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# **Sexual bias exclusion in Romania**

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## Introduction

Sexual bias exclusion is a form of discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Discrimination often occurs due to stereotypes of gender roles and may include the belief that a person of one sex is intrinsically superior to a person of the other. These concepts can differ from one culture to another, but certain characteristics are passed along from generation to generation. For example, men are typically expected to be stoic, decisive, direct, athletic, strong, driven, and brave; women are expected to be emotional, nurturing, weak, affectionate, home-oriented and forgiving. According to the OECD (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), women's labor-market behavior "is influenced by learned cultural and social values that may be thought to discriminate against women (and sometimes against men) by stereotyping certain work and life styles as 'male' or 'female'". The organization contends that women's educational choices "may be dictated, at least in part, by their expectations that types of employment opportunities are not available to them, as well as by gender stereotypes that are prevalent in society". This leads to a salary pay gap between men and women due to the fact that women are more often employed in lower paying sectors and do not occupy as much of the leading positions in society. Any democratic society should not have more than 60% of power positions held by only one men or only women. It should be a general objective for every society to create the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities for both men and women.

In Romania, due to a strong tradition of gender roles, the inequalities between men and women are still present even today. Up to the years 2000's, a public open discussion about gender discrimination did not exist and the inequalities between men and women were seen as being something natural, as part of the norm. According to a study by the Open Society Foundation in 2000, 74% of young people aged between 19 and 29 thought that the man was the head of the family, while an average of 63% of Romanians believed that house chores were the duty of a woman more than the duty of a man. What was even more worrisome was that women were not fully aware of their rights and they would indirectly discriminate against themselves by taking part in the process of gender stereotyping.

The Romanian Constitution of 1991 forbids discrimination based on race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, sex, opinion and political allegiance, wealth, or social background. Even though legislation clearly stated that all people are equal and have the same rights and opportunities, women have never been considered equal to men. The establishment of a national council to regulate this disparity was of absolute necessity. The National Council on

Combating Discrimination, the agency enforcing the ordinance, was established on July 31, 2001. In August, a new ordinance increased fines for discriminatory acts up to approximately \$1,200 (40 million lei). Despite its major impact nationwide, violence against women, including rape, continued to be a problem. Both human and women's rights groups reported that domestic violence was common. According to a 2002 U.N. survey, 45% of women has been verbally abused, 30% physically abused, and 7% sexually abused. Even though the focus has started to shift towards women's issues in society, the resources appointed for this sector were insufficient. This was not only a social but also an economical matter. Despite existing laws and educational equality, women had a higher rate of unemployment than men, occupied few influential positions in the private sector, and earned lower wages.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2005, The National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women was established. Its main objective was to develop government strategy and policy in the field and to bring the national legal framework into line with EU regulations. It operated under the Romanian Government until 2010 advancing women's concerns and family policies. It organized programs for women, proposed new laws, monitored legislation for sexual bias, targeted resources to train women for skilled professions, and addressed the problems of single mothers, especially in rural areas.

The country profile regarding gender equality and attitudes in Romania depicts a contradictory picture. UNDP's Gender-related Development Index 2009 shows a very low gender disparity in basic human development (women reaching 99.9% of the general achievements) Romania coming fifth in the world. UNDP's Gender Empowerment Measure 2009 – a measure of the degree to which women take an active part in economic and political life – places Romania only 77<sup>th</sup> out of 155 countries. A conservative gender view (according to the World Values Survey 2005, Romania is closer to traditional values than most other European countries and furthest from a culture of trust and tolerance), is very likely to explain the contradictions.

The level of discrimination in Romania is very hard to assess. Different research provided different results. When individuals are asked about their own experience with discrimination, the rate of discrimination is rather low. Such results can also be put down to the fact that people in Romania do not often stand up for their rights, and very few cases of discrimination are resolved. The number of real cases of discrimination is considerably higher, but there are few actual cases put on record. According to the European Working Conditions Survey of 2010, only 4.0% of men and 5.6% of women in Romania were discriminated at work, better figures than that of the average for the EU (5.6% and 6.9%). A

study made by one Trade Union (*Barometrul de Incluziune Socială* - Universitatea București, 2010:15) found that 9% of the employees had an experience of being discriminated. Another estimate is that 3.8% of employees and 7% of the total number of women were discriminated (Blocul Național Sindical, 2009:33). The statistics also differ very much from the public to the private sector and from the rural to the urban areas of the country.

According to a CNCD study from 2011, 13% of respondents believed that men were discriminated by the retirement legislation and 7% and another 7% believed fathers are discriminated in their rights of parents. **T.A.T.A.** (Alliance for Non-discrimination against Fathers) is the only NGO in Romania that fights against social, economic and legal discrimination against men/fathers. It helps promote the equality between mothers and fathers in relation with their children.

According to the latest Country profile on gender equality in Romania, from 2012, the employment rate of women in the Romanian labour market (52.0%) is below the EU-27-average (58.5%). Moreover, the percentage of women actively looking for work in Romania (7.1%) is below the EU-27-average (9.8%). Tertiary education attainment of women in Romania has increased to 13.4%, which is, however, still significantly below the EU-27-average of 24.8%. The existence of gender typical fields of study is observable, but in some fields less pronounced than the EU-27 average. In contrast to the EU-trend, the unadjusted gender pay gap in Romania has increased but still remains below the EU-27-average. In Romania, women earned on average 12.5% less than men in 2010 (EU-27: 16.4%). Due to this, Romania has already agreed to take the necessary actions as recommended in the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015.

