
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON THE ROMANIAN AND EUROPEAN UNION LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract: In the present article, there is examined the issue of discrimination against women on the labour market, taking into account three essential aspects: employment, wages and promotion to managing positions. For gathering the data, there was resorted to the statistical analysis and a sociological field research, among a representative population, constituted of 1,500 subjects, from the South-West Oltenia Region. Some of the collected data is commented in the present work. The official statistics shows that the share of women who occupy this area is of 52.4%, lower than the national average, of 56.2%.

Over 28% of the questioned people considered that the gender discrimination represents the main impediment of employment, to which there are added other reasons too, such as: the lack of qualifications and studies, prejudices and household chores etc.

The statistical data attests the fact that, within EU, women have been averagely remunerated with 16.4% less than the men, while in Romania, a man earned 9.1% more than a woman. The sociological field research showed that women are disadvantaged as regarding the choosing of profession, almost 40% of the inquired subjects stating that they are unable to work in certain fields, which are exclusively occupied by men.

Moreover, it was noticed that women have a more reduced share in the economic and political management. For example, in the Romanian Parliament, the share of women is of 18%, that of the men of 82%. This situation is also met in other countries, as Italy, where 69% of the parliamentarians are men and 31% are women.

Keywords: the concept of discrimination, prejudice and discrimination, theories on discrimination, discrimination in work, discrimination in social life management

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Introduction

Discrimination is a widely spread social phenomenon, deeply rooted in the history of the human society, with manifestations specific among the feminine population. We mention that, in almost all the countries of the world, the females represents half, or even more, of the entire population, which shows the dimensions of the phenomenon of discrimination and its multiple manifestations. Furthermore, the discrimination against women phenomenon is much more accentuated in the societies that have a lifestyle based on the traditional values and norms (religious/laic), than in the modern societies, open to innovations and organised on democratic principles (the observing of individual rights and liberties, equality of citizens before the laws etc.).

In the fifties, under the influence of social movements, the negative connotation is developed with respect to the term of discrimination. The initial, neutral meaning, synonymous with the distinction, took over a pejorative connotation. Now, it is about differentiation actions either abusively or illegally, by separating a social group and treating another in a disfavouring manner, one way or the other. At the same time, the term of non-discrimination emerges, with the entire associated conceptualisation.(Stoiciu, G., Popescu, R., Caramalau, R., 2016, p.14)

One of the most frequent forms of discrimination against women is met on the labour market, which we are going to examine, on three aspects: employment, wages and promotion to managerial positions.

It its linguistic acceptations, the notion of discrimination has mainly a positive connotation. The verb *to discriminate* means to distinguish, to differentiate, the separate, to segregate, all these being considered synonyms. Therefore, the meaning is an ascertaining and descriptive one.

In the political sciences field and law, the notion of discrimination is preponderantly referring to value and norm. It gains a major and imperative meaning, with a prophylactic and reparatory character, owing to the fact that the act of discrimination is evaluated in the social context as a reprovable, unequal, undesirable, rejecting action. The fact that there is explained by its usual reference to a real phenomenon, that of limitation, bullying, or infringement of the rights of a certain category of citizens (groups, minorities, populations), within a local or national community.

Thus, through discrimination, there is ignored a moral value (the collective good) and infringed a law norm or principle (the equality of all the citizens before the law). In art. 16, called “Equality in rights”, from the Romanian Constitution, there are underlined the reasons of the mentioned principle: “(1) All the citizens are equal before the law and public authorities, without privileges or discriminations; (2) Nobody is above the law; (3) The Romanian state guarantees the equality of chances between women and men” [...] (The Romanian Constitution, art. 16).

Since 2000, in our country, there has been adopted a legislation, specific for the official fight against discrimination. Thus, Ordinance no. 137/31st of August 2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, starts from the principle of equality, which excludes the privileges and the discrimination in exercising the citizen

rights. Moreover, it is defined the notion of discrimination, through which “it is understood any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference, based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social category, beliefs, sex, or sexual orientation, belonging to a disadvantaged category, or any other criterion that has as purpose or effect the restriction or the elimination of recognition, use or exercising, in conditions of equality, of the human rights and fundamental freedoms, or the rights recognised by the law, in the public, economic, social and cultural area, or in any other areas of the public life”. (Ordinance no. 137, art. 21). In addition, there is mentioned that the unjust and degrading treatment of a person, group of people, or community, is sanctioned with civil penalty, in case they do not fall under the provisions of the penal law [art. 2.2].

