

# IMMIGRANTS' ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN HOST COUNTRY- FROM PRECONCEIVED IDEAS TO REAL LIFE. CASE STUDY ON THE ROMANIANS'

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## Abstract

*Reticence towards Romanian migrants is a matter of interest in the analysis of migratory flows in the EU by country of origin. Since Romania's pre-accession to the European Union, among developed countries such as Great Britain, France, Germany, etc., there have been opinions on the fact that Romania's accession also implies increased pressure on the labor market entry in this developed countries. Moreover, even after the 7-year transition period in which some states have set up barriers for Romanian citizens, fears have been maintained that after 2014 new waves of migrants will enter the developed countries of the European Union. Although this estimate was far too exaggerated, and reality has proven through many good practices that Romanian migrants are useful for destination areas - they cover local employment deficits and their work is appreciated - there are still negative, even discriminatory opinions.*

*The fear of the large number of Romanian migrants who have entered the European Union is materialized also by the fact that they are regarded as "social risk" people with "integration problems". Thus, in recent years public opinion has succeeded to provoke a political backlash (i.e. in France or UK) regarding Romanian migrants. The aim of our research is to analyze the situation of Romanian migrants in the destination countries and to highlight the factors of economic and social discrimination.*

**Keywords:** *immigrant, labour market, discrimination, social vulnerability, Romania.*

## 1. Introduction

One of the most debated topics in recent years is about the economic and social impact of immigrants on destination countries. The greatest increase in the migratory flow in recent years has taken place from East to West. The same direction of migration was registered in the case of the Romanians, who chose Western Europe, USA and Canada as destination states. With Romania's accession to the European Union, there has been a growing debate about the impact of Romanian migrants on destination countries. Cultural erosions, threats to national identity, and the notions of "us towards them" are often identified directly or indirectly in the speech of immigrant opponents. Although the economy has acknowledged the beneficial effect of immigrants on the labor market of developed countries with accelerated demographic aging, (IMF 2019; IMF 2018; Kahanec et al. 2017) the socially discriminatory discourse is often fueled by the fear of altering/alienating the traditional socio-cultural pattern. The expansion of these non-economic concerns largely depends, on the one hand, on the natives' perception of immigrants' expectations and, on the other hand, on the ability of immigrants to socially

integrate. The speech of assimilation versus multiculturalism (The Independent, 2015) gains different accents depending on the country of destination of migrant workers and affects their position on the labor market - in fact favors economic discrimination (Arai et al. 2004) - the quality of jobs, access to some professions, salary levels, career advancement, etc., which often do not strictly relate to their economic performance (productivity and quality of work), but on the contrary. Moreover, they are perceived as a threat to the employability of natives, although often a false problem (natives do not want native jobs or do not meet the selection criteria). For immigrants, social integration also means developing a sense of belonging to the host society. This often implies acceptance and action in accordance with the values and norms of society and, if necessary, the constitution of the social capital deemed necessary by the host country's institutions, because migrant integration is about the stimulation of economic growth (Abdou 2019). The role of indigenous peoples is equally important: social integration is only possible once immigrants are accepted as members of society and treated equally without any discrimination and repercussions.

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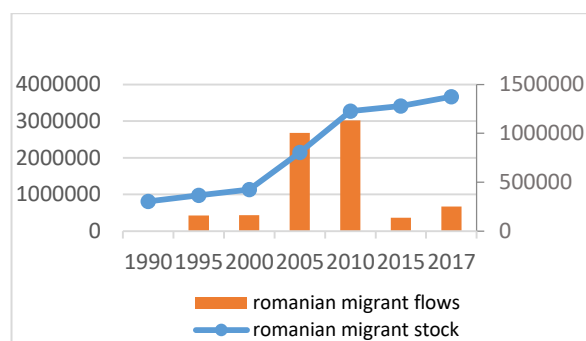
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## 2. Evolution of Romanian migrants on the labor market of destination countries

Romanians labour migration has been and remains the main option for emigration, but accession to the EU has allowed the development of the temporary migration option, being more and more preferred the multi-year mobility option. Thus, by 2017 the stock of Romanian migrant workers has exceeded 3.6 million people, by 1.5 million more than in 2005 (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Evolution of Romanian migrants between 1990 and 2017, persons



Source: Author's calculation based on World Bank data.

