IDENTITY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN ROMANIA. A QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the paradigm in which international organizations, UN member states, national, regional and local authorities act together to solve the concrete problems facing the world today. Although women and girls represent more than half of the world's population, they do not enjoy the same rights and freedom everywhere. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Agenda proposes to empower women by promoting equal opportunities for women and men around the world, facilitating women's access to education, training and careers, ensuring participation in political decision-making and in the management positions of companies, providing solutions to accommodate the time spent for childcare and family with the work schedule, preventing and combating all forms of violence against girls and women, improving their access to health and reproductive services. Starting from the targets and indicators associated with SDG 5, this study proposes a quantitative assessment of the quality of life of women in Romania. In this regard, we used data provided by Eurostat, the National Institute of Statistics, the National Commission for Strategy and Forecasting, as well as data from the reports of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and the European Institute for Gender Equality. To verify the working hypotheses (research questions) we used descriptive statistical analysis with SPSS, Pearson correlation and linear regression processed with the XLSTAT program, graphical representation techniques with PHILCARTO software.

Keywords: quality of life, women, gender equality, sustainable development, 2030 Agenda

Résumé

L'Agenda 2030 pour le développement durable est le paradigme dans lequel les organisations internationales, les États membres des Nations Unies, les autorités nationales, régionales et locales agissent pour résoudre les problèmes concrets auxquels le monde est confronté aujourd'hui. Bien que les femmes et les filles représentent plus de la moitié de la population mondiale, elles ne jouissent pas des mêmes droits et liberté partout. L'Objectif de développement durable (ODD) 5 de l'Agenda 2030 propose de capitaliser le potentiel des ressources humaines des femmes en promouvant l'égalité des

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chances pour les femmes et les hommes dans le monde, en facilitant l'accès des femmes à l'éducation, à la formation et aux carrières, en assurant la participation à la prise de décision politique et dans les postes de direction des entreprises, en apportant des solutions pour adapter le temps passé à s'occuper des enfants et des familles avec l'horaire de travail, en prévenant et en combattant toutes les formes de violence contre les filles et les femmes, en améliorant leur accès aux services de santé et de reproduction. À partir des cibles et des indicateurs associés à l'ODD 5, cet article propose une évaluation quantitative de la qualité de vie des femmes en Roumanie. Pour cet objectif, nous avons utilisé les données fournies par Eurostat, l'Institut national de la statistique, la Commission nationale pour la stratégie et la prospective, ainsi que les données des rapports de l'Agence nationale pour l'égalité des chances entre les femmes et les hommes et de l'Institut européen pour l'égalité des genres. Pour vérifier les hypothèses de travail (questions de recherche), nous avons utilisé l'analyse statistique descriptive avec SPSS, la corrélation de Pearson et la régression linéaire traitées avec le programme XLSTAT, des représentations graphiques réalisées avec le logiciel PHILCARTO.

Mots-clés: qualité de vie, femmes, égalité des genres, développement durable, Agenda 2030

Rezumat

Agenda 2030 pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă este paradigma în cadrul căreia organizații internaționale, state membre ONU, autorități naționale, regionale și locale acționează pentru a rezolva problemele concrete cu care se confruntă lumea de astăzi. Deși femeile și fetele reprezintă mai bine de jumătate din populația planetei, nu peste tot se bucură de aceleași drepturi și libertăți. Obiectivul de dezvoltare durabilă (ODD) 5 al Agendei 2030 propune valorificarea potențialului resursei umane feminine prin promovarea egalității de șanse între femei și bărbați peste tot în lume, facilitarea accesului femeilor la educație, formare profesională și carieră, asigurarea participării în funcțiile de decizie politică și în pozițiile de management ale companiilor, oferirea de soluții pentru acomodarea timpului destinat îngrijirii copiilor și familiei cu programul de lucru, prevenirea și combaterea tuturor formelor de violență asupra fetelor și femeilor, îmbunătățirea accesului acestora la servicii de sănătate sexuală și reproductivă. Pornind de la țintele și indicatorii asociați ODD 5, lucrarea de față propune o evaluare cantitativă a calității vieții femeilor din România. În acest sens, am utilizat date furnizate de Eurostat, Institutul Național de Statistică, Comisia Națională pentru Strategie și Prognoză, precum și date din rapoartele Agenției Naționale pentru Egalitate de Șanse între femei și bărbați și de la Institutul European pentru Egalitate de Gen. Pentru verificarea ipotezelor de lucru am utilizat analiza statistică descriptivă cu SPSS, corelația Pearson și regresia liniară procesate cu programul XLSTAT, tehnici de reprezentare grafică realizate cu softul PHILCARTO.

