

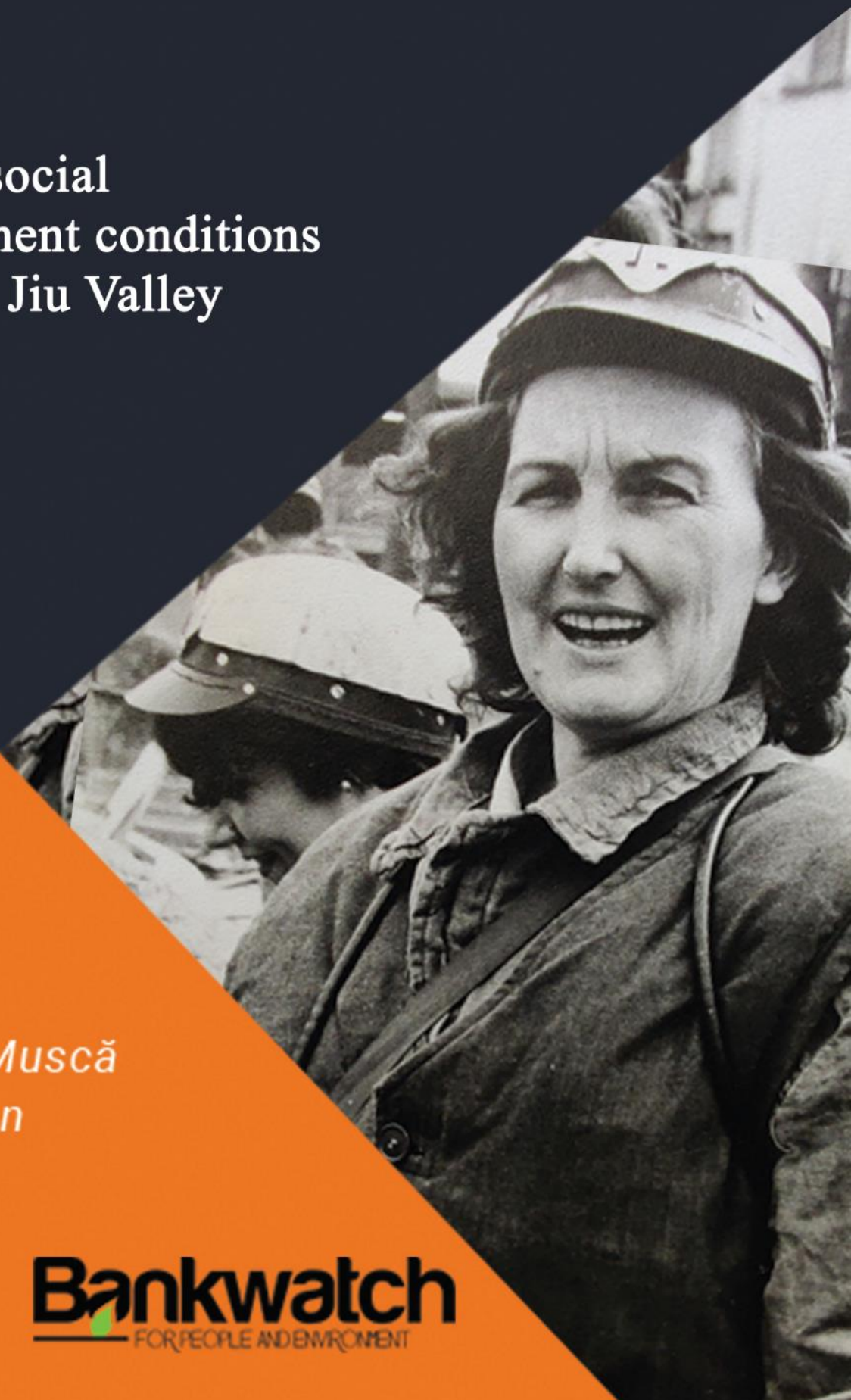
# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE JUST TRANSITION PROCESS

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Analysis of social  
and employment conditions  
of women in Jiu Valley

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Mădălina Muscă / Elena Trifan

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# Executive summary

In recent years, the need for gradual decarbonisation of the economy has also prompted discussions, strategies and plans for a just transition across Europe, including Romania. The closure of mines, one of the main components of phasing coal out from the economy, is however a reality that has been affecting communities in the Jiu Valley, where the economy is mainly based on a single industry, since 1997, with massive restructuring in the mining sector. The way in which the process was undertaken fell far short of the idea of a just transition, with a lack of advanced, rigorous planning, and measures tailored to the specifics of the area and the needs of the workers in the affected towns. The ways of intervention adopted so far, through economic and social protection measures, have been exclusively addressed to individuals who have worked in mines (mainly men). At the same time, current strategies, plans, and actions lack gender perspective when it comes to measures to be implemented in the following years. By assessing how the transition to decarbonisation has affected the lives of women in the mining area of the Jiu Valley, the report aims to highlight that efforts towards a just transition and those for gender equality can only go hand in hand.

The first part of the report analyses the general and local context of mining areas and the specifics of women's activities to show how gender plays a key role in the functioning of realities and roles in single-industry communities. It analyses social policies on just transition in the context of ensuring gender equality, as well as global, national and local social policies on energy transition, in order to present examples of best practices on just transition from other mining areas. The second part of the report shows the results of research conducted in towns in the Jiu Valley. The analysis shows, from an intersectional perspective, the quality of life of women in the Jiu Valley; it aims to address all aspects of their lives to highlight that those solutions for the future in the areas undergoing decarbonisation should take into account the specific needs and issues affecting women. The areas we focused on are: labour market participation, domestic work, child and elder care, social and health services.

With regards to the labour market, the research identified five specific pathways for women in the Jiu Valley. (1) Older women who have experienced most directly the closure of mines and related industry, for whom this was a major trauma. In the best cases, these women rely on the pension they receive and the support of families, but in many situations, they are completely vulnerable and alone, receiving support from their neighbours and help from social services. (2) Women who were in the labour force at the time of the closure of mines, whom, in many cases, have tried different professional

paths, which also included migration to other cities in Romania or abroad. (3) Women who have had favourable conditions to access higher education, as well as a stable workplace. They are either working with state institutions or non-governmental organisations, or they are small business owners. (4) Women who did not have access to education or employment. For them, access to stable working places becomes even more difficult when they have children. In most situations they survive with the help of various types of social assistance and seasonal work. (5) Women who are searching for decent paying jobs, that they cannot get despite having access to education. Their experience is marked by flexible work trajectories, in which working abroad is an important source for securing basics such as housing.

The situation of jobs in the communities in the Jiu Valley is marked by three worrying phenomena affecting the quality of women's lives:

- low-paying jobs
- precarious employment
- migration

For many women in the Jiu Valley, the process of decarbonisation and the closure of mines also meant that the pressure of employment was added to that of domestic and care work and/or social reproduction. As highlighted in the chapter on access to education, the lack of access to public education services such as day care, extended day care and after-school care meant that the responsibility of raising and educating children fell on women's shoulders, especially, but not only, those in unstable socio-economic situations. At the same time, in all cities considered in the study there is a high level of social stratification, which has an impact on the disparate quality of schools, depending on the neighbourhoods in which they are located, and the children's success in schools is often conditional on the investment of financial resources by their family. As pointed out above, in order to cope with financial pressure, many women have chosen migration as an economic strategy. This phenomenon has an impact on schools, through demographic decline, on children left in the care of relatives, grandparents or neighbours through increased absenteeism, school dropouts and the number of underage mothers, as well as on elders, for whom women in the extended family are the main support. Thus, the lack of sufficient development of education and care infrastructure is linked to issues regarding the employment situation.

As part of the research, we have also identified issues relating to the lack of access to basic quality medical services, especially general practitioners, as well as those dealing with maternity, neonatology and paediatrics.



# Introduction

The transition in the Jiu Valley has not been a just one. First, because the costs of this process have been, and are being, borne by the workers, either men or women, and communities in the area. The consequences of these unfair decisions can still be seen today, with the lack of jobs and decent living conditions for a great part of the population being proof thereof. Phasing out coal from the global energy mix and primary energy use requires first and foremost early foresight of a mine's lifespan and long and rigorous planning for a just transition. However, the process has been abrupt in the case of the Jiu Valley, and the lack of advanced planning to effectively address mine closures and job losses, and the lack of real measures to diversify the local economy to meet the needs of the existing workforce are also felt at both personal and emotional levels through a lack of confidence in the future and the ability to manage community issues. Moreover, the directions of intervention, in the economic and social protection measures adopted so far, have been exclusively addressed to individuals who have worked in mines, which in most cases were men. This report aims to contribute to a process remedying this type of inequality, and it is focused on analysing how the transition to decarbonisation has affected the lives of women in the Jiu Valley mining area.

The report has an intersectional perspective, analysing more aspects with regards to the decarbonisation process. If, historically, the concept of just transition has been developed to redress and dismantle the labour-nature divide, adding the gender dimension is an essential process for balancing gender differences, which are more traditionally prevalent in mining communities.

The report is an exploratory research, documenting the quality of life of women in the Jiu Valley. It is based on a comprehensive approach, attempting to address all aspects of women's lives in the valley, but it is not an exhaustive approach, as its scope cannot encompass all possible experiences. Specific to exploratory research, the methodology is qualitative.

The aim of the research is to provide a documented base for future public policy proposals on just transition in the Jiu Valley from the perspective of gender equality and social inclusion.

## **I. Methodology**

As the main scope of the research was to analyse the quality of life of women in the Jiu Valley in order to identify main areas of intervention, for the design of an advocacy campaign, the research has a deep applied dimension. The sampling in the present case was theoretical - selection of the most relevant experiences according to different socio-demographic characteristics. The only fixed aspect was gender, as all participants were females. For all the other socio-demographic characteristics, age, education, occupation (both the formal aspect of employed workforce, as well as domestic work, the migration experience of persons in care work), we have tried to follow a greater diversity. At the same time, persons with relevant positions in the local administration, in the areas of social assistance and employment, were interviewed. Another important aspect was diversity from the geographic point of view - the research focused on the six cities in the Jiu Valley: Petroșani, Petřila, Vulcan, Lupeni, Aninoasa and Uricani. It is worth mentioning that it was not possible to meet all the characteristics due to time constraints. Thus, 21 women in the Jiu Valley were interviewed, with most of the interviews being carried out face to face, the exception being three which were done over the phone. The duration of guided discussions varied, between 40 and 120 minutes. Most interviews were carried out in person, but there were also two group discussions.

## **II. General and local context in mining areas and characteristics of women's activities**

Mining areas are defined by a number of particular characteristics. They depend on non-renewable resources; thus, they are constantly faced with the uncertainty caused by the fact that resources will run out or the extraction point will become economically unviable and close (Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012). At the same time, they are single industry areas and communities living there essentially rely on a sole industry – an extractive industry - which also makes them economically unstable. Environmental degradation also adds to this economic uncertainty.

Mining communities are either generally found in areas which are geographically remote from other metropolitan areas or they are considered economically peripheral. Their position in the geographical and/or economic periphery excludes them from global knowledge flows. Martinez-Fernandez et al. (2012) consider them to be at the edge of Castells' (1997) "informational town", therefore excluded from sophisticated knowledge



networks which are integrated in extremely competitive corporations (Castells, 2000; 2002). While centrally located cities and corporations use global knowledge networks, mining towns remain isolated from genuine global knowledge.

Mining communities have held an important place in research on labour and deindustrialisation processes. However, there are few papers analysing the link between labour and community which include family aspects. The most well-known in this sense is *Coal Is Our Life* (1956), which explores the influence of labour, free time and family on the social life of an industrial town in West Yorkshire, and which underlines how working in mines highlights the organisation of the nuclear family. Other assessments (Williams 1981) noted that while miners can be confronted with class inequalities which are defined, for example, by the lack of control of jobs, women fight inequalities in their marital relations, as they are usually isolated from the family; they undertake all household work and have limited opportunities for paid work. Mining communities are often described as profoundly stratified and segregated areas from a gender point of view - men are employed and bring income to the family, while women take care of the household.

Generally, men have most formal jobs in the coal sector, especially in mining (Smith 2021 apud Kuykendall and Potter 2019, Nayak 2020). Women working in the coal sector tend to be employed as public servants or in non-technical jobs, or, in some countries, they have informal jobs as coal pickers and their working conditions in illegal mines are similar to those of slaves (The Advocates for Human Rights 2019).

Bennet (2015) describes how the industrial legacy, in households and the values which are characteristic to former coal mining communities, shape discourses that influence what can be thought, said and done. A gender approach to economy is widely envisaged to include not only paid jobs, but, at the same time, domestic work, and social state assistance, and this is essential for women (McDowell 2008b; McDonald, Mayes and Pini 2012).

Moreover, Bennet (2015) argues that women have a complex relationship with the *ghosts* of patriarchal households and those of the industrial past which modelled coal communities, which is also found in the research herein. Bennet notes that women are constantly reminded of their destruction, while simultaneously trying to escape them, but yearning for some of the values that sustained them and (re)acting unconsciously and less consciously towards them:

Younger women's experience with the intersection between class and gender regimes are full of the patriarchal structures of the place, by the suffering caused by the eradication of an industry, by the feeling that mothers, and not childcare

service providers, should take care of their young children to keep them close and protect them from the trauma (they have witnessed others) they live. (Bennett 2015).

In most countries, extractive industries were replaced by factories, companies providing customer support services, buildings where companies hire people on low wages and in unsafe conditions – contracts with zero working hours, using temporary agencies and systems based on points, measuring efficiency or the relocation of the company (Bennet 2015).

