



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Gender segregation in the labour market and education

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Gender segregation in the labour market and education in Romania

Doina Balahur

Centre for Gender Equality in Science,
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi

1. Introduction and relevant country context

1.1. A brief overview of the political and economic context of equal opportunities between women and men in Romania

In Romania, women's issues and gender equality became a topic of national interest integrated within the official, institutional agenda and policies only from 2000 onward, once with the starting of the EU accession negotiations. The integration and harmonisation with the *acquis communautaire*, the cornerstone of the accession process, was at the origin of the setting up and development of the new legal and institutional mechanisms aiming at promoting gender equality in Romania. Within the pre-accession period (2000-2007) the general legal and institutional framework for gender equality was created and later on adjusted and developed. These initiatives came after almost a decade (1990-2000) of overshadowing the gender and women issues at political level with a serious impact and on labour market's gender segregation and the access of women in decision-making positions. By example, if before the 1990s the STEM labour market was relatively gender-balanced, for the next decade the number of women seriously dropped down so that, statistically, Romania witnessed an inverted "u" distribution of women and men across most of the STEM domains, referred to in technical terms as *horizontal segregation*. Similarly, the distribution of women on boards and managerial positions in political, economic, administrative, academic etc. domains dramatically dropped down so that the *vertical segregation* also became the *de facto* situation for the 1990-2000 period, and even if things started changing after the EU accession, the situation is only slowly improving¹. In consequence, for Romania, the process of harmonisation with the *acquis communautaire* in the domain of gender equality meant, as a matter of fact, a new beginning.

1.2. Legal and Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in place in Romania

1.2.1. Legislative framework of equal opportunities between women and men in Romania

As concerns the legal regulations for equal opportunities and gender equality, Romania has harmonised its normative framework to be in line with EU standards in the primary and secondary legislation and also with international standards of

¹ More details in Doina Balahur, 2009, Country Report, Meta-analysis of gender and science research http://meta-analysisofgenderandscienceresearch.org/doc/CReport_Romania.pdf

Human Rights² (Cf. §157 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, The Treaty of Lisbon and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC), the Directive 2004/113/EC, which prohibits discrimination and harassment, the Directive 2010/18/UE on child rearing etc.). The general principle of equality is enshrined in the Constitution of Romania (art.16). Romania has also adopted special legal regulations for equal treatment, non-discrimination, equal opportunities and equal pay on the labour market. The Law 202/2002 (republished) on equal opportunities between women and men represents the legal framework of reference on gender equality in Romania. It regulates the measures for promotion equal opportunities and treatment among women and men and for the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination within the public and private sectors of activity and targets the major domains of activity (work, education, health, culture and information, political life, participation at decision making etc.). Special legislation has been adopted to assure the implementation of European recommendations, policy and regulations on the work-life/family balance.

1.2.2. Institutional frame of gender equality in Romania

There were set up and are in charge with gender equality issues national institutions like the *National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men* (ANES) working under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly. It has recently re-became a national agency in order to get more European visibility and to easier conclude direct agreements with similar bodies in different European Member States.

The Agency is responsible for setting up gender equality policies and the national plans on gender equality as well as with their implementation. The Agency has prepared and delivered the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men for the 2014-2020 period (actually the third National Strategy for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men). A *National Commission on Equal Opportunities* (CONES) with representatives at local level, County Commissions on Equal Opportunities (COJES), has been set up by the Law 202/2002 and assures an integrated and unitary approach of the principle of equal opportunities between women and men.

The National Council for Combating Discrimination, has also been set up in order to deal with the complaints of the victims of discrimination (on different criteria, not only on gender) and to ensure their legal protection and recovery. The legal protection (among the traditional court remedies) is complemented by other specialized institutional bodies like the Ombudsman.

It is also worth to mention that within the process the harmonisation with the aquis communautaire, the *National Institute of Statistics* has set up a special department of gender statistics whose main responsibility is to collect data and to develop gender-desegregated indicators and statistics as an important instrument of monitoring end evaluation gender equality.

