

# Towards an Integrated Social Policy in Post-December Romania: Between Aspiration and Reality

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## Abstract

The study highlights the new trends in public social policies of preventing marginalization risks for vulnerable groups and individuals, concomitantly with shaping social/community responsibility for a programme of sustainable social change and development. On the background of some theories about the interdependency and complexity of human needs, these new policy directions attempt to mitigate major issues regarding the social development and normal community integration requirements for the members of the society. The present analysis focuses on the political and ideological principles required for promoting some integrated public social policies required for increasing quality of life. A synthetic review is made as regards the profile of social policies in Romania after 1990. The analysis of 30 years of transition highlights a distinct profile of social policies in the framework of the “selected models of country”. The evaluation of the governmental strategies will pursue the impact of public social policies on some vulnerable categories with high marginalization risk. The analysis attempts to identify actual types of risks in relation with the profile of the beneficiaries and their approach by the governance depending on the political options. A long-term time horizon will be considered along with a short-term one for emphasizing the distinct profiles of the public policies, specific to the post-December governments. During the last years, a new trend of social development emphasizes increasingly more frequently in Europe the need of major objectives for a programme of economic growth in agreement with the social and human requirements. Thus, those stages of “*economic development per se*” by disregarding “*human presence*” could be exceeded. Therefore, the new EU direction for sustainable economic development is centered on “*socially inclusive economic growth*”. As such, the new trends within public policies take account also of a wide sphere of non-economic social factors, corresponding proper to the multidimensional profile of the quality of life and human development.

*Keywords:* social policy, social problems, social development, capitalist society, poverty, quality of life, vulnerable groups.

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## **Brief insight into the post-December social policies. The socio-economic, political, and cultural context**

In post-December Romania, a critical point is highlighted as regards public social policies event at the time of their inception: *the inexistence of a clear diagnosis of the social support need* (social assistance, protection, and development), centered on types of beneficiaries and needs' profile. An immediate consequence of this fact was *the incapacity of determining properly the priorities within the public policies system, and of timely evaluation of the transition's social costs*. To these was added subsequently *a major direction deficit in elaborating an adequate strategy for the Romanian context* of shifting from the planned economy to the free market one. The objectives of a coherent programme of structural reforms corresponding to the transition were not found in unitary public policies focused actively on sustainable social development. The economic development "at any cost" was the sole one placed constantly on the first position. As the economic field enjoyed priority status, the reform was made even with the price of ignoring/sacrificing social and individual welfare//wellbeing. In this context, in the social field emerged ad-hoc decisions, taken as result of emergencies, very often under the pressure of street movements/events in development. Though more investments were made initially in financing fundamental social services (education, health, housing), as reaction to the "burdensome inheritance" of the communist regime, post-December development policies took distance gradually from recovering the social victims of the old regime (Zamfir, 1990; Zamfir, 1995; Pop, 1999; Pop, 2002; Zamfir, Pop, & Zamfir, 1994; Zamfir, 1999; Cace, 2006; Zamfir & Stanescu, 2007; Zamfir, Stanescu, Briciu, 2010; Z., Zamfir, Stănescu, S, Daniel, A., eds. 2015; Zamfir, & Precupețu, 2018). A coherently structured and sustainable project of social reforms adequate to the country's development conditions that would suggest a fitting model for Romania's future was inexistent. Alternatively, under the conditions of limiting financial and human resources severely, a proper prioritization of needs was extremely important for active measures of diminishing and preventing the new social risks for vulnerable individuals and groups. Starting from a simple definition, public social policies represent a structured assembly of programs, measures, and professional activities of protecting some vulnerable individuals, groups, communities that are temporary in difficulty. These categories due to some economic-social, political, biologic, psychological-individual reasons/difficulties, etc. cannot ensure from own resources an autonomous life for the normal integration into community. The activities of social assistance oriented on the punctual requirements of the beneficiaries are developed in a constituted administrative-institutional and normative-legal framework. Social policies provide specialized answer to the complexity of bio-psycho-socio-cultural life human needs (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1995; Zamfir, 1997a). Hence, also the necessity of an integrated perspective regarding sectorial social policies that would cover the wide range of needs that, in their turn, are of integrated type. Intervention in

assistance is realized by specialized forms of social support: (1) Financial benefits; Personalized assistance services; Occasional and emergency aids. Assistance is component part of social protection and intervenes whenever the decent living standard threshold cannot be ensured by own means of the beneficiary. It should be retained that social assistance is a universal right of human being warranted by the right to life itself.