## 1. Level and structure of sexual bias exclusion

It is well known that the gender equality in public institutions is a sensible subject taking into consideration the efforts of Romania and other European countries to overcome the problems related to inequality and discrimination at work. The normative act regulating equal opportunities for men and women is Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and equal treatment for both genders, with subsequent amendments (published in the Official Journal no. 301 of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002). This law regulates the measures for promoting equal opportunities for both of them in order to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination. Some of the most important provisions of the law are mentioned below:

- The definition of specialized gender equality terms (discrimination on grounds of sex, direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, multiple discrimination, equal pay for work of equal value, positive measures);
- Equal access of women and men to the labor market;
- Equal access of women and men to education, health, culture and information;

The National Agency for Equal Opportunities (ANES) was set up under Law no. 202/2002 regarding equal opportunities and equal treatment between men and women. ANES specialized body of central public administration, subordinated to the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family. ANES was the main objective of the PHARE twinning Project RO02/IB/SO-01 Romania – Spain. The main task of ANES was to implement the principle of equal opportunities in all national policies and programs. Law no. 202/2002 has undergone many changes and additional stipulations in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The main changes in the above mentioned legal acts refer to:

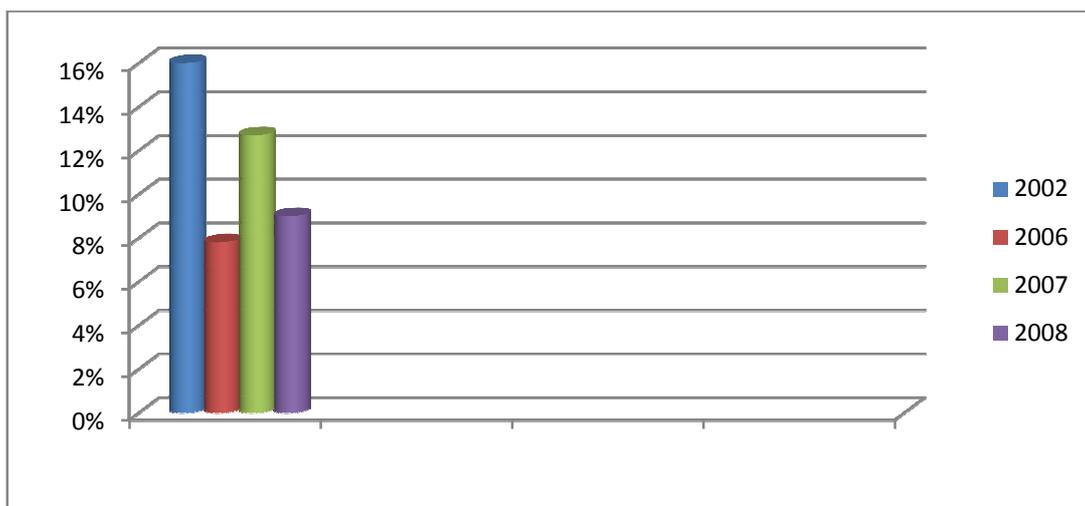
- The establishment of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for men and women (ANES) within the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family;
- An increased sphere of involvement of both social partners and NGOs in the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities for both sexes in all areas of public life;
- The introduction of new concepts such as multiple discrimination and the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;

In order to measure the level of sexual discrimination in public institutions and to identify the most important problems related to this type of discrimination, a questionnaire was

established and applied in 2010 in a public institution based on gender, sexual harassment and discrimination( regarding promotion, salary, evaluation and distribution of tasks). Gender stereotypes are beliefs related to the characteristics attributed to men and women in the society. There is a large amount of studies related to the gender stereotypes in different cultures. People are not aware of the existence of these stereotypes and they do not own up to the fact that this can influence their decisions. Women are seen as “something different” when they are measured according to male standards.

In Romania, all types of segregation are present: hierarchical, horizontal (the predisposition of occupying positions in different sectors) and vertical (the predisposition of hiring men and women in different positions in the same sector of work). A study called “The evolution of work positions in 2010” (Pîrciog *et al*, 2006) proves that 35.9% of Romanians consider that their work is gender related (the industry is considered a male sector). Stereotypical appreciations are made by both women and men, regardless of their positions (manager or executives). This occupational segregation leads to differences to what concerns the salary of men and women. Women are paid worse than men, even though the differences are not that obvious now and they improved over the years. (from 21% in 1994 to 14% in 2004).

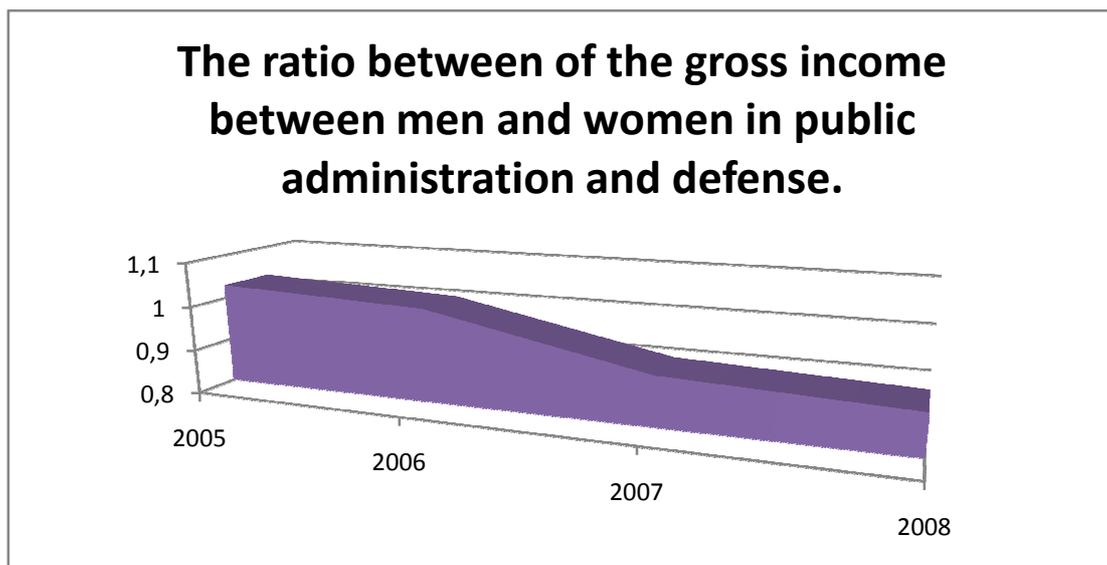
In 2004, 66.4% of women earned less than the average wage due to the fact that they worked in “feminist” sectors. In Romania, the salary difference modified between 2002 and 2008. This can be noticed in the table below:



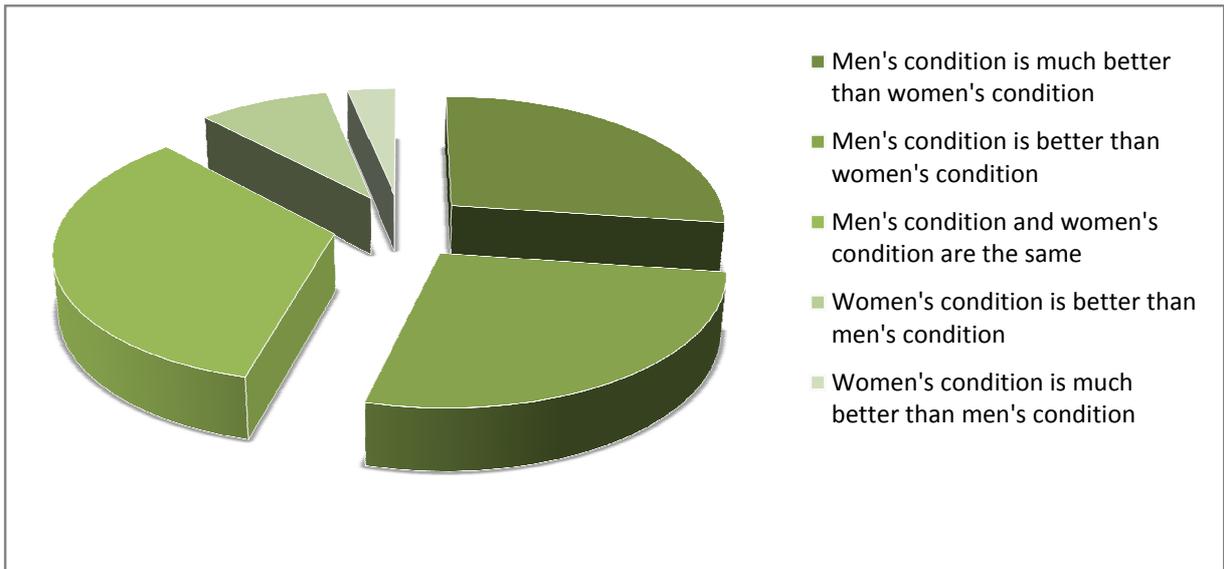
A report made by the Index of gender development of PNUD in Romania in 2009 places our country on the 77<sup>th</sup> place from 155 countries with regards to the degree of women’s participation in the political and economic life. There are two ways of discriminating people at work: through payment and promotion. It is very hard to evaluate the level of

discrimination in Romania. Different studies brought about different results. According to the European Working Conditions Survey 2010, only 4.0% of men and 5.6% of women in Romania were discriminated at work. Another study (Barometrul de Incluziune Socială – University of Bucharest 2010:15) found out that 9% of the employees had an experience related with discrimination. Another assessment is that 3.8% of the employees and 7% of the women were discriminated (Blocul National Sindical, 2009:33).

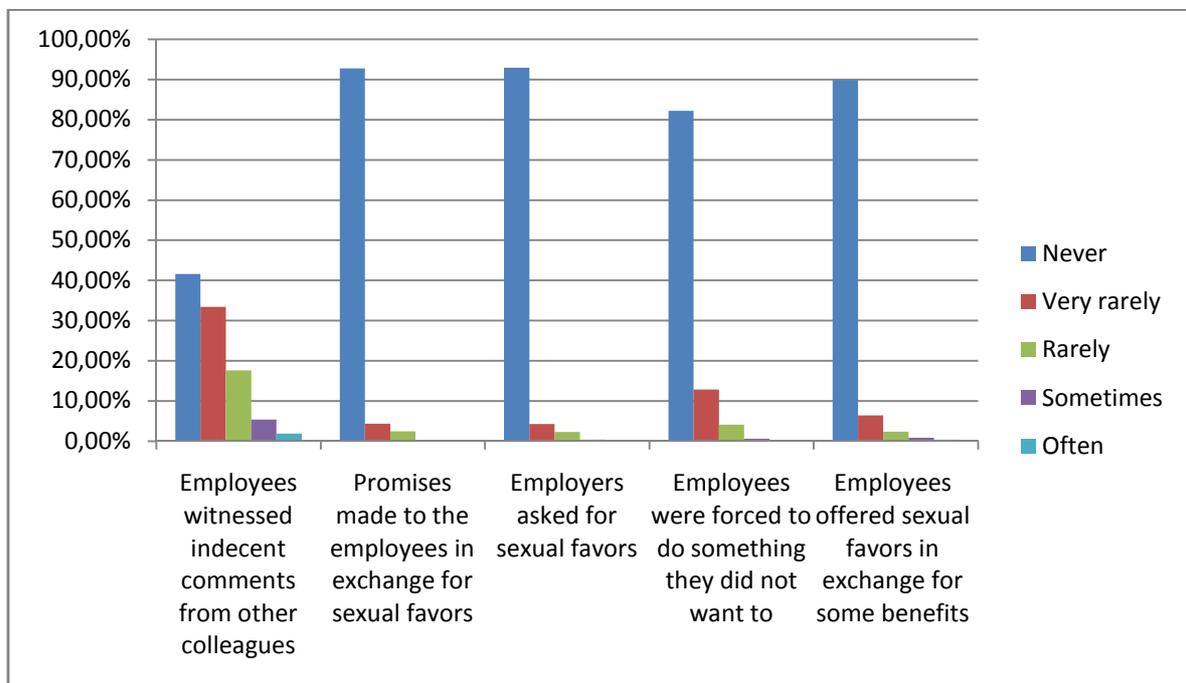
These results are different when we take a look at the general perception. 49% of the employees and 37% of the employers believe that sexual discrimination is very often encountered at the workplace (University of Bucharest, 2010:6). The most often encountered type of discrimination is that against women with small children, most often related to the work schedule and salary. The best method to measure sexual discrimination is the analysis of incomes. The statistics from 2009 show us that the situation of women improved during the past years. Beginning with a very small difference (men earning 1.03 times more than women), in 2008 men earned only 89% of women's income.



