

ROMANIAN ASPECTS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

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ABSTRACT

Imposed by gender concerns at a global level, the analysis of professions feminization phenomenon is a very topical concern. Starting with Human Rights and ending with aspects such as stereotypes, professional segregation and gender bias, equality of chances, including gender equality, is the answer to multiple social and economic issues. Following an overview of several studies from this area of interest, the authors made an analysis of women representation degree among external prevention and protection services managers from Romania. The investigation area reflects not only the measure of professions feminisation in occupational health and safety, but a series of stereotypes and obstacles which rise ahead of women engineers, as well. The results of the study enhance identification of improvement areas for the situation of women operating in this domain and comparison with the nowadays global situation (highlighted in studies of gender equality-related institutions).

KEYWORDS: external services for prevention and protection, gender equality, occupational health and safety, professional feminisation.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: J1, J7, J70, J16, I24

1. INTRODUCTION

There are two main aspects which need to be taken into account by any society which aims at wealth and progress: gender equality becomes an imperative of any human activity and occupational health and safety (OHS) ensures organizational economic efficiency and work productivity.

Women or men? Irrespective of the activity field, gender concerns appear as a determinant of a certain social and moral status quo. The concept of gender equality is apparently outdated because it is mostly mistaken by the feminist movement which took place a century ago. Unfortunately, gender inequality and professional segregation are phenomena that persist despite an obvious evolution at a social level (gender equality is regulated, but factual reality indicates numerous cases of law breaking).

Moreover, professional feminisation, as a relatively new phenomenon, acts as a form in which women fight against inequities they face in their professional activity. Among highly feminised professions are teacher, social assistant, nurse and army-related professions.

But in engineering women are underrepresented. Thus, an analysis of the level of professional feminisation in occupational health and safety is of high interest, especially the situation of external services for prevention and protection (ESPP) in Romania. Such an analysis is meant to reveal the weaknesses of this issue and to indicate the areas of improvement in order to remediate gender inequality.

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2. CONCEPT DELIMITATIONS IMPORTANT

2.1. Sex vs. Gender

We live in a changing world where major transformations yield in the workplace „including the emergence of new organizational designs, new technologies, new markets, new workers, and the globalization of production” (Sweet & Meiksins, 2008). Therefore, understanding gender aspects in the workplace becomes a priority based on demographic explosion and changes (Reskin & Padavic, 2002), (United Nations, 2010).

As a consequence of a general tendency of using the terms „sex” and „gender” without knowing their deep meaning, these two terms need to be properly defined. „Sex” refers to binary categories of women and men that are determined by individual biological characteristics, such as physiological and reproductive traits. „Gender” refers to psycho-social implications of women and men, such as beliefs and expectations about what attitudes, behaviours, aptitudes, values and interests are more appropriate or typical for each of the two sexes (Irimie et al., 2013c; Powell, 2011). Thus, gender is a term used in social contexts referring to roles associated with being a man or a woman.

Gender differences appear as stereotypes, bias and discrimination. A stereotype is a set of beliefs about personal attributes of a group. Inclusion of individuals in certain stereotypes is a cognitive activity related to thinking, learning and remembering specific differences between groups (Powell & Parent, 2002). In contrast, people who have biases, meaning a negative attitude towards members of other groups, get involved in an emotional activity.

Finally, discrimination (a behavioural activity) is highlighted in the manner in which people treat the members of other groups and in the decisions they make with regards to people around them. Discrimination means any differentiation, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social category, conviction, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, non-contagious chronic disease, HIV infection, belonging to a disadvantaged category as well as any other criterion that has as main purpose or effect restriction, removal of recognition, use or exercise, in equality conditions, of human rights and fundamental liberties or rights awarded by law in politic, economic, social and cultural domains or in any other domain of public life. (Law no. 202/2002 republished in 2013 regarding equality of chances between women and men, Government Emergency Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding prevention and punishment of all forms of discrimination and Labour Code).

FEMINISM, according to Romanian Explicative Dictionary (DEX), is a social movement that militates for equal rights for men and women in all activity fields. Another definition of feminism is that feminism is a theoretical and action doctrine that claims fight against gender inequality, promoting women recognition in society through improvement and extension of her role and rights. According to DEX, feminisation means “to give or to gain attributes specific to women, to accentuate one’s femininity, to make feminine”. Thus, increasingly more professions became feminised. PROFESSIONAL FEMINISATION must be defined as the process through which women entered in a growing number in occupations considered by that moment as specific masculine, or the apparition of characteristics specifically feminine in various activity fields and jobs.

