

SOURCES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN ROMANIA

Elena Zamfir – University of Bucharest

Marian Preda – University of Bucharest

Adrian Dan – University of Bucharest

This study was undertaken by Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of University of Bucharest (Nov. 2003- Feb. 2004) and it was commissioned by Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family as a result of the agreement between MoLSSF and European Commission within the common action "Programul Comunitar de Actiune pentru Combaterea Excluziunii Sociale" approved by European Parliament and European Commission (decision no.50/2002/EG).

The main topics tackled in this study refers at social groups excluded, mechanism and patterns of exclusion, sources of exclusion as well as institutional (but also mutual) mechanism for promoting social inclusion, a review of measures oriented in this direction, and recommendations for future actions in order to counteract the social exclusion and promote lasting and complex mechanisms for social inclusion. The study it is split in two parts: the first one published in the current issue, and the second one will be published in the next issue of review.

Introduction

The social exclusion and inclusion conundrum in Romania, as a country that is currently undergoing a transition process, presents certain specific issues generated by the communist inheritance as much as by the very process of transition. If a number of similarities with other Western countries exist, as regards the manifestation of certain forms of social exclusion, pregnant differences appear vis-à-vis the exclusion sources, their manifest amplitude and intensity.

In Western countries, the source of social exclusion is largely a secondary expression of a social system whose developmental processes proved to be well structured, coherent and functional up until the present time.

In countries undergoing a period of transition – particularly difficult, as in Romania's case – the sources of social exclusion are placed in the midst of the very process of change and these are: the explosion of poverty, social disorganisation processes, incongruous institutional and legislative changes – all of which took place in a short period of time, under various pressures often contradictory, both internal and external.

The communist society's prolonged crisis – which became acute in the eighties – generated a process of social disintegration that was propagated after the Revolution as a severe inheritance compounded by new noxious effects that were mere by-products of a difficult period of transition.

Hence, any strategy attempting to prevent social exclusion while promoting social inclusion in Romania will inevitably need to focus not just on the institutional building of an inclusive society but on the gradual absorption of

the accumulation of phenomena that otherwise lead to social disintegration – which are but the results of a historical process that has undergone one too many crises.

Social exclusion: concept and significance

In the contemporary discourse on social policies, terms such as *social inclusion* or, *exclusion* are increasingly used as an extension of the classical debate on *poverty*. Consequently, the “measures for combating poverty” expression tends to be replaced by something which reads like “measures for promoting social inclusion”. If the poverty issue referred strictly to *financial resource deficit*, promoting social inclusion refers to a somewhat larger topic than that. On the one hand, it refers to an extremely varied spectrum of *deficits* pertaining to *social, cultural, moral and economic* causes while, on the other hand, it refers to an active focus on *social development and direct intervention* via the progressive construction of a more *inclusive society*.

Duffy (1995) considers that *social exclusion* is an all-encompassing concept compared to *poverty* for it includes not just the *lack of material means* but also, the *hopelessness* of ever becoming included in various *social, economic, cultural and political networks*. Alongside income or consumption deficit implied by the *poverty* concept, the *social exclusion* concept presupposes a deficit of normal, daily life participation to various social activities in all its forms and guises.

The social exclusion concept is much more recent than the poverty one. In 1994, the Council of Europe gave a definition of the “excluded” as those “groups of people who find themselves partially or, entirely outside the effective incidence of human rights”¹.

The exclusion concept came about in 1975, in the CMCE documents. Anti-poverty Programmes gave new impetus to the concept’s re-emergence in the limelight. In 1988, the European Commission published a document explicitly referring to “social exclusion” so that, a year later, in its European Charta for the Workers Fundamental Rights it mentions “the importance of combating social exclusion in the spirit of solidarity”. That same year, the CMCE adopted a resolution concerning “combating social exclusion” in which it asked member states to take concrete steps to combat social exclusion while it requested the European Commission to follow up on this commitment alongside member states².

Hence, it can be argued that the term’s consecration came about through the third Anti-poverty Programme (between 1990 and 1994) launched by the European Commission. From that moment on, the European Community’s political discourse tended to replace the “poverty” term with “social exclusion” as a central idiom referring to a much larger subject matter.

¹ Strobel, 1996, 262

² Berghman, 1996, 11

In specialist literature as much as in political programmes one comprehensive and functional definition underlines the fact that:

"exclusion must be defined in terms of inability/failure to integrate of a person or group in one or more (sub) systems of the following four:

- ◆ *the legal and democratic system* that presupposes civic integration;
- ◆ *the labour market* that promotes economic integration;
- ◆ *the welfare state* that promotes what can be termed as *social integration*;
- ◆ *the family and community system* which promotes *inter-personal integration*"³.

Social exclusion predominantly refers to the failure to achieve full *citizenship rights* due to both structural causes that are *socio-economic* in nature as well as due to individual, more subjective causes.

Unlike the poverty perspective, which is by excellence a static one in that it focuses on the result of economic processes that are very difficult to change, the new social segregation perspective concentrates on the dichotomy intrinsic in the exclusion/inclusion process. Bruto da Costa (1994), in order to succeed in correcting the currently static perspective, introduced the "impoverishment" concept in his approach, which concerns a *process* that leads to the (static) result of actual poverty. Moreover, this process is but a fragment, a particular and one-dimensional case of another more complex, dynamic and sophisticated process of social exclusion that has as a result the state of relative deprivation.

Whelan (1991) defines three types of deprivation generated by the enforced absence of certain goods, such as:

- ◆ primary deprivation (caused by the absence of food, clothing, heating);
- ◆ secondary deprivation (caused by the absence of commodities such as, the telephone, car, desired leisure activities);
- ◆ deprivation vis-à-vis private property and long-term possessions (the absence of certain goods related to the quality and the facilities of housing).

As regards *social exclusion sources* there can be identified three distinct types:

- ◆ *structural exclusion created by the social system's very configuration*: is the result of structural processes such as, for instance, joblessness produced as a result of the restructuring mechanisms that are typical of the transition or, typical of the economic processes themselves; the effect of social policies' deficit and/or inadequate social policy options; the lack of an adequate response from the social system when faced with a distinct need. For instance, in Romania, there was no form of income support for single parent families, up until 2003. Equally, for various groups

³ Berghman, 1996, *Social Exclusion in Europe: the political and analytical context* in Graham Room (publisher), 1996, *Measuring Poverty and Exclusion*

at risk, the system had no preventative measures in place compared to the financial and technical means at its disposal. Teenagers who leave either public institutions or surrogate families when they turn eighteen have only occasional and haphazard support in the difficult process of social insertion.

◆ *the territorial/community belonging of an individual/group* that prevents it from satisfying certain needs due to the overall resource deficit apparent in the community despite the existence of a formal solution inside the system that operates in other communities. For example, in rural communities there are no specialised social assistance services (i.e. day care centres for the elderly and neglected children etc.) and if they exist, they are but embryonic hence, it automatically excludes some citizens from using such forms of social support.

◆ *Self-exclusion* (individual options, cultural model, lack of interest, a diversity of elements which pertain to personal choices which push that person to opt out of certain forms of social participation. The fact that there are certain individuals who do not want to have identity papers or marriage certificates is because of their personal option.

Dimensions and approaches. The objectives of this paper

In this paper, we intend to concentrate on the principal sources and forms of manifestation of social exclusion apparent in the Romanian society and in those social groups that are mostly at risk from social segregation.

The First Objective: identifying the main types and sources of social exclusion:

1. Economic exclusion
 - from primary earnings
 - from social transfers
2. Exclusion from education:
 - education absenteeism
 - abandonment at different levels, residential backgrounds and social groups
3. Health provisions exclusion
4. Social assistance services exclusion
5. Exclusion from job seeking services/labour market
6. Exclusion from housing/decent standard of living
7. Exclusion from political life participation
8. Social exclusion owed to delinquency
9. Social exclusion owed to drug/alcohol dependency
10. Social exclusion owed to malfunctions of the justice, police systems etc.
11. Social exclusion owed to reduced access to opportunities due to regional accessibility, transport, means of communications
12. Social exclusion owed to abandonment/lack of a family environment (young, elderly, handicapped people)
13. Social exclusion owed to gender

14. Traffic in human beings
15. A special case: the Roma population
16. A special case: abandoned children, severely neglected, maltreated.

The Second Objective – an analysis of the situation of the social groups facing an increased risk of social exclusion.

The Third Objective – reviewing the main social policies on social inclusion and the principal institutions attempting to combat poverty and social exclusion as well as means of evaluating them.

The Fourth Objective – identifying new action plans and social policy solutions.

Major sources of social exclusion

Sources of social exclusion during the socialist regime

The socialist society generated profound social exclusion processes. The most important are the following:

- An economy that was irrationally based on heavy and processing industry as well as an extensive agriculture with high production costs and few markets to sell its products on; hence, after 1989, the collapse of this type of industries produced high unemployment and a reduction of waged salaries – which was a major source of social exclusion.
- After a period of highest socialist modernisation, starting from the beginning of the second half of the seventies and into the eighties, the Romanian socialist economy enters a period of crisis that becomes chronic. In particular, during the eighties, the Romanian population is confronted with progressive impoverishment. On top of the financial resource's decline comes a degradation of services and product's quality, and a gradual restriction of accessing even the most basic goods and services;
- The creation of single-industry zones whose collapse, after 1989, generated an absolute social catastrophe;
- The lack of investment in modern technologies lead to a gradual erosion in terms of competitiveness that was tragically underlined by opening up competition with Western economies, after 1989.
- The disintegration of the social protection system coupled with an insane social policy that accentuated the process of impoverishment:
 - A massive reduction in public expenditure in the areas of education and health with disastrous effects on their quality;
 - A quasi-total disregard for social assistance services; the only sector that was unilaterally and outrageously developed was that of residential care institutions that had an adverse effect on the normal development of abandoned children, handicapped persons etc.;
 - The aggressively pro-life policy that had as a result an enormous rise in social stress levels, the rise of maternal and child mortality, the appearance of a large number of unwanted children – especially among the poorest

segments of society; the most devastating effect was the explosion in the numbers of abandoned children that were taken into care by institutions whose very creation and financing had a severely adverse effect on their development chances.

Disintegration processes – sources of social exclusion during the transition period

Due to unexpected difficulties, the initial period of transition increased the process of social disintegration – which had already surpassed any level of acceptability during the communist regime – quite exponentially.

The economic downfall, the social policy deficit and the ample processes of social disintegration are the very factors responsible for the explosion of poverty and the accentuation of segregation and social exclusion processes.

The downfall of the economy

The economic system's re-structuring strategy, doubled by particularly unfavourable conditions (the economic structure inherited and the disintegration of economic international relations) led to a dramatic economic downfall. The downfall took place in two stages (table 1: 1989-1992 and 1997-9) interspersed by a period of economic recovery (1993-6). It is only after the year 2000, especially the period between 2001 and 2003 that we begin to see the beginning of an economic upturn. On the basis of economic growth forecasts, we can expect to see 1989's GNP level reached by the end of 2006.

