului” Local Action Group

Natural growth rate 2002 - 2011
- < (+) 400
- (+)399 - (+)350
- (+)349 - (+)250
- (+)249 - (+)100

Population loss due to negative migration rate 2002-2011
- (-)156 - (-)102
- (-)101 - (-)1
- 0 - 62

The 17th CEMAT session addressed the issue of Functional areas – capitalisation of local potential in territorial development policies over the European continent.

- a study on functional areas, including a questionnaire that was filled by 25 Member States of the Council of Europe.
- specific spatial development conditions require a place-based cooperation models.
- unlock the potential of functional areas and call upon other relevant actors to promote such measures as well.

Identifying and defining functional areas
Identifying and using endogenous potential
Providing support for the development of functional areas
Ensuring Territorial Governance based on cooperation and democratic principles
Thank you

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