Youth policy in Romania

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Report by an international group of experts appointed by the Council of Europe

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Introduction

The path to democracy is not direct, nor is it a one-way street. The countries of "eastern Europe", which have recently come to democracy, are still going through an uncertain and unfinished process of transition: it is a bumpy ride. Establishment of the new democracies depends, to a large extent, on increased European co-operation. Hence the importance of the case study which Romania represents for the process of building an enlarged Europe.

Romanian society faces two major questions: one is that of direction: where is it going? The other is the question of means: how?[1] With regard to the direction to be followed, two main pathways are posited: one of them involves recovering "national characteristics, real or imaginary", defined in ethnic terms – a factor of distinction, separation and even isolation from the rest of the world and, above all, from Europe. The other is the opposite: turning towards Europe, that is appropriating the values which characterise the western European spirit. The first direction seeks to build an "ethnically oriented community", the second posits a "civically oriented community".[2] The first of these positions represents a nationalist stance, the second a Europeanist attitude.

The relevance of the Romanian case study has therefore to do with its location on the centuries-old frontier between West and East.[3] From having been part of the Roman Empire (from 106 to 271), the country passed into the possession of the Byzantine Empire until its fall in 1453. Its frontier location made the country ripe for successive invasions (Slav and Mongols) and for domination by foreign powers.

Frontiers can separate or unite. Under the Ceauşescu regime the logic of separation reached the extreme of prohibiting foreigners from living with Romanian families.[4] But after 1989 Romania made confident strides towards democracy and a market economy. This is not to say that the state-dominated model has magically disappeared after the upheavals of 1989:[5]

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1. Nadia Bradus, "La société roumaine. A la recherche de la normalité", *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie,* Vol. XCV, 1993, pp. 403-415.
2. *Ibid.*
3. N. Djuvara, *Le Pays Roumain entre Orient et Occident,* Publications orientales de France, L'Aigle, 1991.
4. Jean Cuisenier, "Roumanie: la Roumanie et le domaine culturel roumain", *Ethnologie française,* XXV, 1995, 3, XXV, pp. 333-341.
5. Pavel Campeanu, "Roumanie: les meandres de la privatisation", *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie,* Vol. XIX, 1993.

the "command" economy did not transform itself spontaneously into a "market" economy. On the other hand, a sudden start to liberalisation means that political intervention has to be reconsidered, including government policies for youth.

For all these reasons, the relevance of the Romanian experience derives from the way in which it can stand as a paradigmatic example when discussing the transition processes under way in eastern Europe. Not least because these processes do not always lead to the establishment of a new, post-transitional equilibrium. Romania is undergoing a transitional period of complex contours. The country is therefore of great sociological interest in the field of "society in transition". Hence also the paradigmatic interest of some of the options facing youth policies in Romania.

One of these choices (options) has to do with the type of youth policies to be given priority: facilitational or interventionist. Another option has to do with the yawning gap between policies on paper (in the form of law) and the implementation of policies (the extent to which laws produce results).

What sort of youth policies should be fostered in Romania: facilitational policies which seek to combat and minimise the effects of adverse contextual conditions? Or interventionist policies which seek to promote change in contexts (causes) which, structurally speaking, lead some young people to call for social support?

We shall see throughout this report that facilitational policies are to be recommended, in so far as without them the vulnerable situation in which many young people live may get worse. However, because facilitational policies only act on the "effects of the structure" they have no effect on the structures themselves; for this reason, facilitational policies do not stop social vulnerability from reproducing itself, whenever it is structurally engendered. The same is not true of interventionist policies, which are geared to changing the structural conditions which provoke (cause) the vulnerability of many young people.

It is hoped that the democratisation of Romanian society can in future foster the growth of a new urban middle class. Growth in this class will involve modernising traditional sectors. The important thing is that the process should be based on social relations which neither discriminate against nor marginalise large sectors of the Romanian population, as has happened with young people, for instance.

It is here that youth policies can and must play an important role. Young democracies which wish to establish their democratic institutions, modernise their economies and promote social welfare have to be able to face up to and take difficult decisions. Unlike the decisions taken during the transition

process, in a context of general consensus as to the need to do away with the previous autocratic system, the decisions to be taken during consolidation should have a lasting and significant effect on the future, starting with the future of young people.

Acknowledgements

1. Methodology

1.1. Information sources

Three principle sources of information were used in drawing up this report: written sources, oral sources and data from "direct observation" of an ethnographical nature.

1.1.1. *Written sources*

Various documentary sources were used: institutional reports, such as the NHDR – *National Human Development Report, Romania – 1999* or *the National Report on Education for All;* scientific works (books or articles in international publications); the leaflets and brochures published by NGOs and other youth organisations; newspaper articles, etc. But the main document used was the national report (NR) produced by the Youth Studies and Research Centre.

We were provided with a preliminary draft of this report at the end of December last year, with information covering the following areas: the youth policy of the Youth and Sports Ministry; youth research; youth information and consulting; young Romanians and the "Youth for Europe" programme; the demographic situation of the young population; living conditions and life quality of Romanian youth; education; work; the family-young couple; health; sports and leisure; culture; religious life; youth in the defence structures of Romania; civic and political participation by young people; national minorities; sexual minorities; social detrimental status, marginalisation and social exclusion; youth from anomie to delinquency; special results – Olympic Games and competitive sport; and international activity.

Despite the plentiful information made available, the international review group felt there were some fundamental gaps in this first version of the national report, relating to structural and methodological aspects, statistical consistency, and the lack of qualitative studies of youth cultures. The Romanian research team reworked the first version of the report, introducing new information, namely:

– a sociological survey on the basis of an Omnibus questionnaire, using a sample of young people (15-29 years old) with national representativeness;

– qualitative researches on the basis of interviews, case studies and documentary analyses on specific themes;

– a presentation of juridical documents concerning present regulations in
the national youth policies.

The short period of time which the Romanian research team had to draw up
these new surveys did not allow them, understandably, to analyse them as
thoroughly as might have been wished. But the new data amounted to a real
new gain in information.

We are also aware of the limitations which we had to face – starting with the
time constraints, given that the second version of the national report was
only made available to us on 12 and 13 June 2000, after we had already
made two visits to Romania: the first at the beginning of the year, from
11 to 16 January 2000, and the second a few months later, from 31 May to
4 June 2000. We all worked under pressure. Indeed, we should stress the
hard work of the Romanian research team.

1.1.2. *Oral sources*

Oral sources were the result of meetings with young people, representatives
of youth associations and members of institutional bodies directly or indi-
rectly involved with youth policies; these meetings were held during the
course of two visits by the international review group to Romania.

During the first visit, on which the group was in Bucharest, from 11 to
16 January 2000, we had a meeting with Mr Crin Antonescu, Minister of
Youth and Sports, at which representatives of other ministries were present:
Secretariat for Minorities – Romanian Government; Ministry of National
Education; Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Health. During this
first visit we also had meetings at the following head offices: Presidency
(Youth Division); Youth Foundation; Gavroche Institute (institute for the pro-
tection of children); Youth Studies and Research Centre; the Centre for
Urban and Regional Sociology; and TER (Romanian Youth Association for
the Environment).

The second visit took place between 31 May and 4 June 2000, in Cluj. This
city was chosen because of its outlying location and its proximity to more
rural areas. On this visit we held meetings with representatives of the public
local authorities; we visited the Ethnographical Museum of Transylvania,
where the director showed us around the museum and presented the insti-
tution's research into the problems faced by rural youth; we had a meeting
with a lecturer of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, and professors, lectur-
ers of the Department of Sociology, University of Cluj-Napoca and
researchers of the University's public opinion studies centre Metro Media
Transilvania; we had a meeting (Panticeu Town Hall) with workers on the
MYS Programme (Non-Governmental Youth Association within Villages); in

Sarata we had a debate with young people from the village; in Cojocna we visited a social centre run by an NGO (Youth Action for Peace).

The international review group would like to record the warm welcome with which they were received at all these meetings, and express their thanks for the valuable information provided.

1.1.3. *Direct (ethnographical) observation*

We also went deliberately prepared to let ourselves be surprised by what we saw, jotting down our findings in notebooks. The spontaneous exercise of curiosity led us to formulate puzzles which intrigued us and thereby helped us to overcome the ethnocentricity of people observing a reality alien to them. We then found that these enigmas were small signs or clues of much more complex realities.[1] Some of the puzzles we discovered during the course of our visit to Romania are still puzzles. Others have been resolved into signs or clues of a reality which is not always visible on the surface. The following are two of those puzzles, taken from our travelogue:

i. *The enigma of the "out-of-control driver" and the "fascination with mobile phones"*

On our second visit we travelled from Cluj to Panticeu (38 km), and then a further 5 km to Sarata. This journey was long and eventful. The driver of our minibus swerved the vehicle from left to right, causing some concern to certain members of the international expert group. I thought that the minibus might have its steering out of order or some other mechanical problem. At the first opportunity – the first time we stopped – I had a good look at the vehicle. It was a modern Mercedes van (MB 1000) belonging to Turism Transilvania, Agencia de Turism KM 0. The strange name of the agency prompted me to look at the mileometer, but this had yet to reach 37 000 km. Was the minibus driver a fan of Palinka Plum, a Romanian drink which, when I was given it to taste, brought tears to my eyes?

I only managed to decipher the mystery of the out-of-control driver on the way back to Cluj, when on the back seat of the minibus I was quietly musing on another puzzle: that of the Romanian fascination with mobile phones. An excerpt from a recently-published telecommunications journal:

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1. This method, that of discovering complexities from small clues, is the so-called paradigm of clues. It was developed by Morelli, the Italian art critic who detected art forgeries from small pictorial details. It was also developed by Freud, who based many of the fundamental principles of psychoanalysis on the observation of small symptoms. And, of course, it was cultivated by Sherlock Holmes, who arrived at his discoveries via seemingly irrelevant clues.

"Romania, one of the poorer European countries, has one of the highest mobile telephone user rates in the region. There seems to be no let-up in the number of people acquiring a mobile and there are now well over a million subscribers."[1]

There is an amazing fascination in this country with the use of mobile phones. At a meeting with a group of young people from a rural background (Sarata) one of them professed his great consumer's dream: "to have a mobile phone". Inevitably, as we returned from Cluj to Bucharest on a domestic flight, the passengers' phones would ring after the plane had taken off.

It is true that telecommunications in Romania started operating over 100 years ago. The first telegraphic line was set up in 1854. It was a Romanian, Augustin Maior, who was the inventor of multiple telephony which led to the spread of Bell's invention.

But why this fascination with mobile phones, particularly amongst younger people? The meeting to which I referred, with a group of young people from a rural milieu (Sarata), was highly elucidative. These youngsters expressed all their dissatisfaction with the isolation in which they live. They would like to be able to have access to the Internet; they called for more television channels, given that their local TV station only provided one channel, and they complained about the lack of transport and good roads. So that was it! The minibus driver's zigzagging was expert driving designed to avoid the holes in the road. In the winter the roads are even more impassable. There are young people who have to walk 20 km every day to go to school! Everything seems a long way away for these young people. Starting with their future. They feel cut off from the modern world. The mobile phone is an easy means of linking up. Once more there was the stark duality: in a pre-modern habitat the young people were calling for the symbols of modernity.

ii. The enigma of "post-modern" peasants

On the journey back from Sarata to Cluj this duality cropped up all over the landscape: from time to time we were surprised by groups of old peasants sitting at the edge of their houses waving effusively, showing their friendliness in their toothless smiles. They were probably more used to seeing donkeys and carts passing by. Then we would turn a corner and see young peasants working the land, in shorts and T-shirt. And round the next corner an unexpected sight: two young peasant girls digging away and showing off not only their strength but also their looks – they were dressed in bikinis! A

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1. *PM Communications Reporting,* 12 March 2000, p. 14 (produced for the *Sunday Telegraph* by PM Communications).

breath of post-modernity in an environment dominated by pre-modernity. They were probably city girls now living with their parents.

1.2. Research strategy

The research strategy used in drawing up this report consisted of collating the different data sources indicated above, and then posing a series of questions. This method is known as triangulation.[1] This research strategy was facilitated by the eclectic nature of the international review group:

Ulla Helsingius: expert in intergovernmental co-operation (Chair);

Manuela du Bois-Reymond: youth researcher and rapporteur of the last report on Swedish youth policy;

Lyudmila Nurse: researcher and social policy expert;

José Machado Pais: youth researcher;

Victoria Chan: expert on minorities questions;

Dan Trestieni Ion: secretary of this group on behalf of the Council of Europe.

At several meetings held during the two visits and also using e-mail correspondence, the group subjected the information collected to "collective hermeneutics".[2] This is a method for collective interpretation by groups. The final interpretation is the result of a consensus between multiple individual – that is triangular – readings, lending a collective dimension to the interpretation. In the case of our group, the collective hermeneutics became a true intercultural experience.

However, we are aware of the short period of time which we had at our disposal and which made it impossible to look at the questions raised in depth. Likewise, the information gathered and that supplied to us clearly left out some important aspects of Romanian society and the living conditions of the country's young people, and these aspects could therefore not be included within this report.

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1. The strategy of triangulation was disseminated by N. Denzin, amongst others, in *The Research Act in Sociology,* Aldine, Chicago, 1979. The basic underlying principle in triangulation is the collection of multiple observations, through a variety of procedures, combining different paths of enquiry, raising contrasting hypotheses, using theories belonging to different areas of learning, and collating different points of view.

2. M. Molitor, "L'herméneutique collective", in Jean Remy and Danielle Ruquoy (Dir.), *Méthodes d'analyse de contenu et sociologie,* Publications de facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, Bruxelles, 1990, pp. 19-35.

2. Young people between then, now and the future

In contemporary Romania there are three distinct development models which affect the juvenile condition of young Romanians: a. a model of pre-modernity, b. a model of modernity, and c. a model of post-modernity. James Coleman has provided a clear definition of these models with regard to the relation between young people and their families,[1] and we will therefore follow his outline.