Table 1. The Evolution of the GNP in Romania: 1989-2003

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
GNP annual variation(% from the preceding year)	-5,8	-5,6	-12,9	-8,8	1,5	3,9	7,1	3,9	-6,1	-4,8	-1,2	2,1	5,7	5,0	4,9
real GNP (1989=100)	100	94,4	82,2	75,0	76,1	79,1	84,8	88,1	82,8	78,8	77,9	79,6	84,1	88,3	92,6

Source: for the 1989-2002 series, the Social Monitor, The Monee Project; estimates based on 3 quarters, INS-BSL 10/2003

The economic downfall's effect on the population's standard of living

Such effects were manifest through the following:

- *The real wage salaries' significant reduction and constant degradation:* the net medium wage reached, in 2000, its lowest level (60,4%) of the medium wage in 1989;
- *The tax increases carried out under the pressure of lowering of the tax base rate that resulted in a depreciation of the waged salary;* if, in 1990, the medium net wage, as a percentage of the gross medium wage, represented 84,3%, by the

year 2002, it only represented 71,2%. In 2002, the Government carried out a programme of reducing the tax burden on the workforce cost.

- *The rise in the polarisation of wage earnings:* an increasing number of employees are remunerated with the minimum wage or, around this very amount; conversely, the ratio between the medium and the minimum wage degraded constantly (see table 2); the minimum wage as a percentage of the medium wage decreased from 65,3% in 1989, to 26,9% by 1999.

Table 2. The Dynamic of Real Wage Earnings 1990 - 2003 (1989=100)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
The net minimum wage	--	100,0	108,2	75,8	62,6	38,4	40,1	32,4	37,9	30,8	28,9	44,1	45,9	46,7	57,8
The medium net wage	100,0	103,5	84,5	73,8	61,4	61,5	68,8	75,3	58,3	60,3	58,0	60,6	63,6	65,0	72,4
Annual variation of the net medium wage earnings (% from the previous year)	2,8	3,5	-18,3	-12,7	-16,8	0,1	11,9	9,4	-22,6	3,5	-3,8	4,6	4,9	2,1	8,8
The minimum wage as a percentage of the medium wage	--	62,1	82,2	66,0	65,5	40,1	37,4	27,7	41,8	32,8	32,0	46,7	46,4	46,2	51,4

Source: for the 1989-2002 series, the Social Monitor, The Monee Project; estimates based on 3 quarters, INS-BSL 10/2003

- *The dramatic decrease in the number of employees* from 8,156 millions employees in 1990 to only 4,384 millions employees in 1990 (table 3); the decrease in the number of employees led to the economic dislocation of entire social groups, massively disintegrating and confusing hundreds of thousands household's life strategies; the "selective exclusion" affected a number of specific social groups – particularly, the Roma population and, in general, those with poor professional qualifications, the youth under the age of 25 and those over the age of 45. Thus, a massive exclusion from the job-seeking workforce occurred. Those who lost their wage earning jobs either went into early retirement, sought income support while being unemployed, went into the underground economy or, entered a period of chronic under-occupation.

Table 3. The dynamic of the number of salaried workers 1989-2003

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Number of salaried workers (Thousands people)	7997	8156	7574	6888	6672	6438	6160	5939	5597	5369	4761	4623	4619	4559	4384
1989=100	100,0	102,0	94,7	86,1	83,4	80,5	77,0	74,3	70,0	67,1	59,5	57,8	57,8	57,0	54,8

Source: for the period 1993-2001: Romania's 2002 Year Book Statistics; for 2002: INS "2003 Romania in figures"; for 2003: INS-BSL 12/2003

- The massive decrease in the rate of salaried workforce occupation was only partially compensated by an increase in non-occupational, non-salaried forms. Table 4 indicates that in the period 1989-99, the rate of occupation decreased constantly from 473 persons/1000 inhabitants, to 375/1000 inhabitants i.e. 77% of the 1989 level which was followed by a slight increase.

Table 4. The Rate of Occupation 1989 – 2002

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
The occupied populace (1989=100)	100	99,0	98,5	95,5	91,9	91,5	86,7	85,7	82,4	80,5	76,9	78,8	78,2	76,1
Persons in work/ 1000 inhabitants	473	467	465	459	442	440	419	415	400	392	375	385	382	382

Source: for 1989: INS "1993 Year Book Statistics"; for 1990-2001: INS "2002 Year Book Statistics"; for 2002: INS "The Workforce Balance".

A most difficult objective for the new government was to create a rise in the total number of employed persons alongside continuing make people redundant in so-called inefficient industries.

The reaction of the compensatory support network failed to occur in a period of great social and economic difficulties

➤ *The generalised under-financing of the social protection system*

The social effects of the transition-generated economic shock were accentuated by a social policy deficit. Research, based on national and international statistics, shows that public social expenditure in Romania during the transition period placed our country on the penultimate place in Europe (Tables 5 and 6).

Romania inherited a social protection system that was under-financed and remained so during the transition period that followed.

- In 1989, Romania was the socialist country with the smallest social public expenditure – GDP percentage wise. This dire situation was maintained in the ensuing transition. If other countries that underwent a period of transition responded to that situation by accentuating the quota allocated for social expenditure, Romania's answer to that was far from adequate (Table 5).

Table 5. Social Public Expenditure Dynamic in countries facing the shock of the transition (1993 vs.1989) as compared to some EU countries

<i>Countries in transition</i>	<i>1989 (GDP%)</i>	<i>Rises/Decreases vs.1989 by % (percentage wise)</i>
Countries in transition average	16,7	4,5
European countries in transition average	20,4	6,6
Romania	14,2	1,0

CSI countries average	13,6	6,0
EU (1990)*	25,4	3,6

* In EU countries, the comparison is being made between 1993 and 1990, as the data refers only to social protection expenditure i.e. social transfers and health expenditure less education expenditure.

Source for Romania and countries in transition: Zamfir, C. (co-ord.) 1999

Source for the EU: The Social Situation in the European Union, EUROSTAT, European Communities, 2000

Though, at times, there were fluctuations, European countries in transition maintained a significantly higher level of expenditure as a GDP percentage than Romania. Up until 2001, Romania found itself not just at a lower level of social public expenditure than other European countries in transition (with the exception of Albania) but at an even bigger distance from the average European Union countries (Table 6).

Table 6. Social Public Expenditure as a GDP percentage

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Romania	14,2	16,6	17,0	16,5	15,2	15,5	16,0	15,7	15,9	17,3	18,4	17,2	18,2
(1989 = 100)	100,0	104,2	80,4	65,4	62,0	67,9	80,5	86,0	76,8	76,4	74,6	72,6	--
Bulgaria	20,3	21,2	24,5	27	22,8	21	18,3	16,3	17	19	21,2	-	-
Hungary	22,5	22,7	29,6	31,9	31,3	32,3	-	-	23,8	24,4	23,5	-	-
The Czech Republic	21,5	23	24,2	22,9	25,9	25,5	23,3	23,1	25	24,8	-	-	-
Average EU countries	25,4	25,5	26,5	27,7	28,8	28,4	28,3	28,5	28	27,6	27,6	-	-

* Health, education and social transfers (including social assistance expenditure, allowances, pensions, income support, indemnities and other social expenditure – minus housing expenditure).

Source: the National Study for Human Development, Romania (2000) and the Ministry of Finance; Abramovici, G., Social Protection in Europe, Statistics in Focus, EUROSTAT (no. 1/2002)

The Health and Education services under-financing

If, on the whole, social expenditure was under-financed, certain components such as, health and education services (as well as others such as, social assistance and housing) had a severely negative social effect due to the dearth of resources. The main social services institutions, education and health had a modest contribution, not least in a negative way sometimes, to supporting a community that was undergoing a difficult transition process due to severe under-financing as much as because of reforms that were either late or, too vague and confusing.

Social public expenditure for health and education, for all their reduced level in 1989, did eventually rise yet, not sufficient enough as they remained far from a satisfactory level.

The level of this type of expenditure comes out worst by comparison to other European countries in transition as nearing the levels in Russia, Moldova and Bulgaria (Table 7). It is only after 2001 that the Government focuses on a more rapid growth of the financial support – especially in areas such as health and education.

Table 7. Education and Health Social Public Expenditure Dynamic in some countries undergoing transition (GDP%)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Russia	7,3*	5,8*	6,4	6,0**	7,9	7,7**	6,1**	8,3	9,0	7,4	6,2	-	-
Slovakia	10,6*	10,5	10,5	11,1	11,6	11,3	10,7	11,7	11,0	10,5	10,1	9,9	-
The Czech Republic	8,2	8,9	9,1	9,7	12,0	12,1	11,9	11,8	11,1	10,8	11,1	11,0	11,3
Poland	6,7*	9,7	10,1	10,4	10,1	9,7	9,6	10,1	9,9	9,3	9,8	-	-
Hungary	10,9	11,9	12,6	13,4	13,2	13,6	11,8	10,8	10,7	10,4	10,5	10,2	9,3
Latvia	-	7,0	6,7	7,3	10,2	10,2	11,0	9,8	9,5	10,2	10,9	10,3	10,3
Moldova	-	-	-	10,9	10,5	14,9	13,4	15,9	14,8	10,5	7,6	7,0	7,5
Bulgaria	7,9*	8,6*	11,5	11,8	10,8	9,0	7,5	6,1	6,7	7,3	7,5	7,5	7,3
Romania	4,7	5,6	6,9	6,7	6,1	6,0	6,0	6,4	5,9	6,8	7,6	6,1	7,4
of which is education expenditure	2,2	2,8	3,6	3,6	3,3	3,1	3,4	3,6	3,3	3,3	3,8	2,9	3,2

* the source for this data is UNICEF, the Fourth Regional Monitoring Report (no. 4/1997)

** the source for this data is the Transition Report – 2000

Source: the Social Monitor 2003; The Monee Project

The effects of under-financing and the diminishing of the social transfer's real value

- On the whole, social income deriving from transfers eroded much more visibly than salaried income thus, deepening the gap between wage earnings and those of the income support dependent populace. Moreover, huge discrepancies between the degree of social support accorded for various social categories became apparent (Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8. The Evolution of Social Transfers' Income as a Percentage from the Medium Wage

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
The average pension for age limit with full length of service ²⁾	--	63,9	53,4	53,7	56,3	54,9	52,9	50,1	52,0	49,5	60,0	57,9	58,2	58,6
The average pension for all forms of retirement	--	37,7	35,3	34,1	35,1	32,7	31,2	30,0	32,0	29,9	34,9	33,9	34,5	35,2
Unemployment benefit	--	--	42,9	29,6	28,0	35,8	30,2	29,6	39,3	32,4	32,5	31,8	32,0	34,6
Income support	--	--	--	20,0	16,1	14,4	18,6	15,7	15,4	14,7	14,6	13,2	11,4	12,0
Social Support ³⁾	--	--	--	--	--	--	21,8	21,6	19,0	18,4	16,6	13,4	9,7	33,5
Child Support Benefit ⁴⁾	--	9,7	7,2	5,6	5,9	4,2	3,6	3,3	7,2	6,1	5,3	4,1	4,5	4,2
Second Child Support Benefit ^{1) 5)}	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2,8	5,6	3,7	3,0	2,3	1,7

* From 1997 onwards, a supplementary allowance for families with two or more children was introduced

Source: the ICCV database

Table 9. The Pensions Dynamic: 1989-2003 (1989=100)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<i>The average pension for State Social Support</i>	100	106,1	87,0	70,7	61,1	58,0	61,9	64,1	51,4	49,3	59,3	54,8	58,2	59,1
<i>The average pension for the Agricultural Sector</i>	100	181,7	78,1	40,8	48,5	64,9	65,3	74,3	77,0	72,5	70,0	62,6	67,0	69,1

Source: for 1989-2002: INS – the 1993 Statistic Year Book; for 2003: INS-BSL 12/2003; for the year 2003, only the first three quarters were considered

Compared to the medium wage, the pensions' system erosion was the lowest, followed by the Unemployment Benefit one. Long-term unemployed benefit (Income Support) however, eroded much more rapidly. The income-tested social support's late arrival i.e. 1995 practically disintegrated by the year 2000. Its re-launch under the VMG format in 2001 brought it back to an acceptable level. The Child Benefit allowance was brutally eroded up until 1997. After a short-lived comeback, it continued its regressive trend until 2001. After 2001, as the entire system of allowances was reconsidered on the basis of better focusing on certain of its component parts (a special focus on single-parent families and on those with many children) an increase in their net value was registered.

