

RURAL NEETs IN ROMANIA



2009/2019
OVERVIEW

AUTHORS

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This document is published by COST Action CA 18213: Rural NEET Youth Network: Modeling the risks underlying rural NEETs social exclusion.

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Please cite this publication as "COST CA18213 Rural NEETs in Romania: 2009/2019 Overview.

ISBN: 978-989-781-427-3

Visit: www.rnyobservatory.eu

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes a particular situation of young population in Romania: the population of NEETs, with a focus on rural NEETs.

Based on a complex methodology which uses data from different national sources (INS) and international sources (Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey-EU-LFS, OECD), this report gives an overview of the evolution and particularities of NEETs in Romania during the previous decade, namely 2009-2019.

Within the last ten years, the population of NEETs in Romania has grown rapidly, placing Romania in first place in the EU-28 in terms of the share of this population among the young population. Thus, in 2009 Romania with a NEET rate of 13.9%, occupied first places in the EU, along with Bulgaria (19.5%), Italy (17.5%), Latvia (17.5%) (Eurostat, 2020). A decade later, in Bulgaria and Latvia, the NEET rate decreased significantly to 13.7% and 7.9%, respectively, but in Romania and Italy it increased by more than 1pp: 14.7% in Romania and 18.1% in Italy. (Eurostat, 2020).

The causes for this are both individual (way of life, socio-familial origin, expectations and aspirations) and socio-economic (accessibility of the education system, development of lifelong learning, correspondence between education and labour market demand, particularities of the Romanian labour market, socio-economic policies supported by central and local authorities, etc.)

The detailed analysis of the data regarding the situation of NEETs in Romania reveals some aspects specific to our country:

- Significant differences in the distribution of young NEETs by degrees of urbanisation to the detriment of rural areas (9.3% in cities compared to 21.7% in villages in 2019);
- The majority of the population belonging to this category has a very low level of education;
- National statistics fail to communicate properly the entire population of NEETs due to a phenomenon specific to Eastern European countries, namely temporary migration for work;
- The existence of an important number of programs and measures of socio-economic, educational support that target this category of population but which are not inter-correlated and consequently have very limited effects and modest results.

REZUMAT

Raportul descrie o situație particulară a populației de tineri din România: populația de NEETs, cu accent pe NEETs din rural.

Bazat pe o metodologie complexă care utilizează date din diferite surse naționale (INS) și internaționale (Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey –EU-LFS,OECD) raportul evidențiază evoluția și particularitățile NEETs-ilor din România în ultimul deceniu: 2009–2019.

În ultimii zece ani populația de NEETs din România a crescut în mod accelerat situând România pe primele locuri în UE–28 în ceea ce privește ponderea acestei populații în rândul populației de tineri. Astfel, în 2009, România cu o rată NEET de 13,9% a fost pe primul loc în UE, alături de Bulgaria (19,5%), Italia (17,5%), Letonia (17,5%) (Eurostat, 2020). Un deceniu mai târziu, în Bulgaria și Letonia, rata NEET-urilor a scăzut semnificativ – 13,7%, respectiv 7,9%, dar în România și Italia a crescut cu peste 1pp: 14,7% și, respectiv, 18,1%. (Eurostat, 2020) Cauzele sunt atât de natură individuală (mod de viață, originea socio-familială, așteptări și aspirații) cât și de natură socio-economică: accesibilitatea sistemului de educație, dezvoltarea învățământului pe tot parcursul vieții, corespondența dintre educație și cererea pieței forței de muncă, particularitățile pieței muncii din România, politicile socio-economice susținute de către autoritățile centrale și locale etc.

Analiza detaliată a datelor privind situația NEETs-ilor din România relevă câteva aspecte specifice țării noastre:

- Diferențe importante în ceea ce privește distribuția tinerilor NEETs pe grade de urbanizare în defavoarea ruralului (9,3% în orașe față de 21,7% în sate în 2019);
- Majoritatea populației care aparține acestei categorii are un nivel foarte scăzut de educație;
- Statisticile naționale nu reușesc să surprindă întreaga populație de NEETs datorită și unui fenomen specific țărilor din Estul Europei: migrația temporară pentru muncă;
- Existența unui număr important de programe și măsuri de suport socio-economic, educațional care vizează această categorie de populație dar care nu sunt intercorelate și, în consecință, au un efect foarte limitat și rezultate modeste.

INTRODUCTION

This report proceeds in three sections. It begins with an introductory contextualisation with the most relevant information about the Romanian social, economic and political situation in the last decades (2009–2019) and key youth policies based on a relevant literature review. A methodological note explains the database used and the statistical operations undertaken. The most extensive section of the report refers to the analysis performed, with a specific focus on young people, by degree of urbanisation and concerning four main topics: population; employment; education; and, NEETs.

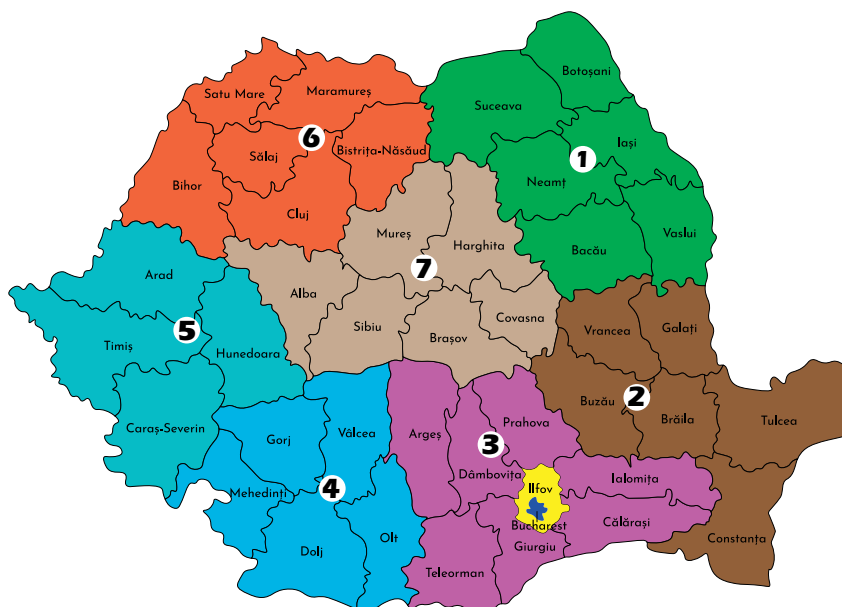
The report ends with a brief conclusion that highlights the main results regarding the topics explored.

1. CONTEXTUALIZATION

From the geographic point of view Romania (capital, Bucharest) is located in the southeast of Central Europe, both inside and outside the Carpathian Mountains, on the lower course of the Danube (1075 km) and has access to the Black Sea. The surface of the territory is 238,397 km².

Since 1989, after 45 years of a totalitarian regime, Romania is again a democratic country and since 2007 has been a member of the EU. At the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s, the Romanian authorities adopted national legislation on regional development, taking into account EC Regulation no. 1059/2003 on the establishment of a common system of statistical classification, concerning the organisation of 8 Development Regions (Chart 1). These Regions are territorial-statistical units corresponding to the NUTS II level, according to the Eurostat classification.

