

Migration as a Factor of Social Innovation and Development: the Case of Romanian Migration to Italy

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Migration as a Factor of Social Innovation and Development: The Case of Romanian Migration in Italy

Enzo Rossi and Fabrizio Botti

Rezumat:

Cercetarea economică recentă își îndreaptă atenția asupra rolului capitalului social în procesul de dezvoltare și mai ales asupra rolului acestuia și a rețelelor sociale în cadrul fluxurilor de migrație din perspectiva dezvoltării sociale.

Întrebarea principală a cercetării este: care sunt principalele constrângeri pentru procesele de migrație care afectează procesul integrării migranților? Oare capitalul social și rețelele sociale joacă un rol? Care sunt modelele de integrare dezvoltate la nivel European?

Pentru a răspunde acestor întrebări, ne concentrăm pe un studiu de caz: procesul de migrație a românilor în Italia și în particular în zona Romei.

Cuvinte cheie: Inovație socială, dezvoltare socială, migrație

Abstract:

Economic research is currently focusing on the role of social capital in the development process and particularly on the role of social capital and social networks in migration flows in a social development perspective.

The main questions our research is trying to address are as follows: which are the major constraints in migration processes affecting the integration process of migrants? Do social capital or social networks play a role? Which is the integration model developed at European level?

In order to address these questions we are focusing on a specific case study: the Romanian migration process in Italy and particularly in the area of Rome.

Keywords: Social innovation, social development, migration

Introduction

Economic research is currently focusing on the role of social capital in the development process and particularly on the role of social capital and social networks in migration flows in a social development perspective. Social capital is “the collective value of all 'social networks' and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other” in the definition of R. Putnam, or the existence of a certain set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permit cooperation among them” according to Fukuyama definition.

The main questions our research is trying to address are as follows: which are the major constraints in migration processes affecting the integration process of migrants? Do social capital or social networks play a role? Which is the integration model developed at European level?

In order to address these questions we are focusing on a specific case study: the Romanian migration process in Italy and particularly in the area of Rome.

1. Romanian migration flows in Europe before the EU enlargement: from “ethnic” to “circulatory” migration

European political debate around migration from Eastern European member countries after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements has been driven by a lack of awareness of actual migration flows, even in an historical perspective.

Romanian migrations to the Western Europe started during the communist regime and it finished being a long term and mass process before the 2007 enlargement.

Until mid nineties, Romanian migration flows were mainly “ethnic” and involved thousands of Jews and Romanians with Hungarian and German origins. According to destination countries’ estimates, between 1980 and 1989, more than 300,000 German and Jews people left Romania and just during 1989-1992, about 100,000 people went back to Germany.

As ethnic flows ended, migration had a strong decrease while at the end of the nineties 90% of migrants belonged to Romanian ethnic group.

During the nineties, one of the most significant features of Romanian migration was its circulatory flow. Nowadays, the Romanian circulatory migration process is cyclical and not permanent. Migrants regularly move from Romania to EU countries to compensate for economic crisis. Circulatory migration is organized in migration network systems able to adapt to legislative, economic and social transformations, and supported by the intensive use of internet or mobile phones¹.

Despite an increasing share of children migrants, the Romanian community in Italy was essentially made of workers with previous experience of external migration and of internal migration as during the eighties, when the Ceausescu regime forced thousands of peasants to move from the country to the cities’ suburbs. Since 1989 and the closedown of some Romanian factories, internal migrants came back to the country or started to migrate abroad mainly from the provinces of Botosani, Suceava, Bacau, Galati and Vrancea .

Still before the enlargement, a turning point in the Romanian migration to the EU was in 2002 when Romanian citizens were allowed to have short-term stay in the Schengen area without a visa. Romanian migration flows sharply increased (especially circulatory migration) and Spain and Italy became main destinations (50% in Italy, 25% in Spain according to Sandu, 2006).

1.1. Romanian residents in the EU25 before the enlargement

¹ Potot Swanie, The Rumanian Circulatory Migration: Networks as Informal Transnational Organizations, paper for the EAPS conference, Rome 26 November 2004.

