

How does the middle class look like in Romania?

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Abstract: Besides the scientific enterprise of trying to define the dimension and characteristics of the middle class, we try to imagine an artistic find of middle class, seeing it as a woman in the beginning of maturity, capable to come through her own capabilities and her knowledge acquired through educational process, a person who can change the society around her with her innovative ideas, bringing the progress.

The documentation activity about this subject lead us to the conclusion that the image of the middle class depends very much on the way you choose to look at her. You can look at her from the distance, without the possibility to say many things about it, if you choose some general criteria in order to separate middle class from other population groups. Or, you can look very closely at it, having in this way the possibility to see all the details of this image. Everything depends on the choices made in defining the criteria which separate middle class from the other social classes.

Measurement of middle class is not an easy task due to several reasons. Firstly, it requires the classification of population into social classes, for which it is necessary to take into consideration some objective criteria, as levels of income, occupation or levels of education, skills or others, but also subjective criteria as the prestige of the profession or company, manual or non-manual character of work, social category of family or residential area where the person was born. The larger the number of criteria taken into account is, the bigger the subjectivity of the classification is.

Secondly it is difficult to find availability of data sources allowing the estimation of middle class. Ordinary data sources, namely the sample surveys, use major classification classes, which make the analysis less detailed.

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This article proposes to present two first perspectives, strictly quantitative, regarding the measurement of middle class in Romania, through the population incomes and respectively through the professional categories.

For each of those two perspectives, the article presents the main characteristics of the persons defined as middle class.

Keywords: middle class, incomes, professional category

JEL Classification: I31, Z130, B41

1. Introduction

The measurement of the middle class dimensions is not an easy task for several reasons. Firstly, the definition of criteria which can be used in order to separate different population groups into social classes assumes a specific degree of subjectivity, which leads to the fact that any methodology is the subject of more or less virulent criticism.

Secondly, the construction of a population classification into social classes represented the concern of many researchers, the attempt being already a "trodden path". This theme represented in all times a very interesting issue, because there always existed social groups having different life styles, interests and targets inside society. Under these circumstances, because the subject is so discussed and studied, it is difficult now to identify new perspectives or other criteria in order to define middle class in other way the predecessors did it.

Another aspect is about the specific of the grouping we intend to build. Are we talking about population groups, socio-economic categories or even social classes? In our view, the social class requires the consideration of several criteria, both economic and social, but one should take into account also the sociological aspects that should consider population opinion on social classes, aspects on prestige, reputation or esteem given by some members of the society to one category or another. This kind of information is more difficult to obtain through purely statistical researches.

Once established, the criteria by which the social classes shall be built, it is necessary to identify the data source containing all criteria defined at the level of an individual. In general, however, the selective statistical researches are specialized and aim to ensure information to determine some statistical indicators specific to one objective, topic or area, which hinders us finding a completely satisfactory data source, which could provide microdata comprising all necessary

variables. Thus, the methodological demarche is limited by the availability of statistical information, leading to a smaller “refinement” of the analysis.

Over coming the inherent difficulties, we have to admit that the effort to define a scientific, fiable and reliable way of measurring middle class is justified by the relevance of the result. This is why the measurement of the social classes’ dimension concerned many researchers, justified by the richness of the information which can be obtained and the domains for which these information is useful. This theme was a very interesting debating subject, because all time social groups with different lifestyles, interests and objectives existed inside every human society.

A big part of speciality literature highlights the middle class’s role of society’s “pillar”, capable to introduce the economic and social progress, to mobilize resources and to produce profit. The positive role of a powerful middle class is sustained by many theoretical and empirical studies which tried to show its importance – like capital, education and income accumulation, on one hand, and economic growth of a country, general and individual general welfare, on the other hand.

The middle class dimension is, undoubtedly, a good indicator for characterising the development degree of a country, obtained by “healthy” methods. For this reason, the attempt to investigate the existance and characteristics of middle class in Romania after 25 years of transition to market-oriented economy presents a special interest, representing a way of diagnosis of the Romanian society.

Information regarding middle class were used during the time for different purposes. People spoke a lot about middle class in the period of its istorical development, from several perspectives: from the point of view of antagonist classes to those of women’s fundamental rights, to the point of view related to the gender and equal opportunities and so on. In the last period of time, the subject of social classes was “darkened” by aspects related to poverty and social exclusion, due to worldwide decision-making concerns related to the alarming development of this phenomena. Thus, the researches concentrated on the efforts to develop a special methodology able to allow the statistical measurement of different aspects of poverty like the numerical expansion, the poverty deepness, persistance and ways of occurance (the lack of monetary resources, lack of access to non-monetary resources like health care and education, social exclusion or isolation, etc.).