Discrimination also triggers the manifestation of inequality between people, derived from the deliberately negative appreciation of their ethnic, racial, political, religious, sex, age etc. belonging. It encompasses different types and forms of manifestations – from the most peaceful, to the most violent. Generally, discrimination addresses the relations between individuals, sexes, groups, institutions, social classes, organisations, communities, religions, states, nations etc., manifesting itself on the microsocial level (e.g.: family discrimination), the macrosocial level (e.g.: the ethnic groups), and globally (e.g.: between human races). Racial and gender based discrimination represent the most frequently met ones, in different societies, reason for which they aroused the interest of the specialists, to investigate them rigorously.

The discrimination affects persons dignity and has influences over what is defined as auto-discrimination. Auto-discrimination implies the lack of hope, of a strategically vision as a response to the applied differentiated treatment, to the diminution of the perceived prestige level associated with the social category of membership and to the resignation to the situation.(Panait, A., 2011, p.13).

In the sociological literature, there is made the distinction between prejudice and discrimination, as, for example, does the American sociologist Norman Goodman, who underlines the following: “*Prejudice* refers to people’s attitudes and ideas, *discrimination* to their behaviour. Briefly, discrimination represents the unequal treatment of people, based on their belonging to a social group or category. Traditionally, discrimination refers to the *behaviour* that injures the object (objects) of discrimination”. (our note) (Goodman, 1998, p. 202)

The theoretical and normative background

Discrimination is a life characteristic, reflected by certain theories and interpreted in an approbatory or disapprobatory manner, according to the political and philosophical orientation of each author. We can assert that discrimination has become a studied issue and a public intervention problem, when its forms of expression gained unbearable, pathological, or explosive valences. Habitually this is the case of racial and sex discrimination.

As a social phenomenon, discrimination can be approached from several points of view, specific to history, sociology, law, political sciences, statistics, ethics, philosophy

etc. It results that there are a lot of theoretical perspectives of analysis. The merging of juridical research with the statistical and sociological one, can offer us a conclusive image on the discrimination of women, and the evolution of this phenomenon in the contemporary world. Thus, for example, law places at our disposal the normative background, which sanctions the discriminatory actions. This illustrates the type of reaction that state and society have, at some point, when the values that they cherish and cultivate are threatened. Practically, we deal with a concrete answer for the factors that might perturb the social order, factors that violate human dignity. Statistics offers us evidences of quantitative data, based on which there are calculate the area and the amplitude of the phenomenon, on national level. Sociology confers the causal or functional explanation of the phenomenon, the proposal of solutions, based on which, the results unravelled by the empirical investigations (due to the examination of qualitative or quantitative aspects), along with the identification of the vulnerable social groups etc.

The discrimination against women can be explained in sociology, from the perspective of several theories, such is the theory of roles, the functionalist theory and the determinist theory. The first indicates the fact that men and women carry out different roles in the society, some of them natural, biological, others attributed by the institutions and the groups that they belong to. The functionalist theory (whose eminent representatives were, in anthropology, B. Malinowski and R. Brown, and, in sociology, T. Parsons and R. K. Merton) sustains that all the activities from a society fulfil a certain function, meaning that they satisfy different needs of the people (from the instinctive, primary, to the soul, spiritual ones). The way they are satisfied varies from a society culture to the other. The culture is what teaches people the values, such is the good, the justice, the freedom, the truth, solidarity etc., along with their opposite. Consequently, it is possible that, in certain societies, the racial discrimination and that against women to be perceived as natural, normal, as something appropriate, especially if it generates from a saint, venerable tradition.

The determinist theory implies the unfolding of the cases that generate certain effects, as the phenomenon of discrimination against women. Moreover, it is explained the importance of different factors involved in such a process, and the role each of them had, in producing the effect.

For the same reason, we can invoke the comprehensive theory of Max Weber, which is based on the signification of meaning and the significations of human actions, therefore, the exploitation of the subjective universe, of motivations and reasons that mobilise people to act in a certain way or another. Why, for example, in a particular circumstance a woman is appreciated, while, in a different context, she is treated offensively?