2.1. Pre-modernity

In the pre-modern model, a household is a household living near subsistence level. An economy based largely on subsistence farming is the most widespread example, though extractive economies in general – in which most occupations are in the primary economic sector – fit this model, as do village-based societies in which most households are engaged in herding.

This pre-modern model exists in Romania and is not merely residual. In Romania, the proportion of the rural population was 45% at the end of the 1980s. After 1989 this proportion started to go up and today it approaches 50%. The survey on labour force in households (1997) indicates a high percentage of the population occupied in the private sector in rural areas (73%), of which 69% in agriculture.

In other words, a significant part of the Romanian population lives in a pre-modern society, and the most characteristic feature of this model is its persistence. There are historical roots which explain the continued existence of this model. The essentially rural nature of Romania was ideologically exacerbated by L. Blaga (1895-1961), the Romanian poet who celebrated the "Romanian village" as the "spiritual" symbol and identity of "Great Romania".[2] Indeed, various Romanian intellectuals and politicians assigned a "moral status" to country life. The "life of the countryside" was not only seen as the cradle of the most genuine values of the Romanian people, but also as an obstacle to the social transformations which the communist regime sought to bring about.[3] Hence the popular resistance to the policy of village "systematisation" imposed by Ceauşescu.[4]

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1. James Coleman, "Social capital, human capital, and investment in youth", in Anne C. Peterson and Jeylan T. Mortimer, *Youth Unemployment and Society,* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994, pp. 34-50.
2. L. Blaga, *Eloge du village roumain,* Librairie du Savoir, Paris, 1989.
3. Claude Karnoouj, *L'invention du peuple. Chronique de Roumanie,* Arcantère, Paris, 1990.
4. Jean Cuisenier, "A l'ombre des Carpates", *Ethnologie française,* 1989, pp. 244-252.

During the communist period Romania was subject to the famous policy of homogenisation, aimed not only at rural life, but also at the towns and cities. The creation of so-called "social blocs" was one of the results of this policy. Apartments were built in order to regroup the population "systematically", as required by a political will to produce "social homogeneity".[1] However, what in fact happened was that country-city relations were strengthened, away from the control of political power.

The "socialist" urbanisation of the 1970s and 1980s questioned the peasant-like way of life that had existed up to the early 1960s as well as the traditional village life, and the system of values that lay behind them.[2] This generated a process of social destabilisation, of adaptation to the changes under way but, at the same time, a renewed commitment by Romanians to traditional forms of country life: "They were searching for the constant in the process of change, the stable element in the fluid situation, and most importantly they were seeking to create the village in the city".[3]

In any case, pre-modernity also ensured that the totalitarian system was borne, in general, with a certain docility, which may be explained by the paternalistic relations between "power" and "society".[4] This paternalism is well known as being one of the most characteristic features of pre-modern rural society.

With the end of the dictatorship in 1989, the pre-modern characteristics of Romanian society did not disappear. On the contrary, "for the rural population of today the most important source of living is the land, the forest. And the basic form of economic organisation is the family farm. If we add to this that the newly formed farms are rather poorly equipped with machinery, one can see that the modernisation process of previous decades has halted and has even been reversed in Romanian villages for the last couple of years. What reappears is the past, the elements of the old peasant world".[5]

In this pre-modern model, the household is the principal productive institution. The household has both responsibility for its children and authority over them. In an economist's terms, property rights over children are vested in the family:

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1. Vintilã Mihãilescu, "Le bloc 3211. Résidence et sociabilité dans un immeuble d'appartements sociaux à Bucarest", *Ethnologie française*, XXV, 1995, pp. 489-496.
2. Jósef Gagyi, "Man and land in the Székelyföld", in László Felföldi and Ildikó Sándor, *Multicultural Europe: Illusion or Reality?*, European Centre for Traditional Culture, Budapest, 1999, p. 69.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Nadia Bradus, op. cit.
5. Jósef Gagyi, op. cit.

"My folks have two and a half hectares in the collective farm, a vegetable garden that gives us all we need for the house... we also have a donkey and a cart." (young man, 20 years old, NR, 301).

"We all do something in the household, but especially mother and father, they impose themselves, me – I mostly help them." (young man, 25 years old, NR, 300).

In rural milieus, 76% of young people live with their family of origin (NR, 299). The labour of children is useful to the household, both because in the diverse activities of the household there are always tasks that children can carry out and because the economic level of the household is sufficiently low that the effort of all is needed.

The importance of the rural structure means that 44% of the young population (aged 15 to 29) live in rural areas and almost half (47%) of rural working young people are unpaid workers in the family household. Moreover, six out of ten working young people from rural environments are employed in agriculture (NR, 249).

Most Romanian young people with a low level of education are to be found in a rural environment. It is easy to understand why. In this development model, formal schooling is hardly necessary, and for societies at this stage schools are scarce. Amongst some rural young people in Romania there is a clear rejection of education. Dropping out of school is justified by arguments such as "school is good for nothing" or "anyway, there are no jobs" (NR, 229).

The future of these young people is therefore anchored in a pre-traditionalism which resists change. Indeed, the usual rituals of the juvenile condition are not to be found amongst these youngsters, forced early into adulthood. Consumption of alcohol and tobacco by these young people is socially accepted, given that it legitimises the early acquisition of adult status. In Romania, around one third of men (35%) have started to drink alcohol before the age of 11. And, as may be expected, in line with the demographic reality, the percentage of drinkers is higher in the rural than in the urban environment (NR, 158).

Caught in the web of this pre-traditionalist model, the young people do not have great future prospects. They live in a situation of clear underemployment. In other words, unemployment is masked by traditional occupations; unpaid work in the family household. Living conditions in rural milieus are, in some respects, degrading. In 1997 there were 1 475 inhabitants per doctor in rural areas (NHDR, 49). Also, less than half of communes in rural areas (48%) having running drinking water (NHDR, 80).

Under these conditions, if these rural young people could escape the countryside:

> "I would like to work somewhere... but not in agriculture... to have money, a telephone, colour television set, running water." (young man, 20 years old, NR, 300).

But the alternatives do not exist: 49% of rural young people would leave their village immediately if they had the chance of doing so. Even more (64%) perceive their living in a rural environment as determined by the lack of alternatives (NR, 398).

2.2. Modernity

The modernist model is characteristic of a post-agricultural, urban, industrial society engaged largely in manufacturing. This model is associated with social change and is characteristic of industrialised societies, with a capitalist or state-directed economy. Educational attainment is valued by both families and the state.

This can be seen especially clearly in Europe after the second world war. Before the second world war, secondary education was not universal; a large portion of the population gained employment immediately after elementary school. After 1945, a strong demand for equal educational opportunity was created, secondary education became universal, and, in the 1960s, there arose a demand to replace the two-tiered secondary education system with comprehensive schools enrolling all young people in a single cohort.

Under the communist regime, Romania industrialised itself in keeping with this model of modernity. But the model went into bankruptcy after 1989, when measures were adopted to dismantle the state centralised economy. State corporations were privatised and foreign investment was attracted, but the immediate results were transition costs. The loss of the former external markets after the dissolution of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in 1991 caused problems for Romania's foreign trade and the trade deficit worsened.

Restructuring of the mining industry has been one of the most important components in the ongoing process of transition in Romania. It has affected numerous and various stakeholders, miners and their families, communities dependent on mining operations, people who worked in metallurgy and the public services, inevitably engendering obstacles and difficulties in employment.

What we find in Romania today is an industrial sector in decline, a sector which was the driving force behind a process of modernisation which never actually got off the ground. Young Romanians have, in general, a reasonable

level of education, but the industrial fabric does not create job opportunities for them.

With employment precarious and the economy in crisis, the future is viewed with some pessimism. Even with the difficulties, families adopt defensive saving strategies, in an attempt to safeguard the future. In 1998 the population's hard currency deposits accounted for 48% of total deposits while state company deposits stood at 29% and private companies only 20%. In other words, it is the private sector which contributes most to the circulation of capital, in a developmental manner and in search of profits. Families are guided by a "materialist" ethic, with the emphasis on saving. The population's deposits in Lei increased from 28% in 1994 to 37% in 1998. This confirms a predilection for saving amongst some Romanian families, even to the detriment of consumption. In other words, some Romanian families no longer produce for mere subsistence (characteristic of the pre-modern model) but the propensity for consumption is also not very great (this would be characteristic of the post-modern model).

2.3. Post-modernity

Despite everything, since 1990 consumption has far exceeded production. But this post-modern trait (consumerism) has a reverse side which makes itself into a pre-modern trait: incomes have not been correlated with labour productivity.

But there are other aspects to note: in the post-modern model, the family's central role in the economy has vanished, and the family itself has become a kind of appendage to the economic structure. It is an institution relevant to consumption but no longer important to production. However, in the case of Romania, a significant proportion of consumption depends on a family's capacity to produce.

Indeed, the make-up of real household income reflects the mixed character of the Romanian economy. The evolution of real household income depends considerably on consumption of own agricultural resources. In the conditions of a general decline in income, salary income as a share of total income has been quite low (under 40% in 1997 and 1998), whilst consumption from own resources accounted for a relatively high share: approximately 30% (NHDR, 40).

The position of young people is not at all comfortable in this respect: 83% of rural young people assert that another member of the family has the biggest share of income supply and only 17% are the main contributors (NR, 254). But the position of many urban young people is no more comfortable. They are the great victims of urban unemployment which emerged with the

development of the tertiary sector, in the wake of the collapse of the modern model, based on obsolete industries.

In fact, climbing unemployment figures are a recent phenomenon in the Romanian economy. In 1997, for instance, the number of wage-earners was three million less than in 1990, with unemployment affecting around 12% of the population in 1998. This trend has been exacerbated by mass redundancies in the course of the reorganisation of some big state corporations, especially those in mono-industrial areas.

Young people have been amongst the worst affected by this crisis situation. They are also amongst those hardest hit by unemployment and job insecurity. On the other hand, it is they who ideologically embrace the values of post-modernity. Their dreams of consumption (starting with a mobile phone, computer, etc.) and their aesthetic investments in their body, which suggest a body-loving culture (we might recall the "peasant girls dressed in bikinis"), are signs that they have signed up to post-modern values. Even in rural areas, we observed that young people made an effort to stylise their appearance (using clothes in line with urban fashions) and called for discotheques where they could channel their desire for fun – not traditional forms of entertainment, but those modelled on urban culture. Fashions always played an important role in rural life as a particular identity. They also played an extremely important role under communism, because style was associated with the social status of the individual. In the early 1990s one of our colleagues studied lifestyles of young migrants in the big cities in the former USSR, in which she discovered a phenomenon of obsession with latest fashions in clothes and food among the migrants from villages and small towns.[1]

Fashions were young people's response to the policy of homogenisation. Later on they became an identity of the new capitalist elite which first picked up the image of designer clothes, mobile telephones, Mercedes cars as a sign of prosperity and did not relate the last to the hard work and risky life style of modern business. That is why the bikini is mainly a social attribute, and we would be rather surprised to find any hedonistic values of post-modernity behind it.

2.4. Different generations, trajectories and living conditions

The societal models described above – pre-modern, modern and post-modern – generate a complex web of transition to adulthood. This complexity is the result of the coexistence of three different generations

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1. L. Koklyagina, "Soviet urban youth: sociological view" in *Soviet Social Reality in the Mirror of Glasnost,* The Macmillan, St. Martins Press, London, pp. 41-50.

modelled by pre-modern, modern and post-modern trajectories. This means that intergenerational relations in Romania are characterised formally by an asymmetry of power and authority, although there are reciprocal flows of socialisation – not without tension – between generations living side by side. An example of this tension is the actual difficulty in rural environments (pre-traditional) of defining youth as a category. The international review group had expressed a wish to meet with a group of young rural people. But when we arrived at the meeting we were amazed to be met with "young people" aged 15 to 45!

Other distinctive traits mark out the generation. It could be said that the older generations are guided by values rooted in the ideological world of societal collectivism, whilst younger generations, and particularly the better educated urban youth, embraced more variable values based on societal individualism. The older generation is in fact the "parental generation", but not those in their early forties, who are in western terms not "young" any more. This "forty something" generation was totally disillusioned about the ideas of collectivism due to the time of their upbringing when the system started cracking, and now produce classical examples of aggressive individualism as a reaction to the fraud collectivism. In the former, individual aspirations are subordinated to collective causes: social rights, community identity, emotional dependency. In the latter, these collective causes are subordinated to individual aspirations: personal realisation, private rights, individual initiatives.

When the different generations are confronted with given social values, continuities run up against intergenerational discontinuities. The opinions shared by young people and their parents relate to religion (75%) and family (66%). Opinions tend to differ in relation to: choice of profession (47%), politics (47%), moral standards (46%), sexual life (43%) and changes in Romanian society (37%) (Opinion Poll, 2000).

There is here a great contrast between the young and the not so young: the traditional generations are, essentially, the repositories of the past, conserving that which they inherited; and the modern and post-modern generations hope that Romanian society will transform itself in the near future, so that they can be the protagonists of this future.

In this matrix of complex relations, the generation of young people finds itself in the most precarious situation. In the preceding generation some people benefited economically from the change in the regime. After 1989, under the programme for de-collectivisation, 80% of agricultural land was returned to the original owners and their heirs. This was a considerable gain for those who got their land back, although not necessarily a productive

gain. Farming has not been modernised, given the lack of incentives for farmers, left without suitable agricultural machinery.

Social imbalances, and not only generational imbalances, have become more acute with the change in regime. In 1997 the total income of the wealthiest 7.6% of the population was almost equivalent to the total income of 40% of the poorest inhabitants (NHDR, 40-41). Regional imbalances are also great. The urban-rural gap has expanded during transition, as in the market economy system resources will always be guided to the regions which offer the opportunity for rapid and maximum profit. Rural areas are the poorest.