2. How can we define the middle class?

The first step in the attempt to evaluate the middle class is to define the notion and to identify the variables which influence the middle class in accordance with the criteria defined by the measurement methodology.

Trying to find a general definition of the middle class, this can be defined as that part of population which owns a set of characteristics or advantages which allow it to have a “comfortable” living standard. By characteristics or advantages we can understand both objective aspects, like level of income, level of education or professional training, the specificity of the occupation or profession, but also subjective aspects like the job’s, fellowship’s or graduated school’s prestige, being born in urban area or in a certain district, the ethnic and cultural background, etc.

If as regards the criteria to be taken into consideration in the population distribution by social classes things could be quite clear, not the same can be said when trying to define the meaning of the comfortable standard of living. Are we talking about a decent, medium, standard living of all the population or only of a part of it? It is hard to give a sturdy answer.

In order to find an adequate answer, we have to keep in mind aspects related to a multitude of domains, like working conditions, health condition, housing conditions, living standards, material deprivation and poverty, wealth, etc.

A classification of population into homogeneous groups can start as a socio-economic classification and can become, cumulating as many criteria as possible, a social group classification, depending on what domains are taken into consideration (several criteria belong to a certain domain).

3. Middle class from the income perspective

The income is the simplest criterion to be used for the separation of the population into social groups.

The easiness of the income’s use in the social groups’ separation comes from the fact that the only choice which should be made refers to the definition of incomes interval limits which separates middle class from the other two classes, the group of people who have lower incomes and the persons who have higher incomes, respectively.

Regarding the income intervals which separate the middle class, the majority of researchers considers that middle class is situated in the centre of income distribution, between the group of poor people and the group of rich people. Besides this there are many possibilities to choose the limits used internationally till now.

The delimitation of the income distribution centre has very many alternatives in literature. We can mention just the most important alternatives here:

- in a very broad sense, we can consider middle class like being formed of 80% of the population, excluding persons situated at the extremes of the income distribution, i.e. first 10% of the poorest people and the first 10% of the richest people, respectively.
- similarly, we can consider middle class as 60% of the total population, excluding persons situated in the first two deciles and in the last two deciles, respectively.
- in French literature we can find a division of population into social categories: popular category (it includes persons from first three deciles), privileged category (including persons from the last two richest deciles) and middle class which is situated between the popular and privileged ones. Middle class is also divided into lower middle class (fourth, fifth and sixth deciles) and higher middle class (seventh and eighth deciles).
- Anthony Atkinson defined middle class in Great Britain by dividing population into quintiles, of which the middle class is included in third and fourth quintiles.
- Martin Ravallion considers persons with incomes between 75% and 125% of the median of income distribution as members of the middle class.

If there are many measurement methods regarding the poor group of population (absolute, relative, subjective methods), not the same thing we can say about defining a "richness" threshold which can allow a measurement of the group of rich people.

In order to establish the criteria for the division of population into social classes from the income point of view, we defined two methods of middle class measurement: a relative approach and an absolute one. For each of them the incomes intervals that separate the middle class from the other classes were

defined (the group of people with low incomes and those with higher incomes) and we processed the data by the main characteristics: gender, age, residence area, occupational status and development region.

The data source used was the Quality of Life Survey 2011, sample survey carried out annually by National Institute of Statistics of Romania. It represents the implementation of the European research on incomes and living conditions, which is the main data source on poverty and social exclusion at the European Union level in the national statistical system. This is a harmonized selective statistical research, conducted on an annual basis in all EU Member States, based on the Regulation No. 1177/2003 of the European Parliament and the Council on community statistics regarding the income and living conditions.

The main objectives of the Living Conditions Survey are the production of itemized statistical data to characterize the living conditions of the population and to measure the degree of poverty. Also, information is collected on different social aspects, such as housing, health, education, employment, incomes, housing facilities and durables, etc. The most important aim of the survey is the assessment of the population incomes at individual and household level, according to some definitions comparable at the EU level, such as: available income of the household, available income of the household before social transfers, gross income and the level of the gross income, net income by components.

The indicator used to establish 3 population groups is the annual gross income of persons aged 15 and over. This represents the sum of gross incomes from all sources, such as: employment, self-employment in agriculture, self-employment in non-agricultural activities, social benefits, income from property, other incomes, etc. Because the household own consumption, i.e. the value of products and services produced by households for own consumption, holds a significant share in the total incomes of the population in Romania, in the analysis we used the annual gross total income of persons, obtained by adding the value of own consumption calculated at individual income level achieved by each member of the household.

