

MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES FROM ROMANIA E.U. FUNDS – A SOLUTION FOR THE VULNERABLE GROUPS

Nicoleta GUDĂNESCU NICOLAU*

Abstract. *The research emphasizes the situation of the vulnerable groups from Romania, due to the fact that all the external organizations have this concern – poverty and exclusion for the vulnerable groups mostly in this century after the economic crisis. The social exclusion process of the vulnerable groups leads to geographic, ethnic and social segregation, which is the main problem of all the states in the world. In some cases, the entire country is segregated (e.g. African countries). Romania is not an exception and we have some regions with big marginalization problems generated by the differences between people and their social status. In our country the most affected areas are North-East region, South-West Oltenia region, North-west region which can be considered the undeveloped regions from Romania. The research is realized in order to find solutions for these communities as well as financing the interventions done for solving the main problems like living conditions, education, employment and integration in society. The main solutions in financing the interventions are the EU structural and cohesion funds.*

Keywords: *marginalized communities, vulnerable groups, segregation, social inclusion, EU funds.*

Introduction

The challenge of the new century is the social exclusion and the goal is represented by social inclusion. In the actual political and economic context, the leaders, scientists and society representatives are pessimistic regarding the eradication of the poverty and social exclusion. European Union policy has as objective first the social inclusion and after that the eradication of the poverty because the poverty can be just limited, reduced, becoming almost impossible to eradicate it. That's why one of the solutions of the EU is social economy; the people have to work in social organizations in order to have salaries and to be social included. In this way they can integrate in the society and the labor market and their

* Hyperion University, 169, Calea Calarasilor Street, Bucharest, Romania, 030615
n.gudanescu@gmail.com

families to suffer less of poverty. On the short term this can be a solution but this people cannot pass the border of the poverty just working in social organizations that have low revenues and the salaries are similar. For the European countries supplementary funds for the social inclusion of the vulnerable groups can come from the EU structural and cohesion funds that can do more in some cases, like improving the living conditions by houses construction and repairing, evolution by education, money for the children to go to school and not for the last creating possibilities for people to work in their own cities or villages.

The social exclusion is not a metaphor but a complex phenomenon taking different forms, from the excluded individuals because of the economic circumstances, the lack of education and the concerning of the state for these problems until entire excluded communities.

Marginalized communities in Romania.

The concept of marginalized regions and affected groups

A marginalized community is a group that's confined to the lower or peripheral edge of the society. Such a group is denied involvement in mainstream economic, political, cultural and social activities. Marginalization or social exclusion deprives a group of its rightful share of reach to productive resources and ways to utilize its maximum potential for prosperity. It's directed at groups who are seen to differ from perceived norms.¹

Marginalization can affect a community at the macro-level, where its members may lack access to affordable formal education, equal employment or gender-related opportunities. At this level, victims are denied influence or access to the official power structure and can't participate in decision-making processes. At the micro-level, exclusion is manifested in income discrepancies, occupational status, and social networking around race, religion or gender².

Social exclusion leads to subordination of one section of the society as another exercises economic, social and political dominance. Affected groups are usually socially illiterate, uneducated and reliant on others. They're poor and lack basic necessities of life, including access to good healthcare. Marginalized groups include the poor, working children,

¹ https://www.reference.com/world-view/marginalized-community-517401_cfa76aa4eb#

² *Idem* 1

victims of gender and ethnic inequality, the disabled and persons speaking a minority language. The problem can affect an individual, group, household or country³.

The causes of the social marginalization are the mechanisms of the organizing certain societies, but also some individual styles of life, like the lack of integration, familial disorganization, hostile relations with the society and all that mean rules. The geographic discrimination come from the fact that being poor this people are excluded from the normal living conditions zone and there are groping in peripheral areas in pauper houses, living in unhealthy conditions without utilities and sometimes without food.

The groups formed this way are geographically segregated but also excluded from the society. In Romania the groups most affected by the marginalization are Roma population, social assisted persons living from minimum guaranteed amount from the state, single women with many children, religious groups and old people from rural areas without pensions living from subsistence agriculture. The most affected regions by the marginalization of the vulnerable groups are North-East region, South-West Oltenia region, North-West region according to the Rural⁴ and Urban⁵ Atlas of marginalized areas in Romania – elaborated by the World Bank Human Development Division and Labor Minister from Romania.

