

MIGRATION OF SPORTS-RELATED PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE. ANALYSING THE CAUSES OF THE PHENOMENON

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Abstract

Migration has been a multidimensional phenomenon, strongly impacting numerous fields of activity in the structure of societies. It is a challenge for the governments of all states, but also a topic to be addressed by specialists of various areas of expertise. This topic must be constantly approached and updated, particularly nowadays when the dynamics of modern societies and the ever-changing labour market generate new economic and social realities. The research endeavours conducted over time have revealed various aspects: from the causes and types of migration, the pull factors or, on the contrary, push factors, to the economic and social effects of migration. Moreover, brain drain, a relevant concern of the governments of many states, has led to numerous debates and opposing perspectives among researchers and stakeholders in various countries. We witness brain drain in sports area as well, where this phenomenon displays certain particularities which will be further addressed in this research.

The core objective of this paper is to identify the causes and effects of the migration of sports-related professionals as well as the potential steps to create a more appealing domestic work environment in order to foster workforce retention. There are also some ancillary objectives correlated with the aforementioned one, such as introducing the fundamental elements of certain representative theories belonging to various paradigms on migration and brain drain, as well as demonstrating the need to rethink the meaning of brain drain collocation in that it must be updated or even replaced with other collocations.

Research methodology derives precisely from the paper objectives: in order to meet the objectives set, we refer to qualitative research to interpret the data collected from specialist literature reviews and from some semi-structured interviews with Romanian coaches working abroad.

To sum up, studying migration must be a constant concern for all governments and should help strengthen the public development strategies without infringing upon the individual rights and freedoms set forth by international treaties.

Key Words: *migration, brain drain, migration theories, migration causes, migration effects, sports-related migration.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout its existence, every society undergoes numerous changes driven by a series of factors, phenomena and processes. Sometimes, the impact of a single phenomenon or the emergence of a new one is enough to generate changes across multiple fields of activity, reshaping the very structure of the society. One such phenomenon that brings about deep, long-term transformations is migration, including the migration of highly skilled workforce, commonly known as brain drain.

Notwithstanding its role as a highly relevant research topic of current interest for researchers from various areas of expertise (such as geography, anthropology, history, sociology, economics, political science, psychology, juridical sciences and international relations, and the like), it is not an exclusively modern phenomenon. Migration is not a defining feature of contemporary society, but a deeply embedded element of human civilisation shaping its development since the earliest times. Therefore, migration may be deemed as a constant throughout human history, gaining the researchers' attention in modern times, particularly in the first two decades of the 20th century, and undergoing further analysis following the emergence of the *global village*.

As a topic of current interest with significant demographic, economic and social implications, migration has become the focus of extensive research, being tackled in numerous empirical studies, articles, Doctoral theses, and the like. Despite the wealth of studies conducted, this phenomenon still leads to debates and opposing perspectives among researchers.

Research conducted over time has covered various aspects, such as factors underlying migration phenomenon, the social groups involved, the expectations and goals of the migrant, the classification of migrants based on their social and professional backgrounds, the migration volume (number of migrants), the geographic extent of migration (encompassing both emigration and immigration regions), migration dynamics, migratory flows, the impact of remittances, the effects of migration on the

labour market both in the countries of origin and in the host countries, the effects of migration on demographics, religion, culture, social dynamics, and the like. Besides these research topics, *brain drain – the migration of highly skilled workforce* – captures the attention of researchers worldwide, eliciting both supportive and critical perspectives.

1.1. Migration: meaning, theories, taxonomy

Migration, a phenomenon that currently impacts all states worldwide can be regarded, as researcher D.S. Massey asserts, as a way of life.

The widely accepted definition of the *migration* concept, as outlined in the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, is 'the large-scale movement of tribes or populations from one territory to another, driven by economic, social, political or environmental factors' (***, DEX, 1998, p. 632).

Although clear, this definition fails to provide a complete picture in that it does not specify whether the movement is periodic, permanent or occasional, nor does it clarify its purpose or whether it occurs within or outside the national borders. Moreover, if we consider the demographic perspective, it is essential to distinguish between key concepts such as *total population movement*, *natural movement*, and *migratory movement*.

