

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF MIGRATION IN ROMANIA¹⁰

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ABSTRACT: *The research objectives of the authors' team aim to analyze the economic and social effects of migration in the EU space, with a special focus on Romania, in order to identify the main challenges and opportunities on the labour market. The innovative nature of the article is based on an interdisciplinary methodology, which combines economic and social research specific to fields such as macroeconomics and sociology with the analysis of public policies regarding migration. This article has examined the economic and social impact of migration in Romania within a broader European context, highlighting the increasingly complex role that migration plays in shaping demographic dynamics, labour markets, and public policy. The main findings are that Romania is currently facing a dual demographic challenge: a persistent negative natural population growth and accelerated population aging, which together exert strong pressure on the sustainability of the labour force and social protection systems. Although international migration has recorded a positive balance in recent years, this has not been sufficient to offset the demographic decline driven by low fertility and high mortality rates.*

Keywords: *Migration, EU, Romania, impact, labour market*

JEL Classification: *F22, J08, J1, J2, J61*

1. INTRODUCTION

Romania had a resident population of 19.036 million inhabitants as of 1 January 2025, down by 31.5 thousand people compared to 1 January 2024, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INS, 2025). The main cause of the decrease in the resident population is the negative natural increase (the difference between the number of live births and deaths: -101.8 thousand people).

The demographic aging process has deepened, with the share of the elderly population (aged 65 and over) continuing its growth trend: compared to 1 January 2024 by 0.3 percentage points (from 20.0% in 2024 to 20.3% on 1 January 2025). The share of the population aged 0-

¹⁰ Acknowledgments: The article is based on research conducted within the study PSG 2.11: European Migration and its Economic Impact on EU Member States. Case study: Romania, coordinated by Dr. Alina Ligia Dumitrescu, within the Research Plan of the Romanian Academy/INCE for 2025.

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14 in the total population decreased from 15.9% on 1 January 2024 to 15.6% on 1 January 2025. The demographic aging index increased from 125.8 (on 1 January 2024) to 130.0 elderly persons per 100 young persons (on 1 January 2025). INS data also show that the urban population, as well as the female population, are in the majority in Romania (51.3%, respectively 51.4% of the total population).

The balance of international migration in 2024 was positive, with the number of immigrants exceeding that of emigrants by 58.8 thousand people. Thus, Romania continued to be a country of immigration. However, the balance of international migration, decreasing compared to previous years, failed to compensate for the negative natural increase (-102 thousand people). As a result, on 1 January 2025, the resident population of Romania was decreasing compared to the same date of the previous year. During 2024, men were in the majority both among emigrants (57.6%) and among immigrants (58.3%).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly literature on migration highlights the limitations of strictly economic explanations and underscores the need to integrate social and institutional dimensions into the analysis of migratory decision-making. Boswell (2008) emphasizes the difficulty of clearly delineating the boundaries between migration economics and social structures, arguing that the assumption of uniform rationality, according to which individuals seek to maximize utility, must be understood in relation to external constraints and specific social contexts.

In this direction, Stark (1991) challenges the individualistic ontology of migratory decision-making and argues that the family or household constitutes the fundamental unit of analysis. *Migration decisions are thus conceptualized as collective strategies aimed at risk reduction and the maximization of group welfare, analogous to the way microeconomics treats the firm as a profit-maximizing unit.*

From a neoclassical perspective, Kurekova (2011) demonstrates that the enlargement of the European Union to Central and Eastern Europe provided a relevant empirical framework for testing the hypothesis that migration is primarily driven by differences across labour markets. Intra-EU migration is explained by differences in real wages and by imbalances between labour supply and demand in economies with varying levels of development and capital endowment.

Regarding the impact of migration on labour markets in destination countries, Vanselow, Liebig, and Kaplanis (2016) observe that most empirical studies point to limited or negligible effects on wages and employment at the local level. *This limited impact is attributed to the complementarity between migrants' and native workers' skills, the higher occupational positioning of natives, the greater flexibility of the native labour force, and structural adjustment mechanisms, including technological change and capital flows.*

Ruhs and Vargas-Silva (2017) argue that immigration, even when *accompanied by increased labour market participation rates, cannot offset the demographic decline of the labour force in most European countries.* Existing labour shortages are therefore likely to persist and intensify in the context of the European green transition and the expansion of technologies associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

A more recent strand of the literature highlights the role of migrants in sustaining the functioning of essential services in times of crisis. Anderson, Poeschel, and Ruhs (2021) show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, a substantial share of essential workers were immigrants, particularly in health care, social care, and food supply chains. Nevertheless, the extent of migrants' contribution to the systemic resilience of these services remains insufficiently explored, both in academic research and in public policy.

