Young People and Projects for the Future. Case Study Romania

Corina Dragan[1], Sebastian Fitzek[1], Gabriela Neagu[1]

[1]Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy

Младите хора и плановете за бъдещето. Изследване на случай в Румъния

Корина Драган, Себастиан Фицек, Габриела Неагу

Институт за изследване на качеството на живота, Румънска академия

Author Note

Corina Drăgan https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5783-1396, Sebastian Fitzek https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6454-7820 , Gabriela Neagu https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6655-7256

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Corina Drăgan, Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy, Romania, Bucharest, Calea 13 September, no.13, E-mail: corina.dragan@iccv.ro

Бележки за авторите

Корина Драган https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7881-089 , Себастиан Фицек https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6454-7820 , Габриела Неагу https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6655-7256

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Abstract

In recent years, the problem of young people has become a dominant one both in the scientific literature, being analyzed from different perspectives, as well as at the level of leaders from various European and national institutions, being interested in the identification of measures, and policies to support young people. The problems that today's young people face are increasingly complex, and the decisions they make and the solutions they identify have a significant impact not only on their own lives but also on the community and the society they belong to. Our study aims to answer the following questions: what are the expectations of young Romanians vis-a-vis their educational, professional, and family future? What are the actions they undertake to achieve their proposed objectives? From a theoretical point of view, we will use a multiple trajectories perspective. From a methodological point of view, we will use quantitative data collected in 2022-2023 in Romania at the level of the South-West Oltenia region. The results confirm the fact that young people are uncertain about their future mainly because the socio-economic and political situation is unstable; that they have a great capacity for adaptability that allows them to change their strategies to obtain the best result for their future; coherence in the development of plans has a close connection with the level of education and qualification of young people.

Keywords: NEETs, rural development, young people, Romania

Резюме

През последните години проблемът за младите хора се превърна в доминиращ както в научната литература, където се анализира от различни гледни точки, така и на ниво лидери от различни европейски и национални институции, които се интересуват от идентифицирането на мерки и политики в подкрепа на младите хора. Проблемите, пред които се изправят съвременните млади хора, са все по-сложни и решенията, които вземат оказват значително влияние не само върху собствения им живот, но и върху общностите и обществото, към които те принадлежат. Настоящото проучване има за цел да отговори на следните въпроси: какви са очакванията на младите румънци по отношение на тяхното образователно, професионално и семейно бъдеще; какви са действията, които предприемат, за да постигнат поставените цели. От теоретична гледна точка изследването използва подхода, основан на перспективата за множеството траектории. От методологична гледна точка то де базира на количествени данни, събрани през 2022-2023 г. в Румъния, на ниво регион Югозападна Олтения. Резултатите потвърждават факта, че младите хора са несигурни за бъдещето си главно поради нестабилната социално-икономическа и политическа ситуация; те имат голям капацитет за адаптивност, който им позволява да променят своите

стратегии, за да си гарантира най-добри резултати за бъдещето; последователността в разработването на бъдещите планове има тясна връзка с нивото на образование и квалификация на младите хора.

Клочови думи: NEETs, развитие на селските райони, млади хора, Румъния

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Introduction

Young people represent an essential concern for all current societies, primarily due to professional and social integration difficulties and low and fluctuating incomes. On the other hand, some cause lie beyond personal or generational interests: (a) Fast demographic changes in a knowledge-based society and economy. Modern society is characterized by an accelerated trend of population aging, which means a higher pressure on the budget for social insurance, as well as difficulties in the long-term provision of the labor force necessary for economic growth; (b) Consolidation of social cohesion. Sustainable economic growth and social cohesion are priority objectives for Europe, but accomplishing these goals requires low inequalities between the different population categories. The increasing number of young people excluded from the educational and training system or the labor market leads to the development of social tensions between the young and adult people, between the employed and unemployed people, increase the delinquency and crime rate, deters the participation of the young people to the civic life, etc.; (c) Human rights. A democratic society is a society in which citizens' rights are observed, and the right to work is a universal human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and The European Social Chart (1965) stipulate not just the right of people to work but also the right to be paid according to work, the right to decent working conditions, protection against unemployment, etc. And for that reason," they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport, and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalized from participating in activities (economic, social, and cultural) that are the norm for other people, and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted."(Joint Report on Social Inclusion, 2004, p.10)

Romania's 2020 Country Report reveals that poverty and inequality continue to pose significant challenges, with limited access to services exacerbating the situation. A third of the Romanian population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma, are most affected. Parental income strongly correlates with poverty among children and their level of education. In-work poverty in Romania ranks high in the EU, and social benefits and minimum income measures have been insufficient in reducing poverty. Despite an aging population, no active aging policies have been implemented. The rural-urban gap, regional disparities, and inequalities are still significant obstacles to accessing essential services. Furthermore, the country has not adequately harnessed the potential of the social economy to improve social conditions.

