

## THE GENDER ISSUE IN ROMANIA BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS AND REALITY

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to draw attention to gender issue in Romania, revealing the gap remaining yet between aspirations and reality, as well as the main challenges to be overcome for reducing this gap. Thus, we consider the aspirations to gender equality as reflected by the new approaches of the topic in the literature, in the United Nations agenda on the Millennium Development Goals and in the European Union policy, with refer to the model of gender equality policies. Having this general frame of reference, we address the problem of gender differences within occupational context, focusing on the current state in the field of Research and Innovation at European and national level, as resulted from analysis of related statistics, recently published by European Commission. The overall conclusion sustained by the figures is that gender equality in research activities and higher education in our country seems to remain rather a desiderate, a matter of "politically right" statements, or a less significant problem - considered to be solved exclusively by adopting specific legislative regulations.*

**KEYWORDS:** *gender, gender differences, gender equality index*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *I24, J16, J70, Z13*

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### 1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

Promoting gender equality and empowering women can be found among the eight Millennium Development Goals of United Nations (UN) - goals aimed to be achieved by 2015 (UN, 2000). Romania as a signatory member of this work was concerned with setting objectives, strategies and policies dedicated to achieving the eight goals.

„The 2015 deadline is fast approaching. The contributions of national Governments, the international community, civil society and the private sector will need to intensify as we take on the longstanding and long-term challenge of inequality, and press forward on food security, gender equality, maternal health, rural development, infrastructure and environmental sustainability, and responses to climate change. A new agenda to continue our efforts beyond 2015 is taking shape... Gender equality and women's empowerment are key. Gender inequality persists and women continue to face discrimination in access to education, work and economic assets, and participation in government.” (UN, 2012, p.5)

The eight goals are interdependent and improving the status of women is important for achievement the other issues of Millennium Development Goals and to promote human development. „Hence, ... to improve gender equality in education and employment may initiate a continuous cycle of positive

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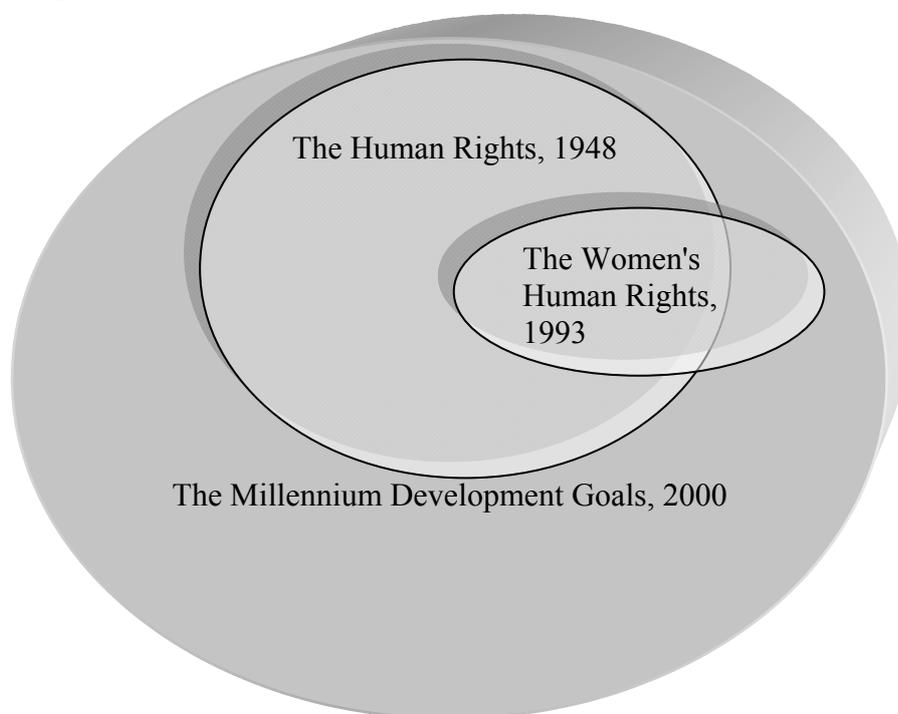
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reinforcing feedback effects between gender equality in employment and economic development, leading to further improvements in both.” (Chen, 2004, p.1)

Equality between women and men is also a fundamental value of human rights recognized by the European Union (EU) and reflected in all European policies and projects. The sphere of comprising human rights, women's rights and Millenium Development Goals is presented in Figure 1, which shows the relationships of inclusion and transcendental of the three areas.



