

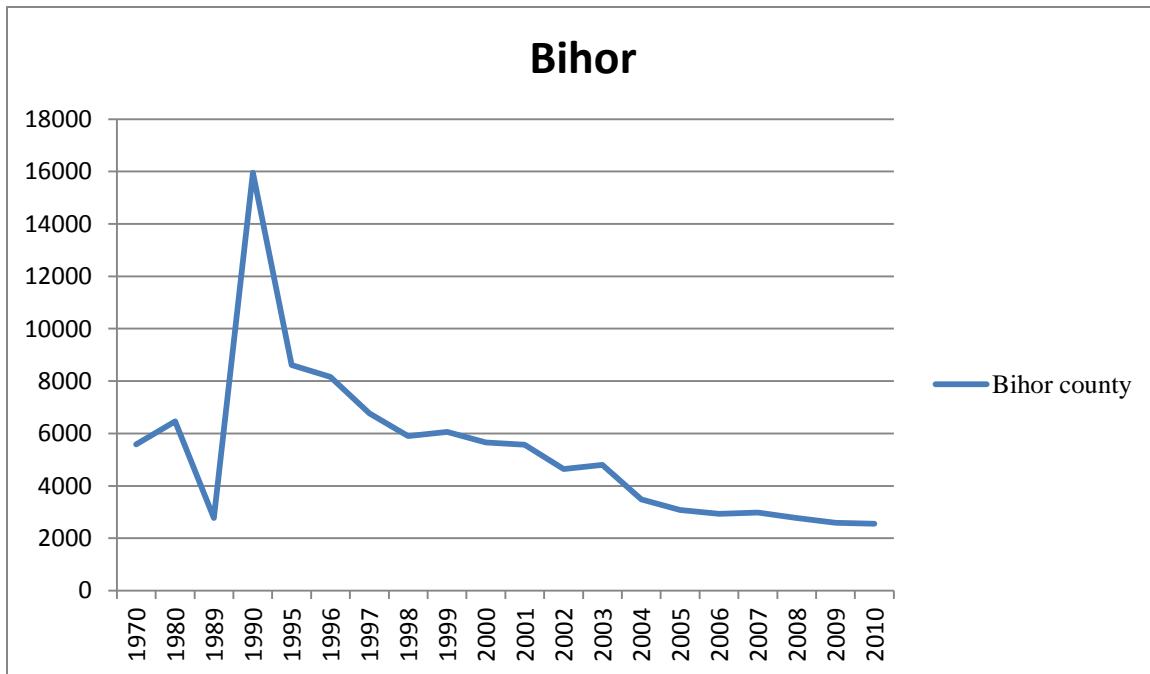
Contraception in young people and teenagers in Romania  
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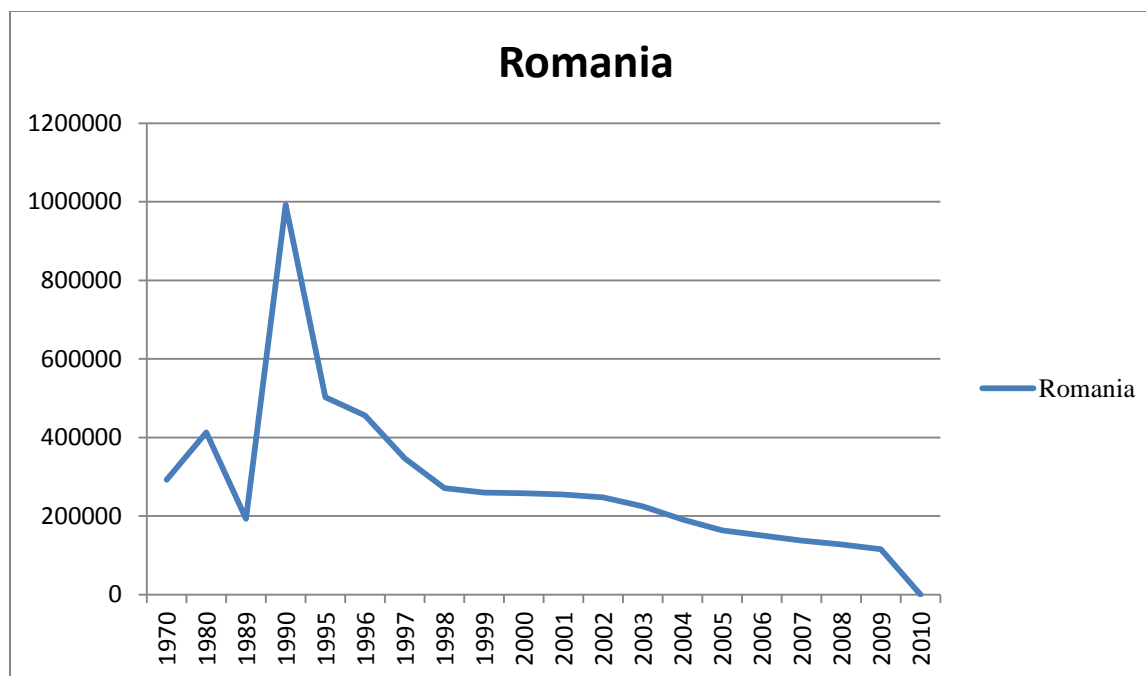
The interdiction of abortion, and of any means of contraception in the last 25 years of the Ceausescu regime, not only have left tens of thousands of mourning families, women mutilated for life from empirical abortions, and long-lasting distortions in the collective mentality.

