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The effects of migration: the children left behind

In 2007, The Soros Foundation initiated a research program dealing with one of the most important and impactful effects of external labor migration, namely its impact on the children left behind.

Through this program, the Foundation aimed to create a best practices model and a set of services for children whose parents are working abroad, which will integrate the positive effects of migration while eliminating the negative ones.

The program contains several main activities:

- an opinion poll for the junior high school students; The poll consisted of easily understood questions regarding the lifestyle, resources, health and welfare (monetary resources), behaviors and values of the family of origin, as well as the school performances of each student. All the interviews were anonymous; the respondents cannot be identified in any way. The main differences concerning children whose parents are working abroad were identified through this tool.
 - a series of interviews with the local decision-makers (City Hall, Local Council), social assistants, teachers, school headmasters, and parents from the areas and communities with high migration numbers; The aim of this line of research is to determine the main types of successful interventions from the local communities aimed to support the children and the main needs of schools and local authorities (knowledge, material resources, political affiliation, etc.) for the funding of such projects.
 - an analysis of the child policies and legislation in Romania
 - a pilot program for special services for the children whose parents are working abroad
 - the elaboration of a set of public policies for the children in question
- The first two of these activities were performed in 2007.

1. **The opinion poll** took place in June 2007, involving a representative sample of students from grades 5-8, on a national level, as well as on historical regions, as well as a supplementary sample of students with one or both parents working abroad. The total number of students participating in the research was 2,037, with 200 school representatives (mainly headmasters, with deputy headmasters or secretaries being interviewed in certain cases) from the same number of schools.

The main methodological features of the research are as follows:

- Sample volume: 2,037 junior high students, of whom 1.600 are a representative sample for junior high school students, and 437 are a supplementary sample of students whose parents (one or both) are working abroad
- Sample type: probabilistic, stratified, with proportional representation on region-defined strata (8 regions) and degree of urbanization (5 categories). The main selection unit was the education unit (200 schools with junior high school students). A supplementary selection on levels of a sample of 437 students whose parents (one or both) were working abroad at the time of the interview. The sample is representative for the junior high school population in Romania.
- Error margin: +/- 2.5%
- Data gathering timeframe: June 4th-11th, 2007
- Data gathering was performed through the 'exam method' (the questionnaires were filled in by the students).

- In addition, the 200 headmasters included in the sample in question filled in ‘school files’, with relevant statistical data.
2. A qualitative research. Interviews were conducted in eight locations with a high incidence of migration: Timiș county-Lugoj and Biled; Satu-Mare county-Negrești Oaș and Micula; Dâmbovița county-Fieni and Gura Vulcanei; Neamț county-Piatra Neamț and Horia. Interviews with the families/relatives who care for children whose parents are working abroad were conducted in each of the eight locations. Interviews were also conducted with the local social assistant, the headmaster of the local school, the local police and, where possible, the local priest.

The other three activities included in the program shall be performed in 2008.

The research is based on the quantitative and qualitative studies performed by the Soros Foundation, and is the second part of the research published in November 2007 “Effects of Migration: Children Left Behind”. This paper is an attempt at an in-depth analysis of the data gathered through the opinion poll, and also of the more detailed data obtained through the local interviews that were conducted as part of the program.

The data gathering and processing was performed by The Gallup Organization Romania. The methodological tools (sample and questionnaire) and the report were the responsibility of the project’s team: Georgiana Toth, Georgiana Păun, Alexandru Toth, Ovidiu Voicu (FSR program manager), Mihaela Ștefănescu (FSR program coordinator).

A qualitative approach to the risks to which the children whose parents are working abroad are exposed

Georgiana Toth

Introduction

Any discussion about the consequences of a social phenomenon ‘x’ on a group, community, or another social phenomenon ‘y’ must involve the answer to the question ‘what would have happened to y in the absence of x?’. In other words, it must isolate the effect of x on y from the effects of other factors that were also affecting y. In social research, scientific experimentation – as a method used to determine the relation of causality between two or more variables while keeping the other factors under control – becomes in most cases almost impossible to use, because there often exists a set of variables which cannot be kept under control and whose influence cannot be ignored. On the level of common sense, certain phenomena often receive simple explanations, which easily attribute causality between two events. In the case of migration, which is a complex multi-faceted phenomenon, produced in time and space, generalizing statements of the type “children whose parents work abroad do poorly in school” or “a 12 year old committed suicide because his mother left to work in Italy” only work as tabloid headlines, because their validity remains controversial. To be correct from the point of view of common sense, as well as from a practical point of view one must discuss the risks facing the children because their parents are working abroad.

The situation of the children who are “left behind” received a great deal of attention in the media, which presents it as a social problem. Coupled with the not-entirely-legal migration of Romanians abroad for work, this negatively impacts the scientific endeavors to investigate the effects of the parents’ migration on their children, because investigators often encounter reluctance on the part of the children and their family to discuss the phenomenon. On the other hand, however, beyond the reluctance to mention negative effects of the children themselves, both research using representative samples, and qualitative research show that these negative effects are far from uniform, they are independent from the social context of migration to the point of origin, and they lack the extent that the media is trying to convey. Before blaming an entire category of people for choosing to work and live temporarily abroad, far from their children, in order to be able to support their families it is only fair to wonder what would have happened to these children and their families if the opportunities for international migration would not have existed. Of course, in order to answer this question, one would have to undertake a purely mental exercise, since the character of migration itself, as well as the difficulties to measure subjective variables, namely the emotional response of the children in question would hinder any real scientific research.

The results of the qualitative investigation performed in June 2007 on a sample of junior high school children¹ identified a series of effects and made a few hypotheses regarding the consequences of their parents’ actions. We shall try to give a qualitative interpretation of the consequences of these actions on the children left at home, as well as the risks they entail. The data used was gathered through interviews conducted in September 2007 in five locations across Romania: Vulcana and Fieni in Dâmbovița county, Biled and Lugoj in Timiș county and Horia in Neamț county.

¹ See *The Effects of Migration: Children Left Behind* by Georgiana Toth, Alexandru Toth, Ovidiu Voicu, Mihaela Ștefănescu, Soros Foundation Romania, 2007

Consequences on the family level

The comparisons between groups of children based on the status (migrant/non-migrant) of their parents showed that certain negative consequences were more prevalent for children whose mothers were working abroad. Children whose fathers were abroad were experiencing less negative effects, most likely because in most cases they were left in the care of their mothers. Moreover, even when both parents were absent, the extended family was successful in assuming the roles of the two parents so that, although emotional trauma was present, children received enough attention, love and supervision to limit the risks caused by the absence of their parents. The group of children exposed to the highest psychological and behavioral risks remained that of children whose mothers were absent and whose parents were divorced. Certainly, the consequences were also affected by the family context and the consequences of migration on the latter.

Based on our qualitative interviews, we were able to identify direct negative consequences of the absence of one or both parents on their families and children living at home.

The first consequences that we identified deal with *the evolution of the parental couple*. The absence of one of the parents, and especially the mother, leads to the deterioration and “cooling” of the relationship between the parents themselves.

In certain cases, this leads to divorces and children often end up living with one of their parents.

“I did follow up on one of the students whose mother is abroad. So what’s the effect, ultimately? Many families just break up. One of the parents leaves, the couple breaks up, people don’t return or find someone else while they’re away, and all these affect the children, we have many of these examples right here in our school.”(interview, headmaster, Vulcana, Dâmbovița county)

For certain women, going abroad is not just a strategy to improve their family’s income, but also a way to get out of dead-end relationships. In these cases, their children are not only deprived of their mothers, but also risk being abused by their fathers, whose abuse sometimes also caused the departure of the mothers in the first place. There have been cases when families were abandoned, women choosing not to return to abusive relationships.

“So unhappy women left, who have children here, and they got there and forgot about the children, they found other men... and now the children have to suffer for it... if their husbands had issues, if they drunk, or they were abusive... or even without that, if they found better lives there... they decided it wasn’t worth it to return to their children ...” (interview, the priest from Horia)

“About this, what I can say is that there have been many divorces and many broken families... generally when the women are leaving. We had many custody investigations, following divorces. But generally, they all wanted to keep their children... they didn’t leave the children to the fathers. By now, we don’t have as many divorces anymore. But there were two years when there were a lot of divorces and of those, I think about 95% of the women were working in Italy. There are still many women working there now, but back then they were gone for long periods of time, and they couldn’t maintain a long-distance relationship... and they couldn’t see what was happening back home. And when they returned, the husbands would start with the accusations; they were young women with small children, with many problems. I don’t know... they started seeing the world differently... I couldn’t explain it myself. But generally, most of those women said that the relationship with their husbands had turned cold, and they felt like they had nothing in common anymore.” (interview, the social assistant from Horia)

Besides the risk of broken families, the parents’ migration may also lead to a redefinition of relations within the extended family, so that children end up replacing their biological parents with the relatives in whose care they are placed. In most cases, these relatives are the children’s grandparents, whom the children consider their real parents, and even call “mother” and “father”. Especially when the children are very small when their parents leave for extended periods of time, the relationship between them and their parents ceases to exist.

I: How did the children react when you first left?

A: Well the kid didn't realize, he was too little, an infant ...

I: What about the others?

A: The older ones, yes, but not really ...

I: How about now?

A: We're still the parents... She's more like an aunt...

I: You and...?

A: My husband and I. They call us mother and father. Yes." (interview, a grandmother caring for three children, aged five and a half, eight and eleven, whose mother has been working in Spain for the last five years)

Another effect of the parents' absence is a lesser extent of supervision of the child's pursuits. This obviously depends on each family's context, and on the members of the extended family who are left to care for the children, but our interviews all confirmed the existence of this particular effect. Lower levels of supervision can affect the child's school performances, as well as cause deviant behaviors. The absence of parents is also a source of emotional trauma for children.

"Another consequence would be an increase in... I won't say the rates of dropping out of school, but their performance. They don't receive proper parental supervision, so some of them get a bit out of control, so to speak." (interview, the social assistant from Lugo)

I: "What are the main problems facing them?"

A: Well, they're disoriented, they don't know what to do, how to do it, how to achieve their goals. They don't have anybody to show them the way."(interview, the priest of Biled)

"Generally, parents keep in touch with their children, send them presents, money... sometimes they send them too much money, and the children get used to it. They have money and cell phones, but they miss supervision... I don't know of cases when a parent completely disappeared, but there are cases when parents forget to send money home... both men and women. It could be that they're not making any money, and they stay abroad just for the sake of it, or because they have no money to get back to Romania, or it could be that they have new families there. There have been cases... but they're not the norm..." (interview, the social assistant from Horia)

We can therefore note, as our preliminary conclusions that the effects of the parents' absence on their children depend very much on the existing relationship between the parents and their evolution, as well as the individual context of each extended family. The main risks for the children are related to emotional deprivation and the lack of parental supervision.

Parental affectivity deprivation effects

The discussions that we conducted with persons who deal directly with the children whose parents are abroad centered most often on two categories of effects: the increase in material welfare coupled with emotional deprivation. The two categories are constantly in opposition; all our respondents highlighted the fact that money and material welfare cannot compensate for the lack of parental love.

"...generally, these children suffer enormously, even if they are well-off financially... even when they can flaunt their... you know... their new clothes... it affects them emotionally... and you can see it [...] they lack the most important thing... love... as much as we try to help them."(interview, the school headmaster from Horia)

I: As far as you know, do parents support their children? Do they send money, clothes?

A: Most of them do. Certainly. They send money and clothes. But the children miss their parents. So it's about how they're feeling. And this also affects their school performances. They try to receive emotional support from their teachers. And they

also compensate by buying the most expensive gadgets and so on. You can imagine the effects of that on their school performances.” (interview, a teacher from Lugoj)

“The children are the victims... and we try to help them as much as we can... but you can't replace a mother's love not even with... ten thousand Euros...” (interview, the priest from Horia)

„I: Are the children affected by the absence of their parents?

A: Yes... they miss their parents terribly... much as I wish to protect them... We raised them for a long time... now they're dealing better with it...”(interview, the grandmother of two children, aged seven and ten, whose parents have been working in Italy for the last four years, Horia)

The qualitative interviews reinforce the results of the opinion poll conducted with junior high school children which showed that children whose parents or mothers were absent were more prone to bouts of depression than the general population. Teachers and social assistants noticed that these children tend to isolate themselves from the other children, become less communicative, more apathetic, seemingly more ‘thoughtful’. The interactions with other children are sometimes replaced with excessive consumption of TV, which often affects the children's school performances.

“A: I don't think that these children have financial problems, but they lack their parents' love...

I: How do they behave?

A: They stop communicating, or they try to replace what they need emotionally with money, they enjoy... I'm not calling it arrogance, it's difficult to say that a child is arrogant... but they tell us we're not their mothers, and we are aware of that, and we are doing our best to be their surrogate mothers...”

“A: These children, after their parents left, became friends with their TV sets, with their computers, so they live in a virtual reality... and that is sure to affect them... what I think is that they'll be less sensitive, because of all the violent cartoons and videogames they grow up with... they'll be less sensitive and tougher... and we can see that in school...” (interview, the school headmaster from Horia)

“I: From your own experience, what would be the most important issues for the children?

A: Their main issue is emotional. You can see it on their faces, especially when we talk about their parents, all we have to say is that tomorrow we are holding the parents-teachers meeting. And you can see it on their faces.

A: Did they have health issues? Are they more sensitive to health problems?

I: We didn't see any health conditions, but you can see how isolated they are, they try to isolate themselves, they're thoughtful, they're not involved in class activities. During breaks, all the other children are playing, and they stay behind. That's their most important issue” (interview, the headmaster from Vulcana, Dâmbovița county)

Emotional deprivation is displayed differently, according to each child's age and personality. Some children cry frequently, others get sick, and yet others look for surrogate parents, including their teachers.

“I: Did she cry? (when her father left for Spain)

A: Yes, she cried, she was even in hospital, we couldn't get through to her ‘I want daddy home, I want daddy home!’. We even had to have her admitted to hospital.

I: Why?

A: She said: “Mommy, I want all of us together!” She was missing her father.

I: What hospital was she admitted in?

A: You know what happened? My youngest had the mumps, and then the older one got it too. She had to stay indoors, have no contact with other children, so she couldn't play and she was thinking about her father all the time, and she was saying “I want daddy home, I can't go on like this, I want my daddy”. She was missing her father.”(interview, the mother of two girls, 13 and 10 respectively, whose husband has been in Spain for three years, Vulcana)

“I: Let's get back to the issues of the children whose parents are abroad... how they act in class... what's different about

them? How do you see them? How can you tell that their problems are caused by the absence of their parents and not by other causes?

A: The principal and teachers can tell you more... from what I hear from them, one primary school teacher told me that a child asked her "would you like to be my mommy?"... this happens with grade 1 children, this one boy, I don't know whether both his parents are away or not... but you can see how these children are looking for our protection... here in school" (interview, school headmaster from Horia)

I: How did the children react the first time, when their father left?

A: Well, they didn't react in any way... because I was home

I: How about the last time? When you both left?

A: The last time... obviously bad.

I: How do you think your absence affects them?

A: They affect them, that's for sure.

I: But how?

A: Emotionally, first and foremost, they stop studying, they cry, they tell us "don't go away no more"

I: Which of the two?

A: Both of them.

I: Do they stop studying? They skip school?

A: They don't skip school. But my oldest, do you know what she told me? "If you go away this year again, I'll stop studying" and then that's exactly what she did. Can you imagine! Yes. 'So why did she stop studying?' 'Well, I told you I'll stop studying if you go! See?'" (interview, the mother of two girls, 10 and 14 respectively, who's been working with her husband in the Netherlands for the last seven years, Biled)

I: How did she react the first time her mother went abroad?

A: When her mother left the first time, she cried a lot, but she was young, she'd be up on the fence, crying, and people would ask her: why are you crying Mirabela? "Because my mom went to Spain". When they talked on the phone, she'd stop crying. When her mother returned after four years, the little girl didn't recognize her" (interview, grandmother of a seven-year-old girl, whose mother has been working in Spain for the last five years)

The fact that the absent parents are trying to make sure that their children have everything they need, including expensive things that are ostentatious by comparison to the children's real needs, is seen by our respondents as a way to show their love, which can nevertheless have negative effects on the education of the children.

"Firstly, children miss their parents' love... they are affected by this lack. But on the other hand, they're also proud because if their mother or father is in Italy, they get everything they need. And some of them really take advantage of this, because, as you can see, the village is full of motorbikes and cell phones... and they all receive money and clothes. But all this cannot compensate for the lack of love." (interview, the social assistant from Horia)

I: As far as you know, do parents support their children? Do they send money, clothes?