Regarding the destination countries, we notice that during the period 2010-2017 the preferences of the Romanians did not register any significant changes (Table 1).

Table 1. Stock of Romanian migrants on the labor market of the countries of destination

Main mobility destinations for work	2017 – stock persons	$\Delta_{17/10}$ stock persons	$\Delta_{17/15}$ stock persons	2017 - % of the total stock of Romanian migrant workers	$\Delta_{17/10}$ % of the total stock of Romanian migrant workers	Distance between Romania and destination countries, km
Total, of which:	3662849	388620	250794	100	-	-
Italy	1024132	211095	15963	27,95	-1,41	1141
Spain	639676	-170795	-160724	17,46	-11,8	2479
Germany	533660	398749	95660	14,56	9,69	1297
Hungary	340000	286919	236579	9,28	7,37	2096
USA	208362	19307	-24431	5,68	-1,14	643
Israel	161629	-9624	-27010	4,41	-1,77	7997
UK	98727	41795	24827	2,69	0,64	858
Canada	96031	-178	532	2,62	-0,85	7433
Austria	91158	36853	33469	2,48	0,52	1875
France	77770	-104329	-27718	2,12	-4,45	1566
Belgium	72751	51117	20051	1,98	1,2	1774
Greece	45355	66	6758	1,23	-0,4	744
Other destination	273298	132521	56838	7,46	2,37	-

Source: Author's calculation based on World Bank and Google Maps data.

Available: <https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/distanceresult.html?p1=49&p2=26>

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

So, Romanian's preferred destinations for work were both in 2010 and in 2017 Italy and Spain. If the stock of Romanian workers in Italy is around 28% of the total Romanian migrants, with an increase in the absolute value of more than 200 thousand in the period 2010-2017, the number of Romanians left in Spain, in the same period it was reduced by more than 150 thousand people and their weight by over 11 percentage points, respectively from 29.26% to only 17.46%. The reduction of the Romanian stock in Italy and Spain can be explained by circulatory migration, the Romanians are moving to countries with more attractive economic opportunities, and by the increasing number of

naturalization of Romanians in these states (ANSA 2017).

At the same time, we notice that the largest flow of Romanian migrants is recorded in Germany, about 400 000 from 2010-2017, and their share in total Romanian migrants rises from 4.8% to 14.56%, thus exceeding the traditional destination - Italy.

Another significant increase in the number of Romanian migrants is recorded in the United Kingdom, so that from 2010 to 2017, the number of migrants has increased almost 7 times to 340,000 and represents over 9% of all Romanian migrants.

The increase of the Romanian migrant flows in Great Britain and Germany is due to the fact that these

countries have some of the highest wage differentials at the level of the European Union states compared to Romania, although they have supported a selective entry by field of activity, also requesting a certain level and profile of education and specialization.

Thus, the Romanians who chose to migrate to Germany in 2017 were motivated by the possibility of earning a salary 5 times higher than in Romania (Table 2) and the low probability of becoming unemployed, in Germany being one of the lowest rates of unemployment among migrants in the analyzed states. The United Kingdom is also an attractive destination for Romanian migrants as a result of a 6.13-fold wage differential compared to Romania at the level of 2017 and an unemployment rate among migrants of only 6.4%.

An analysis of the pressure of the Romanians on the destination countries' labor market gives us a different point of view (Table 2). Mobility incentives in destinations with a significant share of Romanians are strongly differentiated by language criteria (Hungary, Germany), medium and low qualification level (Italy and Spain) and high level of qualification, Austria, Belgium, etc.).

Although the average salary in Hungary has similar values to Romanian one, the historical and ethnic considerations favor migration to this country. The reasons for the high number of Romanian migrants who choose Hungary as a destination state can be found in language similarities, because in Romania there are many bilingual schools with teaching in Hungarian, access to the Hungarian labor market is much easier. Thus, we observe that over 200 thousand Romanian migrants in Hungary represent almost half of all migrants in this country, but the share in the total employed population is only 4.4%, which indicates the lack of pressure on the labor market.