Experts in population sociology and demography areas agree that *total population movement* includes both *natural movement* (birth rate / death rate) and *migratory movement* (the relocation of individuals outside the locality or the national border). Therefore, from this standpoint, migration is a type of population movement, an essential component within the broader framework of total population dynamics.

From a sociological perspective, researcher G. Ferréol and his collaborators define migration as 'the movement of a population from one country to another or from one region to another.' (Ferréol, G., 1998, p. 51). A closer examination of this definition reveals that the migration concept is essentially tied to the spatial or territorial movement of the population, without considering other aspects.

Romanian sociologists, C. Zamfir and L. Vlăsceanu, highlight multiple facets of migration, defining it as 'the movement of large groups of individuals from one

territorial area to another, followed by a shift in residence and / or engagement in social or economic activities within the new location.’ (Zamfir, C., Vlăsceanu, L., 1998, p. 174). Therefore, migration involves more than just physical relocation, it also includes changes in residence and / or seeking and finding employment within the host area. Hence, migration and geographic / spatial / territorial mobility are not entirely synonymous, as migration concept does not include commuters, seasonal workers or tourists.

The aforementioned definitions clearly fail to display and explain the multiple causes of this phenomenon, the particularities of the migrants, their capacity to adapt to the new economic, social and cultural reality, the migration effects in the country of origin as well as in the host country, and the like. Despite the limitations of various definitions, migration is commonly recognised as a population mobility phenomenon occurring inside or outside the borders of a state, involving the change of residence / workplace for a period exceeding one year. This phenomenon does not include nomadic populations.

Notwithstanding the wealth of studies conducted over time, this complex phenomenon cannot be exhaustively explained. Moreover, due to its dynamics and to the emergence of certain factors, processes, social phenomena (economic crises, pandemics, a shift in mentality, and the like), migration topic requires constant analysis and regular updating.

To substantiate this perspective, we need to explore some of the migration – related theories (the geographic, sociological, economic and pluralistic approaches), its underlying factors, the migration types, but also the shapes this phenomenon takes, such as *brain drain*.

The geographical approach to migration generally focuses on analysing distances, regions, areas of attraction, on examining the geographical disparities (factors overlooked by economic theories), the demographic structures, on assessing the environmental effects and regional transformations, on analysing the changes in population composition (age distribution, gender ratios, education level, professional background, ethnic diversity and religious affiliations), but also on identifying the underlying causes of permanent migration. This approach is based on several influential

theories such as *E. G. Ravenstein’s Laws of Migration*, 1885; *Gravitational theories* (J. Q. Stewart, 1941; G. K. Zipf, 1946; W. Isard, 1960; I. S. Lovry, 1971; and the like) and *Mobility transition theory* (V. Zelinsky, 1971).

The father of migration theories, geographer *E. G. Ravenstein*, is the one who formulated the first seven laws of migration in two articles, subsequently expanding them to eleven. His research endeavours over time have focused on identifying the connection between the geographical and economic characteristics and population redistribution; the relationship between the geographical, social and technical distances and migration volume; the ratio between a country’s size and the volume of incoming migrants; the migration / living standard ratio; the relation between migration distances and the gender of the migrant, the impact of migration on the host territory; the fundamental causes of migration (push factors and pull factors), and the like. By means of the two articles, Ravenstein aimed at demonstrating that migration is a gradual process driven by geographical proximity. Notwithstanding the drawbacks, the laws of migration developed by the geographer provided the foundation for numerous subsequent theories and research endeavours.

The economic approach to migration develops on two levels, the macroeconomic level and the microeconomic level. The macroeconomic dimension is supported by *The Classical theory* (A. Lewis, 1954), *The Neoclassical theory* (J. Harris, M. Todaro, 1970), *World systems theory* (I. Wallerstein, 1974), *Cumulative causation theory* (D. Massey, 1990), *Institutional theory* (D. Massey et al., 1995), while the microeconomic dimension is based on theories such as *Neoclassical theory* (L. A. Sjaastad, 1962, M. Todaro, 1970, G. J. Borjas, 1980), *New economic theory of workforce migration* (O. Stark, D. E. Bloom, 1984), *Relative deprivation theory* (O. Stark, M. Taylor, 1989), *Migration theory beyond wage differences* (O. Stark, 2003), and the like.