The definition of concept of discrimination, in the traditional meaning of the term, does not exclude some ambiguities and controversies, supplied especially by the confusion between the types of discrimination and the forms they manifest, or the use of specific syntagms, such the ones of *positive discrimination* and *inverse discrimination*. The first is a specific type of discrimination, which regards: "The assuring of advantages special for individuals, only because they belong to certain social categories" (Goodman, 1998, p. 202)

Basically, it is started from the hypothesis that a social group can be vulnerable or disadvantaged, and, then, the members need to be helped. An edifying example, from our society, is the admission of the Romany to the university education, on places especially preserved for them, for which only they can candidate.

The research of discrimination in USA, leads Norman Goodman to the conclusion that, in this society, there is manifested another type of discrimination too, that is the *institutional discrimination*. The thinker considers the fact that the deficiencies in the activity of an institution, such are the educational and health care, can generate discriminatory situations between the individuals. Thus, school can prepare students that are capable, or others, incapable, to access to power, to gain influence and social prestige, to increase their wealth.

We appreciate that, besides the already mentioned meaning of the institutional discrimination concept, we can also talk about a new, real one, with unequal treatment coming from the same type of institution (e.g.: the same public institutions receive different governmental funds, but they have the same internal needs).

According to the determinist way of thinking, we are in the position to consider that, to the origin of certain discriminatory actions, there are collective traditions and prejudices, ignorance and ill-intention, the fake judgements and wrong reasoning, the stereotypes and the prejudices of particular certain of people. They are concluded in what we can call types of *spontaneous discrimination* (opposed to the deliberated one), which appears naturally, by default, in the individual behaviour, usually having a hereditary trait, being transmitted through education, from the previous generations to the nowadays ones. Consequently, for example, most of people, especially the ones living in the rural regions, agree with the idea that the role of women is to carry out activities related to family (care and bring up of children, prepare food etc.), while men should perform economic or political activities. Such a mentality is as common, as nobody asks why men do just some of the household activities, while women do different ones, in the family (e.g.: the preponderant frequency of the maternal leave, although the laws give the right to paternal leave too).

The stereotypes and prejudices fuel the conservative mentalities and discriminatory practices. Certain psychological research attest that the prejudices are founded on fixed ideas, incompatible with the entire change, within a society. Furthermore, R. Descartes was evidencing that the prejudice is at the core of our errors in knowledge. The disturbed conceptions lead to the formulation of labels, positive or negative, about individuals and groups, circumstances – a process explained by the American sociologist, William I. Thomas, through the theory of social *labelling*.

According to this theory, people do not make judgements according to the reality, but to a previous definition, taking fake, or exaggerated appreciations, as: “the Muslims are fanatic and terrorist”, “the Romany are lazy, thieves or dirty”, “the Chinese are meticulous”, “women are incapable of leading”, “men are more intelligent than women” etc. These labels do not resist against a test of the full concordance to the reality, and, therefore, they do not own the value of recognised truth.

If sociology is based on the diagnosis and practical solving of some forms of discrimination, met in different social groups, the law desires the attenuation or the elimination of discriminatory behaviours, by formulating coercive norms and negative sanctions. The sociological study concern discrimination as social phenomenon, while law addresses the individual infringement of certain normative acts, or legal provisions, and the punishment of the guilty.

The problem of people discrimination is reflected in a multitude of normative documents, national and international (elaborated within UNO, the European Union etc.). Among the well-known international documents, we are mentioning:

- The Universal Declaration on Human Rights, U.N.O., 1948;
- European Council Directive 787/2000 on the access of the persons with disabilities on the labour market;
- European Council Directive 43/29th of June 2000 on the implementation of equal treatment principle of persons, irrespective of their race or ethnicity;
- United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (published in the Romanian Official Gazette, the 26th of November 2010);
- European Council Directive 78/27th of November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

“Romania adopted several regulations which contribute to the improvement of women’s situation, particularly in terms of fighting against discrimination and family violence and to promote the equal opportunity of the men and women. One cannot speak of an integrated approach of the specific problems of the women, although such initiative was forwarded by the National Agency for Family Protection”. (Achimescu, V., Cace, S., Stanescu, S.M., 2011, p. 110)

In our country, there were created the National Council for fight against Discrimination, through the Governmental Decision no. 1994 from 2001, an autonomous state authority, within the Romanian Parliament. The national legislation that refers to the phenomenon of discrimination includes:

