BUCHAREST, A WELL ENDOWED YET RATHER PASSIVE CAPITAL: A SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PERSPECTIVE[1]

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This paper examines social sustainability of the metropolitan area of the capital city. It looks at the recent developments in the areas of: population, poverty and social inclusion, education and training, employment and labour market, together with health and perceived quality of life. The analysis identifies several policy fields to be addressed at the national and local levels: (i) institutionalized support for vulnerable groups, (ii) participation in early childhood education and lifelong learning, and (iii) employment policies to promote the integration of the youth on the labour market and the "active ageing".

***Keywords**: social sustainability, Bucharest-Ilfov, Europe 2020, local development.*

This paper is about examining social sustainability in the metropolitan area of Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. The analysis builds on the concept of social sustainability, which focuses on the social pillars contributing to sustainable development. It contributes to an increased theory-research linkage by looking for sustainable patterns of urban development in Bucharest-Ilfov region, which includes Bucharest city. The first part shortly introduces conceptualization of social sustainability. The second part analyses trends of urban development of Bucharest on several dimensions: population, poverty and social inclusion, education and training, employment and labour market, together with health and perceived quality of life. Concluding remarks present the key findings for guiding future policy interventions.

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The growing concern about importance of social sustainability is mainly related to the juxtaposition with the economic and environmental issues. The concept has been developed mostly in relation to sustainable development (SD) at

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local level, as sustainable communities, and in particular to the urban sustainability topic (UNDP, 2003; Colantonio, 2009; Davidson and Wilson, 2009). Defining social sustainability is a difficult and debated task, as it combines two complex and often fuzzy concepts, namely (a) sustainable development, which in itself is a combination of economic, environmental, social and institutional components with (b) an emphasis on social aspects, either 'traditional', such as employment and poverty, or 'emerging', as happiness and social mixing.

Definition of sustainable development is mainly associated with the Bruntland Report (1987) as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' and with a continuous intertwine of economic, environmental and social aspects. From this point, onwards differences[2] arise on multiple levels: the intertwine is represented as either interlocking or concentric circles serving different research goals (Barron and Gauntlett, 2002). Furthermore, there is an emphasis on the 'environmental paradox' as the substantial difference between what is demanded from the Earth and what the Earth can offer, resulting in an either so-called 'stronger sustainability', focusing on reducing the demand side, or in the 'weaker sustainability', with an anthropocentric approach on the resource side, centered around the relationship between people and nature (Williams and Millington, 2004).

The European policy perspective is encompassed in the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS), launched in 2001 and renewed in 2006, using the Bruntland definition, aiming to a continuous improvement of the quality of life and well-being of present and future generations, and supporting 'a dynamic economy with full employment and a high level of education, health protection, social and territorial cohesion and environmental protection in a peaceful and secure world, respecting cultural diversity' (Council of the European Union, 2006: 2).

Definitions of social sustainability are linked with the above-mentioned conceptualizations, in the sense that it is broadly defined as the maintenance and improvement of well-being of current and future generations (Chiu, 2003), or as a system of cultural relations which promotes equity of access to public services (McKenzie, 2004). The different interpretations of social sustainability are summarized under three different development perspectives (Chiu, 2003):

- development-oriented: a sustainable path of development keeps social relations, customs, structures and values;
- environment-oriented, which meets social conditions, norms and preferences which are required for people to act in an ecological manner on resource distribution and intergenerational equality, and
- people-oriented perspective, focuses on social cohesion and preventing social exclusion.

[2] Different research traditions (urban planning, environmentalist, sociology) present various selections of theoretical foundations of the concept – Kavanagh; Omann, Spagenberg, 2002; Stuber, Xiang, 2010.

A more integrative approach is provided by Colantonio's definition of social sustainability, as 'how individuals, communities and societies live with each other and set out to achieve the objectives of development models which they have chosen for themselves, taking also into account the physical boundaries of their places, and planet earth as a whole' (Colantonio, 2009: 8).

The various perspectives on sustainable development make a difference when it comes to integrating sustainable development in the planning process. Colantonio draws attention on the importance of sustainable operating principles, using as example the opposition between the economic sphere versus the social and environmental ones. If the aim is to ensure economic growth, social and environmental objectives will be put into practice, as long as they support economic growth (Colantonio, 2009).

Moreover, social aspects are often overlooked in research projects, in favour of the economic and environmental ones, shows a recent overview of relevant EU Framework Programme (FP6, FP7) funded research (EC, 2010). In addition, only one FP project focused on social inclusion indicators, and indicators of health inequalities are the least researched area. The relative low share of social indicators in the SD research agenda reflects the need to re-think the proper theoretical and operational balance between the pillars contributing to sustainable development.

The problem of choosing the most appropriate indicators integrates social sustainability in the current 'beyond GDP' debate, articulated in the Stiglitz Report (2009), as it underlines the necessity to 'shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's well-being. And measures of well-being should be put in the context of sustainability' (Stiglitz, Sen, Fittousi, 2009: 12). The Report offers recommendations for articulating a more comprehensive measurement under three issues: (1) classical GDP issues, (2) quality of life and (3) sustainability. Multi-dimensionality is key to developing research on well-being, encompassing objective and subjective measurements of the following aspects: material living standards (income, consumption and wealth), health, education, personal activities, including work, political voice and governance, social connections and relationships, environment (present and future conditions), insecurity (both physical and economic) (Stiglitz, Sen, Fittousi, 2009: 15). These dimensions include both traditional, as well as emerging key themes and domains.

Reviewing previous research, under the traditional topics, Colantonio's study (2009) groups fields like: basic needs (including housing), education and skills, equity, employment, human rights, poverty and social justice. The emerging topics include demographic change (ageing and international migration), empowerment, participation and access, identity, sense of place and culture, health and safety, social mixing and cohesion, social capital, well-being, happiness and quality of life. Again, from the measurement point of view, the same study identifies two major trends: social impact assessment (including biophysical and economic variables), and a broader definition of environment, encompassing environmental variables in the social impact assessments. However, the mechanisms for integrating social dimensions into policies for sustainable development are still to

be developed and need considering all the linkages between various themes, such as equity and happiness (Colantonio, 2009).

Placing a stronger emphasis on creating sustainable communities at local level has triggered a whole line of integrated policy and research, focusing on urban development, materialized under different policy papers, such as: *Local Agenda 21* (1995), the *Bristol Accord* (2005), *Leipzig Charter* on Sustainable European Cities (2007), or the *EU Sustainable Development Strategy*, *Lisbon Strategy*, or *Europe 2020 Strategy*[3]. The current paper places the analysis of the urban social sustainability in the integrative approach of sustainable development planning, with reference to the current policy agenda at EU level, namely *Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*.

The description of the situation follows closely the analysis framework defined in the Manual for Local Sustainable Development Strategy (UNDP, 2003), including 'traditional' themes, such as population, poverty and social inclusion, education and training, employment and labour market. 'New' themes are added to this framework, such as demographic change, health and perceived quality of life. The analysis is located at both capital city and metropolitan level, in a European comparative perspective, and is based on the databases of the National Institute of Statistics (INS) and Eurostat. Additionally, we also use data from the available surveys or studies. Most data cover the period 2007–2010. Selection of indicators is based, on the one hand, on the strategic documents at European level (mainly EU SDS and Europe 2020) and, on the other hand, on data availability. For several indicators, lack of data at regional level represents the main reason for not using the same headline indicators as the European policy documents.