According to Law 319/2006, OHS represents “the aggregate of institutionalised activities with the main purpose of ensuring the best conditions in the work process, protecting life, physical and psychical integrity and health of employees and other participants to the work process”. The definition itself describes OHS as a main element in ensuring life and well-being in the workplace, without leaving space for interpretations and second opinions. Beginning with this definition, the importance of professional feminisation analysis in OHS becomes a fundamental analysis of the

extent to which women have equal chances with men to manage and ensure compliance of regulations regarding employees' safety and health.

At the same time, Law 319 defines ESPP as "legal or physical persons outside the organisation/unit authorised to provide prevention and protection services in OHS domain". Decision 1425/2006, in Article 14 mentions that organisation of prevention and protection services must be made by the company, in several manners (mainly, internally and externally, in several variants), among which is appealing to ESPPs.

Authorisation for ESPPs operations is conditioned by the existence of a manager who, among others, must have a superior professional training level (university studies in technical domains or agriculture and at least one 180 hours-course in OHS or a Master's Degree in this domain) and a minimum five years' experience as a professional in OHS.

2.2. Professional feminisation and labour market concerns

The general opinion regarding gender equality in the workforce is that women have equal rights with men, so favoured mainly by national and international legislation.

The US is regarded as „the country of all possibilities". Despite this, the American state still affirms that there are difficulties in women integration in research and development of science and engineering. It is necessary to pay more attention to women's potential that, because of their discrimination, is wasted, considering that society needs to use all the existent resources for a faster development in order to keep the pace with global changes.

US Committee on Maximizing the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine ("Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering", 2007) elaborated a study on the level of using women's potential in science and engineering universities. It is important to mention that science comprises all categories of exact sciences, as well as life sciences and the social and behavioural ones.

According to this study, women have the ability and capacity to succeed in science and engineering. Research on functions and structure of the brain, influence of hormonal changes on performance, human cognitive development and human evolution did not reveal significant biological differences between men and women regarding sciences and mathematics, which could explain the weak women representativeness in these research domains.

Unfortunately, women who have the desire to develop a career in academia are lost at each transitional educational level. Since high school graduation, girls tend to give up the intention of continuing studies in science and engineering. As they evolve in the professional hierarchy, the number of women who can participate in the academia professional selection process diminishes significantly. Authors bring into notice the fact that ideas of professional orientation depending on certain sexist stereotypes negatively influences girls and women interested in scientific research and teaching in the domains this study focuses on. Most of the times, they are discouraged when they express their intention of following such a career, which determines difficulties in professional integration of women and, implicitly, in using their valuable potential for national development.

In the last three decades, women graduated 30% of PhDs in social and behavioural sciences and 20% of the ones in life sciences in the US. Still, in top research institutions only 15.4% of the teachers in social and behavioural sciences and 14.8% of the teachers in life sciences are women. And these are the only domains where the situation is reflected by two-digit numbers. Women belonging to racial or ethnical minorities are literally absent from science and engineering departments of top research institutions.

Women still face diverse forms of discrimination in all areas of science and engineering. Research has shown that women face barriers in professional selection, entrance and promotion and women who belong to minority groups face double discrimination. They have to work in environments that

favour men, because they traditionally dominate these fields. Women's remarkable aptitudes in these domains and their desire to professionally evolve in academia have been questioned many times. The consequence is that women do not have the same opportunities as men and they are not encouraged enough to develop their interests and aptitudes to their maximum, a fact that becomes increasingly obvious as they tend to get advanced in higher positions.

Psychologists highlighted that human has the tendency of making decisions depending on a series of unconscious principles with significant consequences. Thus, they reached the conclusion that the members of the commissions that elect the academic personnel, despite their desire of being objective, are inclined towards choosing a man rather than a woman and, moreover, they would rather doubt the merits of a woman than those of a man.

Higher education teachers are paid worse, promoted with more difficulty, receive fewer honours and hold less management positions as compared to men. The evaluation process is made by high degree scientists and is considered impartial. But the evaluation criteria of the meritocratic system are not impartial enough (although, most of the times, without intention). For example, determination and the ability to innovate independently are considered more valuable than other characteristics such as flexibility, diplomacy, curiosity, motivation and dedication, which could be more important for development of sciences and engineering. Also, determination and capacity to innovate independently are considered to be typically specific to men.

It is signalled that women represent a more important part of the labour market and of the higher education graduates. To use this valuable potential a review of the professional integration and work performance evaluation criteria is necessary, as well as a reorganization of organizational structures. An efficient program involves taking correctional measures, analysing and using data on organizational changes and an efficient framework for progress monitoring.

Committee on Gender Differences in the Careers of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics Faculty; Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine; Committee on National Statistics and National Research Council made another study on gender bias in science and engineering ("Gender Differences at Critical Transitions in the Careers of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics Faculty", 2010).

This study revealed that productivity of higher degree teachers is similar for both sexes, but post PhD graduates differ depending on sex with regards to: number of papers published, participation to conferences, scientific meetings, bonuses and awards received.

