



LUND UNIVERSITY

School of Economics and Management

Master Program in Economic Demography

“Evolution of the Living Standards and Quality of Life for the Ten Former Communist Countries after they have joined the European Union- happy ever after?”

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Abstract:

The research project's aim is to analyse and compare the evolution of the living standards and of the quality of life in the ten former communist countries that have joined the European Union back in 2004 and 2007. The project will include as well a survey, developed by the author in Romania, in order to test on real grounds the effects and impacts of joining the European Union on the everyday life of the Romanian population.

Key words: EU, CEE countries, Romania, Survey, Living Standards, Quality of Life;

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Abbreviations

EU- the European Union;

CEE- Central and Eastern European;

IMR- Infant Mortality Rate;

OECD- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

FCC- Former Communist Countries;

EU-15-European Union 15 member states before the 2004 enlargement;

EU-27-European Union 27 member states;

GDP- Gross Domestic Product;

F.Y.R. Macedonia- the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

ILO- International Labour Organisation;

ERDF-European Reconstruction and Development Fund;

ESF- European Social Fund;

SOP- Sector Operational Program;

1. Introduction

It is acceptable to acknowledge that the ultimate objective of any modern nation is to increase, beside its prosperity, the standards of living of its people and to improve within its territory the individual and general well-being. The Research Project will present an interplay between the concepts of Living Standards- Quality of Life and the accession to the EU implications. Choosing the topic of living standards and quality of life within the European Union is a challenging task. However, the importance of the two components in the everyday lives of hundreds of millions of people lighted within me this ambition and made me focus on the evolution of living standards and quality of life in the ten former communist countries (FCC) after they have joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007 respectively.

There is evidently a huge necessity to establish and identify the most important social challenges facing the European Union citizens from the 10 New Member States, and to better understand the context of different socioeconomic groups. To support the importance of this topic, permit me to quote one statement of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers, issued in 2007 by Liddle and Lerais: “Public policy imperatives, such as Growth and Jobs, the Lisbon strategy and the drive for greater competitiveness are not ends in themselves-but means to an end- the well-being of European citizens”.

Even if in this paper the main focus will be on the evolution of living standards and quality of life of the citizens of the FCC, it is imperatively important to take into consideration the impact these new member states generate on the outlook of the “old” 15-European Union states. Consequently, the challenges that arise from social exclusion, family structure changing, the new gender roles, ageing population or unemployment have pushed nonetheless the quality of life and standards of living issues to the fore of the top table of European Union debates. The concept of “well-being” is vague and most of the times subjective, so therefore in this academic research the author will try to focus on a multilateral approach when interpreting it. Likewise, it can be addressed and used at a multitude of levels, from micro – individuals- to macro – a whole society-. Well being is not limited only to good living conditions and an active control over resources, but also the manner in which people respond and feel about their lives in these regards. Therefore, the topic of well-being has attracted the ultimate interest of the European Commission, which issued a Renewed Social Agenda back in 2008, aiming to prioritise the social needs of the European Union citizens through a broad repertoire of measures, all made so as to assist people that deal with rapidly changing social-realities.

The accession of 10 new FCC to the European Union in 2004 and 2007 has not only increased the territorial size and population of the structure, but it has also generated a greater diversity of people, cultures and lifestyles throughout the whole European Union. This diversity is for sure increasing and enriching the everyday lives, but on the economic, social and developmental perspectives, it is not equally beneficial for all European Union citizens. As one simple rule of economics states, the flipside of diversity is inequality, fact that is evident in between European Union member states and more specifically between regions of development of different countries.

During the process of analysing the Quality of Life and Standards of Living within the European Union, the author will keep an open eye on the role of European Union institutions considering the utterly important role they have on the lives of every European Union citizen. With their multiple policies issued programmes of coordinating inter-regional

policies, affecting key aspects of “quality of life” such as: employment conditions, job skills, mobility, equal opportunities or public health, is hard not to take into account the EU Institutions importance in the overall decision making process. As a personal assumption, the author strongly believes that the general economic and social development of the new member states and also of the European Union as a whole, depend on good and effective common European policies, on a good and effective information of the population but most importantly on the complete understanding of the empowered-deciding actors of the real living needs and daily experiences the European Union citizens’ encounter.

Through the research project, the author will try to emphasize the important difference that exists between the concepts of living standards and quality of life, since there is the perception that both are explanatory for the same facts. The research project will focus both on the theoretical aspects of the analysed topic and on a practical case study. As a theoretical backbone, beside the classic literature on the topic of Living Standards a significant amount of information and data will be acknowledged through the European Union official reports and the surveys issued by the European Union institutions.

As well, a questionnaire-survey is to be run in one of the former communist countries, current member state of the EU, that being Romania. The survey will try to analyse and compare the existing differences regarding the evolution of the standards of living and quality of life after the country has joined the EU in 2007. The sample used in the survey for Romania however, is limited (117 answers) so the results are not totally representative for the whole society of the country. The author will try to analyse and test some of the patterns based on the geographical aspects but also on the economic and political background of the analysed country, on its cultural habits, all of these capturing in the end the essential of the concepts of standards of living and quality of life; then these results are to be put and analysed in a diverse context. Also, since Romania is the 7th most populated country of the EU, the standards of living and quality of life its citizens experience, influence on a significant manner the whole general statistics and patterns of the EU’s social development framework, so a deeper analysis of the country’s post-accession evolution is considered by the author to be useful and necessary in today’s reality.

1.1. Aim and Scope: the Research question

It was generally assumed up until the recent Global Financial Crisis of 2008-2009 that joining the European Union would improve significantly the general welfare and the quality of life of citizens of that specific country. Under the current turbulent economic environment, with many EU countries struggling to get out of the economic abyss and maintain a relatively constant economic growth, the question is whether there exists proven evidence of the fact that, indeed, joining the European Union had improved the welfare, standards of living and the quality of life for the former communist member state’s citizens since their accession to the EU? Do the EU Structural and Cohesion funds work properly in reducing the discrepancies between the regions/ countries of the EU? How has Romania managed its EU membership status in the perspective of improving the lives of its citizens?

1.2. Methods:

This research project is aimed to be both a comparative and classification study. During the research project, the 10 CEE countries will be continuously compared in terms of different standards of living and quality of life indicators as well as classified in

terms of performance indicators (e.g.: the EU funds absorption rate). The methods used will be both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative part of the project will include the questionnaire survey in Romania, with 117 responders from all three regions of the country: Muntenia, Moldova and Transylvania; nevertheless, their answers as well as all the indicators presented during Chapter 2, will be analysed from a qualitative perspective. In other words, official EU documents, working papers and the EU policies and legislation will be all used for the analysis of the aforementioned parameters.

Chapter 2 – “Theoretical acknowledgement of the topic”

2.1. “Analysis of the differences between the concepts of Living standards and Quality of Life”

The two aforementioned concepts are most of times causing confusion because they are identified as expressing similar facts. However, there are differences both in calculating and in what each of them determines and generates. Therefore, the definitions of these two terms may be difficult to tease apart and even overlap in some areas of analysis.

The concept of standards of living of an individual refers to the general level of wealth, comfort, necessities or material goods available for an individual or a certain socio-economic class in a certain period of time and in a certain geographic area. (Steckhel, 1995) When analysing and calculating the standards of living one must take into consideration, according to Haughton (2011), the following elements: the quality and availability of employment, the inequalities between social-classes, the poverty rate, the inflation rate, the number of paid vacation days per year but also the life expectancy or the quality and availability of education. Specialists consider the indicator standards of living as being an objective and a good evidence generator for a certain country/ region/ enterprise or any micro household. It is also important to mention that the standards of living compare distinct points in time. For example, when one is interested in analysing the impact of joining the EU on the quality of life and standards of living for the FCC, it is presumed that the standards of living of the citizens of these countries, have improved greatly after joining the European Union, compared to their situation after abolishing the communist regime. Also, one should acknowledge that the most used parameter when measuring the standards of living is the HDI¹ (Human Development Index), developed by the World Bank, back in 1990.

Compared to the indicator standards of living, the indicator quality of life is more subjective because when calculated it compresses mostly intangible facts. The United Nations again, based on its declaration of Human Rights, provides a list of factors that should be considered when evaluating the quality of life from a specific geographical region. This includes elements that might seem for the citizens of the developed countries as hilarious, but for some others very important and even non-existent yet. Consequently, factors that may be used in order to measure the quality of life include the following: the freedom from slavery and torture, the freedom from discrimination, the freedom of movement, right to marry, right to have a family, right to be treated equally without regard to gender, language, religion,

¹ The HDI takes into consideration the life expectancy at birth, the adult literacy rates and the per-capita GDP in order to calculate a region/country/continent rate of development;

political beliefs, nationality, socio-economic status, right to education, right to vote, right to human dignity, freedom of religion, freedom of thought.

When comparing the two concepts some of the following elements are among the first observed differences. Firstly, when people are asked about their standards of living the first thing that comes to their mind is the amount of money they make during a month or during a year. However, if one considers that there are many other factors that make up the standard of living indicator beside the level of income then chances are someone's standards of living are still quite good despite a present lack of income. For example, citizens of one country that had no significant increase of their incomes after their country has joined the European Union, but by the other hand, after the accession have gained better chances of securing a qualitative job, the economy of their land became stronger, they benefited from an improved healthcare system and costs of goods and services remained at a reasonable level, then one can say that generally, their standards of living at least remained the same if not improved. By the other hand, standards of living are assumed by scholars to be a *flawed indicator*. As a clear example, while Slovenia² is considered to rank highly in all areas that compose the standards of living indicator, most researchers would agree that for some segments of the Slovenian population, the standards of living are quite low. Similar to the standards of living, what may be considered by an individual from one member state to be a good "quality of life" may be considered by another individual from another member state as a bad "quality of life".

2.2. Theories to support the Research Project and Literature Review

According to Bennett (1937), the concept of standards of living is "*complex and elusive*". Bennett suggests that any absolute measurement of the standards of living is inadequate, and therefore this parameter should be measured in relative terms. By the other hand, Davis (1945) believes that the main purpose of the public sector must be the continuous increase of the population's living standards and quality of life. Nonetheless, Bernard warns in his work that any administrative decision or public policy should not only be taken on the basis of raising the standards of living and quality of life since their measurement is more like "*an art than like a science*".

Williams and Zimmerman (1938) gave their own definition of the standards of living concept: "an ideal or norm of consumption which may be described in terms of goods and services of a specific quantity and quality". Some scholars found this definition too broad, and therefore Konus in his work reviewed the topic of living standards and offered another, more specific, approach to the topic, stating that the whole idea surrounding the standards of living is basically the "monetary value of those consumers' goods which are in fact consumed in a course of certain period of time by an average family belonging to a given stratum of a population". According to Curcio (2005), while the consumption based measurements have, along the time, dominated the literature regarding the living standards, the more recent literature documents offer an alternative in the measuring methods of the standards of living. As an example, Sen (1984) believes that the most researched aspects of the standards of living are the ones based on utility consumption and from opulence. Conversely, he argues that a much better measurement of the living standards would be one based on economic freedom.

² In the region of Kros, for example, the availability of employment has been poor for the last two decades; the environmental quality is significantly below the average of the country, whereas the incidence of disease is high and the life expectancy is below average;

Blackorby and Russell³ (1978) have argued in their work that between the standards of living and the costs of living there is a direct relationship. More specifically, they affirmed that the costs of living manifest a direct impact on the standards of living. Conversely with Blackorby and Russell assumptions, Pope (1993), believed that instead of the cost of living-standards of living relationship there is another linking relationship, namely the one between the per capita income and the standards of living. He argued that “the standards of living of all classes from all countries could be assumed to have moved upward with the rise in average of the per capita income”.

Ogburn (1951) describes a certain four factors believed to affect the differences of peoples’ standards of living. These factors are the natural resources, the population, organisation and technology. In his work, Ogburn argued that population implies a negative relationship on the standards of living⁴. He also argued that the standards of living are most closely correlated with technology, motivating that those countries with highly advanced technologies usually record higher standards of living for their citizens. Moreover, in his perspective, high technology could be associated with low production costs and logically, low technology could be associated with higher production costs, hindering this way the economic growth rate and the raise of living standards of a certain country or region.

Various other literature authors focus on the implications standards of living generate on a certain economy (the local one). Ely (1996) believes that a stabilised level of the standards of living is a certain guarantee for a long-run supply of labour. Consequently, the same author stated that if the standards of living manifest this effect on the labour supply they may also contribute to the creation of an effective business environment, a key factor for obtaining constant economic growth.

An interesting approach of the living standards- population size link was conducted in a research by Chen (2012). He states that in the end, all human societies are complex thermodynamic systems. He also showed that in the case of low levels of living standard, increasing their level would also lead to an increase of the population size, while in the case of high living standard, increasing them would lead to a decrease of the population size. Nonetheless, he proved that an increase in the population will also produce a higher social pressure as well as an additional pressure on migration. He also assumes that at a low level of living standards, raising their level will lead to an increase of the population density; at high levels of living standard, the same increase of them will lead to a decrease of the population density.

Regarding the quality of life indicator the following ones were considered to be the most reflective for the topic under analysis. Therefore, there are 3 approaches when dealing with the “quality of life” concept, according to Ventegodt, Merrick and Andersen (2003). These are:

1. The subjective quality of life (the way individuals feel their own life is; more precisely if one individual is happy with the life he has, then this is reflected in the subjective quality of life).
2. The existential quality of life (the way quality of life is interpreted by individuals at a deeper level than the subjective analysis does).

³ In their work, Blackorby and Russell defined the cost of living as the ratio of costs of realizing a particular indifference surface or level of real income at different prices;

⁴ It is important to mention that these assumptions could be based on the fact that China and India, two hugely overpopulated nations, make up two fifths of Ogburn study.

3. The objective quality of life (how one's life is perceived by the outside world; this parameter is mainly influenced by the culture in which people live; clear examples for this type of analytical approach are: the social status or any status symbols one should have in order to be considered a "good" member of that culture).

The integrative theory of the quality of life was formulated by the same aforementioned scholars and takes into consideration a series of different factors. The first one was assumed to be the "Well Being of the individuals". This factor is considered as being the most natural aspect of the subjective quality of life. Therefore, most of the times, the idea of "well-being" is closely related to how things objectively function in connection with the external factors present in life. It is assumed that the concept of "well-being" is more superficial than other concepts such as meaning in life, fulfilment of needs or self-realization. The second factor considered, assumed by many to be the most important one when dealing with the quality of life concept, is the Life Satisfaction. Previous studies⁵ have proved that on average, people are less satisfied with life than their state of well-being would indicate. Among the classical types of satisfaction theories, we decide to illustrate "The Preference Theory" (the quality of life is based on whether one gets what one wants). In relation to this, the World Health Organisation emulated a definition of health that argues health is a *state of complete physical, mental and social well-being*. The Preference theories are a sub-group of the Gap theories. The Gap Theories are found in a multitude of forms: some include time, or the realization of life potential over time and space. They are focused on finding the balanced harmony; the smaller the gap between them is the greater one's satisfaction and the greater ones quality of life). The third factor assumed to compose the quality of life is the "Happiness" one. Many individuals link the concept of "happiness" with the human nature; according to previous studies⁶, "happiness" is usually associated with non-rational dimensions, here including: love, close ties with the nature, state of health etc. The "Fulfilment of Needs" is a less abstract factor, compared to the previous ones. When needs are fulfilled then the quality of life is high (Maslow's pyramid of needs). There are also some "Objective Factors" assumed to influence the quality of life such as: marital status, state of health, number of contacts with other people etc.

Veenhoven (2001) by the other hand considers that "quality of life", "happiness" and "well-being" denote each of them special merits. Consequently, he uses a double bi-partitions classification: between life "chances" and life "results" and between "outer" and "inner" qualities. He also stated that these dichotomies conduct to a total of four qualities of life: "livability of the environment; life-ability of the individual; external utility of life; inner appreciation of life (p.1).

Research into the quality of life topic has been influenced by attempts of measuring it in the most objective manner possible (Renwick, 2011). Tests that have been run compressing either extremely objective parameters such as the medical viewpoint (ability of walking, running, standing), or extremely subjective parameters (state of life etc). However, all these research are based on the aforementioned theories that essentially try to generate a list of objective factors thought to determine of a good life.

⁵ Studies run by the Quality of Life Research Unit of Toronto University;

⁶ Run by the Quality of Life Research Centre, Claremont Graduate University in 1999;

2.3. Previous Research

The European Quality of life Survey is a periodical survey directed by Eurofound that examines a range of social issues of the European population. It analyses both “classic” indicators such as unemployment, income, education, family, health, life satisfaction and “unusual” indicators such as the perceived quality of the society EU citizens live in.

There have been 3 Quality of life surveys (2003, 2007 and 2012), each of them including all the ten FCC current members of the EU.

The First Quality of Life Survey from 2003 confirmed the widespread perception of economic divide and social differences between EU-15 and the New Member states. Consequently, the living standards in almost all 10 FCC⁷ were markedly lower than the ones in the EU-15. Also, the citizens of all FCC were generally less satisfied with their quality of life, compared to the citizens from the EU-15 countries. Nevertheless, the survey revealed that the housing conditions, health status and working environment were all worse in the former communist nations than in the EU-15. The 2003 survey is extremely important because it provided for the very first time an insight into areas which are more often overlooked- areas where there is a common pattern across all the enlarged European Union. Therefore, according to the First Quality of Life Survey, two thirds of the citizens across 27 analysed states (back then 15 member states, and 12 candidates), were optimistic about their future. Also, home ownership was more common in the FCC than in the EU-15 (75 % compared to 60%). Surprisingly enough, the survey revealed that the rate of completing the secondary level of education was higher in the FCC than in the EU-15, whereas the rates of completion the third-educational level were barely similar all across EU-27.

The Second Quality of Life Survey from 2007 was broader and more complex than the previous one. Beside the already asked questions from 2003, a set of new parameters were introduced for analysis such as the “work-life balance”. Also, the second survey results were very interesting from the analytic point of view, mainly because they could be compared with the results from the 2003 Survey, and therefore draw some well-founded conclusions. The survey from 2007 revealed that citizens of the FCC members of the EU were generally satisfied with their lives: on a scale from 1-10, they averaged 6.4 for life satisfaction and 7.2 for happiness.⁸ The same study revealed that there still exists big inequalities in between the geographical regions of the EU (*e.g.* : Bulgaria and Romania register GDPs/per capita closer to the candidate countries F.Y.R. Macedonia and Turkey than to other EU member states). Accordingly, around a half of households from the former communist countries grow a big proportion of their food within their habitat, a fact almost inexistent for the EU-15 countries (some exceptions in the Southern parts of Italy and Greece). The 2007 Quality of Life Survey also concluded that in the FCC the family is more involved into the childbearing process and therefore the grown-up adults from these countries manifest a higher degree of eldercare for their parents or relatives, than individuals from EU-15 countries. However, both in the EU-15 and New Member states, women were identified as spending a larger amount of time than men in caring domestic duties and activities. When asked about the quality of the society they live in, responders from all Former communist

⁷ Slovenia was the only country from the group of former communist countries where the standards of living of the population were similar with the EU-15 countries;

⁸ The citizens from the 10 former communist countries averaged a level of 6.8 in terms of life satisfaction and 7.3 in terms of happiness; (source: *The Second Quality of Life Survey, 2007, Main Findings*);

countries, but also those from Italy and Portugal, trust their political institutions the least. Conversely, people from the Nordic countries expressed the highest level of trust both in institutions and other people surrounding them.

The Third Quality of Life Survey from 2012 gave an authentic perspective over the living standards and quality of life among the EU citizens. The important economic (Global Crisis) and social changes that occurred between the second and third Euro-found Quality of Life Survey, have been reflected in this last study. The main findings of it were: optimism about the future was significantly lower in the FCC (40%) compared to the EU-15 countries (62%); one in three responders, as of EU-27, declared in 2011-2012, that their financial status worsen compared to 12 months ago – particularly the ones with low incomes. In concordance with the 2003 and 2007 studies, the 2012 analysis confirms that family still plays a major role across all EU countries, as basis of social contacts and main source of support in meeting the daily needs. Nevertheless, among the former communist countries, there has been a steep decrease since the 2007 Survey regarding the trust in public institutions, governments and parliaments.

Starting with the year of 2003, the European Working Conditions Observatory provides constant sets of information regarding the quality of work, the employment issues in the EU Member states. The work of this observatory offers extremely valuable data for this research initiative mainly because it focuses on 4 research themes, strongly connected with the quality of life of individuals: career and employment security, health and well-being of workers, developing skills and the work-life balance. The European Working Conditions Surveys that have started back in the 1990s, and have provided an overview of the working conditions all across European Union member states in order to identify the risk exposed groups, to contribute to the better development of the European Working legislation and to analyse the differing aspects of working conditions all across the continent. The last Working Conditions Survey, from 2010, revealed that the levels of physical risk exposed at the workplace have not diminished greatly since the first survey from 1991. As a matter of fact, the workers in the EU-15 countries have a job that involves a higher degree of creativity compared to the FCC (82% compared to 52%)⁹. Lastly, especially in the FCC, the extent of gender differences between men and women when applying for a job, are still present; this reinforces again the urgent need of developing equal-gendered policies in relation to working lives within these societies.

