

## **THE DIFFERENT SIDES OF OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: IMPLICATIONS ON THE CHANGES AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**

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### **Abstract**

*The scenery of social movement in Romania, started at the beginning of this year following the Emergency Ordinance issued by the Romanian Government, which provided, among others, collective pardons and amendments of the Penal Code, was largely described by the media in two key points:*

*On one hand, a political one, which placed under discussion the alleged manipulation of the parties in opposition, parties which accumulated frustrations related to the weak results obtained at the last parliamentary elections; the rejuvenation of the anti-PSD sentiment; the attempt to break the main party in the Government; blocking the economic investment program of the government installed after the elections; the reconstruction of the popularity of Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, which declared himself against the Government program, but also against the main political party in Government, etc.*

*On the other hand, one in which the moral component was in the focus of the public debate, by underlying several messages with ethical roots; the diversification of the forms of masked corruption; “unfair behavior in the public space”<sup>1</sup> of the government party; the fear that the history is reversible; the fact that the attempt of the Government to implement a law in the area of corruption had hidden and well-calculated objectives.*

*At the intersection between the two explanatory frontiers, once with the disarming of the conflict, it remained a media construction unidentified scientifically: the image of the two countries of Romania which are irreconcilable (the poor Romania versus the rich Romania), willing in the future to confront argumentatively their own decisional alternatives as regards their own social path.*

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<sup>1</sup>See interview with prof. Dumitru Sandu in PressOne / <https://pressone.ro/sociologul-dumitru-sandu-politicienii-judeca-strada-ca-si-cum-ar-fi-cea-de-acum-10-20-de-ani/>

*Complementary to the two approaches, the article seeks to introduce in the explanatory equation a new variable, almost absent in the series of the debates in the Romanian press: social pressure to change the institutional behavior in Romania. Has the Romanian society changed in the last 27 years in a way that we can feel a pressure towards changing the formal institutions, as a first step of changing the political practices? What has changed and how can we explain this pressure towards change? Do we have data that support this hypothesis? We know from Robert Putnam that the “performance of an institution depends on its social, economic and cultural background.” How does this background in Romania looks like at the beginning of 2017? How do the Romanians perceive the quality of their own lives at present?*

**Key-words:** objective indicator, objective well-being, satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with past, subjective indicator, subjective well-being, the satisfaction of life, quality of life

**JEL Classification:** J1, J10

### **I. Objective and subjective well-being – conceptual evolutions**

The concept of “quality of life” was first “launched” by the intellectuals in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> decade of last century. A key concept of the “social state of a community”<sup>1</sup>, is propagated in time in the “public conscience” and especially in the “public speech”, becoming step by step “a global objective of the politics, a performance criteria for all social programs”<sup>2</sup> specific to the governmental space of the EU Member States.<sup>3</sup>

The quality of life represents an important indicator of each individual’s life, if the individual is satisfied, generally speaking, by his social route, including all the components which build his social journey: the health condition, the human / social capital he has available, the profession, the workplace and work environment, the earnings obtained, the place of living, family, free time allocated to it and the group of friends, the society in which he lives.

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<sup>1</sup> See Zamfir, Cătălin (coord.), *Social state of Romania – quality of life: current situations and perspectives for 2038*, Social report of ICCV, Romanian Academy, 2017, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Zamfir, Cătălin; Căce, Sorin (coordinators), „A strategy of relaunching the quality of life in the perspective of 2035: Directions. Objectives. Targets. Restrictions. Opportunities. Priorities”, ICCV, Romanian Academy, 2016

<sup>3</sup> See Amsterdam Treaty, from 1997, respectively Europe Strategy 2020, and for Romania post-1989 the Government programs 1998-2000 and 2001-2004, 2005-2008, 2013-2016, 2017-2020.

The Romanian sociology has connected itself to the series of conceptual debates since the 8<sup>th</sup> decade of last century, proposing several objective and subjective indicators of measuring the quality of life.