The medium wage's reduced level had a perverse effect in that:

- As the Unemployment Benefit was constantly in the region of the minimum wage value, this meant that the motivation of those whose wage earning potential was not any better than the minimum wage to decrease and, in many cases, it encouraged them to move to the underground economy (that allowed them to claim Unemployment Benefit and obtain other earnings from a whole host of informal activities).

Table 10. The social transfers' income evolution as a percentage of the minimum wage

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<i>Average pension (all forms)</i>	--	63,7	45,1	54,3	56,5	86,0	88,0	114,3	81,0	96,0	118,1	72,5	74,3	76,3
<i>Unemployment benefit</i>	--	--	54,9	47,2	45,1	94,2	85,0	112,9	99,5	103,8	110,1	68,0	69,1	75,0
<i>Income Support</i>	--	--	--	31,9	26,0	37,8	52,4	60,0	39,0	47,1	49,4	28,1	24,6	26,0
<i>Social support⁶⁾</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	61,3	82,3	48,1	56,1	38,6	28,8	20,9	72,6

Source: IRQL (ICCV) database

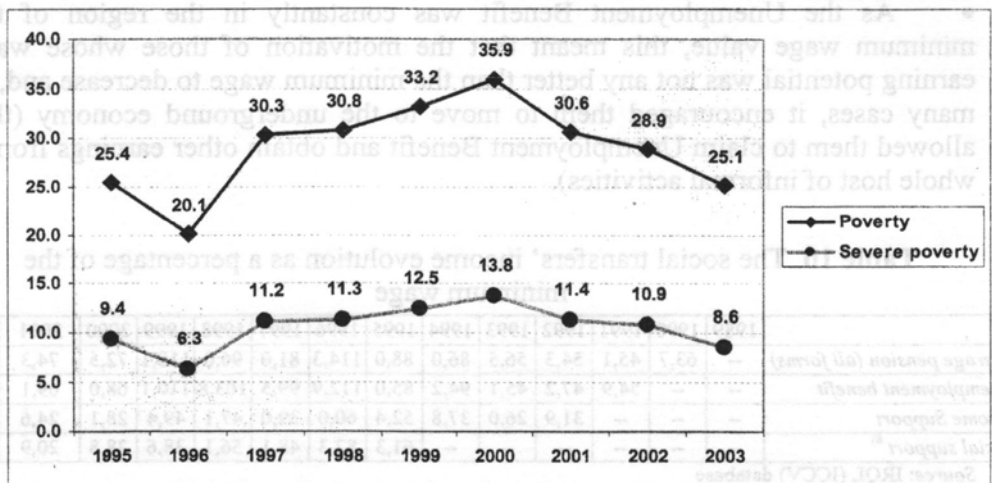
Expressing the current Government's will to reconsider this entire area, the National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Plan (adopted by the Government in 2002) includes a programme to increase social public expenditure to reach, in a relatively short period of time, the level of medium expenditure in the European Union. Reconsidering supporting social policies is

vital for a rapid absorption of the social degradation produced by first, the communist regime and subsequently, by the transition period as much as it is vital for building a European-type society that is not just economically developed but it is socially developed too and has a high degree of social cohesion as much as it is a socially inclusive.

The explosion of poverty

It can be argued that the transition period, in our country, was characterised by a dramatic economic downturn. Poorly protected socially at times, its effect was a sudden increase in poverty. There were two poverty shocks: the first happened between 1991 and 1993; between 1995 and 1996, there was a slight diminishing of poverty due to the slender economic upturn apparent. The economic crisis concurrent to the period between 1997 and 2000 was responsible for the second poverty shock: from a 20% poverty level in 1996 to 36% by 2000 (Diagram 1 indicates the poverty dynamic using a methodology that makes comparisons between 1995 and 2002 possible). The 2001 economic re-launch produced a significant decrease of the poverty level: from about 36% in 2000, to 29% in 2002. Taking into consideration annual economic growth forecasts, it is estimated that by 2007, the poverty level might fall below 15%.

Diagram 1. The poverty and indigence dynamic between 1995 and 2003



Source: CASPIS, 2004.

The current debate that is based on statistics (please refer to the above diagram) shows that the sudden increase in poverty reached its peak in 2000. This is based on three factors:

- An erroneous strategy for re-structuring the economy – not just in terms of its privatisation strategy but also, in terms of the way in which the market economy was institutionalised and its macro-financial policies;
- A feeble political will favouring compensatory social support vis-à-vis the dramatic downturn in the standard of living;
- The social disintegration that significantly affected the social resources needed for an economic re-launch.

The excessively high economic and social cost of the transition represents an important handicap that must be considered a priority in being absorbed.

The weak social protection for the population was not wholly an inevitable social cost. Largely, the feeble protection offered was a cost generated by a lack of political will to increase social support hence, avoidable. Moreover, especially though the combined effects of social disintegration processes, the social resources for economic and social re-launch have been gravely affected for the foreseeable future. The transition costs, including the social and political economy errors of the past will continue to plague Romania's future if they are not a priority for correction.

The social assistance system's reduced capacity to compensate the negative effects of the transition on the disadvantaged social segments.

Until legislation on the social assistance system was approved in 2001 and was later backed up by secondary legislation in the shape of the 2003 Government Ordinance on the system of social services, the social assistance net that was designed to protect people that found themselves in difficult circumstances, according to their specific needs, was found to be dramatically under-financed. It was concentrated on residential institutions, was structurally incomplete, had poor focus as regards groups and individuals, was characterised by a rather confusing mix of centralisation/decentralisation and had a high degree of fragmentation.

Under-financing: if financial social assistance was maintained, though with great fluctuations, to cover the necessary minimum, the very social assistance services were severely under-financed. Though in these last years an upward trend as regards social assistance services financing has been noted, the vast majority of financial resources were allocated, for long periods of time, to support social assistance residential institutions, such as: institutions for the abandoned children, for handicapped ones, for severely handicapped adults. Supporting certain social assistance services in the family or, in the community was extremely reduced. Varied community centres for social assistance as well as those extremely specialised, such as those dealing with drug dependency, domestic violence, with physically, sexually and emotionally abused children for example were but the exceptions that confirmed the rule or mere pilot projects that were under-financed or had their financing discontinued.

Structural deficiencies in both components i.e. both in the area of financial support as well as the area of specialised services for social assistance:

a) *Financial support for those in need.* Though drastically reduced in value, *child support* was the only type of financial social assistance that contributed in a major way to supporting the poorest segment of the population. Conversely, social support for the poorest of the poor – introduced as a system, as late as 1995 – had practically disappeared by the year 2001. The Minimum Guaranteed Income introduced via the Law no. 416/2001 substantially improved access to minimal financial resources for those living in extreme poverty. Though certain problems relating to the local authorities' co-financing the programme still exist (for reasons that the said authorities have fewer tax-payers than potential beneficiaries), the new system works a great deal better than the old one as it includes incentives for participation onto the labour market (72 hours community work) while it prevents over-inclusion. Developing *emergency social assistance funds*, though important in its own right, was not of a design that allowed the resource deficit to be completely covered for those living in poverty and, especially, for those living in extreme poverty.

b) Until the 2001 legal framework for social assistance was created, the social assistance services system represented the least developed component of the system, with grave shortcomings and distortions.

- Social assistance services concentrated on an institutional framework of residential social assistance (residential homes for children and the elderly);
- There was a quasi-total absence of an in-house, family and community social assistance – the only types of assistance that can offer an efficient prevention and social re-insertion. The lack of a coherent in-house (family and community) public service system is the most pertinent answer given to the persistence of the institutionalisation phenomenon;
- The chronic lack of social assistance services dealing with a whole host of severe problems: domestic violence, drug and alcohol dependency, social assistance for victims of crimes, homeless persons etc. Being mostly pilot projects, a few services of this kind have been undertaken – very few in the private sector and rather more in the private/NGO system – though the numbers are by far insufficient judging by the existing needs.
- Family social and medical care services appear to be completely absent. It was as late as 2003 that a process of re-thinking the function of such services and their systematic development occurred following the promulgation of the Governmental Ordinance no. 68 on social services.
- Public authorities' social assistance capacities remained severely under-developed as the bulk of the programmes with external financing funds went towards Non-governmental organisations.

Focusing on residential social assistance institutions. Due to the lack of a family and/or community social assistance system that could prevent, treat at the inception phase and socially re-integrate people, the current social assistance system remained a prisoner within the confines of its residential institutions that

undertake the care for people with social difficulties for a limited period of time without the means or know-how to return them to a normal, meaningful life.

A faulty focus: social segments that find themselves in the most difficult situations – extreme poverty, exclusion, chronic social segregation – were least covered in terms of social support both financially and socially. The result of this was the growth and consolidation of a wall of segregation around people who live in extreme poverty (and social exclusion).

A confusing mixture of centralisation/decentralisation. The social assistance system was initially highly centralised as both financial support and the central authority administered social assistance services. In 1997, a decentralisation process was underway yet it was characterised by confusion, chaos and incoherence.

- Certain systems were decentralised while others not.
- Decentralisation undertaken without ensuring specialists and financing which led to massive inconsistencies between local financial resources and the new responsibilities assigned to them.
- Decentralisation was undertaken in a haphazard and chaotic way that led to losing all control and monitoring capacities.
- Often, it was mostly done at regional level while the local level was completely ignored

A confusing mixture of public/private. Though the system's ideology had as a precondition the public/private complementary principle in fact, the public system remained under-developed while the hope rested on a spontaneous, priority-less explosion of social assistance services offered by non-governmental organisations.

In particular, the 1997-2000 Government banked almost exclusively on the “civil society” to ensure the necessary social assistance services which led to an obvious failure of the social and moral support for the vulnerable. The framework Law underpinning the establishment of the National System of Social Assistance in 2001 (as well as a series of secondary Laws that followed afterwards) initiate the creation of the necessary structures that enhances the system's role and responsibilities in providing specialised social services.

There was however, a net preference in favour of treating problems outside their natural environment from where they first occurred i.e. family, community and passing them onto institutions, such as with children that their families were unable to take care. In such cases, the families were even encouraged to hand the children over to these institutions. Hence, children with handicap, regardless of whether their disabilities were slight or were, in fact, pseudo-disabilities were automatically taken into care in institutions for handicapped children or, special schools where they were isolated from normal children hence, excluded from a normal, decent life.

