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## **UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IN ITALY**

### **A community study in two Romanian villages**

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**MigraCtion Programme 2004-2005**

**November 2005**

with the support of

<b>COMPAGNIA</b>
<b>d i S a n P a o l o</b>



## CONTENTS

INTRODUZIONE: RIPENSARE L'EMIGRAZIONE MINORILE	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
1. CHILDREN'S' MIGRATION WITHIN THE GENERAL MOBILITY FRAMEWORK	12
2. SHORT METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	14
3. MIGRATION CAUSALITY AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES	14
4. MINORS' MIGRATION STRATEGY	16
5. MINORS' MIGRATION RATIONALES	17
6. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION	20
7. PERCEIVED ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES IN THE ORIGIN COUNTRY AND LABOR OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD	21
8. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND LIFE STYLES	22
9. MINOR MIGRANTS AND JUVENILE CRIMINALITY	23
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25
APPENDIX	26



## INTRODUZIONE

### RIPENSARE L'EMIGRAZIONE MINORILE

*Flavia Piperno, CeSPI*

Un po' per sfida a se stesso e agli altri, un po' per noia o forse per curiosità, Gaetano (Massimo Troisi), nel famoso film "Ricomincio da tre" decide di trascorrere un periodo di tempo a Firenze, dove vive una zia che può ospitarlo. Il suo inconfondibile accento napoletano è però un indesiderato biglietto da visita che inesorabilmente – quasi suscitasse un riflesso condizionato – induce i suoi interlocutori a domandare: "Di dove sei?" e poi a commentare con l'aria di chi la sa lunga: "ah, lei è immigrato!". E' solo dopo aver tentato, più volte ma invano, di sfuggire allo stereotipo circa la sua identità che Gaetano, all'ennesima domanda sulla sua provenienza esplode: "sono napoletano ma non sono immigrato!"

#### *Identità e stereotipo*

E' proprio attorno alla critica ad uno stereotipo troppo radicato riguardo all'identità dei minori stranieri che ruota lo studio di Monica Alexandru che qui presentiamo. In questi anni siamo stati infatti abituati a concepire i minori non accompagnati principalmente come pedine passive di un progetto più grande di loro: troppo giovani e ingenui per percorrere con determinazione un preciso progetto migratorio; troppo deboli e isolati per non divenire facili vittime di reti di traffico che li sfruttano o per resistere alla tentazione di cadere in percorsi di devianza. L'idea di bambini più o meno smarriti sul nostro territorio, privi di una guida o di un punto di riferimento e costretti a lavorare come fossero adulti, non manca di suscitare sgomento e indignazione da parte dell'opinione pubblica e spinge le istituzioni – specialmente a livello locale - a mobilitarsi in favore della tutela sociale dei nostri giovani ospiti.

Eppure questa immagine dei minori non accompagnanti è parzialmente distante rispetto alla realtà che emerge dallo studio di campo condotto nelle città di romene di Bixad (Oas) e Barbatesti (Valcea). Innanzitutto i due ricercatori mettono in luce come, nella maggior parte dei casi, i minori che si muovono dalle due città non siano affatto "non accompagnati"; al contrario essi generalmente si spostano a seguito di genitori o parenti e, nel paese di arrivo, trovano l'appoggio di un network di familiari o concittadini spesso ben strutturato. Essi, inoltre, solo in un numero ridotto di casi sono vittime di traffico. Più spesso emigrano con un obiettivo preciso: quello di fare un po' di soldi per continuare gli studi, per rispondere alle necessità quotidiane, o per comprare beni di lusso che diventeranno simbolo di uno status sociale, ma anche strumento di affermazione e integrazione, nonché specchio dell'agognato passaggio all'età adulta.

Giovani migranti economici, dunque. Sotto molti aspetti simili ai loro padri e alle loro madri, di cui – all'estero – ripercorrono l'esperienza lavorativa. Simili a loro nel fare propria una cultura della mobilità, così profondamente diffusa in Romania anche prima della parziale apertura delle frontiere. Una cultura della mobilità circolare (a questo proposito Dana Diminescu parla di "installazione nella mobilità"), che ha portato tanti cittadini rumeni, di ogni età e sesso, ad alternare periodi brevi o lunghi tra il paese di origine e quello di destinazione, senza di fatto mai recidere il legame né con l'uno né con l'altro. Ma i giovani di Bixad sembrano, in fondo, simili anche a tanti giovani

dell'Europa occidentale - soprattutto del nord Europa – determinati a sfruttare il periodo delle vacanze scolastiche per ritagliarsi un periodo di lavoro e guadagno all'estero.

Naturalmente, il flusso migratorio minorile in uscita da Bixad e da Barbatesti ha anche caratteristiche specifiche. Più degli adulti, i giovani sembrano bisognosi di catene migratorie e reti di relazione solide per trasferirsi all'estero, e probabilmente questa è una delle regioni per cui il tasso di emigrazione minorile è molto più forte a Bixad - che ha una antica storia migratoria - piuttosto che in Valcea, dove l'emigrazione è assai più recente. Le analisi mettono tra l'altro in luce come i minori che partono non solo poggino su solide reti migratorie, ma generalmente tendano a viaggiare quando la situazione legale dei genitori all'estero si stabilizza. In Valcea, il fatto che il processo migratorio sia cominciato con un certo ritardo, fa sì che molti emigrati si trovino ancora in una condizione di irregolarità e questo scoraggia anche brevi ricongiungimenti da parte dei più giovani.

Un altro tratto che sembra contraddistinguere l'emigrazione dei minorenni rispetto a quella dei loro compatrioti adulti è la maggiore vulnerabilità rispetto a modelli consumistici. Tutti i ragazzi intervistati dichiarano infatti di aver utilizzato il denaro guadagnato all'estero per spese di consumo (salvo destinarne una parte, almeno in alcuni casi, alle spese scolastiche). Se da una parte impressionano i racconti di giovani che investono i propri guadagni in telefonini da 500 euro e delle file di macchine lussuose all'uscita dei pochi bar del paese, dall'altra sembra evidente che la rincorsa emulativa si inserisce nel difficile processo di acquisizione di potere e riconoscimento sociale tipico dell'adolescenza.

### ***Alcuni fattori preoccupanti***

Fin qua si potrebbe ritenere che l'emigrazione rappresenti per i giovani di Bixad un'importante tappa nel proprio processo di crescita. Tuttavia, nonostante questa apparente "normalità", la situazione si rivela sotto molti aspetti allarmante.

Uno dei fattori più inquietanti è senz'altro la percezione diffusa di una relazione di alternativa e contrapposizione tra percorso di studio e percorso migratorio. La scuola viene vista come una possibile chiave di accesso ad uno status sociale più elevato ma non trampolino di lancio per l'inserimento professionale o per l'acquisizione di un'indipendenza economica. In un contesto povero, privo di prospettive lavorative, e con un settore agricolo orientato unicamente all'auto-sussistenza – e dunque lasciato al lavoro degli anziani e dei migranti interni – il successo finanziario – facilmente equiparato al successo *tout court* – è unicamente associato all'emigrazione (un'emigrazione che crea dipendenza ma, apparentemente, non crea sviluppo)<sup>1</sup>. Per questa ragione, diversi insegnanti notano come l'emigrazione (un'emigrazione povera, diretta a settori di lavoro scarsamente qualificati), stia creando tra i giovani una forte demotivazione rispetto al proprio percorso formativo. E in effetti, se le figlie vedono le proprie madri impiegate nel settore domestico dei paesi occidentali dopo anni di studio che si rivelano inutili, perché dovrebbero ripercorrere lo stesso errore?

Un secondo elemento preoccupante è il fatto che i giovani intervistati a Bixad spesso riproducono l'esperienza migratoria dei genitori. Nei mesi all'estero svolgono generalmente il lavoro dei familiari: accompagnano i padri nei cantieri o nei campi, oppure assistono le madri nei lavori domestici. Per quanto pesante o scarsamente qualificato, il lavoro svolto non viene mai avvertito come umiliante né diviene oggetto di critica da parte dei coetanei al momento del ritorno. Se generalmente spetta ai figli, migranti di seconda generazione, rompere le gabbie etniche e la

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<sup>1</sup> E' del resto diffusa l'opinione secondo cui, a causa della dilagante corruzione di cui tuttora soffre la Romania, il denaro diventi una chiave importante non solo per usufruire di un più ampio paniere di merci, ma anche per accedere a posizioni di lavoro interessanti o a titoli di studio superiori.

segmentazione lavorativa di cui hanno sofferto i genitori, divenendo attori di un riscatto economico e sociale tanto nella terra di arrivo che di origine, questo non sembra essere il caso dei giovani di Bixad.

