

Developing future scenarios of demographic, migratory and labour market processes in Romania:

Foresight findings

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Jointly for our common future

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes results of the foresight exercise conducted in November 2013 in Sfântu Gheorghe (Romania), on the topic of key drivers and future impact of migratory, demographic and labour market processes by 2025. Being part of the SEEMIG project, the foresight exercise was conducted in all participant countries. As qualitative methods in general, the foresight development focuses primarily on in-depth investigation of attitudes, representations, rationales, and perceptions of social actors. Therefore, it represents an excellent complementary approach to the primarily quantitative approach of the SEEMIG project. The method can be perceived as an expedient of the future oriented thinking. In the present research, we tried to answer the following questions: (a) How participants imagine their future? (b) What pathways of demographic social and economic development they expect? (c) What are the main drivers of the expected developments? Developing foresight scenarios is also a policy oriented research tool. Foresight exercises help decision makers to link the present day policies with their possible future outcomes. Migratory processes were in the focus of our foresight exercise.

From a methodological point of view, our foresight exercise comprised two main parts: brainstorming events and the foresight development session. First, three brainstorming events took place. These were in fact focus group interviews (or very similar to focus group interviews) with 8 participants in each group. Separate brainstorming sessions were organized for experts (in migration), decision makers and returned migrants. The second part was the so-called foresight development event, when a negative and a positive future scenario were discussed by two mixed groups (i.e. experts, migrants and decision makers together). The scenarios were outlined both for macro- and micro-levels. Micro-level scenario development implied that the prospects of concrete “heroes” (ordinary people) were discussed.

The events were organized and the participants were recruited by the three SEEMIG partners from Romania, the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe and Harghita County Council. The recruitment process was assisted by a professional market and social research firm. This firm did not organize and facilitate foresight scenarios before, but it had remarkable previous experience in organizing focus-groups. The discussions were moderated according to a standardized guideline.

Through the three brainstorming events we identified the main drivers of the migratory processes in Romania. Besides the questions directly related to the causes of migration, we also asked the participants about their concerns and fears related more generally to the demographic development of the country/their region. Furthermore, we introduced an additional research question about the perception of demographic processes. Our question was whether the participants perceived the present demographic trends unchangeable (and taken for granted in the nearby future) or they thought that these trends were changeable and can be altered by population policy measures.

The four most important drivers were subsequently discussed during the second phase (i.e. foresight development). These were the following: (1) the country’s economy, (2) educational system, (3) attachments (bonds) to homeland, and (4) the evolution of inequalities. It was interesting to observe

how participants defined positive and negative scenarios along certain drivers. They did not define Romania's economic context in sharp terms, along positive or negative macroeconomic indicators. Economic prosperity was rather linked to a comprehensive systemic transformation, while maintaining the current economic situation meant in itself the fulfilment of the negative scenario. The educational system was strongly connected to labour market. Thus, the positive scenario implies the implementation of a more flexible educational system that adapts well to the continuous change of the labour market. In the case of attachments to the homeland the emphasis fell on the fact that (in the positive scenario) migrants maintain connections with the sending society with the help of opportunities provided by modern technologies. Finally, the fourth and last driver is constituted by inequalities. In this respect, positive scenario meant decreasing inequalities and negative scenario meant increasing inequalities. It worth emphasizing that it was characteristic to the discussion that the participants perceived the continuation of the current trends as a direct way towards the negative scenario and the significant deterioration of the present social conditions.

According to our interlocutors, migration is the most important factor affecting the country's demographic evolution. Moreover, according to participants, this is hardly changeable. Experts joining the discussion provided a very strong interpretive framework for this process: the culturally embedded migratory praxis. In this framework, the question is whether circular migration and the high number of returned migrants, or definitive emigration will prevail in the future. It is important to underline that immigrants are not part of the future expectations of the Romanians.

Ageing of the population represented the most accentuated fear of the participants. The general consensus was that the current trend will lead to the collapse of the pension system. This expectation can be hardly avoided even in the positive future scenario.

Besides emigration and ageing, the Roma integration proved to be one of the major challenges affecting the country's demographic future.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the outcomes of the foresight exercise carried out in Romania in November 2013 with the aim to discuss drivers and future impact of migratory, demographic and labour market processes by 2025. The foresight exercise consisted, first, of brainstorming and brain-mapping sessions with key stakeholder groups: experts, decision-makers and migrants, the aim of which was to identify key drivers of future migration patterns. Second, scenario development workshop was conducted on both macro- and micro-level levels. The brainstorming sessions and the foresight developing events were held in Sfântu Gheorghe, and the participants were recruited from Covasna and Harghita counties.

1.1. Foresight as a method

The SEEMIG project focuses on migratory, demographic and labour market processes in South East Europe. Most of the activities – WP3 (dynamic historical analysis of longer term migratory, labour market and human capital processes), WP4 (analysis of existing data production system; building a transnational database on migratory, labour market and human capital processes; pilot study on emigration from Serbia and Hungary) and WP5 (population forecast for Hungary and Slovakia) – deal with quantified data. Some of the policy recommendations elaborated within the framework of the project (WP4 Action Plan) focus on the statistical data-production system.

The WP5 foresight scenario utilizes a different approach. In the SEEMIG project we utilized a specific/particular foresight method. Four main features of the foresight scenario method used in SEEMIG project worth to be highlighted. Developing foresight scenarios is (1) a *qualitative*, (2) *future oriented*, (3) *policy oriented*, and (4) a *participatory* method.

- (1) **Qualitative method.** The foresight exercise as a research method focuses primarily on the qualitative aspects of the investigated processes. During the scenario-development participants may rely on quantitative data on existing trends, nevertheless, the main aim is not reveal numerical information. As qualitative methods in general, the foresight exercise primarily investigates attitudes, representations, rationales and perceptions of social actors. Consequently, it is an excellent complementary approach to the primarily quantitative standpoint of the SEEMIG project.
- (2) **Future oriented.** The method can be perceived as an expedient of the future oriented thinking. However, it seems necessary to highlight the difference between developing foresight scenarios and elaborating projections or forecasts. The foresight method does not provide predictions of the (plausible) future. It offers alternative scenarios, but it does not offer any prognosis. The main aim of foresight scenario development is to map the attitudes, expectations and fears of participants regarding (nearby) future. A foresight scenario is in fact a mental map of the plausible futures. Of course, through this method one can also provide an insight on the (perceptions of) actual problems and challenges. The questions investigated in Romania/this project through the foresight are:

- a. How do participants imagine their demographic future and how is it related to migratory and labour market processes?
- b. What pathways of social and economic development they expect? and
- c. What are the main drivers of the expected developments?

A further characteristic of the method is that it investigates the future scenarios on both **macro** and **micro** levels. As for the drivers, it focuses primarily on macro (or in the case of local scenarios on mezzo) level, but it is interested in the impact of social processes on individual life strategies and chances.

- (3) **Policy oriented.** Developing foresight scenarios is a policy oriented research tool. Foresight exercises help decision makers to link the present-day policies with their possible future outcomes. It helps stakeholders to identify possible threats and opportunities in due time, and thus influence the future consequences. Through the foresight exercise policy makers are invited to think about the unusual, and about possible effects of policy measures actions on longer term.
- (4) **Participatory.** As for the policy-relevant consequences of the foresight exercises, not only the conclusions of the analysis are important. The foresight event (brainstorming and scenario developing) can mobilize and get the stakeholders involved. The persons are present at these events not only as informants, but also as potentially active shapers of future policy measures. So, one of the main objectives of the method is to socialize stakeholders for a more consensus oriented and cooperative decision making process. The foresight events are designed to create standards for cooperation between stakeholders in different domains and to promote constructive debates between them.

During the last decade, foresight has become a popular method in Romania too. The method was used in different domains, for instance, in investigating the challenges faced by rural communities (Ghişa 2011), in elaborating the Research Development and Innovation strategy of the Ministry of Education and Research (Grosu 2007), or in initiating cooperation between stakeholders involved in research and technical development.¹

1.2. Main findings of SEEMIG foresight exercise

The report outlines the main findings of our foresight exercise regarding the migratory processes in Romania. The investigation revealed that the experts, public officials and decision makers consider migratory processes one of the most important factors affecting the country's future development. According to their expectations, the intensive international mobility will continue. However, it is not clear whether the process of circular (temporary) migration or the definitive emigration and the intensive depopulation will be characteristic. The main factors affecting the future prospects are the economic situation, the strength of the bonds between the migrants and the homeland, the

¹ See the FORSEE project financed also by the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme [<http://forsee.eu/>].

evolution of the educational system, and the evolution of the inequalities, in particular the territorial inequalities in Romania.

