

## SHIFTS AND TRENDS OF THE ROMANIAN EMIGRATION FROM OLTENIA REGION

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**Abstract:** Emigration is, probably, the most defining process of social change that affected Romania during the past decades. Although difficult to estimate, the great number of Romanians who chose to live, work or study in other countries caused significant consequences both in the communities of origin, and in the host-countries. The aim of this study is to evaluate, based on the statistical data issued by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, the size and demographic characteristics of the migratory flow during the past ten years in the Oltenia Region, as well as to analyse the effects of these population movements based on economic, social, and other criteria, regarding the area of origin. As a secondary objective, there will be scrutinized the effects occurred during the period of time when coronavirus pandemic related restrictions to the freedom of circulation were enforced on the migratory flow.

**Keywords:** emigration, Oltenia region, trends, social change, remittances.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, Romania has experienced emigration, particularly after its accession to the European Union in 2007. Economic factors, including limited job opportunities and higher wages abroad, have been significant drivers of emigration from the country. Many Romanians have sought better prospects in countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and others within the EU. However, during the past years, Romania has started to be considered an emergent immigration destination, situation that again challenges institutions' response and the host society at different levels<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Livia Dana Pogan, *Attitudes Towards Immigrants' Integration in Romania*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane "C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor", no. XXII, 2021, pp. 303–311, retrieved from <https://npissh.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/25.-Livia-Pogan.pdf> accessed on 13.02.2023.

The Oltenia region, located in southern Romania, has also been affected by emigration. People from this region have been drawn to migrate to other parts of Romania or abroad in search of better living conditions and employment opportunities.

International human migration is a transformative force in society. When individuals migrate, they not only change their physical location and workplace but also undergo shifts in their behaviour, adherence to different rules, and affiliations with new institutions. Most significantly, their social relationships undergo transformation. These individual changes, over time, have noticeable effects on the entire community they belong to, impacting both the host community and those left behind. While migration is often viewed as a path to progress, offering access to improved living conditions, certain consequences, particularly in private life, can lead to suffering and societal imbalances<sup>2</sup>.

In this context, the aim of this paper is to assess, based on the data provided by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, through the Tempo data series, the size and demographic characteristics of the migratory flow, throughout the past decade, in the Oltenia region. After presenting the general context in which emigration from Romania occurred, the following parts of the study will focus on analysing the effects of these population movements taking into account the economic and social effects on the area of origin. The focus of the assessment regards both the current situation, but also intends to observe the trends, the demographic evolution over the years. The final part of the paper is dedicated to the understanding of the effects of these population movements and to discussing their impact on the region.

## 2. THE CONTEXT

As previously explained, emigration from Romania has been a significant phenomenon for several years, driven by various factors such as economic opportunities, better living conditions, and higher wages in other countries, especially within the European Union. Since Romania joined the European Union in 2007, its citizens have had the freedom to move and work within the EU member states. This has led to a notable increase in emigration to countries like Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and others. One of the primary reasons for emigration is the economic disparity between Romania and some other EU countries. Higher wages and more job opportunities have attracted many Romanians to seek employment abroad. In demographic terms, the emigrants are

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<sup>2</sup> For further analysis, see Alexandra Porumbescu, Livia Pogan, *Social change, migration and work-life balance*, in "Revista de Stiinte Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques", no. 60/2018, pp. 16–26, retrieved from: <https://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/social-change-migration-worklife-balance/docview/2161032333/se-2?accountid=8083>, accessed on 02.04.2023.

often younger and skilled individuals who are seeking better prospects and career advancement opportunities<sup>3</sup>.

According to the data published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)<sup>4</sup>, with more than 4 million Romanians living outside the country, Romania ranks 17th among countries of origin of migration worldwide. The ratio between the Romanian population that migrated outside the country and that of another nationality that migrated to Romania is approximately 6 to 1, the number of Romanian emigrants being 6 times higher than the number of foreign immigrants who were in the country at the end of 2020. Also, the World Migration Report 2022 indicates that the value of remittances that Romanians who went to work abroad sent to the country amounts to approximately 7.5 billion dollars in 2020, down from 2019<sup>5</sup>.

Emigrants from Romania often send remittances back home to support their families. These remittances can have a positive impact on the local economy and contribute to household income<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, emigration has led to demographic changes in Romania, with certain regions experiencing a decline in population, particularly in rural areas. However, the departure of a significant number of people has social implications, affecting families, communities, and social networks left behind.