In Romania at national level rural marginalized communities are distributed in 992 villages (35% from total rural areas from the country), that means 1/3 from all the localities have marginalized communities. Extrapolating from the urban area in total 216 cities of all the dimensions, 1/3 of them have marginalized communities of Roma and non-Roma population.

From all the problems of these communities the biggest problem is the poverty which is reflected in the lack of money to buy minimum for existence (food, clothes) and the lack of a proper house, living in precarious conditions, many people in a few rooms, without utilities (water, heating, electricity) and approximately 160.000 people without identity documents.

This situation is generating by the lack of education and employment in these communities, reflected in the poor resources that they have for

³ *Idem 2*

⁴ http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Minister/F6_Atlas_Rural_RO_23Mar2016.pdf

⁵ <http://www.inforegio.ro/images/Publicatii/Atlas%20zone%20urbane%20marginale.pdf>

everyday living. The main problem is that the situation is repeating for the next generation that has to leave school, to work from small ages for a piece of bread.

The state institutions are in search of solutions, other than the social assistance offered that is not enough and financing more of this people means less resources to invest in main domains like health and education.

From the studies the marginalization on a community is determined using 3 main criteria and 7 indicators that emphasize the level of education, the employment and the living conditions in the specific area. The indicators are presented in the below table.

Marginalization criteria and key indicators for urban and rural areas in Romania (%)

Table 1

	URBAN		RURAL	
CRITERIA	KEY INDICATORS	%	KEY INDICATORS	%
HUMAN CAPITAL	Population 15-64 age that graduated 8 classes	22.1	Population 15-64 age that graduated 8 classes	59.3
	Population with disabilities	8%	Population with disabilities	No data available
	Children 0-17 age from total population of the community	20.5	Children 0-17 age from total population of the community	No data available
EMPLOYMENT	Population 15-64 age employed, not in the education	22.2	Population 15-64 age employed, not in the education	72.1
HOUSING AND LIVING CONDITIONS	Houses without electricity	1%	Houses without electricity	2.7
	Houses overcrowded	54,7	Houses overcrowded	26.1
	Population without property documents	12.3	Population without property documents	87.9

Source: World Bank Atlas – data taken from the 2011 Census on Population and Houses in Romania.

The most affected regions by the marginalization and social exclusion are North-East, South-West and North-West. By region the localities with

the great number of marginalized communities and with big number of people social excluded the situation is the following.

**Number of persons from marginalized communities
in the North-East Region, declared by the local authorities**

Table 2

Crt. No.	Locality	Number of persons	Number of marginalized communities
1	Bacau	24,541	9
2	Moinesti	650	6
3	Onesti	505	2
4	Buhusi	988	3
5	Comanesti	1372	6
6	Darmanesti	1170	3
7	Botosani	1300	3
8	Flamanzi	810	2
9	Iasi	2228	10
10	Harlau	794	3
11	Roman	1677	3
12	Campulung Moldovenesc	420	3
13	Radauti	230	3
14	Suceava	630	6
15	Dolhasca	560	1
16	Vicovu de Sus	650	1
17	Barlad	1645	4
18	Husi	770	8
19	Vaslui	2700	4
TOTAL		43,660	80

Source: Regio Management Authority, List of marginalized areas in Romania, November 2013.

**Number of persons from marginalized communities
in the South-West Region, declared by the local authorities**

Table 3

Crt. No.	Locality	Number of persons	Number of marginalized communities
1	Craiova	1333	7
2	Targu Jiu	9055	12
3	Rovinari	3071	6
4	Drobeta Turnu Severin	2231	8
5	Schela Cladovei	1836	1
6	Orsova	440	2
7	Caracal	348	3
8	Slatina	6988	7
10	Corabia	543	5
11	Ramnicu Valcea	2568	7
TOTAL		28,413	58

Source: Regio Management Authority, List of marginalized areas in Romania, November 2013.

