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***Assessment of the Labour Force and Employment
Situation in SATU MARE County, Romania***

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

AGES ASSOCIATION



CONTENTS

1. GENERAL INFORMATION	3
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	3
3. DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY	4
4. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKFORCE	5
5. MAIN CHALLENGES ON THE LABOUR MARKET	13
6. ADULT EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN A LABOUR MARKET IN THE CHANGE.....	13
7. WORKFORCE CHANGE DUE TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE	19
8. LABOUR MARKET TRENDS BASED ON SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS.....	20
9. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS	21
10. REFERENCES	25

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Country:** Romania
- **County/region:** Satu Mare
- **Partner organization:** AGES ASSOCIATION
- **Date of submission of the report:** 19.05.2025

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to analyze in depth the existing data on the workforce and working conditions in Satu Mare County, Romania, with a special focus on the changes generated by the current challenges. Among these, the accelerated development of artificial intelligence, the economic and social consequences of the war in Ukraine, but also the impact of other global phenomena, such as migration or recent economic crises, are major factors influencing the structure and dynamics of the local labor market.

The main objective of the study is to provide an assessment, based on updated statistical data, of the main trends observed on the labor market in Satu Mare County. This includes analysing changes in the composition of the workforce (e.g. increasing share of workers in sectors such as information technology or logistics services), identifying structural challenges related to employment (such as skills shortages or an ageing workforce) and assessing new emerging trends such as the expansion of remote work or the digitalisation of hiring processes.

At the same time, the study aims to support specific interventions by public authorities and socio-economic actors in the region, providing relevant interpretations of labour market data. The aim will be to formulate recommendations adapted to local realities, aiming at both increasing employment, adapting the educational offer to the needs of the labour market, and promoting a faster and more effective integration of vulnerable groups (e.g. young NEETs, migrant workers, Ukrainian refugees).

In addition, the study will help identify opportunities for local economic development by correlating labour market developments with innovation, entrepreneurship and investment initiatives in sectors with growth potential. It will also examine how Satu Mare County can competitively adapt to European and global trends, by stimulating continuous training and the renewal of the skills of the workforce.

The study provides a comprehensive picture, based on concrete data and analysis of the dynamics of the labor market in Satu Mare County, so as to facilitate proactive measures adapted to the new economic and social realities.

3. DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

- **Data collection period:** January 2023 – May 2025
- **Methodology used for data analysis:**

Within the study of the analysis of the labor force and employment conditions in Satu Mare County, with a focus on the changes generated by current factors such as the development of artificial intelligence and the consequences of the war in Ukraine, an extensive activity was carried out to gather statistical data from official sources, in order to substantiate a clear and objective assessment of the dynamics of the labor market. This stage included the extraction and processing of labour force information from national and local statistical reports, complemented by a review of the institutional documents developed by the County Employment Agency, which provide relevant data on job vacancies, unemployment rates and sectors affected by labour shortages. An analysis of migration issues was also carried out to capture how population mobility has influenced the availability of human resources in the region.

- **Sources consulted:**

National Institute of Statistics (INS) for data on employment, unemployment, labor demographics, affected economic sectors.

National Employment Agency (ANOFM) for reports on job vacancies, unemployment rates, integration programs for the unemployed and refugees.

Eurostat for comparative data at European level on employment, migration, skills, adult education.

Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity for national public policies on the labour market, adult education and refugee integration.

European Commission – studies and reports on the impact of artificial intelligence, automation and digital transformation on the labour market.

International Labour Organization (ILO) for global perspectives on trends in work, migration and labour market inclusion policies.

INS – TEMPO Online Database – for detailed data at regional/county level on employment, unemployment, labor force structure.

Reports of the Satu Mare County Council for local economic development and employment strategies.

POCU (Human Capital Operational Programme) and PEO (Operational Programme for Education and Employment) programmes – information on adult education and professional integration initiatives in Romania.

EURES Romania for data on labour mobility and integration of migrants/refugees.

World Bank and OECD – analyses on labor market reforms in Romania and digitalization and automation trends.

UNHCR Romania (UN Refugee Agency) for data on the number of Ukrainian refugees and their integration into the workforce.

General Inspectorate for Immigration for administrative data on labor immigration.

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) for studies on the new skills needed in the age of AI and digitalisation.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LABOUR FORCE

The analysis of the workforce in Satu Mare County highlights a number of significant trends and challenges in the period 2023–2024, influenced by factors such as technological development, socio-economic changes and the regional geopolitical context.

Total number of employees

The number of employees in Satu Mare County at the end of January 2025 was 85,906 people, an increase of 667 people compared to the end of December 2024 and 1,133 more people compared to the corresponding month of 2024.

The average gross salary in January 2025 in Satu Mare County was 6,959 lei, down by 351 lei compared to the previous month and higher by 434 lei compared to January 2024.

The average net salary in January 2025 in Satu Mare County was 4,178 lei, lower by 333 lei compared to the previous month and by 156 lei higher than in the same month of 2024.

Evolution of the average net salary in January 2025 compared to December 2024 and January 2024, respectively, by the main branches:

Sector	Average net earnings (January 2025, RON)	% January 2025 vs. December 2024	% January 2025 vs. January 2024
Total	4,178	92.6	103.9
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	4,179	71.5	107.0
Industry, Construction	4,000	90.5	100.4
Services	4,312	95.0	106.3

<https://satumare.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/COMUNICAT-DE-PRESA-EFECTIVUL-SALARIATILOR-SI-CASTIGUL-SALARIAL-IANUARIE2025.pdf>

At the end of May 2023, 86,874 employees were registered, an increase of 204 people compared to April 2023 and 1,468 people compared to May 2022.

The Satu Mare County Directorate of Statistics published the report for May 2023 on the number of employees and the average salary earning.