EUROSTAT carried during 2005-2006 a project called “European Survey on Income and Living Conditions”. The project was not focused primarily on the working conditions, though some of the included variables related to the labouring sphere, such as: “part/full time job”, “number of hours worked”, “managerial position” or “change of job”. The survey offered a wide picture of the income distribution considering that it included all private households and their members residing on the territory of the countries at the time of data collection. It showed that in 24 out of the 27 EU countries, the material well-being is considered to be the most important criteria for having a high life satisfaction. Other main findings include: in the FCC the discrepancy between rural wages and urban wages is significantly higher than in the EU-15 countries. According to the same survey, the fact that in the FCC schooling units for the upper levels are almost inexistent in the rural areas, so therefore children that want to attend a higher level of education need to travel daily in order

⁹ The 2010 European Working Conditions Survey also revealed the following trend: in most of the EU-15 countries (except Portugal and Greece), 43% of the self-employed and 29% of the employees would like to reduce their working hours; in the former communist countries, on the contrary, 53% of the self-employed and 34% of the employees would like to increase the working hours in order to increase their incomes;

to be able get it, the fact that hospitals are located in long-distanced urban centres so the access to emergency health-care is merely impossible, make the overall quality of life and living conditions severely worse in the rural zones of the CEE countries compared to the urban ones from the same countries.

During 2005, The Economist Intelligence Unit led a study regarding the quality of life in 111 countries, including all the 10 FCC members of the EU. The interesting aspect about this study was that it developed a new “quality of life index” based on a unique methodology, in the sense that it linked subjective results of life-satisfaction surveys with the objective parameters of quality of life. The indicators used to determine the quality of life were material well-being, health, political freedom, job security, family care, climate and geography, political stability, gender equality and the community life. Analysing the main findings of the study, the first ranked country¹⁰ was Ireland, followed by Switzerland and Norway. Regarding the FCC, the best placed one was Slovenia (place 27), followed by the Czech Republic (place 34) and Hungary (place 37); among the worst ranked FCC, one can find Poland (place 49), Bulgaria (place 57) and Romania (place 58). The study found as well little correlation between education and life satisfaction. In this study, it is quoted an ILO survey, in which it was found that schooling and training were inversely related to human well-being when jobs are slightly attuned to people’s aspirations and needs.

A study called “Trends in quality of life in the EU: 2003-2009”¹¹ has been developed by the European Commission in 2010. It concluded that the recent financial crisis can be associated with a decline of quality of life and in the perceived overall quality of the society. Also, while indicators of living standards and quality of life did improve massively during 2003-2007 for the new member states, they fell backwards between 2007 and 2009. However, among the new member states, the countries that experienced the deepest economic contractions were not automatically the ones reporting the greatest lowering of the quality of life. Nevertheless, the study also showed that countries like Estonia, Latvia, Romania and Bulgaria have slowed, during the last years, their paths towards an improving well-being.

The OECD developed during 2011 a survey among all its member states regarding the Quality of Life. Since 6 out of the ten former communist countries actual members of the EU¹² are OECD members also, the results of the survey are worth being mentioned. The survey tested indicators such as the work-life balance, the environment quality or the number of positive events encountered during one day. Its main findings showed that the Central Eastern European (CEE) countries scored relatively poor in all tested indicators (exceptions being the proportion of individuals holding a secondary education diploma) compared to other OECD countries (OECD, Quality of Life, 2011). When asked about the balance between positive-negative events they encounter during one day, the OECD mean average balance was 80%: more positive events than negative ones. Regarding this indicator, the former communist countries have recorded the following figures: Poland (83%- the only country out of the CEE to score above the OECD average), the Czech Republic (75%), Slovakia (75%), Hungary (69%), Slovenia (72%) and Estonia (69%).

¹⁰ For calculating the quality of life index, a scale from 1-10 is used; the first country scored a value of 8.33 and the last one a value of 3.89;

¹¹ Source: http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be/eu/docs/agenda/26-27_10_10_ef1047en.pdf;

¹² Member states of the OECD among the former communist countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia;

3.1. The European Union Funds- how effectively they have worked?

The 10 Central and Eastern European countries joined the European Union in two stages: 1st of May 2004 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and 1st of January 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania). As of EUROSTAT 2010, this region of the continent comprised a population of 102.1 million, with a GDP/per capita of 8990 euro.

“2007-2013 Financial Framework” Funds

The aim of the “2007-2013 Financial Framework” was to strengthen both the economic and the social cohesion between countries and regions of the EU, during the 2007-2013 timeslot. The former communist countries were, and continue to be the poorest regions of the EU. Therefore, a total of 172.6 billion Euros from the EU budget have been allocated so as to finance cohesion, infrastructure and social projects in the 10 New Member states (see Table 1). Three objectives were set up by the EU bodies regarding the period 2007-2013, and these were: Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and Territorial Cooperation¹³. The “convergence objective” is especially important for the current research, since its main goal is to help the least-developed member states catching up more quickly with the EU average by improving conditions for growth and employment. A total of 81.54% of the total EU funds have been allocated to realise this objective in the case of the FCC. The EU directive sets a level of 70.5% of the funds¹⁴ corresponding to the objective of Convergence, to be allocated in the regions where the GDP per capita is below 75% of the EU average¹⁵. Another important objective for the CEE countries is the one of Regional Competitiveness and Employment. Its scopes such as promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, the adaptability and the development of inclusive labour markets are all stringent problems of the aforementioned societies. Funding these projects¹⁶ has been for the 2007-2013 Financial-Framework in the charge of the ERDF and the ESF structures.

In terms of strategy and access of the countries to these funds, the Councils of Ministers issued before January 2007 a “Community Strategic Guideline for Cohesion”, in which priorities, objectives and effective implementation suggestions of the Cohesion Policy are being presented. Based on these guidelines, all former communist countries had to adopt a generically called “national strategic reference framework”.¹⁷

¹³ Source: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/general_framework/g24231_en.htm;

¹⁴ Namely the Structural Funds : ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and ESF (European Social Fund); the Cohesion Funds represented 23.22% of the total allocations regarding the *Convergence Objective*;

¹⁵ this meaning, that beside some minor, partial exceptions (some regions of Slovenia and the Czech Republic), all the other CEE countries entered back in 2007 under this incidence;

¹⁶ The funds for this objective for the 10 former communist countries, reached a level of 19.13 billion euro, equivalent to 12.95% of the total allocations;

¹⁷ The National Strategic Reference Framework served as the base for programming and coordinating the projects and actions financed with the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds; their main responsibility is to ensure that the interventions of the funds are in-line with the strategic guidelines;

In terms of operational programmes, the former communist member states have to develop them through the EU Commission, which appraises every proposed programme and determines whether or not is viable in terms of reaching its initial objectives. Each operational programme relating to the Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment objectives should include¹⁸: justification for the financing, implementing plans and a financing plan. As of the current financial framework, all member states are fully responsible for the management and control of their operational programmes. The EU Commission established, part of the Funds directive, that for each operational programme, the member state will need to implement: a managing authority, a certifying authority and an audit authority.

Table 1 presents the allocations for each FCC, member of the EU, during the 2007-2013 exercise. The allocations were calculated based on every country's population size and on the necessities of every of them (KPMG, 2012). Many specialists however agreed that the allocations for the current financial exercise were not wisely conducted; Romania for instance, who has a double population compared to Hungary and considerably lower levels of living standards and societal development, was granted EUR 5 billion less than the latter and as well 3 times less in terms of Funds/capita.

Table 1- Basic Information regarding the EU Funds for the former communist countries during 2007 2013

Basic CEE Information on EU Funds 2007-13											
	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	CEE Total
Population *(million)	7.6	10.5	1.3	10.0	2.2	3.3	38.2	21.5	5.4	2.0	102.1
Annual GDP* (billion EUR)	36.0	145.9	14.5	98.4	18.0	27.4	353.7	121.9	65.9	36.1	917.9
GDP per capita (EUR)	4,764	13,890	10,821	9,830	7,993	8,232	9,266	5,682	12,149	17,617	8,990
EU Funds 2007-2013 (billion EUR)	6.7	26.3	3.4	24.9	4.5	6.8	65.3	19.2	11.4	4.1	172.6
EU Funds per capita (EUR)	882	2,502	2,540	2,488	2,014	2,035	1,711	895	2,094	2,003	1,690
EU funds per GDP	2.6%	2.6%	3.4%	3.6%	3.6%	3.5%	2.6%	2.3%	2.5%	1.6%	2.7%

- Based on EUROSTAT data, 2010;

Source: KPMG Report: "EU Funds in Central and Eastern Europe"

Table 2 presents a half term report focusing on the absorption performance of each CEE country. Therefore, is important to acknowledge that a major difference exists between the contracted grants and the paid grants. While the "contracted grants" (financial contributions from the EU budget) represent the amounts for which the contract has been signed by the competent authority and the final beneficiary by the 31st of December 2010, the paid grants represent the amount of payments which were disbursed to the final beneficiary by 31st of December 2010. Romania and Bulgaria, as seen from Table 2, registered during the first part of the current financial framework the lowest values of payments, whereas Latvia or Slovenia registered the highest figures. When looking at the paid grants per capita, one can

¹⁸ Source: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/general_framework/g24231_en.htm;

observe that the Czech Republic reports the highest values (788 EUR) whereas Romania the lowest (71 EUR).

Table 2- Information regarding the implementation of the Funds (2007-2010)¹⁹

Basic CEE Information on implementation 2007-10											
	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	CEE Total
Available budget 2007-2013 (billion EUR)	8.0	31.0	4.1	29.3	5.0	7.3	82.1	23.3	13.4	4.8	208.2
Available budget 2007-2013 per capita (EUR)	1,044	3,009	3,035	2,913	2,172	2,161	2,530	1,078	2,490	2,400	2,039
Contracted grants 2007-2010 (billion EUR)	3.0	17.2	2.5	15.0	3.7	5.0	43.5	10.4	7.6	2.3	110.2
Contracted grants 2007-2010 per capita* (EUR)	391	1,699	1,835	1,493	1,643	1,469	1,142	481	1,409	1,144	1,079
Paid grants 2007-2010 (billion EUR)	0.8	8.1	0.9	4.8	1.5	2.1	13.1	1.5	2.3	1.3	36.3
Paid grants 2007-2010 per capita* (EUR)	103	788	635	478	644	629	344	71	418	644	356
Contracted Ratio	37 %	55 %	60 %	51 %	76 %	68 %	53 %	45 %	57 %	48 %	53 %
Payment Ratio	10 %	26 %	21 %	16 %	30 %	29 %	16 %	7 %	17 %	27 %	17 %

- Based on EUROSTAT data, 2010;

Source: KPMG Report: “EU Funds in Central and Eastern Europe”

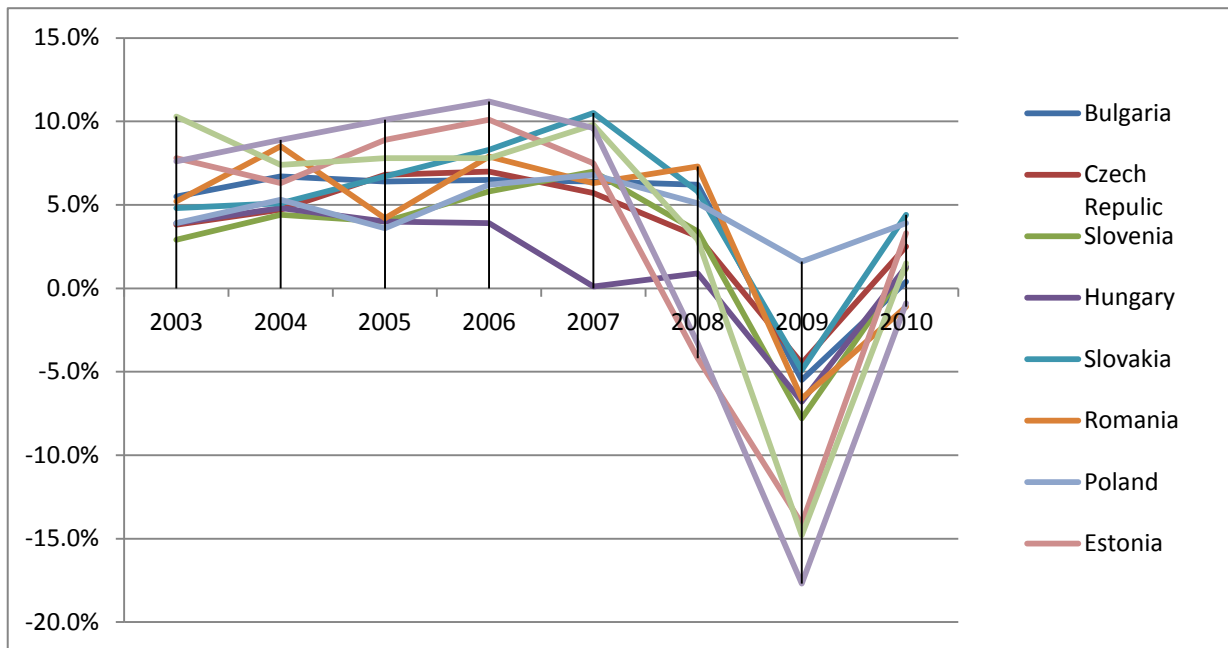
3.2. Panoramic overview of the everyday life in the 10 former-communist countries after EU membership: happy ever after?

In this part of the thesis the author would like to emphasize a comparative perspective of the ten former communist countries taking into account the most representative indicators in terms of standards of living and quality of life. Consequently, a qualitative approach will be used, the explanations of the figures being based equally on the aforementioned theories as well as on the official reports issued by the EU institutions.

¹⁹ EUROSTAT will release as of 2014, a second report concerning the second period statistics of the “2007-2013 Financial Framework”;

3.2.1. Economic Indicators

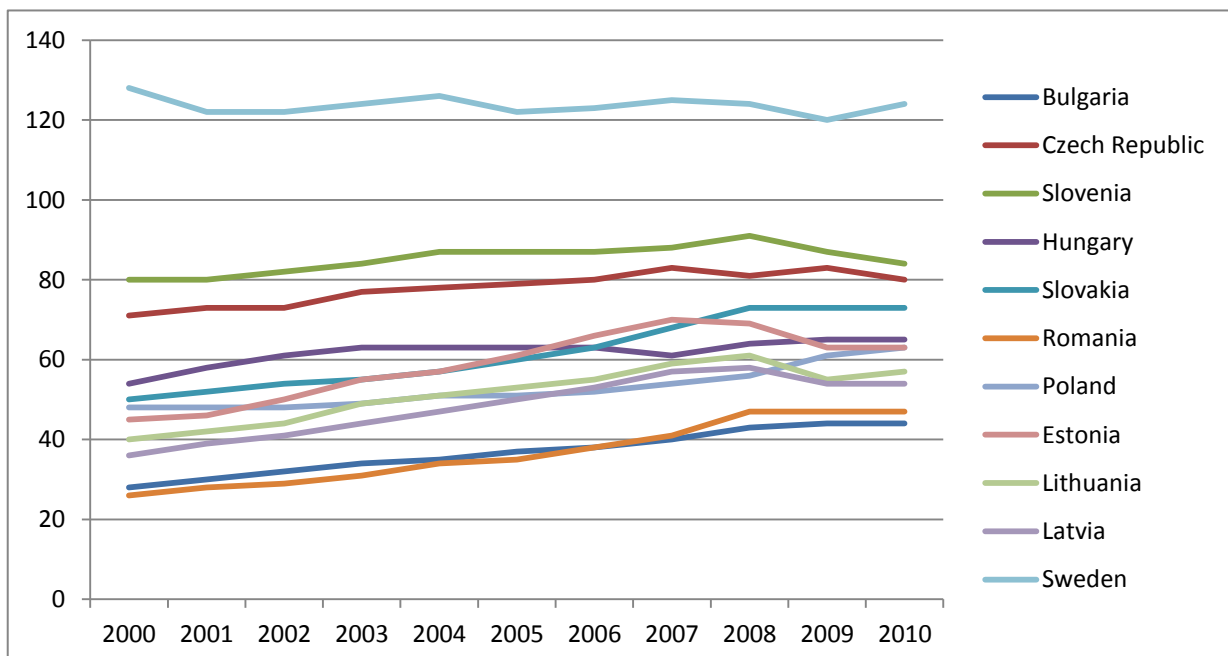
Diagram 1 – Real GDP growth rate



Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

While improvements in the living standards were primarily driven by improved health before 1950, growing GDP per capita accounted for most of the improvements since then. (Haatcher, 2010) Diagram 1 reflects quite explicitly that all ten former communist countries have been seriously affected by the recent global financial crisis (beside Poland, all other nine countries registered during 2009, negative growth rates of their economies). However, up until the year 2008, there have registered constant, positive high rates of economic growth (remarking here Slovakia in 2007 with 10.5% or Romania in 2008 with 7.3%). According to Becker (2012), nowadays, in the case of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, more funds would not generate more growth; the same author believes that the 10 former communist countries reached a level where the returns begin declining and additional funds would not lead to higher economic growth.

Diagram 2 - The GDP/capita evolution – as share of the EU-27 average



Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

Even if considered by specialists (Pope,1993) as being the most commonly used indicator of human well-being, the GDP- per capita still has some major weaknesses: it does not include the public health, home production nor does it capture the quality of the environment one individual lives in. According to Diagram 2, one can observe that both Slovenia and the Czech Republic recorded close figures to the EU-27 mean during the last 5 years, whereas countries like Romania, Bulgaria or Latvia are still far away from this EU-27 average. Income inequalities are a better, yet again not complete, indicator of living standards and quality of life evolution. According to EUROSTAT, as of 2010, the highest income inequality was registered in Latvia (Gini coefficient value of 38), followed by Lithuania and Romania. By the other hand, the smallest gap between population incomes was registered in Slovenia (Gini coefficient value of 23), Hungary and the Czech Republic²⁰. The Gap Theories of Life Quality presented during Chapter 2 reflect also the importance of “balanced harmony” towards the general well-being of an individual. Regarding the EU Structural Funds impact on the overall GDP/capita growth, a propitious relationship between the two has been found by Beugelsdijk and Eijffinger (2005). As well, on the basis of regional data, Cappelen (2009) detected a significant positive impact of structural funds on regional economic growth.

3.2.2. Demographic indicators

Table 3 – Population evolution and Population Density

Country	Growth Rate of Population 2002-2010	Population Density comparison	
		2004/2007	2010
Bulgaria	-4.1%	69	69.1
The Czech Republic	2.9%	132.2	136.2
Slovenia	0.02%	99.2	101.7
Hungary	-1.5%	108.6	107.5
Slovakia	0.8%	109.8	110.7
Romania	-1.7%	93.7	93.2
Poland	-1.9%	122.1	122.1
Estonia	-1.5%	31.1	30.9
Lithuania	-4.2 %	54.8	52.4
Latvia	-4.1%	37.1	36
Sweden	4.4%	21.8	22.9
The Netherlands	2.3%	476.7	492.2

Source of the Table: Author's calculations using data from Eurostat (2013)

An optimum population for a country is one which the territory of that country can support sustainably while allowing all the people living on that land a good quality of life.²¹ Consequently, the GFN²² (Global Footprint Network) introduced the concepts of bio capacity and ecological footprint in a wish of calculating more objectively the correlation

²⁰ See Appendix 1, for a detailed graph regarding the relationship between income inequality and GDP per capita;

²¹ Source: www.populationmatters.org;

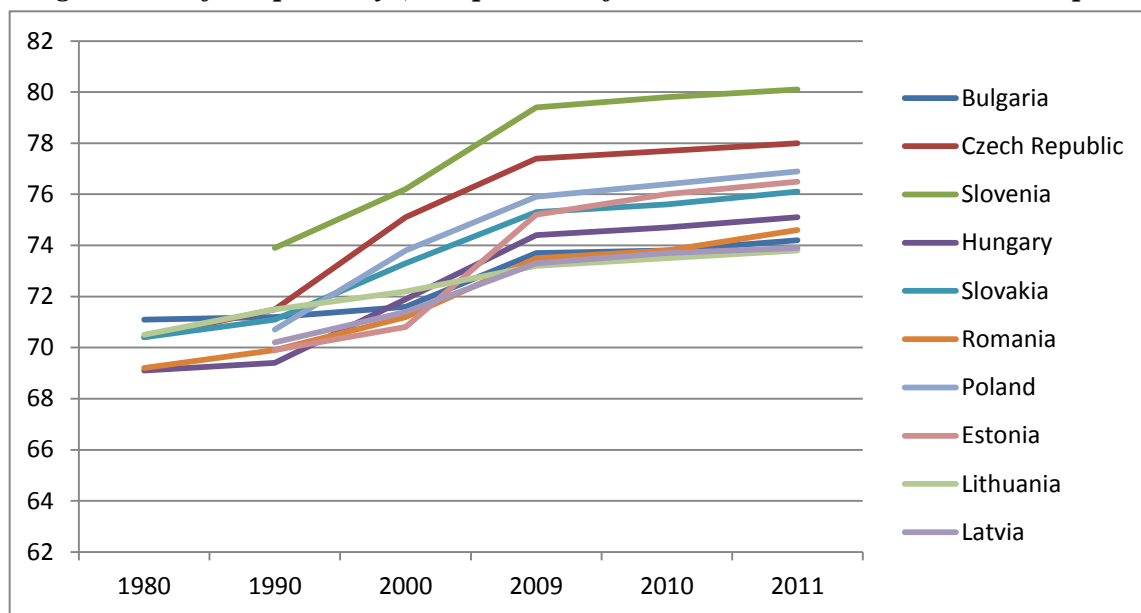
²² The Global Footprint Network calculates the ecological footprint, the demand on nature and bio-capacity in 230 countries- including here the 10 CEE; according to one survey issued by the Global Footprint Network in 2010, the best performing CEE country current member of the EU in terms of ecological reserve was Slovenia (2.7 on a scale from 1-10), whereas the worst performer was Lithuania (0.3 on a scale from 1-10);

among population size and standards of living. Their conclusions showed that the optimum number of people for one country will never be an exact number but an approximate size of the population able to allow communities a decent living standard.