Table no 1

Social dimensions of sustainability analysed for the case of Bucharest

Dimension	Headline Indicator
Demography	Old-age Dependency Ratio
Social Inclusion	Absolute Poverty Rate
Education and Training	Structure of the population aged 25–64 by level of education
Employment and Labour Market	Employed population aged 15+
Health	Standardised Death Rate, all causes of death
Quality of Life	Perceived Quality of Life

THE CITY SIZE: DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS

The main challenge to sustainable development in terms of demographic trends is represented by the balance between present and future generations. This is

[3] For in-depth studies on the territorial dimensions of EU strategies, please refer to the ESPON programme – e.g. ESPON, 2006 or ESPON, 2010, available at: www.espon.eu.

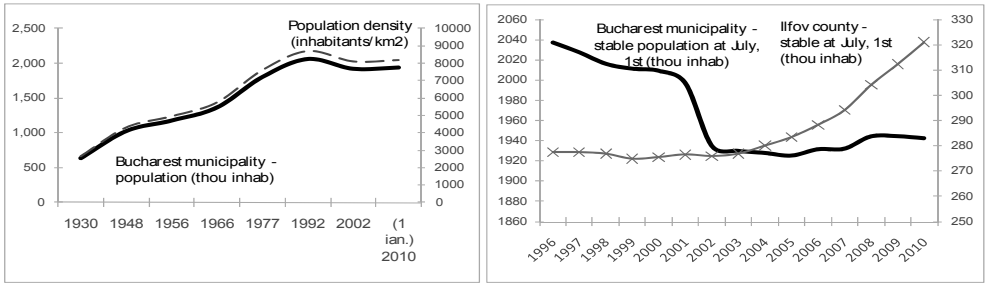
reflected in indicators such as: the ageing population, old-age dependency ratio or time dimension (population pyramids). Policy actions directed at tackling demographic related problems, especially in what concerns the ratio between active and inactive population, should also consider the possibility of attracting nationals from other countries.

The capital city of Bucharest stands for 9% of the country population and covers 238 km². Ilfov County is the smallest county of the country: it covers an area of 1,583 km² and its population represents just 1.5% of the total country population. Out of the total number of residents living in Bucharest-Ilfov region (2,263,261 people, on July 1st, 2010), almost 86% live in Bucharest. This distribution of the population distinguishes the capital of Romania (next to Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria) among the European capitals where the dominant trend is that 25–80% of the population lives in the suburbs or in the larger urban zone.

In what concerns density, Bucharest is one of the most densely populated capitals of Europe (ranking 15th). The high density of the population in Bucharest-Ilfov area (1,242.9 inhabitants/km² in 2010) is due to the urban agglomeration of the capital.

Figure 1

Evolution of the population in Bucharest Municipality and Ilfov County



Data source: INS on-line TEMPO database.

The population decreased after 2000 in Bucharest (–3.3%), but increased in Ilfov County. The natural growth of the population was negative after 1990[4] until 2008, in Ilfov, and until 2009, in Bucharest and it was stressed by the temporary migration to work abroad, particularly after 2000. However, the internal migration compensated much of the loss of population, the migration rate being clearly positive in the period 2004–2010. Thus, in all, Bucharest-Ilfov region lost less than 1% of its population, in the decade 2000–2010.

[4] With a minimum of – 5.5 to 1 000 inhabitants in Ilfov and – 4.6 to 1 000 inhabitants in Bucharest, in 1996.

Table no 2

Brief presentation of the territory and population of Bucharest-Ilfov region

	Bucharest	**Ilfov**	**Bucharest-Ilfov**
Area (km^2)	238	1.583	1.821
Population (inhabitants on July 1st 2010)	1.942.254	321.007	2.263.261
Density of the population (inhabitants/km^2)	8.160.7	202.8	1.242.9
Evolution of the population, 2010 compared to 2000	–3.3%	+16.5%	–0.9%
Total dependency ratio, 2010	36.4%	38.6%	35.1%
– 2020 prediction (PRAO)[5]	41.4%	37.0%	40.8%
Old-age dependency ratio	19.2%	19.2%	19.2%
– 2020 prediction (PRAO)	25.1%	19.4%	24.3%
% women	53.3%	51.3%	53.0%
% men	46.7%	48.7%	47.0%
% urban population	100.0%	42.4%	92.2%
% rural population	0.0%	57.6%	7.8%

Data source: INS. Number of residents on July 1st, on-line TEMPO database. Total dependency ratio: (<15 + >64) % (15–64). Total dependency ratio of the elder: >64% (15–64).

On the basis of the demographic trends of the past ten years, Eurostat projections show that the population of Bucharest-Ilfov region will be rather constant until 2020 and that it will lose less than 5% (similar to the EU27 average), by 2030.

The 19.2% old-age dependency ratio in Bucharest-Ilfov region is one of the lowest in Europe (the 28th region with the lowest ratio, in 2009). According to the INS projections, the dependency ratio of the elder will increase to 25.1% by 2020 in Bucharest and to 24.3% in Bucharest-Ilfov region, value which is comparable with (not higher than) the European average.

There are 275 thousands people aged 65 and over living in the capital, accounting for 14.2% of the total population (July 2010). The proportion of old people was rather stable in Bucharest, varying very little between 1996 and 2010 (12.8% to 14.6%). Anyhow, INS projections show that the proportion of the people aged 65 and over is expected to increase to about 18% of the total population, by 2020 (PRAO 2010–2012). In Ilfov County, the 14% proportion of old people is expected to remain constant until 2020.

The proportion of children (0–19 years) decreased almost continuously, from almost 25% of the population in 1996 to 16.4% in July 2010. The most severe decrease was observed in the age category 0–14. However, the INS projections for the next 10 years (2011–2020) show that the proportion of children aged 0–14 will remain of 11–12% in Bucharest and 13–14% in Ilfov.

[5] PRAO – *Regional plan of action for employment and social inclusion* and the *Implementation plan for the Regional plan of action 2010–2012. Bucharest-Ilfov region*, elaborated by the Regional Pact for employment and social inclusion Bucharest-Ilfov.

Currently, in Bucharest there are about 319 thousands children and teenagers (0–19 years old), who represent between 16% and 19% (district 5) of the total population of the six of Bucharest districts. Most of them live in districts 6, 3 and 2, and just 12% of the children from Bucharest live in district 1.

The population of working age (15–65) had a positive evolution, increasing from 70.9% in 1996 to over 74% in the interval 2005–2008. In July 2010, the work force resources of the capital amounted to over 1.42 million people (73.3% of the population). By 2020, the proportion of the population of working age is expected to decrease to 70.7% in Bucharest, and to be around 72–73% in Ilfov.

The population of working age represents between 68% (district 1) and 76% (district 5) of the district population, with 73–74% in the other districts.

The ethnic composition of Bucharest residents changed dramatically over the past 80 years[6]. In 1930, the proportion of the ethnic minorities was 16% of the total population (about 100,000 people), half of which were Jews, followed by Magyars and Germans and other minorities representing more than 1% of the internal structure of the minorities. The population of other ethnic groups than Romanian decreased significantly in time, partly because of the outflow of the Hebrews and Germans during the communist period, and partly because of the massive increase of the population of the town by the inflow of Romanian ethnics from other regions of the country, particularly from the rural areas.

Thus, according to the 2002 Census, the ethnic minorities represent just 3% of the total population (about 58,000 people), almost half being Roma, followed at a large distance by the Magyars, Hebrews and Germans. A total of 27,322 people have self-identified as Roma. The Roma population is concentrated in districts 1, 2 and 5, and in the historic centre of Bucharest, as well as in other 13 localities from Ilfov. However, more recent studies based on hetero-identification, promote estimates of the Roma population of more than 10% of Bucharest population, about 300,000 people.

The multicultural diversity of Bucharest is developing by the increasing number of legal immigrants[7]. Recent surveys (SNSPA, 2010) show that the legal immigrants from China, Republic of Moldavia, Turkey and different Arabian states account for most of the people from third countries who have a valid living permit in Bucharest (December 31, 2009). The European and US citizen represent just about 7% of them.

POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Within the context of sustainable development, social inclusion calls for solidarity between and within generations and increased quality of life for

[6] The data on the ethnic affiliation are collected only at census and it is done by self-identification.

[7] The number of legal immigrants in Romania decreased between 2000 and 2004 (from 11,024 people to 2,987 people), increasing thereafter to 10,030 in 2008, and to 8,606 in 2009.

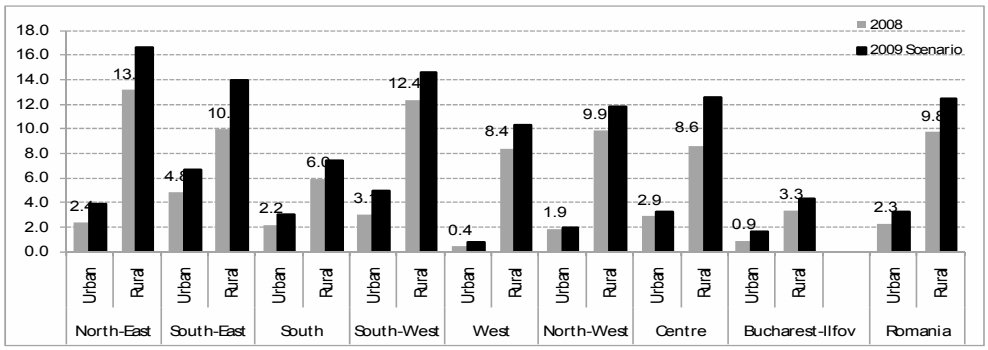
individual well-being (EU Sustainable Development Strategy – SDS, 2006). Reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion is an operational objective at EU level, for both EU SDS and Europe 2020 Strategy.

Among the European countries, Romania has a high level of poverty[8]. The poverty level increased until 2000, after which it decreased continuously. The rate of absolute poverty (Crai et al., 2009) decreased from 35.9% of the population, in 2000 to 5.7%, in 2008 (by about 1.22 million people). Along the entire period, the groups with the highest risk of poverty included:

- The large households, with many children (particularly three children and more);
- The children (0–14) and the youth (15–24);
- The people with low level of education (particularly the people with a maximum of 10 grades);
- The informal workers, the agricultural workers, the unemployed, the house wives;
- The Roma people.

Figure 2

Rates of absolute poverty, by regions (2008–2009)



Data source: Crai et al. (2009), UNICEF and the World Bank. Data: HBS (INS). Estimations using the consumption per equivalent adult person. Estimation method developed in collaboration by WB, INS, CASPIS, UB and ICCV, in 2002, described in detail in WB, *Poverty Assessment* (2003).

Bucharest-Ilfov region had constantly poverty rates significantly lower than in the other regions of the country. Particularly in the urban areas, in Bucharest and in the towns of Ilfov County, the poverty level is comparable with the European average. In the communes from Ilfov County, the poverty rates are higher, but consistently lower than in the other rural areas of the country.

Life in Bucharest is more expensive than in most of the other towns from Romania, in terms of consumption goods and foods. This is relevant because most

[8] Irrespective of the method of assessment: absolute or relative.

of the households in Romania spend 40–48% of the total expenditure for food (INS, 2010).

However, the main incomes of the households (wages and pensions) are substantially higher in Bucharest than in the rest of the country. This is why the average standard of life of the households from Bucharest-Ilfov is higher and the incidence of poverty is much lower. Thus, in 2009–2010, the average wage represented more than 150% of the national average in Bucharest, and almost 140% in Ilfov County. The average pensions were 91% of the national average in Ilfov County, and 127%, in Bucharest.

The Eurostat data on the total income of the households at the regional level show that the primary incomes per inhabitant (in PPC) represent, in Bucharest-Ilfov, 71.9% of the EU27 average, compared to just 37.2% in West Region, 31.8% in Central Region and 21.1% in North-east Region (in 2007). The primary incomes represent mostly (88%) disposable incomes (proportion similar to the EU27 average) and they increased between 2000–2007 more than in the other regions of the country, being among the highest increases in Europe. The financial crisis and the austerity measures taken between 2009–2010 affected adversely the income of the population, but the average income in Bucharest-Ilfov region, after having stagnated in 2009, resumed their increase in 2010, and will continue to increase by 4–5% annually, until 2014 (CNP, 2011).

Even if the average standard of living is higher in Bucharest-Ilfov region than in the rest of the country, there are vulnerable groups which need support from the community. First, there are the people living in absolute poverty. Their number was of about 19,000 in 2008, in the urban areas, and 6,000 in the rural areas of Ilfov County (Crai et al., 2009). Their number might have increase during the period of crisis (2009–2010).

The profile of the poor people is similar with that of the rest of the country. More than half are children and young people. The Roma people are statistically overrepresented, but they do not represent the majority of the poor people in Bucharest. A socially sustainable development strategy for the capital must, therefore, include a component addressed to the children and their specific problems.

The *Strategy for development and modernization of the system of social assistance in Bucharest Municipality, 2008–2013* (DGASPC Bucharest) mentions the following target groups: at-risk children (children from the system of social protection, children at risk of breaking from the family, children with disabilities, street children, children whose parents work abroad), the young people leaving the system of special protection, the people with disabilities, the elder living in institutions or alone (with no relatives), victims of domestic violence, drug addicts, the homeless, the Roma people, the immigrants/refugees, the population suffering from calamities in emergency situations.

The rate of infant mortality[9] is a relevant indicator not just for the health state of the general population, but also for the level of development of the medical

[9] Dead before the age of 1 per 1,000 live births.

services targeting the children. The rate of infant mortality is lower in Bucharest than in Ilfov and than the national average (6‰, compared to 8.4‰, and 10.1‰, INS, data 2009). Moreover, the decrease compared to 1990 was stronger than in the other regions of the country[10], because social campaigns have been organised in Bucharest, an increasing number of women used the pre-natal checks and the supply of relevant medical services improved. Despite this progress, Bucharest remains among the European capitals with the highest number of infants dead per 1,000 live births.

Besides the children living in poor families, almost 5,000[11] children (0–19) are included in the system of special protection (June 2010), in family-type services, or in public and private residential services.

Another highly vulnerable group of children (0–19), not yet addressed by a targeted national policy, refers to the children whose parents (one or both) are working abroad. According to the estimates of the General Directorates of Social Assistance and Protection of Children, there are about 319 thousands such children in Bucharest, and 66 thousands in Ilfov County (June 2010).

The people with disabilities are another disadvantaged social group, which is well represented in Bucharest-Ilfov. According to ANPH (National Agency for People with Disabilities) data, on December 31, 2010, in Bucharest live 8.32% of the total number of people with disabilities from Romania (HIV/AIDS included), i.e. 57,377 people (of which 565 people in institutions). Of them, 3,562 are children with disabilities. In Ilfov County there are 7,371 people with disabilities, of which 654 children. Most of the people with disabilities living in Bucharest suffer of somatic, mental or psychic handicap. Compared to the other counties of the country, Bucharest has the best endowments: 21 public centres (residential and non-residential), where 800 people with disabilities are assisted.

However, only 4,334 people with disabilities in Bucharest and 236 in Ilfov are employed. In other words, the employment of the adults with disabilities is extremely low, compared to the European levels: only 8% in Bucharest and 3.5% in Ilfov. In the absence of inclusive policies of support for this disadvantaged group, their opportunities and their standard of life cannot improve.