A: Most of them do. Certainly. They send money and clothes. But the children miss their parents. It's what they're feeling. And this also affects their school performances. They try to receive emotional support from their teachers. And they also compensate by buying the most expensive gadgets and so on. You can imagine the effects of that on their school performances." (interview, a teacher from Lugoj)

The emotional deprivation affects the development of the children's personalities. The immediate consequences are most often behavioral responses to the emotional trauma, but the lack of any type of intervention, either from their families or from outside can lead to long-term consequences for the children's personality development.

Effects on the children's school attendance and involvement

These types of effects can be seen more as indirect results of the absence of the parents. When they are present, the effects are caused by the lack of supervision, as well as by emotional deprivation.

"The negative consequences are not financial, they are emotional... I'll tell you what happens... we had very good students whose parents left... one boy was left in the care of his sister, she was 20 years old... a student herself...the boy was in grade 5... and we could see that he'd skip school, couldn't get to school in time... and we found out that he and his sister were watching TV late every night, and in the mornings they couldn't get up to go anywhere..."(interview, representative of the Authority for the Protection of Children, Neamț county)

Many times, the persons in whose care the children are left not only lack the basic abilities to supervise them, but are also unable to support them with their school work.

"A: Firstly, these children don't get any help with their homework, studying... the grandparents can't help them... uncles and aunts have no time for them... they just make sure that the child has its lunch... give it money for a sandwich or a bag of snacks... And think they did their job... and then it's up to us..."

I: What's up to you?

A: These children only study in class, that's all... they do no homework... and there are very few of these children who have any hobbies, like playing an instrument, or sports. They get home around 2 pm every day, they have lunch... and then they watch cartoons, their older sisters watch the afternoon soaps... and that's it..." (interview, the school headmaster from Horia)

Even in the absence of parental supervision and support for homework, the effects on the school performances of each individual child vary according to their personality, and their individual level of interest for studying.

"I: Who used to help the girl with her homework?"

A: I did.

I: You help her with homework?"

A: Yes, until grade 2, even grade 3, I used to sit with her when she was doing homework. From now on, I can't do it anymore... and if she doesn't understand something, she asks, she's a smart girl, the first in her class... we're older, and we can't help her anymore, but she's managing, she studies in her own room, and when she doesn't understand something, she asks her teachers..." (interview, the grandmother of a ten-year-old girl whose parents have been working in Greece for the last nine years, Fieni)

The lack of proper supervision from the family also affects the children's educational pursuits, which are replaced with recreational pursuits (like watching television), in the context where school also lacks the necessary mechanisms to control these tendencies. In some extreme cases, this can result in children dropping out of school.

Substance abuse problems and deviant behaviors

Another indirect effect of the parents' absence, coupled with the inadequate control from the child's caregivers, can result in deviant behaviors.

"... there are cases where the mother and father are both working abroad and they do humiliating work just to send them money, and the kids are partying all the time... I know of such cases in Roman... not so many in the village... but in town there are some..." (interview, the priest from Horia)

As the data from the opinion poll suggested, the emergence of deviant behaviors in children correlates with the absence of their mothers.

“A: ...especially when the mothers are gone... as soon as the mother is gone, they lose their way.

I: What does “they lose their way” mean?

A: It means that they don't go to school... have antisocial behaviors... they get drunk, they throw beer bottles at fences... they swear... you know, behaviors that aren't decent...” (interview, the priest from Horia)

“I: What do you think are the consequence of the absence of the parents for their families? Both positive and negative.

A: They are left in the care of the grandparents, who are very old, so they are left without direction, without guidance. They do as they please... they wander on the streets, they're just directionless.” (interview, a social assistant from Biled)

In the absence of their parents' or family members' control, children and teenagers are more exposed to peer pressure and take up deviant or inappropriate behaviors for their age: illicit substance abuse, long absences from home, and even actions that break the law. In many cases, these behaviors impact their personality on the long term, their relationships with their families, and their school performances.

“I: So what sort of problems do these children tend to have?

A: The main problem, especially when the mothers are absent, is that the child goes home from school, and there isn't always a warm meal ready, or there is no family life to speak of, the child has nobody to talk with. So the child ends up talking with others who don't always show support and may be negative influences... I don't know, it's a matter of not having someone to communicate with. These children may have been distant from their parents anyway, but when the parents are absent, they become even more distant because... I don't know... there isn't much you can do over the phone. If you're there you can see the child has a problem, you see their face change when they talk about it, because you know your own children.

I: And how do these problems manifest themselves?

A: These children have a lot of freedom, they do whatever they please if they're not controlled. They don't come home at night, they go to clubs and bars, they smoke a lot... these teenagers, because I'm talking about the underage teenagers, after they're 18, nobody knows what they do. I don't know, I think the absence of their parents has serious negative effects. I don't know if they end up using drugs, but they're using alcohol frequently. They lack supervision, and they develop a personality that nobody can change. School, teachers... nothing has value for them anymore. This is what I think, based on the cases that I've encountered...” (interview, a social assistant from Biled)

The absence of the parents does more than just encourage deviant behaviors; it also exposes children to abuse from their caregivers. Interviews have shown that there are cases of work and even sexual abuse, although it is unlikely that there would be a greater incidence thereof for children with migrant parents by comparison with the general population.

‘... There was the case of a 15 year old boy... his mother left for Italy and sends him money each month... he was left in the care of an aunt who had six children... and the aunt didn't let him go to school anymore, in order for him to take care of her children... another person made a girl prostitute herself, she was picked by the police from the street, and taken to the center... this is what happens... parents just send money, presents...

...”(interview, a representative of the Authority for the Protection of Children, Neamț county)

As the opinion poll data suggested, interviews confirmed that the absence of the parents exposes children to deviant behaviors and even abuse from their caregivers.

Conclusions

The consequences of the absence of migrant parents, as shown by data gathered by quantitative analyses and confirmed by interviews with persons having direct contact with their children, are contextual and should not be generalized or exaggerated. Given that most of these children stay with their mothers or within their extended families, and that there are relatively few situations when families lack the necessary mechanisms of supervision, the statements regarding the negative effects of the parents' absence should specify the category of children directly exposed to these risks.

The parents' migration does not always directly impact the children; it often indirectly affects them by producing effects that lead to broken families. The category of children most exposed to risks of any form is made up of children from broken families or whose mothers are abroad. It is in these cases that children are most likely to be abandoned or abused by their current caregivers.

A direct consequence of the parents' absence is emotional deprivation, along with a lack of supervision. When parents are gone for long periods of time, and children are left with adults who do not have the abilities and/or competencies to provide them with emotional and educational support, these two consequences may, in their turn, have negative effects on the health and mental development of the children, their level of involvement in school activities, their likelihood to engage in deviant or inappropriate behaviors, and to be subject to abuses of any form.

The negative effects identified by our research are probably similar to those generally encountered in children from broken families (either as a result of divorces/separations or the death of one of their parents), so that these children are an extra category exposed to risks. Therefore, the attention of their communities and especially schools and child protection agencies should focus on this category of children to the same extent that they do on children from poor or broken families.

The effect of the absence of migrant parents on their children's school performances

Paula A. Tufiş

Introduction

This research aims to study the effect of the absence of one or both migrant parents on the school performances of their children. Partially, school performances are affected by the resources available to the child (finances, education, spare time, support with homework, emotional support, supervision). The absence of one or both parents for longer periods of time may cause reduced school performances to the extent that the parents' roles are not fulfilled by someone else (the parent who stayed at home, the extended family, or other available caregivers). On the other hand, the available resources and other factors related to the parents' involvement in their children's school performances are not the only factors operating in this equation. Other determining factors may be related to individual features of each child (mental abilities, attitudes toward study and school, interest and time spent on homework), individual features of the teachers and the schools themselves (competencies of the teachers, interest and support shown to each child, school's facilities), to the influence of their peers (aspirations and behavior models), mentors, or role models. Thus, it is possible that the negative effects of the absence of one parent can be diminished by the actions of the above-mentioned factors- and also including the positive effects of the parents' absence, such as material resources, increased likelihood to travel abroad and have contact with a different cultures (see "Effects of migration: children left behind" FSR 2007).

In this context, one must ask whether the parents' absence really determines a significant reduction in school performances, and whether this also influences other factors which contribute to good school performances, or whether, to the contrary, the negative effects of the parents' absence are eliminated by other factors. The following analyses will focus on the influence of factors related to families and children, in order to see whether the latter are able to manage their situation without outside help. The data we used in our analysis was gathered through the "Effects of Migration: Children Left Behind" – FSR 2007 research, which included a representative opinion poll conducted on a sample of 1,603 junior high school students, and an extra subsample of 434 students of the same age, whose parents are working abroad. In order to measure school performances, we used each students self-confessed GPA for the last semester (semester 1 of school year 2006-2007); the main indicators of school performances used in this research are:

- The socio-demographic profile of the family (broken families, number of siblings, parents' education, parents' satisfaction with current job, and an indicator of the family's material goods)
- Communication relations within the family (between parents, and between parents and child)
- Child's attitude towards school (enjoyment, importance of good grades)
- The degree of supervision of the child (how often the child is out after 9 pm without its family knowing its whereabouts) and deviant behavior (arrests, conflicts with neighbors, fights with other children, complaints from teachers)
- The child's homework habits (the approximate number of hours spent studying/doing homework each week).

Moreover, the analysis uses two extra variables – gender and residential environment, in order to take into account the differences in school performances between girls and boys, and between the rural and urban environment (see **Table A-1** for a list of variables used in our research).

The family's socio-demographic profile is related to the child's school performances especially through the social and economic profiles of the parents. It is considered that the family's financial resources, as well as its human capital (competencies and skills – either natural or trained through the parents' education and career) will contribute to the child's school performances. The family's material resources can be invested directly in the educational process (investments in stationery, books and tutoring), yet the material status of the family can influence school performances indirectly through the family's access to health care services and its opportunity to provide a safe and appropriate environment for the child's cognitive development. The parents' level of education and their career determine a series of processes which can contribute to the educational success of their children, starting with the parents' ability to help children with homework and their support for school performances, their attitudes towards education and the importance thereof and especially higher education, the pressure on children to perform well in school, and last but not least, the parents' and children's relations with school and teachers.

Moreover, the family structure may influence children's school performances. Experiencing the death of a parent, a divorce or a separation may have important consequences on the mental welfare of both children and the parent in whose care they are left, and may negatively impact school performance. Similarly, the quality of family relations (the relationship between parents, and the child's ability to confide in its parents) may contribute to the creation of a stable and non-stressful environment which encourages good school performances. Similarly, large families indicate not only reduced resources (both financial and emotional), but also a lower social status, generally associated with low school performances. Children from broken and large families are also more exposed to deviant behaviors, partially because of a lower extent of supervision from adults. All this can negatively impact school performances.

The child's attitude towards school (enjoyment and importance of good grades) may also contribute to its motivation to achieve good performance. Another important factor which can be influenced by each individual family's features is the child's attitude to homework- whether there is a regular study program at home, including homework; as well as the average number of hours spent studying and doing homework. These can be very important for achieving success in school – not only because they contribute to the child's cognitive development, but also because they are features readily recognizable by teachers, who offer positive feedback in exchange.

The profile of families with migrant parents

A comparison between children whose parents (one or both) are working abroad and children whose parents do not, shows that there are significant differences between the two, especially when it comes to the social and demographic features of the families in question and the relations within the family (see **Table A-1**). Children with migrant parents tend to come from broken families (divorced, separated, or single parents) with lower education and social status than the regular population. Given that both an 'intact' family, and a high social status are generally positive influences for school performances, children whose parents are migrant are at a disadvantage from this point of view by comparison with other children. On the other hand, there are two more differences between the two groups of children, which put the migrant parents' children at an advantage: they come from smaller families and their families are, on the average, better off (in terms of home appliances, etc.).

The communication between children and parents is less frequent in the case of children with migrant families, which may have a negative impact on their school performances. As a result, these children award lesser importance to obtaining good grades in school. From the point of view of deviant behaviors, we have found no significant differences between the two groups of children. Also, on the

average, the number of hours spent studying and doing homework is not significantly different for the two categories of children. The difference in terms of school performances is not great either, but it is statistically significant – children with at least one parent absent had, on the average, GPAs lower by 10 points than the other children.

Direct and indirect effects of the absence of parents on their children's school results

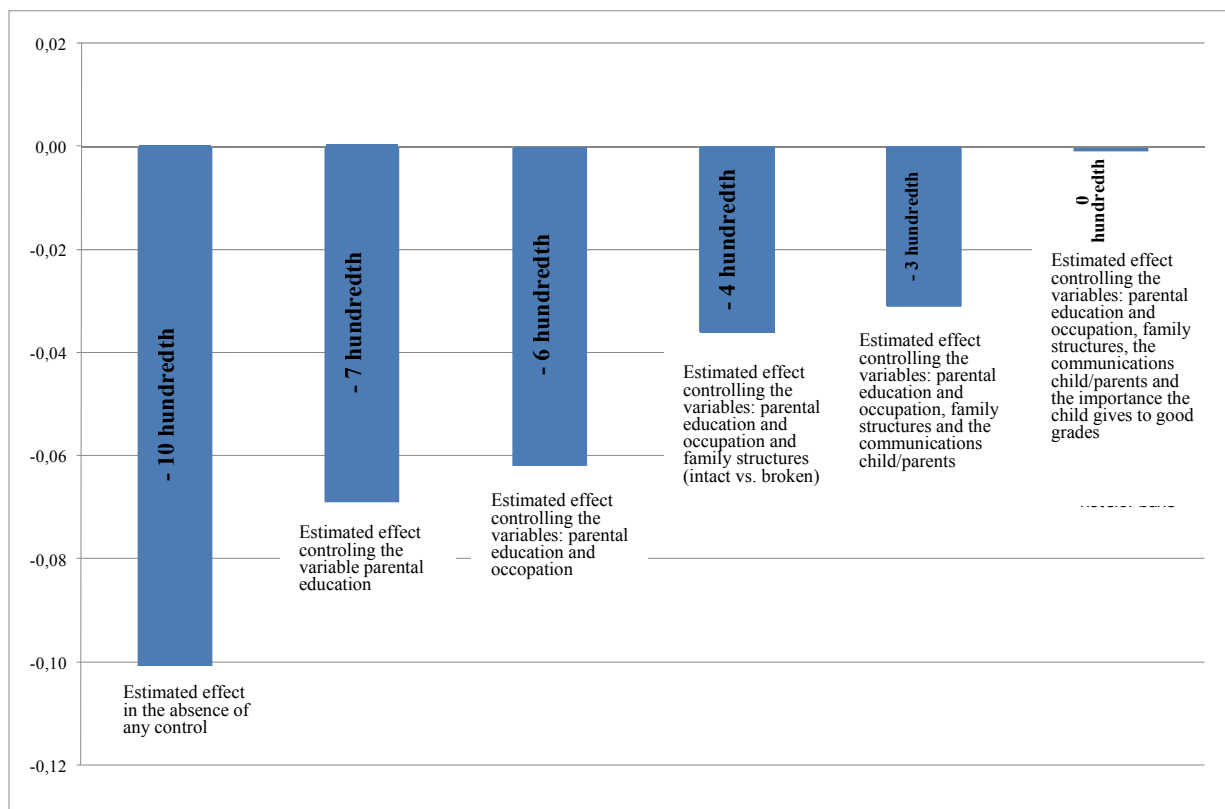
The numbers above show that, generally, the parents' absence is correlated with a slight negative impact on school results. Moreover, families with migrant parents also have other features (low education and career opportunities, bad communication between children and parents) which can negatively affect school performances. These factors not only affect the school performances of migrant parents' children, but those of all children, regardless of the structure of their family of origin. In this context, we must ask the question whether the absence of parents has a *direct* negative impact on school performances (this impact or part thereof is due exclusively to the absence of one or both parents and not to other features of the family or child in question), or an indirect one (due entirely to the lower education and career opportunities of the parents and the poor communication between them and their children). In order to find an answer to this question, we estimated the effect of the parents' absence on the child's GPA, at first without taking into account any other factor, and then taking into account certain family features which may contribute to lower school performances (for any child). In order to choose these features, we used the information provided in Table A-1.

The data suggested that the absence of parents is associated mainly with the following factors which may, in turn, have negative effects on school performances:

- Broken families (as a result of divorce, separation or death)
- Lower levels of education (parents)
- Lower levels of career opportunities (parents)
- Poor communication between parents and children
- Lack of interest in good grades on the part of the child

The results (see **Table A-1**) suggest that the parents' absence is only indirectly associated with school performances, with the influence of the other factors that we mentioned above. Apart from any other variables, the absence of the parents determines a decrease by 10 hundredth on average (see Figure 1) in the children's GPA (which is significant statistically). If we include the variable of the parents' education, however, the result is a decrease from 10 to 7 hundredth, which is not longer statistically significant. Therefore, 30% of the negative effects of the parents' absence can be explained by the lower levels of education of migrant parents. If we also add the variable of the parents' career opportunities, the effect decreases to 6 hundredth (explaining 10% of the overall negative effect). The introduction of the family status variable, further reduces the effect to 4 hundredth (or 20%). Thus, only a few features of a family- social and career status- can explain partially the negative effect of the parents' absence on the children's GPA. If we also take into account the quality of the communication between parents and children, the negative effect of the parents' absence due to work migration completely disappears. In conclusion, on the average, a child from a family with migrant parents does not have statistically significantly different school performances from a child whose parents are not migrants, if both children come from families with the same type of structure and the same social and career opportunities.