1.3. Structure of the report

Our report has four main parts. The first outlines the demographic, migratory and labour market processes in Romania. This analysis is based primarily on WP3 Romanian country report (Dynamic historical analysis of longer term migratory, labour market and human capital processes). Due to the fact that the brainstorming sessions and the developing future scenarios took place in Sfântu Gheorghe, and the participants were recruited from Covasna and Harghita counties, we also present the local contexts of the relevant social processes. The second part of the report describes in details the methodology of the brainstorming and foresight development events. We present here the participants and the standardized guidelines of the events. The third part comprises the main findings of the analysis. We present first the three brainstorming events, and then the results of the foresight exercise by sketching the positive and negative scenarios both at macro- and micro levels. The last part of report synthesizes the findings and focuses on highlighting opportunities, challenges and foci of policy intervention ensuing from the scenarios.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

1.4. Political and Socio-economic Overview

After World War II, Romania was occupied by Soviet forces; consequently, the country became part of the Eastern Bloc. This affected not only the geopolitical orientation of the country, but it has also led to a certain political, social and economic order. It is well known that the Eastern European states became single-party systems, whereas in the domain of economy the planned economy became dominant, where the redistribution was the principal way of coordination instead of market mechanisms. One of the most important turning points of the 20th century of the country was definitely represented by the collapse of state socialism in December 1989. This event radically altered Romania's geopolitical orientation again. In the early 1990s, it became clear that the Western (European) orientation had no real alternatives. This was reflected by the fact that a strong consensus has been formed among the Romanian elites regarding EU and NATO integration. In a broader perspective, one can claim that, in the 1990s, a new *consensus on modernization* has emerged, which designated the Westernization (Europeanization) of different social structures as the desired pathway of social development. We consider that the newly emerged consensus on modernization was one of the main factors that triggered profound social and demographic changes in Romania (and elsewhere in Eastern Europe).

However, the relative economic positions and the demographic prospects of the country have considerably deteriorated during the last two decades. The 1990s were characterized by a deep economic and social crisis, and not only because of the sharp decrease of GDP per capita. The main problem of the period was the sudden collapse of industrial production. The number of people

employed in the industrial sector fell from 4.169 million in 1989 to 2.004 million in 2000 (Murgescu 2010: 469). It is important to note that the recovery of the economy began later than in the majority of Eastern European countries (Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia or Poland for instance). The next period, the one between 2000 and 2008, was characterized by an intensive growth of the Romanian economy. This rapid growth came after a two-decade-long period of stagnation and decline. The GDP/capita reached its 1989 (or 1979) level in 2005. The comparison to the world average shows, however, that even at its peak point in 2008, the relative economic position of the country was significantly worse than it was in the last decades of state socialism. In 2007, Romania joined the European Union, but shortly after the accession the period of high rate of economic growth was drastically interrupted by the general financial crisis in 2009. As for the expectations regarding the future, is of particular importance, that the financial crisis put an end also to the expectations shared by the majority of the population, namely that Romania could reach the Western standards of social development and living conditions in a relatively short time.

1.5. Development of international migration

The regime change of 1989 represents a major turning point in the demographic development of the country. Until 1989, the Romanian population grew dynamically, which was primarily due to the pro-natalist policies enforced from 1967 on. In 1989, the country's population exceeded 23 million persons. After 1989, a radical population loss occurred, which can be considered a drastic decline even in the broader Eastern European context. According to the 2011 census, the population has fallen to 20.1 million, which means a population loss of 13 percent compared to figures from 1989.

One of the factors causing this radical decrease in population size was the decline in the total fertility rate (and in the number of newborns). The most important factor however was the negative net migration. In spite of closed borders, the phenomenon of emigration existed during the times of state socialism too: between 1948 and 1989, a relatively high net migration loss (783,578 persons) was officially registered in Romania. This period was characterized primarily by the emigration of the minority groups. The members of the Romanian Jewish community migrated *en masse* in several waves. After the late 1970s, the mass migration of Germans (Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians) begun too. Furthermore, during the time period between 1988 and 1992, a number of about 100,000 Hungarians left Transylvania. Hungarians were highly overrepresented among the emigrants in the time period between 1992 and 2002 too.

However the process of emigration from Romania intensified only after the turn of the millennium. In October 1999, the European Commission recommended the starting of the accession negotiations with Romania. Part of the integration process, in 2002, Romanian citizens have been exempted from visa in the majority of the EU countries. As already mentioned, at the beginning of 2007, Romania became an EU member. The new legal status of Romanian citizens within the EU resulted in an increase of the volume of emigration. In the present, according to the immigration statistics of the main receiving countries, an approximate number of 3 million Romanian citizens live abroad. The main contextual determinants of these outflows were the intensive deindustrialization and the growing numbers of individuals who found themselves side-lined on the changed labour market, and had to resort to subsistence farming.

Migration became a relevant issue in Romania both from scientific and political perspective only by the turn of the millennium. Although research on migration has intensified in the second half of the 1990s, its results have not been integrated into demographic modeling and forecasting until recently. After the 2002 census, the concept of *circular migration* – introduced by Dumitru Sandu (2000a) – became very popular in Romania. According to this approach, the unregistered and unforeseen population loss highlighted by the 2002 census should not be considered as being caused by definitive out-migration, but the majority of missing persons were only temporarily abroad and might return to Romania. This perspective proved, however, to be unsustainable (Ghețău 2012).

With regard to the impact of emigration on the labour market, two periods can be distinguished: the first consists of the 1990s and the very beginning of 2000s, whereas the second starts by the mid-2000s. In the first period, due to the economic transition, the number of available workplaces radically dropped in Romania and migration emerged as a reaction to the incapacity of the Romanian economy to create jobs and absorb the existing labour force. Seen from the perspective of the state, migration functioned as a safety valve, because significant strata of the population who were at the risk of becoming beneficiaries of social assistance left the country. Therefore, migration lowered the social costs of the transition and reduced the risks of social tensions (Horváth and Anghel, 2009, p. 395). From 2001 to 2008, the Romanian economy grew with an impressive average rate of 6.2% annually, which situated Romania at the top in the region. According to a survey taken in 2007, approximately 15% of the companies active in sectors characterized by intensive growth – T&C (textile and clothing) industry, constructions, trade, the financial and other services, and HoReCa (hotels, restaurants and catering) – reported personnel deficit. The most severe problems were reported by the firms active in the T&C sector (Șerban and Toth, 2007, p.6). These labour shortages were also directly linked to the emigration of Romanian labour. Romanians preferred to work abroad in constructions, commerce, hotel trade, domestic and care services (including women who previously worked in the textile industry) and earned at least twice they could get doing the same job at home.

In 2009, the Romanian economy experienced a sharp contraction. Since 2011 there has been a small recovery. Even in the crisis context, the Romanian labour market failed to meet the needs of employers, and the shortage was above the average both in a European and a global perspective. For example, in 2010, 36 percent of the companies in Romania declared having difficulties filling the job vacancies, facing particular difficulties in the following domains: engineers, skilled traders, sales representatives etc. (Manpower, 2009, 2010). Analysts consider that the causes of the deficiency are structural, mostly related to emigration, and forecast an absolute shortage in roughly 20 years (Ghețău, 2009; Șerban and Toth, 2007).

As for the immigration, the number of annually emitted work permits is at a low level too. Although in 2008 the yearly quota of work permits issued for third country nationals had to be supplemented, legal authorizations issued in that year represented the peak with only 15 thousand permits (Toader, Smirna, Jurca, & Cernat, 2010). As mentioned above, the economic dynamics of the 2000s conjoined with the amplified emigration of the Romanians lead to a workforce shortage in some economic sectors. In this context immigrant labour seemed to be a mid-term solution for addressing the problem. However, the predictions made in 2008, which assumed a considerable increase in labour-motivated immigration up to a stock of 200-300,000 persons (1.1-1.4% of the population) until 2013-

2015 (Cervinski, 2011, p. 46), proved to be unsubstantiated. The global economic crisis curbed the ascending curve of immigration to Romania.

According to all population forecasts, Romania will face in the following decades a rapid demographic process of population loss and ageing, the main causes being the very low fertility rates (1.3 children/women) and the continuous negative net migration. The ageing process in Romania is much faster than in Western European countries and in (nearly total) absence of population policies will have severe social and economic consequences. As working age population is continuously decreasing and the economic dependence ratio is worsening, the pension system and the health care system will most probably become unsustainable.

1.6. Local context: Sfântu Gheorghe and Harghita county

The Romanian foresight exercise was realized by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities in close cooperation with a professional market research company (TransObjective). The two local SEEMIG partners, the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe (capital city of Covasna county) and Harghita County Council were also. The participants were recruited the market research company partners, the majority of them being invited from the territories of the two counties. After outlining the economic, demographic and migratory processes in Romania it worth describing the local context too.

Both Harghita and Covasna are part of the historical and ethno-cultural region of Szeklerland, inhabited in majority by ethnic Hungarians. According to the 2011 census, the share of the Hungarian native speakers was 86.4 percent in Harghita and 75.3 percent in Covasna. In Sfântu Gheorghe, 77.8 percent of the total population was Hungarian-speaking. Beside the common ethnic background, Harghita and Covasna share several important socio-economic characteristics too. First, both are predominantly rural counties, without major urban centers. In a historical perspective, the rural character of these administrative units can be considered even more accentuated. A relatively fast process of urbanization and industrialization took place following the territorial reorganization in 1968 when Harghita and Covasna counties were established. The population of the three main towns (Sfântu Gheorghe, Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiu Secuiesc) tripled in the time period between 1966 and 1992. After this period, these towns have experienced a relatively moderate population decrease. Today the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe has 56 thousand inhabitants.

