National policy recommendations on the enhancement of migration data for Romania

Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities

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Jointly for our common future

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1. INTRODUCTION

Romania has been characterized by an intensive process of emigration since the 1950s. After 1989, there were several distinct phases of the Romanian out-migration:

- The period between 1990 and 1993 was primarily characterized by the emigration of **ethnic minorities and people emigrating in the search for international** protection.

- In the period between 1993 and 1996, the EU countries introduced a restrictive visa regime for Romanian citizens, therefore the non-EU countries (Israel, Hungary, Turkey) became the principal receiving countries of the Romanian emigrants.

- This trend gradually changed during the period between 1997 and 2001 and emigration towards the EU countries increased.

- In 2002, the Romanian citizens have been exempted from visa requirements in the majority of the EU countries. In 2007 Romania joined the European Union, but not yet the Schengen Agreement. The new legal status of the Romanian citizens within the EU produced an increase on both the volume of emigration and the regularization of the Romanian emigration. In Spain, the number of legally registered residents of Romanian citizenship almost tripled in 2007 as compared to 2006, as the number of immigrants increased from 211,325 to 603,889. In Italy, the number of those residing with a valid residence permit rose likewise, from 278,582 in 2006 to 625,278 in 2007.

- The financial crisis considerably modified the patterns of the Romanian emigration. We can assert that the recent financial and economic crisis diminished the number of new emigrants without however inducing considerable return migration of the Romanians living abroad. In the former main destination countries (Spain and Italy) the dynamic growth of the Romanian migrant stock has stopped (however, the number of residents with Romanian citizenship did not decrease), but in countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom and Belgium it even increased dynamically. Interpreting these data one can forecast a geographic relocation of the main destination places of the Romanian migrants from the Mediterranean Area to (North)-Western Europe. According to the immigration statistics of the main receiving countries, an approximate number of 3 million Romanian citizens live currently abroad.

From 2001 to 2008, the Romanian economy grew with an impressive average annual rate of 6.2 per cent, which positioned Romania at the top of the growing economies in the region. According to a survey conducted in 2007, approximately 15 per cent of the companies active in sectors characterized by intensive growth reported personnel deficit. In 2009, the Romanian economy experienced a sharp contraction in the context of the economic and financial crisis. Since 2011 there has been only a small recovery. Even in the crisis context, the Romanian labor market failed to meet the labour demands of employers, and the shortage was above the average both in a European and a global perspective. For example, in 2010, 36 per cent of the companies in Romania reported having difficulties filling the job vacancies, in particular in the following domains: engineers, skilled traders, sales representatives etc. Analysts consider that the causes of the labour supply's deficiency are structural, mostly related to emigration, and forecast an absolute shortage in roughly 20 years.

To summarize, emigration has an important influence on the population and labor market dynamics in Romania. Therefore, accurate, up to date, comparable and reliable data are of key importance for evidence-based policy-making.

1.1. Introducing SEEMIG

SEEMIG (Managing Migration in South-East Europe) has been a transnational cooperation project implemented in the framework of the 'South-East Europe' Programme of the European Union. The project was carried out between 2012and 2014. The consortium was composed by statistical offices, research institutes and local authorities. The Romanian project partners were the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, the Harghita County Council and the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe. In order to facilitate evidence-based policy-making on the national, regional and local levels, the main objective of SEEMIG was to better understand and address the longer term migratory, human capital and demographic processes of the SEE area, as well as to assess their effects on labor markets and national/regional economies. The project also aimed at strengthening the capacity of local and regional authorities in collecting and utilizing statistical data for purposes of sectorial policies, and in introducing evidence-based policy-making and implementation.