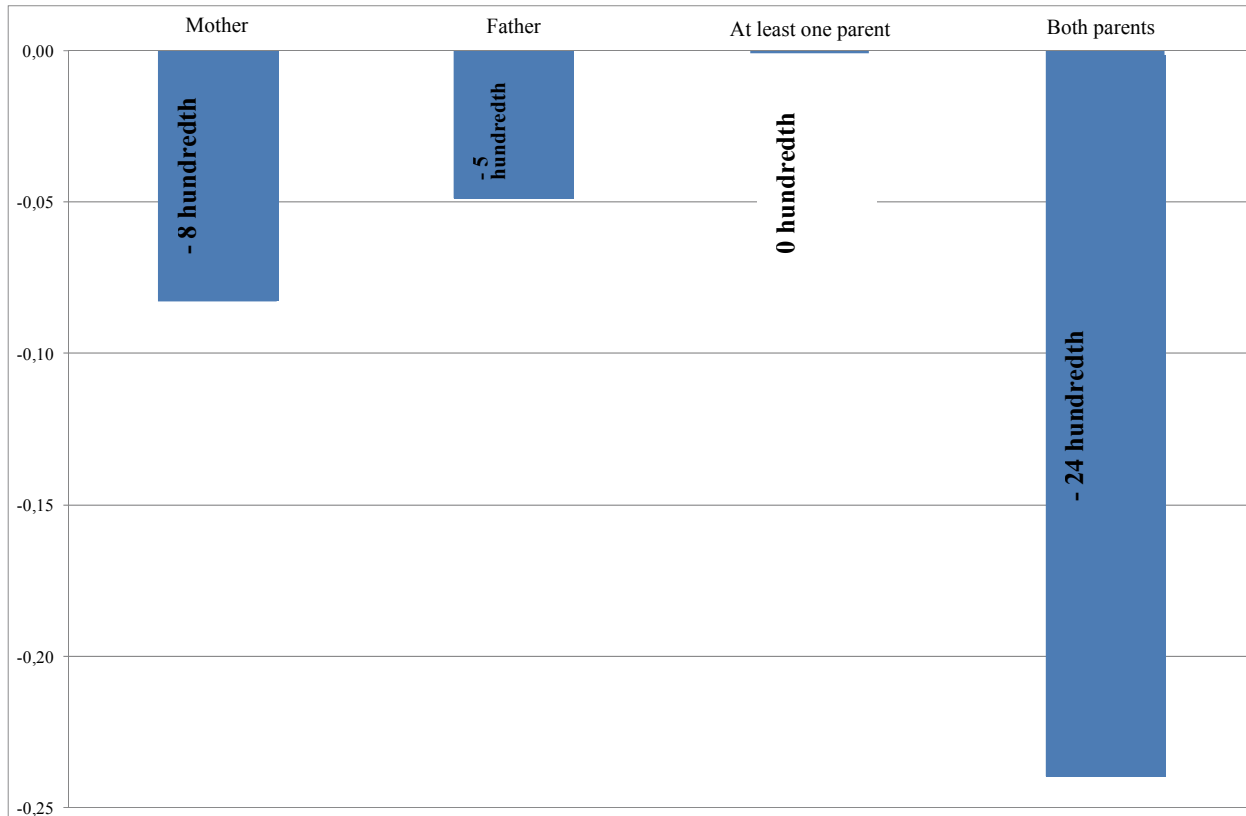
Figure 1. The effect of the absence of at least one parent on the GPA of the child, in the absence of other variable



This conclusion should not be interpreted as the absence of any risk for the school performances of children whose parents are migrants. That fact that migrant parents ‘self-select’ themselves from a group characterized by features which determine lower school performances does not eliminate the consequences experienced by children in school, and the reality of having, on the average, lower performances than children with non-migrant parents.

If the departure of at least one parent does not have a substantial effect on school performance, the absence of both parents due to migration for work entails more risks for the school performances of their children (see Table A-3). Of the 710 students with migrant parents included in the research, 448 (63.1%) have at least their mother away, 472 (66.6%) have at least their father away, and 210 (29.6%) have both parents away. The effect of mothers’ absence on the children’s school performances were somewhat stronger than that of fathers (see Figure 2): in the first case, the decrease in the average GPA is by 8 points, with 5 points in the second case. None of these effects, however, is significant statistically (both effects were estimated using the variables mentioned above). If both parents are absent, the effect on their children’s school performances is more dramatic and more statistically significant: the absence of both parents causes a reduction by a quarter of a point, on the average, of the GPA. This effect is all the more dramatic because it cannot be explained by any of the other variables.

Figure 2. The effect of the parents' absence depending of which parent is abroad



Moreover, the effect is maintained – with the same intensity and statistical significance- in the model which takes into account all variables that influence school performances in our research (see the Introduction for a complete list). Because the results of this model are identical with the results included in **Table A-3**, they will not be presented separately.

An analysis of the time duration of the parents' absence (the numbers are not included here) suggests that school performances are not significantly influenced by the duration of the parents' migration abroad. Although, on the average, the time durations are rather long², it is likely that there is no sufficient variability (at least at this time, when the phenomenon is relatively recent) in the migration durations to cause significant effects on school performances.

Risk factors and advantages for the school performances of children whose parents are migrants

If the absence due to migration of at least one parent has no effect on the school performances of their children, one may ask if these factors operate similarly in the case of children who are not in the same situation. It is possible that risk factors may have stronger negative effects on the group of children with migrant parents, while the beneficial factors, or advantages, may have weaker effects,

²In the group of children with at least one parent abroad, the average duration of the absence is of approximately 31 months; for children whose mothers are abroad, the average duration of their absence is of approximately 24 months; for children whose fathers are abroad, the average duration of their absence is of approximately 34 months; and for children with both parents are abroad, the average duration of their absence is of approximately 23 months.

which would place the group of children with migrant parents at a disadvantage by comparison to the general population of children. Also, we have established that the absence of both parents due to migration abroad may constitute a higher risk of lower school performance for their children. Apart from this negative effect of the absence of the parents, it is possible that students from this group are even more disadvantaged by an increase in negative effects and a decrease in positive effects on the determinant indicators of school performance.

To further research this issue, we have estimated the effects of a series of potential risk factors and potential advantages separately for each group of children: the children with one parent abroad, the children with both parents abroad, and the children with both parents at home (see **Table A-4**). In the case of the latter, almost all the indicators included in the research were shown to have significant influences on school performance. In this group, the following indicators seem to determine higher performances:

- Intact families
- Low number of siblings
- High level of parents' education
- Strong career opportunities for the parents
- More material resources in the household
- Positive attitude to education
- High importance placed on good grades by the child
- High level of supervision of the child by the family
- Low incidence of delinquency and conflicts initiated by the child
- High time investments in study and homework made by the child

The two variables that we used to measure the quality of relationships in terms of communication within the family (parents who get along well and talk to their child on a regular basis) had unexpected effects in this particular model from the theoretical point of view. Thus, the good family relations should create the conditions for better school performances; however, in the model we have used, the estimated effects suggest the opposite. A more in-depth study is needed to interpret this result. Given that the effects we have identified here are relatively insignificant statistically, we shall not include their interpretation.

Moreover, in this group, girls tend to have better school performances than boys, and students from the rural environment tend to do better in school than their counterparts from urban environments. At the same time, the opposite features (broken families, high numbers of siblings, low level of parents' education, etc.) determine lower school performances.

We can generally notice that the significant determining factors of school performance in the groups of children with migrant parents (one or both) are a sub-set within the list of significant determining factors for school performance of children with non-migrant parents. In the case of children with at least one migrant parent, some of the predicting indicators lose their statistical importance:

- Intact families
- Strong career opportunities for the parents
- Low incidence of delinquency and conflicts initiated by the child

This suggests that, while children of non-migrant parent can benefit in terms of school performance from the fact that they come from intact families with strong career opportunities, as well

as from having a non-delinquent, non-conflict prone behavior (or, to the contrary, their school performance can be negatively impacted if the opposite is true), these factors have no influence on the school performances of children with at least one migrant parent³. For the rest of indicators which maintain their statistical importance, there are only small differences between the intensity of the effect in question on the group of children with at least one migrant parent, and for the group of children with non-migrant parents. The only factor which is an exception to this rule relates to the material resources of the household (see Table A-4). Although households with at least one migrant parent have more material resources (see Table A-1), paradoxically this factor has a weaker positive effect on school performance. The effect of material resources on the performances of children with at least one migrant parent is less than half as important in the case of children with non-migrant parents. Thus, one of the main advantages to be gained from migration (increased material resources) is diminished by the low intensity of the effect of this improvement on the school performances of children.

There are no significant differences based on environment (urban or rural) for the group of children with migrant parents, yet the gender difference persists.

In the case of children with both parents absent, the same factors that apply to the group of children with one migrant parent also lose their statistical significance by comparison with the children with non-migrant parents. Moreover, another factor loses its effect:

- The child's positive attitude towards education

In this case, much like in the case of children with one migrant parent, although there are small variations in the intensity of effects by comparison with the group of children with non-migrant parents, only one difference is statistically different: the effect of intact families. While this latter factor has a significant positive impact on children without migrant parents, it also has a negative impact.

The comparison between the effects operating in the group of children with both parents absent and the effects operating in the group of children with at least one migrant parent suggests that school performance is determined by similar processes, with similar intensities (see **Table A-4**). Although prior analysis has shown that the effect of the absence of both parents is more significant than the effect of the absence of only one parent (see **Table A-4**), the other processes that contribute to school performance are similar in the two groups of children with migrant parents.

The determining factors for school performances used in these models managed to explain around 35% – 40% of the children's school performances. The explicative power of the model is stronger for children with both parents absent ($R^2 = 0,42$) and approximately identical for the group of children with one migrant parent ($R^2 = 0,37$) and the group of children with no migrant parents ($R^2 = 0,35$). To determine which of the used factors has more explicative power and what the hierarchy of effects is from the point of view of their intensity, we have estimated the standardized effects of the model (see Table A-5) which may vary in absolute numbers between 0 and 1, where values closer to 0 represent very weak effects, and values closer to 1 represent very strong effects. The charts below present the list of determining factors for school performance for each of the groups of children included in our research, in a sequence from weak to strong (see **Figure 3**, **Figure 4** and **Figure 5**)⁴.

³ Keeping into account the influences of other factors included in the model.

⁴ To facilitate the interpretation of the hierarchy of the effects in the Figures, we transformed the negative effects into positive effects and we re-labeled the factors so as to keep this transformation into account. For instance, a negative effect for males becomes a positive one for females, or a negative effect on large families becomes a positive effect on small families.

In the group of children with no migrant parents, the material resources of the family have the strongest influence on school performance. This factor is also found to have a strong effect in the two groups of children with migrant parents, but with weaker effects (in the group of children with at least one migrant parent it is the sixth predicting factor in order of importance, while in the group of children with both parents absent, it is the fifth predicting factor in the order of importance).

Figure 3. A hierarchy of the effects of determining factors for children with no migrant parents

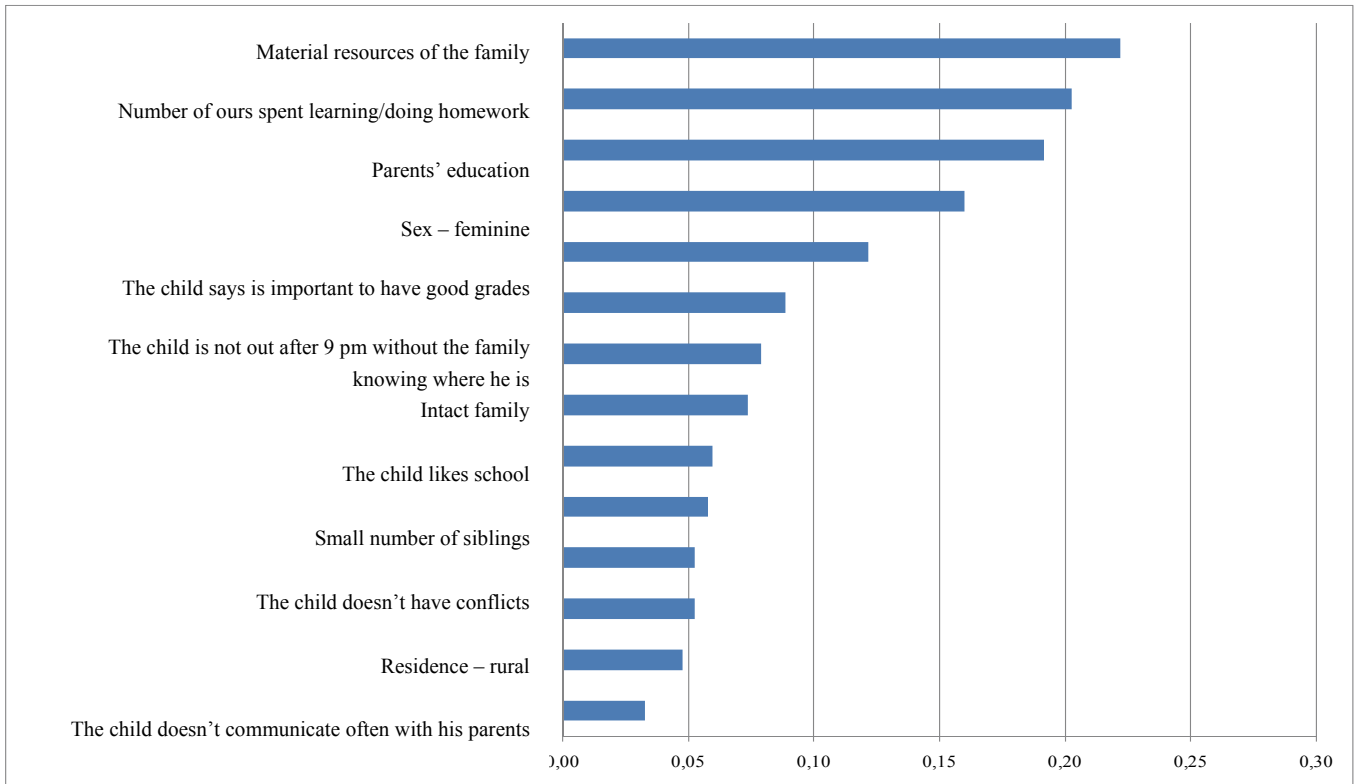


Figure 4. A hierarchy of the effects of determining factors for children with at least one migrant parent