The peripheric position of mining communities in the global economy, where research and development and the headquarters of companies are found in different areas, means that salaries and other costs are maintained at a low level in order to compete for jobs and investments. The rights of workers and their representativity in trade unions have declined with the rise of temporary employment agencies which hire and refuse workers due to evidence, based on the inflow and outflow of the request (elsewhere) for goods and services. While women wouldn't wish men to return to coal mines or dangerous jobs which affect their bodies, they are nostalgic for a period when workers had more rights, supported by more powerful trade unions; when jobs were more available and secure. Nostalgic stories of past paid work are revelatory of current experiences of work (Davis 1979; Bennet 2004), exposing anxiety caused by the lack of job security (Bennet 2015).

In Romania, David Kideckel's research (2004, 2010) remains representative of the effects of transition in single industry areas. His analysis shows the consequences of deindustrialisation and the process of transition to a market economy for workers in two industrialised areas – the Jiu Valley and Făgăraş. Kideckel (2004) points out how transition brought about a significant devaluation of the status of men in the valley - from "highly regarded miners, former socialist heroes and scourge of socialist and post-socialist governments alike" they became dispensable, useless, "their lives derided as worthless anachronisms" (56). In parallel, women complain of endless work, isolation, the decline of family status, the denigration of their husbands and the lack of prospects for their children. In his work published in Romanian, *România postsocialistă. Munca, trupul și cultura clasei muncitoare* (2010), (Getting By in Postsocialist Romania: Labor, the Body, and Working-Class Culture), Kideckel describes aspects such as the impact of the closing of the mining industry on the physical and mental health of miners, the discord between miners and non-miners, and how gender relations in the community were also affected. Starting from jokes that they used to make in the underground, with sexual undertones, they now reveal internal conflicts of gender identity:

(...) if the wife of a miner has to work or if the man undertakes some domestic responsibilities in order to make ends meet, he feels he is not acting according to norms appropriate for his gender, and the sense of ultimate personal failure makes underground jokes seem less comic and more threatening (186).

### **III. Introduction to social policies on just transition in the context of ensuring gender equality**

The concept of **just transition** was developed by trade unions as a bridge between environmental and social concerns. Its foundations were laid in the 1970's and 1980's by workers in the United States in response to constraints exerted by companies in single industry areas, who had greater power in communities in the absence of other employment options, forcing them to work in an unhealthy and toxic environment to make a living (Morena, Krause and Stevis, 2020). The concept also aimed to move beyond the "labour versus nature" debate in which workers and trade unions are portrayed as opposing measures that would stop climate change, as they involve job losses. According to recommendations of the<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organisation (ILO), just transition always involves social dialogue between trade unions, employers and state authorities.

The concern for the inclusion of gender equality in just transition measures is recent. However, gender equality is one of the seven guiding principles in the ILO Guidelines on just transition and other policies and programmes developed in this respect. The challenge of just transition is an opportunity to transform gender norms and to promote gender equality, including in employment, whereby women are empowered to participate as actors, including at decision-making and leadership levels, to combat climate change and to advance sustainable development (Dhir 2017). Just transition is an opportunity in particular to address sectoral and occupational segregation between women and men, to end wage and skills gaps or to strengthen social protection (ibid:4).

Additionally, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) of the Paris Agreement, adopted at COP 25, requires a better implementation of gender-sensitive climate actions at all levels - a just transition means that workers will not bear the costs of environmental protection, and the communities will be protected from the impacts of job losses (Smith 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> ILO. "Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all." (2015). Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_emp/@emp\\_ent/documents/publication/wcms\\_432859.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf)

Studies examining the closure of mines and coal power plants mainly track the reactions of institutional actors, and to a lesser extent document the perceptions and reports of male and female workers and communities on the closure process (Strambo, Aung, Atteridge 2019). Moreover, most of the existing studies on transition and mine closures mainly focus on how they have affected miners, who are generally male. There are, however, studies that have linked the transition in coal regions with how the closure of mines has influenced the lives of women in those communities. However, although the concern to explicitly include the gender dimension in this process is a recent one, in addition to all documents and reports presented above, the overlap between gender and just transition is also found in academic studies. In this regard, according to a recent literature review (Walk et al. 2021), the impact of transition on the labour market holds an important place in the analysed themes. During the transition period, workers, predominantly men, were subject to massive layoffs, while the impact on women occurred on secondary and tertiary job markets. **To compensate for the decrease in household income, women increasingly took up waged jobs** (Beatty 2016). In most cases (Walk et al. 2021) studies have shown an increase in female employment rates, and in other cases an increase in overall jobs. Walk's review shows an essential aspect in terms of just transition and the scope of this report: "the conditions in these jobs are usually reported to be more precarious, low-paid and insecure compared to the relatively secure mining jobs" (ibid: 12). Christina Beatty (2016) examines the extent to which the local labour market for women acts independently of the labour market for men, and how this has changed over time. Her analysis is a case study of English and Welsh coalfields. The conclusions of the study highlight that immediately after the closure of mines there is an increase in the employment rate in paid work among women in coal regions, while the economic activity among working-age men falls. However, while men who used to work in mines are no longer participating in what is considered the working population, because they are a generation that does not compete for jobs held by women, future generations of men are. Beatty (2016) concludes that the change dynamics in coalfields over time suggests that women are increasingly facing competition from men for jobs outside the coal industry. Thus, in coalfields, a younger group of men, who a generation ago would have found jobs in the coal industry, may now be employed in shops, hotels, catering, hospitals and offices, often in roles that once would have been filled by women. Thus, they have made the labour market in these areas more difficult for women. In this way, the consequences of male job losses are transmitted, in part, from men to women (28).

Another key consequence of transition examined in several academic studies has been the **decline of communities due to migration**, focusing on various patterns of migration. In Appalachia (US) men were the ones migrating to jobs in construction (Oberhauser

1995), while in Lusatia it was young women who were leaving to find employment (Jacobsen, Winkler, and Cottbus 2012 apud. Walk et al. 2021). Another mentioned aspect is the **decrease in community activities, community spirit and solidarity**. For example, in the case of Romania, the transition destroyed trust among community members by turning active miners who broke the strike (for various, often financial, reasons) against their former colleagues, who were then out of work (Kideckel 2004).

The way in which transition impacted family dynamics is a different theme found in studies on transition in single communities. A prevalent subject is that men started to spend more time at home, while women went out to work, which in some cases led to the liberalisation of gender roles (Walk et al. 2021), but in most assessments gender inequalities remained unchanged. Moreover, many studies highlighted that the total workload for women increased, as paid work was added to domestic work (ibid.). Another theme is the increase in domestic conflicts in this context (ibidem). Their causes are manifold, but studies emphasised “the juxtaposition between women’s traditional responsibilities in households and the changing nature of women’s social positions through employment or political engagement and the resulting erosion of the traditional gender order” (ibid: 14). With regard to the political and activist engagement of women in transition processes, they were not formally included – due to lack of access to institutions – but acted through informal networks.

Studies point out that the degree of economic, social and psychological impacts of the closure of mines in the effective adaptation of the community depends on the longevity of the mine and the extent to which the local economy is shaped by this type of activity (Warhurst 1999), as well as structural policies and the policies of mining companies, trade unions, governments and communities. **Determinants of community adjustment and mine closure preparedness include: a diversified local economy, advanced planning, as well as the provision of services such as counselling, retraining, job search and relocation assistance** (McDonald, Mayes, and Pini 2012).

#### IV. Global, national and local social policies on energy transition

Coal is thought to be responsible for over 40% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. To comply with the Paris Agreement a timely global phase-out of coal is needed.<sup>2</sup> The pressure to shift from fossil fuels in an attempt to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius under the

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>

Paris Agreement and reiterated by the IPCC<sup>3</sup> report (which warns of the need for significant and rapid action) has led to several scenarios for the energy transition.

At the global level, various institutional and transnational actors have drawn attention to the importance of a just transition for climate change mitigation. ITUC highlights that “a just transition requires a social protection system that prevents poverty and social exclusion for those that lose (part of) their income or employment due to the effects or mitigation of climate change” (ITUC 2019: 416<sup>4</sup>). This social protection system should include: medical care; sickness benefit; unemployment benefit; old-age benefit; employment injury benefit; family benefit; maternity benefit; invalidity benefit; and survivor’s benefit<sup>5</sup>. Besides the social protection system, active labour market policies are needed to facilitate the transition to *low carbon* jobs through training and reconversion (ibid.). Recommendations include the implementation of Public Employment Programmes (PEP) which contribute to environmental protection, such as jobs focusing on reforestation and water and soil conservation (ibid.). Payment for Environmental Services (PES), which usually has a primary environmental objective, can also contribute to a just transition economy by supporting the livelihoods of low-income individuals (ibid.).

At the national and local levels, three main policy directions on just transition were identified: measures for people losing their jobs, community economic regeneration policies, and local and regional empowerment policies for affected communities. The Bankwatch guide on just transition features 8 necessary steps to ensure the process (Mustață 2017):

- The clear understanding of the concept - just transition is not just about attracting investors but local measures that address: public infrastructure, social policies, taxation, education, decent incomes and ensuring quality of life;
- Selection of impacted area - single-industry area based on an industry with a negative impact on the environment, which employs a large part of the workforce;
- Potential assessment - demographic context, state of infrastructure, business environment and geography;

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<sup>3</sup><https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097362>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/role\\_of\\_social\\_protection\\_in\\_a\\_just\\_transition\\_en.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/role_of_social_protection_in_a_just_transition_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/legal-advice/WCMS\\_205340/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20Social%20Security%20\(Minimum%20Standards,nine%20branches%20of%20social%20security.](https://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/legal-advice/WCMS_205340/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20Social%20Security%20(Minimum%20Standards,nine%20branches%20of%20social%20security.)

- Involvement of decision-makers (local and central authorities, trade unions, businesses, politicians);
- Consulting the community;
- Best practice models;
- Support from local authorities;
- Identification of financial tools.

With regards to Romania, especially in the case of the Jiu Valley, the way the transition was carried out did not follow the principles of just transition. The decision to close the mines was taken without assessing its potential impact on local communities, and the proposed measures did not have the expected impact (Haney, Shkaratan 2003). Today, efforts are being stepped up to find solutions to a just transition, but stakeholder positions are ambivalent. At the same time, documents concerning this objective have been drawn up - the Hunedoara Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP)<sup>6</sup> and the Strategy for the transition from coal of Jiu Valley<sup>7</sup>, which commit to the complete closure of hard coal mines by 2027. These two strategies are reference documents on just transition, but the proposed measures ignore the gender dimension of the process. At first glance, and analysed from a narrow perspective, like many other public policies and strategies, they appear to be gender neutral. However, they do not acknowledge that women and men in mining communities have been, and continue to be, differently affected by the decarbonisation process, and thus they exacerbate the issues they face, as we shall highlight in this report.

Difficult access to employment and lack of job security have an impact on people in the Jiu Valley, irrespective of gender, but women are disproportionately impacted as, traditionally, they have more unpaid jobs in addition to paid employment: education/care/social reproduction work and domestic work. To relieve them from the last two responsibilities, but also to encourage their participation and involvement in the economic and political life of the community, specific support and social protection measures are needed; yet they are either missing or are only mentioned in the TJTP and the Transition Strategy. Given women do paid and unpaid work, especially in single-industry regions, measures to reconcile gender disparities in these areas should first and foremost consider how access to education and care is provided. In the first three chapters of the section presenting and analysing the results of the research, we will show that these two aspects are now insufficient and that the two reference documents fail to

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<sup>6</sup> <https://adrvest.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Planul-Teritorial-pentru-Tranzitie-Justa-Hunedoara-2021-2027-Draft-1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/1abd1d8a7ae172a12c45bc79287ec26d.pdf>



address these needs and issues. As we point out, they also lack an intersectional vision on the transition process: the objectives are aimed at retaining or attracting young workers and mainly improving conditions for them. The focus on formal employment ignores people in informal work (people with a low socio-educational level), and also the unemployable population, especially older people (the population in the Jiu Valley is in a constant demographic ageing process) as well as other social groups who need specific protection measures (persons with disabilities or special care needs, victims of domestic violence, vulnerable groups based on ethnic grounds, etc.).

All policies and strategies aiming for a just and sustainable transition should consider the gender dimension when addressing environmental challenges and opportunities. Not, however, as a particular factor, but as a fundamental element in considering the needs of the communities for which (and with which) the respective measures are proposed and the way public policies are designed and implemented.

## **V. Best practices: examples from other areas**

**Best-practice examples of economic revitalisation** (*Source: Cristina Martinez-Fernandez; Chung-Tong Wu; Laura K. Schatz; Nobuhisa Taira; José G. Vargas-Hernández (2012). The Shrinking Mining City: Urban Dynamics and Contested*)

### **Mount Isa, Australia**

The strategies for economic revitalisation pursued two paths: (1) consolidating the role of Mount Isa as the regional centre, providing services in education, health and mining technologies and (2) developing mining tourism - many mining assets are now owned and maintained by the city for tourism purposes.

### **Sudbury, Canada**

Sudbury started its revitalisation process by encouraging ICT industries - it attracted client support centres, which created jobs and improved the IT infrastructure of the city; however, jobs in the client support industry are easy to relocate, are badly paid, and have part-time or flexible contracts.

### **Yubari, Japan**

The city of Yubari started with a double failure – a failing public-private partnership to develop a themed park and overspending the local budget on both renovating and buying

houses and city infrastructure. The city declared bankruptcy. Following these events, the city council established the “Yubari Regeneration Citizens Council” to help in promoting citizens’ activities in the field of public services and community management. The Citizens Council organised itself in three working groups to deal with (1) environment, crime prevention and traffic safety; (2) tourism and culture; and (3) social welfare and life. A distinctive feature of the City of Yubari is that citizens’ groups committed to an active role in assisting a city council in overcoming its financial difficulties.