**Figure 1. The sphere of comprising and relationships between human rights, women's rights and Millenium Development Goals**

*Source: Author's creation*

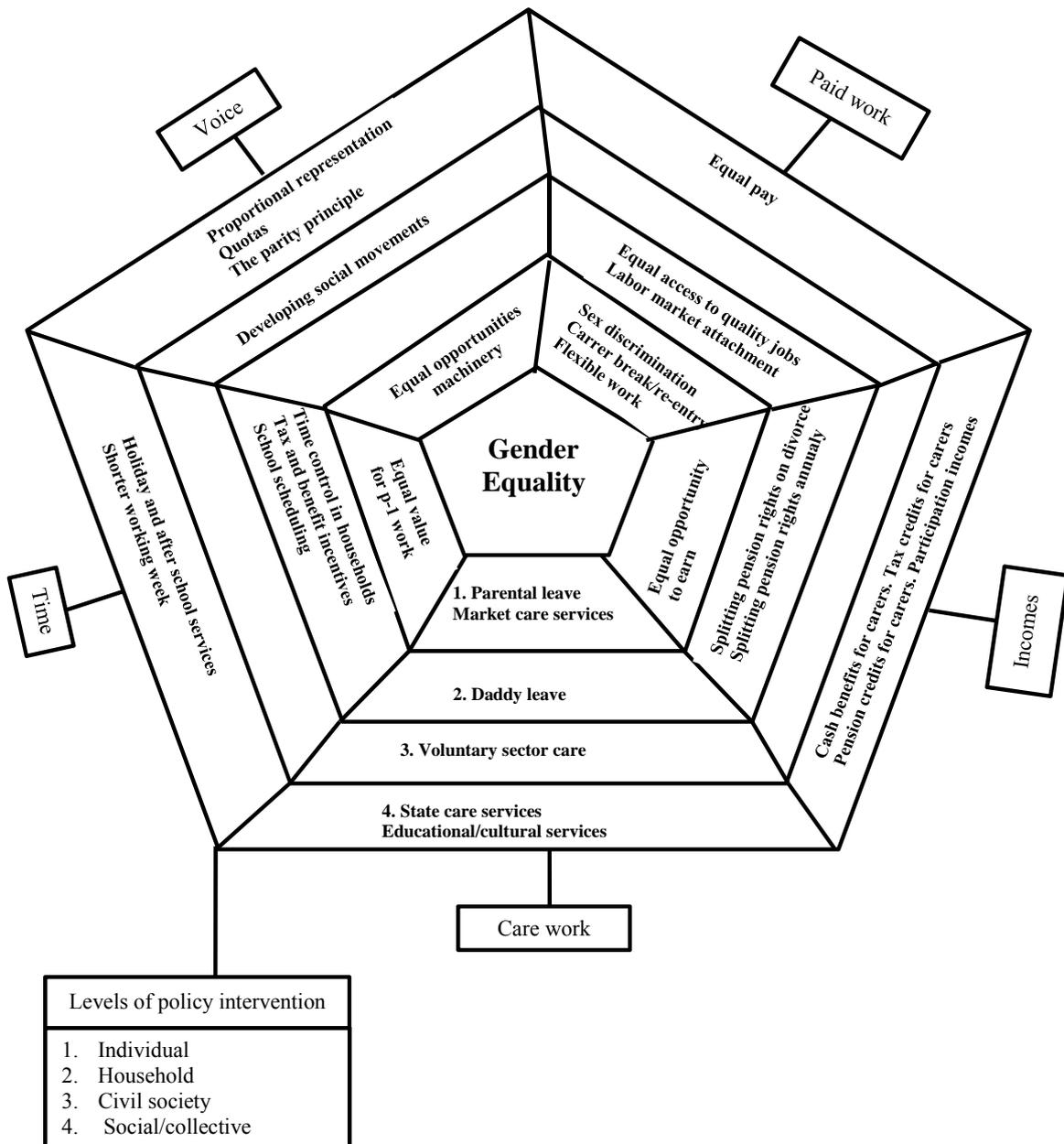
Statistics on gender equality are particularly important for developing and implementing realistic policies, based on evidence. The conceptual model proposed by Pascall and Lewis (2004, p. 380) highlights the main issues to be traced on the four levels of policy intervention (including by statistical records), providing a useful framework for decision-making in the field and monitoring results (see Figure 2).

