

IDENTITY FEATURES OF THE ROMANIAN IMMIGRANTS FROM ITALY

Adrian OTOVESCU¹

Abstract: *The Romanian transnational migration represents one of the most important social processes that our country had to face during the past two decades, involving over 3,5 million citizens. The most compatriots have left, especially for working, to Italy, Spain, France, England, Greece, and to other continents. The biggest Romanian immigrant community in different European states is in Italy and Spain, and the migration phenomenon from Romania is still in process. The main purpose of this article is to respond at three important questions: Who are those who have left from Romania to Italy, in what regions they are living and working? Which are the most important reasons of their options for this country? In what measure living in a foreign society has influenced their cultural identity and their value options? In the article is also presented a brief history of the sociological researches on Romanian immigrants from Italy, socio-demographical data and comparative analyses. The main research methods that we have used are the statistical method and the opinion query based upon questionnaire. The initial hypothesis, that Romanians from Italy have preserved, generally, their cultural identity, was confirmed by the results of the sociological field research*

Key-words: *immigrant population, socio-demographic structure, stages of emigration, reasons for emigration, potential migration*

1. Introduction

After 1990, many Romanian citizens emigrated abroad (Nicolaescu, 2011). According to some unofficial statistic estimations, their number is almost 3.5 million people. Most of them, around 2 million, arrived to Italy and Spain, although their presence is also notified in other European countries, especially the western ones,

¹ PhD Lecturer University of Craiova. Email: adiotovescu@yahoo.com.

and other continents too. The Romanians' trans-national migration constitutes one of the most important social phenomena that marked our society in the contemporary period. During the last two decades, Italy, Spain, France, England and Germany confronted with a great number of immigrants that came especially from the developing countries, from Central and Eastern Europe, but also from northern Africa or other continents. The amplitude of the immigration phenomenon places Italy among the European countries with an important share of foreign population. For example, at the 1st of January 2006, the foreign people represented almost 9% of the German population, over 6% of that of Spain, over 5% from that of Great Britain and over 6% of that of France.

According to the official statistic data, published by the Italian state, at the 1st of January 2011, the total number of the resident foreigners from its territory was of 4.570.317 people, being with 335.000 more immigrants than the previous year. In 2011, Italy had 60.6 million dwellers, among which 7.5% were foreigners that came especially from European, African and American countries. Most of them (86.5%) were concentrated in the northern and central areas of the country, known both for their high level of economic, social and cultural development and for their permanent touristic importance (The National Institute of Statistics – ISTAT [online] at www.istat.it, accessed October, 2011).

At the beginning of 2011, the official statistic data indicated the fact that the number of the Romanian citizens with permit of residence on the Italian territory reached over 1 million people (9.1% more than in 2010). In reality, their number was thought to be much bigger, some specialists that studied this problem, mentioning the number of approximately 1.3 million people (in their total number being also present those who don't have a permit for residence in Italy). Thus, the Romanian community from the Peninsula became the most numerous, being followed by the communities of citizens that came from other countries, such: Albania, Morocco, China, Ukraine, Philippine, Moldova Republic, India, Poland, Tunisia etc. The migration for working and, implicitly, for a better living, represents the main cause of the migration phenomenon from one country to another and from one geographical area to another. In Europe, there were noticed that the most immigrants came from all over the world during 2010. There was calculated that one of three international immigrants lives on the European continent. Also, at the European level, were registered 77.1 million children born from immigrant parents (*World Migration Report 2010*, International Organisation for Migration, Geneva, 2011, p. 245). We mention, related to this context, that the total number of the international immigrants was estimated to 214 million people in 2010, USA being considered the country with the most immigrants in the world (*Ibidem*, p. 115).

Because of the permanent immigration were produced modification in the composition of the population from many occidental societies. Altogether, they knew an economic

reviving of the domains that lacked the manpower, being attracted a large volume of manpower, especially young one. Yet, there also appeared multiple problems related to the managing of the immigration process, of professional, social, educational, cultural integration of the foreigners. For the temporary immigrants, working in the developed countries meant better incomes and an improving in the living standard of the families that remained in the origin countries. The world statistic data attest that, in 2008, most part of the money sent home by the immigrants were registered among those people who worked in Italy: 12.7 billion dollars (*Ibidem*, p. 184).

The economic crisis from the last years and the drastic measures of austerity taken by several western governments led to the introduction of restriction on the labour market and, implicitly, to a deterioration of the working and living conditions of the immigrants, determining alarming increases of the unemployment rate among the foreign population. For example, in Italy, the unemployment rate among the entire immigrants came to 10.75% in 2009. In such circumstances, the access of the immigrants to the labour market was limited and conditioned by the fulfillment of certain more strict criteria. An example is that from 2008, when the Italian authorities gave only 150.000 of working permits to the immigrants who solicited them and rejected 700.000 requests (*Ibidem*, p. 198). In a report of the International Labour Organization is mentioned the fact that, until the end of 2012, the unemployment phenomenon will affect, worldwide, over 200 million people. Altogether, it is appreciated that, nowadays, there are necessary 50 million jobs to reach the number of the employees registered in 2008 in the entire world.