Given the fact that the region of Szeklerland had (and has) an accentuated rural and an economically peripheral character, out-migration from the area was predominant. Until 1989, the internal migration towards major Romanian (and especially Transylvanian) urban centers was of primary importance. Following the establishment of Harghita and Covasna counties in 1968, this process of internal out-migration has decreased considerably due to the industrial development of the main cities, Sfântu Gheorghe, Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiu Secuiesc; however, it was not at all insignificant afterwards either.

As mentioned already, during the state socialist period the ethnic minorities (especially Jews, Germans and Hungarians) were highly overrepresented among emigrants. A total number of 97,000 ethnic Hungarians left Romania between 1986 and 1991. In the 1990s, Hungarians continued to be

heavily overrepresented within the migrant population. In this period, the migration of labour force from Harghita and Covasna counties to Hungary was particularly intensive.

After the turn of the millennium however, the Romanian migration context was profoundly transformed as a result of the country's extremely intensive participation in the international migration movements. As mentioned already, according to immigration statistics of the main receiving countries, 2.7-3 million Romanian citizens reside abroad, mainly in Western Europe. Out-migration has the greatest impact on the Moldovan region and Southern Transylvania, while the least affected are the areas inhabited by the highest proportion of Hungarians, among them Harghita and Covasna counties.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Workshops

2.1.1. When and where were the workshops conducted

In Romania, the brainstorming sessions and the scenario development event were held consecutively in a two days long intensive work period, on the 27th and 28th of November, 2013. This proved to be a good idea because the participants of the foresight development remembered well the former discussions. The workshops were scheduled as follows:

- November 27, 11,00: Brainstorming event for decision makers
- November 27, 17,00: Brainstorming event for representatives of migrants
- November 28, 11,00: Brainstorming event for experts in migration, demographic and labour market processes
- November 28, 17,00: Foresight scenario development

The brainstorming events lasted around 2 hours. The foresight development lasted longer, nearly 4 hours (3 hours 47 minutes). All events took place in Sfântu Gheorghe at the protocol room of the Bastion Café, rented and provided by the Sfântu Gheorghe local government.

The three brainstorming events were led by a moderator (Tamás Kiss) who was helped by two assistants (Grigore Barna and Annamaria Fazakas²). The foresight scenario development was also led by the moderator, but the work of the two mixed groups were facilitated by the assistants.

2.1.2. How were the workshops conducted

Both the brainstorming and foresight scenario development were conducted according to a standardized guide elaborated before the events. (See Appendix 1. and Appendix 2.)

2.1.2.1. Brainstorming events

The three brainstorming events followed the same pathways. As an **introductory part** the moderator welcomed the participants. He introduced himself, his assistants and all persons implicated in the organization of the event. Then he presented the aims, technical details and requirements of the session. Finally, the moderator presented shortly the SEEMIG project and the importance of the WP5 foresight exercise.

The second stage of the event (the **discussion** in a strict sense) had three main parts. First each participant introduced itself. Second, idea generating questions were put by the moderator. Five interrelated questions, referring to the demographic, migratory and labor market processes were put:

² Employed by TransObjective, a market- and opinion research firm, engaged in the recruitment of the participants and the organization of the events.

- (1) What are the ideas, notions coming first to your mind when you think about the demographic situation **in Romania**?
- (2) What are the ideas, notions coming first to your mind when you think about the demographic situation **in your region**?
- (3) What do you think, how will the demographic situation of the country evolve **until 2025**?
- (4) In your understanding, what makes people move, or what does make them stay in their home country? You can mention both **push and pull factors**.
- (5) What do you think, through what kind of **policies** can the process of migration be influenced and its consequences managed?

In the last phase of the discussion, the participants (helped by the moderator) created clusters of the main drivers, so they grouped the ideas emerged during the previous phase. Then the (clusters of) drivers were ranked according to their importance and probability. For the prioritization of drivers we used the classical forecast scenario matrix suggested by the Hungarian colleagues (Réka Geambasu and Ildikó Simonfalvi). Hence, prioritization was structured along two aspects: importance and probability. We drew the matrix on the flipchart and participants were asked to fill it in.

2.1.2.2. Foresight scenario development workshop

The foresight scenario development was also conducted according to previously elaborated guidelines. The event was composed by four main phases. The **introductory phase** was similar to that of the brainstorming events. Following it, a **joint discussion** was taken place. Each brainstorming group had a spokesperson, who presented the main findings of the brainstorming events focusing on the main drivers causing the migratory movements. Following the presentation 5 drivers were chosen. These drivers were discussed in the foresight scenario developing events. The drivers were the same for the negative and for the positive scenario.

- 1) Following the joint discussion two groups were formed to develop foresight scenarios. The first group discussed the positive the second one the negative scenario. Migrants, experts and decision makers were equally represented in the two groups. Both groups had the same task, namely to discuss the effects of factors outlined at macro-level and on the personal life of some fictive characters, representing ordinary people. The two group discussions were moderated by the two assistants.

2.2. Participants

Participants were recruited by a professional market- and opinion research firm (TransObjective, Cluj-Napoca). This firm did not organize previously foresight development, but they had a remarkable experience in organizing focus groups. For all four events the process of recruitment started the weeks before the sessions. The participants were recruited by telephone and e-mail.

- First (three weeks before the events), the possible participants were invited by phone.

- Those who replied positively received an official invitation through e-mail two weeks before the events
- The research assistant employed by the market research firm had the responsibility to remind the participants about the event (three days and one day before the sessions)
- For each brainstorming event an initial number of 10 participants were recruited. Nine, eight and eight participants joined the sessions (see the table below).

Thanks to the professional organization the groups were balanced. None of the three types of participants were overrepresented at the foresight-scenario developing event. The brainstorming events were also balanced, participants having very different professional backgrounds and life stories.

In the recruitment procedure, we followed strictly the common methodology elaborated for SEEMIG partners by INFOSTAT (Toth 2013). For the purposes of the foresight in Romania, we operationalized the three stakeholder groups involved in the exercise in the following way (Table 1). Without these operational definitions the professional organization of the event would have been proved to be impossible.

Table 1: The composition of the brainstorming groups

	Type of group	Operational definition	Geographical area	Other conditions	Participants
1	Migrants, civil society	Returning migrants	Sfântu Gheorghe	Lived more than 1 year abroad, university graduate	8
2	Stakeholders	Members of local and county councils, national parliament, majors, vice-majors	Harghita and Covasna counties	-	8
3	Experts	Executive officers at migration, labour-market and human capital related institutions or engaged in migration-related research	Harghita and Covasna counties	-	8

- ***Migrants and civil society*** meant in our case ***returned emigrants***. The WP3 country report clearly demonstrated that Romania is a sending country. Very few NGO's engaged in the integration of the immigrants are in the country.³ We also limited the geographic area to Sfântu Gheorghe (because we had to decide where to organize the event). The profile of the migrants was very different. We had returned migrants from the United States, the United Kingdom, Austria, Hungary and Germany.

³ Participants of the WP6 focus group will be NGO's engaged in the integration of immigrants.

- **Stakeholders** were defined as members of local and county councils, members of the national parliament, majors, vice-mayors. We had representatives of all of these categories among the participants.
- **Experts** were executive officers at migration related institutions and researchers engaged in migration. The executive officers were more numerous. We had representatives of the National Institute of Statistics, the Labor Office, Social Protection, and Ministry of Education.

2.3. Approach to analysing material

The discussions were recorded both with camera and Dictaphone. Following the event a full transcription was made. For the analysis we used this full textual version. In the case of the brainstorming events, the notes of the assistant were also used.

2.4. Problems and difficulties

Thanks to the professional organization, the groups were balanced. We tried to provide the opportunity for all participants to articulate their standpoint. None of the three types of participants were overrepresented at the foresight scenario development. The brainstorming events were also balanced; participants had very different professional backgrounds and life stories.

3. RESULTS OF THE FORESIGHT EXERCISE

3.1. Key drivers of migration

The three brainstorming events were designed to reveal the main drivers of migration, and the related areas of the labour market and demographic development. As mentioned already, we used a previously elaborated guideline. Three main phases were established for the discussion. In the first phase, we asked questions that brought to the surface a large number of drivers. In the second phase the drivers were grouped, and then ranked according to their importance and probability.

As the methodological description revealed, five questions were used to generate ideas. The questions were the following:

- a. - What are the ideas, notions coming first to your mind when you think about the demographic situation **in Romania**?
- b. What are the ideas, notions coming first to your mind when you think about the demographic situation **in your region**?
- c. What do you think, how will the demographic situation of the country evolve **until 2025**?

- d. In your understanding, what makes people move, or what makes them stay in their home country? You can mention both **push and pull factors**.
- e. What do you think, through what kind of **policies** can the process of migration be influenced and its consequences managed?

Besides the questions directly related to the drivers of migration, we also asked the participants about their concerns and fears related more generally to the demographic development of the country. The table below summarizes the topics discussed during the brainstorming events. We grouped the answers related to the demographic development separately from the drivers of migration (following the logic of the guideline). However, the majority of the factors causing migration were already revealed during the first part of the discussion (i.e. the demographic development).