**Examples of best practice in (re)vitalising tourism** (Source: Campbell, S., Coenen, L. (2017), *Transitioning beyond coal: Lessons from the structural renewal of Europe’s old industrial regions*, CCEP Working Paper 1709, November 2017. Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University)

### **Zasavja region, Slovenia**

The transition process focused on promoting local tourism - the organisation of festivals using the former mining infrastructure to build the touristic image of a city and using former industrial buildings as show venues; encouraging mountain biking, rafting and hiking by improving both tourist paths and the information provided to visitors, using restored sites (such as the Europark leisure area); and integrating new tourist paths in existing industries. Similarly, the Steirische Eisenstrass region in Austria hosts motocross events in an iron mine.

Bilbao, Spain (Source: Cueto Alonso, Gerardo J. “New tourism uses for mining heritage in Spain.” (2016).)

The opening of the Guggenheim Museum on a former industrial site in the port in Bilbao, in the heart of the Basque Country in Spain - an old industrial region traditionally specialising in steel and naval works. A related area of development in the tourism sector is the potential of museums designed to honour the heritage of coal regions, as implemented in the Steirische Eisenstrass region (Harfst, 2015). Similarly, former mines, plants, and steelworks are currently used to preserve and exhibit “industrial culture” for tourists in the Ruhr Valley, where Zollverein (one of the largest industrial coal sites in Europe) is now a UNESCO World Heritage site and regional museum (Coenen et al., s.n.).

Exploiting former mining installations presents an opportunity to recover a heritage which, without new activity, would have irreversibly decayed. The success of these tourism initiatives is based on the existence of a more important category of tourists looking for authenticity and specificity in the places they visit, and the mining heritage certainly meets these requirements. The best results can be noticed in the case of old

mines which, before their closure, have been adapted to a new tourist use, making it possible to preserve a great number of elements which can be reused, thus ensuring that some crucial elements for an accurate interpretation of the mining past are not lost.

**Examples of social protection policies contributing to a just transition** (Source: ITUC Economic and Social Policy Brief. “The Role of Social Protection in a Just Transition.” ITUC CSI IGB: Geneva, Switzerland (2019)<sup>8</sup>.

### **Great Britain**

Operating since 2013, Energy Company Obligation is an energy efficiency support scheme which helps combat fuel consumption by subsidising insulation measures in order for low-income households to save energy and reduce electricity bills. Additionally, through the scheme the most vulnerable persons receive a £140 energy subsidy.

### **India**

Since 2005, the Mahatma Ghandi Rural Employment Guarantee Act has aimed to improve rural infrastructure, increase land and water resources and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed unskilled wages.

### **Egypt**

Since 2014, the Egyptian government has drastically reduced fuel subsidies, which mainly benefit the rich, and allocated more resources to health, education and social protection. In particular, it has extended the coverage of social protection programmes for poor families, elders, orphans and people with disabilities.

### **Philippines**

After Typhoon Haiyan hit the country in 2013, the government quickly took steps to extend the DILEEP programme (Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program). It offered those affected by the storm up to 30 days of paid employment, social protection as temporary income and health and injury insurance.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/role\\_of\\_social\\_protection\\_in\\_a\\_just\\_transition\\_en.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/role_of_social_protection_in_a_just_transition_en.pdf)

# Results of the research

In the following, we will showcase some of the most important aspects revealed during the research, which should be taken into account in the process of just transition so that it also includes the perspective of all the local people, especially the women living in these areas.

## I. Women's paid work in the Jiu Valley

For a better understanding of the relationship women in the Jiu Valley have with work, we will classify experiences in five categories. Each of these categories is marked by stages of local and global socio-economic change that have structured both personal lives and jobs and their quality in the Jiu Valley.

**The first category describes the experiences of women who worked both during and immediately after the communist era, and are now retired.** The image of women in the Jiu Valley during the heyday of mining was that of women exclusively concerned with domestic work. Miners' wives are seen as being exclusively concerned with looking after the household and bringing up children. However, when talking to women in the valley, we have found many examples of women who were also working during that time. Women were not working underground, but they had jobs in the industry around the mine. Many worked in the coal preparation process or in administrative and technical positions at the mine. One of the women we talked to dealt with monitoring the quality of coal in all the mines in the Jiu Valley. Her experience is deeply marked by those times. For her, employment ended at the beginning of the 1990s when she sensed that things would never be the same again. Currently she is retired and her pension pays someone to help her with shopping and other household chores. Another engineer, now retired, told us that she doesn't really regret the closure of mines, especially as the coal power stations brought extra work for the women who had to wash and clean the pollution left on house windows and on the clothes they dried.

*Winters were black, one could not go for a walk. The snow falling in the following hours was black because it was raining smut from the heating plants. The air was very polluted. This was a major disadvantage, so the life quality was profoundly affected by this polluted air. It could have been resolved, but it was something not desired. (Engineer, retired, Petrila)*

However, with regards to just transition, besides talks on who bears the material cost of mine closures, women's experiences show it was also an unfair transition in terms of

valuing the work of people at that time. Interviews show a trauma that came not only from the closure of mines, but especially from the way it was done:

*I went there and actually cried because **I couldn't dare to take any studies home, because it was the Tech Office.** Even today I'm crying over the "Pit coals of Romania" as I haven't, I have never taken a study from there and when I saw them piled up in a corner, covered with faeces and, last but not least, derided, I cried. I admit, I am usually a cry-baby, but I could not help it, all the time... The manner of this lack of care, of respect towards everything, everything that meant so much work and so much... That is where you lived, that's where you got your money from, from that... from coal. (Engineer, retired, Petrila)*

*I mean, she was [so devastated] by the closure of mines that she cried. She viewed the video of the last coal car on Facebook for a hundred times and she cried, and she cried when they detonated it, she was torn...and the 12th elevation where she worked. I remember her, she was outraged - I never understood why, these people didn't have screws, they said, or nails to work underground, and my mother was adamant: how? there was material! there was raw material! There was! How could they do such a thing, not to exploit it, they had to take it somewhere else! (Psychologist, Petrila, 35 years old)*

The described experiences are cases of favourable conditions compared to the general context, where older people have both financial support, as they had a job in that time, and family support, because they still live nearby. In the section on ageing, we describe how elders are among the most vulnerable groups in the community due to migration and the lack of a decent income because of unemployment.

At the time of the closure of mines, related industries, and other plants in the area, not all women were on the verge of retirement. Some of them had only just started their professional lives. **This second category of experiences is marked by uncertainty, multiple career paths and migration.** In Romania, not only mines were closed, but, following the fall of the socialist regime, there was a period of deindustrialisation which resulted in the closure of many factories and industries. Work in trade replaced work in plants in many single-industry areas, but it was unpredictable and poorly paid. The experiences below primarily describe the *resilience* of women during this period. As described in literature (Kidecker, 2010), during the transition period it was women who bore the burden of supporting the household and who showed coping skills by adapting to various career paths.

*And many years we struggled with such services in trade. Here, you could only work in trade. Yes, I worked in trade some four-five years. Then I gave birth to a daughter. Afterwards I just stayed at home, as we couldn't afford to pay someone to look after our child, as I was not well-paid in trade. So, I stayed at home for a very long time. I went to postgraduate medical school. I couldn't get a job as a nurse either, of course. I continued working in trade after I finished medical school. Less (work), and indeed, with the same issues. (Nurse, Petrila, 52 years old)*

In many cases, the search for livelihoods also meant migrating to other cities or other countries to find work. It meant consecutive retraining and reskilling.

*I got a job here in 1986 at the garment factory, because that's how it was then. I went to the mine, worked as telemetry station operator and dispatch at the mine. I went through that stress, that the mine is closing, on the 1st the mine will close. I had instalments on the flat, two small children, I was under that stress - on the 1st the mine will close, on the 1st the mine will close. So, it was a stress, the day came and the mine closed. I commuted to Petroșani at the former ACCVJ [Jiu Valley Coal Plant]; so, the contract between the mining units and the former ACCVJ, also owned by the company, was to keep us employed for 6 months, same salary, same position. Yet, I had a big wage there, I was a secretary [...the person describes she was paid only 6 months/year]. I couldn't live without a salary for 6 months. I took my children and left for Arad. That's where I worked for the first time in a garment factory; what job can you get if you don't know anyone in a big city? At the garment factory, I sewed with the sewing machine. After that I took an exam for a job as warehouse manager, head of a food warehouse. I delivered goods all over Romania, and then I worked as accountant for an Italian firm. I left for Italy, I was illiterate there as I didn't have Italian studies and in one year I did three years of high school, I took the exam to live there, I took Red Cross classes. (Entrepreneur, Vulcan, 49 years old).*

Migration has become the most common strategy for securing an everyday living. The most representative phenomenon of migration was that of women who left to do care work, mainly for Italy (more details Guțu&Țoc 2021) and then Austria. It is a demanding type of work, of providing constant care, 24/7. Caregivers (*badante* in Italian) live with the person they provide care for and take care of everything - shopping, cooking, etc.

*When you go there, you're acting as badante [caretaker] right? There are sick older persons, various diseases, all types, dirty, our Romanians turned them for the better, with food and cleaning and all. The poor elderly were there and nobody was around them. When children came, they didn't bring a cookie, just, hey, I'm here to see you today. A cookie! (Caregiver, retired, 65 years old, Vulcan).*

This phenomenon is also acknowledged by local authorities, especially as it caused problems for the children left behind, for whom specific social services had to be developed.

*But another issue has already surfaced with the caregivers, with those who go there and provide care. At first, they went for a month or two. Now it is like this: they're here for three months, away for three months or one month, leave again for a month, so they leave all the time. It is rare to see people leaving for longer periods. That's pretty much it - two months away, two in the country or away from the country, they're alternating (social worker, 40 years old, Petrila)*

The third type of experience is the one of **women living in favourable conditions to access high education, as well as a job in the field**. They are working with state institutions or non-governmental organisations, or they are small business owners. Most of the times they work in the fields of social psychology or social assistance.

*I am fully aware that people around me live a little worse than I do, and it's a fact. But I have reached that point where it's not a tragedy for me if I'm missing things. When I talk about quality of life, I don't know, there are things that have changed for the better in the area, which didn't exist when I was a student or younger. (Psychologist, 37 years old, Petroșani).*

In these cases, women are satisfied with the working conditions and their activity, thus choosing to remain in the country even though it may affect their family life.

*Two months after he got there, it was the only time he asked all of us, me and the kids, to go. He'd found some job at the laundry of the nursing home where he worked, part-time, to wash the sheets in the nursing home and, I don't know, I just felt it wasn't my thing. I felt like I didn't go to school for nothing, to wash sheets. No, I have nothing against people who do that, but I didn't feel like it suited me or motivated me for a longer period. I like what I'm doing here. It's a field, I don't know, which brings satisfaction, especially when you manage to solve a case or help someone. It's satisfying. I felt*



*that I can evolve from here, but there, going there to do something like that, I didn't see an evolution (social worker, 34 years old, Lupeni).*

The issues they point out are more related to the living and employment conditions of people who are unemployed or working for a minimum wage. Although there are aspects that make their experience less unpredictable and the life conditions are better, the phenomena that have affected the area are also felt by them. The economic insecurity that has marked the area in this period, is being felt, and it is also visible for more privileged groups.

*It means I'm coming to work tomorrow, but I don't know if I'll have anything to do. And it's just like that. Somehow, the followed path was to close as many things as possible, to give up as many things as possible, now, all this deal with let's open, let's do it, let's become entrepreneurs comes on a very sterile ground where we don't even trust the employer anymore. I'm sure that if I were an employer and told, I don't know, let's say 120 people "- Hey, I'll give you jobs, you have to work for a month and by the end of the month I'll give you a wage.", probably half of them would get lost on their way due to lack of trust. (Psychologist, 40 years old, Petroșani).*

*In the Jiu Valley, where the living standard is quite low as...there are not so many jobs. With the closure of mines there are retired persons, the ones that, let's say, have a slightly higher standard of living because they had the mine wages and the ones still working in the mine, but for the retired persons the pensions are decent enough to ensure their living, and there are people, quite a lot, who fork for a minimum wage and thus the standard of living is very low (social worker and company administrator, 45 years old, administrator).*

The fourth type of experiences are the ones of people who **had no access to education or workplaces during the transition period**. For them, access to stable working places becomes even more difficult when they have children. In most situations, they survive with the help of various types of social assistance and seasonal work. As it is a mountain area, during the summer they can pick berries or mushrooms:

*We pick them, get paid per kilogram, if that's what we do and... But at 12 - 1 p.m. we get back home to take care of our children (housewife, 35 years old, Petrila).*

This kind of work, while providing the flexibility to take care of children in the absence of other care options (see the chapter on unequal access to early education), does not

provide any other form of social or medical insurance. Additionally, incomes are unpredictable, making it almost impossible to make long-term plans. In addition to berry picking, for people who have not had access to education, other possible sources of income are cleaning activities - cleaning staircases of blocks of flats, washing carpets - which share the same precarious characteristics with picking fruit. Most of the times, single mothers are the ones who are in these situations.

Job insecurity is not only experienced by those who have not had access to education. The fifth type of experiences describe **issues faced by women in search of employment, even though they had access to education**. Flexible employment paths set by previous generations are maintained for them. Working abroad is an important source of ensuring basic things such as housing.