But as we suggested above, the transition process through which Romania has been going has produced losers and winners. The intermediate generation (from 35 to 50) is probably that which benefited most. Of employers, 56% belong to the 35 to 49 age group (NHDR, 29). In rural environments the older generations who managed to get their land back have come out best. In addition to owning the land they continue to enjoy power over younger people which in pre-traditional societies comes with seniority: "In local societies elderly landowners dominate decision making (for example concerning the use and maintenance of village pastures and the maintenance of roads) and the management of economic activities; the young and middle-aged generations have no social weight".[1]

Although most rural young people (79%) work the land, they do not own it – their parents do. Almost 41% of the total number of householders are 60 years old and even older. This shows the existence not only of the extended family (three generations living together) but, to an even greater extent, two-generation families with old fathers and adult children.

As a result, although young students (88% of them) are those who depend most on their parents, an appreciable percentage of young farmers (43%) also depend on them (NR, 76).

Poor living conditions are particularly acute in the case of young couples, whatever their habitat. Suffice it to say that in Romania the percentage of young married people (aged 15 to 29, with or without children) who have gained independence from their parents is 11%; at the same time, the percentage of married couples living with their parents (or even with their grandparents) is 8%. In other words, almost half the young couples in the country are dependent on their parents (Opinion Poll 2000). This is inevitably a priority area for action: it is essential to help these young people towards independence, especially those who are already married and have

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1. Jósef Gagyi, op. cit., p. 71.

children and continue to depend on their parents for their livelihood. Why are they still dependent? Some because they lack their own house, some because of unemployment, and some for both these reasons.

3. Demographic issues

We have seen that Romania is living in a paradox of modernisation because of a surplus of tradition. There are also substantial asymmetries in the demographic domain. Although changes in the birth rate (with the exception of the Roma) has placed Romanian society on a par with the demographic standards of more developed societies, socio-economic decline is far from reaching a situation in which the country matches the wealthier countries of Europe. Romanian society is therefore faced with the social problems resulting from underdevelopment together with other, no less important, problems faced by more advanced societies.

3.1. Population decrease

The population of Romania has been decreasing over the last decade. This reduction in the population is the result, amongst other things, of the decriminalisation of abortion and the liberalisation of contraception as from 1989.

The new demographic policy resulted in a dramatic drop in birth and fertility rates, much below the minimum level to ensure a demographic renewal of the generations. The total fertility rate dropped from 2.19 children in 1989 to 1.83 in 1990 and to 1.30 in 1995-97. Likewise, the birth rate (number of live births per 1000 inhabitants), dropped from 16.0 in 1998 to 10.5 in 1998 (NHDR, 46-47).

The fertility level in Romania is similar to many developed countries. However, in Romania, the rapid fall of the fertility rate was a result of the decline in the population's standard of living. So much so that the drop in fertility was due more to widespread abortions rather than to any proper family planning policy. According to a survey on reproduction health carried out in 1993 by the Institute for Mother and Child Protection, Bucharest, the share of Romanian women resorting to modern contraceptive means was quite low (14% of married women), abortion being the primary family planning means. This justifies the high number of abortions per live birth (1.14 in 1998), as well as the high maternal mortality rate (40.2 deaths per 1000000 new born) (NHDR, 47). In other words, the demographic decline (an indicator of development) is the effect of poverty conditions (indicator of underdevelopment).

This situation suggests that there is an urgent need to implement an appropriate family planning policy aimed at young people, giving priority to the

use of contraceptives. This is not to say that rejuvenation of the Romanian population should also not be an objective, through policies to correct the demographic decline and measures designed to support young couples: help with buying their own homes, family subsidies, help for students, etc.

Young people represent a significant proportion of the Romanian population. In 1999, young people aged 15 to 29 represented 25% of the population. This can be explained by the increased birth rate (baby boom) of the years following 1968, under the forced birth rate policy imposed by the regime previous to the events of December 1989. This means that many young people (16-18 years old) looking for work are the children of the baby-boom generation.

The school attendance rate registers the most dramatic fall at secondary school level. Almost a quarter of young people of 15 to 18 years old leave the education system prior to getting their diploma (NR, 81). These young people, the children of the baby-boom generation, seem to be the generation to lose out. It is they who have to face the greatest adversities in the transition to adult life. What is the future for a country which sees its young people increasingly detached from the education system, gaining fewer and fewer skills and qualifications?

These children of the baby-boom generation are not only a problematic generation as the result of a demographic imbalance. The pro-baby policy of the communist regime made possible the deep divide between family incomes and birth rate. Those with higher incomes managed to keep control of their family size while the size of poor families increased. Thus took place a polarisation of families depending on incomes and relations with certain social groups such as Roma communities. In the same way, there appeared large numbers of street children and abandoned children.

In the early 1990s, in the context of demographic decline, the urban population practically stagnated as a proportion of the total population. However, since 1990, the contribution of migration to distribution of the population between urban and rural areas has changed. The migratory flow from rural to urban areas has changed. The migratory flow from rural to urban areas that accounted for 52% of urban population growth during 1966-92 has diminished and virtually disappeared. Instead, the number of departures to rural areas has gone up considerably (NHDR, 55).

The rural population still stands at around 45%. On the other hand, the annual average growth rate of urban population during 1995-2000 is negative (-0.25). These indicators may be interpreted as "a reflection of the forced pace of industrialisation in the past regime associated with non-sustainable massive migration to urban areas. In 1990, the urban population

increased by 22 percentage points as against 1960 (from 32.1% in 1960 to 54.3% in 1990), followed by a decline" (NHDR, 8).

This "return to the country" may accentuate the renewed vigour of the pre-traditionalist model, as described above, with serious consequences for the independence of young people. This scenario calls for effective policies to promote the emancipation of the rural young: education, vocational training, employment, housing.

3.2. Emigration as a strategy for escaping crisis

The difficulty of survival in Romania has created a considerable propensity for emigration. The number of Romanians abroad, concentrated principally in western Europe, the United States and Canada, has been estimated at between eight and ten million. Up to 1989, the main reason for emigration was political. Many of these emigrants were received into universities and research centres in the United States and western Europe.[1] The bloody repression from University Square (1990) triggered a real exodus of intellectuals to countries with a democratic tradition.

Although in the period 1995 to 1999, the official statistics (Ministry of Internal Affairs) show that there was a drop in the flow of emigration by young Romanians, this was not due to any reduction in the propensity for emigration. It was the result of tighter restrictions on immigration in the countries of destination. However, this situation may alter with the integration of Romania into the European Union.

Tight immigration restrictions in the countries of destination are resulting in an increase in clandestine emigration. In various countries of western Europe there are a considerable number of young Romanians working on building sites, some of them with university degrees. Mafia-linked prostitution networks are also quick to abduct or entice young girls from eastern Europe:

> "Not all the women are kidnapped; some are duped by promises of jobs abroad. It is easy to trick a naïve young woman from a poverty-stricken no-hope town in Moldavia or Romania into believing that there is an escape route from desolation if they accept the offer of a job as a babysitter or waitress in Italy, Belgium or London."[2]

Many young Romanian emigrants have reasonable academic qualifications. It is well known that educational standards in "socialist" countries were higher than the average for countries with the equivalent level of development. In Romania we find two types of brain drain: the external brain drain

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1. Jean Cuisenier, op. cit.
2. *The Times,* 24 February 2000.

characterised by qualified young people leaving for other countries, and the internal brain drain as qualified people abandon scientific and research activities in order to take up employment opportunities.

However, the dream of many young Romanians is to leave their country behind them, to find living conditions which they cannot hope for at home:

> "I see myself abroad, as far away as possible from Romania with a good and stable job, with an acceptable wage and a bigger family (a child)." (Mihaela, 22 years old, student/teacher) (NR, 311).

> "I hope I can achieve success both me and my husband in a foreign country in Europe." (Ana-Maria, 23 years old, student/journalist) (NR, 312).

This is the usual response of highly educated young people faced with the lack of opportunities to realise their professional aspirations in Romania. This situation is difficult for both the young people and the country. The brain drain actually works as a kind of "invisible subsidy" which Romania gives to the countries in which its emigrants settle, contributing to the economic development of these countries and accentuating, to Romania's further disadvantage, centre-periphery asymmetries.

The theoretical notion of a brain drain does not correspond only to a simple statistical flow of skilled labour which crosses international frontiers. There are two central ideas in the concept of a brain drain: a. that educational programmes are public costs, and b. that investment in education in order to develop "human capital" is a way of strengthening and supporting the economic potential of a country.[1]

There are therefore conflicts of interest associated with the problem of the brain drain. There is a clear contradiction between the interests of young migrant Romanians and the interests of Romanian society. Both have invested in their basic education, the former as individual agents and the latter as the provider of public or private funds for this purpose. But whereas the economic benefit of the agent may lead him/her to emigrate, the country sees its investment wasted. Does the Romanian Government have a clear mobility policy for the young? It does not seem to. We therefore think that special opportunities should be created for highly qualified young people to given them extra stimulants to stay in the country.

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1. Barbara Rhode, "Brain drain, brain gain, brain waste: reflections on the emigration of highly educated and scientific personnel from Eastern Europe", in R. King, *The New Geography of European Migrations,* Belhaven Press, London, 1993, pp. 228-245.

4. Education, employment and unemployment

In contemporary Romania we found the education and training system to be severely out of step with the employment market. The qualifications obtained by many young people are out of all proportion to the jobs on offer. The high educational drop-out rate is one of the worrying features of this period of transition.

But young Romanians do not drop out of education merely by chance. The employment policy tools most in evidence in Romania seem to be more in the realm of low-wage jobs which allow the economy to find a fragile balance, rather than any education, training and employment policy aimed resolutely at the challenges facing the country with the process of opening up to western Europe.

4.1. Education

The 1990s saw a reduction in the proportion of the population covered by the education system in all age groups (except in the group corresponding to higher education).

Secondary education accounted for the most severe fall in the enrolment rate. The enrolment rate in secondary education was 90.7% in 1990 and fell to 67.8% in 1998. The causes of this dramatic drop were: "the family's financial incapacity to keep children in school, a certain depreciation in the role of education in the public opinion, the high unemployment rate among high school (secondary school) and professional school graduates affecting pupils' decision to continue with further years of study" (NHDR, 52).

The young Romanians most affected by this development are the children of the baby-boom generation, currently aged between 14 and 18. Older young people continue, committed to obtaining good educational qualifications. The number of students in higher education has in fact increased considerably: from 164 000 in 1989-90 to 408 000 in 1998-99. The enrolment rate has also shot up, from 10.6% to 25.4% (NHDR, 52).

This means that young Romanians fall into two distinct groups with regard to the education system: the older ones are overqualified in relation to the current job opportunities, whilst the younger ones are underqualified in relation to the future needs of the labour market.

In view of this situation there is an urgent need for education, training and employment policies based on forward-looking scenarios. A vocational

training system which seeks to anticipate the foreseeable evolution of the employment structure will inevitably involve a qualitative re-think of the education system, with links being created between the world of education and the world of work.

In an economy recently opened up to the market, it is important to set up interdisciplinary research groups at universities in order to identify projects for intervention in economic life. A university is one of the best institutions for rationalising the overall modernisation process currently under way in Romanian society.

Training cannot lose sight of the changes in the economy. In recent years there has been a significant decline in industrial investment, namely in mining and the food and chemicals industries. On the other hand, in electrical and thermal energy, trade and public administration, investment has increased. The transfer of investment from a structure which consumes raw materials and energy to sectors with high added value (science consuming) remains a challenge for the emerging mechanisms of the Romanian market. But in order for these investments to be successful, the education and training systems need to respond appropriately.

In other words, educational policies should be based on curricular and teaching structures which ensure a solid basic education and which allow for vocational retraining and mobility in the future, in line with the rapid economic changes currently taking place and which are set to continue into the future. These foreseeable changes will require vocational skills to be adapted to new production processes and policies will be needed for "informal education", in companies and at the workplace.

In short, educational policies are needed which prepare young people for a market structure characterised by occupational flexibility and mobility. Long gone are the days when "a change of workplace and field of activity were criticised, whilst length of service in the same unit represented a reason for a wage rise" (NR, 2). In other words, the high school system needs to be reorganised in line with the skills and sectors of the economy of the future.

But there is also a need for development of apprenticeship schools in line with regional needs. Professional education (professional and apprenticeship schools) finds itself in a paradoxical situation: over the course of the last decade (from 1990-91 to 1998-99) the number of teaching units has increased by 14%, the number of teachers has also risen (by 61%) but the number of students is down by almost 40% (NR, 97).

It is possible that professional education has not been aimed at the regions most in need of it, the rural regions. The fact that in these areas youth unemployment is masked by young people helping out on family farms does not

mean that youth unemployment should not be regarded as a serious problem. Moreover, it is precisely in the rural areas that the formal education system faces the greatest difficulties: precarious conditions of premises and poor logistics, shortage of qualified teaching staff, a drop in the number of those completing compulsory education, a decline in demand for education at secondary level (high schools and professional schools). But in rural environments we also find qualified young people (some of them from the cities) who fail to find a job compatible with their qualifications.

Moreover, most rural young people (58%) assert that their academic qualifications are out of proportion to the type of work which they are offered in rural environments: 41% admit to being overqualified and 17% blame their low qualifications (NR, 298). These indicators clearly show that the education and training systems are out of step with the labour market.

The education system has to be assessed in terms of its economic and technological context. We are not arguing that the education systems should be subordinated to merely economic criteria. However, something has to be done to match the supply of qualified human resources to the demand, given that a source of skilled workers is a necessary condition for economic development. In other words, the output of qualified youngsters has to be gauged to the discernable trends in the employment market. We did not discover any study of young people's integration trajectories in the labour market.

4.2. Employment

The employment structure in Romania suffers from serious imbalance: there are fewer and fewer people in employment, in both proportional and absolute terms, and increasing numbers of self-employed and unpaid family workers. The increase in the number of self-employed among young people is an indicator of the country's recovery from decades of individuals' dependency on the state and a road to economic prosperity, but we were not able to get relevant information to check these figures. The employment crisis has bolstered the pre-traditionalist model. This imbalance is reflected in changes in economic sectors: "the shift of emphasis from industry to agriculture; the poor capacity of the services sector to absorb workers laid off in manufacturing; the risk of 'pseudo-tertiarisation' of employment, due to the lack of sustainable development in the services sector" (NHDR, 19).