Cuvinte cheie: calitatea vieții, femei, egalitate de gen, dezvoltare durabilă, Agenda 2030

1. Brief introduction to the paradigm of sustainable development

The issue of sustainable development has become an international concern since the 1970s. The United Nations (UN) Conference on the Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, put on the map of international debates the issue of socio-economic development related to the need to protect the environment. On this occasion, issues related to industrial pollution, depletion of natural resources, the

danger of extinction of plant and animal species, the need to increase living standards and to reduce inequality between people were analysed. After decades in which economic growth has been the priority goal of countries, it has been recognized for the first time that this does not mean well-being for all, as development based on the irrational exploitation of natural resources often irreparably endangers the environment.

The best-known definition of sustainable development is set out in the *Brundtland Commission Report*, based on the work of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development in Stockholm in 1983: "development that seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future generations to meet their own needs". This Commission, chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, set out the first principles that guide sustainable development: (1) development is not just about growth and the pursuit of profit at all costs; (2) the irrational exploitation of natural resources with all its effects on life, people and ecosystems must be rethought in such way that we do not jeopardize the chance of future generations for a healthy, dignified and prosperous life. Therefore, sustainable development combines three key dimensions of development in a balanced formula: social, economic and environmental. The states of the world must continue economic development, for the benefit of as many people as possible, without irreparably affecting the environment.

The conclusions of the Stockholm Conference were resumed and reinforced at the UN Development Conferences in Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations in September 2000, at the World Summit in New York from 14-16 September 2005, during the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) in 2012, and culminated in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - *Transforming Our World*, adopted by 193 heads of state and government at the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015. All these documents emphasize that sustainable development paradigm include a series of stipulations that focus on women's quality of life in relation to gender equality (United Nations, 1992-2015).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the paradigm in which international organizations, United Nations member states, national, regional and local authorities act to address the concrete problems facing the world today. Scientists, practitioners, state and non-state actors are engaged in designing working methodologies, strategies, public policies to address challenges related to poverty and hunger, ensuring access to health services, gender equality and women's empowerment, clean water and sanitation, clean energy at affordable prices, growth and decent jobs, the development of environmentally friendly industries and infrastructures, smart cities and sustainable communities, responsible consumption and production, resilience in the face of climate change and the demands of terrestrial and aquatic life, peaceful and inclusive societies, partnerships to achieve sustainable development goals.

The European Union is a world leader in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The European Commission's projections show that empowering women in socio-economic development would lead to an increase in EU GDP per capita of 6.1% to 9.6%, which means an increase of 1.95 trillion Euros to 3.15 trillion Euros. Of the top 20 countries in the world that have achieved the best results in promoting gender equality, 14 countries are EU members. In the ranking on the gender equality index in the EU for 2019, the Member States obtained on average 67.4 out of 100 points, the highest score being assumed by Sweden. In this gender equality ranking, Romania obtained 64 points.

Regarding equality between women and men, the European Union has adopted six directives on equality in the workplace, self-employment, access to goods and services, social security, pregnancy and maternity, family and flexible working arrangements for parents and caregivers. These directives are now a true legal standard among EU member states. The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 ensures the coordination of the European Commission's work on gender equality, with the general objective of creating a European area of equality between women and men, in which gender-based violence, all forms of discrimination and structural inequality become an issue of the past (European Commission, 2020a, b, c).

