

## GENDER SEGREGATION AND WOMAN DISCRIMINATION ON LABOR MARKET

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### **Abstract:**

Promotion of gender equality is the core of the European social and economic policies, but in spite of the progress achieved in recent years, the inequalities between women and men still remain in some fields of activities. Thus, equality and inclusion on the labor market must become a desideratum given the belief that the labor market should provide an opportunity for all, regardless of gender, age or ethnicity. Equality between men and women represents a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for achieving the objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

In this context, the present paper aims to address a number of theoretical issues in relation to the concept of gender segmentation, to its forms and factors of influence.

**Key words:** labor market, equality of sexes, employment, work

**JEL Classification:** J70, J71

### **1. Introduction**

Equal opportunities exist when a goal or an opportunity is achieved with the same level of effort by individuals or groups of different circumstances and types.

Equal opportunities are based on ensuring the full participation of every person in the economic and social life, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, religion, age, disability or sexual orientation. As regards the labor market, the opportunities are unevenly distributed in all countries, and also at the level of the various subgroups. This situation applies in respect of the types of jobs, types of employment contracts, working hours, remuneration, social security, and other collateral benefits. Equal opportunities on the labor market relate to the choice of a profession, to employment and promotion to any post or job vacancy at all levels of professional hierarchy, to the possibility of professional development, working conditions in accordance with the rules of health and safety at work, to equal payment for equal work, etc.

An essential feature of equal opportunities on the labor market is equal opportunities between men and women.

Discrimination means differentiated treatment applied to a person by virtue of membership, real or alleged, in a particular social group. The groups most often subjected to discrimination and on which most studies have been centered are ethnic minorities, racial, religious, groups of immigrants. There is a special concern for the discrimination against women. In terms of ethics, discrimination of any kind and, in particular, gender discrimination and the consequences of such practices are unacceptable. Constitutions of any state, regulations regarding the European labor market and policies concerning equal opportunity and fighting exclusion forbid and punish such practices, while international standards of ethics and social responsibility in business voluntarily undertaken by numerous companies disapproves them.

### **2. Indicators of segregation**

Gender segregation refers to the tendency of men or women to work in different sectors and jobs. In other words, one of the genders dominates a certain professional category.

Many policies and programs do not take into account these differences; they are "gender-blind". The result is that the services and public and private infrastructures, as well as the areas such as employment, training, business and political environment are not always created according to the specific needs of men and women (or more often males are taken as models).

Specialized literature outlines two distinct concepts, namely the horizontal segregation and the vertical segregation.

Horizontal segregation means under/over representation, without any criterion, of a group in certain fields or sectors. It refers to the concentration of men or women in certain professions or sectors of economic activity. It is considered that there is a constant horizontal segregation on the labor market in almost all OECD countries. It is anticipated a continuation or even an intensification of professional segmentation, the number of women tending to increase in certain sectors in the long run. This trend explains, in part, the difference in remuneration between men and women.

Horizontal segregation of the labor market is quite obvious both nationally and at the European level. The delimitation between male and female jobs is justified primarily by arguments that do not refer to women's ability to exercise a certain profession or to the roles and requirements of the gender within the family and society in general.

Vertical segregation means the over/under representation of a group of workers with various professions or from different sectors that are at the 'top' of the occupational pyramid, depending on income, prestige, job stability, regardless of the field of activity. Under-representation at the top level of the employment pyramid is a phenomenon known as 'vertical segregation' in academic literature, or more commonly known as 'hierarchical segregation'. In academic literature, vertical segregation is referred to as the 'glass ceiling', indicating the existence of obstacles that lead to a certain scarcity of women in leadership positions and in decision making processes within organizations, businesses and also in associations and unions. The existence of barriers that prevent the rise of women is capped with the concept of 'sticky floor'. This concept describes the forces that tend to keep women in the lowest levels of the organizational pyramid.

Unfortunately, vertical segregation persists in many countries, and furthermore the opportunities for professional development and ascension of women are still fewer than those of men. Barriers faced by female representatives in achieving professional success are a less visible hence the name of 'glass ceiling'.

Gender segregation on the labor market can be measured through indicators such as

**The dissimilarity index (ID Index)** is the most frequently used indicator for measuring inequalities, and is defined as: "the sum of the minimum proportion of women and the minimum proportion of men who should change their profession so that the number of women could be identical in any profession". The dissimilarity index (ID) is most often used for international comparisons. This indicator calculates employment or field distribution based on gender in relation to horizontal or vertical segregation.

**The standardized index introduced by Karmel and MacLachlan(1988) (IP Index).** It can be interpreted as the share of the active population who should change their job (sector) in order to achieve an equal distribution of men and women in occupations and sectors.