Atkinson and Merlier (2010) argue that there is a negative correlation between the population density and the standards of living quoting United Nations Development Programme statistics. They give examples of deteriorated standards of living because of the higher density such as: higher levels of pollution, climate change, poverty, species extinction.

Balcerowicz and Fischer (2008) by the other hand assume there is a positive correlation between population density and living standards. According to him the health care system, the access to education as well as the access to public services and food suppliers all improve with higher population densities because these services are easier and more cost effective to be reached and delivered to a concentrated population. He gives the example of the rapid urbanisation, arguing that the reasons for which the world's population has moved rapidly, over the last century, from large rural base to large city bases are due to improving the living standards. As an example, he gives the Netherlands, one of the countries with the highest population densities (Table 3) and at the same time one with the highest standards of living across its whole population.

Diagram 3 - Life Expectancy (time period: before the communism abolishment up to 2011)



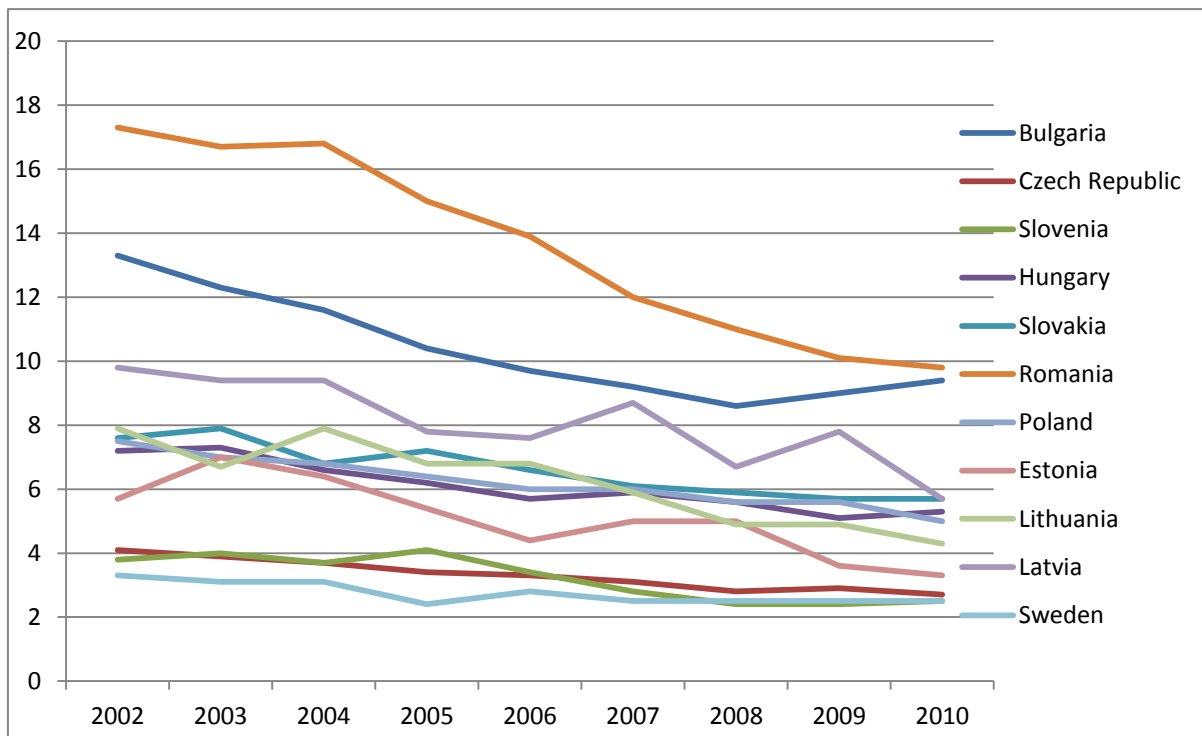
Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

It was found that improvements in life expectancy played a major part in rising living standards for the Western European countries during 1950-73 but the contribution of increased life expectancy declined in the subsequent periods (Haatcher, 2010). The citizens of the high-income countries generally have a better nutrition, better life care and consequently a higher life expectancy. On the same logic, it is reasonable to believe, that countries with high life expectancies are able to guarantee a higher standard of living and a better quality of life for its citizens.

Looking at the diagram above, one can observe that the highest life expectancy, as of 2011, was registered in Slovenia, followed by the Czech Republic, whereas the lowest

values were seen in Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. The mean life expectancy as of 2011 for the ten former communist countries members of the EU was 75.9 years, lower than the EU-27 mean of 79.7 years²³. If one recalls Diagram 2, will observe that the highest GDPs- per capita out of the 10 FCC are the ones from Slovenia and the Czech Republic. Likewise, the aforementioned Haatcher belief is being confirmed: the countries with the highest GDPs per capita also register the highest life expectancy. By the other hand, it is observed that all FCC increased significantly their life expectancy during the last two decades, and more importantly, at a faster pace during the 2000 to 2009 interval, compared to the period from 1980 to 1990.

Diagram 4 – Infant Mortality Rate



Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

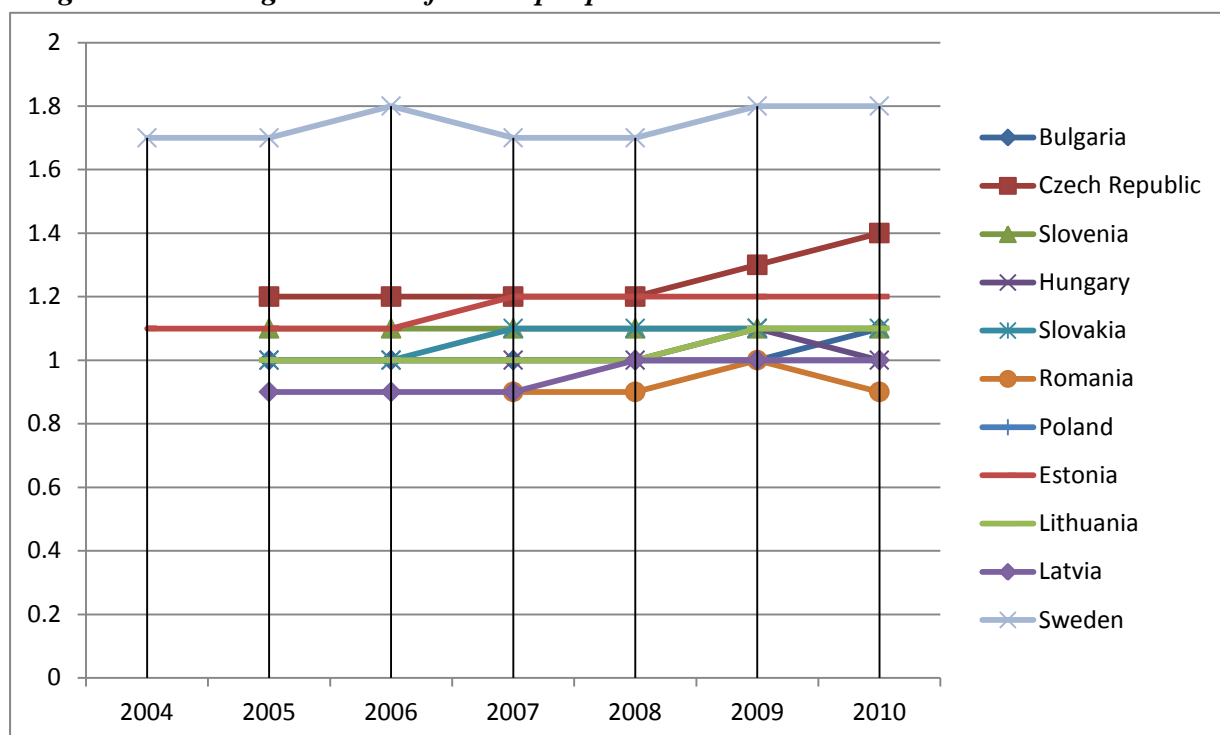
Andersen, Howard and Taylor (2011) assume that the infant mortality rates are vital when comparing ethnic groups from a certain region because they are a good parameter of the overall quality of life and of the chances of survival for the members of each group. For example, higher IMR among a certain group of individuals (in the present case, a country), may suggest a lack of adequate health care and access to the health facilities. Same authors agree as well, that there are many other factors that determine high rates of infant mortality, beside a low quality of life, among which: the presence of toxic wasters, malnutrition of the mother during the pregnancy or out-right starvation. Looking at the *Diagram 5*, even though both Romania and Bulgaria reduced massively their infant mortality rates, they still have higher rates when compared to other former communist countries. Latvia's progress from 2009 to 2010 is remarkable and so is the Czech Republic' IMR evolution during the last 8 years (almost equalising Sweden).

²³ According to EUROSTAT, as of 2011, 9 out of the 10 former communist countries registered high gender gaps at birth (10.2 years for Lithuania- the highest, and 6.1 years for the Czech Republic- the smallest);

3.2.3. Living conditions indicators

For anyone, living in some satisfactory housing conditions is one, if not the most important aspect of daily basis life. Good housing conditions are essential so as to meet the basic needs, but it is not just a question of four walls and a roof (OECD, Better Life Index). Besides measuring the level of satisfaction people have with their living conditions, it is always important to take into account the number of rooms shared per person or whether the households have access to the basic utilities.

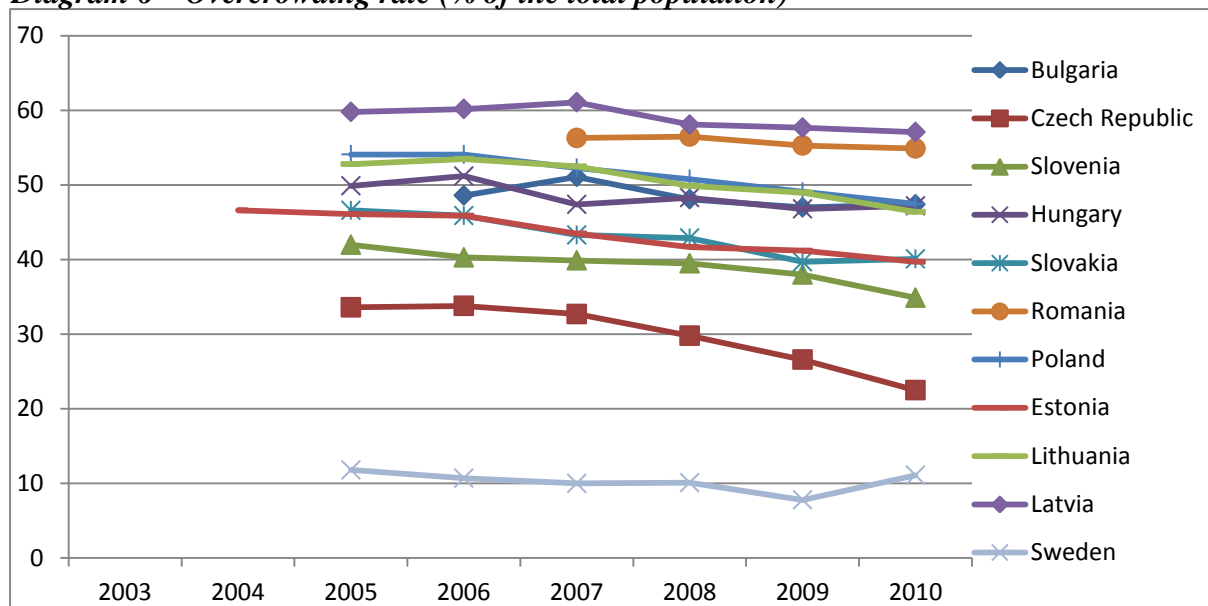
Diagram 5 – Average number of rooms per person



Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

The average number of rooms in a dwelling is calculated by dividing the number of rooms the dwelling has to the number of persons living there (OECD, Better Life Index). According to the same source, generally countries with more than 1.2 rooms/per person are considered to offer a high standard of living for their citizens. According to these criteria, one can observe from *Diagram 5* that as of 2010, it was just the Czech Republic and Estonia that fulfilled the threshold of 1.2 rooms per person, all other 8 countries underperforming in this regard. The lowest values as of 2010, were registered in Romania (0.9 room), Hungary, Poland and Latvia (1 room).

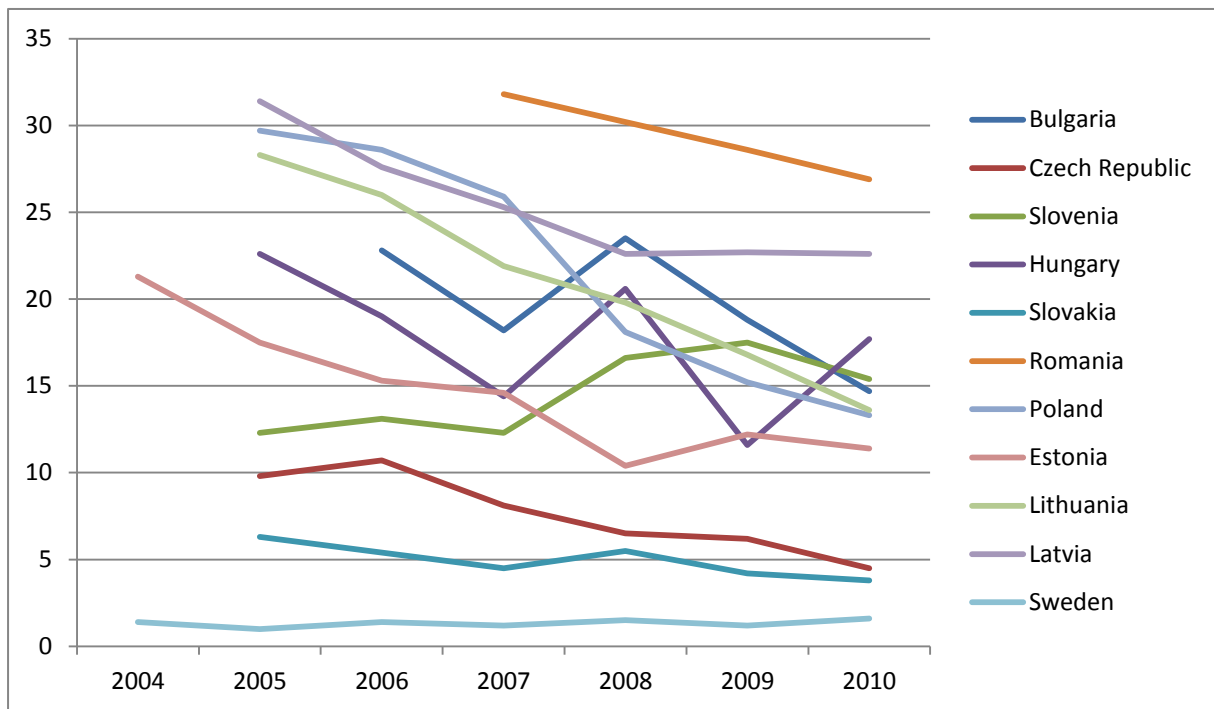
Diagram 6 – Overcrowding rate (% of the total population)



Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

The overcrowding rate is defined by EUROSTAT Official Reports Glossary as the percentage of the population living in an overcrowded household. Therefore, a person is considered to be living in an overcrowded household, if that household does not have at its disposal a minimum of rooms so as to equal: “one room per couple in the household”, “one room for each person aged over 18 living in the household”, “one room per pair of children under 12 years of age”, “one room per pair of people of the same gender between 12 and 17 years of age”. According to the 2011 OECD Better Life Index, an overcrowded house may generate a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the people living in it. In addition, according to the same source, dense living conditions represent, most of the times, a sign of inadequate water and sewage supply. As seen from the diagram above, the Czech Republic reported, during the whole analysed period, the smallest levels of overcrowding rate, reaching by the year of 2010, a level of 22.5%, comparable with the one from Sweden-11%. The highest values of overcrowding were registered back in 2010 by Bulgaria and Romania (57% and 54,9% respectively) mainly due to the overall economic and social backtrack these countries had, compared to the other CEE nations, as well as an assumed higher poverty rate among their population. By the other hand, a positive fact is that beginning with 2004, in all 10 former communist countries the trend of overcrowding is on a decreasing path, all nations reducing their overcrowding rate with 7% on average during the analysed period.

Diagram 7 – severe housing deprivation (% of the total population)

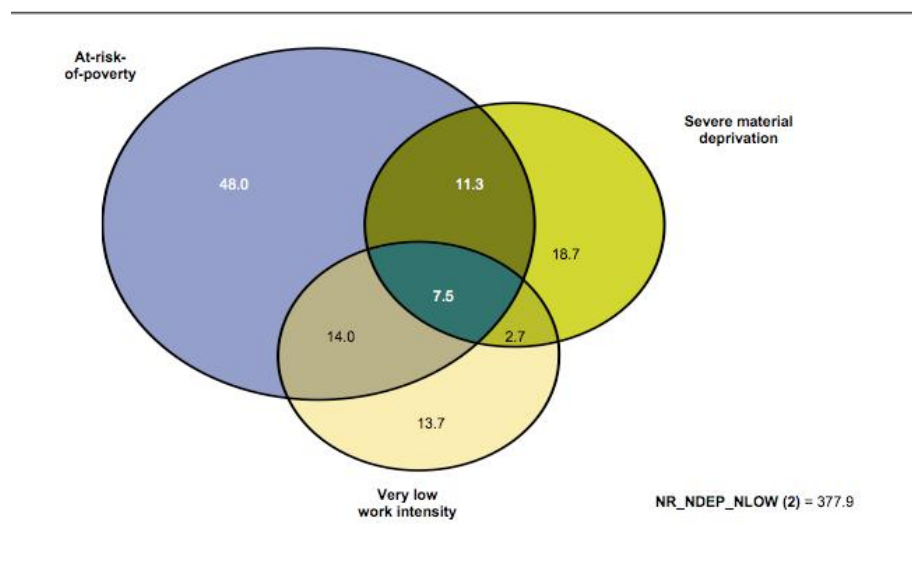


Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

Severe housing deprivation is defined as the percentage of one country's population that encounters, beside an overcrowding rate, also at least one of the housing deprivation conditions. Therefore, when analysing the housing deprivation, EUROSTAT takes into account houses with leaking roof, with no bath/shower and no indoor toilet and the dwellings considered to be too dark (generally, a sum of poor amenities). According to Rybkowska and Schneider (2009), as of 2008, people from the former communist countries living in households with dependent children were more than twice as badly affected by their house deprivation than those living in households without dependent children – 8.6% compared to 3.1%. Even if Romania reduced between 2007 and 2010 by 5% the total number of people living in a household with severe deprivation, it still remains the country with the highest value as of 2010 from all CEE countries (26.9%). By the other hand, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have constantly reduced their figures, and, as of 2010, they reached similar levels as the ones recorded in Sweden. It is important as well to acknowledge that only The Czech Republic and Slovakia registered, out of the former communist countries, as of 2010, values below the EU-27 average of severe housing deprivation - 6%.