Even if new indicators for the multiple dimensions of gender equality are currently available, the information is still insufficient and provides only a partial picture when the existing statistics are analyzed for each dimension, separately. Given this fact, important research efforts were made during last years for aggregating of such indicators assessing the major domains of gender equality considered in the EU policy framework. These efforts were materialized in the so-called European Gender Equality Index, developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) as an assessment tool of the status in the field at the EU level and across its member states.

The first results of research conducted for assessment based on this Index were published in current year, showing that the EU is only halfway to an egalitarian society from a gender perspective, with an average score of 54 points from 100 (EIGE, 2013a, b). The score may range from 1 (total inequality) to 100 (total equality), being computed relative to a common set of indicators for all EU countries, with similar scoring. This ensures the consistency of analyses at national level and the comparability between EU countries, so that it may become in time a really useful tool for the assessment of progress in the field.

The research was divided into six main domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power, health) and two satellite-domains (intersecting inequalities and violence), as evidenced in the Figure 3. The

two satellite-domains are linked conceptually to the Index, but were not included in the actual analysis.

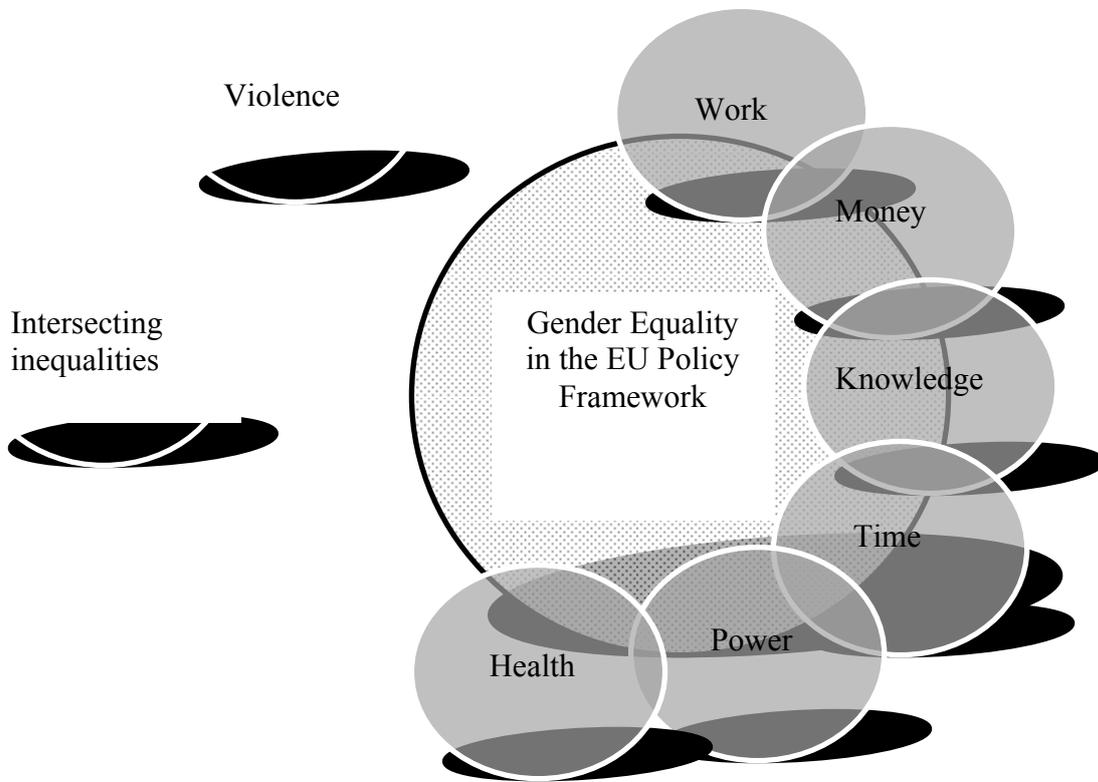


**Figure 2. Model of Gender Equality Policies of Pascall and Lewis**

*Source: Betzelt (2007, p.21)*

Each domain examines issues with relevant indicators. Thus, the work domain examines the positioning of men and women in the labor market, by participation, segregation and quality of work (Figure 4). The money domain examines inequalities of the economic status and financial resources of women and men, while the knowledge domain shows gender differences in education and training. The time domain focuses on the relationship between work, domestic activities and care and other activities (social, cultural, etc.), and the power domain examines the differences of