The Romanian government has been making efforts to address the issue of emigration by implementing policies to attract and retain skilled workers, promote economic development, and improve living standards. It's essential to note that migration patterns can change over time due to various factors, including economic fluctuations and changes in immigration policies in destination countries.

### 3. EMIGRATION TRENDS IN OLTENIA

In regard to the region Oltenia, the emigration flow has been constant and significant. Although not in the top areas of Romania as source of emigration<sup>7</sup>, significant effects can be noted in terms of social and economical landscape. Given the fact that most migration in the past decade has been work-related, there is a

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<sup>3</sup> Cristina Ilie Goga, Vali Ilie, *From "brain drain" to "brain gain". Where does Romania stand?*, in "Revista de stiinte politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques", no. 54 /2017, pp. 90–103.

<sup>4</sup> M. McAuliffe, A. Triandafyllidou (eds.), *World Migration Report 2022*, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Laura Mariana Cismaș, Ruxandra Ioana Curea-Pitorac, Ioana Vădăsan, *The impact of remittances on the receiving country: some evidence from Romania in European context*, in "Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja", 2019, DOI:10.1080/1331677X.2019.1629328.

<sup>7</sup> Babucea Ana-Gabriela, *Analysis Of The Temporary Emigration At The Level Of South - West Oltenia Region Of Romania – Study Of Case: The Young Adult*, in "Annals - Economy Series", Constantin Brancusi University, Faculty of Economics, vol. 1, 2016, pp. 13–18

shortage in the labor market. In addition, the money sent back home as remittances supports entire families, thus discouraging them from involving in economically productive activities. Another issue is related to the traditional shape and role of the family, which is now altered, due to the lack of one or both parents, while children are being left in the care of elderly.

The data analysed in this section is provided by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (RNIS), and refers to two main types of emigrants: permanent and temporary. According to the information provided by RNIS, temporary emigrants are people who emigrate abroad for a period of at least 12 months. Emigration means the action by which a person who previously had habitual residence on the territory of Romania ceases to have habitual residence on its territory for a period that is or is expected to be at least 12 months. The usual residence is the place where a person usually spends his daily rest period, without taking into account temporary absences for recreation, vacations, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatments or religious pilgrimages. Emigrants with a change of residence or permanent emigrants are persons (of Romanian citizenship) who emigrate abroad. Emigration is the action by which a person renounces his domicile in Romania and establishes his domicile on the territory of another state. The Romanian domicile of the person is the address at which he/she declares that he/she has the main residence, entered in the identity document, as it is recorded by the administrative bodies of the state.

Figure 1 below shows the numerical evolution of the temporary and permanent emigration from all the counties included in the Oltenia region – Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinți, Olt and Vâlcea. As it can be observed, there was a steady ascendent trend from 2013 until 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic halted the circulation intentions of many people. After 2020, the international migration is resumed, with a significant increase in both temporary and permanent immigration.

| Year                       | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | Total         |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|
| <b>Temporary emigrants</b> | 17686 | 16689 | 17963 | 20233 | 21660 | 25057 | 24304 | 24489 | 19570 | 22717 | <b>210368</b> |
| <b>Permanent emigrants</b> | 791   | 797   | 681   | 833   | 1363  | 1234  | 1470  | 1497  | 1114  | 1948  | <b>11728</b>  |

**Fig. 1.** No. of emigrants from Oltenia region, 2012–2021

*Source:* Data from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, compiled by the author<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, accessed on 04.04.2023.

All in all, temporary emigration from the Oltenia region in 2012 represented a total of over 17,000 people, and by 2021 it counted over 22,000 people, with a total increase of about 5. 000 people. For the total decade, this region alone in Romania has lost over 210,000 inhabitants. Permanent emigration reveals smaller figures, but none the less also significant: from 2012 until 2021, more than 11,000 people have moved to other countries, thus seriously contributing to the alarming demographic decline of Romania. When referring to temporary emigration the figures are higher, due to the characteristics of this type of population movement it should be taken into account that they are more likely to return to the country of origin. On the other hand, the increased difficulty in the process associated with permanent emigration makes such a decision more definitive, and usually people who choose this are determined not to return. In this context, the following parts of the research will focus on permanent emigration from the area.