Social Exclusion

Graph 1 – “People in the EU exposed to Social Exclusion”



Source of the graph: Eurostat 2011 Official Reports²⁴

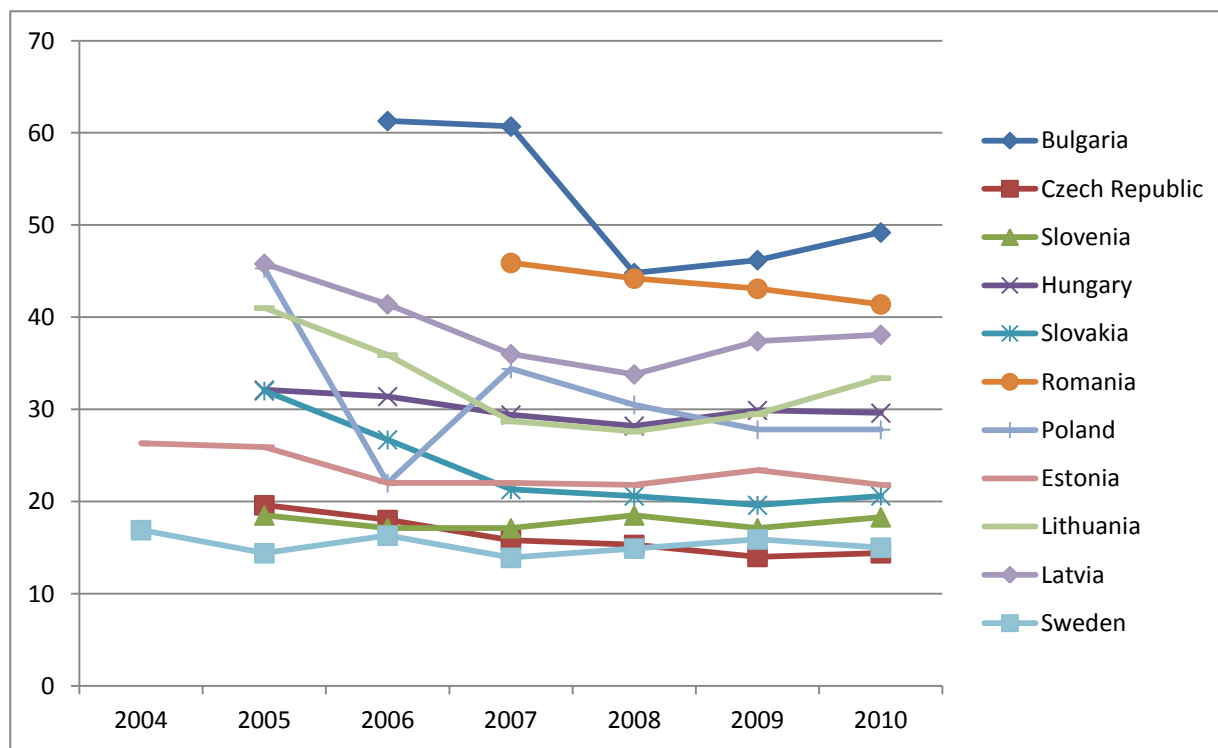
The overall risk of facing social exclusion is, as of EUROSTAT Official Reports Glossary, composed of three types of risks: “of poverty”, “of facing severe material deprivation” and “of living in a household with low working intensity”. People are therefore considered to be at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion if they encounter any of these three types of risk. As observed from Graph 1, as of 2011, in the EU-27 there were 116 million people exposed to the risk of poverty or social exclusion. According to the same Graph 1, 48 million people in the EU-27 were exposed to the risk-of-poverty. Out of these 48 million people, 28.4 million were citizens of the FCC, hence, more than half of the whole people from the EU exposed to the risk of poverty were citizens coming from the former communist countries. Also, 7.5 million people from EU-27 were facing, as of 2011, all three types of risks. Out of these people, 5.4 million were citizens of the former communist countries, representing an alarming level of 72% of the total. The EU declared the year 2010, as the “European Year for combating poverty and Social Exclusion”. Beside two major conferences that took place in January and December, a series of national and local events talking about the topic of poverty and social exclusion took place in every EU member state. After this effort, a new EU inclusion strategy was issued, that encouraged every member state to coordinate their efforts of fighting poverty, via a Social Investment Package²⁵. The European Union also supports both financially and strategically this fight against poverty and social

²⁴ Graph 1 at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_pees01&lang=en;

²⁵ The Social Investment Package is a plan issued by the European Commission that guides EU countries into using better their social budgets in order to ensure a sustainable social protection. It focuses as well on the so called “integrated packages of benefits and services” that help citizens throughout their lives to achieve a lasting positive social outcome;

exclusions via its institutions like The European Social Fund, The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund as well as through the Progress programme.²⁶

Diagram 8 – People exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion (% of the total population)



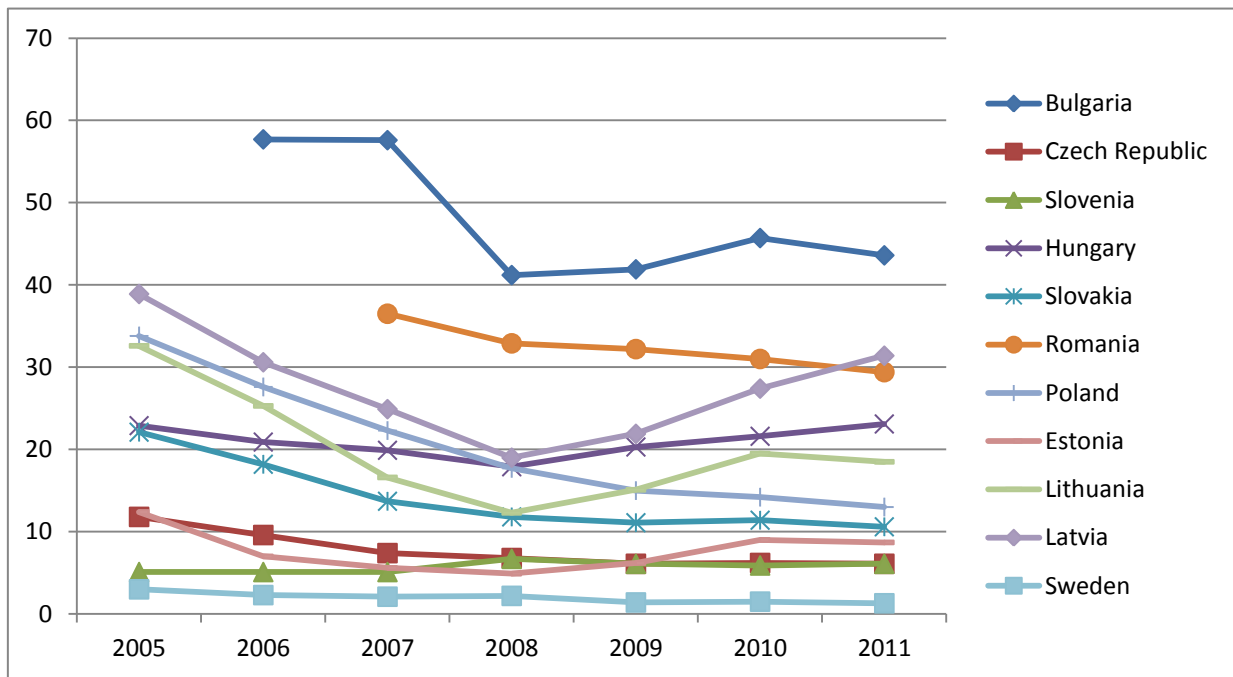
Source of the Diagram: Author's data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

EUROSTAT Official Reports Glossary defines the risk-of-poverty rate as the share of people which after the social-transfers have a disposable monthly/yearly income below the risk-of-poverty threshold²⁷. It is extremely important to understand that this indicator does not show whatsoever wealth or poverty of a certain country, but a low income in comparison with other citizens of that respective nation. Consequently, a higher than normal value of this indicator does not imply automatically a low standard of living or a deteriorated quality of life, but can be a vital signal that something is going wrong. As observed from the diagram above, during the time interval 2006-2009 the number of people exposed to the risk-of-poverty and social exclusion declined in almost all analysed countries (the only exceptions being Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). As of 2010 however, the trend was reversed in almost all FCC (exceptions being Romania, Estonia and Hungary), as the proportion of people exposed to the risk-of-poverty rose on average by 0.3 percentage points (EUROSTAT Official Reports, 2012), equivalent to around 1200000 million people.

²⁶ PROGRESS is the EU employment and solidarity programme. It focuses on areas like gender equality, non-discrimination, working conditions or employment, social inclusion and protection;

²⁷ The risk of poverty threshold is normally set at 60% of the national mean- disposable income after the social-transfers;

Diagram 9 – Severely materially deprived people (% of the total population)



Source of the Diagram: Author’s data compilation from Eurostat (2013)

This indicator refers to the citizens that have their living conditions severely constrained because of a lack of resources. EUROSTAT Official Reports Glossary classified in this category people that experience at least 4 out of the following 9 deprivation items: can’t afford paying the rent or the utility bills, can’t afford keeping their homes adequately warm, face unexpected expenses, eat meat, fish or a equivalent protein every second day, a week of holiday from home every year, a car, a washing machine, a TV or a telephone. This indicator is becoming more and more important, since is one of the indicators that compose the “Europe 2020 poverty target”²⁸ (Social Situation Observatory, 2011). Between 2005 and 2008, countries like Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland or Lithuania all performed remarkably and showed a massive reduction in the relative number of individuals severely deprived whereas Slovenia registered during the same time interval a slight increase of the severely deprived people. The EU has approved for the 2007-2013 Financial Framework over 500 million Euros via the “Food for the Most Deprived” programme. This program is focused primary on the severely materially deprived people of the Union, and is being funded from the Common Agriculture Policy Budget. The ten FCC benefited of about 183 million Euros via this program (e.g.: Poland -76 million Euros, the most and Czech Republic-183869 Euros, the least²⁹). It is important to mention as well, that the severely materially deprived indicator is in a tight correlation with the indicator deprived people, as of 2011 the correlation between the two changes being 0.93 (EUROSTAT, 2011).

²⁸ Europe 2020 Poverty Target represent s an uniform engagement of the EU bodies that by the year of 2020, there will be at least 20 million less people exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion;

²⁹ Data available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1093_en.htm;

3.3. Evolution of the standards of living and quality of life in the ten former communist countries

In this part of the research project the author would like to present a panoramic view of the changes that occurred in the societies of the analysed nations, after they have joined the EU, based on the graphs and diagrams already presented. The analysis will be structured in three clusters of countries grouped both politically and geographically. Consequently, the first cluster compresses the former communist countries from Central Europe: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary, the second one the ex-Soviet Baltic republics and the last one Romania and Bulgaria.

Table 4 – “Quality of Life Indicators in the CEE countries”

Country	Political Participation		Yearly Working Hours		Air Pollution (in tonnes)	
	Last elections before accession	Last elections	2004/2007	2011	2004/2007	2011
Bulgaria	55.6%	60.2%	2142	2040	819498	387207
Czech Republic	57.9%	64%	1827	1774	227223	170331
Slovenia	60.6%	63%	1742	1662	49010	10387
Hungary	57%	64%	1992	1980	248810	32295
Slovakia	70%	55%	1816	1793	96188	69406
Romania	51.7%	41.7%	2006	1840	577201	371976
Poland	46%	54%	1983	1939	1241190	973587
Estonia	58%	62%	1996	1924	88245	88220
Lithuania	35.2%	35.7%	2052	1980	41016	38084
Latvia	55%	49.89%	1829	1740	6779	3158

Source: Author’s gathering using data from EUROSTAT (2013) and countries’ statistical offices website³⁰

Table 4 exemplifies important topics when dealing with the indicators “quality of life” and “standards of living”. If one recalls Ogburn Theory (Chapter 1), that states that the most important factors affecting the standards of living of people are the natural resources (and the quality of the environment), the population, the organisation and the technology, then is acceptable to state that Table 4, is a good reflection of all these indicators. First, if one looks at the Political Participation in the ten CEE countries, it can be easily assumed that the trend records a negative evolution in all countries. If one acknowledges also that the mean voting participation in the 10 FCC during the last EU elections was only 32.25% (compared to 43% the EU-27 average)- *EUROSTAT, 2013*, than it makes sense to assume that expressing the political voice is a stringent problem in this region of the continent. Therefore, the expensive initiatives conducted from Brussels such as “Access to Rights and civil dialogue for All” campaigning for an awareness of the voting importance in all member states, seem to work inefficiently, without any visible results. However, it is generally assumed that the EU Parliament elections from 2014 will be an extremely important moment, in which more funded conclusions could be drawn.

By the other hand, according to the same “Table 4”, the annual Pollution tonnes in each of the ten FCC reduced massively (on average with 28% compared to the accession moment). This may be seen as a victory of the EU Air Policy and of the “EAP –Environment

³⁰ Slovak Statistical Office, portal.statistics.sk; Statistical Office of Slovenia, stat.si; Estonian Statistical Office, stat.ee; Romanian Institute of Statistics, ins.ro;

Action Programme 2002-2012”. The goals of this programme were³¹: the introduction of a new chemical policy (realised in 2011) and a general improvement of the air quality within the EU. A public survey has been conducted by the EU Commission regarding the air quality in all EU-27 countries, and the results are expected to be published by the end of 2013.³²

In order to protect the workers safety and health, the European Commission issued in 2003 the “EU Working time directive³³”. According to it, the employer must guarantee to the employee a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours in every 24, paid annual leave of at least 4 weeks a year and a maximum weekly working time that should not exceed 48 hours. Even if all the 10 FCC, as of Table 4, considerably reduced the annually working hours from the moment of joining the EU, more improvements are needed. Quoting official OECD Statistics Database, there are just Slovenia and Slovakia, as of 2011, close to the OECD average annually working hours- 1760.

Countries evolutions and results of the EU Funds

Table 5- “Contracted ratio of EU Funds for 2007-2011 (operational domain/ per country)”

Intervention type	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	Total CEE progress
Economic Development	31%	54%	68%	94%	82%	64%	64%	44%	48%	44%	57%
Energy	N/A	53%	19%	25%	60%	73%	19%	9%	53%	N/A	33%
Environment	27%	16%	63%	33%	N/A	86%	57%	43%	57%	N/A	43%
Healthcare	N/A	N/A	N/A	71%	85%	N/A	77%	49%	96%	N/A	72%
Human Resource Development	47%	58%	70%	53%	82%	59%	62%	87%	73%	61%	65%
Public administration	46%	53%	N/A	35%	84%	76%	48%	32%	67%	92%	46%
R&D innovation	N/A	32%	43%	23%	44%	68%	67%	68%	57%	73%	57%
Transport	30%	90%	69%	68%	87%	44%	44%	19%	40%	27%	51%
Urban and rural development	53%	60%	44%	46%	73%	68%	52%	79%	62%	N/A	57%
Technical assistance	48%	51%	29%	76%	59%	37%	38%	18%	78%	97%	48%
Total progress	37%	55%	60%	51%	76%	68%	53%	45%	57%	48%	53%

Source: Author’s gathering using data from EUROSTAT (2013) and KPMG 2012 report;

Table 5 presents the contracted ratio of the EU Cohesion Funds for each of the ten CEE countries, and includes for each of them all the intervention types. The *contracted ratio* represents the total amount of grants for which a contract has been signed between the beneficiary and the competent national authority, divided to the whole budget available for that specific intervention type during the 2007-2013 financial framework. (KPMG, 2012) As of 2012, the CEE average contracted ratio was 67 % (KPMG, 2012), with the following countries performing the best: Estonia (94%), Latvia (87%) and Bulgaria (79%) and the

³¹ Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/newprg/archives/index.htm>;

³² Source: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=6322&lang=en;

³³ A directive is a legislative act of the European Union which REQUIRES member states to achieve a particular result without dictating the means of achieving it;

following performing the worst: Slovakia (64%) and Poland (63%). However, it is generally accepted that the Payment Ratio is a much better indicator for the “EU funds absorption performance” of a country. Since the literature lacks in offering a detailed data for each CEE country and each intervention type, it is nevertheless important to mention that the average payment ratio of the CEE countries was, as of 2012, just 29%. While the Baltic nations performed the best – 40%, countries like Romania and Bulgaria performed the worst-under 20%. Consequently, one can easily observe that a high contracted ratio (Bulgaria) does not automatically imply a high payment ratio.

Poland is a country that exemplifies clearly some of the contradictions of the Central and Eastern European Countries regarding their accession to the European Union. Between the years 2004-2008 high economic growth rates have transformed in a positive manner the Polish economy (Diagram 1) and have integrated it almost completely into the pattern of Western European countries (Wiesnieski, Hykawy, Jatczak, 2008). Observing the figures from Table 1, Poland, despite facing difficulties absorbing a larger proportion of structural funds, is still the largest beneficiary of European Cohesion Funds. This, according to Hardy (2009) has assured for this country a “soft landing” during the current economic crisis. Table 5 offers a better perspective over the contracting rate of the EU Funds. Poland performed impressively in domains such as Healthcare, Economic Development, Human Resources Development or Transport. As of 2011, 88% of the Polish population aged 25-64 owned a high school degree (Polish National Statistical Bureau) (same level as in 2004 and higher than the OECD average of 74%).

The **Czech Republic** has faced during the last two decades important political developments that have shifted from a great enthusiasm for the return to Europe to a sort of euro-scepticism, manifested into a significant level of disenchantment with the EU structure. This is in a bizarre contradiction with the fact that the Czech Republic has been a net beneficiary of the European Union Cohesion funding plan (Table 1 and Table 5) even if it might have not used such money to maximum effects (European Commission, Inforegio³⁴). Overall, specialists agree that the accession to the EU has contributed positively to the general development of the lives of Czechs. The standards of living of the Czech people are high compared to other former communist countries (Diagrams presented above being explanatory), thus, according to Diagram 9, the level of people exposed to the risk of poverty was almost half in the Czech Republic, compared to the EU average. As of 2011, 91% of the people aged 25-64³⁵ have earned at least a high-school degree, higher than the OECD countries average of 74%.

The **Slovakian** case according to Bilcik and Buzalka (2009) is characterised by extreme political positioning, reached during the accession process and afterwards³⁶. After the year of 2001, a period of constant economic growth, generating a growing quality of live and of living standards characterised Slovakia (European Quality of Life Survey, 2007). According to Table 1 and Table 2, around 2.2 EUR billions from Structural funds have been attracted by Slovakia (Table 5 presents an impressive contracting rate of Slovakia in terms of absorbing the Healthcare funds- 94%, equivalent to 230 million euro). However this boom period ended sharply when the economic crisis of 2008 extended to Central Europe (Diagram 1). Even if during the 2000s Slovakia was regarded as one of the most successful Central

³⁴ Data available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/commu/beneficiaries/czech/index_en.htm;

³⁵ Data provided by the Czech National Statistics Office, at: czso.cz;

³⁶ Slovakia has been characterised by periods of nationalism (immediately after gaining its independence) and periods of great openness across the political and economic spectrum (after 1998);

Eastern European countries, a country where the quality of life was reaching gradually similar levels to other Western European countries, (Bilcik and Buzalka) the impacts of these changes on the Slovakian population were mostly negative: a limited labour flexibility, long-term unemployment as well as social exclusion of the poor. (Bartscht, 2011) Regarding the education level of the population, 91% of the Slovakian population have earned a high-school degree as of 2011 (Slovak Statistical Office, portal.statistics.sk) (comparable with figures from other CEE countries such as Czech Republic or Poland).

Most specialists see the **Hungarian** transition as one success story. However, post-European Union accession domestic realignments, according to Korkut (2012), have seen increasing polarisation in relation to EU - related types of reform. Also, taking into account that the Hungarian expectations regarding the sharp raise of the living standards after the accession to the EU were not completely fulfilled, there has been and continues to be, a popular backlash regarding the EU-related initiatives. Alongside with the Czech Republic and Estonia (Table 1), Hungary received the highest amount of structural funds per capita during the “2007-2013 financial framework”. The biggest proportion of the population still approves the country’s European Union membership³⁷, even if, according to official EU Commission reports³⁸, Hungary has “moved towards being one of the worst performing member states in its responses to the Commission”. A proportion of 81% of the Hungarian population has earned at least a high-school diploma as of 2011, comparable with the level of 2004 (80.4%) and higher than the OECD countries average (74%).

In the case of **Slovenia** the accession to the EU has been the last phase towards the complete modernisation of the Slovenian society (Report of Slovenia’s Progress in EU Integration, 2001). The standards of living in Slovenia were, even before the accession to the EU, very close to the ones from EU-15³⁹, and continued to improve towards the last nine years. Conversely, by comparison to other CEE countries, Slovenia experienced during the last 20 years less radical upheavals on its political, economic and also social life (Tomsic and Prijon, 2012). The standards of living in the post-communist Slovenia evolved on a positive manner, mainly because of the presence of the left-wing parties that have ruled the country during the last two decades. The reforms of these left-wing parties were gradualist, focused on promoting strong trade-unions and on building a modern market socialism (Tomsic and Prijon, 2012). Therefore, Slovenia not only became the country with the highest GDP-per capita among the former communist countries (Diagram 2) when joining the European Union, but it has also become the country with the strongest welfare system, with the lowest levels of inequality within its population and also with the lowest figures of poverty towards its society. Nonetheless, as in the case of other European nations, the recent financial crisis shrank the Slovenian economy: the GDP of it has contracted severely starting with 2009 and the levels of unemployment began to increase, reaching alarming levels (Statistical Office of Slovenia). 83% of the Slovenian population earned at least a high-school diploma as of 2011 (Statistical Office of Slovenia, stat.si), comparable with the other former communist countries and higher than the OECD countries average of 74%.

Usually specialists analysing the standards of living and quality of life treat the three Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) as an entity, mainly due to the fact that

³⁷ According to *Eurobarometer 76*: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_first_en.pdf;

³⁸ Source: <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21573589-hungarian-government-defies-europe-over-constitutional-change-viktors-justice>;

³⁹ By the time Slovenia joined the EU (2004), the GDP-per capita was 70% of the EU-15 average; by 2011 the Slovenian GDP-per capita cumulated 90% of the EU-15 average, overlapping GDP-per capita from EU-15 countries such as Portugal or Greece;

in many regards the three countries share common cultural, social and economic characteristics. It is important to mention however, that for the Baltic nations “demography was political” (Jurkynas, Ozolina, Veebel and Loik). Decades of Russification have made an immense impact both on the ethnic and linguistic outlook of these states. (Zembergs, 1980) The Baltic nations were unique among other post-Soviet republics, in the sense that they started important reforms towards EU membership (e.g.: effective constitutions, free elections, monetary reforms, freedom of speech and human rights legislation) very early after gaining their independence (Purfield, Rosenberg, 2013). Also, mass migration, specifically from Latvia and Lithuania, has provided opportunities and increased the living standards of those condemned otherwise to poverty or low-paid jobs in their native countries. After gaining European Union membership (in 2004), high economic growth rates, regularly surpassing the 10% threshold annually (Diagram 1), increased massively the living standards and quality of life of most of the citizens of these three countries. If one considers Tables 1 and 2, it can be observed that during the current financial exercise, the Baltic States were among the top performers in terms of attracting the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds. However, Lithuania for example, which according to Table 5, performed extremely well in terms of contracting funds for Energy, is currently facing serious allegations regarding the illegal and ineffective way the funds have been spent.⁴⁰ All Baltic economies proved to be extremely vulnerable during the recent economic crisis (Diagram 1). High levels of unemployment, cuts on the public system salaries and a general aggravation of the quality of life, have all been the pattern of last three years in these nations.