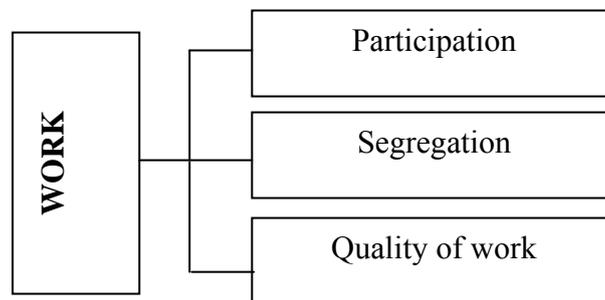
representation in economic and political structures. Finally, the health domain examines differences between women and men related to health status and access to health structures.



**Figure 3. Domains of the Gender Equality Index**

*Source: EIGE, 2013a, p.19*

According to the results of this research Romania ranks last in the EU with a total score of 35.3 points while Sweden is ranked first with 74.3 points (EIGE, 2013a, p. 109). Therefore, differences between men and women are considerable. The employment rate in the labor market is lower for women, as well as political power. And women have a higher risk of poverty (EIGE, 2013b, pp. 122-126).



**Figure 4. Domain of work and its sub-domains**

*Source: EIGE, 2013a, p.20*

Determinants of the current situation of Romanian women at work are outlined in specialized studies: "available time" ("altruism model" Becker, 1965); "relative resources" (or "exchange theory" Blood &

Wolfe, 1960); Hărăguș, 2012a, and Hărăguș, 2012b; "bargaining theory" (non-cooperative models, Lundberg & Pollak, 1994); "gender ideology" (or "gender role socialization theory", Ross, 1987).

Hărăguș (2012a, p. 4) points out that "69% of the population has the belief that women and men should deal with same domestic tasks, but in reality women are occupied 77% with cooking, 66% with shopping, 75% with cleaning house and 85% with washing clothes. Another cause of this situation is the prevalent old Romanian mentality, suggestively expressed in a comment to an online article (Ghioarcă, 2013, comment 37 Mate) in the following terms: Men's favorite slogan is "women's place is in the kitchen "...The truth is that many women prefer to deal with raising children, household chores, but nor the men push themselves to help them in these activities! This is the education level of Romanians! The woman was always treated with superiority by the men, and this mentality will change very difficult.

In this context, the next sections investigate the situation existing in Romania in the field of research and innovation.

## 2. THE GENDER ISSUE WITHIN THE OCCUPATIONAL CONTEXT

In the Classification of the Occupations in Romania, there are a small number of feminine-gender occupations, which leads to the question: is there no place on the labour market for the „fairer sex”? In order to give an answer to this question, the scientific demarche requires some conceptual clarifications from the beginning.

The word gender refers to the binary categories' male and female, which are determined by the individual biological characteristics such as the physiological properties and reproductive systems (Powell, 2011, pp.1-13). According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (DEX), this category defines the physical and constitutional differences between a man and a woman, between male and female; all the specific characteristics that differentiate the animals and plants in males and females. On the other side, the term gender, according to Powell, refers to the psychosocial implications of men and women, such as beliefs and expectations regarding attitudes, behaviors, capacities, values and points of interest that are closer to one gender or another (Powell, 2011, pp.1-13). Thus, the term gender is used in a social context, being a „social concept, consolidated during the development of the society”. It assigns what we understand from social point of view by woman and man and is made up of beliefs, stereotypes, ways of action, roles and social status, applied according to specific contexts. The English word “gender” – Romanian “gen” – is not equivalent with the concept of biological male and female, but means the creation of the social stereotypical idea of men and women. The gender and its correspondent characteristics are not born, but assumed by socializing; they are changeable” (VET, 2009, p. 27).