In particular, the delay in creating a functional system for social assistance services was one of the main factors responsible for the Romanian society's overwhelming vulnerability during this period of transition. As they

were unheard of during the communist regime, the social assistance public services were ignored and even eliminated from the social assistance system all together during the initial stage of the transition.

The appearance and ample manifestation of new processes of social disorganisation

The social and economic changes apparent generated new processes of social disorganisation that was not compensated appropriately by an adequate and sufficient social support during what was but a very difficult period of transition. Moreover, the typical deficiencies characteristic of the new system of social protection generated a minimal cover for only some social groups while others were completely neglected.

- The social protection's under-financing is largely responsible for the sudden outburst of poverty; it can be argued though, that even worse than that was the responsibility born by the social support services for the insufficient prevention/absorption of such disintegrating social processes.

It is a well-known fact that prevention has more effective results for social inclusion/normal integration that are less costly than recuperation/therapy. Yet, it is only after the 2001 advent of the framework Law for Social Assistance that the need for developing a well-structured system for specialised services in social assistance becomes apparent (see Government Ordinance 68/2003 concerning Social Services).

The under-financing of social protection was aggravated by the confusing strategy to re-launching social services. The communist system's negative inheritance in this area was tentatively set aside. The deficit and confusion of the social support services system was a telling factor that generated social exclusion and degradation processes.

It is only in 2001 that the Government drafted the institutional development's strategy of the new system of Social Assistance and adopted the Law on the National System for Social Assistance that sets the framework for providing specialised, professional social assistance services. On the basis of this framework law, secondary legislation is being drafted to underpin a new system of specialised services. It is only now, fourteen years after the Revolution, that we find ourselves in the midst of a process of implementing a modern vision for organising a system of social assistance. Conversely, a certain sluggishness in as far as the implementation of the new programme is concerned was noticeable hence, the difficult poverty and social exclusion assimilation. It is vital to understand that social assistance services oriented towards the family and the community could become an essential instrument in preventing social exclusion while promoting social inclusion. This is, in fact, the new philosophy underpinning social assistance services promoted by the framework law on social assistance.

Social exclusion types/ forms

Education services exclusion

Educational reform was for a long period of time rather hesitant and characterised by frequent confusions and uncompleted good intentions which failed to make it into a coherent, systematically structured framework for all types of education. Schooling offer inherited and perpetuated an obsession with the new generation's formation for industrial work yet, offering little or no preparation at all for the vocational formation adequate for the market economy's current requirements as much as the new generation's efficient functioning in a cohesive and active society. The traditional accent placed on exact sciences (vital for engineering job types) is not yet complemented adequately by *knowledge and useful life skills*. The school Curriculum has not enough disciplines referring to society, the economy and personal development. Education meant for participatory co-operation, developing positive relationships and forming active life skills have yet to play anything else but a marginal role in the Curriculum.

The tightly knit relationship between school – family – community, traditionally developed in Romania suffered much degradation during the final part of the communist regime in Romania and degraded even further during the transition period.

The slight social and financial support that schools benefit from (as illustrated in previous tables) had a negative effect not just on the quality of education but on the access to it becoming ever more polarised. Impoverished segments of the populace (with their massive presence in rural areas) have an extremely reduced access to higher education and a difficult one to secondary i.e. high school education also. Thus, school abandonment – at times, even at primary school level – though percentage-wise it remains unimportant, it is, nevertheless, a most serious occurrence. Moreover, the polarisation of the advantages deriving from education is further highlighted by the quality of education itself being highly polarised in that there is a small segment of youth that is functionally illiterate.

School participation and abandonment. Though statistics show that the rate of inclusion in the primary cycle is high (around 99% at 1999-2002 period level) while the rate of abandonment (i.e. those who enrol yet, they drop out later) remains relatively low, we can nevertheless speak of diminished academic performances for a significant part of the total number of students – especially those from rural areas. In other words, we could define their participation as purely formal as it represents, through the sum of acquired knowledge, no more than a “functional abandonment” of sorts. This type of school participation that fails to generate a satisfactory level of acquiring information and skills is determined rather by the allowance they receive than not.

If primary education participation increased (according to statistical data), secondary education participation (college, professional college and high

school) decreased worryingly: from 91% in 1990-91 to 69% in 1999-2000. Failure to enrol in the secondary cycle of an extremely high number of school children at the required school age is but an important source for social exclusion. Especially due to a confusing policy on vocational study, we are still far away from the objective of generalising the completion of education via the achievement of a professional diploma. The proportion of young people who fail to achieve anything but a Capacity Diploma (from this year, the National Testing System) is around 15-16% of an entire generation – a number to which are added those who fail to complete even the obligatory education.

The accentuation of educational polarisation is one of the crucial factors for the social polarisation of the future. Though, on the one hand, higher education participation has grown rapidly (approximately 25% of this generation are reading for University degrees), at the same time, the proportion of young people that are withdrawing from education before they finalise their professional formation via a diploma that attests to its completion also rose. Thus, the risk of fragmenting the young generation in two: those who graduate from University and those who fail to complete high school or a professional school.

Table 11.1. The Rate of School Abandonment

	Primary	Secondary	High School	Post-High School	Professional	Complementary	Vocational School
1995-1996	0,5%	1,0%	3,9%	7,1%	5,0%	6,4%	-
1999-2000	0,8%	0,9%	3,8%	8,9%	5,4%	8,3%	5,2%

Source: The Ministry of Education and Research Database

Table 11.2. The Evolution of the Rate of School Abandonment

Year	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02
The Rate of abandonment	3,2	4,9	3,9	2,2	1,9	2,0	1,9	1,9	2,0	2,2	2,0	1,8	2,3

Source: CASPIS – Report on the Millennium's Development Objectives

The *Programme for Combating School Abandonment*, initiated by the MECT, MFS, MMSS, the Patronage Authority, ANPCA was completed and launched in 2002 on the basis of the 2001-2004 Governance Programme and contains the following:

- The 2001-2004 pre-University Education Development Strategy;
- The Strategy for Stimulating the Roma Youth's Participation in Education;
- The PHARE programme "Disadvantaged Groups Access to Education – with particular focus on the Roma groups";
- The strategic partnership MECT-UNICEF concerning the Roma children's education;

- The 2002-2003 introduction in schools and, from this year, in kindergartens too, of the “Milk and Croissant” Programme that had a visible impact on stimulating school participation;
- The Programme for kick-starting rural education;
- The Programme for educational establishment’s rehabilitation;
- The Ministry of Education and Research Order no. 3510/2000 concerning new endeavours to eradicating illiteracy through which each educational inspector gets developmental tasks vis-à-vis monitoring the illiteracy phenomenon and drafting adequate measures to combating it;
- The Ministry of Education and Research Order no. 3907/2000 concerning the prevention of school abandonment and ensuring that the schooling of children and school-age youth in the pre-University education system is continued;
- Changes to the Education Law concerning lowering the age of compulsory education to start at the age of six and lengthening its duration to include the 10th form.

Every one of these measures requiring a financial resource increase is based on a fundamental prerequisite for quality increase, as well as rehabilitating, education – particularly, in rural areas as regards the disadvantaged children’s access to education, increasing education and vocational study appeal, stimulating community participation in school life, developing an educational cycle for parents etc. The target group is made up of school-age children (6-18 year olds) that have a poor educational background, are/have been socially segregated, have abandoned school, have a high-risk family background, belong to ethnic groups whose access to education has been limited, parents whose educational formation is problematic or have culturally preconceived ideas.

The urban/rural differences as regards access to education probability as well as concerning performance are significant:

- The rate of secondary education enrolment of those completing the primary cycle was 86% in rural areas compared to 98% in urban ones, in 1999.
- The percentage of qualified teachers in rural areas is 72% compared to 88% in urban ones.
- Only 24% of the high school pupils and 37,5% from vocational schools come from villages.
- In approximately 20% of rural schools, the last capital refurbishment work undertaken took place before 1945. In another 25%, no major refurbishment work happened in the last 30 years (and 35% of schoolmasters in the rural area believed in 1999 that their school was in need of urgent refurbishment).

The *educational deficit* is a major risk. The rate of abandonment in High Schools is several times higher in the 9th grade i.e. at the beginning of the secondary school education cycle than in the following years. This speaks volumes about the material difficulties apparent as much as it does about the

difficulty in confronting them and the lack of educational focus. The failure to complete primary and secondary education (in the year 2000, approximately 6,26% of teenagers between the ages of 16 and 20 were no longer attending school) constitutes a premise for the functional illiteracy responsible for the increase in poverty and social exclusion.

Increasing school participation via the “Milk and Croissant” Programme. The introduction in 2002 of the “Milk and Croissant” Programme (one free meal per day) for pupils from the 1st to the 4th grade had certain positive effects as the programme was well received by the parents of these pupils as well as the rest of the population thus leading to an increase in school participation both in impoverished areas as well as the Roma minority (Table 12).

Public Opinion Barometer data – carried out in October 2002, by the FSD and the MMT showed a proportion of 83,6% of those interviewed thought such a measure to be necessary while 80% thought this measure ought to be extended to the 5th to the 8th grades as well. Though needy families better welcome this type of support, the vast majority of the population (80%) considers that this type of support should be awarded universally, (which is, in fact, what is currently happening) irrespective of their family background i.e. whether their families are poor or not. At the time this research was carried out, the programme’s evolution was positive i.e. 92% of those interviewed said their children received their milk and croissant daily. The usefulness this support has is beyond any doubt as it positively affects a large part of school-age children:

Table 12. „...for your child, the croissant and milk ...” (%) *

	<i>Earnings</i>					<i>Ethnic Group</i>			<i>Area</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Q1</i>	<i>Q2</i>	<i>Q3</i>	<i>Q4</i>	<i>Q5</i>	<i>Roma</i>	<i>Romanian</i>	<i>Hungarian</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	
<i>It is absolutely necessary, as you have nothing to put into your child's lunch box</i>	38.6	7.4	4.3	3.8	0.0	60.0	12.7	9.1	9.2	19.9	14.9
<i>It's good for those days when you have nothing to put into your child's lunch box</i>	45.5	29.6	39.1	42.3	12.9	26.7	35.8	40.9	31.2	39.1	35.4
<i>Represents no more than a supplement he/she enjoys</i>	15.9	48.1	45.7	42.3	58.1	13.3	40.8	36.4	44.0	35.4	39.4
<i>It has no value whatsoever</i>	0.0	14.8	10.9	11.5	29.0	0.0	10.8	13.6	15.6	5.6	10.3

* Parents with children in the primary cycle

Source: the “Public Opinion Barometer – October 2002” carried out by the Metro Media Transylvania with the support of the Foundation for an Open Society.

The lack of educational facilities in rural communities

There are a number of specific forms of exclusion from education access to/services that can be found mainly in rural areas (especially poor, isolated villages etc.) and in the Roma communities where there is much more difficult problems concerning education.

There can be identified specific risk factors characteristic of rural areas, such as:

- Certain small/isolated hamlets have no school because of the small number of children living there.
- Some parents don't send their children to school because they have no money for school clothes, textbooks and writing materials.
- Most children in rural areas, teenagers in particular, are used occasionally or permanently for agricultural or communal husbandry work to the detriment, sometimes, of their school participation or other educational activities.

In the case of isolated hamlets where there can be no discussion of any agricultural or other economic activity on a scale comparable to that in villages that are more easily accessible, situated in the proximity of national roads, the material and human resource problem (i.e. teaching and auxiliary personnel commuting to work) is ever more acute.