- (2000), “Mobilité en Europe: étude de deux réseaux migratoire roumains”, *Sociologie Româneasca*, n.2, pp.101-120.
- (2002), “Les Migrants transnationaux: une nouvelle figure sociale en Roumanie”, *Revue d’Etude Comparative Est-Ouest*, n.1, pp. 149-177.

As of 1st January 2006, one year before the enlargement, Romanians formal residents in the EU25 were 900,000, even if another survey also accounting for short-term economic migration estimates 2.5 million Romanian migrants².

Table 1. Romanian residents, January 2006

Country	Romanian residents	Percentage From Foreign residents (%)
Spain	388,400	9.7
Italy	271,500	11.9
Germany ^a	73,400	1.0
Hungary	66,300	42.4
Austria	22,800	2.8
Greece	18,900	3.4
United Kingdom ^a	17,600	0.6
UE26	905,800	3.4

^a 2004 data.

Sources: *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione Caritas/Migrantes* (2007) on Eurostat, OECD, Council of Europe and various National Institutes of Statistics data.

The largest number of Romanians are in Spain (388,400) followed by Italy (271,500) where they are 11.9% of the foreign resident population. In Germany, Romanian residents decreased by 2,700 people during 2003-2006. Remarkably, in Hungary Romanians are 42.4% of the foreign resident populations.

2. EU 2007 enlargement and the transition period

EU member states reacted in an even more restrictive way to the EU enlargement in 2007 compared to the 2004 enlargement. Almost all the EU15 countries decided to impose access restrictions to the labour market for Romania and Bulgaria and to restrict the migration flows' size. Sweden and Finland are exceptions on that trend. Among the 2004 new member states, Hungary is the only country imposing those restrictions.

Member states restrictions were mainly lead by the national governments responding to the public opinion's concern about "foreign invasion" and expected new member citizens' exploitation of welfare systems. They were not based on an effective assessment of actual migration flows or available evidence (on post-2004 enlargement). Ireland and UK policy shift (2004 openness versus 2007 restriction) was an example of that attitude. However, according to European treaties, the transition period and relative restrictive measures must end no later than 2011.

Table 2. Access to labour market for citizens of new members – 2004 and 2007

Country	2004 enlargement	2007 enlargement
Sweden	Open	Open
Finland	Restricted	Open
UK and Ireland	Open	Restricted
Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain	Restricted	Restricted

Source: Caritas/Migrantes (2008); European Commission

² Sandu D. (2006), *Living abroad on temporary basis: the economic migration of Romanians 1990-2006*, Soros Foundation Romania, Bucharest.

2.1. Some evidence of post-2007 migration flows

According to the main surveys on migration potential (Corsi and Guelfi, 2007; Dustman, 2003; IOM, 1999; Krieger, 2004), there is no evidence of potential mass migration from new central-eastern European countries, and a propensity for temporary migration prevails.

According to available evidence, since January 2007 no mass and uncontrolled migration from Romania and Bulgaria is ongoing³, and new entrant workers are marginal in most of the EU25 countries except for Italy and Spain where Romanian workers are 0.8% and 1.8% of the total working age population as showed in Table 3 (Eurostat Labour Force Survey, LFS).

Table 3. Romanian working age residents in the EU (2005-2007)

Country	Abs. Value ('000)			% of total adult population		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Austria	18	17	14	0.3	0.3	0.3
Belgium		5	10		0.1	0.1
Cyprus	2	2	2	0.5	0.4	0.3
France		23	24		0.1	0.1
Germany	63	46	64	0.1	0.1	0.1
Greece	16	16	20	0.2	0.2	0.3
Hungary	22	21	21	0.3	0.3	0.3
Ireland	5			0.2		
Italy		273	306		0.7	0.8
Portugal	7	12	12	0.1	0.2	0.2
Spain	336	445	555	1.1	1.5	1.8
United Kingdom	16	12	17	0.0	0.0	0.0
Others	17	8	7			
UE	502	880	1,052	0.2	0.3	0.3

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey, Spring 2007

2.2. Romanian residents: reasons of stay

Romanians in Italy were 8.000 in 1990, 50.000 in 1999 and they exceeded 100.000 in 2002. They were already providing a structural contribution to the Italian economy in 2002 when 20% of labour permissions to foreign workers were given to Romanians.