Possibility of promotion or professional re-orientation is characterised by a specific mobility. 15.3% men and 8.5% women gave up teaching for another profession and in academia women are 40% more likely than men to be promoted in a deputy position ("Gender Differences at Critical Transitions in the Careers of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics Faculty", 2010).

Analysis and evaluation of success in science and engineering revealed very interesting aspects. Criteria for appreciating effort and performance are dated, specific to a period when number of women teaching in universities was extremely low. Therefore, today's possibilities of women to promote are reduced. Gender biases also affect women capacity to evolve similarly to men in this profession due to persons who experience discrimination without being aware of this fact (they do not consider themselves as discriminated despite reality, which is contrary to their opinion).

Despite all these, in the last 30 years women managed to equal men's academic performances. Barriers met by women in their career consist in reduced access to institutional resources; marriage and children and elder care have a minimum influence.

On the one hand, evaluation of institutional constraints proved that although in certain universities there are programs that encourage women to advance in their career and to offer the safety that involvement in family life will not endanger their career, most times women feel constraints of choosing between family and career. This leads to diminishing the number of women in science and engineering academia as well as decreasing the pace in the promotion process. On the other hand, single persons have a more reduced performance in their professional activity as compared to those

who have a family. In order to implement family-friendly policies a previous precise estimation of the real situation of women teaching in universities is necessary, along with supporting these policies by top management in higher education institutions.

The authors signal that all these require a correct estimation of available resources and the interest and efficiency in the work done by those involved in these projects.

Payment differentiation between men and women causes dissatisfaction and reduction of the payment gap would reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth (Gault, 2014). While 59.3% women would earn more if they were paid equally with men, the poverty rate for women would halve (would be 3.9%, decreasing from the actual 8.1%). According to Pew Research Center, a subsidiary of Pew Charitable Trust, Millennials see an improvement regarding salary equality by gender, though there still are significant differences. Young women think that the changes made by now are insufficient and that inequities in the labour market continue to affect them considerably (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Neither Europe does the situation look better: a study made in the UK and published in November 2012 (Warwick Institute for Employment Research, 2012) shows that for people with the same educational level, salary differences appear from the moment they are hired. The study, made through the 'Futuretrack' project developed by the Workforce Research Institute from Warwick University, analysed the evolution of salary during 2006–2012 for UK universities graduates who obtained their diploma in 2006. The conclusions of the study are not surprising: 70% women earn under £24,000, while only 55.6% British young men earn this salary. Irrespective of the activity domain, the gap is not in the favour of women. Even in domains such as justice, where women are more numerous, men earn higher salaries. The only activity area where women are paid equally with men is that of the not-for-profit organizations. After the age of 30, payment gaps become more obvious. A chance to overpass such issues is women establishing their own business, our paper presenting the situation in OHS.

Another concern is increasing professional segregation (EU OSHA, 2014) and women concentration in several sectors: health, social, retail, education and public administration. The financial crisis affected the manufacturing sector and the proportion of feminine workers is increasing in agriculture.

Vertical segregation, namely the situation of women managers is iconic for the whole labour market. From this perspective, the situation of women managers is iconic for the entire labour market. According to "Women in business: from classroom to boardroom", a report published by Grant Thornton in March 2014, only 24% of senior management positions are held by women globally. The study aims at an incisive analysis of women's situation in the labour market worldwide. Thus, the global leader from this point of view is Russia, where 43% of the women holding positions in senior management are located. The study shows that the main reason of this high representativeness is the ex-soviet policy of equal chances for everyone. Also, the urbanization process brought new career opportunities for Russian women. Among the economically developed countries, the highest representativeness is in New Zealand, where 31% of senior managers are women.

Depending on the industry, the number of women senior managers differs. While in education and social services 51% of the managers are women, there is a low representativeness in domains such as mining (12%), agriculture (16%), energy (16%) and transport (17%). Also, it is important to mention that businesses in domains linked to public administration have more women leaders than other industries.

From 2003, European Commission has developed an online database to study the representativeness of women in the following activity domains: political, public administration, justice, business and finance, as well as social partners and not-for-profit organizations (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elder Persons, 2013). At the European level, Romania is among top five

countries with regards to a high representativeness of women in management positions (Irimie et al., 2014).

Regarding the New Economy, according to the EU study regarding ICT sector, nowadays, from 1000 women graduates of a Bachelor's degree or equivalent studies, only 29 have a diploma in ICT and only four in 1000 will actually work in this field. Regarding management positions, only 19.2% are held by women, as compared to the average of other industries: 45.2%. Also, the ICT sector is characterized by a low representativeness of women entrepreneurs: 31.3% of Europeans that have independent activities and just 19.2% of the ICT entrepreneurs.