| Gender | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | Total |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Male   | 356  | 339  | 275  | 332  | 599  | 535  | 641  | 669  | 517  | 900  | 5163  |
| Female | 435  | 458  | 406  | 501  | 764  | 699  | 829  | 828  | 597  | 1048 | 6565  |

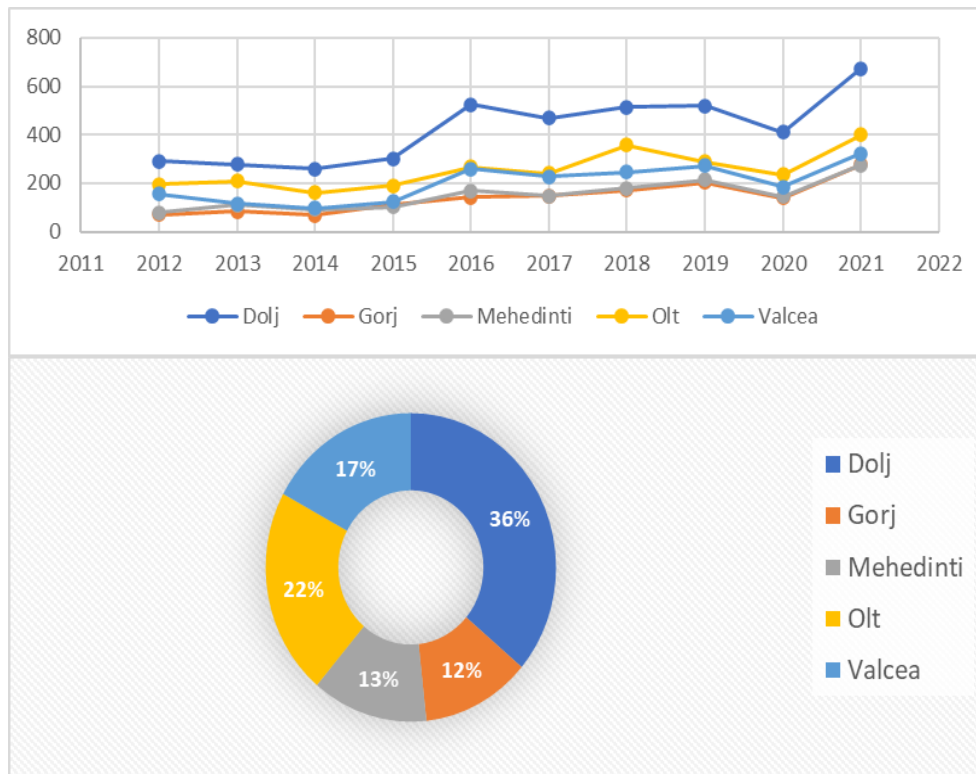
**Fig. 2.** Gender distribution of permanent emigrants from Oltenia region, 2012–2021

**Source:** Data from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, compiled by the author<sup>9</sup>.

As it can be observed, the gender breakdown reveals that the female share of permanent emigrants is only slightly higher than that of men. This is also associated with the types of employment that are usually available abroad, and also with the fact that women are, in general, more likely to follow their husbands and families. In terms of consequences, however, the significance of

<sup>9</sup> Available at <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, accessed on 04.04.2023.

these figures resides in the fact that mothers, as main figures in child upbringing often miss from their homes, thus creating significant imbalances for the future generations.