This approach is generally grounded on the study of economic factors, of labour demand and supply across various geographical regions, on an income-related comparative analysis between the country of origin and the host country, on identifying labour market deficiencies in a certain area and advancing corrective mechanisms to address these imbalances, on studying the economic effects of migration on both the

host country and the country of origin, on assessing the value of remittances and their impact on the economic system of the country of origin, on analysing the relation between migration and the development of a dual labour market, on analysing migrant networks and migration typology, and the like.

The sociological approach aims at examining the causes of migration, its effects, including, but not limited to social, cultural and economic effects, and the pull and push factors. Additionally, it emphasizes the role of migration networks in initiating, facilitating and sustaining migration as well as in integrating migrants into their new social environment. This approach relies on several theories, as follows: *Theory of intervening opportunities* (S. A. Stouffer, 1962), *Theory of integration / assimilation / acculturation* (R. Redfield, R. Linton, M. Herskovits, 1939; M. Gordon, 1964; A. Portes, S. A. McLeod, R. N. Parker, 1978, M. Pries etc., 1999), *Theory of transnational social spaces* (M. M. Gordon, 1918; R. Portes, 1941; J. Portes etc., 1966), *Theory of push and pull factors* (E. S. Lee, 1966), *Migration network theory* (D. Massey, 1987).

Over time, additional theories have emerged, as follows: *Theory of spatial interaction*, *Human capital theory*, *Transnational migration theory*, *Theory of bispatiality and passionate impulse*, *Theory of migration process phases*, *Theory of migration systems*, *Multidisciplinary theory and mobility transition*, *Theory of new economic order*, *Synthetic theory*, *Institutional theory*, and the like.

Even when focusing solely on these theories, it becomes clear that migration stems from a wide range of influencing factors leading to a comprehensive classification system. The drivers of migration can be categorised based on the defining characteristics of the different historical periods in human development, the social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds from various regions, the occurrence rate of some environmental phenomena, the migrants' expectations, and the like.

For instance, we can consider the push factors mentioned by Everett Lee in his 1966 model, reinterpreting Ravenstein's laws, as underlying causes of migration: *war*; *natural disasters*; *pollution*; *insecurity*; *desertification*; *hunger or drought*; *mental attitude*; *lack of opportunities*; *desire for more*; *politics-related fear*; *persecution*; *death threats*; *inadequate living conditions*; *discrimination*; *sadness*; *loss of wealth*; *poverty*;

slavery or forced labour; unemployment; harassment; lack of affection; desire for political and religious freedom; deficient healthcare; illiteracy; limited prospects for building a family, and the like. We need to mention that migration decisions are seldom driven by a single factor. Therefore, the underlying causes of migration, the reasons determining individuals or groups of individuals to leave their countries are remarkably diverse, making it challenging to thoroughly encapsulate and analyse them. (Kuptsch, Oishi, 1995; Paganoni, Todisco, 1995; Salt, 1997; Koser, Salt, 1997; Boulier, 1999; Brandi, 2001; Todisco, 2002; Francovici, 2000, and the like). However, economic factors often play a decisive role in shaping migration choices, at least for some individuals.

Bearing in mind solely the aforementioned causes, we can distinguish between various types of migration, including individual and collective migration, forced and voluntary migration, permanent, temporary and circular migration, legal and illegal migration, internal migration (occurring within the borders of the same country) and international migration (occurring outside the state borders), and the like.

Italian researchers, E. Todisco, M. C. Brandi and G. Tattolo argue that present-day migration can be broadly classified into two main categories: *economic* (driven by economic factors) and *noneconomic* (driven by factors of a different nature, such as family reunification, healthcare services, pursuit of studies, seeking better post-retirement living conditions, marriage-related factors, adoption-related factors, and the like). (Todisco, E., Brandi, M. C., Tattolo, G., 2003)

All these previously introduced aspects reflect the need to approach migration in a flexible manner and from pluridisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, for it is a global, ever-changing phenomenon, significantly impacting all social systems and subsystems. It is the point in which anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics and other disciplines meet to provide a deeper understanding of the human essence and of the current world dynamics.