Chartered Management Institute, through its pole indicates that society needs young women models. The study proves that the number of women aiming at a top manager position is half of the number of men with the same objective (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/03/06/female-role-models_n_4912332.html?utm_hp_ref=uk%20-%20msn.com). A Yale University study (<http://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2013/aug/15/guilty-of-unconscious-bias-job-roles>), published in "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences" magazine in September 2012, shows that the majority of people have the tendency to fit men and women in stereotype categories to easily generalize concepts. Thus, each of us carries a part of the guilt for the difficulties women face in their career.

The analysed studies highlight several issues in gender approaches in the labour market, which refer to the impact of different types of societies and cultures. Further, the authors briefly highlight gender concerns in OHS.

2.3. Gender issues in safety and health at work

In 2003, Diana Diamantopoulou, the European Commissioner responsible for employment and social affairs, showed in a report dedicated to gender issues that "Achieving gender equality in all aspects of employment is now a key European priority". The report highlights the dual importance of considering gender in risk prevention and including occupational safety and health in gender equality employment activities." (EU-OSHA, 2003a, p.3)

Based on data from European institutions, national authorities, social partners and experts can formulate real measures for integration of the gender dimension in OHS policies. Why are these measures necessary? Since 2000, in the EU women represented 42% of employees (EU-OSHA, 2003a, p.9) and the trend was towards increasing number of women employees. In 2012, women were 47% of the labour force in the US (Pew Research Center, 2013). Women's labour presents several features in favour of horizontal and vertical segregation. The model where gender differences may appear, affecting health and safety in the workplace is shown in figure 1.

The gender issue in the workplace can be approached at a social, sectorial, organisational and individual level (mentalities, stereotypes, perceptions, behaviour, values etc.). A few examples of risks differentiated by gender are shown in table 1.

Risk factors that generate health concerns depending on the activity domain are: biological, physical, chemical and psychosocial. Also, combined exposure needs to be highlighted as a special problem for research, especially for workers in the services sector (Table 2). Recent papers regarding combined exposures in female-specific jobs bring to light the necessity for further research to improve prevention activities (EU OSHA, 2013; EU OSHA, 2014).

After more than ten years, it has been revealed that inequality inside and outside the workplace may have effects on women's health and safety. Thus, European Strategy regarding gender equality between women and men (EU, 2010), as well as policies regarding health and safety in the workplace aim at examining the specific challenges in health and safety generated by the extended integration of women in the labour market. Analysing statistical data regarding employment, work