From a policy perspective, Katseli (2004) *underscores that the development of effective migration policies depends on states' capacity to integrate migrants not only into the labour market but also into the host society*. Given the complexity of the phenomenon, European governments have often sought to keep migration at the margins of the political agenda, resorting either to defensive measures and crisis management through border controls or to selective immigration programs and large-scale regularization processes.

3. METHODOLOGY

The article is based on an interdisciplinary analysis of the economic-social impact of the migration phenomenon in the European space. The research methodology focuses on the quantitative analysis of the main indicators specific to the labour market, as well as on the qualitative analysis of documents and policies in the field of migration, on the consultation of specialized literature, studies, and articles published by renowned authors from abroad and in the country.

4. STATISTICAL DATA ON MIGRATION IN EU MEMBER STATES AND ROMANIA

According to data provided by the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat, 2025), on 1 January 2024, 44.7 million people born outside the EU were living in an EU member state (9.9% of the EU population), an increase of 2.3 million people compared to 2023. In addition, 17.9 million people living in one of the EU countries on 1 January 2024 were born in another EU country, which represents an increase of 0.2 million people compared to the previous year.

The largest number of foreign-born people living in EU countries on 1 January 2024 was recorded in Germany (16.9 million), France (9.3 million), Spain (8.8 million), and Italy (6.7 million). Foreign-born persons in these 4 EU countries together accounted for 66.6% of the total number of foreign-born persons living in the EU, while the same 4 EU countries accounted for 57.8% of the EU population.

The highest share of foreign-born persons in the total population was recorded in Luxembourg (51.0% of the resident population), followed by Malta (30.8%), Cyprus (26.9%), Ireland (22.6%), Austria (22.1%), Sweden (20.6%), and Germany (20.2%). In contrast, foreign-born persons accounted for less than 5% of the population in Poland (2.6% of the resident population on 1 January 2024), Romania (3.1%), Bulgaria (3.3%), and Slovakia (3.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Share of foreign-born persons in the total population on 1 January 2024

Country	Total		People born in other EU Member States		People born in non-EU	
	Thousands of people	% of population	Thousands of people)	% of population	Thousands of people	% of population
Belgium	2,324.1	19.7	950.8	8.0	1,373.2	11.6
Bulgaria	211.8	3.3	67.7	1.1	144.1	2.2
Czech Republic	1,069.6	9.8	313.8	2.9	755.8	6.9
Denmark	832.4	14.0	272.5	4.6	559.9	9.4
Germany (¹)	16,881.3	20.2	6,348.0	7.6	10,533.4	12.6
Estonia	244.4	17.8	26.4	1.9	218.0	15.9

Country	Total		People born in other EU Member States		People born in non-EU	
	Thousands of people	% of population	Thousands of people)	% of population	Thousands of people	% of population
Ireland	1,211.9	22.6	357.5	6.7	854.4	16.0
Greece	1,147.8	11.0	234.4	2.3	913.4	8.8
Spain	8,838.2	18.2	1,592.5	3.3	7,245.8	14.9
France ⁽¹⁾	9,328.9	13.6	1,965.8	2.9	7,363.1	10.8
Croatia	519.9	13.5	65.6	1.7	454.3	11.8
Italy	6,673.6	11.3	1,599.4	2.7	5,074.2	8.6
Cyprus	259.9	26.9	90.0	9.3	170.0	17.6
Latvia	238.6	12.7	21.9	1.2	216.7	11.6
Lithuania	268.3	9.3	19.6	0.7	248.7	8.6
Luxembourg	342.9	51.0	221.0	32.9	122.0	18.1
Hungary	677.0	7.1	344.8	3.6	332.2	3.5
Malta	173.8	30.8	41.0	7.3	132.7	23.6
Netherlands	2,914.9	16.2	779.6	4.3	2,135.3	11.9
Austria	2,023.4	22.1	883.9	9.7	1,139.5	12.4
Poland ⁽¹⁾	935.9	2.6	236.0	0.6	699.9	1.9
Portugal	1,703.8	16.0	380.3	3.6	1,323.5	12.4
Romania ⁽¹⁾	588.2	3.1	217.6	1.1	370.5	1.9
Slovenia	319.9	15.1	61.3	2.9	258.6	12.2
Slovakia	214.0	3.9	155.5	2.9	58.6	1.1
Finland	520.1	9.3	134.1	2.4	386.1	6.9
Sweden	2,169.3	20.6	554.1	5.3	1,615.2	15.3