Romania is a particular example considering that its process of regime change was violent and bloody compared to other peaceful transitions from Europe. This transition process led to the “reincarnation” of the new political elite, with tight connections with the former regime, which then proceeded to consolidate its grip on both political and economic power (Ivan, 2009). Despite a high level of wish from the Romanian population in joining the EU, the governmental actors of the country didn’t translate this wish into effective reforms both on the social and economic aspects, and consequently Romania joined the European Union only in 2007, three years after it was initially scheduled to do. According to Zaharia and Stan (2009), the standards of living of the Romanian population were extremely low back in 1989 after the fall of the communism. Comparing the figures of 2013 with the figures of 1989, one can easily say that both the standards of living and the quality of life for the Romanians improved massively (Diagrams 2, 4, 5, 9, 10) (better schooling, better health care, opportunities of: travelling, studying, working freely in almost any European country). However, if compared to the other EU member states, the standards of living of the Romanian population are still low today (e.g.: according to Diagram 2, the compressed GDP per capita of a Romanian, as of 2010, reached only 48% of the EU-27 average). Additionally, while Romania had the potential of accessing EU structural funds, it was hampered by its own inability of proposing viable projects (Ivan, 2009). According to Table 2, Romania has the smallest payment ratio concerning the EU Structural Funds, out of the ten former communist countries (7%).

Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, and the positive effect of the membership status was soon outweighed by the global financial crisis (Andreev, 2009). Despite a new democratic constitution emulated in 1991, the actual social and economic reforms started only in the mid 1990s. The standards of living of the Bulgarians suffered in the first years of transition a severe depreciation compared to the last years of communism mainly because of

⁴⁰ Source: <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/business/lithuania-s-use-of-energy-saving-funds-inefficient-eu-auditors-say-527-296904>;

the Banking system collapse from 1993 and of the low-levels of economic growth from the following transition years (Nenovski, Tochlov, 2011). During the negotiation of ascending to the EU period, the standards of living and the quality of life of the Bulgarians have improved significantly (well presented in Diagrams 2, 9, 10) due to the public sector reforms and to the important remittances sent home by the migrants (Nenovski, Tochlov, 2011). It is important to mention though, that the security of the citizens is still under supervision from EU organisms since the organising crime and the levels of corruption are utterly present and consequently create an un-properly functioning judiciary system as well as an unstable living environment.

4.1. Background information

The first quality of life and living standards surveys started in Romania during the 1970s, addressing mainly individuals from the urban areas, with samples of around 3000 responders. (Baltatescu, 2001) According to the same author, there were approximately 250 indicators tested, taken from the models developed by Andrews and Whitney in the US. However, because of the communist regime⁴¹, these surveys were banned up until the Romanian revolution from 1989. Therefore, in 1990, the Institute of Quality of Life is inaugurated. Under the rule of this institute, there have been several surveys run up until now. “*Quality of Life- A social Policy Journal*”, “*the Diagnosis of Quality of Life*” or the “*Public Opinion Barometer*”, were all developed during the last two decades. All three surveys revealed that the transition period for Romania was long and inefficient towards increasing the living standards and the quality of life of the Romanians (Marginean, 2002). Likewise, beginning with 1999, there has been an abrupt declining of the life satisfaction towards the Romanian population (mainly due to the high inflation rates, to the political instability, raising levels of poverty in the total population and to the big banks bankruptcy) (Baltatescu, 2001)⁴². However, after 2000 (as Diagrams from Chapter 3 show), there has been a constant improvement of the standards of living and quality of life due to constant GDP growth rates, well coordinated social policies and stricter fiscal regulations. It all coincided with the EU accession of the country, back in January, 2007.

4.2. Description of the Survey, aim and scope

The author has developed an individual survey, comprising 117 individuals from Romania (living both in the urban or rural areas), trying to identify if there has been an improvement of their living standards since their country has joined the EU. The individuals tested are residents of all three big historical regions of the country: Transylvania, Southern Part (including here Bucharest) and Moldavia. The study was conducted during the month of May 2013, using three different survey techniques⁴³: online, paper and telephone. Due to the fact that some responders were unable of reading the questions in English, the questionnaire questions were translated in Romanian (please see Appendix 5 – for the Questionnaire version in English).

The aim of the survey was to identify the positive and negative aspects generated by the accession of Romania to the EU and their impact in the everyday life of the responders. Consequently, there have been questions regarding the most important indicators of living standards and quality of life (Marginean, 2002, p.119): education system, health system, prices of everyday goods or the judicial system⁴⁴. The scope of the research is to draw some conclusions, comparing official reports issued by the European Union’s

⁴¹ It was thought that these surveys would reflect the miserable quality of life the Romanians had back then;

⁴² See Appendix 4, for a detailed explanation of the quality of life decline;

⁴³ Survey techniques as of: <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/artisticreflectionkit/tools/researchtechniques>;

⁴⁴ The design of the Present Questionnaire was created following instructions from “Research Methods, Data Collection Methods and Questionnaire Design”, Office of National Statistics, Statistical Training Unit;

institutions with the answers of the individuals in the present survey. The author wants to see whether or not the amount of money, information and knowledge the EU has invested in Romania during the 2007-2013 financial framework paid off in raising the living standards, improving the quality of life and diminishing the social and economic differences between Romania and other EU member states.

4.3. Methodology of the questionnaire survey

According to the National Statistics Office of the UK⁴⁵, the sample surveys are used to collect different sets of data through questions and answers regarding opinions, demographics or employment characteristics of a specific sample of people. This is a cross-sectional survey, since it collected information on a population at a single point in time-month of May, 2013-. All the 117 individuals answered all 6 questions of the questionnaire. No missing values have been observed and consequently none of the individuals has been dropped from the analysis.

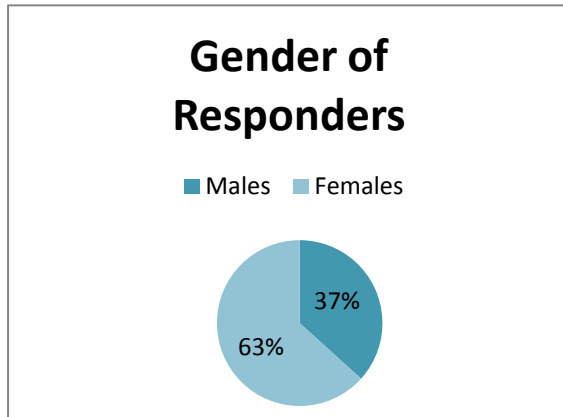
On the present survey, 3 types of techniques, as stated above, have been used. The first one was the online-technique: in which the responders completed electronically the survey questionnaire. This technique was mainly used in the present research survey (60% of the responders), because of the relatively low costs it can be sent and to the wide spreading spectrum it can be addressed (from local to national communities). The means through which the questionnaire was distributed were both social media networks or via e-mail, and the responders were generally individuals under 45 years. However, this technique has proved to have its own limitations: the results obtained may be unrepresentative of the whole population, since some groups have been more motivated to return questionnaires than others. The second technique used was paper- face to face interviews (share of 30%). Each responder received a printed version of the questionnaire and had to tick his/her choice on every question. The technique was mainly used for the responders aged above-45, since most of them did not have access to the internet. The time for answering the questionnaire ranged on average from 5 to 10 minutes. Among the advantages of this technique the author identified the high response rate (in this case being 100%); however, this technique proved to have its own limitations, among which: added pressure on the responders considering the presence of the reporter or additional costs with printing the questionnaire. The third technique used was the telephone interview (comprising around 10% of the total sample). Interviews were held especially for responders aged above 65 years. The reporter asked the question, then gave the answering options and then registered the answers of the responders. As an advantage of this technique one can state the fact that the data collection was relatively fast since the responses to questionnaire's questions could be obtained immediately (an average timing of 5-7 minutes for answering all questions); however, because in Romania the low socio-economic groups do not own a home-telephone, this have resulted in a less-representative sample for the current survey. At each of the 6 questions, only one valid answer was requested and could be chosen.

⁴⁵ Source: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>;

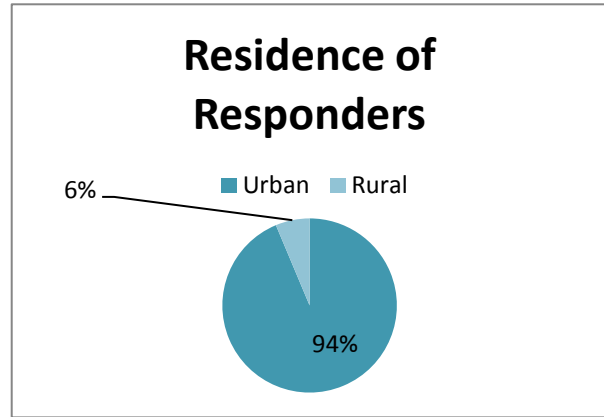
3.4. Results and Discussion

General overview of the sample

Graph 2



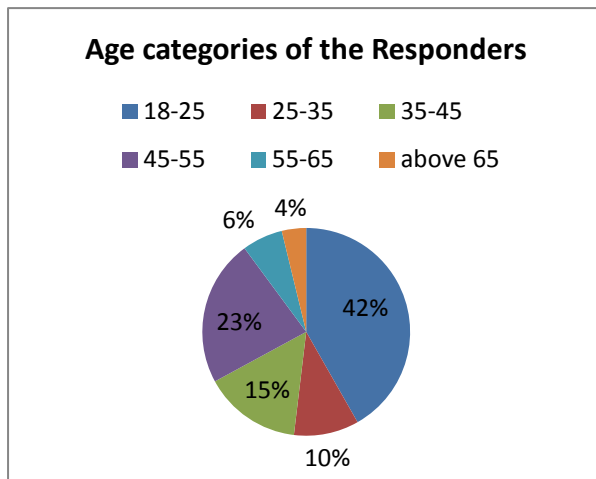
Graph 3



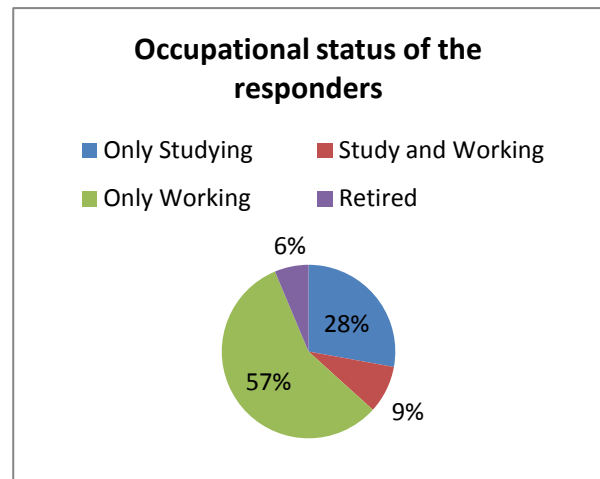
Source of the Graphs: Author's calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

As observed from Graph Number 2 and Graph Number 3, the sex distribution of the sample does not reflect the statistical gender reality of Romania (63% women - 37% men in the sample, compared to 52% women – 48% men in reality⁴⁶). As well, most of the interviewed individuals of the present survey, reside in an urban area (94%), significantly more than the general trend of the entire country (55.6%), according to *National Statistics Office of Romania (INS)*.

Graph 4

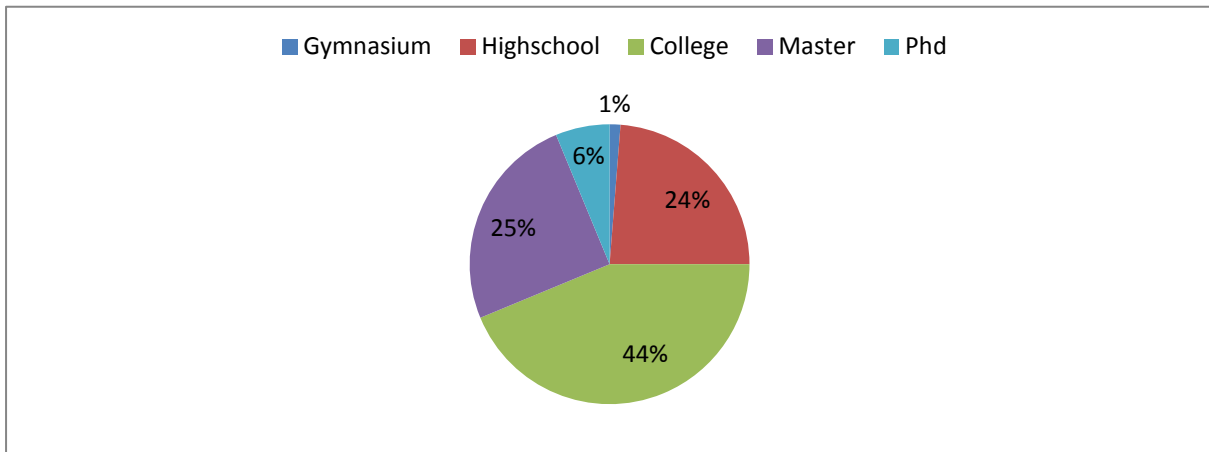


Graph 5



⁴⁶ Data according to the last Romanian census of 2011, provided from National Statistics Office of Romania (INS);

Graph 6: “Educational Level of the Responders”



Source of the Graphs: Author’s calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

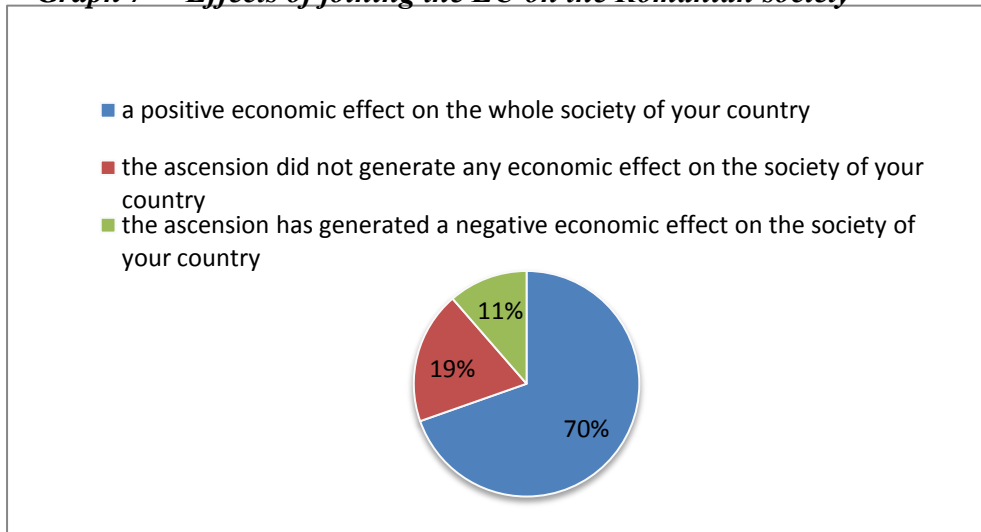
Seeing the figures from Graphs 4, 5 and 6, some assumptions can be made. Therefore, according to Graph 4, the analysed sample does include in the 18-25 years old age-category more individuals than the official statistics state⁴⁷ (42% in the sample, compared to 12.3% in the official statistics). Nonetheless, regarding the summed 25-55 years old age-categories the sample matches almost perfectly the reality of the Romanian official statistics (48% in the sample, compared to 45.7% in the official statistics). When analysing the occupational status of the responders, one can observe that most of them were “only working” at the time of the survey (57%), 28% were “only studying”, 9% were “working and studying”, and 6% were “retired” individuals. The fact that the responders of the survey correspond to each occupational status category is extremely efficient for the analysis of specific domains and fields each of these occupational statuses interferes stronger with. Regarding the educational level of the responders, one can observe that most of them (44%) own a College/Bachelor degree, 24% a high-school diploma whereas 25% own a Master diploma. As expected, the outliers of the survey are the individuals owning a Gymnasium diploma or a PhD (1% and 6% respectively).

⁴⁷ Data according to the last Romanian census of 2011, provided from National Statistics Office of Romania (INS);

General Analysis of the Questions answers

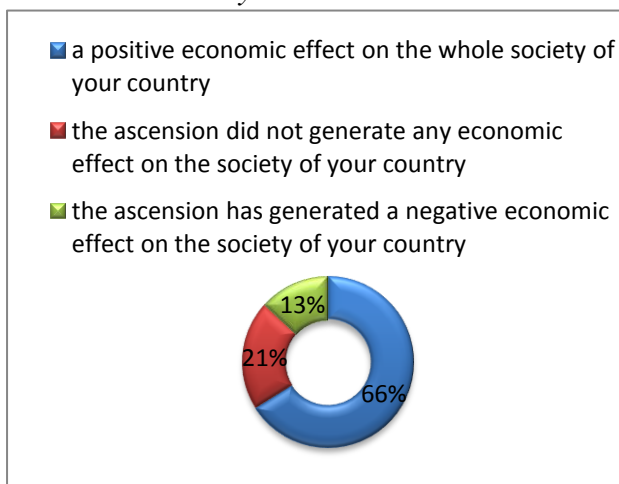
Question Number 1: Do you consider that the ascension of you country to the European Union has generated?

Graph 7 –“Effects of joining the EU on the Romanian society”

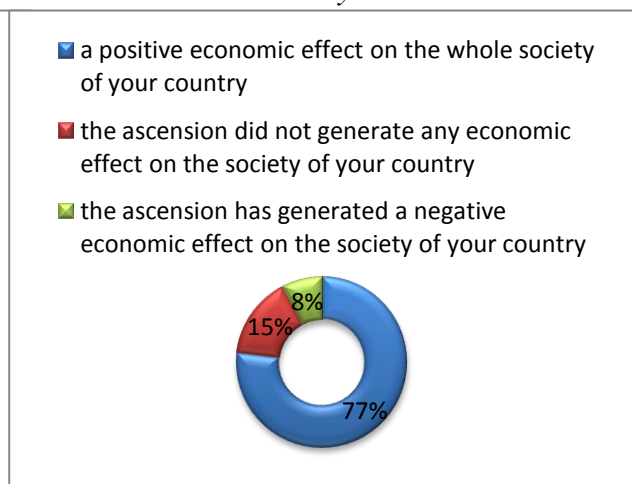


Different Age-groups Answers

Under 45 years



Above 45 years



Source of the Graphs: Author’s calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

When asking individuals this question, many of them immediately resonated: the EU cohesion policy. This financial instrument coordinates projects throughout the whole continent’s regions⁴⁸ in a wish of diminishing the inequalities between them. On a large majority (70%) the responders believed that the accession of Romania to the EU has generated a positive economic effect on the society of the country. The results are in line with a recent survey, developed by IRES in 2013⁴⁹, in which 66% of the responders expressed the same opinion and converse to a CIADOR survey from 2013 when 60% of the responders

⁴⁸ Romania is the second poorest country in the European Union; all its 8 regions of development all included in the EU cohesion policy spectrum (Appendix 6);

⁴⁹ Source: <http://www.ziare.com/articole/romania+uniunea+europeana>;

declared that the EU accession has generated a negative economic effect on the Romanian society⁵⁰. Individuals aged above 45 years seem to appreciate in a higher proportion than individuals below 45 years Romania's accession to the EU. The explanation for these results may be found in the CIADOR 2013 Study. According to this study, Romanians believed that the main negative consequence on the Romanian economy as being an EU member was the reduced number of jobs, due to a tougher competition. Since "Youth Employment" is a stringent problem in Romania (as it is in all European countries), and taking into account as well the results of the aforementioned study, the fact that individuals under 45 years perceive in a higher proportion that the EU accession generated a negative impact on the Romanian economy, could make sense. Nevertheless, the trend is on a positive evolution with most of the responders (above and under 45 years) considering that the EU membership generated a positive effect on the Romanian economic and social life. This fact may be determined by some evident improvements generated by joining the EU. As clear examples, the A2 Motorway linking Bucharest to Constanta has been finished with 75 % EU SOP Transport funds, over 600 km of railways have been renovated with EU money, migrants from Romania did not need working permits in almost all EU countries after the country's accession to the EU. Another positive indirect effect of joining the EU could be seen in the share of attracted FDIs during the post-accession period. According to *Appendix 9*, during 2007-2008, the level of FDIs in Romania increased by 2 EUR billions, in real terms meaning 11043 new jobs created through 145 FDI projects (Rusu, 2010).