**Number of persons from marginalized communities in the North-West
Region, declared by the local authorities**

Table 4

Crt. No.	Locality	Number of persons	Number of marginalized communities
1	Beius	676	5
2	Marghita	1423	6
3	Oradea	1200	3
4	Salonta	295	1
5	Alesd	1200	1
6	Sacueni	1835	3
7	Bistrita	1370	6
8	Beclean	469	3
9	Campia Turzii	604	6
10	Gherla	477	3
11	Turda	1432	5
12	Baia Mare	2403	9
13	Sighetu Marmatiei	880	3
14	Borsa	375	2
15	Targu Lapus	140	2
16	Viseu de Sus	642	3
17	Zalau	311	2
18	Jibou	825	1
19	Satu Mare	770	4
20	Negresti Oas	657	5
TOTAL		17,975	73

These 3 regions have the biggest marginalized communities as we can observe from the number of people social excluded and number of communities, the most affected is North-East region followed by South West as number of persons (28.143) and North-West (17.975), than the rank for the number of communities North-West is the following with 73 communities and South-West with 58 communities.

Results: Strategies and Policies for social inclusion in Romania.

The process of solving the marginalization problem in Romania started in the past when the precession program **PHARE** (Pologne et Hongrie – Aide a la Restauration Economique) initially established in 1989 by the EU for the 2 countries and extended in 1990 for all the south-eastern European countries. The program included measures of human development from all the social categories in order to be educated and have competencies that help them to have a decent job and gain their own existence.

The following step after Romania integrated in EU was the using of the structural and cohesion funds 2007-2013 allocation, with the 2 years extra for implementation until 2015, the social components of the Human Resources Operational Program. The interventions in social economy, for the social assisted persons, Roma communities, disabilities persons and other vulnerable groups are being financed from this program and are continuing by sustainability measures other 3 years after the financing were finished.

From 2014 Romania have allocated from EU other funds until 2020, from which the public institutions and social partners can use for solving the problems in marginalized communities.

The Government and public institutions proposed by different strategies and policies measures and objectives meant to solve the social inclusion problems for the marginalized communities. Among these we can remind:

National Strategy for social inclusion and poverty decreasing 2014-2020

The Strategy follows two general lines of action – poverty limitation and social inclusion by two policies – on one side the ones the policies for human capital (employment, social domain, financing access, education, health, housing) and regional politics (rural and urban marginalized areas including Roma). The strategy has defined expected results of implementation like:

- Increasing the level of employment among the persons from vulnerable groups;
- Increasing the financing for the people with no revenues – this can be a real problem for the Romanian state because of the great amounts allocated to the social assisted persons;
- The social inclusion of the people from marginalized communities Functionalities improvement of social services;
- Transformation of the social assistant in an integrator of the employment and social services in poor communities;
- Investments in an e-social assistance system at national level;
- Increasing the role of the social economy.

Romanian Government Strategy for inclusion of Roma communities 2012 -2020

The main objectives of this strategy are:

- Including Roma population in education and limiting the school leaving phenomenon at Roma children;
- Finding possibilities for employment of the Roma population, professional counseling for identification of a job and keeping it;
- Social and health services structures existing and developed or new;
- Improving living conditions for Roma population.

Strategy of social inclusion of disability persons 2014-2020

Objectives:

- Improving the living conditions of disability persons;
- Identifying workplaces adapted to the conditions of the disability groups;
- Equal opportunities of education and professional training for disability persons.

National Strategy for the protection of the children's rights

As the children are the group most affected by the marginalization the Romanian government elaborated a strategy for the protection of the children, for improving their access to quality educational services and respecting the rights of this category mainly the ones from the vulnerable groups and reducing the discrimination.

National Strategy for active aging and the protection of old categories of people 2015-2020

The main objective in the condition of demographic problems at national level is to maintain and reintegrate the senior persons which have capacity to work on the labor market and help them to train so to face the new technology era.

