

INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL ECONOMY. GENDER APPROACHES AND CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract: *The analysis included in this study started from two questions: how much is the involvement of vulnerable women in social economy organisations an alternative to reduce their risk of social exclusion? Can we speak of a “feminization” of the social economy in Romania? This study approaches the problem of women protection at the international and national level and analyses the data collected during the sociological survey from the project „INTEGRAT – resources for the socially excluded Roma women and groups”. We analysed both the potential of women participation, and their involvement in the surveyed social economy organisations.*

Keywords: *social economy, gender, women, vulnerable groups, social exclusion*

1. Regulations regarding the improvement of women situation

Immediately after World War Two ended, the freshly established United Nations organisation (UN) paid particular attention to the international promotion of human rights. The establishment of the Commission for Human Rights supported this action. The new framework used to approach the human rights allowed the adoption of measures improving the situation of women.

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The priority given to the observance of the political rights for women was largely due to the specific context existing after World War Two, in which just a handful of countries acknowledged and conformed to these rights. A first step towards solving this situation was the establishment in 1946 of a subcommission dedicated exclusively to the status of women. Initially organised within the UN Commission for Human Rights, the main goal of the subcommission was to develop a chart of women rights. The proposal forwarded in 1946 was rejected by the mother body, the UN organisation. The evaluation of the potential impact of the cold war on the proper functioning of the UN, led to the conclusion that the activity of the subcommission might be paralysed. On these grounds, the two structures were separated as of 1946 and remained subordinated to the same international organisation.

The first notable success was the modification of the preamble to the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights. The text adopted in 1948 changed from “all men and brothers” to “all human beings are born free and with equal dignity and rights”. The activity of the Commission resulted in the adoption in 1952 of the Convention on the Political rights for the Women”.

One of the main documents which regulates the situation of women is the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ratified starting with 1980. The signatory countries were: Sweden, Cuba, Guyana, Poland, Portugal, Laos, Dominica, Barbados, China, Cape Verde and Hungary. Romania ratified the convention in 1982 in the third wave of signatory countries: Columbia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Austria, Congo, Guinea, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Peru and Santa Lucia. A total of 164 states from Europa, Asia, Africa and Latin America ratified CEDAW Convention until 1997.

At the European level, the fight against social exclusion is a joint preoccupation of then member states. While the risk of poverty deepens for those who already are vulnerable, under the impact of the socio-economic environment, the policy of minimal guaranteed income must be improved in agreement with the needs and in correlation with the active policies for inclusion on the labour market (Popescu, 2009, p. 175). The recommendations regarding the measures to balance the family life with the professional life include the regulation of vacations and of the children rising facilities, as well as the equal opportunities for men and women (Segalen, 2011, p. 401-402).

At the national level, the concern to improve the situation of women and the elimination of discrimination against women is a constant preoccupation being mentioned among the governance goals (Parlamentul României, 2009, p. 16).

The main regulations whose purpose is to protect women or to improve their situation are: Law 48/2002 approving the Governmental Decision 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination and Law 217/2003 regarding the prevention and control of family violence.

In terms of institutions, in 2006 the National Agency for Equal Opportunity of Men and Women (ANES) and the National Agency for Women Protection were established. With the view to improve the situation of the vulnerable groups, women particularly, ANES concluded in 2008 collaboration protocols with ANOFM and ANR (MMFPS, 2010, p. 4). Both institutions were thereafter discontinued and their attributions taken over by MMFPS according to art. 2 from OUG 68/2010b, regarding some measures for MMFPS reorganisation and for the reorganisation of the institutions in its subordination, coordination or authority.

2. Profile of the women potentially involved in social economy organisations

This subchapter analyses the main characteristics of the women respondents from the samples regarding the demand for social economy.

Table. 1 Occupational structure of the respondents¹

	South-ast region		Bucharest-Ilfov region		National sample	
	male	female	male	female	male	female
	col %	col %	col %	col %	col %	col %
1 Employee	32%	29%	46%	37%	32%	29%
2 Company owner, administrator	3%	3%	5%	2%	2%	1%
3 Freelancer, licensed private person	2%	1%	2%	0%	3%	0%
4 Agricultural worker	4%	1%	0%	0%	4%	1%
5 Casual worker, non-agriculture	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
6 Casual worker, agriculture	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
7 Registered unemployed	4%	2%	2%	1%	5%	4%
8 Unregistered unemployed	19%	8%	9%	13%	16%	8%
9 Pensioner	26%	31%	27%	37%	29%	37%
10 Housewife	2%	21%	1%	5%	1%	16%
11 Pupil, student	4%	4%	7%	5%	4%	3%
Total N	752	802	536	626	578	624