According to the European Commission (EC), the gender segregation represents the tendency that men and women to work in different fields and occupations, being of two types (EC, 2013):

- The horizontal segregation, meaning an under (over) representation of a certain group in occupations or fields that are not ordered according to a certain criterion. The horizontal segregation refers to the concentration or the unequal distribution of men and women in various occupations or fields of economy.
- The vertical segregation understood as under (over) representation of a definite group of workers in occupations or fields on top of a ranking based on “desirable” attributes – income, prestige, job stability etc. independent of the field of activity. The vertical segregation, known as hierarchical segregation, creates the so-called “glass cells” for the women, emphasizing the visible or invisible barriers encountered by women in their attempt to climb on the hierarchy. This notion is accompanied by the notion of “sticky floor” which describes the forces that tend to keep the women to the lowest levels of the hierarchy.

Given that the world population in 2011 was 7 billion inhabitants, out of which 3,557.000.000 men (50.82%) and 3.443.000.000 women (49.18%), namely 103 men for 100 women, the statistical data

regarding occupations presented in the UN report "Women Worldwide 2010: Trends and Statistics" (UN, 2010) show the following:

- Women between 25-54 years old have a higher participation within the labour force that in the year 1990 (UN, 2010, p.78).
- The wages of women represent 70% - 90% from the wages of the homologous men (UN, 2010, p.97).
- "The vulnerable employment" or the self-employment and contribution to the business of the family prevail in Africa and Asia, especially for the women. These workers suffer because of the lack of the job security (UN, 2010, p.87).
- Women still are rarely employed in high position jobs, invested with power and authority, or in jobs traditionally occupied by men (UN, 2010, pp. 90-91)
- The maternity still is a source of discrimination at work. Despite the legislation, many pregnant women lose their jobs and this causes frequently trials (UN, 2010, p.104).

Nevertheless, the nowadays phenomenon of feminization of jobs exists and must not be confused with feminism. Therefore we define the concepts of feminism and feminization.

Feminism, according to DEX, is a social movement that militates for equality of rights between men and women in all the fields of activity. The interest for the rights of the women goes back to the times of Enlightenment. The first important expression of the feminism was „Vindication of the Rights of Woman”, written by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792); the movement grew rapidly and has extended from America to. Crucial moments in developing the modern feminist movement were „The Second Sex” by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) „The Feminine Mystique” (1963) by Betty Friedan, as well as the foundation of the National Organization for Women in 1966 (Enciclopedia Universală BRITANNICA, 2010, vol. 6, pp. 48-49).

On the other side, the feminization represents a process apart from the feminist movement, although it comes from this movement. Without the efforts and sacrifices of the feminists worldwide, the feminization of the society wouldn't have happened, if we omit the *matriarchy* – that historical period during the primitive commune in which the woman had the main role in the economic and social life. All the actions taken by the followers of this movement did not aim mainly this feminization, but the simple affirmation and recognition of some essential rights that have been taken away from women for an extremely long time. Nevertheless, it was one of the main consequences, in spite of the fact that we still witness some acts of discrimination more or less subtle.

The definition in the DEX for the term feminization says: "to give or get typical feminine features, to stress someone's femininity, to put to the feminine gender", so we can conclude that the feminization of the jobs means in fact the process of penetration of women (in an increasing number) in professional areas considered so far as typical masculine, as well as arising of some typical feminine features in some activities or jobs.

### **3. GENDER EQUALITY BETWEEN MYTH AND REALITY**

From the point of view of the culture and civilization, Romania and the whole world face stereotypes and gender differences. The sociologist Vladimir Pasti (2003) approaches the present problem of gender inequality, naming it "the last inequality". He stresses that the patriarchal patterns of thinking and behavior continue to exist in various ways. Women often do not realize that they are discriminated.

Did the feminist movement succeed to change dramatically the society? If we analyse the behavioral patterns from the mass-media, we tend to think that we live in a world free of stereotypes and discrimination. Mihaela Miroiu treated the problem of the models differentiated by gender in the mass-media, and so she stressed some aspects of high interest for this issue (Miroiu, 2004, 2011).