Italy is the second state after the share of Romanian migrants in total migrants, so the 1 million Romanians account for 17.65% of the total number of foreigners in 2017, with an insignificant decrease of 0.57 percentage points compared to 2010. Thus, Romanian workers exercise the higher labor market pressure in 2017 - 4% - after Hungary. Although there

is a large number of Romanian workers in Spain (more than 650 thousand), their share does not exceed 10% of the total of foreigners in 2017 and the labor market pressure is much lower, around 2.7%. Similar pressure is also found in Israel, the country with tradition in accepting Romanian workers - in various industrial activities and in construction. Although, the number of Romanian migrants in Israel does not exceed 103 thousand people, being over 6 times smaller than in Spain.

In contrast, there are states such as the United States, the United Kingdom or France, where the share of Romanian migrant workers does not exceed 1.25% of total active migrants on the labor market and 0.3% of the total employed population, although the number of Romanian migrants increased in 2017 compared to 2010 in the United Kingdom and France.

There are some factors that influence this mobility:

- the occupation profile is complementary, migrants accepting jobs, denied by natives; however, the reputation of the Romanians in the labor market is good, being appreciated, even preferable to other categories of migrants (in construction are preferred in Israel and Germany; in the medical field (OECD 2015) in Italy and Belgium, where almost 50% and 18% of foreign nurses are Romanian, in France over 16% of foreign doctors are Romanian, and in the United Kingdom there are 2140 Romanian doctors, etc.)

- starting with the pre-accession period and later in the post-accession period when it was liberalized (gradually and / or selectively or even totally in some Member States) the labor market for Romanian workers, there was an increase in the share of those with a high level of education, but not necessarily the quality of employment in the country of destination, which is why the proportion of over-qualified persons has increased. (OECD 2018).

- there is greater availability for employment in marginal jobs on the labor market of destination countries, from "dedicated" jobs to migrants, to common jobs, but for which migrants are preferred to natives, being less paid (construction, transport, etc.).

Table 2. The impact of Romanian migrants on the destination country's labor market

	Share of RO migrants in total migrants country X,%		Share of RO emigrants in total destination country's labour force X,%		Wage differential <sup>1</sup>		Migrant unemployment rate, %	
	2017	2010	2017	15,7	2017	2010	2017	2010
Italy	17,65	18,22	4,031	29,8	3,861	4,97	15,7	11,5
Spain	10,48	11,75	2,854	7,7	3,698	4	29,8	19,9
Germany	5,09	1,25	1,380	6,8	5,020	7,7	7,7	10,8
Hungary	46,86	51,36	4,432	5	1,275	1,77	6,8	7,5
USA	0,38	0,4	0,104	4,3	7,188	7,16	5	9,6
Israel	5,32	6,19	2,674	6,4	3,533	3,62	4,3	7,2
UK	1,18	0,76	0,268	7,5	6,138	5,37	6,4	8

<sup>1</sup> Diferențialul de salarii dintre țara X și România a fost calculat ca raport dintre salariul mediu anual al țării X și salariul mediu anual din România.

Canada	1,30	1,34	0,461	10,7	5,840	7,27	7,5	8,1
Austria	5,51	4,35	1,577	17,3	5,460	5,54	10,7	8,2
France	1,25	0,81	0,297	17	4,852	5,58	17,3	14,5
Belgium	5,43	1,48	1,142	32	5,729	6,59	17	17,1
Greece	3,64	4	0,941	6,8	2,291	2,32	32	16,2

Source: Author's calculation based on World Bank data Available :  
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>.  
[http://www.ilo.org/travail/areasofwork/wages-and-income/WCMS\\_142568/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/travail/areasofwork/wages-and-income/WCMS_142568/lang--en/index.htm).

Mobility for work currently depends more on the opportunities and comparative advantages of employment than on distance (Bunduchi et al. 2019). Digitization has allowed real-time communication and practically eliminated constraints on distance, as well as the development of means of transport and the promotion of flexible forms of employment.

### 3. Access of the Romanians to the labor market of the member states

With the start of Romania's accession to the European Union, according to the experience of other states that joined in 2004, fears appeared in the developed countries of the Union (EU15) on migratory flows from Romania that would cause tensions on the labor market, both in number and by accepting lower salaries, with effects on the natives - the risk of vacancy and the reduction of the average salary level.