There is surely a notable difference of perception of sexual discrimination. Educated people have a better perception of discrimination than the less educated people (a possible explanation is the fact that the employees in public institutions have witnessed more discrimination cases than the persons in the private sector). In order to identify the causes of sexual discrimination in the public sector, a questionnaire was brought and tested in Romania in May-June 2011. The questionnaire was given to the people in public local institutions. They admitted that the gender conditions differ in Romania. The chart below proves this:



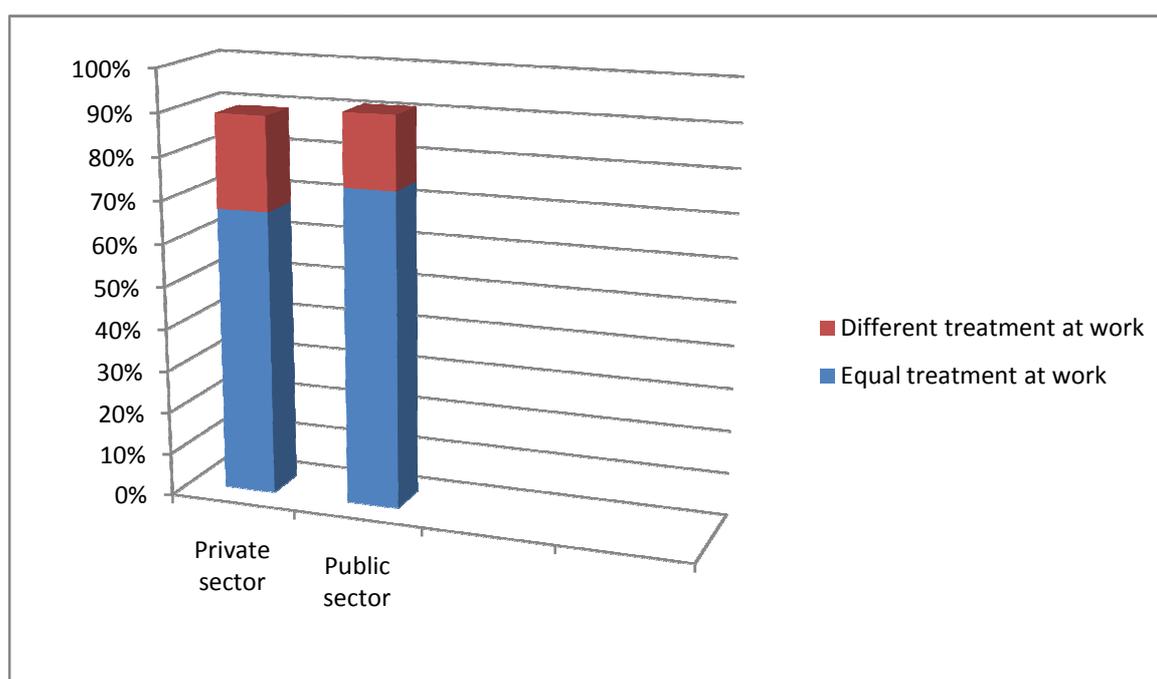
The situation changes when it comes to the condition of the two sexes within the institution: 25.30% think that men's situation is better, 13.71% consider that the situation of women is better, while 60.89% consider that both categories have a similar treatment. Women consider that they do worse than men, but this does not influence the way they see their situation. We see here a situation where the general perception of inequality is not perceived individually. The questionnaire contained a series of questions regarding sexual harassment cases at work. The chart below illustrates the level of awareness of the employees:



The difference between men and women's answers is negligible. The most frequent cases of sexual harassment refer to indecent behavior, comments, and less to the situation in which a manager asks for sexual favors. Even if these cases are very rare, they still exist, but there are no official complaints.

## 2. Causes and consequences of sexual bias exclusion

As we have seen so far, there are a lot of studies regarding sexual exclusion that present different results. Some studies show that women in Romania earn about 7% less than men for similar jobs, and their employment is around 10% lower than for men. On the basis of these data, the National Trade Union Block commissioned a research project, co-funded by the European Social Fund, to identify the nature of types of gender discrimination and to propose actions to boost women's role in society. Trade union data showed that, in 2009, Romanian women earned, on average, 7.3% less than men. By sector of economic activity, men earned 33% more than women in the manufacturing industry, 31% in financial intermediation and insurance, more than 25% in retail trade, some 24% in hotels, restaurants and catering, and 16% – 17% in healthcare, social services and education. In Romania, the employment rate among women is significantly lower at 51.7% than that among men, which amounts to 64.9%. The significant gap in female and male employment is partly due to the fact that large numbers of women work in agriculture. Another reason for this gap is that, no matter how well trained and competent women are, they often have to accept positions below their level of qualification. In the private sector, over 67% of the respondents stated that men and women enjoyed equal treatment at work, while 22% stated the opposite, compared with 74% and 17%, respectively, in the public sector.



Women claim that discrimination is stronger when seeking access to vocational training and career development, but they are reluctant to disclose places and situations when they felt discriminated against or harassed at work. The gap in the employment of men and women appears to be wider between urban and rural areas. This is due to the fact that, in Romania, about a third of workers are still working in subsistence farming, as self-employed workers, or as unpaid family workers, and to the fact that women outnumber men in these roles. Farm laborers are neither wage earners nor unionized workers, which explains the lack of information about their rights and the regional variance between individual perceptions of discrimination. The perception of the various forms of discrimination varies greatly between each development region, which requires policies designed to respond to the specificities of each of the country's regions. Statistics show that the number of women in decision-making positions is lower than that of men. This reality has multiple causes, both general and personal, as well as individual, such as:

- low level of professional experience and sometimes education of women;
- stereotypes regarding the status and roles of women, for example women viewed as a sole family caretaker, maternity and women's absence from the labor market during parental leave and child care;
- the lack of an equitable and coherent system of promotion at work, the lack of organizational culture, etc.