Source: Integrated, IQLR, 2011

¹ % of total men/women

No significant differences can be noticed regarding the employees between the national level and the South-East region, the figure being around 30% for both genders. Differences exist in Bucharest-Ilfov region, with 46% employed men and just 37% employed women, but this is under the conditions in which there are more retired women. The company owners, the freelancers, the agricultural workers and the casual workers are categories where men and more numerous than women. Overall, there are more men than women working (44% of the men and 32-34% of the women at the national level and in the South-East region, and 53% of the men and 39% of the women in Bucharest-Ilfov region). The differences between the rural and urban areas are rather small when analysing the same educational categories.

Table 2. Factors influencing the employment opportunity

	Employment opportunity		
	South East region	Bucharest-Ilfov region	National sample
Is woman	---	--	---
Is middle aged	+++++	+++++	+++++
Number of school years	++++	++++	++++
Is Roma ethnic	-		
Has a large family		-	
Has chronic disease	--	--	---
Lives in urban areas	++		

Source: Integrated, IQLR, 2011.

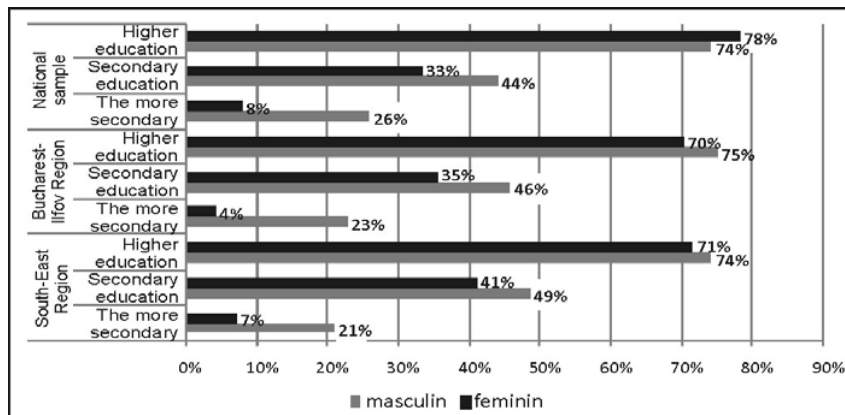
Logistic regression. The symbols in the table show positive or negative influences of the characteristic from that line on the opportunity of getting a job. The higher is the number of “+” or “-”, the stronger is the relation.

The differences remain when we refer to the residence, age, education, ethnic group, size of the household and health state, as can be seen from the above table; however, they have a less important role in explaining the participation on the labour market than age and education. It can be noticed that the male persons who are not too young, not too old, who have a higher level of education, have no chronic disease, have the highest odds to get employed. Separating by educational level, we notice that the difference between men and women is very large for the people who graduated at most the middle school (4% of the women with middle school from the South-East region are employed, compared to 23% of the men with middle school

education). The differences are lower for the people with medium education and not significant for the people with higher education: 70-80% of the men and women with higher education degrees have a job, thus confirming the data from World Bank Report (Diaconu M., 2004).

From the perspective of the level of education, we notice the existence of a common trend among the three samples (South-Eastern region, Bucharest-Ilfov and the national sample): preponderance of the properly educated women, followed by the women with medium education, the graduates of middle school at most being on the last position. Except for the national sample (category with higher education), we notice that at all levels of education analysed, women account for lower proportions than men. If at the level of the higher education the differences are small (75% women graduates compared to 75% men graduates in Bucharest-Ilfov and 71% women graduates compared to 74% men graduates in South-East), the differences increase proportionally with the decrease of the level of education. Practically, at the level of the graduates of the middle school at most, the number of men exceeds at least three times that of women. The largest differences were recorded in Bucharest-Ilfov, with 4% women who graduated no more than the middle school compared to 23% men with similar educational level.

Chart 1: Participation on the labour market depending on the education and gender¹



Source: Integrated, IQLR, 2011.