In the context of the socio-economic and political difficulties of the post-December Romania, the sociologists, right from the beginning, estimated the seriousness of the social issues corresponding to a difficult and unpredictable transition. (Zamfir, 1990; Zamfir, & Zamfir, 1995; Pasti, 1995; Zamfir, 1997b; Zamfir, 1999; Voicu, 2005a; Pop, 2002; Pop, 2003; Cace, 2004; Voicu, 2005b; Pasti, 2006; Cace, 2006; Zamfir & Stanescu, 2007; Marginean & Precupețu, 2010; Zamfir, 2012a; Zamfir, 2012b, Marginean, 2013). The time of shifting from socialism to a western society of capitalist type was known. However, nothing was known about how exactly this could be done. Nor how long would last to achieve this change, and at what social and human costs. Nonetheless, it is a certainty that the aim was a form of capitalist society with “human face”. It was difficult to achieve it. It remained just an aspiration/wish for the Romanians. Even less could we imagine then, where the road would lead thirty years later? In fact, at present, we still do not know precisely whether this nebular, contradictory process of transition is concluded, though transition is no longer mentioned.

*The first period of transition* was faced brutally with the modern risks of a western market economy on the background of the economy weakened by excessive-authoritarian centralism, an inheritance of the communist past. To this was added also the frailty of confuse, unconsolidated democracy, which was “extremely loud”, as specific to beginnings. It was foreseen that the population would undergo a strong social shock. New, severe and multiple social issues were anticipated that were over-added to the ones originating from the socialist regime. The chances for identifying timely solutions were few.

Wide segments of population were threatened by rapid impoverishment, and by poverty’s massive expansion, doubled by the risk/shock of social marginalization. Perhaps, that is the reason why sociologists emphasized then the compulsiveness/necessity of a firm answer to the plan of some “strong social therapies” to match the shock of transitioning to a new social form (the western capitalist society). At the same time, they underlined the role of some active and sustainable social policies. Unfortunately, this priority objective of some “aggressive” social policies of the support type for vulnerable groups and individuals proposed by the sociologists from the beginning, was much too less taken into account by the political decision makers/factors of the time. In fact, the post-December social policies strategies by their initial objectives have covered only partially the needs that multiplied rapidly for large social categories, for large groups, and even for entire communities. Thus, the first support interventions addressed to the vulnerable ones, even if they aimed major forms of new risks (unemployment and its official acknowledgement,

impoverishment of large social groups, institutionalized children, street children, marginalization of the Roma communities), did not have the capacity of providing for active and sustainable solutions related to the severity of these issues.

In fact, preparing the conditions for Romania's accession to the European structures captured over the first period of transition the complete attention of the political decision factors and of the social stakeholders. "Economic growth", under any conditions, came first over "Human Good". In their turn, the European welfare standards, as permanent milestones put pressure on establishing the sectorial social policies. Thus, in the process of preparing the accession conditions to the EU, Romania gave first priority to the most disadvantage social groups (institutionalized children, young delinquents, street children, very poor Roma). However, other large high-risk categories were ignored (elderly, unemployed, families with many children, youths' employment on the labor market in attractive jobs, etc.). The aggregation of the difficult issues from the past with the newly emerged ones led gradually to deepening severe poverty for some large groups of individuals, and even communities. However, already at the beginning, the aim was for "capitalism with a human face" and the avoidance of "wild capitalism", Romania could not embed itself in the requirements of this pattern.

In the second part, after the accession to the European Union, Romania focused on administrative-institutional and legislative changes that would bring the country closer to the modern European standards of welfare. Increasingly more frequently, in the EU statistics and in the national ones, objective, but subjective indicators as well emerge as regards quality of life, the benchmark for comparisons of the member-states. These measure both poverty and social exclusion risks, but also the satisfaction degree with life (well-being, happiness) (Zamfir & Magino, 2013).

