

ROMANIA'S RURAL AREA-CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract: Rural areas have substantial growth potential. There are great differences between rural areas, which have intensified in the last decade between rural area from different places. In Romania, the rural area represents about 90% of the country's surface, and the share of inhabitants in rural areas-among the highest in Europe - amounts to 47.3% of the total population. The main purpose of this paper is to emphasize the characteristics of the Romanian rural space, in terms of population, economic activities, representative aspects as a whole, using for this purpose a summative analysis.

Key words: rural area, Romania, characteristics

INTRODUCTION

The importance to be given to the issue of rural areas was widely presented at the seminar on problems of development and development of rural areas, organized by the UNECE in Bulgaria, 1974.

Table 1.

Characteristics of the countryside

No.	Analysis from the point of view:	Characteristics
1	Economic and occupational	The economic configuration is agro-forestry-pastoral
		Production space in which the primary sectors are important
		The main form of ownership is private family property
		Non-agricultural activities occur in more densely populated areas. Services are lower
		A large part of the population works in both sectors (productive and unproductive), agricultural and non-agricultural
2	Demographic	More airy, more humanized areas
		The population is relatively homogeneous in terms of social features, such as: ethnicity, language, religion, politics, philosophy, economic conception [5,6,11,13]
		Better interpersonal relationships
		Better community involvement
3	Landscape	Beauty due to the natural structure, more airy landscape, flora and fauna
		Qualities of rural habitat: tranquility, peace, climate, fresh air, soothing landscape, social calm
4	Lifestyle	Existence of some rules, traditions derived from local culture
		Social and cultural life is a heritage of humanity
		Relationships between acquaintances and friendships predominate
5	The relationship between rural and urban	Mutual dependencies: the externalities generated by the urban are mostly economic regarding the offer of services and creation of new activities and the externalities generated by the rural are directed towards the urban
		Increased trend of migration from urban to rural areas of economically active people and pensioners
		Recreation possibilities, due to the rural landscape with natural value, historical and architectural vestiges, tourist objectives
6	Development policy	The principle of continuity and complementarity of agri-food activities
		Promoting economic and social cohesion
		Diversification and improvement of infrastructure, access to technologies
		Increasing the quality of life
		Conservation and protection of the environment
Promoting specific culture and traditions		

Source: Man T.E., 2008 [9]

At this seminar, it was emphasized that "rural areas represent most of the territory of EEC/UN and play an important role in their social development. Because of this, the development of these areas must be rationally planned and compatible with the nation's overall goals. Rural areas should not be considered as homogeneous entities - they differ from each other in their endowment with natural resources, their cultural and ethnic traditions, and their level of economic, social and technical development. In many countries, balanced

development at the regional level and improving the living standards of villages have been the main objectives pursued. Technical advances have created increasing interdependencies between agriculture and industry, between cities and villages" [3, 1, 2].

The table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the rural area, describing the rural space from the perspective of economic and occupational factors, demographic, landscape, way of life, the relationship between rural and urban and the development policy applied.

Table 2.

The functions of the countryside

No.	Function	Manifestation
1	Economic - considered as a basic function, it manifests itself in the sense of fulfilling some commitments of the EU Member States for guaranteeing a production system that would ensure:	Food needs of the entire population.
		Ensuring an adequate level of income for rural inhabitants, a level comparable to that of the liberal professions.
		Protecting the environment and sustainable management of resources.
		Meeting the needs of agricultural, industrial, artisanal or commercial SMEs and in the field of services.
		Conservation specific resources for agriculture and support biotechnology.
2	Ecological - manifests itself in the sense of promoting actions in the following directions:	Conservation of the natural resources of life - soil, water, air.
		Protecting biotypes and green spaces.
		Conservation and protection of biodiversity.
		Protection of wild animals.
3	Socio-cultural - the main goal of the development of the rural space is the realization and improvement of the life relations, by: [2]	Stimulation opportunities for better communication and constructive collaboration between residents.
		Possibilities for creating and notifying social and spatial relations.
		Possibilities for community integration of all inhabitants.
		Support for the socially disadvantaged.
		Preparation for participation in decision-making processes on issues of common interest.
		Stimulating creative activities towards artistic forms of expression.
Stimulating the sense of community, sociability and joy.		