*I graduated from the Faculty of Social Work and I also have a Master's in Human Resources and I stay at home (...) I worked abroad, so I managed to buy a flat here. If I hadn't worked abroad for two and a half years with my husband, we wouldn't have had a house. (...) I worked in Germany, at a hotel-restaurant and wherever it was needed [we were working]. My husband was working with the pizza place, I was in the restaurant (...) But I couldn't adapt and I also gave birth there and it was very hard for me, he was working, I was alone at home with the first child, new-born, it was really, really hard. I was depressed, when the baby was seven months I came home and three months later my husband came, as he couldn't live there without us (Housewife, 30 years old, Vulcan).*

*I finished two years ago; I have a degree as general nurse. There haven't been any job openings since then. I didn't have where (...) I gave up, I got used to the idea. I have been abroad for a while; I was in the Netherlands working in a slaughterhouse. (...) [Now] I work as cashier and this is written on the tag, but I do everything, from pallets, receiving goods, everything, everything, everything that's related to the warehouse, everything. (...) The shift is eight and a half hours, with half an hour for the lunch break, but you never use it, there is no time. (...) [the wage] is the minimum, this month I got 1400 lei, so very little. (Cashier, 23 years old, Petroșani).*

With economic instability and low wages in the private sector, there is competition for jobs in public institutions. Interviewees mentioned how they tried to find a job in these institutions, but the competition is too intense and possible informal relationships prevented them from finding a job there. This situation is also acknowledged by local experts in the labour market:

*There are better jobs in medical care, as we have the hospital, which is quite big, and there are quite a lot of jobs there. And in education. Anything with the state. (Employee at the Local Employment Agency, 35+, Petroșani)*

## **Low-paid jobs**

For many women who stayed in the Jiu Valley and who are part of the active population, most jobs are found in trade, second-hand goods warehouses, furniture factories and HORECA.

In Petroșani, the biggest employer is Hunedoara Energy Complex (CEH), which employs 45.9% of the number of people registered with companies in Petroșani, while the second largest employers are trade businesses (various NACE codes), where 14.63% of people are employed.

In Vulcan, most people are employed in trade (38.67%) and furniture manufacturing (21.35%).

In Uricani, most people are employed in trade, especially in second-hand clothes warehouses (44.52%).

In Lupeni, most people are employed in trade (20.27%) and logging (14.86%).

In Petrila, most people are employed in bakery production (14.04%) and trade (13.81%).

In Aninoasa, most people are employed in furniture manufacturing (35.57%) and trade (27.17%).

## **Migration**

Migration is the second largest issue described by people living in the Jiu Valley – migration driven by economic factors. Few jobs, in harsh conditions and poorly paid, have led many people, men and women, to leave in search of a better standard of living. For some it was just a means to save money for an apartment or to open a business, although those who returned to open businesses did not really leave for that reason. It seems they wished to come back for different reasons (being close to their family and circle of friends), and opening a business gave them the confidence that they could have a decent life in the Jiu Valley. For others, as described by the interviewees, migration became a lifestyle. Working in agriculture provides this solution, where people can work in “seasons”, as they can go abroad for a certain period to save enough money to live in Romania for a few months. When they return home, they have no other sources of income and the migration-return cycle repeats itself.

*After I gave birth to my daughter... (My husband) has been going for three years in a row; after the second daughter was born it started to get a bit harder and we couldn't make it with the salary received here and we agreed*

*he should go abroad. (...), yes, he leaves for two-three months, returns for two-three at home, it depends. He leaves again and so on. It's been three years since he has been leaving periodically, returned and left again. (...) after we bought the second house (just for us) we decided to have another child. As we have a place of our own. And it was hard. For a while... The wage is very low, there are very high demands for a newborn child and, somehow, we sank into debt and in order to pay for it he had to leave for a higher income. This was all. You are pushed to leave, as the wages here are very low. Yes, whatever you wish to do as a woman; I wanted to get a job here, but...you can't find a job where you can take care of children and still work. Nobody understands you have to do the second or third shift, for example. There aren't any. (Housewife, 25 years old).*

According to the experiences and stories of women in the Jiu Valley, children are the most affected:

*Problems? There are a lot, I don't know how to explain. You experience them and you have to deal with them even though...there is nothing else to do, no other option. It's been 3 months since he's been away and our daughter is restless. Every time they talk, she starts crying for him to "come home!" (cries). It's something that... This is the biggest issue, that I can't make her understand what is going on. That's about it. (Housewife, 25 years old).*

One of the direct impacts of migration on the area is the demographic decline in all 6 cities studied in this research, as can be seen in the figures below.

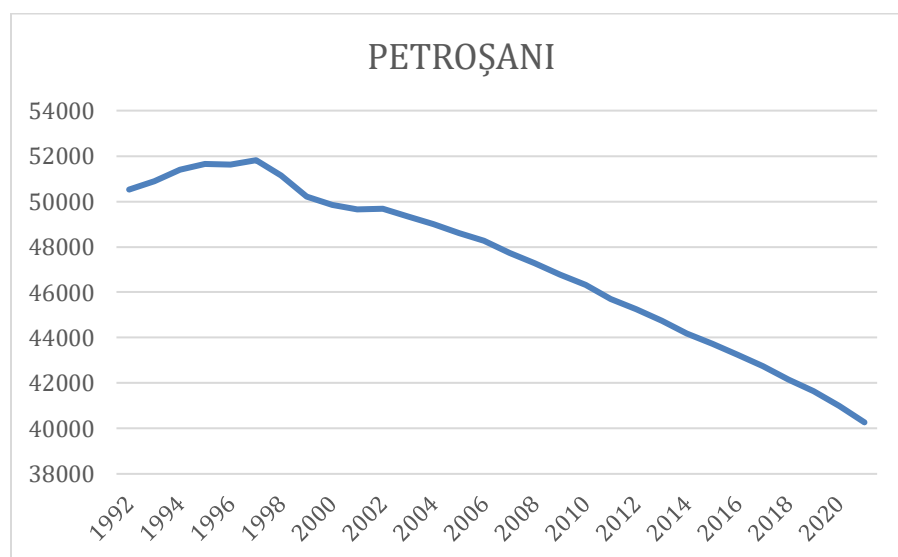


Figure 1. Evolution of population in Petroșani (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

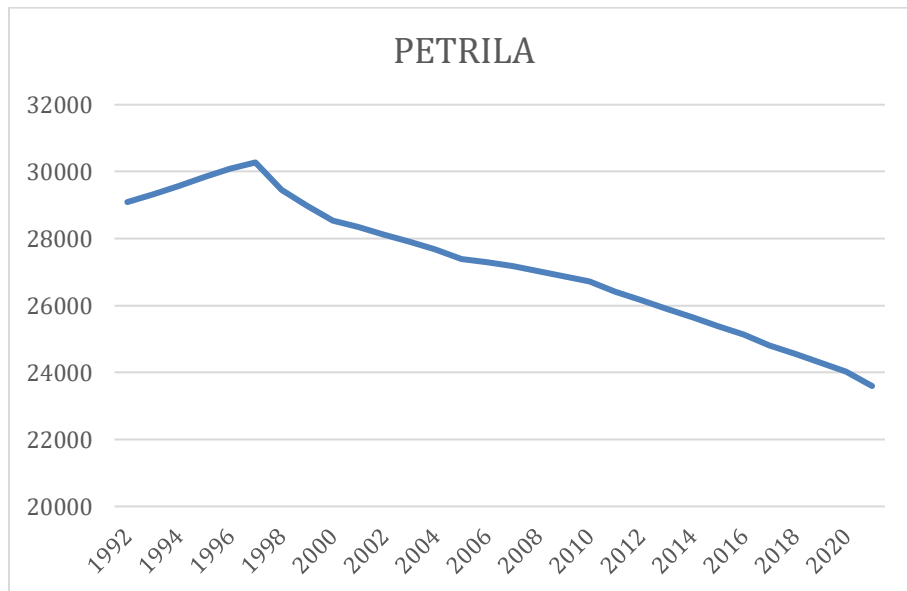


Figure 2. Evolution of population in Petrila (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

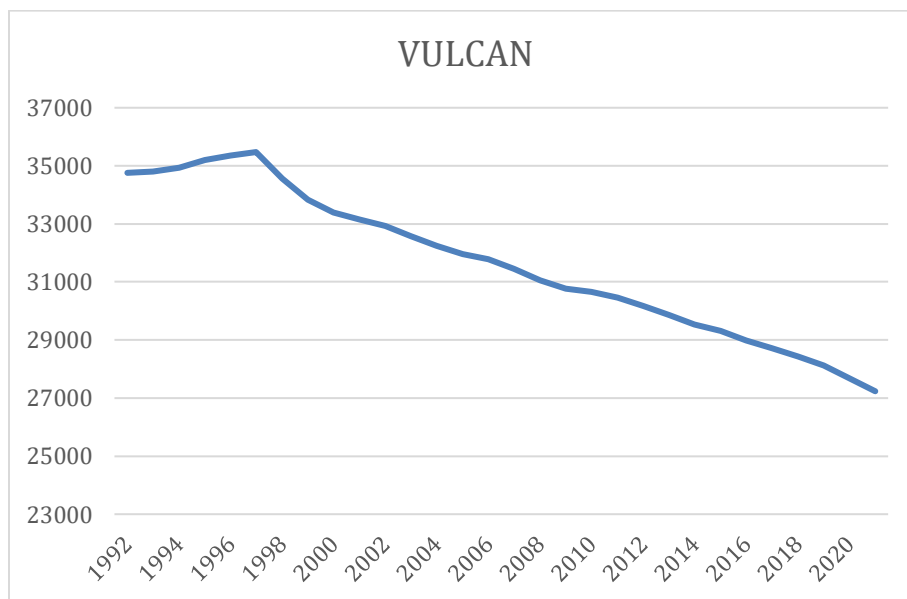


Figure 3. Evolution of population in Vulcan (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

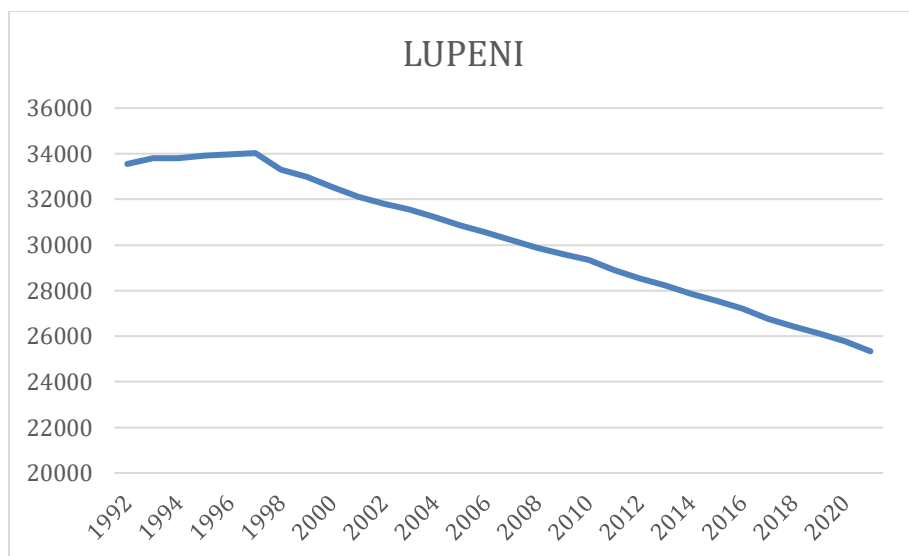


Figure 4. Evolution of population in Lupeni (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

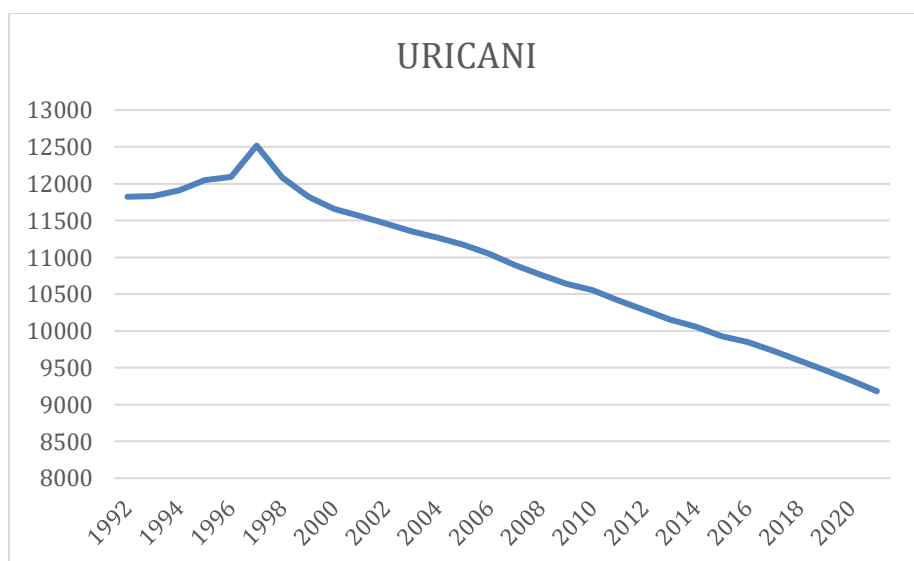


Figure 5. Evolution of population in Uricani (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

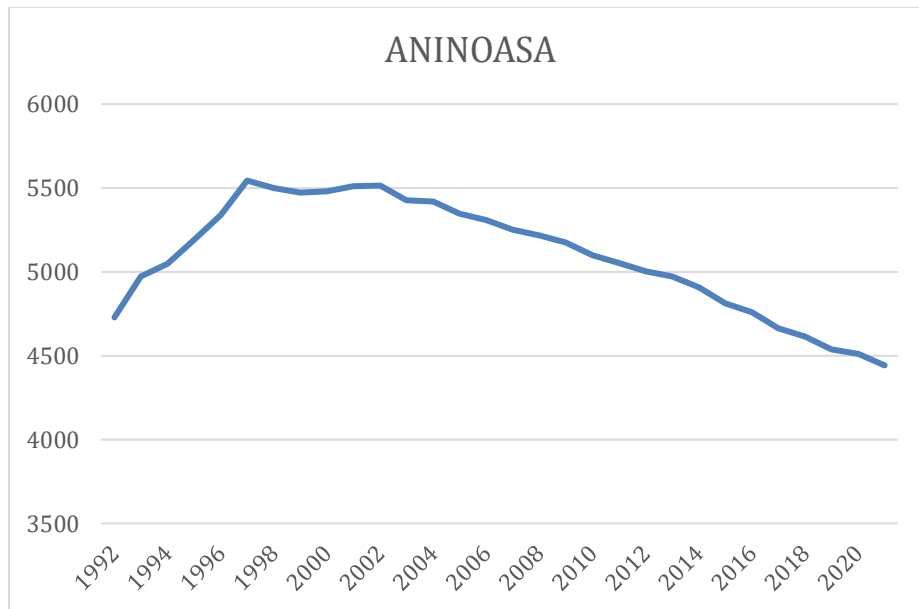


Figure 6. Evolution of population in Aninoasa (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

### Precarity of jobs

Also specific to migration, job precarity exists even for those who stay. Local businesses, subsidiaries of other companies building part of the outsourced production for bigger companies, especially the automotive industry (e.g. wiring, steering wheels) can relocate their business at any time they consider that some conditions are not favourable or profitable (e.g. the wiring company that closed the Livezeni site).