Chart 1 Romanian Map – Development Regions



Legend: 1 North East Region; 2 South East Region; 3 South Muntenia Region; 4 South West Region; 5 West Region; 6 North West Region; 7 Centre Region; 8 – Bucharest-Ilfov Region



Each Development Region is organised by counties – a local territorial administrative structure – in which all public administrative institutions at the central level are represented.

In the transition from totalitarianism to democracy, national and international socio-economic crises have affected a significant part of the population and have led to the emergence of poverty, unemployment, increasing migration rates, etc. One of the most affected categories of the population is that of young people.

This national report focuses on young people, and more precisely, the NEETs population. The aims of this are: to better understand the situation of this category of populations in the national context but also in the European context; to identify together with the project partners solutions for the NEETs' problems; and, to change the dominant negative perspective of these young people into a realistic and responsible one.



2. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

For this report we scrutinise a variety of statistical (secondary) data sources. These sources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Eurostat, Labour Force Survey data analysed on a NUTS II level;
- Eurofound, ILO and OECD reports and other reports of relevance;
- National Institute of Statistics (INS) reports and other national databases.

The data we have selected cover the following criteria: age target population (15–24 years or 15–34 years); the time interval analysed (2009–2019); and degree of urbanisation (town, cities, rural areas). These criteria will be applied to all areas analysed (i.e., education, employment, unemployment, etc.) When highlighting the differences in years; and age groups, the level of urbanisation rate will be calculated in both relative and absolute rates.



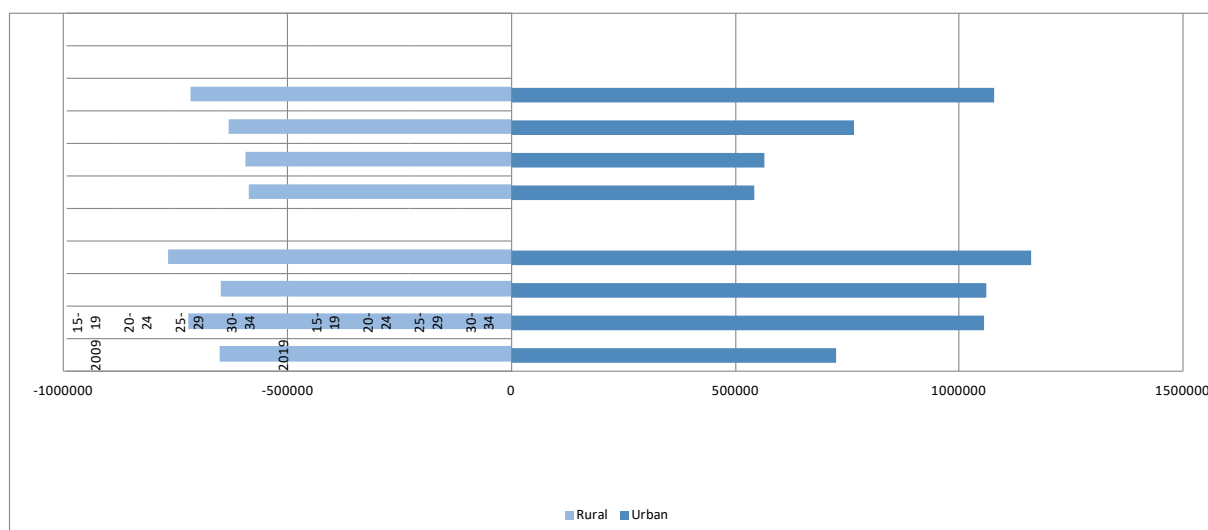
3. DATA ANALYSIS

3. 1. Population and youth population

Romania entered the democratic period in (1990) with a population of over 23 million people. However, in the last three decades its volume is significantly reduced for each age group but also by areas of residence. The data of the National Institute of Statistics (INS) shows that the total population of Romania on January 1, 2019 is 19,414,458 people (resident population) and the density of the resident population is 81.9 people/km². (INS, 2019:9). A young person is often defined as someone between the time in which he/she is likely to leave the compulsory education system and the time when they find their first job. This period has gradually increased, on the one hand because compulsory schooling has been extended and young people tend to stay longer in school and on the other hand, the labour market is constantly changing and is not very generous with its supply of jobs, especially for the young population.

In this context, the EU includes people between the ages of 15 and 34. Romania has adopted the same range as the EU so that the young population is considered to be between 15–34 years old. INS data shows that on January 1, 2019 the population aged 15–34 was 306,823 people. (INS, 2020). In this study, however, we will focus on the 15–24 or 15–29 age range: 15 is the age at which most young people in the EU complete compulsory education and are in a position to choose either to stay in the system or leave it. At the age of 24, most young people complete the highest level of education – if they have chosen to remain in the education system – and they have a job, family, etc. We also took into account the literature in the field according to which (Maguire and Thompson, 2007) the inclusion of only young people aged 16–24 is much too restrictive given that the problems faced by this category are also encountered after the age of 25 and these young people are excluded from public policy measures. Many young people in the elderly cohort – over the age of 24 – who have left the education system prematurely, are no longer in school, or in vocational training systems, but neither in the labour market. Even so, they are often not included in the NEETs category. However, these young people face the same challenges they had to face between the ages of 18–24. For these reasons, for some aspects of the analysis we will also refer to the age group 30–34 years.

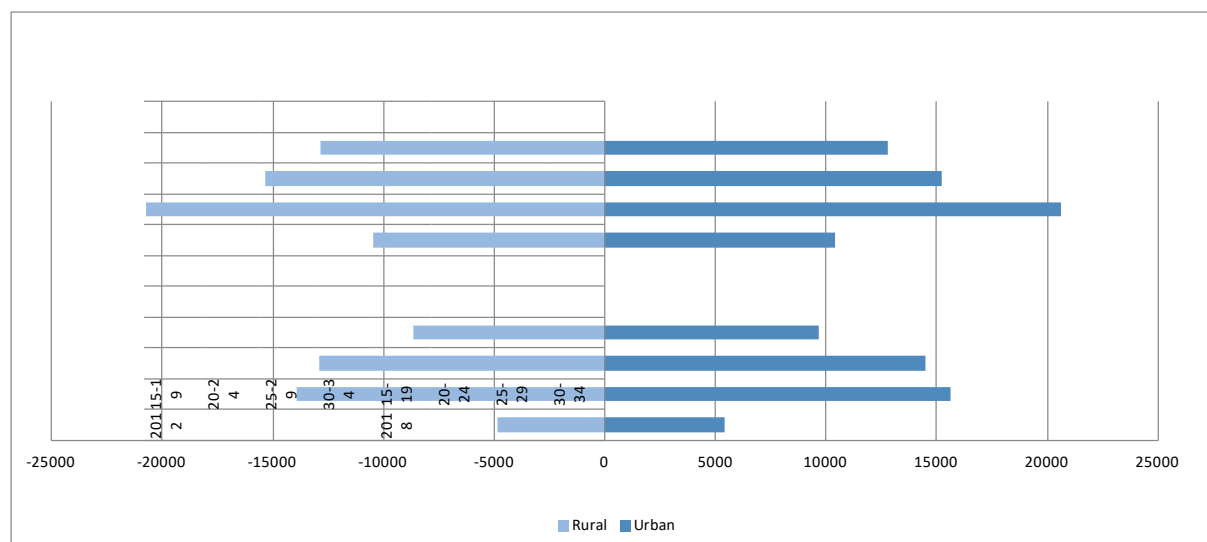
Chart 2 The evolution of the Romanian population (15–34 years) in the period 2009–2019 (number of people)