Source: Man T.E., 2008 [9]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of this paper is to emphasize the characteristics of the Romanian rural space, in terms of population, economic activities, representative aspects as a whole, using for this purpose a summative analysis of numerous existing information, combining office theory research with factual analysis of statistical data.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Romania enjoys an important but unused development potential. Investments and competitiveness in Romania are elements that need to be improved, in order to achieve an acceleration of economic growth and ensure a convergence of revenues with those in the EU.

The rural area plays an important role in the national context, both in terms of its size and in terms of its residential, economic and recreational function. The average population density in rural areas has remained relatively constant over the years (at about 45.1 inhabitants/km²). Romania's population has a much higher level of rurality, the share of rural population in Romania reflects its higher incidence compared to other EU countries, where rural settlements are less populated and scale lower, as an alternative to urban concentrations. Many of these rural communities contribute, to a small extent, to economic growth, but retain their social structure and traditional way of life.

Most communes with less than 50 inhabitants/km² are grouped in the western part of the country, compared to the eastern and southern areas, where communes predominate, with population densities of 50-100 inhabitants/km². The most populated rural areas are those in the northeast of the country, where the birth rate is high, and in the southern regions, heavily industrialized during the communist period. There are large disparities, determined mainly by the influence of relief at regional and county level. In this context, there are 24 communes and cities that overlap in whole or in part with the

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve where the average population density is 28.7 inhabitants/km².

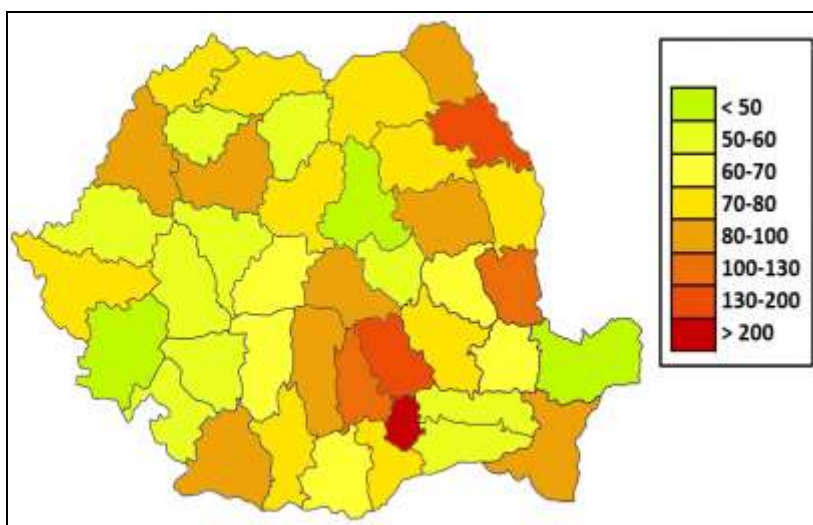


Figure 1. Population density in the country, by counties

Source: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demografia_Rom%C3%A2niei [14]

Romania has the highest share of the rural population in the total population, among European countries, with a percentage of 46% (Figure 2), more than Bulgaria, Hungary or Poland, and even more than Albania. From a demographic point of view, Romania is aging and the rural area even more so. Here are just a few figures: in a decade, 1992-2011, in rural areas, the population aged between 0 and 14 years, decreased as a share from 20.9 to 17.7%. During the same period, the population over the age of 65 increased from 15% to 19.4%. This is the way of statistics to express what is most directly said that in the villages and communes of Romania there are more and more elderly people.

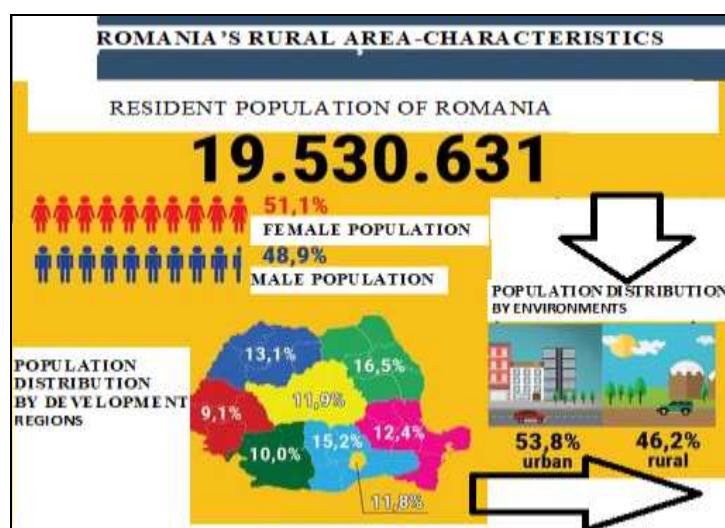


Figure 2. Romania's rural area-characteristics

Source: processing after https://www.economica.net/populatia-rezidenta-a-romaniei-era-de-19-5-milioane-de-locuitori-la-1-ianuarie-2018_171204.html [15]