First, the newspapers "teach" us that the general value of a woman is given by her physical aspect and what she can offer through it, while men always are on the front page of the newspapers and enjoy the merits and respect due to the successful jobs, often associated with male-figures. The successful woman is invisible or without media value. More, men are superior or equal while women are equal or inferior. On TV, the situation is seen from two points of view: on news and on Romanian serials. On the news we see that women ask and men have the answers. Also, men are frequently subject on the news, while women are presented in negative situations: drunk, prostitutes etc. The serials offer patterns of behavior even more negative: one can think that women should "sell" themselves or do various subterfuges to get what they want, because money and power are always owned by men. Women must always be young, sexy and take care of how they look and have bad reputation: seller, students, actress, prostitutes, hysterical, nosy, sometimes even evil and stupid. Men have small business, are aggressive, slick, solidary, but also drunk. Smoking is usually related to "partnership".

The misogynist dominance of the patterns observed show that there still is a discrimination of gender, status and role. The general thinking of a society is strongly influenced by the mass-media, and therefore the possibility for the feminization of the jobs and a fair society remain either a wish or a "form without substance".

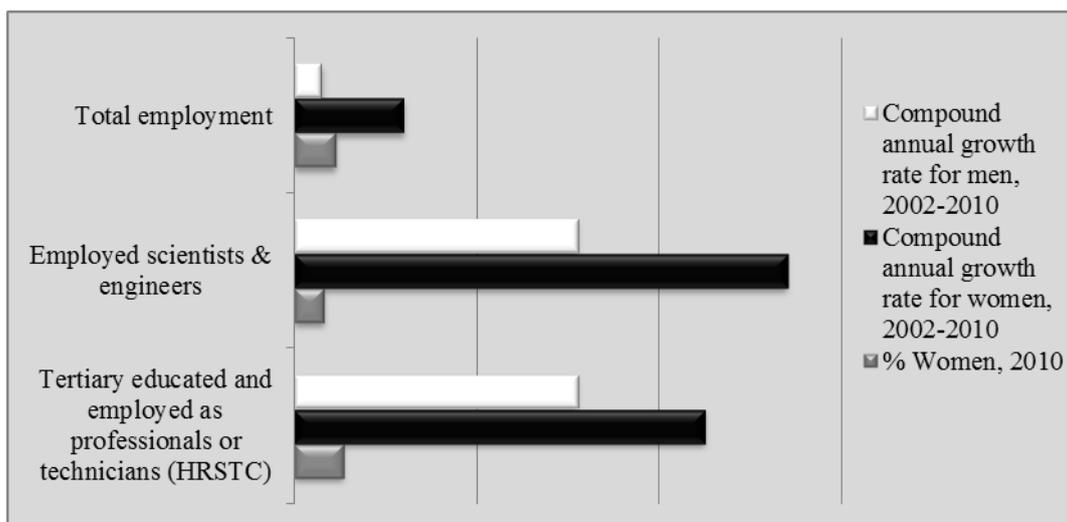
All these exist in spite of the fact that the legislation has changed during the last 20 years, for example the Law no. 202/2002 regarding the equality of chances between men and women, the Emergency Ordinance nr.137/2000 and the Labor Code, in which any discrimination is forbidden (Chidovăț & Popovici, 2010). In spite of this, the professional segregation of women still exists and is proved by the existence of the occupational patterns different depending on sex, causing inequalities between incomes, even if the principle "equal salary for equal work" is stated by law. Nowadays, the most important regulations are those adopted by the EU.

#### **4. THE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF GENDER EQUALITY IN ROMANIA IN THE FIELD OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

In order to see if the gender equality is a wish or a reality, we analyzed the available data from the specialized reports of the EC, regarding especially the situation in Romania. The last report „She figures 2012. Gender in Research and Innovation – Statistics and Indicators” was published in March 2013 (EC, 2013), offering answers to questions such as: What is the percentage of women researchers in Europe and how does this proportion evolving? In what scientifically fields are women better represented? Are the careers of the women researchers similar to those of men? Statistics about women in the scientific area are comparable with those in Europe? How many women have a top management position in this domain in Europe?

Thus, the report „She figures” is a collection of data regarding the situation of the women in science and research. This collection of data has evolved and widened the perspectives exploring aspects such as innovation or work-life equilibrium. It also reflects the goal to develop harmonized statistics for the whole Europe, allowing comparisons between countries and creating a sound, consistent data base available for the EU.