Note: The individual values do not add up to the total due to rounding and the exclusion of the 'unknown' country of birth group from the table.

Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden did not include refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in their population and migration statistics.

(1) 2024 provisional/estimated.

Source: Eurostat (2025).

Table 2 presents a summary of the 5 main groups of foreign citizens residing in Romania, by citizenship and place of birth, in 2024.

Table 2: Main countries of origin (by citizenship and place of birth) for the foreign/foreign-born population residing in Romania on 1 January 2024 (in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total foreign/foreign-born population)

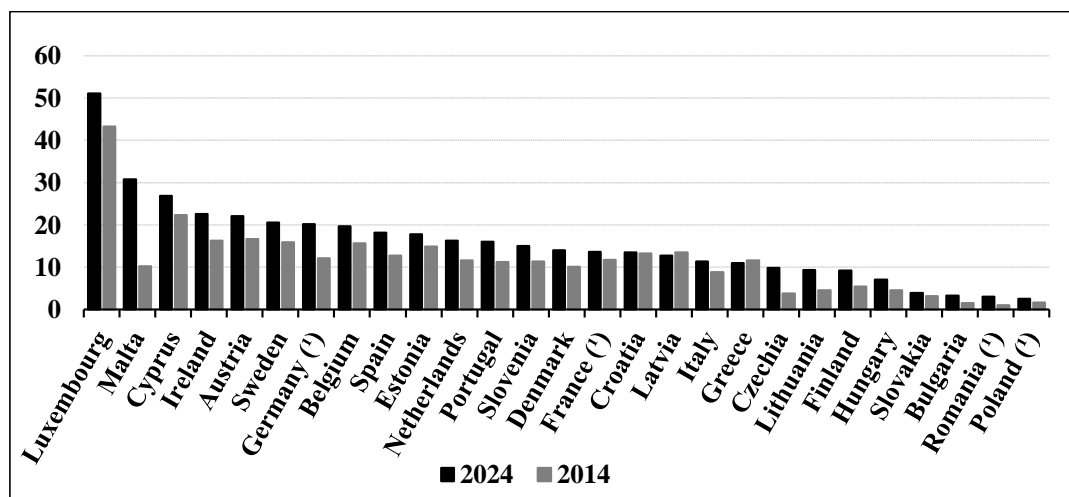
ROMANIA					
Citizens from:	Thousands of people	(%)	People born in:	Thousands of people	(%)
Ukraine	50.6	21.9	Ukraine	137.0	23.3
Nepal	15.9	6.9	Moldova	113.4	19.3
Italy	15.2	6.6	Italy	71.3	12.1
Sri Lanka	12.9	5.6	Spain	63.0	10.7
Turkey	12.8	5.5	United Kingdom	30.6	5.2
Others	124.0	53.6	Others	172.9	29.4

Note: The individual values do not add up due to rounding.

Source: Eurostat (2025).

As illustrated in Figure 1, the proportion of foreign-born residents increased between 2014 and 2024 in nearly all EU Member States, with the exception of Latvia and Greece. The most pronounced growth in the share of foreign-born persons was observed in Malta, where it rose from 10.3% in 2014 to 30.8% in 2024. Substantial increases were also recorded in Romania (from 1.1% to 3.1%), the Czech Republic (from 3.8% to 9.8%), Bulgaria (from 1.5% to 3.3%), Lithuania (from 4.5% to 9.3%), and Finland (from 5.5% to 9.3%).