3.1. Relative approach

First alternative of work adopted by the authors takes into consideration the characteristics of income distribution in Romania, more precisely a relatively high

concentration of persons in the low income area. In this variant, the middle class is not established by a certain pre-determined level of incomes, but by the general income level, achieved by the other members of society.

This sets as a middle class those persons who, in ascending order of the annual gross incomes, can be found in the middle part of the income distribution and represent a third of the total number of persons.

Based on the survey sample, in this variant of analysis we established 3 groups of persons, namely: the group of persons that, in 2011, earned an annual gross income of less than 6120 lei, the group of persons whose income was in the range of 6,121 lei – 13,360 lei and the group of persons with an annual gross income higher than 13,360 lei. In this variant the middle class has been considered as being formed of persons with an income in the range of 6,121 lei – 13,360 lei.

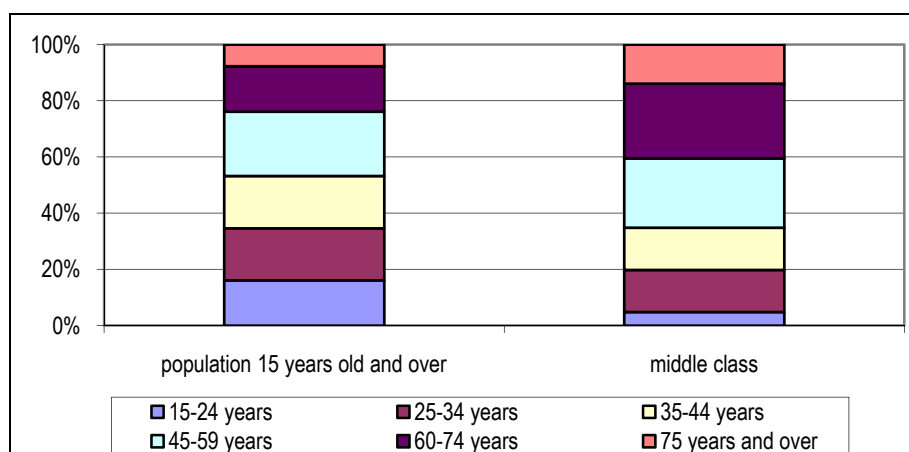
The most expected answer would be on their number. According to authors' own calculations, using the distribution of annual gross income of persons aged 15 years and over, 5,339 thou. persons would form the middle class in terms of annual gross income achieved in 2011. This group represents almost 30% of the total number of persons aged 15 years and over, with relatively similar weights between the two areas: in urban area they account for 30.2% of the total population aged 15 years and over.

An unexpected ascertainment, taking into account that in general women earn, on average, lower income wages than men, is that women form the majority of the middle class, their share in the total number of persons included in this category being of 58.8%, higher than the share of women in the total number of persons aged 15 years and over (51.8%).

Obviously, the structure of persons by age group in the middle class bear the "mark" of the necessary time to accumulate training and professional experience, as well as to make a professional career that will lead the persons to positions on the labor market that will generate higher incomes, compared to other population categories. Thus, the middle class is "dominated" by persons in age groups of 45-49 years and 60-74 years (representing 51.3% of the total in this class). One should not overlook the share of 14.0% of persons aged 75 years and over in the total of the persons in the middle class, higher to the share this age group is holding in the total population aged 15 years and over (of 7.7%). As expected,

young persons who did not completed the education and training period represent only 4.8% of the number of persons in the middle class.

Figure 1. Structure of middle class and persons 15 years and over by age groups, in 2011



Source: Author's own calculations based on Quality of Life Survey 2011 micro-data.

If we analyze the distribution of persons considered as middle class in our methodological approach, we find that 58% of members of this group live in urban areas. The distribution by area is relatively balanced, but the structure by gender inside each area (urban or rural) is different. In urban area the women are predominant in middle class, as well as at national level (65.6% of the total number of persons in the group). In rural area, the share of men in the middle class is higher compared with the share of women of one percent.

Analyzing the structure of middle class members by educational attainment, we can confirm the Romanian words "if you have education, you have chance", in the sense that we can prove statistically the theory saying that the educational attainment, meaning the sum of general knowledge and the professional skills acquired by a person during his/her life, is one of the factors determining an adequate level of income.

Thus, in the total number of the persons with a low level of education, the share of persons included in the group of persons with high incomes is small (11.3% are persons with primary education and 11.6% of them graduated secondary

school), the majority of persons with low level of education belonging to the group of population with low incomes (46.5% from the persons with primary education and 58.6% of those who stopped the education process at the secondary school level).