This was the reason why a number of EU Member States have introduced the controlled (monitored and limited) traffic regime within a maximum of 7 years, as required by EU law. Some countries have applied

restrictions for shorter periods of time (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Hungary have applied a restrictive circulation regime abolished in 2009, but in 2012 Spain has reintroduced restrictions by invoking the increase in unemployment) and others for longer periods (Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg have lifted the restrictions only from the beginning of 2012).

And Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria and France have decided to restrict access to the internal labor market for Romanian migrants for the entire period of up to 7 years, with few exceptions for highly qualified staff.

During this period, the media in the destination countries promoted repeated campaigns against migrants in several countries, such as France, the United Kingdom, etc., in which was promoted a distorted picture of the negative effects of immigrants on the labor market and society in general.

They even mentioned that migrants only aim at accessing social care systems without the intention to work. At the end of this period (January 1, 2014), there were again fears about the "invasion" of the Romanians, but they did not materialize. (Vasile et al. 2013).

Chart 2 Crime rate evolution in UK, 1983-2018



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2019

The same thing happened in the United Kingdom, where the British press and government initiated an entire anti-Romanian immigrant campaign. Knowing the influence it has on citizens, the British press speculated that with the arrival of a wave of both Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants, the crime rate will increase, linking this theory to the year 2004, when 10 eastern states joined the European Union, and with

that the number of immigrants in the UK has increased. So in the period 2004-2009 in the British press, there were 691 articles related to the theme of Romanian immigrants (Fox et al. 2012).

Firstly, the media presented in false data and figures, such as the article "Prepare for the Romanians' Invasion" (Daily Express 2006) which announced in 2006 that 450,000 Romanian immigrants are expected

to "invade" the Kingdom Unit, although the official statistics show clearly that in 2010 there were 53081 Romanians, and in 2015 they reached 89402 persons (World Bank 2018). At the same time, in addition to the fake number of newspapers, the titles of newspapers on Romanian immigrants contained terms such as invasion, horde or flood, leading to obvious discrimination and encouraging racism.

These journalistic assessments must be analyzed with caution because, in fact, the opening of the labor market to migrant workers in the new Member States, including Romania, has been gradually achieved, being closely monitored. Thus, we have two periods in the analysis of migration in the context of Romania's accession to the European Union:

- the 2004-2006 pre-accession period, in which access to member countries was restricted by bilateral agreements, even in the first years of Romania's transition to a market economy (eg Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, etc.), the period in which migrant movement was monitored through visas and work permits, labor contracts concluded before arriving in the country of destination, well-defined periods of stay, etc.

This selection of Romanian workers for the labor market of the destination countries was in fact associated with the employment policy of the destination countries, the number and professional profile of the migrants accepted being associated with the needs of the local labor market. The presence of the employment shortage not covered by native workers has generated the availability of employment, demanded by the business needs of the country of destination and not based on the wishes and expectations of migrants.

- 2007-2014, the monitoring period for the opening of the labor market and the gradual liberalization of the movement for the Romanian migrants. Bilateral agreements have been promoted with each of the member countries establishing the labor market monitoring process, from free movement in 2007 to limitations for the entire period allowed by EU legislation, ie 7 years. In fact, free movement was still limited in some countries, so we can not talk about uncontrolled migration or invasion. The number of Romanian migrants was managed by the limits established annually by the receiving states.

In the United Kingdom, the increase from 53 000 to 89 000 was achieved at a time when traffic restrictions were well established and the profile of migrants was strictly defined according to the needs of the labor market of the destination country, on the one hand, job completions, unoccupied by natives, on the other hand, jobs with a deficit in employment by natives (illustrative example is the medical field). In Germany, the number of Romanian migrants increased by more than 300,000 in the period 2010-2015, especially as a result of the bilateral agreement on seasonal workers, the number of contracts depended on the needs of the labor market of the two countries. In

France, the increase in the number of Romanians in the same period was determined by the needs of the French labor market, the authorities reducing the restrictions on jobs with recruitment difficulties.