In the present work we wish to examine few of the identity features of the Romanian immigrants' community from Italy, on the basis of few pieces of information extracted from certain official statistic data and on those collected with the help of a poll. Through the undertaken analysis, we will try to find a well documented answer for three questions:

1. Who are the people who left from Romania to Italy?
2. What are the main reasons for their option regarding this country?
3. To what extent did our conational people keep their cultural identity in the new social adoptive environment?

2. Short presentation of the sociological researches on the Romanian immigrants from the Italian society

In the last decade were made several polls and field researches for knowing the Romanian immigrants from different European countries. They were realized both by the Romanian and Italian specialists. Among the polls, we mention those made in 2007 by *Metro Media Transilvania*, on the social working and living conditions of the

Romanians from Italy, on their expectations and value orientations (under the coordination of Prof. Vasile Dâncu); in 2008, by CURS Bucharest on the Romanians from Italy and Spain (under the coordination of Dorel Abraham). Between 2004 and 2008, Pietro Cingolani studied the life of the Romanian immigrants from Torino (it holds the second position, after Rome, regarding the number of Romanian citizens) and, in the same time, he realized case studies in the village Marginea from Suceava County (half of the dwellers from that locality being in Italy, most of them near Torino) (Cingolani, 2009, p. 180). Prof. Dr. Dumitru Sandu is the author of a series of major works on the theme of migration, among which we mention, related to this context, the researches regarding the Romanian communities from Italy (*Locuirea temporară în străinătate. Migrația economică a românilor: 1990-2006*, published in 2006) and from Madrid Autonomous Region (September 2008) and also the book *Lumile sociale ale migrației românești în străinătate* (2010).

From an anthropological perspective, were canalized by Carmen Banța, in 2009, „the identity cultural guide marks of the immigrant Romanian people from Bruxelles”. Their identity profile of the Romanian immigrants from France was examined by Marius Matichescu in a book published in French (2011). As for us, we studied the Romanian community from Italy, including their social and cultural identity, in a work published in 2008.

3. Socio-demographic characteristics of the Romanian immigrants from Italy

In the following paragraphs we will analyze the corps of Romanian immigrants in Italy, related to the foreign population from this country, in terms of some socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, civil status, national membership etc) and of some qualitative evaluations. In this way, we will have the possibility to know the general and particular features of the immigration phenomenon from the Italian society, to reveal the cities or regions in which they are living most of the foreign citizens and, finally, to get an edifying image of the Romanian immigrants, based upon their socio-demographic structure.

a) The accentuated growth of the Romanian population and its distribution in the territory

In the period of time before 1990, the number of the Romanian citizens from Italy was very low, as comparing to the number of the citizens arrived from Morocco, Philippines, Yugoslavia, Egypt and Tunis – countries that occupied the first five positions and had, each, over 10 thousand resident people in Italy. Romania held the 25th place from the total number of 30 states that had resident permit in Italy.

The statistic data reveal that, in 1989, was registered a total number of 490.338 people with residence permits in the Peninsula. Almost 43% of them came from 30 countries and the rest of 57% belonged to different countries of the world (Otovescu, 2008, p.153). Between 2002 and 2006, the number of the resident foreigners in Italy was doubled (from 1.549.373, in 2002, to 2.938.922, in 2006), because of some normative documents that allowed the immigrants from the territory of Italy to legalize their residence in this country, changing their clandestine situation. During two decades (1989-2011), the foreign population resident in Italy grew from almost half a million people to approximately 5 million nowadays. This fact makes us wonder whether the future of this country will be that of a multi-ethnic society, and also that of the other western European states, permanently assaulted by immigrants arrived from the Third World countries or other areas dominated by poverty and economic difficulties.

Table 1
The dynamic of the immigrant population in the Italian society

Year	The number of resident people	The number of the Romanians in the total of the residence permit immigrants
Until 1978	Almost 350.000	No data available
1989	490.388	3.365
1 st of January 2007	2.938.922	342.200
1 st of January 2011	4.570.317	968.576

The source: Information selected from:

- Luigi Preti, *Imigrația în Europa*, translation by George Lăzărescu, Editura Tehnică, Bucharest, 1993, p. 40
- The Service of Statistics from the Ministry of Interior (become The National Institute of Statistics - ISTAT, from 1992, date at which was started the systematic registration of the foreigners)
- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, Roma, 2007; document *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1 gennaio 2007*, available on www.istat.it, p. 1
- Istat, *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1 gennaio 2011*, available on www.istat.it

As for the administrative-territorial organization, Italy is divided in 20 regions. The statistic data attest that the largest communities of foreigners are, in the descending order of their shares, in the next regions: Lombardy, with the capital at Milano; Veneto, with the capital at Venice; Lazio, with the capital at Rome; Emilia-Romagna, with the capital at Bologna; Piedmont, with the capital at Torino; Toscana, with the capital at Florence. As a rule, the largest urban concentrations from Italy, absorbed the most numerous contingents of immigrants. Although the foreigners are spread in all the 20 regions of this country, in 9 regions are met the highest values, their share exceeding 5% of the entire population from each region. At Milan, Rome and in the afferent regions, the foreigners represent 8% of the total resident population.