With the change in the administrative structure, in Romania, there are eight development regions (North-West, Centre, North-East, South-East, South-Muntenia, Bucharest-Ilfov, South-West Oltenia, West) that are characterized by significant differences in terms of the level of socio-economic development, social problems, intervention measures, etc. For this study, we opted for the Region South West Oltenia. Romania's South West Oltenia region is located in the southwestern part of Romania and comprises five counties: Dolj, Olt, Vâlcea, Mehedinți, and Gorj. The South West Oltenia region falls into the "less developed" region category, with a GDP per capita 75% lower than the EU average. Compared to the other areas of the country, in 2020, in the South-West Region, the at-risk-of-poverty rate ranks third, after the South-East and North-East Regions (Regional Development Plan of the South-West Oltenia Region 2021-2027, p. 10).

Theoretical and methodological framework

Theoretical framework

There are many approaches to analyzing the plans of young people. Some of them focus on the educational dimension - young people aim to reach the highest possible level of education to have a better chance of getting a better-paid and safer job. Others pay special attention to professional activity, especially since, in recent decades, the place of young people in the labor market is very problematic: higher risk of unemployment, lower wages, etc.

There are also opinions according to which today's young people no longer pay much attention to education and occupation. These two dimensions are critical, but for young people, they no longer represent a priority objective. Family, free time, hobbies, etc., have become more critical for young people. Moreover, for today's young people, unemployment, leaving the education system, and returning after a period in school have become everyday, ordinary situations. There are studies (Kraaykamp et al., 2019) that show that young people's attitude towards school and work is the result of their values, attitudes, culture, etc., passed on by the family: in families where parents have a job, respect for work and education and encourage their children to do the same, the chances of them having a successful socio-professional integration are high. The family cannot act on its own to achieve this success. Children and young people attend school for a long time. The attitude and values conveyed by the school must be such to encourage respect for education and work to make up for where the family fails for various reasons. To support those who propose to analyze professional integration, but especially to cover these essential differences between the way of life, values, and actions of young people, the specialized literature offers numerous approaches. Some of them are included in the traditional

approaches to the human capital theory category by G. Becker & Th. Shultz (Becker, 1997; Becker &Tomes, 1979; 1986), or the signal theory by Arrow (Arrow et al., 2000). Others are considered modern approaches, including professional integration as a rational job search process (Vincens, 1981), the multidimensional path perspective (Rose, 2000), professional integration as a socially structured process, integration as a professional development process of socialization (Dubar, 1991), or professional integration as a dimension of adult life (Galland, 1991). The data we collected correspond to a greater extent to modern analysis approaches because they reflect how young Romanians from rural areas project their future.

The main objectives of the research were to understand the challenges young NEETs face in securing stable employment and starting a family and to identify the critical factors that would retain employees in Romania. The research aimed to gather information on the proficiency of young people in foreign languages, their preferred work location, and their views on starting a family abroad and to provide insights into the most effective solutions and support required to retain young people in Romania and to help them to build a brighter future. The study results analyzed the choices and decisions of NEET young people regarding working life and starting a family.

Methodological framework

The research was conducted using a self-administered online survey with a sample size of 95 participants. For data collection, we used the Google form.

We used the "snowball sampling" or "chain referral" method for respondent selection and, for data collection, a sociological survey based on a questionnaire. The questionnaire-based survey is a commonly used method in social sciences as it represents "research instruments that gather the information that allows us to describe and compare people's attitudes (what they feel), knowledge (what they know), and behaviors (what they do). (McIntire & Miller, 2010, p.330)

Our choice to use sociological surveys to investigate young people's attitudes toward their future is based on the fact that the issue addressed is of interest and relevance to Romanian society as a whole, and questionnaire-based surveys highlight the opinions, successes, or failures of the group rather than the individual. By reflecting the views, perceptions, and attitudes of a group or population category, the analysis of questionnaire-based survey results allows for the identification of solutions and essential measures for a broad group/category of population or even for the entire population of the country, rather than just for an individual.

