

POLICY DIRECTIONS IN THE AREA OF POPULATION

Cătălin Zamfir – University of Bucharest

Problems concerning the population

1. Romania is increasingly aware of the challenging demographic problems:
 - a) The birth rate crashed after 1989, remaining at a low level, not lower, however, than the level in many European countries.
 - b) High child mortality, particularly infant mortality.
 - c) Strong migration after 1989, mainly involving the youth. Many of the migrants are likely to return.

2. Each of these dimensions had significant contributions, which is why they have to be considered in the attempt to explore the possibility of developing correcting policies. The most important and complex problem is the birth rate, although strong measures also have to be adopted to alleviate mortality and migration, particularly the permanent one.

3. There are three factors accounting for the crash of the birth rate:
 - a) Keeping an artificially increased birth rate until 1989, due to the violent pronatalist policy of Ceausescu's regime.
 - b) The economic and social shock of transition – still affecting adversely the birth rate.
 - c) The deficit of social support for the child and for the family with children. If compared to the other European countries, particularly to the transition countries, the public effort in terms of resources (share of the national GDP) is lower in Romania. Bulgaria, for instance, having a similar level of economic development puts more effort than Romania in supporting the child and family. This deficit is not due only to the limited public resources, but also to the priority use of these resources in directions other than the social policy. It is not the case here to analyse whether such preferences were unavoidable or not, but the situation has to be stated as such.

4. The Romanian community displays an increasing concern and will of action to stop birth rate decrease and even to alleviate it. The other European countries also display such concern.