The accentuated raising tendency, observed in the case of the immigrants, in general, is valuable also for the people that came from Romania. We mention that there are important communities of Romanians in 15 from the 20 regions of Italy and in 4 of them their number exceeds 30.000 people. Other important cities preferred by our conational citizens are Milan, Padova and Verona. In the 5 mentioned cities are over 33% from the total number of the Romanian immigrants, the rest of almost 67% being spread in different regions of the Peninsula. We can say that in the case of the Romanian citizens appeared a steep growth. Thus, if in 1989, there were around 3.000 immigrants with residence permits in Italy, signifying under 1% of the total number of the residence permit people, later, on the 1st of January 2007 (the date when Romania became a member of the European Union), their number raised to approximately 350.000, representing almost 12.5% from the total of foreign residents (around 3 million people).

From the official statistic data, it results that on the 1st of January 2007, there were in Italy six great communities of foreigners that had over 100.000 people each. In descending order, they were formed from citizens arrived from Albania, Morocco, Romania, China (144.885), Ukraine (120.070) and Philippine (101.337).

Table 2
The first three communities of immigrants

No.	Country	Number of immigrants	The Share in the total number of foreign population
1	Albania	375.947	12.8%
2	Morocco	343.228	11.7%
3	Romania	432.200	11.6%

Source: Istat, *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1 gennaio*, Rome, 2007, p. 6 [online] at www.istat.it

Five years later, in 2011, the Romanian community from Italy reached the highest number of foreign population, after a rapid and explosive growth that would propel it in the top of the classification. It was followed by that of the Albanians, Moroccans, Chinese (209.934), Ukrainians (200.730), Philippines people (134.154), the citizens from Moldova Republic (130.948), from India (121.036), Poland (109.018). Therefore, if in 2007 there were six communities of immigrants of over 100.000 members, in 2011, their number grew to ten.

Table 3
The first three communities of foreigners from Italy
(1st of January 2011)

No.	Country	Number of immigrants	The Share in the total number of foreign population
1	Romania	968.576	21.1%
2	Albania	482.627	10.6%
3	Morocco	452.424	9.9%

Source: Istat, *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1 gennaio 2011*, [online] at www.istat.it

On the whole, it can be noticed an increase of the foreigners from 2.938.922, in 2007, to 4.570.371, in 2011 (according to the official data). In reality, as some researchers of this subject say, their number is constantly increasing. Also, in the same interval of time is tripled the number of Romanian residents on the Italian territory that, in 2011, will represent 21.2% from the total number of foreigners.

b) The structure of the Romanian immigrants (on age, gender, legal status groups)

The large presence of the Romanian immigrants in Italy transformed their community into an important economic, social and demographic force. Moreover, among this community was also registered the higher birth rate (10.2%, in 2006), for example, the statistic evidence from Italy mention the fact that in October 2006, one of four babies born in the Rome Region was Romanian and at Milan, one of five newly born children had Romanian parents. We underline that the birth rate is generally higher among the foreign population from Italy than among the Italian one. In 2006 only, were born 398.000 children from foreign parents, representing 10.3% from the total number of births happened on the territory of this country and forming the second generation of immigrants (Otovescu, 2008, p.136), fact that contributes to the rejuvenating of the population from the Peninsula.

The share of the underage people from the foreign population was maintained relatively constant at over 20% of its total, between 2002 and 2006. at the 1st of January 2007, there were 665.625 underage children from the total of 2.938.992 foreigners.

After the analysis of the statistic data it results that there is a relatively balanced report on genders as regarding the foreign population from Italy. For example, in 2007, there were 50.12% males and 49.88% females, representing a number of 102 men and 100 women. In 2003, those with the age between 18 and 44 constituted almost three quarters (74.32% - 1.117.245 people) from the total of immigrants. The preponderance

of the young people is generally explained through the priority motivation for working of those who are in Italy, representing an important source for covering the necessary manpower from the economy and the social activities from the Peninsula.

The sociological research of a sample of 1066 Romanians from Italy (of 18 years old and over) reveals us the fact that the average age of the Romanian immigrant in this country was, in 2007, 33 years old, characteristic both for men and women.

Almost a quarter (23%) of the questioned subjects were between 26 and 30 years old, 18% belonged to the age group of 21-25, 17% were between 36-40 and 16% were between 31-35. As much as the age grows, the Romanians share in Italy decreases. For example, at the age group 51-55 were 3% and at 56-60 only 1% (Metro Media Transilvania, 2007, p.58). The gathering of the percents for the age groups between 18 and 45 years, leads us to the conclusion that the Romanians from this country are, in proportion of 89%, young people with obvious working availabilities. The same conclusion results from another sociological research (coordinated by Prof. Dumitru Sandu) that evidences that abroad "left for working more young than old people" and especially those that graduated a vocational school or the high-school (Sandu, 2006, p.18).

In the same time, as for the Romanian state, the sociological researches showed the fact that in Italy came for working those who had a labour contract (44%), so, with a vocational qualification. To them, were adding, according to their share, the people who were working in their households (14%), those who were self-employed, without authorization or workman's pass (14%), unemployed or day-labourers (10%) (Metro Media Transilvania, 2007, p.17, 31).

Considering the legal status, the statistic data from 2003 show that over a half (52%) of the foreigners from Italy were married and the percent of the married people, among the Romanians, was even higher (66%, according to the estimations of Prof. D. Sandu) for the entire interval of the departures from 1990-2006.