In addition, we used online platforms for data collection as the data collection period coincided with when the population was still experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the level of comfort for direct interaction with the target group was not high. The facilities offered by technology are highly appreciated by the young population, which is the target group of this research. Access to the online platform can be done at any time without requiring a change in the respondents' schedule.

The selection of respondents was based on the following specific criteria for NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) status: they should be aged between 16 and 29 years old, not attending any form of education, and not having an employment contract.

For this type of research, the sample size is determined by the researcher and is stopped when the information becomes redundant, meaning that no new or significant findings emerge from it. (Moscovici & Buschini, 2007).

Like any method of selecting the population under investigation, the one we have chosen in this case has advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage of snowball sampling is that it allows quicker access to the target population. It relies on recommendations from known individuals (friends, colleagues), and the response rate is usually high. The main disadvantage of this method is the lack of representativeness of the sample: the individuals who respond to the questionnaire are not selected through statistical or objective methods but rather are the result of subjective choices made by other respondents. This method of selection facilitates the inclusion of individuals with interconnections, those who are more socially engaged in their communities, who participate in various professional courses, but it may 'lose' those who are 'isolated' (young people living in isolated communities, lacking internet access, or digital skills, etc.).

To develop the research instrument, we conducted documentation activities on the topic of NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), through consulting specialized literature (journal articles, books, national and international legislative documents, and public policy documents). Additionally, we had discussions and meetings with experts in the field - researchers and trainers. The questionnaire was pretested on a control group of 5 young people.

Characteristics of the investigated population

In terms of sociodemographic characteristics, the respondents are grouped by gender as follows: a) females 87% (66 persons) and b) males 31.6% (34 persons). In terms of age distribution, it is as

follows: 18-21 years (56 young people); 22-25 years (21 young people); 26-29 years (11 young people). Considering the significant differences between urban and rural areas in Romania, we have also included a variable regarding the residential environment of NEETs youth. Thus, 14 young people are from urban areas, and 81 are from rural areas.

The participants were selected using a non-probability sampling method and were primarily young people from Romania who were not enrolled in education, employed, or undergoing training (NEETs). The survey consisted of questions related to job security, fair pay, corruption, equity, social justice, proficiency in foreign languages, traveling abroad, preferred work location, and starting a family, and it was constructed in a multiple-choice format.

The survey outcomes unveil the participants' demographic profile, including their age, gender, place of residence, education level, occupation, marital status, and the number of children. The findings also reveal the participants' inclination towards working abroad, including their preferred destination countries, areas of interest for work, proficiency in languages, and financial aspects. Furthermore, the results shed light on the participants' intent to relocate abroad and establish a family there permanently and their perceptions about the job market and standard of living in Romania in the next five years. The research considered the vulnerable socio-economic situation of young people in Romania aged 16 to 29 who fall into the NEET category and used a comprehensive methodology of secondary data and primary data collected through a sociological survey questionnaire. The research used preliminary data using a sociological survey questionnaire applied online via a Google form, selecting young people from urban and rural areas in southwestern Romania (Olt, Dolj, Gorj, and Valcea counties). In addition to sociodemographic data, the interview guide was structured around 12 in-depth questions. The results of this research are essential because Romania has the highest proportion of NEET young people and is under-represented in studies on this topic.