*That's why I quit from wiring, because of the commute. I have small children at home and I said I couldn't commute there. Commuting here to Livezeni, yes, it was fine. 10 minutes each way. But I had to leave one hour early to go to Hațeg (...) to arrive there because I had to start work. That would be two hours prior to the start time. (...) The commute took one hour and another hour I was waiting there in case anything happened during the commute. That one hour was a backup, in order to arrive in time for work. (Unemployed, 30 years old, Vulcan)*

Also, according to information received during interviews, another type of manufacturing existed in the area, the *lohn* industry - garment workshops that are globally recognised as generating low-paid jobs and harsh working conditions. But these closed before the pandemic, according to a person working in employment.

Jobs in tourism are on the borderline between precarious and seasonal work. Most jobs in the Straja ski resort are seasonal, and they require people to remain in the resort for



the entire season, 24/7, and are not available for women with dependents (children or elders).

### **Feminisation of educational, social reproduction and care work**

Gender is structuring roles both in and outside the household, and care and social reproduction work is generally assigned to women, especially in single-industry areas. The education of the child/children, both institutional and especially at home, is often considered a women's responsibility, as a teacher from Petrila explains:

*In 90% of cases, throughout kindergarten, we have only talked to mothers. Fathers don't come as much (...) they were probably at the mine before, as well as tired and working in shifts. We only saw them at festivities. Otherwise, we got along very well with the mothers, being housewives, right? They came and brought the children, they dressed them properly. (...) Now they stay with their grandmother or a neighbour, but usually the grandmother. Right, so I teach upper kindergarten and, so far, I have only seen four fathers. (Teacher, 64 years, Petrila)*

The transition to capitalism and especially lay-offs at the mines have made the communities in the Jiu Valley more vulnerable, especially women from working-class families, which, as Kideckel (2010, 167) mentions, have been faced with new challenges generated by the general decline in living standards and the increasing difficulty in fulfilling the responsibilities of entrenched gender roles. The new material conditions have led to a change in the dynamics of domestic life, especially through increased pressure on women to contribute to the economic situation of their families. As previously mentioned, one of the results is the departure of many women from the Jiu Valley to work abroad.

*If initially fathers were the ones to bring income to the family, and the only ones who were working, following the layoffs it seems that the financial pressure somehow shifted from them to women, to wives. And many families have only had women, not only mothers, but I believe this is what they went through, the experience of women working abroad (School counsellor, Petroșani)*

*This overseas wonder, of course the migration phenomenon caught us at the top. We were probably the first ones to leave for Italy and Germany. (Psychologist, Petrila)*

For some women, access to paid work has also meant a form of validation and appreciation, a way of asserting their independence and ability to juggle many responsibilities. Even if paid work is added to domestic and care work, which is a burden for women, one of the direct effects has been a greater degree of empowerment, as the wife of a former miner, now a nurse, recounts:

*Women have become more independent and were no longer under the thumbs, as they say. Before they were...as in the army - Attention! They were waiting for their husband with food and everything needed. It was a pressure indeed. Indeed. They changed, they found jobs. They left, they worked somewhere else, became independent and probably had a word to say. (Nurse, 53 years old, Petrila)*

However, the responsibility of care work remains almost exclusively on the shoulders of women; none of the research participants raised the issue of paternal leave or sharing the child rearing responsibilities between the couple. Partners were mostly mentioned as support, especially financial support, but child rearing was mentioned as solely the responsibility of women.

The changing dynamics of paid work - domestic work are reflected, intertwined and reconstructed in more obvious or subtle ways in education in the Jiu Valley, as discussed below.

## **II. Access to education**

In local development and just transition strategies education is a central pillar to improve the quality of life and create a healthier environment. However, these strategies are often built on general facts which are not adapted to the reality of the community they target. Beginning with the issues raised by participants in this study, in the following we will show some of the pitfalls of the strategies outlined so far, as well as possible new avenues for more gender and class inclusive strategies.

### **Unequal access to early education**

*Usually if a mum wants to work, there is nothing to do with the child. She needs to get a nanny or turn to the grandmother. We have kindergartens, we have nurseries, not enough, as places are limited; you have to move quickly to find a place in the nursery. (Employee at the Local Employment Agency, 35+, Petroșani)*

One of the most common reasons pointed out by the women we interviewed when it came to the difficulty of doing paid work and the pressure to stay at home during the child-rearing period is the limited and unequal access to early education, especially the lack of childcare facilities. The possibility to enroll children in a childcare facility or all-day kindergarten would relieve women of some of the domestic chores. The current available options differ according to the socio-economic status of the family and the career path they had before the time of birth. For middle or high-income earners, access to a caregiver is the most preferred option for returning to work:

*Well, it is easy, I stayed at home until the child was two years old, because I didn't have any other option. After they turned two, a nanny was hired. There wasn't any other way. It was a financial burden on the family, a much more substantial one compared to sending the child to a nursery, in my opinion. But that wasn't a viable option until the child turned 3 and we could enrol them in a kindergarten. (School counsellor, Petroșani)*

For the other women (with access to a salary mostly equivalent to the minimum wage) the remaining options are parental/extended family support or, most commonly, staying at home to take care of the child/children.

*Yes, whatever you want to do as a woman is hard. I wanted to get a job here, but...you can't find a job where you can take care of children and still work. Nobody understands you have to do the second or third shift, for example. I am not. (...) I tried to get a job this summer. But there wasn't anyone who could have taken care of my girls and I couldn't agree with anyone to find a job. If I find someone to take care of children, they only do it for a few days, but one cannot be employed only for a month or two, or some days. I haven't found a person to take care of them and agree that the pay is low, and to pay them. Who stays with the girls? At the end of the month, you have almost nothing left, you pay utilities, children need clothes and shoes. (Housewife, 25 years old, Petrila)*

*Afterwards I just stayed at home, as we couldn't afford to pay someone to look after our child, as I was not well paid in trade. So, I stayed at home for a very long time. (Nurse, 53 years old, Petrila)*

The Strategy for the transition from coal of Jiu Valley (2021-2030) mentions several proposed actions for Strategic orientation 1.3. *Modernising education in the region, improving access to education and making investments: 1.3.9. Equipping kindergartens, setting up all day nurseries/ kindergartens and implementing after-school programmes in localities that do not have such facilities, with the provision of means of access (buses).*

At the same time, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) mentions the development of new nurseries, and, according to the Ministry for Development, Public Works and Administration, in Hunedoara County, the cities of Petroșani, Lupeni and Vulcan will benefit from this measure. However, women in towns in the Jiu Valley say that authorities have promised the development of new nurseries for many years (see Regional Development Plan 2014-2020, page. 228) but they have never become a reality. All that has happened in recent years has been the setting up of nursery groups in private kindergartens in Petroșani and Vulcan, which have limited places and are restrictive in terms of costs, again, accessible only to certain social categories.

Even in the pre-school period, access to all-day kindergartens is difficult given the limited number of places in state kindergartens. At the same time, the all-day programme includes a fee for the children's meals. Thus, these limit the possibility of women in the most vulnerable categories getting a job, without social support.

*There is a single all-day kindergarten and I have also used its services, otherwise I couldn't have come to work. The children can also stay there overnight. So from Monday to Friday, they don't work during weekends, so there is nobody there on Saturday or Sunday, but it is not a nursery, it's an all-day kindergarten. However, you have to pay for children's food. (Social care workers, 42 years old, Lupeni)*

### **Unequal access to primary, middle and high school education**

*There are clearly other, better schools, more pretentious schools and in the same city there is a plethora of schools where things are not as they should be, and it is noticeable on the kids. (School counsellor, Petroșani)*

*However, there are good kids, who learn well and go far. Unfortunately, only with the help of their parents. So, if the parents don't invest in private tutoring or if they don't personally take care of the children, it's for nothing. (...) We have a good high school with good children. But that is where parents insisted and got private tutoring and they instructed children. (Employee in Public Administration, Local Employment Agency Petroșani)*

One of the most pressing issues in public education at the middle to high school level, is, as mentioned by interviewees, the gap between "good schools" and "weak schools" in all cities, which is most visibly reflected in national assessment results and dropout and early school leaving rates. These stem from issues existing in the whole school ecosystem and are not just a result of the way they are organised. According to data in

the report “State of Education” 2018-2019 of the Hunedoara County School Inspectorate, out of the 6 cities analysed in this research, Vulcan has the lowest pass rate of the National Assessment examination (38.3%). In the same city, one of the schools has a pass rate of over 70%. The difference between the two schools is the area in which they are located - the school with a low pass rate is located in the most deprived part of the city, with children with poor socio-familial backgrounds, with a different ethnicity. Basically, children’s success in schools depends on their family’s financial resources, which is a national issue, not only a local one, but a just transition process takes into account measures for the most disadvantaged groups as well.

Socio-economic segregation is an issue that reflects the socio-educational path of children; it was noted in our interviews in all cities, and both authorities and residents know that these areas are marginalised: Bosnia, Ianza Colony, Venus-Saturn, Saşa, Dallas. In this respect, only three of the areas are mentioned in the Strategy for the economic, social and environmental development of Jiu Valley, (2021-2030), and then only as an unused potential and a hindrance to the attractiveness for tourists: “the existence of unused public areas, sometimes located right in the centre of towns, shows a lack of homogeneity, having a negative impact on the possibilities of increasing the attractiveness for tourists”.

At the same time, one of the actions proposed in the Strategy is *1.3.2: The prevention of school dropout rates and the reintegration of dropouts in the education system, by implementing modern second-chance programmes and providing step-by-step education*. Second-chance programmes are a welcomed restorative measure in communities where access to education has been difficult and we believe it is important to maintain them in the Jiu Valley. We also encourage the use of alternative, step-by-step learning systems in vulnerable communities as an opportunity to attract children to school, instead of methods used in “classical” pedagogy, and we believe it is a useful means to diversifying the educational offers (even if today, in reality they are accessed and used more in privileged environments.) However, we believe that the measures proposed in the Strategy are not adapted to the needs of vulnerable categories and to the issues faced by schools in the Jiu Valley. Without efforts to provide effective access to free quality education, along with strong social measures, the vicious cycle of poverty in which large parts of the communities in the 6 cities find themselves will only be perpetuated.

The issue of unequal access to education has been magnified in the pandemic context. Thus, as women mentioned in our interviews, the most impacted were children from poor families:

*How can you have online classes in a one-room flat with seven children?  
There was no space. One was in the bathroom, one in the kitchen, two in*

*the room, and one on the floor. Where would the others stay? At some point one of them told me: I'm going on the roof. They had headsets and used them so as not to disturb each other. (Housewife, 35 years old, Petrila)*

*And it was hard. There was a lot of work as they didn't understand certain things. The teacher explains in a way. We, as parents, don't have the same education. How can we explain to a child something and make them understand it? (Housewife, 25 years old, Petrila)*

Another issue pertaining to gaps in access to quality education, mentioned in interviews, is the school infrastructure:

*There are a lot of old, unrenovated schools, many unsuitable classrooms as they are too small for the given number of pupils. Or the furniture is very, very old and the labs lack equipment such as chemistry, physics and other such labs. It feels as if you open a door and suddenly you are in 1982. You were teleported in time and space. And I think this has a great impact on the interest, curiosity, everything children should be excited about. (School counsellor, Petroșani)*

As mentioned in previous chapters, one of the greatest changes in the Jiu Valley, following the closure of mines and migration waves, is the demographic decline. The decreasing number of pupils in schools is a national problem, but in the Jiu Valley it is even more pressing, and is reflected in the resources allocated to each school (according to the principle “funding follows the pupil” in our education system; the schools with fewer pupils get less resources, which is reflected in poor infrastructure and less qualified teaching staff).

*The school population is declining steeply compared to other counties, areas of the country. And in the Jiu Valley, I think the phenomenon is aggravated even more due to this migration abroad, for work. (School counsellor, Petroșani)*

The charts below show the evolution of the number of children by level of education.