As we have briefly reviewed, in Romania there are in place, legal and institutional arrangements and a national strategy aimed at insuring equal opportunities among

² Romania has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1982 (contributing at the entering in action of the convention at the international level); Romania became member of the Council of Europe in 1994 and, as a precondition of membership, has ratified the European Convention of Human Rights.

women and men. However, their impact – just like in most of the European countries and even wider, so as it has recently been highlighted³ – is still marginal, mainly due to underfunding and the lack of political will and interest for gender equality issues. The inherent difficulties generated by the economic crisis contributed to the slow progress and even stagnation.

1.3. Gender segregation in the labour market and education

1.3.1. General demographical data

Romania is the seventh largest country among the EU Member States. According to the official statistical data, Romania's *total (residential) population*⁴ at the end of 2013 was of 20,020,074, within which were 51 % women (10,258,594) and 49 % men (9,761,480).⁵ The *total active population* was 9,977,000 (women 4,409,000 i.e. 44 %). The *total employed population* was 9,247,000 (women 4,119,000 i.e. 45 %). The analysis of age cohorts indicates, just like in most European countries, a low birth rate and an ageing tendency.

1.3.2. Gender, education and labour market

In Europe it has already become a common fact that the share of women graduates (level 5 in ISCED) outnumber men graduates, representing 59 % of total graduates⁶. Even if not at the same high level, this trend is also confirmed in respect with STEM domains, however with important differences among the sectoral disciplines and among Member States. European data (She Figures, 2012:20) made evidence that based on this 'social investment' in higher education, women climbed from 45 % in total employment (in 2007) to 53 % among the highly educated in an S&T field and who are employed as professionals or technicians. The same data mention that in spite of this positive trend, *science and technology keep on being male-dominated*⁷ so as the following data shows.

The data presented in the table below make evidence that women are under-represented in S&T and also indicates the gender segregation of the labour market for scientists and engineers in the European countries, except Iceland, Bulgaria and Poland where participation of women and men is balanced. For Romania (marked yellow in the table) the proportion of men in science and engineering (including ICT) is almost double as compared to women, generating a gender-segregated labour market for these fields.

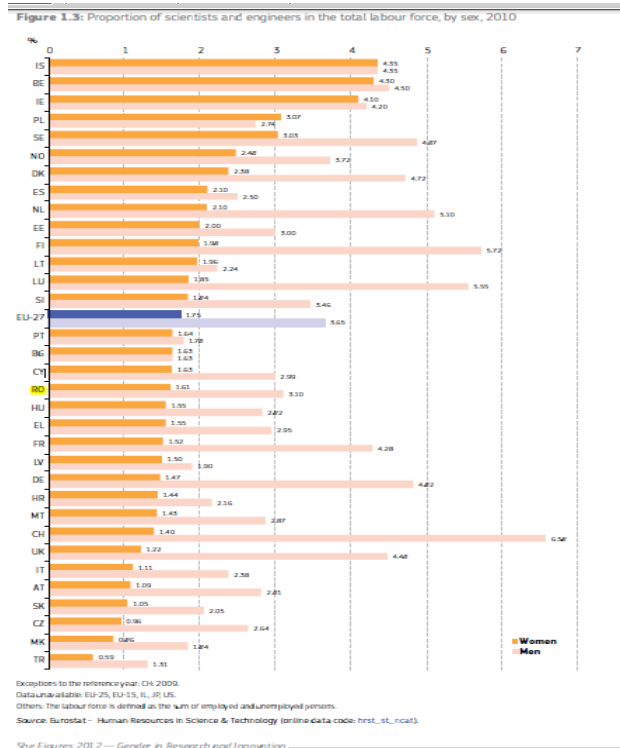
³ Petra Debusscher, 2015, Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action+20 and the Opportunities for Achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Post- 2015 Agenda for Development; European Parliament, European Union, Brussels.