1.2. Workforce international migration and *brain drain* phenomenon

Migration, including international migration, is a natural, ever-changing phenomenon, having experienced substantial expansion in recent years. For instance,

the 2024 United Nations Report reads that “there are about 281 million international migrants in the world, which equates to 3.6% of the global population.”
(<https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024>)

Over time, both the number of individuals leaving their countries and the geographical paths migrants take when relocating have fluctuated, making it increasingly challenging to establish precise migration balances. In this regard, the inconsistencies in the reports published by EUROSTAT, OECD, the UN as well as in the experimental calculations conducted by the National Institute of Statistics reflect these difficulties in establishing a definitive migration balance.
(<https://insse.ro/cms/files/newsletter/2023/fenomenul-migratiei.pdf>)

Beyond these reasonable differences, we have witnessed a constant increase in the number of migrants of both genders, in the last decades, including in Romania. “In 2020, most EU citizens living in other European Union Member States are Romanian citizens (3.1 million individuals or 23.0% of the total EU citizens living in another EU country.”

(https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/tendinte_sociale_2.pdf)

A particular aspect of international migration is circular migration: moving from one country to another: “Romanian immigrants registered in states that until 2010 served as significant hubs for workforce absorption, as Italy and Spain, are believed to have later ‘emigrated’ to the United Kingdom and Germany, primarily in search of economic stability and a favourable political climate in the destination countries.”
(https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/tendinte_sociale_2.pdf)

Some individuals migrate for employment opportunities, forming *labour – driven economic migration*. This category includes both unskilled workers and highly educated, qualified professionals (doctors, teachers, researchers, information technology specialists). The migration of skilled professionals is commonly referred to as *brain drain*.

Although the *brain drain* collocation was first documented in a 1962 report by the Royal Society of London, referring to English scientists migrating to the United States of America, brain drain phenomenon dates back to the Middle Ages when art, architecture, historiography, literature in the Islamic world and Renaissance Italy were

enriched by the expertise of specialists from the Byzantine Empire. Therefore, brain drain is an age-old phenomenon, continuously shaping societies across the globe.

An analysis of the *brain drain* collocation across multiple dictionaries reveals a common defining feature, namely the advanced education and highly specialised training of migrants (*highly qualified personnel, qualified personnel, scientists and engineers, specialists*, and the like). Therefore, the emphasis is not placed on the act of leaving a location or a profession, but on the high level of education and professional expertise of the migrants: “many educated or highly skilled individuals leave a specific place or profession and relocate, in search of better opportunities” (<https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/brain-drain>); “large numbers of educated and very skilled people leave their own country to live and work in another one” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/brain-drain>); ”educated or highly skilled individuals leaving a country, economic sector or area of expertise to live and work elsewhere.” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brain%20drain>)

In Romanian, *brain drain* collocation carries a negative connotation, for the term *drain* is associated with concepts such as *flight, refuge, exodus, expatriation, exile, escape, getting away, wandering*. For this reason, we believe the collocations forwarded by Italian researchers, E. Todisco, M. C. Brandi and G. Tattolo, *brain circulation* or *brain movement* (Todisco, E., Brandi, M. C., Tattolo, G., 2003, page 115), or even *cyclical movement of specialists* would be more suitable. The latter collocation advanced by us offers a broader perspective as it encompasses both highly qualified individuals who have completed university studies, and non-higher educated individuals who possess exceptional skills in various fields such as arts, sports, music, and the like. Furthermore, due to their profession or vocation, these specialists have the opportunity to practice, to market their expertise in any state, to discover other societies and cultures and to choose where they wish to live.

The migration of specialists has sparked intense debates and has led to opposing perspectives among analysts. On the one hand, some view this phenomenon as detrimental to the migrants’ countries of origin (loss of human capital, loss of specialists and of funds invested in their education); on the other hand, others highlight the positive

effects of the phenomenon for the countries of origin of the migrants (decreased unemployment rate, the economic benefits of remittances).

Given the importance of qualified professionals to host countries, many states develop recruitment policies. For instance, in Europe, five distinct elite recruitment models have emerged, as follows: the *English model* which focuses on specialists in humanities area, the *French model*, designed to cultivate an elite that is culturally and socially distinct from political and bureaucratic personnel, the *juridical model*, focusing on law specialists, the *Italian model*, open for individuals with academic credentials and significant experience in public administration or politics, and the *American model*, which covers both academic qualifications, professional experience and the relationships with the interest groups that constantly engage with “the bureaucratic system established by specialists over time.” (Ezra, S., Henri M., 2001, p. 235–237, 273).

