



POPULATION DYNAMICS IN ROMANIA DURING THE LAST CENTURY. 1918-2017

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Abstract: *The study presents the evolution of the Romanian population in the period 1918-2017, in an European context and in a wider world context. Important stages of demographic evolution are described, in a historical approach and based on the analysis of relevant statistics, among which administrative data from the national censuses. The study also identifies several factors that have contributed to population dynamics. It is clear from the conclusions that during a century, the demographic evolution of the Romanian population was non-linear as a result of the extreme political and economic conditions in various stages, which had major implications in social terms.*

Keywords: *population, historical approach, ethnic structure, natural growth, factors.*

Introduction

In the period 1918-2017, Romania faced several major historic events, with socio-economic and political implications. In 1918, Romanian nation enrolled on a new road through the Unification of the Romanian Principalities. Then, there were initiated several political-economic processes of deep social impact, such as the involvement in the two World Wars or the initiation of agrarian reforms (in 1921 and 1945). The entry into the Communist era of 1945 had deep social implications: the cooperativization of agriculture concluded in 1962, the industrialization of the national economy from the 70s, the general background of the urbanization and the modernization of the society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Romania underwent a rather late modernization process, visible also through the tendencies to overcome rural poverty, which was very extensive at the time. To study the phenomenon, human and material resources have been mobilized, especially in the field of sociology and economics

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In socialism, after the 50s, by reducing social inequalities and creating a quasi-general employment framework, the problem of poverty came out of public attention, virtually absent from the official speech of power. Subliminal, however, over four and a half decades of communism, this problem has not left the collective consciousness. Awareness of the poverty situation persisted especially in the case of the rural population, which was brought into an area of extreme precariousness the quality of life, first by transferring the burden of paying the massive costs of war debt, then by supporting the costs of industrialization and urban upgrading through the collectivization of agriculture and the control of agricultural commodity prices.

On the other hand, the reports of the communist regime, concerning the economic achievements in industry and agriculture, massively distorted the statistical indicators. As a result, certain indicators referring to the socialist period have to be interpreted with reserve. All economic and social changes affected the dynamics of the population during the century.

Population during 1918 – 2018. Global reference

The trend of world population growth in the last century ranged between 1.6 and 2 billion (in 1900-1927) to over 7.5 billion (in sept 2017). This increase has been unevenly distributed across continents, relative to (under) development. Most of the population grew on extra-European continents (excluding North America and Australia). Between 1950-2000, Africa's population grew nearly four times (from 228 to 814 million) and Asia almost tripled (from 1.4 billion to 3.7 billion). The overall mortality of children aged under five decreased by 53% over the past 25 years. According to the UN, so far only 62 of 195 countries have managed to achieve the targets set in the area of decreasing infant mortality. Infant mortality in the world has fallen from 12.7 million in 1990 to 5.9 million in 2015¹. The female gender tends to have a lower mortality rate, with the mean gender difference of about 5 years.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of the world population: 1900-2000

Continent	1900	2000
America de Nord	5	5,2
Europe	24,7	11,9
Asia	57,4	60,5
Central and South America	4,5	8,5
Africa	8,1	13,4
Oceania	0,4	0,5

*Source: *** United Nations Population Division, Briefing Packet, 1998 Revision of the World Population, Prospects; World Population Prospects, The 2006 Revision.*

¹ UN (2015). World Population Prospects.

Europe, from a population of 458 million in 1914, reached about 726-730 million inhabitants in 2000 (UN, 2015). Although the European countries have made great strides in health care over the last century, there are still important gaps in life expectancy (OECD, EC, 2012). At the average, it increased from 30-40 years in 1900 to 80.6 years in 2015 (Eurostat, 2017). After 1990, in the European countries, the average life expectancy at birth increased by over five years. The gap between the countries with the highest life expectancy (Spain, Italy, and France) and those with the lowest life expectancy (Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania) remained at the same level for about eight years. In 2010, the largest segment of the European population was the 15-64 age group, accounting for 67% of the total population (UN, 2015).

Population in Romania during 1918 – 2018

Inside The Union of Romanian Principalities in 1918, the total population of Romania doubled, registering 14,670 thousand inhabitants in 1919 (Table 3). The term Great Romania entered into circulation after the Treaty of Versailles of 1920. Romania between the two World Wars had the maximum territorial extension in its recent history – 295,641 km², existing in that form until 1940. Despite the territorial readjustments after World War II, the population of Romania has continuously increased since 1919 for seven decades. The peak of growth was registered in 1990, when Romania's population represented 158% of the population of 1919.