Table 6: "EU Funds Dynamics in Romania during the 2007-2013 Financial Framework"

	Total Allocation 2007-2013 Eur Bn.	Absorption rate (including pre-financing), % of the total allocation	Cumulative attracted funds (including pre-financing), EUR Bn.	Certified absorption rate, % of total allocation
OP Regional	3.8	27.8	1.04	11.7
OP Technical Assistance	0.2	14.4	0.02	9.8
OP Enhancing Administrative Capacity	0.2	13.4	0.03	9.1
SOP Enhancing Competitiveness	2.7	17	0.43	6.4
SOP Transport	4.6	7	0.32	6.1
SOP Human Resources Development	3.7	28.9	1.00	5.5
SOP Environment	4.5	12.7	0.57	3.4
Total	19.7	17.8	3.42	6.6

Source: Romanian Ministry of internal affairs;

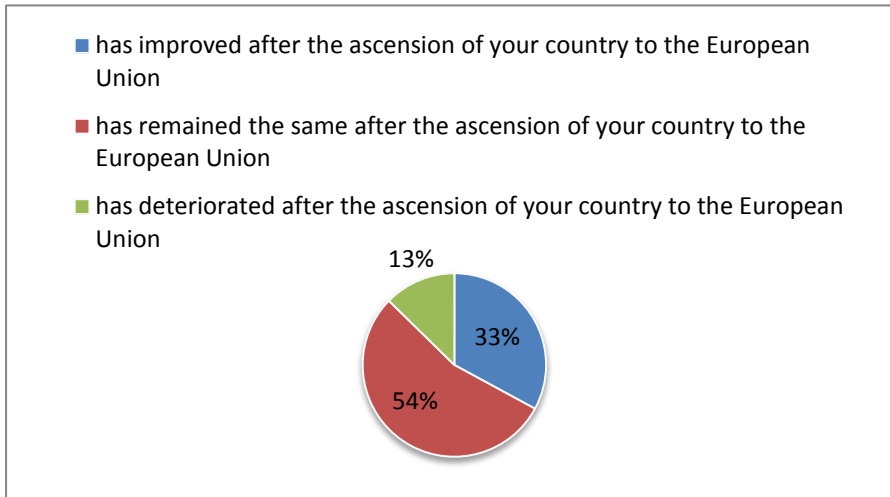
By the other hand, according to Table 6, there is an urging problem healing. The absorption rate of the EU funds remained extremely low, 17.8% during the "2007-2013 financial framework". However, it is not a quantitative problem primarily, but a qualitative one stringently. According to a CIADO study of 2013, 42% of the Romanians blamed the Government for this low absorption rate and 33% the EU Bureaucracy. The fact that many projects cannot be implemented after being granted funding (Table 2 reflects a good dynamics of contracting the EU grants), in other words money go back to the Commission, generates imbalances in the cost-benefit equation. According to Dragan (2010), the EU funds

⁵⁰ Source: <http://www.timpolis.ro/articol-eurosepticismul-la-cote-ridicate-in-romania-24474.html>;

should be a modality through which the objectives can be fulfilled and not a scope in themselves.

Question Number 2: Do you consider that the health system of your country?

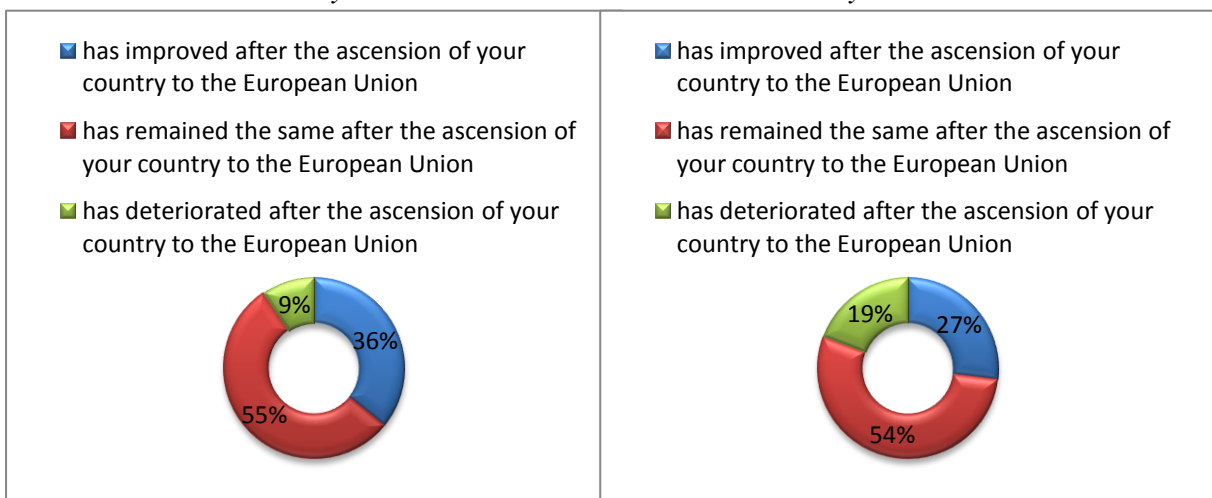
Graph 8: “Health system evolution”



Different Age groups answers

Under 45 years

Above 45 years



Source of the Graphs: Author’s calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

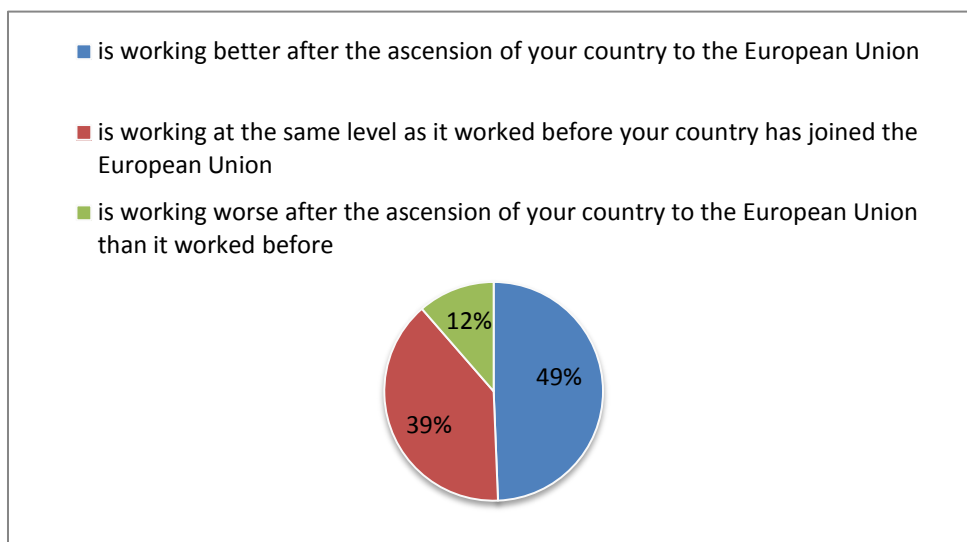
There are 3 types of health projects developed through the EU Cohesion Policy: the first one includes “the health infrastructure” (modernising and building new hospitals or any health institution)⁵¹, the second one includes the “investments in different activities” (health education, training of health professionals, prevention campaigns, lifelong learning so as to be able to work longer and healthier); the third one “others” –comprising health innovations or cross-border cooperation. (European Commission, 2011) Regarding Romania, the results of the allocated funds are seen throughout the whole country. As clear examples,

⁵¹ 417 million Euros have been allocated for Romania regarding the development of the health infrastructure during the 2007-2013 financial framework, through the European Regional Development Fund; (http://ec.europa.eu/health/health_structural_funds/docs/watson_report.pdf);

the Hospital for Pneumology from Timisoara, that serves approximately 200,000 people every year, has been renovated, modernised and equipped with modern medical technology (total investment of 900,000 euro⁵²) in 2011. The Regional Hospitals for Emergencies from Tirgoviste and Baia Mare⁵³ – both serving around 1 million people, have been modernised or are in the process of being modernised and equipped with the latest technology, after investments of 30 million euro (85% of the investment- EU funded). In this context of constant investments and evident proof of health-system improvement during the last years, the results of the survey are surprising. The biggest proportion of the responders (54%) stated that the health system remained at the same level as it was before Romania joined the EU. One third of them answered that the system evolved on a positive manner since Romania joined European Union whereas less than a quarter believed the health system decreased in terms of performance since the country’s accession. A possible explanation for this outcome of the survey could be the fact that the communication between the responsible institutions and the population worked unproductively. By the other hand, quoting official statements of Romanian NGOs, they declared that at some projects developed by their organisations regarding health-education for instance, very few members of the community showed interest in participating, even if all expenses were covered by the EU funds. Again, the fact that individuals rated “above 45 years” (which normally use more often than the youngsters health services) believe in a proportion of 19% that the health system is performing worse since Romania has joined the EU, should determine the Romanian authorities to re-think their positioning regarding the health administration and management as well as the quality of services delivered in the health units.

Question Number 3: Do you consider that the rule of law and the juridical system of your country?

Graph 9: “Judicial system evolution”



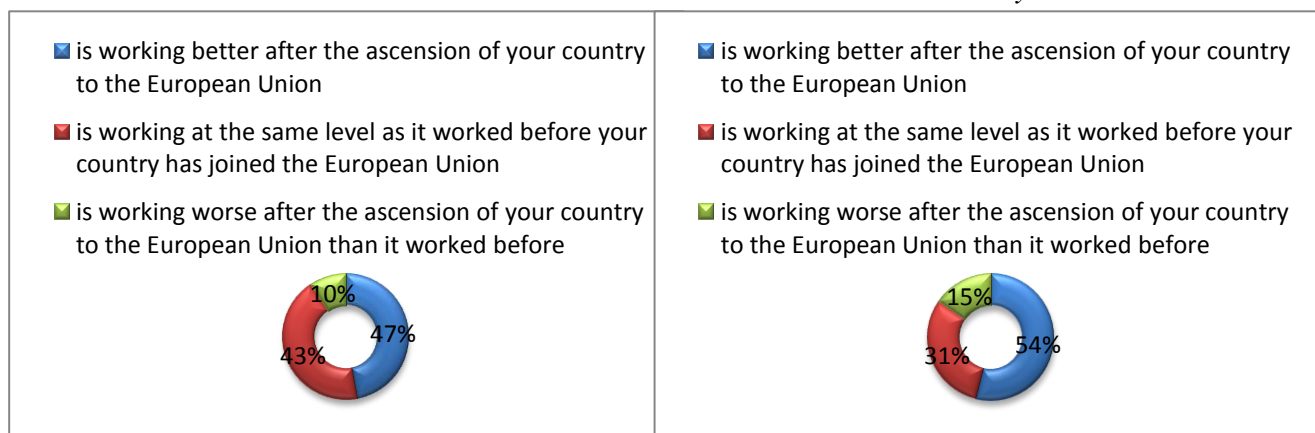
⁵²Source: www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/spital-din-timisoara-renovat-si-modern-echipat-cu-fonduri-europene-940475.html&q=&esrc=s&ei=d_uLUYCALZD54QS_tYGQBw&usg=AFQjCNEF5TIHdoZqGmmJYjWHD7K PQZAFoA;

⁵³Source: [http://www.finantare.ro/stire-13834-Reabilitare-de-17-milioane-de-euro-la-Spitalul-Judetean-Baia-Mare.html;](http://www.finantare.ro/stire-13834-Reabilitare-de-17-milioane-de-euro-la-Spitalul-Judetean-Baia-Mare.html)

Different Age Groups Answers

Under 45 Years

Above 45 years



Source of the Graphs: Author's calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

The largest proportion of the responders (49%) believed that the judicial system of Romania worked better after the country has joined the EU, whereas 39% believed it worked at the same level as it did before the EU accession and 12 % considered it has deteriorated since 2007. These results may be analysed from two different perspectives. The first one is the real progress over the last 6 years, and the other one is the expected progress over the last 6 years. Quoting official Reports of the EU Commission⁵⁴, Romania and Bulgaria were the first, and up until now, the only member countries on which the EU organisms applied a “cooperation and verification mechanism” in order to develop an effective judicial system so as the citizens of the two countries can benefit of full rights as EU residents. The reports issued by the EU commission⁵⁵ show indeed a real progress of the judicial system of Romania⁵⁶ (corruption levels decreased during 2007-2013, the judicial reform will end this year by issuing a new revised constitution and the organised crime is nowadays, basically inexistent). However, the expected progress is far from being accomplished. If one recalls *Table 2*, the small absorption rate of the EU structural funds, was massively caused by these high corruption levels - fraud concerns regarding the public procurements and spending. (Pawlak, Reuters, 2013) Yet again, the fact that the EU-Schengen Area remains an open objective for the country, despite a complete fulfilling of the requirements, 6 years after the accession, creates for many Romanians the impression of being treated as “EU Second Hand citizens”.

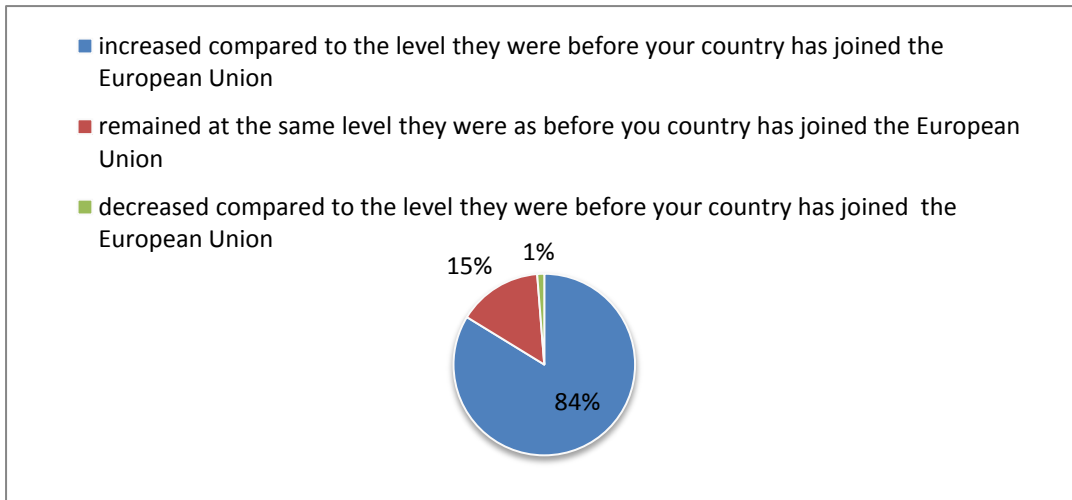
⁵⁴ Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/cvm/>;

⁵⁵ Source: http://ec.europa.eu/cvm/docs/com_2013_47_en.pdf;

⁵⁶ Over 26 million euro have been invested in Romania through different programmes regarding the reform of the judicial system from 2007-2013 (available at: <http://incomemagazine.ro/articles/peste-110-mil-euro-pretul-reformei-din-justitie-1-1>);

Question Number 4: Do you consider that the prices of daily basis goods, after your country has joined the EU?

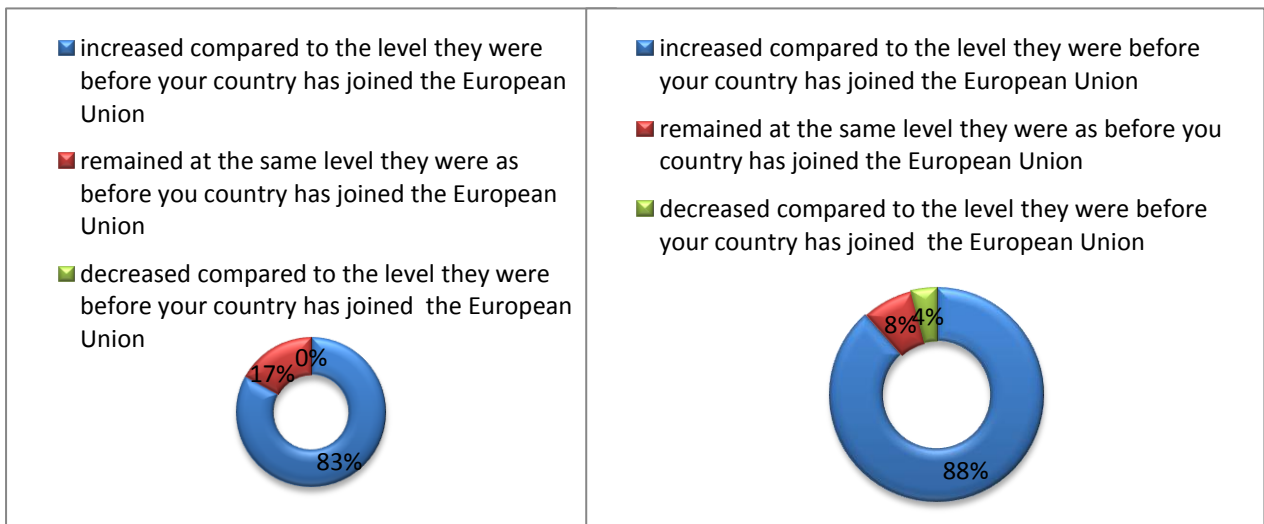
Graph 10: “Prices of daily-basis goods evolution”



Different Age Groups Answers

Under 45 Years

Above 45 Years



Source of the Graphs: Author’s calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

The highest number of the responders (84%) appreciated that the prices of daily basis goods increased after Romania has joined the European Union. The fact that the prices of daily basis goods increased during the last 6 years in Romania, represents a reality. However, it is dangerous to associate the EU accession with this increase. First, the inflation rate (see Appendix 7) has been extremely volatile during the last 6 years period which generally determines a volatility of the goods and services prices. Secondly, the VAT increased during 2009-2010 from 19% to 24%⁵⁷ for goods and services. By the other hand, according to Diagram 2 (Chapter 2), the incomes of the Romanians grew as well during the last years, reaching, as of 2013, a level of 52% of the EU-27 average. Unfortunately though, Romanians spend the highest amount of their incomes on food from all EU countries as of

⁵⁷According to: <http://www.romanalibera.ro/bani-afaceri/finante/guvernul-a-majorat-tva-la-24-urmeaza-valuri-de-scupiri-191649.html>;

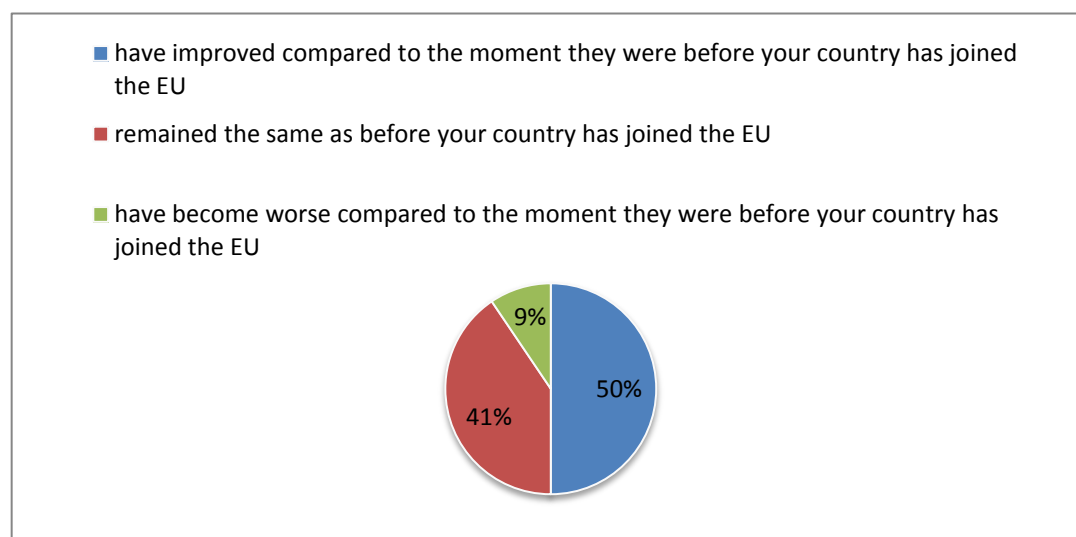
2011⁵⁸ (29.4%, compared to 21.4 % in Lithuania or 12.4% in Sweden). This could be a signal not only of a generally poorer society but of a society where prices of basic goods and services are being bent when reported to the incomes of the population. (Marginean, 2002) If one recalls Blackorby & Russell Theory (Chapter 1) that states that between the costs of living and the standards of living there is a direct relationship, than the results of the survey show this theory cannot be applied on the Romanian pattern. The costs of living in Romania are comparable with the ones from other EU-15 countries, whereas the standards of living of the Romanian population remain quite low. The author considers that Pope (1993) theory could be more explanatory for the Romanian case. The theory states that between standards of living and GDP per capita there is a direct relationship. Considering that the GDP per capita in Romania is significantly lower than the EU average, so are the standards of living.

The fact that individuals “above 45 years” answered in a higher proportion (88%), that the prices of the daily goods increased after the country’s accession may be a sign of the deprived situation in which the pension system of Romania finds itself. For example, the mean, monthly pension is 170 euro in Romania, whereas in Slovakia is 260 euro. Taking into account that Romanians spend 29.7% of their monthly income on food compared to 17.7% in Slovakia (Appendix 9), then the situation becomes more severe.

Human Resources Development

Question Number 5: After your country has joined the European Union, do you consider that the working conditions at your workplace?