Thus, the number of employees in Satu Mare county, at the end of May 2023, was 86,874 people, up by 204 people compared to the end of April 2023 and by 1,468 people more than the corresponding month of 2022.

The average gross salary in May 2023 in Satu Mare County was 5,736 lei, up by 180 lei compared to the previous month and higher by 647 lei compared to May 2022.

The average net salary in May 2023 in Satu Mare County was 3,682 lei, higher by 162 lei compared to the previous month and by 516 lei higher than in the same month of 2022.

<https://informatia-zilei.ro/statistici-satu-mare-salarii-mai-mari-si-angajati-mai-multi/>

Unemployment rate and structure of the unemployed

According to data provided by the Satu Mare County Employment Agency (AJOFM), the unemployment rate fluctuated during the analyzed period:

- January 2024: **4.19%**
- February 2024: **4.31%**
- March 2024: **4.35%**
- June 2024: **4.52%**
- July 2024: **4.51%**
- August 2024: **4.46%**
- December 2024: **5.14%**

In December 2024, the total number of registered unemployed was **6,588**, of which **885** were unemployed with benefits and **5,703** without benefits, according to the County Employment Agency (AJOFM), and companies find it difficult or not at all to find employees.

The distribution of the unemployed by residence environment shows a higher concentration in rural areas, with **5,184** compared to **1,404** in urban areas.

As for the structure by age groups, most unemployed people were between **40-49 years old (1,811)**, followed by the **30-39 age group (1,449)**. At the opposite pole are young people between **25-29 years old (470)** and those under **25 years old (897)**.

Regarding the level of education, a significant share of the unemployed is represented by people without education or with primary education level (**55.80%**), followed by those with secondary education (**29.58%**) and vocational education (**6.12%**). People with high school education represent **6.27%**, and those with higher education **1.47%**.

At the end of December 2023, the unemployment rate recorded in the records of the Satu Mare County Employment Agency was 3.92%, up from November 2023. Of the total number of unemployed registered at the end of December 2023, respectively of 5,006 people registered in the records of AJOFM Satu Mare, 809 were unemployed with benefits and 4,197 without benefits.

By residence, the number of unemployed at the end of December is as follows: 938 unemployed people come from urban areas and 4,068 unemployed people come from rural areas. Most of the unemployed were between 40-49 years old (1,417), followed by those in the age group between 30-39 years old (1063), at the opposite pole being people between 25-29 years old (323).

Regarding the structure of unemployment according to the level of education, the unemployed without education and those with primary education level have a significant share in the total number of unemployed registered in the records of AJOFM Satu Mare (54.55%). Unemployed people with secondary education represent 30.52% of the total registered unemployed and 6.81% have completed vocational education. The unemployed with high school education represent 6.35% of the total registered unemployed, those with higher education 1.34%, and those with post-secondary education 0.43%.

The structure of registered unemployed by level of employability, established by profiling, is presented as follows:

1,509 very difficult to employ, 2,505 difficult to employ, 963 medium employable, and 29 are easily employable people. The classification in an employability category is carried out as a result of the profiling activity of the persons registered in our records.

Mass-media analysis

The local press also announces that, at the end of December 2024, the unemployment rate in Satu Mare County was 5.14%, up by 0.22 percentage points compared to the previous month, according to the Satu Mare County Employment Agency (AJOFM), and the total number of registered unemployed reached 6,588 people. (<https://ziare.com/satu-mare/stiri-news/unemployment-rate-in-satu-mare-county-at-the-end-of-December-2024-5-14-la-huta-9060077>)

In terms of available jobs, recruitment portals indicate a significant number of opportunities in Satu Mare County. For example, as of March 24, 2025, the eJobs platform had more than 1,163 jobs available in various fields. (<https://www.ejobs.ro/locuri-de-work/satu-mare>)

For a detailed perspective on the labor market in Satu Mare County, the Satu Mare County Directorate of Statistics provides updated data on the labor force, including activity, employment and unemployment rates, structured by gender and age groups.

(<https://satumare.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2.RATELE-DE-ACTIVITATE-OCUPARE-SI-SOMAJ-PE-SEXE.pdf>)

This information reflects the dynamics of the labor market in Satu Mare County, highlighting both the challenges related to unemployment and the employment opportunities available in the region.

In 2023, the labor market in Satu Mare County recorded the following relevant data:

Unemployment rate:

- At the end of August 2023, the unemployment rate was 3.49%, with a total of 4,457 registered unemployed. Of these, 633 were unemployed with benefits and 3,824 without benefits.
- At the end of September 2023, the unemployment rate rose slightly to 3.51%, with 4,490 registered unemployed. Of these, 600 were unemployed with benefits and 3,890 without benefits.
- Of the total number of unemployed registered at the end of September 2023, respectively of 4,490 people registered in the records of AJOFM Satu Mare, 600 were unemployed with benefits and 3,890 without benefits.
- By residence, the number of unemployed at the end of September is as follows: 855 unemployed people come from urban areas and 3,635 unemployed people come from rural areas.
- Most of the unemployed were between 40-49 years old (1,252), followed by those in the age group between 30-39 years old (940), at the opposite pole being people between 25-29 years old (260).
- The structure of unemployment by age groups at the end of September 2023 is suggestively presented as follows:
- Age group
 - < 25 years: 610
 - between 25-29 years: 260
 - between 30-39 years: 940
 - between 40-49 years: 1,252
 - between 50-55 years: 764
 - Over 55 years old: 664
 - **Total 4,490 unemployed**

Regarding the structure of unemployment according to the level of education, the unemployed without education and those with primary education level have a significant share in the total number of unemployed registered in the records of AJOFM Satu Mare (55.40%). Unemployed people with secondary education represent 29.30% of the total registered unemployed and 6.40% have completed vocational education. The unemployed with high school education represent 7.00% of the total registered unemployed, those with higher education 1.50%, and those with post-secondary education 0.40%.