Source: INS, <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, – data extracted in 25.05.20

The structure by age and residence of the Romanian population (Chart 2) reflects trends of demographic aging – namely, the reduction in absolute numbers of the population aged 15–34 – but also imbalances between the two areas of residence: the elderly population between 15–34 years is lower in rural areas in comparison with urban areas. The negative values of the natural increase are one of the causes for this, but it is equally important to increase the rate of permanent and temporary emigration specific to these age categories. Romania joined the EU in (2007) and this resulted in increased rates of emigration, especially with regards to the young and working age. In recent years, there has been an emergent phenomenon: “European commuting”. Increasing numbers of young Romanians choose to emigrate temporarily to Western European countries to obtain a job. This type of emigration proves to be very difficult to capture in national statistics and makes it difficult to identify the exact composition of NEETs in Romania.

Chart 3 Temporary emigrants by age and areas residences (number of people)



Source: INS, <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, – data extracted in 25.05

INS data (Chart 3) highlights at least two important features: on the one hand, the number of young people who choose to emigrate temporarily increased for all age groups during the period 2012–2019; on the other hand, the young migrants from rural areas numerically exceeded those from an urban environment. It should be noted that the young people who emigrate in greater numbers are those in the age category 20–24 years old, whether they are from rural or urban areas. For young people in rural areas, this is the only option to have a job and earn money for themselves and their families. Young people working temporarily abroad are statistically integrated into the NEETs category, but do not belong to any of the sub-categories as defined by Eurofound (Eurofound, 2012; Eurofound 2016).

This distinct category of young people highlights another aspect related to NEETS: their respective analysis only from a static and not a dynamic perspective (Zanadrelui, 2015:11). Although statistics of different institutions are available, in practical terms these young people do not exist as such – especially those who emigrate for work and are therefore very dynamic and mobile.



Table 1. Ratio of youth population by age subgroups and absolute and relative change (%) in Romania (2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019)

	2009	2013	2019	Absolute change 2009–2013 (relative change 2009–2013)	Absolute change 2013–2019 (relative change 2013–2019)	Absolute change 2009–2019 (relative change 2009–2019)
Overall						
15–19	5.6%	5.5%	5.3%	–0.1pp (–1.8%)	–0.2pp (–3.77%)	–0.3pp (–5.6%)
20–24	6.8%	6.4%	5.2%	–0.4pp (–6.2%)	–1.2pp (–23%)	–1.6 pp (–30.7%)
25–29	6.5%	6.7%	5.8%	0.2 (pp (3.0%))	–0.9 (pp (–15.5%))	–0.7pp (–12%)

Source: Eurostat, 2020, [yth_demo_020], data extracted 29.09.20

The data (Eurostat, 2020) shows that young population of Romania decreased from 19% to 16.4% between 2009 and 2019.

For a country that “exports” young labour, one of the most important effects is to stimulate economic inactivity among both emigrants and among those who remain in the country and receive money from abroad. Older people – especially women in rural areas – living in households with close relatives who have emigrated (temporarily or permanently) choose not to look for a job, not to accept a lower-paying job, or even not to work. Therefore, the money sent to the country by emigrants supports the families remaining in the country and leads to an increase in the consumption of the population but also to an increase in the reserve wage (the lowest wage accepted for a work activity) and consequently to an increased rate of NEETs.



3. 2. National strategies and programs for young people

Young people have always been in the attention of the Romanian authorities from different perspectives and with different intensity. Among the institutions that target young people are: The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MMPS); the Ministry of National Education (MEN); the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MTS); and the National Agency for Employment (ANOFM). One year before Romania's accession to the EU (2006), the main legislative document was adopted, and this forms the basis for the development of policies concerning young people in Romania. It is known as Law no. 350 of 21/07/2006 the Youth Law. Currently, the legislative framework on which public institutions operate also includes Law no. 76/2002, updated by Law no. 250/2013, and Law no. 233/2010. These provide for measures to implement strategies and policies developed to protect people at risk of unemployment, ensuring a high level of employment and adaptation of labour to the requirements of the labour market. ANOFM develops free services financed from the unemployment insurance budget, in the field of information and professional counselling, labour mediation and professional training. These form the methodological norms for the application of Law no. 116/2002 on preventing and combating social marginalisation, approved by H.G. No.1149 / 2002.

In relation to public institutions and programs, the most important interventions in favour of young people can be classified as follows:



Table 2 Youth Policies and Strategies

Field	Date	Policy name
Education	2002	Milk and bread – providing a hot meal for students in compulsory education
	2004	High school money – financing the transport of students from rural areas to urban areas to continue their schooling in secondary level (ISCED 3–4)
	2005	A second chance – courses for young people who have left school early but who want to complete their level of schooling
	2012	Professional scholarship – scholarships for students who choose vocational education
Occupation	2013	National Youth Employment Plan
	2015	Subsidised jobs – payment of subsidies to employers who employ young people
Social protection	2004	Social housing – provided social housing especially for young people leaving the social protection system

Source: Author

These youth programs (Table 2) are coordinated by the central authorities. Local representatives are only meant to put them into practice and in some cases to contribute financially to their development. The programs developed in Romania in favour of young people cover the most pertinent domains – education, social protection, employment – but the big problem is that of their institutional non-correlation. The lack of integrated action reduces the positive effects of these measures and therefore they do not significantly contribute to supporting young people.

The most important program for young people, however, remains The Youth Guarantee. This is a program funded by the Romanian Government, it is another program that targets young people under 25 years of age. The main objective of the “Youth Guarantee” is to re-



duce unemployment among young people aged between 16 and 24, by facilitating quality jobs. Specifically, this program aims to ensure that young people under the age of 25, who lose their jobs or do not find one after graduation, receive a good quality offer, either for employment, for further education or entry into an apprenticeship, or internship. The offer will be received within 4 months of registration with the employment agencies. All measures under the “Youth Guarantee” scheme are supported by various forms of financial support, provided to either future employees or employers. Overall, as evidenced by the EC Assessment on the Implementation of the Youth Guarantee (May 2018), in Romania progress has been affected by significant delays, which has led to the situation where most young NEETs have not yet been identified and registered. Of those registered, two-thirds did not receive a job, education or training offer in the first four months, and most young people are never contacted after receiving a job offer to have their situation analysed.