- Labour Code;
- Governmental Emergency Ordinance no. 102/1999 on the special protection and employment of the persons with disabilities;
- Governmental Decision no. 967/1999 on the constituting and functioning of Commission on the Equality of Chances between women and men;
- Governmental Decision no. 1273/2000 on the national action plan for the equality of chances between women and men;
- Law no.202/19th of April 2002 (republished)on the equality of chances and treatment between women and men;

- Governmental Emergency Ordinance no. 96/14th of October 2003 on the protection of maternity at work;

“In the European Union member-states there are legislative provisions aiming to fight against discrimination and mobbing phenomenon. The member-states have the obligation to comply with the objectives stipulated by the European directives but they have a certain freedom when transposing the directives into the national legislation, depending on the specific national circumstances. The European legislation for combating discrimination and psychological harassment on the job brings benefits to workers within the European Union because it provides extended protection for all types of discrimination and harassment. The equality of treatment on the job and regarding working conditions are key-elements in guaranteeing equal chances for all individuals. These key-elements contribute to full participation of individuals to the economic, cultural and social life, and to the development of their professional and social potential”.(O. Banu, 2016, p.75)

- “Discrimination is regulated by several laws and provisions which allow the processual approach of this phenomenon both by the civil and by the penal courts of law (particularly through the National Council for Discrimination Control). If a person feels discriminated it can forward a complaint to CNDC (the result may be a fine for the person guilty of discrimination or rectification of the situation), or it may sue (and demand compensations) or it may do both things. In all cases, the basic law which interprets the facts and makes decisions is the framework law for Discrimination”. (Campeanu, C., 2011, p.6).

The research methodology

For knowing the degree of discrimination against women in the nowadays society, it was resorted to the secondary analysis of the data given by a field sociological research, made within the project “Equal chances on the labour market from Oltenia – integrated solutions” (Research report, 2015). The empirical investigation was based on a poll and statistical analysis. The gathering of field information was made through a questionnaire, filled in at the domicile of the subjects.

The volume of the sample had 1,500 persons, aged between 18 and 65, from all the 5 counties of Oltenia, of both sexes, with the domicile both in the urban, and rural regions. The sample was a stratified one, being projected according to the structure and the share of the population from the established area. It was resorted to the statistical step of three, the margin being of $\pm 2.3\%$.

The main objectives aimed the identification of those discriminatory practices that are met on the labour market and the evaluation of the extent in which the feminine employees face difficulties related to their profession, career and income. The purposes were, equally, cognitive and applicative. The initially formulated hypotheses were verified during the empirical research. Among these we mention:

- The female labour force from the South-West Oltenia Region is less occupied than the masculine one, a situation that generates extended unemployment among women;
- Between men and women, there is a discrepancy on addressing the wages, which creates advantages for the first ones;
- The wage disadvantage of women, as compared to men, is even greatly present in the private environment, than in the public, state, institutions;
- The discrimination of women is met to a great extent as regarding both the choice of professions that they wish, and the jobs;
- The promotion of women to different leading positions of the social life is generally widely accepted by the citizens, and benefits by a favourable sustaining nowadays;
- The women have the leading role in the political and socio-economical life, less than the men do.

Further on, we are going to resort to the data provided by field sociological investigation, realised within the mentioned project, concomitantly to the evidencing of statistical data, relevant for the issue on the discrimination against women.

Results and comments

a) Gender differences on addressing female employment

One of the major problems of the European Union is the low rate of female employment in useful social activities. From the statistical data, presented by Eurostat, it results that five countries have the lowest rate of feminine employment: Greece (43%), Italy (50%), Croatia (53%), Spain (54%), Romania (56%). At the opposite side, there are the northern countries of the European continent, where, over 70% of the feminine population has a job: Sweden (77%), Germany (72%), Denmark (72%), Finland (72%) and Luxemburg (71%). (Eurostat)

The research done on the sample of 1,500 persons, from Oltenia South-Western Region, showed that 69% of them work, but the degree of occupation is lower for the female population, with 11% less than the male one. The resulted discrepancy confirms the first hypothesis of the study, meaning that the women's chances of employment on the labour market are lower than those of the men, a situation that amplifies the dimension of unemployment among them.

