

The Main Difficulties and Problems of the Romanian Immigrants from Europe



Sociology

KEYWORDS : immigration, Romanian Diaspora, difficulty/problem, state of mind

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ABSTRACT

The present material is the result of a sociologic research among 615 Romanians who emigrated in 5 developed countries from Europe. The main objective was that to know the difficulties that they face on the territory of other countries and to find who helps them to solve these problems.

1. The objectives, the hypotheses and the methodology of the research

Between 1990 and 2012, almost 5 million Romanians left the country to work abroad, to study in the western universities or to reunite with their family. This ample social phenomenon presents a special interest for the sociological research and also for the political and journalistic environments. Starting from 2006, we have gathered many data and information about the Romanians who settled down in Italy and, later, our documentation extended on those from other countries: Spain, France, Germany, England. A part of the data was used for the publishing of two specialized books (for detailed information on this subject see Otovescu, A., 2008; Idem, 2013, chap. I) and some articles in magazines of sociology (Idem, vol. IX no. 4/2011; Idem, no.3/2012; Idem, no.4/2012).

In the present study we have established to accomplish two objectives:

1) To decipher the greatest difficulties that the Romanian immigrants met when they reached the destination country, therefore at the beginning of their adapting and integration into the foster society;

2) To know the main problems that the countries where they live are facing at present and to diagnose their state of mind after a self-evaluation.

The first formulated hypothesis was that the learning of the foreign language from the host country, finding a proper house and making a new group of friends and acquaintances, represent the first difficulties that a new immigrant has to solve.

The second hypothesis concerns the exploration of the ulterior problems that appear in the life of any immigrant and we have assumed that they are directly connected with the absence of a family and the social life that he was used to in the native society.

The studied population was a group of 651 people from Romania (for further details regarding the human rights in Romania, see Otovescu Frasier C., 2008, p. 129-131), who lived on the territory of 5 European countries: Spain, Germany, England and France. The used researching method was the poll based on a questionnaire, filled in both in the foster countries and in Romania, when they came to visit or during their leave. In certain situations, the statistic evaluations were correlated with certain case studies too, that the sociological research involved a double perspective of analysis: quantitative and qualitative.

2. The sociological diagnosis of the difficulties and problems of the Romanian immigrants

The information that we have, attests the fact that the Romanian Diaspora has a global area of geographical spreading, but the main communities are on the European continent (in over 31 countries, most of them being in Italy, Spain, Germany, France, England), in North America (especially USA and Canada), in South America (especially Argentina and Venezuela), in Asia (most of them in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan), in Africa (over a half of the total number of the people from the continent living in South Africa), in Australia and in the Middle East (most in Israel, Jewish Romanian citizen) (details in Otovescu A., 2013).

Italy, USA and Spain are countries with communities of Romanians that exceed a million people each, generally formed as a consequence of the economic immigration, process that accelerated starting from 1990 due to the democratization of the Romanian society and the observing of the human rights, including the right to free circulation in other countries, a right previously denied by the communist regime in Romania. Moreover, the unemployment, corruption, inefficient governing and poverty phenomena that accompanied the restructuring of the Romanian society on capitalist fundaments, accelerated the emigration in Romania.

Further on, we are going to expose the structure and the share of the answers to the next questions from the questionnaire:

a) Which was, for you, the biggest difficulty that you met the moment you arrived in the country you are now?

	Spain	Germany	England	France	Italy
1. To speak the language of the country	34.2%	65.9%	16.4%	32.4%	39.0%
2. To make new friends, acquaintances	18.4%	2.4%	27.9%	26.8%	13.7%
3. To find a house	18.4%	4.9%	9.8%	7.0%	10.3%
4. To bring all my family here	7.9%	7.3%	3.3%	7.0%	5.5%
5. To obtain a residence permit	7.9%	4.9%	11.5%	1.4%	11.6%
6. To find a job	6.6%	-	1.6%	2.8%	3.4%
7. To adapt to the climate	3.9%	2.4%	13.1%	7.0%	2.1%
8. To change my eating habits	1.3%	7.3%	16.4%	8.5%	12.3%
9. Other	1.3%	2.4%	-	2.8%	2.1%
10. DA	-	2.5%	-	4.3%	-
Total	100%	100%	100.00%	100%	100%