3.3. Rural areas

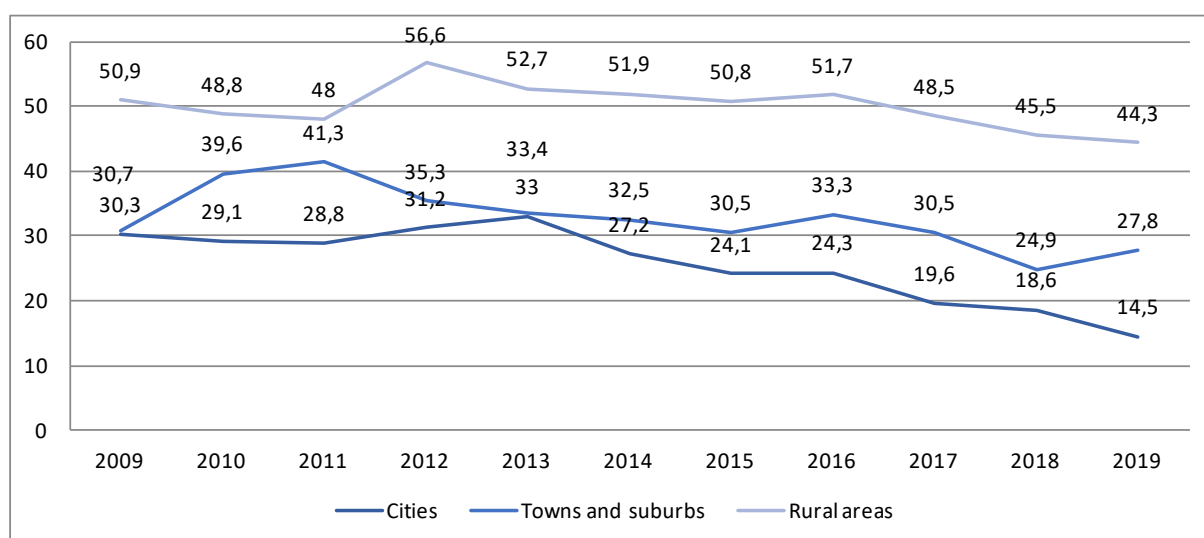
The concept of a 'rural area' is a generic one that covers distinct realities from one country to another. For Romania, the rural area has a special importance given, first of all, by its size measured both by the share in the total area of the country – 97.3% – and by the share of the rural population in Romania, this includes almost half of the population (46.7% – 2018). The rural population has grown significantly in recent decades, yet it faces poverty because the practice of subsistence or semi-subsistence agriculture (Croitoru & Mihalache, 2011) which has become a defining feature of the Romanian rural areas. Croitoru & Mihalache (2011:56) even speak of a (re)ruralisation of Romania in the "sense that the rural environment and agriculture played the role of last refuge for the segments of the population affected by the economic restructuring" stage that extended until the beginning of the 2000s.

Young people who remain in rural areas have very simple plans for the future: men work in agriculture – most often seasonal activities – and girls plan to get married. Very soon both young men and young women in rural areas come to the attention of social protection authorities: young families who do not have the resources to support themselves and raise their children, underage mothers at risk of child abandonment, young people at risk of entry in dangerous environments (human trafficking, alcohol consumption, drugs, delinquency, etc.) The factors that led to this situation are complex but mostly related to the low level of socio-economic development of the countryside, limited human and social capital of the population, but also a certain type of collective mentality.

3. 4. Introductory socio-economic analysis

The economic crisis of 2007–2008 has led to an increase in rising unemployment, the share of NEETs in the population, an increase in the rate of early school leaving by young people, an increase in emigration and, consequently, a decrease in the level of socio-economic development. The long transition process and the socio-economic crisis of 2007–2008 affected young people and the rural population most noticeably.

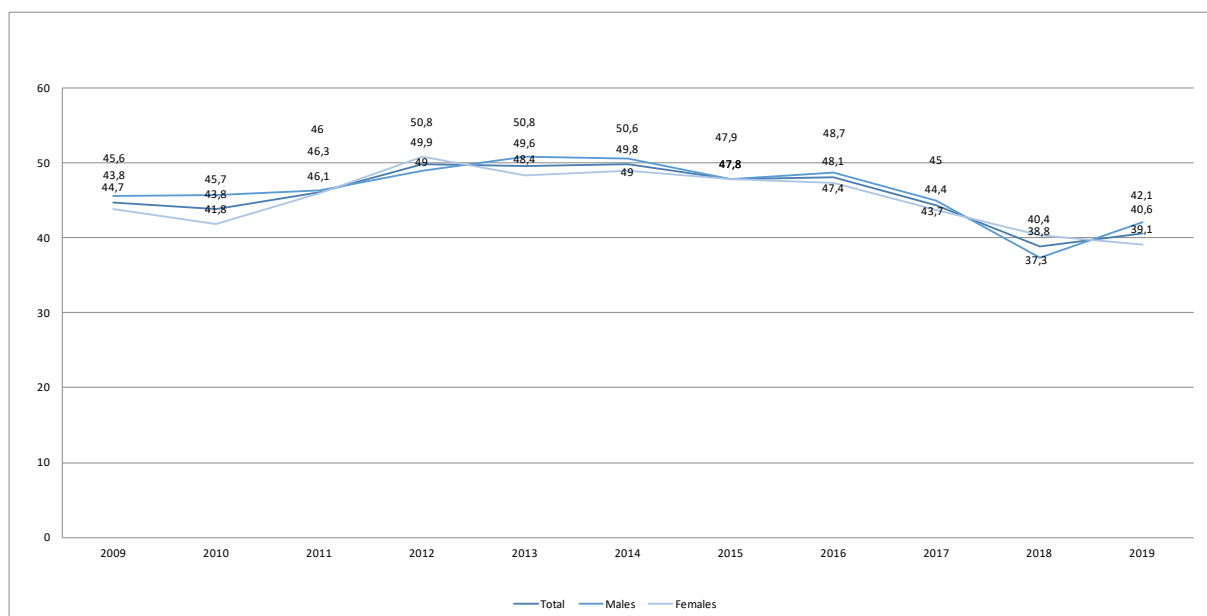
Chart 4 People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by degree of urbanisation, 15–29 years (%)



Source: Eurostat [ilc_peps13] – data extracted in 30.05

Romania's Youth Strategy 2014–2020 shows that, regardless of the method by which we choose to measure the level of poverty in Romanian society, young people are the poorest age group. (Youth Strategy 2014–2020, 2014:14). The data (Chart 4) shows that in the last decade the risk of poverty for the young population (15–29 years old) has not changed significantly regardless of their environment of residence. The analysis of the relationship between the risk of poverty and the degree of urbanisation highlights the fact that young people in rural areas have a much higher risk compared to young people in urban areas.

Chart 5 People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex (15–24 years)



Source: Eurostat, [ilc_peps01], data extracted

Regardless of the gender, young women are much more at risk of poverty compared to young men (Charts 5).

Poverty is related both to the level of education and occupation, but also to belonging to a certain socio-familial and cultural environment. In relation to the concept of 'rural', another has emerged – rurality – which is most often used in connection with the phenomena and events that take place in this environment and which allow the construction of an identity thereof. Thus, rurality refers not only to the fact that a part of the population lives in this environment, but also to the perceptions that people have about themselves, about other people they live with in the same environment, but also about their traditions, activities, opportunities. Swartz et al. (2012) argue that communities have a key role to play either in increasing opportunities and opportunities or in limiting young people's access to them. The difficulty of "taking" a young person out of the disadvantaged environment in which he lives becomes very complicated as a result of factors that are beyond administrative, educational, etc. It is also a problem of mentality at the community level: it seems natural



for young people wish to continue a “model” seen in the community, in the family of origin, etc. Perpetuating poverty can become one of the strategies adopted by young people in disadvantaged backgrounds – including rural areas – over time, even if they sometimes do so involuntarily. Young people who do not have access to places where they can find information about employment, or to people (family members, relatives, friends, acquaintances) who may have this information, are at greater risk of exclusion.