National Strategy for the limitation of the school early abandon in Romania

The project contributes to:

- Involvement of the children, young and persons that abandoned early the school in education;
- Implementation of the after school and second chance programs in all the regions with vulnerable groups;
- Limitation of the phenomenon of school leaving at national level by helping financially the marginalized communities (the parents without financial resources doesn't maintain their children in education system).

National Reform Program

The main objective is attaining and achieving the goals of Europe 2020 Strategy meaning limiting the poverty, social inclusion, limiting the school leaving and increasing the level of tertiary education.

National Strategy for employment 2014-2020

The objectives follow:

- Improving in functioning of labor market;
- Facilitating the transition from unemployment to employment;
- Professional competencies for young people;
- Increasing the level of employment in rural areas, women and vulnerable groups.

National Strategy for Health 2014-2020

The main objectives of this strategy are the improving the state of health for all the Romanian citizens no matter the social status or race, increasing of the quality of public medical services and the level of understanding by the authorities of the health problems in vulnerable groups and the access to medical services of the marginalized communities.

National Strategy of Life Long Learning

Involves the objectives settled by EU LLL Strategy meaning: access to educational and learning system all life long, incentives offered for this, quality and relevance of the learning process, education and professional training according to labor market and industries in trend, partnerships for education between state, social partners and academic environment for an efficient educational system.

These strategies cover all the domains related to social inclusion of the people in marginalized communities.

Solutions to the problems. Projects financed from EU structural and cohesion funds for the marginalized communities in 2016

At two years from the official opening of the 2014-2020 EU funds allocation the state institutions doesn't seem to be very active regarding the using structural and cohesion funds. From the 7th programs approved by EU only the social Human Capital Program have measures for the limitation of the marginalization in Romania.

The financing is necessary for these marginalized communities composed by vulnerable groups of people. The financing measures are integrated centered on the human capital offering them the possibility of working, education programs for children and adults, better living conditions and other incentives for improving their life. The financing program is entitled Local integrated development in marginalized communities (Roma and non- Roma people). The maximum budget for such a project is 6 mil. Euros.

Projects financed by Human Capital Program regarding educational programs for children from vulnerable groups like afterschool and second chance where they can be helped to improve their school performances and the children and young that abandoned the school can be reinserted in education.

Projects financed by Human Capital Program that follows the introduction of the concept of entrepreneurship in marginalized communities, projects that are offering 40,000 Euros for people who want to open their own business, creating workplaces for the vulnerable groups.

Regional Program has measures for improving residential buildings in urban areas where are living as well marginalized communities.

The Environment Program follows to improve the water infrastructure and create one in the locations where it doesn't exist.

Conclusions

Romania still has marginalized communities with vulnerable groups that need to be integrated in society. The poor people are as we already know excluded from the society, labor market and education by only their social status. To get to the main indicators of EU Strategy Europe 2020 Romania still have to overpass many problems related to poverty of a big part of their citizen, marginalization, integration of the minorities, increasing of the number of children and young people in education. All these problems can be solved by measures like the above presented and financed from the national and European funds (European Social Fund) dedicated to vulnerable groups. The measures have to be integrated containing interventions for all the categories of persons included in the marginalized communities.

Acknowledgement

This paper has been developed within the period of sustainability of the project entitled *“Horizon 2020 – Doctoral and Postdoctoral Studies: Promoting the National Interest through Excellence, Competitiveness and Responsibility in the Field of Romanian Fundamental and Applied Scientific Research”*, contract number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/140106. This project is co-financed by European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013. **Investing in people!**

REFERENCES

- [1] Danaher, M., Cook, J., Coombes, P., *Researching Education with Marginalized Communities*, Palgrave Macmillan (2013).
- [2] Vincze E, Hossu I, *Socio-territorial marginalization in Roma communities in Romania*, European Studies Foundation (2014).
- [3] *The integration of the marginalized society in Romania*, World Bank Studies, 2012.
- [4] <https://www.reference.com/world-view/marginalized-community-517401cfa76aa4eb#>
- [5] http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Minister/F6_Atlas_Rural_RO_23Mar2016.pdf
- [6] <http://www.inforegio.ro/images/Publicatii/Atlas%20zone%20urbane%20marginalizate.pdf>
- [7] <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Marginalized+groups>