At the end of 2018, the Government of Romania launched the 2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania (NSSDR). Within the Government operates the Department of Sustainable Development and the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development that brings together university professors, specialists, practitioners with multi-trans-interdisciplinary approaches of the issues covered by the 2030 Agenda to work together on the national implementation plan of the NSSDR. In July 2019, at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in New York under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Romania was co-organizer of the related event "Governance of the SDGs: Learning from country experiences and defining an agenda for the future". The conference was initiated by the Government of Romania through the Department for Sustainable Development in partnership with the Government of Iceland and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Romania climbed two positions in one year, ranking 42nd out of 100 countries in implementing sustainable development goals, performed by the team of renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs.

The sustainable development paradigm concerns each of us, not just international organizations and governments. Transforming our world begins with changing everyone's behaviour: informing and raising awareness of local community issues, environmentally friendly behaviour that can begin with waste selection and recycling, integrating digital solutions in public management, enhancing people's integration who do not have digital skills. The COVID-19 pandemic will radically change the world we live in, accelerating transformation towards the digital solutions offered by information technology and communication (IT&C).

Although women and girls represent more than half of the world's population, they do not enjoy the same rights and freedom as men everywhere. In some regions and countries around the world, women and girls cannot fully participate in education and training programs, even in primary education, they do not enjoy the same employment opportunities as men; women receive lower wages for the same work as men; women in management positions are facing discrimination; women do not have the right to get involved in politics and to be elected to leadership positions. In these circumstances, the humanity cannot realize its full potential if women do not enjoy the same rights and freedoms as men, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Concepts, data sources, statistical indicators

Quality of life research aims to describe and analyse the living conditions of the population (standard of living, family life, living conditions, health, education, environment, etc.), people's satisfaction with living standards, evaluation of different dimensions of quality of life, public policies that propose well-being improvement. In Romania, concerns regarding the quality of life research date from the '80s, having as reference the quality of life indicators, a research coordinated by the sociologist Cătălin Zamfir. After 1990, with the establishment of the Quality of Life Research Institute, preoccupations in this field took a considerable boost as a response to the demands of Romanian society to increase living standards. It was a transition period with great expectation, complicated by social and economic problems (Mărginean, 2004; Mărginean and Precupețiu, 2019).

Quality of life is an evaluative concept, which can be investigated by two types of methods: (1) sociological methods (questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, tests, scales) through which the subjective dimension of quality of life can be assessed (self-perception of living standards) and (2) statistical methods (selective, sample-based statistical surveys) that target its objective dimension (Mărginean, 2019; Iftimoaei, 2021).

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Agenda proposes to improve the quality of life of women by eliminating all forms of discrimination between women and men (economic, social, political, cultural), reducing gender disparities in social life and economy, strengthening institutions and promoting active policies in preventing and combating violence against women and girls, facilitating women's access to education, integration and professional empowerment, reducing the gender pay gap.

As of 1 January 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda have entered into force, and UN Member States have begun to develop strategies, policies and measures to implement them. Eurostat and the national statistics institutes committed to develop methodologies for measuring and evaluating the progress made in implementing the SDGs by reporting them to the targets and indicators allocated, as set by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2016.

On the occasion of the 48th meeting of the United Nations Statistics Commission in March 2017, for the implementation of the 17 SDGs, a global list was approved containing 169 targets to be achieved and a number of 244 indicators. Currently, data are available for about 1/3 of the indicators. The European Union is the most advanced region in the world in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development goals and their associated targets are carried out by Eurostat. The following table summarizes the targets and statistical indicators for SDG 5 - gender equality, which essentially aims to improve the quality of life of women.