If the persons who graduated the vocational and high school levels are equally distributed between the three classes of incomes defined in this approach, what is not true for persons with university degree: 78.5% of them belong to the group of population with high incomes, one tenth belongs to middle class and 11.4% belong to the group of persons with annual gross income below 6,120 lei.

Table 1. The distribution of 15 years old and over persons by groups of annual gross incomes, level of education and area of residence, in 2011

- % -

Area of residence Income classes	Educational attainment						
	without any level of education graduated	primary	secondary school	vocational education	high-school or first two classes of high-school	post high- school or technical school of foreman	university
A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 6,120 lei	67.4	46.5	58.6	24.4	34.0	8.7	11.4
6,121-13,360 lei	30.0	42.3	29.8	37.4	28.6	22.5	10.1
More than 13,360 lei	2.6	11.3	11.6	38.1	37.5	68.9	78.5
URBAN	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 6,120 lei	77.7	43.6	51.2	13.7	29.6	8.9	10.8
6,121-13,360 lei	20.9	51.7	38.9	45.9	29.1	24.4	8.8
More than 13,360 lei	1.4	4.8	10.0	40.4	41.3	66.8	80.4
RURAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 6,120 lei	65.5	47.3	62.9	36.1	43.6	7.8	16.6
6,121-13,360 lei	31.7	39.7	24.5	28.2	27.4	14.7	20.6
More than 13,360 lei	2.8	13.1	12.6	35.7	29.0	77.5	62.9

Source: Author's own calculations based on Quality of Life Survey 2011 micro-data.

Looking at the distribution of 15 years old and over persons by groups of gross annual incomes and educational attainment, it results that persons with medium and higher level of education (high-school, vocational education or post high-school or technical school of foreman) represent 61.1% of the total of the middle

class members. Persons who graduated an university represent less than 5% of the total middle class; at the same time, among persons with high level of gross annual incomes this category represent 28.4%.

The occupational status is another individual characteristic of a person by which we can find other different features between the three groups of population find from the point of view of gross annual income. The occupational status is a combination between two types of information: on the one hand, we speak about the way one person earns his/her personal incomes (from the labor force market or from other sources) and, on the other hand, we speak about the kind of activity each person carries out (salaried work or own account work, the continuation of studies or domestic work in the own household).

Figure 2. The structure of 15 years old and over persons by groups of annual gross incomes and occupational status, in 2011



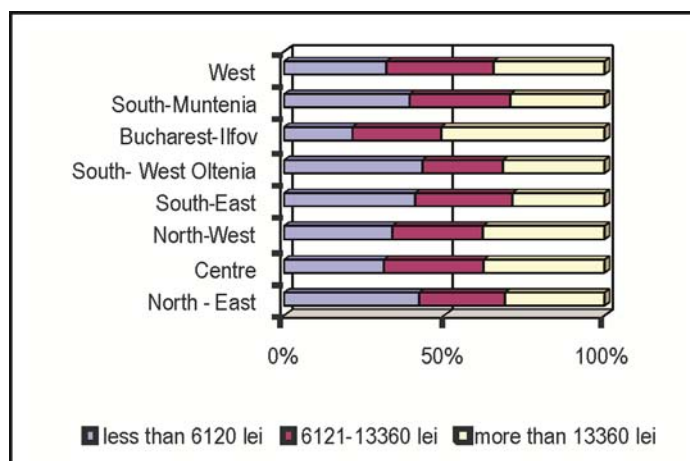
Source: Author's own calculations based on Quality of Life Survey 2011 micro-data.

Unlike the structure of 15 years and over persons, where retired persons represent around one quarter, almost half of the structure of middle class is composed of pensioners, employees representing 36.4% and own account workers 10.9%.

By area of residence, due to the higher development in urban areas, we can see a higher share of employees among middle class members, compared with rural areas (41.3% compared with 29.8%) and a lower frequency of own account workers who belong to this class (4.6% compared with 19.5% in rural areas). The other occupational positions, which produce lower incomes or have not any income, very low represented between middle class members both in urban and rural areas.

The advantages of being an employee are very clear if we compare the share of employees in the structure of each income class. Thus, if in the low income class the employees hold a share of 1.9% in the class of gross annual incomes higher than 13,360 lei the employees represent almost three quarters (71.4%) and even more in urban area (78.4%). In exchange, the share of own account workers (25.4%) is much higher in the class of low incomes compared with high income class (6.4%), due to the big number of own account workers employed in agriculture. This fact is more visible in rural area, where the share of own account workers within persons with low incomes is almost equal with 40%, but the own account workers represent over one tenth from the persons with high incomes from rural area.