The structure of registered unemployed by level of employability, established by profiling, is presented as follows:

1,487 very difficult to employ, 2,130 difficult to employ, 838 medium employable, and 35 are easily employable people.

The classification in an employability category is carried out as a result of the profiling activity of the persons registered in the AJOFM records.

(<https://www.buletindecarei.ro/2023/09/rata-somajului-inregistrat-in-evidentele-ajofm-satu-mare-la-sfarsitul-lunii-august-2023.html>)

<https://www.anofm.ro/satu-mare/351-rata-somajului-inregistrat-in-evidentele-ajofm-satu-mare->

at-the-end-of September-month-
2023/#:~:text=To%20sf%C3%A2r%C8%99itul%20month%20septembrie%202023%2C%20rate%20
%C
8%99tribute%20%C3%AEnregistrat%C4%83,pp%20fa%C8%9B%C4%83%20de%20month%20septe
mbrie%20a%20year%202023.)

Distribution of unemployment by residence:

In September 2023, of the total number of unemployed, 855 came from urban areas, and 3,635 from rural areas. (<https://www.anofm.ro/satu-mare/351-rata-somajului-in-registrat-in-evidentele-ajofm-satu-sea-at-the-end-of-September-2023/>)

These data provide a detailed picture of the labor market situation in Satu Mare County in 2023, highlighting both the unemployment rate and its distribution by residence and age groups.

Following the analysis of the media articles regarding the labor market in Satu Mare County for the years 2023, 2024 and the beginning of 2025, the following aspects are highlighted:

Unemployment rate in Satu Mare County:

- **October 2024:** The unemployment rate was 4.74%, up 0.21 percentage points from September 2024. The total number of registered unemployed was 6,083, of which 743 were indemnified and 5,340 were not indemnified. Most of the unemployed came from rural areas (4,872), and most were aged between 40 and 49 years old (1,664). (<https://www.satmareanul.net/2024/11/29/474-rata-somajului-in-judetul-satu-mare-la-end-of-October-2024/>)
- **December 2024:** The unemployment rate rose to 5.14%, marking an increase of 0.22 percentage points compared to November 2024. The total number of unemployed reached 6,588, with 885 people receiving benefits and 5,703 not receiving benefits. The distribution by residence environment shows 1,404 unemployed people in urban areas and 5,184 in rural areas. The most affected age group was between 40 and 49 years old, with 1,811 people.
- Of these, 885 people benefit from unemployment benefits, and the remaining 5,703 are unemployed without benefits. Analyzing the distribution by residence, 1,404 unemployed people come from urban areas, and 5,184 from rural areas, indicating a significant share of unemployment in rural areas of the county.
- As for the structure by age groups, most unemployed people are in the 40-49 age range, with a total of 1,811 people. They are followed by those aged 30-39 (1,449), and on the opposite side of the spectrum are people aged 25-29 (470).
- The detailed structure of the unemployed by age groups at the end of December 2024 is as follows:

Distribution of unemployment by age group (December 2024):

Total: 6,588

Under 25 years old: 897

Between 25-29 years: 470

Between 30-39 years old: 1,449

Between 40-49 years old: 1,811

Between 50-55 years old: 1,004

Over 55 years old: 957

Education level of the unemployed (December 2024):

- In terms of education level, the unemployed with primary education or without education form a significant segment, accounting for 55.80% of the total unemployed. The unemployed with secondary education constitute 29.54%, and those with vocational education 6.54%. People with high school education represent 6.33% of the total, while the unemployed with higher education are only 1.49%, and those with post-secondary education represent 0.30%.
- As regards the employability of the unemployed, the situation is as follows:

Very difficult to employ: 1,955 people

Difficult to employ: 3,302

persons **Medium employable:**

1,303 persons **Easily**

employable: 28 persons

- This classification is carried out on the basis of a profiling activity of registered persons, in order to assess more precisely their ability to be integrated into the labour market.
- Although the unemployment rate registered a slight increase in the last month of the year, it is important to note that the authorities continue to make efforts to reduce unemployment and integrate as many people as possible into the labor market, through various professional training programs and measures.

[Unemployment rate in Satu Mare county at the end of December 2024: 5.14% | Gazeta de Nord Vest](#)

These data highlight an increase in the unemployment rate in Satu Mare County towards the end of 2024, with a significant share of the unemployed coming from rural areas and from the 40-49 age groups. It is also noted that most of the unemployed have a low level of education.

For 2023, no specific articles were identified in the available sources providing detailed data on the labor market in Satu Mare County.

Following the analysis of the media articles regarding the labor market in Satu Mare County for the years 2023, 2024 and the beginning of 2025, the following aspects are highlighted:

Evolution of the average net salary in Satu Mare County in 2023:

- According to data provided by the Satu Mare County Directorate of Statistics, the average net salary in the county increased by 451 lei in 2023, reaching 3,838 lei in December 2023.

<https://www.transilvaniabusiness.ro/2024/03/10/salariul-mediu-net-in-judetul-satu-mare-a-increased-by-451-lei-in-2023/>

Unemployment rate in Satu Mare County:

- **October 2024:** The unemployment rate was 4.74%, up 0.21 percentage points from September 2024. The total number of registered unemployed was 6,083, of which 743 were indemnified and 5,340 were not indemnified. Most of the unemployed came from rural areas (4,872), and most were aged between 40 and 49 years old (1,664).