Table 1. SDG 5-Gender Equality: targets and indicators

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
	5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
	5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (*a*) national parliaments and (*b*) local governments
	5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
	5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1 (*a*) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (*b*) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
	5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

Source: **Global indicator Framework for SDG and targets for 2030 Agenda:**
https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/

Under the coordination of Eurostat, the European Commission established a set of statistical indicators (EU SDG Indicator Set) to be developed for monitoring and evaluating the progress in implementation of the SDGs in the European member states. The EU indicators selected for the SDG monitoring meet the "RACER" conditions: relevance, acceptability, credibility, ease of monitoring and robustness against biased or misinterpretations. The Indicator Set proposed by the EU is structured on the 17 SDGs and includes 100 different indicators. The practical experience has proven that this number of indicators is reasonable for analysis and dissemination to the general public and the media. Each SDG is covered by a number of 6 statistical indicators, with the exception of SDG 14 and SDG 17, each target being allocated a number of 5 indicators. Of the set of 100 statistical indicators, 41 indicators are multi-objective which, although designed to monitor a specific objective, can also be used to analyse the level of implementation of other SDGs. According to Eurostat, each SDG can be monitored and evaluated through 5-12 statistical indicators. Of the set of 100 indicators established by Eurostat, 88 indicators are updated annually, 12

indicators with a lower frequency; 69 indicators from official EU Statistics, 31 from other sources; 51 indicators from the set of one hundred are common to Eurostat and the United Nations Statistical Commission.

On 22 June 2020, Eurostat published a paper entitled "Sustainable Development in the European Union - Monitoring Report on Progress towards the SDGs in the EU Context - 2020 Edition", which provides a statistical overview of progress towards the 17 objectives sustainable development of the 2030 Agenda in the European Union. The Eurostat Report shows significant progress on the "No Poverty", "Health and Welfare", "No Hunger" and "Decent Working Conditions and Growth" objectives. A progress has been made in achieving "Sustainable Cities and Communities", "Quality Education", "Partnerships for Objectives", "Responsible Consumption and Production", "Affordable and Clean Energy", "Reducing Inequalities", "Earth life" and "Industry, innovation and infrastructure ". More efforts are needed to achieve the SDGs on "Climate Policy" and "Gender Equality" (Eurostat, 2021).

In Romania there is a National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (NAEO). Within the Government of Romania functions an inter-ministerial working group called The National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (NCEO) in order to identify the best solutions for the development and implementation of public policies for equal opportunities between women and men. NCEO is composed of representatives of ministries and other specialized bodies of the central public administration subordinated to the Government or of the autonomous administrative authorities, trade unions and employers' associations at national level, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations, with recognized activity in the gender equality field. NAEO prepares annual reports on the participation of women and men in elections, the situation of women and men in decision-making positions in public administration, Romania's position in the online database of the European Institute for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, the national situation on domestic violence.

The evaluation carried out by NAEO based on the candidacies submitted on the electoral lists in the elections for the Romanian Senate in 2020 showed that 2477 people registered (from political parties, minorities and independents), of which 764 (30.84%) women and 1713 (69.16%) men. Following the election, 136 senators were elected, of which 25 (18.38%) women and 111 (81.62%) men. A number of 4657 people (from political parties, minorities and independents) registered on the electoral lists for the Chamber of Deputies, of which 1341 (28.80%) women and 3316 (71.20%) men. Following the election, 330 deputies were elected, of which 60 (18.18%) women and 270 (81.82%) men (NAEO, 2020a).

In 2020, in the central public administration there were 693 management positions decision-level 1 (secretary general, deputy secretary general, director general, deputy director general) and decision level 2 (director, deputy director), of which 122 vacancies, the rate of occupation of positions being 82.4% (571 positions occupied). Out of the total positions held, 310 (54.3%) belonged to

women and 261 (45.7%) to men. Compared to 2019, the female percentage increased by 0.8 percentage points (from 53.5% in 2019 to 54.3% in 2020). Throughout the period 2016-2020, it can be seen that in 2018 the percentage was at the lowest level (49.6%) and in 2020 it was the highest, respectively 54.3 %. Also, in 2016, 2017 and 2019 the female percentage was over 50%. Romania has a better position than the European average. (NAEO, 2020b).