There are educational establishments in rural areas that are still facing important problems relating to the poor state of some of the buildings, classrooms and laboratories educational facilities as well as many other specific difficulties, such as: placing, in the same classroom, different aged children together whether for reasons concerning the lack of qualified personnel or of the number of same-aged children to make up a class.

The programmes launched these last few years by the Government either to link isolated hamlets with mini-busses or, rehabilitate rural schools through the allowance of important sums of money whether from internal resources or from external – EU and World Bank programmes – though they resolve many difficult issues, they are not yet sufficient to solve every single problem referring to the very gap that exists between rural and urban education. These ought to be backed up by efficient measures in future too. It is estimated that this essential objective of including children and the future young adults in the process of educational formation can be achieved if educational reform is continued apace, based on a philosophy quality education for all, on equal opportunities and a timeframe spanning to the year 2012.

A serious source of social exclusion is the lack of rural kindergartens due to a lack of qualified educators and financial resources needed for their functioning thus leading to limiting access to pre-school education in rural areas.

The effects of the lack of access to kindergartens is directly reflected on children if we take into account the fact that the role of pre-school education is essential for school performance. Moreover, it affects parents indirectly in a way in which their earnings would be greater if they had more time to dedicate to their work.

Educational disparities: rural/ urban

As can be noticed from the accompanying table, both general indicators relating to the standard of living and poverty rate as well as those indicators that characterise the population's education level come out in favour of the urban population and against the rural population.

Indicator		RURAL area	URBAN area
1. % unqualified didactic personnel in pre-school education – 1998		28%	10%
2. the average marks for the Capacity examination	<i>Romanian</i>	6,01	7,14
	<i>Mathematics</i>	6,02	6,83
3. The poverty rate in 1998*		41%	28%
4. population with an educational background no better than Secondary education (8 th grade)**		56%	12%

Source: MEN for unmarked indicators, Teşliuc, Pop, 2001 for * și INS for **

It is self-evident that the education of children was found wanting in rural areas where the percentage of unqualified personnel is rather high compared to urban areas while kindergarten facilities are also sub-standard by comparison.

The grave consequence of such poorly compensated disparities is the *difference between rural and urban Capacity examination results, with the former receiving marks inferior by an average of 1 mark in Romanian Language and Mathematics examinations compared to the latter.*

In order that the equality of opportunity is adequately promoted, there needs to be a sustained effort to increase the contribution of children from disadvantaged social segments to take part in the high school system as any other way would see their efforts to access higher education blocked.

Such a *measure for promoting social inclusion* was the *Programme for Re-launching Rural Education* initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry for Public Finances, the World Bank and the National Council for the Development of Rural Education. Its scope is to ensure the equality of education opportunities for children from rural areas.

Inclusive education

Currently, there are problems concerning the curtailment of HIV positive children's access to education (compared to 1990, the number of HIV positive children was significantly smaller, while their care was assured by the Ministry of Health out of budgetary resources). Moreover, children with other types of illnesses as well as those suffering from a slight handicap suffer just as much not from a lack of support ingrained in the system but because of teachers and other parent's negative attitude towards them.

The campaign that is currently being run attempts to make people aware of the fact that healthy children will not get infected as a result of simple school interaction with children who are HIV positive and that such behaviour does not serve to prevent the illness being transmitted yet it serves only to exclude these unfortunate children.

Alongside statistics that reveal a decrease in the numbers of newly infected cases (especially amongst children) the results of this campaign begin to be seen and the social inclusion of HIV positive children is gradually achieved.

Measures for promoting educational inclusion for the Roma community

Formal education is, in many cases, the only way in which the Roma can escape the *vicious circle of social exclusion*: poverty – lack of interest for education – illiteracy – the lack of a profession/job and the wage that goes with it – poverty (see also Chapter 4 – the sub-chapter “the Roma minority”).

Though on the one hand, the lack of school participation is the principal factor generating social exclusion, for the needy ones who do not frequent school, there was a necessity to introduce another motivating factor: obtaining child allowance was conditioned on frequenting school. The immediate effect of that was a dramatic reduction in school abandonment while it increased the chances for school participation among socially disadvantaged groups. Moreover, it increased opportunities for integrating in future on the labour market and for reducing poverty.

Other supplementary facilities for Roma children and youth (as well as for those living in extreme poverty – many living in rural areas) had a positive effect on disadvantaged groups as well as society as a whole through the reduction of social inequalities and increasing the opportunities offered by education for children at risk.

An example of good practice:

SPECIAL HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY PLACES RESERVED FOR THE ROMA POPULATION

Right from the beginning of the nineties, the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance of the University of Bucharest offered 10 places annually to any Roma ethnic who wanted to follow the Faculty's “social assistance” profile. This policy was based on the principle of positive discrimination as well as recognising the need to have Roma social assistants that could be accepted easier to work inside communities with high social risks as well as offer young Romas a model figure to inspire them. Though at the beginning, the number of candidates that fulfilled entry criteria was less than the allocated number of places, during these last years, the large numbers of Roma applicants and their good examination admission results have lead to the supplementing of the number of places as well as the introduction, from 2001, of similar places in the department “The College for Community Social Assistants”. The example given by the Faculty's Social Assistance Department has been replicated as similar faculties, nation-wide and lately, at certain Law Faculties as well.

The Ministry of Education and Research introduced this principle at High School level too and, starting with the year 2001, each High School offers two separate places for Roma pupils who have graduated their Capacity examination – obviously, in the order of merit. As yet, the majority of places have not been occupied with the number of requested being still reduced.

The Ministry of Education and Research together with the Education 2000+ Centre have initiated the *Programme “Education – a second chance”*.

This is a pilot project for schooling recuperation in the hope it would combat social segregation as well as the social and professional exclusion of youth that have not yet finalised their compulsory education and, as a result of that, have not gained the minimum competencies needed to obtain a work place. The scope is to support youth aged between 14-25 to complete basic education training to enable them to pass the Capacity examination and prepare at the same time for a work placement equivalent to professional apprentices school. Initially, the Programme included 11 pilot schools from 6 counties and the Bucharest municipality that was later (starting from September 2002) extended to all counties in Romania.

Re-launching schooling, both through quantitative indicators (i.e. school participation, the number of classes graduated etc.) and, especially, through a performances', qualitative increase represents a priority unanimously accepted as education is but a fundamental source for constructing a prosperous, inclusive and socially cohesive society.

Health service exclusion

Probably one of the hottest topics of the current social disputes refers to the sanitary system's performance. There is a multitude of factors and processes with contradictory effects here:

- Increased access to a host of services and quality medicines during transition. Beyond the positive character of such a process, we cannot ignore the dramatic upsurge in the cost of medical care that is quickly overcoming both budgetary as well as individual resources. The rise in costs has inevitably generated spectacular polarisation via different mechanisms, in terms of access to both services and quality medicines.
- The uneven development of the health system, with an accent put mainly on treating emergencies while neglecting preventative medicine and primary care lead to a polarisation of accessing health services and a degradation in the state of health of disadvantaged social segments of the populace.
- The general confusion coupled with questionable principled options for sanitary reform generated unevenness and excessive costs notwithstanding corruption:
 - Replacing territorial medical assistance with family doctors has frequently generated social and regional areas that were left uncovered. The family doctors system is far from representing a well-thought institution that can ensure efficiency and reduced costs.
 - The excessively high medicines cost owed to inefficient procurement mechanisms. This is why in Romania, in the past, imported medicines were 50% more expensive than in other European countries.
- Reproducing the sanitary services' separation from their social counterparts, coupled with a lack of social assistants provided for in their structures, hospitals and other sanitary units proved to be incapable of constructing an efficient

relationship between hospitals and the family. Moreover, it failed to induce active participation on the patient's part in the sense of leading a healthier life as much as it failed vis-à-vis the medical and social formation of the personnel in the system.

As a result of accumulating such problems, a series of social groups were segregated from accessing health services. Among these groups, we can identify the following categories: families whose poverty is accentuated by processes of social disorder; indigent families with lots of children; a large part of the Roma population; impoverished inhabitants living in isolated rural areas who have to money to access the better organised, urban medical care; persons without a work place and constant earnings; the homeless. To these groups can be added a group that has no access to family planning for a whole host of reasons.

The population's state of health pattern and its access to medical services expresses the combined effect of certain specific factors:

- *Poverty*: the dearth of financial resources generates deficient nourishment, inadequate housing, an inability to access elementary hygiene conditions, including drinking water (for instance, the TB incidence – 115 cases to 100000 inhabitants – places Romania on the last but two places among the ex-communist countries, in Europe).
- *Social disorganisation* generates a complete disregard for one's health and for the health of their children, unhealthy lifestyles, a cultural and sanitary education deficit etc. In the last few decades there has been an increase in diseases caused by personal turmoil and a cultural paucity vis-à-vis healthy lifestyles, such as: sexually transmitted diseases, illnesses caused by alcoholism, drugs etc.
- *A reduced access to medical services for socially disadvantaged categories of people* owed to the social policies in the area of health were mostly incoherent as well as inefficient; this led to a worsening of their state of health.

As a result of this combination of factors, Romania finds itself among the last places in Europe as regards the population's state of health indicators despite certain progresses made after 1989 vis-à-vis the population's general state of health (i.e. the reduction in infantile, maternal and neo-natal mortality, in the number of new cases of HIV/AIDS etc.)

CASPIS's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Promotion Strategy (2002) underlined three major sources for limiting access to medical services:

- The collateral or direct economic costs implied that could not be supported due to the financial constraints placed of a rather large segment of the population. In particular, the cost of medicines is but one of the most important sources for the medical care deficit apparent (especially for the poor and the elderly segments of the population).
- The ambiguities in applying legislation relevant to the health medical cover area as much as a lack of publicising the concrete way in which medical assistance can be accessed condemn people from high social risk categories to fail to take advantage of the sanitary assistance services available to them.

- Organisational medical assistance ambiguities coupled with a lack of resources generates inequalities that are highlighted in the way in which certain geographical areas are covered for the purposes of medical or social services.

Health services accessibility is affected by factors such as:

- The *actual distance to the nearest hospital/medical cabinet* – in rural areas, there are regions that have an insufficient number of medical cabinets notwithstanding the big distance that some people need to cover to get to them. There are hamlets so remote that it makes the access of ambulances to them very difficult and sometimes virtually impossible. This situation can be remedied via improvements made in the local transport infrastructure as much as by offering financial inducements to doctors working in rural/segregated areas in order that they stay and work there.
- The *specialist medical personnel available* – there are regional disparities with rural areas coming out worst in that respect. In particular, such disadvantaged areas can be found in Moldova and the Baragan plain; the number of doctors compared to the number of inhabitants there is extremely low. In 2002, there were 90 communes with several hundred villages in which there was not even a single family doctor available while in Bucharest, apart from a host of University centres, there are 4 doctors for each thousand inhabitants.
- The large number of persons either working illegally or having no health insurance for reasons of the particular group they belong to (i.e. children, pensioners, the unemployed, guaranteed minimum wage beneficiaries). Peasants who own a parcel of land, the self-employed or, day-workers are but some of the categories of people who ought to ensure themselves yet, because of their meagre income they fail to do so hence are most vulnerable in cases of illness or accident.
- The 1997 Health Insurance Law conditions access to essential health services, such as the case with dental treatment, in that the insured pays part (between 33-66%) from the cost of the services rendered. Hence, a large part of the population (such as those in extreme poverty, those with children, pensioners) cannot afford dental treatment because of financial penury and/or the exaggerated costs of this type of treatment.
- Access to means of contraception is difficult for a large part of the fertile-age population again, due to economic considerations and a gap in information. The cost of contraceptives is way above the economic means available to disadvantaged sections of the population hence the need to introduce means of subsidising them in order to reverse this situation and ensure the poor have access to modern means of contraception. This is necessary to reduce the extremely high rate of abortions (over 200.000, which means approximately one abortion to every baby born in 2003). In 2003, the Ministry of Health distributed through its National Programme, with the aid of international organisations, free condoms for approximately 135.000 people. This figure, however, represented only a fraction (2%) of couples at a fertile age while the focus on people who are at a high risk of abortion (Roma people, those in extreme poverty, young

females from rural areas) remained insufficient. It is necessary that massive subsidies place contraceptives on the free medicine list in order that it can be distributed free of charge to all categories deemed to be at risk of having an abortion.