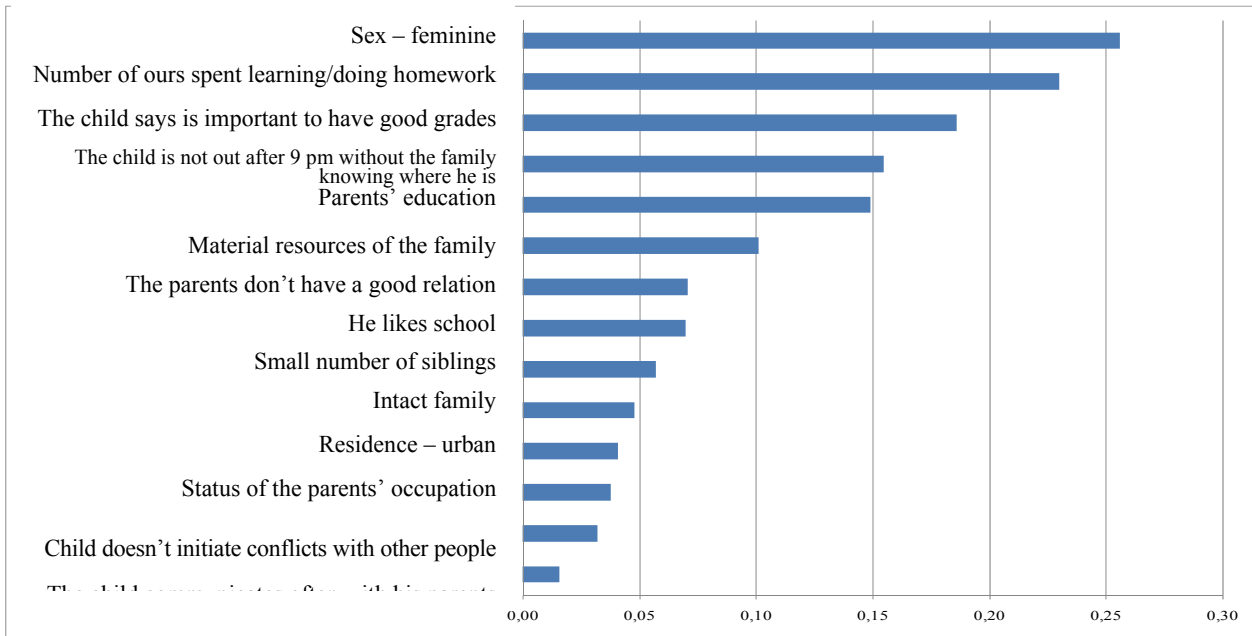
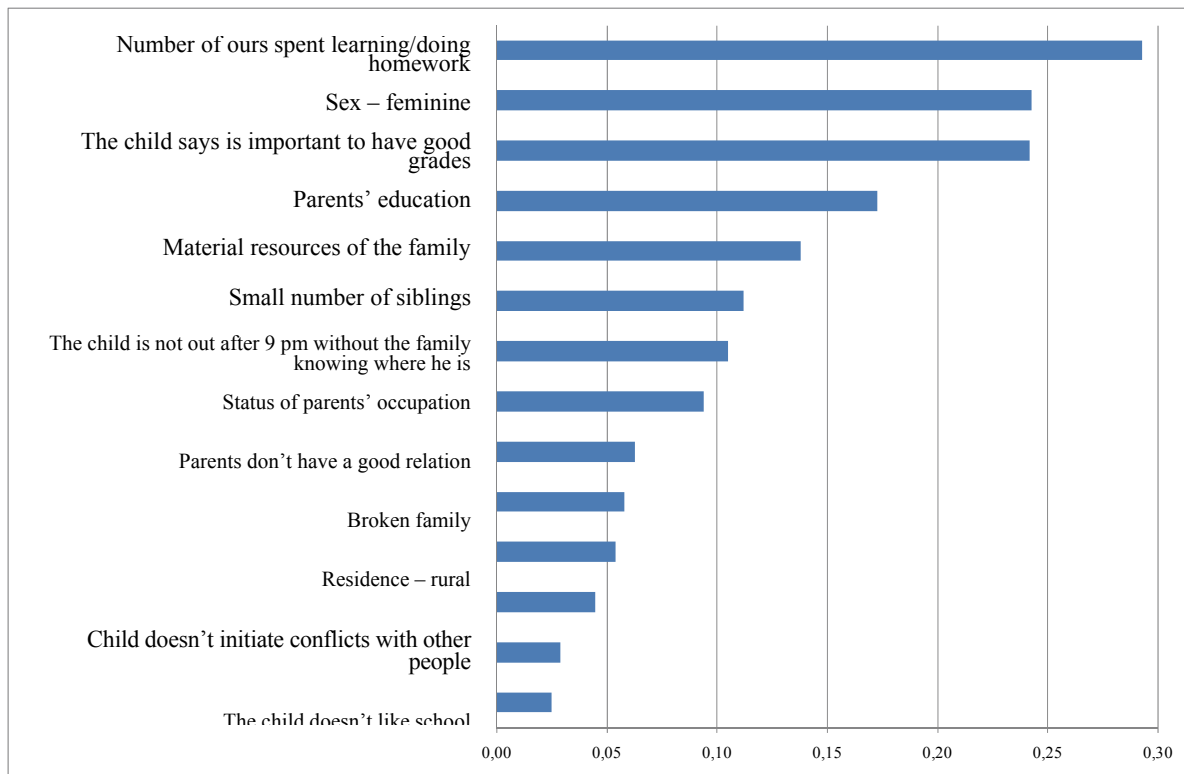


Figure 5. A hierarchy of the effects of determining factors for children with both parents absent



The parents' education is among the important factors influencing the school results in all three groups of children. The parents' career opportunities, however, have no important independent contributions to explaining school performances (given that career opportunities are strongly correlated with the educational level, career has no strong additional contribution).

The approximate number of hours spent weekly for study and homework seems to be one of the most important determining factors for school results – it is the first in order of importance for the group of children with both parents absent and the second important for the group of children with at least one parent absent and the group of children with non-migrant parents. It is interesting that the relation between this factor and school performances is actually more important than the relation between the material resources of the household and school performances, or the relation between the parents' education and school performances. This is explainable if we take into account the fact that study patterns (measured in the number of hours spent studying) are more directly linked to the cognitive development processes of the child, as we already mentioned in our introduction. This is also one of the most important qualities taken into account by teachers when grading a student.

The importance of good grades, as seen by the children, is another important predicting factor for school performances, suggesting that students who are aware of the importance of good grades are more motivated and involved in the educational process. On the other hand, this can be a self-selection effect: children who already have good grades and who do not need to put in extra efforts to improve their grades also feel that good grades are important.

The degree of supervision children receive from caregivers is found among the important predicting factors for school results – probably because it is an important factor for the degree of responsibility that children develop, discouraging delinquency, displaying the interest that the family has in the child, and denoting the success achieved by parents in imposing rules of behavior on their children.

The gender differences are found among the most important effects in all three groups, with girls having on the average better school performances than boys. This is usually due to the differences between the cognitive development cycles of boys and girls – girls are more interested in their school results in junior high school, while boys only involve themselves stronger in their school performances later on.

It is likely that the differences between genders diminish as the children evolve in age. Also, average GPAs showed equal percentages to different areas of competency- namely girls are more adept at certain subjects, while boys are more adept at others.

Conclusions

The above analysis has shown that the absence of at least one parent is indeed associated with lower school performances, but these are due almost exclusively to the lower social and professional status of the families in question (education levels and career opportunities), as well as to the structure of the families (broken families). This, however, does not mean that students with migrant parents are a group at a higher risk of failure in school. It means that the risk of having lower school performances is approximately the same for these children as it is for children who come from non-migrant families, but whose families are not intact and have a lower social and professional status than the general population.

The most disadvantaged group from the point of view of school performances is the group of children with both parents absent. In their case, the absence of both parents from the household has the biggest negative impact on school performances, more so than all other negative impacts related to social status or family status. Moreover, the absence of both parents has a negative impact on the school

performances independently from any other influences that we took into account in this study. This suggests that, all factors being equal, of two children who come from identical environments, the child with both parents abroad will have the lower school performances.

Although our analysis did not explore this directly, the results related to the effect of the absence of at least one parent by comparison to the results related to the effect of the absence of both parents suggest that in the former case, the parent who remains at home successfully assumes many of the important functions for their child's school performances. In the case of children with both parents absent, the support structure for the children's school performance deteriorates, and the educational role of the parents fails to be successfully assumed by other persons or institutions. In this case, it is recommended that social policies be implemented in order to insure the existence of a support network made up of persons who are not part of the family (teachers, social assistants, school councilors), and who can assume part of the parents' attributions for insuring good school performances (motivation and encouragement, study strategies). This type of support is necessary for children with both parents absent, but it is also recommended for children who have one migrant parent, in order to reduce the burden on their primary caregiver (the parent who remained at home).

An encouraging conclusion is that the factors which determine school performance operate in similar ways and at similar intensities in all the three groups of children. There is one important exception in the case of children with at least one parent abroad: although material resources become more available in the household, their effect fails to be as important as it is in the case of children with non-migrant parents. Unfortunately, the increased resources which are the easiest to regulate through social policies also have the lowest effect on these children. This is not to discourage social policies aiming to increase material resources – the effect of the latter can be found on the list of effects with strong impact on school performances for both groups of children with migrant parents, even if the impact is lower than in the case of children with non-migrant parents.

Other factors that need to be mentioned here include the education of the parents, which unfortunately is not an easily changeable factor through social policies, the number of hours children spend studying weekly (one of the most important factors) and the importance of good grades for the child. Given the importance of time dedicated to study for the overall school performances, extra-curricular activities emphasizing study and homework could be used to enhance this effect. Parents and caregivers can also be involved in these activities, and mentored through teachers-parents meetings to insure that they are involved in the children's study and homework schedules.

Table A- 1 Averages and differences between averages of children with at least one parent abroad and children of non-migrant parents

	Average	The differences between the residential areas of the groups	Minimum Maximum
	<i>Children with at least one parent working abroad (N=710)</i>	<i>Children without parents working abroad (N=1327)</i>	
Control variables			
Residence - urban	0,50	0,48	0 1
Sex - male	0,48	0,51	0 1
Family socio demographic characteristics			
Intact family	0,75	0,86	*** 0 1
Number of siblings	1,20	1,52	*** 0 20
Parents' education	1,82	1,87	+ 1 3
Status of the parents' occupation	27,41	28,80	* 0 62
Material resources of the family	5,36	5,06	*** 0 10
Relations and communication inside the family			
Parents get along well	0,67	0,70	-0,03 0 1
The child communicates often with the parents	2,79	2,95	*** 0 4
Child's attitude towards school			
The child likes school	2,51	2,59	-0,08 0 4
The child says good grades are important	3,55	3,61	-0,06 + 1 4
Supervision and delinquency			
Child out after 9 pm without family knowledge of whereabouts	0,60	0,64	1 3
Child initiates conflicts with other people	0,38	0,35	0 2
Deprinderi de muncă școlară ale copilului			
No. of hours/week spent studying	11,45	11,71	-0,26 0 47
School performances			
GPA for last semester	8,38	8,48	-0,10 + 5 10

*Note: Level of statistical significance *** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; + $p \leq 0.1$; Grey cells mark the statistical significant differences between the residential areas of the two groups. **READING EXAMPLE:** On a scale from 1 (minimum) to 4 (maximum), the children with at least one parent abroad give on average an importance of 3.55 to good grades in school. Children without parents working abroad give on average an importance of 3.61. The differences between the two averages of the groups has a value of - 0.06 and it is statistically significant (different from 0) on the level 0.1 (p)*

Table A - 2 The effect of the absence of at least one parent on the GPA of the child in the absence and in the presence of other predicting factors – non-standardized regression coefficients

Predictors	Effects on the child's GPA										
	-0,10	+	-0,07	-0,06	-0,04	-0,03	0,00				
At least one parent is working abroad			0,55	***	0,48	***	0,49	***	0,48	***	
Parents' education			0,01	***	0,01	***	0,01	***	0,01	***	
Parents' occupation					0,23	***	0,22	**	0,20	**	
Intact family							0,04		0,00		
Child communicates often with his parents									0,43	***	
Child says is important to have good grades										0,43	***

Note: Level of statistical significance *** $p \leq 0,001$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; * $p \leq 0,05$; + $p \leq 0,1$; Grey lines show statistically significant differences between GPAs of the two groups. **READING EXAMPLE:** Without taking into account other variables, the effect of at least one parent's departure on the child's GPA is on the average -0,10 points (the absence of at least one parent determines a 10 points drop in the school performances, which is statistically significant on the 0.1 level). If the education variable is taken into account, the absence of at least one parent determines an average drop of 7 points in school performances

Table A - 3 Effects of the departure of parents on the GPAs of children according to which parent is absent (mother, father, at least one, both) - non-standardized regression coefficients

Predictors	Effects on the child's GPA				
	Mother	Father	At least one parent	Both parents	
Parents working abroad...	-0,08	-0,05	0,00	-0,24	**
Parents' education	0,48	0,48	0,48	0,47	***
Parents' occupation	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,01	***
Intact family	0,18	0,20	0,20	0,19	**
Child communicates often with his parents	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	
Child says is important to have good grades	0,43	0,43	0,43	0,43	***

Note: Level of statistical significance *** $p \leq 0,001$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; * $p \leq 0,05$; + $p \leq 0,1$; Grey lines show statistically significant differences between GPAs of the two groups. **READING EXAMPLE:** Taking into account the effects of other predictors, the departure of the mother determines an average drop of 8 points in school performances, which is statistically insignificant (not different from 0).

Table A - 4 The effects of determining factors of school performance on the child's GPA in three groups of children: children with at least one parent abroad, children with both parents abroad, and children with no parents abroad non-standardized regression coefficients

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Differences between Group 1 and Group 3	Differences between Group 2 and Group 3	Differences between Group 1 and Group 2
	Children with at least one parent working abroad (N=710)	Children with both parents working abroad (N=210)	Children without parents working abroad (N=1327)			
Control variables						
Residence - urban	0,09	-0,12	-0,12 +	0,22 *	0,01	0,21
Sex - male	-0,57 ***	-0,53 ***	-0,37 ***	-0,20	-0,15	-0,04
Family socio-demographic characteristics						
Intact Family	0,12	-0,16	0,27 **	-0,14	-0,44 *	0,28
Number of siblings	-0,04 +	-0,12 +	-0,04 *	0,00	-0,09	0,08
Parents' education	0,30 ***	0,33 *	0,38 ***	-0,08	-0,04	-0,04
Status of the parents' occupation	0,00	0,01	0,00 +	0,00	0,01	-0,01
Material resources of the family	0,05 **	0,07 *	0,11 ***	-0,06 *	-0,04	-0,02
Relations and communication inside the family						
Parents get along well	-0,17 *	-0,15	-0,08	-0,09	-0,08	-0,02
Child communicates often with his parents	0,02	0,03	-0,06 *	0,08	0,09	-0,01
Child's attitude towards school						
Child likes school	0,07 +	-0,03	0,08 **	-0,01	-0,10	0,10
Child says is important to have good grades	0,27 ***	0,41 ***	0,20 ***	0,07	0,21	-0,14
Supervision and delinquency						
Child out after 9 pm without family knowledge of its whereabouts	-0,21 ***	-0,14 +	-0,12 ***	-0,09	-0,02	-0,07
Child initiates conflicts with other people	-0,08	-0,12	-0,17 *	0,09	0,05	0,04
Child's study habits						
Number of ours/week spent learning/doing homework	0,03 ***	0,03 ***	0,02 ***	0,00	0,01	-0,01
R ²	0,37	0,42	0,35			

*Note: Level of statistical significance *** p ≤ 0.001; ** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; + p ≤ 0.1; Grey cells in the first three columns show statistically significant effects of the predictors on the child's GPA; Grey cells in the last two columns show statistic differences between the effect in one group and the effect in the other. READING EXAMPLE: In the group of children with one parent abroad, the increase of study time by one hour determines an average increase of 0.03 points in school performances, which is statistically significant on level 0.001. The difference between the effect of study time on school performances of children with at least one parent abroad and the same effect in the group of children with both parents abroad is of 0.01 point, which is statistically insignificant. In the group of children with at least one parent abroad, all predictors used explain 37% (R²) of overall GPA variation.*

Table A - 5 Effects of determining factors for school performance on the child's GPA in three groups of children: children with at least one parent abroad, children with both parents abroad, and children with no parents abroad- non-standardized regression coefficients

	Group 1 <i>Children with at least one parent working abroad (N=710)</i>	Group 2 <i>Children with both parents working abroad (N=210)</i>	Group 3 <i>Children without parents working abroad (N=1327)</i>
Control variables			
Residential - urban	0,04	-0,05	-0,05 +
Sex - male	-0,26 ***	-0,24 ***	-0,16 ***
Family socio-demographic characteristics			
Intect family	0,05	-0,06	0,08 **
Number of siblings	-0,06 +	-0,11 +	-0,06 *
Parents education	0,15 ***	0,17 *	0,19 ***
Status of parents' occupation	0,04	0,09	0,05 +
Material resources of the family	0,10 **	0,14 *	0,22 ***
Relations and communication inside the family			
Parents get along well	-0,07 *	-0,06	-0,03
Child communicates often with his parents	0,02	0,03	-0,05 *
Child's attitude towards school			
Child likes school	0,07 +	-0,03	0,07 **
Child says is important to have good grades	0,19 ***	0,24 ***	0,12 ***
Supervision and delinquency			
Child out after 9 pm without family knowledge of its whereabouts	-0,16 ***	-0,11 +	-0,09 ***
Child initiates conflicts	-0,03	-0,05	-0,06 *
Child's study habits			
Number of ours/week spent on learning/doing homework	0,23 ***	0,29 ***	0,20 ***
R ²	0,37	0,42	0,35

*Note: Level of statistical significance *** p ≤ 0.001; ** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; + p ≤ 0.1; Grey lines show statistically different predictors' effects on the child's GPA. READING EXAMPLE: In the group of children with at least one parent abroad, the increase by one standard deviation of the time spent studying each week determines an average increase in school performance of 0.23 standard deviations, which is statistically significant on the level 0.001.*

The community dimension. The consequences of economic migration for Horia

Georgiana Păun

Horia is located in Moldavia, two km away from the town of Roman and is made up of two villages: Horia and Cotu-Vameș. The commune experiences the typical issues of Romanian villages: poverty, subsistence agriculture, high levels of unemployment, little to no educational opportunities. Because commuting is not profitable, locals chose to work abroad instead. Economic migration abroad is a complex phenomenon with multiple consequences, on both the individual and the household level. The special circumstances of Horia have to do with the fact that more than half of the children of school and preschool age have both parents working abroad, especially in Italy¹. We have interviewed the children's closest relatives and the formal and informal representatives of the authorities.