Regularization made cyclically in the recent past in Italy involved just few Romanians in 1986 and 1990. In 1995, 11.099 Romanians benefited from that measure (4.5% of total), 24.098 (11.1%) in 1998. In 2002, during the last wave of regularization, 147.947 Romanian workers obtained formal permission (21% of total). The last regularization in 2003 lead to a 150% increase in residence permits to Romanians, becoming the first foreign community in terms of residence permits holders (240.000).

³ Traser J., T. Venables (2008), *Who's afraid of the EU's latest enlargement? The impact of Bulgaria and Romania joining the Union of free movement of persons*, ECAS, Brussels; Euractiv.com (November 2007).

At the beginning of 2007, Caritas/Migrantes (2007) estimates there are 556.000 Romanian residents in Italy (53.4% are women), representing 15.1% of foreign population. These numbers show an increase (2006 on 2005) by 116% compared to the number registered in the year of Romania's accession to the EU (Caritas/Migrantes, 2008).

Table 4. Romanian residents: reasons of stay, Italy – 2006, 2007

Reason of stay	Abs. value		%	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
Work	352,000	749,000	63.3	73.7
Employed	263,000	570,000 ^a	47.3	56.1
self-employed	15,000	16,000	2.7	1.6
Unemployed	26,000	56,000	4.7	5.5
Informal	48,000	107,000	8.6	10.5
Family	186,000	239,000	33.5	23.5
Underage	91,000	116,000	16.4	11.4
other family reasons	95,000	123,000	17.1	12.1
Others	18,000	28,000	3.2	2.8
Total	556,000	1,016,000	100.0	100.0

Sources: Caritas/Migrantes (2007); Ministry of the Interior, MIUR, Istat, Unioncamere/Cna and Inail data.

In 2006, two thirds of Romanians stayed in Italy for work reasons (63.3%): 263,000 are net employed (people worked at least 1 day during the year); “informal” accounts for regular migrants workers without an (or with a partial) employment contract.

Romanians live mainly in northern Italy (60.6%), but they are concentrated in the Lazio Region (20.8%), 17.2% of which live in the city of Rome. Rome and Turin are the provinces where Romanian residents share of the total resident migrants is remarkably high: respectively 26% and 38%. Caritas/Migrantes (2008) estimates that Romanian migrants almost doubled in Italy from January 2007, they should equal 1.016.000 (+82.7%), mostly for work reasons.

3. Lost opportunities of Romanian migration in Italy

Despite the promise of enlargement for the citizens of new member states and the relaxation of the restrictions to free movement, residence and access to labour market, a set of problems are still on the ground for Romanian migrants in Italy: housing, workforce exploitation, underground economy, limited access to primary services, women and children slave trade, violence and racial discrimination.

The Italian Government's attitude toward new member countries is still mixed: it decided to maintain restrictions on workers movement with remarkable exceptions in important sectors for Romanian workers, such as: constructions, care services, tourism, agriculture, metallurgy, managerial and high skilled tasks, and seasonal workers.

This attitude and a negative perception of Romanians by part of Italians mostly fostered by an unfair media representation, is leading to lost opportunities for economic activity in Italy.

It is also crucial to stress Romanian migrants' high level of education: medium-high for 59.2% of Romanian residents in Italy, well above the foreign residents' average (39.9%) and that of the Italians (33.4%). Moreover, ICT (information and communication technologies) sector is highly developed in Romania: it is the first country in Europe and sixth worldwide for qualified ICT specialists. It exhibits 5,000 over 30,000 student graduates in ICT engineering every year (5 times

more than Russia and 7 times more than India!). No doubt that a better integration policy may mutually benefit Romanian migrants and Italian economy in many important sectors.