By comparison to EU countries as well as to other countries undergoing a period of transition, the Romanian sanitary system offers reduced cover and poorer quality services.

Table 13. Access to Resources Impacting on Public Health Indicators

No. Art. DIU	Country	Population using adequate sanitary facilities in 2000 (%)	Population using treated drinking water sources in 2000 (%)	Population with access to essential medicines in 1999 (%)	No. of doctors/100000 inhabitants 1990-1999 (the most recent data)
	Countries with high DIU				
2	Sweden	100	100	95-100	311
13	United Kingdom	100	100	95-100	164
35	Hungary	99	99	95-100	357
36	Slovakia	100	100	95-100	353
	Countries with medium DIU				
60	The Russian Federation	...	99	50-79	421
62	Bulgaria	100	100	80-94	345
63	Romania	53	58	80-94	184
96	China	38	75	80-94	162
	Countries with reduced DIU				
138	Pakistan	61	88	50-79	57
142	Nepal	27	81	0-49	4

Source: the 2000 Human Development Report, UNDP, p.167-8

The lack of medical personnel, the reduction in the number of clinics and general clinics that have remained in the public sector, the compensated medicines crisis are but some of the factors that have generated certain groups' significant exclusion from the health services.

Table 14. The Network of Sanitary Units that have remained in the Public Sector

	1990	-----	1999	2000	2001
Hospitals	423		428	442	446
General clinics	540		447	253	202
Dispensary	5883		1234	908	406
TB Health centres	16		14	14	12
Observation sanatoriums	15		13	11	11
Crèches	841		388	358	348
Pharmacies	1948		534	508	517

Source: INS, MFT, Romania's Statistic Year Book, 2002, INS

The number of people insured/listed with family doctors by the 31st of December 2002 was 21.221.646 (CNSAS, 2003). If we report this to the figures from the 2002 population census, notwithstanding the possibility of double registrations, it appears that a number of approximately 500.000 people (2,3%) find themselves outside the medical assistance network of which the overwhelming majority lives in rural areas.

The population's satisfaction with medical services is low. Data from May 2003⁴ shows that 46% of the Romanian population is dissatisfied⁵ with local medical services as the system is perceived as inefficient and corrupt⁶, thus affecting especially those poorest who, due to financial indigence are excluded from services relating primary medical care.

The re-launching of the Health Reform (MSF, CNAT – 2001) was discussed at the 5th of December 2001 meeting with all agents involved. It includes a series of strategies and action plans aimed at reforming the sanitary system:

- The National Strategy on Hospital Reform
- The Strategy concerning medicines and sanitary materials' policy (i.e. a return of the RO97122003 PHARE Programme concerning the national policy on medicines in Romania that was finalised by the end of the year 2000)
- The Strategy concerning the Health Financing System's improvement
- The Strategy concerning Women, Children and the Family's Health for the period 2002-2006 (the priority being the prevention of illnesses and curative medicine).

For the period 2002-2004 and then up to 2015, a series of programmes that fix the priority objectives were drafted:

- The Public Health Community Programme
- The Programme for the Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- The Child and Family Health Programme
- The Special Protection for Handicapped Persons Programme
- Halving the rate of 1-4 year old children's mortality between 2002-2015
- Reducing infant mortality by 40% between 2002-2015
- Eradicating measles by 2007
- Halving the rate of maternal mortality between 2001-2009
- Increasing the number of births assisted by qualified personnel
- Putting a stop to the rise of TB and beginning to see a reversal of the trend
- Ensuring basic medicines at affordable prices

⁴ The Foundation for an Open Society and Metro Media Transylvania *The Public Opinion Barometer*, May 2003.

⁵ "How pleased are you with the local medical services?" – completely dissatisfied = 17,5%; not very satisfied = 28,3%.

⁶ To the question "During the last five years, have you resorted to the medical services for a consultation, treatment, surgical intervention and if you have, have you given anything extra apart from the legal taxes?" 24% of those questioned answered "Yes, I have" to both questions – Source: The Foundation for an Open Society & CURS, October 2003, *The Public Opinion Barometer*.

Exclusion from Housing

People's exclusion from housing is closely linked to indigent housing conditions (including the restriction of access to public utilities due to the rising costs compared to the economic resources of individuals) as well as to the difficult access to buying/renting accommodation in urban areas for homeless persons.

➤ *Over-crowding.* 42,8% of the population lives below the average 14,2 square metres per person (INSSE, 2003). Recent data (INSSE, ACOVI 2002) reveals the fact that people who find themselves in the first three-digit income earnings are those who suffer the most from over-crowding. Moreover, 7,4% of the population registers an inhabitancy density of over 2,01 persons per room. Furthermore, for approximately 6% of the population (1,3 million people) the living space per person is around 4 square metres (approximately 100.000 dwellings – of which 2/3 live in rural areas).

➤ *The lack of connections to public utilities.* According to statistical data, approximately 250.000 dwellings (3% of the total stock), with approximately 500.000 persons have no types of installations (i.e. electricity, current water supply, hot water, sewerage, natural gas, central heating). For instance, the percentage of households from the first digit that have no hot water, sewerage and bathroom/shower room is approximately 85% while of those in the last digit only 6,5% have no such utilities (ACOV I 2002). A number of small towns have for years now stopped being supplied with hot water and heating in a centralised system due to the economic collapse of local suppliers and/or sky-high rocketing prices and the people's impossibility of sustaining such expenditures. This type of exclusion is likely to generate other types of exclusion.

Table 15. Households that are confronted with diverse problems according to the residential area type and earnings

Households without:	TOTAL (%)			URBAN (%)			RURAL (%)		
	Total	D1_T	D10_T	Total_U	D1_U	D10_U	Total_R	D1_R	D10_R
Hot water installations	47,6	87,6	7,8	16,8	44,4	2,4	87,8	96,6	63,2
Sewerage	41,7	83,3	5,7	9,0	29,2	0,8	84,3	95,3	58,7
Bathroom/Shower room	43,7	85,0	6,0	11,8	35,0	1,2	85,2	96,6	58,6
Heating	2,6	-	-	2,5	4,8	0,7	2,6	-	-
Adequate heating	12,0	12,0	10,9	16,7	29,1	11,2	5,9	11,5	2,2
Adequate installations	5,2	-	-	7,7	12,6	6,1	1,9	-	-
Sufficient space (crisis)	14,4	-	-	17,7	22,5	14,0	10,1	17,8	6,7

Note: D1 - first digit earners (the poorest 10%), D10 - last digit earners (the wealthiest 10%)

Source: INNSSE⁷, "ACOV I 2002"

⁷ Data from the 2002 Population Census differs +/- 10% vis-à-vis certain indicators (generally speaking, conditions appear to be better in ACOVI than in the Population Census) probably as a result of the sample's failure to account for indigent household with the worst possible living conditions.

The previous picture shows the huge discrepancy between the poorest 10% and the wealthiest 10%. Beyond such discrepancies, what is worth noting is the acute crisis of space and adequate heating that is plaguing those living in urban areas while for those living in rural areas it is the lack of a modern infrastructure that is preventing them from modernising their households. Moreover, it is worth signalling that approximately 5500 households (the majority of which are in urban areas) have no access to any source of current water.

The data obtained by the MMT in October 2002 in a nation-wide representative research (the Public Opinion Barometer – the Foundation for an Open Society 2002) show that:

- Approximately 4,6% of the blocks of flats were branched out of the thermal energy public system as a result of the tenant's maintenance debts;
- Approximately 3,5% of the blocks of flats were never branched in;
- Approximately 7,4% of the blocks of flats were branched out on request.

In situations such as these, approximately 22% of the urban households have no heating during winter. Furthermore, the difficulty of supporting the ever rising costs of heating supplied by the public system for thermal energy makes some 3 out of 10 Romanians to have considered several times about branching out of the system. Moreover, 84% of the households consider branching out of the system ought to be encouraged at the same time with installing personal heating systems.

Hot water provision also represents a problem for approximately 19,3% of the total number of urban households the most affected being those from medium-sized towns (30.000 – 100.000 inhabitants) and small (under 30.000 inhabitants) where 50% and 39% respectively say they have no hot water.

➤ *Maintenance expenses for those living in urban areas.*

Such as was shown in a recent document⁸, the population's impoverishment process that was notable after 1990 had a relatively classical pattern: an increase in compulsory expenses accompanied by a decrease in the optional ones. Expenses for service payment out of the total consumption expenditure⁹ (in urban areas) constantly rose: from 14% in 1994 to 20% in 2000, 26,5% in 2001 (3,4 times higher than in rural areas). The increase was owed especially to maintenance expenses, which represented in 2001, in urban areas, 55,2% of the total expenditure for services. For example, in 2002, in the Bucharest area, the average percentage of housing expenditure was 61,9% (INS, 2002).

In 2002, approximately 32,6% of the urban households were repeatedly unable to pay expenses related to the maintenance of their dwelling (water, gas,

⁸ CASPIS, 2003 "The effect of rising maintenance costs on the standard of living", material edited by Zamfir, C., Ilie, S., Grigoras, S. and Dan, A.

⁹ On the whole, services expenditure in 2001 was 20,7% of the total consumption expenditure and 27% of the total cash expenditure. The highest percentage belongs to housing expenditure (53,6%) followed by telephone, TV and radio licences whereas health services accounted for only 2,7% and education (3,9%) – INS, 2002.

heating) during the last 12 months of the year. The situation was critical for the poorest 30% of households: approximately one in two households were unable to keep up maintenance payments. Relatively recent data¹⁰ reveals the fact that at the level of the month of May 2000, approximately 24% of those who at that date lived in a block of flats had their maintenance payments for at least three months in arrears. Approximately 68% of families with arrears live in big cities, of over 100.000 inhabitants. In a situation such as that, part of these households risk being evacuated or have the provision of utilities cut off (in certain situations not just individually, but collectively). According to statistical data, during the interval 1990-2001, the average wage rose 1000 fold while thermal energy tariffs rose 2409 times.

CASPIS estimated that the percentage of communal maintenance¹¹ costs during the 2003-2004 winter would be approximately 35% of urban household earnings. According to the INNSSE methodology the estimated percentage of this type of expenditure amounted to 25,8% whereas using the FROA¹²/CASPIS methodology this could amount to as much as 46,5%. In December 2002, approximately 8% of the total number of households spent on communal maintenance between 70% and 100% of the monthly earnings whereas for 3,3% they ought to have spent more than 100% to cover the spending.