In the paperwork “Indicators and sources of variations of the quality of life, which appeared in 1984 and was coordinated by professor Cătălin Zamfir, there were four “global indicators of the quality of life” which were proposed”, but also “several partial indicators”, specific to the “quality of different spheres, domains of life”:

1. **Life satisfaction** (an indicator called „satisfaction not specific to life” is used, but also an indicator of “satisfaction specific to life”, with four items “indicators of satisfactions with the big life component domains”: work, way of spending free time, own self, life, family),
2. **The perceived quality of life** (using a list of 73 components of the “life situation”, grouped in 13 domains of life),
3. **The perceived change in the quality of life** (which are the directions of the important characteristics of life development, given the perception of the past / future),
4. **Integration / psychological alienation** (using 6 items: / human community, control / lack of control on own life; understanding / lack of understanding; control / lack of control on the social events; the meaning / lack of meaning of work; optimism / pessimism referring to the dynamic of the social life environment).<sup>1</sup>

Underlining the fact that the subjective indicators are “the only global indicators of the quality of life”, a decade later (1992), in the paperwork “factors of *quality of life*”,<sup>2</sup> professor Cătălin Zamfir makes an excellent description of the differences of “coverage” and “structure” between the objective / subjective indicators, responsible for the process of measuring the social state of a society.

On one hand, “there is a difference in coverage”, Zamfir says. If the objective indicators rather paint a static picture of the material quality of life, being “more adequate to describe determinant components of life (number

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<sup>1</sup> Zamfir, Cătălin (coordinator), „*Indicators and sources of variation of the quality of life*”, the Publishing House of the Academy of Romanian Socialist Republic, Bucharest, 1984, p. 87-108

<sup>2</sup> See Zamfir, Cătălin, “Quality of life” magazine, The Publishing House of the Romanian Academy, no. 3-4 / 1992, p. 219-229

of rooms in a dwelling, family income, etc.), the subjective ones “have the capacity to express the global quality of different spheres of life – family, work, free time – or even life in general.

On the other hand, he says, if the objective indicators reveal the exact image of the state of life of an individual, “of the conditions” or the “related components” in which life develops (objective welfare), subjective indicators of measuring the quality of life represents a process of evaluating them, a perception of the “life conditions and the components of life”, which is compulsorily “filtered by expectations, values, aspirations (subjective welfare).<sup>1</sup>

It is hard to imagine an equation which will integrate all key variables involved at a certain time in the explanatory construction of an individual’s quality of life, responsible to a large degree by his quality of life. On the other hand, as emphasized in the *Strategy of relaunching the quality of life in the perspective of 2035*, published in 2016 by the Romanian Academy, “there has not been any accepted procedure to assemble the partial indicators of the quality of life in a global indicator”.<sup>2</sup>

This constraint possesses an explanatory instrument sufficiently well grounded.

On one hand, the individuals evaluate and define their life conditions according to the opportunities / limits that these are offering, by the socio-economic context (internal / external) to which they are connected.

On the other hand, the capacity to optimize the process of capitalizing the set of opportunities and to build viable strategies for increasing the quality of life represents for every specific case a product of a process of individual construction.

This makes any human action objectified in the functional matrix of increasing the quality of life to represent a sum of the combination of the two: socio-economic context and particular life strategies.

In the last decade it has been developed an European system of measures the indicators of the quality of life, with a common standardized

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<sup>1</sup> Ibidem

<sup>2</sup> See Zamfir, Cătălin; Cace, Sorin (coordinators), „*A strategy of relaunching the quality of life in the perspectives of 2035: Directions. Objectives. Targets. Restrictions. Opportunities. Priorities*”, ICCV, Romanian Academy, 2016, p. 6

methodology, which has instruments of “monitoring the collective evolution” as regards the following spheres of the quality of life:

- a) **Economy** (revenues – as a fundamental element of the living standard, occupation – opportunities of economic activity),
- b) **State, politics of a nation** (economic policy, social policy– redistribution of economic resources, quality of public system),
- c) **Quality of the human environment** – indicators referring to the quality of others: trust, fairness,
- d) **Quality of the constructed environment** – construction referring to the joint past efforts as regards territorial organization,
- e) **Quality of the natural environment** – transformed in good / bad by the past generations,
- f) **Quality of the world** – influence which is felt due to the connection to the global world.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. The perceived life quality of Romanians – history of a transitions without a strategic horizon**

The life satisfaction indicator (perceived quality of life), as single global indicator of the quality of life, which evaluates subjectively “the entire life context” of an individual, included in the European statistical programs, correlated in a positive way, as expected both with the „financial available resources”, but especially with the “structural conditions that the society is offering”: rational political system and oriented towards national interest, adequate and motivating social, quality public and education services, people you trust and with whom you live well.<sup>2</sup> In this key note, how does the picture of the dynamic of the perception of the quality of life for Romanians look like, if we were to carry on a short time-scale of its evolution?