4. The stages of the working emigration and the Romanian regions from where the people left

The emigration of the Romanian citizens for working abroad (both for short and long term) is a phenomenon that increased its intensity along the years and involved an important number of families. This is also attested by the conclusions of a sociological study, under the coordination of Prof. D. Sandu who mentions that: "Over a third from the country's households, approximately two and a half million, had at least one of their members left abroad after 1989. Almost a fifth part of the Romanian households had at least one member who worked abroad. The share of the 18-59 years old people who worked abroad is of at least 12%".

The examination, from the historic perspective, of the Romanians' temporary migration abroad, led the named author to the conclusion that there are three distinct stages of this process:

Period	The maximum rate of emigration
1990-1995	3‰
1996-2001	7‰
after 2001	28‰

Source: D.Sandu, *Locuirea temporară în străinătate. Migrația economică a românilor: 1990-2006*, Bucharest, noiembrie 2006, p. 18

The same stages are met, with small differences of time interval, in the case of the Romanian emigration in Italy: "from a maximum number of 14 thousand Romanians during 1990-1996, it goes to a maximum of 34.000 and at the end of 2005 the number of the residence permits of the Romanians from Italy reaches 300.000" (Ibidem, p.24).

Although the leaving abroad for working was made from all the historic regions of Romania, yet, Moldova, Muntenia and Oltenia registered a higher intensity as comparing with those motivated by touristic interest and family visits. Moldova is the region considered to be even "typical for the economically motivated leaving". In 1990-2001, the dwellers from Moldova left in relatively equal shares for working in Italy and Israel. After 2001, the departures to Italy from this region reach 75% from the total number of working leavings". "The dwellers from Oltenia are reorientating from Canada towards Italy. For the dwellers from Transylvania, the direction change of the working migration implies the substituting of Hungary, a privileged destination, with Italy. The people from Banat, replace Serbia and Sweden with Italy too" (Sandu, 2006, p.24).

The poll realized by Metro Media Transilvania among 1066 Romanians from Italy, of over 18 years old (during 20th of November – 15th of December 2007) who were in that country for other purposes than tourism, evidenced the fact that their domicile in Romania was in the following regions: Moldova – 43%; Transylvania – 30%; South – 22%; Bucharest – 3% (Metro Media Transilvania, 2007, p. 57).

The main domains where the Romanian immigrants from Italy work are building and agriculture, where activate especially the men; housekeeping, taking care of the aged people, commerce, touristic services, where the women are employed. Over 80% of the Romanian residents in Italy have the statute of workers, carrying out execution services. Yet, there is a growing category of business men that work especially in the building department and commerce, certain media materials informing that there are over 17.000 Romanians who founded building companies

(*Evenimentul zilei*, 28th of March 2007). What is sure, many of them, initially left just for finding a job, succeeded later in organizing their own businesses on the Italian territory or in activating in fields of great public notoriety and to gain the sympathy and the approval of the Italian citizens. A significant category of conational people is that of the football players Adrian Mutu and Cristi Chivu, of some artists and television personalities such is Ramona Bădescu, of some models world-wide recognized, as Catrinel Menghia and, recently, Mădălina Ghenea, who enjoy a wide notoriety and recognition of their professional talent and value, being part of a category of “exceptional” Romanians who work and live in Italy.

5. The reasons of their options for Italy ***and the potential migration***

In Italy, the first legal dispositions for the regulation of the immigrants' situation were registered in 1986, following the pressures exercised by the fluxes of citizens come from the African, Asian and Arab world. To them, was added, in 1990, the massive entering of citizens from the ex-communist states, phenomenon that produced a real problem for the Italian society and for different state institutions that either ignored the immigration control or made it impracticable (Preti, 1993).

The main reason for the people's immigration to Italy was, from the start, that of finding a job. Before 1989, this country confronted with a high rate of unemployment, phenomenon that affected almost 2.5 million employees. From here, it came the Italians' fear, in front of the foreigners wave, of the act that they would lose their jobs, because the immigrants would accept lower wages and wouldn't be pretentious about the working conditions. Only in 1990 was ended a scientific study on the migration phenomenon in Italy that revealed that 58.1% of the foreigners were for at least 3 years in that country, that 40.3% came her with the hope of finding a steadfast job and other 35% were from family reasons, for studies or for travelling (Preti, 1993, p. 44). Starting from here, were conceived the statistic tables in which the reasons were: working, family, religion, chosen residence, studies, tourism, asylum, (unsolved) asylum request, others (businesses etc).

The consulting of the information registered in the foreigners' residence permits (on the 1st of January 2007) and published by the National Institute of Statistics from Italy, allow us to underline that 60.0% from the total number of foreigners from this country was there for working, 31.6% for family reunion, 2.14% for studies, 1.85% for residence and 1.33% for religious reasons. The working motive was mentioned by 78% of the immigrant men and by 44% of the immigrant women. On the 1st of January 2007, the two types of permits, for working and family reunion, represented the motives for the presence in Italy of 90% from the total number of foreigners (Istat, *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1 gennaio 2011*, p. 4 [online] at www.istat.it)

We should mention that the elaboration of the data regarding the presence of the foreigners in Italy was initiated in 1992 by The National Institute of Statistics from Italy. Until 1992, the information about the immigrants was collected by The Department of Statistics of the Interior Ministry.