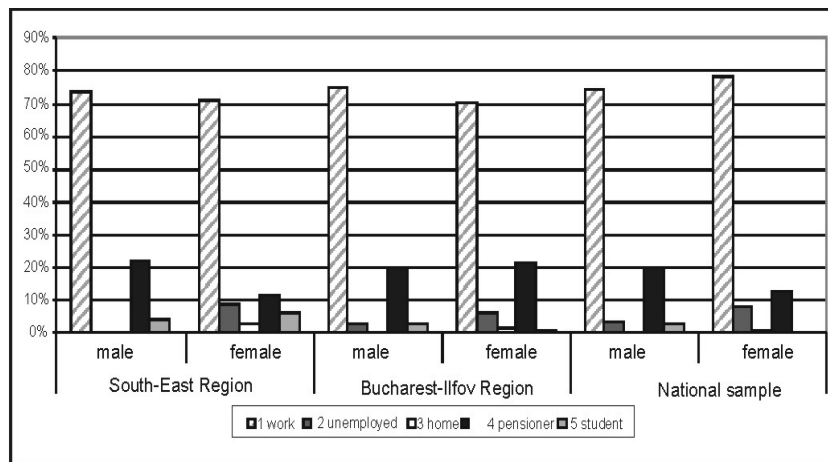
¹ % of men/women with no more than middle school education, men/women with medium education, men/women with higher education

A first conclusion of the analysis is that the feminine population has a higher level of education, which increases the opportunities for insertion in economic activities in general, including in social economy organisations.

To nuance this conclusion, we analysed thoroughly the data related to the status on the labour market. Following are the results of intersecting each category presented above with the status of employee, unemployed, housewife, pensioner or pupil.

The women graduates of higher education are preponderantly active persons working in a job. At a significant difference are the pensioned women followed by the unemployed women. From the perspective of insertion on the labour market, the women graduates of higher education have a high potential for insertion.

Chart 2: Status of the higher education graduates on the labour market ¹

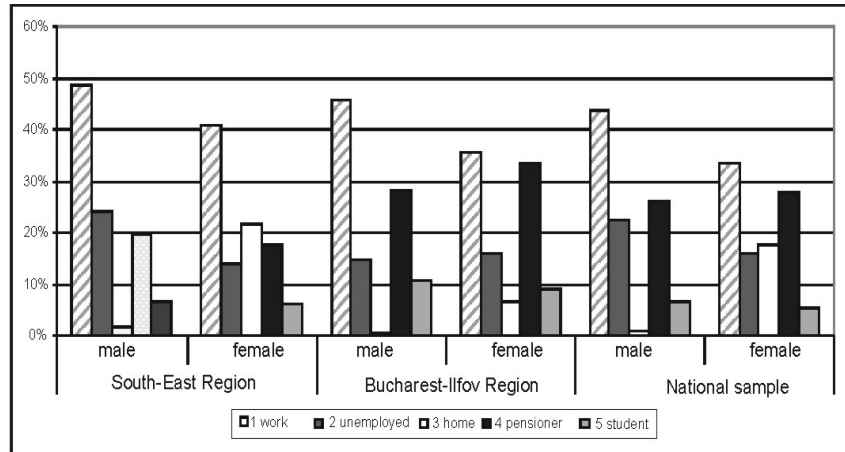


Source: Integrated, IQLR, 2011

The pattern shown above holds in the case of the women graduates of medium education, except the lower difference between the employed and unemployed or pensioned persons. Otherwise said, the proportion of pensioned women and of the unemployed women is higher than that of employed women.

¹ % of men/women with no more than middle school education, men/women with medium education, men/women with higher education

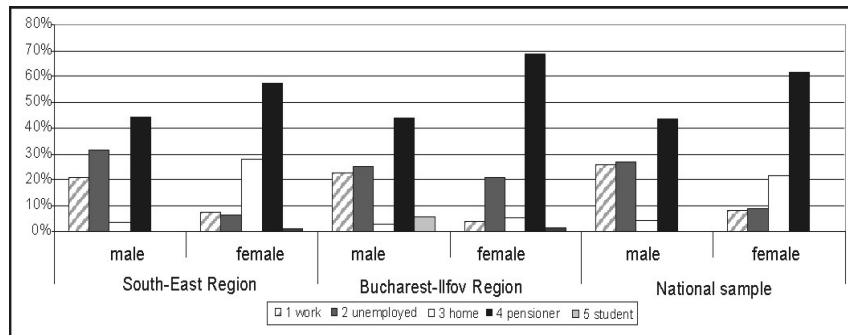
Chart 3: Status of the medium education graduates on the labour market



Source: Integrated, IQLR, 2011.

The pattern of distribution of the graduates depending on their status on the labour market changes significantly for the people who graduated no more than the middle school. The number of retired persons is the highest, followed by the unemployed persons. The employed persons are on the third position.