- Of the total number of unemployed registered at the end of October 2024, respectively 6,083 people registered in the records of AJOFM Satu Mare, 743 were unemployed with benefits and 5,340 without benefits.
- By means of residence, the number of unemployed at the end of October 2024 is Thus: 1,211 unemployed people come from urban areas and 4,872 unemployed people come from rural areas.
- Most of the unemployed were between 40-49 years old (1,664), followed by those in the age group between 30-39 years old (1,367), at the opposite pole being people between 25-29 years old (422).
- The structure of unemployment by age groups at the end of October 2024 is suggestively presented as follows:

Age group	Stock at the end of the month
Total	6.083
< 25 years old	817
between 25-29	422
between 30-39	1.367
between 40-49	1.664
between 50-55	922
Over 55 years old	891

- Regarding the structure of unemployment according to the level of education, the unemployed without education and those with primary education have a significant share in the total number of unemployed registered in the records of AJOFM Satu Mare (55.47%). The unemployed with secondary education represent 29.82% of the total registered unemployed and 6.33% have completed vocational education. The unemployed with high school education represent 6.41% of the total registered unemployed, those with higher education 1.58%, and those with post-secondary education 0.39%.
- The structure of registered unemployed by level of employability, established by profiling, is as follows: 1,807 very difficult to employ, 3,081 difficult to employ, 1,172 medium employable, and 23 are easily employable people. The classification in an employability category is made as a result of the profiling activity of the persons registered in the records

<https://www.satmaraanul.net/2024/11/29/474-rata-somajului-in-judetul-satu-mare-la-sfarsitul-October-2024/>

- **December 2024:** The unemployment rate rose to 5.14%, marking an increase of 0.22 percentage points compared to November 2024. The total number of unemployed reached 6,588, with 885 people receiving benefits and 5,703 not receiving benefits. The distribution by residence environment shows 1,404 unemployed people in urban areas and 5,184 in rural areas. The most affected age group was between 40 and 49 years old, with 1,811 people.

<https://www.satmaraanul.net/2025/01/27/514-este-rata-somajului-in-judetul-satu-mare-la-end-of-December-2024/>

Distribution of unemployment by age group (December 2024):

- Under 25 years old: 897 people

- Between 25-29 years old: 470 people
- Between 30-39 years old: 1,449 people
- Between 40-49 years old: 1,811 people
- Between 50-55 years old: 1,004 people
- Over 55 years old: 957 people

These data highlight an increase in the unemployment rate in Satu Mare County towards the end of 2024, with a significant share of the unemployed coming from rural areas and from the 40-49 age groups. It is also noted that most of the unemployed have a low level of education.

For 2023, no specific articles were identified in the available sources providing detailed data on the labor market in Satu Mare County.

Youth unemployment rate

Young people under 25 are a vulnerable category on the labor market. At the end of December 2024, 897 young people under the age of 25 were registered as unemployed, highlighting the need for integration and vocational training programs dedicated to this age group.

Industries with a shortage or surplus of labor

Although specific data on industries with labour shortages or surpluses are not detailed in the available sources, an increased demand for digital and technical skills can be observed in the context of technological development and automation. At the same time, traditional sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, may find it difficult to attract and retain skilled labour.

Alte date relevante

The analysis of the profile of the registered unemployed indicates that most of them are considered difficult or very difficult to employ, according to the profiling activities carried out by AJOFM. This situation underlines the need for tailor-made interventions and training programmes tailored to the specific needs of these people.

Job opportunities in Satu Mare County: According to an article published on March 17, 2025 (*Information of the Day*), the Satu Mare County Employment Agency (AJOFM) announced the availability of 209 jobs for job seekers, according to data provided by local employers.

Satu Mare County Employment Agency (AJOFM):

- **Job vacancies:** AJOFM Satu Mare periodically publishes lists of available jobs in the county. For example, as of August 5, 2024, 371 job vacancies were available.

(<https://www.anofm.ro/satu-mare/371-locuri-de-munca-vacante-oferite-de-catre-agentia-judetana-pentru-ocuparea-forcei-de-munca-satu-mare/>)

- **Unemployment statistics:** AJOFM provides up-to-date statistical data on the unemployment rate and the number of registered unemployed. This information is available on the website of the National Employment Agency (ANOFM). [https:// www.anofm.ro/](https://www.anofm.ro/)

National Institute of Statistics (INS) – Satu Mare County Directorate of Statistics:

- **Monthly statistical bulletins:** INS publishes statistical bulletins that include data on the labor market, such as the number of employees, average wage earnings, and unemployment rates. For example, the April 2024 Statistical Bulletin provides such information.
- **Statistical Yearbooks:** The Statistical Yearbook of Satu Mare County 2023 provides a detailed analysis of the main economic and social indicators, including data on the workforce and its employment.

The labor market in Satu Mare County is facing significant challenges, including a rising unemployment rate and a high share of unemployed people with low levels of education. It is essential to implement active employment policies, vocational training programmes and initiatives to support integration into the labour market, adapted to the local context and the specific needs of different categories of the population.

5. MAIN CHALLENGES ON THE LABOUR MARKET

The Romanian labor market is going through a complex transformation process, marked by a series of structural and conjunctural challenges. Satu Mare County, located on the north-western border of the country, faithfully reflects these trends, having local particularities generated by its geographical positioning, economic structure and demographic dynamics.

A first major aspect is the skills shortage. Both at national level and in Satu Mare County, there is a significant gap between employers' requirements and the qualifications available on the labor market. Fields such as IT, healthcare, construction and industrial engineering constantly report difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel. The lack of digital skills, advanced technical skills and transversal skills (communication, adaptability, teamwork) is a major barrier to accessing modern jobs.