All Romanian regulations for labour and social security state the principle of equality between men and women. However, with few exceptions (related to maternity issues) they do not include specific provision, implementation mechanisms and methodologies meant to ensure an equal status for women. Certain reluctance continues to persist in appointing women in management structures and in decision making position. This occurs particularly in male dominated staff and is based on assumptions regarding women's attitudes rather than on competence. Private companies do not promote equal opportunity policies in recruiting their personnel. They prefer men to women applicants in order to avoid the payment of the legal benefits related to maternity leave. Due to the acute lack of work opportunities, an important number of women (especially young women) choose the alternative of working in the "underground" economy, on low incomes, no work contracts, and no social insurance. While the risk for sexual harassment at work has considerably increased, no legal provision for preventing and/or punishing it has been adopted. The retirement age is different for women and men. The difference is not justified at least from a biological point of view since statistics

show that, near retirement age, men's mortality rate is at more than double than women's mortality rate.

In 2006, ANES started a campaign entitled "*Take part in decision making!*" with messages containing media slogans, posters, leaflets and statistical analysis on women and men in decision-making positions. In 2009, in the area of removal of the discriminatory conditions of women in politics and promoting the equal participation of women and men in decision-making, ANES conducted a statistical analysis on the participation of women and men in political decision-making at central and local government level. The analysis referred to the representation of women and men in decision-making at central government level (Minister, Secretary of State), Parliament and local government level (county councils, local councils, prefectures and municipalities).

In 2011, the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection made an analysis of the situation of men and women in decision-making positions (executive levels 1 and 2), in public administration. The main findings of the analysis are:

- At national level, more than half of the decision-making positions in central government are occupied by women.
- In the Government Ministries, most decision-makers are women. Their share in the decision-making positions both in 1 and 2 levels is higher than at national level.
- The ratio of women who occupy decision-making positions in Ministries is more than in their decentralized units at local level, institutions under their authority and other bodies of the Ministries.

### 3. Government role in preventing sexual bias exclusion

The concept of equal human rights is well grounded in Romanian democratic history. The **Romanian Constitution** (Article 16) stipulates that all citizens are equal in front of the law and public authorities, without any privileges or discrimination. The principle of equality between the sexes is regulated under Article 4, and Article 38 (equal wages for equal work). **The Romanian Labour Code** stipulates the equal treatment of men and women at the workplace.

Promoting equal opportunities for men and women and ensuring full enjoyment of all human rights has been a priority for Romania even before the country joined the European Union. The European Commission emphasized in the assessment document Agenda 2000 that in the field of equal opportunities, Romanian national legislation covers the provisions of Community legislation on non-discrimination on account of gender.

The steps for improving the legislation concerning equal opportunities for men and women have been created, inter alia, through:

- the ratification of the Revised European Social Charter;
- the adoption of the National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for men and women (2000);
- the Law on Equal Opportunities for men and women (202/2002).

The **Law on Equal Opportunities for men and women** is the most important legal text providing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. It explicitly defines and prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination as well as sexual harassment. The law was adopted in 2002 and revised in 2006, and it transposes EU Directive no. 76/207/EEC and EU Directive 2002/73/CE. The Law covers the following areas:

A. Protective measures:

- Equal pay for men and women
- Equal treatment for men and women regarding access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions
- Safety and health at work for pregnant women and women who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding

B. Burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex

C. Part-time workers

D. Self-employed workers

E. Parental leave

F. Social security schemes

Following the inclusion in the European Union in 2007, Romania has adopted all the European legislation and regulations against sexual discrimination. The year 2007 was labelled the European year of equal opportunities, in an attempt to raise awareness on this issue. Equality is one of the five values on which the Union was founded and all policies and decisions made by the Union are bound by the principle of equality between men and women. The Charter of Fundamental Rights provides for equality between the sexes and prohibits sexual discrimination.

In March 2010, the Commission adopted the Women's Charter, thus renewing its commitment to gender equality and to strengthening the gender perspective in all its policies. The most recent strategies include: the creation of the European Institute for Gender Equality, as part of the strategy for equality between men and women 2010-2015, and The EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015.

As part of the 2006-2012 National Strategy for the Equality of chances between men and women, the Romanian government organized a series of campaigns to bring awareness of this subject to the general public. Workshops on the perspective of gender were organized in schools, measures were taken to facilitate the presence of women in politics (less than 10% of members of parliament were women) and protocols of collaborations were signed between the National Agency for Equal Opportunities and the National Audiovisual Council of Romania agreeing that journalist should not depict a specific gender as inferior to the other.

Secondly, the Romanian government supported a series of programs that would facilitate the inclusion of women in work fields that are dominated by men, for example business and management. These include theoretical seminars and courses of business addressed to women, as well as a national program that offers non-refundable financing for business projects run by women. The national program "Manager Woman" was a success and was renewed for a 4<sup>th</sup> year, and over €120,000 will be distributed to women who want start a business.

## 4. Institutions and their actions

In 2000, the Social and Economic Council of the Romanian Parliament founded the Commission for Equal Chances and Treatment.

The main functions of the Commission were:

- to eliminate any form of gender discrimination and to improve women's conditions in society;
- to integrate the principle of equal chances for men and women in legislative initiatives, policies and programs including both men and women;
- to monitor the implementation of provisions referring to the equal chances and treatment of men and women within the international documents ratified by Romania.