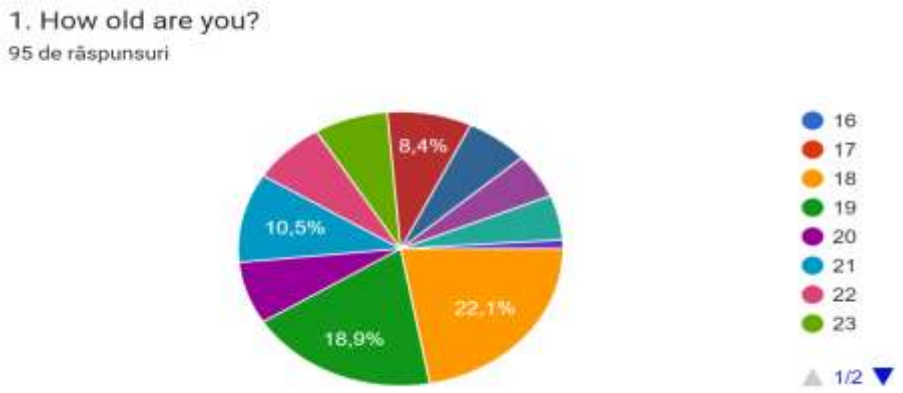
Result

The study results reveal a gender split, with 87%(66 persons) of participants being female and 31.6%(34 persons) male. Most respondents, 34.8% (33 pers.), reside in a rural area in the communal sector, 47.8%(46 persons) live in rural areas in the village sector, and 17.4%(16 persons) live in cities. Most participants (89.5%-85 persons) have completed high school, while 7.4% (7 persons) have a university degree, and 3.2% (3 persons) have only completed primary school. However, a high percentage (78.9%-75 persons) of respondents are currently unemployed, 9.5% (9 persons) are employed, 6.3% (6 persons) are still enrolled in school, and 5.3% (5 persons) are employed and receive a

salary. The results indicate that 65.3% (62 persons) of participants are single, 25.3 % (24 persons) are married, 6.3% (6 persons) are cohabiting, and 3.1% (3 persons) are separated. Concerning children, 68.4% (65 persons) of respondents have none, 17.9 % (17 persons) have one, 12.6% (12 persons) have two, and 1.1% (1persons) have three. Concerning age, the results show that 39 pers. Participants are 18 and 19 years old, followed by 56 people between 20 and 27 years old.

Figure 1

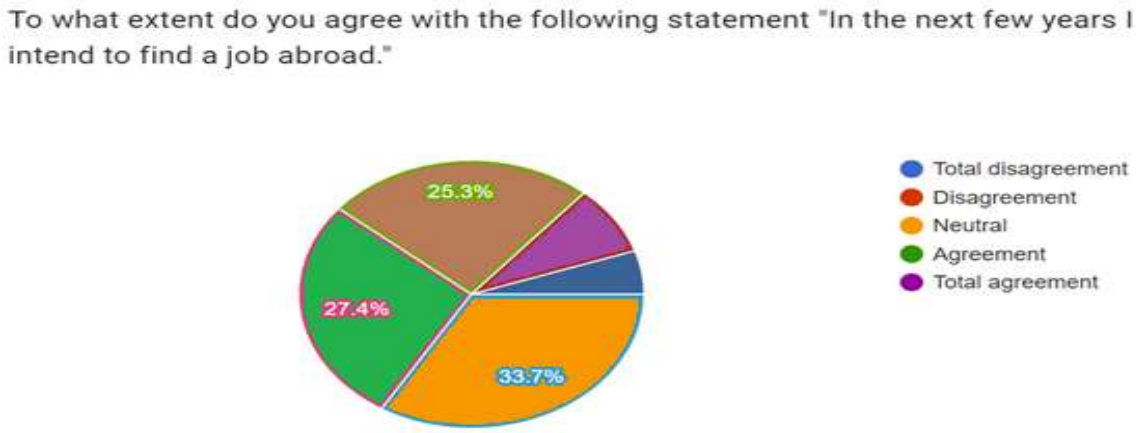
Age of respondents



Source: Research "The plans of young Neets."

Figure 2

Intention to find a job abroad in the next few years



Source: Research "The plans of young Neets."

The results of the second question in the survey reveal a balanced mix of opinions regarding the intention to settle permanently abroad soon. Nearly 32 persons (33.7%) of the participants held a neutral stance, while 24 persons (25.3%) were against the idea. However, a considerable number of respondents also expressed support for the concept, with 26 persons (27.4%) somewhat agreeing and 8 persons (8.4%) total agreeing. Only five persons (5.3%) of the participants expressed strong disagreement. These results imply that while some respondents are willing to consider settling abroad permanently, others may have reservations about doing so. It highlights the diversity of perspectives on this matter among the participants.

According to the results of the third question of the survey, 69 respondents (72.6%) would primarily seek support from their relatives or family if they were to relocate abroad. And 31 persons (32.6%) would look to friends for assistance, while a smaller proportion of 14 persons (14.7%) would rely on their spouse or partner. Only a minimal number of respondent's four persons (4.2%) would turn to former schoolmates, 2 persons (2.1%) to previous coworkers, 2 persons (2.1%) to neighbors, and 1 persons (1.1%) would rely solely on themselves. These findings demonstrate that the respondents' close family members and friends would be their primary source of support in the event of a move abroad.