The latest national study on domestic violence conducted by National Agency for Equal Opportunities between women and men shows that, in the first half of 2019, a number of 6731 victims of domestic violence were reported, of which 4,167 (61.91%) were female and 2564 (38.09 %) male. The distribution of family aggressors, at national level, by sex and area of residence is as follows: 4143 family aggressors, of which 1555 (37.53%) female and 2588 (62.47%) male. The prevalence of domestic violence with female victims is higher in rural areas where there were 2291 female victims (54.98%), while a number of 1876 of female victims (45.02%) are from urban areas. Out of the total of 6731 victims of domestic violence, a number of 5,343 minor victims (79.38%) were reported, of which 2852 (53.38%) girls and 2491 (46.62%) boys. At national level, the counties with the highest number of women victims of domestic violence are Constanţa (488 women victims), Galaţi (454 women victims), Timiş (236 women victims), Gorj (226 women victims), Maramureş (193 women victims) (NAEO, 2020c).

On 28 October 2021, the European Institute for Gender Equality launched the latest *Gender Equality Index Report*, which is a tool for measuring the progress of gender equality in the EU in order to support policy makers in developing more effective gender equality measures. Overall, the EU scored 68 points out of 100 in the Gender Equality Index, a microscopic increase of just 0.6 points from last year's edition. On this occasion, EIGE Director Carlien Scheele stated that Europe has made slow progress on gender equality in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The best score on gender equality is obtained by Sweden (83.9 points), and the lowest score is held by Greece (52.5 points). Compared to the European average of 68 points, Romania obtains a modest score of 54.5 points. From the detailed analysis of the scores obtained by Romania on the main fields of activity (work, money, knowledge, time, power and health), it results that women in our country are facing problems in accommodating work with the activities performed in their own household, gender inequalities are most pronounced in power positions, there are slight improvements in economic decision-making, in the women′s participation in education and training programs, the short duration in the field of work, the women′s access to the sexual and reproductive health services (Eurostat, 2021; EIGE, 2021).

European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2019
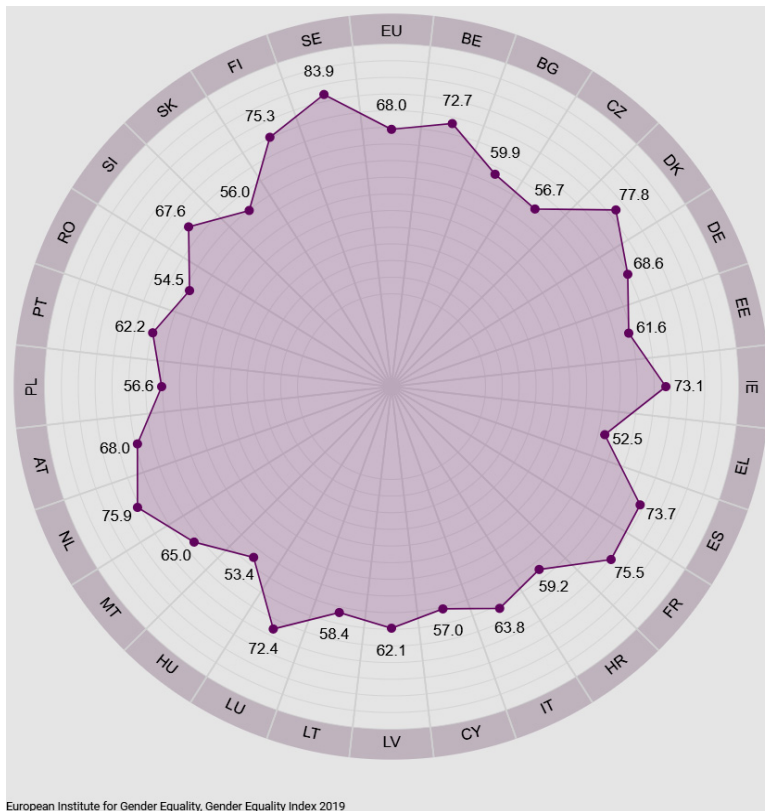
Figure 1. EU Gender Equality Index in 2021