### **Financing public social policies. Factors and conditions**

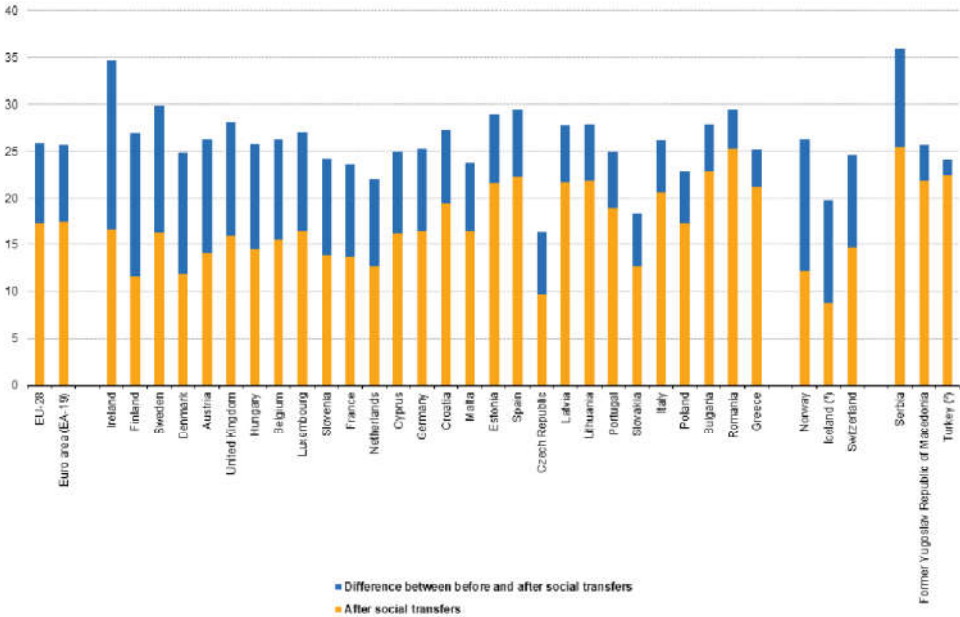
The configuration and efficiency of public social policy corresponding to post-December Romania were disadvantaged permanently by the scarcity of financial and human resources oriented towards the social sector. The chronic underfinancing of the sectorial social policies was a constant of the Romanian transition. To it were added subsequently the confusion, incoherence, and instability of the legal-administrative framework. The lack of coordination of some anti-poverty and social inclusion governmental programs at national level was a factor in hindering the sustainable changes in social assistance. At the beginning of the transition, social policies had a much too low financing and could not meet the high demands of extraordinary social protection as necessary at the time. Moreover, the budgetary projection lacked a sustainable strategic vision in agreement with the specific social requirements of a future model of country development. The social policies were circumscribed over the entire transition period to a *minimal welfare state model* (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1995; Cace, 2004; Voicu & Voicu, 2005; Voicu, 2005b;

Stanescu & Briciu, 2010; Pop, 2005; Pop, 2017). Despite huge social difficulties inherited from the communist regime, in Romania, over the entire transition period was maintained the trend of state's social functions retrenchment. The social dimension of the state was continuously diminished as answer to the pressures of the domestic political decision makers, but also because of some clearly formulated conditionality of the international/external institutions (for instance, IMF, World Bank). Overall, the control and support of vulnerable groups by the state, even though with high financial costs was modest, more for mitigating emergencies. Hence, its inefficiency on long term. Without minimizing the role of some such emergency "fire extinguishing" policies, we emphasize the explanation that in Romania the social functions of the state over the entire transition period were reduced visibly, though the trend was contrary in the European states (Zamfir, 2012a; Zamfir, 2012 b). In our case, the multiple risks prevention mechanism by sectorial social policies was much more dimmed even during the periods of economic crisis and austerity.

Over the entire period of transition the option was for a "small social state" policy. Thereby, the "Left orientation" attempted to protect itself also against some obsessive ideological prejudices of the Right, and against allegations regarding the closeness to the communist practices of a "paternalist" state, and about the return to the past. While the Romanian state restricted increasingly more its social attributions, contrary to any modern trends, the size of the socially excluded segments was increasing continuously. The rapid process of impoverishment with direct impact in low education and even the exclusion from education of children could not be halted. The precarious and insufficient health services for a large part of the population illustrated the "disease of the health system" and the limits of the policies in the field. The preventative side of the health policies as mitigation of the social risks of illnesses on rapid increased remained completely uncovered (tuberculosis, hepatitis, cancer, etc.). Because of the poor and inefficient protection, the segment of children from disfavored families, of the elderly without any help, of the young delinquents, and of those excluded from the labor market, etc. became a significant one and completely unfavorable to Romania within the European statistics (Zamfir, 2012 a; Zamfir, Stanescu, & Arpinte, 2015; Zamfir & Precupețu, 2018).