The results of the fifth question indicate that the primary reasons for respondents considering leaving Romania and working abroad are the low living standards, low wages, expensive cost of living, and a perceived lack of interest from authorities in addressing the needs and problems of young people. Conversely, respondents listed the following reasons, in descending order, for why they would choose to move to a Western country: the opportunity to provide a better life for their children or future family, better job opportunities, attractive salaries, job stability, a different lifestyle, improved quality of life, opportunities for professional growth, the chance to gain new experiences, a high standard of living, the Western mentality, a stable economy and political situation, and fewer people. Some respondents also mentioned that they would not leave Romania due to their family being here or not having another place to go.

The results of the sixth question indicate that most respondents, 22 persons (23%) prefer finding a job in Romania. Germany comes in second as a preferred destination at 18 persons (18%), followed by Spain -14 persons (15%) and Italy -13 persons (14%). Austria – 11 persons (12%) is also a popular choice among respondents. The United States 6 persons (7%) is a less popular job destination than other EU countries. The remaining respondents (11 pers.) prefer finding a job in other EU countries. These results suggest that the respondents prefer working within the EU. When comparing the number of

respondents who wish to stay in Romania (22 persons) to those who prefer working abroad (73 persons), it is evident that many respondents intend to work outside of Romania.

The results of the seventh and eighth questions reveal that construction is the most sought-after field of work among the respondents, with 23 persons. They are selecting it as one of their top three choices.

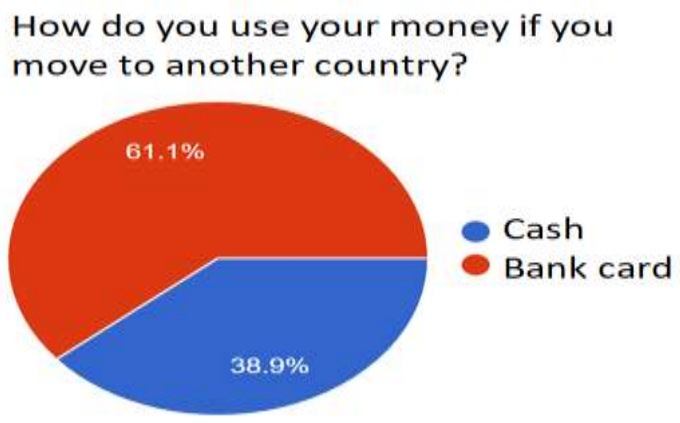
Marketing comes in second place, with 20 persons of the respondents, followed by agriculture at 15 persons, nursing 2 persons, culinary arts 9 persons, and auto mechanics 7 persons is also among the favored fields.

On the other hand, sports (6 persons), computing (3 persons), and any job or trade that the respondents (7 persons) are willing to work in are the least preferred fields in comparison to the top three. These results highlight a clear preference for construction as the most desired field of work, followed by marketing and agriculture, while the remaining areas are less favored.

The results of the survey indicate that many respondents (33 persons) are proficient in English, followed by French (13 persons), Italian (8 persons), and German (2 persons). However, a significant proportion (39 persons) of respondents do not know any foreign language. In conclusion, while English is the most known foreign language among the respondents, most of those who know a foreign language only have basic or intermediate-level knowledge. This, combined with other factors such as qualifications and professional experience, makes it difficult to determine if the respondents are prepared for international employment. The results suggest that only a few respondents will likely be prepared for this type of work.

Figure 3

Young people's preference for the use of money



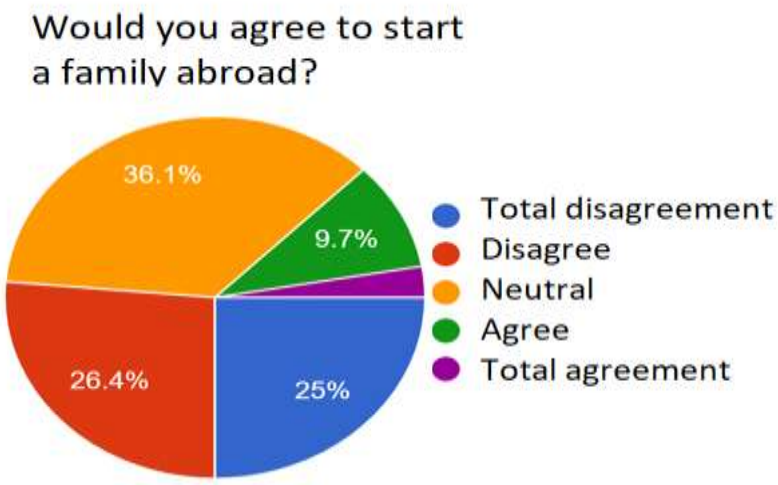
Source: Research "The future plans of young Neets"

Young people prefer using cards over cash when spending money while working abroad. According to the survey, 58 persons (61.1%) of young people indicated that they would use a card, while 37 persons (38.9%) preferred cash. The choice between money and a card will depend on several factors, including personal preferences, accessibility of card and banking services, and local payment customs.