Figure 1: Share of foreign-born persons in the resident population in EU Member States, 1 January 2024 by comparison with 1 January 2014 (in %)



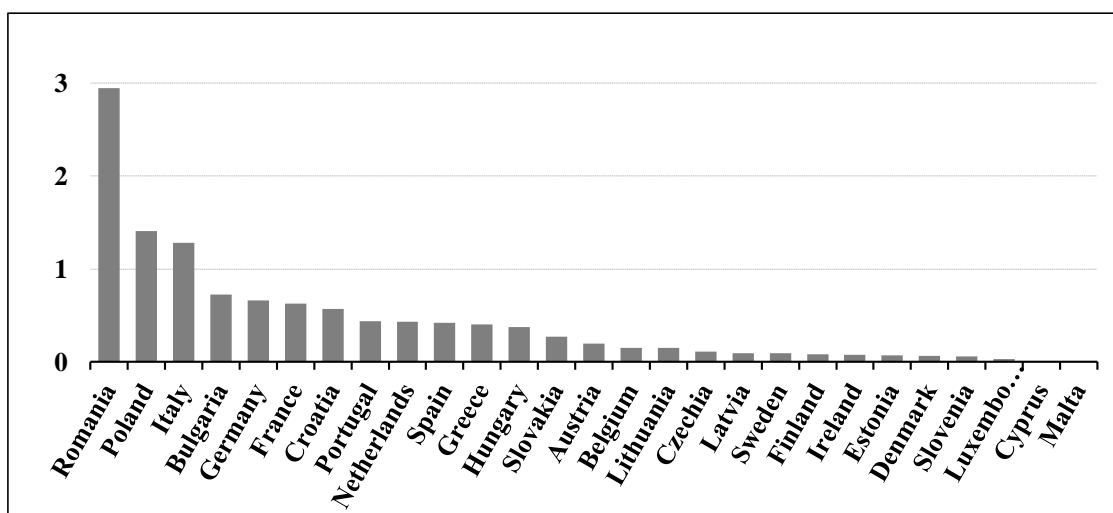
Note: Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden did not include refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in their population and migration statistics.

(*) 2024 provisional/estimated.

Source: Eurostat (2025).

Romanian, Polish, and Italian citizens were the 3 largest groups of citizens from an EU country residing in other EU countries on 1 January 2024, for which data are available (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of EU citizens residing in the remaining EU countries on 1 January 2024 (in millions of people)



Note: Detailed data by individual EU citizenship have not been provided by Denmark, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, and Poland.

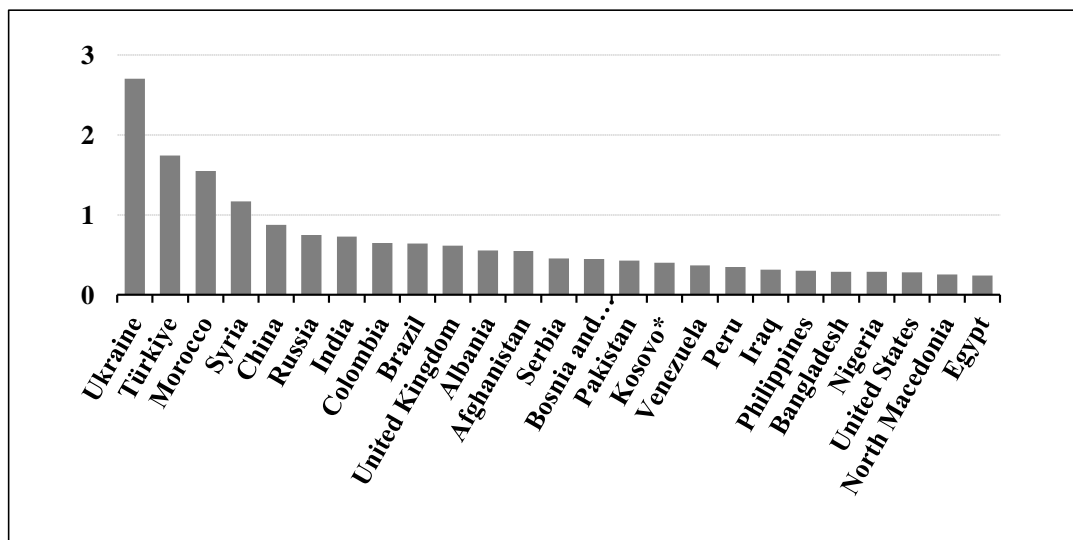
Only detailed data by individual EU citizenship for the most numerous ones have been provided by Spain.

Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden did not include refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in their population and migration statistics.

Source: Eurostat (2025).

Ukrainian, Turkish, and Moroccan citizens were the 3 largest groups of non-EU citizens living in EU member states on 1 January 2024, for which data are available (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Number of non-EU citizens residing in EU member states on 1 January 2024 (in millions of people)



Note: Detailed data by individual citizenship have not been provided by Denmark, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, and Poland.

Only detailed data by individual citizenship for the most numerous ones have been provided by Spain.

Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden did not include refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in their population and migration statistics.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Source: Eurostat (2025).

An analysis of the age structure of the population shows that, for the EU as a whole, the foreign-born population was younger than the native-born population. The age distribution of the foreign-born population shows, compared to the native-born population, a higher proportion of young adults of working age and a lower proportion of children, adolescents, and adults aged 60 and over. On 1 January 2024, the median age of the native-born in the EU was 45.1 years, while the median age of the foreign-born living in the EU was 43.1 years.

In most EU countries, the foreign-born population was younger than the native-born population. Only in Estonia, France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia was the proportion of people aged 65 and over higher in the foreign-born population than in the native-born population. In addition, the proportion of people aged 15-64 was higher in the foreign-born population than in the native-born population in all EU countries except Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. In Denmark, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Finland, and Sweden, the proportion of people aged 15-64 was at least 20.0 percentage points higher in the foreign-born population than in the native-born population (Eurostat, 2025).

5. MIGRATION IN ROMANIA: EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

The concepts of residence, emigration and immigration have the following definitions according to the National Institute of Statistics, aligned with Eurostat standards:

- *Residence* represents the place where a person usually spends his daily rest period, without considering temporary absences for recreation, holidays, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatments, or religious pilgrimages.
- *Emigration* means the action by which a person who previously had usual residence on the territory of Romania ceases to have usual residence on its territory for a period that is or is expected to be at least 12 months.
- *Immigration* means the action by which a person establishes his or her habitual residence on the territory of Romania for a period that is or is expected to be at least 12 months, after previously having had habitual residence in another country.

According to the OECD Report on International Migration Outlook 2024 (OECD, 2024), in 2022, 36,000 new immigrants obtained a residence permit longer than 12 months in Romania (excluding EU citizens), 56% more than in 2021. Of these, 76% were immigrants for work, 10% family members (including accompanying family), 9% people who came for educational reasons and 4% other immigrants. Approximately 1,500 short-term permits were issued to international students and 3,700 to temporary and seasonal immigrants for work (excluding intra-EU migration). In addition, 33,000 intra-EU postings were recorded in 2022, representing a 79% increase compared to 2021. These posted workers generally have short-term contracts.

The year 2022 was the first one in which more citizens arrived in all counties of Romania than left. The resident population increased through the massive immigration of Ukrainians and foreign workers (Economedia, 2024). At the end of 2020, the ratio between the Romanian population that migrated outside the country and that of other nationalities that migrated to Romania was approximately 6 to 1, the number of Romanian emigrants being 6 times higher than the number of foreign immigrants who were on the territory of the country (IOM, 2021).

The top 10 countries from which most citizens entered Romania in 2022 were: Ukraine, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the Republic of Moldova, India, Bangladesh, Italy, Sweden, and Morocco (OECD, 2024).

In 2023, the number of people applying for asylum for the first time decreased by 18%, reaching approximately 9,900. The majority of applicants came from Bangladesh (2,800), Syria (1,900), and Pakistan (1,200). The largest increase compared to 2022 was for citizens of Bangladesh (1,400), and the largest decrease was for citizens of Ukraine (-4,300).

Emigration of Romanian citizens to OECD countries increased by 9% in 2022, reaching 268,000. Approximately 36% of this group migrated to Germany, 18% to Spain, and 12% to Italy. The following OECD countries were the top destinations for Romanian citizens in 2022: Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, France, Switzerland, and Poland.

To address the labour shortage in various sectors, the Romanian Government has taken measures such as increasing the annual work permit admission quotas and streamlining administrative procedures. The annual work permit admission quotas were set at 100,000 in 2022, 2023, and again in 2024. The 2022 quota was fully subscribed in December of the same year, and the 2023 quota was also completely exhausted. However, demand from employers exceeds this quota. In 2023, there were approximately 124,000 work permit applications, down from 138,000 in 2022.