Some researchers argue that in addition to doctors, teachers, engineers, information technology specialists, the brain drain collocation should encompass a broader range of professionals such as ”scientists, researchers and scholars; international advisors; employees of global organisations; multinational managers; professionals across various industries; clergy members; artists, actors, entertainers and tourism professionals; athletes; skilled workers; military service members; as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students.” (Todisco, E., Brandi, M. C., Tattolo, G., 2003, p. 120).

Due to their competences, skills and abilities, these specialists can secure employment abroad with greater ease. Unlike others, they can choose the countries where they wish to work, build their lives and establish permanent residency.

1.3. Migration of Romanian coaches

The post-1989 Romania has undoubtedly experienced a significant rise in migration. Individuals of various ages and backgrounds, both men and women, have left the country. This wave includes both unskilled and highly educated and highly qualified individuals.

The latter includes some specialists in sports and physical education. Commonly referred to as sportspersons, the specialists in this field may be divided into two categories: individuals engaged in professional competitions in a particular sports branch (athletes) and those working in the sports industry (coaches, kinesiotherapists, doctors, nutritionists, sports managers, and the like).

Coaches, often former competitive athletes, are professionals qualified in one or several sports disciplines, who are responsible for training athletes and teams. Naturally, every sports branch has its own characteristics and requirements, but the coach's influence extends beyond technical instruction – they are the *professional father*, the most important person in the life of an athlete / a team. Prior to designing a training programme, a coach must recognise the individuals' innate talent and motor potential, guiding them toward the right sport. A coach provides unwavering support, becoming the person an athlete leans on, a shoulder to cry on, the one to motivate them to continue after experiencing injury, disappointment or failure, but also the one who shares their joy when winning. The coach must be the guide who gently enforces discipline, while also supporting, encouraging, understanding, appreciating their athletes and recognising their achievements.

From a professional standpoint, the coach is responsible for developing the annual training plan, organising the athletes' activity and establishing performance criteria. They provide the necessary clarifications during training sessions and display correct movement patterns, closely oversee the instructional process and the performance of the given tasks, lead the technical and tactical preparation meetings, evaluate each athlete's progress, check the competition calendar and select the athletic events to be attended by the athlete / team, plan training camps, work closely with medical professionals to assess and forecast athletes' fatigue levels. Moreover, the coach stays up to date with advancements in the sports branch concerned – whether technical, methodological, competition-related and the like, conducts SWOT analyses to evaluate their athletes' or team's strengths and weaknesses as well as those of their opponents, in order to identify opportunities, minimise risks and improve the competition – related strategies. Furthermore, they accompany athletes to scheduled competitions and

coordinate the efforts of assistant coaches, kinesiotherapists, sports doctors and other supporting specialists.

The achievements of Romanian athletes and teams over the years have proven that Romania has been producing exceptional coaches. However, unfortunately, after 1989 (and even earlier, as is the case of Marta and Bella Karoly), some of the most prominent figures in sports coaching have left the country, a shift that has undeniably impacted the subsequent performance of Romanian athletes.

Although we did not intend to compile a full list, we will nonetheless highlight a few names of Romanian athletes and coaches who have reached notable results in their host countries, as follows: Ștefan Kovacs, Ilie Balaci, Mircea Lucescu, Cosmin Olăroiu, Marius Șumudică, and the like (football); Teodora Ungureanu, Celestina Popa, Andreea Răducan, Emilia Eberle, Nicușor Pascu, Ștefan Radu, and the like (gymnastics), Gheorghe Sbora, Cezar Drăgăniță, Cristian Zaharia, Cornel Penu, and the like (handball), Ion Geantă, and the like (tennis), Andrei Iosep, and the like (water polo), Noemi Lung Zaharia, and the like (swimming), Dragomir Cioroșlan, and the like (weight lifting), Maricica Puică, Ion Puică, Valentin Anghel, Carol Șanta, Liliana Bîră Hofer, Claudiu Șușelescu, Nicolae Voicu, Adrian Ghioroaie, Bedros Bedrosian, and the like (track and field events).