A study by Deloitte (a global provider of audit, tax and legal, consulting, financial advisory and risk management services to approximately 90% of the companies present in the Fortune Global 500® and to thousands of companies in the private sector) shows that two-thirds of companies cite the lack of experience of new employees, while entry-level positions are taken over by artificial intelligence, and the stimulation of human skills becomes a priority. In this context, the statement of Raluca Bontaş, Partner, Deloitte Romania is relevant: "By integrating human capital into their business strategy, organizations can ensure their long-term success, demonstrating that investing in people and their performance is not only a moral obligation, but also a business one. Employees who perceive stability and feel connected at work are more likely to trust their organization and contribute significantly to improvement

financial results. On the other hand, the developments in technology are undeniable, and the benefits generated in various activities cannot be ignored. But the two components of the workforce – IT solutions and human staff – are complementary and we just need to find the optimal integration option, so as to increase productivity, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to stimulate creativity, innovation and employee involvement in daily work". Therefore, the idea that the sustainable success of an organization cannot be built without a strategic investment in people is emphasized, which reflects a modern, employee-centered vision. The clear link between the feeling of stability, trust and financial performance is highlighted – an aspect also supported by numerous studies in the field of human resources and organizational psychology.

At the same time, the undeniable impact of technology is recognized, but without falling into the trap of excessive automation. The suggested balance between digital solutions and human input is realistic and advisable, especially in contexts where adaptability, empathy and creativity play a crucial role. The central idea of the paragraph – that technology must enhance, not replace, human contribution – supports a sustainable and innovation-oriented development model.

At the same time, the aging of the workforce is becoming an increasingly pronounced reality, especially in border counties such as Satu Mare, where external migration and the decrease in the birth rate have led to a decrease in the active population. In 2023, official data indicate that the employed population in the county was predominantly concentrated in the 40-54 age group, with an increasingly low participation of young people.

Migration continues to shape the local labour market. While a significant number of Satu Mare residents migrate abroad in search of higher salaries, the county is also becoming a destination for Ukrainian refugees and migrants from other areas, which brings new challenges. Language barriers, difficulties in recognising professional skills and discrimination in the workplace are common obstacles to the integration of these people into the local economy.

Another significant problem is competency mismatches. Many active people are trained in one field but work in another, often without formal reskilling, leading to low productivity and difficulties in adapting to the new demands of the digital and automated economy. In addition, administrative barriers, such as professional accreditation procedures or recognition of previous experience, further complicate employment.

Key trends observed in the labor market include the increase in the number of *remote* and hybrid jobs, the acceleration of automation processes in industry and commerce, as well as a sharp digital transformation in the services sector. In Satu Mare County, companies in the automotive components production and agriculture sector are investing more and more in modern technologies, reducing the need for unskilled manual labor and increasing the demand for qualified technicians and operators.

The impact of major events on the labor market is significant. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to dramatic declines in employment in the hospitality and trade sectors, while the conflict in Ukraine has generated an influx of refugees into the county, altering the dynamics of labor demand, especially in the service and light manufacturing sectors. At the same time, global economic uncertainties maintain high pressure on the local labor market, affecting job stability.

In the key sectors affected, health and public education are suffering from the migration of specialists to Western European countries, while agriculture and construction are facing a chronic shortage of seasonal and permanent workers. Industrial production, especially in the field of automotive components and textiles, is feeling the pressure of digital transformation and the need for rapid reskilling.

The analysis of employment data highlights that sectors such as IT, healthcare services and logistics are expanding, while traditional industries such as textiles and extensive agriculture are experiencing job losses. Emerging areas such as the green and digital economy are also starting to generate new employment demands, putting pressure on existing training systems.

In terms of labor shortages and surpluses, Satu Mare faces a severe shortage of personnel in health, construction and IT, while there is a surplus of low-skilled or unskilled workers, difficult to integrate into the top sectors of the economy.

The Satu Mare County Council proposed in the Satu Mare County Development Strategy for the period 2021–2030 measures to improve the integration of the workforce, including:

- Promotion of continuing education: Implementation of professional training programmes for adults, in collaboration with educational institutions and non-governmental organisations.
- Attracting and integrating migrants: Developing policies for the integration of migrants into the labour market, including through learning Romanian and recognition of qualifications.
- Modernization of working conditions: Supporting employers in implementing safe and healthy working conditions, according to European standards.
- Stimulating technological innovation and local entrepreneurship: Providing financial support and advice to startups and SMEs, especially in areas such as information technology and green production.

In conclusion, the labor market in Romania and, in particular, in Satu Mare County is at a crossroads, marked by the urgent need to adapt to the new economic, technological and demographic realities. The challenges are complex and interconnected, requiring coherent public policies, flexible training programmes and social integration measures to ensure a competitive and adaptable workforce.

6. ADULT EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN A CHANGING LABOUR MARKET

In an ever-changing economic and social context, adult education and lifelong learning (LLL) are becoming essential components for adapting the workforce to new market demands. In Romania, including in Satu Mare County, these processes are supported by institutional frameworks, public policies, various training providers and initiatives dedicated to adapting skills to the emerging needs of the economy.

Institutional framework and public policies

At national level, the framework for adult education is established by the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2015–2020 (in the process of being updated for the next period), complemented by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), which pays special attention to retraining and professional development. Also, the National Education Law no. 1/2011 regulates continuing education, and the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor have key roles in implementation. At regional level, including in Satu Mare County, the County Employment Agency (AJOFM) coordinates professional training programs for the unemployed and employees, in partnership with accredited providers.

In addition, the Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) 2014–2020 and its continuation in the period 2021–2027 finance skills development projects, especially for vulnerable groups or sectors in digital and green transition.

Mapping Adult Education Providers

In Satu Mare County, adult education providers are diverse and cover a wide range of needs:

- **Public suppliers:**

Regional Center for Adult Vocational Training in Satu Mare (CRFPA) – offers qualification, retraining and improvement courses in fields such as construction, services, IT, tourism.

The "Vasile Goldiș" West University – Satu Mare branch – offers continuing education programs for specialists in various fields.