Graph 11: “Working conditions evolution”

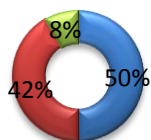


⁵⁸ Source: <http://businessday.ro/03/2013/raportat-venituri-avem-cele-scumpe-alimente-uniunea-europeana/>;

Different Age-groups Answers

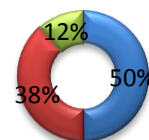
Under 45 Years

- have improved compared to the moment they were before your country has joined the EU
- remained the same as before your country has joined the EU
- have become worse compared to the moment they were before your country has joined the EU



Above 45 Years

- have improved compared to the moment they were before your country has joined the EU
- remained the same as before your country has joined the EU
- have become worse compared to the moment they were before your country has joined the EU



Source of the Graphs: Author's calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

The European Foundation for Improving the life and working conditions (see the Previous Research for results of their surveys) represents the main actor towards the improvement of the working conditions in all member states. Also, recalling Ely (1996) theory that states that a stabilised level of the standards of living is a certain guarantee for a long-run supply of labour, the author considered this parameter of being extremely important to be tested. According to the responders' answers, 50% of them consider that the working conditions have improved since Romania joined the EU, 41 % considered they remained the same and only 9% believe the working conditions became worse since the EU accession. The results confirm the EU and European Social Fund allocation strategy regarding the Human Resources development (Diagram 11 below and Table 5), that in the case of Romania over 4 billion euro during the 2007-2013 financial framework have been allocated. As of 2012, Romania has fulfilled all the EU Labour Law Framework requirements, thus in all working environments of the country there should nowadays exist the minimum working facilities as requested by the EU legislation. However, the health and security at work remain one of the stringent problems of the Romanian labour market. According to the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work, the number of work accidents/ 1000 persons remains at the highest rate in Romania, from all EU countries, as of 2012. By the other hand, through the EU Strategy "2007-2012 -25% cut in accidents at work" important funds have been allocated to Romania's small and medium size enterprises (Diagram 11- Administrative Capacity Development values) with the precise scope of significantly reducing the number of severe and fatal work accidents.

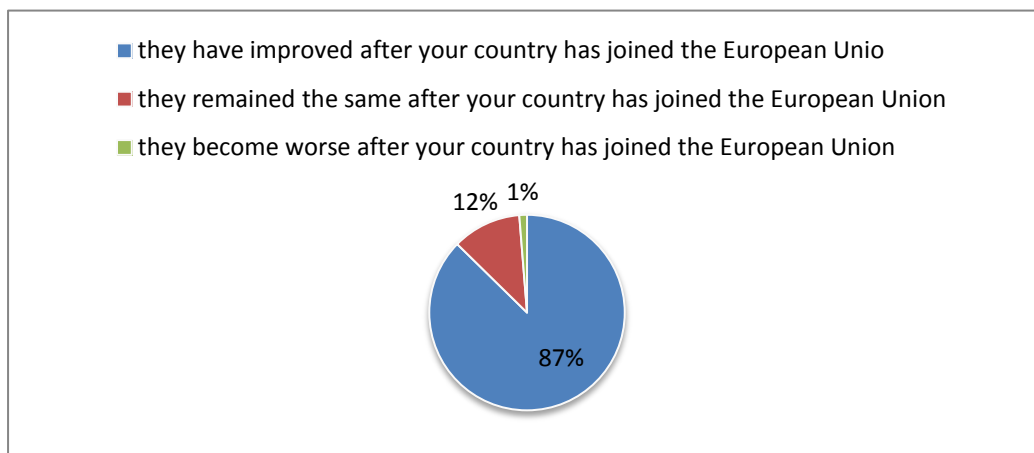
Diagram 10: “Financial Plan for the European Social Fund in Romania during 2007-2013”



Source of the diagram: *The European Social Fund in Romania 2007-2013, Romania;*

Question Number 6: Regarding the studying conditions (access to information, international opportunities, better studying facilities), do you consider that?

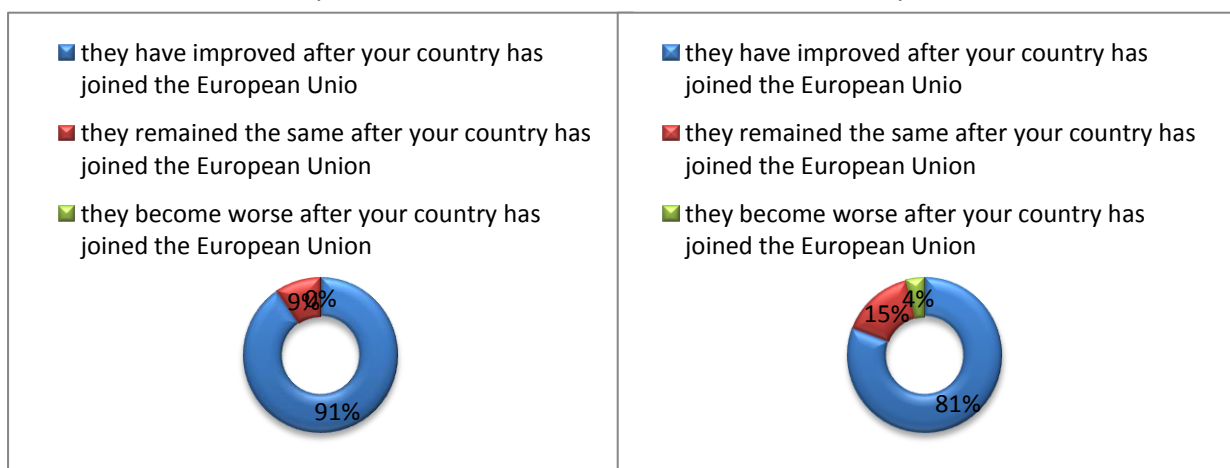
Graph 12: “Studying conditions evolution”



Different Age Groups Answers

Under 45 years

Above 45 years



Source of the Graphs: Author's calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

Recalling Diagram 11, and comparing it with the results from Graph 12, one can assume that the “Human Resources Development” funds worked efficiently in Romania during the 2007-2013 period. Consequently, a huge majority of the responders (87%) stated that the studying conditions have improved after their country has joined the EU, 12% stated they have remained at the same level they were before and just 1% believed the studying environment became worse after joining the EU. Recalling Ventegodt, Merrick and Andersen Theory, the development of one individual resources and professional capacities can generate a better existential and objective quality of life for that individual. There is real evidence to confirm the belief of the responders with the projects realised in Romania during these last 6 years. The ERASMUS programme for instance, that offers the chance of studying abroad for the Romanian students, spread during the last 6 years in almost all Romanian Universities⁵⁹. Over 400 schools and high-schools have been renovated with massive financial participation from the EU –REGIO funds (as an example, during the first three months of 2011, 5 rural schools serving 4000 pupils from Romanian Region 7 have been completely renovated with 97% EU funding⁶⁰). It was estimated that as of 2010, there were 35 million euro invested⁶¹ (EU Funds), solely in the renovation of classrooms all across Romania. Nevertheless, the POSDRU Funds (Human Resources Development- better integration on the labour force- development of the knowledge based society) attracted many participants: students, teachers, trainers from different backgrounds in a wish of developing more the concept of life-long learning.

Question Number 7: Do you consider that after your country has joined the European Union?

Graph 13: “Social actions involving the retired people”



⁵⁹Erasmus project has been implemented as of 2013 by 36 Universities of Romania;

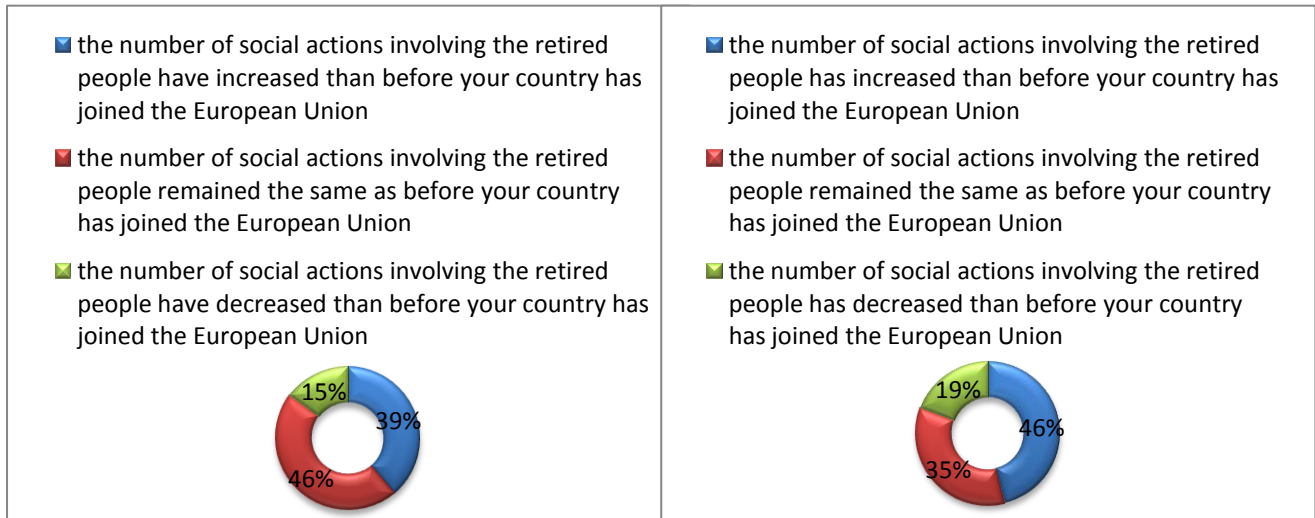
⁶⁰Source: <http://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/detaliu.aspx?t=Stiri&eID=8828>;

⁶¹Source:<http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/social/se-obtin-fonduri-europene-pentru-reabilitarea-scolilor-din-romania.html>;

Different Age Groups Answers

Under 45 Years

Above 45 Years



Source of the Graphs: Author's calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

The European Commission promotes a wide variety of projects all across the EU member states to support the retired people and generate a continuous contribution of them to the society they live in, after their retirement. Therefore, the year of 2012 has been declared the “European Year for Active Aging- solidarity between generations”⁶². Many social actions are being developed from the beginning of 2012 all across Romania (some small examples, for May 2013: “The Traditional Village for a Future Life”- addressed to both young and over 50 years old citizens who are unemployed or at risk of poverty, “CreActiv”- aims to enhance cooperation between generations or “Working through Intergenerational Senior Empowerment”- enables seniors to play an active role in their community⁶³). However, as in the case of Health System development, the responders seem to appreciate in the highest number (43%) that the number of social actions remained at the same level they were 6 years ago. Very close though, 42% of the sample appreciates that the initiatives including the retired people increased indeed since 2007 and just 15% consider that the number of these actions decreased during the last 6 years. Individuals aged above 45 years considered however, in their largest proportion (46%), that the actions involving the retired people have increased since Romania joined the EU. An explanation for these opposing realities could be the fact that most of these actions are developed in the big cities, so the access may be difficult and could stand as an obstacle in taking more advantage of them. By the other hand, the communication between the organisers and the target group still remains an alarming problem in Romania since most of the actions are not advertised and promoted accordingly.

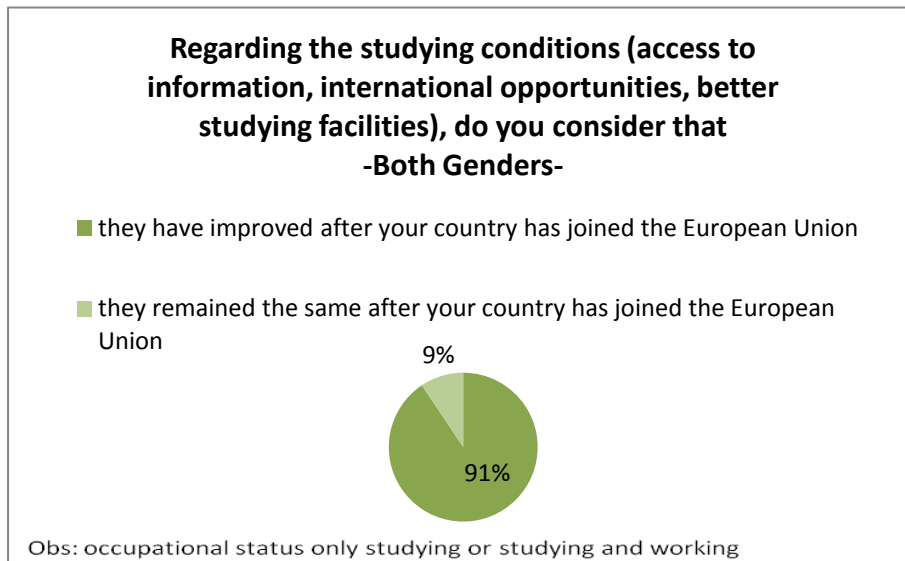
⁶²Source: <http://europa.eu/ey2012/ey2012.jsp?langId=en>;

⁶³ More about these projects can be found at:

<http://europa.eu/ey2012/ey2012main.jsp?catId=972&langId=en&countryId=37>;

Specific Analysis of the responders' answers:

Graph 14: "Studying conditions evolution- focused group results"



Source of the Graph: Author's calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

When analysing only the answers of the responders that were "just studying" or "working and studying" at the time of collecting the data, one can observe that the percentage of them stating that the studying conditions have improved after the country has joined the EU is higher with 4% than the general sample answers (91% compared to 87%). This confirms again, that the structural funds allocated to the educational system proved to be, beside efficient, a driving forces for the new European modern teaching-model. The EU main purpose is that by the year of 2020, the EU Open Cooperation Mechanism (that functions as a know-how intelligence transfer between EU member states) will become the main instrument through which effective and innovative educational methods from one country could be applied in other member states. Romania already took important steps towards integrating its educational system in the European Educational model⁶⁴.

Graph 15: "Actions including the retired people- focused group results"



Source of the Graph: Author's calculations using the Questionnaire Survey collected data

⁶⁴ All higher education units of Romania function from 2006 onwards on the Bologna system;

The graph above confirms the deception trend regarding the actions including the retired people. However, the fact that the focus category these projects are addressed to, the retired people, in a proportion of 80% (compared to 15% the opinion of the whole sample), believe that the actions involving them decreased since the country has joined the EU, should put both the Romanian and the European deciding figures in a pro-acting and re-thinking strategy positioning.

4.5. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

After developing this survey, the author can draw some well-funded conclusions. The first one is that the EU offers many instruments and opportunities so as the new member states can effectively improve their living standards and quality of life. Unfortunately, Romania was unable during the first financial framework (2007-2013), to attract most of these funds and therefore the evolution of the general well-being was below the expected level. More importantly, the author considers that the communication mechanism between the institutional actors and the population lacked and continues to lack at a severe level all across the country. Memorising back, one can remember that many projects (ex: health prevention programs, social actions including the retired people) were badly promoted: no participants of the targeted groups, no mass advertising, in a word: a lack of serious implication from both sides. If one mentions a survey issued in 2013⁶⁵ in which 53% of the Romanians didn't know which were the EU institutions as well as the *CURS* survey of 2012, when only 30% of the responders acknowledged that the A2 and A1 motorways were 85% funded with EU money than the reality becomes even darker. However, the general support for the EU, as revealed from the questionnaire responders, still remains high in Romania. Also, figures of Table 5 (Contracting grants) are being confirmed by the responders: the highest contracted grants were the ones for Human Resources and Education Development; the responders considered in a huge proportion (over 85%) that the studying conditions have indeed improved after the country has joined the EU. Concluding, if there is a real wish for improving the quality of life and the well-being of the people, then a complete new strategy must be approached for the 2014-2020 financial framework when 35 billion euro⁶⁶ await to be smartly and effectively spent.

4.6. Limitations

The first limitation this survey suffers of is the size of the sample. If the sampling period would have been longer (3-6 months), a target of minimum 1000 responders could have been achieved, and consequently some more plausible results obtained. The survey lacks in an age-category realistic distribution, so additional individuals aged above 55 years would have made the survey more conform to reality. Also, for further surveys, a wider range of sub-indicators could be used, starting the analysis from the already obtained results. Nevertheless, rate-typed questions (questions that rate on a different scale the quality of certain services/ goods) would be needed for a deeper analysis of the situation in the country. Likewise, developing surveys in other FCC from the other 2 "clusters" (central European countries and the Baltic States) could result in very interesting comparative results with Romania.

⁶⁵ Source: <http://www.timpolis.ro/articol-euroscpticismul-la-cote-ridicate-in-romania-24474.html>;

⁶⁶Source:<http://www.infoong.ro/articole-ong/329-pentru-perioada-2014-2020-romania-urmarete-s-obin-alocri-de-fonduri-europene-de-35-miliarde-euro>;

5. Conclusions and contributions

Concluding, the research project aim has been accomplished. We have showed during the Research Project, that indeed, joining the EU does appear to improve the quality of life and the standards of living for the citizens of a specific country. Beginning with the 3 lane motorway and ending with the fact that today the EU citizens don't need any longer a residence permit for living and working in most EU countries, all ultimately generate an improved everyday life. We showed as well during the whole project the means through which the ultimate scope of every modern nation- the welfare of its citizens- can be achieved via the EU instruments, funds, projects and plans.

When coming back to the Research Questions, one can observe that all three of them found an answer during the Research Project. The first one: “does the EU membership status improve the quality of life of the citizens of a country?” has already been answered above.

The second one: “whether the EU funds work properly in reducing the discrepancies between EU countries”, needs an extended discussion. Many analysts, among them Bingley (2013), state: “The EU bureaucracy is big and discouraging; accessing EU Structural Funds is merely impossible; these funds are only money on paper”. First, it is crucial to acknowledge that these funds are money coming from the EU budget; very important to mention that the EU budget is composed $\frac{3}{4}$ from contributions of the member states. The author believes that an enlarged and complex EU auditing methodology regarding the approval and financing of the structural programmes is not just required, but mandatory. Secondly, there is proof that some countries absorbed a higher percentage of the structural funds than others. With this irrefutable evidence, one can state that the problem might transfer from the supra-national (EU) to the national (every nation) ground. In the end, it is every country's decision the way it implements the institutional design of absorbing the EU Funds. Also, the fact that in countries like Poland or Lithuania, important projects have been implemented and nowadays do improve the lives of millions, represent vivid evidence of the fact that the EU Allocation mechanism is working – yet, better for some member states and worse for some others.

The third research question, “How has Romania managed its EU membership status in the perspective of improving the lives of its citizens?” has also been answered. The author based his analysis on a survey that has been run in Romania and compared the results obtained with the official data from the EU Reports. As previously known, the survey and the data collection proved the initial hypothesis, that Romania remains one of the worst performers when it comes to absorbing the EU Funds – 7% out of the total allocations. By the other hand, in real terms this means around 2 billion Euros, moneys that seem to not have changed much the lives of the responders. The author observed that the main problems in Romania when it comes to benefiting at a larger extent from these structural funds are: the high corruption levels – that block for undetermined periods the projects proposed for being granted funding, the stuffy bureaucracy and paper work as well as the lack of communication between the authorities, the beneficiaries and the population. Nevertheless, based on the answers of the responders, the general opinion about the EU continues to be highly appreciated in Romania, in line with figures of Poland for instance and divergent with figures from the Czech Republic. (Eurobarometer 78)

The contributions of the project for future research are consistent: first, the literature lacks a comparative and classification analysis of the ten former communist

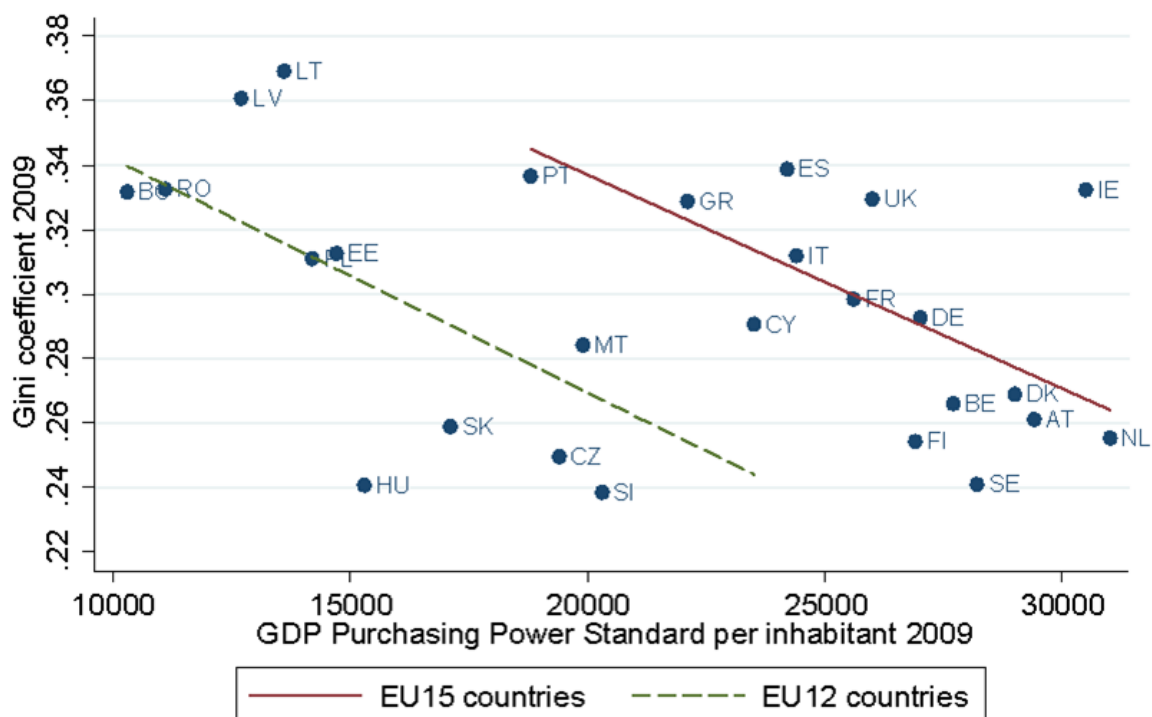
countries that have joined the EU in terms of their standards of living and quality of life evolutions. Secondly, the Survey results from the present research project may send an alarming signal and at the same time be a turning point from where a new strategy may be approached by the Romanian authorities for the “2014-2020 financial framework”, so that the mistakes done during the current exercise will not repeat in the future. Thirdly, the research project showed a different approach towards the standards of living and quality of life concepts. It developed the idea of, what the Centre for Public Scrutiny from Great Britain calls, “effective well-being”, because it focused both on the classic indicators of quality of life and standards of living (GDP, infant mortality rates etc) as well as on the new ones (global foot-print, overcrowding rates, participation of the population on the political arena). We also tried, on the base of this combination, to show their real impact on the lives of analysed populations.