Source: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/compare-countries/index/map

The progress regarding the achievement of the SDG 5 associated targets from the 2030 Agenda is reported by the Department of Sustainable Development within the Romanian Government based on the monitoring performed by the National Institute of Statistics. One year after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Sustainable Development organized in partnership with the National Institute of Statistics the conference on "National indicators for sustainable development", within the project "Sustainable Romania – The development of the strategic and institutional framework for implementing the 2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania". The Report contains relevant statistics for decision-making at national level and illustrates the evolution of a number of 98 indicators associated with a number of 60 targets, corresponding to the 17 sustainable development objectives for Horizon 2020 (Iftimoaei, 2021).

The above-mentioned Report states that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities between women and men in all areas of activity. Women are need to spend more time to educating children and caring for the elderly

while performing their duties. Given health restrictions, women dedicated more time for household activities, which amplifies family tensions that generated domestic violence.

Women are the majority in the field of health and social care, with a much higher exposure than men to the new coronavirus. In Romania, inactivity affects to a greater extent woman aged 20-64 years compared to men in the same age segment as a result of fulfilling family responsibilities, especially in rural areas. Legislation on parental leave and the monthly child-raising allowance were a step forward in ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for women and men.

Women continue to be underrepresented in the Parliament and Government of Romania, as well as in other leading political positions at the national and county levels. Regarding the number of women with top management positions in companies with foreign and / or Romanian capital, Romania is among the first places in the European Union. Women are more affected by poverty than men, especially women in rural areas, elderly women, women living in households with low work intensity. The most serious problem that women are facing in Romania is the violence in all its forms. According to the mentioned Report, in the monitored period (2008-2019), the maximum level was reached in 2018 when 1087 rape crimes were registered. (Department for Sustainable Development, 2021).

3. The working methodology: research questions, data analysis, results

For the quantitative assessment of women's quality of life in Romania from the perspective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development we used the following data sources: (1) data from Eurostat - the section containing indicators for assessing progress on sustainable development, to obtain a comparative perspective, Romania in a European context; (2) data provided by the National Institute of Statistics - the section with indicators that describe the standard of living in Romania; (3) data provided by the National Commission for Strategy and Forecast and by the National Institute of Statistics in the sections dedicated to labour statistics and education statistics.

The research questions are the following:

- What is the Romania's progress in implementing SDG 5 - Gender Equality, compared to the situation at European level?
- What is the contribution of women compared to men to economic growth (GDP per capita)?
- What is the connection between all the variables analysed / are the variables used correlated?
- How has the living standard of women evolved compared to men in Romania after joining the EU?

To test the working hypotheses (research questions) we used descriptive analysis with **SPSS** (Netedu, 2005; Coman, 2011; Vasile, 2014;) boxplot comparative analysis (Rotariu, 1999; Lahoz-Beltra, 2021), Pearson correlation and

linear regression processed with **XLSTAT** Program, illustrated with maps made with **PHILCARTO** software.

3.1. The situation of women in Romania: social and demographic aspects

In Romania, women represent 51.1% of the total usual resident population. From the official statistics we find that, out of the 19328.8 thousand people who on January 1, 2020 had their usual residence in Romania for at least 12 months, 9868 thousand were women, representing 51.1% of the total usual resident population. In urban areas, the share of women in our country is more pronounced than in rural areas; over 5474.9 thousand women live in cities, representing 52.4% of the total urban population. In rural areas, the share of the female population is 49.5%. The female population is on average 3.3 years older than male population. The average female age is 43.9 years, while for men it is 40.6 years. This difference is explained by the longer average life expectancy for women than it is for men (National Institute of Statistics, 2021a-b).