More than a quarter of a century since the Revolution in 1989, Romania seems it is still confronting with a dilemma having its source from the sum of the multiple strategic hesitations form the transition period: what is our country project? Do we have at this moment such a project? How should the Romanian state function? What role should it be attributed? How should this answer to the big demographical problems? How about the excessive polarization or the disparities in the regional development? How were and how are the economic resources redistributed? Which was the offer as regards the quality of the public system? How much has the economic and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibidem, pag. 2-5

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, pag. 6

social policy of the Romanian state influenced the quality of life of Romanians?

Most of the difficulties that the Romanian society has and is still confronting largely have their origin not so much in the arguable quality of the strategic decisions in the transition period, but rather in the lack of strategic horizon which was unfortunately present in the entire transition period. For an important segment of the Romanian population, the absence of the strategic public policies or the strategic country project has fueled and indirectly stimulated the discontents as regards the perception on the quality of life, but also the state of distrust in the public institutions in Romania. Which was under these circumstances the global picture of the quality of life of Romanians in the last 27 years?

In the *Public Opinion Barometer 1998-2007*, based on the data supplied in the last 20 polls carried out through the opinion Barometer of Soros Romania Foundation, professor Dumitru Sandu carried out in 2007 an excellent picture of the evolutions as regards the morale of the Romanian population after 17 years of transition<sup>1</sup>:

- Under European context, Romanians were “**dissatisfied, but optimistic**”<sup>2</sup> - 47% of the Romanians declared themselves as dissatisfied with the life they carry, which was 28% higher than the EU average of dissatisfied people;
- Under national context, Romanians were “**dissatisfied and polarized**” (professor Dumitru Sandu emphasizes that in the spring of year 2007 “to be young under 30 years, mature between 30-59 or old over 60 years means a great deal for the morale”, this being influenced not so by the age, which has “its specific biologic resources”, but especially on the “resources of material, human or relational capital which are associated”);
- For the public opinion there was a “**lasting dissatisfied towards the Government**”<sup>3</sup> (“the discontent towards the Government”, the analysis

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<sup>1</sup>Sandu, Dumitru, “*The avatars of the social discontents in Romania of years 1998-2007*”, in Barometer of public opinion 1998-2007, Soros Foundation, Romania, October 2007

<sup>2</sup> According to professor Dumitru Sandu the particular segment of “discontented optimists” (approximately 20% of the Romanian population) was constituted as a result of a “combination of challenges given, on one hand, by poverty and, on the other hand, by opening opportunities associated with the accession to the European Union”, Ibidem, p. 33

<sup>3</sup> What is interesting is the data which indicate the segment of the population which declare in general their satisfaction towards the government: “the relatively poor women, without

shows, represents “one of the strongest indicators of the morale that the population has towards the public institutions”;

- As regards the “dissatisfaction of the daily life”, even if the “average life of the Romanians is more and more colorful”, in general “**the predominant moral remains the dissatisfaction**”<sup>1</sup>.

Professor Dumitru Sandu makes an inventory, based on the data obtained and a few consequences of the morale of the Romanian population at the level of year 2007<sup>2</sup>:

- The double dependency of the Romanians, both by resources and by the morale of the persons, **are influencing the structuring of their life projects, which in most part are on short term**;
- As we are getting further from the moment of the Revolution in December 1989, Romanians **are starting to weigh more closely on the structural real conditions that life has to offer**, remodeling step-by-step the image about the political leaders which had a role in the history of Romania (Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Iliescu and Carol I were considered in the spring of 2007 “the best political leaders”);
- Even if a certain tendency of a decrease in the dissatisfaction was signaled, **the average Romanian is definitely installed in the top of the most “discontented Europeans”**, probably also due to the dissatisfaction with the incomes obtained (Romanians tend to be “contented with their own family”, but “discontented with the money they possess”);
- “**The discontented do not believe in institutions**”, the rank of year 2007 establishing a top of distrust in which the Government, the Parliament, the president, the political parties, the banks and the unions are on the firsts positions (professor Sandu Dumitru states that the “dissatisfaction with the people’s lives propagates to the institutions”, the majority of which are political, the banks and trade unions being also perceived as social level as strongly politically influenced.