The "underground economy" is currently growing. This is due to a combination of factors: prolonged economic decline, generalisation of long-term unemployment, disharmony between economic and social reform, bureaucracy and corruption. It is estimated that the underground economy represents around 40% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) (NHDR, 18). Moreover,

81% of young Romanians think that the most frequent form in which young people are employed is through illegal forms of work (NR, Opinion Poll, 2000). Illegal work affects young people in different categories: young people from rural environments who have migrated to the cities where they find the same problems as caused them to leave the countryside in the first place, young people from shelters and orphanages, young people who, although they have a steady job, take illegal work as a way of supplementing their wages.

The employment crisis shows itself in other ways. In recent years the population working in agriculture and the retired population have both increased, in absolute and proportional terms. At present, the number of pensioners with social insurance and unemployed people is close to the number of people in employment. For every 1 000 persons in work, the number of non-working and unemployed rose from 1 140 in 1990 to 1 408 in 1996.[1] In other words, there is an increasingly small working population supporting more and more people.

Job insecurity is rife. We were not provided with any information on the number of young people working without any contract, but it is clearly in the interest of employers to keep young people in this situation, in order to avoid paying taxes.

In Romania, the labour market is highly segmented at regional level. Of all young employed persons with higher education, 93% are from an urban environment and 7% from a rural environment (NR, 123). On the other hand, of young people with a low level of educational attainment a large proportion are from rural environments, as for example the 79% of those who failed to complete compulsory education or having only elementary education. Unemployment itself is segmented on regional lines, in line with the skill levels of the unemployed: the highly educated sit unemployed in the cities, whilst the poorly educated sit unemployed in rural areas, or have to work on parental farms.

The labour market is also segmented in terms of age. Young people belong to one of the most deprived categories in employment. Only a few young people find jobs in financial, banking and insurance activities which are well paid activities in the labour market (NR, 122). On the other hand, the unemployment rate amongst young people is two to three times higher than the average. In 1998, the 15 to 24 age group accounted for approximately 45% of those registered as unemployed by the International Labour Office; of these, almost 40% lived in the rural areas (NHDR, 20-21).

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1. *National Report on Education for All – Romania*, Ministry of Education, National Institute of Educational Sciences, Bucharest, 1996, p. 6.

In addition to the divisions along lines of region and age, the labour market is also segmented in terms of gender. In rural environments, young women are hard put to escape a system for integration in adult life in which liberation from dependency on their parents involves falling into dependency on their husbands. And the situation of young women with higher education qualifications also evinces discrimination on grounds of gender. Of all unemployed young people with higher education, post-higher education and high-school education, 79%, 61% and 55% respectively are young women. In short, the most underprivileged category in the labour market in the 1990s was young women. This was due especially to the increasing number of sectors undergoing restructuring (the structure, by gender, of the labour force in the sectors) and withdrawal from the labour market of women who failed to find a job (NHDR, 20).

The greatest proportion of young people in employment work in agriculture (31%), and of these the majority work in the private sector as unpaid family workers (81% of young people working in the private sector are in agriculture) (NR, 122). Special attention should then be given to young people in rural habitats: areas with poorly developed infrastructures and lacking in communication systems. Support is urgently needed for modernising agriculture, namely through special credit facilities for the acquisition of tractors, combine harvesters, tools, machinery and irrigation equipment.

The production system in Romania, with its imbalances and archaic traits, allows for a persistent informal economy alongside a formal sector with a deeply rooted unwillingness to innovate, modernise or take risks. Low levels of productivity and a weak financial system also make it difficult to reinvest profits. The economy is substantially in sectors where competitiveness depends on the intensive use of unskilled labour, with low wages and little job security.

It is therefore essential to encourage the creation and mobilisation of resources and agents in order to bring new life to the economic fabric in more deprived regions, namely through incentives for self-employment projects, given that the normal employment market is small and the jobs on offer are mostly precarious. Support for youth enterprise is a policy to be recommended. This should involve offering incentives for innovative and creative business projects, in less traditional activities in which the young people can be more competitive in the national market, or even (why not?) the foreign market, thereby opening the way to job creation and a degree of innovation in Romanian industry.

Measures are therefore needed to encourage young Romanians to set up in business. Young people represent an insignificant proportion of employers as a social and professional category: only 0.5% (NR, 119). Many young

Romanians are guided by traditional ("materialist") strategies in relation to employment and work-related questions. The fact is that the majority of young Romanians (93%) regard a good job as one which provides a good wage. Other "post-materialist" job characteristics are of relatively little interest to young Romanians: the chance to take the initiative (23%), prestige (13%) or chance of showing creativity (11%) (NR, Opinion Poll 2000). These figures support the argument for vocational training geared to developing autonomy and personal initiative, which may lead the young people to start up on a self-employed basis or else to set up family companies.

4.3. Unemployment

According to figures from the Labour and Social Protection Ministry, unemployment from 1992 to 1998 was worst for young people aged under 25 years. Indeed, during this period more than 70% of the young unemployed were aged under 25 years. Up to 1995, the number of unemployed and the unemployment rate increased constantly; the 1995-96 period brought a slight improvement. However, beginning with 1997, the unemployment rate went up, due to the acceleration of the restructuring process in mining, chemical, petrochemical sectors and metallurgy.

Young people with high school education (upper secondary education) have the biggest share of the unemployment rate. This means that the labour market is short of skilled jobs. There is also a high unemployment rate for young people with vocational education, which means that the labour market has neither high-skilled nor low-skilled jobs.

Almost half the young unemployed persons (42%) are long-term unemployed (one year and more) (NR, 246). As the young are the hardest hit by the employment crisis, and given that long-term unemployment has been increasing, political measures are needed to combat the social exclusion of these young people, as the result of persistent difficulties in finding work.

The average duration of unemployment in the fourth quarter of 1998 was 17.6 months, higher in urban areas (19.6 months) (NHDR, 21). Long-term youth unemployment is also a greater problem in urban than in rural areas. Amongst young people unemployed from 18 to 23 months, 92% lived in urban environments; of those unemployed more than 24 months, 71% also lived in urban environments. In other words, long-term unemployment is camouflaged in the rural areas, as the young people end up taking part in the family farms.

Once again we find that in rural areas the pre-modern economic structures help to dampen the unemployment crisis. This means that the areas with the greatest employment problems – in addition to rural areas, where unem-

ployment is camouflaged – are in industrial localities, with a development level below the national average and a lack of job opportunities. These areas were the hardest hit by the restructuring of industry. During 1994-97 the employment rate for the population as a whole fell from 50% to 44%. The number of employees fell by 1 176 000, from 6 201 000 in 1994 to 5 025 000 in 1998 (NHDR, 19).

The problem of unemployment causes young Romanians to be deeply pessimistic about the future:

> "Everything goes from bad to worse."
> "I foresee a dark future."
> "There is no change for the better in this country."
> "For the time being, I have no hope."

> (Statements by young Romanians, living in Bucharest, NR, 301-303).

The problem of unemployment is so bad for Romanian young people that in order to get a job 52% would accept any activity, provided it brings an income, and 49% any activity that has nothing to do with their trade/profession. There is also a significant percentage who would accept any job, even without a contract (Opinion Poll 2000).

Moreover, the majority of young Romanians (54%) think that they have no chance of finding a job in the place where they live. Our suggestion is therefore that a voucher system be developed whereby young people, especially those living in small villages, have the right to free travel up to a given total of kilometres/hours per week/month, in order to enhance their mobility. This is of importance in order to get job information and to develop networks (especially in the cities).

Most young Romanians think that young people would find it easier to find a job "if the counselling was better, steering them towards certain trades/professions" (65% think this way); "if young people were trained for the trades/professions needed in the labour market" (72%) and "if education were associated to a greater extent with the skills frequently required by employers – computer skills, foreign languages, driving licence, etc." (77%) (Opinion Poll 2000).

One of the reasons put forward by young people for the difficulty of finding a job is rooted in the perception that young people are not informed about job offers (NR, Opinion Poll 2000). We would therefore recommend that information centres dealing with job offers be set up at schools, on the radio, television, etc.

Training should also be a priority. And because it is a priority it should be subject to constant strict evaluation. Most young people in Romania think that

employment difficulties are due to one reason: "vocational training for young people completely out of step with the labour market" (Opinion Poll 2000). Are young people being trained for unemployment?

Some measures have been launched to combat unemployment. But how effective are these measures? Which are more effective? And which measures have been taken to combat the segmentation of the labour market which hit young people hardest, namely segmentation in terms of gender and habitat? And again, how are employment policies co-ordinated: what distinguishes the newly created National Council for Vocational Training and the National Vocational Training and Employment Agency?

We also followed a number of initiatives of the Cluj Regional Employment and Training Agency and found that it worked positively with Cluj Technical University – NAPOCA. This profitable co-operation resulted in training courses for the unemployed in computing, ecology (environmental issues), management, counselling in the virtual development of small and medium enterprises, and career counselling for the unemployed. But it is important that these courses should be held within companies, so that the companies can take on at least some of the trainees. However, there needs to be strict control of the illegitimate advantage taken by some companies of the young trainees' labour. As employers are entitled by law to employ young people during a given probation period, they seek to take advantage of this situation to the detriment of the young people.

"They used us, then took on others in the same situation, and so on and so forth ... But what can one do?" (19 year old woman, dressmaker) (NR, 307).

And what should we say of vocational integration policies destined from the first to fail to meet their proposed targets? In the national report we find a good example of the uselessness of employment policies which may be successful in some countries but which are unsuitable in other contexts. Under an agreement with Canada under which the latter granted a non-repayable loan of 1 888 000 Canadian dollars for implementation of an electronic job exchange, it was hoped that unemployed young people in Romania could benefit from a scheme often used in western countries. The expectation was that whilst operating a computer they could self-assess their occupational characteristics and skills and the firms could advertise jobs and the respective requirements, all of this through the programme. The whole scheme is admirably up-to-date, but unfortunately hardly accessible to those with no computer skills, and objectively useless for those without access to a computer at all.

This is a lesson to be learned. The success of a policy is not independent of the context in which it is implemented. We would therefore advance with

the concept of grounded interventions – by this we mean that all political intervention must be contextualised. A good measure in one context, if uncritically transposed to a different context, may prove inappropriate.

5. Family, gender and sexuality

5.1. Family

In 1998, 50% of young married couples had not managed to leave their parental family. At the same time, most young people (70%) declared that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their family life (NR, 150). The collation of these two indicators is clear proof of the instrumental function of the family for young Romanians.

In fact, according to information from the Opinion Barometer – Youth, 1998, young people are highly dependent on their parents: 83% of young people were living with their parents; even in the case of the age group 25-29 years old, the percentage is high (60%).

Most unmarried young people live with their parents, only 6% living "independently". But the surprise, as we have seen, is the young couples (with or without children), half of whom still live with their parents. It is no surprise that 71% of young married couples living with their parents think that the inhabited space is insufficient for the future, whilst 26% were resigned to these limitations (NR, 84). Also according to figures from the Opinion Barometer – Youth, 1998, 20% of Romanian young people consider that the chance of finding a suitable home "is a serious problem" and 78% regard it as a "very serious problem".

In contrast, almost 75% of the older population declare themselves satisfied with their accommodation (NR, 84). The housing problem therefore affects young people more severely. Indeed, according to data from recent research (1999) conducted by the Life Quality Research Institute, the overwhelming majority of those asked (89%) thought that of all the different categories/groups of persons, those that have the greatest problems with accommodation are young people. As a result of this, 93% of those asked said that more money from the budget should be allocated to building new houses.

The National Housing Agency recently launched programmes for granting home loans, in order to help young people to build their own houses. It is important to encourage these measures and to offer special interest terms, especially for couples with more limited means, university students, young workers and self-employed young people. Creating housing in the countryside, possibly with the help of the young people who need it, is urgently needed, in order to make them independent of their parents' homes.

The housing shortage is a barrier to the workforce's mobility, flexibility and ability to adapt to the process of economic restructuring. Because of this, economic changes which involve migratory flows should be accompanied by appropriate housing policies.

In rural environments, as we have seen, a significant percentage of young people work as unpaid family workers. But this situation is more serious for women. In 1998, women accounted for three times more unpaid work than men (NHDR, 20). This situation shows us that considerable segments of the population behave along traditional lines, with women in a position of inferiority and subordination.

Young mothers face additional problems: 6.5% of Romanian families with children have only one of the parents present. This may mean a high percentage of single mothers. The fall in social support for large families was particularly detrimental to women, as single mothers often find themselves in a desperate situation. In terms of family policies, there are attempts to discourage the placing of children in shelter institutions by supporting families financially (NR, 109). Is this policy successful? There are no doubts as to the need for policies offering adequate protection to single mothers.

5.2. Gender

In rural environments, women enter adult life early, usually through marriage. Although the mean age in 1998 at first marriage was 24 years for urban women, the mean age for rural women was 22 years.

But it is the marriage rates which most clearly highlight the specific condition of rural young women: whilst the marriage rate for urban women aged 15 to 19 is 18.6%, the rate for rural women of the same age is 48.5%! In other words, in rural environments we find a traditional pattern for transition to adulthood for girls: through marriage, and at an early age. The proof of traditionalism lies in the persistence of the phenomenon: the number and share of children born of young mothers (15-19 years old) has stayed at high levels during recent years. From very early on, girls are guided towards family responsibilities. Are the children of these young mothers always wanted? There seems to us to be a lack of satisfactory family planning programmes, especially in rural areas. This is another priority area for youth policies.

Unpaid family workers are predominantly female (72%), which reflects the high number of women working in agriculture. Many others work in the so-called "grey" economy, on low wages, no labour contracts and outside the social insurance system. Besides the low level of income, these young women are, therefore, highly vulnerable. During the transition, exploitation of women in the "sex industry" has boomed. The risk of sexual harassment has considerably increased.