Despite of this, integration appears difficult and migration policies are still inadequate. Irregular migration, partly as a consequence of the former, is widespread. Romanian criminal organizations are largely operating in Italy, largely supported by local criminality.

As to the first point, integration, we observe that EU migration policy (particularly the Italian one) has not adequately promoted a consistent integration model: barriers to free movement before the enlargement, limited access to labour market also after 2007, and an increasing share of public expenditure diverted to repression rather than to integration policies prevail. According to the Italian migration law n.40/1998, also known as "Turco Napolitano", public expenditure targeted to repression policy must equal those channelled to integration policies. In 2004 expenditure targeted to repression were 4 times greater, and it is assumed that the balance is worsening even if it is not possible to get updated figures.

Other "pull factors", in addition, incentive illegal activity: strong demand of prostitution from early EU member countries and the high share of underground economy in Italian sectors with Romanian workforce (mainly constructions and agriculture) encourage illegal migration, criminal transnational enterprises, human trafficking and exploitation of Romanian women and underage.

**Table 5. Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Europe (Transcrime estim.)
2000, 2001, 2002**

Countries	2000-2002	2000		2001		2002	
	n.victims/100,000 over 15 male	min	max	min	max	min	max
Austria	84	1,430	2,860	1,830	3,660	2,080	4,160
Czech Republic	9	350		360		370	
France	27	3,260	6,520	3,560	7,120	5,740	11,480
Germany	45	9,260	18,520	9,860	19,740	11,080	22,160
Italy	115	17,550	35,550	18,360	36,720	17,970	35,940
Lithuania	15	160	320	100	200	120	240
Netherlands	76	3,410	6,820	2,840	5,680	3,430	6,860
Poland	15	1,720	3,440	930	1,860	1,670	3,340
Spain	54	4,600	9,200	6,010	12,020	7,500	15,000
Sweden	10	200	500	200	500	200	500
Total		41,940	84,030	44,060	87,860	50,160	100,050

As showed in Table 5, illegal sexual trafficking affects Italy more than Spain where there are a large number of Romanian immigrants, and raise the problem of underestimation of actual foreign residents in official figures.

As a reaction to crime, Italian authorities carried out massive and sometimes indiscriminate expulsion of Romanians, as highlighted in Table 6, which certainly is not helping mutual understanding and perception.

Table 6. Expulsion of Romanians from Italy 1998-2006

Year	Romanians expulsion	Ranking
1998	1,154	3 rd
1999	2,149	2 nd

2000	2,535	2 nd
2001	3,698	3 rd
2002	9,702	1 st
2003	11,937	1 st
2004	11,628	1 st
2005	10,702	1 st
2006	7,926	1 st

Source: Ministry of the Interior (2007)

Conclusions

The enlarged Europe faces major socio-economic challenges such as an increased cultural diversity and exchange within the continent and with other parts of the world. These are mostly consequences of ongoing economic and societal transformations fostered by the globalization processes as EU enlargements, telecommunication innovations and migration flows.

Our review of Romanian migration flows in Italy raised some issues that need to be addressed in further research. An in-depth analysis of Romanian migration flows after the 2007 enlargement and a survey of micro-determinants of social exclusion for Romanian migrants in Italy with a focus on social capital and network effects is needed in order to investigate the role of ethnic minorities and migrants network in the construction of their active citizenship and participation to political process in European societies. Research should focus on the potential negative effect of network dynamics in the host country and in the sending area, especially in a gender perspective and in the field of education.

Romanian migration can play a role in Italian economy that is currently constrained by several factors: the lack of a coherent European integration model and the prevalence of repressive measures; political parties' and the media's role on misrepresentation of complex phenomena are leading to a mutual biased perception, fear and intolerance behaviours; the substantial share of underground economy on Italian Gross National Product is attracting foreign criminal activities worsening general perception.

Romanians' migration process shows a new pattern of possible integration in Europe: circularity and "professional" migration modify the existing integration models usually recognized in Europe⁴. The distinctive circular path of Romanian migration flows and the extensive presence of Italian firms in Romania have the potential of a new kind of "horizontal" cultural exchange. A new concept of European citizenship may emerge.

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