The results of the survey question "To what extent would you agree to start a family abroad and stay there?" indicate that many respondents, 36.1% (34 persons), hold a neutral or ambiguous stance towards the idea. In comparison, 26.4% (24 persons) disagree, and 25% (23 persons) disagree with starting a family abroad and staying long-term. In contrast, 9,7% agree, and 2.8% strongly agree.

Figure 4

Young people's preference to start a family abroad



Source: Research "The future plans of young Neets"

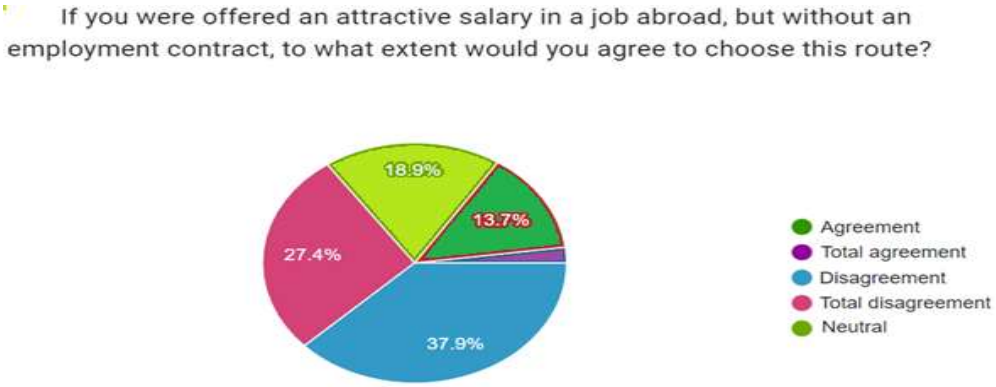
The results from the question "Where do you see yourself working in the next five years?" offer a glimpse into the career aspirations of the respondents. Most of them, 36 pers., aspire to work within Romania, with a preference for urban centers such as Bucharest, Cluj, Brasov, and Timisoara. Conversely, 26 persons of the respondents envision working abroad, with Munich being the most favored location, followed by Rome, Madrid, Vienna, and Barcelona.

When asked about their willingness to work without an employment contract in exchange for a high salary abroad, the survey results show that many respondents are cautious about the idea. 37

persons (37.9%) disagree with it, with 26 persons (27.4%) strongly disagreeing. 18 persons (18.9%) are uncertain, while 13 persons (13.7%) agree and 1 persons (2.1%) strongly agree.

Figure 5

Intention to work without an employment contract



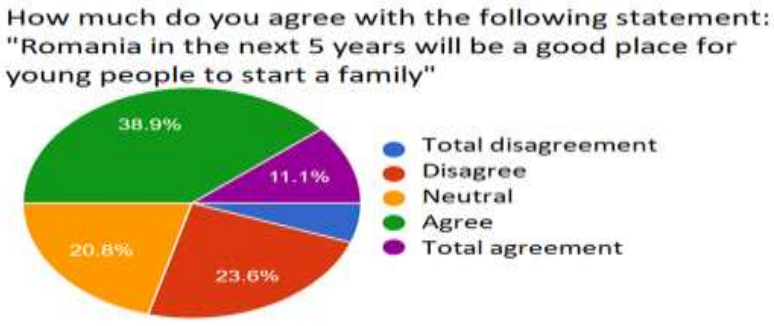
Source: Research "The future plans of young Neets"

The results from the question "What are the top three conditions or changes you would choose to work long term and safely only in Romania and not abroad?" reveal that many respondents, 83 persons, prioritize having a higher salary and the protection of employees' rights and freedoms.

The results of the final survey question, "To what extent do you agree with the statement 'Romania in the next 5 years will be a better place for having a job and starting a family?" indicate that many respondents 37 persons (38.9%) are optimistic and agree with the statement. However, 22 persons (23.6%) disagree, and 19 persons (20.8%) are neutral or indecisive. Additionally, 10 persons (11.1%) strongly agree, while 5 persons (6.3%) strongly disagree.