Chart 4: Status of the middle education graduates on the labour market



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011

In conclusion, we may say that the pattern of workforce employment by level of education differs with the graduated level of education. The higher is the educational level, the higher is the employment rate.

Since the subsample of employed people is not large enough, we cannot supply percentages for the employment of men and women, but we can notice that at the national and regional levels men are more often skilled workers, while women work more in services and commerce, data consistent with World Bank report (BM, 2008c). Of the people with higher education, women work more in areas such as health care and education, while men work more in the army or police. Except for Bucharest-Ilfov region, women represent the majority in the public administration.

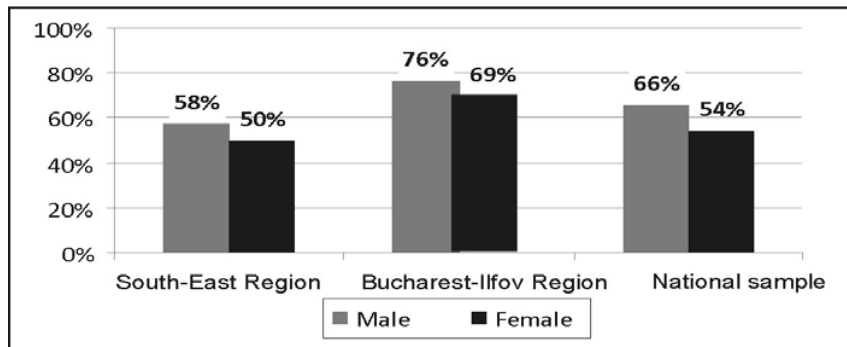
The average work history is 12-15 years in all surveyed regions. Women have a smaller work history in South-East and at the national level, but not in Bucharest-Ilfov region. The average length of the work history in the last job is 7-9 years, small differences between men and women being noticed in the South-East region.

About 90% of the working men and women have a work contract on undetermined period, and about 95% of them work full time. The part-time jobs for women, phenomenon observed in some EU countries (BM, 2008c) is not noticeable in Romania. In Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East regions, about 65% of the employees work in private companies and 35% in public institutions or state companies; more men are working in the private companies and slightly more women work in the public environment. We could not observe here the 10-20% differences in the income of men and women noticed by other studies (BM, 2008c).

Of the unemployed people, there are more retired women than men (37% vs. 27% at the national level and in Bucharest-Ilfov, 31% vs. 26% in South-East region). 16% of the women in Romania and 21% of the women in South-East region stated to be housewives (the percentage for men can be disregarded). In Bucharest the percentage of housewives is 5%, the unoccupied women preferring to declare the state of unregistered unemployed person.

Of the jobless persons, more than half worked in the past, particularly the people from Bucharest, where the percentage rises to about three quarters. A slightly higher percentage of men than women worked in the past, as seen in Figure 1. The reason they are no longer working is collective sacking for 40-50% of the men and 28-33% of the women from South-East and at the national level, while the reasons are more varied in Bucharest-Ilfov. The women particularly mentioned medical reasons or child raising (about 10-15%, and an extremely low percentage for the men).

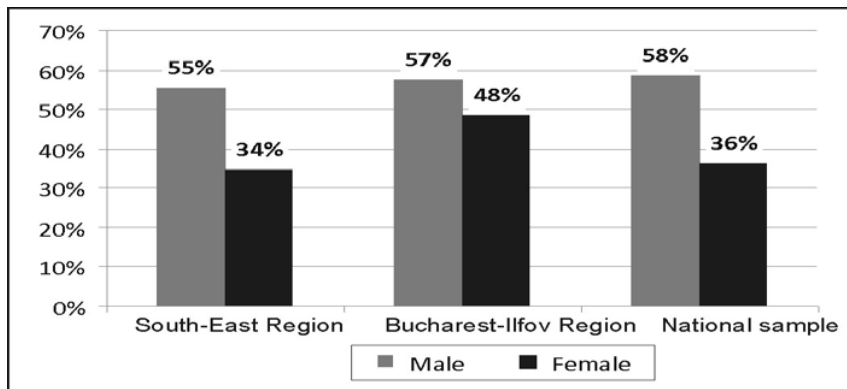
Chart 5: Work experience depending on the gender¹



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

At the national level and in South-East, half of the men and more than a third of the women looked for a job, while in Bucharest the gender differences are not significant: 50-60% of the men and women had this initiative. On the other hand, just 10% of the men and women (slightly more in Bucharest-Ilfov) declared that they received a job offer.