In addition to discrimination on the labor market - by limiting labor migration, lower salaries compared to native workers, limitations of career development, quasi-generalized over-qualification, etc., Romanian migrant workers have been subjected to exaggerated social pressures, based on isolated cases promoted exaggeratedly by the media than on the official statistics of the destination countries. Such proof of discrimination was the association of Romanian immigrants with the term "crime". A British press study, which comprised over 4,000 articles published by the 19 most important national newspapers in 2012-2013, conducted by the Migration Observatory (2014) showed that references to Romanians had a strong association with crime, gangs of criminals and the poverty of the country of origin. The language used by tabloid newspapers to describe and discuss Romanians has often been centered on crime and antisocial behavior (gang, criminal, beggar, thief), while the statistical data show no direct link between the increase in the number of immigrants Romans and increasing crime.

Romanians and Bulgarians were considered criminals before the accession, as many of them arrived in the UK through illegal methods. Although a person is illegally in a country, he can not be considered a criminal, just because he used illegal methods to reach that country. Illegal access is generally associated with the existence of an alternative to employment in the informal economy, a way of occupying existing in all countries of the world, albeit in very different proportions and shapes. Thus, the press did not emphasize the concrete illegal facts made by the Romanian immigrants, but only presented them as criminals (Carnegie Europe 2014). However, according to official data (Office for National Statistics 2019) of the British authorities, since 2002 and so far, crime rates in the UK have a declining trend, and no significant increases have been recorded either as a result of the accession of the 2004 member states or after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria (Chart 2).

In a Daily Mail (2013) article it is mentioned that for every 1,000 Romanians in London, 183 are arrested. Due to the fact that the number of arrested Romanians does not exceed 700 persons (Table 3), it is assumed that the total number of Romanian migrants does not exceed 3800 persons, while there are actually 103 421 persons. It is useless to mention that "arrested" is different from "convicted" or "defendant" and in many cases the same person has been arrested several times. It went so far that a simple ID check could become an "arrest" if the person is invited to the police station and registered in the database (MAE 2013). Thus, we notice that the number of those sentenced to imprisonment is lower than that of persons arrested. The share of Romanians convicted in total convictions is below 1%

which proves once again that the data presented by the press only had the role of denigrating and discriminating against the Romanian migrants, without any statistical arguments regarding the higher criminality of the Romanians compared to other migrants.

Although official statistics show real data, the British press showed exorbitant figures that Romanians are responsible for 92% of the 2012 ATM frauds (The Daily Express, 2013)

Table 3. Situation of arrests among Romanian migrants in the period 2012-2018, persons

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Arrested romanians	427	649	769	1035	1551	1837	1426
Romanian prisoners	512	588	629	798	619	652	727
Total number of people in prison	83769	85265	84093	84235	85513	83263	82236
Share of Romanians imprisoned in total prisoners,%	0,61	0,68	0,75	0,94	0,72	0,75	0,88

Source: Author's calculation based on Ministry of Justice și Home Office data Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2018/list-of-tables>.

Even if organized crime is a global business and the British press indicates that gangs in Romania are involved in such frauds, official police data shows us a totally distinct situation, namely that of the total of 6,511 ATM frauds, only 5.8% were carried out by Romanian immigrants, and not 92%, as the representatives of the media presented.

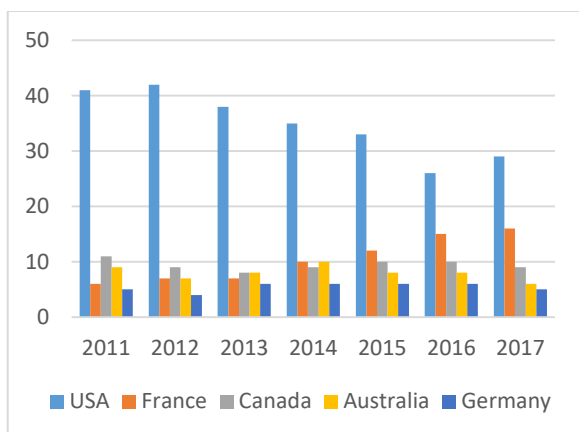
Table 4. Situation of ATM fraud arrests in 2012

Total people arrested	Total Romanians arrested	Percentage,%
6 511	377	5,8

Source: Author's calculation based on Metropolitan Police data. Available: [http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure\\_2013/feb\\_2013/2013010001669.pdf](http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure_2013/feb_2013/2013010001669.pdf)

And the latest annual data show that in 2017 the top five countries for the fraudulent activity of British cards were the USA, France, Luxembourg, Italy and Ireland (Financial Fraud Action 2018), and Romanians were not on the list.