Starting in 2024, the initial duration of the residence permit for work permit holders was increased to a maximum of two years (compared to one year in 2023). The staff of the General Inspectorate for Immigration was supplemented in November 2023, in order to be able

to manage the increase in the number of procedures for residence permits. Romania signed bilateral social security agreements with the United States, Italy, and Montenegro in 2022-2023 and memoranda of understanding on labour and social security with Nepal (in October 2023) and with Vietnam (in January 2024).

As part of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Government announced the launch of an initiative to develop a program to attract highly specialized human resources from abroad (including Romanian expatriates) to engage in research, development, and innovation activities in Romania. A simplified procedure for issuing free practice permits has been introduced for doctors from the European Economic Area (EEA) member states working temporarily in Romania. The maximum number of authorized working hours for international students has been increased from 4 hours/day to 6 hours/day in February 2024.

6. THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MIGRATION IN ROMANIA: EMIGRATION VERSUS IMMIGRATION

Pociovălișteanu & Dobrescu (2015) consider that the free movement of persons is one of the most important freedoms guaranteed by European Union law and is a necessary prerequisite for building a single market. Greater adaptability of workers through the migration process is also a key element in increasing the competitiveness of the European Union at a global and individual level, allowing employees to improve their skills and employment opportunities, income, and career prospects. Experts consider that migration can have both positive and negative effects on the economy. For the country of origin, one of the positive effects of migration could be the decrease in the unemployment rate and the reduction of the existing tension on the labour market, simultaneously with the decrease in the balance of social expenditures in total budget expenditures. However, this relaxation could lead to short-term benefits from migration, leading to Romania becoming a long-term labour-importing country (Silași, Simina, 2008, Pociovălișteanu & Dobrescu, 2015).

Remittances (money transferred to our country by emigrants from Romania) represent an external source of budget financing. The amounts of money sent to the country by emigrants have constituted a source of income, perhaps even the only one, for their families. *In this way, their standard of living has improved, as the money sent home is used for housing construction, while increasing consumption by purchasing other necessary goods and services, leading to improved living standards in the country of origin.*

On the other hand, migration has a significant impact on the labour market in Romania, mainly causing a significant shortage of workers, especially skilled ones, due to high emigration. However, immigration is emerging as a way to address some of these labour shortages, particularly in sectors such as *construction and manufacturing*. Large-scale emigration of working-age people has negatively affected population growth and labour productivity in Romania.

Emigration has a negative impact on the Romanian labour market by causing a labour shortage: A major impact of emigration is a significant and growing shortage of workers, especially in highly skilled sectors such as information and communications technology (ICT), health, education, and engineering. Emigration has also led to a decline in the working-age population, which has a negative impact on population growth and future labour supply.

Also, in Romania, emigration has had a negative impact on productivity. The high rate of skilled emigration has negatively affected real labour productivity growth. Additionally, in the context of an aging workforce, the decline in the working-age population, combined with lower birth rates, has led to an aging workforce, putting even more pressure on the labour market.

There are also positive effects of migration on the economy. In the short term, emigration has contributed to the decrease of unemployment and the pressure on the labour market. Remittances have provided a significant source of income for families, increasing the standard of living and contributing to consumption and investment in Romania.

On the other hand, immigration can solve the labour shortage at least in certain sectors. Immigration becomes a solution to compensate for the shortage of domestic labour, especially in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and the hospitality industry. Foreign workers predominantly occupy these positions. Thus, immigration contributes to economic growth by stimulating both the supply and demand for labour.