Demographic development is a much broader and more complex set of social phenomena compared to the migratory processes. Migration is only one aspect of a country's demographic development. Besides the emigration and immigration, fertility and mortality also affect the size and structure of a population. We tried to reveal the perceptions of the participants regarding the importance of the migratory processes (emigration and immigration) in the demographic development of the country. An additional research question was if the participants perceived the present demographic trends unchangeable (and taken for granted in the nearby future), or if they thought that these trends were changeable and can be changed by population policy measures. Drivers as discussed in each group are briefly summarized in Table ZZ.

Table ZZ: Drivers affecting the demographic evolution of the country and the migratory processes, respectively

	Experts	Decision makers	Migrants
Demographic prospects of the country			
Demographic situation of Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ageing - Population policy of the former regime - Population decline - Poverty - Transnational mobility and tradition - Freedom - Mentality - Brain drain (the most innovative individuals leave the county) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing ethnic structure, growing proportion of Roma people - Ageing - Rural area without prospects - Different migration potential of the social strata (lower migration rate of the low status strata) - Depopulation - Growing number of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ageing - Low level of human capital - Population decline - Growing proportion of Roma people - Loss of collective values that could affect positively the demographic tendencies - Brain drain

		single-member households	
Demographic situation of the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tradition of migration - preservation, persistency - poverty - Migration as cultural tradition - migration as accommodation of experience and cultural capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - economically peripheral region - different ethnic background, lack of knowledge of Romanian language - less labor market opportunities - rural area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more intensive process of migration - lack of sense of responsibility towards the community - restrained character of social networks and possibilities - worse infrastructure than in other parts of the country
What factors affect the demographic evolution of the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The structure of the educational system - Lack of workplaces - Brain drain - Return migration - Living conditions (material factors) - Economic situation of the country - Return migration - Labor market - Religious faith - Local communities - Quality of local services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roma integration - Poverty - Migration policies of Western states - attachment to the homeland and local community - education - workplaces - reproductive model (single child or bigger families) - living conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of fit between the system of higher education and labor - neoliberal order emerging after the change of the regime - economic situation - lack of workplaces - development of agriculture - crisis of values
Drivers of migratory processes			
Push and pull factors of emigration at individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - professional self realization (pull) and low prestige of some intellectual jobs (push) - crisis of social values - migration is a culturally embedded praxis - differences of wages - differences of lifestyles - calculability of life trajectory in Western society (pull) and uncertainty (push) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - differences in wages - lack of possibility of building a professional carrier - the quality of social and healthcare system - lack of stability of the political and legal system - weakening national and local identities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - possibility of learning (pull) - possibility of professional carrier - less bureaucracy in Western societies - differences in the level of civilization - Hungarian passport - client friendly bureaucracy and authorities - open society

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - desire to learn - concerns about children's future prospects - traditionalist social milieu 		
Policy measures affecting migratory processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating jobs - creating a more calculable and predictable institutional and legal system - positive vision of future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - changing institutional and legal system - housing for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating better infrastructure - creating jobs - economic improvement

3.1.1. Experts

In the brainstorming group of experts the topics related to the country's demographic situation were the following: ageing, roots (bound to homeland), the demographic policy of the former regime, transnational mobility and migration, the cultural tradition of migration, freedom, mentality and brain drain.

In this phase of the discussion, **ageing** emerged as the strongest fear. Practically all participants shared the same feeling, which is tightly related to the demographic policy of the former regime. Starting in 1966, the former regime adopted a pro-natalist demographic policy, and implemented it with repressive means (e.g. criminalization of abortion). As an immediate result, the number of births doubled in 1996 and 1967. Moreover, the number of births in the seventies was also relatively high (the triple of the number of births in the present). Many participants in our discussion group were born in this period. They raised the problem of retirement benefits, claiming that when these generations reach the age of retirement, the country's pension fund will probably collapse. They perceive this as a demographic process that will almost certainly occur.

Migration, more precisely emigration recurrently appeared in the discussion, since poverty, transnational mobility, the tradition of migration, freedom, mentality, attachment to the homeland, and brain-drain were all related to migration. They conceive migration as a tradition that has a significant past both when they talk about the whole Romania and the region they live. The fact that Szeklerland is a rural, peripheral, and mountainous region is highly important in this respect. The region was relatively overpopulated until the 1980's compared to the absorption capacity of the agriculture and the dimension of industry. Many people from the region had already emigrated to the United States and Romania (to regions belonging to Romania before 1918) at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Leaving the region temporarily was also customary. Temporary migration was linked to age and qualified as habitual cultural practice. Migration had a central role in providing the basis for independent life of young people. Migration also provided them the means to expand family businesses and make investments.

The area was a source of migration in the former regime too. However, the most characteristic type of migration was the internal one. People fled in massive numbers from Szeklerland to urban and industrial centres from Transylvania and Romania's other regions. According to our discussion partners, this cultural tradition is one of the reasons why the region became so rapidly involved in international migration. But they also said that Szeklerland was far from being a unique case in Romania. Similar processes occurred in other regions under similar conditions (for example, Maramureş or Bistriţa Năsăud). From this perspective, the current transnational mobility is neither entirely new nor unknown despite the radical changes in contexts and technical conditions that have emerged in the meantime.

Our interlocutors had no doubts that migration will continue. However, they did not know what model will prevail, complete or return migration. The latter implies that young people involved in international migration will utilize the resources gained in migration, such as knowledge or other types of capital, when they return home. In this respect, the fundamental issues raised during the discussion were about the bonds migrants have with the homeland, and their sense of belonging to their local, regional and national community. Traditions and the traditional character of the region represent controversial issues. The traditional milieu as a source of migration represents a push factor because it tries to control to a great extent the way of life people choose to live. Meanwhile, the more relaxed, permissive and free social climate of the destination countries is perceived as a pull factor.

Questions about local and national demographic prospects have not disclosed any new drivers. On the contrary, the third question (i.e. what shapes Romania's demographic future) shed light on some new factors. Economic factors are prominent in this respect. The main problem appears to be Romania's economic situation, which shapes demographic prospects primarily through the evolution of the labour market (the availability or the lack of jobs), and the evolution of standard of living. Discussants also mentioned, although with a lesser emphasis, local services that shape non-material components of quality of life.

To summarize, we may claim that in the group of experts there are two main phenomena mentioned with regards to demographic prospects: age structure of the population and migration. Concerning the age structure of the population, ageing is seen as a process that will emerge with great certainty. Migration has been highlighted as the most important factor influencing the demographic process. In this respect, the extent of migration and return migration are the drivers that shape the future. One can observe that mortality is practically absent in demographic discourses, while the low rate of fertility is taken by experts as a given. They do not envisage scenarios in which they count on a significant increase in fertility.

It is also worth noting, that immigration appears only as return migration. Experts who participated in our discussion do not have a future in mind in which the issue of immigration is included. The possibility that immigrants could fill in places left open by the domestic labour force has not occurred to anyone, not even as a theoretical possibility.

In the next part of our discussion we asked questions related to push and pull factors of migration, which disclosed new drivers in addition to the already mentioned ones. The experts emphasized the

crises of values that characterize post-socialist Romanian society. One of the implications is that some occupations lost their prestige and are less rewarded in material sense. Today, a young person being in the early stage of his/her carrier as a teacher, or another intellectual occupation cannot find material security. Moreover, he/she has to confront the low social prestige attributed to his/her occupation. This is the fact – combined with the impossibility of professional self-realization – put many young people on the path of international migration.

Another factor that pushes young people toward migration is the decisive feeling of uncertainty created by the legislation and institutional system. This feeling of uncertainty comes partly from the fact that there are no clear priorities in development strategies and these lack consistency. On the other hand, the rule of law is also uncertain in Romania. For example, laws that regulate the business environment and firms are not clear, and many times depend on the interpretation of who implements the respective regulation. Beside creating uncertainty and decreasing the chances for a comprehensive carrier planning, this situation makes people vulnerable.

3.1.2. Public officials

On the brainstorming event with decision makers the following associations emerged with respect to the demographic situation of the country: changing ethnic structure (the increase of Roma population), ageing, lack of prospects for rural areas, different rates of migration in different social strata, depopulation, and the increase of single-person households.

In the first part of the discussion, which concentrated on general demographic processes, participants brought to the foreground the unequal evolution of the population with respect to ethnicity. According to the census in 2011, 3,2 percent, nearly 620 thousand individuals declared that they belonged to the Roma ethnic group. Participants in the discussion formulated the hypothesis (shared by many others and also shown by surveys related to this issue) that the “real” number of Roma is much higher than official numbers let us believe. It is around 2 million persons, which makes up approximately 10 percent of the population in Romania. There is a significant difference in the fertility behaviour of Roma and non-Roma. Participants highly over estimated this difference, situating fertility rate of Roma women around 4 or 5 (while the real value is around 3 children). However, they advanced real estimates regarding higher fertility rate and younger age structure. The integration of Roma is a key issue in the demographic and social future of Romania; this is also a perception that one cannot argue against. Even before 1989, the majority of Roma were situated in the lowest strata of the society; yet, their situation was incomparably better than nowadays. After the change of regime, a process of extreme marginalization of the Roma got under way. Some authors investigating the issue of Roma marginalization use even the concept of the formation of a Roma underclass (Emigh et alii 2002; Ladányi-Szelényi 2006). According to participants in this discussion group, provided that the Romanian state does not advance in the integration of Roma, the society will become even more polarized that can lead to conflicts between Roma and non-Roma. They also think that if the Roma issue remains unsolved it can lead to a more massive migration of non-Roma from Romania or from certain regions.