It is clear that young women have better academic qualifications than young men (8% of them are university graduates, as against boys – 4.3%); the share of high school leavers is also bigger (42%) than that for boys (32%). However, in comparison with young men, more young women are not working or unemployed. Moreover, by occupancy groups, very few girls have access to the economic field, to decision-making sectors and prestige. Only a small number have skilled or highly skilled qualified jobs, while the number of women with unskilled or low-skilled jobs has increased. In addition to this, young women are more likely to play truant or drop out of compulsory education. These indicators accompany the phenomenon of the ruralisation of young Romanian women. The percentage of young women migrating to a rural environment (45%) is higher than for young men (38%) (NR, 68). In all likelihood, girls and young women are more dependent on parents and have to care for the elderly.

These migratory flows, differentiated in terms of gender, must necessarily be taken into account when devising labour market policy, family policy and gender policy. But what we found is that there is no legislation aimed specifically at the needs of girls and young women. There was also no government institution responsible for resolving the specific problems faced by women. There are merely a few NGOs which have sought to ensure some degree of fairness in relations between men and women (NR, 244).

5.3. Sexuality

As stated in the national report, "in Romania, the sexuality field was limited to the 'conjugal task' for a long time, even if not to procreation" (NR, 326). The situation has changed. In other words, the idea that femininity is equivalent to waiting and resignation has been discarded.

After 1989, owing to the liberalisation of abortion, Romania quickly became the country with the highest percentage of abortions in Europe, with two to three abortions for each live birth, for 1990. According to the reports provided (NR, 156) the long tradition of using abortion for fertility control, combined with economic difficulties forcing couples to restrict the number of children or to postpone the moment of having babies, and the absence of modern contraceptive methods on a large scale, represent the elements responsible for the high percentage of abortions in Romania.

In fact, contraceptives are not widely used amongst the young: 48% of young people aged 15 to 24 do not use any contraceptive methods, only 20% of girls of this age use any of these methods (NR, 156). A far greater commitment is needed to information campaigns on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and on sexually transmitted diseases. Sexual education

appears to be being introduced slowly into schools. But we are unaware of the extent of these initiatives. And what of the role of the church?

The highest birth rates are amongst young mothers: 39% of births are to young women aged 20 to 24, and 15% to young women aged 15 to 19. Indeed 84% of all births are to young women aged 15 to 29 years (NR, 64).

The highest birth rates are also in rural areas: in 1998, 56% of births were in a rural environment (NR, 65). Sexually transmitted diseases (gonorrhoea and syphilis) are most frequent amongst the urban young – a consequence of a low sexual education level among them.

In relation to Aids, not many cases are registered but the infection rates could suddenly start to shoot up. Effective preventive campaigns are therefore needed. In a society in transition such as Romania, there must be good sexual education in the schools, beginning with the primary schools. Children and young people now face risks which were unknown to the parent-generation.

If the age of the beginning of sexual life is an indicator of modernity (which is doubtful), the young seem to be more "modern" than the older generations regardless of the place of their residence (rural or urban). Information, based on the *Public Opinion Barometer, June 2000,* provided by Metro Media Transilvania, University of Cluj, shows that similarities in general use of contraception are higher in the same category of residence than among the different age groups within the same area of residence and urban-rural differences are higher than the similarities related to age. As for the use of modern contraception (condom, coil, pill) age seems to be a better indicator than the rural-urban disparity. The use of modern contraception is higher among young people than adults.

On the one hand, the urban population is clearly more "modern", more educated and wealthier than the rural. On the other, the objective constraints to modern birth control behaviour are stronger in rural than in urban areas, for instance opportunities to get medical advice in using the pill or coil are less available to the rural population than to town-dwellers (in most of the rural areas there is even a shortage of physicians). Villagers of Panticeu, for example, estimated the availability of the general physician in their village as two hours per week. Another important issue is the psychological cost of asking for this advice. In a limited social space like Romanian village life, in a very close community young people have less opportunity to get it privately. And last, but not least, is the financial cost of contraception in villages: with the monthly average income per member of household at US$16 in rural areas, in comparison to US$23 in urban, one can hardly afford the monthly cost for pills at US$2.

Birth control behaviour is also determined by the so-called moral costs of unwanted pregnancy which is very high for young people, most of them unmarried, and quite low for adults, most of them married. Besides that, abortion is not only the legal means of contraception, but also very cheap (it costs less than US$8 in national health service clinics). So abortion by the majority of the population is an approved and the most used method of birth control.

Table 1. The average age of beginning of sexual life[1]

	Age	Average age
National	26-50	19.6
	18-25	17.6
Rural	26-50	19.3
	18-25	17.6
Urban	26-50	19.8
	18-25	17.3

Table 2. Use of contraception in the last month[1]

	Age	Yes (%)
National	26-50	29
	18-25	31
Rural	26-50	25
	18-25	26
Urban	26-50	32
	18-25	35

Table 3. Use of modern contraceptive methods (condoms, coil, pills) in the last month[1]

	Age	Yes (%)
National	26-50	23
	18-25	45
Rural	26-50	20
	18-25	34
Urban	26-50	25
	18-25	55

1. Public Opinion Barometer - June 2000.

6. Participation

6.1. Civil society

In Romania, 1990 marked the beginning of the association boom: the monthly rate of NGO registration was 300 and by 1997 the number of legally registered NGOs was 32 982 (NHDR, 59). However, research conducted by the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society (FDCS) revealed a high degree of inactivity within the NGO sector, as a large number are virtually inactive. The number of active, influential NGOs at national level is estimated at 400 (NHDR, 60).

The data provided by the 1998 Public Opinion Barometer (POB) indicate that the membership rate of NGOs, political parties and trade unions among the population above 18 was around 22% (the NGO sector accounts for 11%).

What is the main problem of participation through the NGOs? It is that the NGOs do not always meet or attend to the needs of the country as a whole. As they tend to have very specific interests, it is important to maintain a kind of balance sheet of the problems which are or are not resolved by the NGOs. The fact is that NGOs are "often organised to promote particular goals ... rather than the broader goal of development".[1]

Moreover, there are functional and regional disparities in the development of the NGO sector: two thirds of the total number of NGOs are located in large cities and district capital cities and 90% of them are concentrated in urban areas. Therefore, the regional distribution of NGOs will aggravate already existing disparities, including the urban-rural gap (NHDR, 60).

NGOs are in fact hardly present in rural environments. Most rural young people (more than 60%) say that these organisations have not bothered about approaching the needs of the countryside and 43% say they are badly informed as to the actual existence of NGOs (NR, 299).

Regional disparities are also reflected in the distribution of governmental grants: in 1993, 15 districts received no financial assistance from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, while one district benefited from 10% of the total allocated budget (NHDR, 62).

We also found a need for decentralisation of government aid. In 1996, local government was a minor NGO partner, according to the Foundation for the

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1. *The Economist,* 29 January-4 February 2000, p. 28.

Development of a Civil Society: only 9% of the partnerships involved local government, while partnerships with central government accounted for 16% of the total (NHDR, 61). These figures suggest poor decentralisation of resources, preventing local authorities from taking more of a leading role in encouraging participation by citizens.

Most young Romanians (81%) say that they do not know of any youth/governmental organisations capable of helping them solve some of their personal problems (NR, 349). Indeed, a considerable number of people consider non-governmental organisations irrelevant or without any public impact. This is confirmed by a Foundation for the Development of Civil Society study on voluntary work, indicating that 45% of the subjects had not heard of non-governmental organisations (NHDR, 64).

This being the case, the fact that many young people do not identify with the associative structures of civil society may mean that the associative movement is somewhat out of touch with the aspirations and problems of a significant proportion of Romanian young people.

Low rates of membership among young people in particular is certainly an indicator of political indifference, which is not a new phenomenon at all. It is quite normal in western countries and is now shared by the majority of Romanians. According to the results of the POB in October 1998, 76% of Romanians were not interested in local political life, and 65% in national political life. Also, at that time 79% of the subjects thought that their influence over decisions taken at local level is low or very low. At national level the rate of this opinion was even higher: 83%.

Public Opinion Barometer results of June 2000 provided by the Metro Media Transilvania, show a decline in participation (table 4), even where the organisations are certainly available (table 5).

Table 4. Membership in organisations or associations (sport, professional, unions, etc.)[1]

	National	Rural	Rural youth	Urban	Urban youth
Yes	8	6	4	10	11
No	92	94	96	90	89

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1. Public Opinion Barometer, June 2000.

Table 5. Are there any associations or NGOs in your area?[1] *

	National	Rural	Rural youth	Urban	Urban youth
Yes	64	35	40	89	91
No	36	65	60	11	9

* Included are the associations connected to agricultural work (agricultural associations)

One of the obvious explanations is that Romanian society is still overcoming the ideological effect of communism: before 1989 the Romanian public space was practically under the total control of the communist regime. A very significant characteristic of Romanian communist society was a ritual construction of public unanimity. The individual had no opportunity to exercise his/her responsibilities at the community level. Romanians, like other citizens of the post-communist countries, exercise their new right for individual choice by refusing association, because before 1989 association was compulsory for most of them. Another important fact was that as well as being forced into that participation without any choice they were also not able to influence any activities of their organisations.

The new factor which keeps the majority of the population at arms length from new associations is the bureaucratic procedures in registration of associations. It normally requires the formal approval by the local law court and a specific ministry (apart from the requirement of an owned or rented headquarters, at least 25 members who agree to be members and to sign for that, board of directors, and so on). As a result a lot of people simply give up the whole idea.

Material constraints are closely linked with the general living conditions of the Romanian population close to or under the poverty line. Some initial compulsory costs have to be met by those who are trying to register the association. If about 80% of the population can cover only basic needs or not even that (41% cannot even satisfy basic needs), the financial cost of participation (however small it might be) remains problematic.

Lack of facilities could be added to the list of constraints. For example, in Panticeu (the village where we met three mayors and young people) the main request of the villages' mayors in improvement of youth participation was for renovation of the village culture house.

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1. *Ibid.*

6.2. Youth cultures/subcultures

The fact that young Romanians do not take part in structures of associations does not mean that they do not participate in the formal sociability networks which channel their everyday lives. Juvenile sociability networks are firmly established in their leisure activities: 59% of young Romanians meet up frequently with friends.

However, many young Romanians express a desire to occupy their free time in some different way: 30% go to the cinema, but many more (53%) would like to go. Likewise, 15% go to the theatre but many more (64%) would like to, 13% go to museums/exhibitions/art galleries, many fewer than the percentage (60%) that would like to do so. In view of this situation, measures should be taken (travel discounts, free travel for a given number of kilometres/hours) in order to allow young people to enjoy the forms of cultural consumption which most appeal to them.

If these initiatives are not taken, many young people will end up getting into passive leisure, with television the main activity. This is not to say that other young people do not get involved in alternative youth cultures of a performative kind. During our second visit to Romania last summer we saw a lot of roller skates in Bucharest. We were told that there was a major meeting point for skaters in Herastru Park, where a modern track had been set up for skating contests. The performative nature of roller skating is transposed to other contexts: "spending many hours together, the rollers form a homogenous collectivity with common habits and preferences. As the result of questioning, it was found that many of them are passionate players of snooker" (NR, 321). These young people can show us their skill as roller skaters. They need only a smooth area to put their talents to the test. This open area is most likely what they need in reality, in order to roll their ambitions to success.

And when this fails to happen, they can "come off the rails". Drug taking by young Romanians needs careful attention from the makers of youth policy. In the first place, there are no representative data at national level on drug taking. But it is known that the number of hospitalisations at the National Pilot Centre for Drug Addicts (NPCDA) has risen significantly: the number of patients hospitalised in the first quarter of 1998 was 100% more than the average for any quarter in 1997 (NR, 159).

The process and context of initiation into drug taking and the factors leading to drug addiction amongst young Romanians need to be studied in order for the right political action to be taken.

According to a study carried out by the Youth Studies and Research Centre, whilst at the beginning of 1997 most young users were 18 to 22 years old,

by the beginning of 1998 their age had fallen to 14 to 15 years old. In other words, initiation into drugs is taking place at an increasingly early age. This suggests that prevention policies should be aimed primarily at the youngest young people. A number of young high school students in Bucharest were questioned about the problem of drug addiction, and their suggestions deserve to be taken seriously: firstly, more information campaigns on the risks and effects of drugs, and special lessons at school on this subject.

Involvement in drug taking is for some young people a way of escaping the real world in which they live. The same is true of computer games and the feverish adoration of the Internet.

> "Internet is for me a drug. When I receive it seems to me I am shooting heroin in my veins." (young man, 17 years) (NR, 319).

Why are young people so keen on computer games? Because in the virtual scenario of a computer game, they discover themselves as protagonists, on the interstices of a composite reality: half image, half substance, an intermediate reality of a simulated reality. This is what happens with young people, who make up the majority of the voyagers (or surfers) in cyberspace.

Computer games provide this de-realisation of the real or realisation of the virtual. The question is whether these games will make it possible to realise, in virtual terms, aspirations which are highly difficult to attain in reality. For many young people, for example, the world of education appears aleatory: assessments, their qualifications, even their future. The real world, "real life", is full of uncertainty. Computer or video games, on the other hand, exercise a performative power: when using a flight simulator young people feel themselves to be pilots, as players in a game they internalise the hero's mission.

> "When you are seated in front of a PC and try to play, you have the impression that the games can offer you more than life [...]. There are terrible intelligent games, that catch you, and even create the illusion of living them." (24 years old, student of Philosophy) (NR, 319).

Internet cafés are expanding and frequented by thousands of young Romanians, eager to link up to other parts of the world. Youth policies do not exploit this cyberculture in an intelligent manner in order to facilitate the life of young people.

6.3. Political participation

The concept of political participation, like so many other sociological categories, is ambiguous and imprecise. But we may say, succinctly, that political participation depends fundamentally on both the objective possibility and the subjective will to take part in the political decision-making process.