All these Romanian coaches, alongside many others who have pursued their career abroad, have played a vital role in shaping the sports landscape of their host countries, earning titles and medals that these nations proudly celebrate. We will further share a few notable examples in this respect:

Mircea Lucescu, a football coach with an impressive record of over 32 trophies, has built an extraordinary career across Italy, Turkey and Ukraine, earning the utmost respect of all the football players he has guided: [Galatasaray](#) won the UEFA Super cup, reached the second phase of the Champions League and was crowned champion of Turkey; [Şahtar Donetsk](#) won eight Ukrainian championship titles. These are just a few standout moments from his brilliant career.

Cosmin Olăroiu, a football coach since 2000, has built an impressive career across the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and China, resulting in a remarkable list

of achievements: in 2008, he led Al-Hilal to winning the Saudi Premier League title and the Saudi Crown Prince Cup. In 2009, his team won the Saudi Crown Prince Cup again.

After relocating to the United States of America, swimmer Noemi Lung Zaharia, a silver medalist at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, became the Director of the Aquatic and Fitness Center at Miami Dade College North Campus in Miami, Florida, and a faculty member at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. In 2024, she took on a new role as Director of the Sport Leadership Department and Associate Professor at the United States Sports Academy.

Cristian Zaharia, a former Romanian national handball player, transitioned into coaching after migrating to the United States of America. From 2001 to 2003, he served as head coach of the U.S. men's national handball team, leading them in the Pan American Games.

Cornel Penu is widely regarded as Romania's greatest handball goalkeeper. After leaving the country, he performed his coaching activity in [Marrakech](#), Morocco, and later in Sedan, France.

Claudiu Șușelescu, a former Romanian competitor in track and field events, who migrated to the United States of America, earned multiple awards for excellence in teaching and coaching.

Voicu Nicolae, a former Romanian competitor in track and field events, migrated to the Netherlands, where he successfully trained Dutch athletes towards achieving national-level results.

Adrian Ghioroiaie, a Romanian competitor in track and field events and subsequently coach, migrated to the United States of America, building a distinguished career there. In 2011, he was named coach of the year by the USTFCCCA for his outstanding coaching at Southern Miss (he played a pivotal role in coaching the Southern Miss's first-ever NCAA champion in any sport).

Bedros Bedrosian, a former Romanian triple jumper, has built an impressive coaching career across multiple countries, including the United States of America, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Dominican Republic, the Sultanate of Oman and Colombia. He currently carries out his activity in India, where his coaching expertise leads to record-breaking performances as follows: Mayouka Jony scored 14.11 metres in long jump, M.

Sreeshankar scored 8.21 metres in long jump, Ankit Sharma scored 8.16 metres in long jump, while Ranjit Machesvary scored 17.30 metres in men’s triple jump.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ELEMENTS AND RESEARCH OUTCOMES

All these prominent figures of Romanian sports have chosen to migrate and have achieved success abroad. The question that arises concerns the reasons behind their decision to leave. In order to identify these underlying factors, we referred to a qualitative research method – the semi-structured interview, participated in by thirteen subjects, all of them coaches working outside the Romanian borders.

By employing this method, we aimed at attaining several objectives, as follows: identifying the reasons underlying the decision of certain Romanian coaches to migrate and pursue their career abroad, as well as determining whether there is a connection between their decision to migrate and some of the push factors identified by Everett Lee.

The interviews have revealed several key insights: the subjects, currently coaches and former athletes with outstanding achievements in their respective sports branches, either individually or as part of a team, have carried out their coaching activity in more than two foreign countries since 1989; each participant has spent more than a year working abroad; their choice of migration destination was not influenced by selecting a country with friendly ties to their homeland, nor did they work within the *secondary labour market* (as defined in the Labour market segmentation theory); three of the interviewed coaches have decided to settle permanently outside Romania, six of them returned but expressed interest in migrating again for coaching opportunities, while four of them remain undecided about whether to return or stay abroad indefinitely. Five coaches, excluding those who have permanently relocated, moved their families to the host countries, while the rest left their families in Romania.

In point of the reasons behind the decision to migrate, we have identified several relevant aspects. Given the fact that all the interviewed coaches enjoy international professional recognition and possess extensive experience allowing them to achieve financial stability, we can rule out economic hardship as a potential migration

underlying driver. Similarly, their decision is not influenced by the need to escape war or natural disasters. Therefore, their motivation is not rooted in primary needs, as outlined in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (physiological, safety and belonging needs), but rather in deeper aspirations.