Post-secondary schools and technological high schools – organizing training courses for adults.

- **Private and corporate suppliers:**

Accredited specialized training centers (e.g. local training companies in the field of IT, entrepreneurship, digital skills).

Chambers of Commerce and Industry – offer authorized courses in collaboration with business partners.

- **NGOs:**

Organizations such as the STEA Association or the Caritas Association run training programs for vulnerable groups, including refugees, the unemployed, or people with disabilities.

Alignment with labour market needs

The current offer of adult education in Satu Mare County is partially aligned with the demand on the labor market. Courses in digital skills, CNC equipment operation, logistics and entrepreneurship are becoming increasingly popular, reflecting the need for qualified personnel in manufacturing, IT, transport and services. However, there are still significant gaps in sectors such as health, education, precision agriculture or new green technologies, where training programmes are underdeveloped.

Participation and barriers to access to adult education

According to Eurostat and INS data, Romania has one of the lowest rates of adult participation in continuing education programs in the EU (about 2-3% in 2023, compared to the European average of over 10%). At the level of Satu Mare County, local data show a similar trend, with limited participation, especially in rural areas and among people with a low level of education.

Among **the main obstacles** identified are: costs, lack of time, lack of motivation, low accessibility.

- Many adults cannot afford to pay for training.
- Employees, especially those in the private sector, have work schedules that do not allow them to attend classes.
- The poor perception of the benefits of continuing education persists in certain social categories.
- In rural areas, the lack of training providers is a significant obstacle.

Programmes and initiatives to support labour force integration

Several recent initiatives aim to increase participation and support the integration of the workforce through continuing education:

AJOFM Satu Mare periodically organizes events and programs to facilitate integration into the labor market. An example is *the Graduate Job Exchange*, held on October 11, 2024 at the Satu Mare Trade Union Culture House, which offered job opportunities for young graduates.

The agency also provides professional counselling, training and retraining services, addressed to both locals and refugees or other vulnerable categories, to facilitate their integration into the labour market. Vocational training programs offered by AJOFM Satu Mare are free for the unemployed and job seekers.

Also, there have been and are ongoing projects financed by European funds for training in digital skills, entrepreneurship and training in trades sought on the labor market.

Among the courses offered are digital skills, commercial worker, elderly home caregiver and cook. These courses are organized through the Regional Center for Adult Vocational Training in Cluj.

There are also private initiatives (e.g. reskilling programs offered by large companies in the industrial area) for the retraining of existing employees, as well as programs for the integration of refugees from Ukraine into the local labor market, through Romanian language courses and accelerated professional training.

In Satu Mare County, several initiatives support the integration of the workforce through adult education programs:

- **The Stea Association** offers professional training programs and support for the integration into the labor market of people from marginalized communities, promoting social entrepreneurship and parental education.
- **The Foyer Transit Center** in Satu Mare, part of the FARA Foundation's "Support for Independent Living" program, provides training and counseling services for young people leaving the protection system, facilitating their transition to independent living.
faracharity.ro
- **The Education and Employment Programme (PEO) 2021–2027**, implemented at national level, includes support measures for adult vocational training, with a focus on developing digital skills and adapting to the demands of the labour market.
- **The Gutenberg Association**, in partnership with **the SamStudia Association** and supported by the local authorities, conducted personal development workshops for young people from Satu Mare, addressing topics such as financial education, time management and media education. These activities were free of charge and targeted young people aged between 14 and 35.

Alignment with labour market needs

The vocational training programs in Satu Mare are designed to meet the current demands of the labor market, especially in areas with a shortage of qualified personnel. Digital skills courses and courses for commercial workers or carers reflect the need to adapt to digitalisation and the increased demand in the social services sector.

Participation and barriers to access to adult education

Although there are a variety of programs available, adult participation in vocational training is often limited by factors such as lack of time, insufficient financial resources, or lack of information about existing opportunities. Projects such as INTEGRA, co-financed by POCU, aim to increase participation in continuing vocational training, especially among low-skilled employees and those in disadvantaged rural areas.

These programmes and initiatives contribute to the development of the skills needed to integrate and retain adults in the labour market, thus responding to the challenges of an ever-changing economy.

7. CHANGES IN THE LABOUR FORCE DUE TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

The war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the Romanian labor market, bringing rapid changes and major challenges, including in Satu Mare County. According to official estimates, Romania has received over 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, some of whom have settled temporarily or permanently in the border counties, including Satu Mare, due to the geographical proximity and the support infrastructure offered.

The presence of refugees has influenced the local labour market in complex ways. On the one hand, the availability of labor increased in certain sectors, especially in areas such as construction, the hospitality industry and agriculture, where the demand for workers was already high. On the other hand, the effective integration of refugees into the labour market has encountered significant obstacles. Many employers have shown reluctance to hire people without knowledge of Romanian or without complete documents recognising professional qualifications obtained in Ukraine.

Romanian authorities, both at government and local level, have adopted several measures to facilitate the integration of refugees into the labor market. The government has simplified the procedures for obtaining the right to work for Ukrainian citizens, allowing them to work without the need for a work permit under certain conditions. Support initiatives were also launched at local level, including in Satu Mare County, where public institutions and non-governmental organizations collaborated to provide career guidance services, Romanian language courses and assistance for the socio-professional integration of refugees.

However, integration challenges remain significant. Language barriers are one of the biggest difficulties, affecting refugees' ability to obtain jobs that match their qualifications. Also, the official recognition of professional diplomas and certificates in Ukraine is often a slow and complicated process. In addition, although in general the attitude of Romanian society was one of solidarity, there were isolated cases of discrimination or marginalization of Ukrainian workers, sometimes fueled by perceived competition for jobs or cultural differences.