**Moir and Selby-Smith index (MSS Index)**, also called 'Female employment indicator' is based on the assumption that segregation implies that the rate of women in a professional category is different from the rate of women in employment. This indicator measures the sum of absolute difference between the percentage of women and the rate of employees per occupations.

**The Sex Ratio Index (SRI)** represents the number of women employed in typically female jobs/sectors divided by the expected proportion of women in these occupations if there were no segregation less the equivalent ratios of women in male occupations.

**The Gini coefficient** is generally used to measure inequalities in income, but it can also be applied in measuring segregation. Unlike other indicators this one takes into account the distribution of sectors/occupations corresponding to the degree of concentration of women and men.

**Marginal matching (MM)** consists in the division of males and females by sector and occupations. It is assumed that female sectors/occupations have a number of women workers equal to the number of women in employment and that male sectors/professions have the same number of men equal to the number of men in employment.

### 3. Influence factors of segregation

Gender segregation on the labor market is influenced by a number of factors, such as:

✓ **Comparative advantages** given by different biological characteristics of both sexes probably represent the oldest explanation for the division of labor by gender. For a long time, emphasis has been put on the variety of physical differences between the two sexes, but in the long run, technological progress has reduced the role of physical characteristics, and the attention has shifted to the brain or rather towards the way in which the mind works;

✓ **Fewer investments in education.** It is considered that women themselves choose to invest less in education because they believe that employers will have prejudice against them and they will be offered jobs that do not require high investments in training. In terms of professional training at work, statistics show that on average, women receive fewer hours of training compared to men. This is however due to the decision of employers and collective agreements rather than to women's choice;

✓ **Preferences and prejudice.** Specialists consider that preferences for a particular job and certain features of it are defined even before a person enter an educational system or labor market and that, in theory, people are willing to pay for their preferences if need be;

✓ **Entry barriers and organizational practices.** Examples of potential organizational practices are employment or promoting mechanisms that tend to favor male work force as a result of the fact that women have fewer relational resources. Research has shown that the more formal and more transparent personal practices are, the weaker the pairings between jobs and gender will be. Jobs in the public sector or in large companies tend to be more regulated in terms of bureaucracy. Thus, the different payment structures or the different types of employers (large or small companies, public or private) contribute to the establishment of the model of segregation;

✓ **Roles/responsibilities in ensuring family income.** It is believed that occupational segregation often keeps women captive on jobs with low added value and more poorly paid. On the one hand, the different employments have different value added for employers according to the position in the structure of the production chain and not according to productivity or to the professional training of the employee. The uneven distribution of family tasks offers an alternative explanation for the fact that women accept job offers with short or with flexible schedule although this implies lower wages, but it is the only way that they can combine the role of mother and income provider.

#### 4. Aspects regarding discrimination of women on the labor market

The labor market is where the work offer meets the demand and establishes the terms of employment, negotiation and the wages the workers' will get according to their performance, the mobility of wages and work force based on vacancies, companies, regions, etc. It is here that labor relations unfold and are strengthened, real human networks are formed and interact with each other and make this field exist.

The characteristic of this market leads to a series of features, such as: a derived market, influenced by other markets (the goods market, the production market) and at the same time generating effects which can be found in all sectors of economic and social life; it reflects the mutual ties between demographic realities (which determines the job offer) and economic and social development (which generates the demand); it means constant negotiation between job providers and demanders, in terms of quantity, quality and structure; it is regulated in the highest degree. This trait is derived from the need to protect the employee, to control fair competition through trade unions, to allow grouping of entrepreneurs who employ labor power; it is a market with an imperfect competition, either a monopoly or an oligopoly, depending on how the offer and demand are structured and organized by employers and trade unions; it reflects the way in which labour force is supplied based on branches, sectors, professions and levels of training.

In addition to the above features one should keep in mind that labor market is a heterogeneous market, divided into segments, types of activity, geographical areas, qualification levels, professions, sex, age, etc. From this point of view, followers of the labor market segmentation theory reveal a primary labor-market-characterized by high stability of employment, high and growing wages, the presence of a hierarchical scale, the use of relatively advanced technology, the existence of strong and effective trade unions -and a secondary-market characterized by insecure jobs, high staff fluctuation, the use of rudimentary technology, lack of opportunities for promotion, non-existent or weak unions.

Another feature of the labor market is a certain degree of discrimination against certain persons belonging to vulnerable groups. Persons belonging to vulnerable groups within the society face discrimination both in finding a job and at the workplace. These groups include women, elderly workers, minorities and EU immigrants; mothers looking for a job after they have given birth, but whose duties relating to childcare are unwanted by employers; the very qualified elderly who have been denied promotion in favor of younger candidates; immigrants are discriminated by potential employers, employers or colleagues.