Compared to the communist period (before 1989), the women's ideas about life has changed quite a lot. Nowadays, women are experiencing premarital sexual intercourse, are more concerned with fertility control and contraception, prefer free unions to the detriment of the family, accept celibacy and single-person household, advocate for equal opportunities with men, are open to various sexual experiences, adhere to feminist movements and promote gender equality. The change of lifestyles, especially in the last decade, the increase of the education and schooling period, the access to well-paid and socially valued jobs, the desire for career advancement have changed quite a lot the sociodemographic behaviour of women in Romania.

The phenomenon of "postponement of marriages" is reflected in the decrease of nuptials (number of marriages), increase of the average age at the first marriage (28.3 years), decrease of the birth rate (number of births), as well as increase of the average age at the birth of the first child. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2019, the average age of the mother at birth (28.8 years) and at the first birth (27.6 years) was slightly higher than the previous year, maintaining the tendency to postpone the birth. Women in rural regions continued to give birth at a younger age (27.2 years) compared to women in urban areas (30.0 years). The highest average age at all births was registered in Bucharest (31.5 years), and the lowest in Călărași County (26.5 years).

Women's reproductive behaviour is impacted by their occupational status. Although the share of live-born by housewives (33.0% in 2019) is at a fairly high level, there is a decrease compared to the previous year (34.2% in 2018). A percentage of 52.4% of live-births had employed mothers. In 2019, in rural areas, 48.3% of the number of live births had housewives, and in urban areas 20.6% of the number of live births had housewives. In 2019, the trend shows an increasing share of live-births by women with a higher level of education continues - at least with a university degree (30.4%) and the share of live births by mothers with a

medium level of education: vocational, secondary and post-secondary school (35.6%).

3.2. Statistical analysis of progress in implementing SDG 5 - Gender Equality

For the analysis of Romania's progress regarding the implementation of SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda, we queried the Eurostat database - the section dedicated to sustainable development indicators from where we selected the following variables, depending on the sex of people, for the period 2008-2020:

- the gender pay gap measures the lower (%), the average hourly income earned by a woman compared to the average hourly income earned by a man (the indicator measures economic inequality rather than discrimination at work);
- the employment gap measures the difference between the employment rates of women and men between the ages of 20 and 64 (the employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of people between the ages of 20 and 64) employed in the total population of the same age group (the indicator is based on the EU labour force survey EU-LFS);
- the gender gap for inactive population refers to those who do not work, are not actively looking for a job and are not available to work even if they have found a job. Therefore, they are neither employed nor unemployed and are considered to be out of the workforce (this definition used in the EU-EU LFS labour force survey) in accordance with the methodology of the International Labour Organization;
- the number of seats held by women in national parliaments;
- the number of top management positions held by women in companies;
- the share of young graduates of higher education (higher education);
- the rate of early leaving the education system by young people is the share of the population aged 18-24 with a level of elementary education (low), which does not follow any form of training (formal or non-formal);
- employment rate of women aged 20-64 years in total labour resources.

Indicators that describe the statistical distribution of the selected variables for Romania and the European Union (average scores obtained by EU member states) were calculated using the SPSS software: minimum, maximum, average (central tendency), standard deviation (how much the scores are spread around average) and parameters showing the flattening and inclination of the distribution (skewness and kurtosis).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the SDG 5-Gender Equality: Romania vs. UE