The meagre prospect of rural areas was partly linked to the topic of Roma, because Roma are concentrated in rural settlements and economic peripheries. In the same time, participants in the

discussion think that the hardships of rural life are only partially related to Roma communities. The gap between villages and towns has grown wider after 1898. Villagers lost their jobs in the industry and agriculture became a problem area. According to decision makers, the trendy rhetoric holding that development of rural services, mainly tourism, can solve the problems of this area is unfounded. Thus, one can expect deepening territorial inequalities. While the young and qualified population concentrates in urban centres, rural settlements and small towns are confronted with a more accentuated ageing and depopulation.

During this discussion people spoke about low fertility and birth giving at a more mature age. This topic was associated with more and more young people living alone, and also with an increase in the number of one-person households. In this part of the discussion trends in family planning surfaced as issues that can be influenced only to a small degree or not at all.

Regarding the demographic prospects of Szeklerland, participants univocally raised the idea of being a disadvantaged region. The factors that contribute to this situation are the following: it is a marginal area with respect to economy, lacks an urban centre, which evidently implies less job opportunities. Participants believe that this is why migration affects this area more negatively than is the case in other region. We must note here that this hypothesis is not necessarily correct in the light of researches done in this region. Another topic that emerged was the “ethnic/cultural otherness” (i.e inhabited by Hungarian majority) attributed to the region. Participants consider that the ethnic structure of the region represents a disadvantage because one can foresee the continuous degradation of Romanian language competence in case of young generations. With respect to the labor market, declining language competence reduces the chances of young people in finding a job.

The discussion concerning factors shaping demographic prospects disclosed a few new drivers. The necessity of Roma integration surfaced this time too. It appeared as a factor that may have positive results provided that public policies concentrate on this issue. Poverty is the next factor that came up in the discussion. Eradication of poverty might reduce the great territorial inequalities in the country. The educational system appeared in two contexts. On the one hand, our interlocutors think it would be important to build a better linkage between the educational system and labour market. On the other hand, they pointed toward the misguided educational methodology as the reason of poor Romanian language competence in Szeklerland.

The migration and the reproductive model were the two factors that emphatically emerged during discussions about demographic processes. Participants perceived migration as the more important factor, and the one that can be more easily shaped (and ore hardly foreseen). Economic development plays a key role in this. Through improved labour market, eradication of poverty and better living standards, economic development can lead to decreasing migration. They also attributed high relevance to migration policies of Western countries, which can pull Romanian population. The second factor was the reproductive model and family type. There was a general consensus in stating that we witness the dominance of families with only one child and there are few chances for a revival of the idea of bigger families. One can note that public officials have not considered trends so evident and determined as the group of the experts. Public officials brought up arguments related to fertility and family models exclusively in terms of values and worldviews, and

did not speak about structural and material dimensions that were considered essential in the case of migration.

3.1.3. Comparison of key drivers

The three groups identified the similar causes that determine migration. This is evident if we compare the factors that were classified and ranked in the third phase of the discussions according to their probability and importance.

Drivers	Experts	Public Officials/Decision-makers	Migrants
Driver 1	Economic situation	Economic situation	Economic situation
Driver 2	Attachment to the homeland	Attachment to the homeland	Attachment to the homeland
Driver 3	-	Education	Education
Driver 4	Inequalities	Inequalities	-
Driver 5	Legal and institutional framework	Legal and institutional Framework	-
Driver 6	Local services	Positive future vision	Migration policy of Western states

There was a general consensus in all three groups regarding migration: they all agreed that the evolution of economic conditions determine migration in the first place. In its own turn, this also shapes the way labor market evolves. Meanwhile, as we will see, economic evolution did not mean only macroeconomic development (or stagnation, or recession) for our interlocutors. They had clear ideas about changes in economic structure that are necessary for thinking and talking about a positive scenario.

Attachment to the homeland was another important factor that was ranked among the first five drivers in all of the three groups. The way in which interlocutors formulated negative and positive scenarios with respect to this factor was also interesting to observe, as we will present it further on in the report.

Educational system, inequalities and **stability of institutional and legal system** appeared in two of the group discussions. **Local services, a positive image of future** and **migration policies of Western countries** were mentioned in only one group each.

3.2. Matrix of key drivers

We selected four factors determining future migration trends. The factors were selected based on the drivers defined by the three groups and the common part of the foresight developing event.

These factors are the following: the country's economy, educational system, attachment to the homeland and the evolution of inequalities (Table GG).

Table GG: Key drivers and dimensions of scenarios

DRIVERS	POSITIVE SCENARIO	NEGATIVE SCENARIO
Economic situation of the country	Economic prosperity, changing economic structure	Economic crisis, constant economic
Educational system	More flexible education focused on skills and capacities	Preservation of the current structure
Attachment to the homeland	Strong bounds, capacity of maintaining bounds with migrants communities	Weakening bounds
Inequalities	Reducing inequalities	Growing inequalities

3.3. Development of scenarios (macro-level analysis)

It is interesting to observe how interlocutors defined positive and negative scenarios along certain drivers. They did not define the economic context of Romania in sharp terms, along positive or negative macroeconomic indicators. Rather they thought that economic prosperity implies also a comprehensive systemic transformation, while maintaining the current economic situation means in itself the fulfilment of a negative scenario. Furthermore, the educational system was strongly connected to the labour market. Thus, a positive scenario implies the implementation of a more flexible educational system that adapts well to the continuous change in the labour market. In the case of attachments to the homeland, the emphasis fell on the fact that migrants may maintain links and relations to the source environment with the possibilities provided by modern technologies, and in the positive scenario they make use of these technologies. Finally, the fourth and last driver is constituted by inequalities. In this respect, the positive scenario means decreasing inequalities, whereas the negative scenario means increasing inequalities.

3.3.1. Scenario 1 (positive scenario)

The most important drive is **economic development**. Participants approached this issue through the topic of labour market:

"Obviously, I think about more job opportunities, about improving the chances of young people to get a job. This is evidently a function of national economic trends."

It is also interesting how they approached the effects of an expanding labor market. On the one hand, as we have already mentioned, there is a deep concern related to the ageing of the population. Participants saw this phenomenon as inevitable. However, the labor market could keep a balance between the active and inactive population, and could create opportunities for maintaining the social protection system and the pension fund. This requires sacrifices even in the positive scenario. Because of changing age structure, rising the age for retirement is inevitable. Despite all these, one

can avoid the collapse of the system by bringing in the labour force market many unemployed or other inactive persons.

Expanding the labour market does not stop emigration, even in the positive scenario. As we have already mentioned, migration has become an embedded cultural practice in many regions in Romania. Nearly 3 million Romanian citizens live abroad, and due to the fact that the volume of migration has reached a critical point and it became self-reinforcing, expanding labour force cannot stop it. Nevertheless, in the positive scenario return migration will become dominant. For young people it is already evident to study abroad, to graduate from colleges abroad and to work for a time there. However, if labour market conditions are favourable and the economy expands, many of them will return home and establish a family.

Improving economy can be approached in other ways than that of the macroeconomic indicators. According to our discussion partners, there is an evident need for certain structural transformation. In the present day Romania, industry is characterized by the dominance of branches that work with small added value. A significant part of industrial production is made up by various assembly factories, such as textiles. In Covasna county the dominant industry branch is textile. This is why some have named the region “trouser valley.” This situation implies that, according to our interlocutors, many of those who have a job work for the minimum wage. In the positive scenario this structure will change and industries producing added value and services will become dominant. These structural changes will determine the type of migration, that is, return migration will prevail over definitive migration.

As an implication of these positive tendencies we will witness the dominance of small and middle-sized local enterprises. It is worth noting that in the case of positive scenario our interlocutors did not give any role to foreign or multinational capital investments.

Another positive perspective is offered by the increase of productivity, which is related to qualified labour force. This guides us to the role of the educational system.

The economic trends envisioned in the positive scenario are intimately linked to a successful reform of the **educational system**. The reform is possible if the Romanian government decides to double the public spending on education (Romania has now the lowest proportion of GDP spent on education in the European Union). In the positive scenario, the main focus of the reform is on the elementary and secondary education. Due to the reformulated policies the teacher’s training will be also revised and the social prestige as well as the income of the pedagogues increased. A growing number of graduates will be oriented towards the educational system and nearly all vacant post in rural education will be filled with qualified personnel. This has not been the case since the 1980s.