Migration abroad started in the commune after 1989. However, the volumes and intensity thereof only increased after 2002, when Romanians became able to enjoy freedom of movement in the Schengen space:

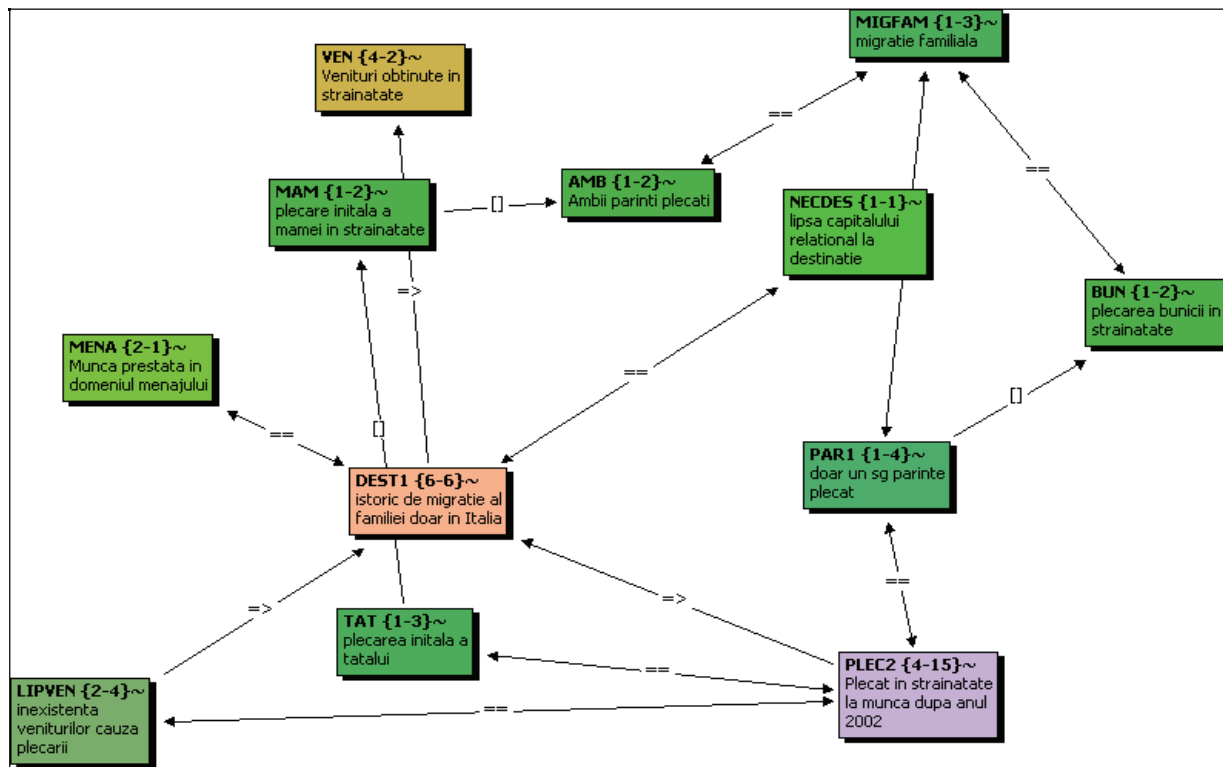
“... I think it was after 1989 that people started to leave. They weren't leaving legally, and they were mostly going to Ireland, Israel, Greece, Italy, Spain, all over the place [...] but most people left after 2002” (headmaster).

The main causes of migration from Horia are related to finances: the locals were unable to support themselves and insure decent living conditions for their families on the income they were making in Romania:

“The problem is that there aren't jobs... you can't find a job... there's no money... you're starving to death... and they don't care... well, I was watching TV yesterday, they only care about themselves, not about us, they don't do anything for this country... Well, what can you do here? You can't work the land... you can't do anything...” (a grandmother who cares for her 14-year-old granddaughter).

Horia migration is of a network type, based on family capital:

“ So at first some people left, and they made relations there, and then they brought their relatives and friends, but some people just left with no prior arrangements ...[...]...” (the priest). The main destination for Horia locals is Italy.



Semantic network no.1: Migration history in Horia¹

Migration in Horia can be classified in two major categories:

1. Family migration: The departure of one of the partners determined the departure of the other. In this case, the couple's children were left in the care of grandparents or close relatives.
2. Non-family migration: The departure of women resulted in divorce between in most cases: *About this, what I can say is that there have been many divorces and many broken families... generally when the women are leaving. We had many custody investigations, following divorces. But generally, they all wanted to keep their children... they didn't leave the children to the fathers. By now, we don't have as many divorces anymore. But there were two years when there were a lot of divorces and of those, I think about 95% of the women were working in Italy. There are still many women working there now, but back then they were gone for long periods of time, and they couldn't maintain a long-distance relationship... and they couldn't see what was happening back home. And when they returned, the husbands would start with the accusations; they were young women with small children, with many problems. I don't know... they started seeing the world differently... I couldn't explain it myself. But generally, most of those women said that the relationship with their husbands had turned cold, and they felt like they had nothing in common anymore.* (interview, the social assistant from Horia) In these cases, children either follow their mothers abroad, or are left in the care of grandparents.

According to the latest poll conducted in schools and kindergartens, more than half of the school and preschool aged children in the commune had both parents abroad in 2006:

“[...]... a poll was conducted last year, and I think more than half of the children had their parents abroad, the children were staying with older siblings or with extended family members who were supervising them, shall we say, from a distance; in kindergarten, among the youngest children, there were seven with both parents abroad... four children with both parents abroad in the junior class, five in the senior class... out of about 20 children... six in the preschool class... five in grade 1, four in grade 2, seven in grade 4... seven out of 18 in grade 4A, six out of 15 in grade 4B, twelve in grade 5, seven in grade 6, five in grade 7, nine in grade 8...” (school headmaster). The exact number of children who have at least one parent abroad is unknown: *“From the data we gathered last year, I think there are about 100/150 children who are either living with their parents or are being cared for by other people. Once we were told that it is here that the largest number of children with absent parents is located. But you can never tell whether that’s true or not, because it’s not like we went from house to house to ask. And there’s no law which would force the parents to make a statement that their children are left in the care of X when they leave the country.”* (social assistant, Mayor’s Office).

Children whose parents are abroad are left in the care of grandparents or extended family members: *“...Children... were left with their parents... there are also cases where children were left by themselves”* (headmaster)

“... well, as far as I know, they all have a grandmother... I don’t know of cases where the parents are gone and the children are by themselves... there may be some people like that in the village... like everywhere else...” (a local who is taking care of two grandchildren).

There are few cases in which the children are not in the care of an adult:

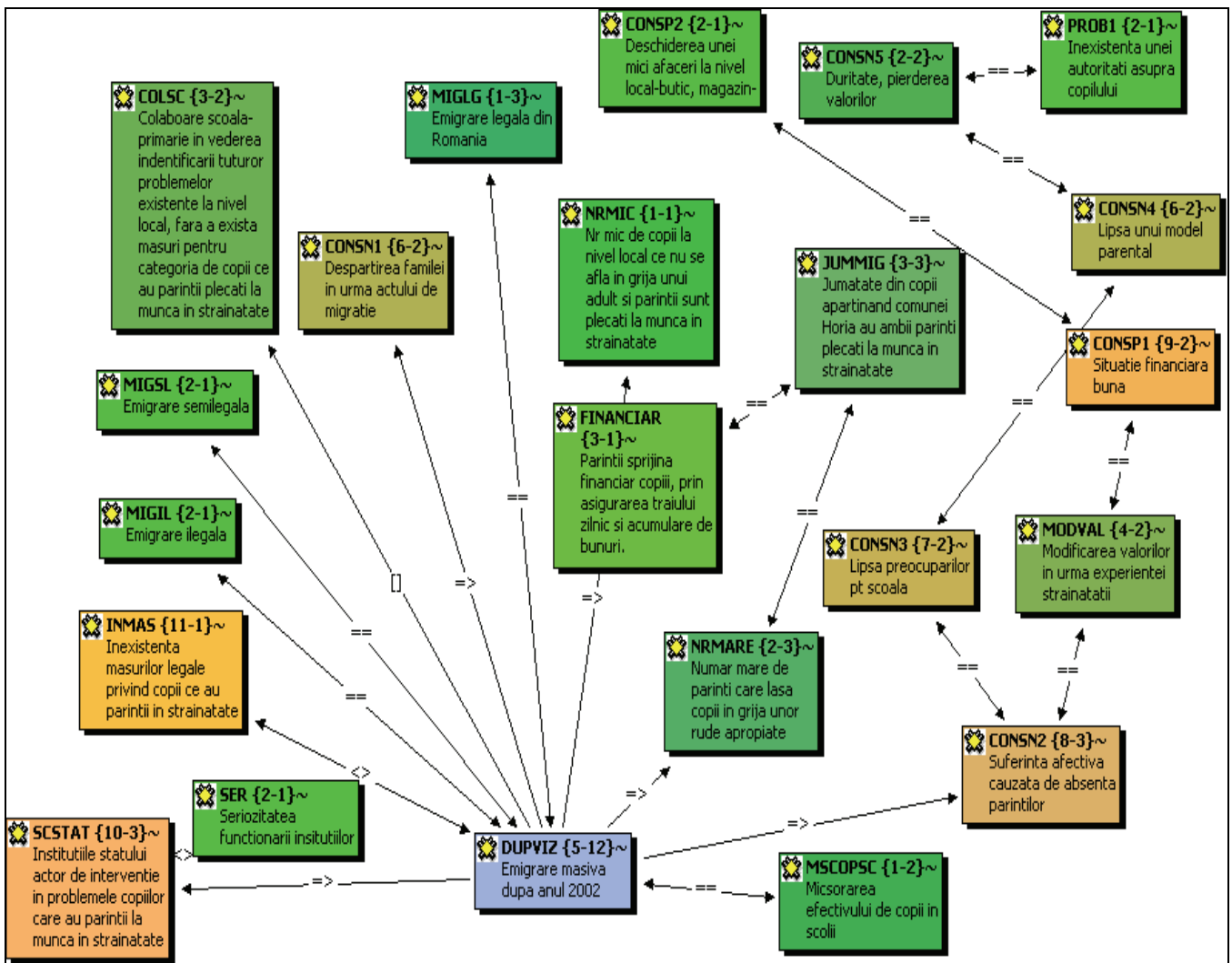
“... we had one family, but that’s not the case anymore, the kids are university students now, at first the wife left, then the husband... and the children were left by the themselves... the oldest was a senior in high school, the youngest was in grade 7, so they took care of each other... but they were good children... now the younger child is also a university student... the oldest is also abroad, and the older daughter is also abroad... but these cases are rare...”(headmaster)

Most parents cannot afford to take their children with them (mostly to Italy). The reasons are multiple: the impossibility to make enough money and obtain an acceptable job coupled with an inability of the child to integrate in the destination country. This is why permanent immigration of entire families is more of an exception than the norm: *“They’re few... we have two or three cases... who took everybody with them... I mean their parents, siblings, relatives... two or three situations... I think one family left to Italy and two to Spain, or the other way around...”* (headmaster) *“Well, why should they take them along? They have to study... they have plans... we want to build a house...”* (a local who is taking care of two grandchildren).

The main consequences of the local migration are as follows:

1. **Positive financial consequences: income, opening local businesses, building or renovating houses, purchases of home appliances to improve the family’s lifestyle:** *“If we take into account the fact that Roman is a town with a high percentage of unemployment... people couldn’t find jobs... they were living off the retirement benefits of the parents, the social assistance for the children... the positive thing is that they fulfilled*

their goals... given that I don't know that they are higher educated, most of them are workers, so all they wanted was money, a better life... and most of them achieved that... they came back, built a house... finished building a house, opened a business... that was about it. [...] a house, a car, and of course, home improvements...(headmaster) "... there are positive consequences for their finances, they come back with money, build houses, buy cars ...[...]" (priest)



Semantic network no. 2: The consequences of migration on households

2. The second consequence is related to a **change in values and mentality:**

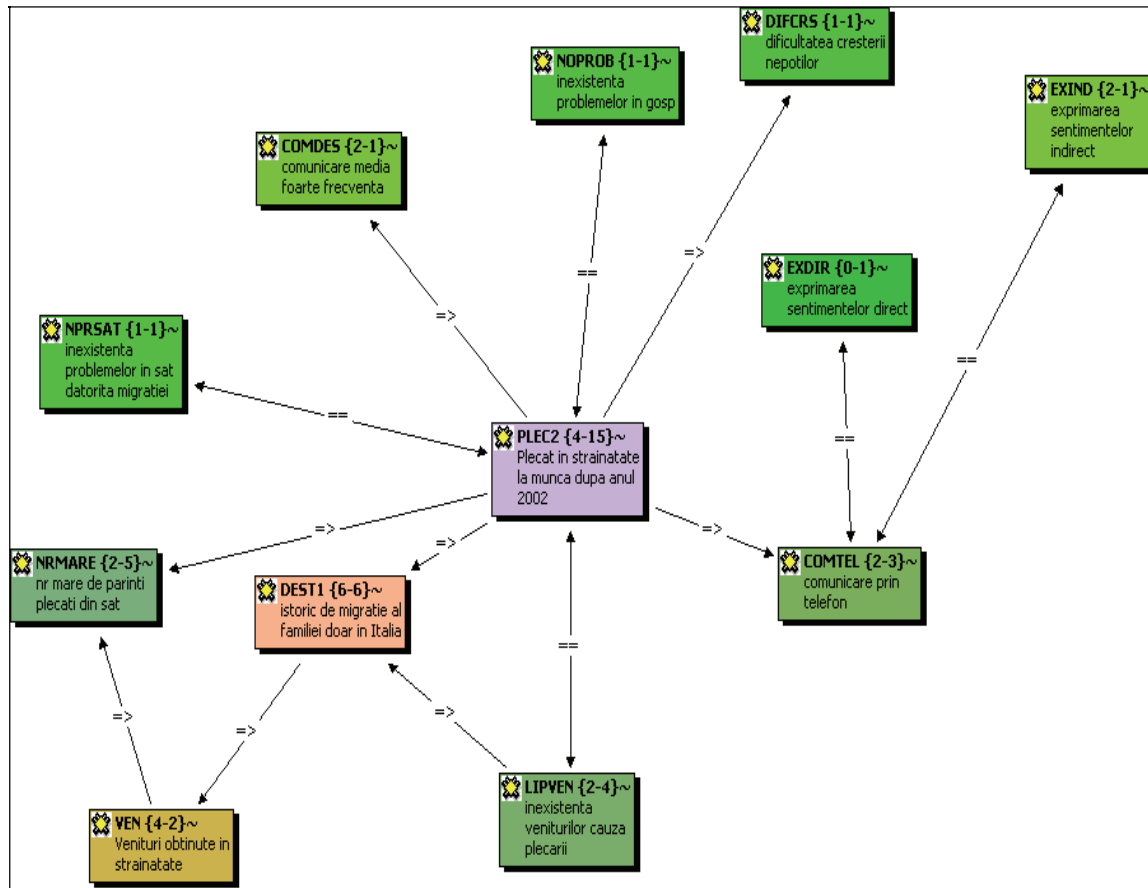
"... well, in terms of esthetics... and cleanliness... their values have changed (...)" (priest) "I think people's mentalities changed very much... they became more selfish... and it's understandable... I mean, there... they work very hard... and they learned to value what they make..." (headmaster).

The negative consequences are less prominent than the positive ones:

1. **The emotional deprivation caused by the parents' absence:** *"we have encouraged them lately to take their children along, even if it would affect us, as a school... it's better for the children to be with their parents, and the same applies to parents... nothing beats that... because there have been unfortunate situations... like the priest was telling you... many families broke up, both when only one parent left and when both did... they still separated, even there ...(...)... and then we encouraged them to take their children along... (...)* ... generally, these children are suffering enormously, even if they have money... it affects them emotionally... and you can tell" (headmaster) *"children found it difficult to come to terms... very difficult... the first time was very difficult... then they learned to put up with it... like on that show about the little girl whose parents are abroad and she's living with her grandparents and she said 'grandma, I can't choose between you and mom'"* (a local who's caring for her three grandchildren)
2. **A lack of interest for school and an increased risk of delinquency:** *"A: Firstly, these children don't get any help with their homework, studying... the grandparents can't help them... uncles and aunts have no time for them... they just make sure that the child has its lunch... give it money for a sandwich or a bag of snacks.... And think they did their job... and then it's up to us... These children only study in class, that's all... they do no homework... and there are very few of these children who have any hobbies, like playing an instrument, or sports. They get home around 2 pm every day, they have lunch... and then they watch cartoons, their older sisters watch the afternoon soaps... and that's it... we found that some of them brought the same books to school every day..."* (headmaster) *"... it also depends on each person's education... if the children weren't educated properly before their parents left... it will make a difference... it also matters in whose care they are left... if they are left with a grandmother who can handle them... or with someone who can barely talk themselves... it depends... if there are extended family members... siblings, in-laws... there are families in which children just miss their mother or their father... and that's all, we have two girls here in the village who are the first in their class... but there are also cases where the absence of the parents compromises the children's education...(...)* especially when the mothers are gone... when their mothers leave they go astray... they skip school... display antisocial behaviours... they get drunk, and all sorts of indecent behaviour" (priest)
3. **The absence of a parental role model for the children's values and views on life:** *"These children, after their parents left, became friends with the TV set, with the computer, so they live in a virtual reality... and that is sure to affect them... what I think is that they'll be less sensitive, because of all the violent cartoons and videogames they grow up with... they'll be less sensitive and tougher... and we can see that in school..."*
The parental guidance and socializing roles cannot be performed to the same extent by the grandparents, mainly because of their ages.
4. **Difficulties with children-rearing:** These difficulties are not recognized at first by the grandparents and they vary according to several factors: the age of the grandparents, the presence of other adults in the household, as well as the closeness between children and grandparents.