Quando si parla di migrazione bisogna naturalmente anche prestare attenzione alla situazione che sta a monte rispetto a tale processo. Analizzando i racconti di molti ragazzi intervistati a Bixad, notiamo che essi si trovano in una condizione di forte isolamento: è questo un terzo e ultimo elemento che suscita una profonda inquietudine. Se da una parte i giovani migranti si scoprono “accompagnati” nella loro esperienza migratoria, dall’altra essi appaiono, invece, “soli” nella loro terra di origine. La partenza di donne adulte, generalmente impossibilitate a portare i figli con sé, può infatti risolversi in una carenza di risorse affettive e di cura e in un allentamento di quei meccanismi di protezione sociale che ad esse vengono tradizionalmente affidati. In assenza di strutture pubbliche in grado di rimpiazzare la tradizionale cura familiare, l’impatto dell’emigrazione femminile – sebbene potenzialmente positivo dal punto di vista economico – può rivelarsi negativo dal punto di vista sociale. In Romania le donne che partono affidano generalmente i figli a nonni oppure ad altri parenti o amici. Tuttavia spesso questo non si rivela sufficiente: l’interrompersi di una continuità di cura aumenta il disagio dei minori che non possono più ricevere lo stesso controllo e contenimento emotivo/educativo di prima. Bambini e ragazzi rischiano conseguentemente di cadere in dinamiche di abbandono o marginalizzazione sociale che spesso si traducono in una minore resa scolastica (anche a causa del maggiore assenteismo) e, nei casi peggiori, in veri e propri percorsi di devianza.

### ***Che fare dunque?***

Nonostante siano ormai molte le evidenze che mostrano come la realtà trovata a Bixad rappresenti più la regola che l’eccezione, le politiche messe in atto dall’Italia e da molti altri paesi occidentali sembrano ritagliate su un’immagine superata del giovane migrante. Ci si ostina infatti a considerare i minori non accompagnati o come vittime bisognose di assistenza (in quanto prede di una rete di traffico che ne organizza il viaggio e la permanenza nel paese di arrivo) o come giovani devianti (o quanto meno inclini alla devianza) su cui occorre esercitare un maggiore controllo e, se possibile, pratiche di rimpatrio.

Si tratta di politiche tanto dispendiose – in termini di tempo e risorse finanziarie – quanto fallimentari. Lo dimostrano le difficoltà che le istituzioni locali incontrano nel trattenere in strutture di accoglienza i minori che vengono trovati sulle nostre strade, così come i numeri davvero esigui dei beneficiari di progetti di rimpatrio assistito (posto che i minori non sono categorie espellibili). I funzionari dei centri di accoglienza notano come i giovani che passano per le loro strutture (in particolare quelli rumeni) raramente vi si fermano in quanto sono interessati a conseguire un guadagno, il più alto possibile, e non trovano “conveniente” l’assistenza che le istituzioni italiane sono pronte ad offrire (inserimento in comunità ad hoc, formazione scolastica o alfabetizzazione, percorsi di apprendistato, che tuttavia risultano spesso mal pagati e precari, e non assicurano l’ottenimento di un permesso di soggiorno al compimento del diciottesimo anno di età). Anche tra gli operatori dei programmi di rimpatrio assistito si registra un certo disagio: i giovani difficilmente desiderano reinserirsi nella comunità di origine e sono spesso pronti a ripartire poco dopo il rimpatrio. Alcune istituzioni cominciano di conseguenza ad analizzare programmi che non prevedono il rimpatrio ma piuttosto percorsi di integrazione e regolarizzazione sul territorio italiano<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Alcune interessanti analisi politiche sulla questione della migrazione minorile sono affrontate in: D.Melossi e M.Giovanetti, *I nuovi Sciuscià. Minori stranieri in Italia*, Donzelli Editore, Roma, 2002; ANCI, *Minori stranieri non accompagnati: un’indagine territoriale*, ANCI – Dipartimento Immigrazione e Politiche Sociali, Roma, 2004; *Save the*

Da questo studio si ricava la consapevolezza che politiche tese a gestire il flusso migratorio dei più giovani dovrebbero partire dall'assunto che i minori stranieri sono spesso attori consapevoli del proprio progetto migratorio (sebbene, naturalmente, il problema del traffico non vada sottovalutato) e hanno esigenze specifiche con cui occorre porsi in relazione. E' inoltre fondamentale riconoscere che per i giovani migranti la mobilità non costituisce un "problema", ma piuttosto una risorsa (spesso una delle poche risorse che essi hanno); questa risorsa dovrebbe essere innanzitutto riconosciuta e successivamente valorizzata e incanalata verso percorsi di crescita e auto-realizzazione dei giovani protagonisti di questo processo.

Non è questa la sede per definire strategie alternative di gestione dei processi migratori dei minori, e non è questo l'obiettivo che lo studio di Monica Alexandru si propone. La ricerca tuttavia evidenzia alcuni nodi problematici su cui le politiche devono riflettere.

E' evidente che se i giovani migranti sono a tutti gli effetti migranti economici essi saranno sensibili rispetto a strategie di formazione-lavoro anche per periodi brevi (ad esempio durante l'estate, in corrispondenza con le vacanze scolastiche); esperienze di questo tipo potrebbero rivelarsi un'importante base per la creazione di un primo bagaglio professionale da spendere nel paese di origine, ma anche in visione di un futuro inserimento regolare nel mercato del lavoro del paese di destinazione.

Inoltre, gli stati occidentali dovrebbero in ogni modo evitare che i giovani si trovino costretti a scegliere tra un percorso migratorio ed un percorso formativo. Attraverso politiche specifiche è possibile che formazione e migrazione si intreccino e rafforzino a vicenda. Gemellaggi, scambi tra istituti scolastici, borse di studio, potrebbero ad esempio essere strumenti per favorire una mobilità sentita dai giovani come necessaria, indirizzandola al tempo stesso verso percorsi di qualificazione.

Le politiche rivolte ai giovani non dovrebbero limitarsi ad affrontare le tante problematiche connesse alla migrazione minorile. E' necessario anche riscoprirne le potenzialità. Dallo studio emerge che i giovani adottano un comportamento migratorio ispirato a un modello circolare piuttosto che vettoriale. Si tratta di un tipo di mobilità che può rivelarsi particolarmente incisiva per la creazione di reti socio-economiche tra Nord e Sud e per la circolazione di conoscenze e abilità - e più in generale di un capitale umano e sociale - tra le due sponde del processo migratorio (non a caso nell'ultima Comunicazione della Commissione Europea su "Migrazione e sviluppo: alcuni orientamenti concreti"<sup>3</sup>, un'intera sezione è dedicata alla migrazione circolare)<sup>4</sup>. Inoltre, mentre il ritorno produttivo dei migranti è stato oggetto di molta attenzione da parte di ricercatori e *policy makers*, il potenziale impatto sullo sviluppo locale derivante dagli investimenti portati avanti dai figli rimasti in patria (giovani e spesso istruiti), grazie alle rimesse dei genitori, non è stato tenuto nella dovuta considerazione. Alcune ricerche empiriche mostrano invece come i giovani, grazie al sostegno finanziario dei genitori in emigrazione, e all'esperienza accumulata durante i periodi di emigrazione, si rivelino a volte soggetti privilegiati per l'avvio di attività produttive. Politiche di valorizzazione del flusso migratorio minorile dovranno tenere in considerazione questi aspetti.

Infine è chiaro che è necessario agire anche a monte del processo migratorio. Lo studio mette in evidenza come molti giovani sperimentino una situazione di forte disagio: le possibilità di realizzazione economica e personale nella terra di origine appaiono così scarse che l'uso più logico

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Children, *raccolta di giurisprudenza in materia di rilancio del permesso di soggiorno a minori non accompagnati al compimento della maggiore età*, giugno 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Commission of the European Communities, Migration and Development: Some concrete orientations, [COM (2005) 390 final, 1 September 2005]

<sup>4</sup> A questo proposito si veda anche: P. Weil, *A Flexible Framework for a Plural Europe*, background paper preparato per la Presidenza britannica dell'Unione europea, disponibile alla pagina *web* <http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/Weil-final.pdf>.

delle rimesse sembra indirizzarsi alle spese di consumo. Alle scarse opportunità di lavoro si aggiunge il problema del vuoto affettivo lasciato dall'emigrazione femminile. Di fronte a questo stato di cose è necessario porsi alcune domande: E' possibile creare maggiori e migliori opportunità di lavoro in loco per i ragazzi (ad esempio, favorendo la formazione, promovendo la creazione di imprese o di cooperative o eventualmente appoggiando i progetti di ritorno produttivo dei genitori dei ragazzi)? E' possibile creare meccanismi di *welfare* innovativi che rispondano ai nuovi bisogni sollevati dall'emigrazione femminile? Ed è possibile in questo contesto sfruttare l'esperienza e la formazione delle stesse donne che all'estero prestano servizi di *welfare*?