However, when we were dealing with the rural environment (especially with a rural environment marked by extreme drought as is the case in Romania), social networks also have a number of disadvantages. Thus, in a community where the normal thing is lack of employment, leaving school, social assistance status and social networks can act in a negative way. Specifically young people will copy the behaviour and attitudes of others, or will be discouraged in their efforts to leave their specific risk category. In a disadvantaged rural environment, young people can (intentionally or unintentionally) limit their educational, occupational, social, cultural, aspirations etc.



3. 5. Education

In Romania, education is free at all levels and access to all levels is guaranteed by law, for all categories of the population. The beginning of schooling takes place at the age of 6 and compulsory education lasts for 9 years: 8 years at ISCED 0–2 level and 1 year at ISCED level 3. Education in Romania practices early selection, based on national tests with very high stakes since, depending on the results obtained, students are assigned either to the academic route (theoretical secondary education, with much easier access to higher education) or to the vocational route (vocational or professional school) that sends most graduates to the labour market. In order to have access to higher education, graduates of vocational schools must complete their education with another year or 2 of school at upper secondary level and take the bacalaureate exam.

Table 3 Population by educational attainment level, age and degree of urbanisation 15–24 years (%)

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cities	ISCED 0–2	37.5%	38.4%	37.7%	36.8%	36.8%	37.7%	40.1%	41.1%	40.7%	40.5%	35.7%
Towns and suburbs		44.2%	48.1%	39.7%	50.3%	50.9%	51%	53.2%	52.7%	52%	50.7%	47.1%
Rural area		56.2%	58.4%	57.8%	61.9%	61.7%	60.6%	59.1%	58.9%	59.1%	57.4%	52.6%
Cities	ISCED 3–4	56.9%	54.6%	54.3%	54.5%	53%	51.9%	53.2%	53.1%	52.7%	53.6%	58.2%
Towns and suburbs		52.2%	43.7%	48%	44.5%	44.8%	43.3%	42.8%	44.1%	44.7%	46.1%	50.2%
Rural area		41.8%	39.4%	39.3%	35.7%	36%	37%	38.7%	39.2%	38.6%	40.3%	44.9%
Cities	ISCED 5–8	5.6%	7%	7.9%	8.8%	10.2%	10.4%	6.7%	5.9%	6.6%	5.9%	6.1%
Towns and suburbs		:	:	:	5.2%	4.3%	5.7%	4%	3.2%	3.3%	3.2%	2.8%
Rural area		2.1%	2.2%	2.9%	2.4%	2.2%	2.4%	2.2%	1.9%	2.3%	2.4%	2.5%

Source: Eurostat, [edat_ifs_9913] data extracted 08.09.20

Overall, the level of education of young people in Romania increased between 2009–2019 (Table 3), but with significant differences between the two areas of residence to the detriment of the rural environment. Data from the Romanian Ministry of Education (MEN, 2019) shows that the differences between urban and rural areas in terms of school participation rates at all levels of pre-university education is over 20pp to the detriment of rural areas.

Table 8. Population aged 15–24, by ISCED levels (%) and degree of urbanisation in Slovakia, including absolute and relative change (2009–2013, 2013–2019, 2009–2019)

		2009	2013	2019	Absolute change 2009–2013 (Relative change 2009–2013)	Absolute change 2013–2019 (Relative change 2013–2019)	Absolute change 2009–2019 (Relative change)
Cities	ISCED 0–2	37.5%	36.8%	35.7%	0.7pp (–.9%)	–1.1pp (–3%)	–1.8pp (5%)
Towns and suburbs		44.2%	50.9%	47.1%	6.7pp (13.1%)	–3.8pp (–8.0%)	2.9pp (6.1%)
Rural area		56.2%	61.7%	52.6%	5.5pp (8.9%)	61.7%	60.6%
Cities	ISCED 3–4	–9.1pp (–17.3%)	–3.6pp (–6.8%)	54.3%	54.5%	53%	51.9%
Towns and suburbs		56.9%	53%	58.2%	–3.9pp (–7.3%)	5.2pp (8.9%)	1.3pp (2.2%)
Rural area		52.2%	44.8%	50.2%	–7.4pp (–16.5%)	5.4pp (10.7%)	–2.0pp (–3.9%)
Cities	ISCED 5–8	41.8%	36%	44.9%	–5.8pp (–16.1%)	8.9pp (19.8%)	3.1pp (6.9%)
Towns and suburbs		5.6%	10.2%	6.1%	4.6pp (45.0%)	–4.1pp (–67.2%)	0.5pp (.1%)
Rural area		:	4.3%	2.8%	()	–1.5pp (–53.5%)	()
		2.1%	2.2%	2.5%	0.1pp (4.5%)	0.3pp (12%)	0.4pp (16%)

Source: Eurostat, [edat_lfs_9913] data extracted 08.09.20

The deficient infrastructure of educational services specific to rural areas, the financial constraints faced by the population in this environment, and also a certain collective mentality unfavourable to education increases the risk of premature leaving of the education system among rural youth. Most educational institutions operating in rural Romania provide only primary and secondary education (the first 8 years of schooling) and the quality of education and learning conditions are well below those in the urban environment (Kitchen et al., 2017). The Romanian education system is one that focuses more on competition and



less (or not at all) on equality and equal opportunities in education. The studies conducted so far (Voicu, 2007) have shown that young people in rural areas and young people from disadvantaged socio-familial backgrounds are underrepresented at post-compulsory education levels.

These differences between urban and rural areas and the characteristics of the national education system are also observed at the level of absolute and relative rates. The analysis of the absolute and relative data highlights the trend that they tend to rise as the level of education increases and when it comes to rural areas. (Table 4). These differences between areas of residence and levels of education remain throughout 2009–2019 (Table 4).

3. 6. Youth employment and unemployment

A number of researchers (Furstenburg & al., 2004) consider entering the labour market one of the most important indicators of individual maturity. However, this does not mean that all young people succeed in achieving this goal, or that it occurs for all at the same time. The legal working age in Romania is 16 years old, but the chances of finding a job are very low, regardless of the age of a person.