More than 20 years after the fall of communism and, implicitly, of its unhappy experiment of its demographic policy, the number of unwanted pregnancies in Romania is still too high. Unwanted pregnancy in an adolescent or young woman often translates into the use of abortion as the worst means of family planning or maybe, even worse, in infant abandonment, their number amounting to about 4.000/year in 2005.

My presentation attempts to analyze the social, economic, educational causes and, last but not least, those related to the collective psychology that led to this situation.

The situation of abortions between 1970-2010, in Bihor county and in Romania, is as follows:





In 1994 the National Family Planning Network was founded, which now includes 211 offices, with a number of consultations only 462,000 in 2010. The family planning activity was included in the national Program for maternal and child health, which is currently in progress.

In 1999 there developed The Study of reproductive health in Romania, by the Ministry of Health and several international organizations UNFPA, UNICEF, USAID, JSI R & T, SDC, WHO, IOMC, which revealed:

- 99% of women have heard of at least one modern contraceptive method
- 98% have knowledge of COC
- 93% have knowledge of condoms
- 91% have knowledge of IUD
- 93% know at least one empirical method
- 85% have knowledge about periodic abstinence
- 72% have information about tubal ligation

Women in urban areas are more informed than those in rural areas: 25% more informed on surgical sterilization, 71% more informed on spermicides, 11% more informed on the COC and the IUD.

In 2004, Romania ranked first in Europe with regard to the number of abortions, considered as a means of family planning with 0.84 abortions per woman, between 1993-2004. In the same period, 58% of women between 14 and 44 used a contraceptive method, but only 34% a modern method of contraception.

In 2005 there were 520 pregnancies in mothers under 15 years and over 29,000 births in mothers between 15 and 19. (Romania ranks second after the UK - more than 50,000 births). 90% of pregnant teenagers resorted to abortion, and 10% have abandoned the child in hospital.

In 2008 over 50% of women did not protect themselves from an unwanted pregnancy, 128,000 abortions were recorded, out of which 10% in adolescents.

In 2009 UNICEF study shows that 25% of young people did not use any form of contraception, the abortion rate in Romania being of 78 in 100 women of childbearing age, recording 350 abortions a day. 88% of women had information about contraception, and, still, only 10% used them. Romania ranked first in Europe with 8,500 births per year among minors, 43 mothers in 1,000 being minors. 14% of sexually active women used COC and 32% are in the age group 15-19 years.

Compared to 1990-1995 (cca.400 per month), the number of women who resort to family planning offices for advice, now dropped to half (200 per month).

The consequence is that Romania ranked third in Europe in 2010, with regard to the number of abortions and first with regard to ignorance of modern contraceptive methods (about 50% of the general population).

In 2010 over 60% of sexually active adolescents between 15-18 years never used contraceptive methods (a sample of 1,056 adolescents in Romania). Over 60% of adolescents have used natural contraception, 24% of women used at least once emergency contraception, 84.3% of women of childbearing age used at least one contraceptive method, 94.1% know the condom, 87.8% know the contraceptive pill, but 20% of women use no protection at all. Of all women of childbearing age, only 9% use COCs.

What are causes that led to this situation? Psychosocial causes:

- The interdiction of abortion and contraception in communist Romania, for a quarter of a century

- the liberalization of voluntary abortion in 1990 was perceived as a right that was won

- The communist propaganda, which presented COC as an extremely harmful method to women (fattening, serious hormonal disorders, hirsutism, liver and heart diseases, IUD - produce uterine cancer, condoms being considered immoral). It caused distortions of the collective psychology that persist even today.

- The leaflets of birth control pills contain even today a long list of side effects, most of them highly improbable, designed to protect drug companies from any legal consequence, frightening women and “confirming” the false truths and persistent fears of pro-natalist propaganda of the communist state.

What can be done?

- Education at all levels: in schools, in offices of family planning and gynecology, in the media (television, magazines for women, etc.).

- Emphasizing the idea that abortion is the most dangerous method of family planning, that unwanted pregnancy is one of the most dangerous situations for a young woman, regardless of how it ends and that any method designed to prevent its occurrence is preferable.