Chart 6: Proportion of the people who sought a job during the past year²



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

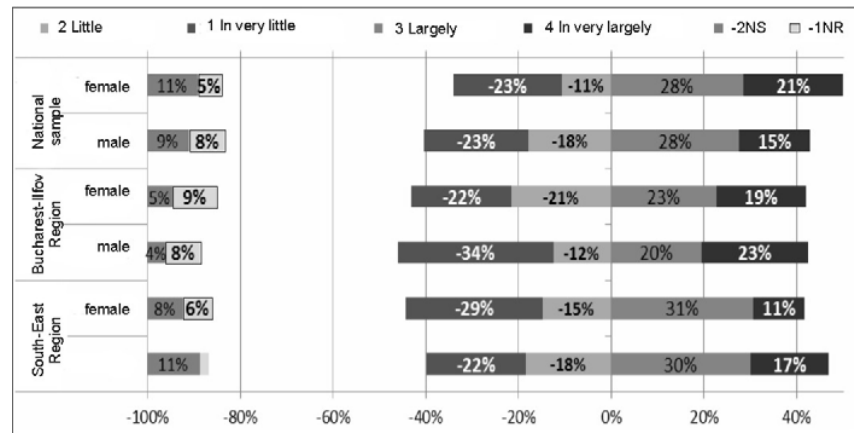
¹ % proportion of the formerly employed, currently unemployed, of active age

² % proportion of the unemployed of active age who sought a job.

As reasons for not seeking a job, women claim especially the household responsibilities (about a third of the respondents), while the men mentioned resignation, self-consumption and continuing to study.

In close connection with the labour market experience, people estimate their odds for a job in the near future. The pessimism or optimism influence, in turn, the willingness to look for a job, so that the perception regarding the possibility to get a job in the future may be as important as the availability of jobs. Chart 7 shows that in Bucharest, the level of optimism is higher among women, about 23% of them considering that they will find a job, while just 19% of the men from Bucharest and less than 15% of the men and women from South-East region of development and at the national level consider this. Just 22% of the men from Bucharest are strongly pessimistic, compared to 34% of the women from Bucharest and about half of the inhabitants from South-East region of development and from the other regions. At the national level, women evaluate poorer their odds to get a job than men do.

Chart 7. Evaluation of the possibility to get a job in the future¹



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011

There are many factors influencing optimism. The fact of having recently received a job offer, refused because of various reasons increases decisively the trust in the possibility to get a job in all regions. Then, the period which elapsed from the last job is an important factor in South-East region of development and in the country in

¹ % of the men and women of active age who don't have a job

general: the people who had recently lost their job are more optimistic than those who had never worked or than the long-term unemployed. Age also is a factor in the two regions, the younger people being more optimistic, but this influence is not observed at the national level. The level of training is more important in Bucharest. The more educated people from Bucharest-Ilfov region of development also are trustier; the attendance of training courses has influence, but rather low (Table 3).

Briefly, the younger people, more trained, who left more recently the labour market and who had the opportunity to enter again the labour market are trustier in their odds to get a job. Taking these factors into account, gender matters at the national level, women being more resigned that they will not find a job, either because they don't want it, or because they considered they have little chances.

Table 3. Evaluation of the possibilities to get a job for the future

	South-East region		Bucharest-Ilfov region		National sample	
	Moderate	Optimist	Moderate	Optimist	Moderate	Optimist
Age	↓↓↓↓↓	↓↓↓↓	↓↓↓	↓↓↓↓	↓	
Years of school			↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑		↑↑
Number of children in the household			↓			
Is a women		↓		↓↓↓	↓↓↓↓	↓↓↓↓
Liver in urban area	↑		↑↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑	
Recently unemployed vs. didn't work before	↑↑↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑↑	↑	↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑↑
Medium-term unemployed vs. didn't work before		↑↑↑↑				↑
Long-term unemployed vs. didn't work before	↑↑↑					
Attended training courses		↑		↑	↑	
Received job offer		↑↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑	↑↑↑↑
Strength of explanation	27%		41%		25%	