In the case of Romania, there are a number of challenges related to the integration of immigrants. Foreign workers in Romania, especially from the extra-EU space, face problems related to discrimination and exploitation. Policymakers need to be made aware that Romanian institutions are not yet fully equipped to deal with the needs of a growing immigrant population, with a lack of dedicated immigrant integration offices and staff in key ministries. *Experts recommend strengthening legal protection for foreign workers, improving support services such as language training, and implementing better integration policies to ensure fair treatment and protection.*

7. NATIONAL IMMIGRATION STRATEGY AND THE EUROPEAN PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

To support the legal immigration process, the Romanian government adopted the National Immigration Strategy 2021-2024, which is based on the following *general principles* (General Secretariat of the Government, 2021):

- the principle of *legality* means that the activities to achieve strategic objectives are carried out based on and in accordance with the law;
- the principle of *responsibility* for implementing the National Strategy lies with each of the authorities and institutions with responsibilities in the field of immigration, in the parts that concern it;
- the principle of *sovereignty* reflects the right of the Romanian state to establish policies in the field of admission, stay, and return of third-country nationals in order to promote political, economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian interests and to comply with obligations assumed through bilateral or international treaties, conventions, agreements, and understandings concluded with other states;
- the principle of *cooperation and coherence* implies active cooperation in the development and implementation of a common European Union policy in the field of immigration, as well as the correlation of the National Strategy with the measures and policies established at the level of other Member States;
- the principle of *respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms*, according to which all activities carried out by the authorities and institutions with responsibilities in the field of immigration are carried out in compliance with the provisions of international conventions and treaties on fundamental human rights and freedoms to which Romania is a party;
- the principle of *shared action* aims at the unitary implementation of state policy and legal provisions in the field of immigration, as well as a concerted implementation at all levels;
- the principle of *transparency* implies the implementation of an active information policy and, where appropriate, consultation of civil society with regard to decisions and procedures applied in the context of immigration;

- the principle of *partnership* assumes active participation, involvement, and consultation of other relevant actors (non-governmental organizations, international organizations, UN agencies, academia, private sector) in achieving the objectives of the National Strategy;
- the principle of *equal opportunities and treatment between women and men* expresses the commitment to put into practice the legal provisions and guidelines contained in the strategies in the field, considering the positive impact that the implementation of the Strategy's objectives can have on gender equality, non-discrimination, and accessibility.

The objectives and directions of action are the following:

- A. *Efficient management of the migration phenomenon, which means:*
- promoting the conditions of entry, stay, and exit from Romania;
 - simplifying access to the territory of Romania for foreigners, for the purpose of employment/secondment, and developing the access system for investors from third countries to the Romanian market;
 - effectively preventing and combating illegal migration, illegal migration in connection with terrorism, trafficking in immigrants and labour exploitation of foreign employees;
- B. *Strengthening the national asylum system and ensuring compliance with European and international standards, which signifies:*
- processing asylum applications efficiently and in accordance with applicable national, European, and international legal standards;
 - streamlining the process of determining the Member State responsible for examining the application for international protection;
 - ensuring reception and assistance conditions for asylum seekers;
 - strengthening the social integration mechanism of persons who have acquired a form of protection in Romania and those with legal residence;
 - resettling refugees and asylum seekers, and the temporary evacuation to Romania of persons in urgent need of protection and their subsequent resettlement.
- C. *Strengthening the Romanian state's response capacity to an influx of immigrants at the border of the national territory, which implies:*
- prior preparation and unitary and integrated management of actions taken in crisis situations;
 - participation in the common effort to combat hybrid threats.
- D. *Sustained capabilities necessary for the implementation of policies in the field of migration, asylum, and integration of foreigners, which aims:*
- development/modernization of physical infrastructure and increased mobility at the level of the structures of the General Inspectorate for Immigration (I.G.I.);
 - ensuring human and financial resources, with an emphasis on the appropriate dimensioning of operational needs and on improving the quality of services provided in the field of migration, asylum, and integration;
 - accessing non-reimbursable external funds;
 - increasing dialogue with civil society and international non-state actors.

The Romanian authorities are in the process of elaborating the future National Strategy on Immigration for 2025-2028, which will also address ways of implementing the legislative acts related to the *European Pact on Migration and Asylum*. This pact was adopted by the European Parliament in April 2024 and by the Council in May 2024.

The *European Pact on Migration and Asylum*, adopted by the Council in May 2024, is a set of new rules designed to manage migrant arrivals, create more efficient and uniform procedures, and ensure a fairer sharing of responsibility between Member States. Provisions include faster screening and asylum procedures at the border, better cooperation in crisis situations, and the possibility for Member States to take responsibility for migrants through resettlement, financial contributions, or operational support.