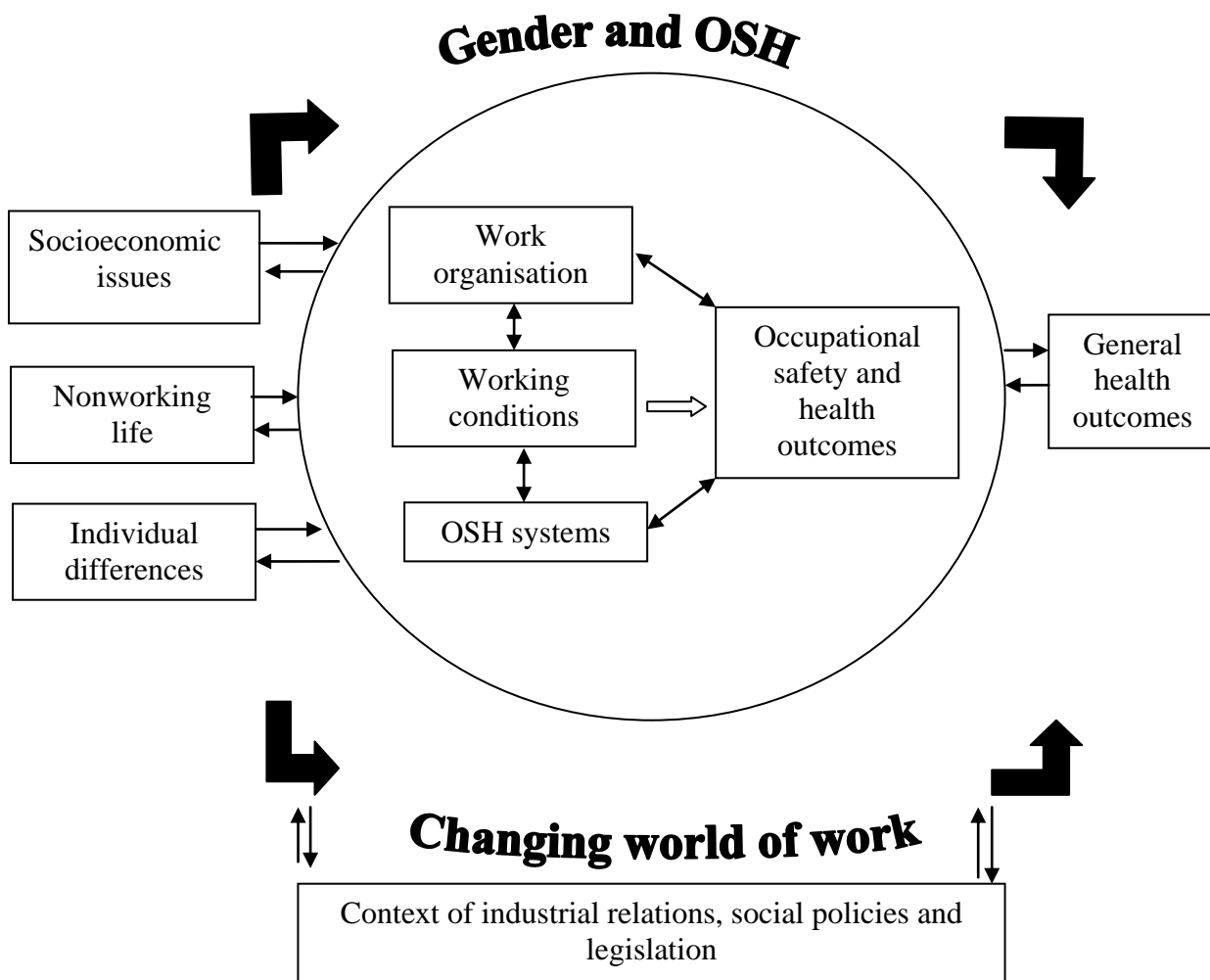


Figure 1. Model for occurrence of gender differences affecting occupational health and safety
 Source: EU OSHA, 2003a, p.11/EU OSHA, 2003b, p.2

Table 1. Examples of gender differences in risks and health outcomes

Hazard/health outcome	More exposed/ 'greater incidence'	Comments
Accidents	Men	Men have a higher rate, even after adjustments are made for fewer hours worked by women
Upper limb disorders	Women	High incidences are found in some highly repetitive work carried out by women such as 'light' assembly-line work and data-entry work, where they have little control over the way they work
Heavy lifting	Men	But, for example, women in cleaning and catering and care work suffer injuries from heavy lifting and carrying
Stress	Women	Both report high rates, but stressors particular to 'women's' work include sexual harassment, discrimination, low status jobs with little control, emotionally demanding work and double burden of paid work and unpaid work in the home
Violence from the public	Women	Women workers have more contact with members of the public

Hazard/health outcome	More exposed/ 'greater incidence'	Comments
Noise/hearing loss	Men	Women in textile and food production can be highly exposed, for example
Occupational cancer	Men	Women have higher rates in certain manufacturing industries, for example
Asthma and allergies	Women	For example, from cleaning agents, sterilising agents and dust in protective latex gloves used in healthcare and dusts in textile and clothing manufacture
Skin diseases	Women	For example, due to working with wet hands in jobs such as catering, or from skin contact with cleaning agents or hairdressing chemicals
Infectious diseases	Women	For example, in healthcare or work with children
Inappropriate work and protective equipment	Women	Many work clothes and equipment have been designed for the 'average man', causing problems for many women and 'non-average' men
Reproductive health	Both	Neglected areas include fertility, menstrual disorders, menopause and male reproductive health
Inappropriate work hours	Both	Men are more likely to work very long paid hours; women do more unpaid work in the home. Both want a better work-life balance.

Source: EU OSHA, 2003b, p.2

Table 2: Combined risks — a major issue for women at work

Risk factors and conditions	Outcomes
<i>Working in service sectors</i>	
Jobs not covered by OSH legislation	
Prolonged standing and sitting	
Static postures	
Monotonous and repetitive work	Stress and mental health problems
Moving loads repetitively and moving people	Different accidents: slips, trips and falls, violence related, needlestick injuries, cuts and sprains
Exposure to biological and chemical agents	Fatigue and cognitive disorders
Client and patient contact	Musculoskeletal disorders
Working at clients' premises	Infectious diseases
Multiple roles	Skin disorders, asthma
Lack of information and training	
Low control, autonomy and support	

Source: EU OSHA, 2014, p.32

conditions, exposure to risk, accidents in the workplace and health issues for women in the workplace, a new series of problems and generating causes/factors emerge: combined exposures, cancer in the workplace, problems faced by young and old women, growth of the services sector, violence and harassment, working hours, access to rehabilitation, women and illegal work, women and migration, feminine sex-related new and old professions (home care and family work)), (EU OSHA, 2014). Emerging risks need to be known and prevented. For all these we need OHS management systems and, especially, OHS specialists.