Figure 3. The structure of 15 years and over persons by income class and development regions, in 2011



Source: Author's own calculations based on Quality of Life Survey 2011 micro-data.

The unequal development of geographical areas influences the distribution of middle class in territorial profile, too. Analyzing the distribution of middle class by development regions, we can see a similar distribution in relative terms to the distribution of 15 years old and over population. South-Muntenia and North-East Regions hold higher share in the total middle class (18% and 15%) and the development regions South-East, North-West and Centre have, each of them, around 13% of the total middle class. One tenth of persons with a gross annual income between 6,120 and 13,360 lei live in West and Bucharest-Ilfov regions.

The distribution of 15 years and more persons by income classes inside each development region is more relevant. Thus, the middle class represents around one-third of the total 15 years old and over population in West, South-Muntenia and Centre development regions and around one quarter in South-West Oltenia, North-West, North-East and Bucharest-Ilfov regions. We can also notice that in the regions with the highest poverty rate the group of persons with lower incomes holds the higher shares in South-West Oltenia (43.2%), North-East (42.2%) and South-East (40.9%) regions. In Bucharest-Ilfov region the highest share of persons with high incomes is recorded; this share is much higher the those recorded in other regions (an opposite situation we find in South-Muntenia development region with a share of low income persons below 30%). The most balanced development regions from the point of view of distribution of 15 years old and over persons by income classes are West and Centre development regions.

3.2. Absolute approach

In the case of the absolute approach, we considered the middle class composed of persons with gross annual incomes placed in the one third median part of the gross annual income distribution. According to this work version, three groups of persons were defined, more exactly persons with gross annual incomes lower than 43,480 lei, persons with incomes between 43,481 and 86,960 lei and persons with gross annual incomes higher than 86,960 lei.

Unfortunately, the absolute approach of approaching the middle class doesn't offer viable results, because of the small number of records included in the income interval chosen to define the middle class in this absolute approach. Thus, at national level, a number of almost 238 thousand persons earned gross annual incomes between 43,481 lei and 86,960 lei, in 2011, representing 1.3% of the total 15 years old and over population. If we calculate a monthly income, it would mean a relative level of gross income between 4,300 lei and 8,700 lei which represents high incomes, in comparison with the average monthly wage or pension.

In this case, the structure of middle class is composed mainly of men (around three quarters), of average age (56.1% of middle class persons are included in 25-44 years age group and 31.5% are included in the age group 45-59 years old) and from persons living in urban area (73.9% from the total of 238 thou. persons).

If the share of men in urban area is closed to the national one, the middle class from rural area is composed exclusively of men (this represents 95% from the total group). The age structure is different in the sense that, in rural area, old persons aged 60-74 have a double share than the national one in the total of middle class persons, besides the category of persons aged 25-34 represents a share of 12.3% of the total middle class (compared with 21.5% of population at national level). From the educational attainment point of view, two-thirds of persons considered in the absolute approach belonging to the middle class graduated the tertiary education, 15% graduated high-school and one tenth of them have vocational education. Persons with low level of education represent only 5% in the group of population analyzed.

Disparities between areas of residence are visible from the point of view of educational attainment, also. If the persons with a university degree keep a share of 81.6% in the total middle class from urban area, in rural area this share is only 25.6%, the majority of middle class being composed in rural of persons with vocational education (31.3%) and high-school education (22.8%). The members of middle class with vocational education from urban area represent only 3% and those who graduated high-school represent around 10%.

Table 2. The structure of middle class and of 15 years and over population by educational attainment and area of residence, in 2011

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	Total	Educational attainment						
		without any level of education graduated	primary	secondary school	vocational education	high-school or first two classes of high-school	post high-school or technical school of foreman	university
A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
TOTAL								
Middle class	100.0	-	0.6	4.5	10.4	14.3	3.3	67.0
Population 15 years and over	100.0	1.4	8.3	25.1	20.6	28.2	3.7	12.7

URBAN	100.0							
Middle class	100.0	-	-	1.8	3.0	11.2	2.4	81.6
Population 15 years and over	100.0	0.4	3.2	16.6	19.2	34.5	5.3	20.3
RURAL								
Middle class	100.0	-	2.2	12.1	31.3	22.8	6.0	25.6
Population 15 years and over	100.0	2.5	14.7	35.8	22.1	20.0	1.6	3.1

Source: Author's own calculations based on Quality of Life Survey 2011 micro-data.