In 1989-2012, Romania's stable population decreased by more than 3.1 million inhabitants, more than 77% of the negative growth of the stable population being determined by emigration. In 2016, the number of populations approached the year 1960, after 26 years of continuous decline. More than 4 million people are currently working abroad. The year 2017 marked the birth of several children of Romanians across the border than in the country.

The Peace Conference in Paris (1919-1920) was the basis for its nationalities. The new European borders would include as few as minorities in national states. Thus, new states such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, etc. were established and Romania has completed its territory. At that occasion massive population shifts occurred. From Romania, about 200,000 people went to Hungary, and 42,000 Turks from Dobrogea and southern Bessarabia settled in Turkey. More than 200,000 Jews (especially from Poland and Soviet Russia), 30,000 Aromanians (from Greece, Bulgaria and Albania), 10,000 Romanians from the USA and Canada¹. After 1918, more than one million Romanians remained outside the national borders: 250,000 in Russia, 230,000 in Yugoslavia, 60,000 in Bulgaria, 23,000 in Hungary, 40,000 in Albania, 13,000 in Czechoslovakia, 200,000 in the United States, 100,000 in Australia and 70,000 in Canada (ibidem).

The main causes of population decline during the period 1990-2012 were: 1. international migration, which resulted in an average annual decrease of the population

¹ *** (2017). Noul cadru de evolutie a Romaniei dupa 1918. Analiza comparativa cu alte state ale Europei,

by 104.2 thousand persons; 2. family planning that caused the annual birth rate to be reduced in 2012 by 51% lower than in 1989; 3. overall mortality – higher in the 1990s as compared to the 1980s. Romania already shows specific European demographic disadvantages, but also some in addition to most EU 28: declining population, aging population, increasing migration of working-age population, a much higher mortality rate (12% o) than the European average (9.7% o) in 2012 ¹.

Table 2. Dynamics of the stable population of Romania after the Union of the Romanian Principalities (thousands of inhabitants)

Year	1912	1919	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Population (thousands of inhabitants)	7.160	14.670	16.000	14.280	15.907	16.311	18.403	20.252	22.201

Year	1990	2002	2011	2016	2017	2018
Population (thousands of inhabitants)	23.206	21.698	20.121	19.760	19.630	18.748

Sources: MICDGS (1923). *Romanian Statistical Yearbook 1912, 1919 and 1920*; the 1930s ... 1960 – *The Statistical Yearbook of Romania*, CNS, 1965; 2002, 2011 – *Census of population and households in Romania*, INS, 1992, 2002, 2012; 1970, 1980, year 2016: *** INS: *The resident population in Romania dropped to 19.7 million ...*; Mibai, A., 2017, *Romania has also lost ...*, ZF, *** *Romanian population on 1 June 2018, Demograph 2018*

Table 3. Dynamics of life expectancy in Romania in the period 1900-2018

Year	1900	1930	1948	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2014	2018
Duration in years at birth	36,4	42,0	52,0	68,6	69,2	69,9	71,2	73,7	75,0	75,2

Sources: *** 1990, *Statistical Yearbook of Romania 1989*, C.N.S., *** 2013, *Romania in figures*, I.N.S.; Ghețău V., *The life expectancy of ... 1978*, *** File: *Life expectancy at birth, 1980-2014 Eurostat*, 2016; *** *World Life Expectancy- Romania 2018*, WHO, 2018

Life expectancy in Romania is well below the European average. If in countries like Spain, Italy or France, the life expectancy reached 82.5 years, respectively – 82.4 years, and – 82.2 years, Romania is ranked 24 in the EU 28, with a life expectancy of 74.5 years (women – 78.1 years, men – 71 years) (UE, 2012)

In the first three decades of the 20th century, the increase in the life expectancy of the Romanian population was 5.6 years, which means an annual average increase of 0.2 years, that is, half of the average increase recorded in the period in the other states Europe. This was one of the causes favouring the increase of the gap between Romania and the other European states, at 15-20 years (Ghețău, 1974). Between 1990 and 2010, the increase in population life expectancy was only 3.8 years (0.19 years per year), even lower than in the 1900-1930 period. This is happening to a country obsessed for a

¹ *** (2012). Demographics of European Union.

century to run in the race to catch up with the West. The ethnic structure of the Romanian population in the period 1930-2017 evolved as follows:

Table 4. Dynamics of the ethnic structure of the Romanian population between 1930-2017