The main objectives of the *European Pact on Migration and Asylum*, with the main focus on combating illegal immigration, are as follows:

- *orderly management of arrivals* by creating a common system for managing arrivals in the EU;
- *common and efficient procedures* through streamlining screening, asylum, and return procedures;
- *fair sharing of responsibility* by setting clear rules for solidarity between Member States, with the possibility of choosing between voluntary relocation, financial contributions, or operational support.
- The content of the legislative package covers the following issues:
- *border procedures* through accelerated checks on arrival, including mandatory security, vulnerability, and medical checks;
- *the asylum procedure* by the examination of asylum applications, including at borders, will be carried out more quickly;
- *handling of rejected applications* by simplifying the expulsion procedure for rejected asylum seekers, based on agreements with third countries;
- *crisis management* through a new mechanism for managing crisis situations and the instrumentalization of migrants;
- *the management of the biometric data through the European Union's centralised biometric database (Eurodac)*, designed to assist with the management of asylum applications and support efforts to detect, investigate, and prevent terrorism and serious crime;
- *improving the reception conditions* by revising regulations that will update the rules on the reception conditions of asylum seekers.

8. MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The empirical evidence confirms that Romania remains, structurally, a country of emigration, with Romanian citizens continuing to represent one of the largest mobile populations within the European Union. Large-scale emigration, particularly of working-age and skilled individuals, has contributed to labour shortages, reduced labour productivity growth, and an aging workforce. At the same time, emigration has generated short-term economic benefits, notably through remittances, which have supported household consumption, improved living standards, and provided an external source of financial inflows.

In parallel, Romania has increasingly become a destination country for immigrants, especially after 2022, when immigration, driven by the arrival of Ukrainian refugees and foreign workers, exceeded emigration in all countries. Immigration has emerged as a partial response to labour shortages in key sectors such as construction, manufacturing, hospitality, and services. *However, the relatively low share of foreign-born persons in Romania's total population compared to most EU Member States suggests that the country is still at an early stage of transition toward a more immigration-oriented model.*

The findings align with the broader literature, which indicates that migration cannot be treated solely as an economic adjustment mechanism. The impact of migration on the labour

market and economic growth is mediated by institutional capacity, sectoral demand, and integration policies. In Romania's case, while policy measures such as increased work permit quotas, simplified administrative procedures, and bilateral agreements have improved labour market access for foreign workers, significant challenges remain in the areas of social integration, labour rights protection, and institutional preparedness.

The National Immigration Strategy 2021-2024 and the strategy for 2025-2028, together with the implementation of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum, provide an important framework for improving migration governance. Nevertheless, for migration to contribute sustainably to Romania's economic and social development, policies must move beyond short-term labour market measures. *A more coherent and long-term approach is required, integrating migration policy with demographic, education, employment, and social inclusion strategies.*

9. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the empirical findings and the theoretical framework discussed in this article, several policy recommendations emerge for enhancing the economic and social contribution of migration in Romania.

First, migration policy should be integrated more closely with demographic, labour market, and education policies. Given the persistence of population decline and workforce aging, migration cannot be treated as a short-term corrective instrument. *Romania should adopt a long-term, evidence-based labour migration strategy that prioritizes sectors facing structural shortages, while simultaneously investing in skills development and workforce retention among the native population.*

Second, institutional capacity for migrant integration must be strengthened. The establishment of dedicated integration units at both national and local levels, covering language training, labour market orientation, and access to public services, would reduce the risk of labour market segmentation and social exclusion. *Particular attention should be paid to non-EU migrant workers, who are more vulnerable to exploitation and precarious employment conditions.*

Third, policies aimed at encouraging return migration and circular migration should be expanded. *Targeted incentives for highly skilled Romanian expatriates, such as recognition of qualifications, fiscal incentives, and access to research and innovation programs, could help mitigate brain drain and support knowledge transfer.*

In conclusion, migration represents neither a panacea for Romania's demographic decline nor an inherent threat to economic stability. Rather, it is a structural phenomenon whose effects depend critically on policy design and institutional capacity. *Effectively managed, migration can mitigate labour shortages, support economic growth, and enhance resilience in key sectors. Poorly managed, it risks reinforcing demographic imbalances, social inequalities, and exclusion.* Future research should focus on the long-term integration outcomes of immigrants in Romania, the return migration of Romanian expatriates, and the role of migration in sustaining economic development amid ongoing demographic transformation.

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