Due to the policy measures and the careful planning of the educational system the structure of the secondary education will be also modified. The most important modification concerns the sharp increase of the proportion of students enrolled in vocational training. In parallel, the share of students gaining theoretical qualification decreases from the present 70% to 30%. The structural reform will lead to a stronger correspondence between the demands of the labour market and the supply of the educational system. As a collateral impact, the rate of emigration will decline. Before

the educational reform, a considerable part of those who attended theoretical education did not succeed to graduate, and as a consequence, they could not continue their studies. The majority of those who graduated high school attended low quality university education at specializations that did not meet the demands of the labour market. Eventually, most of them became unemployed graduates or found jobs under their qualification. Only a small minority succeeded in finding a job as qualified professionals. However, during their life period spent in the educational system they definitely interiorized the aspirations for middle class living standards and lifestyle. But the cultural, professional and structural conditions for achieving the desired social status missed. Emigration proved to be an obvious way to escape this situation. This mechanism causing migration could be partially counterbalanced by the educational reform.

The key concepts of the educational reform were “flexibility” and “development of skills”, characteristics that enable the adaptation to the changing labour market demands. The participants of both groups agreed that decision makers cannot exactly foresee the future trends in the labour market:

“As a consequence, we should not say that we need shoemakers, because presently there are few shoemakers in the town. Let train 30 shoemakers. What will happen if it turns out that nobody brings shoes to shoemakers? When shoes are worn out, people simply buy new ones. This is not the right way. We cannot foresee what will be a good job in ten years or so. The flexibility is becoming more and more important. It is crucial for the youngsters to be able to change the direction if it is needed.”
(Expert)

In the participant’s vision the language knowledge is also of primary importance.

Another key driver of the positive scenario identified by participants is the **attachment to the homeland**. The ability of the sending society (Romania) to capitalize the possibilities lying in new techniques of communication and transnational forms of social organization in order to maintain the links with emigrant communities is considered crucial. According to the positive scenario, active governmental programs will be initiated to achieve this aim. These programs will also provide financial recourses to local governments to develop strategies of strengthening local identity and maintaining transnational bonds with emigrant communities. Nevertheless, this does not imply only annually organized reunions of emigrants, but also inexpensive housing and increased labour market reintegration chances of returning young migrants. The new techniques of communication that enable the creation and maintenance of transnational communities are also used strategically by the national and local government and by the civil organizations engaged in the project. Different types of internet-based social media allow emigrants to maintain a daily virtual presence in the sending society.

Last but not least, the fourth driver of the positive scenario is, that the national government initiate an intense program to reduce **social inequalities**. The designated policy measures have two particularly concrete focuses. First, they deal with territorial inequalities, and second, with the integration of disadvantaged and socially segregated Roma communities. Regarding the territorial

development it should become a guiding principle that some basic infrastructural facilities (such as surfaced road, post office and public transport) have to be granted for all local communities (or at least for all settlements with 300 inhabitants or more). Another aspect is that the Romanian state should provide quality health care and education for the rural population of the country (which makes 45 percent of the inhabitants). These policy measures will induce that rural and economically peripheral areas do not fall out definitely from the Romanian social and economic circuit.

Furthermore, according to the positive scenario, the Romanian state will be really committed to integrate the socially segregated and disadvantaged Roma communities. Therefore, sufficient resources will be allocated to deal with this issue. Roma integration is also intimately linked to the efforts to reduce territorial inequalities, because Roma people are concentrated in economically peripheral rural area. The new policy will put an end to the ongoing practices of powerful local administrations (of economically prosperous cities) to extrude the socially vulnerable groups to peripheral settlements.

3.3.2. Scenario 2 (negative scenario)

The participants agreed that the negative scenario means in fact that the current social trends and processes regarding the economy, education and social inequalities will continue. However, this will not result in the conservation of the present living conditions but will cause their rapid deterioration.

As for the **economy**, the macro-economic indicators were not of primary importance from the perspective of the participants. In their negative scenario, the future was not necessarily characterized by an accentuated decline of the GDP per capita for instance. Instead, the crucial factor is represented by the fact that the structural change of the Romanian economy – outlined in the positive scenario – does not occur. The single factor intimately linked to the macro indicators was the expansion of the labour market. In the negative scenario this will not happen. As a consequence, the pension system and the health care system will practically collapse. This will lead to an extreme vulnerability of the presently active generation.

The failure of structural change will lead to an even more accentuated emigration of the qualified labour force. This will also accelerate the breakdown of the pension system, which will occur earlier than in other Eastern European states.

According to the negative scenario, the spending on education remains at its actual level.⁴ This implies that rural schools will continue to have almost exclusively unqualified personnel with temporal contracts (they spent one or two years in this job). Currently, this is one of the principal factors leading to the situation that only 10 percent of the rural students continue their studies at secondary level and only 3-4 percent at university. In the second scenario the structural reform of the educational system will not occur either. This means a continuous production of unemployed graduates and increasing rates of emigration.

⁴ We have to mention that since the foresight events this amount decreased considerably.

As for the maintenance of links with the emigrants' communities, in the negative scenario the government (and the whole political elite) will continue to deal with this issue only from the perspective of country's external image. The emigration usually becomes a political issue only when the Western media discusses the real or imagined social problems caused by Romanian emigrants (often labelled as Romanian Gypsies). Furthermore, no programs will be initiated to facilitate the return and the reintegration of young emigrants.

Finally, given the lack of adequate policy measures the size of territorial inequalities will grow. The majority of large towns and metropolitan areas, as well as some mid-sized towns or territories with favourable infrastructural capacities will remain comfortable and liveable. The elites and more generally the qualified labour force will be concentrated in these areas (in the case did not leave the country yet). The EU funds have as key priorities both Roma integration and the reduction of territorial inequalities. However, the target groups benefit little from these funds. The main part of the resources allocated by the European Union are spent by professional NGO's or firms specialized in spending EU funds. These organizations are clearly led by the elites of the large towns. Consequently, the amounts spent on Roma integration and rural development does and will not really improve the chances of these groups.

3.4. Development of scenarios (micro-level analysis)

The two heroes of the negative and positive scenarios are identical:

- **Zoltán** lives in a small town in Covasna county (Baraolt). He is 55 years old and in 2025 he will be 67. He works as a mechanic and will become a pensioner in 2023. He has two children. His son works presently in the United Kingdom in construction. His daughter studies at Babes Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. Zoltán's wife is 52. She works as a hair-dresser.
- **Tímea** lives in a village near Baraolt (Batani). She is 14 and attends the local school. She is studious and intelligent, and her results are really good. Tímea lives in the Roma colony of the village and she was grown up practically by her grandparents. Her grandfather worked until 1992 as a miner in the coal mine from Baraolt. When the mine was closed, he obtained a disability pension. He was among the luckiest, because only few of the miners succeeded in Baraolt to obtain a pension. Due to the disability pension, the family is among the few households having a regular income. The majority of the households in the Roma colony from Batani does not have a regular income in addition to social benefits. The majority of those belonging to older generations worked in the former regime for the local collective farm (Cooperativa Agricurala de Productie). In fact, in the former regime, the conditions of employment were totally unequal and discriminatory against those working in agriculture. As a consequence, they receive a minimal amount of pension. The majority of the younger generations (for instance Tímea's parents) have never had formally a working place or a permanent job. Tímea's family (formed by her grandparents, her mother and Tímea) are in a relatively good material situation. However, the cost of her schooling represents an unpredictable burden for the family.

3.4.1. Scenario 1/Positive scenario

According to the positive scenario, **Zoltan** and his wife are pensioners in 2025, but remained active by running their own business. If we evaluate from a middle class or from a Western perspective, their pension “is sufficient for nothing”, but in Baraolt this amount covers the minimum material needs. Zoltan was not satisfied with this situation. In 2018 (when he was 62), he successfully competed for EU funds supporting small scale enterprises. He started a pension business in Doboseni, another village near Baraolt. Doboseni is situated to 10 kilometers from Baraolt, in a mountainous region, lying at the southern slope of the Harghita Mountains. Zoltan’s wife is from Doboseni and she inherited mansion house from their parents. Using the EU funds they renewed and rebuilt the house and started to run it as a rural pension. The spouses were helped by their daughter-in-law. She prepared the application and now helps them in managing the pension.

As in other remote rural areas in Transylvania, significant infrastructural investments were made in the Baraolt-basin too. This was the main condition for the recovery of the tourism in the region. Not only the tourism picked up, but a modest industrial recovery was also taking place. The Romanian government offered serious tax benefits for companies settling in disadvantaged areas, and as a consequence some industrial production started in the Baraolt region too. This caused a recovery of the constructions. In opposition to the conjuncture between 2002 and 2008, the recovery was not limited to major urban centers. This made possible for Zoltan’s son to return from the United Kingdom and to marry and settle down in Baraolt. Zoltan’s daughter (who was a student in Cluj in 2013) did not return to Baraolt. She founded a family in Sfântu Gheorghe, the capital town of Covasna county. Before settling down, she spent two year in the United States.

According to the positive scenario, **Tímea** becomes a teacher. The grandparents decided to finance her schooling and to send her to study in Baraolt. The educational reform played a primary role in her success. In 2015, the government initiated a stipend for students coming from disadvantaged families. This was the main tool of the educational reform, which in its first phase focused on the formation of qualified teaching personnel. In this project, students coming from disadvantaged communities and areas (and in special Roma students) were beneficiaries of positive discrimination. **Tímea** took part in this project along thousands of other Roma students. The project provided for her not only a professional background, but also a supportive professional and social network. After the university she spent two years in Lithuania and Bulgaria thanks to a fellowship. After she returned she started immediately teaching in Valea Crisului, a village near Sfântu Gheorghe. Next to teaching she is a PhD student. Her thesis is on the role of alternative pedagogy in the education of disadvantaged students. She is married. Her husband is a Roma from the Orko community in Sfântu Gheorghe. He is also a teacher, they meet at the university. As a teacher, **Tímea** is an honoured citizen of Sfântu Gheorghe, as few but a growing number of Roma are.