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Appendix 1

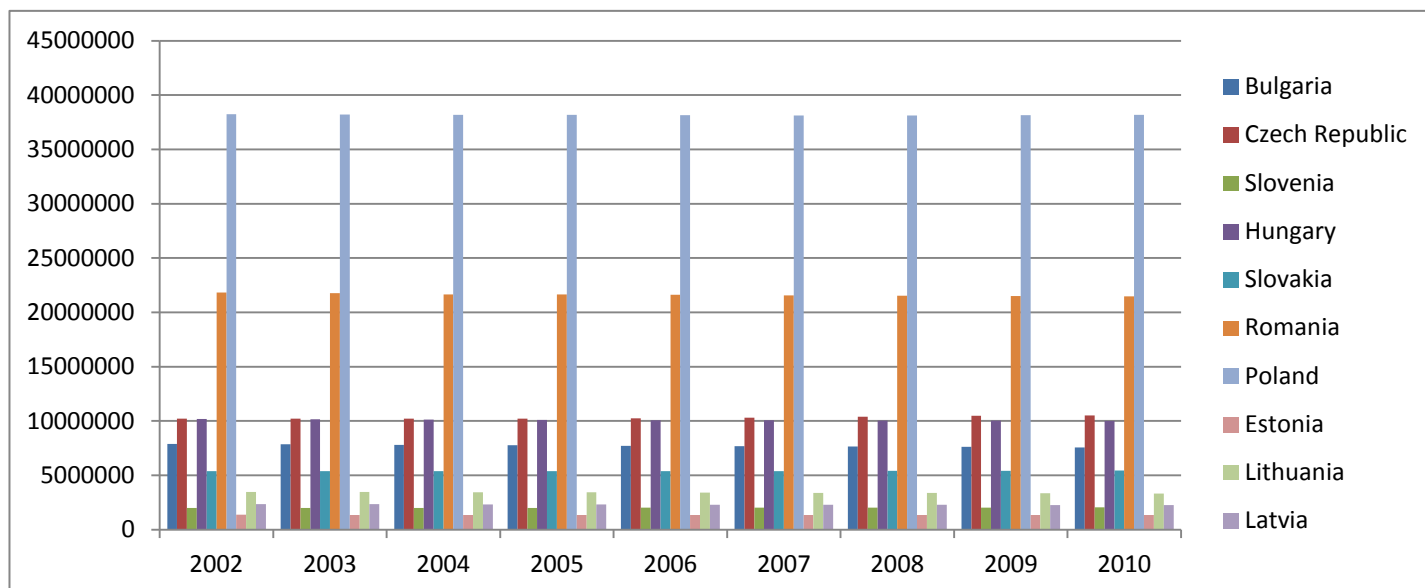


Luxembourg is omitted from the graph.

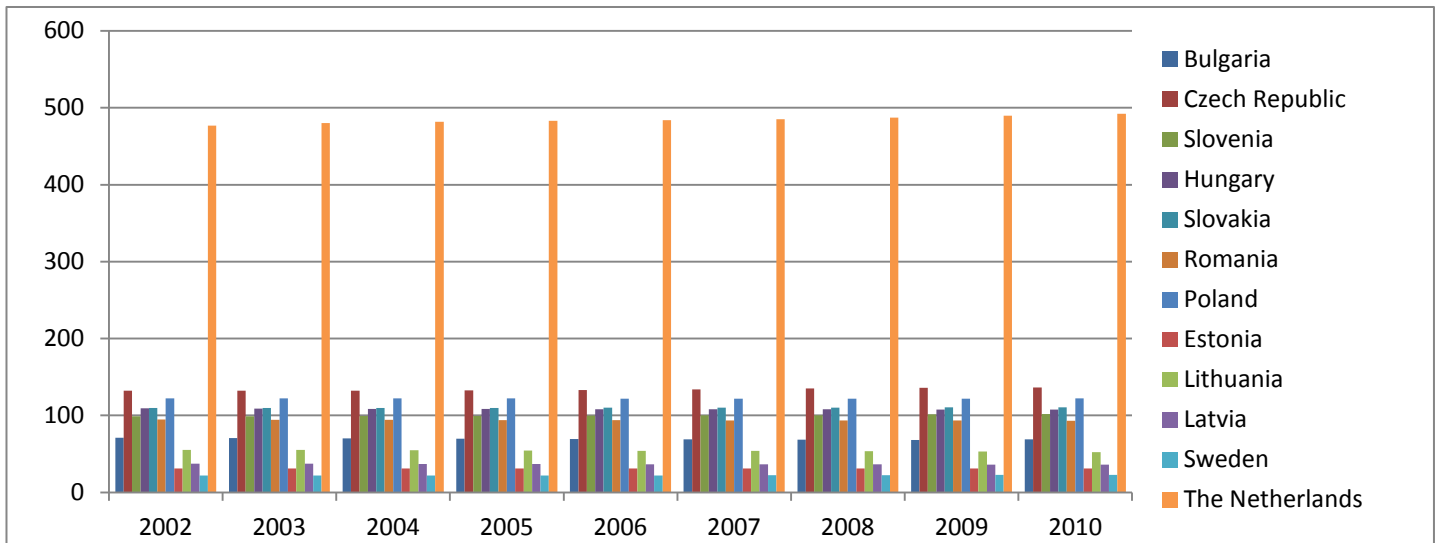
Source: European Commission, Eurostat, cross-sectional EU-SILC 2010 UDB August 2012
European Social Situation Observatory – Income distribution and living conditions

Graph available at: http://www.socialsituation.eu/monitoring-report/images/Ineq_4.png;

Appendix 2



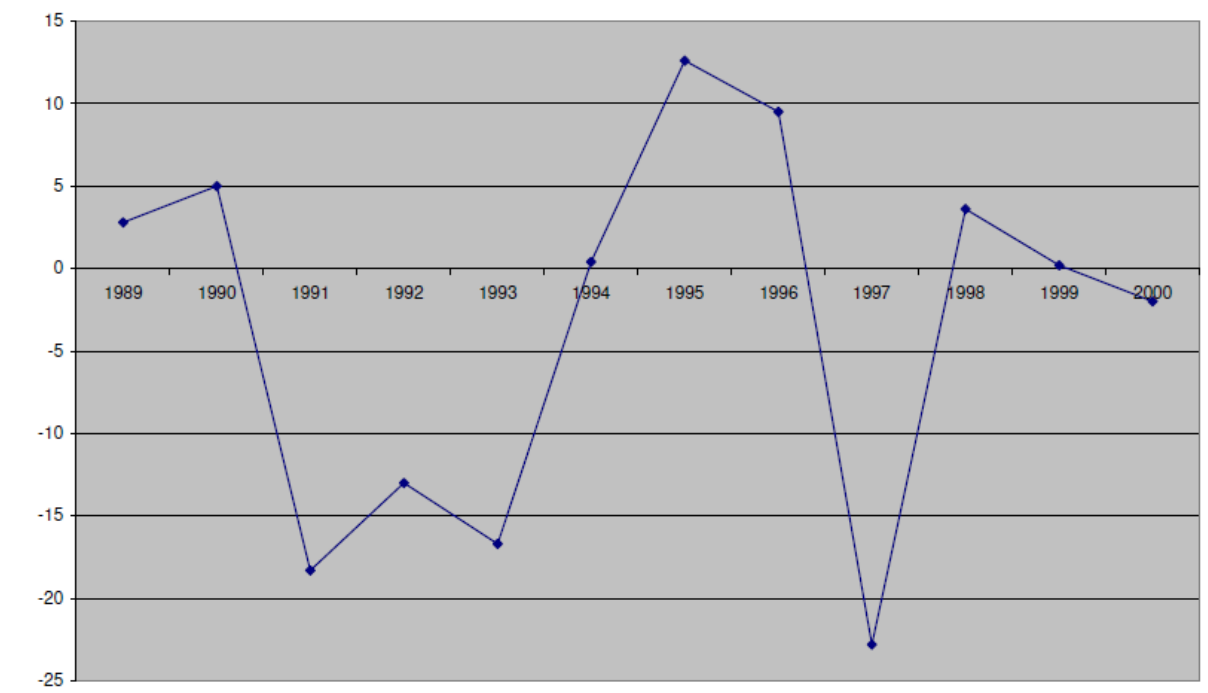
Appendix 3



Source of the Diagram: Author's calculations using data from Eurostat (2013)

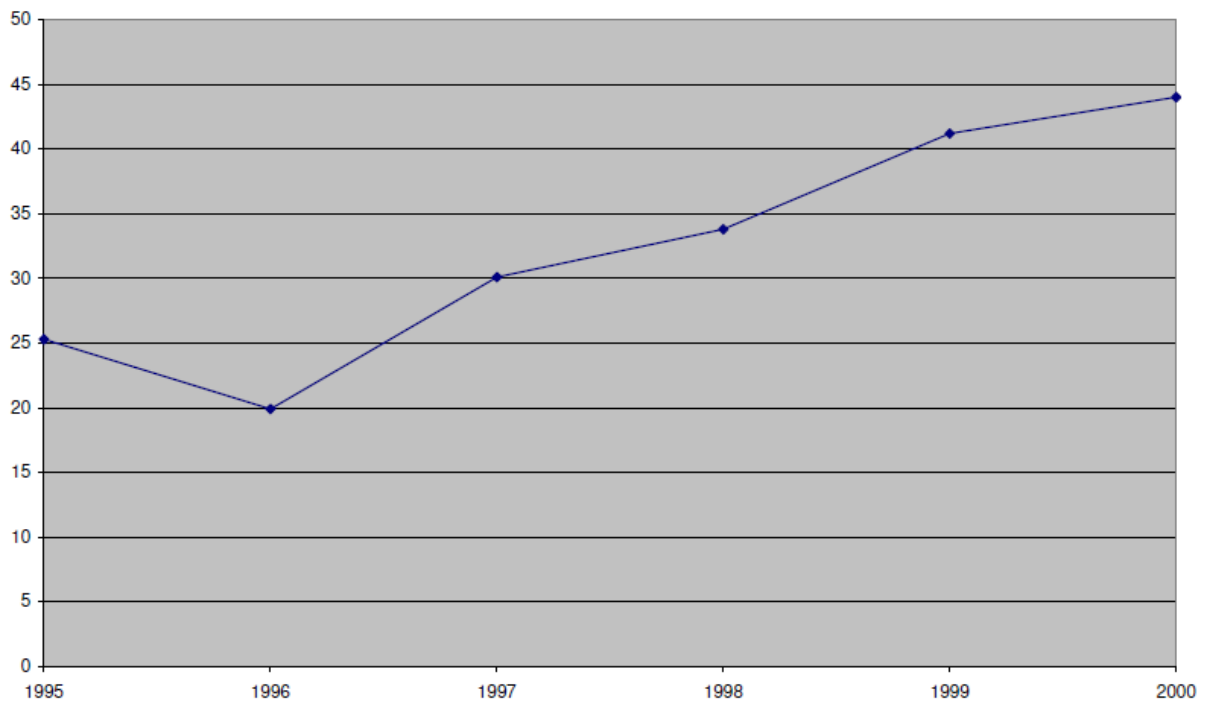
Appendix 4

Annual variation of net real average earning in Romania



Source: RIQL database

Poverty Rate in Romania



Source: Zamfir, C.(coord.), 2001

Appendix 5

Questionnaire regarding “The effects of joining the European Union on the Standards of living and quality of life”

Overall instructions:

- You can only have ONE valid answer for each question
- Please underline your answer choice for every question
- Please answer all of the questions to the best of your ability

1. Sex :

- a) Male; b) Female ;

2. Your age is in the following age category:

- a) 18-25 years;
b) 25-35 years;
c) 35-45 years;
d) 45-55 years;
e) 55-65 years;
f) above 65 years;

3. The last educational level reached and successfully completed:

- a) Primary School;
b) Secondary School;
c) High-school;
d) College/University;
e) Master Degree;
f) PhD or above;

4. Do you live in a:

- a) Rural Area;
b) Urban Area;

5. At the moment of completing this questionnaire you are:

- a) Only studying b) Studying and Working c) Only Working d) Retired

6. Do you consider that the ascension of your country to the European Union has generated:

- a) a positive economic effect on the whole society of your country;
b) the ascension did not generate any economic effect on the society of your country;

c) the ascension has generated a negative economic effect on the society of your country;

7. Do you consider that the health system of your country:

a) has improved after the ascension of your country to the European Union;

b) has remained the same after the ascension of your country to the European Union;

c) has deteriorated after the ascension of your country to the European Union;

8. Do you consider that the rule of law and the juridical system of your country:

a) is working better after the ascension of your country to the European Union;

b) is working at the same level as it worked before your country has joined the European Union;

c) is working worse after the ascension of your country to the European Union than it worked before;

9. Do you consider that the prices of daily basis goods, after your country has joined the EU, have:

a) increased compared to the level they were before your country has joined the European Union;

b) remained at the same level they were as before you country has joined the European Union;

c) decreased compared to the level they were before your country has joined the European Union;

10. After your country has joined the European Union, do you consider that the working conditions at your workplace:

a) have improved compared to the moment they were before your country has joined the EU;

b) remained the same as before your country has joined the EU;

c) have become worse than before your country has joined the EU;

11. Regarding the studying conditions (access to information, international opportunities, better studying facilities), do you consider that:

a) they have improved after your country has joined the European Union;

b) they remained the same after your country has joined the European Union;

c) they become worse after your country has joined the European Union;

12. Do you consider that after your country has joined the European Union:

- a) the number of social actions involving the retired people has increased than before your country has joined the European Union;
- b) the number of social actions involving the retired people remained the same as before your country has joined the European Union;
- c) the number of social actions involving the retired people has decreased than before your country has joined the European Union;

Note: The questionnaire is anonymous so please DO NOT sign it

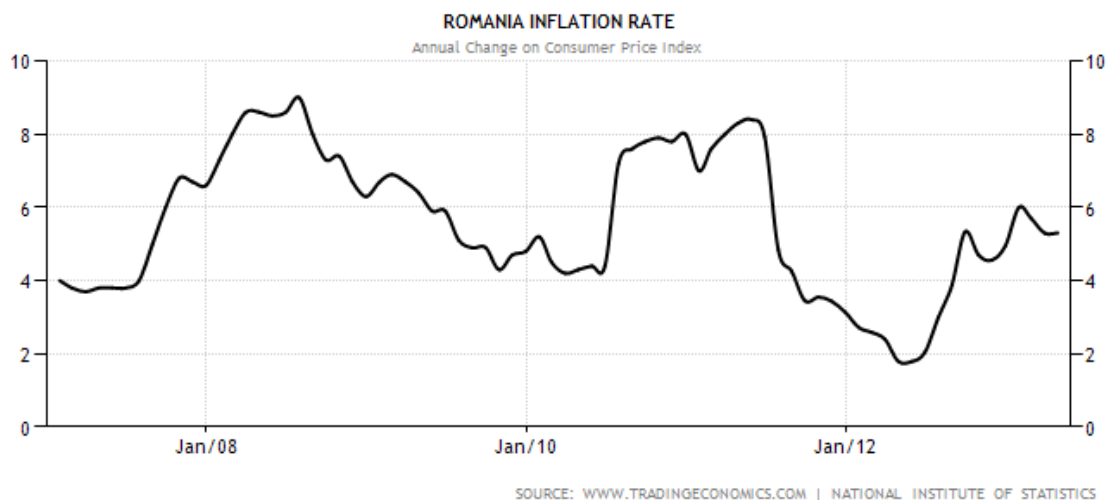
The results of the questionnaire are to be used for a research in writing a Master Thesis at Lund University

Appendix 6

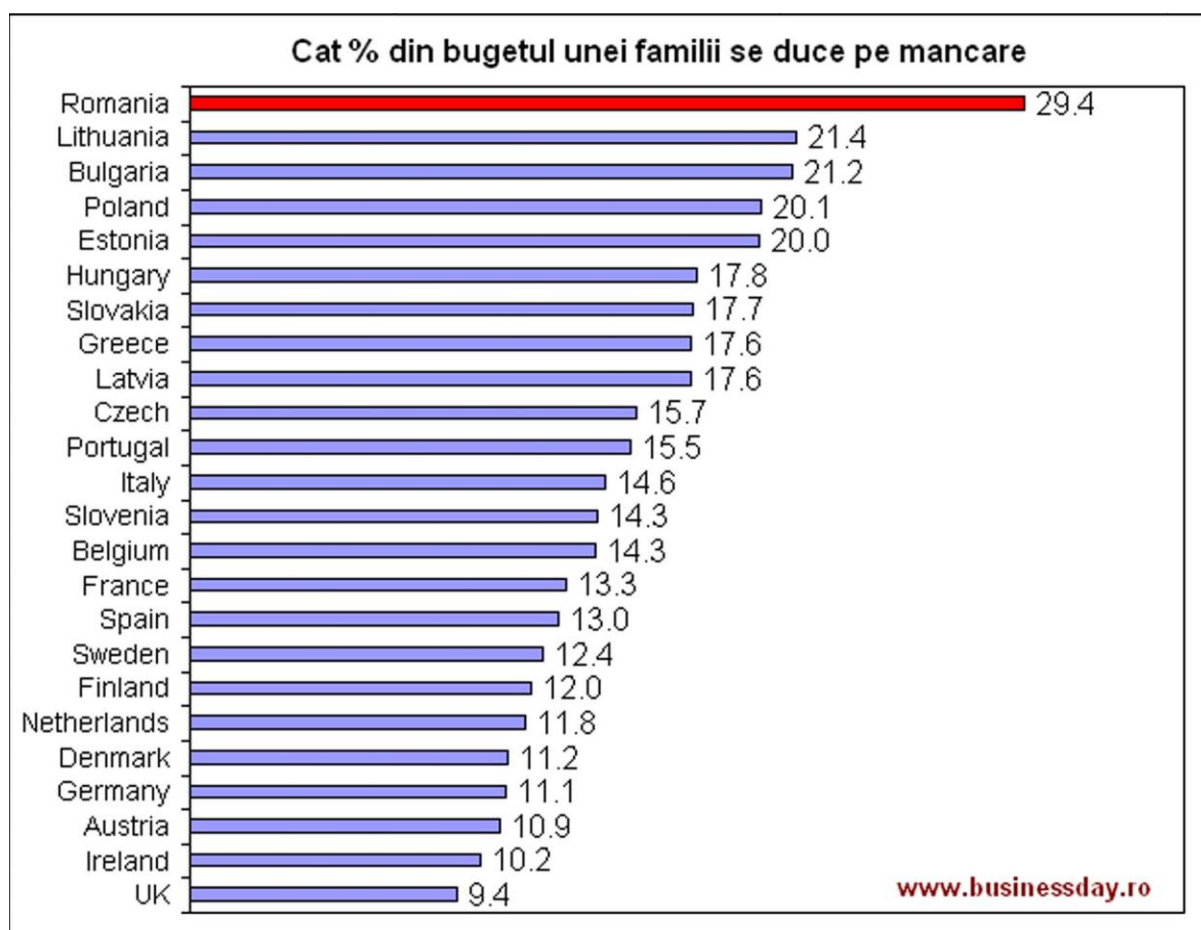
Regions of development in Romania



Appendix 7

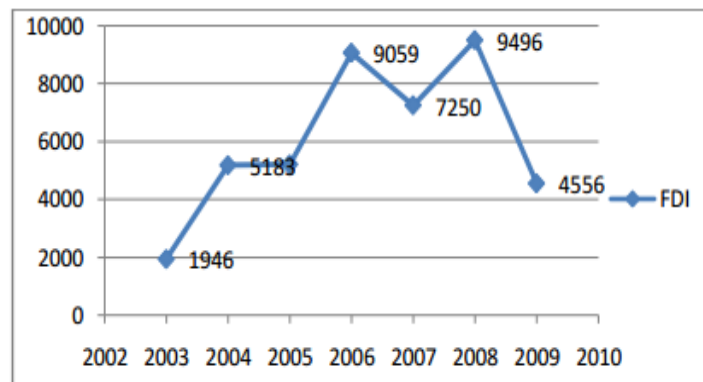


Appendix 8



Appendix 9

Value of FDIs attracted in Romania



Source: National Bank of Romania, The balance of payments 2009, processed data accessed on 13.12.2010 at <http://www.bnro.ro/page.aspx?prid=4617#peloc>