The rate of unemployment in the five counties of Oltenia was of 6.25 (at the moment of the field sociological poll), being in accordance to the rate of the national rate of unemployment (almost 6% during 2015, according to the data of the Romanian National Institute of Statistics). Unemployment among the population from Oltenia has been a perpetuated phenomenon over several years, and affects especially the young population and the active female labour force. It is worth mentioning that, in 2015, the population of the region had 2,250,000 dwellers, from which approximately 49% was active population (1,112,000 persons), and only 33.5% of its total number was

registered as employed, that is more than 372,118 persons had a job, according to the estimations made by National Institute of Statistics. It has to be mentioned that over 31% of this region population was living in Dolj County, which was registered 688,885 dwellers (in the same year), from which 51.6% were women (355,438 persons), and 48.4% were men (333,447 persons). The rural population was representing 45.9%, and the urban one, 54.1% (Oltenia Regional Department for Statistics).

In the past years, the unemployment in Dolj has affected almost 25,000 persons, among which over 10,400 were women. It ought to be remembered that, in March 2012, Dolj County was on the top of the counties from Romania with the highest rate of unemployment (8.71%), being, along with Vaslui (9.64%), Mehedinți (9.54%), Teleorman (8.72%) and Covasna (8.52%), while the national rate of unemployment was below 6%. The counties of Dolj and Mehedinți contributed directly to the supplying of the unemployment rate in South-West Oltenia Region (7.48%), which placed it on the first position, among the other eight administrative regions of Romania. Consequently, there were harsher conditions of women occupation, accentuating the sex differences, on addressing the employment.

According to official statistics, the rate of feminine employment in South-West Oltenia Region was of 52.4% in the past years, being lower than the national average – which was of 56.2%. The higher shares of the feminine unemployment were registered, according to the field sociological research, among the uneducated persons (30.2%), and of those with only secondary and vocational studies (22%). The same research showed that the people who do not work, did not look for a job, in a percent of 54% (among which only 25.4%, “permanently”), and 26.5% did not look, because they lack confidence that they could find anything, manifesting passivity and scepticism.

In order to see to what extent there is, in the social life, a discrimination against women, on the labour market, it was resorted to the elaboration of a sociological questionnaire, consisting of specific questions. Firstly, it was requested an evaluation of the sex of the persons who could not find work easily, the expressed opinions resulting from their own impressions, or life experiences. Then, the inquired subjects were requested, in an open-answer question, to explain the reasons, or the causes, that prevent the women from having access on the labour market, to a great extent. To the question: *From your so-far experience, who are the people for which it is the most difficult to find a job?*, there were evidenced the following categories of answers:

- 49.4% considered that the employment difficulties are equally shared by women and men;
- 36.5% indicated the fact that women find a job with greater difficulty;
- 7.9% noticed that this difficulty is met only among men;
- 6.2% could not make an appreciation.

It is clear that, within the public opinion, the situation of women employment on labour market is an actual problem, in the Romanian society. It is noticed not only by the 36.5%, but also by the 49.4%, thus, we can assert that over 85% of the adult

citizens, make a connection between the condition of being a woman in Romania, and the difficulty to enter the labour market, to a greater extent than the men.

Certainly, the employment on the labour market depends not necessarily on the gender, but on a series of personal factors (interest, competence, willingness, professional skills etc.) and socio-economic ones (available jobs, economic investments, employment policies, educational institutions and professional training etc.). This is mainly the reason for which we considered to be necessary to request the investigated population to explain why women find a job with more difficulty, in the nowadays society. The asked question: *If women find a job with more difficulty, which do you think there are the causes for these complications?*. It did not provide predetermined answers, therefore, there were formulated the following priority reasons/causes of the studied phenomenon:

1. Gender discrimination – invoked by 28.2% of the questioned persons;
2. Lack of qualifications/necessary studies – noticed by 11.7%;
3. Prejudices/stereotypes–evidenced by 9.8%;
4. Housework (only done by women) – sustained by 8.7%.

There are also present other special reasons, but not less painful, which impede the female employment, such is the lack of experience, maturity, age, corruption etc.