Tra poco tempo la Romania entrerà nell'Unione Europea. Sebbene la piena libertà di circolazione non verrà immediatamente concessa, diverrà praticamente impossibile espellere i cittadini in posizione irregolare. Si pone dunque con urgenza la necessità di definire delle politiche che sappiano promuovere l'integrazione dei migranti sul nostro territorio, nonché pratiche virtuose di promozione della circolazione e del ritorno. Se le politiche rimarranno sorde alle reali esigenze di cui i migranti si fanno portatori, diverrà assai difficile percorrere questa strada.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study was conducted in September- October 2005 and aimed at assessing minors' migration patterns in Bixad a commune located in Oas region, in the north-western part of Romania. The locality was chosen due to a significant number of unaccompanied minors identified in France and Italy, originating in Oas. For comparative purposes a similar study was conducted in Barbatesti, a commune located in Valcea county with a high incidence of migration towards Italy. Data were collected based on face to face interviews and aimed at assessing the incidence of minors' migration in Bixad community, to identify the gravitational model of their movement and to appraise their migration strategy. We were particularly interested in revealing whether minors are accompanied by their parents during their migration project or they leave to Italy alone. If in Bixad minors' migration abroad for study, work or tourism was already a habitual practice, in Barbatesti, Valcea this was rather the exception. As a consequence our primary objective in Valcea was to understand the causes generating this different pattern. Children's migration has previously been studied in the context of trafficking in human beings due to the high vulnerability of this category to sexual or labor exploitation. The conclusions of the present study revealed another representative pattern of minors' migration: voluntary economic migration. Since the issue of minors' consent is relative we made a clear distinction between what we considered voluntary work and what fits within the bounds of trafficking in children. In this paper we considered voluntary work involving minors any job different from trafficking in human beings as defined by the UN Protocol Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. As long as there is no interference into the exercise of minors' rights, their mobility strategy lays within the same category as economic migration.

In order to assess minor's migration patterns from Bixad the first question we need to answer is whether they are accompanied or not during their migration strategy. An assessment of minors' migration strategies indicates that in Bixad there are two predominant trends: minors leaving based on a statement of agreement authorizing a third person to accompany them until the destination in Italy where the parents are living or, minors leaving accompanied by their parents. This indicates that most children leaving from Bixad are not actually unaccompanied at the destination.

There are no important differences between minors' migration rationales and adults' motivations for migration. However, a distinctive push factor for minors working abroad is a strong sense of independence. The factors that enhance the probability of children's migration are: living in a community with high migration prevalence and a long migration history, access to a strong migration network, diffusion of a culture valuing migration as life strategy, a lower economic status as compared to peer groups and relative poverty.

In Valcea, minors are not significantly involved in migration flows. The main causes explaining this difference are: a shorter history of migration as compared to Bixad, less structured migration networks, a higher number of irregular migrants, risky migration strategies preventing parents from bringing their children with them, a lower number of minors with mediated migration experience, younger adult migrants, with small or no children.

An assessment of minors and parents perceptions regarding the importance of education evidenced that school is valued for strengthening one's social status but not for its role in enhancing one's financial position or for the acquisition of the capabilities that would later facilitate access to a satisfactory job. The causes for this distrust in school as a premise of success lay in the lack of labor opportunities on the local market and in the possibility of achieving a high economic status independent of the educational background if working abroad.

Both communities targeted in this study are facing an acute lack of job opportunities. Graduating from high school or going to university is not perceived as a premise for getting an attractive job.

Jobs performed by minors abroad do not differ from those performed by adult migrants. Boys usually work on building sites or in farms and girls do the housekeeping. However, girls' migration for labor is not as common as in the boys' case. At early ages, working abroad is a period of apprenticeship for boys. Children accompany parents at work where they acquire not only the abilities necessary for performing a certain job, but also the values and behaviors that will ensure the success of a future migration initiative on their own.

There are two different consumption patterns specific for minor migrants: sowing of their wealth by investing in expensive goods or spending the money on immediate necessities depending on the duration of the migration strategy and on the quantum of the salary abroad. Investing money in expensive goods such as exquisite clothes, gold chains, cars or motorcycles strengthens others perceptions about migration as a strategy of success. These visible goods are status symbols laying a barrier between non-migrants and migrants. For those who worked or lived abroad for a while, it is not only consumption patterns that change but also life styles.

There is a common view about France as a favored destination for minors committing illegal activities due to a perceived higher tolerance of the French authorities towards minors' criminality as compared to Italy where sanctions are harsh and address both minors and parents when possible. Illegal activities are mainly related to stealing money from parking places, stealing food products from supermarkets or begging. There are also reports about minors involved in prostitution or entrapped in trafficking in human beings networks.

## 1. CHILDREN'S' MIGRATION WITHIN THE GENERAL MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

In 1989, the fall of the communist regime in Romania has been associated with major changes of the political and economical system. The conjunction between the opening of the borders and the unstable economic environment has generated an inflow of economic migrants towards Western countries. However, the flow of migrants has been rather constant, the only significant increase coinciding with the lifting of the visa restrictions for Romanians traveling to the Schengen space in 2002.

The opening of the borders has not only favored economic migration but also meant the creation of a prolific pool for the recruitment of victims of trafficking in human beings. According to the last report issued by the United States Department in 2005, Romania is placed in Tier II, which means that the authorities involved in the management of trafficking in human beings did not meet the minimum standards in countering the phenomenon but are making significant efforts. The same report indicates that Romania is still an origin and transit country for trafficking in human beings.

Analyzing children's mobility as part of the international migration flows is strictly related to the above dimensions of migration. Before describing the particular situation of minors' migration to Italy in two distinct communities located in the north western and southern part of Romania it is useful to shortly enumerate some general conclusions regarding this phenomenon, as reflected by previous studies.

Children's migration has mostly been analyzed in the context of enhanced vulnerability to trafficking in human beings. The fall of the communist regime meant a massive process of dis-institutionalization. Although the closing down of the old mammoth centers for abandoned children, well-known for their association with child-abuse histories, went on successfully, many children are still living or working in the streets. In spite of the efforts made to support poor families, to promote contraception methods, and to offer counseling and shelter to young mothers, there are still many cases of child abandonment. Media reports also evidenced the low number of maternal assistants as compared to the number of children abandoned in hospitals<sup>5</sup>.

An international report shows that about 89% of the Romanian working children are working in agriculture, 8% are self-employed, 6% have a non-relative employer, and 60% are not paid for their work<sup>6</sup>. Most of the children working in agriculture reside in the rural area and work within the family. However some reports evidenced that in poor regions located in the rural area there are cases of children traded by their relatives generally for working in farms, often in improper conditions. Some of these children have been entrapped in trafficking networks. The percentage of Roma children exposed to child labor is higher than that of non-roma Romanian children. A study conducted by Save the Children indicates the fact that some specific Roma features also account for the highest percentage of working street children<sup>7</sup>. Even if child labor does not always coincide with trafficking in human beings – such as in the case of children working within the family in the rural area- one of the consequences of child labor is school dropout. On the medium and long term, this considerably contributes to the socio-economic isolation of this category<sup>8</sup>.

International debates focused on the Romanian adoption system. The Romanian Government suspended international adoptions as a consequence of the imperative request of some EU officials, concerned about its relation with trafficking in children or organs. There were also some reports

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<sup>5</sup> S. Lazaroiu, M. Alexandru, *Internal Trafficking in Romania*, IOM Bucharest, November 2004.

<sup>6</sup> C. Ghinararu, *Child Labour in Romania. Discussion Paper*, Bucharest, RoMEDIA Publishing House 2004.

<sup>7</sup> C. Ghinararu, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> S. Lazaroiu, M. Alexandru, 2004, op. cit.

about street children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation or abuse and about the incidence of sex tourism in Romania. Foreign tourists involved in sexual relations with street children have brought about the opportunity for shocking media subjects. Although such reports might overestimate the phenomenon they clearly indicate a tendency<sup>9</sup>.

These shortcomings in the programs targeting the inclusion of vulnerable groups might enhance the probability of their entrapment in a trafficking in human beings network. An assessment of young women vulnerability to trafficking in human beings indicated that victims are more likely to be recruited from the 15-25 age category with lower risk at the extreme ends of this age cohort<sup>10</sup>. According to the latest IOM statistics regarding victims of trafficking in human beings assisted by IOM Bucharest, between January 2000 and March 2005, 195 out of 955 victims were minors.

The issue of children's migration as economic migrants has not been explored before. Surely, the idea of volition in case of minor persons is relative. Due to this judicial and psycho-sociological consideration we should clearly make a distinction between what we will consider voluntary work in this paper and what fits within the bounds of trafficking in human beings. In this paper *we shall consider as voluntary work involving minors any job different from trafficking in human beings as defined by the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.*

According to the UN Protocol,

“trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments to achieve the consent of a person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum the exploitation of prostitution of others, or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”.