3. STRUCTURAL GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION OF EXTERNAL SERVICES FOR PREVENTION AND PROTECTION IN ROMANIA

3.1. General considerations

Theoretical comprehension of gender equality and professional segregation imposes a detailed analysis of the level of practical application of these concepts. Thus, the level of women representation in a certain activity domain (OHS, in this case) reflects, at least as a quantitative indicator, the extent to which these concepts are truly applied.

At the same time, OHS represents one of the most important activity areas approached when it comes to labour efficiency. Definitely, people who feel safe and who benefit from an adequate work environment from both physical and psychical perspective are able to perform their tasks at the quantitative and qualitative level estimated by managers, to be performant.

Regarding concerns on professional segregation (Irimie et al., 2013b; Jacobs, 1999), it is interesting to track the level to which women entered this domain, for several reasons:

- Establishment of an ESPP involves (along with a sum of other conditions) graduation of studies in a technical domain, where it was proved that women are significantly less than men;
- Entrepreneurial spirit of women professionally trained in OHS may be observed;
- A profound analysis of the point to which gender equality is closer to reality rather than to a simple desiderate can be made.

Considering the above, this paper aims to analyse professional integration of women in the ESPP segment in Romania, according to the consolidated situation as of 2013. The consolidated list of ESPPs authorised in Romania is available on the website of Labour Inspection (www.inspectmun.ro). Labour Inspection is the state institution that exerts control on unitary application of legal requirements in its competency domains over organisations operating in the public, mixt and private sectors as well as over other categories of employers. Its main purpose is to track fulfilment of legal obligations of employers in work relations as well as those referring to labour conditions, protection of life, physical integrity and health of employees and of other participants in the work process, during working hours.

The methodology of the paper consists in statistical quantitative and qualitative analysis of ESPPs in Romania from a gender structure perspective, subject to several criteria: development regions, legal form of organisation, localisation (urban/rural), professional training level and major professional training services providers.

The study aims to offer a synthetic image of the level to which gender equality represents a reality in OHS, as a professional activity domain. The importance of this analysis consists in the possibility to observe the 2013 twill, with the purpose of identifying directions for improvement, where applicable.

As women's capabilities in working with other people are largely known, without doubt they are very efficient in situations such as successfully performing trainings. Of course, their capacity and studies in OHS are likely to completely allow them authorisation and successful management of an ESPP.

Figure 2 presents the method of grouping counties by development regions: North-East, South-East, South, Bucureşti-Ilfov, South-West, West, North-West and Centre, grouping used to analyse the results further presented in this paper.

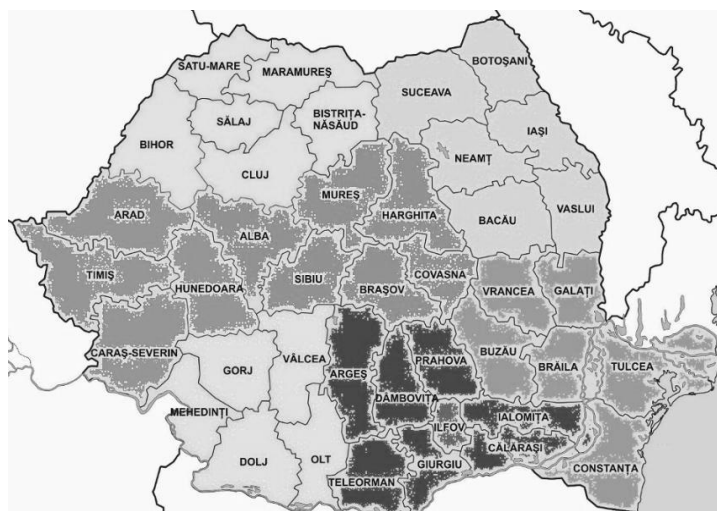


Fig.2. Development Regions in Romania

Source: adapted from Development regions in Romania

3.2. Implications of professions feminisation in OHS: aggregated analysis of ESPPs situation in Romania

At a national level there are 3061 ESPPs, women representativeness rate among ESPPs managers being of just 23.3%, which indicates that professional segregation remains an actual concern in OHS. Distribution by development regions and gender is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. ESPP distribution by development region and gender in Romania (2013)

S. No.	Region	County	Total	Women	Men
1	București-Ilfov	București	544	160	384
2		Ilfov	42	8	34
3	Centre	Alba	107	22	85
4		Brașov	72	18	55
5		Covasna	14	2	12
6		Harghita	34	3	31
7		Mureș	87	19	68
8		Sibiu	117	25	92
9	North-East	Bacău	84	20	64
10		Botoșani	22	3	19
11		Iași	64	10	54
12		Neamț	64	12	52
13		Suceava	46	6	40
14		Vaslui	16	6	10
15	North-West	Bihor	83	17	66
16		Bistrița-Năsăud	13	0	13
17		Cluj	117	25	92
18		Maramureș	82	15	67
19		Satu mare	36	2	34
20		Sălaj	24	2	22