Communication between the absent parents and the children is usually performed by telephone. Children receive phone calls either daily or several times a week. The grandparents that we have

interviewed stated that there are no issues in the home that they cannot solve.



Semantic network no. 3: The migration process and the communication between children and parents

In terms of possible solutions to the issues mentioned above, the local authorities remain vague. There are only two applicable laws that have been identified: Law no. 272 and Ordinance no. 272. *“Ordinance no. 219 only allows us to establish what the number of parents who are abroad are, but has no provisions about how these children can be helped. These laws are useful, but insufficient to regulate the real situation. Not to mention that they need to be improved. Actual measures... we have taken measures only when our intervention was needed... namely in Neamț county, of 6,418 cases, protective measures were taken in 93 cases... this means that the children were given to the care of their relatives or relevant institutions... There are similar cases when the parents are in Romania as well, when the parents are neglecting their children... and then there are people who leave illegally... so they’re not registered anywhere (...) This took the state institutions by surprise, that’s the whole truth... They should know what the reality is... There has been no coherent strategy from the legislative point of view... it took us by surprise... and this isn’t the only time it’s happened... the same applies to homes for the elderly. (...)... The authorities should be aware of the real situation and try and reduce the costs of this migration. But, like I already said, the extent of the phenomenon took everybody by surprise. Other countries had similar problems, but they managed to solve them to a certain extent. Now it’s Romania’s turn (...)... The government should do something so that people wouldn’t go abroad... everybody should have a decent pay... access to well-paid jobs... a work ethic... If this doesn’t happen and*

parents have to keep going abroad, I think that large child centers should be eliminated. On the local level, the number of social assistants could be increased, and private centers could be created for these children. And in countries and regions with large numbers of Romanian migrants, there should be Romanian schools..."(Mihai Hanganu, Executive Manager of the Authority for the Protection of Children, Neamț county)

In Horia, there are no programs designed especially for children whose parents are abroad. The local school collaborates with the Mayor's Office in order to identify children who are at risk.

Conclusions

Children whose parents are abroad are a vulnerable group. The risks with which they are faced are the negative consequences of their parents' absence. The community micro-research highlighted the possible consequences on the local level, both from the perspective of local (formal and informal) authorities and that of adults in whose care children were left.

The negative consequences in Horia are mostly psychological: the children miss their absent parents, and this can cause isolation and depression. Depression is usually alleviated by the presence of extended family members, and the child's being used to living with them. The lack of interest in school and extra-curricular activities may be a result of the parents' absence, but the low interest in school performance cannot be explained through solely one causal factor. The absence of parental role models which serve as guidance for the children is strongly related to the age of the child at the time of its parents' departure.

In the absence of parents, the socialization of children becomes the responsibility of close relatives, which can be a burden for elderly persons.

These negative consequences caused by the absence of parents are not generally applicable for every individual case, and can vary in intensity according to the duration of the parents' absence, the degree of closeness between relatives, and each child's individual personality.

In order to solve these issues, one must identify the responsible parties who can reduce the impact of the phenomenon of migration on the affected children: the authorities. The first step which we identified consists in creating a legislative frame suitable for the existing situation.

All these consequences highlight that fact that children with parents abroad are a vulnerable group.

Who do the children belong to?

Monica Șerban
Ioana-Alexandra Mihai

Introduction

The title of this work may seem frivolous. “Who do the children belong to?” sounds like an interrogative pertaining more to a paternity test. The answer usually is related to assuming the responsibilities related to rearing a child and the relations between the parents.


So how would this question be related to international migration from Romania? We are usually tempted to look at migration from the point of view of adults, probably because of the extent of work migration from Romania. However, international migration includes, as a very consequence of its work component, the impact on children. This is why one of our goals was to see what happens to these children, in the context of a certain migration flow (to Spain). We tried to establish the numbers of children, their means of transportation, and their situation in their ‘adoptive’ country. We have built this study on both quantitative and qualitative information, gathered through questions that we formulated. We have used data provided by the destination country (the Spanish National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Spain), opinion polls from the origin country⁵, and information gathered through interviews conducted both in the area of origin and the area of destination (Teleorman county and Madrid)⁶.

Getting back to our title: if we have children, it seems very clear to whom they belong. However, our intention is to ‘consider’ the children of migrants to Spain not from the point of view of their biological parents, but from the point of view of social belonging, of citizenship and the status which is supposed to guarantee/protect their rights. Although apparently frivolous, the way this ‘paternity’ is assumed may have important consequences on the long term. This is, therefore, our intention: to discuss the consequences of the migration of these children, and the responsibility of their social ‘paternity’, from Romania’s point of view.

So who are the children in this case? We shall work with a less-conventional definition. In principle, our discussion shall focus on individuals aged 18 and less. Sadly, our data also included in some cases teenagers who were 19 (since we worked with age categories, eliminating the 19-year-olds from our group of interest became practically impossible).

⁵ The opinion poll “Temporary residence abroad”, performed by Gallup Organization Romania, at the request of the Foundation for an Open Society, national sample, 2006 (for a presentation of the methodology used see D. Sandu (coord). 2006. *Living abroad on a temporary basis. The economic migration of Romanians: 1990-2006*. FSD. Bucharest

⁶ Field research based on information gathered through qualitative methods, for the project “Temporary residence abroad”, FSD, in Nenciulești, Teleorman (July 2006) and Madrid, Spain (September 2006). We tried to concentrate, especially in terms of qualitative data, on general information (as opposed to information related to the particularities of each area – Teleorman/Madrid – or to the selection method (snowball type) of the respondents).



The migration to Spain is a significant phenomenon for the current migration of Romanians (out of all departures abroad during 2002-2006, approximately one quarter chose this destination⁷). The importance of the phenomenon is obvious. However, it must be noted that the issue of the children or the consequences that we have discussed for Spain itself are not necessarily valid solely for this destination. The aspects we are going to mention are probably ‘just as’ present in other destinations with an important Romanian presence (at least in Italy).

The purpose of our research was to discuss the issues rather than find solutions; to find aspects that we think are less known about the Romanian migration to Spain, rather than attempt a systematic presentation; to say “there’s something else that we should take into account”, rather than “that’s what happens”. This research is the result of efforts to explore the issue and should probably be seen as the beginning of a jigsaw puzzle, which is still missing many pieces, and is yet to be built.

The research is split in four sections. In the first section, we discuss the context and the general development of Romanian migration to Spain, attempting to establish the type of migration for which the presence of children is possible. The second section is an attempt to place children in the context that we have established: to discuss their presence within migration, the patterns of ‘attraction’ of these children to migration. If children are present within any type of migration, it is normal to determine what is happening to them. The core of the answer to our initial question is in section three, which attempts to find out in general terms who ‘assumes responsibility’ for these children. The final section discusses the situation from the point of view of the consequences for Romania, especially on the long term.

The migration of Romanians to Spain

International migration is a complex phenomenon. Although this statement has become a truism, we do need it in order to establish the way this section should be read. *Because* migration is a complex phenomenon it can be presented in many ways (and obviously in many details). *But* the purpose of this section is to establish the context in which the ‘children’s migration’ appeared and grew, and not to explain the development of general migration to Spain.

Therefore, we shall only discuss the elements that may help us establish to whom the children who currently live in Spain belong to. Namely, the type of migration to Spain we should look at in order to find these children.

There are two causes for the presence of Romanian children in Spain: the actual migration of children from Romania to Spain, and the birth of a Romanian child on Spanish territory (the first being migration per se, while the second is more of an effect of migration). As a result, there are two major categories of migrant children (who can be defined as such):

1. *children born on Spanish territory* (children of Romanian migrants). This category includes a large variety of situations: children with Romanian parents, and children with one Romanian parent and the other parent of a different citizenship than either Romanian or Spanish⁸

⁷ D. Sandu (coord). 2006. *Living abroad on a temporary. The economic migration of Romanians: 1990-2006*. FSD. Bucharest

⁸ The children of one parent of Spanish citizenship obviously have a different status (see the section on citizenship, access to education and medical care).

2. *children born on Romanian territory*, who migrate to Spain. Most cases included here refer to children who join their migrant parents (this is a family-class immigration situation, although not in the strictly procedural sense). Another case included here refers to the independent migration of underage children.⁹

It is obvious that for our first category, there have to be couples of Romanian migrants (who either migrate as such or are created at the place of destination). In the second case, the first condition is obviously the existence of children at the place of origin, but also the existence of couples who migrate (we will discuss this further in the section ‘how children enter migration’. A second condition (which was documented for several cases), is a long duration of migration. “Long” is obviously a vague term. However, the idea which the term defines in this context is that of a sequence to migration: the children’s presence at the place of destination as opposed to their migration from the place of origin to the place of destination as a process that follows, temporally, the migration of their parents.

The time sequence between the migration of adults and that of children is difficult to quantify. However, it is evident that it cannot be very short.

The independent migration of underage children is usually the result of a developed flow, and it can generally be associated to illegal immigration. In the case of Romania, in order to prevent this very issue, the regulations regarding the travel of underage children unaccompanied by adults are extremely strict. Moreover, unaccompanied underage children cannot be legally integrated in the workforce at the place of destination.

The fundamental condition for the emergence of this type of migration is the illegal nature of the migration itself, and, obviously, the development thereof on the basis of networks which allow the informal integration into the destination workforce. Therefore, if our reasoning is correct, in order to discuss children involved in migration to Spain, and especially the way that they get involved in it, we need types of migration which would allow the reunion/forming of couples (at the place of destination), with a sufficiently long duration of residence abroad; for the specific case of unaccompanied underage children, we also need to have migrant networks, as well as illegal immigration.

This is, therefore, the perspective from which we discuss migration to Spain. We shall use the idea of a *migration route* as an alternative to a migration type, as a way to migrate, which becomes consistent and stable in time¹⁰. From the perspective of migration routes, we shall attempt a short presentation of migration to Spain.

From the point of view of the history of international migration from Romania, we can say that migration to Spain is a rather discreet phenomenon in the context of the international immigration of Romanians after 1989. According to opinion poll data from the area of origin¹¹, between 1990-1995, Spain barely attracted about 2% of all departures abroad, a long way behind the top five destinations of the time. This is an easily explainable phenomenon: Spain was not one

⁹ In reality, apart from children who accompany their parents, regardless of the reason, to Spain, there is also the category of underage children who involve themselves unintentionally in migration, through child trafficking. This is a special form of migration. We have no intention to include this type of migration in this research

¹⁰ For a more detailed presentation of the ‘migration route’ concept, see Șerban. M. 2006. *International migration routes to Spain*. in D. Sandu (coord.) *Temporary residence abroad. The economic migration of Romanians*. FSD; Niculescu M. Vâlvoi E. O., Radu. D. C., Kozak D., Constantinescu M. 2005. *The Institutional Diagnosis of the Romanian Workforce Mobility in the European Space. Institutions, Contexts, and Migration Routes*

¹¹ D. Sandu (coord). 2006. *Temporary residence abroad. The economic migration of Romanians: 1990-2006*. FSD. Bucharest

of the 'known' routes for Romanians. Before 1989, political refugees represented the only form of Romanian migration to Spain. This was a negligible phenomenon in size¹², and, mostly, unfavorable (through its specific selectivity) to the development of work migration through migrant network. Despite this, and the lack of public visibility and 'importance' on the level of Romanian international migration (as a whole), the first 'stories' of the current migration, and the first 'networks' which became consistent in time were established in Spain during the 1990s¹³.

During 1996-2002, Spain became one of the top four destinations for the Romanian migration, however still behind Italy and Israel, in terms of sheer numbers. After 2002, Spain became one of the most attractive destinations for Romanians.

This is a significant difference: during 2002-2006, Spain became the second destination for the Romanian migration (25% of all departures)¹⁴.

This is, therefore, a flow which increased, easily ignored in the context of Romanian migration, especially after migration for work became the norm (after 1996). Migration to Spain is fundamentally migration for work, and as such its context is well known enough by now that we do not need to make a detailed presentation thereof¹⁵. In terms of migration routes, the most used route was 'individual migration', which is characterized to a high extent by its illegal nature¹⁶. Generally, the departures from Romania were legal, entry to Spain was legal/illegal, and residence in Spain was mostly illegal, with illegal employment. In most cases, the residence and employment conditions were legalized after a while. The most attractive occupations were in constructions (for men), and domestic service (for women). The networks based on family relations, friendships, and nationality insured the development of this phenomenon. The duration of migration in these cases was highly variable: from years to months spent in both countries (Romania and Spain).

Departures mediated by the government (after 2002) is another route to Spain. Although highly visible, the departures mediated by the former Office for the Migration of the Workforce (OMW), and by its next incarnation, ANOFM, represent a low percentage of the total of migrant Romanians who worked/are working in Spain. The Office mainly regulated short stays (3-6 months) for agricultural work.

Legal departures mediated by private mediation agencies, which is another type of international migration, does not seem to have happened much in the case of Spain. The issues related to the right of mediation after the signing of the agreement with Spain (2002), along with the development of the above-mentioned two routes of migration were probably the reason for this situation.

¹²In 1991, Romanian migrants had obtained 2,612 work permits. Although work permits are far from the best measure for the size of any migration, if we take into account that high likelihood that refugee claims were approved (due to Romania's political situation prior to 1989), this was a good indication for the legal migration to Spain.

¹³ D. Sandu (coord.) 2004. A Country Report on Romanian Migration Abroad: Stocks and flows after 1989: 18 Multicultural Center Prague, www.migrationonline.cz

¹⁴ D. Sandu (coord). 2006. *Temporary residence abroad. The economic migration of Romanians: 1990-2006*. FSD. București

¹⁵ M. Șerban. 2006. *International migration routes to Spain*. In D. Sandu (coord). *Temporary residence abroad. The economic migration of Romanians: 1990-2006*. FSD. Bucharest

¹⁶ The definition of (individual) migration as illegal is not simple at all. In principle, it can be done on the basis of three criteria (D. Broeders. 2007. The new digital borders of Europe: EU database and the surveillance of irregular migrants. *International Sociology*. 22: 73): entry, residence, and employment in the country of destination. The three criteria can be combined in various forms, giving rise to different 'degrees/situations' of illegal immigration

Legal departures based on work agreements with no mediator represent a fourth migration route¹⁷

The percentage of its usage is difficult to assess accurately if we take into account, on the one hand, the fact that part of Romanian migrants to Spain used the method of ‘individual work agreements’ to obtain legal employment at the place of destination and not to insure their departure from the place of origin, and, on the other hand, the fact that informal mediators could be involved in these cases, persons with migration experience capable to insure a connection between employers at the place of destination and potential employees as the place of origin. Although in theory we have individual migration routes, at least two of the above-mentioned arguments strongly link and define them as a consequence of the development of the individual migration route.

The opinion poll data from the place of origin helps us establish, although loosely, the percentages of routes in migration to Spain. The mediation companies (or our second type of route) covered around 20% of all departures taking places between 1996-2000, and then dropped to approximately 2% for 2002-2006. OMFM has a percentage of 7% of the total work visas issued between 2002-2006. It is obvious that the largest part of departures to Spain took part on the basis of the first migration route (individual non-mediated migration), developed through migrants’ networks or strongly associated to them (legal departures on the basis of non-mediated work agreements)¹⁸

This is, therefore, a flow with an ascendant trend which probably became more intense at some point at the end of the 1990s, and experienced a significant increase at the beginning of the new millennium.

The data obtained at the place of destination seems to support the above (Chart 1). The series cannot cover the whole dimension of the Romanian migration to Spain, but it has the advantage of (also) including the illegal part of migration. The increases seen after 2000 are spectacular: in 2001, the numbers of Romanian migrants were in the tens of thousands, which become hundreds of thousands a couple of years later. After 2003, the numbers of Romanians ‘empatronated’¹⁹ by City Halls in Spain are between 70,000 and 100,000 persons each year, with over 400,000 persons in 2006.