*To be more explicit about this difference we should note that voluntary work excludes*

“any activity involving the deliverance of a child or of a young person under the age of 18 by either or both of his natural parents or by his legal guardian to another person whether for reward or not, with a view of the exploitation of the child, or the young person or of his labor” (UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, art 1, letter d).

Let us consider an example relevant for the above distinction: a boy aged 16 accompanies his/her parents abroad during the holiday period. The father needs a hand at work and decides to take his son during the weekends on the building site. He negotiates with his employer a salary for his son. At his son's request, he also finds another job for him in a restaurant. Both work on the black market for more than 8 hours but get enough money to be able to save some. After 2 months the boy returns home, and continues school.

The above situation can at most be defined as child labor but it is obviously not a case of trafficking in human beings. In some regions with a high prevalence of migration it is a common life strategy. Although the parent intermediated the relation between his son and the future employer he did not deliver him into the custody of that person and the freedom of movement of the minor was not limited.

Children helping their parents in similar situation may be even younger. Also there are cases when youths under the age of 18 leave unaccompanied to find a job abroad. Usually they have relatives or friends who help them during their migration projects. As long as there is no interference into the exercise of their rights, their mobility strategy lays within the same category as economic migration.

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<sup>9</sup> S. Lazaroiu, M. Alexandru, 2004, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> S. Lazaroiu, M. Alexandru, Who IS the Next Victim? Vulnerability of Young Romanian Women to Trafficking in Human Beings, IOM Bucharest, August 2003.

## 2. SHORT METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In order to better understand minor's migration behavior we selected two regions with a high incidence of migration towards Italy. We dedicated much of the previous chapter to the distinction between trafficking in children and minor's labor migration. This paper will only target minors in the context of voluntary labor migration. During the research, there were also fragmentary reports about trafficking in children or about minors involved in begging or stealing. Even though these reports might indicate a tendency they should be interpreted carefully due to the limited timeframe of the research which did not allow the deepening of such a delicate subject.

The study was conducted in September- October 2005 and aimed at assessing minors' migration patterns in Bixad a commune located in Oas region. The locality was chosen due to a significant number of unaccompanied minors identified in France and Italy, originating in Oas. For comparative purposes a similar study has been conducted in Barbatesti, a commune located in Valcea county with a high incidence of migration towards Italy. During the field work, the researchers decided to also initiate an exploratory research in Tur, a commune affiliated to Negresti-Oas. Although research conducted in this location had only anexploratory extent,, it is worth mentioning its particularity as an origin county for economic migration towards Italy. Unlike Bixad, where migrants' destinations are very diverse, Italy is a favorite destination for migrants in Tur and Negresti Oas. Due to the homogeneity of Oas region as regards the culture of migration as a success strategy, the interviews conducted in Tur, although merely exploratory, have a significant methodological value for the present study. Therefore, some of the extracts included in the study were selected from the interviews conducted in Tur.

Data were collected based on face to face interviews targeting three groups: minors with direct or mediated migration experience in Italy<sup>11</sup>, adult migrants with children and local authorities. Due to the timeframe of the research most migrant adults and some of the minors were not at home. After the holiday in August many returned to Italy. Some of the interviews had to be redesigned to facilitate the assessment of migrations patterns from the perspective of relatives with mediated migration experience. This was mainly the case in Valcea. Other limitations referred to the presence of third persons during some of the interviews which might have distorted the sincerity and spontaneity of the answers and therefore the accuracy of the reports.

The specific objectives of the study were to assess the incidence of minors' migration in Bixad community, to identify the gravitational model contributing to their movement and to appraise their migration strategy. We were particularly interested in knowing *whether minors are accompanied by their parents during their migration project or they leave abroad alone*. If in Bixad minors' migration abroad for study, work or tourism was already a habitual practice, in Barbatesti, Valcea this was rather the exception. As a consequence our primary objective in Valcea was to understand the causes generating this different pattern.

## 3. MIGRATION CAUSALITY AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES

In order to understand the causality of migration in Bixad and Valcea we need to look back at the moment when people started to leave. Before the 1989 Revolution, commuting was a regular life

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<sup>11</sup> The age in brackets at the end of each extract selected from the interviews is the age of the children/youth at the moment of the interview; all interviewed youths were minors during their migration strategy.

strategy in Bixad. People worked in a wood factory located nearby. Many moved around the country to install high tension pillars, to harvest fruit and vegetables or to work in vineyards. Then, the factory went bankrupt and the old occupations gradually disappeared. The same thing happened in Valcea where most people worked in mines and on a chemical platform. Commuters had a higher living standard than other locals. Losing their jobs meant a sudden loss of financial resources and, as a consequence, a change of their life style. In this context, international migration offered commuters, the possibility to cope with the new economical situation.

“They would leave every morning to the mines in Berbesti. There were about 7 busses transporting hundreds of people. After the 1996, restructuration left many people working in mines or on the chemical platform without a job.

Up to the ‘90s, people with or without a job would leave to nearby counties such as Braila and Ialomita and work in agriculture. They came back with trains transporting part of the cereals harvested. They had many animals to feed and they would also sell some of these cereals to the marketplace; they had a higher living standard; they got used to having money. Many of them left abroad after this.

All these people were commuters. Ceausescu gave them apartments. He gave apartments especially to those working on the chemical platform in Berbesti. After restructuration, there was a sudden drop of prices on the housing market in this region. People had no jobs anymore so they had to sell the apartments. They came back here.” (teacher, Valcea)

In Bixad, during the early ‘90s people were already heading to Yugoslavia. In 1992, the instable situation in Yugoslavia redirected migration towards the European Union. France and Italy became primary destinations of migration, with France pulling about 50 percent of the migration flows and Italy about 25 percent. Other significant destination countries are USA, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Belgium. This diversity of destinations might be the result of the long migration experience combined with the stagnant economic situation in Bixad (job opportunities remained scarce) and enhanced controls but also with the gradual drop of migrants’ salaries at the most attractive destination countries as a consequence of the increasing number of migrants there.

“In Bixad, people left abroad since the ‘90s. First destination was Iugoslavia. After the conflict in Iugoslavia they headed to France and some left to Italy. It was easier to cross the borders through Hungary and Croatia than through Germany or Switzerland. Then Austria imposed higher restrictions and more headed to Italy” (ex-mayor, Bixad).

In Valcea, since the early ‘90s migration strategies were short-termed and migrant’s projects were mainly related to the acquisition of goods that were later sold. To this purpose, people left to Hungary, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. A significant increase of the migration flows coincided with the restructuration period when many people living on commuting lost their jobs. Migration flows headed primary to Italy since then.

As compared to Bixad, Valcea has a shorter history of migration easily visible in the number of newly built houses. In Bixad there are ostentatious houses whereas in Valcea most houses owned by migrants are not yet finalized. However the impact of migration is visible in both communities. Showing off one’s financial possibilities by building pretentious houses or buying expensive machines has also contributed to migration flows, laying down the premises for relative deprivation. In this context it is not objective poverty that weights in the migration rationale but the perception of one’s financial status as compared to that of the other locals.

“Temptation to leave is strong because people here are competing with one another. If my neighbor builds something... If I assemble grit stone tiles, my neighbor prefers marble; if I choose an iron fence, my neighbor chooses a better one. I had my porch made to look like that of my neighbor. It is all about being ambitious: if they can do it, I can do it too. This is the most important motivation for migration“(ex-mayor, Bixad).

The higher the number of migrants to a certain destination is, the stronger and wider the connections between migrants and non-migrants are. The length of the residence abroad, the legal or irregular status of a migrant or the number of successful circular movements between origin and

destination counties influence the efficiency of such a network. This means that a person who knows a legal economic migrant who resided for a longer period in a foreign country or whose migration strategy involved an intensive circular migration is most likely to leave and be successful in his/ her migration strategy. The rationale for this is quite straightforward: a person with these characteristics has more acquaintances in the foreign country who could support newly arrived migrants. This profile is only specific for Bixad county, whereas in Valcea migrating is often times risky and many return unsuccessful.

#### **4. MINORS' MIGRATION STRATEGY**

In order to assess minor's migration patterns from Bixad the first question we need to answer is whether they are accompanied or not during their migration strategy. According to *law 272/2004 an unaccompanied minor is any minor who is not accompanied by his/her parents or by other legal representative or who is not under the legal supervision of a third person*. An assessment of minors' migration strategies indicates that in Bixad there are two predominant trends: minors leaving based on a statement of agreement authorizing a third person to accompany them until the destination in Italy where the parents are living or, minors leaving accompanied by their parents. This indicates that most children leaving from Bixad are not actually unaccompanied at the destination.