⁴ This figure does not take into consideration people on temporarily mobility/migration.

⁵ Romanian National Institute of Statistics, http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania_in_Cifre_2014.pdf (retrieved on 21 August, 2015).

⁶ EIGE, 2015, The 4th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States.

⁷ She Figures 2012, Gender in Research and Innovation; European Union, 2013.



Proportion of scientist and engineers in the total labour force by sex, 2010

Source: She Figures, 2012:21

The same stable pattern of women under-representation in STEM careers both at European and national level is reproduced by the proportion of women researchers in Higher Education sector by field of science (2005-2007) so as the recently released “She Figures” 2015 (brief version) shows. The table below shows that the proportion of women in engineering and technology research in HE institutions still remains low but, overall, a positive growing trend can be observed (with some exceptions) for most of the European countries. For Romania, within a seven-year period, the proportion of women researchers in science and technology in Higher Education grew from 34 % to 41 %.

TABLE 3: Evolution of the proportion (%) of women researchers in the Higher Education Sector, by field of science, 2005-2012

| | Natural sciences | | Engineering & technology | | Medical sciences | | Agricultural sciences | | Social sciences | | Humanities | |
|----|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------|------------------|------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|------|------------|------|
| | 2005 | 2012 | 2005 | 2012 | 2005 | 2012 | 2005 | 2012 | 2005 | 2012 | 2005 | 2012 |
| BE | 30 | 33 | 19 | 21 | 47 | 53 | 40 | 47 | 43 | 49 | 42 | 45 |
| BG | 54 | 47 | 26 | 33 | 53 | 51 | 34 | 33 | 43 | 52 | 47 | 54 |
| CZ | 32 | 29 | 21 | 21 | 44 | 48 | 36 | 36 | 39 | 42 | 37 | 42 |
| DK | 26 | 33 | 16 | 24 | 41 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 32 | 42 | 45 | 43 |
| DE | 23 | 28 | 14 | 19 | 39 | 48 | 39 | 49 | 34 | 36 | 36 | 50 |
| EE | 38 | 40 | 24 | 31 | 57 | 58 | 42 | 46 | 55 | 58 | 59 | 62 |
| IE | 31 | 34 | 21 | 21 | 57 | 61 | 38 | 47 | 45 | 49 | 44 | 51 |
| ES | 38 | 41 | 34 | 37 | 40 | 43 | 38 | 39 | 39 | 42 | 39 | 42 |
| HR | 41 | 44 | 31 | 36 | 55 | 58 | 41 | 46 | 45 | 55 | 52 | 58 |
| IT | 36 | 42 | 21 | 26 | 30 | 36 | 32 | 39 | 36 | 42 | 49 | 52 |
| CY | 30 | 34 | 18 | 31 | 0 (0%) | 56 | : | : | 38 | 40 | 48 | 47 |
| LV | 39 | 43 | 21 | 36 | 59 | 64 | 51 | 54 | 60 | 64 | 70 | 68 |
| LT | 41 | 45 | 27 | 35 | 54 | 61 | 47 | 53 | 61 | 65 | 62 | 65 |
| LU | 26 | 24 | 18 | 16 | 23 | : | : | 34 | 58 | 35 | 53 | |
| HU | 27 | 27 | 18 | 22 | 44 | 46 | 33 | 38 | 41 | 45 | 45 | 44 |
| MT | 17 | 26 | 9 | 13 | 30 | 46 | 20 (1/5) | 27 (3/11) | 34 | 40 | 28 | 23 |
| NL | 26 | 41 | 21 | 41 | 39 | 41 | 34 | 41 | 38 | 41 | 42 | 41 |
| AT | 26 | 29 | 18 | 22 | 40 | 46 | 49 | 56 | 44 | 49 | 46 | 52 |
| PL | 39 | 39 | 23 | 25 | 53 | 55 | 47 | 49 | 47 | 47 | 45 | 47 |
| PT | 48 | 51 | 33 | 31 | 54 | 56 | 50 | 55 | 53 | 54 | 51 | 50 |
| RO | 36 | 51 | 34 | 41 | 57 | 57 | 43 | 42 | 45 | 50 | 33 | 49 |
| SI | 29 | 30 | 18 | 24 | 50 | 52 | 52 | 53 | 38 | 46 | 47 | 51 |
| SK | 38 | 46 | 32 | 32 | 55 | 56 | 44 | 42 | 53 | 52 | 48 | 48 |
| FI | 33 | 33 | 30 | 25 | 57 | 67 | 58 | 55 | 53 | 57 | 54 | 57 |
| SE | 35 | 36 | 22 | 25 | 61 | 59 | 56 | 47 | : | : | : | : |
| UK | 31 | 44 | 19 | 40 | 51 | 50 | 33 | 60 | 41 | 39 | 47 | 38 |
| NO | 26 | 33 | 19 | 26 | 49 | 56 | 43 | 47 | 42 | 48 | 43 | 47 |
| MK | 33 (3/9) | 56 (14/ 25) | 32 | 34 | 62 | 66 | 28 | 44 | 38 | 48 | 64 | 54 |
| RS | 51 | 49 | 31 | 34 | 56 | 48 | 45 | 57 | 50 | 48 | 50 | 57 |
| TR | 41 | 43 | 30 | 32 | 44 | 47 | 27 | 30 | 37 | 41 | 41 | 43 |