Romania was placed permanently on the last positions in the European rankings as regards the involvement of the state in solving timely the severe and multiple social issues as regards the diminishment of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion. The budgetary resources granted to the social sector in transition were permanently extremely low, and Romania ranks on the last positions within the EU. According to the EUROSTAT data, if in 1995 the expenditures with the social protection were by 10% out of the GDP, after more than 20 years, in 2017, these register an infinitesimal increase by only 1.7%, without taking account of the deepening social polarization and of the new forms of exclusion. This, the more so, as these social expenditures include a wide part of the ones intended for social

protection. Social protection and assistance aimed more to compensate the losses of the waged category, by means of the the social insurance system, and less the support for the vulnerable groups with major risks of extreme poverty and social exclusion. (Pasti, 1995; Zamfir & Zamfir, 1995; Zamfir, 1997b; Cace, 2010; Zamfir, 2000; Zamfir & Burtea, 2012; Zamfir, Stanescu, & Arpinte, 2015; Marginean, 2013). Unfortunately, in time, just the anti-poverty social policies focused on emergency were the strengthened ones. However, these attempted to defend, at the verge of the subsistence threshold the generation of children and youths with major risks of falling deeper in severe poverty without any possibilities of escaping it in the future. Thus, they were labelled for life as socially marginalized. In fact, the lacking sustainability and the inefficiency of the inclusion policy for large groups in major difficulty led gradually to the outspread of a “*culture of poverty, doubled also by a culture of learned helplessness*”. A defensive reaction against the hardships of life, an indifferent, passive attitude against the social reality is the cultural model transferred to the generations of children from severely disfavored families. The social assistance system based on testing incomes implemented initially just for the poorest groups emerged late in Romania, only in 1995. As it was financially very small, the aid could be regarded more as support for survival. In time, even these aids for minimum existence eroded rapidly. In 1997, all financial benefits as social support were eliminated, and only those for the children allowances remained (3% from total benefits or 0.3% from GDP). Anyway, their coverage degree for the severe state of some social category was completely insufficient (Pop, 2016; Pop, 2019; IQLR, 2010, IQLR, 2011; UNICEF, 2003; Zamfir, 2010; Zamfir, 2013). Yearly, the social support forms lowered more. They did not cover at least the elementary subsistence requirements for poor families. Their state degraded gradually and for the new generations of children, as well. The deepening of poverty, and severe poverty generated a state of passively accepted helplessness and consigned to a culture of poverty (Townsend, 1993; Sachs, 2005; Zamfir, 1996; Zamfir, E., 1997a; Stanculescu & Berevoescu, 2004). This could explain also why that in 2016, after 27 years of transition, Romania is placed amongst the EU countries with the highest risk of the poverty rate by over 25%, immediately after Serbia, maintaining the same position for the poverty risk rate before and after social transfers (*Figures 1 and 2*).



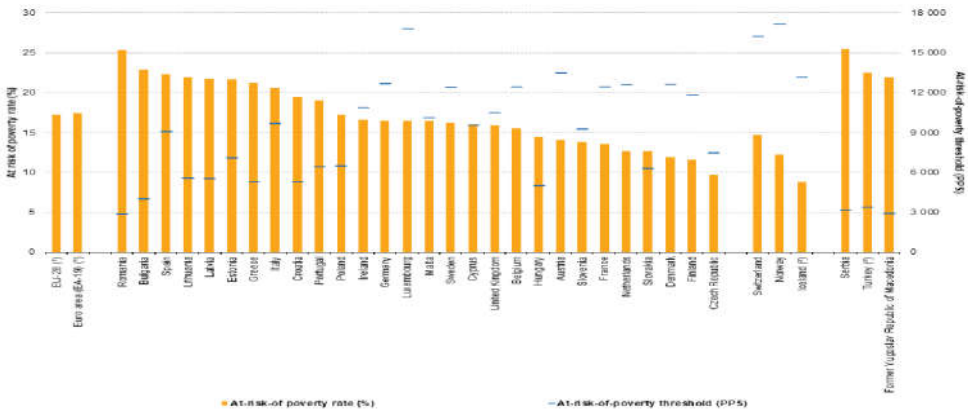
Note: ranked on the difference between before and after social transfers