“I wanted to work aboard this summer again, but my parents came home too late. Immediately after their arrival I had to go to school again. I had my passport issued. I only need a statement of agreement from my parents that would allow the driver to accompany me until I get to their home in Italy. Next year, I will leave again during the summer holiday” (boy, 14 years, Bixad).

It should be noted however that there are also cases of minors identified in France or Italy without their parents. One hypothesis would be that these children are actually accompanied but refuse to give information about their parents because they are afraid the latter could be sanctioned for the illegal stay in Italy. None of the interviews conducted could confirm this hypothesis. However there were fragmentary reports about children having left alone in Italy or France.

Some reports including data from April to September indicated that authorities in Italy and France investigated three cases of unaccompanied minors for whom they asked the city hall in the local community to file a report assessing the social and financial situation of these children at home. Two of these cases referred to minors identified on the Italian territory. One minor had a poor education background and came from a large family having a very precarious economical status. The other one however, had a migrant family who supported his migration strategy and enrolled him at school in Italy. No data were available at the moment of this study about other similar cases.

Unaccompanied minor migrants are more likely to come from families with poor financial resources, some of them unable to support their children at school. However such cases are rather scarce in Bixad. The long migration history and the high number of migrants have contributed to the community's economical development.

It seems that in most cases minors leaving abroad depend on the support of their parents or of a relative willing to help them. A valued prerequisite of migration is being on good terms with the transporter who can, when necessary, bribe the officers at the checkpoints.

“Anyway, one can only leave abroad if knowing somebody there, maybe the parents, an uncle, or a brother who is already there. Now, a minor can only leave if accompanied by his/her parents. At least one of the parents has to accompany the child and this parent also has to have the certified agreement of the other parent” (girl, 19, Bixad).

“After 8 classes, I stayed home for one year and then I left to my aunt in Italy. She was working as a housekeeper. I had my papers made immediately but I could not find a job as soon as I got there. Though I have lived in Italy for ten months I have only worked for 6 months. My parents have also been in Italy but only for a little time. My cousin and my aunt are there. My aunt resides legally in Italy and she has a flat there”(16, years, Bixad).

“It is really hard to cross the border now but if you have some money anything is possible (16 years, Bixad”).

“If you do not have an invitation from somebody abroad, you can pay 50 Euro at the checkpoint and you are free to go” (girl, 14 years, Bixad)

### **Box 1: Interview with a mother of two unaccompanied minors in Italy**

I have 7 children. Mary was 19 when she left abroad, Nuta 24, Ilinca 22, Ion, 17, Vasile 18 and Gheorghe 15. Before leaving, they would watch the sheeps but then they realized that they need money and a house, so they left. Gheorghe had no even finished 8 classes when he left. We said that he could leave too since he did not like school. Before leaving to Italy, his father would send him watch the sheep after school. Next day my husband would not let him attend classes. When he finally went to school, he was not prepared for classes. How could he, when a day before he had other things to do? Little by little he stopped going to school. He finished only 6 classes. He did not go to school anymore but he was out in the fields reaping.

Then, he went to Italy to see how life was there. He has been there for 4 years already. Vasile sent him the money and he had his passport issued and got a visa. He took care of horses there. He knew where he would work before leaving. Vasile found him a job where he worked. He cut down trees.

There are many hardships here. Pensions are so low that we have hardly enough money for paying the bill for electricity. What should he have done here? What should he have lived on if he had no money and no job? Those who work the land get nothing. They have no tools and the land is infertile here. What should we seed? Only grass and crop? Everything is so expensive. One oil bottle is 38- 40 000 ROL (1 EUR)

During Ceausescu’s leadership, one could send the children to work. At that time, my children went to gather fruits after 10 classes. From 16 to 18 years, Vasile went to Ploiesti to work. He came back every two weeks and watched the sheeps.

I have not gone abroad but my husband did. He worked for a while with Vasile. Vasile was the first to leave the country. He helped Maria to have her passport issued, and then he helped Ion and Gheorghe.

We could not send Gheorghe and Vasile at school. Gheorghe has only finished 5 classes. When he was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade he went to harvest potatoes in St. Gheorghe. Anyway, we could afford to send him here to school. I remember he went to school with a notebook and a pen packed in his boots. We had no money though to send him to high school in Negresti (mother with migrant minors, Bixad).

## **5. MINORS’ MIGRATION RATIONALES**

Is minors’ migration driven by the same factors as adults’ migration? If not, what is different in the causality model? Before answering this question we should firstly emphasize the fact that minors’ economic migration is a common tendency in Bixad, whereas in Valcea there are insignificant reports about such cases. What are then the premises that enhance the probability for a minor to migrate?

Living in a community with high migration prevalence and a long migration history. In such communities it is likely that a higher number of migrants have a legal residence abroad or that future migrants have access to strong migration networks linking destination and origin countries.

Access to a strong migration network. Having migrant parents or migrant relatives facilitates employment in the destination country at early ages.

Culture of migration. Absence of satisfactory job opportunities at the local level combined with exemplary success stories about migration leads to the ingraining of migration as life strategy. Socialization in such communities involves the gradual inculcation of mobility values. Perceptions about migration as success strategy and a certain ethics of labor become largely diffused. Having migrant parents contributes to easy access to migration prerequisites and shapes expectations about destination countries.

Having a lower economic status as compared to peer groups. Ostentatious consumption of minors whose migration strategy was successful influences perceptions regarding the acceptable financial status. If migrant adults show off their wealth firstly by building houses and buying cars, minors mostly spend their money on motorcycles, mobile phones and exquisite clothes.

Relative poverty. Most minors leaving abroad have a strong sense of independence and are unsatisfied with the financial support of their parents. Ostentatious consumption of minors who have been abroad accentuates negative perceptions regarding one's financial possibilities.

“My father left for 6 years already. He has many acquaintances there. Italian employers expect you to be honest and not to steal from them. Still, you do not get paid enough. Nowhere are the salaries so low as in Italy. Italians are not so generous but they expect you to do your job. In Austria or in England you get paid better for your work”. [...] On Sundays, at Church you can see uneducated people who left abroad with Armani suits. I am really bothered by the fact that people with only four classes wear such a suit. It is not them who look good in Armani suits but those who graduate from college (boy, 18 years, Bixad).

“After my elder brother left, the younger one said that he would leave too after graduation. My mother did not agree with him leaving before graduation. He saw that his brother had his own money. He is very determined, very determined. He would say: “I will leave too. I also need exclusive clothes, I need a house and pocket money. I do not want to depend on your support anymore. Anyway, when you make your own money you do not have ask anything from anybody”. He had a job here, he would spend much of his salary for the bus ticket to Negresti. Both of them left after graduating from a vocational school, after the 11<sup>th</sup> form. Mother came home during a holiday and took my younger brother with her”(sister, 19 year, Bixad).

“Maybe our colleagues at school who have been abroad know that they are better off than others, that they can buy many things, maybe exquisite clothes... If they leave with their parents, they can afford many things. My visit in Italy has been quite pleasant. I would have tried to work in Italy but at my age it is more difficult to get hired there. If it were not for the possibility of working abroad, I do not know what would happen here, how people would be living. In Italy one can make much money and then come back here and build luxury houses. During the summer holiday, we will leave to Italy again. I would very much like to work, to do something, anything... This way I will make some money, my own money... I would not depend on my parents anymore... One has to be able to also make it on one's own, to succeed in earning some money... In Italy one can make enough money whereas here it is impossible... What could we do here? Work in agriculture? This won't bring anybody money. In Italy any job is worth doing” (girl, 16 years, Bixad).

“It is trendy to build big houses here. No one cares about you if you do not have a house and financial possibilities. Few talk to the fellows at school who do not have a house and and a car” (social worker, Bixad).

The selections above indicate that there are no significant differences between minors' migration rationales and adults' motivations for migration. However, usually it is parents' migration that enhances the probability of children's migration. Also, in case of minors' migration, a significant push factor is a strong sense of independence.

As we stated before, in Valcea minors do not leave abroad for work. Few go on holidays or benefit of the family reunification procedure. The main causes explaining this difference are the following:

- Shorter history of migration as compared to Bixad

- Less structured migration networks
- A higher number of irregular migrant; risky migration strategies
- A lower number of minors with mediated migration experience
- Younger adult migrants, with small or no children

“Most people who left to Italy have no children at school. I think there are only 5 persons working in Italy, who have children enrolled at this school. These children are too young. What could a 14 years old child do abroad? The last thing their parents need is to have to take care of their children. Older adolescents do not leave because only few of them have parents abroad to help them.