The National Council for Combating Discrimination is an agency of the Romanian government, established in 2001 and responsible for applying Romanian and European Union anti-discrimination laws and managing the National Anti-Discrimination Plan. The legal status of the CNCD was established by the anti-discrimination law of 2000 (Law 137/2000) and subsequently amended in 2006. According to the law, the Council reports to the parliament and is politically independent. The CNCD is also responsible for conducting research regarding social attitudes and perceptions of the phenomenon of discrimination in Romania, and regularly publishes reports on its findings.

The National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women ensured the development of a democratic and tolerant society allowing for the participation of all people, irrespective of gender, to Romanian public life. It operated under the Romanian Government until 2010, when government decision 728/2010 was enforced, regulating the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection as the governmental mechanism responsible for the development of strategies and policies in the field of promoting equal opportunities for men and women eliminating any form of gender discrimination.

Since 2010, this ministry supervises the application of the provisions of the Law on Equal Treatment in its field of activity, through coordinated and subordinated institutions, which must respect the application of measures promoting equal chances and treatment of men and women men and take the necessary action to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination based on gender. These institutions include:

**The National Agency for Labour Force Occupancy**, which ensures the application of measures observing equal chances and treatment for men and women in the field of providing services for work occupancy and professional training, and also in the field of social protection for unemployed persons.

**The National House for Pensions and Other Social Insurance Rights**, which ensures the application of the measures observing equal chances and treatment of men and women in the field of managing the public system of pensions and other social insurance rights.

**Work Inspection** ensures the application of the measures observing equal chances and treatment for men and women in the field of establishing work relations and of work health and security and controls the application of the present law provisions both in the public sector and in the private one, via work territorial inspectorates.

**The National Council for Adults Professional Training** is an autonomous administrative authority having a consultative role, which ensures the application of the measures for observing equal chances and treatment between women and men in developing policies and strategies concerning adult professional training.

The **National Institute for Scientific Research in the Field of Labour and Social Protection** and **The National Institute for Research Development for Labour Protection**, both under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, are responsible for promoting and ensuring equal chances and treatment for men and women in their specific fields of activity and offer all the data and information they have which are necessary for developing the strategies and policies in the field.

The **Association for Gender Freedom and Equality** (A.L.E.G) was created in Sibiu in 2004 and has the mission to promote gender equality and fight against all forms of discrimination and violence based on gender. Their projects are local and include non-formal educational campaigns for youngsters and raising awareness on the subject for the general public. Their best known project is The Gender Equality Festival, which they have organized every year since 2004. The campaign used non-formal education methods to create a variety of attractive events, such as a street event that engaged the audience to express their opinion on gender, a gender treasure hunt competition in which eleven teams (made up of boys and girls) had to pass through ten practical assignments which gave them the opportunity to become aware of gender stereotypes and prejudices (e.g. boys are not good at doing household chores and girls don't have any technical skills), and to discover the values and significance of equality between sexes. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of an educational campaign that

fighters stereotypes about men and women, which feed different forms of discrimination and violence. Their latest project “Log In” promotes a responsible attitude of young people on the issue of gender equality on social media. It includes workshops on gender violence in the new media and other non-formal activities for young people.

**ALTFEM** is a national campaign to bring awareness to the issue of discrimination and gender stereotypes, and to change the image of the woman in society, as well as her professional role. The main initiative of the campaign is to get approval for a new bank note that would depict a feminine historical figure. There is an ongoing petition for this with more than 25100 signatures so far. The site offers a number of editorials about the challenges women are facing nowadays, but also testimonials of successful women and role models, suggestions on how to stand up against discrimination.

The National Union of Students in Romania, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, has run from December 2010 to February 2014 the national project “Together for bringing awareness and promoting the equality of gender and chances”. The project included a campaign of sensitizing on the issue of gender discrimination and promotes a more inclusive society; it offered professional trainings and formation courses for women, and a campaign that promotes successful role models for women.

**T.A.T.A.** (Alliance for Non-discrimination against Fathers) is the only NGO in Romania that fights against social, economic and legal discrimination against men/fathers. It helps promote the equality between mothers and fathers in relation with their children, and it assists and offers counseling for men who have had their rights breached. With the help of the National Council against Discrimination, they have solved a series of cases of discrimination; for example, in 2008, the Emergency Hospital “Grigore Alexandrescu” from Bucharest had the internal rule that only the mother would have the right to ward with her child in the hospital. This was considered discrimination towards the father, a fine was passed to the hospital and now the father has the same rights as the mother. Currently, they have filed a complaint against a press association for having printed out a series of nursery vouchers that depict images only with the mother and the child, while the father figure is missing from all the images. Their justification for the complaint is that such images encourage gender stereotypes and the wrong idea that only mothers are involved in nursery activities of children. The complaint will be analyzed by the CNCD and a decision will be reached by the end of the month.

## 5. Other activities against sexual bias exclusion

**AnA Society for Feminist Analyses** has published „AnaLize” Magazine. The sponsor is the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Bucharest. The target group: politicians, companies, general public. The target is to establish and promote studies and research on women’s right and discrimination (<http://www.anasaf.ro/en/index.html>).

**The Association of Business Women and Top Managers in Braşov** (AFAFCI) creates the organizational framework for business women and women managers in Braşov and Braşov County and to achieve their goals and objectives that should lead to the promotion of members and their companies. The target group: local community, support grass-roots initiatives (<http://www.afafci.ro/old/english/overview.html>).

**The Centre for Partnership and Equality**, whose sponsor is also The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Bucharest, supports the initiatives and the execution of programs and projects to raise awareness within the Romanian society in regards to women’s present condition (<http://www.cpe.ro/english/>).

**The Centre for gender studies** supports the gender equality, empowerment of women, education, gender-sensitive public policy, and research studies, political participation of women, political representation of gender interests (<http://www.centrulfilia.ro/>).

**The Equal Pay Day** develops a framework of structures to provide the necessary education, training and opportunities for women, to achieve economic independence (<http://bpwromania.ro/>).