S. No.	Region	County	Total	Women	Men
21	South	Argeş	109	23	86
22		Călăraşi	28	3	25
23		Dâmboviţa	43	7	36
24		Giurgiu	14	4	10
25		Ialomiţa	37	10	27
26		Prahova	147	54	93
27		Teleorman	30	10	20
28	South-East	Brăila	46	12	34
29		Buzău	40	10	30
30		Constanţa	180	55	125
31		Galaţi	82	30	52
32		Tulcea	19	8	11
33		Vrancea	25	6	19
34	South-West	Dolj	55	12	43
35		Gorj	59	10	49
36		Mehedinţi	27	4	23
37		Olt	32	3	29
38		Vâlcea	47	6	41
39	West	Arad	55	12	43
40		Caraş-Severin	48	3	45
41		Hunedoara	134	27	107
42		Timiş	136	28	108
TOTAL			3061	712	2350

Source: based on author findings

Considering that one of the conditions for service authorisations is to be managed by a person with superior professional training level (who, among others, must graduate in a technical domain), the reduced number of ESPPs women managers can be explained by the influence of gender stereotypes that interfere in professional orientation. Also, OHS feminisation is a relatively new phenomenon, gender equality remaining a simple ideal. Another explanation is the lack of the minimum five-year experience required in this domain, a period hardly achieved by women who decide to interrupt their professional activity to start a family and bring up children. In fact, the national regulations do not encourage women integration in this field. It is true that chance equality between men and women is stipulated by law, but there is no regulation that motivates the increase on women representativeness in OHS. From the location perspective, 92.4% of the ESPPs are headquartered in urban areas, while 7.6% are headquartered in rural areas.

According to Figure 3, 88.6% of ESPPs are limited liability companies (SRL) and authorised legal entities (PFA). Also, among these services are individual enterprises (II), joint-stock corporations (SA), general partnership companies (SNC), family enterprises (IF) and non-governmental organisations (ONG). Except from the general partnership companies (it is a single one and is managed by a man), all the ESPPs have both women and men managers. Also, it is notable that there is a single non-governmental organisation and it is managed by a woman.

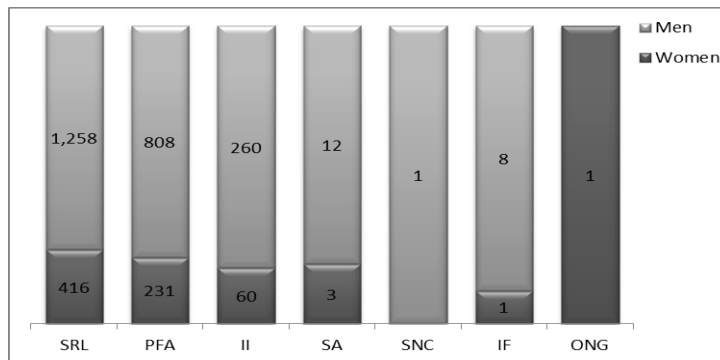


Fig. 3. Structure of ESPPs in Romania – by gender and legal form of organisation
 Source: based on author findings

Similar to men who are ESPP managers, most women own limited liability companies (58.4%), authorised legal entities (32.4%) and individual enterprises (8.4%), totalising 99.2% of women.

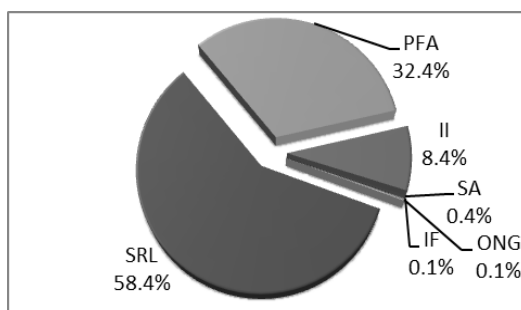


Fig.4.. Structure of ESPPs owned by women in Romania – by legal form of organisation
 Source: based on author findings

Regarding the professional training level, ESPPs managers graduated between one and five courses in OHS. Most of the managers (99.3%) graduated between one and three professional training courses in OHS. While from the 17 managers who graduated four courses only three are women, among those who graduated five courses there is no woman. Thus, it is obvious that women’s professional training level is more reduced as compared to men’s level.

From the 712 women managers, 59% graduated two courses and 37.2% graduated a single course in OHS. Only 3.8% of them graduated three or four professional training courses.

This relatively low level of professional training in OHS domain in the case of women managers can be explained, similar to all other activity domain, by gender discrimination, stereotypes interfering in the professional orientation process as well as family-career conflict.