■ = more men than women
□ = parity between men and women (defined mathematically at 50%-50%)
■ = more women than men

Source: She Figures leaflet, 2015

A reversed situation of gender segregation in education and the labour market (this time generated by women's over-representation) is found in the sector of Human Health, Social Work and Education where, according to the recently released European Gender Equality Index (second updated version 2015), 30 % of human resources are women and only 8 % men. *This is reflected in a large gender gap of 22 percentage points between women and men workers aged 15 to 64 for the EU-28 and gaps ranging in size from 11 percentage points in Romania to 32 percentage points in Sweden (EIGE-GEI, 2015:31)*⁸.

There are domains of education and careers/professions traditionally feminised and dominated by women accompanied by the "burden" of traditional and historical stereotype of devaluation of women's work, *tied to the body and needs like teaching young children, social work, nursing* (A.M.Young, 1990:220)⁹. The more realistic strategy on gender equality aiming at supporting the under-represented gender means to create gender balance and to bring more men in the traditionally women-dominated professions such as early childhood education.

1.4 Transferability

We have analysed in depth the phenomena of gender segregation in STEM education and career both at European and national level in D. Balahur, P. Fadjukoff, *Women and Technological Education. A European Comparative Perspective. The 10 Commands to the Policy Makers* (2010). On that occasion we have identified several profiles of women pursuing education and careers in science

⁸ EIGE, Gender Equality Index 2015, Measuring Gender Equality in European Union 2005-2012.

⁹ Young, I.M, 1990, Justice and Politics of Difference, Princeton University Press.

and of those not willing to study and work in these traditionally masculinised domains. We have emphasised that while there is no strategy of “one size fits all” that could be successful, no matter of time and place, in bringing more women in STEM education and career several factors contribute more to this aim. Among them we briefly illustrate with some that were common to the European countries in the sample: early childhood holistic and non-gender-biased education (most prominent in Finland), teachers and curricula (France), role models and mentors (Germany), organisational climate and culture sensitive to gender diversity, a motivation based on the self-determined competencies reinforced by parents, teachers and peers and the desire to ‘have a good life’ and to ‘accomplish something’.