Usually, young people leave to Italy. They are not older then 20 or 30, they have no family responsibility, no wife or children. They leave to make some money because here there are no jobs available. It is the Western mirage...” (teacher, Valcea)

Minors’ migration strongly depends on their parents’ status abroad. Irregular migrants, having an uncertain status abroad, cannot support their children’s migration. Instable jobs abroad and fluctuant incomes lower the possibility of minors’ migration. Spending holidays abroad is less probable in Valcea, since parents cannot support the travel costs. Another important difference between the two studied communities is related to the late emergence of migration in Valcea. The first migrants are usually single men with no dependants. Even if they have gotten married later, they have young children for which labor migration is not an option yet. Considering the similar economic opportunities in the two communities, it is likely that, gradually, migration patterns should become more like those in Bixad.

“Many of those who left to Italy for a long time bring their children there. If the children are not so good at school parents prefer to help them get a job so that they make some money. However if they like school they continue studying in Italy. Parents having a stable job there and” permiso de sojorno” bring their children there” (police officer, Tur).

### **Box 2: Minors’ migration in Valcea**

“Most people here leave to Italy. There are children who are staying with their grandfathers for years, while their parents are abroad. About half of all people who left abroad, let their children here since they do not have a legal status in Italy and they are always in danger of being caught and returned. As long as they work on the black market, they change their job frequently. Some have taken their children with them only to bring them back. They could not afford to spend money and to pay taxes.

There are minors who join their parents in Italy during the holidays but I do not know whether they work there or not. Minors’ migration is a foreseeable trend since they understood anything requires money. While here one makes a little more than one euro for a workday, in Italy he/she makes 40 Euro. Leaving abroad, will certainly be everybody’s future. Money is going to be an electrifying enticement for leaving.

Once I was in a disco where I had the chance to talk to a young man who had joined his mother abroad during the holiday. He said that he earned 30 000 000 Lei in one month. He wanted to spend it all and to go to make some more. I was stupefied. I have a 7 000 000 lei salary.

Being trendy is also a strong enticement for youths. They want to wear fashionable cloths. They would leave next day if possible, but their leaving depends on their parents’ migration. There are old people in the family whom they cannot desert. I believe family prevents them from leaving. Had they been allowed to do what they wanted they would have long been gone away.

More, when leaving they need somebody to stay at for a while, to have a place to sleep. There are people who left only to come back later with nothing. They could not find a job. Acquaintances abroad are indispensable if they decide to leave.

Many of the children having parents abroad are awfully lazy. Their parents send them money and they just sit and do nothing. I know a girl in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade who wears gold jewelry and fancy cloths. Parents working abroad send about 100 Euro a month for their children. They make sure their children have

everything they need so the latter only sit and wait. There is a huge difference between one having 15 000 lei in his pocket and one having 200 000 lei.

When parents come home during the holidays, they ask us to advise their children to learn. Grandparents who take care of them cannot properly ensure their education. Minors trick them often when it comes to school responsibilities”(teacher, Valcea).

## 6. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION

An assessment of people’s perceptions regarding education might be a difficult task to achieve due to the high social desirability associated to such a question. However most interviews with minors and parents clearly evidenced that school is valued for strengthening one’s social status but not for its role in enhancing one’s financial position or for the acquisition of the capabilities that would latter facilitate access to a satisfactory job. There are many reports about failure in getting a good job whether the applicant graduated from middle school or from university.

The causes for this distrust in school as a premise of success lie on the one hand in the lack of labor opportunities on the local market and on the other hand in the possibility of achieving a high economical status independent of the educational background as a consequence of migration. Those who do manage to a get a job in the origin community or in nearby localities have low salaries, insufficient for covering more than the basic necessities.

Some teachers complained that minors with migrant parents lose interest in school. Grandparents spend little or no time to supervise their grandchildren’s activity at school. It may also happen that grandparents themselves advise children not to waste time to study instead of working. As long as school does not offer a similar enticement as migration, it remains secondary. However, for youths under the age of 18 who have not graduated from secondary or middle school, working abroad is just a temporary strategy lasting for the holiday period.

“I gave up school because I had no money. There are others who went to high school only to give it up after the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. They got a job in Italy too. The jobs one can get there are not so hard. You only have to work for 8 hours in the most appropriate working environment. Italian employers are very polite. I think it is better to work than to go to school. Back at home, if one chooses to study he would later need money to find a job. In Romania it is impossible to find a job”(boy, 16 years, Bixad).

“There are many educated people here with no school. It is a good thing to go to school but this will not help you find a job” (mother with migrant minors, Bixad).

“There are some who graduated from college but could not find a job. They leave abroad and do modest jobs. [...] My grandfather said I did not need to learn. But I still passed the exam. I was so proud of that. That was why my elder brother said he would go to Italy and help us. The youngest brother could not wait to graduate so that he could leave seeing that his brother was already on his own, and that he had his own money. (girl, 19 years, Bixad).

“School is useful especially for children. I have only finished 10 classes and this time spent in school has brought me no advantages. Those who like school should learn but not too much. I want that my children study but my boy wants to have money like many of the people he sees.

He should also learn to work the land during holidays. He has to! In Italy he did not work. He just went to the seaside. I think some children over 15 are able to work. In Italy they work in restaurants and raise money for school. Here, in every house there are children abroad.

One of my children likes to work the other one doesn’t. My boy goes to my brother-in-law and helps him paint the house he is building. Not everybody should work in an office. I want them to learn but they also have to know how to use a shovel, a hammer, a cement mixer.

People who stay home only earn as much money to make it through the day. Those who go to college cannot find a job either so they give up school to leave abroad. Sure, I would let my child go to work.

When he is 15 I will allow him to work. If when he is 16 he looks older than he really is, why shouldn't he work"? (migrant mother with 2 minor children having been to Italy during the summer holiday)

"I took care of the pig, the elder brother watched the cow and the other one the horse. We had to work the land. I still work the land, but not all of it. We pay a worker to do this job now. So, when I was 13, me and my brothers were left alone at home. I cried so much because everything seemed so hard for me. I had to study during the night. I had no time to do it at daytime. (girl, 19 years).

## **7. PERCEIVED ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES IN THE ORIGIN COUNTRY AND LABOR OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD**

Is local economy so weak that it rejects youths from early ages? Both communities targeted in this study are facing an acute lack of job opportunities. Graduating from a high school or going to university is not perceived as a premise for getting an attractive job. Salaries in Bixad or Valcea are hardly enough for paying for the household expenses. Agriculture is not a satisfactory option for youths. In many communities with migration experience, land is mostly farmed by old people or by internal migrants. However, life standards are highly different in the two communities. As a consequence of the long migration history, Bixad is exemplary for the benefits of migration on sending counties, whereas Valcea is less developed and migration prevalence is a lot lower.

Jobs performed by minors abroad do not differ from those performed by adult migrants. Boys usually work on building sites or in farms and girls do the housekeeping. It is worth noting however that girls' migration for labor is not as common as in the case of boys. When girls leave they usually accompany their mothers at work. In this case although they might be a helpful hand in doing the housekeeping, their activity is usually not remunerated. At early ages, boys' work abroad is a period of apprenticeship. Children accompany parents at work where they acquire not only the abilities necessary for performing a certain job, but also the values and behaviors that will insure the success of a future migration initiative on their own. Often times, the parent negotiates with the employer the salary for the extra hand but the money is paid to the parent only.

If children usually accompany parents at work, young persons under the age of 18 are more independent. Parents might resort to their acquaintances to get a job for the minor during the summer period, but the latter is fully responsible for the job and gets the salary paid without intermediaries. In other cases, minors residing with their parents abroad might find a job without their parents' knowledge about it. At early ages, migration for work is valued as successful life strategy. In spite of the fact that we met cases when minors would totally reject the modest jobs performed by migrants after a short labor experience, generally no work was perceived humiliating as long it was paid enough.

Should the work performed abroad be distressful, there are strategies to cope with it. One is ostentatious consumption, showing off the economic status acquired as a consequence of migration. Another one is considering oneself as part of an accepted strategy, resorted to even by persons with college degree.

"My parents left to Italy for 7 years. When I was abroad there were times when I accompanied my mother to her job and helped her do the housecleaning. My mother comes back every three months. She has no residence papers yet. Mitrut, my brother wishes to leave to Italy immediately after he finishes the 8th grade. He said it was hard to work there. My father found him a job. He fed the horses and helped him on the building site"(girl, 14 years old, Tur).

"I left to Italy after graduating from the 11th form. I was there for a month and a half. My father took me with him to spend my holiday there. The fourth day I got a job. I needed money. I needed money to go out for a pizza or to attend parties. First, I worked in a private house where I cut the grass, painted the

walls and assembled the kitchen and the bathroom floor. I made 45 euros a day. Then I worked in archeology. I cleaned the dust on a road. I worked for the same company as my father. It was a state company. I earned 50-55 Euro daily. It was an easy job. I was working with somebody who knew Italian. In time, I learned a few basic words too. My last job was to a Chinese food store. A friend who was living with me helped me get this job. I earned 5 Euro an hour while working from 7 to 9-10 in the evening. This meant 90 euro a day. I have worked there for 2 months and then I returned home. I was satisfied with the job I had with those Chinese people. If they saw you working they were nice with you. We would eat together chicken and get some food to eat at home too. (boy, 18 years, Bixad).