Finally, smaller disadvantaged groups include the homeless adult people, the street children and the drug addicts. According to Samusocial (Service of emergency social assistance), at the end of 2009, a third of the country homeless were located in Bucharest, about 5,000 people, most of them ending in the street because of a psychic disease.

The phenomenon of the street children from the early 1990s narrowed significantly. However, there still are couple of hundreds street children still working or living in the streets of Bucharest (UNICEF). Many of them are

[10]The rate of infant mortality in 1990 was 26.9‰ cross country, 31.5‰ in Ilfov County, 20‰ in Bucharest and 21.5‰ in Bucharest-Ilfov region.

[11] 4,288 in all districts of Bucharest and 681 in Ilfov County.

confronted with health problems (skin disorders, scabies, wounds, burns, even TBS and hepatitis) and most show signs of chronic malnutrition.

The number of drug addicts in Bucharest was 17,767 in 2009, according to the report of the *Lisbon European Agency for Drug Consumption Monitoring*. The drug addicts are aged 20–29 (heroin) and 15–34 (cannabis), the starting age being 15–19, which is the high school period. In other words, campaigns of information, as well as protection measures for the high school students all around Bucharest are absolutely necessary, in order to keep the phenomenon under control and minimize it.

The town halls of all the districts from Bucharest provide support, such as minimum guaranteed income, social canteens, food staples and other forms of aid and services for the poor families. The social canteens supplied food for 3,000 people, in 2009. Starting from 1998, the social canteens also developed in the localities from Ilfov County (108 seats in 2009). The number of beneficiaries of social canteens decreased as the poverty rate decreased. In 2009, over 2,700 people in Bucharest and 108 people in Ilfov used the services of the social canteens. In 2010, the number of seats was expanded in the social canteens. Furthermore, about 86,000 inhabitants from Bucharest (pensions below 400 lei/month, unemployed, poor families) were beneficiaries of the European plan for the distribution of food staples to the disfavoured people.

As shown, in Bucharest live over 275 thousand people aged 65 years or more. Even if the old people have a significantly lower risk of absolute poverty than the children or young people, some categories of old people are vulnerable, either because they have very low pensions which are not enough to cover the utility fees, the food and medicines, or because they lost their dwelling being cheated, and because the family support for the elder decreased. According to DGASPC 2008–2013 strategy, the services for the vulnerable old people are extremely underdeveloped in Bucharest, covering less than 25% of the estimated demand of such services of care in the household, day centres, senior clubs or residential centres. In 2007, most of such services were located in district 1, while districts 4 and 5 had no such social services for the elder. One of the districts offered specialised services. The situation was not better with respect to the private suppliers either. Therefore, the offer of services for the elder must be multiplied and diversified, much more so as the proportion of old people is expected to increase to about 18%, by 2020.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education is included, alongside social inclusion, in the EU SDS on the general theme of ‘Social Inclusion, Demography and Migration’. The main targets set in EU SDS include reducing the number of early-school leavers and completion of upper secondary education for young population (at least 85% of people aged 22

years old). The policy agenda on education and training is completed now with the targets set by the *Europe 2020 Strategy* and detailed below.

The educational system in Bucharest-Ilfov region consists of a network of 653 school units. In the school year 2009–2010, in Bucharest were functioning 221 preschool units, 302 units of preuniversity education and 33 state and private universities. In Ilfov county, the school network consisted of 16 units of preschool education (legal entities), 80 units of preuniversity education and one university.

The need for school renovation is lower in this region than the national average, the current state of the buildings where the teaching process runs being generally good (PRAI 2008–2013)[12]. However, problems exist in the vocational education units, due to the old endowment of the workshops and laboratories, and because of the lack of modern endowments stimulating the education focused on the student. The computing technique improved consistently during the recent years. The number of computers in the region was 7.7 times higher in 2009 than in 2001 (5.6 times higher than at the national level).

The EU member states and the European Commission have elaborated in 2009 a strategic framework for cooperation in education and formation (*ET 2020*)[13]. A quality education at all levels (early, preuniversity, vocational, university and life-long-learning) is the key to success. Only a lifelong quality education ensures the employment, economic success and allows the citizens to fully participate in the society. The long-term objectives of the European strategic framework *ET 2020* are: (1) to promote lifelong education and mobility; (2) to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training; (3) promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; (4) encourage creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training. The following targets to be reached by 2020 have been established:

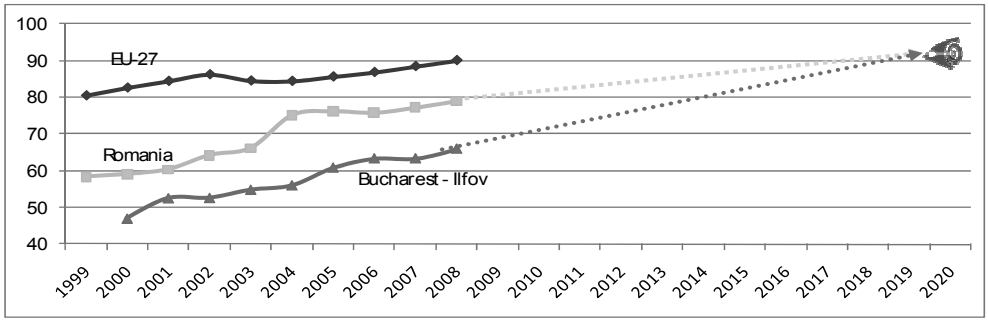
- At least 95% of the children aged four and above (up to school age) must attend early education.
- The proportion of the pupils with poor reading, mathematics and science performance according to PISA tests must be lower than 15%.
- The share of early school leavers must be below 10% (*Europe 2020* target).
- The proportion of higher education graduates must exceed 40% of the people aged 30–34 (*Europe 2020* target).
- The proportion of people aged 25–64 participating in training courses must be higher than 15%.

[12] *The Regional Action Plan for Education PRAI 2008–2013. Region Bucharest-Ilfov*. According to this document, the need for rehabilitation of the region schools was 33% in 2007, compared to, for instance, with 91% in North-east region.

[13] http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy

Figure 3

Participation of children aged four in early childhood education (% children aged four)



Data: Eurostat.

In Bucharest-Ilfov region, the school population enrolled in the preschool education counted 54,086 children, in 2009–2010, of which 91.4% in urban areas and 8.6% in the communes from Ilfov county. Although the participation of the children aged four to early education improved continuously since 2000, Bucharest-Ilfov region, with just 65.9%, remains much below the national average, below the European average and far from the target set for 2020.

The school population enrolled in 2009–2010 in primary and middle school education (including the special education) counted 138,338 children, of which 89.6% in urban area and 10.4% in rural areas. Only data at the national level are available for the quality of the primary and middle school education measured with the PISA test (OECD)[14]. Romania joined this program in 2006 and the pupils (aged 15) obtained scores so low that we rank on the 25th position of the 25 participating European states. In 2009, the scores were better, but Romania (next to Bulgaria) remained on the last position in the European Union, and very far from the strategic target.[15]

In the school year 2009–2010, the number of pupils enrolled in high school education in the region was of 87,321 (of which 94% in the urban areas); 7,633 pupils (92% in the urban areas) were enrolled in the vocational education, and 5,729 people (96% in urban areas) were enrolled in post high-school education.

The decrease of the early school leavers to less than 10% by 2020 is one of the main five goals of the strategy *Europe 2020*, based on three priorities which

[14] PISA international test measures the basic competency of the pupils from the secondary education in three critical areas: reading, mathematics and sciences.