In 1998 the **National School of Political and Administrative Studies in Bucharest** has created the first master’s program of gender studies in Romania. In 2003 such a master program appeared at Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and from 2004, at West University of Timisoara. Classes: Feminist Political Theories, Sociology of gender, Gender Policies in Europe, History of political feminism Romanian, Institutions and policies, Discrimination and Equal opportunities: laws, policies, institutions, Gender Policies in Romania, Gender Policy in Education, Gender and Economy, Gender analysis: seminar research, Practice in governmental organizations and in NGOs. Academic feminism is developed and there are many experts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Available from Web: <http://www.politice.ro/programe/politici-gen-si-minoritati>

Gender is a neglected variable in psychology (especially in Romanian psychology). Simply replacing the word “sex” with the word “gender” does not mean that gender is studied as social constructionism. With few exceptions, the interest in women’s health is the health reproduction. In other words, the healthy woman is the one that is fertile, procreates and gives birth to healthy children.

Some reasons why equality gap of opportunity between men and women in the desired and the present situation is still high:

- Romanian traditional attitudes and beliefs regarding the role of women and men;
- The shadow of the 50 years of communism with what they meant in the conception on individual rights, equal rights between women and men;
- the maintenance of this subject of equality in the category “others” in agenda of policy priorities;
- Lack of unity in raising awareness on the issue of NGOs profile, lack of concerted lobbying and advocacy activities;
- Lack of an educational-formative system in this direction.

Lately, discrimination against women in the workplace has been treated with great interest. An example of this is FEMINA project that aims to address issues of discrimination generalized situations in which victims are especially females. Released by Blockbuster Media and its partners, the Association for the Promotion of Women in Romania (APFR) and the National Institute for Public Opinion Studies and Marketing (NSOMAR), FEMINA is held nationwide. Through its objectives, this project wants to strengthen the principle of equal opportunities and gender in civil society to better promote women in the labor market, equal rights awareness and overcoming cultural stereotypes and present a fair and non-discriminatory images of women in Romanian society.<sup>2</sup>

FEMINA project wants to draw our attention to several forms of discrimination that may occur during the job interview:

- any question an marital status or family situation or obligation of any commitment in this regard is discrimination;
- physical appearance should not be decisive in the choice of the employer, but only objective factors should be considered relevant for the job;
- women should not be asked if they have children, or if they want to have:

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<sup>2</sup> *Discriminarea de gen- o problemă actuală* in hipo.ro. Available from Web: <http://www.hipo.ro/locuri-de-munca/vizualizareArticol/709/Discriminarea-de-gen-o-problema-actuala>

- women should not be evaluated according to their availability beyond the program, but according to the skills necessary for the job.

CNCD is the autonomous state authority, under parliamentary control, which unfolds its activity in the sexual bias exclusion's field. The Council is the guarantor of respecting and applying the principle of equal opportunities between Women and Men, in compliance with the effective legislation and with the international documents whereat Romania is part of. CNCD functions in conformity with Government Order nr.137/2000 republished/revised, regarding prevention and control over any kind of discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

CNCD prevents discrimination through information/informational/informative campaigns, making people become aware of human's rights, of the effects of discrimination, of the principle of equality. This council organizes training courses, information/informative courses, projects at a local, regional, national level and does research.

The CNCD is also responsible for conducting research into social attitudes and perceptions regarding the phenomenon of discrimination in Romania, and regularly publishes reports on its findings. Additionally, the CNCD established a Documentation Centre (Centru de Documentare) which can be accessed by the public and which provides a series of publications relating to anti-discrimination, human rights, legislation, minority rights issues.

Although we believe that mothers are often discriminated against in the workplace, few employers have come to court. The only case of discrimination of this kind is that of Remus Borza, a trustee and administrator of Hidroelectrica, who had fired at least 10 women on maternity leave. Moreover, Borza went public on Romanian TV against these women: "Hidroelectrica is a production company, not a company of recently given births," and he went on calling them "girls who gave birth to too many bloody kids". The National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) sanctioned the statements of this manager with a fine of 10,000 lei.<sup>4</sup>

Gerda, mother of two young children, has also encountered this kind of problems. Although she worked for several years as an accountant before maternal leave, she is currently looking for a job. And she has been looking since last April. "Whenever I am invited to an interview, they asked me about my two children. Do I have anyone else to leave them with if they get sick? Although accounting can be done at any time, no one wants to hear about a flexible program. Everywhere I go, I feel that the biggest problem is my children.

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<sup>3</sup> Available on the internet: <http://www.cncd.org.ro/>

<sup>4</sup> Available on the internet: <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-16775694-munca-dupa-concediul-crestere-copilului-cnd-toti-parca-ntorc-spatele.htm> [online]. [cited 09/03/2014].

Nobody dares to say it frankly that that is the problem, but the questions are so clear that there is no doubt about it. The problem is even greater if you have two kids. I do not know what would have happened if I had three.”<sup>5</sup>

In December 2013, a female secretary of a company in Bucharest, was obliged to tear papers apart for eight hours a day, after she has been fired and then rehired, following a court order. After reinstatement, the woman, about 35 years old, was obliged every day to tear by hand archival documents considered confidential, telling her that she was involved in a program to protect the environment. The women notified CNCD, accusing her employer of discrimination, harassment, and actions that violated the right to dignity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Zoltan, Sipos. *Munca după concediul de creștere al copilului: când toți parcă îți întorc spatele*, in hotnews.ro, 9 March 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Amendă pentru discriminare*. Available from Web: <http://www.ziare.com/stiri/amenda/amenda-pentru-discriminare-o-firma-si-a-obligat-secretara-sa-rupe-hartii-toata-ziua-1271682>. 07 December 2013.

## 6. Characteristic of CPE – Centre for Partnership and Equality

“To tell a woman she may not do is to tell her what she can do”. This is the main slogan by means of which CPE transmits its aim, its goals, its definition.



CPE - Center for Partnership and Equality promotes integration of the equal opportunities for women and men in public policies and associated practices, as part of democracy and open society.