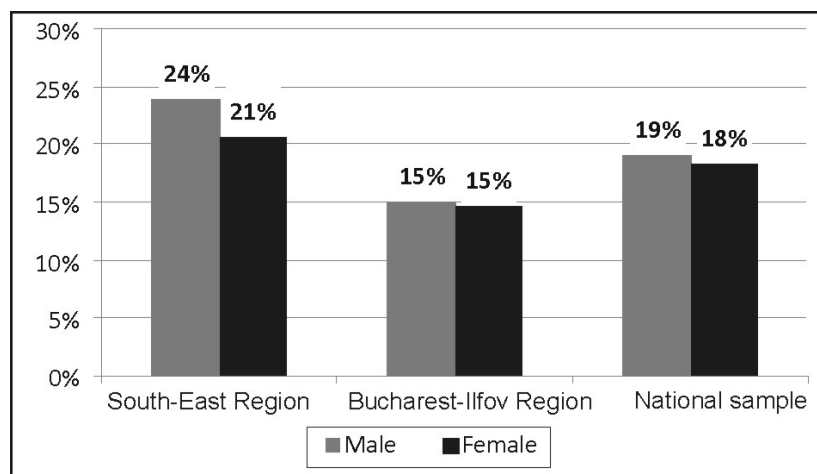
Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

Multinomial logistic regression. The upward-pointing arrows show a positive influence of the characteristics from that line on optimism, while the downward-pointing arrows show a negative influence. The number of arrows shows the intensity. The moderate column shows the effects the effects on the odds to be “little” confident versus “very little”, while the “optimist” column shows the effects of the odds to be “much or very much” compared to “very little”.

Reading example: in South-East region of development there is a higher probability for the people who got a job offer to state that they will find a job in the future, than to state that they will certainly not find a job in the future, compared to the people who didn't get a job offer. However, there is not a higher probability that they state they are “little” confident that they will get a job than that they state they are “very little” confident that they will get a job, compared to the people who didn't get a job offer.

An active strategy to increase the odds for employment of the people who passed the school age and who want to work is the attendance of training courses. There are not significant differences between men and women regarding the continuous formation. About 15-20% of the unemployed attended training courses for continuous formation.

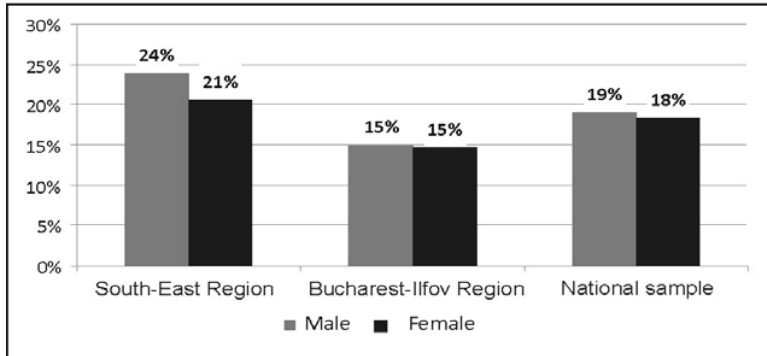
Chart 8: Participation in training courses¹ %



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

¹ % of unemployed persons of active age who attended training courses.

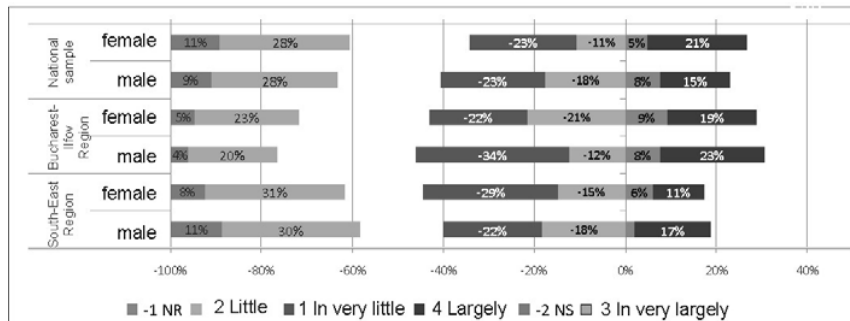
Chart 9: Proportion of the people who had a job offer which they turned down, %



Source: Integrated, IQLR, 2011.

The demand for training courses is much higher, because about half of the men and women who don't have a job are willing to attend formation courses, with no significant differences between regions or genders (Figure 6). Thus, the accessibility of this type of courses must be enhanced in order to include the people willing to get instruction, but who don't have this possibility because of financial reasons or because of the too long distance.