The last Social Report of the Institute for Quality of Life Research (IQLR) - Social conditions in Romania - Quality of Life: current situation and

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foreign travel experience, but with a consistent stock of social network”, respectively “the ones who carry Government”, professor Sandu Dumitru concludes.

<sup>1</sup> Ibidem, p. 44

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 45-54

perspectives for 2038<sup>1</sup> published in early 2017, envisages a series of official data relevant for the understanding of the current perception of Romanians regarding the quality of their lives.

Glancing over the most important factors that influenced the evolution of the social status of Romania starting with 1990, by comparison with the EU member states or other former communist European countries, we are able to see a very interesting picture:

- Between 1989-2000 Romania underwent **the worst economic collapse of the entire European area** (economic decline) and between 1989-2016 recorded **the lowest economic growth within the EU**:

Table 1 Economic results in the period of transition: GDP in bilion euro<sup>2</sup>

Indicator	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Bulgaria	Romania
GDP in 1989	64,4	26,9	22,6	11,1	42,6
GDP in 2000	186,4	66,6	51,2	14,3	40,8
GDP in 2016	432,4	170,7	113,5	45,1	169,4
Degree of multiplication GDP 1989 -2016	<b>6,7</b>	<b>6,3</b>	<b>5,0</b>	<b>4,1</b>	<b>4,0</b>

Source: GDP data: \*\*\* 2016, *Statistical Annex of European Economy, SPRING 2016*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs. *Gradul de multiplicare al PIB – calculations by Mariana Stanciu (Quality of Life Research Institute)*

- Throughout the transition what was dominant in Romania was "**the policy of the small State**", meaning that Romania was ranked first in terms of low level of financing as a share of government spending from GDP:

Table 2 The share of government spending in GDP<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Zamfir, Catalin (et al.), *Social conditions in Romania - Quality of Life: current situation and perspectives for 2038*, IQLR Social Report, the Romanian Academy, 2017 (<http://www.iccv.ro/node/579>)

<sup>2</sup> See Zamfir, Cătălin (coord.), "*Romania's social status - quality of life: current situation and prospects for 2038*", Social Report of the *Quality of Life Research Institute*, Romanian Academy, 2017 (<http://www.iccv.ro/node/579>)

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, pag. 10

EU 15 <sup>1</sup>	48,5%
EU 28	47,3%
EU 8 <sup>2</sup>	42,4%
<b>Romania</b>	<b>35,7%</b>

Source: Eurostat

- By 2015, compared to other European countries (except only Bulgaria), "the satisfaction with life of Romanians indicator" is placed still on a negative path:

*Table 3 Satisfaction with life: the percentage of people very satisfied + satisfied<sup>3</sup>*

EU 15	83%
EU 28	80%
EU 8	76%
<b>Romania</b>	<b>59%</b>
Bulgaria	47%

Source: Eurobarometer 83 (2015)

- The highest impact of the transition has been recorded in the area of employment opportunities and employment structure (8.1 million jobs in 1990, about 4.6 to 5 million jobs within 2000-2015)

*Table 4 Employment rate: population 20-64 years (2015)<sup>4</sup>*

EU 28	70%
EU 15	70,5%
EU 8	71,3%
<b>Romania</b>	<b>66%</b>

Source: Eurostat

- According to data received from Eurostat, in 2015, the **annual income per capita** (basic source for standard of living) ranks Romania **on the last position in Europe** at a considerable distance from other European countries:

*Table 5 Per capita annual income available, Euro (2015)*

<sup>1</sup> Highly developed European countries (eurozone)

<sup>2</sup> The eight group other former communist countries (except Bulgaria) - who have experienced a better transition (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary)

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, pag 11

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, pag. 12

EU 15	32.938 Euro
EU 8	13.962 Euro
<b>Romania</b>	<b>8.531 Euro</b>
Romania % from EU 8	61,1%
Romania % from EU 15	25,9%