### **Trends in the number of students in the cities of the Jiu Valley (1992-2020)<sup>9</sup>**

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<sup>9</sup> For some of the education levels only data for some of the years and cities were available in the National Institute for Statistics' database

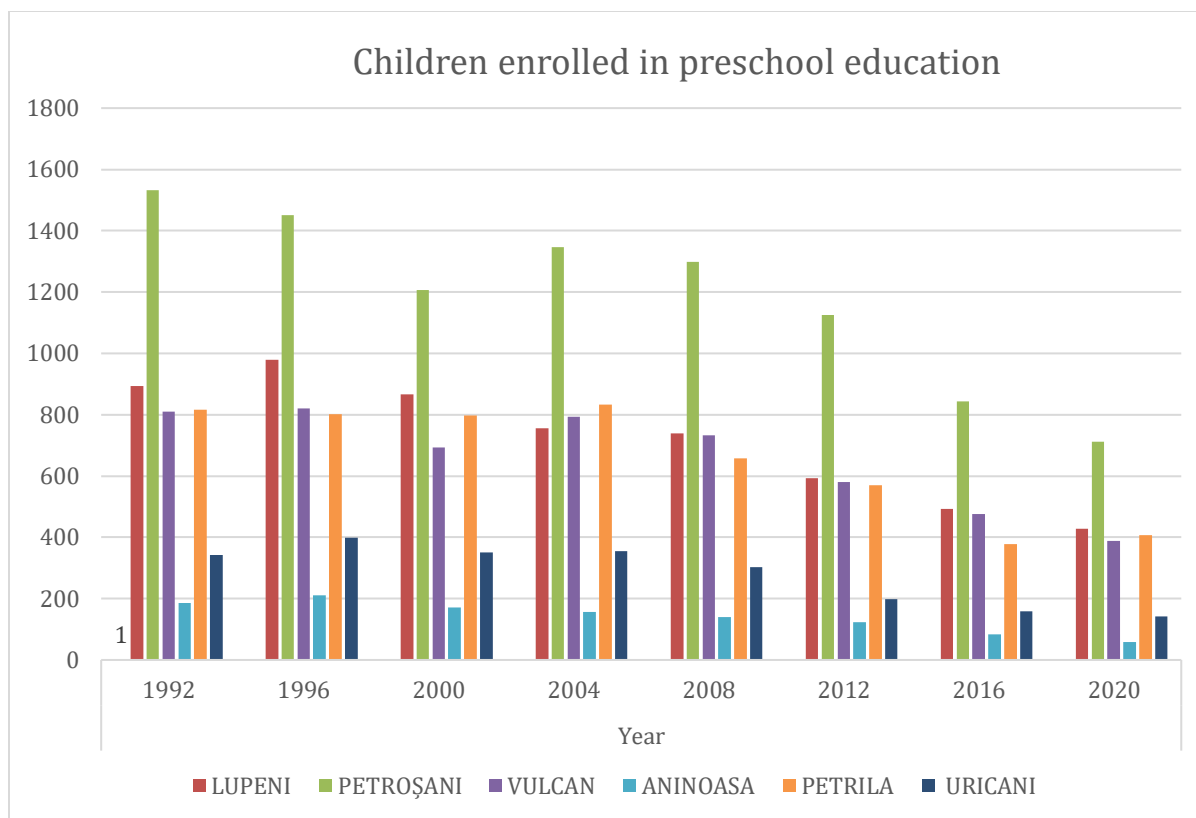


Figure 7. Distribution of children enrolled in preschool education in the Jiu Valley (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

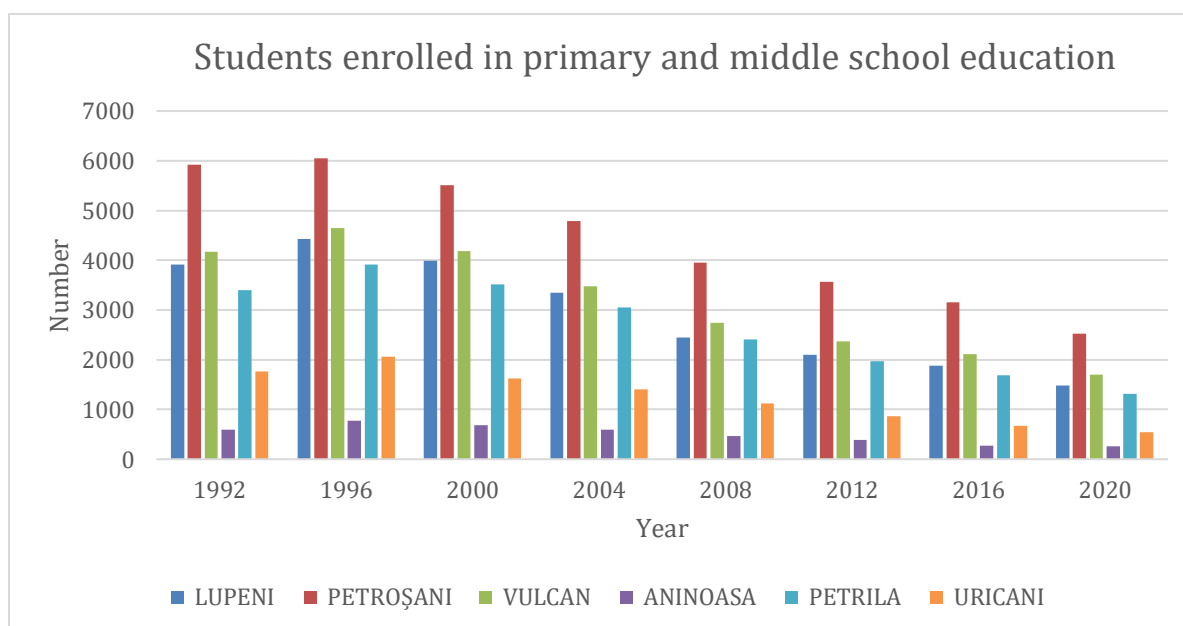


Figure 8. Distribution of children enrolled in primary and middle school education in the Jiu Valley (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)



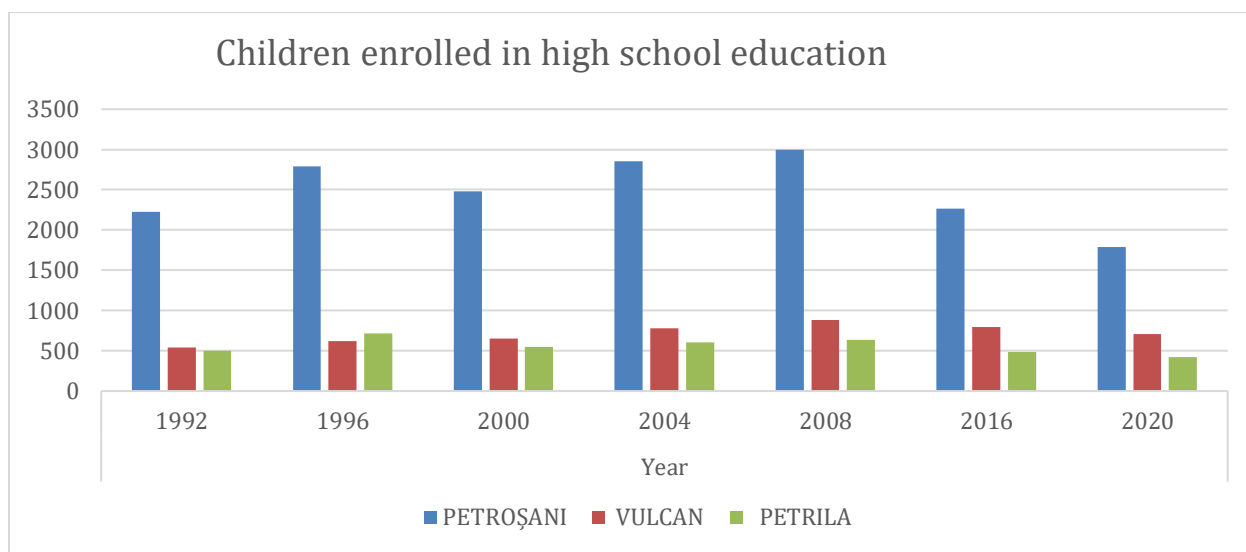


Figure 9. Distribution of children enrolled in high school education in the Jiu Valley (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

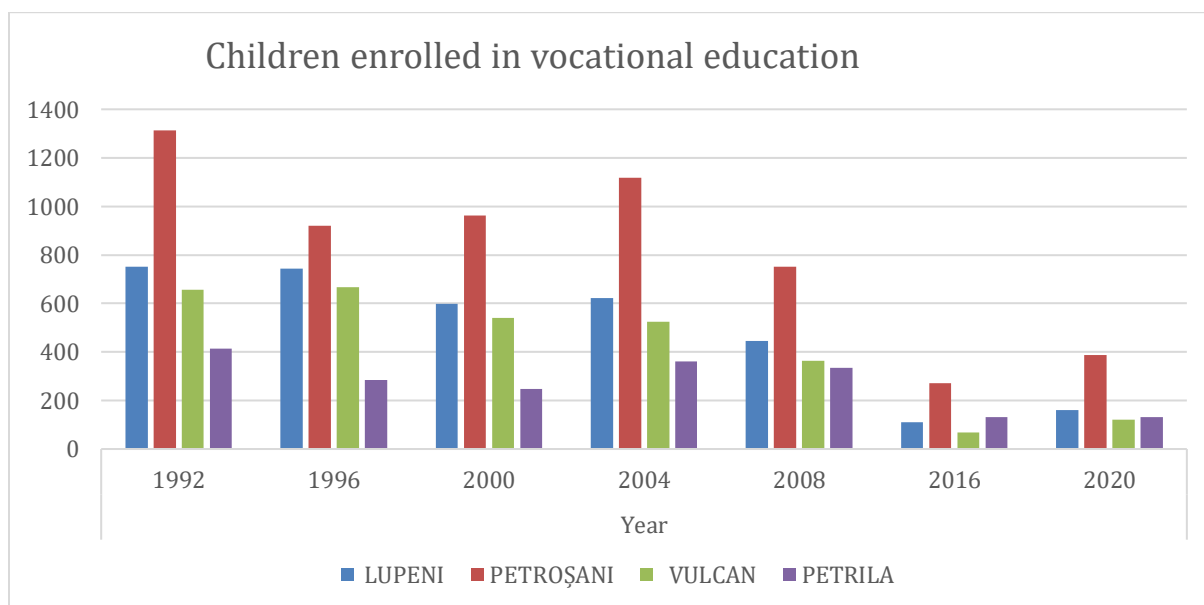


Figure 10. Distribution of children enrolled in vocational education in the Jiu Valley (1992-2020) (Source: National Institute for Statistics)

The growing phenomenon of underage mothers is a direct reflection of the impact of unequal access to education and parents' migration paths on the girls in the Jiu Valley.

This issue was identified by many participants in the research, who work in the field of social educational assistance:

*The phenomenon of underage mothers and sexual relationships with adults is on the rise. (Social care employee, Petrila)*

*We have very young mothers; it went down from high school to middle school. There are few cases, yet it is a phenomenon on the rise. (School counsellor, Petroșani)*

*Even the number of underage mothers has also increased. Generally, in the past years, girls having parents living abroad. And at 15, 16, 17 they have children. (Social care worker, Lupeni)*

Furthermore, both in strategies for development of the area and in interviews with women in the research, the topic of vocational schools and vocational training for high schoolers was addressed.

*There is a lack of specialists, as industrial high schools used to train computer operators, hairdressers, whatever is required, whatever sounds better. They have now started to change their profiles. To realise that we also need skilled workers, not only diplomats. (Social care employee, Petrila)*

One of the most touted solutions in this regard is dual education and the promotion of public-private partnerships to give graduates a chance of employment. Dual education is usually organised in vocational schools. The participation rate of the male population compared to the female population in such schools is discordant. According to the Report on the State of Pre-University Education 2019-2020 in Romania, the gender gap in participation in high schools is in favour of girls, while in vocational high schools it is 10% in favour of male students. The educational offer, as suggested by the above respondent, has fluctuated in high schools in the Jiu Valley and has not had a coherent vision based on an integrated education strategy. It also does not take into account how gender structures labour market opportunities.

The demographic downward trends are also visible at the level of university education. Additionally, the university's educational offer and reputation are not good enough to attract the most motivated students to stay in the Jiu Valley.

*The university still produces graduates. I don't know where they will work, but they exist. We have generations every year. We don't excel at what is called the opportunity to access higher education of increased academic*

*quality in our area. It doesn't say anything good about you if you state that you're a graduate of this university. It does not speak well of you. People will raise their eyebrows, fine, higher education but... (School Counsellor, Petroșani)*

This can be seen in the decreasing number of students. Beyond the national trends of demographic decline, the number of students at the University of Petroșani (the sole university in the Jiu Valley) halved between 2011 and 2017, but in 2017 they accounted for about 37% of the total number of higher education graduates in Hunedoara County. Although the University began to broaden its educational offer, after the closure of the mines, it largely ignored the context of the Jiu Valley. The current fields of study address the problems of just transition and the development potential of the area to only a limited extent. More consideration could be given to training and retraining for *low carbon* jobs. The same could apply to vocational and professional fields in secondary schools.

### **III. Access to health**

Health is one of the most important issues when it comes to quality of life. However, there is also a weak health service in the Jiu Valley. Even though the area has a healthcare infrastructure (much of it rehabilitated, renovated and consolidated in recent years), out of 190 institutions, including 3 hospitals (Petroșani, Vulcan, Lupeni), nearly half of the medical staff are clustered in Petroșani (800 health professionals). According to the Strategy for the economic, social and environmental development of Jiu Valley (2021-2030) and interviews with women in the Jiu Valley, one of the obvious challenges in the area is the scarcity of family doctors: one per 2,829 inhabitants. A significant number of family doctors are retired or approaching retirement age and there has been no success in attracting young specialists in this field.

*It's a Jiu Valley-wide problem everywhere with family doctors. It is because many are retired, many are on the way out and very few remain. (Social assistant employee, Petrila)*

There is also a high turnover of medical staff at the hospital level, with many of the positions for specialists remaining unfilled.