Chart 10: Willingness to attend formation/improvement courses during the subsequent period, %¹



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

¹ % of unemployed persons of active age

Another variant to work is to accept a job at a long distance from their home or to accept an unsafe job, solutions which are mentioned more often by the men. Regarding the financial aspirations, men would demand a higher job than the women (1200 compared to 1000 RON in Bucharest, 1000 compared to 850 at the national level; the differences were not significant in South-East region of development).

The perceived effects of the unemployment on the standard of living are strong (70-80% of the men and women consider that they were affected). The health state, the family relations and the trust in self are life aspects who affected about 20-30% of the men and women who don't have a job. The women from Bucharest-Ilfov region are slightly more affected than men, particularly regarding the self-esteem (35% vs. 22%). Otherwise, the gender differences are not significant.

3. Profile of the women involved in social economy organisations

Social economy usefulness for the women may take two forms: supplier of goods and services or employer. First, from the perspective of beneficiary, women can take loans from CAR units, the single mothers can ask assistance from the NGOs providing day care social services for their children, so that the mothers can participate in the labour market. In order to do that, the neighbouring social economy units must be known, first of all.

The INTEGRATED data show that there are not too large differences in terms of CAR, cooperative societies and NGOs visibility to the two genders. At the national level, men are more familiar with the employee CAR, with the credit cooperatives and with the consumption cooperatives, but the differences are not larger than 10%. In the regions of development these differences disappear, CAR visibility being higher to women.

Table 4. Visibility of social economy organisations among the men and women

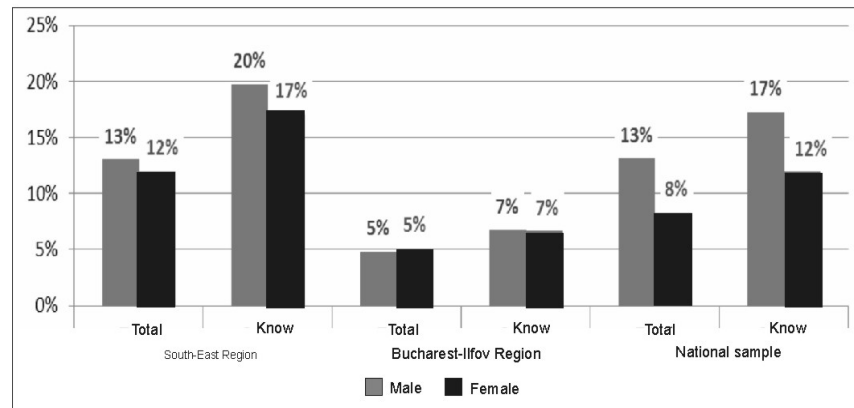
	South-East region		Bucharest-Ilfov region		National sample	
	Male	Female	M	F	M	F
	<i>col %</i>	<i>col %</i>	<i>col %</i>	<i>col %</i>	<i>col %</i>	<i>col %</i>
CARS	48%	49%	57%	57%	49%	43%
CARP	51%	56%	62%	69%	63%	58%
Credit COOP	47%	47%	34%	32%	45%	37%
Agric. COOP	23%	26%	15%	16%	17%	17%
SCM	21%	23%	25%	26%	18%	19%
Consumption	25%	27%	23%	23%	20%	16%

	South-East region		Bucharest-Ilfov region		National sample	
	Male	Female	M	F	M	F
	col %	col %	col %	col %	col %	col %
COOP						
UPA	15%	16%	15%	17%	13%	12%
NGO	25%	32%	51%	55%	30%	31%
Commons	7%	7%	6%	6%	8%	7%

Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

There are no significant differences between men and women in South-East and Bucharest-Ilfov regions of development regarding the use of the services provided by these organisations. At the national level, men use more often the services of these social economy organisations than women do (17% of the men knowing at least one organisation, compared to 12% of the women knowing at least one social economy organisation). Increasing the trust of women in these organisations might be a solution to equalise their utilization.