[15] At the national level, the proportion of pupils with poor reading performance decreased from 53.5% in 2006 to 40.4% in 2009, for mathematics from 52.7% to 47%, and for sciences from 46.9% to 41.4%. For the purpose of comparison, the EU27 averages in 2009 were 18.7%, 22.7% and 18.3%. The strategic target for 2020 is to reach proportions below 15%.

support themselves mutually: accomplish a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Currently, over 300,000 young people in Romania dropout of school at the end of the first cycle of secondary education, or even earlier (8 grades, at most). This situation is specific particularly to the rural areas and to the children from disadvantaged environments. There are no data available for the regional level,[16] but given the high accessibility to education and the wide network of school units, Bucharest-Ilfov region is expected to have a lower rate of early school leavers than the national average (16.6%, in 2009), and even than the European average (14.4%, in 2009). As proxy variable, the *Regional Statistic Yearbook 2010* (Eurostat) uses the indicator regarding the proportion of the young people aged 17 still attending school. The value of this indicator for Bucharest-Ilfov region shows that 91.8% of the young people aged 17 choose to go to school, a rather high proportion in Europe, and much higher than 79.3% in West region, 77.5% in Oltenia, or just 67.7% in North-east region.

At the national level, the lack of recent data and studies on the insertion of the graduates and on the long-term requirements of the labour market affect, dramatically the adapting capacity of the educational offer and of the initial professional formation to labour market requirements. Bucharest-Ilfov region benefits, however, of a pilot study regarding the insertion of the vocational and technical graduates, conducted within PHARE program TVET. The study[17] aimed the graduates of the School of Arts and Crafts and of the complementary year, graduates of 2007, and it has shown that one year after graduation, 92.5% of them were continuing their studies. Of the pupils who concluded their studies, only a third had managed to enter the formal labour market as employees or self-employed. This means that just one of three graduates of vocational and technical education had accomplished a successful insertion one year after graduation. The rate of the successful insertion was higher for the male graduates (36.9%) than for the female graduates (28.8%), and for the graduates from the urban areas (17.4%), compared to just 16.7% for the rural graduates. In other words, the rate of successful insertion is particularly low for the graduates of vocational and technical education. Furthermore, a World Bank study (2008)[18] has shown that graduating a vocational school does not represent a protection against the risk of poverty.

[16] The available data are only at the macro-region level. Thus, macro-region 3 which includes Bucharest-Ilfov and South Muntenia, had in 2009 a rate of early school leavers of 16.3% (Eurostat).

[17] Ministry of Education and Research, *Report on the state of the national educational system*, Bucharest, 2009.

[18] Stănculescu, 2008. According to this study, 1.3% of the employed population from Bucharest-Ilfov region were among the working poor in 2006. The households of the working poor included 3.8% of the total population of the region. There are no more recent studies on this topic.

Bucharest is an important university centre of Romania. In the school year 2009–2010, 285,720 students were enrolled in the universities from Bucharest and another 251 in Ilfov county. Data about the proportion of higher education graduates within the population aged 30–34 are available only at the macro-region level[19].

At the regional level, the relevant proxy variable is the structure of the population aged 25–64 by level of education. The proportion of higher education population in Bucharest-Ilfov region is over two times higher than the national average and above the European average. Furthermore, taking into calculation the low proportion of the population with basic education (primary or middle education) it can be noticed that the population from Bucharest-Ilfov region is well educated in comparison with both the rest of the country and with the European average. Therefore, regarding this strategic goal, the region stands all the chances to get significantly close to the *Europe 2020* target.

Table no 3

Structure of the population aged 25–64 by level of education (%)

	2008			2009		
	UE-27	**Romania**	**Bucharest-Ilfov**	**UE-27**	**Romania**	**Bucharest-Ilfov**
Higher education (ISCED 5–6)	24.3	12.8	27.7	25.2	13.2	27.7
High school and vocational school (ISCED 3–4)	47.1	62.5	59.7	46.8	61.4	59.2
Basic education (ISCED 0–2)	28.6	24.7	12.6	28	25.3	13.1

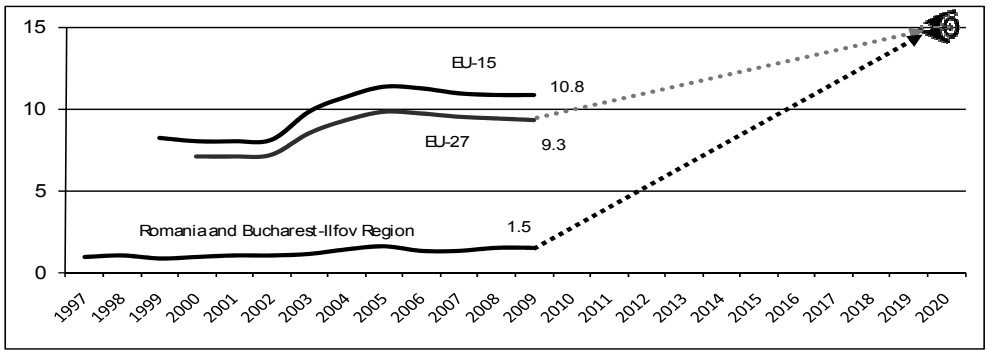
Data: Eurostat.

In terms of lifelong learning, the situation is much worse both at the national level and at the regional level. In 2009, in Bucharest-Ilfov region, under 200,000 adult people attended at least one training course for life-long-learning. Only 1.7% of the population aged 25–64 in 2008 and 1.5% in 2009 attended a form of lifelong learning, which puts Bucharest-Ilfov next to the other region of the country among the European regions with the lowest rates of lifelong training. Only in some regions of Bulgaria, Greece and Hungary (as well as in Turkey) were recorded similar low rates, over 6 times lower than the European average, and this situation may affect the economic competitiveness of the region.

[19] In 2009, the people with higher education from macro-region 3 (Bucharest-Ilfov and South-Muntenia) represent 22.3% of the population aged 30–34, compared to 16.8% the national average and 32.3% EU27 average. Anyhow, given the considerable discrepancy between the two included regions, we consider that most probably, Bucharest-Ilfov region gets close to the European average (Eurostat data).

Figure 4

Participation in lifelong-learning of the population aged 25–64 (%)



Data: Eurostat.

The school dropout rate in Bucharest city decreased considerably, in comparison with 2000. In Ilfov County, the school dropout rate is even lower than in the capital city. The levels of study most affected by school dropout in Bucharest-Ilfov region are the middle school and the School of Arts and Crafts (PRAI 2008–2013). The phenomenon is more intense in the schools from the areas with poor population, from the peripheral areas and from the areas with many Roma ethnics, particularly in districts 2 and 5, and in some poor communes from Ilfov County. Generally, school dropout from high school and vocational education is actually determined by the early dropout from school after the primary or middle education. The school dropout rates are higher in the Schools of Arts and Crafts than in high schools, particularly in the rural areas and for the young people from disfavoured environments.

In conclusion, given the strategic direction of the European education policies, Bucharest-Ilfov region must direct its attention towards the early education and to the continuous formation of the adult people. The quality of the basic education is not satisfactory, but the national policies and programs seem to be more efficient in tackling this issue than local policies.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET

Operational objectives set by the EU SDS renewed in 2006 include: (i) by the end of 2007, every young person who has left school and is unemployed should be offered a job, additional training or other employability measure within six months, and within no more than four months by 2010 and (ii) increasing the labour market participation of disabled persons (EU SDS, 2006:18). Again, as is the case with

social inclusion and education, the policy agenda is completed by the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, aiming at ensuring smart growth.

The labour resources[20] of Bucharest-Ilfov region counted over 1.52 million people in 2009, of which 1.31 million in Bucharest and 212 thousand people in Ilfov County. The slight increase of the population of working age between 2000 and 2009 is reflected in the level of the labour resources. There is a balanced distribution by gender.