After the research of 1066 Romanians from Italy, made in December 2007 by Metro Media Transilvania, came that 8 reasons were at the origin of the decision when they chose Italy as a temporary or permanent destination, after the departure from Romania:

1. „Money” – said 26% from the total number of the investigated people;
2. „Job, working” – 25%;
3. „For a better living, a better life” – 10%;
4. „Poverty, the low incomes from Romania” – 9%;
5. „For better earnings” – 6%;
6. „Family motives, reunion, divorce, bereavement” – 6%;
7. „For helping my family” – 4%;
8. „The lack jobs, the economic situation from Romania” – 4% (Metro Media Transilvania, 2007, p. 9).

These categories of motives were obtained after a question with free answers and can be noticed that they are interconnected, being able to be evaluated in an associative manner. Money, working, better living are, actually, the preponderant reasons, of whose fulfillment represent for every man the guarantee of the material and moral existence. Secondary, we met motivations determined by the family situation – of associative type (family reunion, marriage) and dissociative (divorce, death). Although that range of motives (identified through the poll) don't explain why was particularly chosen Italy instead of other country (because the same reason could have been fulfilled in any other developed European country), it is significant for understanding of the needs and significant aspirations of the Romanian immigrants. As we can notice from the above data, the first two reasons are related to *money and work*, being interdependent values: work generates earning, and this is obtained after carrying out a social useful activity. The both categories of motives characterize over half (51%) of the subjects from the sample and illustrate a preponderant economic motivation for the presence of the Romanians in Italy (doesn't matter if they were forced to emigrate because of poverty, unemployment or low salaries and insecure jobs).

The greatest share of the questioned people declare themselves “quite satisfied” and “very satisfied” by “the way in which they live” in Italy (67%), by the money they earn

in this country (61%), by the friends they have (77%), by the family life (85%), by their health (83%) (*Ibidem*, p. 10), meaning that they enjoy multiple satisfactions that they didn't experienced in their country. The fact that their relatives, their friends, colleagues and acquaintances from Italy were those who helped, generally, their conational citizens to come in that country and to work, indicates us the presence of some active and long lasting social networks, Romanians helping each other and making a permanent connection wit the origin social environment. Certain polls revealed that 34% of the Romanians intended, in 2006, to leave for working in Italy and 20% in Spain (Sandu, 2006, p. 25).

As for their intention of returning to the country or retro-migration, some sociological researches evidence that 35% of the questioned Romanian immigrants from Italy expressed their desire of permanently returning home and other 21% decided to remain definitively in Italy. With the money they earned, some immigrants wish to buy land in Romania (25%), to build a house (31%), to invest into a business in our country (23%), while others desire to change their house in Italy (27%), to begin a business here (8%) etc. (Metro Media Transilvania, 2007, p.39).

6. The preservation of the cultural identity ***among the immigrants***

In the same time with the increasing of the Romanians, temporarily or permanently established in Italy, were manifested their interest of organizing and declaring themselves as a community willing to promote their cultural and national identity. Along the specific activity developed by the Romanian Embassy in this country, can also be seen other institutional forms that assure the legal support for the manifestation in the public space of our conational people. Thus, at the end of 2006, we meet in Italy a national organization called *The Romanian League from Italy* that consisted of 14 associations functioning in different regions with the headquarters at Rome, Torino, Milan, Palermo, Padova, Brescia etc.

Also, there is a political formation, named *The Romanian Identity Party* (founded at Rome, on the 9th of December 2006) and a Romanian newspaper *The Romanian Gazette* that appear at Rome starting with 2003, a weekly publication with the highest number of copies printed among all the foreign publications from Italy. As, well there are other publications that, along with the Romanians associations, are preoccupied of the realizing a viable communication among them, of keeping the Romanian cultural values and of maintaining the conscience of national belonging of the immigrants.

Another form of institutional organization of the Romanians from Italy is represented by their affiliation to a national syndical structure that attest their capacity of understanding that, once they are integrated on the labour market, they have not

only obligations, but also rights. According to the estimations made by *The National Federation of the Builders and Wood Workers*, to which the Romanians are also affiliated, in 2006, were working in Rome, legally, "almost 9.000 Romanians and other 150.000 activated illegally in constructions, meaning that certain right of the illegal workers were ignored and unprotected".

The preservation of the Romanians' from Italy cultural identity constitutes a problem of which the official institutions of our state and the organizations founded by our conational people from this country take care. From the sociological perspective, it is important to know what kind of changes were produced in the horizon or in the cultural code of the Romanians who ended working and living in Italy, whether they remained more Romanian or they became more Italian (as Emilia Lewandowska was asking regarding the Poles, in a study from 2004: *More Polish or More British?*). For the gathering of the field data, we drew up a sociological questionnaire that we applied for 125 subjects from Italy. They were found with the help of some relatives, friends, former colleagues that keep in touch with the persons from Italy.

The questionnaire applied in Romania was filled out though the direct contact with the 125 subjects, during their leave spent in the country or on the occasion of some religious holidays, when they came home. Most of the subjects from the lot (82.2%) had their domicile in Craiova and the rest of them in localities from five counties of Oltenia. The main cities of residence in Italy were Rome (for 22.6% of them), Torino (12.3%), Napoli (11%), Milan (7%), Bologna (5%). Others were living in (2.7%), Padova (2.7%), Bari (2.1%), Florence (2.1%) etc. Because there wasn't up to this moment, the possibility of making a representative sample group that would have allowed us to exploit the obtained data and conclusions, we resorted to the identification of an exploratory share of subjects, therefore the gathered information is referring only to that group of respondents. In the summer of this year we are going to make a direct documentation in Italy, on the Romanian community from Torino and, on this occasion, we hope e will succeed in forming sample groups according to the rigors of the scientific research.