Variation in participation depends on the presence and absence not only of structures for participation in the political system, but also of a political culture of participation. In other words, participation depends not only on integration (political mobilisation) but also on information (political interest).[1]

The particular combination of integration and information therefore gives rise to different attitudes to participation. What happened under the "communist" regime? The objective presence of integration combined with the subjective absence of information meant that intervention by young Romanians was effective but unconscious, and therefore of doubtful legitimacy. We may classify such participation as alienated.

Figure 1. Integration vs. information

Information Integration	+	–
+	Participation	Alienation
–	Apathy	Marginalisation

But for other young people, namely street children and those in rural environments, the situation they face is marginalisation, given that there is no integration and the information available is manifestly insufficient.

In either case, the lack of integration is due to a large extent to mistrust of the political parties. The Youth Public Opinion Barometer – 1998 carried out by the Youth Studies and Research Centre pointed out that young Romanian people give political parties low scores of trust. Assessment of communication between public authorities and citizens is also negative (NR, 198-199). Finally, to the question "how happy are you with the political life of our country", on a five-step scale (from "very displeased" to "very pleased") the scores for the variants "displeased" (48%) and "very displeased" (27%) stood much higher in the distribution of responses (NR, 197).

This disinterest, mistrust and dissatisfaction felt by young Romanians with regard to politics suggest a possible interpretation: the problems they feel, as young people, are not being satisfactorily solved.

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1. Manuel Braga da Cruz, *Instituições Políticas e Processos Sociais,* Bertrand, Venda Nova, 1995, pp. 333-367.

6.4. Multicultural society

According to the latest census, in Romania ethnic minorities account for 10.6% of the total population. Data in the national report (chapter XVI – national minorities) suggest the need to promote good interethnic relations of cohabitation and the need for educational policies for young people.

Of the various ethnic minorities in the country, integration is most problematic for the Roma (Gypsies). This is firstly because their population has been growing in relation to the total Romanian population, given the high birth rate, and secondly because the economic and social changes taking place lead to greater stratification of Romanian citizens of distinct origins. And thirdly because discrimination against the Roma has historical and ideological roots.

Gypsies in Romania were slaves until the mid-nineteenth century: "They were slaves in the full technical sense of the word, treated like chattel property in the legal codes of the Romanian principalities. The codifications of Gypsy slavery became clearer towards the eighteenth century. *Tsigane* in the Romanian language was equivalent with *rób* which might be translated as 'slave'. So it was a social identity, much more than an ethnic cultural identity".[1]

The important change in the political situation of the Roma in eastern European countries today is that they are often recognised, at least formally and legally, as a national minority. Many NGOs have been and are promoting this trend. This recognition brings some advantages to the Roma people: "There are now resources that are distributed to Gypsies – publications, broadcasting rights, associations, cultural centres, etc. – as part of policies with which states address their minority problems".[2]

However, the opinion of Nicolae Gheorghe, Vice-President of the International Romani Union, should be considered: "I personally am critical of this trend in the Romani movement which seeks to fashion Romanies as a national minority because I consider that in reality, the true concept of national minority is only a by-product of nation-state building. The discourse of national minorities is another way to reproduce and to reinforce the nation-state. The fact that the nation-states are so generous now to these 'minorities' is just one device for reinforcing the legitimacy of these states as ethnic states, states which actually belong to an ethnic 'majority'. So, ethnic minority policies are exhibited as if in a display cabinet, like a showcase in

1. Nicolae Gheorghe, "The social construction of Romani identity", in Thomas Acton (Ed.), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity,* University of Hertfordshire Press, Hertfordshire, 1997, p. 158.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 160.

international politics to make sure that the Council of Europe and the western democracies think that things are well in eastern Europe".[1]

Sometimes, policies designed to help ethnic minorities are, inescapably, motivated by a kind of "national egoism" principle. Ethnic minorities are seen, in this ideology, as polluting cultural homogeneity. As such they are either eliminated or coercively assimilated, or else merely tolerated and discriminated against, by being regarded as resident aliens.[2]

The question to be debated therefore is which are the best policies for promoting an inclusive solution for the Roma in the societies in which they live. If social participation and inclusion are essential conditions for citizenship,[3] it is also necessary to be aware of the exclusion processes (social, economic, legal and political) which are the reverse side of inclusion mechanisms. It is not easy to arrive at a solution for inclusion of people who bear the historical burden of socialisation for exclusion.

For this very reason, our suggestions are for an inclusive solution to start with younger generations. There must be a strong policy commitment to integration of young Gypsies: with support for education, in training and vocational integration programmes.

But measures are also needed in order to safeguard the cultural distinctiveness of different ethnic groups, remembering that the right to be different is one thing – it is quite another to take a difference as the basis for devaluing that which is different. Hence the need for programmes which promote tolerance and greater understanding between young people from different cultural backgrounds, in order to eliminate more or less subtle forms of racism.

6.5. Exclusion/inclusion

The problem of multiculturalism is therefore closely connected with processes of inclusion/exclusion.

The national report gives us a long list of legislative measures which are theoretically designed to safeguard the rights of these minorities. The report states: "They enjoy all the rights of Romanian citizens, without any discrimination. More than that, the young people belonging to the national minorities benefit also from some special protective measures, especially in relation to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, lin-

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1. *Ibid.,* p. 160.
2. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995.
3. B. Turner, *Citizenship and Capitalism,* Allen & Unwin, London, 1986; Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in the Liberal State,* John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1994; and Robert E. Goodin, "Inclusion and exclusion", *Archives européennes de sociologie,* Vol. XXXVII, No. 2, 1996, pp. 343-370.

guistic and religious identity" (NR, 338).

But reality shows us that good legislative intentions do not always have a practical effect. You can't change things by decree. Hence our disagreement with the belief – stated in the national report – that "the regulations relating to the protection of national minorities have become effective" (NR, 338). Moreover, this belief becomes unsustainable when it is suggested that if there are instances of inequality they are due to people being unaware of their (formal) rights under the law: "One of the problems which persons belonging to the national minorities seem to face at present in Romania is inadequate knowledge of the rights provided for in the Romanian legislation in force and of the institutions especially authorised, with powers in this field" (NR, 338).

If the problem of exclusion (effect) is to be imputed to the ignorance of the excluded (cause), a way has to be found to break this vicious circle: the powers of the institutions referred to have to be broadened so that they can provide information on legal rights to those not enjoying the respective benefits.

As we have seen, young people from a rural background, young unemployed people and young women are at risk of exclusion. To these we should add disabled young people and young people from shelter institutions.

The problem of street kids is one of the most worrying issues. Some of these children are involved in drug taking (autolac) and others try to bring in money in a variety of different ways. The general prevalence of sexual abuse is very widespread in the case of this population: rape, prostitution, modelling for pornographic films and photos, transforming themselves into rapists, the leaders getting included in special sex traffic networks.

The living conditions of these children are deplorable. We were informed that Romania has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Europe (NR,152). According to the General Department for Public Health, the incidence of tuberculosis amongst the young population rose during the period from 1990 to 1998. This is the result of poverty and the precarious housing conditions of Romanian young people.

In the case of street children, the picture is even worse. Sometimes, not even the police help them: "the money the street kids manage to collect is very little and they have to give it to the police to be left in peace" (NR, 323).

It is not easy to find a solution to the street children problem. During our first visit to Romania, we visited Gavroche House, where we had the chance to witness the enormity of the challenge of facing up to this problem. The Director of Gavroche House, Madi Butu, with her experience in the field,

gave us her opinion which deserves serious consideration. She believes that in order to solve the problem of street children the families have to be involved in the process of rehabilitation and integration of these children. Indeed, a recent study conducted by Save the Children – Romania, Unicef, Gavroche House and the Life Quality Research Institute, warns that children need to be placed in their natural family or a substitute family, instead of placing them in care institutions. Permanent institutionalisation is seen as the worst solution.

But how can these children be integrated in their original families if they go to live on the street precisely because of the effect of living in destructured families? Many of these children were in fact forced to go on the streets and find money through theft, begging, burglary and prostitution.

> "I left home because I could not bear being beaten by my second father. He sent me to procure money and to buy alcohol, vodka ... If I could not bring as much as he wanted, he beat me with a belt until he could see blood cooling, and then he tied me to the heater. When he was drunk, he beat also my mother or he obliged her to drink with him." (G.S., 16 years old, quoted by Save the Children – Romania).

The problem of street children should therefore be seen as a problem resulting from the miserable conditions in which many Romanian families live. And if this is the root of the problem, it cannot be resolved merely by a policy of providing support. The important thing is to give these families work, decent housing, conditions under which their children can study.

7. Youth policy

Romanian national youth policy is taking shape simultaneously with the dramatic changes taking place in society; this is a fairly typical situation for countries in transition. The most striking aspect is the fragmented approach to youth policies and the lack of any overall co-ordination or planning, or indeed of any assessment of the results of the policies.

7.1. Youth policies in the country in transition

The absence of any real integrated youth policy is largely the result of historical factors. In reality, the various unconnected political measures which have been adopted are replicas of a more distant past and reflect the uncertainties and ambiguities of the more recent past.

Under the communist regime it was thought that the problem of socialising young people (for example, in education) could only be satisfactorily resolved by the state. The country lived under a regime which believed in the "stratification" of youth.

The events of 1989 marked the beginning of a new phase: that of the "de-stratification" of youth. By accepting that young people can be educated and trained not only by the state but mainly by civil institutions, it is implicitly accepted that this education and training is not merely or even predominantly political.

The aims of youth socialisation have therefore been de-politicised and the state is consigned to the role of administering the resources, which it is intended should also be pursued by private institutions (NGOs) and youth associations. Hence the close relationship between the Youth and Sports Ministry and youth associations and organisations.

In other words, state intervention is essentially geared to fostering the activities of youth associations. From a system which sought to indoctrinate (prior to 1989) the country has turned to a policy of encouraging participation, supporting youth organisations, namely through NGOs.

Given this, it is possible to argue that since 1989 there has been no youth policy in Romania in terms of an overall strategy designed to promote the education and social integration of young people. There are only sectoral policies, not always consistent with each other, and rarely concerted. This is borne out by the organisational framework for government institutions expressly dealing with youth issues on an almost exclusive basis. On the one

hand there are various ministerial organisations (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Department for National Minorities), with sectoral youth policies. On the other hand there is the Youth and Sports Ministry, with policies designed to support youth NGOs and youth associations.

The challenge facing Romania in this sector is to broaden the scope of sectoral youth policies and to increase their effectiveness; but youth issues cannot simply be resolved by a set of sectoral policies. There is therefore the challenge of co-ordinating these sectoral policies in an integrated and overall fashion. This is the only way to face up effectively to the aggravated situation of young people in societies like Romania going through a complex transition period.

7.2. Institutions

The Youth and Sports Ministry is certainly one of the major governmental agencies shaping the Romanian national youth policy, but its real share in policy development and implementation is very small and very specific: focused on sports and recreational activities and youth NGOs.

Figure 2. Orientation of Romanian youth policy
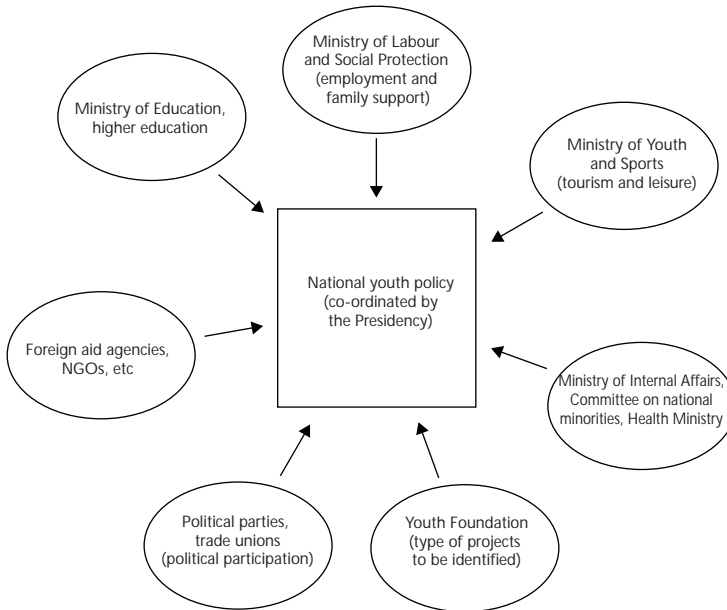
As a society in transition Romania has some transitional institutions designed to co-ordinate new democratic youth policy and a special department responsible for youth policy within the Presidency was established in 1997 to take on this co-ordination. This special department comprises five people. Its main function is to co-ordinate all institutions involved in youth matters, but it seems to be mainly involved with some of the NGOs. Social networking is the most important feature of the department.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (one of the 16 ministries, whose leader is also a Cabinet Minister) is trying to co-ordinate the youth policy on the level of fact-finding and enacting legislation. The best established contacts are with the National Police (Ministry of Internal Affairs), the Department for National Minorities and the Ministry of Education.

Youth foundations can be described as transitional types of youth organisations and the bridge between the past and the future national youth policy. After 1990 youth foundations took over the premises of the former communist organisations, but it would be politically incorrect to ignore these foundations in the national youth policy.

The Youth Studies and Research Centre has the potential to be a social actor shaping national youth policy if it manages to overcome dependency on the ministry. It has a group of interesting researchers, but little understanding of its own role in national youth policy.

Finally, the NGOs are the prime partners of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Whilst during the early 1990s many of them focused on human rights and also on supporting children with special needs, they have recently reoriented their activities towards the social assistance, education, health and regional development sectors.

As stated in the national report, "the basic idea that guides the youth activity of Youth and Sports Ministry is that of harmonising its programmes with those originating in the sphere of civil society (NGOs) [...]. This form of planning ministry activity [...] answers efficiently and totally the signs given by the youth associated in NGOs [...] transmitted to the governmental sector" (NR, 37).