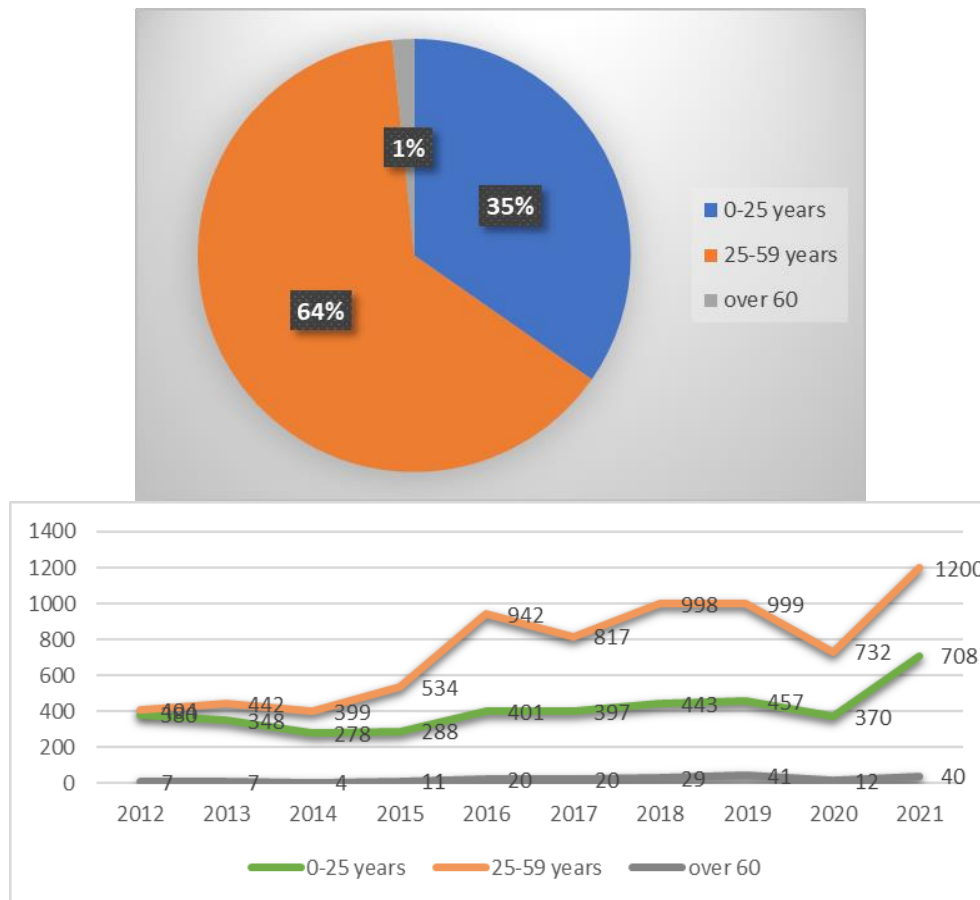


**Fig. 3.** Permanent emigration from Oltenia region, by county of origin 2012–2021

**Source:** Data from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, compiled by the author<sup>10</sup>.

Figure 3 above offers indications regarding the county of origin of the permanent emigrants. It can be noted that among the five counties composing the Oltenia region, Dolj county recorded the highest numbers of permanent emigrants throughout the years, with a share of 36% of the total group, and is followed by Olt, with 22%, and Vâlcea with 17%. On the other hand, Gorj is the county where the smallest share of permanent emigrants was recorded – about 12%. However, in all the counties the net emigration rate follows the same growing trend, with a relative decrease during the coronavirus pandemic, but a steady fast-growing trend afterwards, reaching maximum figures.

<sup>10</sup> Available at <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, accessed on 06.04.2023.



**Fig. 4.** Evolution of permanent emigration from Oltenia region, per age group 2012–2021

**Source:** Data from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, compiled by the author<sup>11</sup>.

Probably the most concerning aspect regarding permanent emigration from Oltenia is related to age break down, which indicates that for the analysed decade, the biggest share of emigrants is represented by people aged 25–59, people of working age and who can, in general, contribute to the economic development of the area. Thus, this age group makes up for about two thirds of the total emigrant population, while people over 60 years old only represent 1% of the total. The age group 0–25 years is another third of the total, including both children and also young people, who are usually in education in training. The massive departure of young and active population brings along very important consequences in terms of social and economic development, which will be addressed in the following section.

<sup>11</sup> Available at <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, accessed on 06.04.2023.

#### 4. EFFECTS OF THE EMIGRATION FROM OLTENIA

The effects of emigration in the Oltenia region of Romania can be wide-ranging and have implications for various aspects of the region's social, economic, and demographic landscape. Emigration can lead to a shortage of skilled and educated workers in Oltenia. As people leave in search of better opportunities abroad, the region may experience a brain drain, where highly educated and talented individuals move away, leading to a loss of human capital and expertise. In addition to this, emigration can have both positive and negative effects on the regional economy. On the one hand, remittances sent back by emigrants can provide a significant source of income for their families and communities, contributing to local consumption and investment. On the other hand, the departure of the workforce can result in decreased economic productivity and reduced tax revenues for the local government. Furthermore, besides bringing benefits for the destination country, successful immigrants' integration brings benefits for all the actors involved, from the individual, the community, the economy of the host country and even to the origin family and even country, who can take the advantage of material, financial, social or cultural remittances<sup>12</sup>.