Chart 2 shows the evolution of the numbers of Romanian residents in Spain. The big differences between the two series (City Hall registrations and residence) suggest that illegal residence is consistently high, which implicitly would also suggest illegal employment.

Returning to the title of our research, where should we look for children in this complex of routes? From the previous pages, it becomes obvious that, when children are present, and their numbers are significant, they can only be included in the individual, non-mediated route. The other routes have low percentages in migration, and the numbers of children who would manage to arrive in Spain via those routes would be very low.

It is, however, highly probable that children arrived in Spain following the individual, non-mediated route, not only because of the extent of the route itself, but also because of its content: migration of this type allows (for as long as it remains illegal, and more so when it

¹⁷ In 2005, according to data provided by the diplomatic missions in Romania, of the total of work visas for Spain, (26,694), OMFM had insured 14,323 (the maximum number of agreements for 2002-2005), while private mediation agencies had only insured 22 work visas (according to data included in the research *The liberalization of the work market in Romania. Opportunities and risks*, elaborated by DMS, OMFM, The Department of Political Sciences of the Faculty of Political and Communication Sciences, The University of Oradea).

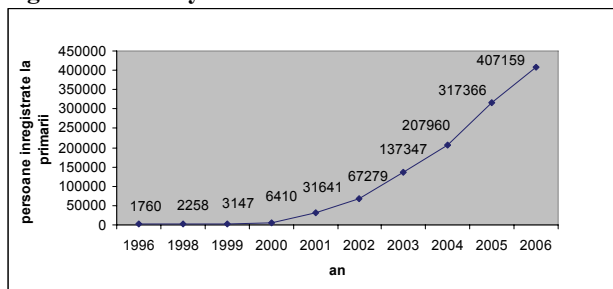
¹⁸ D. Sandu (coord). 2006. *Temporary residence abroad. The economic migration of Romanians: 1990-2006*. FSD. Bucharest

¹⁹ This term, used frequently by the Romanian community in Spain, comes from the Spanish work “empatronamiento” – meaning census, registration

becomes legal) couples to migrate. It also allows for the formation of couples at the place of destination, if we consider that it allows migrants, at least at first, to migrate to specific locations in Spain. Because it is partly illegal, it also allows underage children to migrate, and can even involve them in the work market. Moreover, it also allows a redefinition of the migration situation and the extension of stays abroad. All these are possible because of the very flexibility of this route, its ability to adapt to environmental constraints and accumulate the resources necessary to deal with them.

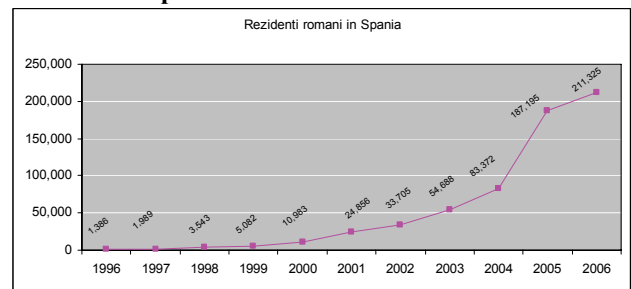
So whom do the children who are in Spain belong to? From the perspective of migration routes, they do not belong to the Romanian migrants working in agriculture, but to those who work in constructions and as housekeepers. They are the children of people who resided and worked illegally in Spain.

Chart 1: Progression of the number of Romanians registered at City Halls



Data source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, <http://www.ine.es/>

Chart 2: Progression of the number of Romanians residents in Spain



Data source: Anuario Estadístico de inmigración (serie 1996-2006), Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, www.mtas.e

The Romanian children in Spain

We have seen that, in the case of migration to Spain, there is a route to which the children who travel to Spain can be related. Our next step is to find out when/how the children started being involved in this migration route. Qualitative information in our possession only allows us to formulate hypotheses for the children who travel from the place of origin to the place of destination, and not for children born on Spanish territory. We shall concentrate, therefore, exclusively on the former. What we want to establish is the times, if any, to which we can connect the migration of children. Our attempts at finding an answer (in the ‘children in the migration to Spain’ section) will be the premise we use for this. If these answers formed a solid basis, then we should find a consistent number of children in the migration flow to Spain. So what is this number? How many children are involved in migration? Are there differences between age categories? These are the questions that we are trying to answer in this section.

The children involved in migration to Spain

On the route of ‘individual, non-mediated migration’, ‘bringing the children along’ means two things: having the money and having the time; although this somehow translates as a financial process, when it is not one by far. The stability of the migrants’ families is essential and is first and foremost related to the stability of their jobs and income levels, with consequences on other aspects as well (accommodation at the place of destination, for instance).

Let us look at this in more detail. The typical Romanian family in Spain is made up of constructions workers and housekeepers. We can continue by saying that neither of the two spouses have legal status in Spain. Let us see what this means from the point of view of stable incomes, jobs, and accommodation.

Illegal residence represents a barrier for a lot of work opportunities for migrants (as a rule), and, in principle, forces them to remain in the Romanian community: work is performed according to the rules of the ‘black market’, based on trust, not on papers. Neither of our theoretical two spouses can find legal employment. Potential employers are clear on this point: they do not want to hire illegal residents. Moreover, certain fields (and certain jobs) are completely out of the reach of illegal residents. The absence of a work agreement increases the risks associated to any understanding between parties: each party assumes the risk that the other party will fail to fulfill its obligations, especially since there is no legal method to insure the latter.

This is why the support of others, that ‘one knows’ and trusts, and whom trust one in return, is essential. This is one of the main reasons for which men are usually at first ‘employed’ by a fellow Romanian (in their team), and women based on the recommendation of fellow immigrants with more experience. The degree (or the risk) of instability of illegal employment is high. One of the motivations of employers for using illegal residents is the very high flexibility associated thereof. Illegal immigrants may fulfill a clear need without any obligation to them from the employer after that need ceases to exist. ‘Unemployment’ is entirely the illegal immigrant’s problem.

Income associated to informal jobs is also subject to the same risks, and is obviously low. Although no tax is paid, the vulnerability of illegal residents (whose day to day living depends on this income, which means that they will accept almost any pay), as well as the losses related to illegal employment²⁰ are the reasons for which the selling price of this workforce is low. The income from

²⁰ Employment of illegal immigrants seems at first sight the best choice for the employer. However, there are several disadvantages that the latter must take into account. For instance: discovery by the authorities can result in the payment of substantial fines; the lack of qualifications of the migrants (the employer has no guarantees of the qualifications of the employees. Questions and answers are based on trust only. The statement “I can do this” is explainable, given that the

illegal employment is related to quantity, not quality. In principle, this translates in little to no free time. Therefore, even when an illegal immigrant obtains a similar or higher income than a legal immigrant, the efforts they make to keep the job in question are also greater.

Another influence on the decision to reunite families is accommodation. The typical scene is that of an overcrowded apartment. In the case of migration to Spain, at least during stage one thereof, the accommodation unit is 'the room'. Each family lives in one room of an apartment, sharing the latter with other people. Part of the reasons for this arrangement is the financial side: rent and other expenses are split between a sufficiently large number of persons that they become accessible. Other reasons have to do with the status of being an illegal immigrant; without 'papers', none of the spouses can conclude a lease in their name, therefore having to accept the conditions imposed by/negotiated with 'the apartment boss' (the owner of the lease). Life in such an apartment must be strictly regulated: there is not enough room for each family to have appliances such as stoves, washers, etc. Bathrooms and kitchens must be used in a certain succession, so that nobody is late for work. As a rule, none of the housework is 'externalized', on the one hand because families do not have experience in the field, and, on the other hand, because the income does not allow for restaurant outings, Laundromats, etc. Is it possible to bring a child to Spain in these conditions? Without the certainty of jobs and incomes, and to a 'room' for a home? The answer, in the case of the majority of our respondents, was no. At this stage, the parents are in Spain, and their children are in Romania, in the care of relatives. However, both parties want to reunite their family... It looks like this is impossible at this migration stage. However, as migrants spend more time in their new country, their situation is constantly improving. Even as illegal residents, the trust that they develop with their employers can provide them with stable jobs and higher income. However, the moment when the couple passes to the next stage is when one or both spouses' status is legalized. At this point, they can find legal employment, and their freedom of choice and decision takes on a whole new dimension. This seems to be the moment after which plans to 'bring the children along' are being made.

So far, it seems that legal status is a fundamental requirement for reuniting families. It is, however, just a factor that facilitates improvements in the situation of migrants. Legal status does not automatically mean a better job, higher income, etc.. It only offers opportunities that the migrants need to be able to explore. It can be a long time between obtaining legal status in Spain and being able to reunite families. This is because, in the first place, parents must insure a constant and stable income for the minimum expenses of a reunited family. At least one of the parents will not be able to continue working intensively because of having to care for the children, which means that the other parent will have to be able to make enough money to compensate for this. Part of the expenses (which may not exist in Romania once a child is born) increases considerably (families with children must find living arrangements suitable for their children, and thus pay rents more or less normal for the destination country).

Even when planned, family reunions are not necessarily complete or permanent. Circumstances may only allow families to bring some of their children to Spain. We are unaware of the percentage of 'failed' reunions, which may result in the children being re-sent home for a while, to be reunited with their parents later. The reasons for this can be multiple: the parents may be unable to provide for their children financially, or the children are unable to adapt to their new environments.

While we were able to find an answer to the question regarding the times and conditions when children migrate to Spain, we have insufficient data to be able to determine the circumstances of children who are born in Spain. It may be that the reasons we discussed above also apply to the

migrant might not have enough money to buy food the next day. The consequences, however, can be severe for the employer).

decision of having children. However, in circumstances such as these, it is likely that many other factors also enter the equation (such as the Spanish cultural pattern).

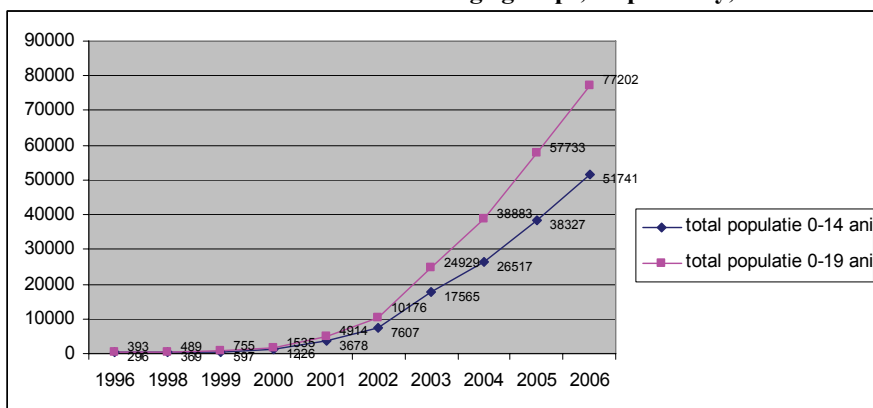
How many Romanian children are there in Spain?

The answer to this question is and will remain inexact for as long as the migration of Romanians to Spain will keep its current features. This is largely due to illegal immigration. The previous section advanced that children ‘show up’ in migration only once their parents have legal status in Spain. However, although this may be the general rule, there are obviously cases when children are reunited with their parents before the status of the latter is legalized in Spain. We are unaware of the real percentage of Romanians who are the exception to the ‘rule’ that we identified. This remains a question for future researches in the matter. However, in the case of children, it is likely that the numbers registered by Spanish authorities are closer to the truth than in the case of adults.

Another source of inaccuracy is again illegal immigration, only this time the migration of underage children (especially older teenagers). Older teenagers may work, and therefore their migration becomes an event that they assume independently from their families of origin. They are a category of migrants that is usually related to developed migration flows. In principle, the ‘migration culture’ which inevitably develops in the communities of origin is the motivation behind this type of migration. The issue persists that this type of migration is usually illegal. This is why it is likely that the official numbers of older teenagers who are migrants are less accurate than those pertaining to other age categories (underestimating the real size of this category).

Secondly, there is a possibility that data reflects the phenomenon incorrectly because children’s migration is circular. Children are brought into Spain or sent back home... and so on. Migration that is circular is difficult to evaluate in exact numbers, especially because it depends on a large number of factors. Bearing all this in mind, we shall try and see what the data provided by Spanish sources seems to suggest. We have used the data from „El pordon municipal” (City Hall registrations), provided by the National Spanish Institute of Statistics (INE), for 1996-2006. The data suggests, much as expected, a relatively recent increase in the phenomenon (Chart 3). Regardless of whether we look at the 0-14 or the 0-19 age category, until 2000, the numbers are insignificant. It was only in 2000 that the two populations grew to over 1000 persons. After 2000, the increase was noticeable; in 2006 there were 54,741 children 14 and under, and 77,202 teenagers and children 19 and under in Spain

Chart 3: The evolution of 0-14 and 0-19 age groups, respectively, between 1996



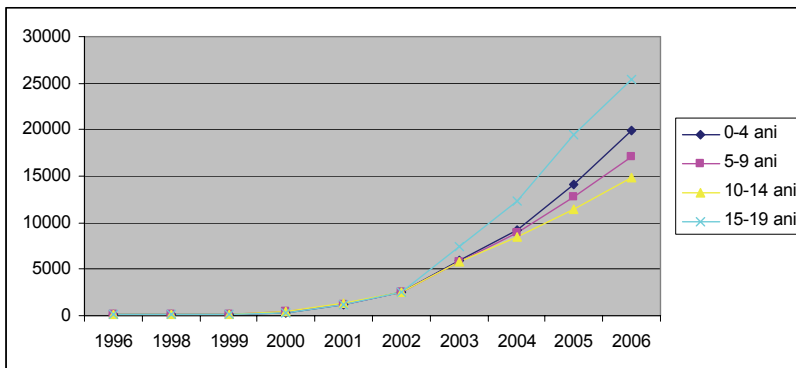
Data source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, <http://www.ine.es/>

When we look at graphical projections of the data above, we can see that the most consistent increase after 2002 happened in the 15-19 age category (Chart 4) . We think that there are several reasons for this increase. First, 2002 meant a reduction in migration costs for Spain (and actually for all EU countries, and especially the ones parties to the Schengen Treaty). It was to be expected that once visas were eliminated, and travel costs go down, an increase will be felt for categories in possession of certain limited resources: the youth. On the other hand, it is very likely that increased expertise in migration (especially in regions of the area of origin with high incidence of the phenomenon) will promote migration as a successful life strategy, and will ‘pressure’ young people into involving themselves in it. It is also possible that teenagers 14 and older were also brought into Spain by their parents who trying to bring their families together. This is because it is at 14 that children graduate from junior high school in Romania, and also because their adaptation to migration is probably more likely and possible at lesser costs than that of children of younger ages.

Another category which experienced a significant increase is that of children between 0 and 4 years of age. Obviously, children born in Spain are included in this category. This is a common situation because the migrant population is generally young (international migration, despite the reduction of selectiveness, remains a phenomenon affecting young adults, especially in its work component²¹).

The circumstances of the 10-14 age categories, who have experienced the least significant increase by comparison to the other categories, are interesting. It is possible that in this case the parents would be reticent to bring their children to Spain due to their enrollment in junior high school in Romania. However, we should treat this potential explanation cautiously since a reduction in the numbers of potentially migrant children (by reuniting families) is normal once the children grow older²²

Chart 4: The evolution of Romanian populations of children and teenagers aged 0 - 19, based on age categories.



Data source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, <http://www.ine.es/>

²¹ For Romanian residents (including legal residents), the age average was 31 in 2006, the youngest (together with Byelorussians and Moldovans) in terms of European countries of origin

²² Given that the age of children increases alongside with that of parents, and work migration involves mostly young adults

What are the Romanian children doing in Spain?

We have seen that Romanians living in Spain are not solely adults, but also children. Apart from the children who are working (and are generally older teenagers), it is interesting to see what the circumstances of the Romanian children born in Spain are, as well as those of the young children brought into the country by their parents.

What happens in the families?

As we showed before, Romanian children arrive in Spain after their parents have reached a certain stability: they have their own apartments, a stable income, and to a certain extent, free time which they can dedicate to their children. The birth of a child usually means that its mother will have to stop working temporarily. One strategy used in order to minimize the time involved is to also bring the grandparents to Spain. This causes a new type of migration, involving persons aged 50 and over, who do not go to Spain for work, but to take care of their grandchildren. The same applies to older children (born either in Spain or in Romania). Grandparents, and especially grandmothers, usually reside in Spain for a few months at the time. They are not registered by the Spanish authorities, because they do not require residence papers (which is why official statistics do not account for them). Sometimes grandparents also find employment, which reduces the cost of their temporary residence in Spain and allows them to visit for longer periods.