*The hospital in Petroșani has four to five gynaecologists and no neonatologist. The lady who was there has retired and no one occupied the new post, although I understand it has been put out to tender on numerous occasions. (Psychologist, Petroșani)*

*The doctors started to leave. Just today I found out that we don't have an ophthalmologist at the hospital. We have to go to Petroșani if we have a problem. We don't have a neurologist, we don't have a neurosurgeon, now we don't have an ophthalmologist. (Social care employee, Lupeni 42 years old)*

The direct implications of the lack of specialists in the public health system are on the one hand the use of private medical services and, on the other, migration to larger cities for access to services.

*Thank God you have somewhere to go. Ok, the vast majority are private services, but I guess that's the way it is everywhere. So, I don't know, I don't think there are places in the Romanian health care system in general where someone is going to say "wow, I'm going to the state because they're better and more considerate of me", I don't think that happens. (...) Then, the system for dentists is that they come and provide consultations, each office has a permanent doctor. (...) And if you don't have that specialist, the easiest thing is to bring someone from the centre, where you went to university and where you still know something, and then they bring you someone who is good. They provide consultations here and if it's something more complicated, they call you in Timișoara or Cluj. (Psychologist, Petroșani)*

*For some routine tests I indeed seek to go to a clinic that is private here. For others, other cities, for example...Cluj. (Social worker and company administrator, 45 years old, Petroșani)*

One of the medical services for which migration to other counties is very high is birth. Women with medium to high incomes seek private or public services in Deva, Timisoara or further afield. The main reason is the notoriously low quality of medical services, especially in Petroșani (currently, as pointed out above, there is a lack of medical staff to cover the neonatology section, which is essential for births).

*I was scheduled here for a C-section on the 18th, the baby wanted to be born on the 10th. I rushed to Petroșani, I called the doctor I visited for my monthly check-up, at a private clinic. She had just left her shift an hour before and said "sorry, I'm not coming back". She didn't come back to do my C-section and I ended up at the one, how should I put it... I think everyone in the Jiu Valley knows that one. Oh, I hope you don't go to her. She tore my peritoneum when she pulled the baby out of my belly. I'm left with scars. I had to have a total abdominal reconstruction three years ago.*

*If I didn't have my tubes tied during the procedure and got pregnant, my womb would grow and I'd be in big trouble. (Unemployed, 30 years old, Vulcan)*

Access to public medical services in other counties and private services are restrictive, even impossible, for a large number of women in the Jiu Valley. Another direct effect of migration, lack of jobs, and the fact that many miners' wives have only been engaged in domestic work, is the lack of health insurance. As a result, as the women told us in the interviews, there is very little attention paid to control and prevention, and more to emergency services when an acute health problem arises (especially when it comes to the most expensive ones, such as dental interventions).

*I am unable to (go for check-ups). They cost. Everything is about money. When one doesn't have medical insurance, and receives a 13 million RON (old system, currently 1300 RON) bill for electricity, one is not that interested in check-ups anymore. (Housewife, 35 years old, Petrila)*

*So far, I did not have serious issues, but sometimes I have to pay for some tests, some that have to be done. But that happens rarely, I have to pay especially when I go to a private clinic. (Housewife, 25 years old, Petrila)*

The worsening health of the population who migrate mainly seasonally from the Jiu Valley is also due to the specific nature of their work. Seasonal work in agriculture means several months of living in more or less poor conditions, certainly very demanding on the body, often dangerous or unsafe.

*From agriculture or from working abroad, quite a few came with serious health problems. They're worn out. That's where they do wear and tear work. (Nurse, 53 years old, Petrila)*

The single-industry nature of the area also means that, in many development strategies, aspects concerning health are linked to the occupational diseases of miners and how existing health services fail to meet the need. What is not emphasised is that working in the mines has also affected miners' female partners in ways that are reflected in women's health today. One of the persons we spoke to, a nurse in a permanent care centre, points out that the specific impact of the single industry on women's health is visible, even though they worked less in the mines, in health problems such as heart or neurological diseases.

*I look at it from my point of view; so, while my husband worked at the mine, I was always stressed. They were stressed about working in the mine under those conditions. We were stressed to see them get home after a shift.*

*Yes, I wouldn't wish you to live like that. To know that the husband should get back home, let's say at 1 a.m., after I came back home from the third shift, it happened often that instead of sleeping I would sit and count to hear that he was coming home. So maybe that worry as well, maybe bad nutrition. I don't know. That's what we always ate around here, heavy, fat, hearty food because, well, men worked in the mine and what did they eat? Hearty meals. I laughed about it a lot; after I arrived in the Valley, I saw that, God, the main concern was what are they going to eat during weekends. Yes, there was a concern about food. I never thought about it before coming here. What to cook all the time. It is obsessive. It was in a way. But they're probably remnants from forever ago. Indeed, I think many of these diseases come from the eating style and lifestyle. Worry, lots of stress, accidents. And probably, well, these political malcontents, maybe they also contribute to it, after just waiting a while. (Nurse, 53 years old, Petrila)*

#### **IV. Access to social services**

##### **Ageing and access to social care services**

*There are many older people, let's not forget that we have an ageing population. The population is quite old, there are many older people and many are left alone because children either went abroad, either live in other cities; or maybe they live in the same cities, but older people are alone and some of them aren't managing to get by, maybe they can't even walk to do shopping. So, they live alone in their houses, isolated and it's bad. It's hard. (Psychologist, Petrila)*

Given the mono-industrial character of the area, waves of migration, lack of attractiveness in terms of job opportunities, low quality of life and, more recently, the pandemic, the ageing of the population in the Jiu Valley is becoming an increasingly prominent problem. One of the most pressing problems is the lack of care and support structure for older people. The ageing population is a nationwide problem, and according to the National Institute of Statistics, 28% of elders live alone. The main issues they are facing are: their financial situation (58%), health (46%), dependence on others (36%), feeling useless (33%) and loneliness (30%). The consequence is the emergence of anxiety and low self-esteem, which aggravates social retreat and, ultimately, depression.

In addition, there is a lack of infrastructure specific to these needs: from residential centres, to home care facilities, to day centres or some types of facilities for spending time outside the home. There are 3 private and 2 public residential centres in the area,

accommodating around 200 people, which is insufficient given the increasing demand. The issue, especially for the private centres, is that access to these services is directly linked to the financial possibilities of the beneficiary or their family. Non-residential day centres are unevenly distributed (in 3 out of the 6 cities such centres don't exist), most of them being located in Petroşani.

Women are disproportionately affected by the lack of such facilities, as their life expectancy in general, but especially in the Jiu Valley, is higher.

*Pensions from the mines are quite high, but usually former miners benefit from those. Lately, how do I put it; we have issues with their widows. They're pretty much gone, poor souls, and now only their wives are alive, and they don't have pensions. (Social worker, Lupeni)*

The poor infrastructure of public and private care services for elders also means that, where possible, some of the care work is carried out privately, predominantly by women in the extended family. This makes it even more difficult for women of working age who, in most cases, also care for children and need to balance work duties to bring home an income. Women leaving for work abroad leads to the total abandonment of elderly people needing care. In the context of the pandemic, the lack of infrastructure for active ageing and care was accentuated by the problem of loneliness and isolation of older people, many of them having relatives abroad.

*Most of them, especially after retirement, have children living abroad. I have heard many stories of not receiving help from their children abroad. They remain alone and with no support. We had 62 older people in the Bahtalo project, and for three years we delivered them monthly packages of food and hygiene products. When the project was over, last month, I saw how worried they were. What will we do if you don't visit us? (Social worker, Lupeni)*

## **Domestic violence**

Even though violence against women was not noted as a critical problem in any of the cities where we conducted interviews, support and protection infrastructure for victims only exists in cities that are quite far away, for example in Deva. However, this is a solution that is only used in extreme cases, as most of the time abuse and violence are problems of a private nature and people avoid exposing them publicly. The lack of support infrastructure and thus the possibility to get out of the circle of abuse turns them, as one respondent points out, into victims:



*Most of them are victims. If we talk about it (violence) ... from this point of view they are victims. Victims of abuse, as abuse can even be of financial, emotional, psychological or physical nature. If there's anything that I think is really a problem they face, it would be that they are victims. (Psychologist, Petrila)*

Similar to the infrastructure for ageing and care, the infrastructure for the protection of victims of domestic violence is very scarce, even non-existent in some cities. The public centres owned by the Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection of Hunedoara mainly serve older people with various degrees of disability, and other cases are taken only in exceptional situations.

*There are no safe shelters, no services for abused women. (School counsellor, Petroșani)*

The improvement of social assistance, infrastructure and staff providing social services is also an important objective of the Strategy for the transition from coal of Jiu Valley (2021-2030). However, social assistance matters are mixed for all categories of beneficiaries, and the causal relationship between poverty and deviance has classist and sometimes racist overtones. However, we acknowledge and believe that this is one of the most important solutions: the development of an integrated vision for social intervention that takes into account several dimensions of the issues faced by each of the cities.

## **V. Quality of housing**

The transition to a non-coal economy and the need to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions has meant the closure of mines as well as thermal power plants in the Jiu Valley. The shift from central heating to household units was initially welcomed mainly by women in the areas where the plants were located, because it also meant relieving them of a large part of the domestic cleaning work. There's even a local anecdote about the 'White of Petroșani':

*I won't tell you what it means for a woman not to clean all day, but once a week. Not to wash the window every three weeks, but every two months. To clean all day and wash carpets, but not to wash them half the year. I went through that. We had a stove, we had coal and a cat. And the cat would go on the coal and then on the cupboard and then I was cleaning after it. Or that sooty mess, you had a nose full of soot. There was no white, there was Jiu Valley white. This means you couldn't wear a white coat all day, but 8 hours, and afterwards you couldn't even wash it. There was Jiu Valley white, there was no white. (Engineer, retired, Petrila)*



*It was a really hard time when we had coal heating, from the coal-fired district heating plants where the coal really gave off a smoke (so) that you couldn't even dry your laundry on the balcony. It was a more, let's not say black, a greyer period. Then we switched to the thermal heating part and we ended up with central heating, no more district power plants, no more smoke, no more polluted Jiu. Now it's very clean and conditions are totally different. (Public administration employee, Petroșani)*

While it has led to a reduction in pollution and an improvement in air and water quality, the closure of power plants and the lack of a centralised heating system has meant even greater disparities between those with financial resources and those without:

*Most people have their own gas-fired central heating systems while those who couldn't afford them have stoves. They're still using wood or whatever they can find to keep warm (...). There are other areas in our area and in Petroșani where they still don't have central heating, because people couldn't afford it. Or there are areas where there are no gas pipes and people are not using central heating systems yet. With gas cylinders, it still works. (Psychologist, Petroșani)*

One of the examples of the extreme side effects of the lack of an effective strategy for transitioning to other, less polluting, central heating systems is the use of toxic heating materials (also coupled with the proliferation of second-hand warehouses in the Jiu Valley), such as clothes:

*We have many second-hand warehouses here and they sell bags of clothes that are torn and can't even be used at second hand quality, I also worked in warehouses as a manager. Only top-quality clothes go into the shops. Those that cannot be used are sold in bags of clothes. At that time, a bag of clothes was one RON; last summer it was still one RON. And the neighbour bought a van full of those bags. She bought a car full of wood, a car full of clothes and now she uses wood and clothes for heating. (Housewife, 30 years old, Vulcan).*

*In Aninoasa, where the warehouse was, the owner had full control because of people living in the surrounding houses. He was setting fire in the warehouse with clothes, for the employees. And the smoke kept reaching people's houses. They filed a complaint and (the people who were accountable) got a fine. (Housewife, 30 years old, Vulcan).*

## VI. Prospects for the development of the area

Talks about the future of the area are often pessimistic. Even though the women we spoke to in the research showed resilience and adaptation to difficult material and socio-economic conditions, what was most striking in interviews was the lack of confidence that things could change for the better. Below are some of the extracts from the interviews to illustrate the lack of confidence in a better future and the ability to deal with community problems. Most often, distrust is marked by the financial instability and lack of security that has historically marked the area over the last 30 years:

*My feeling is that some things are done now, in the last moment, like when you're drowning. And then you get a breath of fresh air. That's why I said earlier, I'm not overly optimistic about this period. (...) Everyone around me is gone, I don't have friends here anymore, whether it's in the country, whether it's abroad... (...) And because, in general and financially, things are starting to get worse and worse. Not that I make less, but what I make is not enough anymore. These things make you think. (Psychologist, Petroşani)*

Pessimism is also driven by the lack of economic development. As highlighted in the chapter on work experience, most employers (apart from public institutions) offer few jobs, which are also low paid and full of uncertainty:

*I try not to think about the future ... I cannot be an optimist. Since 1997 we keep messing things, and we haven't built anything. We have nothing! What was done? If I look around for 5-10 companies that are going well. Hard to find. There are a few employers, but at a small level. We cannot be so proud with them, for a valley where so many have been fired. (Public administration employee, Petroşani)*

Pessimism and worry about the days to come are weighing heavily on the mental health of local residents. In some cases, they are also seen as a main cause for their deteriorating physical health.

*I was optimistic until eight or ten years ago, but I'm not that optimistic anymore that something will happen and we will be happy. Happy like, content, cheerful, let's not carry a load on our backs all the time, because of what will be? All this worry is killing us, is making us ill. What will it be? Uncertainty, uncertainty to have children in schools and maybe you won't*

*have resources to keep them in school and so many others. (Nurse, 53 years old, Petrila)*

Despite some measures taken at the local level by social assistance authorities, these are proven to be of limited effect in combatting social issues arising due to economic issues.

*Downhill, it seems we're going downhill. It seems to have gotten worse since the rising number of young mothers. Continuing with the quality of education. And with the plethora of services the state should provide (School counsel, Petroșani)*

However, the most striking source of pessimism is the lack of trust in public authorities. Both the brutal and unplanned manner in which the mines were closed and the lack of subsequent plans to combat the impacts of this phenomenon led to a complete distrust in the capacity and will of state institutions to manage social and development issues of the area.