1.2. Introducing the policy recommendations

This present document aims at presenting the most important problems *and policy relevant consequences resulting from the migratory, demographic and labor market processes*. It targets a large public composed by stakeholders, politicians and opinion leaders. The recommendations are primarily based on the findings of SEEMIG research-activities. Hence, the major contributing documents to the Romanian National Policy Recommendations are the following: 1) the *Country report on existing data production system and major data sources in Romania*; 2) the *Dynamic historical analysis of longer term migratory, labor market and human capital processes in Romania*; 3) the *Action plan for migration data enhancement in Romania*; 4) the *National foresight report in Romania*; 5) the *Focus group on immigration trends, integration and labor market*; 6) and the *National/Local Strategy for enhancing migration data production and utilization in Romania*.[1]

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Better integration of the administrative data in the statistical data production system

In Romania, according to the Law No. 266/2009 on statistical data collection, the National Institute of Statistics is the institution in charge of statistical data collection on international migration. However, administrative data sources are not adequately integrated in this statistical data production system. The population register for instance, operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is not used for statistical purposes. This is the register of all Romanian citizens whether or not they have residence in Romania. Citizens, who (officially) left the country and have deregistered, are also included in the population register. Another relevant category is that of extra-territorial Romanian citizens living predominantly in Ukraine and in the Republic of Moldova. Romania offers for the residents of former Greater Romania (referring to the Romanian state territory prior to the Second World War) and their descendants Romanian citizenship through a simplified process of naturalization without requesting residence in the country. Trans-border Romanian citizens enter the population register when they receive a Romanian ID card. Consequently, the Ministry of Internal Affairs - Directorate for Persons' Record and Database Management holds a database on: a) the (officially registered) emigrant stock; and b) the new Romanian citizens residing in neighboring countries (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova).

The first recommendation is that the **population register should be integrated into the statistical data production system**. The most relevant data refer to the following groups: a) the officially

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[1] These documents can be downloaded from the project's website, www.seemig.eu.

registered emigrant stock; b) the new Romanian citizens residing in the neighboring countries (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova) registered in the population register.

Another relevant area concerning the improvement of the Romanian data production system is the **use of the registers of foreigners for statistical purposes**. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should transmit data or provide access to these registers. If the National Institute of Statistics would have direct access to the registers of foreigners, the result can be a rich and relatively reliable data on immigrant stock, which is completely missing currently from datasets on migration delivered by the National Institute of Statistics.

These actions would require the modification of the Law No. 266/2009 on statistical data production system. The relevant institutions/stakeholders are the National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A close cooperation is needed between these two institutional actors. The integration of administrative data into the statistical data production system would benefit all national authorities and research institutes engaged in the issue of international migration.

Challenges: A main challenge is represented by the possible unwillingness of data owners (i.e. relevant departments of the MIA) to share data. Another challenge lies in reaching a broad political consensus regarding this issue. Without a broad political consensus and a strong political authorization, the reform of Romanian data production system has little chances of success. An additional challenge is to secure the financial resources. The recommended actions should rely primarily on national public funds. The integration of administrative data sources in the statistical data production system would be facilitated by the fact that both statistical and administrative registers in Romania use the same PIN. The other side of the coin however is that data protection issues could be invoked against integration.

To repeat, the relevant **stakeholders** in this respect are the National Institute of Statistics and the relevant departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

2.2. Integrated and internationally standardized definitions of different migrant groups

For a better integrated and internationally harmonized data production system the **definitions of the "population" and different migrant groups should be revised**.

In Romania, following the replacement of the state-socialist regime by the democratic one, the statistical and administrative definitions of the term "population" have become highly incongruent. The lack of a consistently used definition for the country's population has a decisive effect on the Romanian data production system. During the state-socialist regime, there was a steadily used definition applied by all institutions involved in population registration. In this period, the Romanian population was defined as the totality of Romanian citizens with legal residence/address in Romania. Until the 2002 census, the statistical definition of the population was similar. In 2002 however, the National Institute of Statistics changed the statistical definition of the Romanian population. The long-term resident foreign citizens were included, whereas the Romanian citizens who were staying abroad for a long period of time (at least 1 year) were excluded.

Although the statistical definition of the population has changed, the logic of the population register (and other administrative data sources) remained unaltered. So, the population register contains all Romanian citizens irrespective of having or not having residence in Romania. Furthermore, the population register does not integrate the registers of foreign citizens residing in Romania. It is very important to stress that this situation led to a duality in the definitions applied to the Romanian population. On the one hand, there is the *legal population* of Romania meaning the totality of citizens whether or not they reside in Romania; and on the other hand, there is the *usual population* of Romania meaning the totality of persons residing usually in Romania (irrespective to their

citizenship). The first (i.e. legal population) remained the *administrative definition of the population,* which differs considerably from the *statistical definition of the population* (i.e. usual resident population). In other words, the administrative definition of the Romanian population is still the definition elaborated during socialist state. This duality in definitions is a permanent source of confusions and inconsistencies, and hinders the integration of the administrative and statistical data production systems.