Families who already have better circumstances in Spain can afford to hire babysitters, typically also Romanians. The latter are usually women who are just starting out in their Spanish 'experience', and work for minimum pay. This allows mothers to return to work sooner, and also provide income for the family.

An important issue for our discussion is learning Romanian, and/or improving the knowledge of the language. Romanian parents seem to be interested in insuring the integration of their children into the Spanish society, which entails achieving fluency in Spanish. This is why parents prefer to speak to their children in Spanish (generally due to the fact that the grandparents usually use Romanian). Children who are born in Spain or arrive there at an early age have few chances to speak Romanian correctly: until recently it was only their parents and relatives who were teaching them to read and write in Romanian, who, apart from their own (on the average) lack of education, also have little interest in teaching the children any other language than Spanish, which will facilitate their integration in their new country. Besides, the spoken Romanian that the children learn from their families depends on their place of origin in Romania. Besides the grammatical errors usually found in people with little education (of which lack of agreement between the verb and the noun is a prime example), the Romanian spoken by the migrants uses a lot of words and expressions 'borrowed' from Spanish.

Romanian children encounter little difficulty with integration (the younger they are, the easier it is for them to integrate). They learn the language quickly and usually have a good educational background, from their Romanian schooling, despite the initial troubles with the language. It is only children 10 years and older who encounter adaptation issues, compounded by the language difference.

The question that we need to ask is related to the extent of the chances that these children who can speak and write in Spanish better than in Romanian (because of their schooling) have to be reintegrated into the Romanian society, of course in the context that they even desire it.

Aspects related to citizenship and access to education and health care

We have seen the circumstances within the families of Romanian migrants. In order to have an overall picture, though, it is important to also see what the Spanish state can offer to immigrants' children, in terms of both services and citizenship, which is fundamental for the future of these children.

Since 1996, the Spanish state started to show concern for immigration beyond the regulations provided for work. It amended a law on immigrants, dating since 1985, (Ley de la Extranjeria), to include rights related to education, equality, legal counsel and the right to have an interpreter when dealing with Spanish authorities. Regional authorities also received greater powers to protect underage immigrants²³.

Once a child arrives on Spanish territory, it has certain rights. First and foremost it is the right to education. Regardless of the immigration status of the parents, all children who are on Spanish soil have the right and obligation to take part in the basic 10 grade educational system, just like Spanish citizens. Moreover, authorities must insure that immigrants receive an adequate education, which promotes their social integration and takes into account their own cultural heritage. Immigrant children have full access to the support and scholarship system offered by the Spanish state. Even if preschool education is not mandatory, local authorities are forced by law²⁴ to insure that immigrants' children can take part in it.

Romanian children find it relatively easy to integrate, especially in primary education. They learn Spanish quickly and generally do well in school. The reverse is usually more complicated. Children who went to school in Spain find it difficult to integrate in the Romanian educational system. The difficulties are not related as much to the language, but to the sheer amount of information contained in the Romanian curriculum. This is also one of the reasons for which some parents are unwilling to bring their children to Spain.

In terms of access to health care, the same rules that apply so any EU citizen on Spanish territory also apply to Romanian children: they have the right to free medical assistance in the public health care system. As a matter of fact, any foreign national registered with a Spanish City Hall has the same rights to health care services as Spanish citizens.

Underage children do not even require registration with the City Hall in order to have the same rights as Spanish citizens. Pregnant women also have the right to free health care services both during and after their pregnancy.

Besides these rights, the Spanish state, autonomous communities, City Halls, and NGOs are also interested in integrating immigrants, which translates in a series of projects aimed to further integration in the educational system and access to specific health care services for immigrant children.

Another fair question to ask is the extent to which Romanian children are considered 'aliens' by the Spanish state. A Romanian child born on Spanish soil is not a Spanish citizen, unless one of its parents is a Spanish citizen. However, any person born in Spain can obtain Spanish citizenship provided they have resided in the country for one full year. Foreign nationals can become Spanish citizens after 10 years. The numbers of Romanians who apply for Spanish citizenship is low (there were 166 cases in 2006, of which 78 applied for Spanish citizenship after marrying a Spanish citizen). One of the reasons for this may be that most Romanians do not meet the duration requirements. Another reason may be that Spain does not allow dual citizenships, and many Romanian migrants do not want to renounce their Romanian citizenship. However, it is important to find out whether children born in Spain or those who arrive there at early ages are going to choose to become Spanish citizens and enjoy all the related rights.

Why are we interested in all these aspects?

If we agree with the hypothesis that families reunite especially after the parents become legal residents and we take into account the differences between the series of data contained in Chart 1 and Chart 2, which suggests that Romanian migration to Spain is still mainly illegal, the chances for an increase in the migration of children to Spain are high. Of course, part of the difference is explained by

²³ Ortega Pérez, Nieves, 2003, España: Hacia una nueva política migratoria, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=99>

²⁴ Ley Orgánica 4/2000, http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/Admin/lo4-2000.html

the fact that most of the legal residents do not have children (due to their young ages).²⁵ Others are uninterested in residing in Spain for longer periods of time and therefore are uninterested both in becoming legal residents, and in bringing their children to Spain. However, the large difference (almost 200.000 persons) between the two series of data²⁶ and the constant increase in the numbers of children over the last years are good arguments for a continual increase (even if the migration of adults may decrease).

The categories where we can expect increases contain the teenagers 14 years of age and older, and the infants between 0 and 4 years of age. The first category is influenced by factors pertaining to the area of origin (the development of a migration culture being just one of these factors), while the other is influenced by factors pertaining to the area of destination: because of the age of most migrants, children are likely to be born in the area of destination.

If, on the one hand, there are arguments for an increase of the number of children in the area of destination, there are also arguments against this increase. The circular character of migration, especially after Romania joined the EU, is a good argument against it. The information about both types of migration is, at this time, insufficient. January 1st 2007 is still too recent to be able to see its influence on the overall migration to Spain.

Nevertheless, what is the importance of the fact that there are tens of thousands of Romanian children in Spain, and their numbers are likely to increase? The consequences for the development of a second generation of migrants are multiple. We shall try and highlight just a few of them.

...because of the demographic evolution of Romania

At this time, the issue of the ageing of the Romanian population is becoming important. The Green Card of Population²⁷, elaborated by The National Commission for Population and Development together with the UN Fund for Population emphasizes the seriousness of this issue. It is not just the loss in numbers caused by migration (which can only be estimated, and which is only permanent to a certain extent), but also the decline in birth rates which started in Romania in 1992. The decline in birth rates has as an effect more than just the decline in population numbers; it also affects the age structure thereof. The ageing of the Romanian population entails important economic and social issues, of which maybe the most important is the decline in numbers of the persons which actively contribute to the health care and retirement benefits systems, coupled with the increase in the numbers of those who benefit from them.

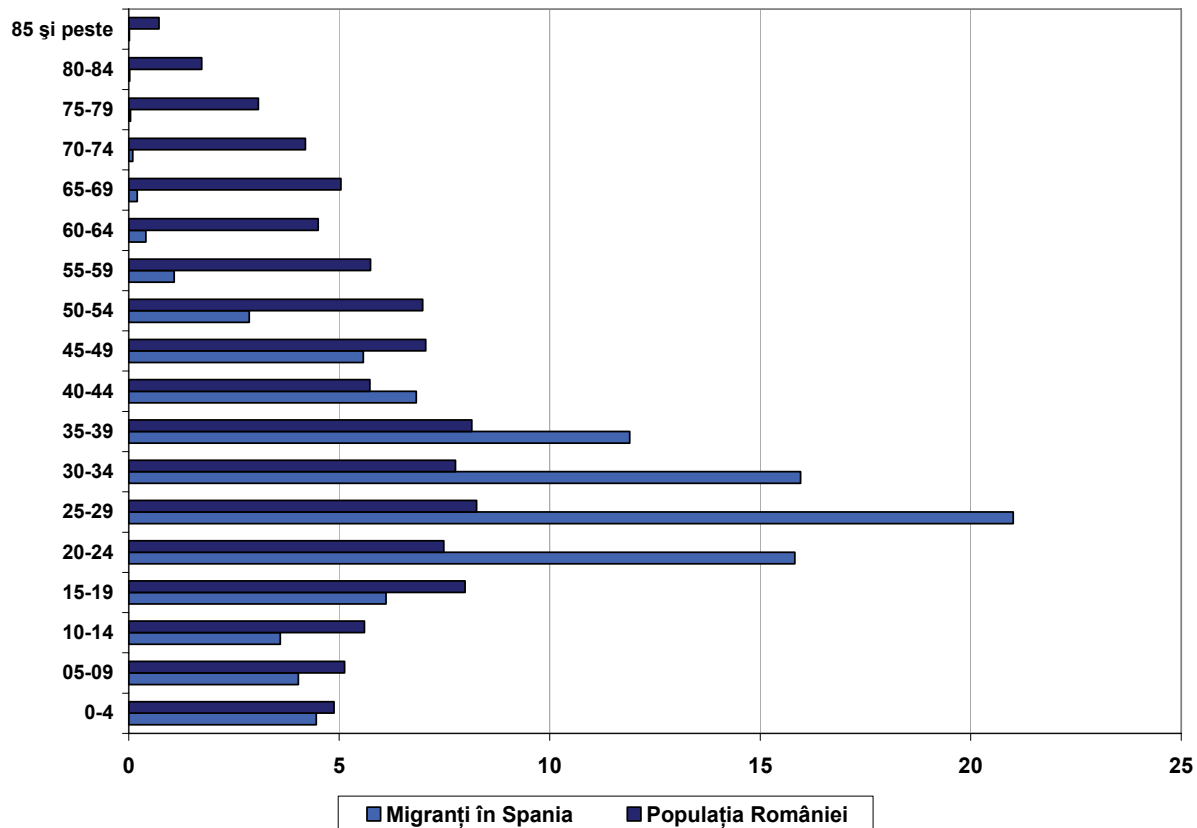
If migration becomes permanent, it will contribute to the population decline. It is important to note that the population decline is not just a reduction in numbers, but a reduction in the numbers of certain age groups. Looking at Chart 5, we can notice that the most significant part of the migrants to Spain (and we have no reasons to think the situation is different in other popular migrant destinations) is between 20-34 years of age, with significantly higher percentages than the same age group in Romania. These are active persons who, if they were employed in Romania, would be able to contribute to the social assistance budget.

²⁵ However, the persons who 'commute' between Romania and Spain may be unaccounted for by the registration system. Their lack of interest in legal residence beyond the three months allowed by law is likely to prevent these 'commuters' from getting registered. Therefore, it is possible that the difference between 'registered' persons and residents is not covered to a large extent by the 'commuters'

²⁶ We assume that the large numbers of illegal immigrants will try to legalize their circumstances once they reach their destination. Spain's migration policy, and Romania's EU membership, even though Spain does not allow at this time Romania's free access to its labour market, sustain this hypothesis.

²⁷

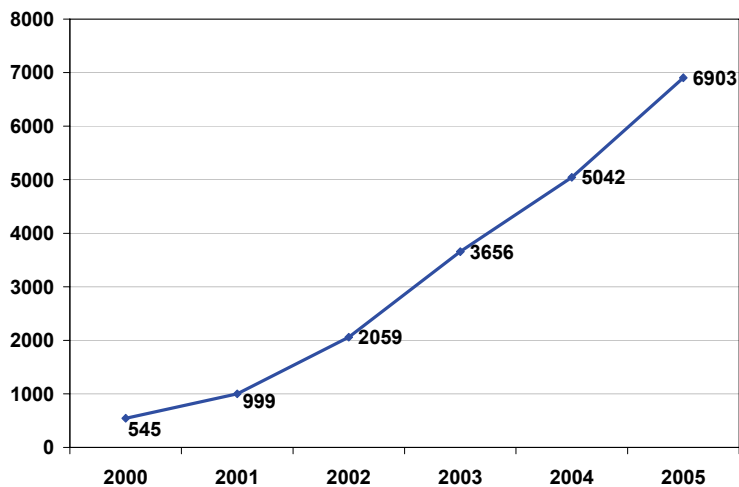
Chart 5: The age structure of the Romanian migrant population in Spain compared with the population of Romania. The data represents percentages of the migrant population, and Romania, respectively (data by MTAS and INSSE for 2005)



At the same time, we must notice that approximately 37% of all migrants are in the age group with the highest birth rates (20-29 years old). By comparing this data with the 16% percentage that this age group is represented in Romania, we can understand the real extent of the issue. The percentage of children is still low among migrants, by comparison with the population of Romania, but we can expect this to change, either through families being reunited, or by the birth of children in Spain. In 2005, 6,903 children were born in Spain of Romanian mothers, of whom 5,252 with Romanian mothers and fathers. Chart 6 shows the evolution of the number of children born in Spain of Romanian mothers.

Even if these children are Romanian citizens, their chances of becoming Spanish citizens are high and extremely likely. The resulting demographic loss for Romania would be made even more serious by the pre-existing demographic crisis.

Chart 6: The evolution of the number of children born on Spanish territory of Romanian mothers



...because of returning migrants

There are already issues affecting the migration of Romanians to Spain which pertain to the coming of age of a migration flow. Returning migrants are important from the point of view of long-term migration.

Romania is faced at this time, much like all the other new EU members, with a need for workforce on the internal market, and especially in certain sectors of the economy. One of the possible solutions, which is currently expected to happen naturally, is the return of the Romanians who are currently working abroad. The advantages of this return, strictly from the point of view of the internal workforce market and by comparison to other possible solutions, are obvious. The likelihood that this will happen, especially in the future, is also obvious. Romania's new situation, as part of the EU, along with the whole concept of the migration of workforce (despite temporary restrictions) within the European space will probably facilitate the process. However, we must wonder whether families, and especially families with children, will be part of this migration trend? Or if, on the long term, we are discussing about persons born and reared in Spain? Which of the children or young people will return to Romania? Will they be bilingual citizens able to become integrated in either of the two societies (Romanian and Spanish) without fail or will they be European citizens, Spanish/ 'Romanianish'-speaking Romanians searching for their identity in two spaces without belonging to either? The issues we have tried to address while discussing about 'what Romanian children are doing in Spain', from the very problem of being able to learn correct Romanian, would suggest that the first variant, that of migrants free of cultural constraints is not very plausible, at least not for a large portion of the current children involved in the Romanian migration.

...because of the circulation of children (or the migration also involving children)

If we tried to show that adults' migration for work is not the type of migration which would involve children, we cannot lose sight of the fact that there are cases in which we must discuss another type of migration, that of children. We are unable to discuss the size of this phenomenon, but that does not mean that the phenomenon itself does not exist. There are temporary situations: parents find themselves unable to support their children in Spain, or children fail to adapt. The trial period may lead to failure, and children may return to Romania for a while, only to try again at a later time. Isn't it

natural to ask what is happening with the children in these cases? Moved between two worlds, do they stand real chances of adapting to either of them? To what extent and according to which rules will these children complete their education? For which of the two societies will they be prepared when they grow up?

In place of conclusions

Paradoxically, our starting point, the question ‘to whom do these children belong?’, found no answer. The children are Romanian by birth, but, in many cases, Spanish by country of adoption. The world that they live in gives to most of them the right to choose whether they will grow up to be Romanian or Spanish citizens. The conclusion that we are interested in is that their freedom of choice must be influenced so that its consequences will be positive. Regardless of their later choice of citizenship, Romanian children who are currently living in Spain need to have their language and their culture just as much as they need to be able to integrate into the Spanish culture in which they are currently living.

It is important to be aware of the fact that the migration of Romanians, in the specific forms that it evolved, involves their children, a phenomenon that is likely to become more and more important. The consequences of this phenomenon are at this time not very visible. However, on the long-term, at least from the point of view of the demographic crisis of Romania and the potential return of migrants, and last but not least, the circular migration between the two countries, the migration of children deserves attention.

The recent interest in the situation of Romanian children living abroad (Box 1), may be seen as a starting point in a series of efforts which will become increasingly important on the long term.

Box 1: The recent interest in the situation of Romanian children living abroad

The issue of Romanian children living in Spain has started to receive interest in Romania only recently. So far, the measures taken dealt with the building of the children’s national identity through educational services. In 2006, there were already a few NGOs set up by Romanian migrants in the Madrid area, aiming to offer children courses of Romanian language and culture, as well as access to a library with books in the Romanian language, but these efforts were still at the project stage. Spanish local public authorities support these NGOs by providing them with headquarters, consultancy and sometimes funds, as part of their efforts to facilitate the integration of migrants in the Spanish society.

During the summer of 2007, The Ministry of Education, Research and Youth of Romania issued an ordinance through which interviews were organized for the employment of teachers of Romanian language, culture and civilization in Spain and Italy. The subjects will be optional, organized as two classes per week for students enrolled in all forms of education, except for higher education. The results of this project are yet unknown, because the project only started last fall.