Consequently, we have a confirmation of the fact that women are preferred on the labour market, to a lesser extent than the men, only because they are the representative of the female gender – appreciated 28.2% of the 1,500 questioned adults. To the same motivational area, there are included the categories of answers from the 3rd and 4th position, due to the fact that they belong to a specific emotional mentality, increasing the share of the people who underlined gender based discrimination to 37.7%. From the total number of persons who explained why women find a job with more difficulty, owing to discrimination that they deal with, in the present society, 67% were given by the females, and 33% by males. The conclusion is that the field research confirmed the first hypothesis of the study, so there is a well-substantiated reason of the initial appreciation.

Although the opinion that women are discriminated on labour market is publically recognised in our country, yet, the mentality that, in a family, the husband has to work, and the woman to take care of the house and children, represents a stereotype shared by 78% of the questioned. Only 1.8% considered that both husband and wife need to share their responsibilities, regarding the house and the children, along with the jobs. The family is appreciated as a primordial social value, as something holly, because more than 71% of the subjects stated that whoever “is more preoccupied only with his family” enjoys the greatest prestige and respect in the society (as 39.5% of the men and 60.5% of the women declare). The employing for earning a salary is also a social prestige value, but only for 16.8%, a fact that explains why people choose family, instead of work, probably considering that, theoretically, it is better for the women to work, but they are afraid that it might happen to the detriment of the family life.

b) Gender differences on addressing the salary

The difference of wages, between women and men, is a widely met issue, not only in our country, but in other 28 countries of the world, with a quasi-general character.

From the data published by Eurostat, it results that women were paid, in 2013, on average, with 16.4% less than the men from the European Union, being noticed a slight decrease of the wage difference, between men and women, as confronted by 2008, when the average of the difference was of 17.3%.

It should be observed that the smallest differences in salaries are in Slovenia (3.2%), Malta (95.15%), Poland (6.4%), Italy (7.3%), Croatia (7.4%), Luxemburg (8.6%), Romania (9.1%) and Belgium (9.8%). On the other hand, the highest salary differences were in Estonia (29.9%), Austria (23%), Czech Republic (22.1%) and Germany (21.6%) (Eurostat Press release), in the last 3 states the level of socio-economic development and exercising of democracy, of promoting a civilised behaviour in the society being a constant characteristic. Nonetheless, as concerning the economic activities, the work payment, there are notable differences between the female labour market, and the male labour market, the latter being in advantage, with regard to the payment.

During 2008-2013, there occurred a contradictory phenomenon, on one side of accentuation of the wage differences, and, on the other side, of diminution of them. The most important increases were registered in 9 states members of the EU, from which we mention: Portugal - cu 3.8% more, that is, from 9.2% in 2008, to 13% in 2013; Spain- with 3.2% more; Latvia- with 2.6% more; Italy with 2.4% more etc. The most significant decreases of the wage differences between men and women, in the same time interval (2008-2013), were in Latvia (from 21.6% to 13.3%), Poland (-5%), Czech and Malta (each with -4.1%), along with Cyprus (-3.7%) (Eurostat Press release).

Between women and men, there were also observed differences on addressing their representation on different categories of jobs. The analysis of the statistical information presented by Eurostat validates an axiomatic truth, which is that: "although they represent 46% of the employed, women were under-represented as managers, only a third being females in 2013, in the EU. Furthermore, women were over-represented as administrative employees, in services and sales, constituting two thirds of the persons employed in these jobs" (Eurostat Press release). Actually, from three managers, two are men, and from three clerks, two are women.

The EU statistics show that a man, in Romania, earns with 9.1% more than a woman, employed in our country, which situates us on the 7th position in a European states top, made on the differences between men and women.

The field research, made in Oltenia, evidenced three categories of opinions, among the analysed population, from the point of view of the women's wages are perceived, confronted by those of the men. Thus, it was proved that:

- a) usually, women earn more than men – appreciated 44.5% of the respondents;
- b) usually, men earn more than the women – appreciated 42.9% of the subjects;
- c) generally, the men's and women's wages are equal – 3%.

The fact that 44.5% believed that women earn more than the men, is not surprising, if we consider that many women left for work, to other countries, better developed economically, from Europe, where the salaries are obviously higher than in Romania.