First of all, the report shows that women with high education find a job easier than women with medium or basic education, but both men and women are oriented to research fields "typical for the gender", so the professional segregation generate unequal opportunities on the labor market. However, as it can see in the Figure 5, women in science and research grew in number more than men (a growing rate of 5.4% per year for women during 2002-2010, compared to only 3.1% for men in the same period).



**Figure 5. Comparative situation of men and women employed per total and as scientists & engineers, professionals/technicians (2002-2010)**

*Source: Adapted from (EC, 2013, p.19)*

In Romania, the percentage of the persons with high education who work as technicians or specialists in sciences and technology (S&T) is 70.7% for women and 64.5% for men, but the proportion in the overall labor force is 1.61% for women and 3.1% for men. It must note that this data do not reflect the number of the working places part-time, and women often have such jobs. The importance of this aspect comes from the impact of these jobs on the professional evolution of women compared with men – it is harder for women to grow in career due to this situation.

Regarding the proportion of women researcher in 2009, Romania is on the 6<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking (45%), with a growing rate of 3.3 during 2002-2009.

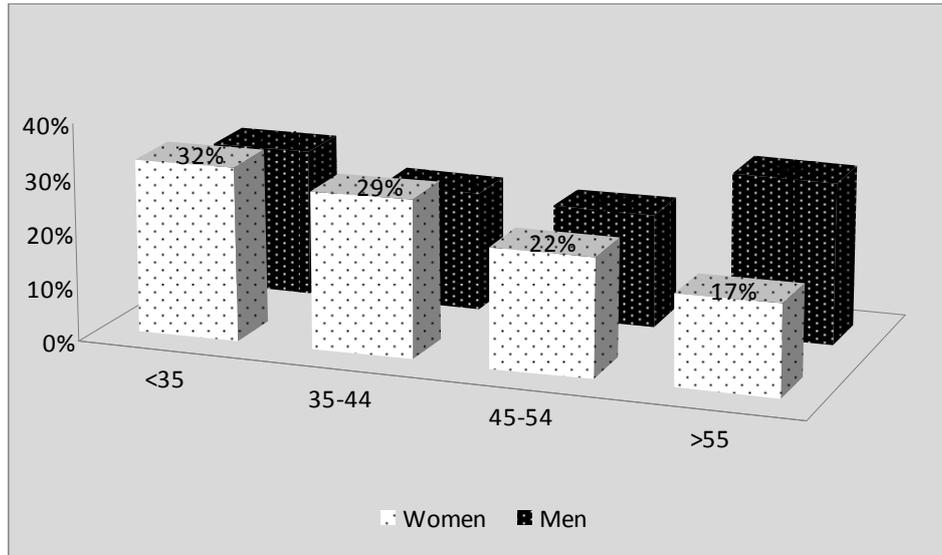
The women researchers in our country represent 3.1% of the labor force for the feminine gender. Generally, although there are women working in research, their number is still low, due also to the small proportion of researchers in the overall labor force. Anyway, the Romanian women grew constantly from this point of view in the analyzed period of time.

By studying the total of women researchers in three areas of economy (higher education, government and enterprises), we can study better their situation compared with men. Thus, in higher education they represent 46%, in government sector 50%, and in enterprises sector (business) 38%, for all three Romania having one of the best situations. This proves that the differences between men and women steadily decreases, allowing to attain the objective that is elimination of gender differences.