Figure 6

Respondents' perception for a better future Romania to start a family



Source: Research"The future plans of young Neets"

Based on the analyzed data, it can be deduced that a significant portion of the respondents (33 persons /34.7%) are proficient in English, while fewer individuals know French (13 persons/13.7%), Italian (8 persons/8.9%), or German (2 persons/1.2%). However, a substantial number (39 persons/41.5%) do not possess knowledge of any foreign language, and only a limited proportion (12.8%) reported knowing two foreign languages, English and French. Among those who are knowledgeable of a foreign language, the majority (43 persons/45.2%) have a basic understanding, while a smaller percentage (33 persons/34.4%) have intermediate proficiency, and (19 persons/20.4%) have advanced proficiency. These findings indicate that if they were to pursue job opportunities abroad, most respondents would be only partially equipped to communicate effectively in the foreign country's language. When asked about their preferred mode of payment while traveling abroad, the majority (58 persons/61,1%) preferred to use bank cards, while a smaller portion (37 persons/38.9%) opted for cash. Regarding starting a family and living abroad, a significant number (34 persons/36.1%) of respondents had no clear stance, while a smaller proportion disagreed (24 persons /26.4%) or strongly disagreed (23 persons/25%) with the idea. Only a limited percentage agreed (9.7%) or strongly agreed (2.1%) with the notion. Regarding their preferred place of work in the next five years, a significant number of respondents (36 persons) expressed a desire to work in Romania, and some (26 persons) wanted to work abroad, with 33 not providing an answer. Among those who preferred to work in Romania, the majority favored larger cities such as Bucharest, Cluj, Brasov, and Timisoara. Conversely, those who wanted to work abroad preferred cities like Munich, Rome, Madrid, Vienna, and Barcelona. The most popular career choice was construction, followed by agriculture, marketing, nursing, and other fields. When asked about accepting a job abroad without a formal employment contract, even if it came with an attractive salary, most respondents (37 persons/37.9%) disagreed. A smaller number (26 pers./27.4%) strongly disagreed. A portion (18 pers./18.9%) were uncertain, while 13 persons (13.7%) agreed and 1 persons (2.1%) strongly agreed. Most respondents (83 persons) indicated that higher salaries, respect for employee rights and freedoms, elimination of corruption, and establishment of equity and social justice were the factors that would keep them working long-term in Romania. Finally, when asked about their opinion on Romania's prospects for finding a job and starting a family in the next five years, a majority (37persons /38.9%) agreed, while a smaller proportion (19 persons/20.8%) were neutral, a similar number (22 persons/23.6%) disagreed, 10 persons (11.1%) strongly agreed, and 5 persons (6.3%) strongly disagreed. These results suggest that although most respondents prefer to work in Romania,

they are dissatisfied with the country's current state and hope for significant improvements in various aspects of work and living conditions.

Discussions

The survey results indicate that a moderate number of participants have a neutral attitude towards finding a job abroad - 33.7%. However, a notable proportion of respondents, 27.4%, agree with the idea, while 25.3% disagree. Although a smaller group, 8.4% of participants agreed strongly, and 5.3% disagreed. These findings suggest that while some young people are open to the possibility of working abroad, others may not be as interested. Acknowledging that the results only provide limited insight is crucial, and more information is necessary to understand the situation comprehensively. The responses may also vary depending on factors such as the participants' educational level, marital status, and financial stability.

According to the survey results, most respondents (61.1%) plan to use bank cards for payments when traveling abroad, while a smaller portion (38.9%) plan to use cash. This indicates a preference for the convenience and security bank cards offer over carrying cash. This preference is likely due to the widespread acceptance of card payments in Western countries with advanced banking systems, such as Germany, Austria, France, Italy, and Spain.

These results suggest that many respondents may not have considered the idea or are weighing the pros and cons. On the other hand, a significant minority, who either agree or strongly agree, might be motivated by factors such as job opportunities, improved living conditions, or a thirst for adventure. The data suggests that while many respondents may be wary of starting a family abroad and residing there long-term, a significant minority is open to the idea. Further research and analysis are needed to understand the underlying reasons for these attitudes and their potential impact on migration and family formation decisions.