Table 16. Urban Households' distribution according to the percentage of maintenance expenditure from the net family income (December 2002)

Expenditure intervals	No. of households	% of households
over 100%	142.025	3.3
80-100%	168.548	3.9
70-80%	174.132	4.0
60-70%	286.178	6.6
50-60%	432.432	10.0
40-50%	719.583	16.7

Source: ABF – 2002 (INNSSE); CASPIS, 2003.

Using the FROA/CASPIS methodology, it is estimated that during the peak months (December and January) of the 2003-2004 winter, the average percentage of this expenditure could rise to an average 46,5% of the monthly net income (in a pessimistic scenario) or to 'only' 38,7% (in its optimistic counterpart). What these figures fail to capture are the huge differences between the above-mentioned income brackets' groups. Thus, during the winter months, urban households from the worst off income earning group ought to pay 20% more than their full monthly income which translates into accumulating maintenance debts (in the absence of borrowing). Hence, they run the risk of having the provision of such services discontinued and even get evacuated from

¹⁰ The Foundation for an Open Society, *Public Opinion Barometer*, May 2003.

¹¹ Cold and hot water, electricity for communal spaces, industrial waste, sewerage, sanitation and heating

¹² The Federation of the Romanian Owners' Associations

the building. The sources for this dire situation are to be found in the accentuated impoverishment of the population after 1990 (especially through a decrease in real earnings – both primary and those realised from transfers – in the face of an uncontrollable rise in prices in public utilities practised by the Autonomous Administration).

To remedy this situation, the Government allocated annually for the cold season (November – March) a series of funds destined for people with modest incomes. During the 2002-2003 winter, the sum allocated was ... and the number of beneficiaries was ...

➤ *Homeless persons* appeared as a result of a process of de-institutionalisation, mental illnesses cases, forced evacuations, vulnerable people being swindled out of their possessions, the lack of financial resources etc. In Romania, there has not yet been undertaken any systematic attempt to find out in great detail the exact dimensions of this phenomenon.¹³ “Medicins sans Frontiers” estimates that in Bucharest alone, the number of homeless people is around the 5000 mark.¹⁴ Though the figure is not large compared to other European capitals, because of the lack of support programmes, the plight of these people appears desperate – as some become victims of abuse, often socially irrecoverable. The Medical and Legal Institute statistics show that on the streets of Bucharest died, on average, around 300 homeless adults per year, between 1997 and 2000. The homeless are usually single persons, predominantly male yet lately, there can be seen an increase in the number homeless families as a result of poverty, mainly.

Beginning with 2003 though, an increase in the local public administration authorities’ focus on building emergency shelters for the homeless has been noted. In a recent research carried out by MMSSF it is shown that the number of shelters for homeless adults has grown remarkably. Data collected in 23 counties show a number of 25 shelters with a total accommodation capacity of 901 places. Moreover, in these counties exist a further 20 centres for street children, with a total capacity of 546 places. The increase in the number of places/beds in shelters, though visible lately it is still far from offering adequate cover for existing needs.

➤ *The possibility of acquiring/renting an accommodation.* The transition brought with it a spectacular price increase for both acquiring or renting an accommodation especially in cities that are still active as well as they are economically attractive. Among these cities, Bucharest and a few other places like, Timisoara, Iasi, Cluj, Sibiu, Constanta, Brasov are a breed apart. If in 1990, the average price of a two-bedroom flat was the equivalent of 40 average monthly wages by 2003, the price had risen to 120 average wages. The introduction of mortgages in 2003, brought a sudden rise in house prices. The positive effects of this initiative were only felt by those whose earnings exceed

¹³ CASPIS is currently undertaking a research project, which aims to determine with maximum possible accuracy the number of homeless people in urban areas.

¹⁴ According to the research undertaken in 2002

the average, as the poor became ever more excluded from acquiring a dwelling (with the aid of a credit) due to the high mortgage repayment rates. Moreover, the price for renting a two-bedroom flat (approximately 200 Euro per month) is above the Romanian economy's average wage.

In the Government's social programme for 2002-2003, the aim of building social dwellings for young people has been clearly stated. Hence, there will be built 21.000 social dwellings destined for letting by young people, whose earnings prevent them from acquiring property or renting it at current market prices. Moreover, a further two programmes aim to build social dwellings destined for categories of people whose earnings also prevent their access to acquiring property or renting it at current market prices (CASPIIS, 2002).

Exclusion from occupational services/the labour market

One of the main sources for social exclusion is represented by the failure to access a work place due to the frequent mismatch between professional background and the labour market requirements.

As we have pointed out in Table 3, the number of employees was nearly halved in the interval 1990-2001. The loss of a wage and its replacement with earnings from transfers (or, even with no earnings whatsoever) generated an explosion of poverty among active yet, unemployed people. The majority of persons freed from the wage system were distributed as follows (PNAinc, 2002):

- Became unemployed, within a short period of time was manifest a substantial level of unemployment which peaked in 1999 (11,8%); by 2001, this level had comedown to 8,6% yet, this was accompanied by an increase in the number of people without an occupation;
- Retired into pension, often before the legal limit, something that burdened the social security system in the absence of a compensatory workforce request on the labour market; thus, the dependency employees/pensioners became supra-unitary;
- Passed on to the underground economy where the specific costs and risks were worth having in the absence of "real jobs";
- Retired to pursue agricultural activities yet, pursuing more of a survival agriculture than a profitable activity.

The nation-wide average unemployment rate has never registered during transition values above 12% yet, it varied significantly at a regional level on occasions having values in excess of 25%. As unemployment became chronic, it meant that there were hardly any relative advantages so that upon the expiry date for benefits payment people simply gave up on registering in the Workforce database. Meanwhile, temporary, atypical occupation documentation were permitted as long as the unemployed status was given up in which case occupation costs rose significantly due to the taxation with associated social scope. The introduction of the guaranteed minimum wage was accompanied by

a growth in the rate of recorded unemployment as a result of conditioning the guaranteed minimum wage on being registered in the Workforce database.

Reform delays and the economic recession meant that the number of available jobs were fewer year on year so that an important segment of the active population began to be confronted by long-term unemployment thus, becoming chronically unemployed. Statistical data offered by the International Labour Bureau (BIM) indicates that the average unemployment duration tends to increase – differently, when based on age groups. In the year 2000, this was 18 months, rising by two months compared to 1999; the same year, 51,5% of the BIM unemployed had been unemployed for over a year and 24% of the same were in this situation for over two years.

- Youth unemployment was relatively high before due to a lack of available job positions. In the 1996-2000 period there was even a reduction in occupation for very young age groups (15-24 y.o.) from 13,8% to 11,8% alongside an increase close to 10% for people older than 65.
- The total rate of occupation (the number of occupied persons/1000 inhabitants) fell constantly.
- At the beginning of the year 2000, the rate of activity (the proportion of civilian, active population that are 15 year old and above) was 52,4% whereas the rate of occupation (the proportion of occupied civilian population that are 15 year old and above) was 46,9%.
- The negative, natural growth had a negative impact on work resources. On the 1st of January 2001, the active population was 1,2 million smaller that it had been at the beginning of 1990 when it numbered 10,84 million.

On the other hand, it is worth signalling that there are no major discrepancies between gender from an occupational point of view. The occupied population is, by a slight majority, masculine (54% are men). During the past eight years, there has been an increase in the role of the female work force in the economy.

Active measures destined to stimulate the hiring of youth on the labour market (such as, hiring facilities for high school and University graduates, workplace bursaries for young people, free training courses etc.) have contributed lately to a reduction in the numbers of young people who are unemployed (the Law number 116/2001 on Combating Social Segregation) though now, the most vulnerable category appears to be that made by people who are close to retirement age.

Underground economy work

Work in the underground/black market economy represents a constant occurrence for an important segment of the active population. The factors assimilated to this state of events relate to corruption, deficient control, inadequate social protection policies, high taxation etc. Though working in the underground economy brings with it only a slight benefit that ensures but a style

of living from one day to the next, at the same time, it represents a huge source for exploitation and social exclusion that offers no system of protection for reasons that it contributes nothing to various insurance schemes.

Work paid not as it is claimed in the paperwork

One of the recent problems highlighted by labour inspectors concerns the declaration of smaller wages that are being paid in reality. This rather frequent practice favours the employer, who can therefore pay substantially smaller contributions towards their employee's social insurance whereas it only temporarily favours the employee. In the long-term though, this practice is to their detriment as their respective funds are smaller which means that their future benefits will be smaller too.

An even graver aspect is revealed by the fact that many employees' wages are smaller than what it actually says in the paperwork. Apart from it being a very serious form of corruption, it is also a source of social exclusion for the employees.

The National Action Plan for the Occupation of the Workforce (MMSS – NAPOW, 2002)

This plan was drafted on the basis of the European Strategy directives concerning the workforce occupation by the MMSS in conjunction with the NAPOW, other ministries and institutions. PNAO highlights the measures Romania intends to implement in the short-term in order to increase workforce occupation hence, reduce unemployment, support life-long education, increase labour market flexibility to enable it to respond adequately to the economic changes underway, avoid discrimination and social exclusion. The four pillars on which the Plan is built coincide with the EU strategy: improve employment capacity, develop entrepreneurial spirit and create work places, promote enterprises and their employees' ability to adapt, ensure equality of opportunity between men and women.

Malfunctions in the act of justice, social order promotion and increasing the safety of citizens

The role justice plays in maintaining social cohesion

A number of factors that have generated important malfunctions in the act of justice can be identified:

- Legislative confusion and instability;
- The rapid promotion of the idea of separating justice from governmental control – a vital operation for reforming the entire system – was not followed by efficient mechanisms for ensuring the act of justice was fair

and of an adequate quality. This fact is responsible for the excessively frequent judicial errors as well as opening backdoors to allow corruption to filter through the system.

- Political interference in the act of justice still exists and must be confronted head-on as it is, probably, a by-product that explains many of the errors committed.
- Certain legislative decisions tied in with faulty non-judicial, community mechanisms attempting to find a solution to many a problems led to the cancer of court action. Certain statistics provided by the Justice Ministry show that one in two people in this country appeal to the current justice system.

The justice system, through its faulty operation, is largely responsible – alongside other factors – for deepening the poverty of certain social segments that are segregated through the very high cost of justice in this country that is error-strewn and littered by corruption-engendered abuses. Alongside its essential contribution to normalising social relations and consolidating state of law values in people's conscience, one cannot ignore the fact that its frequent malfunctions had an important contribution to engendering feelings of desperation and deep distrust in the way social institutions function and, ultimately, altering social cohesion. Despite a timid rise of the population's trust in judicial institutions (from 21% in 1999 to 26% in 2003¹⁵) it can be argued that continuing inconsistencies in the act of justice continue to generate a feeling of deep mistrust in its ability to do exactly what is meant to do – justice!

The police and community relations

The police are an essential institution that ensures personal security, a state of confidence, safety a belief in the social climate and social cohesion.

It can be estimated that following a period of significant inhibition after the Revolution, the police had an important contribution to the establishment of a climate of safety in the Romanian society. The police underwent a positive, internal reform process that is concurrent with the professionalism existing in the European Union system.