It is clear that the NGOs deserve special care from the state, as many of them play a very important role. However, youth policies cannot – or rather, should not – be left up to the NGOs. Only a small number of Romanian young people belong to them. In Romania the non-governmental sector totals approximately 23 000 organisations, but two thirds of them are concentrated in the big cities and the developed areas.[1] If the Youth and Sports

1. *National Report on Education for All – Romania.* Ministry of National Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, Bucharest, 1997, p. 7.

Ministry persists in basing its policies exclusively on NGO initiatives, the scope of its action will necessarily be highly limited. Young people not belonging to NGOs or not helped by them are left out altogether.

The desire to guard the work of associations from government control is understandable. In the Constitution of 1965 (Article 3), the Communist Party was defined as the "political force directing all of society". Any initiative not emanating from the party, that is from its hierarchy, was prohibited.[1] The constitution distinguished a special category of Romanian citizens: the members of the Communist Party, regarded as the "most advanced and aware citizens in society" (Article 26). In contrast, all initiatives coming from civil society were deemed suspect, and even bridge clubs were banned. The Ceauşescu regime transformed Romanian society into an amorphous mass of individuals deprived of the ability to express themselves as citizens.[2]

After 1989, the development of the NGOs can be viewed as the natural result of the increasingly important role played by civil society. Indeed, the overthrow of the regimes of eastern Europe worked greatly to the benefit of the role played by civil associations of various kinds: unions, churches, dissident intellectuals, etc. It was only natural that also in Romania voices which had been silenced made themselves heard on major issues, such as the defence of the environment, human rights, ethnic minorities, young people, etc.

However, not all of Romanian civil society has a propensity for this type of social participation – more voluntary than obligatory, more persuasive than coercive. It is likely that old forms of socialisation still render people unwilling to take part, even if outside the traditional state domains where they were coerced into participation.

The associative youth sector in Romania is not in fact very large.[3] According to recent data provided by the Youth Studies and Research Centre, only 11% of young people were involved with associative organisations (NR, 17). This low level of participation is justified, in the national report, by the difficulties young people have in managing their daily life: "The conclusions of the studies show that the associative phenomenon at this age group is reduced by disruptive factors that appear in Romanian society [... such as the ...]

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1. Nadia Bradus, op. cit.
2. Ibid.
3. The creation of associative organisations is often dependent on slow-moving and complex processes and procedures. This is the case, for instance, of the Council of Romanian Youth. The process of setting up the Council started shortly after the fall of the totalitarian regime, but was only concluded in March 1998. Another example of slow-moving legislation is the fact that no definitive arrangement has been established for the legal and administrative situation of the former property of the Communist Youth Union, administered after December 1989 by the Youth and Sports Ministry and by other youth foundations.

majority of young people face problems of an existential order: a place of work, a minimum income necessary for a decent living standard, a prospect for evolution in a professional career, a home in order to set up a family. Because these problems remained unsolved in the past and have no prospects of solution in the near future, the young person puts on the back seat the necessity of association, of taking part in civic life" (NR, 48). However, the question posed is the following: Shouldn't young people be supported by youth organisations in precisely these problems?

From what we were able to observe there does not exist adequate co-ordination between the main agents involved in implementing national youth policy. Moreover, there appears to be some (conflict-generating?) overlapping of interests and aims, as between the Presidency and the Youth and Sports Ministry. There is a need for a co-ordinating structure to tie together the sectoral policies for youth pursued by the different ministries (National Education Ministry, Labour and Social Protection Ministry, Ministry of Culture, Internal Affairs Ministry, and National Defence Ministry).

Although there are a number of interministerial committees, they appear to be unco-ordinated and to be set up to resolve occasional specific problems: in other words, they have very specific, and possibly ephemeral, powers. In other cases, we are unaware of how interministerial co-ordination is conducted. For example, what is the relation between the Youth and Sports Ministry and the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Education? Given this situation – of non-integration of youth policies – it is no surprise that these weaknesses are felt and reproduced at local public administration level.

Attempts to establish local youth policies have not met with great success. This is a gap which needs to be filled. The constraints are identified and explained in the national report: "The possibilities of the Ministry of Youth and Sports to solve certain needs at local level are limited by both material and human factors" (NR, 28). The Ministry of Youth and Sports has therefore relied on the support of the NGOs, through a programme especially created for this purpose: "Partnership Programme between the Local Public Administration and the Youth Non-Governmental Organisations". But once more there is no indication of the guidelines for such co-operation. Are local youth policies exclusively in the hands of the specific interests of the NGOs? Will the NGOs meet all the greatest needs felt by young people at local level?

There is no doubt about the evident advantages of decentralising youth policy. The heterogeneity of Romanian youth (as we have seen in chapter 3) reflects the asymmetries in the country as a whole, and decentralisation is an advisable course.

In short, after the events of 1989, it is not possible to speak of a real and integrated youth policy. The objective then was limited to ensuring a minimum relationship between the Youth and Sports Ministry and the youth associative structures. The biggest problem posed at the time was: what use should be made of the public property of the Communist Youth Union? And the decision (Decree Law No. 150/1990) was that this property should be managed by a mixed council comprising representatives of the Youth and Sports Ministry and youth associations.

At a later stage, youth policies in Romania were characteristically fragmentary and unco-ordinated. The present legal framework comprises a large mass of legislation – laws, decrees, ministerial orders, governmental decisions and governmental orders relating to the protection of children and young people's rights. However, little or nothing is known about the effect or effectiveness of these measures. Measures should never be seen as the "objective" of youth policies. They are merely a means to achieving given ends. To what extent have these measures been successful? In order to answer this we inevitably need a rigorous assessment of the measures.

Youth from Romania estimate that in Romania the legal regulations have no significant effect on their lives and "have remained only on paper" (46%), "have proved to be inapplicable" (21%) or "have woefully failed in most cases" (19%) (NR, 351). On the other hand, young people have knowledge to a small extent (40%) or not at all (41%) of programmes initiated by the Youth and Sports Ministry for Romanian youth. Those who know of them, quite a few, estimate them as being less useful. Most young people (68%) cannot estimate the efficiency with which the funds of the Youth and Sports Ministry are administrated (NR, 350). With these facts in mind it is perhaps possible to understand that the confidence of young people in NGOs is at below-average level (Opinion Barometer – Youth, 1998).

It is important that youth policies should deal with the expectations and aspirations expressed by young people. Asked about the necessity of measures concerning youth, a majority of young Romanians called for intervention in the following areas: social housing (84%), sponsorship (78%), unemployment (77%), youth promotion in managerial positions (72%), and introduction in the classified list of professions of the youth worker profession (70%) (NR, 351).

Finally, at a time when the doors of the European Union are half open to Romania, it is not possible to exclude from youth policy the potential of co-operation. Work experience and study grants are opportunities not to be missed.

8. In search of new identities

Romania is going through a phase of transition, discovering a new course. The same may be said of young Romanians. As during any period in the wake of a major political and economic upheaval, uncertainty as to the future dominates all efforts to rebuild a social order. The order of the past is no longer relevant and the order of the future has not yet stabilised. The same can be said of reconstructing identities.

One of the most urgent tasks of all transitional societies is the re-establishment of trust, after decades of ideologisation and imposing of false identities. Information from the POB confirms that this process is still under way in Romanian society.

Table 6. Do you think that most people are trustworthy? (%)[1]

	National	Rural	Rural youth	Urban	Urban youth
Yes	29	30	28	28	24
No	65	64	68	66	73
Don't know/ No answer	6	6	4	6	3

The low rate of people who think that the "generalised other" is trustworthy could stand as a confirmation of the traditional dimension of Romanian society. Another explanation of these figures is grounded on the hypotheses of social anomie due to the very fast changes experienced at all levels of Romanian society, changes associated with transition to the market economy.

8.1. Transitions by young Romanians in a country in transition

We have seen that young Romanians are living through a process of transition experienced as a tension between past and future, between markers of pre-modernity which resist change and post-modern traits which map out new juvenile identities. In this continuum between pre-modernity and post-modernity, old identities are transmitted and new identities generated, in a complex process which intersects with another continuum between integration (social or economic) and disintegration. Young people from different

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1. Public Opinion Barometer - June 2000

social backgrounds are playing out their identities in this matrix of different possibilities. The following table shows some groups of young people who, for one reason or another, are the potential targets of youth policies.

Figure 3. Modernity vs. integration

Modernity Integration	–	+
+	Young housewives Teenage mothers Young people (some married) without their own home (living with parents) Unpaid workers	Graduates in employment Grey/informal workers
–	"Ruralised" urban young people Gypsies Street children	Single mothers Unemployed graduates Young people alienated through new technologies Young drug addicts

a. Pre-modernity promotes social forms of social integration, namely in the community and in the family. This is fundamentally normative, that is, ideological integration. In pre-modernity, the construction of juvenile identities is subject to normative coerciveness which standardises or legitimises situations wholly incompatible with developed societies. This is the case of young people who accept working for their family without being paid, girls who are socialised for domestic docility in defence of the "family interest" (looking after old people, children and husbands), young mothers who seek (social) status through motherhood, thereby aggravating their poverty by having lots of children.

Youth policies in this case should seek to help young people towards independence: special credit facilities should be granted for buying/building their own homes and agricultural machinery, transport and education systems should be improved and extended, in order to ensure that young people receive a proper education. School buses are needed in remote rural areas to support young people's educational mobility, to combat truancy and to eliminate residential social exclusion.

The situation of rural young women deserves special attention which should be given within the framework of a national policy aimed at young women, including their education and occupational opportunities.

Finally, pre-modern characteristics should be exploited in order to escape pre-modernity. For example, the spirit of community co-operation should be

exploited in order to develop co-operatives or companies for agriculture or agricultural products. On our visit to Sarata we were given an instructive example of the success of three brothers who had joined forces, each contributing with his own tractor. Associations of this type (Three Brothers – Three Tractors, Ltd) should be encouraged. In other words, a system of state support is needed for young people's small and medium-sized enterprises. Incentives should also be given for self-employed young people and for self-sufficient lifestyles.

Despite the relative (normative) integration of young people living in this situation, it is urgent that youth policies treat them as a priority target. Why? Because if this normative integration exists it is merely to counterbalance manifest economic penury. It is the lack of housing, inaccessible schools and unemployment which lead these young people to seek refuge within their families. But these same young people – through the media, for instance – will become increasingly aware of the miserable conditions in which they live, as they gradually understand that there is another world, from which they feel themselves distant. They will foster dreams of consumption, and adopt strategies of mobility. They may want to try their luck in the cities, and they may not have the luck to find it. They will soon be on the road to normative disintegration, to add to the misfortune of being left out by the modern economy.

The best way to reach these young people is through local support networks. It is therefore important to delegate some functions of the central authorities in youth policy to the local level; this should include finance and creating resources for youth programmes at the local level (region, community).

Young people living in a pre-modern situation start work very young. When they are no longer young they will probably see that they missed out on youth. This is why we recommend the development of basic (elementary) infrastructures for recreation activities for young people in these communities.

b. Pre-modernity is a source of social disintegration in developing societies. This is what happens to the "ruralised" urban young. This category covers young people who have tried to survive in the cities, but return to the countryside under the pressure of unemployment. It also covers young people who although they have always lived in the countryside already have an urban way of thinking. The fact that almost half of Romanian young people live in villages does not represent an option on their part: it is imposed by the economic crisis and urban unemployment.

These "ruralised" urban young people live in a normative tension with older generations; they fail to adapt to the rural way of life and feel frustrated by

the failure of their projected identities. And obviously, they are not happy about unpaid work on family farms. They run the risk of long-term unemployment. Our recommendations – both for these and for other young people – are: to introduce a system of tutor-teachers at secondary schools who will provide young people with detailed information on the labour markets prior to leaving school, and to extend the job shop scheme from universities to include secondary schools.

Some of these "ruralised" urban young people will feel a strong urge to emigrate. It is important that they are informed of current employment regulations in other European countries, of the opportunities and of the risks of illegal work abroad.

Another manifestation of pre-modernity as the cause of disintegration is the phenomenon of street children. As we have seen, street children exist because of the de-structuring of their original families; this de-structuring of families is caused by great economic insecurity. These children are highly vulnerable. A policy is needed which can protect young people (especially young women) from being exploited by traffickers.

Young Gypsies are another example of social disintegration, with significant pre-modern traits. The ethnicity of the group is a defensive reaction to the marginalisation to which they are subject. This is because of Gypsy experience of inferior social position, of carrying a stigmatised identity in society in general, where words like Tzigan, Zingari, Zigeuner always carried a stigma of inferiority. Hence the need to ensure practical anti-discrimination measures to protect the educational, employment and human rights of ethnic minorities. In particular, there is a need for increased measures based on positive discrimination regarding access by Roma children and young people to higher levels of education.

c. Unlike pre-modernity, which brings with it forms of normative integration, modernity and post-modernity promote forms of economic integration for young people. This is the situation in which we find young people involved in the black economy (mafia networks), in prostitution or in drug dealing. Young people estimate that in Romanian society corruption is a problem (28% of those asked) and even a very serious problem (64% of those asked) (NR, 88).

The problem is not only that fortunes are suddenly amassed by unlawful means. It is that these fortunes are produced at the cost of many other young people whose identities are degraded. We are speaking of drug addicts and young people obliged to prostitute themselves. Drastic measures are needed to put an end to this phenomenon, in which the mobsters are upstream and the victims of the activities downstream.

In this field we also find young graduates in employment. These may constitute a problem to the extent that they may be enticed abroad to work. They will not find the incentives needed to keep them in Romania and put their specialist know-how to use. Hence the importance of supporting the young elite and adopting a system of measures to protect the country's intellectual capital.

d. Post-modernity also generates forms of social disintegration. Hedonistic currents make sexual relations easier and more frequent. The possibility of contracting Aids increases, as does that of unwanted pregnancies. Hence the phenomenon of single mothers – either unmarried or divorced (divorce itself is a phenomenon typical of modernity and post-modernity). Programmes are needed to support these mothers and their children. But above all the country needs to develop a system of sexual education for young people which should reflect the cultural traditions of Romanian society, whilst at the same time explaining to young people the consequences of prostitution, unprotected sex, etc.