The civil active population[21] displayed a continuously increasing trend, after 2000. The civil active population from the region includes 1.25 million people (in 2009). In Bucharest, there are about 1.09 million active persons, of which 1.06 million employed persons. In Ilfov county, the active population counts 160 thousand people, of which 156 thousand people employed.

Table no 4

Participation in the economy of the people aged 15–64 (%)

		1996	2008	2009	2010		
Population aged 15–64					(1st Q)	(2nd Q)	(3rd Q)
Activity rate	Romania	70.8	62.9	63.1	62.3	64.8	64.9
	Bucharest-Ilfov	66.5	65.5	66.5	68.1	68.0	65.9
Employment rate	Romania	65.8	59.0	58.6	57.0	60.1	60.2
	Bucharest-Ilfov	62.4	63.3	63.8	65.2	65.2	62.8

Data: INS, *AMIGO*, on-line TEMPO database.

The economy of the region has developed much over the recent years. Correlated, the involvement of the population aged 15–64 increased after 2003, exceeding the national average, both as activity rate and as employment rate.

Furthermore, if we consider the population aged 20–64[22] the employment rate is even higher: 68.1% in the region, compared to 63.5% at the national level and 69.1% EU27 average (Eurostat data for 2009). Bucharest-Ilfov is the only region in Romania which closes (at the same rate as Europe) the target set by the *Lisbon Strategy* (70% employment level, by the end of 2010). Taking into consideration the prognoses for 2011–2014 (CNP, 2011), only Bucharest-Ilfov seems to stand

[20] The labour resources include the population of working age, able to work (men aged 16–62 and women aged 16–57), as well as the people below and above the working age who are still working. Data from the *Workforce balance* (INS).

[21] The civil active population includes the employed civil population and the registered unemployed. Data from the *Workforce balance* (INS).

[22] The age of 20 is considered conventionally the age when education concludes, the university cycle included.

chances to reach by 2020 the 75% employment target (of the population aged 20–64) set by the acting strategy *Europe 2020*, which continues the *Lisbon Strategy* with the view to achieve a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The participation in economic activities is much higher for men than for women, in Bucharest-Ilfov region and in all country. For instance, in the autumn of 2010, while the activity rate for men was 72.6%, the corresponding rate for women was 59.9%. However, in Bucharest-Ilfov region, the activity rate of women is better than the national one (59.9%, compared to 57.4%). Similarly, in the third quarter of 2010, the employment rate of the women from the region was 57.3%, compared to 68.9% for men and 53.6% the national average for women.

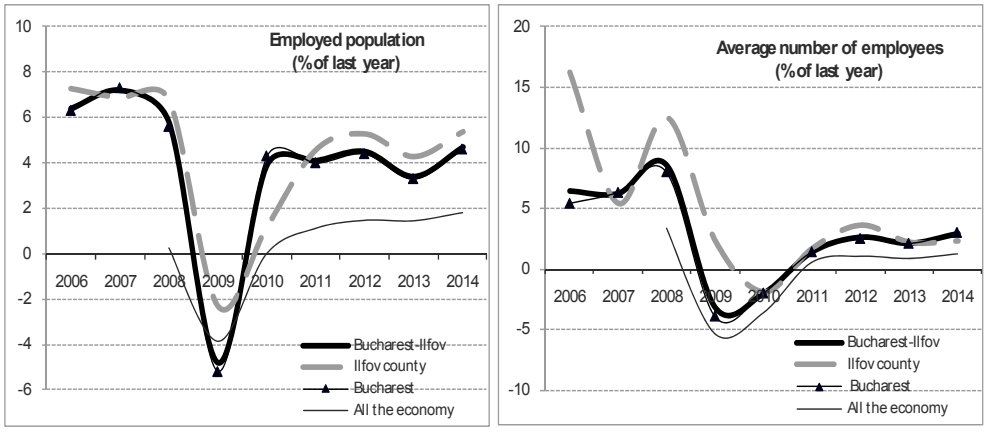
The employment rate is higher in the towns of the region, compared to the communes (63.4% versus 55.9%). This aspect differentiated the capital from the general situation in the country, where usually employment is higher in the rural areas, because of the subsistence agriculture performed by many households.

In 2009, the employed population from Bucharest-Ilfov region consisted of employees, 94.8%[23]. The proportion of the employees in the employed population is substantially higher than the national average (67.2%), higher than the EU27 average (83.4%), and comparable with the situation from the other capital cities.

According to the estimations of the National Commission of Prognosis (CNP, 2011), in Bucharest-Ilfov region, after the decrease from 2009, both the employed population and the average number of employees will restore and will continue to increase over the subsequent years, faster than the national economy.

Figure 5

Evolution of employment and employees in 2011–2014 (%)



Data: CNP, 2011.

[23] Eurostat data based on the *Labour Force Survey* (AMIGO). Throughout the entire period 2002–2009 the proportion of the employees in Bucharest-Ilfov region varied between 94–96%.

The company owners, the entrepreneurs and the self-employed account for just 5% of the the region's employment, compared to almost 15% in Europe (Eurostat, 2009). The proportion of these categories is much higher in Romania (20.8%) than the European average, but their overwhelming majority actually are self-employed farmers. Unlike this situation, in Bucharest and in Europe most of these categories work non-agricultural services, more or less specialised. The information campaigns and the promotion of entrepreneurship, particularly among the youth and women, as well as measures to support the entrepreneurs, should be a strategic direction of action not just at the national level, but at the local and regional level too.

The Eurostat *Regional Yearbook 2010* places Bucharest-Ilfov employment among the top 10 European regions, according to the specialisation index (in 2008). The employed population from this region focused on services in a proportion of 68.2% in 2008 and 68.8% in 2009. The specialization index is even higher in Bucharest city, where 71.1% of the population was occupied in services in 2008 and 71.7% in 2009, while in Ilfov county, the corresponding proportions were of just 47.9% and 49% (however, higher than the national average of 41.9% in 2008 and 42.8% in 2009).

The proportion of the young people (15–24), as well as the proportion of old people (65+) in employment is decreasing both in the region, as well as across the country and in Europe. Both categories of population experiencing the main stages of life transition (from school to work and from activity to inactivity) are seen as vulnerable, particularly under the conditions of global crisis. The active measures and the employment policies promote the integration of the youth[24] on the labour market and the "active ageing"[25]. The regional and local policies can add value, though.

The population of the region meets the basic requirements, in the perspective of smart growth (*Europe 2020*). The people with higher education account for about one third of the region employment, over two times higher than the national average, and higher than the EU27 average. However, the capital is still far from the top ten European regions, from this point of view, whose proportion of the people with higher education reaches 40–55% of the total employment[26].

The population employed in technology and knowledge-intensive industries and services is over three times higher in Bucharest-Ilfov region than the national average. Also, the proportion of the population employed in R&D activities is over four times higher than the national average and higher than the European average.

[24] By diversified services of information and counselling regarding the career, mediation, consultancy and support services to start a business, to stimulate workforce mobility, to subsidize the jobs for the young graduates, for the employment of the students and school pupils during the holidays, programs of professional formation etc.

[25] By ensuring work opportunities for the elder, by the establishment of adequate conditions of work, improving the work health state, facilitating the access to professional formation and providing incentives to make the old people stay at work, deterring early retirement.

[26] These regions include London, Brussels, Brabant Wallon (Belgium), Pais Vasco, Vlaams-Brabant (Belgium), Madrid, Ile de France, Hovedstaden (Denmark), Utrecht (the Netherlands) and East Scotland. (Eurostat, *Regional Yearbook 2010*).