As far as occupational status is concerned, a share of 81% of the total number of middle class members are employees, 13% represent own account workers and 7% are retired persons. The share of pensioners in the total middle class in urban area is lower (around 5%); at the same time, the share of employees is higher in comparison with the share recorded at national level (87%).

Self-employed persons represent around one quarter of the middle class in rural area; in nominal terms the number of persons is almost equal between urban and rural areas, but the middle class is composed mainly of own account workers with liberal occupations in urban area (doctors, lawyers, craftsmen and so on) and in rural area by persons working in agriculture.

It should be noted the share of pensioners included in the middle class in rural area, which is higher than those recorded in urban area (13.5% of members of middle class in rural area, compared with 4.8% of the total group in urban area).

Table 3. The structure of 15 years and over population by income class, occupational status and area of residence, in 2011

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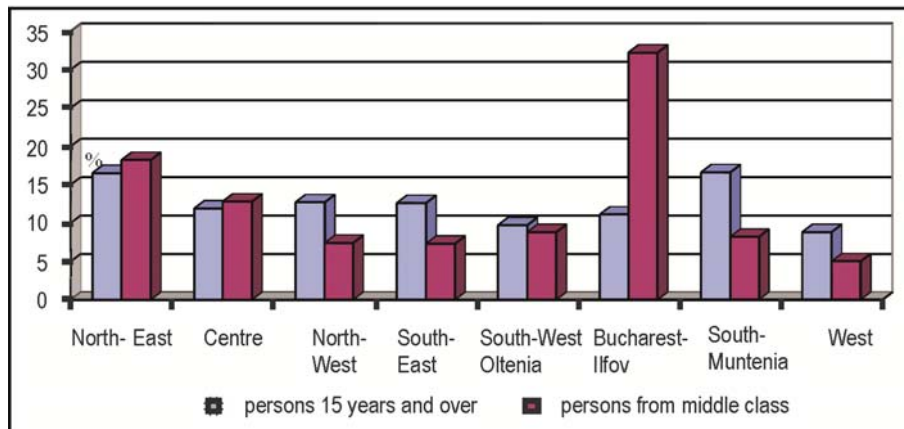
Area of residence Income class	Occupational status						
	employee	own account worker	unemployed	retired person	pupil/student	housewife	other occupational status
A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Persons 15 years and over -total	36.1	14.5	2.9	26.1	10.5	7.9	1.7
Lower 43,480 lei	35.5	35.5	3.0	26.4	10.6	8.0	1.7

Area of residence Income class	Occupational status						
	employee	own account worker	unemployed	retired person	pupil/ student	housewife	other occupational status
43,481 – 86,960 lei	80.7	12.2	-	7.0	-	-	-
More than 86,960 lei	66.3	27.7	-	6.1	-	-	-
Urban	47.6	4.3	3.1	25.2	12.1	5.9	1.5
Lower 43,480 lei	46.9	4.3	3.2	25.6	12.3	6.0	1.6
43,481 – 86,960 lei	87.1	8.1	-	4.8	-	-	-
More than 86,960 lei	78.5	13.3	-	8.2	-	-	-
Rural	21.8	27.3	2.7	27.3	8.4	10.5	1.9
Lower 43,480 lei	21.5	27.3	2.8	27.4	8.4	10.5	1.9
43,481 – 86,960 lei	62.8	23.8	-	13.5	-	-	-
More than 86,960 lei	31.2	68.8	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Author's own calculations based on Quality of Life Survey 2011 micro-data.

The middle class structure by development regions differs significantly. If the 15 years old and over population from Bucharest-Ilfov region represents more than one-tenth of this age group, in the middle class structure it has a share of one-third, the share being much higher in urban areas (42.6%). The same phenomenon, but not with the same intensity it happens in the North-East and Centre regions. In the opposite side, meaning a smaller frequency of persons from the middle class is recorded in South–Muntenia, South-East, North-West and West (the share of persons from the middle class in these regions is smaller than the share of 15 years and over population with differences between 2-8 percentage points).

Figure 4. The share of 15 years old and over population and the share of persons belonging to middle class, by development regions, in 2011



Source: Author's own calculations based on Quality of Life Survey 2011 micro-data.

With all these drawbacks which can be considered to come from the lack of capacity of the measurement instrument to collect the high incomes of wealthy persons in Romania, the Quality of Life Survey continues to be an useful tool to define the social classes in Romania. Adding new eligibility criteria, cumulative fulfilled with the relative approach to incomes, it will open new perspectives for identification of the specific features of the middle class in Romania.

4. Middle class from the perspective of the professional category

The choice of the grouping criteria of population into social classes depends on several factors, like:

- the perspective used to look at social classes (economical, sociological, philosophical, conflict between classes);
- what dimensions or domains can separate the classes;
- data sources available at one point of time.