“In Italy, I went with my father to work (12 years old). He also worked during the weekend for private employers. He needed somebody to help him so I accompanied him. This way, money were paid to our family only. Our employers gave us food. There were good people.

I tried to use the trowel but it got stuck. My father came and showed me how to use it. I would also use a pulley to lift a bucket up to higher floors so that my father could reach it. We ate where we worked. Our master had a water pool and in the evening we had a bath and then we left home. I worked for two months and then I returned home. I have never worked in Bixad in exchange of money. One of my friends has, and he got paid 200 or 300 000 thousand lei a day. This is only enough to eat one or two days.

When I worked with my father he would get paid for my work too. He kept the money. I did not need any of it because my father bought me everything. Anyway, money was paid to our family. We preferred that I helped my father instead of finding somebody else to take this money. One day, after finishing my job in an old lady’s house I went out and swept the dirt in the courtyard without her telling me to do it. She saw this and she was very happy that I was so hardworking. She paid me 20 Euro for this. Next day I cleaned the courtyard again and I got paid another 20 Euro. We have firstly worked for some other people who recommended us to this old lady. The first employers saw that we were honest people and sent us to this lady”(boy 14 years, Bixad).

## **8. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND LIFE STYLES**

There are two different consumption patterns specific for minor migrants: sowing of their wealth by investing in expensive goods or spending money on immediate necessities. Whether a minor buys expensive goods or spends the money for specific necessities depends on the duration of the migration strategy and on the money that he/she could earn abroad. Investing money in expensive goods such as exquisite clothes, gold chains, cars or motorcycles strengthens others’ perceptions about migration as a strategy of success. These visible goods are status symbols laying a barrier between non-migrants and migrants. Not having financial possibilities to achieve similar goods is perceived as a limitation that makes one less eligible for friendship groups with a high financial status or for making the right girlfriend.

For minors with a higher educational status, a job abroad is just a means to an end, a strategy of making some money and also to cover school necessities. It may also be an alternative strategy in case of failure to pass the admission exam at college.

Minors with migrant parents usually have comparable economic possibilities as those with direct migration experience. However, in such cases grandfathers or other relatives taking care of the children manage the remittances. Often, relatives spend remittances for different purposes than those indicated by the parents abroad. In such situations, oftentimes, parents prefer to send cloths instead of money or, when possible, to take their children abroad with them.

“I made about 65 EUR a day. I gave some of the money I earned to my aunt for the time I lived with her before finding a job. I bought a phone and some clothes with the rest. My cousin’s employer hired me. Italians hire 16 years old workers. However, if you are this young you have to respect some rules: not climbing higher than 8 flours, wearing a helmet...”(boy, 16 years, Bixad)

“I haven’t bought too many things with the money I earned abroad but everything I got was exclusive. In this community, people only look up to you if you wear exquisite clothes. I have not bought a 500 Euro worth mobile phone. Many own such a phone here but I preferred one that will only satisfy basic necessities: I can make phone calls and send messages. I do not need more than this. Those who have expensive mobile phones have worked a lot to buy them. They gave up school after graduating from the 8<sup>th</sup> form and left abroad but I am educated, I have 2 or 3 diplomas; I will easily find a job as a veterinary here.

I spent the money I earned for school necessities. I sent some of it to my mother. To do this, I resorted either to transporters who charged 10% of the total amount, or to relatives. If you make the right acquaintances for this, they can elude the checkpoints when transporting money. My father is in good terms with the transporter and he usually carries the money we send home”(boy, 18 years).

“In Bixad, girls only like you if you have money and a house. Women do not usually go abroad. They go to school for 8 or 12 years and they get married at 14 or 15 years. They like money and usually choose for a boyfriend somebody who has been to France or to Italy” (boy, 18 years, Bixad).

“Some buy a car, gold chains and clothes. They spend 1000 EUR and after this they suddenly realize they are penniless. However there are also boys who spend the money wisely” (boy, 18 years, Bixad).

“I would like to buy a Porsche and a house in Brasov so that I do not see all these peasants here or hear my neighbor’s house trapping. I had a BMW but I crushed it into a fence”. (boy, 19 years, Tur). .

“When they come back in August, migrants bring their cars to the nearby bar and park them there. They buy a case of beer and offer everybody a drink” (teacher, Bixad).

For those who worked or lived abroad for a while, it is not only consumption patterns that change but also life styles. Important events such as the weddings are not organized anymore in conformity with local habits. Agriculture is abandoned in favor of working abroad and Italian expensive cloths become trendy. Italian language becomes a status symbol and when youths gather together, those having been abroad speak often Italian. In some cases, another important acquisition is the ingraining of a specific ethic of labor valuing hard work, honesty and trust as premises for success.

“You should see what they wear! They give up the simple garments and come back so different that one cannot recognize them. They have jeans and many other clothes... They are modern youths now. For their wedding they rent limos to show off their bride. They organize weddings in Negresti (a town nearby) because they consider customs in Bixad are outdated.” (teacher, Bixad).

“Girls like you if you wear exquisite cloths and if you have a car. Those who come back in august from Italy speak only Italian and they show off. (boy,19, Tur).

## **9. MINOR MIGRANTS AND JUVENILE CRIMINALITY**

Data about crime related activities committed by minors abroad are scarce. Authorities felt uneasy when talking about this subject and most of the reports we collected are based on discussions with migrants.

There is a common view about France as a favored destination for minors committing illegal activities due to a perceived higher tolerance of the French authorities towards minors’ criminality. If breaking the law, minors would not be penalized in France whereas in Italy the police would sanction the minor or/and the parents when possible. Illegal activities are mainly related to stealing money collected in the boxes placed in parking places, to stealing food products from supermarkets or to begging.

“In France there’s a lot of stealing. However in Italy it is different. One cannot steal. In France, minors go to parking places and steal the money collected in boxes. Some have built houses with the money they

made from stealing. There are many here in Bixad who make money from stealing in France. They do it because they are aware of the fact that nobody will punish them. In Italy however if the minor commits a crime it is either him/her that goes to a rehabilitation institution or the parent who is arrested. In Italy there are also many people who carry a gun. If you are caught in the act of stealing you can get shot. They do not feel sorry for you as French people might. Some minors go to school just for as long as they need to get their papers done. Once they have the papers, they get a job” (girl, 19 years, Bixad).

There are also short reports about minors involved in prostitution or entrapped in trafficking in human beings networks. Considering the high social control specific for rural communities it is likely that minors involved in crimes abroad dissimulate the real occupation and expose only the economic impact of the migration strategy. The difficulty of getting data about the crime related side of migration may be a consequence of their concealing the specificity of the activities abroad or of people’s trial to protect the community from being associated with negative stories.

### **Box 3: Trafficking in human beings and juvenile criminality**

“Here in Oas county, people are swollen with pride. If one builds an interesting roof then the neighbor has to make one that looks even more interesting. They work abroad because money are the most important thing for them. It is true though, that here they have no place to work. Everything was shut down; there is no place to work anymore. After the Revolution, the Government’s most serious mistake was not creating places for people to work. Salaries and pensions are not raised but prices are higher. How are people supposed to live here? On what... There is no possibility of having a decent life here! Children do not care about learning anymore. They say: “Father, I will go to France anyway...”

In France they beg. For some time now they started leaving to Italy too. Some, have gone to school and after that they worked there... Here nobody prices a man’s work whereas there one gets paid for what he/she works.

Here one gets nothing... Children in school have seen that there are others like them who left abroad and managed to buy beautiful clothes and motorbikes. They want to leave too to earn twice as much money. Those who have a qualification leave abroad. They have a good economic situation, raise money for their house, for cars and for sending their children to school. Some came for a confession on Eastern. Leaving abroad may have a negative influence on some of those who leave. They become addicted to drugs, drink alcohol, are homosexuals. I have seen some cases here in Bixad of some 16-17 years old youths who have been raped by homosexuals abroad. For two weeks they have been harassed by those people. They have not called the police because it would have brought shame on them. If the people here had known about it, it would have been impossible for them to go on living in Bixad. Others do willingly this kind of job. They are homosexuals. They leave there and come back with money; people look up to them here. There are also girls from the village who go abroad for two weeks and then come back. Had these women had a decent job there they would have staid there for 3 months not for 2 weeks” (Priest, Bixad).

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## APPENDIX

### Guidelines for the interviews

- **Guidelines for the interviews with minors**

#### *Perceptions about education*

- Some believe school is necessary for succeeding in life. Others consider school is not an important prerequisite for success. In your opinion, is school important or not for succeeding in life? Why?
- If you could choose between going to school or having a job what would you choose? What would your parents advise you in relation to this?