The questioned lot was made of males in a proportion of 54% and females, 46%; 18.3% were between 18-25 years old, 40% were between 26-35 years old, 16.7% between 36 and 45, 12.5% of 46-55 and 2.5% between 56 and 65 years old. Half of the members of the lot were married (over a third with children), 425 unmarried and 5% were divorced. Almost 485 graduated the high-school, 30% graduated a university and 12.4% graduated a vocational school. A quarter of the subjects were in Italy for under a year, 30% for 1-3 years, 235 for 4-6 years, 12% for 7-9 years and 10% for 10 or more years (these were entirely workers).

If in Romania approximately 30% of them were workers, 13% without occupation, 16% were doing intellectual activities, 10% with medium qualification, in Italy, over

66% of the subjects were workers and only 4% of them in the profession for which they had high qualification (doctors, engineers, teachers). Most of them (85%) worked in Italy for the first time since they had left Romania, while 15% of them had worked previously in other countries. The main reasons for their decision about working in Italy are those known from the anterior researches, financial ones (mentioned by 53%) and finding a proper job (20%), to which are added, on the third place, the family relations, for an important part of the subjects (10%). The biggest majority (84.1%) of those who least confessed that found here what they had been looking for: the desired job (42%), the possibility of earning money (33%), family/friends (5.4%) etc. The major difficulty in the new life social environment was, for 39% of them, to speak Italian; for 14% to make new friends and acquaintances; for 12% to change their eating stile; for other 12% to get a residence permit; for 10% to find a house and for 5.5% to bring their entire family in Italy.

When they left from Romania, most of the subjects of the lot, almost 64% intended to find a job in Italy and then to return home, 21% wanted to remain permanently in this country, 7.5% wished to “forget out country” and 2% couldn’t appreciate. Over 70% self-evaluated as being “poorer” the moment they left from Romania, almost 27% considered they had “the same material situation” that they have in Italy, 1.4% thought they were “richer” and the rest didn’t answer. Must be observed that for 40% of the incomes from Italy (as comparing with those from Romania) are enough to a “very great and great” extent, for 52% are considered “appropriate”, for 5% are enough “at all” and for 3% are enough to a “small or very small” extent.

We know that the bases of the national identity are language, history and culture. What's more, we may presume that, among the immigrants, the conscience of the national belonging is stronger that among other citizens from the country, because being in the middle of the strangers determines you to learn the norms, the values, the thinking and behaviour pattern of the foster country, that is to notice and to leave the differences. In order to evaluate to what extent the group of Romanian immigrants from Italy preserve its cultural identity, we resorted to the use of some indicators or analytic descriptors, on which we designed the questions from the questionnaire (with free and pre-formulated answers):

- the speech in the maternal language;
- the observing of some Romanian customs and traditions;
- the preserving of tight connections with the family from the country;
- the use of the same culinary practices;
- the manifestation of “homesick”;
- going to church;

- the conscience of belonging to the national culture and history;
- the consumption of Romanian cultural products (music, TV, books etc);
- the self-evaluation of their own national identity.

One of the hypotheses from which we started, in realizing the field research, was that the immigrants from the questioned lot are willing to preserve their national and cultural identity in their new social environment from Italy. An important role is that played by the maintaining of the relation with the family members from the country and periodic visits at home, the use of the Romanian language and watching the Romanian TV programs etc.

Although each of the indicators mentioned below were illustrated through adequate questions in the questionnaire, in the present context we will confine ourselves only to some pieces of information. For example, the subjects were requested to appreciate if they consider that they would become like all Italians or they would preserve the status of Romanians among Italians. The obtained answers indicate the fact that over three quarters of the questioned people mentioned the preserving of their national identity.

Table 4

Your intention and preoccupations are....?	
Of remaining a Romanian among the Italians	76.7%
Of becoming like all the Italians	12.5%
DA	10.8%
Total	100.0%

Source: *Identitatea socio-culturală a imigranților romani din Italia*, Report, Institutul Social Oltenia, 2011.

If at the declarative and group level exists the sincere and quasi-sincere preoccupation of maintaining the Romanian identity (in high percents they said that they are for under 6 years in Italy), as the time passes (we are referring to those that have over 7 years of residence in this country) the perception of the immigrants change, meaning that, once they are established in the Peninsula, their goal is that of becoming like all the Italians, as it results from the statistic data put in the next table:

Table 5

Intention Period	Of becoming like all the Italians	Of remaining a Romanian among the Italians	DA	Total
Under 1 year	7,1%	89,3%	3,6%	100,0%
1-3 years	7,9%	76,3%	15,8%	100,0%
4-6 years	17,2%	69,0%	13,8%	100,0%
7-10 years	78,6%	7,1%	14,3%	100,0%
10 years and more	70,0%	30,0%	0,0%	100,0%

Source: *Identitatea socio-culturală a imigranților romani din Italia*, Report, Institutul Social Oltenia, 2011.

A significant change is that as regarding the use of the Romanian language inside the family or in the relations with the conational people, under the influence of their time spent in Italy, yet, without the canceling the linguistic identity of the users. For the period of “10 years and over” in Italy, the differences are important: half of the questioned people preserve their maternal language in the family, other 40% speak Italian and 10% the both languages.