In Satu Mare County, where the local economy depends largely on SMEs in industry and services, the integration of refugees has provided both opportunities and additional pressures. Employers have had to adapt working conditions and invest in training and intercultural communication, while local institutions have stepped up coordination efforts to manage these flows and ensure the most effective integration.

Therefore, the war in Ukraine has profoundly transformed the Romanian labor market, creating a complex context in which solidarity, adaptability and the development of effective public policies are essential to capitalize on the potential of the new workforce and to maintain social and economic balance, both nationally and locally, in Satu Mare County.

8. LABOUR MARKET TRENDS BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY DATA

The labor market in Romania is undergoing a continuous transformation, influenced by global and local factors, with visible effects in Satu Mare County as well. One of the main trends is the significant increase in the number of remote jobs, initially accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently maintained by the need for flexibility and security in the unstable geopolitical context. In Satu Mare, many companies in the IT, consulting and support services sector have adapted their work models, allowing employees to work *remotely*, which has expanded access to qualified labor from rural areas or other regions.

Another major trend is the increasing demand for digital skills. Both nationally and in Satu Mare, employers are increasingly looking for candidates with skills in using digital platforms, online marketing, cybersecurity and data analysis. The digital transformation of companies, accelerated by automation and artificial intelligence, generates both new job opportunities and challenges related to adapting the existing workforce.

The effects on businesses are significant: many small and medium-sized companies, traditional in Satu Mare County, are experiencing difficulties in modernizing their operations and finding qualified employees. At the same time, companies in innovative industries, such as the production of electronic equipment or IT services, are experiencing consistent growth. At local and regional level, the sectors on the rise are information technology, logistics and tourism, while the textile industry and traditional agriculture are starting to show signs of decline, caused by labour migration and lack of modernisation.

Among the main challenges of the labour market are skills shortages, the effects of automation and demographic change. Romania, including Satu Mare County, is facing an accelerated process of population aging and the migration of young people to other European regions or countries, which accentuates the shortage of skilled labor. The automation of some industrial processes, but also in the service sector, leads to the disappearance of traditional jobs, at the same time as the need to train new skills adapted to new technologies.

Global events, such as the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, have had a direct impact on the labor market. For example, in Satu Mare, located close to the border with Ukraine, the demand for personnel in the field of social assistance and integration services for refugees has increased, and the economic dynamics have been influenced by migrant flows and the reconfiguration of logistics chains.

Artificial intelligence is playing an increasingly important role in transforming the labor market. In Romania, the integration of AI in sectors such as healthcare, finance or industrial manufacturing has led to a decrease in demand for administrative and repetitive positions, at the same time as an increase in demand for specialists in data science, machine learning, robotics and intelligent solutions management. In Satu Mare, companies in the field of automated manufacturing or data analytics are starting to invest in AI, which opens up new opportunities, but requires a rapid retraining of the local workforce.

It is estimated that the needs of the labour market will increasingly shift towards advanced digital skills, critical analysis skills, adaptability and creativity. Sectors with growth potential in Satu Mare County include information technology, digital financial services, green energy and creative industries. Investments in technology education, lifelong learning and the promotion of transversal skills will be key to supporting the adaptation of the workforce to new economic realities.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The analysis of the Romanian labor market, with a special focus on Satu Mare County, outlines a complex picture of the challenges and profound transformations that influence the dynamics of employment. These trends reflect both structural and cyclical pressures, which require strategic and well-calibrated interventions to ensure the efficient and fair functioning of the labour market. The main findings of the proposed analysis are set out below.

1. The skills gap persists. In Satu Mare County, as well as at national level, there is a constant shortage of skills in key areas for regional development. Fields such as information technology, healthcare, construction and industrial production are facing a shortage of qualified personnel. For example, companies in industrial parks in Satu Mare report difficulties in attracting engineers, CNC operators and electricians. This deficit affects the ability of firms to adapt to new technologies, innovate and increase their competitiveness.

2. Ageing workforce and external migration. The active population in the county is decreasing, and an increasing proportion of the workforce is over 45 years old. Demographic ageing is accentuated by external migration, which has led to the loss of a significant number of young and skilled workers, especially in the fields of construction, care and transport. These phenomena reduce the base of active employees and generate additional pressures on pension and health systems.

3. Migration trends – opportunities and challenges. The conflict in Ukraine has brought a flow of migrants to Romania, including to Satu Mare County, which is a transit point and, in some cases, a point of settlement. These migrants can help fill labour gaps, but their integration is often hampered by language barriers, lack of recognition of qualifications and legal uncertainty. In the absence of effective integration policies, this resource remains underutilized.

4. Automation and digitalisation are accelerating the transformation of the labour market. Rapid technological change is generating a growing demand for digital skills, data analytics, online platform management and smart equipment operation. Many companies in Satu Mare County are going through automation processes that reduce the demand for unskilled physical labor, but increase the need for technical and digital personnel. Unfortunately, current training systems are not yet flexible enough to meet these requirements.

5. Administrative and linguistic barriers and discrimination. Access to the labour market is still limited by slow bureaucratic procedures, the lack of clear mechanisms for the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad and discrimination, especially against vulnerable groups such as Roma, the elderly or refugees. Employers complain of difficulties in recruiting non-EU staff, while workers face a lack of support for professional integration.

6. The impact of major events on employment. The COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have led to sudden changes in the structure of the occupation. In Satu Mare, the HORECA sector suffered significant losses, while logistics, courier services and the medical field recorded an increase in demand. Thus, the transition to sectors with growth potential has accelerated, but without a coherent reskilling strategy, many workers have remained outside the formal labour market.

7. Informal work – a persistent problem. A significant proportion of economic activity, especially in agriculture and construction, still takes place in the grey area of the economy. "Undeclared work" remains a widespread practice, with negative effects on workers' social protection and on the collection of revenues to the state budget. This reality is fuelled by the lack of attractive legal alternatives, especially in rural areas.