According to the own methodology defined for separating the social classes, a social group classification relieve is a hierarchical procedure which should take into consideration the following domains:

- A. RESOURCES (incomes, educational attainment, patrimony)
 B. EMPLOYMENT AND PRESENCE ON THE LABOR FORCE MARKET
 C. WELFARE AND LIVING STANDARDS
 D. PRESTIGE (public opinion, reputation or social esteem)

The characteristics of the economic activity carried out by a person are essential in defining his/her place in society, being the main premises of each person's capabilities to ensure the needs for a certain living standard (higher or lower). Social classes relieve starts with a classification of professional categories.

The professional classification in Romania is based on the Occupation Classification in Romania, 2008 revision. It comprises four big groups of professional categories and eleven professional categories. These are presented in the following table:

		Professional category
A	ELITE	
	1. Owners or leaders of big economic and social units	1
	2. Owners or leaders of medium or small economic and social units	2
	3. Persons with public reputation (famous doctors, lawyers, artists and actors, public opinion leaders)	3
B	SPECIALISTS	
	1. Specialists in technical domains	4
	2. Specialists in services	5
	3. Specialists in traditional occupations	6
C	WORKERS AND LABORERS	
	1. Workers and laborers with high skills or vocational training	7
	2. Workers and laborers with medium skills or vocational training	8
	3. Workers and laborers with low skills or vocational training	9
D	PRECARIOUS CATEGORY	
	1. Own account workers in subsistence agriculture	10
	2. Unqualified workers without vocational training or skills	11

The middle class includes professional categories B.1, B.2, B.3, C.1 and C.2. These are the "potential" middle class, representing persons having occupations with "potential" or, at least theoretically, occupations which can guarantee the inclusion of a person among middle class members.

The structure of employed population by professional categories shows a domination of the 9-th category (Workers and laborers with low skills or vocational training) which has a share of 44.4% from the employed population. It

is followed by the 8-th (Workers and laborers with medium skills or vocational training) and 11-th (Un-qualified workers without vocational training or skills) categories which have shares of 14.7% and of 13.3% respectively of the employed population.

According to this methodology, the privileged class (Owners and leaders of economic and social units and Persons with public reputation) would include only 2.6% of the total employed population.

Among the total persons 15 years and over for which the professional category could be defined, persons classified as members of the middle class (persons from the 4-8-th categories) represent 38%. The structure by gender of this group of population is slightly in favor of men, these persons representing 57% from the total middle class.

Table 4. The structure of middle class and employed population, by educational attainment, in 2011

-%-

A	Total	Educational attainment						
		without any level of education graduated	primary	secondary school	vocational education	high-school or first two classes of high-school	post high-school or technical school of foreman	university
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Middle class	100.0	0.1	0.8	8.1	12.9	31.0	5.6	41.6
Employed population	100.0	1.0	5.7	22.7	17.3	29.9	3.1	20.3

Source: Author's own calculation based on a 2011 Population and Census sample.

We found that middle class members have a higher stock of education compared with the other groups of population. The structure of middle class, by educational attainment in 2011, shows higher weights of middle class members, compared with the whole employed population, for the higher level of education, like high-school, post high-school or technical of foreman school or university (the share of persons with university degree is almost double between middle class, compared with the total employed population).

5. Conclusions

In order to prepare an our own methodology for middle class measurement in Romania, I investigated which criteria would be the most appropriate for identification and separation of this category of population from others. The establishment of these criteria took into consideration, in addition to significance and relevance of each of them, the existence of data sources for Romania. However, the existence of some data sources which contain information for Romanian population restricted somehow the selection of domains and criteria. The social classes analyze would be finer if we would have data suitable to describe the LIFE STYLE. We are speaking about three dimensions:

- Information about the manner different categories of population use the time, especially the free time, and more exactly, to which activities they allocate more time: for working activities, personal care or house maintenance, training activities (basic formal education, continuing vocational training or general education) or contrary, for leisure or amusement activities, sporting or tourism activities and so on;
- a set of information regarding the consumption of cultural goods or services, like the frequency of literature non-professional literature, catching performances, cultural events, visiting museums or historical places, internet use for training or for general education enrichment, etc. Information regarding the degree of knowing foreign languages or the favorite kind of music would offer an extra of knowledge for the analyze of social classes;
- the existence of some information regarding personal social relations and the degree of social interaction of the person would offer an image on “entourage” in which a person lives and carry out his/her daily activities, providing an imagine on mentalities, principles, opinions, points of view and even on life philosophy people share, generating in this way a more exact delimitation of some sub-categories of population within middle class.