Table 6

The language spoken in the family Period	Romanian	Italian	Both	DA	Total
under 1 year	69,0%	6,9%	24,1%	0,0%	100,0%
1-3 years	83,8%	5,4%	8,1%	2,7%	100,0%
4-6 years	75,9%	14,1%	10,0%	0,0%	100,0%
7-10 years	78,6%	14,3%	7,1%	0,0%	100,0%
10 years and more	50,0%	40,0%	10,0%	0,0%	100,0%

Source: *Identitatea socio-culturală a imigranților romani din Italia*, Report, Institutul Social Oltenia, 2011.

If at the beginning of their entering into the Italian society, the Romanian immigrants are intensively connected to the other conational people, later, after they learn the language, after they find a convenient job and house, they widen their social circle and are integrating more and more in the community environment, socializing with the Italians in the same way they did with the other Romanians, sometimes getting married. It seems symptomatic the statement of a student (left from Craiova for working in Lodi, a city in which her brother was working for several years): “As I’ve seen, most of the Romanians left for Italy because they wanted to earn money,

initially, and then to return to the country to live there. But, after they spent few years in this country, it's difficult for them to return, because they don't have a job. In my opinion, almost half of them remain in Italy and the other half returns home. This also happens because some of them are getting married, especially women, and remain there”.

The process of integration into the Italian society is made, first of all, through the working activities that the Romanian immigrants do, but also through the way they live and behave in the social environment where they live. Moreover, there are interesting their own appreciations, resulted after the gathering of all the answers for the question: *Do you consider assimilated by the Italian society to a....extent?*

Table 7

Assimilation Period	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To a small extent	To a very small extent	Not at all	DA	Total
Under 1 year	3,4%	10,3%	24,1%	24,1%	31,1%	6,9%	100,0%
1-3 years	0,0%	26,3%	34,2%	23,7%	10,5%	5,3%	100,0%
4-6 years	6,9%	27,6%	41,4%	0,0%	17,2%	6,9%	100,0%
7-10 years	7,1%	28,6%	42,9%	7,1%	14,3%	0,0%	100,0%
10 years and more	20,0%	70,0%	10,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%

Source: *Identitatea socio-culturală a imigranților romani din Italia*, Report, Institutul Social Oltenia, 2011.

In this case, the period for residence in Italy left its mark on the options. It can be seen, in the above table, that the share of the answers at the heading “to a great extent” and “to a very great extent” raises simultaneously with the number of the years spent in that country. The social climate from the Italian localities where the Romanians live is favorable for the process of integration for our conational people. Around 60% of the investigated subjects see the Italians in a positive and even in a praising way, considering them civilized, sociable, correct, respectful, nice, hospitable and talkative.

Generally, we can appreciate that the first formulated hypothesis, that according to which the Romanians preserved their cultural identity, was confirmed with the help of the data resulted on the assemble of the questioned lot. Therefore, to the information presented before, we also add the fact that 78.2% confessed that in their thought still persists “the pleasant memories from Romania”; 85% could name one or more classical Romanian writers; 65.5% listen to Romanian music most of their time; 92% communicate with their parents (from which 19% daily); 72.5% observe the Romanian traditional customs, especially the married ones (the dying of eggs, the

decorating of the Christmas tree, caroling) and 64% don't know any traditional Italian holidays; 91% feel homesick (from which 42.5% "all the time"), especially those who left their children in the country, miss their families (70%), the native places (11%) and friends (8%); 63 of them consider themselves "more Romanian than Italian", through the way they think, feel and talk; 75% speak Romanian inside the family and in the relations with other Romanians; 59% don't have the feeling that they are uprooted from their native world; 77.1% kept their religion; 76% have traditional Romanian objects in Italy etc.

7. Conclusions

During the last two decades, the transnational migration became not only a global social phenomenon, but also an increasing one. In the *World Migration Report 2010*, of the *International Organization for Migration* it was mentioned that the total number of international migrants reached 214 million persons and the United States of America were in the forefront of world countries with most immigrants. It was also calculated that, in 2010, one in three international migrants was living in Europe. Economically developed societies have become the most attractive for foreigners, coming, to their majority, from different European, Asian and African states, affected by the poverty and financial crisis. The official statistical data show us that immigrants represent almost 9% of Germany's population, 7.5% of Italy's, over 6% of Spain's and France, over 5% of Great Britain's population. Migration for work and for a better life represents the main reason of the migration phenomenon from a country to another, from a geographical region to another. Other significant reasons which determine people to abandon their countries are related to family reunion and studies in international prestigious universities. According to the International Labor Organization, the unemployment will affect over 200 million persons, till the end of 2012, which will lead to an increase of the migration flows to developed countries.

Italy is one of the occidental countries that are confronting with a permanent flux of immigrants. In 2011 it had 60.6 million dwellers, 7.5% of them being foreigners come from different European, African or American countries. Among these, there is also an impressive number of Romanians (according to some unofficial data, around 1.3 million persons).