(1) Provisional

(2) 2015

Source: Eurostat (ilc\_li02) și (ilc\_li10)

Figure 1. Poverty risk rate before and after social transfers, 2016 (%)



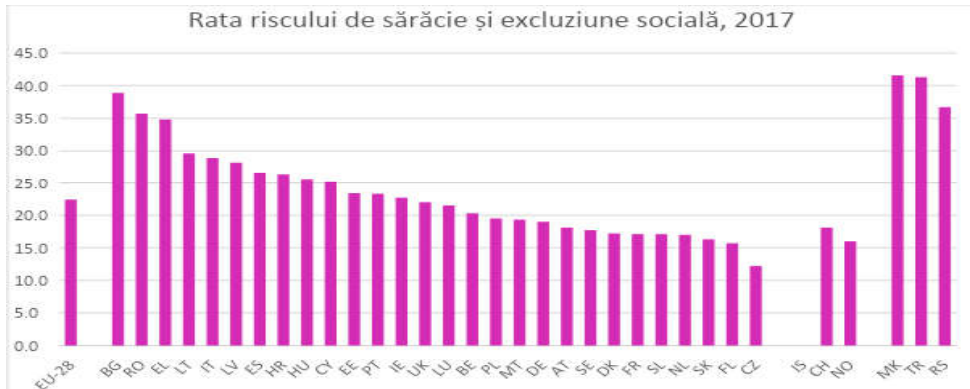
(1) At risk of poverty threshold (PPS: not available)

(2) Provisional

(3) 2015

Source: Eurostat (ilc\_li01) și (ilc\_li02)

Figure 2. Poverty rate and at poverty risk threshold, 2016



Source: Eurostat

Figure 3. Poverty and exclusion risk rate, 2017

Regarding social exclusion, as well, after almost 30 years of transition, in 2017, Romania has an exclusion risk by 35.71% at a difference by over 10% against the EU-28 average, and is placed among the first positions within the EU with the highest rate of exclusion after Turkey with a percentage by 45.1%, Macedonia 41.1%, Bulgaria 38.9%, and Serbia 36.7%. (Figure 2)

Even worse is that in 2017, Romania has a children's poverty rate by 46.8% and ranked amongst the first positions within the EU, and the number of children at poverty risk was by 1.7 million. Unfortunately, child poverty is correlated positively with functional illiteracy, and low school participation (Stanculescu, Marin, & Stanescu, 2012). The comparative Eurostat data indicate as worrying the fact that Romania is on the first position within the EU as regards "incomes' inequality, persistence of poverty amongst children, youths, and families with many children, for persons with disabilities, Roma, rural population, and inactive persons, and a major risk of social exclusion remains for all these disadvantaged categories" (Zamfir, 2012a; Zamfir & Precupețu, 2018; Stanculescu & Stanescu, 2012). For these categories, the precarious life situation is underpinned by multiple indicators of severe deprivation. An example in point: improper housing conditions, over-agglomerated houses (one person out of 5 felt this severe deprivation). With a severe deprivation rate for housing conditions by 19.8%, Romania outpaced Latvia and Hungary's rate by 15.5%, and Bulgaria 11.4%. Here might be added, as well, indicators regarding the precarious state of education, the inefficiency of public health services, the deepening social polarization, and its effects on some dramatic social inequalities in the sphere of incomes, etc. Moreover, Romania is placed amongst the first positions within the EU regarding incomes' inequality.