Table 5 Youth employment (%) and absolute and relative change in Romania by age groups (2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019)

	2009	2013	2019	Absolute change 2009–2013 (Relative change 2009–2013)	Absolute change 2013–2019 (Relative change 2013–2019)	Absolute change 2009–2019 (Relative change 2009–2019)
Country						
Overall						
15–19	91%	76%	8.4%	–1,5pp (–19.7%)	0.8pp (9.5%)	–0.7pp (–8.3%)
20–24	36.6%	36.3%	41.2%	–0.3pp (–0.8%)	4.9pp (12.0%)	4,6pp (11.1%)
25–29	67.4%	70.1%	75.7%	2.7pp (3.8%)	5.6pp (7.4%)	8.3pp (10.9%)
30–34	77.0%	76.6%	81.2%	–0.4pp (0.5%)	4.6 (5.6)	4.2pp (5.1%)
Cities						
Overall						
15–19	2.4%	:	:	()	()	()
20–24	29.3%	25.0%	26.3%	–4.3pp (–17.2%)	1.3pp (4.9%)	–3pp (–11.4%)
25–29	72.4%	71.3%	83.2%	–1.1pp (–1.5%)	11.9pp (14.3%)	10.8pp (12.9%)
30–34	83.7%	83.2%	90.8%	–0.5pp (–0.6%)	7.6 pp (8.3%)	7.1pp (7.8%)
Towns and suburbs						
Overall						
15–19	:	3.7%	5.4%	()	1.7pp (31.4%)	()
20–24	30.3%	33.8%	40.7%	3.5pp (10.3%)	6.9pp (16.9%)	10.4pp (25.5%)
25–29	57.8%	69.1%	71.4%	11.3pp (16.3%)	2.3pp (3.2%)	13.6pp (19.0%)
30–34	77.9%	76.0%	76.6%	–1.9pp (2.5%)	0.6pp (0.7%)	–1.3pp (–1.7%)
Rural areas						
Overall						
15–19	12.6%	13.3%	13.6%	0.7pp (5.2%)	0.3pp (2.2%)	1pp (7.3%)
20–24	41.8%	48.7%	51.5%	6.9pp (14.1%)	2.8pp (5.4%)	9.7pp (18.8%)
25–29	8.1%	6.5%	6.4%	–1.6pp (–24.6%)	–0.1pp (–1.5%)	–1.7pp (–26.5%)
30–34	6.0%	6.0%	5.0%	0/0	–1pp (–20%)	–1pp (–20%)

Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_ergau) – data extracted on 08.09.2020



Compared to the situation at EU-28 level, in the last decade the employment rate in Romania for the age group 15–24 was at least 10pp lower (Eurostat, 2020). Also, for the period 2009–2019 the employment rate of the age category 15–34 did not fluctuate much (Table 5). The employment rate in Romania is less than half that of Norway (over 55%), UK (over 58%) or the Netherlands (over 50%) but above that of countries such as Greece, Italy and Bulgaria which record values below 30% (Eurostat, 2020).

The analysis of Eurostat (2020) data on the employment rate of young people at urbanisation level is difficult due to the fact that we do not have a complete picture: the data does not cover certain years and all types of localities (Table 5). Moreover, on the available data we observed that young people in rural areas have a higher employment rate than those in urban areas. In reality, these young people are engaged in subsistence farming and seasonal farming which is not equivalent to ensuring a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. In order to complete the analysis, we took INS data (INS, 2019: 30) regarding the employment rate among the young population. It reveals discrepancies between areas of residence – + 3.1pp in favour of those in urban areas, compared to rural areas – and between levels of education – between people with low education, only 42.6% were employed. Employment is the main source of income for the population and it is expected that people who work, regardless of age, have a higher standard of living compared to people who do not have a job. However, poverty also affects the employed population. The National Youth Strategy shows that, in Romania, there is the highest level of poverty among working young people: 30.7% of young people aged 18–24 who work are poor while in the EU-28 the value is 11.2% (National Youth Strategy, 2013:16).

At the EU level, atypical employment (temporary and part-time employment) is encouraged, especially among young people, as an opportunity for them to familiarise themselves with the labour market, to earn an income in parallel with school attendance or to gain professional experience, etc. In some EU countries (Denmark, for example, the country that proposed this employment policy measure) – atypical employment, especially among young people, has been shown to have positive effects. But the situation differs from one country to another and it is very important to determine whether this type of employment is a springboard to full professional integration or a hatch to precariousness and ultimately exclusion? (Booth et al., 2002; Blasco & Givord, 2010:75). Monitoring the situation in Romania has led researchers to conclude that most people who are employed on a part-time basis earn lower incomes and have a higher risk of poverty. (Preoteasa, 2013:142).



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In conclusion, for the Romanian population, especially in the case of young people, having a job with a partial work schedule or with a fixed-term contract serves as more of a trap-door to precariousness than a springboard to professional success. Another conclusion of Romanian researchers (Preoteasa, 2013) is that, owing to dissatisfaction with the income obtained by carrying out a legal occupation, the population chooses either unemployment combined with entry into the social protection system, or the informal economy.





**Table 6 Youth unemployment (%) and absolute and relative change in Romania
(2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019)**

	2009	2013	2019	Absolute change 2009–2013 (Relative change 2009–2013)	Absolute change 2013–2019 (Relative change 2013–2019)	Absolute change 2009–2019 (Relative change 2009–2019)
Country						
Overall						
15–19	32.7%	31.5%	27.9%	–1.2pp (–3.8%)	3.6pp (–12.9%)	4.8pp (–17.2%)
20–24	17.9%	22.1%	14%	4.2pp (19%)	–8.1pp (–57.8%)	–3.9pp (–27.8%)
25–29	8.4%	10.6%	5.7%	2.2pp (20.7%)	–4.9pp (–85.9%)	–2.7pp (–47.3%)
30–34	5.8%	6.8%	3.6%	1pp (14.7%)	–3.2pp (–88.8%)	–2.2pp (–61.1%)
Cities						
Overall	59.1%	:	:	()	()	()
15–19	22.2%	28%	15.2%	5.8pp (20.7%)	–12.8pp (–84.2%)	–7pp (–46.0%)
20–24	8.5%	11.9%	4%	3.4pp (28.57%)	–7.9pp (195.5%)	–4.5pp (–112.5%)
25–29	5.6%	6.7%	2.3%	1.1pp (16.41%)	–4.4pp (–191.3%)	–3.3pp (–143.4%)
30–34						
Towns and suburbs	:	53.3%	39.6%	()	–13.7pp (–34.5%)	()
Overall	:	30%	17.2%	()	–12.8pp (–74.4%)	()
15–19	:	14.3%	7%	()	–7.3pp (–104.2%)	()
20–24	:	8.3%	3.8%	()	–4.5pp (–118.4%)	()
25–29						
30–34	27.9%	23%	22.7%	–4.9pp (–21.3%)	–0.3pp (–1.3%)	–5.2pp (–22.9%)
Rural areas	15.8%	14.7%	12.1%	–1.1pp (–7.4%)	–2.6pp (–21.4%)	–3.7pp (–30.5%)
Overall	8.1%	6.5%	6.4%	–1.6pp (–24.6%)	–0.1pp (–1.5%)	–1.7pp (–265%)
15–19	6%	6%	5%	0	–1pp (–20%)	–1pp (–20%)
20–24	41.8%	48.7%	51.5%	6.9pp (14.1%)	2.8pp (5.4%)	9.7pp (18.8%)
25–29	8.1%	6.5%	6.4%	–1.6pp (–24.6%)	–0.1pp (–1.5%)	–1.7pp (–26.5%)
30–34	6.0%	6.0%	5.0%	0/0	–1pp (–20%)	–1pp (–20%)

Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_urgau) – data extracted on 1.09.20



The unemployment rate among the young population in Romania is high for the entire time interval considered (Table 6), but well below the EU-28 average. Romania also ranks better compared to other EU countries (France, for example, which has a youth unemployment rate of around 25%) and very close to countries such as the UK or the Netherlands. (Eurostat, 2020). The explanation for this situation is also specific to occupational activities in Romania: many young people are employed in subsistence agriculture or are in the category of those who emigrate temporarily.

