

Welfare and Labour Aspects of Romanian Orthodox Diaspora in Italy

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Abstract

Based on statistical data evidence, this paper concludes that, since 2012, Romanian Orthodox Diaspora in Italy is increasing, but in a decelerating rhythm. However, the percentage of Romanian active population leaving the home country in the long term lead to a critical migration rate overall. The paper includes demographic and geographic characteristics of diaspora influencing faith affiliation, weekly worship service attendance, daily prayer and assessment of religion importance in the citizen daily life.

Key words: migration, gender, Italian syndrome, statistics

J.E.L. classification: N3, Z12

1. Introduction

Romania's integration into the European Union in 2007 has influenced regional relations, imposing a visa regime for some Eastern European neighboring states while eliminating the visas for free movement within community space. Hence, Romanians have acquired the quality of European citizens enjoying several fundamental rights. In 1993 the Maastricht Treaty established at European level the institution of European citizenship which granted the right to free movement and free residence within the Union to all citizens belonging to the Member States of the European Union. Such citizenship does not replace national citizenship, but supplements it (Svevo, 2005). This allowed unemployed citizens of Romania to work in other member countries of the U.E. (Stoica, 2001) while a series of bureaucratic formalities and movement restrictions were eliminated. Romanians also have benefited by new opportunities of finding a suitable paid job, qualitative services, access to studies including the possibility of free expression of religion. A significant part of the young Romanians were eager to experience a different kind of life outside Romanian borders and their number increased exponentially with each year because those who initially left and established a correct contractual relationship with minimal comfort of life were able to bring their relatives, friends and families in turn to the host country.

2. Theoretical background

Benefiting on the advantages of knowing the languages of Latin origin, familiar geographical climate, equal EU citizen rights and especially coming from a predominantly Orthodox Christian state in the space of a Christian community, many Romanians manage to impress in a pleasant way, noting themselves through their determination and professionalism. Overcoming the problems encountered by Romanians in the diaspora, they succeeded in verification of the popular expression that "man sanctifies the place". They carried with them and cultivated home traditions and set up parishes to keep alive the communication of love with God and their neighbors.

The aspects identified within such context materialize through "transhumant" active members of the local churches in Romania to the different parishes outside the country.

This hypothesis from which we started the present research, began to take shape by identifying and putting together the situations discovered in research trips and pilgrimages through the country and abroad. Discussing with priests from different parishes, former college colleagues or university professors and religion teachers we found that attendance at holy ceremony is somewhat different from previous years due to the absence of many parishioners.

By conducting several in-depth investigations with those who know best the in-site diaspora situation, respectively with the priests who were assigned to international parishes or with the teachers and school leaders who know the situations of the families well, we found out that many of the young people who were part of the parish were leaving country, either for work, studies or for other reasons. This is also how we found that many of the young graduates of theology faculties have migrated to other places to settle with their families abroad. Many of them carry out their mission there as priests, deacons, church chorus singers or gather together with the priest and the administrative council to carry out the specific activities of the parish, and a good part of the students or graduates of the theological seminars work in completely different fields, but keep a good connection with the closest church.

3. Welfare and labor analysis based on statistical data

According to a statement published by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (INS), in 2018 a percentage of 0.7% of the country's active population have left the country in the long term (INSSE 212/29.08.2019). These are the official data presented, but in reality, it is not possible to do a full correct verification in the field. Even though the law mentions that it is the duty of those who leave the country for a long time to declare at the Embassy (Law 227/2015), most do not. This is just an option and the fact that nowhere is any sanction or reward, does it make many skips this. In this regard, the Romanian state came to the support of the Romanians in the diaspora and gave them the possibility to register at the diplomatic or consular missions of Romania in the constituency where they are located, work or have their domicile, as the case may be, without having to go through distance to the country to express this option.