In this context, drawing attention to the existing gaps between the existing incomes' level for the various categories of households and the value of the



minimum consumption basket, calculated within the Research Institute for the Quality of Life, Romanian Academy Bucharest, was a constant signal sent to the political decision makers over the last 30 years' period. It dealt with the alarming poverty state of families with 3, or more children (Mihailescu, 2012; Mihailescu, 2004). Such researches and publications underpinned constantly the decisive importance of social benefits for at-poverty risk families for surviving on the fringe (Mihailescu, 2014). Over the past three decades, Romania ranked permanently on the last positions in the European ranking regarding the involvement of the state in solving timely the severe and multiple social issues regarding poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion. Though we witness successive stages of poverty flares throughout the transition period, in fact the phenomenon is much deeper rooted in history. A study about poverty in Romania over the period of an entire century 1918-2018 attests that the country's population to various shares was concerned constantly with finding some solutions for exiting the state of poverty and economic precariousness (Stanciu & Mihailescu, 2018, Zamfir, 2018). The last decades left their fingerprint on Romania's efforts to overcome gaps against Western Europe regarding the economic dimension of the quality of life of the population from Romania (Stanciu & Mihailescu, 2017). Starting from recent EUROSTAT data, the multiple indicators of social justice indicate that Romania is ranking amongst the last position for significant major dimensions of the quality of life (education, health, housing, family life, living standard, satisfaction with life, etc.) which are all necessary for the balance and life harmony of the individual. In fact, it was ignored that the impoverishment sources in both Romania and other countries of the world are found in a multiple complex of social, economic, cultural and political factors: low under-employment and the lack of stable job. Moreover, to these are added the normal integration deficit of some geographic areas ignored by the governance, a constant low wage policy and the immediate consequence – in work poverty, marked wage polarization, direct or indirect discrimination of women in the labor market, and a “culture of social benefits dependency”, along with lacking “work culture”, etc. Unfortunately, in Romania, the public policies of the transition showed concern for the gradual increase of wage incomes much too late.

As supportive reaction to the multitude of risks that Romania faced over the post-December period, public social services responded with much delay and hesitantly. In fact, the public system of social assistance services with a major role in recovering the beneficiaries, but also in preventing marginalization risks imposed itself unwieldy and had a difficult road in its development, as well, because of some serious institutional-administrative hindrances in the context of excessive bureaucracy (Pop, L.M. 2005). The institutional-administrative reforms displayed constantly by the governmental programs remained largely just electoral promises. In turn, the NGOs by external, and internal financing developed several programs of support at individual and community level. Therefore, most often, the state resorted to the solution of externalizing personalized services to the

NGOs despite that many of them were populated by non-experts (Zamfir, 2012b), see also the Law of social assistance from 2012). In turn, the NGOs by external, and internal financing developed several programs of support at individual and community level.

Frequently, as justification for the inefficiency of the governmental social policies, many analysts called only upon the lacking qualified human resources and low budgets directed to the social sector as causal factors. In fact, next to the chronic underfinancing of the social programs, a wide complex of objective, and subjective factors as well, internal and external, determined the specifics of the social policies profile during the transition. Often, due to some external requirements in promoting social support, imposed by international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank) hindrances and ambiguities emerged in establishing properly the priorities for the social protection and assistance system specific to Romania. Therefore, we consider as exaggeration to regard as the sole accountable and main justification reason for the instability and inefficiency of the public policies in transition just the chronic limitation of some financial resources for the social sector, which is otherwise specific over the entire period of transition. Moreover, in the context of the economic crisis and austerity periods, this argument was brought forward also as an excuse for the governmental incapacity as regards the balanced management of the sectorial policies by community social support programs and services. In fact, the sociological and impact analyses have added as reason for the reforms/changes' inefficiency, next to the chronic underfinancing also the lack of a comprehensive strategic vision of the governance in selecting a viable project of country development. The inexistence of a sustainable model for increasing the quality of life fitted for Romania was owed with certainty also to the incompetence and irresponsibility of the political decision factors in using public money. To this was added the corruption extended to the high levels as well, the amateurism, and lack of professionalism within the public administration system. All of these together were, and remain serious reasons in the failure of the transition's structural reforms process. The political decision makers avoided constantly to assume responsibility for the failure at the level of social reforms. They were and are tempted to explain the passive, confuse character and the inefficiency of social policies by external factors. The unfavorable socio-economic and political context of the country development is called upon very often in this framework. In reality, over the entire transition period, the gradual solving of major social issues related to poverty and marginalization, according to some stages, was always postponed. The general objectives of the anti-poverty and social exclusion programs were not doubled by proactive measures for reducing the poverty and social marginalization risks. Without a clear prioritization as regards the needs of the population, a disarticulated and chaotic financing was set in place for the social sectors, marginalized groups, and persons in difficulty. As consequence, the impossibility of properly managing the funds allotted to social assistance towards those in actual need emerged. Dysfunctions occurred also, in the