Chart 11. Use of social economy organisations services¹, %



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

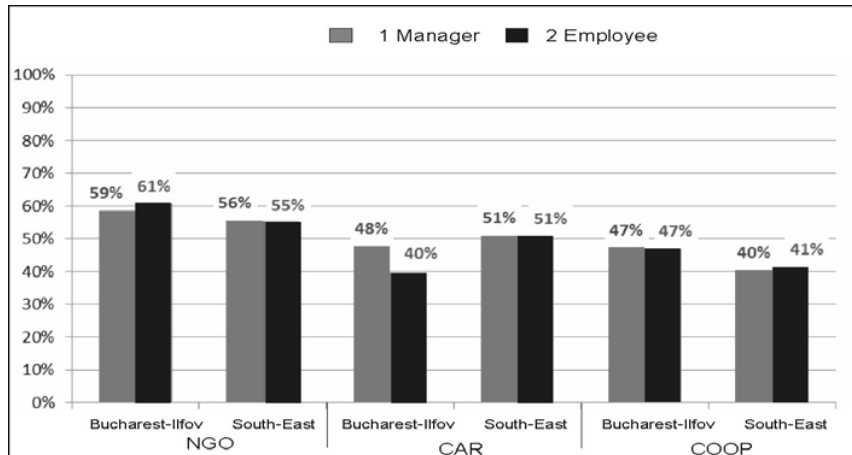
¹ % of the total number of men/women and % of the men/women knowing at least one social economy organisation

We saw above that women are more often employed by the state than by the private companies and more in services than in industry or constructions, as well as in social, medical and educational services (INS, 2009). The women who graduated higher education are equally employed as the men, but the men have more often managing positions (*idem*).

How much is social economy a solution for the unemployed women or for the women aspiring to managing positions? The following analyses are made using the data from INTEGRATED survey regarding the offer of the social economy, which shows the answer of the managers and employees of the CAR units, cooperatives and NGOs from South-East and Bucharest-Ifov regions of development.

The gender distribution is almost symmetrical. The low number of cases doesn't allow a more detailed analysis, but it seems that there are more women employed in NGOs than in CAR units or cooperatives, and their number may even be higher than that of men. Unlike the general situation, one cannot say that there is a clearly lower proportion of manager-women heading these organisations. 50-60% of NGOs managers are women, as well as 40-50% of CAR or cooperatives managers. NGO employees are the youngest, with an average age of 35, followed by NGO managers with an average age of 44. In the CAR units and in the cooperatives, the average age of the managers is about 55 (men are older), while that of the employees is 45-50.

Chart 12: Percentage of women, among the employees and managers, by type of organisation and region, %



Source: Integrat, IQLR, 2011.

The social workers from the NGOs included in the database represent the dominant profession, most of them being women. In the case of cooperatives, most women belong to the technical-administrative staff, while most men belong to the execution staff.

The employees of the social economy organisations are satisfied with their job, up to 80-90% for the NGOs. The women from the CAR units and from the cooperative societies are slightly more satisfied than the men from the same organisations, but the differences are not large.

4. Conclusions

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.

Progresses have been made at the institutional level since 2006, by the establishment of the National Agency for Family Protection and of the Agency for the Equal Opportunity of the Men and Women. The discontinuation of these institutions in 2010 will probably cause, on the short-term, a stagnation of the current situation, while on the long-term it might intensify the situations of women vulnerability.

Although one cannot speak of exclusion, there still are differences in the access of the men and women to the labour market, particularly among the graduates of tertiary education. The women who are not employed have a lower level of education and less work experience than the unemployed men. They allocate less energy to seek a job, partially because of the household duties which they feel as being more important than their partners do, but also because of the widely-spread belief that they have no chance to get a job. The longer periods of absence from the labour market fuel this idea. The social economy entities might provide services to the women, aiding them to work, by running nurseries or kindergartens for the small children, as well as by providing training courses.

Women want as much as men do to participate in such forms of professional training. To this purpose, we consider it would be useful to run, for the general population, an information and awareness raising campaign regarding the social economy organisations. This might help improving social economy organisations' visibility among the women and might implicitly open the way to the goods and services they provide. We consider that the profile of the respondent women allows their insertion on the labour market provided they get help with the family duties. From this point of view, the activity of the social economy organisations might be of help by providing specialised services for children rising and care, domestic activities or sick persons care.

The employed women work mostly in services and commerce or in the public administration. The women who graduated higher education work in fields such as healthcare, education or social assistance. However, for equal qualification there still are wage differences, and women have lower access to managerial positions in the private environment. The social economy organisations (particularly the mutual and non-mutual organisations and the foundations) may be an opportunity for a better integration of the women on the labour market. The results of the analysis have shown that we cannot speak of the feminisation of the social economy organisations in the two regions of development that were surveyed. The surveyed social economy organisations from the two regions of development have a balanced proportion of men and women among their employees, including at the managing level. Women satisfaction with their job in NGOs, cooperative societies and CAR is very high, particularly due to non-financial reasons. The women share the perception that working in a social economy organisation has results at the social level and that they can really help people. At the personal level, the women consider that such a job provides professional development, acknowledgement, success and financial satisfactions.

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