Furthermore, in Romania, the period of time in which young people receive unemployment benefits is very short, the money received is very little and the duration of granting unemployment benefits is different depending on work experience: from 6 months for a contribution of at least 1 year to 12 months for those who have contributed for at least 10 years. In many cases, young people do not use this form of social support, which is why they do not even appear in the authorities' databases. Thus, the unemployment rate in Romania (but also among NEETs) is much higher than the official data records. Another reason explaining the unemployment rate in Romania is that once out of the social protection system (when young people do not receive unemployment allowances) they are "lost" in statistical terms.



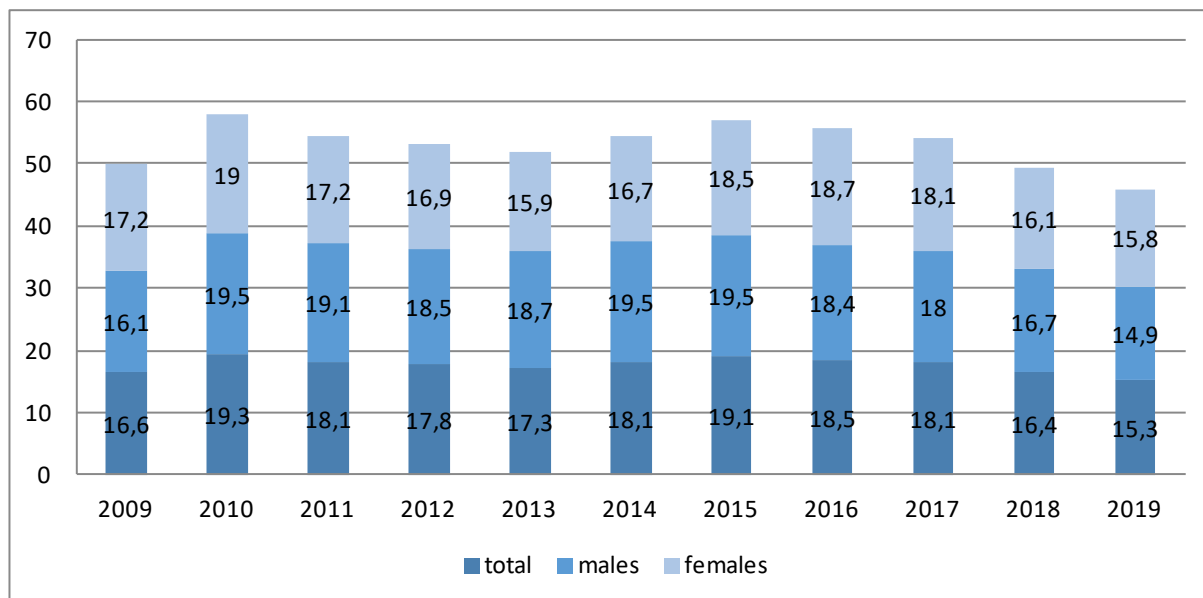
3. 7. NEETs in Romania

The educational, professional and social trajectories of young people are extremely different today. For some, leaving the education system means entering a category considered to be the most vulnerable: the NEETs category.

At the EU level, the European Commission considers NEETs as a key indicator and not only uses it in strategy papers and programs for young people – “Youth in Action”, “Europe 2020” – but calls on Member States and European organisations to develop and to understand this concept. Romania has taken over this indicator and uses it in national policy documents according to the definition and method of measurement agreed at EU level.

In general, the NEETs category is analysed according to the five major groups identified by Eurofound (Eurofound, 2012; Eurofound 2016). Within these categories, however, young people differ by gender, level of education, degree of urbanisation, etc.

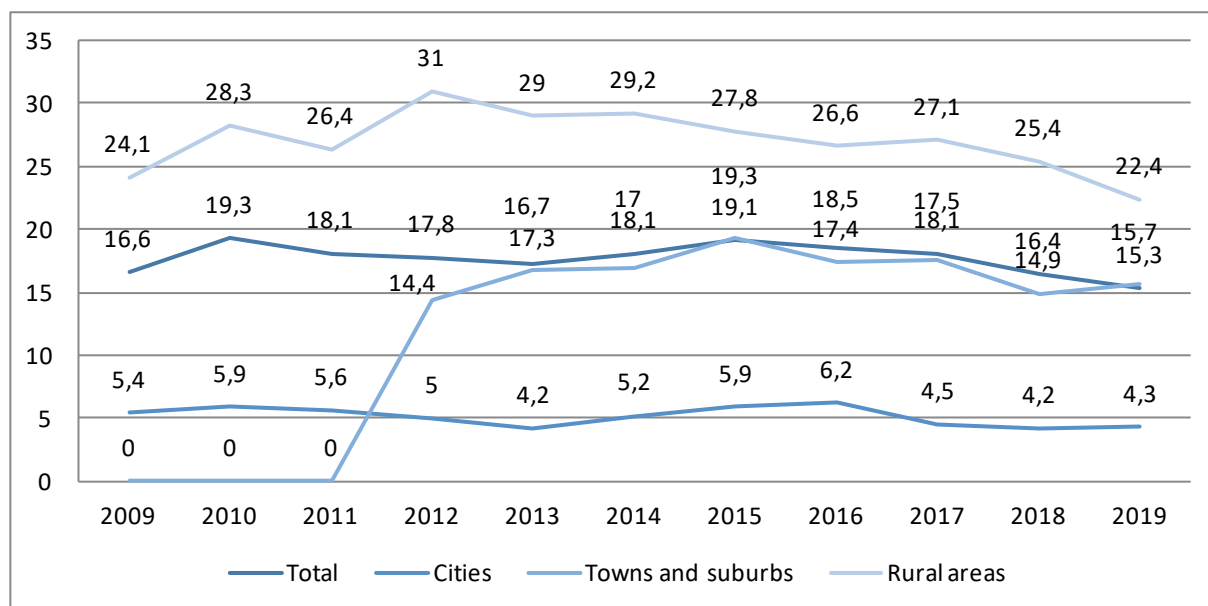
Chart 6 Early leavers from education and training by gender



Source: Eurostat, [edat_lfs_9913] data extracted 08.09.20

In Romania, the dropout rate at all levels has increased since 2007, proof that the economic crisis has played a decisive role in the educational situation of young people. Another observation revealed by the analyses of Romanian researchers is that “the highest dropout rates are recorded at the beginning classes of school cycles” (Apostu et al., 2015:33) which means that the “bifurcation points” noted by Boudon (1973) are difficult to overcome for many young Romanians and their families. Young women are more at risk of premature leaving compared to young men (Chart 6).