CPE was founded in 2002 continuing the activities of the former program for women, the “Foundation for an Open Society”. CPE develops and implements programs and projects which aims Romanian society awareness on the current condition of women and the role they can and should play in the social development of Romania. CPE promotes following rights: women nondiscrimination, right to education, right to have a non-violent life, equal opportunities for women and men, sexual rights and reproductive health rights, economic right for women, active participation of women in public life.<sup>7</sup>

CPE has five areas of expertise: *Gender and the job market* (conducting research, creating practical guides, consultancy for corporations, finding ways of managing situations of discrimination and harassment), *Gender and education* (activities for parents, activities for pupils, training for journalists and experts in public communication on the gender stereotype theme), *Gender and health* (developing a healthy lifestyle by introducing the gender differences in the educational and health services), *Violence against women* (conducting research on domestic violence and workplace, advocacy for creating and modifying the legal and institutional support for victims of violence), *Human trafficking* (research, prevention campaigns, training professionals in this field: psychologists, social workers, policemen, teachers, school counselors).

The Organizational Structure is quite simple: The Board of Directors and the Team “CPE”.

The website of the organization is <http://www.cpe.ro/>. The Facebook page is also <https://www.facebook.com/cpegalitate> interesting:



<sup>7</sup> Available from Web: <http://www.cpe.ro/>

CPE has a very important project currently under way; it is called GENDERIS ([http://www.cpe.ro/images/proiecte/in\\_derulare/brochure-web\\_RO.pdf](http://www.cpe.ro/images/proiecte/in_derulare/brochure-web_RO.pdf)). The project deals with human trafficking.<sup>8</sup>

On the theme of sexual bias exclusion, CPE has also, many projects. A big accomplishment of the NGO was the completion of the guide: “Girls and boys – all different, all equal. Education for gender equality”. The objective has been to promote the education among teachers, students and decisional factors in the educational area. They have managed to organize training sessions with the participation of around 80 different professors from Bucharest. The training sessions have been structured in 2 modules: sustaining gender partnership by shaping the image of gender, social perception of gender and young people, and promoting partnership in public life.

Corina, a lady about 30 years old, standing strained in front of a human resources officer. It strives to provide short but compelling answers, expecting the worst question, who knew that decides it all: “Why do the last two years are missing out of your CV?”. “I was on a maternal leaving”, it comes the answer. The HR Officer says nothing, but for a moment, her face seemed to lay a shadow. Apart from this detail, the interview went smoothly. Corina thought she gave satisfactory answers to all professional questions and she didn’t have problems with the integration into the team. After a few days, they have briefly written: “Sorry, we have found a better candidate.” Corina is just one of the mothers in Romania, after the maternal leave, trying to find a job. Although mothers enjoy congratulations for their families, when it comes to work, they hit invisible walls.<sup>9</sup> CPE helped this lady, they gave references for her and she managed to find a job. CPE tries to help more and more women who find her selves in these cases.

CPE is member of SON ([www.son.ro](http://www.son.ro)), a network of 13 NGOs that support sustainable development in the spirit of open society values, member of International Women’s Program, International Gender Policy Network ([www.igpn.net](http://www.igpn.net)), member of Women Against Violence Europe, member of GEN network ([www.gendernet.ro](http://www.gendernet.ro)).

## Conclusions

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<sup>8</sup> *Proiecte in derulare*. Available from Web: <http://www.cpe.ro/proiecte/in-derulare>

<sup>9</sup> Zoltan, Sipos. *Munca după concediul de creștere al copilului: când toți parcă își întorc spatele*, on hotnews.ro, 9 March 2014.

Sexual bias exclusion is definitely a phenomenon that is real. Unfortunately, it cannot be totally stopped, but there are many ways in which we can diminish it. Sexual bias exclusion should not be tolerated. Women and men are equal, we all are people, and we all have our needs and need to love and to survive. We all need equal opportunities and chances.

So what can we do? We can be volunteers, we can notice discrimination situations, we can propose events; go to events on sexual bias exclusion theme. It is important to be informed and to be aware of these cases. Youngsters should be the first to notice cases of sexual bias discrimination and not let employers take advantage of them. Nowadays, there are so many NGOs which we can contact.

According to a Eurobarometer on gender equality from 2009, 62% of Europeans believe that gender inequality is a widespread phenomenon. According to a study by the CNCD for 2011, in Romania only 34% to 47% of people believe gender discrimination is an important issue. That is why the first action that needs to be taken is to educate the public. Unfortunately, there are still people who either do not know about gender discrimination or disregard it as unimportant. It is essential that people understand their rights so that they can act accordingly when faced with injustice.

Equality between men and women is not just a social matter but also an economical one. The gender gap in the employment rate has strong effects on the economy; that is why increasing the number of women active on work market is one of the priorities of the Europe 2020 plan.

Statistics on the work market in Romania clearly show an unequal representation of the two genders. Men are favored on the Romanian labor market; they have higher wages and a higher occupancy rate than women. In the text of the Strategy on equal opportunities, women are more exposed to the poverty and to the sexual bias exclusion than men. In 2012, in Romania, the employment rate of working age population (15-64 age group) was 64.2 percent, the percentage of men, 72.1 percent, which is much higher than of women (56.4 percent).<sup>10</sup> Experts believe that direct discrimination, indirect and existence of segregation in the labor market have contributed to record an obvious gap between the incomes of women and men.

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<sup>10</sup> *Barbatii, favorizați pe piața muncii din România*, available on the internet: <http://www.ziare.com/locuri-de-munca/locuri-de-munca-disponibile/barbatii-favorizati-pe-piata-muncii-din-romania-1270887>. 02 December 2013

Therefore, for the period 2014-2017, the National Strategy has identified several areas of intervention: education, employment, a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making, integrative approach of gender and gender violence.

We believe that European strategies and national policies are important but it is essential that people change their prejudices against gender roles and reconsider a more inclusive society. This can be done through campaigns and projects, on which people can actively take part in, analyze the issues, debate and propose solutions. These problems affect us all, and change must come from the inside, therefore we should not remain indifferent.

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