Source: The European Commission, based AMECO

- By 2015, "the share of wage incomes from total incomes in Romania" was 55.7%, while gross minimum wage (2015) or the gross average wage (2014) were located far from the average of all other European countries :

Table 6 Minimum wage and average<sup>1</sup>

	Minimum gross salary (2015)	Average gross salary (2014)
EU 15	1.276	3.994
EU 8	411	1.270
EU 15 + EU 8 / 2	843	2.623
<b>Romania</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>661</b>
Romania % from EU 8	588%	604,2%
Romania % from EU 15	188,4%	192,1%
România % from EU 15 + EU 8	388,5%	398,2%

Source: Eurostat [tps00155] UNECE Gross Average Monthly Wages by Country and Year. The average salary was converted from dollars into euros

- **Low wage policy** (more pronounced decrease of minimum wage compared to the average wage) led to impoverishment and high wage polarization, the analysis of the first 26 years after 1989 Revolution leading to a pessimistic conclusion regarding the hope for a future increase of the Romanians' standard of living: GDP growth has not automatically followed a similar dynamics in terms of wage increase:

Table 7 Dynamics of GDP and average wage: 1990 to 2015<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibidem, pag. 15

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, Pag. 17

GDP in EURO	400%
The average real wage	143,3%

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo based

- Data from Eurostat show that Romania has chosen the "**minimalistic social policy**" compared to financing as GDP share, of other European countries in related field.
- Overall, all the social functions of the Romanian state were subjected, during the transition, to under-financing (including the demography field, where problems are more than serious, the spending allocated by the Romanian state for the social protection of families and children was in 2014 - 0,8% of GDP, well below other European countries: EU-15 – 2,1%, EU 8 - 1,5%):

Table 8 The share of spending on social protection from GDP, 2014 (pensions, unemployment, social assistance)<sup>1</sup>

EU 15	19,9%
EU 8	14,7%
EU 15 + EU 8 / 2	17,3%
<b>Romania</b>	<b>11,4%</b>

Source: Eurostat

Table 9 Public expenditures on education and health from GDP (2014)<sup>2</sup>

	Education	Health
UE – 15	5,3%	7,2%
UE – 8	5,3%	5%
<b>Romania</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>

Source: Eurostat

### III. Welfare Aspects: implications on institutional changes

At eight years away (please see the analysis conducted by Professor Dumitru Sandu in 2007) apparently things do not seem to have changed very much. Official data available for 2015 in terms of quality of governance (*Eurobarometer 83*) describe a picture in which the level of confidence of Romanians in institutions still remains very small:

Table 10 Trust in institutions

Institution	Trust – Ro	Trust EU - 8	Trust EU – 15	Trust EU - 28
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<sup>1</sup> Ibidem

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, Pag 19

<b>Justice</b>	<b>48%</b>	40%	62%	52%
<b>Police</b>	<b>49%</b>	58%	75%	69%
<b>Army</b>	<b>76%</b>	64%	73%	71%
<b>Public authorities</b>	<b>42%</b>	45%	52%	47%
<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>13%</b>	11%	21%	16%
<b>Parliament</b>	<b>18%</b>	21%	40%	31%
<b>Government</b>	<b>27%</b>	28%	38%	31%

Source<sup>1</sup>: Eurobarometer 83, 2015

It is more than obvious that within the public perception, politics is the key-factor responsible for the current socioeconomic situation. Basically, 87% of Romanians do not have trust in political parties regardless of doctrine / political color, 82% do not trust the legislature (parliament), and 73% are dissatisfied with the country's established executive (government). Throughout the transition period, more than 50% of the population has consistently stated that the direction where Romania is heading towards was wrong.