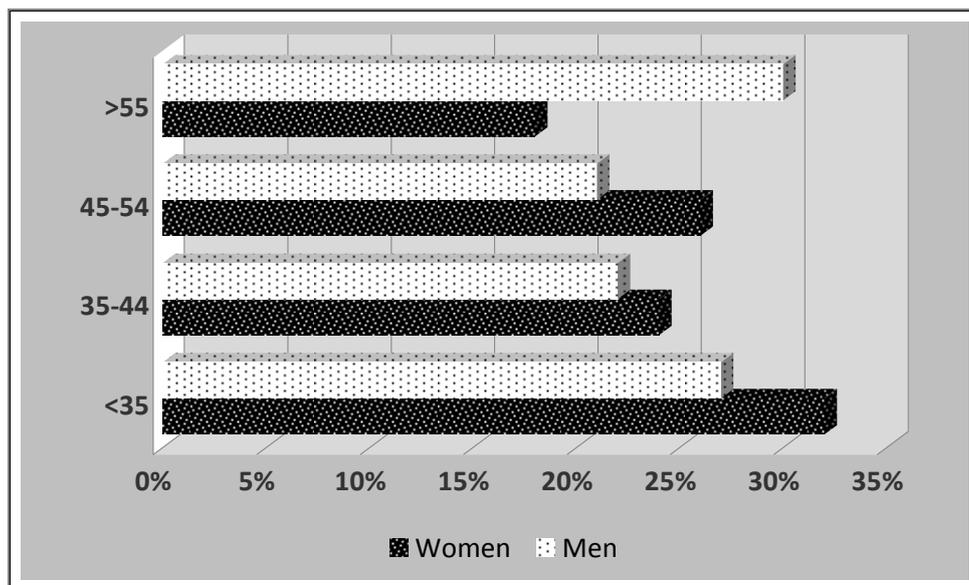
If we analyze the situation by age, for the age category of less than 35 years women surpass men, while for the category over 55 years men surpass women (see figure 6 and 7). This proves that women advance more difficult in career, especially due to the part-time jobs.

The graduation rate in schools is higher for girls than for boys and still women advance in career more difficult than men. One of the explanations is education and professional orientation in school and family. The parents have different expectations for their daughters compared with sons regarding the career, quite often discouraging the girls if they wish to follow careers typical masculine. Another motivation is given by the fact that women choose mainly research fields that are less paid than those chosen mainly by men and it is harder for them to advance.

According to the report „She figures”, 48% of the PhD students in Romania are women. The structure of the PhD female-students is as follows: education 30%, arts 53%, social sciences, business and law 54%, exact sciences, maths and informatics 45%, engineering, manufacturing and constructions 30%, agriculture and veterinary medicine 49%, health and social assistance 62%.



**Figure 6. Percentage structure on ages for higher education in Romania**  
 Source: Author's creation



**Figure 7. Percentage structure on ages for governmental sector in Romania**  
 Source: Author's creation

From the above mentioned data we can see that the Romanian women prefer to get the PhD mainly in health and social assistance, social sciences, business and law, agriculture and veterinary medicine, the situation being similar to the situation in Europe. Thus, we can say that women grow in all the areas of research, although some areas are still dominated by men.

After graduating the PhD, a person either enters the teaching system or research area having 4 hierarchical stages in career: A, B, C and D. For Romania, the situation is as in Table 1.

**Table 1. Proportion of women in total academic staff**

Level	Proportion
A	36%
B	51%
C	X
D	59%
Total	46%

„The index of the glass cell” evaluates how much the women have difficulties to advance in career. In our country, this index was 1.42 in 2004 and decreased to 1.26 in 2010, the lowest value in the EU. If we consider also that only 8.8% of the directors in the higher education sector and only 5% of the rectors are women, equality between women and men is questionable from this perspective.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Apparently there is place for women on the labor market, but these have to work very hard to get what for the men is sometimes "take for granted". Although the national legislation states the equality of rights between women and men, the everyday life shows that there still are prejudices and discrimination – even in a more subtle manner than 50 years ago.

This remark is sustained by analyses undertaken in the present paper, based on evidence and official statistics from the recent reports at the EU level. Unfortunately, the data shows that despite the common policy framework and assessment tools, gender equality remains a great challenge for almost half of the EU member states. Especially for Romania, that ranks the last position with the lowest score for European Gender Equality Index. In other words this means that in our country exist the greatest gap concerning equal opportunities between women and men, and is manifesting in all the six major domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. For each of these domains the national scores are under the averages for EU-27, but most significant differences (in order) are related to money, time and knowledge. Thus, beyond the economic reasons that could explain somewhat this situation, the differences concerning the time and knowledge are likely to be influenced by the prevalent Romanian old mentality on the role and place of women in society.

To conclude, there is a legislative framework, intentions and gender equality policies are good, but we have to strive harder, especially to change the mentality patterns related to this, and to hope that someday such problems will belong to the past.

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