Analyzing the research survey and discussions, it is noted that each of the Romanians still present in the country knows someone who has gone to the diaspora, regardless of whether we are talking about their relatives, friends or neighbors. Of those leaving the country, the majority are young people between the ages of 16-35. According to the same INSSE statement (INSSE 212/29.08.2019), the birth rate in Romania is decreasing, the main cause of this decrease is the negative natural increase, the number of deceased persons exceeding the number of live births by 75,729 persons, and at this rate the number of the Romanian population decreases drastically. According to a report published by the European Union in 2019 (Lutz et al., 2019), Romania could lose over 40% of the country's active population if the scenario of intra-community migration continues at the same rate. Analyzing this report, we can say that in Romania the effect of such an exodus of qualified and educated people would have a direct demographic impact and in the diaspora would reach a population with Romanian origins larger than the one present in the country of origin. Most of those who migrate are young, active adults, most of them have higher education, and the medium-term effect is the loss of the active population from many fields of activity, which means in the long term the reduction of the number of new families. According to the source quoted above, if the number of potential parents is lower than the number of Orthodox parents decreases with the number of established families, the more so as the birth rate in Romania is decreasing.

In the Italian diaspora the mission of the Church can be manifested in the form closest to the Savior's exhortation, as it appears in the Gospel of Matthew: "Go, teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28: 19-20). So once in a tough mission and evangelism priest through apostolic succession is "going and teaching all nations" committing the sacraments and urging them to continue in faith and holiness (Bel, 2004).

In the Church history, its mission did not impose a limit given by the geographical space or the ethnicity (Geffré, 1982), only that these two elements preserve the particularity and tradition of a pastorate and mission of a Local Church, as it is in the example of the current Orthodox diaspora organized ethnically and territorially in several Romanian, Greek, Russian, Russian bishops, but united in the same faith, sanctifying work and catechesis.

As observed in Fig.1 below, Romanians represent by far the largest number of emigrants in Italia (1.206.938), followed by Albanians (441.027), Morocco (422.980), Chinese, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan etc. The ratio between the number of Romanian migrants in Italia and the second largest migrant minority (Albanians) is approximately 3:1. The explication for such ratio might be generated by the language barriers transitivity, considering Romanian language, having solid Latin roots, assemble very much to Italian language, in comparison to Albanian language or with other migrant minorities language. According to official data from Istituto nazionale di statistica (ISTAT, http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRCIT1) the total number of Romanians in Italy at the date of 1st January 2019 were of 1.206.938, comprising 513.289 males and 693.649 females out of a total of 5.255.503 foreigners in Italy (23,0%).

Figure no. 1. Printscreen of ISTAT official statistics regarding the number of emigrants in Italy as recorded at 01.01.2019

Territorio			
Italia			
Tipo di indicatore demografico			
popolazione straniera al 1° gennaio			
Seleziona periodo			
2019			
Sesso			
	maschi	femmine	totale
	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
Paese di cittadinanza			
Mondo	2 536 787	2 718 716	5 255 503
Romania	513 289	693 649	1 206 938
Albania	225 316	215 711	441 027
Marocco	225 305	197 675	422 980
Cina	150 789	149 034	299 823
Bangladesh	101 367	38 586	139 953
India	92 404	65 561	157 965
Pakistan	85 159	37 149	122 308
Egitto	84 215	42 518	126 733
Senegal	82 023	28 219	110 242

Source: Istituto nazionale di statistica (ISTAT), [online] Available at: http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRCIT1 [Accessed 03.11.2019]

The geographic dispersion of Romanian diaspora in Italy is indicated in Table 1.

Table no 1. Romanian migrants in Italy

Region in Italy	Romanian (2019 figures)				% from total foreign population	Variation % compared to 2018
	Male	Female	Total	%		
1. Lazio	105.009	128.460	233.469	19,3%	34,16%	+0,3%
2. Lombardia	79.608	96.974	176.582	14,6%	14,94%	+2,6%
3. Piemonte	64.675	83.241	147.916	12,3%	34,57%	-0,3%
4. Veneto	56.396	70.516	126.912	10,5%	25,33%	+3,4%
5. Emilia-Romagna	38.719	55.553	94.272	7,8%	17,22%	+3,6%
6. Toscana	32.321	52.774	85.095	7,1%	20,39%	+0,6%
7. Sicilia	23.870	34.610	58.480	4,8%	29,24%	+2,6%
8. Campania	17.778	25.030	42.808	3,5%	16,14%	+1,0%
9. Puglia	13.694	22.396	36.090	3,0%	26,00%	+1,2%
10. Calabria	15.743	20.108	35.851	3,0%	31,70%	+1,6%
11. Abruzzo	10.772	15.884	26.656	2,2%	29,85%	-0,2%
12. Umbria	9.724	16.785	26.509	2,2%	27,18%	+0,7%
13. Marche	9.040	17.167	26.207	2,2%	19,14%	+0,0%
14. Friuli Venezia Giulia	11.025	14.332	25.357	2,1%	23,01%	+3,0%
15. Liguria	8.587	12.517	21.104	1,7%	14,42%	+2,0%
16. Sardegna	4.565	9.578	14.143	1,2%	25,30%	-0,5%
17. Trentino-Alto Adige	5.704	8.106	13.810	1,1%	14,13%	+2,2%
18. Basilicata	3.580	5.541	9.121	0,8%	39,29%	+0,0%
19. Molise	1.571	2.510	4.081	0,3%	29,36%	-1,8%
20. Valle d'Aosta	908	1.567	2.475	0,2%	29,84%	-1,5%
Total Romanian in Italy	513.289	693.649	1.206.938		23,0%	+1,4%