The **definition of "immigrants" and "emigrants"** (used by the National Institute of Statistics) follows the logic of the administrative (legal) definition of the population, and as a consequence, it is not at all in line with Eurostat recommendations. *Emigrants* (see the exhaustive survey carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Internal Affairs) are defined as Romanian citizens who leave the country in agreement with Romanian authorities, in order to settle abroad. A serious problem linked to this definition is that foreign citizens who emigrate from Romania are not included (by definition) in the emigration statistics. *Immigrants* are defined as foreign citizens who come to Romania in agreement with Romanian authorities to settle their residence in the country. The complications here are due to the specification that immigrants are foreign citizens. First, as it was already mentioned, after 1990, the Romanian authorities granted Romanian citizenship on preferential terms for former Romanian citizens (and their descendants) residing in neighboring countries (Republic of Moldova and Ukraine). They can obtain Romanian citizenship even without having a Romanian residence. If new Romanian citizens from Moldova or Ukraine set their residence in Romania, they will not appear in migration statistics. Thus, it seems grounded to claim that the majority of effective in-migrants do not appear in NIS statistics as immigrants. The second category that immigration statistic does not include is that of *returnees*. Emigrants (even if they emigrate in agreement with Romanian authorities) remain registered in the population register because there are no incentives or sanctions to enforce deregistration. Hence, in case they choose to return, they do not have to register, therefore, there will be no traces left concerning their migration.

It would be reasonable to use the "statistical" definition of the population (e.g. the totality of residents in Romania) for administrative purposes too. Of course an additional register of the Romanian citizens could be also maintained, but the duality of the definition of the country's population should be eliminated as soon as possible. The definitions of immigrants and emigrants should be also modified to be in line with Eurostat recommendations and international standards.

The relevant **stakeholders** in this respect are again the National Institute of Statistics and the relevant departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, namely the Directorate for Persons' Record and Database Management and the Romanian Office for Immigration.

The main **challenges** lie in securing political consensus regarding this issue and raising the necessary financial resources.

2.3. Recommendation concerning Household Labor Force Survey

This policy recommendation pertains to **attaching an additional module to the Labour Force Survey (LFS).** This additional module would focus on the emigration experiences of: the present household members, the household members living and working abroad, and the intentions of the population to emigrate (work abroad). Regular use of this module would provide very useful data on the dynamics of emigration from Romania. The pilot study carried out by the Hungarian and Serbian colleagues in the framework of the SEEMIG project could be also capitalized in this sense.

Besides employing an additional module of the LFS in Romania, it would be also important the **regular monitoring and analysis of the LFS surveys carried out in the main destination countries of the Romanian migration**. Due to the fact that Romania is first of all an emigration country, for the purposes of analyzing the Romanian migration, not only the Romanian LFS survey can be of interest.

Romanian migrants could be studied through the LFS surveys performed in the main receiving countries too. For instance, in Italy or in Spain, a considerable part of the workforce is constituted by Romanians. These surveys are of special interest because the Romanian LFS surveys do not contain any specific questions regarding migration (e.g. Have you ever worked abroad? Do you plan to work abroad?). The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities is profoundly committed (and is competent) to take steps towards meeting this objective.

Stakeholder: As for the additional module in the Romanian Household Labor Force Survey, the relevant stakeholder is the National Institute of Statistics.

The major **challenges** are represented by the lack of financial resources and the lack of human capital.

Stakeholder : As for the regular monitoring of the LFS surveys of the main destination countries, the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities would be implicated.

Here the major **challenge** is the lack of financial resources.

In both respects (additional module to the Romanian LFS and regular monitoring of LFS surveys carried out in main destination countries) the EU funding should be primarily mobilized.