Year	Nationalities							
	Romanians	Hungarians	Germans	Russians, Ruthenians	Hebrew	Bulgarians	Gypsies	Other nationalities
1930	71,9%	7,9%	4,1%	5,5%	4,0%	2,0%	1,5%	3,9%
2017	89,4%	6,6%	0,27%	0,16%	0,02%	0,03%	2,45%	1,0%

Sources: Constantinescu N.N., 1996, *Economic History of Romania*, Economic Publishing House, p.402; for the year 2017, calculations Stanciu M. on data from *** *Ethno-demographic structure of Romania*, <http://www.edrc.ro/recensamant.jsp?language=0>

Highlights of the demographic transition in Romania

The demographic transition in Romania has been strongly influenced by the interdependence between the political, demographic and socio-economic variables. This has been shaped by the combined effects of mortality, birth, family life, age transition in the demographic pyramid, morbidity and migration.

The demographic transition is a statistical phenomenon, registered since the beginning of the 18th century, and consists in a significant decrease in mortality and birth rates. Over time, there is a gap between the decrease in mortality and the birth rate, the first preceding the second, resulting in a transient increase in the population. The demographic transition was reflected in the urbanization and modernization of European societies. The phenomenon has been facilitated by increasing the quality of life, using modern means of combating mortality, changing the procreative behaviour, by switching from an average of 5-6 children to a woman at a lower number, or even below the minimum replacement rate, (increasing the level of education, increasing the age at marriage, its participation on the labour market, the evolution of the dominant role of the child in the family the costs of raising the child becoming prevalent over the possible economic contribution of the existence of the child in the family) .

In the twentieth century, except for the war years and the 1990s, the population naturally grew continuously before 1967, and as a result of the pronatalist policy between 1967 and 1989. After 1990, the population declined by an average annual rate of 0.15%¹ In Romania, the demographic transition lasted 120 years, ending in 1991, the pronatalist policy of communism determining its prolongation². During the demographic transition, the population of Romania increased 2.7 times, from 8.7 million (in the years 1870-1880) to 23 million inhabitants, in 1990, after which it declined. Here are some aspects of the demographic transition:

¹ *** (2006). Cartea verde a populației în România

² *** (2013). Evoluția mortalității generale în România

The highest figure of the birth rate, in 1912 was 43.4 ‰; The population of Romania grew by 4,392,378 inhabitants, or a quarter, between 1920-1939. Gross birth rate in 1966 was 14.3 ‰. After 1967, when abortions were banned, natality increased to 27.4 ‰; in the period 1986-1989, however, the birth rate decreased, again, to around 16 ‰. After 1989 the birth rate dropped to 10.4 ‰ in 2000; if in 1989 there were 369,000 children born, in 2016 there were 189,783 – the smallest number after 1876;

The peak figure of the general mortality rate, in 1902, was 28,1 ‰; it took 50 years (1850-1889) to reduce overall mortality to 30‰ and 50 years (1900-1929) to reduce it to 20‰, which was maintained until 1947, after which in 17 the biggest reduction in mortality (1948-1967) has reached 9%.

At the beginning of the 20th century, infant mortality (deaths under 1 year) was 197‰ of live births, in 1938 it was 179‰, in 1950 it was 100‰ (in Britain, France, Holland – 50‰), in 1968 it was 59.5‰, in 1990 it was 26.9 ‰ (below 10 ‰ in the western countries).

In May 2016, infant mortality was 9.0 per thousand, as in most EU states it was below 5 in a thousand (Iliceanu, 2016). The divorce rate increased from 2.2 to 4.2 per 10,000 inhabitants between 1901 and 1929. The divorce rate decreased from 20 to 14 per 10,000 inhabitants between 1960 and 2013, with a minimum value in 1970 (4 to 10,000 inhabitants)¹

The population's natural growth has evolved to negative values since 1992, starting from a positive positive value of 20.5 ‰ in 1912. Romania recorded a population increase of 26% between 1960 and 1990 and decreased by 14 % in the period 1990-2015, according to INS data. In total, the natural minus increase of 66,718 people is also a historical record. In 2016, Romania ranked third among the countries with the largest demographic decline in the European Union, after Germany (-187,000 in 2015) and Italy (-161,800), as absolute numbers.