#### *Family*

- Do you agree or not with the following statement: “Is it good that children become independent from their parents as soon as possible”? Why?

#### *Migration ideology; the gravitational model of migration*

- How would you describe life in the locality? Are you satisfied or not with the opportunities you have here? Why? Would you be satisfied with the money you could make if working in the locality?
- How do you find life abroad? Is it easier or harder to make a living there?
- Why do you think that youths/children in Bixad leave abroad? Do you know anybody under the age of 18 who worked abroad? What jobs have they had abroad?
- What does a minor person need to be able to leave abroad (papers, acquaintances etc)?
- How do their colleagues at school look at them when coming back home? Are they any different from the other youths?

#### *Migration strategy*

- Have you ever been abroad? With whom? On what purpose?
- Have you ever worked abroad? How old were you when you worked abroad? Why did you decide to work abroad?
- How have you left abroad? Were you alone when leaving or have your parents accompanied you? (If he/she was alone): How did you leave? Who helped you? (If he/she left alone): Have your parents agreed to your intention to leave?
- Were you aware of the job you were going to have in Italy before leaving? What job did you have abroad? Who helped you get this job? How much did you make a month? How many hours were you working? Were you happy with the salary? Did you manage to raise some money? Did you send money home?
- How did you spend the money you earned abroad?
- Have any of your acquaintances or relatives also been to Italy? Were they residing/working in Italy when you left? Where did you stay at while you were abroad? With whom?

- Some minors who leave abroad have to beg or to wash the windshields for making money. Do you know any minors who did this for a living while abroad?
- Do you know any minors who had to offer sexual services or to steal for a living? Where were they from?

### ***Plans***

- Which are your plans? Will you stay in Romania or do you intend to work abroad? Why?

### ***Impact of migration***

- Has your experience abroad had any impact on you or not? What impact?
- It is said that in Oas, minors migration is an important stage in their life, a moment when their life is completely changed. What is your opinion about this?

### **Guidelines for the interview with parents**

#### ***Migration rationale***

- If you were to assess your life before and after communism when did you have a better living?
- What was your occupation before leaving abroad? Were you paid enough for this job to live decently?
- Why have you decided to work abroad?

#### ***Status abroad***

- When did you first leave abroad? Where?
- Could you estimate how many years/months you worked in Italy up to this moment?
- How did you leave (with a tourist visa, person who helped him/her transit the border)?
- What was your job abroad? How did you find out about the job? Did you know where you were going to work before leaving abroad or you looked for a job in Italy?
- If leaving without a contract, did you have the opportunity to legalize your situation there?
- What was your wage there? Were you able to send money at home?
- Did your child/ren ever accompany you abroad? How old were they when they accompanied you? What were they doing while you were at work (went to school, visited Italy, accompanied you and sometimes helped you get your job done, had a job too)?

#### ***Perceptions about education***

- Some believe school is necessary for succeeding in life. Others consider school is not an important prerequisite for success. If you consider your child/ren's future, how important or unimportant do you find school for their success?
- When there is a lot to do for insuring household necessities or when you need to work the land, do your child/ren miss classes in order to help you?
- Should child/ren help their parents with money and contribute to the wellbeing of the household?

- Do you agree or not with the following statement: „It is not school that should be important for child/ren , but their ability to make money and to get a job”? Why?
- Is there a specific age that you find appropriate for child/ren to start working?

### ***Migration ideology***

- Do you think that Romania can offer your children the possibility to live decently? Why?
- Were you to advise your child/ren about working abroad, what would you tell them? Would you encourage his/her intention to work abroad or you would tell him/her to work in the country?

### ***Minors migration***

- More and more minors leave abroad to make a living or to help their families. Are minors in Bixad leaving accompanied by their parents or do they leave by themselves? Are you aware of minors who left abroad alone? If yes, how old are these minors? How are they leaving? How do they make money abroad? What are their jobs abroad?
- Have your child/ren ever worked abroad? If yes, what job did they get abroad? What was their salary there?
- How have your child/ren left? Who accompanied them? What papers did they carry for crossing the border? Were you aware of the job he/she was going to have abroad? Who helped him/her get the job?
- How did he/she spent the money earned abroad?
- How did you feel about his/her leaving to work abroad?

### ***Plans***

- Do you intend to leave abroad in the future?
- What are your child/ren’s plans as regards working abroad?

### ***Juvenile criminality***

- Some minors who leave abroad have to beg or to wash the windshields for making money. Do you know any minors in the commune who did this for a living while abroad? Where were they from?
- Do you know any minors in the commune who had to offer sexual services or to steal for a living?

### **Guidelines for the interview local authorities**

### ***Profile of the community***

- Where do people in this commune work? What are their occupations? Are wages high enough to live decently?
- Please provide us some information about the age profile of the community?

### ***History of migration***

- When did people started to work abroad? What countries did they first go to? Where do they leave now? In your opinion, what are their motivations for leaving abroad? What is the medium duration of their stay abroad?
- How do they usually leave? Do they have a legal or an irregular status there?
- Could you estimate the incidence of migration in this community?

### ***Migration ideology***

- Do you consider migration is good or bad for the community? What is the impact of migration on the community? Are there significant economic differences between people who have been abroad and those who haven't?
- What is the community perception as regards migration?

### ***Minors' migration***

- What are the most important motivations for minors leaving abroad (visit, work, study)?
- More and more minors leave abroad to work and to make a living or to help their families. Are minors in Bixad leaving accompanied by their parents or are they leaving by themselves?
- If he/she is aware of cases of minors who left abroad alone, do these minors usually have relatives abroad?
- How do they make money abroad? What are their jobs abroad?
- How do you feel about minors who work abroad? What impact does migration have on their development?
- Do you consider that minors' work abroad influences their performances at school? Have you heard of minors who dropped out school for leaving abroad?
- How do minors having been abroad usually spend their money?
- Could you estimate the incidence of minors' migration?

### ***Juvenile criminality***

- Some minors who leave abroad have to beg or to wash the windshields for making money. Do you know any minors in the commune who did this for a living while abroad?
- Do you know any minors in the commune who had to offer sexual services or to steal for a living?
- It is said that minors' migration abroad brings an important change in their life? What do you believe about this?

### ***Specific questions for teachers and headmasters***

- In your opinion, what do people think about school? Do they consider school as essential for succeeding in life?
- How many children from this school have asked you to be transferred to schools abroad? What countries have these children left?
- Are there significant differences between the financial resources of children who have worked abroad/ who have migrant parents and those with no migration experience?

- Are there significant differences between school performances of children with migrant parents and the others?

**Interview list**

Short profile of interviewees		
Bixad (Satu Mare)	Barbatesti (Valcea)	Tur (Satu Mare)
<b>Children</b>		
Boy; 16 years old; resided in Italy for 10 months; worked in constructions for 6 months after the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade; he lived with his aunt in Italy while his parents were home;	Girl; 13 years; visited Italy where her father worked	Boy; 19 years; he left to Italy when he was 16 with his mother and worked for only a few days; he spent most of his time in Italy in discos and had troubles with the police
Boy; 14 years old; worked with his father after the 6 <sup>th</sup> grade for two months during the summer period;		Brother and sister; 13 and 14 years old; the boy worked with his father at a farm where he fed the horses and gathered fruits; the girl helped her mother do the housecleaning
Brother and sister who visited Italy when they were in the 5 <sup>th</sup> and the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade; they left with their mother during the summer holyday; their father was working in Italy;		
Girl; 19 years; visited Italy and helped her mother do the housecleaning; her two brothers and her parents work in Italy; both brothers left to Italy after graduating from the eleventh form; one of them was sill minor when he left;		
Girl, 14 years old; left in the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade to her sister in Italy where she took care of her baby and got paid for it; she worked in Italy for 2 ½ years with short interruptions; both parents worked in Italy too;		
Boy, 18 years, left to Italy when he was 17; he worked in constructions and at a food store		
<b>Parents and grandparents with direct or mediated migration experience</b>		
Mother with two minor children having left to Italy by themselves	Migrant father with a child in the 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	
Migrant mother with two minor	Migrant mother with two	

children who accompanied her in Italy while she worked there; her husband also worked in Italy.	minor children; she and her husband worked in Italy	
Migrant mother with two minor children who visited Italy; her husband also worked in Italy	Migrants mother with three minor children	
	Grandmother with two adult children with migration experience	
	Grandfathers who took care of their niece while her parents were in Italy	
	Grandmother with two adult children with migration experience	
Local authorities		
Police (3 police officers)	Police	Police
Priest	Priest	
Headmaster	Headmaster	
Mayor	Teacher	
Social assistant	Teacher	
	Mayor	