But the whole of Romania is getting older, the average age increasing from 35 years, in 1992, to 41 years, in 2002. A World Bank forecast shows that in 2050 half of Romania's population will have the retirement age. It is an evolution that should warn Romanian officials, regardless of political color or position held in the state. World Bank

experts believe that the aging population has only one solution, namely migration, a phenomenon that is not very popular in Romania today.

Restructuring agriculture and revitalizing the rural economy can be important levers for development [4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12]. The contribution of agriculture to GDP has always been high. However, it remains low due to unused resources. The population employed in agriculture and forestry, for example, has a much higher share (32%), reflecting unemployment and low labor productivity. Restructuring farm activities and increasing capital for commercial farms will inevitably lead to the use of a lower workforce to improve competitiveness. Experience in other agricultural systems, in the Member States or in other countries, is important evidence of this.

But the rural environment also offers cause for concern in terms of economic developments. For example, the share of agriculture in gross domestic product is only 4%, much lower than that of the population employed in agriculture, which is 25%.

Also, Romanian agriculture has reached a paradoxical situation compared to the European Union. It has smaller and more farms than Europe, and at the same time there are few farms, but larger than the European ones. The study by the Institute of Statistics also shows the causes of the low level of development: the irrigated arable land is 1.3% in Romania, 2.6% in Bulgaria, 3.1% in Hungary and 24.3% in Italy. At the same time, fertilizer consumption decreased from 125 kilograms per hectare in 1985 to 60 kilograms per hectare in 2015.

Finally, it should be noted that in terms of housing, there are large differences between urban and rural areas, when the level of housing depends on public investment or local government. In terms of running water, hot water and sewage, there are significant differences between urban and rural.

When it comes to personal investment, however, the difference between village and town is non-existent. The endowment of households with stove, television, mobile phone and washing machine is almost equal in urban and rural areas. This shows that in some chapters the village can be equal to the city.

CONCLUSIONS

The rural environment, unlike the urban environment, represents the totality of the spaces outside the cities and inhabited in our country by the population generically called "peasants", as an antonym for the urban population of "townspeople". In Romania, the rural area represents about 90% of the country's surface, and the share of inhabitants in rural areas - among the highest in Europe - amounts to 47.3% of the total population.

The main form of settlement in rural areas is the village. Shapes smaller than villages, with only a few dozen houses, are the hamlets. One or more villages may form a commune.

In the plain regions, large villages predominate, with about 2,000-3,000 inhabitants, in which the houses are compactly grouped. In the hilly regions, the villages have a population of 500-1,500 inhabitants, with houses lined up along valleys or roads, or easily scattered due to vineyards and orchards that stretch among the houses. This is the most common type of village in the country. In the mountainous regions, the villages are small (300-500 inhabitants), with houses generally much more distant from each other, and in the depressions the villages are larger, with more crowded houses.

In terms of economic development, Romania is on a modest position in the EU27, the share of European GDP in 2012 being only 1%. Although after 2010 the GDP per capita (euro) registered an upward trend, still, compared to the EU27 average in terms of PPS/inhabitant, it represents only 49%. The agricultural sector and the rural economy in general continue to have substantial growth potential, which is still insufficiently exploited.

Agriculture generated 30897.7 million lei gross value added (GVA), representing 6.0% of total GVA. Labor productivity in 2012 in agriculture, forestry and fishing was 2464 Euro/person employed, being almost 5 times lower than the national average (12,527 Euro/person employed), while in the secondary sector (industry and construction) and tertiary, the values recorded were 1.5 and 1.3 times higher, respectively. Rural SMEs involved in non-agricultural activities (industry, services and rural tourism) have a small share.

In Romania there are great differences in wealth, opportunity, education, skills, health and, in many areas, they have intensified in the last decade. In rural areas, incomes are relatively low, compared to urban areas (503 euros/household in rural areas compared to 621 euros/household in urban areas). At the same time, the share of incomes (both in cash and in kind) from agriculture represents 42% of income total gross/household in rural areas, while wages are currently around 26%.

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