Source: Istituto nazionale di statistica (ISTAT), [online] Available at: <https://www.tuttitalia.it/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri/romania/> [Accessed 3.11.2019]

It is observed the largest percentage of Romanian residents in Italy are located in Lazio region, around Rome capital, followed by Milan city in Lombardy region and Turin in Piedmont (it. Piemonte). However, in 2019 compared to 2018 is observed a slight decrease in the number of Romanian residents in Turin, Piedmont (Piemonte) region. Such statistics should be correlated to the Caritas-Migrantes "Immigration Report" stating that, overall: „over half of foreign residents in Italy live in the country's North (57.5 percent), followed by central Italy (25.4 percent) and the South (roughly 12 percent). Only some 5 percent legally reside on the Italian islands, although that figure is on the rise.” (<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/19852/italy-has-third-largest-migrant-population-in-europe-report>)

Figure no. 2. Relevant geographical regions for Romanian residents' dispersion in Italy



Source: <https://www.italythisway.com/images/italy-map-regions.jpg>

Another interesting statistic generating resourceful observations related to the welfare and labour aspects of Romanian Diaspora is related to the evolution of number of Romanian migrants in Italy, as recorded from 2003 by ISTAT (included in Table 2 below).

Table no. 2. Number of Romanian residents in Italy at 1st January

Year	Male	Female	Total
2003	44348	50691	95039
2004	86754	91058	177812
2005	123452	125397	248849
2006	143376	154194	297570
2007	162154	180046	342200
2008	294212	331066	625278
2009	373255	423222	796477
2010	409464	478299	887763
2011	439311	529265	968576
2012	361440	473025	834465
2013	402766	530588	933354
2014	467630	613770	1081400
2015	487203	644636	1131839
2016	492737	658658	1151395
2017	497577	670975	1168552
2018	505961	684130	1190091
2019	513289	693649	1206938
* 2003-2011 data was not reconstructed compared to the population of the 2011 census from Italia			

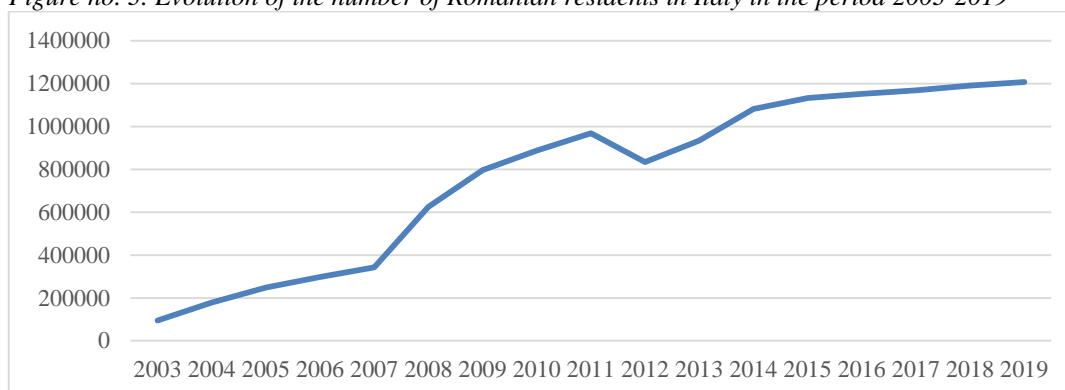
Source: Authors' table, based on ISTAT 2019 data, [online] Available at: http://dati.istat.it/OECDStat_Metadata/ShowMetadata.ashx?Dataset=DCIS_POPSTRCIT1&ShowOnWeb=true&Lang=it