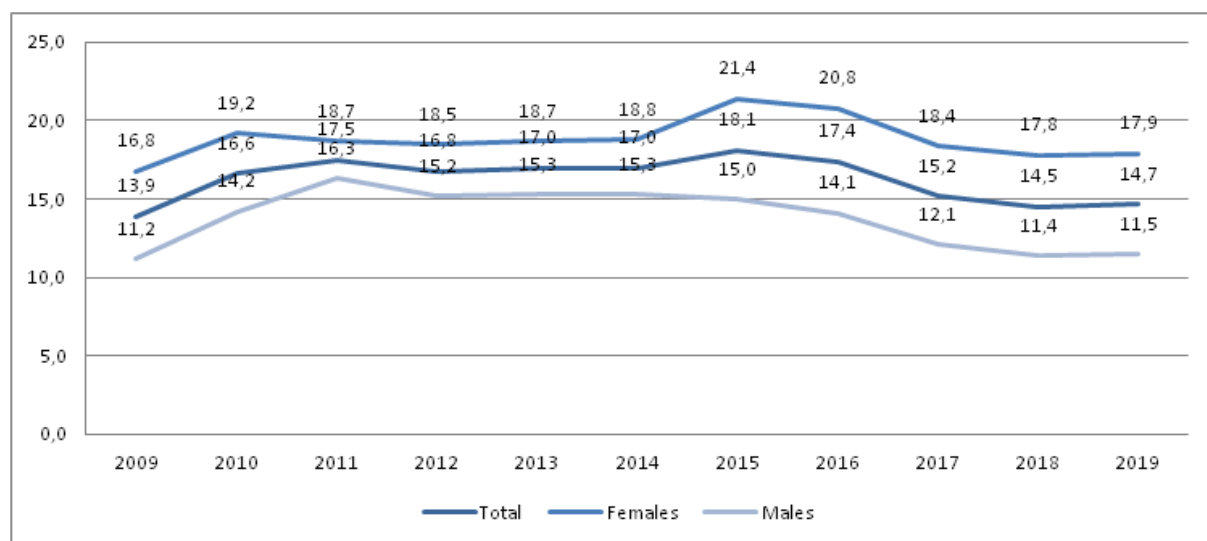
Chart 7 ESLET rate (%) 2009–2019 (Romania) by degree of urbanisation



Source: Eurostat, 2020 [edat_lfse_30], data extracted 8.10.20

High values of early school leaving throughout the whole period are observed – 2009–2019 (Chart 7). By residence it is obvious that rural youths have the biggest problems in school (about 25% of them leave school prematurely) while young people in big cities do not exceed 5%. Early school leaving is the first step to becoming NEETs.

Chart 8 NEETs by gender, 15–24 years (%)



Source: Eurostat, [yth_empl_160], data extracted 31.05.20

The analysis of data on NEETs in Romania by gender supports the idea that those who leave the education system prematurely risk falling into this category: women are more represented in this category compared to men (Chart 8). Overall, Romania has one of the highest NEET rates in the EU-28.

Table 7. NEET rate (%) by age subgroups and by degree of urbanisation in Romania, including absolute and relative change (2009–2013, 2013–2019, 2009–2019)

	2009	2013	2019	Absolute change 2009–2013 (Relative change 2009–2013)	Absolute change 2013–2019 (Relative change 2013–2019)	Absolute change 2009–2019 (Relative change 2009–2019)
Country						
15–19	9.7%	10.1%	10.5%	0.4pp (3.9%)	0.4pp (3.8%)	0.8pp (7.6%)
20–24	17.3%	22.9%	18.9%	5.6 (24.4)	4pp (–21.2%)	1.6pp (8.4%)
25–29	19%	24.1%	20.8%	5.1pp (21.2%)	–3.3pp (15.86%)	1.8pp (8.6%)
30–34	17.4%	22.8%	18.6%	5.4pp (23.6%)	– 4.2pp (–22.5%)	1.2pp (6.4%)
Cities						
15–19	5%	4.4%	5.5%	–0.6pp (–13.6%)	1.1pp (20%)	0.5pp (9%)
20–24	12.6%	14.3%	10.6%	1.7pp (11.8%)	–3.7pp (34.9%)	–2pp (18.8%)
25–29	14.6%	18.4%	11.4%	3.8pp (20.6%)	–7pp (61.4%)	–3.2pp (–28.0%)
30–34	12.9%	15.8%	9%	2.9pp (18.3%)	–6.8pp (75.5%)	–3.9pp (43.3%)
Towns and suburbs						
15–19	:	10.1%	10.9%	()	0.8pp (7.3%)	()
20–24	:	27.6%	22.6%	()	–5pp (–22.1%)	()
25–29	:	26.3%	25%	()	–1.3pp (–5.2%)	()
30–34	:	23.3%	23.2%	()	–0.1pp (–0.4%)	()
Rural areas						
15–19	12%	13.4%	13%	1.4pp (10.4%)	–0.4pp (–3.0%)	1pp (7.7%)
20–24	20.6%	28.5%	22.4%	7.9pp (27.7%)	–6.1pp (–27.2%)	1.8pp (8.0%)
25–29	22.5%	29.1%	26.5%	6.6pp (22.6%)	–2.6pp (–9.8%)	4pp (15.0%)
30–34	20.6%	29.7%	25.8%	9.1pp (30.63%)	–3.9pp (–15.1%)	5.2pp (20.15%)

Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_29) – data extracted in 8.10.20



As expected, the rate of NEETs is higher in rural areas compared to urban ones. As we mentioned in rural Romania, in most schools young people can attend only 8 classes. Young people in rural areas (as well as their families) have to incur additional costs (transport costs, costs associated with living in urban areas away from their rural area of origin) if they want to continue their schooling. Also, the urban environment has many more generous job offers compared to the rural environment, but even in this case the costs that a young person from the rural area has to cover are higher. Some researchers (Simmons & Thompson, 2011) believe that it is precisely these obstructions generated by mobility that explain the increase in the rate of NEETs in rural areas. In Romania, the share of NEETs tended to increase during 2009–2019 (Table 7). By residence, we observe that for all age groups the NEETs share is higher than the national average. Although there are significant differences between EU countries in the share of NEETs, the type of NEETs and the reasons why some young people fall into this category, there are also many similarities that have allowed the identification of clusters. According to Eurofound, the distribution of countries according to the type of NEETs and their characteristics is distributed as follows:

Table 2 Youth Policies and Strategies

Type	Countries	Weight
Family responsibilities	Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Italy, Slovakia, Greece	23–44%
Long-term unemployed, discouraged young people, young people with disabilities	Germany, Austria, Denmark, Belgium, UK	8%
Long-term unemployed	Spain, Cyprus, Croatia, Portugal	18%

Source: Eurofound, 2016

Romania is part of the same cluster with Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Greece and Italy and the main feature is that young people end up in the situation of NEETs primarily for involuntary reasons (they are in the situation of caring for children or other family members in poor health, with disability or are elderly). This prevents them from actively looking for employment opportunities, returning to the training system, etc. All these causes are accentuated by the current socio-economic and societal context.



4. CONCLUSIONS

- Romania has an increased rate of young NEETs;
- The causes that lead young Romanians in the situation of becoming NEETs are multiple: some belong to the individual (belonging to a specific socio-familial environment, being disadvantaged etc.) whereas others are related to the socio-economic system as well as the educational, occupational and social policies of the country;
- The Romanian authorities responsible for young people act in different fields through measures to support this category of population. However, they do not act in an integrated way, and as such effect of the measures is diluted and the share of young people in difficulty does not decrease;
- The rural environment in Romania has always been disadvantaged and remains in the same situation today;
- Loss of human capital through internal or external emigration is not likely to support rural communities or Romanian society as a whole.



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