Table no 5

Employed population in Bucharest-Ilfov, compared to the national average and the EU27, from the perspective of smart growth

		1999	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Employed population aged 15+ (thousand persons)[27]	EU-27	191972	210247	214208	219597	222221	218371
	Romania	10649	9115	9291	9353	9369	9244
	Bucharest-Ilfov	1006	960	1020	1018	1032	1041
Of which:							
15–24(%)	EU-27	11.2	10.4	10.3	10.3	10.2	9.6
	Romania	11.3	9.1	8.4	8.3	8.3	8.1
	Bucharest-Ilfov	8.6	7.0	6.4	6.2	6.1	6.2
65 + (%)	EU-27	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8
	Romania	9.9	5.1	4.9	5.5	5.2	4.7
	Bucharest-Ilfov	1.9	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.2
Higher education (ISCED 5–6) (%)	EU-27	18.2	23.2	23.5	25.5	26.2	27.5
	Romania	:	:	:	13.8	14.8	15.4
	Bucharest-Ilfov	:	:	:	31.9	33.2	32.9
Human resources in science and technology[28] (%)	EU-27	:	:	:	:	:	:
	Romania	19.0	24.1	24.7	24.7	25.8	26.8
	Bucharest-Ilfov	39.2	50.0	49.3	49.1	49.9	50.7
Population employed in technology and knowledge-intensive industries and services (%)	EU-27	:	:	:	:	:	:
	Romania	:	:	:	:	1.7	1.8
	Bucharest-Ilfov	:	:	:	:	5.2	5.8
R&D staff and researchers in all branches of the economy (%)	EU-27	:	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	:
	Romania	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	:
	Bucharest-Ilfov	:	2.3	2.2	2.0	2.1	:

Data: Eurostat data from *Labour Force Survey*.

Unemployment is not a problem in Bucharest-Ilfov region. The unemployment rates are much lower than the national average. Under the conditions of the economic crisis, ILO unemployment[29] increased from 3.4% in 2008, to 4% in 2009, and to 4.7%

[27] The employed population (thousand persons) supplied by the *Labour Force Survey* (AMIGO) differs from the one estimated by the *Workforce balance*. Hence, the text data differ from the data in Table 5.

[28] The human resources in science and technology include the people aged 15–74, other than the directors, managers, high state officials and legislative bodies (ISCO 1), who meet at least one of the following two conditions: (1) they have graduated a faculty or (2) they are employed in a position which normally requires higher education, although they didn't graduate higher education.

[29] ILO (International Labour Office) unemployed people are people aged 15–74 who, during the reference period, meet simultaneously the following conditions: (a) don't have a job and don't work with the purpose to obtain incomes; (2) are seeking a job using, during the past 4 weeks (the reference week included) different active methods to get a job: contacting the National (County) Employment Agency, or a private employment agency, direct contact of company owners or HR officials, go to interviews, testing sessions, examinations, undertaking the formalities to start own business, advertising and responding to advertisements , studying the newspaper adds, asking friends, relatives, colleagues, unions, other methods; (c) are available to start working during the next two weeks (including the week of the survey) provided they get a job.

in the autumn of 2010. The number of the registered unemployed[30] peaked at 36,774 people, in September 2010, decreasing to 28,980 people, in January 2011. Besides the decreasing trend, the unemployment in Bucharest-Ilfov region is predominantly a short-term unemployment. While in 2003, the unemployed for 12 months or more accounted for almost two thirds of the total unemployed people, in 2009 only one in ten unemployed was in this situation. At the same time, the long-term unemployment rate was just 0.45%, compared to 2.17% the national average, or 2.98% EU27 average.

Unemployment rate is, however, worryingly high among the youth. The rate of ILO unemployment for the people aged 15–24 was 16.9% in 2009 and reached 23.9% in the third quarter of 2010 (in 2009, EU27 average was 19.9% and the national average was 20.8%). This shows once more the need for policies and measures (national and regional) to integrate the youth on the labour market.

In conclusion, the employed population of Bucharest-Ilfov region is concentrated in the services sector, it is rather young, qualified, and is a key-resource for development.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Perceptions on the quality of life are key to inform on subjective well-being of urban residents. In this regards, we draw on two data sources, for this paper rely on two data sources – an Urban Audit study (Eurostat, 2010), *Survey on perceptions of quality of life in 75 European Cities*, and a survey conducted by the Faculty of Political Science, Sociology Department of the National School of Political and Administrative Science (SNSPA[31]) – *Cartografierea socială a Bucureştiului (Social Mapping of Bucharest)*, 2010.

The European study provides comparable data for 75 cities of the European Union, Croatia and Turkey (all capital cities, and between one and six towns for the larger countries[32]). For Romania, cities included in the survey are Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca and Piatra-Neamț.

As positive assessments, the best appreciated by the residents of Bucharest are cultural facilities and green spaces. In what concerns cultural facilities, objective indicators are in accordance with the population's perceptions. On the one hand, statistical data show that the Bucharest-Ilfov regional development is, by far, the best endowed with cultural institutions and services (cinemas, theatres and musical institutions, exhibition halls, libraries, shows, cultural heritage, etc.). On the other hand, the Cultural Consumption Barometer (2009)[33] shows that the population in the region consumes the most from cultural products and services across the country.

The situation is different with regard to the green spaces. The area covered with green spaces has constantly decreased in Bucharest, from 4.839 ha, in 1990 to

[30] Unemployed people registered with the employment agencies.

[31] Şcoala Națională de Studii Politice şi Administrative (SNSPA).

[32] Volume of the sample at city level includes approximately 500 cases. Data have been collected in November 2009 by Gallup Hungary.

[33] National Survey conducted by the Centre of Study and Research in the field of Culture (Centrul de Studii şi Cercetări în Domeniul Culturii).

4.139 ha, in 2007[34]. Data from the Urban Audit (Eurostat) show that the green spaces area to which the public has access is, in Bucharest, of approximately 21.3 m²/inhabitant (average value for the period of 2007–2010). This value places Bucharest under the last positions, compared to both greatest European capitals, like Helsinki (133,1 m²/loc.), Roma (131,9 m²/loc.) or Stockholm (96,2 m²/loc.), as well as capitals from ex-communist countries, like Sofia (169,2 m²/inhabitant.), Talinn (142,1 m²/inhabitant) or Prague (83,2 m²/inhabitant). Still, 17% of Bucharest residents declare that they are 'very satisfied' and 49% are 'rather satisfied' with green spaces (parks and gardens) from town.

Negative assessments are, however, much more numerous and relate to cleanliness, noise and air pollution. Moreover, residents of capital city of Romania are the least satisfied with the quality of health services[35], and the least inclined of 'always feeling safe' or to consider their city as a 'healthy place to live'.

In terms of health provision, *EU Sustainable Development Strategy* (SDS) sets the generous objective of 'promoting good public health on equal conditions and improving protection against health threats' (EU, 2006:15). The *EU SDS Monitoring Report* takes into consideration indicators such as healthy life years as headline indicator, alongside dimensions of health, health inequalities and determinants of health. The latter ones represent a serious threat for Bucharest residents, as, according to Urban Audit database, Bucharest and Sofia are among the most polluted EU capital cities, with the highest values of number of days particulate matter (PM10) concentrations exceed 50 µg/m³ (days per year). The same finding is supported by a study of the Centre for Sustainable Policies Ecopolis[36], on *Air Quality in Bucharest*, Impact on health[37]. The study highlights the idea that the air pollution is a general problem at city level, as all stations for monitoring air quality in Bucharest have surpassed the maximum allowed concentration of PM10.

Bucharest-Ilfov also keeps a negative track among European regions in what concerns standardized death rate (all causes of death, three-year average, latest available data are for the 2006–2008 period). Although less than the national average (988.8 for 2006–2009 and 967.2 for 2007–2009), Bucharest ranks the highest values in Europe, with 906.9 for 2006–2008, much higher than the average EU 27 level of 627.5. The situation is far worse for people aged 65 years or over, but Bucharest also has high values at European level for people aged less than 65 years.