What cannot be ignored though, is the fact that the police had been infiltrated by elements of corruption and abuse, in the absence of a mechanism that would have otherwise guaranteed they were eradicated before they even had a chance to occur. There have been cases of association between criminals and the police, cases of trading on the police's influence, violence based on ethnic prejudices – all of which had a negative impact on the public's conscience.

It is however true that the completion of police reforms and increasing its overall efficiency is dependent, pretty much, on the level of financing.

¹⁵ The Foundation for an Open Society, the *Public Opinion Barometer*, November 1999 and May 2003.

What ought to be appreciated is the special attention given to opening up the relationship between the police and community. Promoting community policing is a step forward towards re-building normal relationships between the police and community – thus, increasing its contribution to consolidating social cohesion values.

Though the population's faith in police actions is beginning to grow (from 35,2% in 1999 to 40,3% in 2003)¹⁶ the acquired trust is still far from determining a harmonious relationship between the community and this vital institution. There is still a sustained effort needed to perfect police actions so as to determine a change in the deep-seated mistrust the population feels towards the police.

The traffic in human beings

The traffic in human beings became ever so active during the transition period. The determining factors simply do not have only internal reasons (poverty, the weakening of social control etc.) as they have external reasons too (the war in the ex-Yugoslavia offered fertile ground for such a phenomenon to manifest. The eradication of a quandary such as this cannot simply be done via national police co-operation; the creation of mechanisms to punish consumers of such "services" is vital.

Statistics show that lately, the incidence of crimes involving people trafficking are on the increase, in Romania. Thus, in the year 2000, one in 1000 crimes was for traffic in human beings. By the year 2002, the number of crimes being investigated had doubled. This may be because of the efforts to identify and catch the traffickers being intensified in light of securing the country's borders in view of the forthcoming accession to the EU, by 2007. The same tendency for the number of offences involving clandestine emigration and immigration – which is related to human trafficking – was noted; these too, had doubled.

Table 17. Offences involving people trafficking (2001-2002)

	2001	2002
The total number of offences – of which	340414	312204
Organised traffic in human beings and organs	397	685
Persons under investigation - total	430	625
Organised clandestine emigration and immigration - total	423	665
Persons under investigation - total	530	581

Source: the Romanian Police (2002)

Among the *Priority actions* (approved by the Government on the 4th of April 2002) in the area of *combating the traffic in human beings*, the following objectives are being considered:

¹⁶ *idem*

Short-term:

1. Evaluating the legislative framework in the area of combating organised crime and, in particular, combating the traffic in human beings.
2. Strengthening the administrative capacity for combating human beings' trafficking (i.e. naming a Romanian attorney to work for the Regional Centre SECI set up to combat Trans-border criminality, setting up a Resource Centre relating to the traffic in human beings, completing an Understanding Memoranda with the International Organisation for Migration in the area of co-operation vis-à-vis humanitarian, voluntary return);
3. Strengthening international co-operation in the area.

Medium-term:

1. Completing the legislative framework in the area of combating organised crime and, in particular, combating the traffic in human beings (adopting the Law on the protection of witnesses, the Law on combating organised crime, the Law on the Police organisation and functioning, the Law on the Policeman's Statute);
2. Contribute to the regional co-operation effort to combating human beings trafficking;
3. Improving assistance for victims of the traffic in human beings (setting up shelters for victims of the traffic in human beings in Bucharest, Pitesti and in the Western part of Romania);
4. Developing a national system for human being trafficking being prevented (getting the Romanian Orthodox Church involved, implementing information programmes in schools to raise the youth's awareness of the dangers of becoming a victim of such traffickers, drafting an integrated Programme to fight against organised crime nation-wide and across borders).

The increase in drug consumption

There has been a sharp increase in drug consumption in the past few years, following the authorised institutions' inability to generate and develop prevention and recuperation programmes for drug users. Organised crime networks proliferated as a result of their having managed to corrupt the very people that were meant to combat this scourge, to give them insiders' information.

The rise in drug consumption concurrent to the lowering of the age when youngsters become users are but two of the gravest problems confronting the Romanian society. The highest percentage of drug users is at the age group of 19 to 24 year-olds. The high cost of recuperation services as well as their success rate ought to determine a pooling of resources and energies towards preventing an increase in the number of users. One of the most difficult to absorb is the

drug users' social exclusion. Moreover, the fear that non-users have vis-à-vis the potentially violent reactions of users, results in the users being socially segregated and unable to get the non-users' support that they need so much for their recuperation. In a research undertaken in October 2001 (FSD, 2001) 18% of the respondents said they saw drug users on the street / in the vicinity of their house; in Bucharest, the percentage of those who said the same was 45%.

The causes for this phenomenon can be found in the processes of social and personal disorganisation (at all levels and, in particular, in the family), in the proliferation of activities from the organised crime sphere, the economic difficulties facing a massive segment of the population.

The social inclusion of women and the promotion of gender equality

Women's full social participation is an aspiration that had largely been achieved even from the communist period. There are three important areas in which gender inequalities are usually highlighted: access to education, access to the labour market and access to decision-making.

➤ *Women's access to education*

Even if, at this particular moment in time, schooling at primary and secondary level is close to 100% for both sexes, differences in existent educational stock become apparent. Thus, the average number of years of education men undertake is one year more than their female counterparts. Furthermore, the percentage of (female) graduates of medium and higher education studies is smaller than their male counterparts.

Such data are not yet a cause for concern – not because of how slight the difference really is but because they reflect a history of differentiated access to education rather than the current situation. Hence, for instance, *of the persons undertaking higher education courses at Universities, according to the public census of 2002, 53,8% were women*. In fact, at no other level of education there can be seen an instance of females having their access to education reduced in any way:

Table 18. The percentage of female participation to education (2002)

The institution's level of education	Women percentage from the total
Primary	48,83
Secondary	48,70
Professional apprentices	40,29
High school	53,17
Post-high school	65,03
Higher education	53,80

Source: population and dwellings' census, 2002

It must be noticed the women's over-representation in post-high school and higher education. It appears that only after graduating from University, a

more conservative attitude concerning the woman's role becomes apparent. It is her entering the stage of motherhood that reduces her social participation whereas until graduation, women are well represented in the education system.

➤ *Women's access to the labour market*

Nor as regards the *access to occupation* women fare any worse than men do. Thus, 48% of the total number of employees are women and the rate of female unemployment is smaller than male unemployment. The lesser percentage of women both in term of occupation (44,24%) as well as in terms of unemployment (34,39%) can be explained through the women's age of retirement (which is earlier than men's) as well as their belonging to the housewife category.¹⁷

Thus, it can be argued that women's access to the labour market is similar to that of men.

➤ *Women's access to decision-making*

Lately, a collective concern for increasing women's participation in visible areas such as the political arena – nation-wide/local level representation as well as in managerial positions for various organisations.

Paradoxically, women's representation in local councils or in other forms of representation (at local community level) remains extremely reduced.

For example, in 2000, only 9,7% of the number of parliamentarians were women. The percentage of women in the management of Romanian organisations was only 28,3%.

How can this discrepancy between women's access to education and their occupation percentage, on the one hand, and their participation in the decision-making process, on the other, be explained? It has been noted, in recent surveys, that *women's participation at the level of political representation is most reduced right from the very start, i.e. the local community level.*

In conditions such as these it is self-evident that there cannot be selected too many women representatives at county and national levels as long as there is no selection basis of female leaders at community level.

A complementary explanation for this type of exclusion (at times, it is but a self-exclusion from political participation done by women themselves) is the traditionalism displayed by such communities. This traditionalism is best illustrated by the narrow-mindedness of ideas such as those concerning the natural leadership qualities of men whereas a woman's functions are limited to ensuring the wellbeing of the household and the family.

Whatever the explanation for the reduced participation of women in political life, it is important to remember that the social inclusion of women must happen both top-down and vice-versa. Hence, more women ought to be registered on the parties' lists for parliamentary elections, for example, much as it ought to be that parties recruit more women in their ranks as well as involve them in the decision-making processes. Another important method is to involve

¹⁷ Source: NSI – the data presented is valid for the year 2002.

women in social, economic, 'a-political' community decisions so that later they become involved in political life too.

The severely under-developed areas – sources of social exclusion

In the current Romanian realities, rural areas present multiple, severe under-development characteristics. The lack of occupational opportunities led rural inhabitants to be severely excluded from the labour market. Access to salaried workplaces is quite reduced and the opportunities for getting hold of the necessary resources that would ensure a decent standard of living are considerably smaller than in the urban environment.

Moreover, there are numerous situations in which access to different, essential (in terms of the population's standard of living) goods and services is wildly dissimilar, from one community to the other and from one county to the other.

These differences, sometimes considerable, may create in the eyes of those living in poor areas/communities a sense of relative deprivation by comparison to those living on the other side of an administrative boundary and who are better off than they are. Such an effect could be termed as "territorial" or, "community" exclusion. Here are a number of examples:

- *Access to running water* is quite different if we compare various counties in the country. Thus, the incidence of dwellings without running water is 2-3 times higher in Moldova and Wallachia, compared to Transylvania and Banat.
- *The number of cars to 1000 inhabitants* is in a few counties, such as Timis, Mures, Constanta, Sibiu plus the Bucharest municipality is between 200-289 whereas in others, such as Vaslui and Botosani it is 4-5 times smaller i.e. 50 and 58 cars, respectively.
- There are huge differences in terms of living conditions between counties and regions. Compared to 20-40% *dwellings with bathrooms in rural areas* in Transylvanian counties, Constanta, Bucharest and the Ilfov county to only 2-4% in counties such as Vaslui, Braila, Botosani, Galati, Buzau, Olt and Dolj. Such enormous differences in the quality of life in rural areas, between different Romanian regions create an impression of regional deprivation of whole areas by comparison to others.
- With a proportion of pensioners averaging between 110-130% of the number of persons of the age of 60 and over (of which some have no pension whatsoever) some counties as those in Transylvania, Banat and parts of Wallachia have a net advantage over those in Moldova or Southern Wallachia and Oltenia who have a ratio of only 70-80% pensioners compared to the same number of people over the age of 60. This concentration of earnings from pensions and salaries towards certain counties creates there the premises for better living conditions and constitutes therefore an explanation for other types of deprivation.

Counties registering positive values at various development indicators have also a percentage of rural population much smaller. When the rural population is often 2-3 times more numerous in counties such as Giurgiu, Dambovita, Teleorman, Suceava, Botosani or, Calarasi compared to Brasov, Hunedoara, Constanta, Cluj or, Timis *many of the differences can be explained not by cultural or historical differences apparent but, purely as a matter of difference between two mediums of residency, between village and city as types of communities.*

Overall, the *rural infrastructure* is strongly deficient and of a poor quality. Approximately 90% of communal roads are unpaved and over 80% of the localities have no running water, sewerage or natural gas. In conditions such as these, only about 13% of dwellings have a bathroom and only 2% have central heating. All of this shows that, the dimension of residency exclusion in rural areas is significant as it is far from even beginning to possibly be addressed in the short-term and even in the medium term.

It can be said that in Romania, *the rural environment itself is a source of social exclusion*, as for many rural areas access to minimal living conditions such as electricity, running water, sewerage or primary health care (access to a family doctor) is very difficult or simply non-existent.