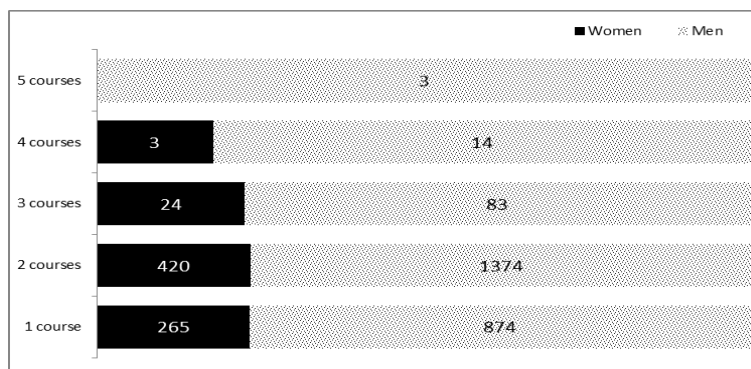


Fig. 5. Structure of ESPPs in Romania – by gender and professional training level
 Source: based on author findings

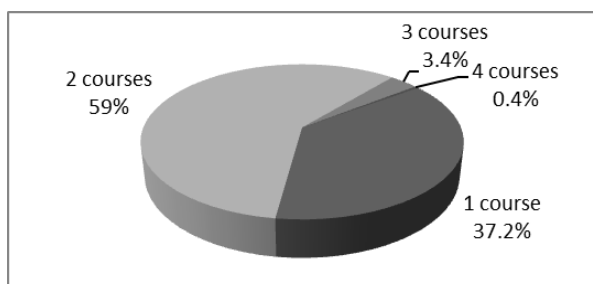


Fig.6. Structure of ESPPs owned by women in Romania – by professional training level
Source: based on author findings

The largest professional training providers in OHS are University of Petroșani, "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University Iași, Polytechnic University of Timișoara and Polytechnic University of București (Irimie et al., 2013a). Along with these universities, there are institutions such as Labour Inspection Centre for Training and Professional Perfecting (CPPPIM) Botoșani, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as other universities, totalising 500 professional training providers.

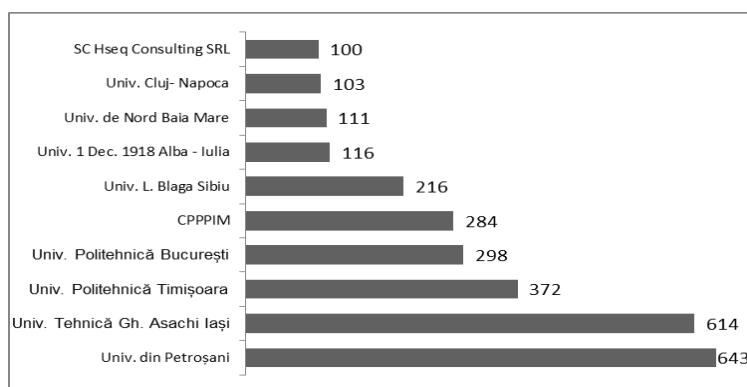


Fig. 7. Romania's main professional training providers in OHS
Source: based on author findings

4. CONCLUSIONS

Statistics in this domain and particularly for the purpose of this paper are extremely important for the development and implementation of a policy based on evidence. Thus, the results and feedback are tracked and adequate decisions are made beginning with 1957, when European Communities Treaty offered a legal basis for gender equality policies and actions, continued with adopted strategies (Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, 2010).

Without doubt, professions feminisation process did not leave OHS untouched. Despite this, women are present in a relatively low proportion among the ESPP managers, as they represent less than a quarter of the total. The professional training level of ESPP women managers is not as high as that of men. These are clues that lead to a simple conclusion: gender equality, as a functioning principle and as a best practice, is a desiderate that seems difficult to meet.

Obviously, women face difficulties in entering this domain. Either it is about explicit or implicit discrimination, the family-career conflict and double work made by women (the one in the workplace, supplemented by doing household chores and taking care of children) or about not

meeting conditions required for the authorisation of the ESPP, women face multiple difficulties in establishing such a company.

It is remarkable that women representativeness level differs depending on the region. The influence factors are geographic vicinity to OHS professional training providers, competition (the total number of ESPPs existent in the region), and the level of economic development in the region, as well as stereotypes and biases. The large number of professional training providers and regulations seem to contradict the fact that women have lower training level compared to men who are ESP managers. Still, no woman graduated five courses in OHS and a reduced number (3.8%) graduated three and four courses. So, this fact can only blame all the other obstacles raised in the path of women professional evolution.

There is one thing for sure: the importance and the increased attention paid to OHS generated opportunities for ESPPs development. Definitely, professions feminisation changed the face of this activity domain, permanently modifying the gender structure and, eventually, competition among external services managers.

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