process of their qualifying for support programs. The major significance of mutual support by “developing together”, by inter-and intra-ministerial, and inter- and intra-departmental/sectorial cooperation between profile institutions was lost. The public sectorial policies were regarded as separate entities and limited narrowly just to a restricted field of covering some strictly particular, isolated, instant needs. Or, for insuring the independence of the beneficiaries and their normal integration into the community is necessary the covering of the basic/elementary needs in their totality/entirety. This fact requires cooperation converging efforts provided by actively interconnected sectorial policies.

In Romania, many studies and researches centered on occupational policies have underpinned that one main factor in preventing and diminishing the poverty risk is related to ensuring a stable job (Stanescu, Cace, & Alexandrescu, 2011; Cojocaru, 2008; Chipea, Onica, 2015; Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2008). Even after a period of economic growth, Romania remains next to Estonia and Bulgaria, the EU member-state with the highest risk of poverty in total population. In 2016, in Romania, the lowest risk of poverty is registered among the ones with constant incomes, that is employees and pensioners, while unemployed are the category with the highest risk of poverty. It is interesting that the distribution of the poverty risk in Romania follows a slightly different pattern than the one from the majority of the EU member countries. Thus, the poverty risk is higher in the case of employees as compared with pensioners. A similar situation is noticed in Greece, Spain, and Luxemburg, as well. Otherwise, Romania is in 2016, the EU member-state with the highest risk of poverty among employees, as it is double as compared with the EU-28 average. It should be mentioned that in 2017, the wage policy changed in Romania, as well. The measures adopted during the last 3 years aimed to increase wage incomes for all employees. In fact, employment is the sure, constant path for preventing and diminishing poverty and marginalization risks (Barr, 1994; Bauman, 2012; Giddens, 2007; Beck, 1992; Stiglitz, 2010, George & Page, 1995).

### **The profile of social policies. Characteristics for Romania**

The post-December public policies suffered from a *severe deficit of active, sustainable measures* for recovering the disadvantaged social categories. Thus, in Romania, *social polarization and its implacable consequences for the community* aggravated too much. At the basis of protection and assistance system that was maintained mainly in a fire-fighting way, stood a disarticulated social policy, outlined on the go, hastily applied, incoherent and confuse (see the child protection system, the laws of national and international adoptions, the pensions’ system set up, the law of ministerial accountability, etc.). The public social policies were not structured within some sustainable development strategies, nor based on a democratic country project agreed on by the social stakeholders.

The neoliberal orientation in relaunching the economy promoted mechanically the idea that people by their own effort can exceed the severe state of deprivation and economic underdevelopment without the intervention of the state. The idea was based on the fact that the new market mechanisms will lead automatically to economic and social relaunch of the country, hence automatically to the welfare of the individual. In fact, this led to the permanent degradation of the social state of those with marginalization risk concomitantly with a severe diminishment of social expenditures. Unfortunately, the principles of social solidarity and of collective responsibility were present less in the policy strategies of post-December social change. The illusion that individual and collective welfare must rely only on labor remained more a transition myth, a wish of the aspirational type of the Romanians. In fact, the employment policies at the level of creating and innovating jobs, but also at the one of ensuring decent working conditions were not doubled by active/efficient measures focused on the actual needs of those at risk of labor market exclusion. Over various periods, they were unevenly stimulated by the post-December governments. Often, the inefficiency of the employment policies was strongly visible for some social categories (by improper working conditions, uncivil environment, inadequate qualifications, etc.). In turn, much too much was invested in training and professional vocational programs for the unemployed without outcomes at par with the expenditures. The finalization of these vocational training, guidance, and reorientation programs had minor impact in the placement/recovery of the beneficiaries on the labor market. They remained often just “stage per se” without immediate correspondence in creating jobs adequate to the training. Anyway, the employment policies promoted more at level of assumed policies were largely passive much too weak for halting the massive emigration process of the labor force to the West, especially of the valued youths. The ample consequences of this process were very severe at social, intellectual and human level and with major negative impact on the family quality of life. Therefore, perhaps, the aggravation of the social and human issues turned in time into a constant concern of some sectorial social programs for increasing welfare and quality of life. Unfortunately, these were unfolded independently, without their coordination and monitoring in time (Zamfir, 1990; Zamfir, Pop, & Zamfir, 1994; Zamfir, & Zamfir, 1995; Pop, 2005; Cace, 2004; Cojocaru, 2010; IQLR Database 1990-1998).