Consequently, we have identified several infrastructure-related issues affecting sports facilities: the continuous deterioration of sports halls and sports fields; outdated and insufficient equipment that compromises the safety and physical integrity of the athletes; the lack of adequate resources to meet all learning and skill development-related objectives, even in properly equipped training centres; the lack of state-of-the-art technologies necessary in competitive sports; inadequate recovery and rehabilitation facilities for athletes; the lack of specialised training environments tailored for elite athletes.

Other underlying factors cover the relationships between key figures in sports: coaches, athletes and athletes’ parents. More specifically, issues include lower-category coaches failing to support senior-level coaches, ego-driven rivalries among coaches; the lack of essential psychological and behavioural traits in some young aspirants, such as perseverance, patience and self-discipline in achieving their goals; excessive parental involvement in children’s sports activities in that some parents set unrealistic expectations in terms of length of training and desired achievements, undermining the authority of coaches, while others fail to provide adequate support for children who wish to pursue sports and be competitive.

In relation to interpersonal dynamics, all interviewed coaches have mentioned the desire to escape a patronage – based system, as core motivation for leaving the country. Within this system, access to resources and positions is secured through nepotism, personal alliances or political affiliations, rather than based on merit and professional expertise: leadership roles are often held by individuals who fail to possess the competence and energy required to drive the development of Romanian sports sector.

Other underlying factors bear a systemic nature and include the lack of vision and engagement from high-ranking state officials, the lack of a clear and well-defined legal framework that ensures predictability, security and motivation for athletes,

coaches and other sports professionals (sports doctors, kinesiotherapists, nutritionists, and the like), ambiguous social and economic policies, the lack of structured programmes, collaborative efforts and international exchange programmes aimed at broadening the experience of both coaches and athletes, unequal media coverage of various sports branches, as well as unequal compensation for athletes and coaches (based on sports category).

In addition to all the foregoing, the mindset of certain individuals / communities is addressed: some parents unjustifiably exempt their children from physical education classes, while others promote the idea that sports are merely a pastime for academically challenged children (individuals who experience learning difficulties) or only accessible to those coming from financially privileged families, families capable of affording high-quality equipment, renowned coaches, participation in various competitive events, and the like. In fact, these issues can be summarised in a few key points, as follows: the lack of public recognition for coaches alongside the athletes they have trained and have successfully guided towards achieving remarkable outcomes, and the general disinterest of state authorities in acknowledging and supporting the endeavours of coaches.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Migration (including brain drain) may be deemed as a constant throughout human history, a global phenomenon, a topic to be addressed by specialists of various areas of expertise, a challenge for the governments of all states, but also a concern for certain international organisations responsible for developing European and global policies aimed at addressing the challenges of contemporary migration.

Nowadays, globalisation and the expansion of international labour markets lead to new migration patterns: increased territorial mobility, higher migration frequency, shifts in migration routes, greater diversity among migrants and evolving motivation for migration. Additionally, recent decades have witnessed a rise in circular migration, but also a noticeable increase in specialists working across two or more countries within their areas of expertise.

In the early days of humanity, migration is primarily driven by the need for survival – securing food and water, escaping wars and avoiding natural disasters. Over

time, new influencing factors have emerged, including economic opportunities, professional recognition, self-fulfillment and personal growth. As migration continues to evolve, Everett Lee's list of push factors must be updated to reflect these expanded motivations.

In case of skilled workforce migration, we can identify a different migrant profile, unique migration routes and specific motivations underlying the decision to relocate.

Coaches, as specialists in certain sports branches, belong to the category of qualified professionals with both national and international careers, often former competitive athletes. They embody what Inkes describes as the *modern man* – courageous individuals, confident in their abilities, driven by self-actualisation, open to new experiences and committed to continuous learning.

In the case of these professionals, migration is often circular, lasting for either a short or extended period, depending on the length of contract (whether for a single season or for multiple seasons). This movement enables them not only to broaden their experience, but also to share knowledge and expertise with others.

Based on the interviews conducted, we have found that financial reasons are no longer the primary driving force behind migration decisions; instead, factors such as job satisfaction, self-actualisation and personal development have taken precedence. Naturally, these factors are further complemented by other factors of a different nature.

All the factors mentioned in this research could serve as a foundation for Romanian authorities in redefining the strategy for the development and promotion of Romanian sports.

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