Romania did not adopt special policies and measures aiming at correcting the gender segregation in STEM education and career. The initiatives came rather from schools, universities and research organisations, sometimes in partnership with companies (especially in IT) and civil society. Apparently, the effects of these informal initiatives are positive so as the recent EIGE study shows: In 2012, the highest overall rates of women’s participation in science, mathematics and computing was in Romania (61 % at level 5 (ISCED 1997), and in engineering, manufacturing and construction in Cyprus (51 %). In 2012, the Netherlands showed the lowest overall rate of women’s participation (25 %) in science, mathematics and computing at level 5 (ISCED 1997), while Ireland had the lowest overall rate of women’s participation (17 %) in graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction (EIGE, 2015:37).¹⁰

The Dutch programme ran by VHTO aiming at supporting girls education in STEM domains being focussed on the main stages of the educational cycle provides a good strategy of dealing with the issue at stake. I would underline that its realistic orientation to begin with early years and education is indeed valuable and with a high potential of transferability. Research-based evidence shows the gender stereotypes are deeply rooted in early childhood and around of the age of 4 they can already be observed in children’s drawings. Little girls’ drawings are focused mostly on domestic objects, while the boys’ ones are oriented towards the things and objects outside home. That is why developing education programmes for parents and teachers in primary cycle and synergic ones for pupils (like the Project Talent Viewer), such as the Dutch study presents, could be a good strategy to be replicated in other countries and cultures. The continuity of these programmes delivered by VHTO at secondary and at tertiary level of education as a means to reinforce the motivation of girls for STEM seems also to be, as the data in the study illustrate, a good strategy to bring more girls and female students in the STEM fields with an important potential of transferability. Such programmes could be developed and implemented with the support of an adequate national policy aiming at stimulating and bringing more girls in STEM education and careers even under the form of a national pact, like in the Netherlands. As for Romania, a similar strategy could be developed through a joint national initiative of the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly and implemented through a partnership between Universities/Research Institutions and NGOs. Such a national project could initially be launched under an experimental basis and if it proves successful it could become a national programme/strategy. The only major barrier could be the source of funding. Otherwise, there is a huge interest and motivation on really bringing more women in STEM – especially in ICT.

¹⁰ EIGE, 2015, The 4th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States.

For women, having a degree in STEM does not necessarily guarantee a career in these domains as important barriers are encountered within the selection and hiring procedures as, generally, men are preferred, so as different research studies made evidence. In this respect the Irish programme aiming at addressing gender balance in the STEM employment and career has indeed a high potential of transferability. The top level initiative of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, to bring together the main actors like companies, women and different academic and civil society organizations in order to discuss and agree on a Good Practice Guidelines and STEM CEO Charter seems a strategy that motivates all the parts to narrow and close the gender gap in companies. Such a strategy, being less dependent on cultural and local specificities, could be easily replicated in different other Member States.

Looking at the domains that are female dominated, like early childhood education, where the focus should be on how to motivate and bring more men, things are more complex as such an aim encounters several barriers and gender stereotypes related to the social image on the nature and type of work supposed by this domain. In this respect the Danish pilot project on early childhood education is a challenging one as it opened “the other way round” debate on how should we motivate and bring men in traditionally female dominated work activities.

The domain of early career education is still at the beginning in Romania, having less than a decade since its institutionalisation and the adoption of the first curriculum by the Ministry of National Education (in 2008). In Romania’s legal documents childhood education is considered as the period from child birth till 6-7 years old. The curriculum is structured on the two age levels, 0-3 years old and 3 to 6-7 years old and is focused on the holistic development of children. The professional education and employment in this field are also at the beginning but belonging to the wider field of education it results that it falls under the general gender segregation in employment in Health, Social Work and Education identified by the GEI 2015 and is a domain dominated by women. In Romania the professional education for early childhood education is provided by schools of social work. According to our direct experience there is little desire of male students to work in this field. A job in early childhood education would be taken only for a temporarily period (in holidays) and, for the time being, not as a professional career due to the low social prestige and low level of payment.

However, in a changed role, men could enter in this field, like in the Danish case studies. Adapting some sequences at the local culture, like “men in the forest”, could be a first step to make men involved in this female dominated work. A partial, for the time being, transfer of good practices could be useful and could open a different and non-gender biased perspective on men’s involvement in education and careers in early child education.

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