In what concerns resources of health, Bucharest-Ilfov region is in a good position – top three among European regions, in terms of number of available beds per 100.000 inhabitants, and in a good rank on the number of physicians and doctors per 100.000 inhabitants. Both indicators have values much higher than the national

[34] Regional Statistics Directorate Bucharest-Ilfov, Bucharest. *Statistical Yearbook*, 2008.

[35] The assessment predominantly negative of health services is in accordance with the findings at national level: majority of population considers the health system as 'bad' and 'very bad' – Mărginean and Precupețu (eds.), *Quality of Life in Romania*, Institutul de Cercetare a Calității Vieții (ICCV), 2010.

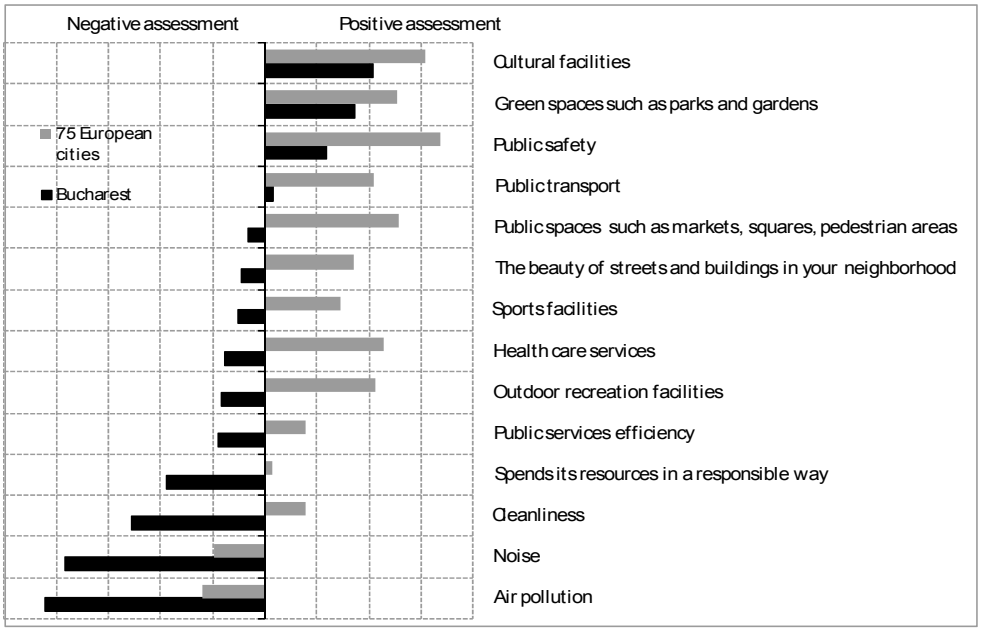
[36] Centrul pentru Politici Durabile *Ecopolis*.

[37] Published in March 2011, available at www.ecopolis.org.ro.

level. However, these indicators do not account for the quality of endowments. On the subjective side, half of Bucharest residents are actually 'afraid of hospitals'. In fact, among the population's fears, only 'fear of earthquake' is higher than 'the fear of hospitals'. Therefore, the poor quality of health services and the poor hospitals conditions are a source of anxiety and dissatisfaction.

Figure 6

Perceived Quality of Life in Bucharest and 75 European cities



Data: Eurostat, Urban Audit, *Survey on perceptions of quality of life in 75 European Cities*, 2010. Note: 75 European cities include Bucharest, all other capital cities and other towns. Syntethic index of dominant opinion (Hofstede method).

Taking all problems mentioned by the people of Bucharest in the European and local surveys, it results a large set of aspects that need improvement: roads (44% of population), cleanliness, traffic (in close relationship with air and noise pollution), parking places, poor status of hospitals and polyclinics (correlated with health services), sport and leisure facilities, housing conditions and work opportunities.

The low levels of satisfaction with different aspects of living in the capital city Bucharest are in accordance with the 'pessimistic' evaluation confirmed by the SNSPA study that 'we need more than three decades to resolve Romania's main problems'. The level of social optimism is quite low – only 7% of the population disagrees with the statement that 'despite what others might think, the situation for ordinary people is deteriorating'. Population is strongly oriented to the future

instead of present times, but this is rather a precautionary measure than a 'hope in better times', as the future is highly uncertain.

There is also a generalized lack of trust in the local public authorities, which are 'not interested in the problems of ordinary people'. Hence, there is no sense in addressing them for resolving one's problems. Pessimism and lack of trust in people result in behavioural terms, in poor civic and social participation, which is an important obstacle for ensuring social sustainability. To conclude, the surveys on perceived quality of life in Bucharest show a status of social passivism, in the context of a rather negative assessment of quality of public services.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined social sustainability in the metropolitan area of Bucharest (Bucharest-Ilfov region). The first part briefly introduced theoretical underpinnings of social sustainability, in the broader context of sustainable development. The case-study on Bucharest is focused on the trends in the following dimensions: population, poverty and social inclusion, education and training, employment and labour market, together with health and perceived quality of life. From the smart growth point of view, Bucharest is a well-endowed city on the corresponding social dimensions.

From the social sustainability point of view, the analysis identifies the following key trends:

1. The old age dependency ratio in Bucharest-Ilfov region is one of the lowest in Europe (the 28th region with the lowest ratio, in 2009). According to statistical projections, the ratio will increase by 2020, but not higher than the European average.

2. Bucharest-Ilfov region had constantly poverty rates significantly lower than in the other regions of the country. Particularly in the urban areas, in Bucharest and in the towns of Ilfov County, the poverty level is comparable with the European average.

3. Vulnerable groups that need support are represented by the people living below the absolute poverty line, people with disabilities, homeless persons (both adult and children), drug consumers, children and elderly people. In particular for this latter group, the supply side of social services should be multiplied and diversified.

4. Main sustainability issues on the education and training system relate to early childhood education and lifelong learning. Although the situation for early childhood education is continuously improving since 2000, the Bucharest-Ilfov region is still under the national and European average, and still far from the 2020 target. Lifelong learning is in a rather poor situation, both at country as well at the regional level.

5. The proportion of the young people (15–24), as well as the proportion of old people (65+) is decreasing in the region, as well as across the country and in Europe. Both categories of population experiencing the main stages of life transition (from school to work and from activity to inactivity) are seen as vulnerable, particularly under the conditions of global crisis. The active measures and the employment policies promote the integration of the youth on the labour market and the "active ageing".

6. The employed population of Bucharest-Ilfov region is concentrated in the services sector, it is rather young, well-qualified and is a key-resource for smart growth.

7. The surveys on perceived quality of life in Bucharest show a status of social passivism, in the context of a negative assessment of quality of public services and a generalized lack of trust in public authorities.

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Această lucrare analizează sustenabilitatea socială a capitalei şi a regiunii Bucureşti-Ilfov. Dezvoltarea regiunii este studiată pe următoarele dimensiuni: populaţie, sărăcie şi incluziune socială, educaţie şi formare profesională, ocupare şi piaţa muncii, alături de sănătate şi calitatea vieţii. Analiza identifică mai multe arii de intervenţie prioritare pentru politicile la nivel naţional şi local: (i) suport instituţional pentru grupurile vulnerabile, (ii) participarea la educaţia timpurie şi formarea continuă şi (iii) politici de ocupare care să promoveze integrarea tinerilor pe piaţa muncii şi „îmbătrânirea activă”.

***Cuvinte-cheie**: sustenabilitate socială, regiunea Bucureşti-Ilfov, Europa 2020, dezvoltare locală.*

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