The meaning that we have given to the term difficulty is that of burden or obstacle, incapacity that appears in the life of a human being the moment he has to adapt to a new social and cultural environment, different from the previous one, in which he lived. When the difficulty is persisting over a long period of time, is perpetuated, it becomes a problem because it concerns the destiny of a group of people (as that of the immigrants) and, therefore, it becomes a social problem. While difficulty is usually individual and is related to the capacity of each person to solve it, the problem is, on the other hand, collective and concerns, besides the individual effort, the involvement of certain institutions (political, economic, educational, cultural etc.) for solving it.

The data from the table confirm the first hypothesis, so the order of the difficulties (according to the share of the answers) involves variations from one country to another. Furthermore, we can notice the fact that the finding of a job did not constitute a major difficulty for the most part of the immigrants, they were able to penetrate on the labour market, generally permissive and generous. On the other side, they came in touch with certain networks of co-national immigrants (a relative, a friend, an acquaintance) that facilitated the finding of the vacant jobs, knowing from Romania where they were going to work abroad (the country, the city, the employer, the new occupation, the salary, the working conditions etc.) and where they were going to live too. The most important difficulties were related to speaking the language of the foster country and making a new group of friends and acquaintances – indispensable means for the social communication and at the new job, for adapting to the new social environment. The most difficult language proved to be German, because 66% of the interviewed Romanian immigrants, with the domicile in Germany, mentioned it as the first difficulty. Neither the Latin languages, such as French, Italian and Spanish proved to be easier to learn for the Romanians from Italy (39%), Spain (34.2%), France (32.4%). The problem of learning a language generally concerns those who stayed only a short period of time in that country. For example, “under a year”, there were 31.6% from the total number of the Romanian immigrants from Spain; 46.4% of those from Germany; 48.5% of those from England; 42.3% of those from France and 25.4% of those from Italy. Between 11.3% (France) and 26.8% (Germany) Romanian immigrants mentioned that they worked in other countries too, fact that proves a phenomenon of trans-national migration, related directly to the economic and social activities. Over a half of the questioned people indicated the fact that they were hired in other countries too for “1-3 years”.

b) Which are the main problems that you face nowadays in ...?

	Spain	Germany	England	France	Italy
1. Lack of the family	18.3%	4.9%	25.5%	9.9%	11.1%
2. A sure job	4.2%		21.8%	5.6%	
3. Knowledge of the language	8.5%	26.8%	14.5%	5.6%	3.4%
4. Lack of the spare time	9.9%	7.3%	10.9%		
5. Discrimination		4.9%	9.1%	2.8%	10.3%
6. Money					5.1%
7. Others	15.5%	4.9%	16.4%	19.7%	21.4%
8. I have no problems	5.6%			7.0%	48.7%
9. DA	38.0%	51.2%	1.8%	49.4%	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The answers to this question are related to the evaluations made by the subjects in connection with the difficulties that perpetuated after a certain period of staying in the new national community, which of them transformed in problems, what new difficulties appeared and, generally, they reflect the dynamic of the individual's facing (regarding the interests, the needs and the expectancies) with the challenges of the foreign socio-cultural environment (for more information see Otovescu Frăsie, C., *Idem*, p. 129-131).

First of all, we can notice the high percentage of those who wished to answer (almost half of the number of the interviewed people, who live in Germany and France; 38% of those from Spain) but also the high share of the Romanian immigrants from Italy (48.7%) who declared that they “have no problems”. For the Romanian citizens from Spain, the first three problems that concern them are: “the lack of family” (18.3%), “the lack of the spare time” (9.9%) and “the knowledge of the language” (8.5%, as confronted to 34.2%, the initial number); in Germany, on the first pace there is “the knowledge of the language” (26.8%) to

which it is added “the lack of the spare time” (7.3%) and “discrimination” (4.9%). This last mentioned problem was also mentioned by the people from England (9.1%), Italy (10.3%) and France (2.8%), countries in which the Romanians were subjected to irony and collective hostility, to denigrating mass-media attacks (because of the crimes made by some of our co-nationals).