The investigation conducted to identify 4 main domains, each of these containing a suitable set of criteria. In this way, the main domains refer to resources, employment and presence on labor force market, welfare and living standards and prestige. The domain of resources contains criteria like incomes, level of education attained and patrimony.

In order to establish the delimitation criteria by social classes from the income perspective, I define 2 approaches of measuring middle class: a relative one and an absolute one. For either of them the limits of the income intervals which

separate middle class from the other two classes (the class of persons who have lower incomes and, the class of persons with higher incomes) were defined and data processing on the main characteristics (gender, age groups, area of residence, occupational status and development regions) were carried out.

Gross annual income of 15 years old and over persons is the indicator used in analysis, representing the sum of all gross incomes obtained from sources like: employment, self-employment in agriculture, self-employment in non-agricultural activities, social benefits, income from property, other incomes and the value of products and services produced by households for own consumption.

Regarding exclusively the Romanian population's incomes, we can highlight a first conclusion: a measurement of middle class in Romania based on a level of incomes which doesn't take into consideration the shape of income distribution is not possible. By using the absolute approach to middle class measurement, which defines the members of this population categories like persons with gross annual incomes between 43,481 – 86,960 lei (i.e. the median third of incomes), a number of just 238 thousand persons in middle class was estimated for Romania in 2011.

Between the two approaches used in separating the middle class in Romania from the income perspective, just one approved to be viable. Unfortunately, this approach is not the most interesting one from the methodological point of view, because it is affected by the shape of income distribution in Romania, characterized by a great number of people situated in the low incomes part of distribution. This fact influences the possibility of producing some international comparability.

In one of these two methodological approaches, in 2011 the average person from the middle class is woman, he/she is an adult person, he/she is an employee, he/she has a medium or tertiary education and earns gross annual incomes situated between 6,120 lei and 13,360 lei. The middle class is more widespread in urban area and within the 15 years old and over population from the development regions Bucharest-Ilfov, Centre and North-East.

With this approach we can't measure the number of middle class members because the number is already established by the separation method itself (a third of 15 years old and over population), but we can just identify the characteristics of these persons, the group of population situated in the middle of income distribution.

The study of middle class from the perspective of gross annual income represents only the first step in order to build a classification of social classes in

Romania. The incomes offer a first image on the number and characteristics of the persons belonging to middle class, but this image is a simple one, just an quantitative one, which can't give us relevant clues regarding the mechanisms which influence the development of middle class, clues about domains in favor of this development and the economic and social policies which can stimulate the numerical increase of this category of population. The income could be a good proxy of a person's living standard, but fails to present the universality of resources a person can use to make ends meet or to solve some unexpected expenditures. The income is characterized by a relative stability in time (in general, the income can't vary spectacularly during a person's lifetime), but the level of income in one moment of time is under the influence of some events or factors related or independent of that person. For example, due to a period of economic crisis, the incomes of some categories of population can become lower compared with the usual ones; a woman in maternal leave can have lower incomes compared with the previous period before motherhood; a student has not own incomes during study period and so on. The income is a result of the intrinsic capability of a person (the level of studies graduated, level of professional qualification, occupation or economic branch of activity) in most cases. There are periods of time in a person's lifetime when the income can falls short or it can be insufficient, but the person can still have a decent or comfortable living standard based on other resources, monetary or non-monetary ones (like for example, money saved in previous periods of time or the ownership of some mobile or immobile goods, shares and so on).

By taking into consideration of other domains and criteria, like, for example, criteria related to the presence on the labor force market, the educational attainment and the professional skills of population, it is possible to enhance the image of middle class.

The criteria related to domain of employment and presence on labor force market give new dimensions and enrich the value of middle class analyze. Of course, the character of the activity carried-out by a person may influence the framing within middle class. We are speaking here about criteria as occupation, existence of a manual or non-manual work, of some supervision competence.

The elaboration of a classification of professional categories, starting from the Classification of Occupations in Romania, allowed defining 11 professional categories, grouped in 4 groups, namely: elite, specialists, workers and laborers and precarious category. In the "potential" middle class were included specialists in technical domains, in services and in traditional occupations (the whole group of specialists) and the workers and laborers with high or medium skills or

vocational training. From the quantitative point of view, the potential middle class (based on the professional categories) contains 38% from 15 years old and over population for which a professional category could be determinate.

The investigation of the dimensions and characteristics of middle class in Romania will continue by taking into consideration of criteria from the other two domains, in order to identify the sub-categories of this group of population.

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