8. The most affected sectors – between lack and oversaturation. Health, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing are among the hardest hit by labor shortages. In hospitals and care facilities, the shortage of medical personnel is becoming critical. At the same time, certain specializations in fields such as marketing, administration or social work are saturated, generating increased competition and employment difficulties for young people.

These findings reflect a tight labour market, where the widening gap between labour supply and demand threatens the region's economic stability. Future interventions need to be well-targeted, integrated into coherent policies and tailored to local specificities in order to respond effectively to these imbalances.

Proposed measures to improve labour force integration and employment stability

In order to meet the current challenges and ensure the effective integration of the workforce in the long term, it is essential to adopt a package of measures aimed at both improving working conditions and developing a resilient and sustainable labour market. These measures must be coordinated and take into account the specific needs of the region, as well as global trends affecting the local economy. In this regard, the following measures are proposed:

Development and adaptation of continuing education programmes. It is essential that adult education and vocational training programmes are aligned with the demands of the labour market. In Satu Mare County, this implies a rapid adaptation of curricula to the requirements of fields such as IT, health, engineering and the green economy, sectors that are booming and require specific skills. It is also necessary to introduce rapid retraining programmes for workers facing job losses as a result of automation. These programs, such as those of the "short-cycle education" type, can offer opportunities for rapid retraining for those who want to retrain in a short time.

Supporting the integration of refugees and migrants. Another key aspect is the integration of refugees and migrants, especially in view of the significant flows in the context of the war in Ukraine. The creation of intensive language support programmes and the rapid recognition of professional qualifications will facilitate their integration into the labour market. Information and awareness-raising campaigns must also be implemented to combat discrimination and promote diversity in the labour market, thus contributing to the creation of a more inclusive environment.

Boosting the employment of young people and vulnerable groups. Another important pillar is supporting the integration of young people and vulnerable groups into the labour market. Measures to boost youth employment could include subsidies for employers recruiting young people, internship and mentoring programmes to facilitate their transition from education to work. Support for people over 50 who face difficulties in reintegrating into the labour market also needs to be strengthened, given that this age group faces an increased risk of long-term unemployment.

Modernization of public employment services. Public employment services need to be modernised by digitalising counselling and job placement processes, in order to facilitate citizens' quick access to information and employment opportunities. The creation of integrated regional platforms will also allow for a better correlation between labour market requirements and labour supply, helping to improve the efficiency of the recruitment process.

Encouraging flexible working and teleworking. In the context in which remote work models are constantly growing, especially in rural and peripheral areas, such as Satu Mare County, it is necessary to support the development of flexible work through legislative and fiscal measures. Promoting teleworking can help reduce internal migration and improve the access of people in less developed areas to jobs that would otherwise not be available. This could also help combat the depopulation of certain localities and increase their attractiveness for young people in the county.

Strengthening public, private and educational partnerships. Last but not least, it is essential to develop strong partnerships between public authorities, educational institutions and the private sector in order to quickly identify skills needs in the labour market and create joint training programmes. Local consortia between companies, schools, universities and authorities can contribute to the development of an educational ecosystem that responds promptly to economic changes and supports a workforce prepared for the future demands of the market.

These measures will contribute to more effective labour integration and greater long-term stability, adapting to both current demands and emerging labour market challenges.

Perspective

Looking to the future, the labor market in Romania and, in particular, in Satu Mare County will continue to be deeply influenced by global and demographic factors. The automation of industrial processes, the accelerated development of digital technologies and the geopolitical instability generated by conflicts such as the one in Ukraine will reshape the demand for labor. In parallel, demographic trends, such as the ageing of the working population and the migration of young people to other regions or countries of the European Union, will increase the pressure on the local labour market.

In Satu Mare County, automation is starting to have a noticeable impact in industries such as automotive components and electronics, where factories are investing in automated production lines, gradually reducing the number of unskilled workers needed. At the same time, digital transformation

The growth of public services and commerce is driving demand for new professions such as IT specialists, data analysts or digital marketing experts, skills that are still lacking locally.

Flexibility and adaptability will become key skills for employees, and constant investment in training and reskilling will be key to maintaining the region's competitiveness. For example, projects such as those developed by the Satu Mare Chamber of Commerce and Industry or local vocational training centers can play a crucial role in reskilling workers from declining sectors, such as traditional agriculture, to areas of increased demand, such as logistics or business support services.

A sustainable workforce development strategy should aim to promote lifelong learning, attract and integrate migrants, modernise working conditions, stimulate technological innovation and local entrepreneurship. Through accessible adult training programmes and by encouraging collaboration between educational institutions and employers, so as to ensure a constant flow of skills relevant to the new needs of the economy. For example, universities and technical colleges in the county could develop partnerships with companies in local industrial parks for dual education programs.

Satu Mare County, located on Romania's northwestern border, is an important transit point for migrants and refugees. The creation of language integration programmes, faster recognition of professional qualifications and employment initiatives in scarce sectors (construction, agriculture, personal care) could turn this challenge into an opportunity.

Adapting jobs to modern standards, including the promotion of teleworking and flexible working hours, could help retain the local workforce and attract specialists from other regions. Already, some IT and outsourcing companies in Satu Mare have started implementing teleworking programs to expand their employee base.

Investing in business incubators, technology parks and supporting innovative start-ups can generate new skilled jobs and reduce the region's dependence on traditional industries. For example, start-up hubs, supported by European funds, encourage young entrepreneurs in Satu Mare to develop solutions in areas such as precision agriculture or green energy.

Thus, through an integrated approach, a resilient, inclusive labor market capable of responding effectively to the rapid changes of the modern economy can be built in Satu Mare County, while ensuring sustainable economic growth and more efficient social integration.

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