

## Timisoara / Romania

### *Context*

Timisoara is one of the first 3 cities of Romania, an important economical, social and cultural centre. From a geographical point of view, Timisoara is situated into the West Plain of the Banat Area. Before the communism Timisoara was named "Little Vienna", because it belonged for a very long time to the Habsburg Empire and the entire city centre consists of buildings built in the Kaiser era. It is a multicultural city with influential minorities, primarily Hungarians, Germans and Serbs. Over the time, Timisoara has known a constant urban development, acquiring quick and easy all Central European trends and standards.

### *Population*

Under the positive demographical policy imposed by the communist regime, the population from Timisoara has reached a peak in 1990 with 351,293 inhabitants. After that, into the first decade of democracy, Timisoara has kept the general trend recorded at the national level of demographical decreasing (generated, especially, by the liberalization of the abortions and the possibility of family planning). Complementary, the main social, economical, political and cultural changes that affects Romania after 1989, has generated a decreasing of the populations dynamic. The very recent input of labour forces (temporary or permanently) and the increasing number of students make it quite difficult to calculate an exact volume of Timisoara's population in the near future.

Year	Population
1956	142,257
1966	174,243
1977	266,353
1990	351,293
1992	334,115
1999	328,148
2002	317,660
2004	307,265

Source: Statistical Yearbook (2004-2006)

### *Economy*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Timisoara became a developed industrial city with more than 60 fabrics (on various domains) and 1200 stores that reflected a quick commercial progress. Also, in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century many technological innovations have improved the urban life of Timisoara.

The economical profile of Timisoara was strongly affected by the political changes after 1989. Many of the industrial establishments were shutdown and a lot of jobs from these were loosed. However, quiet on the contrary to many other cases, the old economical

structures were replaced by new ones. In recent years, Timisoara has enjoyed a significant economic upturn as the number of foreign investments, especially in high-tech sectors, has risen constantly. It is frequently considered the second most prosperous city in Romania (following Bucharest) and there have been frequent debates on whether the so-called "Timisoara Model" could be applied to other cities.

### *Consequences*

The population shrinkage was accompanied by a severe economic depression in the 1990s. Even after almost a decade of revival, the area remains a lower-middle income economy. The statistical quantification of the city population reflects a descendent trend (from 1990 until now). In recent years the general preview of Timisoara is becoming more positive. The house prices are getting higher and there are signs of in-migration. Because of the lack of affordable flats in the inner-city and a very small suburbanization Timisoara has no vacancies in the housing market.

Nevertheless there are considerable problems maintenance which impact on the competitiveness of the inner-city. Furthermore brownfields and vacant lots reduce the physical attractiveness of the urban core.

### *Political and planning responses*

The municipality of Timisoara has designed a detailed strategy for the metropolitan development of this area. There are still a lot of administrative problems, specific for a recovering or growing city (as the services and the extension of the basic facilities). Complementary, the civic resources in Timisoara are not so present, mostly because of high level of heterogeneity.

Even though the municipality tries to apply a metropolitan model for a development strategy of Timisoara, there still are some risks of population decline that cannot be ignored.