The Romanians' migration in Italy, especially for working and for family reunion, followed an accelerated course in the last decade. Officially, their number is around one million people, but is continuously growing. The Romanian Community from Italy became an important economic, social and demographic force. If in 2007, Albania and Morocco had the biggest communities of citizens in Italy, later, in 2011, Romania gained the first place, being followed by Albania and Morocco. The Romanian community from the Peninsula became not only numerous, but that in

which are born most of the children and that with the citizens most willing to remain permanently here (between 20 and 25%, according to some sociological opinion polls). The statistical data show us that in October 2006, one in four newborns in Roma was Romanian, and in Milan, one in five newborns had Romanian parents. On the whole immigrant population from Italy, the birth rate was higher than in the case of Italians, fact that contribute to the rejuvenation of the population from this country (only in 2006, for example, there have been born 398.000 children whom parents were foreigners).

There are important communities of Romanians in the 15 from the 20 regions of Italy, although their presence is mentioned along the entire country. In four regions, the number of the Romanians exceeds 10.000 people. At Rome and Torino are met the most important Romanian groups: over 30 thousand in every city. Over a half of the foreigners from Italy (52%) are married, and in the case of the Romanians, their share is higher, over 66% of their total.

In the total number of the Romanian immigrants are preponderant the young groups (18-45 years old). Certain sociologic researches attest that the average age of the Romanian immigrant was 33 years old in 2007. Although the leaving abroad for working was done in all the regions of Romania, Moldova, Muntenia and Oltenia supplied to the greatest extent the emigration from economic reasons. The main domains in which the Romanians activates in Italy are, for men, building department and agriculture, and for women, housekeeping, aged people caring, tourism services etc. over 80% have the professional statute of workers. Some Romanians built a carrier in sports and entertainment. Generally, the Romanians who work and live in Italy declare themselves satisfied and very satisfied with their earning and with the lives they have in this country. Many Romanians have started their own business in Italy, mainly in constructions (over 17.000 in 2007) and in the commercial sector, especially.

The results of a poll demonstrates that most part of the Romanians preserve in the new social environment representative elements of their cultural and national identities and their family life in Italy plays an important part here.

Residence in Italy has had an impact on the way that immigrant have feel assimilated in the Italian society. So, 70% of those who are living in Italy for more than 10 years have appreciated that they feel themselves assimilated to a great extent. Even if they are feeling assimilated by the Italian society, generally, the Romanian immigrants have kept their Romanian cultural identity (72,5% of those questioned observe the Romanian traditional customs, 91% feel homesick, 75% speak Romanian inside the family and in the relations wit other Romanians).

References

- Banta, C. (2009). *Sensurile unei identitati. Repere identitare culturale ale românilor emigranți din Bruxelles*, Aius, Craiova
- Brandi, M.C. (2006). *Migrazioni qualii cate e migrazioni di tecnici. Stranieri in Italia ed Italiani all'estero*, Working paper CROCEVIA, Torino
- Castles, S. & Miller, M. (1998). *The Age of Migration*. Second edition, The Guilford Press, New York
- Cingolani, P. (2009). „Prin forțe proprii. Vieți transnaționale ale migranților români în Italia”, in Anghel, R. & Horvath, I, *Sociologia migrației. Teorii și studii de caz românești*, Polirom, Iași
- Karnououh, C. (1994). *Românii. Tipologie și mentalități*, Humanitas, București
- Lewandowska, E. (2004). “More Polish Or More British? Identity Of The Second Generation Of Poles Born”, in *Great Britain in Perspectives And Progress In Contemporary Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Gang Zheng, Kwok Leung, John G. Adair (eds.)
- Matichescu, M. (2011), *Integrarea sociala a emigrantilor români în Franta. Profilul identitar al migrantilor români*, Teza de doctorat, Universitatea de Vest din Timisoara
- Nicolăescu, V. (2011). Formation of the new Romanian communities, *Journal of Community Positive Practices*, Nr. 4/2011
- Otovescu, A. (2008). *Românii din Italia*, Didactică și Pedagogică, Bucharest
- Otovescu, A. (2011). “Caracteristici ale identității culturale a românilor imigranți din Anglia”, în *Sociologie Românească*, vol. IX, no. 4/2011
- Preti, L. (1993). *Imigrația în Europa*, Tehnică, Bucharest
- Radu, M. (2006). “Politica și practica privind integrarea imigranților și refugiaților în statele europene”. in *Revista Calitatea Vieții*, no. 3-4/2006
- Sandu, D. (coord.). (2006). *Locuirea temporară în străinătate. Migrația economică a românilor: 1990-2006*, Bucharest
- Sandu, D. (2010). *Lumile sociale ale migrației românești în străinătate*, Polirom, Iași
- *** International Organization for Migration (2004). *Return Migration: Policies and Practices in Europe*, Geneva
- *** Institutul Social Oltenia (2011). *Identitatea socio-culturala a imigrantilor romani din Italia*, Craiova

- *** Metro Media Transilvania (2007). *Comunitatea românească din Italia. Condiții sociale, valori, așteptări. Studiu sociologic*, Cluj-Napoca
- *** Istat (2007), *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1° gennaio 2007*, [online] at www.istat.it
- *** Istat (2011), *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1° gennaio 2011* [online] at www.istat.it
- *** Caritas/Migrantes (2009), *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione*, Idos, Roma
- *** International Organization for Migration (2011), *World migration report 2010*, Geneva

Acknowledgment

This paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/89/1.5/S/59758. Title and intellectual and industrial property rights on the results of the post-doctoral research internship belongs Romanian Academy