Table 11 Direction it goes society<sup>2</sup>

	2010 (ICCV)	DEC. 2015 (INSCOP)	DEC. 2016 (IRES)
Wrong direction	80%	52%	61%
Right direction	10,5%	34%	34%

Source: ICCV, 2017

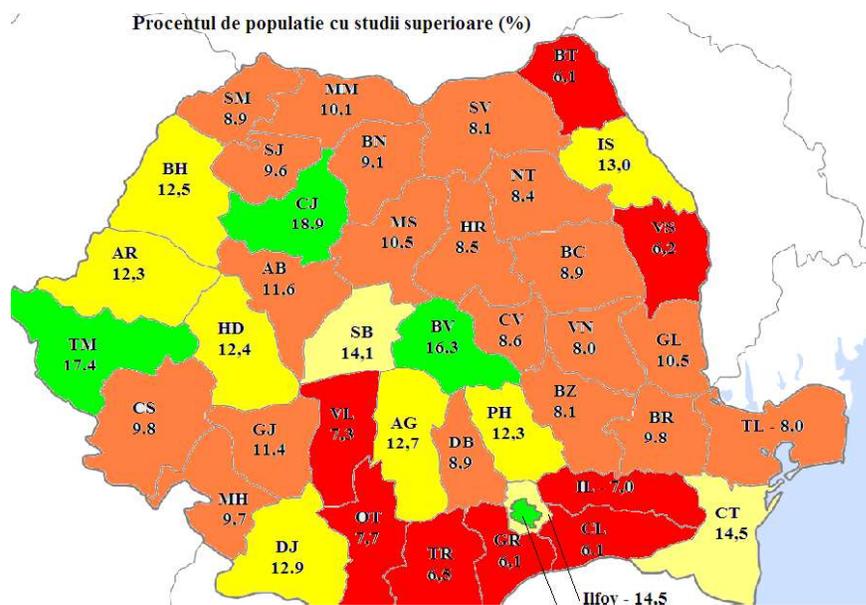
At the beginning of 2017, the Romanians were still concerned regarding the functioning of the judicial system (52% distrusted the Justice) or of the one ensuring public order and safety (51% distrusted the Police).

After 27 years since the Revolution of December 1989, Romania does not yet meet all five convergence criteria for adopting the euro and now has a very large disparity index - 62.2% (the difference between the regions and national level), and the chances of a rapid recovery are not placed near certainty. This is because large disparities are mentioned also in the field of education at the counties level. As economic growth rate can not be discussed outside a strong correlation with the quality of education, the data in Figure 1, presented by the National Institute of Statistics, are more than revelatory.

Fig. 1 Population with higher education (%)

<sup>1</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_arch\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, pg. 19



Source: National Institute of Statistics (2015)<sup>1</sup>

The absence of governmental interest in developing certain mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating of the manner in which the public system works in Romania, the development of crony-like recruitment system for administration personnel, lack of interest in terms of measuring the effectiveness of public policies in Romania have structured gradually in the collective conscience the perception of **the corrupt state** responsible for mismanagement of the country's process of economic and social development.

There are more than few experts who believe that the Romanian state was made available for certain mechanisms "of public resources exploitation by interest groups, with a wide tolerance for various forms of corruption"<sup>2</sup>

This is mainly the Romania's socioeconomic background in early 2017 when, just two weeks after the investiture of the government led by Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu, street protests began as a result of the government's intentions for changing amnesty conditions and amend the Criminal Procedure Code.

According to the data that we have, after the Revolution of December 1989, this was the largest social movement, both in scale (level of participation), as well as in national coverage (level of dissipation). What was the trigger

<sup>1</sup> See <http://cursdegovernare.ro/analiza-cele-4-romanii-si-drumul-fiecareia-pana-la-euro-divergenta-interna-severa.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem

of this great social movement? Was it true that Romanian society has changed? If so, what has fundamentally changed? Who were the rioters? What were the streamer regions/counties that maintained the phenomenon? Can we draw their social, economical and cultural profile?

Although the data from Table 12 are only useful in finding answers that apply to a certain stage, they can also help us to bring out a few **general conclusions**:

*Table 12 Socio-economic profile of the county - social movement in January 2017*

Locality	GDP per capita (euro) <sup>1</sup>	% Population with higher education <sup>2</sup>	Number of participants <sup>3</sup>
București	22.323	30,5%	150.000 – 300.000
Cluj	10.655	>15%	50.000
Timișoara	10.926	>15%	40.000
Sibiu	8.880	12-15%	40.000
Iași	6.289	12-15%	30.000
Brașov	10.528	>15%	13.000
Constanța	10.246	12-15%	12.000
Craiova	6.957	12-15%	10.000
Galați	6.278	9-12%	8.000
Bacău	5.697	7-9%	6.000
Tg. Mureș	6.757	9-12%	6.000
Baia Mare	5.850	9-12%	5.000
Oradea	6.444	9-12%	5.000
Arad	8.805	9-12%	5.000
Prahova	8.008	12-15%	5.000
Hunedoara	8.622	12-15%	3.000
Alba Iulia	8.569	12-15%	2.000

Source: Author, official data acquisition

- The data in Table 12 point out that we are talking about a **major social movement, involving all regions of the country**.