### **Instead of conclusions: an integrated social policies for increasing quality of life**

An integrated social policy, based on harmonizing sectorial policies needs to formulate a sustainable, efficiently articulated and in-point answer structured on the multiple issues/needs of the persons and groups in difficulty. A stipulation is necessary in the context. The concept of category in difficulty has a much wider meaning. It includes not only the socially disadvantaged, the social assistance

beneficiaries, but also the ones who have personal development and improvement needs/aspirations of increasing their satisfaction with life. In brief, an integrated social policy represents an integrated reply to integrated needs. But in the balanced, normal social and human development, as in the scientific knowledge process, there is never a beginning at the “0”/nothing point. It does not allow for a social construction by demolishing, but by supplementing/adding. Always development is based on previous constructions.

Unfortunately, usually the governmental changes of the post-December period have ignored the successive accruals achieved over time by the predecessors, often with very high change human sacrifices and financial costs. The ambition of each transition government was to link its name to the social reform processes, as personal merit/achievements.

In Romania, in the political game of coming to power, the political decision factors of each government started from quasi-total denial of the changes brought by the previous governments. They have formulated, obsessively, harsh critics regarding the social programs of the predecessors. For image considerations, in electoral campaigns, but also in the periods of miming reforms during the period of governance, they aimed in the social sphere for “an own model of changes. They have ignored the requirements of prioritizing actual needs in their country strategies. They have displayed lacking respect for social justice and for the social security of vulnerable groups. By this nihilist-destructive attitude against change/construction of the social system, the process of development and increasing the quality of life was hindered and even halted at some stages. The numerous governmental changes and the ones within the post-December governments have affected severely the reform of the entire social system. A conclusive example in this context is the very high numbers of changed ministers of education, of health, and of social protection and assistance have registered record figures in the post-December governments. As regards ministerial instability, as well, Romania ranks first in Europe. We witnessed frequently “changes for the sake of change”, or to “changing the changes” without consistency and practical rationality. Thus, the ministerial accountability against the commitments of social programs was much diluted over time, up to vanishing completely. Neither the moral damages, nor the material losses of some harmful political options taken in haste, sometimes under the pressure of street movements were accounted for by the post-December governments. The negative consequences, either direct or indirect, on the living conditions of the Romanians due to the selected country model (options for Romania’s development direction) remained without explanations and clear answer over time. Without persuading arguments from the governance, each time they were thrown on their predecessors as unresolved issues accrued in time. In fact, they were ostentatiously presented to the population by the governing decision

factors during the period of electoral campaigns. This explains also, why the negative impact on the quality of life of each post-December governance cycle was absolved of any moral, political, or legal culpability. No accurate calculation was done as regards the high financial costs, nor regarding the human efforts required by social changes/reforms. Their impact on the situation of the beneficiary was not evaluated, as well. In turn, inefficiency, redundancy and lack of cooperation of the social programs focused on disadvantaged categories, the impossibility of disseminating them at community/region level, etc. were elements recorded by several national and international social surveys. They were noticed frequently by numerous political analysts, as well.

The mechanism for preventing modern risks and of protecting the vulnerable ones were much less visible in the post-December public social policies. These were excessively centered on in-point mitigation of emergencies. However, without denying the role of such emergency policies, we stipulate that in Romania, the social state, even over times of crisis and austerity had a minor role in ensuring decent living for large disfavored categories. Thereby, the social responsibility of the state vanished. Nevertheless, concomitantly, the dimension of the segments in difficulty, which were excluded socially by rapid impoverishment and social marginalization increased.

The requirement for integrated-type active social policies in a future country project focused on the quality of life remains even after 30 years a major objective still to be attained but also a goal in the construction of a modern strategy of sustainable development.

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