3.4.2. Scenario 2/Negative scenario

In the negative scenario, **Zoltán** had a heart attack when he was 62. His illness was primarily due to the uncertainty of the living conditions caused by the collapse of the pension system. In the time period between 2013 and 2025, the real value of the pensions has dropped with more than 50 percent. The government is unable to maintain the pension system by newer and newer loans, but in

spite of this fact, is not willing to recognize the system's collapse. Instead of cutting the pensions, the government uses the inflation of the Romanian currency. The treatment following the infarction consumed all the savings of Zoltan's family. After this, the couple was unable to maintain its household in Baraolt. They had to sell their flat and to move to Doboseni, in the house inherited by Zoltan's wife. They try to complement their income with small scale agricultural production. However, in Doboseni, the majority of the population in 2025 belongs to the Rudar Roma community. According to the negative scenario, because of the processes of marginalization affecting both Roma and non Roma the social distances between the two groups have become even larger. The two groups embitter each other's existence. From Zoltan's perspective, the more and more frequent stealing is the primary problem. It goes without saying that Zoltan's daughter lives in the United States, while his son in the United Kingdom.

Following the eight classes, **Tímea** continues her schooling in Baraolt. However, she quickly realizes that – in spite of her studiousness – the educational system offers her little chances. After she finished the ninth class, her grandfather died. She put an end to her studies. Now she lives in the Roma colony of Batani. When she was 17 she founded a family. She never entered the labour market.

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

During the brainstorming event we investigated the perceptions of the participants regarding the role of the migratory processes in the future demographic development of the country. We introduced an additional research question about the perception of other demographic processes. We were interested to know whether the participants perceived the present demographic trends unchangeable (and taken for granted in the nearby future) or they thought that these trends were changeable and could be changed by population policy measures.

The results (at least from our perspective) proved to be really interesting. According to the perception of the participant's the migratory process are the sole among the factors of the demographic development, which could be changed through targeted policy measures. The natural growth had a marginal role in the discussion. The question of mortality was not discussed at all. This topic is not a central issue of the Romanian demographic discourse.

The decreasing number of newborns and the low fertility rate appeared only marginally and this was only partially due to the fact that the foresight exercise focused primarily on migratory processes. It seems that for participants the low fertility rate is a taken for granted issue and an unchangeable social fact. The population policy of the former regime (which aimed to maintain the fertility rate above the replacement level) appeared in the discussion as an abnormal and immoral set of measures. The effects of these measures were perceived as being artificial (the population policy maintained "artificially" a high level of fertility). The population policy of the former regime had distorted of the age structure. As a consequence, the presently active generation will be pushed in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

Some participants perceived the postponement and the decreasing rates of childbearing as a consequence of the changing reproductive models. This was perceived mostly negatively. The older reproductive model (allowing for more children) was linked to the responsibility for the community, while the new one to the process of individualization and loss of collective values. However, even who stood for this opinion revealed that the change is inevitable and hardly changeable through policy measures.

The ageing represented the most accentuated fear of the participants. There was a consensus that the current trend will lead to the collapse of the pension system. This could be hardly avoided even in the positive scenario.

As it was to be expected, migration proved to be the most important factor affecting the country's demographic evolution. However, according to participants, this is hardly changeable either. The experts provided a very strong framework, that of a culturally embedded migratory praxis. In this framework, the absence (or even the decline) of the migration is not a plausible future. The question is whether circular migration and the high number of returned migrants or definitive emigration will be characteristic.

It has to be highlighted that the participants did not discuss at all the topic of immigration. The returned migrants were of particular importance, but third country immigrants did not appear in their narratives. This result can be considered of central importance in our investigation. Immigration is not part of the future expectations of the Romanians.

Besides emigration and ageing, the Roma integration proved to be one of the major challenges affecting the country's demographic future. This was strongly related to the topic of inequalities, more precisely to the topic of territorial inequalities.

Last but not least it was characteristic to the discussion that participants perceived the continuation of the current trends as a direct way towards the negative scenario and the significant deterioration of the present social conditions. This can be escaped only through very strong commitment and proper social policy measures. The principal actors of these measures should be the Romanian government; however local authorities are also important players according to the opinion of the participants.

The following policy relevant lessons could be drawn from the foresight events:

- 1) Migration has been highlighted as the most important factor influencing the demographic process by the participants of our discussions. However immigration appeared only as return migration.
- 2) An important factor that pushes young people toward migration is the decisive feeling of uncertainty created by the legislation and institutional system. This feeling of uncertainty comes partly from the fact that there are no clear priorities in development strategies and these lack consistency. Consistent policies and transparent developmental strategies would have in such a positive effect and would facilitate the return migration of the young people.

- 3) The integration of Roma is a key policy issue in the demographic and social future of Romania. It is serious policies challenge that according to participants the Romanian state does not advance in the integration of Roma. The fear that the society will become even more polarized that can lead to conflicts between Roma and non-Roma exists. They also think that if the Roma issue remains unsolved it can lead to a more massive migration of non-Roma from Romania or from certain regions.
- 4) The ethnic issue also appeared as the “ethnic/cultural otherness” (i.e. inhabited by Hungarian majority) attributed to the region. Participants considered that the ethnic structure of the region represents a disadvantage because one can foresee the continuous degradation of Romanian language competence in case of young generations. With respect to the labour market, declining language competence reduces the chances of young people in finding a job.
- 5) Future migration trends do not depend exclusively on the policy measures adopted by the Romanian government. Our participants attributed high relevance to migration policies of Western countries, which can pull Romanian population.
- 6) Economic trends and the change of the economic structure were of primal importance for the participants. On the one hand, as we have already mentioned, there is a deep concern related to the ageing of the population. Participants saw this phenomenon as inevitable. However, the labour market could keep a balance between the active and inactive population, and could create opportunities for maintaining the social protection system and the pension fund. This requires sacrifices even in the positive scenario. Because of the changing age structure, rising the age for retirement seems inevitable. Despite all these, one can avoid the collapse of the system by bringing into the labour market many unemployed or other inactive persons.
- 7) The economic trends envisioned in the positive scenario are intimately linked to a successful reform of the **educational system**. The reform is possible if the Romanian government decides to double the public spending on education (Romania has now the lowest proportion of GDP spent on education in the European Union).
- 8) The ability of a sending society (as Romania) to capitalize the possibilities lying in new techniques of communication and transnational forms of social organization in order to maintain the links with emigrant communities is considered crucial. According to the participants active governmental programs should be initiated to achieve this aim. These programs should also provide financial recourses to local governments to develop strategies of strengthening local identity and maintaining transnational bonds with emigrant communities. Nevertheless, this does not imply only annually organized reunions of emigrants, but also inexpensive housing and increased labor market reintegration chances of returning young migrants. The new techniques of communication that enable the creation and maintenance of transnational communities are also used strategically by the national and local government and by the civil organizations engaged in the project. Different types of internet-based social media allow emigrants to maintain a daily virtual presence in the sending society.

- 9) Social and territorial inequalities were key topics. Regarding the territorial development it should become a guiding principle that some basic infrastructural facilities (such as surfaced road, post office and public transport) have to be granted for all local communities (or at least for all settlements with 300 inhabitants or more). Another aspect is that the Romanian state should provide quality health care and education for the rural population of the country (which makes 45 percent of the inhabitants). These policy measures could induce that rural and economically peripheral areas do not fall out definitely from the Romanian social and economic circuit.

Appendix 1. – Guide for the brainstorming events

The brainstorming events followed the pathways below:

I. Introductory part

- 1) First the moderator welcomed the participants. He introduced himself, his assistants and all persons implicated in the organization of the event.
- 2) Then the moderator presented the aims, technical details and requirements of the session:
 - a. The main aim is to map: How do participants imagine the nearby future regarding migration, demographic and labour market processes? What pathways are expected? What are the main drivers of the expected processes?
 - b. Participants have to keep in mind that our time horizon is 2025.
 - c. This is a brainstorming session and it will be followed by a foresight scenario developing event.
 - d. The discussion will take approximately 2 hours.
 - e. Participants are requested to sign the privacy statement.
 - f. The discussion will be recorded with video-camera and Dictaphone. Recording the discussion makes easier to take notes and analyze the material. Confidentiality will be preserved. The material will be analyzed by the Romanian research team and will not be transmitted to any third party.
 - g. Following the event all participants will receive a gift parcel from the Sfântu Gheorghe Municipality. A dinner will be also offered to participants. Following the final (scenario development) session a reception will take place. All participants are welcomed.
 - h. Thinking together and elaborating appropriate strategies are the main aims of the discussion. All participants might and are asked to express their opinion freely, without restrictions. All standpoints are equally important. We do not have to reach a consensus, however we must listen attentively each other's opinion. There are no good answers and wrong answers, multiple perspectives can complete each other.
 - i. Two or more people shall not talk at the same time. In the opposite case we will not be able to transcribe the audio and video material, and we will not be able to analyze it.
 - j. Please feel comfortable and relaxed. Enjoy the session!
- 3) Finally, the moderator presented shortly the SEEMIG project and the importance of the WP5 foresight exercise