- The fact that its coverage was very large indicates **the presence on the public agenda of a problem considered fundamental for society**, but still unsolved by authorities;

<sup>1</sup> Data of the National Commission for Prognosis, 2016

<sup>2</sup> Data of the National Institute of Statistics, 2015

<sup>3</sup> See [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestele\\_din\\_Rom%C3%A2nia\\_din\\_2017](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestele_din_Rom%C3%A2nia_din_2017)

- The ethical component is an independent variable only in the equation explaining the grounds for the social movement outbreak; it changes its meaning in the broader context of the resonance that the social movements wished to convey: **diminishing the level of public tolerance to corruption;**
- The assumption that we want to launch is that for a significant proportion of the Romania's population **the institutional change has become a priority of the public agenda;**
- From the central core of the social movement claims two messages were very firmly sent:
  - **The public system from Romania has influenced, by the quality of governance, the current state of affairs,** and part of Romanian society is no longer willing to tolerate corruption and bureaucratic incompetence;
  - The quality of life represents for all Romanians the degree in which life generates satisfaction, **also in the conditions that we possess and for the quality and efficiency of the public services,** which we are compelled daily to connect.
- **An important part of the Romania's population is already very well connected to Western institutions** (either by intersections of professional nature, or by migration, tourism or visits to Romanian families already established abroad).
- In short, **many Romanians became in the last 27 years good connoisseurs of the manner in which the Western institutions work** and require from authorities of public system in Romania quality and efficiency.
- Even if the latest data provided by the National Commission for Prognosis describe a Romania characterized by multiple regional and economic disparities, in some counties/areas the development has accelerated.
- For those counties/areas, *GDP per capita* is continuously increasing, affecting the objective and subjective welfare indicators (in 2017, Bucharest is already situated at the same level with Berlin or Lisbon in terms of *GDP per capita*, with more than 23,000 euros).
- In this context, it is expected that future trends to change the Romania's formal institutions to concertedly and continuously exhibit, starting with these development center poles of Romania.
- Actually, Table 12 indicates that the protests from Bucharest benefited from the serious national support of precisely the most dynamic regional centers in Romania, with a high level of *GDP per capita*;

- The exception represented by Moldavia region can be interpreted in another key: massive participation in protests can be explained by the effect of migration experience in an area of high migration reserve<sup>1</sup>;
- Table 12 also shows the not-at-all accidental presence of a new component in the social background of the social movement in Romania, namely **education**.
- The liveliest protesters districts/areas were those that currently have an important stock of population with higher education (graduates).
- From this perspective, we can advance the hypothesis that the social movement occurred earlier this year had the support of a well-educated segment of the population, connected to the West, with a high level of objective and subjective welfare, migration experience, involved in an increased process of economic development, intolerant to corruption and that puts pressure towards institutional change.
- Certainly we are not talking about two Romanians. As the data show, almost the entire population of Romania has consumed the entire trust stock against political parties and public institutions from Romania.
- From this perspective, **the public agenda themes are the same for all Romanians**. But strong social polarization in the past 27 years ranks them distinctly: relevant for the poor public are now public policies of social protection (pension, unemployment, health insurance), while for the other part of population the pressure for institutional change seems to structure itself in the top list of the public agenda.
- Romanian society has changed in the last 27 years. An important segment of the population has already started to put pressure for changing of the formal institutions in Romania, as a first step in the process of changing political practices. As outlined by Robert Putnam, "the performance of an institution depends on its social, economic and cultural background". This segment is now apparently ready to develop a constant pressure to change the background. And while the development area advances, it is expected that its reservoir will resize.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://pressone.ro/sociologul-dumitru-sandu-politicienii-judeca-strada-ca-si-cum-ar-fi-cea-de-acum-10-20-de-ani/>, interview with Professor Dumitru Sandu, PressOne, February 19th, 2017

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