Table 5. Population dynamics by residential area

	2011		2002		1992		1930	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Total population	20122641		21698974		22810035		18052896	
Urban		54,3		52,7		54,3		20,2
Rural		45,7		47,3		45,7		79,8

Sources: *** (2011). *Population and Household Census*, <http://www.infotravelromania.ro/recensamant.html>, RL online, 02 February 2012, [http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/recensamant--7-1-million-households-and-8-4-million-homes -- provisional results-252257](http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/recensamant--7-1-million-households-and-8-4-million-homes--provisional-results-252257), ICS (1930) , (1940). *Romania's Statistical Yearbook*

¹ *** (1930). *Romanian Statistical Yearbook*, the Official Gazette and the State Imprints of 1932, United Nations Population Fund. (2017). UN Green Paper; Eurostat data. (2015). Marriage and divorce statistics; Iliceanu R. (2016). *** (2013). *Evolution of general mortality in Romania*

The age structure of the demographic pyramid of Romania is unbalanced, with many generations born between 1967 and 1989 and few generations after 1990. The existence of few generations, corroborated with the phenomenon of migration of working generations, has contributed to the acceleration of the aging phenomenon of the population from Romania.

Table 6. Population dynamics by gender, 1992-2011

Population – gender	2011		2002		1992		1930	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total	20121641	100,0	21698181	100,0	22810035	100,0	18052896	100,0
Male	9788577	49,6	10581350	48,8	11213763	49,2	8870778	49,1
Female	10333064	51,4	11116831	51,2	11596272	50,8	9182118	50,9

Source: <http://www.infotravelromania.ro/recensamant.html>, 02 February 2012; <http://www.romanioliberal.ro/actualitate/event/census-7-1-million-households-and-8-4-million-homes---provisional-results-252257>; ICS (1935). (1936). *Romanian Statistical Yearbook*,

Both in 1930 and in 1992, 2002 and 2011, the proportion of the female population in the total population remained slightly higher than that of the male gender, with the respective differences being more pronounced in 2011 and 2002 than in 1992 and 1930.

Conclusions

The current demographic indicators represent a reversal of the years 1918-1920 when the country's population has doubled. The Romanians of those times, who were thrown out by national history, struggled with the sacrifices, to enter the country again, and live here. Now, however, many of those born in Romania have left and are still living through foreign countries. And all this, although Romania seemed much poorer and less tender in the 20's than it is today.

In the case of Romania, history has proved not only full of surprises but also ruthless. If we refer to the transition to the market economy, which is claimed to have lasted about a decade (1990-2000), it has indeed proved to be heavier than a war (Belli N., 2001).

Romania faces, without openly recognizing, a social catastrophe. The first demographic disaster occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century when the reunification of the people was made with the cost of living of 985,000 people on the front, behind their front wounded in hospitals, plus 75,741 war crimes¹

In World War II, Romania lost another 833,000 people, or 4.22% of the country's population in 1939 (19.934 million inhabitants)². This, without considering the loss of the population of the detachment from the national territory, following the Ribbentrop-

¹ *** Archives of the Ministry ..

² *** Anti-Fascist Monitor ..

Molotov Pact of 1939 – Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (26 June 1940) and the Vienna Diktat when North Transylvania was embedded in Hungary and the Cadrilater in Bulgaria (30 August 1940). Then Romania lost a third of its territory.

In Communist Romania, another demographic disaster was applied, this time over more than four decades, by the internal representatives of Stalinist-Marxist-Leninist ideologies. Between 1947 and 1989, the Communist state triggered a systematic demographic process on political and class criteria, destroying the country's political elite before 1940. They were otherwise eliminated from public life and in many cases even from life, the most prominent representatives of the old intellectuals, but also “undesirable” by different social categories. All this has strongly and long-term undermined the substance and value of civil society in Romania. Those missing have been so valuable and so many that they are difficult to count (anyway, of the order of several hundreds of thousands). And the number of years of unmet political detention can also be considered a kind of death, not only that people are being eliminated from public and social life but also subjected to a criminal process of destruction. In such conditions, perhaps 10% of Romanian citizens were eliminated, not only about the political or intellectual elite, but also about a medium, intelligent and valuable social blanket – wealthy peasants, priests, artists, actors, doctors, lawyers, and others.

The fourth massive undermining of the national being took place after 1989. Although the statistics are not conclusive, the performances of the new statisticians are (with all respect) inferior to those of the predecessors of the interwar period, it is estimated that over 4-5 million fellow citizens emigrated in the last 30 years, looking for a job. That's why in 2017, most Romanian children were born across the border and not in the country.

In 15 years, Romania could once again reach the population of 1946, when it was about 16 million inhabitants. In 2013, the number of births in Romania dropped below 180,000, 2013 being the first year in which the fall in population was made predominantly (95%) due to negative natural growth rather than migration. (Tempea, 2014)

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