Chart 3. Top five countries for fraud cards occurring in the UK 2011-2017, £ millions



Source: Author's calculation based on Financial Fraud Action data 2015 and 2018

to an increase in the crime rate was a false one. The Romanian anti-immigrant campaign was a denigrating, discriminatory and false-based campaign that does not correspond to the official data of the authorities. Such discriminatory actions against Romanian migrants are not singular in the United Kingdom, in other member states have also appeared, but statistical evidence has not proved the validity of the scale and impact. Such actions are often associated with political discourse during electoral campaigns (BalkanInsight 2018; ENAR 2016; Open Democracy 2013).

Statistical data officially registered in the EU states shows another image, but the discrimination promoted by different sources brings major damage not only to those targeted - migrants - but also to natives in those countries. The fact is that the labor force moves according to the demand of the labor market, and the competition for employment is a natural phenomenon of the competitive economy. Discrimination promoted on the labor market and in the social environment generally only adjusts the efficiency of human resource allocation, with direct effects on business profitability, reduced demand on the consumer goods and services market, and finally adjusts the welfare of all.

The fear of the British, fed by the press, that the increase in the number of Romanian migrants will lead

## Conclusions

Mobility for work is a phenomenon of the current society and the trend is to increase labor force circulation as a form of ensuring the efficient allocation of production factors. In addition, developed countries experiencing an aging population aging require external resources - migrants - to cover the labor market shortage and as a source of functioning of insurance and social security systems. Paying pensions on the PAYG system requires state budget sources from labor-related taxation. In addition, special services are developed for third-age people, as do many other digitization professions.

Ensuring the labor market with the necessary workforce to create an appropriate offer for demand is a perennial need which, under the current conditions, is particularly regulated by the opening of the labor market for migrants because the demographic increase of the native population does not cover the employment deficits. In addition, migrant workers are generally young people whose children are born, raised, live and then work on the destination labor market, helping to improve the demographic deficit.

Although with profound unfavorable effects for less developed countries of origin, labour migration towards more developed countries is a phenomenon with historical roots and deep social motivation.

Since 1990, the number of Romanian migrants has been on the rise, with market globalization and promoting the free movement of labor across the EU. Mobility for work from less developed countries to the most developed is and will be primarily complementarity and not just marginal to substitution. The business environment, through employers, is the one that supports mobility through demand for work, according to the principle of optimal allocation of factors of production. In the first years after accession,

the main European destination countries were Italy and Spain, adding Germany and the UK. The increase in the number of Romanians in Germany and the United Kingdom after 2007-2014 can be explained by the restrictions imposed by the authorities of the two states, which were in force until 2014, to manage the inflows of persons with a well-defined migrant profile depending on the needs of the labor market, from the perspective of the profession and the level of qualification.

If we are to take into account the tendency of relocation of productive activities in developed countries in recent years (see US policy and others), it is expected that migrant workers' flows will increase, both in the form of spatial mobility and teleworking activities. Therefore, the labor market of the developed countries will be increasingly dependent on the migrant labor force, as an economic factor supporting profitability and, indirectly, fueling fiscal revenues from taxes.

Regulating the labor market and industrial relations is the responsibility of the states, but according to universally accepted moral rules this can not be achieved under conditions of economic and social discrimination. The business environment is continuously developing and outperforming the episodic and / or periodic interests of political discourse, predominantly in its electoral stages. Examples such as that in the United Kingdom or France over Romanian migrant workers are not singular but must be treated with social responsibility because adverse effects are much more difficult to manage. The workforce, respectively human capital, requires significant public and private costs associated with education and training, requires time and the business environment is the main designer of its spatial and professional distribution through the demand of the labor market.

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