As it can be observed in the data analysed above, emigration contributes to a decline in the local population, especially among certain age groups. If young and working-age individuals are leaving in significant numbers, the region's population may age, leading to potential challenges in providing healthcare and social services for an aging population. But emigration can also impact the social fabric of communities in Oltenia. Families and social networks may be disrupted as members move away, leading to changes in social dynamics and support structures. Furthermore, even the quality and availability of education and healthcare services in the region can be affected by emigration. Schools may have fewer students, leading to potential closures or consolidations. Additionally, healthcare facilities might experience a shortage of qualified staff, while the real estate market also suffers changes, leading to a surplus of housing in some areas and demand in others. This could result in changes in property values and rental prices. Emigration can also influence the political landscape of the region. As people leave, their voting preferences change, impacting local and national elections. Furthermore, several studies document the ways in which, in Romania, the diaspora has been decisive in elective processes<sup>13</sup>, despite the fact that, in many situations, the voters have little to no connections or input in the local communities.

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<sup>12</sup> Livia Dana Pogan. *Mapping integration. Understanding immigration*, in "Soc. & Soc. Work Rev.", 2020, pp. 79–87, retrieved from <https://globalresearchpublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Mapping-integration.-Understanding-immigration.pdf>, accessed on 7.03.2023

<sup>13</sup> Mihaela Bărbieru, *Adapting political communication to technology. Case study: evolutionary aspects on social networks in Romania*, in "Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies", vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, pp. 117–136.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The research indicates, as explained, that the most significant part of the migrant group is represented by adult population, people who can work and contribute to local development. For years Romania has benefitted from financial remittances sent to the family left at home, but in reality, only a small portion of that money is later spent on long-term investments, but mostly in consumption, thus supporting an economy branch in a non-sustainable manner.

One of the issues observed in the study deals with the impact of crisis on international migration. The data indicates that during the coronavirus pandemic migration figures decreased. Studies show that, for instance, the economic crisis also had a significant impact on the emigration and return patterns of Romanians. Initially, it caused a decline in large-scale migration to Italy and Spain. However, as a response, there was a reorganization of migration towards temporary forms of migration to northern European countries. Additionally, neighboring countries in central and eastern Europe, which were once considered attractive destinations, lost their appeal as migrants stopped seeking employment opportunities there<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, the coronavirus crisis also halted migration, both due to the circulation restrictions, but also in a generally instable economic environment, defined by decreased predictability<sup>15</sup>.

Although migration brings along social change, it also enhances social differences, which can easily be observed in Romanian society, and, in time, produces a “migration culture”, which values this kind of movement. The most immediate effect of this, on a macro level, is the growing dependence of under-developed areas to more economically developed ones.

It's important to note that the effects of emigration can vary depending on the scale and speed of the migration, as well as the specific circumstances of the individuals and communities involved. Moreover, government policies, both in Romania and the countries where the emigrants settle, can also play a role in shaping the consequences of emigration on the Oltenia region and the country as a whole. In addition, the ways in which immigrants are received and perceived in the countries of destination may be different<sup>16</sup> and influence their experience.

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<sup>14</sup> Anghel, Remus and Coşciug, Anotolie, *Patterns and Mechanisms of Return Migration to Romania* (July 1, 2018). *Patterns and Mechanisms of Return Migration to Romania*. In book: *Remigration to post-socialist Europe: hopes and realities of return* Edition: 2019 ERSTE series, 3Publisher: Wien: Lit-Verlag. Editors: Caroline Hornstein Tomic, Robert Pichler, Sarah Scholl-Schneider, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4497201> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4497201>

<sup>15</sup> Alexandra Porumbescu, *Covid-pandemic related restrictions on the freedom of circulation in Europe*, in “*Revista Universitară de Sociologie*”, Year XVIII, Issue 3/2022, pp. 288–295.

<sup>16</sup> Georgiana Ianoş Stănescu, *Portrayals of Immigrants in European Media*, in “*Discourse as a Form of Multiculturalism in Literature and Communication*”, 2015, pp. 114–123.

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