On the other side, the percent of only 3%, who considers that the salaries are equal, indicates the recognisable conclusion, within the public opinion, that the wage differences are predominant, but not to the women's favour, as it was assumed, but to the men's favour, although the national statistical data sustains that the Romanian men have, on average, a 9% higher salary than the women. Nevertheless, the difference between the share of each option (44.5% - 42.9%) is, basically, insignificant. Yet, such information prove that there is a difference between men and women, on addressing the monthly payment, confirming the first two general hypotheses of the field study. Provided that we also add the fact that 69% of the respondents do not know cases of women who, for the same type of work, to be less paid than the men, it means that the majority opinion – based on personal life experiences – does not match to the official statistical data. We underline that the opinion is an impression, a belief, and not solid knowledge, which can be verified, if confronted to the reality.

Thus, if we refer to the citizen's opinions, they are divided relatively equal in percentages, on addressing the evaluation of men's and women's salaries, with a slightly increased share of those who believe that women's salaries are higher, being in discordance to the second particular hypothesis of the field research.

The persons who sustained that they know cases of women who are less paid than the men (30% of the sample), also mentioned that their job is in the private economic sector (84.7%), which confirms as true the third particular investigation of the field sociological investigation.

c) Gender differences on addressing the chances of access to the social life leadership

A great number of the population from Oltenia (88.6%) expresses their faith in the ability of women to occupy leadership positions, in different fields, which means a high level of appreciation. Only 4.8% proved to be sceptical or negativist to this respect, being still tributary to conservative mentalities, or individual prejudices.

The fields in which women deserve to be promoted to a greater extent, are considered the politics (26.4%), education (21.2%), economy (17.7%), public administration (10.3%), justice (5.7%), cultural institutions (5.1%), and the public health ones (4.8%).

Although the attitude of the Romanians towards women is an open and valuing one, yet, in reality, there is noticed an insufficient representation of them to the leadership of different institutions and social life fields. The phenomenon is met in the other EU states members too. For example, in Luxemburg and Cyprus, women represent under 20% of the total number of managers from these country. The EU females have so far represented, on the average, 33% of the total number of managers (in 2013). The countries, in which manager women have a higher share, are Hungary (41% of the

managers), Latvia (44%) and Poland (38%). Generally, two of three managers from the EU space are men (Eurostat Press release), a fact that proves obvious for the existence of discrimination in the business leadership from the national economies.

Additionally, in the political life, the men are predominant in the leadership positions, as in many other socio-economic and political fields. It is edifying the structure on genders of the Romanian Parliament, resulted after the general elections from the 11th of December 2017. For comparison, with a similar institution from an occidental country, we chose the Italian Parliament.

The gender structure of the Romanian Parliament

464 members

<i>Senate</i>						<i>Chamber of Deputies</i>					
Gender				Total		Gender				Total	
Male		Female				Male		Female			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
116	85	20	15	136	100	268	81	60	19	328	100

<i>Gathered data</i>					
Gender				Total	
Male		Female			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
384	82	80	18	464	100

It results that the women represent 15% of the Romanian Senate's members, and 19% of the Chamber of Deputies' members. Their share in the highest and most representative leading institution of the country, is of 18%, and the share of men is overwhelming – of 8%, from the total number of 464 members of the Romanian Parliament, although the proportion between the male and the female population, in our country, indicates a higher share of females (almost 51.2%)

The gender structure of the Italian Parliament

945 members

<i>Senate</i>						<i>Chamber of Deputies</i>					
Gender				Total		Gender				Total	
Male		Female				Male		Female			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
218	69	97	31	315	100	434	69	196	31	630	100

<i>Date cumulate</i>					
Gender				Total	
Male		Female			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
652	69	293	31	945	100

A sex disproportion, similar to that from Romania, but not with the same amplitude, can be noticed as regarding the women from the Italian Republic Parliament, where the men also have the uppermost position: 69% in the senate, 69% in the Chambers of Deputies and, naturally, 69% of the Parliament members. The share of women in the Italian Parliament is of 31%, the percentage being the same for the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

It results that the degree of representation of the female population, in the parliamentarian institution, as a leading institution of a country, is, in Romania, of 19%, and in Italy of 31%, being remarked a difference of 12%, to the advantage of the Italian woman, as confronted by the Romanian ones. Yet, it ought to be remembered that the Italian Parliament has a double number of members (945 members), as confronted by Romania (464 members).

