

Politics

## Policy Brief: More focus on social and educational policy in Romania is needed

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*Photo: pixabay*

VIENNA – There is a great issue regarding the lack of data on emigration in Romania which is a widespread phenomenon with both positive and negative aspects for the country, claims the newest Policy Brief [“Emigration from Romania: impact and legacy”](#), published within the “WB2EU” network.

It explains that more than 4 million Romanians have emigrated since the 1989 Revolution, sending back the remittances, and upon their return bringing new skills and attitudes. Moreover, the Policy Brief mentions that migration has prevented significant social problems in Romania, offering employment to



the otherwise unemployable and bringing greater social and political stability with the departure of the young, male, intrepid, and often low-skilled population.

“On the downside, migrants and their families (especially children and the elderly) are vulnerable both in relation to the authorities and on a personal level. This may have contributed to radicalization,” notes the Policy Brief explaining that the diaspora skews towards parties that appear to be anti-establishment, even if they are on the far-right.

Due to various administrative hurdles including the lack of documentation for workers, the data on emigration is not fully accurate, nor it could be, explains the Brief. Authors of the Policy Brief estimate that almost 20% of the people born in Romania no longer live in the country.

“Emigrants leave Romania for shorter or longer periods of time in order to obtain better wages to support themselves and their families or to study.<sup>8</sup> According to limited evidence, they remain in the country of destination due to higher pay but also due to better working conditions for those who succeed in integrating”, states the Policy Brief.

Moreover, it explains that other factors motivating them to leave are social services and infrastructure and regional disparities since the poorer regions of Romania are also the regions where most Romanians emigrated from both before and after accession to the European Union (EU).

Mentioning the positive consequences of the migration, the Policy Brief highlights that it keeps people employed who would otherwise lose their

jobs, it transfers money through remittances which is the source of prosperity for families that struggle financially, it increases political stability, even though these effects are insufficiently studied, and it transfers knowledge, skills and cultural attitudes.

On the other side, the Policy Brief explains that the negative consequences are the vulnerabilisation of emigrants who sometimes end up working in poor sanitary conditions with confiscated passports, and vulnerability to loneliness and depression.

“The situation is currently better, after EU accession, but the balance of power between employers and employees is still uneven,” notes the Brief.

It also mentions that other consequences are political radicalization of the diaspora and de facto abandonment of children and the neglect of the elderly for long periods of time which often leads to lasting emotional damage.

“A problem that is oftentimes quoted in relation to migration is the human capital flight (the so-called brain drain), that is, the migration of the “smartest” and most educated individuals. Left without this educated elite, the country of origin would have difficulties moving forward with its economic development, or at least this is the complaint you can occasionally hear in Romania”, highlights the Policy Brief.

However, it explains that Romanians typically emigrate from a position of unemployment and it is not clear whether the state and the business environment are truly invested in attracting skilled workers. The policy brief highlights the fact that Romania is one of the countries to have

the lowest hourly labour costs in the EU.

In conclusion, the Policy Brief recommends that it is important to understand this issue and that a comprehensive study programme is needed to study actual and prospective migrants. Moreover, it recommends that focus on social and educational policy is needed, as well as improvement of the labour market quality.

***The Policy Brief is published in the framework of the WB2EU project. The project aims at the establishment of a network of renowned think-tanks, do-tanks, universities, higher education institutes and policy centres from the Western Balkans, neighbouring countries and EU member states that will be most decisive for the enlargement process and Europeanisation of the region in the upcoming years. The WB2EU project is co-funded by the European Commission under its Erasmus+ Jean Monnet programme.***

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