We have seen that post-modernity can produce a generation of people alienated through new technologies; young people who live in virtual realities, seeking through this to escape the frustrations of real life, such as unemployment. Efforts should be made to exploit the cybercultural potential of this generation. Even computer game fanatics can be encouraged to join company teams, where management can be associated with game theory.

A country on the road to modernisation cannot afford to lose the intellectual and technocratic elite without whom modernisation is not possible. Young unemployed graduates are a national waste. They must be found work. If their training is out of step with the needs of the market, retraining programmes must be created; if the universities train graduates in subjects without career openings, they should create courses which guarantee employment opportunities for the students. There is a need for a public information system (possibly website based) on exchange programmes for young people, availability of grants, etc. This should include internal and international exchanges.

The Romanian economy has not yet managed to gain the momentum needed in order to attract long-term capital investment. New technologies and know-how industries should be developed, in order to act as the driving force behind modernisation.

As for young drug addicts, three simple measures: prevention, prevention and prevention. This means: information rather than criminalisation. Young people should be given proper information on drugs which are addictive, so that they can take conscious decisions. It is the dealers and traffickers who should be vigorously pursued by criminal law.

8.2. Between past and future

Do young Romanians have hope in their future and the future of Romania? The results of the surveys which were available to us are not very encouraging. To the open question "What significant changes do you expect to take place in Romania in the next five years?", posed in the Opinion Poll 2000, the most significant finding was the 54% of respondents who were unable to express an opinion on the matter. Indeed of those who did respond (46%), 9% said they "do not know what to expect".

Only a few young people were able to commit themselves to optimistic or pessimistic points of view: 16% expected a better (decent) living and 9% expressed pessimism of the type "I do not expect anything".

The scepticism of the majority of Romanian young people persists when they are asked to look at the recent past. They think that certain groups and social categories were favoured by the changes of 1989 and subsequent evolutions, and others were disfavoured. The most favoured are considered to be politicians, management staff in companies and institutions and entrepreneurs; the most disfavoured are blue-collar workers, peasants and young people (NR, 90). Young people aged under 20 (children of the baby-boom generation) were the most dissatisfied with daily life: 24% of them declared themselves "very dissatisfied" (NR, 91).

This tension between a painful past and an unpromising future has to be faced politically. This is one of the greatest challenges facing youth policies in Romania. It is also a challenge facing Europe. It is important that Romanian young people should be able to benefit from increasing contact with Europe, taking advantage of the European agreement under which Romania has become a European Union associated country. Phare funds can also be used for developing education and vocational training and research. From a European point of view, participation by Romanian young people in transnational community programmes has to be increased.

In some of our informal contacts with NGOs and groups of young people we found that one of the worst hostages of "state-dependency" was the belief that only with European Union help would it be possible to achieve a better future. Such help is undoubtedly important. But the country needs to rethink its propensity to go and fetch something from elsewhere in order to bridge the gap between the fair aspirations of Romanian young people and the means needed to realise these ambitions. Community aid should come in exchange for a clear and conscious will on the part of the Romanians to work towards reform and modernisation.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

As a result of evaluation of the Romanian national youth policy during the two official visits and review of the Romanian national report and other documentation provided by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and other Romanian institutions, the group of experts appointed by the Council of Europe came to the following conclusions and developed the following recommendations:

9.1. General issues of national youth policy

Despite the great efforts of the Romanian Government, Romanian national youth policy still lacks a systematic approach which should present a vision of the changing role of young people in present-day Romanian society. The national youth policy is not yet solid and coherent and it does not fully address the changes in Romanian society after 1989 and 1996. The function of the governmental agencies in relation to youth affairs is still not clear and unambigious. This especially concerns the role of the Presidency in the shaping of national youth policy.

Further clarification is required about the relationship between national agencies and youth NGOs, which are a focus of the current Romanian youth policy.

It was unclear to the group of experts how local authorities (governments) obtained money to develop a local youth policy apart from funding from youth NGOs and other western technical assistance.

Our (limited) opportunity to meet with representatives of local authorities gave us the impression that youth policy at the county level lacks resources (apart from western aid projects and NGOs that are also mainly western funded) and experienced staff (absence of a national system of professional youth workers).

In view of the fact that the majority of children and young people in Romania live in rural areas, the group of experts was not able to see any practical evidence that the governmental agencies direct their efforts especially to these target groups in order to modernise their situation.

There is no indication that young people in Romania have been influential in shaping youth policy.

The group of experts have been informed about the draft law, but neither time nor resources (none of us can professionally assess it from the legal

point of view) allow us to include any substantial comments on this draft in the report. Therefore we strongly recommend the Ministry of Youth and Sports to seek legal advice from civil society experts from European Union countries and possibly to ask for technical assistance from European Union countries (Germany, France for example), to find an appropriate solution to this matter. In the meantime the NGOs should be encouraged by the ministry to rent the property for their projects, which is the way everybody does it in western Europe.

Therefore the following measures are recommended:

– To establish an interministerial governmental committee on youth policy could serve the co-ordination of a coherent youth policy at national level. All relevant ministries: Labour and Social Protection, Education, Youth and Sports, National Agency for Employment and Professional Training, National Minorities should be involved in this activity at national and regional levels. This should also include the specification of each agency role and responsibility for national youth policy at national, provincial and local community level.

– Local authorities should have more rights and responsibilities in youth policy decisions. They should make youth policy not only for organised but for unorganised young people as well.

– Taking into consideration that Romania does not have an institute of youth workers, the group of experts strongly recommends the establishment of a qualification of youth worker which would comply with European standards of occupational qualifications. Training of youth workers should be at university and college level. The European Union and the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe should be asked for technical assistance in this area and to stimulate the exchange of youth workers with other European countries.

9.2 Education, employment, family policies

Economic and social restructuring of Romanian society affected the life of the younger generations at all levels of social institutions: education, employment and family. The major problem so far is the lack of sufficient resources to provide young people with facilities to cope with their transition period and have a satisfactory youth.

High rates of unemployment among young people in rural areas in particular is partly a result of underdeveloped systems of job finding, professional education and training for the local labour markets, and economic mobility. The situation of under- and overqualification in relation to the local and national labour markets is quite typical for Romania. Young people are unable to move across the country getting jobs they want due to lack of

housing, poor transportation systems and very poor information systems. This increases young people's desperation and their desire to look for a better future abroad or pull them out of the educational system which can not guarantee professional success. The decreased value of formal education, especially in the rural areas, causes truancy.

General improvement of the economy, social stability and the mobilisation of foreign investment are obviously and urgently needed to guarantee young Romanians better life chances, but a set of other immediate measures should be considered as well, such as:

– Operation of school transport (school buses) in remote rural areas to support children's and young people's educational mobility, combat truancy and mitigate residential social exclusion.

– Discount on bus fares or free transport for young people registered unemployed to enable them to go to near-by cities and there use facilities and information systems which are not available in small villages and rural areas.

– Introduction of a system of tutor-teachers at secondary schools who will provide young people with detailed information on national and local labour markets. Those teachers should work closely together with the National Agency for Employment and Professional Training. One of the tasks would be to inform young people about current employment regulations in other European countries and the risks of illegal work abroad.

– Sexual education should be compulsory in secondary schools to prepare young people for new risks concerning matters of health and sexual harassment.

– Development of a policy to combat brain-drain at the level of higher education in co-operation with state and local authorities and national private companies by providing opportunities for highly qualified young people to work in Romania; in other words: protect intellectual human capital!

– Improvement of information and communication technologies and other teaching material for all schools, not only some urban high schools, but even more urgently, rural schools in remote areas.

– Development of a nation-wide system of private and state support for self-employed young people as well as small and medium-sized enterprises and encouragement of self-sufficient life styles.

– Introduction of a system of credits which should enable young families as well as university students, young workers and self-employed young people to get low interest credits to buy (rent) houses, flats, land, agricultural machines, etc.

– Creation of housing facilities in the countryside, possibly with the help of young people who are in need of it, is urgent to make them independent from their parents' housing.

– Development of a national policy addressing young women (especially in the rural areas) including their education and professional promotion.

9.3. Youth mobility and information as basic human rights

The right to mobility is one of the fundamental human rights which all countries have to guarantee. The lack of mobility within Romania is mainly due to the lack of a good transportation system. Visiting other countries for tourism, study or work is available only to a very small minority of young people in Romania. The majority of those young people, whom the group of experts were able to meet, have a feeling that even in the more distant future they will not be able to be more mobile. That is an unbearable situation for modern young Europeans.

The group of experts also learnt that Romania is not a member of the Partial Agreement on the Youth Card, due to the government's claim of lack of financial resources to sustain this project. Also Romania has not paid its annual contribution to the European Youth Foundation for the last three years.

Therefore we recommend:

– The government should become a member of the Partial Agreement on the Youth Card and restart paying its annual contribution to the European Youth Foundation.

– The government should encourage local businessmen and enterprises to sponsor youth-cultural activities (sports, music, photography, exhibitions, theatre, etc.) by offering, among other forms of support, tax deductions for such expenditures.

– To set up youth hostels which can attract internal and international tourists and stimulate the growth of local economies. Young people should be the main actors in setting up and maintaining such hostels and recreation areas (as is done already by some youth NGOs); this also enhances job opportunities in local areas. Romanian youth foundations could be the main partners in this project, providing the hotels and experience in running tourist business.

– To develop a system of publicly available information bases (probably website based) on national and international exchange programmes for young people, availability of grants, etc.

– State and NGOs should develop an extensive scholarship system to enable as many young people as possible (and many more than now) to

spend some time in another European country for study and/or work experience. Together with European institutions Romania should work on an extension of partnerships with other European schools, universities, enterprises.

– To develop a nation-wide system of youth information points on the basis of the criteria set out in Recommendation No. R (90) 7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on youth information and counselling, experiences in other European countries, and with the assistance of the European Agency for Youth Information and Counselling (ERYICA). Ask the European Union to finance Internet connection with other European youth information systems. See to it that the countryside especially gets this system. This seems for Romania the most practical way to implement non-formal education.

– To develop a system of social and economic gratifications to encourage qualified teachers to go and stay in rural areas.

– To attract teachers and youth researchers from other European countries to meet with Romanian partners in summer schools (as is done already in some programmes).

– To develop a voucher system by which young people, especially those who live in small villages, have the right to travel free for a certain amount of kilometres/hours per week/month to enhance their mobility. This is important in order to get job information, develop networks (especially in the cities) and use recreation in the cities or other communities.

9.4. Minority groups and participation

Young people as a group, as a generation, have close to zero chance to participate in local affairs and influence policy in their favour. This is perhaps the greatest challenge Romanian youth policy faces at the moment. Another striking problem in present-day Romania is open and hidden discrimination of the Roma population by neglecting the needs of their communities, especially in the rural areas. Among other groups of young people at risk of social exclusion identified by the group of experts are: street children, young women and, especially in the rural areas, disabled young people, young offenders.

With the appreciation of the scale of this problem in a transnational society, the group of experts therefore recommends:

– Among other measures, to consider establishing local youth councils, which will only make sense if young people have a substantial influence on the decision-making process.

– Promotion of youth projects which allow Roma and Romanian young people to meet and participate in common activities (educational as well as cultural). There should also be special study grants for exceptionally gifted Roma students.

Although the group of experts could not get a clear picture whether the problem of street children is actually under control or it is so fundamentally structural that it cannot be solved in the short run, our opinion is that reintegration of street children into families, including foster parents should be the priority model in this process. The Romanian legal system is very permissive about parental child abuse. Social services do not count child abuse by parents as a social problem, which contributes to the number of children who run away from their parental homes and are not willing to return. Therefore the group of experts recommends:

– The Presidency should review a current law on parents' legal responsibility for abusing their children. A national "watch dog" organisation should be established, including the Telephone of Trust, offering children protection and counselling.

– We did not get clear practical evidence of any policy towards disabled young people. They should get special opportunities for education and work at protected work places.

– Young women in the rural areas seem to be especially in need of support to enlarge their life opportunities and become able to develop less traditionally bound life perspectives. They should get additional means to develop their educational careers.

– We did not get a clear picture about measures for reintegration of young criminal offenders. Models of best practices from other European countries should be taken into consideration.

9.5. Youth research

The group of experts found that the structure of youth research in Romania has not changed significantly since the collapse of communism. The Ministry of Youth and Sports inherited the Youth Studies and Research Centre from the previous structures without changing its status and role. The centre is under-funded and does not meet the modern challenge in youth research. Romanian youth researchers are isolated, without any substantial contacts with their colleagues in the country and abroad, only few can afford to take part in youth research activities. The most experienced are leaving the area of youth research. It is quite clear that youth research should be restructured nationally.

– The ministry should apply for assistance to the Romanian national professional associations (sociological, psychological, etc.) and also encourage

them to establish research committees on youth. A national co-ordinator or a council on youth should be established.

– Youth research should be based on the best resources across the country's universities and research centres and not only on the Youth Studies and Research Centre which does not have adequate financial and professional resources. Funding for youth research projects should be awarded to those institutions which can provide the best quality and on a competitive basis.

– The National Youth Research Committee should consider promotion of the Unesco (ROSTE) initiative in creating "sister institutes": to offer the opportunity to Romanian researchers to work in western youth research centres, and to offer the same opportunity to the western researchers.

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Romania is undergoing a complex transformation period which is of great interest to the study of societies in transition as an example of the processes under way in eastern Europe. The relevance of the Romanian case study is also linked with the country's location on the centuries-old frontier between the West and the East. Hence the paradigmatic sociological interest of some of the options facing youth policy development in Romania, such as the choice between facilitation or interventionist policy. Young democracies wishing to establish new institutions, modernise their economies and promote social welfare face difficult decisions. Unlike the decisions taken during the transition process, in a context of general consensus as to the need to do away with the previous autocratic system, the decisions to be taken during consolidation should have a lasting and significant effect on the future – starting with the future of young people.