- a. SEEMIG is an international project that aims to investigate migratory, demographic and labour market processes in the South-East European region. Eight countries taking part in it. Besides Romania, Austrian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Italian, Serbian, Slovak and Slovenian project partners are involved. The role of local partners (local governments) is crucial. From Romania, RIRNM and two local partners, Sfântu Gheorghe and Harghita County are involved.
- b. The main task of the Romanian project partners is to describe the migratory, demographic and labour market processes in Romania and to improve the existing statistical data-production system. Primarily quantitative methods are used.
- c. WP 5 foresight exercise is not a quantitative (statistical) tool. It aims to map the perceptions of people who are concerned with relevant processes. The central question is: What are their expectations regarding the future evolution of these processes?
- d. Three brainstorming events will take place. The participants of the first session are decision makers (politicians, office holders at central or local authorities). At the second event the participants are migrants (who lived at least one year in a foreign country, but who returned to Romania). The participants of the third brainstorming event are experts (who work in academic sphere or at institutions engaged in the management of the migratory processes).
- e. Finally, the foresight scenario development will take place with the contribution of all participants.

II. Discussion

The second stage of the event (the discussion in a strict sense) had three main parts.

- 2) Each participant introduced itself
- 3) First, idea generating questions were put by the moderator:
 - a. What are the ideas, notions coming first to your mind when you think about the demographic situation **in Romania**? *(First only briefly, in one or two words. The assistant notes the ideas to the flipchart. Then all participants will have the opportunity to enter in details and develop the ideas mentioned)*
 - b. What are the ideas, notions coming first to your mind when you think about the demographic situation **in your region**? *(First only briefly, in one or two words. The assistant notes the ideas to the flipchart. Then all participants will have the opportunity to enter in details and develop the ideas mentioned)*
 - c. What do you think, how will the demographic situation of the country evolve **until 2025**? *(First only briefly, in one or two words. The assistant notes the ideas to the*

flipchart. Then all participants will have the opportunity to enter in details and develop the ideas mentioned)

- d. In your understanding, what makes people move, or what does make them stay in their home country? You can mention both **push and pull factors**. *(First only briefly, in one or two words. The assistant notes the ideas to the flipchart. Then all participants will have the opportunity to enter in details and develop the ideas mentioned)*
 - e. What do you think, through what kind of **policies** can the process of migration be influenced and its consequences managed?
- 4) In the second phase of the discussion, the participants (helped by the moderator) created clusters of the main drivers, so they grouped the ideas emerged during the previous phase.
- a. The following drivers of migratory and demographic processes were enumerated: *(a review of ideas noted on the flipchart)*.
 - b. Now we should group these factors! What are the factors strongly related to each other?
- 5) In the third phase of the discussion, the (clusters of) drivers were ranked according to their importance and probability. For the prioritization of drivers we used the classical forecast scenario matrix suggested by the Hungarian colleagues:

Matrix used for the prioritization of the drivers identified at the brainstorming events

		Importance	
		High	Low
Probability	High		
	Low		

Hence, prioritization was structured along two aspects: importance and probability. We drew the matrix on the flipchart and participants were asked to fill it in.

Appendix. 2. Guide for the foresight scenario development workshop

The foresight scenario development was also conducted according to previously elaborated guidelines. The event was composed by four main phases.

I. Introductory phase

- 1) The moderator welcomed the participants.
- 2) He introduced himself again and introduced the two assistants who will moderate the third phase of the event.
- 3) He outlined the following steps
 - a. Each brainstorming group (i.e. migrants, decision makers, and experts) shall choose a spokesperson, who will present the findings of the brainstorming event.
 - b. Two groups will be formed to develop one foresight scenario each. The groups will be moderated by the assistants.
 - c. Finally, the spokesperson will present the foresight scenario
- 4) The discussion will be recorded with video-camera and Dictaphone. Recording the discussion makes easier to take notes and analyze the material. Confidentiality will be preserved. The material will be analyzed by the Romanian research team and will not be transmitted to any third party.
- 5) All participants might and are asked to express their opinion freely, without restrictions. All standpoints are equally important. We do not have to reach a consensus, however we must listen attentively each other's opinion. There are no good answers and wrong answers, multiple perspectives can complete each other.

Two or more people shall not talk at the same time. In the opposite case we will not be able to transcribe the audio and video material, and we will not be able to analyze it. **II. Joint discussion**

- 1) Each participant introduces itself (which institute he/she represents, why are the migratory, demographic and labour market processes important in his/her work)
- 2) The spokespersons outline the main findings of the brainstorming events. **Question:** *As you know, during the brainstorming events we tried to find the main drivers of the migratory, demographic and labour market processes in Romania. I would ask the spokespersons previously designated to present the group's main findings in three minutes.* The **moderator** writes on the table the drivers.
- 3) Following the presentations 5 drivers are chosen that will be the factors discussed in developing the foresight scenarios.

The moderator is asked to note the drivers in the following table

Factors (drivers) used in the foresight scenario development

Drivers	Positive scenario	Negative scenario
Driver 1		
Driver 2		
Driver 3		
Driver 4		
Diver 5		

- 4) The formation of the two groups for the discussion. **Question:** *In the next phase we will work in two separate groups. Migrants, experts and decision makers will be represented equally in each group. The two groups will have similar task. The first group has to develop and discuss the positive and second group the negative scenario. Both groups concentrate on the effects of the outlined macro-processes on the personal life of some fictive characters, representing ordinary people. I will decide based on the order of sitting which of the groups will participants join.*

III. Foresight developing discussions

The two group discussions were moderated by the two assistants. They were also provided a short guideline previously elaborated.

- 2) Our task is to develop and discuss the negative and positive scenarios regarding the country's migratory, demographic and labour market processes. Please imagine what consequences will have if driver 1 develops positively.
- 3) Please imagine what consequences will have if driver 2 develops positively.
- 4)
- 5) Summarize the positive and the negative scenario. How will the future look like in the case of the positive and in the case of the negative scenario?
- 6) To illustrate the concrete effects of the scenarios we need heroes, more precisely concrete persons. Our heroes of course can have both positive and negative attributes. The main point is that our heroes are ordinary people. Please imagine two such heroes and discuss their life chances in the case of the positive and in the case of the negative scenario.

Appendix 3. – The participants of the foresight events

Characteristics of the migrants participating in foresight exercise

Acronym	Professional background	Age group	Gender	Migratory experiences
C.R	English teacher	35-45	Female	She spent 15 years in Hungary, 2 years in the United States and returned when she gave birth to a baby
M.A.	Industrial production-coordinator	35-45	Male	He spent 16 years in Hungary. He emigrated when he was 14 and returned in 2009.
H. Zs.	Truck driver	35-45	Male	He worked several times for longer periods in the United States
N. N.	Basketball trainer	35-45	Female	She spent 2 years in Austria and worked in her domain.
O.Cs.	Engineer	35-45	Male	He spent 5 years in the United States
H.B.	Technician	35-45	Male	He spent 10 years in Germany
Cs.S.	Journalist	45-55	Male	He studied in Hungary and spent there several times longer periods
C.I.	Architect	45-55	Female	She emigrated to Hungary in 1990 and returned in 1994

Characteristics of the migrants participating in the foresight exercise

Acronym	Institution represented	Professional status	Age group	Gender
I. A.	National Institute of Statistics	Director of Covasna County Bureau	35-45	Female
B.Z.	Office for Children's Protection – Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe	Director	45-55	Female
S.K.M.	Office for Social Protection – Covasna County	Expert	45-55	Female
B.J	Sapientia University – Miercurea Ciuc	Sociologist	55-65	Female
G.O.	Sapientia University – Miercurea Ciuc	Sociologist	25-35	Female
K.I.	Ministry of Education	General Inspector for Covasna County	45-55	Female
K.T.	National Labor Force Agency	Director of Covasna County Bureau	55-65	Male
C.L.	Babes-Bolyai University	Economist	45-55	Male

Characteristics of the decision makers participating in the foresight exercise

Acronym	Institution represented	Professional background	Age group	Gender	Other relevant info
K.B.	Sfântu Gheorghe Local Council	Councilor	45-55	Female	Director of one of the largest high schools in Sfântu Gheorghe
K.A.	Sfântu Gheorghe Local Council	Councilor	35-45	Male	Director of a large NGO engaged in local development
K.A.	Romanian Parliament	Member of the Romanian Parliament (Harghita County)	35-45	Male	Since the foresight events he became the ministry of environmental issues
H.N.	Covasna County Council	Councilor	35-45	Male	
L.A.E	Municipality of Remetea (Harghita County)	Mayor	55-65	Male	
N.E.	Sfântu Gheorghe Local Council	Councilor	25-35	Male	
M.I	Sfântu Gheorghe Local Council	Councilor	25-35	Female	History teacher
N.J.	Covasna County Council	Vice President of the County Council	45-55	Male	Economist, former state secretary