Based on Table 2 can be observed the large proportion of female Romanian residents in Italia, hence suggesting a predominant feminine structure within the Romanian Orthodox diaspora. Demographic characteristics of diaspora might influence aspects concerning Orthodox diaspora, considering the correlation to a Pew study released in 2016 stating 83,4% women on globe are religious, compared to 79,9% men. On all the standard measures of religious commitment examined in the Pew study, based on data collected from censuses, demographic surveys and general population surveys, Christian women are more religious than Christian men (Pew Research Center, 2016). Demographic structure within Romanian diaspora in Italy is probable to influence faith affiliation, weekly worship service attendance, daily prayer, assessment of religion importance in the citizen daily life, belief in heaven, hell and angels etc. Regarding the explanation of the religious gender gap at global level, according to Pew study, there have been developed different theories with „a wide range of sources: biology, psychology, genetics, family environment, social status, workforce participation and a lack of “existential security” felt by many women because they generally are more afflicted than men by poverty, illness, old age and violence. Lately, a growing consensus in the academic community is that the religious gender gap probably stems from a confluence of multiple factors. But there is still no agreement on exactly which factors are most responsible for the gender differences.”

Related to labour aspects, most Romanian female work as care workers („badante”) for old Italian persons, for caring Italian children inside Italian families or in agriculture in the Southern part of Italy. Most but not all are having jobs with contract. The raising number of Romanian residents in Italy suggest Romanian move to Italy for a temporary job, based on poor living conditions or low wage in the home country, ending in staying on long time or permanently. Romanian women forming the largest part of Romanian diaspora work in Italy by leaving family or children in Romania. Some of them work in small towns were might feel isolated (Saudelli, 2019).

According to data from Table 2, the evolution of the number of Romanian residents in Italia between 2003-2019 is presented in Figure 3.

Figure no. 3. Evolution of the number of Romanian residents in Italy in the period 2003-2019



Source: Authors' work based on ISTAT 2019 data

We notice a steady increase in the number of Romanian residents in Italy between 2003-2007, with a more accentuated increasing between 2007-2011 after free movement of labour opportunities due to 2007 accession of Romania to the European Union. Between 2011-2012 is observed for the first time in the analyzed period a decrease of 134111 residents due to economic financial crisis affecting Italy and the whole Europe. In 2013 is observed a recovery in the number of Romanian residents in Italy, of + 98.889, however, not reaching the level of residents from 2011 (when were registred 968576 residents). Since 2013 a moderate increase is manifested in the number of Romanian residents in Italy, not as accentuated as in the period 2007-2011. We conclude the rhythm of increasing in the number of Romanian residents in Italy is decelerating, thus influencing the structure of Romanian Orthodox diaspora in Italy.

4. Conclusions

The exodus of a large part of Romanian population to Italy for temporary, long term and permanent work and residence contributes in forming and expanding Romanian Orthodox diaspora communities. Only in 2018 a percentage of 0.7% of Romanian active population have left the country in the long term, suggesting a critical migration rate overall. Majority of people leaving the country are young people between ages of 16-35. In Italy, Romanians represent by far the largest number of emigrants in Italia (1.206.938 in 2019), followed by Albanians and Moroccans in a ratio 3:1, most probable due to language accessibility. The largest percentage of Romanian residents in Italy are located in Lazio region, around Rome capital, followed by Milan city in Lombardy region and Turin in Piedmont where was observed a slight decrease in the number of Romanian residents in 2019 compared to 2018. Overall, the number of Romanian residents in Italy is increasing, but the increase is more stable compared to period 2007-2011. Majority of Romanian residents are women. Based on statistical data analysis, is concluded the rhythm of increasing in the number of Romanian residents in Italy is decelerating, thus influencing the structure of Romanian Orthodox diaspora in Italy. In correlation to a previous Pew research, the demographic structure within Romanian diaspora in Italy is probable to influence faith affiliation, weekly worship service attendance, daily prayer and assessment of religion importance in the citizen daily life.

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