Conclusions and propositions

1. The solutions identified by the interviewed, concerning the reduction of discrimination against women, on the labour market, refer to the necessity for them to have the studies or the qualifications requested in certain jobs (19.5%), to show trust in their own strength (11.7%), to benefit from help/support (4.6%), and even to migrate to another country for work (4.4%), or to have their household chores, left to their care by their families, reduced (2.9%).

A special responsibility is attributed to the authorities from the women's residence, which have to become involved more for the creation of new jobs (considered 19.3%), for the attraction of investments (9.1%) and for the support of the entrepreneurial women (4.9%). Almost 40% of the inquired subjects considered that women do not have the freedom to choose their profession, as men do, accompanying their appreciation with convincing examples: the heavy industry (22.6%), the top well-paid positions (17.8%), the general leading positions (9.7%), army/police (9.4%), church (9.2%), political jobs (indicated by 8.3%). The main propositions that appear, on addressing the elimination and the diminution of the of women's professional discrimination, regard the change of attitude of the social environment, meaning that women ought to be treated equally, as the men are (10.6%), and to reconsider the role of the woman in the nowadays society (7.7%), a wish that can be fulfilled, both educationally and legislatively. The professions appreciated as the most appropriate for women are those that belong to the educational and public health fields. According to the opinion of the respondents, women might become professionally accomplished, the same as the men, if they benefited by the chance equality (13.3%), support and respect (6.9%), if they were more courageous, had more trust in themselves, were more perseverant (6.9%), and if they had a professional training according to their aspirations (4.4%).

The managers and the administrators might be convinced to employ more women, if they were given fiscal facilities (26.5%), through the elaboration of legislation, adequate for this purpose, and even through the resorting to certain special constraints/ sanctions.

2. If synthesising the above mentioned information, the share of occupation of the female labour force, in Oltenia Region, is of 52.4%, lower than the average for Romania (56%), as it is attested by the statistical calculations. The same conclusion is drawn from the sociological field research too, which shows that the share of the employed women is lower than that of men. Romania is on the 5th place in EU-28, as regarding the share of female employment, although the female population in our country is more numerous than the male one ($F = 51.2\%$; $M = 48.8\%$). On the 1st of January 2015, there were, on average, 95 men for 100 women, according to the calculations made by the National Institute of Statistics. The share of the female population is higher than the male one, in 41 counties, and in Vaslui County only, the male population is more numerous than the female one (102 men, and 100 women).

The female population exceeds 52% in 20 counties, among which, Dolj County. Until the age of 49, there is a higher number of men, than of women, and, after this age, the number of women exceeds that of the men (National Institute of Statistics). The difference of employment on the labour market, between the two genders, is maintained to the detriment of the women, who, the older they get, the less chances of access on the labour market they have, becoming possible victims of the social exclusion phenomenon.

3. One of the primordial objectives for the strategic development of the EU-28 is that, until 2020, the share of employment, for the population aged 20-46, to reach to 75%. The Eurostat information reveals that, on the EU level, the share of women employment was of 62.6%, in 2013 (from which 31.8% had part-time jobs), while the men registered a higher share of occupation, of 74.2%, and a lower percentage of part-time employers (8.1%). As it has already been mentioned, the lowest rates of female employment were registered, in 2015, in Greece, Italy, Croatia, Spain and Romania. On the opposite end, there were the northern countries, which had the highest rate of female employment: Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany (Eurostat Press release).

Thus, Romania occupies a relatively middle position, in the group of the 28 states members of EU, having a share of employment of 56.2%, which situates it on the 5th place, from this point of view. Generally, Romania, and the 5 counties of Oltenia particularly, put a lot of effort into exiting the zone of the EU states that face the lowest share of women employment.

4. From the point of view of the citizens, the principle of equal remuneration, for equal work, regardless the sex of the dwellers, can be applied under the circumstances of observing the equal chances (21.8%), of adequate legislation (7.2%), of imposing a unique wage grid (5.3%), and of women's preference for the state institutions, for employment (2.5%).

5. Although the highest share of the respondents could not appreciate that it should be done for the promotion of women to leading positions (62.2%), yet, for the other 37.8%, there emerged several solutions, meant for solving this issue: the granting of equal chances with the men (9.7%), more publicity of the women, in mass-media (9.7%), the elaboration of an adequate legislation (5%), their superior training, through

studies and qualifications (2.9%), the support of women, in their household chores (1.4%) etc.

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