This indicates that a substantial proportion of the respondents are open to working overseas, although the majority still favors working within Romania. The most sought-after profession among the respondents is construction, among the top three desired fields mentioned in a previous question. This is followed by agriculture, marketing, and nursing, demonstrating a preference for services, health, and trade-related industries. The data reveals that most respondents have a clear vision for their future careers, either in Romania or abroad, and the field they want to work in. A desire for urban job opportunities mainly drives the inclination towards working within Romania, while a yearning for new experiences and opportunities drives the desire to work abroad.

It is not surprising that many respondents are not willing to work abroad without the security of an employment contract, as it leaves them susceptible to exploitation and unprotected in the event of any workplace disputes. An employment contract provides for a formal agreement between an employer and employee, specifying the terms and conditions of employment, such as working hours, pay, and job responsibilities. Without a contract, there is a lack of clarity and accountability in the workplace. The majority of respondents are wary of the idea of working abroad without an employment contract, suggesting that stability and security in their work are important to them and that they prefer to have a clear understanding of their rights and duties as employees.

Eliminating corruption and establishing equity and social justice were also noted as crucial factors for staying and working in Romania. These findings emphasize the significance of job security and fair compensation for employees in Romania. The emphasis on fair pay and respecting employees' rights suggest that these factors play a crucial role in workers' decision-making process when considering working abroad. Furthermore, the mention of corruption elimination and promoting equity and social justice highlights the need for a transparent and fair working environment. These elements are also critical in attracting and retaining workers in Romania. The answers indicate that to encourage workers to stay and work in Romania long-term, the country must address issues regarding fair compensation, job security, corruption, and social justice.

It is essential to consider various factors influencing the respondents' opinions, including their current employment status, confidence in the future job market and economy, and personal experiences and expectations. The high percentage of neutral or positive respondents may reflect the population's general hope and optimism. Conversely, the negative responses may reflect dissatisfaction with the current job market and economy. In conclusion, while a large portion of respondents believe that Romania will improve as a place for work and starting a family in the next five years, there is also a significant group who are skeptical or have negative expectations. Further analysis is necessary to understand the motivations behind these perspectives and make informed decisions about Romania's future as a work and family destination.

Limits of research

The limitations of this research include small sample size, a lack of diversity in the sample population, the possibility of bias in self-reported data, rules in data collection and analysis, and the challenge of accurately measuring the impact of policies and solutions on the NEET population. To enhance the research in the future, it would be advantageous to have a more extensive and diverse

sample, gather data from multiple sources using multiple methodologies to increase the validity and reliability of the results and conduct follow-up studies and evaluations to assess the long-term effects of policies and solutions. Including the perspectives of NEETs and those who have successfully transitioned out of this group would also provide valuable insights into the most effective solutions and support required.

Conclusions and practical implications

In conclusion, the survey results from Romania highlight job security, fair pay, eradicating corruption, and establishing equity and social justice as the critical factors that would retain employees in the country. Although most respondents expect Romania to be a better place for work and starting a family in the next five years, many hold doubts or disagree. Many respondents are proficient in English as a foreign language, with smaller proportions knowing French, Italian, or German. When traveling abroad, most prefer to use bank cards, and most respondents have no clear preference regarding starting a family abroad. The chosen work location in Romania is predominantly in construction and agriculture. At the same time, most respondents are against accepting a job abroad without an employment contract, even with an attractive salary. These findings suggest that workers in Romania place a high value on job security and fair compensation and hold mixed opinions about the country's future job market and economy.

In Romania, young people in the NEET group, those not enrolled in education, employed, or undergoing training, face multiple challenges in securing stable employment and starting a family. To retain them in the country, the government and other key players could implement various public policies and initiatives, such as:

a) It invests in education and skill development programs to provide young people with the necessary skills and qualifications to join the workforce. This could include vocational training, apprenticeships, and business collaborations to offer practical experience.

b) It strengthens the safety net by aiding those struggling to find work, such as unemployment benefits and retraining programs.

c) It stimulates the economy through job creation and investments in high-growth potential sectors, such as technology, renewable energy, and tourism.

d) It grants tax incentives to businesses that invest in the local workforce and create jobs in underprivileged regions.

e) Through tax credits, subsidies, and loan programs, we are improving access to affordable housing and supporting the starting of families.

The Romanian government could also engage in public-private partnerships to generate job opportunities, facilitate new business growth, and enforce policies to enhance the overall business environment, making it more straightforward for entrepreneurs to establish and expand their businesses. By tackling these challenges and creating a supportive environment for young people, Romania can retain its talented and motivated youth, enabling them to build a brighter future for themselves and their families.

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