Women's discrimination refers to any differentiation, exclusion or restriction based on gender which has the effect or purpose of precluding or denying recognition, benefit or exercise of women, irrespective of their matrimonial status, based on the equality of men and women, on the human rights and on the fundamental freedoms within political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Equality on the labor market means equal access to:

- choosing a profession;
- getting employment or promotion on any position or vacancy, on any hierarchical level;
- information and job counseling;
- qualification, training, life-long learning; possibility to develop professionally;
- working conditions complying with the health and safety regulations in force;
- equal payment for equal tasks;
- access to extra benefits or social protection.

These principles are often violated and take various forms of classic discrimination (gender, age, geographical area, religion, sexual orientation, chronic or potentially transmittable diseases or varying degrees of handicap).

Gender discrimination or the denial of the fundamental rights of women is a major cause of poverty. Systematic discrimination has reduced the participation of women in the public area, has increased their vulnerability to poverty, violence and HIV and it has led to an increase of the percentage of poor population in the world.

The main reasons for the discrimination of women are:

- preconceived attitudes of employers toward hiring women, whom they consider lower work force;
- the employer's preference, who is usually a man, for male workers for reasons of social life or solidarity, willing to work with a group of men rather than with a group of women or believing that a man is more efficient;
- the employer's predictions regarding the probable efficiency of the female candidate, whereas her work may be suspended by marriage, birth, and childcare. Therefore, the employer shall give priority to a male applicant or, in the case a woman is hired, she is paid less.

In this context it is appropriate to grant importance to the mobbing phenomenon, which often applies to female persons. This is a phenomenon on the border of discrimination and can be only partially considered a type of discrimination. It is linked exclusively to work and relates mainly to actions of psychological pressure carried out on an employee by the employer or a group of colleagues in order to determine the former to leave the job in question, given that his dismissal is not possible since there is no good reason in terms of the professionalism of the person concerned and/or without legislative issues to affect the employer. The employee who 'should be' removed therefore has to endure, for a long period of time, injustice and humiliations which make him unable to full fill the duties and are aimed to bring him to the point where, on the verge of a breakdown, he will decide to quit that job. These humiliations and pressures to which the employee is subjected to causes social and psychological damages that can even affect health. Women can be

more easily a target of a mobbing attack, but European statistics show, however, that both women and men are targets of such actions, in roughly equal percentages.[7]

With regard to gender discrimination on the labor market statistics carried out at national level present the situation of the Romanian women as follows:

- women in Romania are paid less than men for the same work; In terms of the level of salary, differences may arise as a result of their employment on different jobs and it is not neglected that women interrupt their career when they become mothers and due to maternity leave, which reduces the chances of promotion of women and men at the same rate;
- female population constitutes the majority of employees in budgetary sectors with the lowest salaries: social assistance, education, the medical sector; they hold positions which are more poorly paid, and they are take leadership positions with a decision-making role in a much smaller proportion than men, while men are urged to avoid accepting jobs in areas traditionally considered to belong to women: teaching, babysitting, nursing, housekeeping, secretary, etc.;
- women represent a category of the population more vulnerable to economic and social effects, characterized by a high rate of long-term unemployment, as well as by limited access to well-paid jobs;
- women from Romania show a risk of poverty which is more increased than in the case of men and they are more exposed to domestic violence;
- they carry out most of the chores in a household – ironing, washing, brushing, cooking and caring for: children, the elderly, the sick –without being paid or acknowledged –(showing them “in the lead” in terms of hours of housework).

Women’s vulnerability to discrimination is amplified by the membership of categories with high risk of discrimination, such as the disabled, the pregnant, Romas, the elderly, etc. In 2012, for example, statistics of the National Authority for People with Disabilities showed that in Romania, out of the 636,310 adults with disabilities 54% were women.

Belonging to an ethnic minority, specifically Roma women, entails multiple effects in terms of discrimination. The Roma represent, according to the census of 2011, 3.2% of the country's population. [8] Ethnic discrimination is caused, mainly by:

- deficiency in applying the legislation in force
- poor representation of women belonging to ethnic minorities in the public life
- persistence of negative stereotypes referring to ethnic minorities
- insufficient promotion of ethno-cultural diversity as the basis of social cohesion

According to the Gender Equality Index developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality in 2013, Romania holds the last place in terms of gender equality in all areas, including employment, money and knowledge. At the same time, Romania has the lowest standard of living in the EU (Eurostat, 2012), and women show a low degree of employment on the labor market and they are faced with situations of job discrimination (the Strategic national implementation report of the ESF, 2013).[9]

Reconciliation of the professional life with the family life has a direct impact on women's employment and the jobs available for them on the labor market, on their income and economic freedom throughout life. From the analysis of statistical data one can gather that the reconciliation of family life with professional aspect is of great interest for identifying specific problems which can help us explain the phenomenon of gender discrimination in Romania.