The need to reunite the family proved to be imperative for the Romanians from England, France and Italy too, confirming only half of the second hypothesis of our study. The lack of friends and acquaintances, initially mentioned, is not invoked as an obstacle once with the entry in the host country, a proof that this inconvenience was solved or excelled. Alternatively, there appears a new problem (the stability at job) and it is perpetuated an older incapacity that has become a problem: learning the language of the foster country. This fact indicates the necessity of the systematic organization of courses for learning the language from the new country, which is often the duty of some religious cults or cultural associations that do not have the necessary and financial resources to handle some collective requests. Therefore, learning the language remains, after all, the responsibility of each immigrant, although a fast learning would facilitate the process of integration on the labour market and in the social life from the host country.

The security of job and the knowledge of the language are among the first problems of the Romanian immigrants from England, France, but also Spain. It is known the fact that all the economies of the EU-27 states adopted firm austerity measures because of the recession and the world financial crisis that affected in the first place the immigrant employees, reason for which the fear for being dismissed seized the world preponderantly. For many workers, especially from Spain, affected by unemployment (almost 27% in 2012), the repatriation has become the only solution for surviving. This is nevertheless the explanation why 18.4% of the Romanians from this country considered that they are “more stressed” than they had been in Romania, before leaving in Spain. In this respect, the answers below are edifying, indicating the problem of the stressed people in each of the considered countries.

c) How is your state of mind in ... as comparing to Romania?

	Spain	Germany	England	France	Italy
1. More peaceful	22.4%	17.1%	58.5%	19.7%	19.4%
2. More fulfilled	25.0%	36.6%	20.8%	35.2%	25.2%
3. More equilibrated	25.0%	31.7%	11.3%	21.1%	28.6%
4. More anxious	9.2%	4.9%	5.7%	4.2%	12.6%
5. More stressed	18.4%	9.7%	3.7%	14.1%	13.4%
6. Different				5.7%	0.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

It can be noticed, in general, that the Romanian immigrants from the five countries gain, most of them, a beneficial state of mind as comparing to that they had had in Romania, self-evaluating as “more peaceful” and “more equilibrated” due, of course, to the satisfaction of some imperative material needs, with the help of their obtained wages. Moreover, they evidenced the civilized character of their public life and the working relations, the fact that they are well-paid, according to their professional value and their effort.

3. The factors for solving the immigrants' problems

After the examining of the answers of the 615 questioned Romanians (for further details regarding the human rights in Romania, see Otovescu Frăsie, C., *op.cit.*), it results that there are three categories of factors that they resort to when they need: family, social (friends or acquaintances) and official (the authorities of the state where they are). Most of the immigrants resort to fam-

ily and friends, while the appeal to the institutions of the public administration was noticed only at the Romanian immigrants from England (a country whose government imposed restrictions on the labour market for Romanians and Bulgarians until the 1st of January 2014) and from Italy (known for the public and intra-governmental debate on the problem of the Romanians that integrated in this country, in which live over 1.3 million co-nationals). The fact that only a small part of them resort to the institutions of the state where they are or they do not get in touch with the authorities for solving their problems signifies their lack of trust in the local authorities.

d) When you have problems, whom do you resort to for solving them?

	Spain	Germany	England	France	Italy
1. To Family	21.3%	7.3%	39.3%	8.4%	31.9%
2. To friends	14.9%	19.5%	17.0%	8.5%	20.6%
3. To acquaintances		9.8%			4.8%
4. To authorities			5.6%		7.7%
5. To somebody else	2.1%	4.9%		4.2%	4.0%
6. DA	61.7%	58.5%	48.1%	78.9%	30.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	%

In conclusion, the family and the group of friends represent the main social, moral and emotional support of the Romanian immigrants, signifying exactly the thing they mentioned that they missed when they came in one of the 5 mentioned foreign countries. Nevertheless, the need to belong to a family and to a group of real friends is fundamental for any human being because they satisfy the instinct of sociability.

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