*The fact that they were not replaced, is the Government's problem. They thought that following the layoffs and giving some compensatory wage, the miners with no high school would become actors in the market economy overnight? It's not the miners' fault. Their opposition to reorganisation is still visible. Take a look at ministries and any other budgetary issues. It was easier with the miners. They closed the mine and told them to go home. No retraining, no other jobs, no....I participated in a study and I was doing surveys at the first right. Only at the first on the right, the first entrance of the apartment building. So many blocks of flats had only one tenant. The first on the right, there were probably two on the left. I even had apartment buildings with no tenants. Sometimes I had to interview people on the left as there weren't tenants on the right. They were all gone abroad. And these people in the Government sleep peacefully. It's unbelievable. Ask the decision makers what are they doing? What are they doing? We are the effect. They are the cause. Nobody is holding them accountable. They should be asked everyday - "how do you sleep at night?" (Engineer, retired, Petrila).*

However, pessimism about the revitalisation of the area and the improvement of the quality of life is not overpowering. There are a number of initiatives that, while not having a visible area-wide impact, do convey a sense of hope. The Coalition *Jiu Valley Involved* (Valea Jiului Implicată) is such an example. The coalition is an "organisational and

cooperation framework for local, national and international non-governmental organisations and civic groups, with the aim of implementing projects for the economic, social and cultural development of Jiu Valley and promoting the region at local, national, European and global level"<sup>10</sup>. It consists of numerous local non-governmental organisations which, through active involvement, aim to<sup>11</sup>:

1. Strengthen civil society in the Jiu Valley by encouraging civic involvement, exchanging best practices and improving collaboration between its members.
2. Promote the principles of good practice for the sustainable development of the Jiu Valley and promote civil society there as a particularly important factor in the process of drafting strategic development documents for the region.
3. Promote collaboration between civil society in the Jiu Valley and local, county, regional, national, European and international public authorities, the private sector and academia.

Also, at the civil society level, the Planeta Petrila (Planet Petrila) organisation has held numerous events for the cultural reactivation of the area. The memorial house of ID Sârbu, where events dedicated to children and the elderly in the area have taken place, preserves not only the history of the writer, but also contemporary works of art by nationally and internationally known artists. The Mother's Museum and the Plumber's Museum are two projects run by the organisation that have become tourist attractions for locals and other visitors.

Despite all the mistrust that exists towards the local authorities, there are a number of projects that they have carried out which, from the perspective of the respondents, have improved their quality of life: renovation of the Mining Museum, construction of a swimming pool (in Petroșani and Lupeni), renovation of the civic centre, improvement of several parks, rehabilitation of roads. Furthermore, despite the fact that tourism is not perceived as a solution for the whole Jiu Valley area that could compensate for the lost jobs due to the closure of the mines, and despite dissatisfaction with the way the Straja ski resort in particular has been developed, many of the women surveyed see tourism as an important opportunity which should be exploited. But they all stressed the need for both summer and winter tourism, including the development of tourism infrastructure in the cities near the most important attractions, and an integrated vision for the whole valley, not individual or local, but area-wide initiatives.

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.valeajiuuiimplicata.org/despre-noi/>

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

Moreover, among the women participating in the interviews, some came up with a number of solutions for revitalising the area:

- Involving local authorities in the creation of public enterprises that provide jobs especially for vulnerable people
- Supporting local entrepreneurship - furniture factories, dairy factories, berry collection centres
- Developing both winter and summer tourism
- promotion of local and industrial heritage - “When the Vulcan mine closes, a gallery could be turned into a museum and the mine circuit” (Unemployed, 30 years old)
- mother and child support centres for victims of domestic violence, special programmes for young teenage girls who are at risk of dropping out of school or are at risk of becoming teenage mothers
- one 24-hour centre or emergency centre for each of the cities
- day centres as well as residential centres for lone elders.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The concern for the inclusion of gender equality in just transition measures is recent at the global level and untapped in Romania. Academic literature presented in the first part of this paper shows that future solutions in the areas undergoing just transition should take into account the specific needs and issues affecting women. The traditional gender roles persisting in these areas, even if they have undergone major changes following the closure of the mining operations, are maintained in the domestic and care sectors, as well as in the choice of professions in the labour market. This is why gender should not only be treated as one dimension of transition, but should be at the core of any strategy and measures proposed for sustainable social development. In our assessment, we have tried to take as comprehensive an approach as possible to the quality of life of women in the Jiu Valley, focusing on the elements that particularly impact them, such as participation in the labour market, domestic work, child and elder care, social and health services.

With regards to the labour market, the research identified five specific pathways for women in the Jiu Valley. (1) Older women who have experienced most directly the closure of mines and related industry, for whom this was a major trauma. In the best cases, these women rely on the pension they receive and the support of families, but in many situations, they are completely vulnerable and alone, receiving support from their

neighbours and help from social services. (2) Women who were in the labour force at the time of the closure of mines, who, in many cases, have tried different professional paths, which also included migration to other cities in Romania or abroad. (3) Women who have had favourable conditions to access higher education, as well as a stable workplace. They are working with public institutions, non-governmental organisations or they are small business owners. (4) Women who did not have access to education or employment. For them, access to stable working places becomes even more difficult when they have children. In most cases they survive with the help of various types of social assistance and seasonal work. (5) Women who are in search of decent paying jobs, that they cannot get despite having access to education. Their experience is marked by flexible work trajectories, in which working abroad is an important source for securing basics such as housing.

The situation of jobs in the community in the Jiu Valley is marked by three worrying phenomena affecting the quality of women's lives:

- low-paying jobs
- precarious employment
- migration

For many women in the Jiu Valley, the process of decarbonisation and the closure of mines also meant that the pressure of employment was added to that of the domestic and care work and/or social reproduction. As highlighted in the chapter on access to education, the lack of access to public education services such as day care, extended day care and after-school care meant that the responsibility of raising and educating children was placed on women's shoulders, especially, but not only, those in unstable socio-economic situations. At the same time, in all the cities considered in the study there is a high level of social stratification, which has an impact on the disparate quality of schools, depending on the neighbourhoods in which they are located, and the children's success in schools is often conditional on the investment of financial resources by their family. As pointed out above, in order to cope with financial pressure, many women have chosen migration as an economic strategy. This phenomenon has an impact on schools, through demographic decline, on children left in the care of relatives, grandparents or neighbours through increased absenteeism, school dropouts and the number of underage mothers, as well as on elders, for whom women in the extended family are the main support structure. Thus, the lack of sufficient development of the education and care infrastructure is linked to issues regarding the employment situation.

As part of the research, we have also identified issues relating to the lack of access to basic quality medical services, especially general practitioners, as well as those dealing with maternity, neonatology and paediatrics.

Just transition can be an opportunity to overcome the difficult situation in which the vast majority of women in the Jiu Valley find themselves, insofar as it responds to their

specific needs, including through the development of local infrastructure of social and care services and development programmes directly aimed at promoting gender equality (in education, work).

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Gender mainstreaming in all development programmes, strategies, plans and actions**

Programmes, strategies, plans and actions for the development of the Jiu Valley have generally addressed the issue of the closure of the mines and the professional retraining of former miners (mostly men), through the development of alternative, more sustainable, economic activities which can exploit the local potential, such as tourist facilities, culture, leisure and creative industries or artisan activities. It can be said that the process of retraining workers in the energy sector has been, for the most part, a failure, as it has not generated the desired economic effects. Including the gender perspective in all matters, means taking into account the specific needs and issues faced by women in the area, and it could provide a new direction for the economic development of the area. Thus, establishing some plans / additional measures in favour of gender inclusion may be one of the solutions needed in the Jiu Valley.

### **2. Women's participation in the decision-making process**

It is recommended that any decision affecting certain social categories should always be taken following the consultation of that specific group. Women's participation in decisions on strategies and plans on the development of the area and just transition, as well as decisions on budgetary allocation, can contribute to the inclusion of the gender perspective, which is otherwise at risk of being omitted; this should include paying attention to specific issues that may otherwise remain under the radar. The building of local participatory development networks that include as actively as possible women from various social categories is recommended, as are regular meetings between representatives of the authorities and representatives of women's initiative groups.

Local women's initiative groups need to be supported by providing a space in each town where they can meet regularly, consult and plan on community issues.

### **3. Raising awareness of decision-makers on women's rights and gender equality**

As the concern for women's rights and gender equality is currently neglected in the development policies of the Jiu Valley, it is recommended that projects be carried out aimed at raising the awareness of key actors and decision-makers on these issues (training sessions for authorities, civil servants), so that they pay more attention to them in the future.

Also recommended is collaboration with the County Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (COJES), the appointment of an equal opportunities' expert in each local authority and the development of a local gender equality plan.

#### **4. Sustainable local female entrepreneurship**

Programmes to support local entrepreneurial initiatives should be adapted to the existing occupational gender divide, taking into account the development potential of the area. In this respect, it is recommended that when programmes to support entrepreneurship are implemented in the area, they either include specific programmes to promote female entrepreneurship (programmes aimed exclusively at women) or pay attention to entrepreneurship in female-dominated fields (e.g., education, care).

In the current context, the opening of funding channels for entrepreneurial initiatives in disadvantaged communities is envisaged. In order to access these opportunities, women need information and advice from authorities and non-governmental organisations.

#### **5. Employment opportunities for women**

In order to increase access to employment for women of working age, it is recommended that employers adopt measures to increase the work-life balance of mothers with young children, such as flexible working hours, part-time work or teleworking (where possible) and, where possible, training programmes for women to overcome the occupational gender divide. We recommend the support of entrepreneurial and social economy initiatives developed by women via grants/advice/tax exemption, and hiring local women, especially women from disadvantaged social backgrounds (single mothers, women with no income, etc.).

#### **6. Development of social and care services infrastructure (nurseries, kindergartens, after-school care, centres for elders, domestic violence services, programmes for young mothers)**

As this research shows, the poor development of public infrastructure for nurseries, kindergartens, after-school care and social services for elders largely affects women and their employment opportunities. The professional potential of working women can be harnessed by meeting the care needs they currently provide within the family, in conjunction with programmes to encourage men to participate in family care work (including mainstreaming existing measures such as the possibility for fathers to take parental leave).

Support could be considered for initiatives such as Tagesmutter (daytime mother) in Germany - where a woman takes care of 3-6 children, including her own and those of other women in the community, or women arrange to take turns.

Social services need to address specific problems that mainly concern women, such as domestic violence, by allocating resources to legal, psychological and social counselling



and shelter centres. At the same time, in order to limit the reoccurrence of domestic violence cases, the setting up of counselling centres for aggressors is recommended (for psychological counselling, group therapy).

Last but not least, it is necessary to address the problem of young mothers, a problem that emerges from this research, through specific programmes aimed at: 1) preventing pregnancy among young girls by increasing access to sex education (through school and out-of-school activities) for both girls and boys, and access to free contraception for minors; 2) ensuring the social inclusion of young mothers (preventing school dropout, providing an income for subsistence, childcare, parenting education programmes).

There needs to be allocation and provision of spaces in a social worker's counselling centre where women can organise themselves for community support on various issues such as violence prevention, childcare.

## **7. Ensuring access to healthcare services**

As the interviews reveal, there is currently an acute need for family doctors to ensure access to basic medical services for the inhabitants of the Jiu Valley, as well as for specialist doctors such as obstetricians, neonatologists, and paediatricians. Pregnant or expectant mothers and women with children in their care are forced to turn to health services in other cities, sometimes a significant distance away. The situation is certainly not unique to the Jiu Valley, but this example could be used as a starting point for national programmes designed to encourage young doctors to relocate to disadvantaged, rural areas, by providing financial incentives and access to housing, in order to meet these needs.

Another pressing issue, which is also a national problem, is the lack of health insurance. Women are most affected by the lack of participation in the paid labour market - in the context of the absence of jobs, but also of childcare infrastructure and the division of roles in the family. There is a need for legislation to automatically provide health insurance for women who have children or other carers, or have provided care services for more than 5 years.

We also recommend the development of programmes at the local level to provide free preventive health screening, including free Papanicolaou tests.

## **8. Promoting equal opportunities and empowerment of women in the non-governmental sector**

Promoting equal opportunities in the non-governmental sector has two strongly connected strands:

- **Within the organisation's structure:** we firstly recommend training and increasing the awareness of the management team, staff and volunteers on gender equality issues through participation in workshops and training sessions in this field. We recommend

appointing a person within each organisation to be in charge of gender equality issues and to organise regular meetings with the management team, as well as with members, staff and volunteers. An action plan should be developed for the implementation of gender equality in each organisation, and this should be regularly monitored and updated. We also recommend ensuring gender balance within the organisations and their management.

- **In the activities carried out by non-governmental organisations:** we recommend that women from different social, ethnic and age groups be consulted to determine the needs faced by their communities and to identify solutions. We also recommend that organisations monitor the extent to which women and disadvantaged groups participate in local decision-making and public consultations, and whether they are included in the development plans and strategies of local institutions.

We recommend the creation of a community development group that focuses on the needs faced by women, including women from marginalised communities in the area, empowering them to find solutions within the community as well as to address the problems faced by the authorities. To maintain this group, we recommend developing activities with the community in formats, locations and intervals accessible to women of different age groups and communities. For a better empowerment of women, we recommend the development of counselling programmes to access funding for the development of women's entrepreneurial initiatives.

In terms of the work of organisations, we encourage the development of projects that respond to the women's needs revealed by this study. Among them, we particularly mention the area of health, where we recommend initiatives to support access to free medical screening, as well as the areas of education and care where we identified the need for after-school, extended day care.

Last but not least, we recommend the development of a public policy initiative for the recognition of unpaid but socially beneficial work - namely care work and domestic work - as work, and the provision of social benefits (pensions, health insurance) for this type of work.

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