In Europe, according to the report on gender equality published by EU (2013), although differences in terms of gender equality are dropping progress is slow. The report notes the persistence of inequalities between women and men in terms of employment rate, wage levels and representation in public life. On average, women earn less by 16.4% than men. Across Europe, only 27% of parliament members are women. The report estimates that it may take more than 70 years to reach gender equality in terms of wages and 20 years for women to have a representativeness of 40% in the national parliaments.

In order to reduce discrimination on the labor market there have been developed a number of strategies at European level in order to ensure equal chances for people belonging to groups traditionally subject to discrimination. These strategies aim to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of the group they belong to. These strategies involve on the one hand acknowledging the disadvantages accumulated by such groups as well as the development of policies and practices which help to overcome the difficulties.

There are two reasons for fighting against discrimination in order to access labor market and maintain employment. The first reason is of social nature: discrimination based on such grounds is against European values and against Community law. The second reason is the economic one: the EU, confronted with an aging population, needs to have many active people on the labor market in order to ensure economic growth and future prosperity.

## 5. Conclusions

In general, research suggests that men and women are making different choices in terms of their professions or their jobs, according to the tasks which they need to undertake, on the one hand, and on the other hand, men consider financial gains and responsibilities more important, while women consider relations between employees and the significance of the tasks they have to carry out to be important. In other words, the satisfaction of women at the jobs

predominantly addressed to them derives from those features they consider valuable. This shows that in groups where members are mostly of the same sex, satisfaction at work and communication are clearly superior, and also labor productivity is higher.

Jobs for men and women differ according to economic development. All over the world, it is noted that women can be found in greater proportion in areas with low productivity and lower wages. Typically, they work in small companies, they run small businesses or can be found mainly in the informal sector; this happens due to disproportions between the requirements on the labor market and those relating to family care and household. Social regulations emphasize the role of women in the household, so that women would seek rather to work a flexible schedule, which means under paid job areas.

Labor market discrimination occurs as a result of a combination of individual risk and social factors. There is a combination of causes, including individual behavior but also the conditions and environment of work (including management practices), which facilitates the occurrence of discrimination cases. It takes a good management of anti-discrimination policies and the promotion of equal opportunities.

Equality between women and men not only constitutes an end in itself: it is a precondition for the fulfillment of the overall objectives of EU in terms of development, employment and social cohesion. Increased participation of women on the labor market offers a guarantee of their economic independence and a substantial contribution to the economic development and sustainability of social protection systems.

Fighting discrimination of women on the labor market and supporting gender equality have as main objective the creation of a society in which both women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. One can ascertain there is equality between men and women when both sexes are able to equally divide power and influence; to have equal opportunities in terms of financial independence through work and by setting up their own business; to benefit by equal access to education and the opportunity to develop their skills and talents; to share responsibility for home and children and be free from any constraints, intimidation and acts of violence relating to gender both at home and at work.

In order to achieve the objectives concerning the participation of women in the economic life it is necessary to promote a non-discriminatory basis of the roles of women in all areas of life such as education, career and employment. Economic competitiveness must be achieved so that it could be socially sustainable. Women's participation in the economic activities is essential, not only for reasons of fairness but also as a strategic element because countries that fail to use the talents of half of their population make an inefficient allocation of resources, have lower economic growth and threaten their competitiveness.

Thus, we should keep in mind that equal opportunities in education, employment and property has a strong impact on economic development.

Moreover, gender equality and combating discrimination in the workplace constitute the priorities of the legislative framework in all countries within the European Union, reconciling national legislation with the recommendations, declarations and the instruments in force established by the European Union.

In the future, the following directions must be in the center of concerns:

- ✓ Identify regional specificity of discrimination at work;
- ✓ An investigation to reveal the mentality and behavior of managers in relation to discrimination;
- ✓ Increasing transparency in how to develop and apply labor market policies at national or company level;
- ✓ Support and encourage women to carry their own businesses;
- ✓ Including the prevention of mobbing in the package of performance indicators of managers;
- ✓ Improving the regulatory and institutional framework to ensure gender equality principles;
- ✓ Raising awareness on the benefits of gender equality through various outreach activities.

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