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Pay_gap_RO	13	2.20	12.50	6.3000	2.99026	.569	.616	-.173	1.191
Employment_gap_RO	14	13.10	19.30	16.5429	1.80543	-.313	.597	-.440	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_t	14	16.30	28.10	20.6071	3.61439	.722	.597	-.107	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_r	14	.01	3.10	1.4507	.86318	.523	.597	.412	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_f RO	14	25.50	39.10	30.4786	4.12482	.702	.597	-.155	1.154
Seats_women_parliament_RO	14	9.40	20.00	13.2214	4.30923	.905	.597	-1.112	1.154
Senior_management_positions_w board_members_RO	14	7.80	21.30	12.3571	3.32837	1.795	.597	3.772	1.154
Early_leavers_education_total_RO	14	15.30	19.30	17.3857	1.26786	-.215	.597	-1.013	1.154
Early_leavers_education_males_F	14	14.70	19.50	17.6143	1.70513	-.511	.597	-1.144	1.154
Early_leavers_education_females	14	15.80	19.00	17.1500	1.07399	.436	.597	-1.036	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_t	14	16.60	25.60	23.0500	2.96330	-1.115	.597	.012	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_r	14	15.60	22.90	20.7857	2.36476	-1.281	.597	.342	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_f RO	14	17.70	29.20	25.4643	3.68335	-.916	.597	-.365	1.154
Employment_rates_total_RO	12	63.50	70.90	66.6667	2.70701	.620	.637	-1.241	1.232
Employment_rates_males_RO	12	70.70	80.30	75.1167	3.32534	.519	.637	-1.071	1.232
Employment_rates_females_RO	12	56.20	61.30	58.1000	2.02664	.745	.637	-1.456	1.232
Pay_gap_EU	11	15.30	17.40	16.6364	.69321	-.827	.661	-.378	1.279
Employment_gap_EU	12	11.10	13.60	11.9167	.76733	1.319	.637	.722	1.232
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_t	14	17.70	22.70	20.1643	1.34714	.112	.597	-.179	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_r	14	2.20	4.90	3.7714	.73425	-.546	.597	.123	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_f EU	14	25.70	32.80	29.1929	1.91169	.134	.597	-.185	1.154
Seats_women_parliament_EU	14	22.50	32.30	26.8643	3.36214	.254	.597	-1.338	1.154
Senior_management_positions_w board_members_EU	14	10.40	29.50	19.1786	7.01286	.102	.597	-1.597	1.154
Early_leavers_education_total_EU	14	9.90	14.90	12.1286	1.78689	.377	.597	-1.558	1.154
Early_leavers_education_males_E	14	11.80	17.00	13.8714	1.95662	.449	.597	-1.585	1.154
Early_leavers_education_females	14	8.00	12.80	10.3500	1.64258	.260	.597	-1.466	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_t	14	29.90	40.90	36.1786	3.57301	-.401	.597	-.999	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_r	14	26.40	35.70	31.5357	3.01907	-.331	.597	-1.068	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_f EU	14	33.50	46.10	40.8857	4.12998	-.451	.597	-.936	1.154
Employment_rates_total_EU	12	67.50	73.20	69.6917	2.14071	.602	.637	-1.450	1.232
Employment_rates_males_EU	12	73.30	78.90	75.6583	1.93882	.549	.637	-1.274	1.232
Employment_rates_females_EU	12	61.40	67.40	63.7417	2.34345	.493	.637	-1.575	1.232
Valid N (listwise)	10								

Source: **own processing with SPSS based on Eurostat database**
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/main-tables

The indicator that measures the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of male employees compared to female employees (pay gap) shows higher values in the European Union compared to Romania. In recent years, there has been a significant decrease in the gap between women and men in Romania.

Regarding the difference between the employment rate of men and the employment rate of women (employment gap) aged between 20 and 64, the gap in the case of Romania is larger than in the EU Member States (average of 16.5 % - Romania compared to 11.9% - European Union average). The indicator regarding the inactivity of people in the field of work due to family or personal responsibilities (inactive_caring_responsabilities) registers high values in the case of females.

Romania has a low rate of female members in Parliament (seats_women) or members of the boards of directors of the largest listed companies (senior_management_positions_women).

Another important indicator is the share of young people aged 18-24, who have completed secondary education and are not involved in any vocational training activity (early_leavers_education). Romania registers values above the European Union average for both males and females.

The share of the population aged between 25 and 34 who graduated from university (tertiary_educational_attainment) is on an upward trend in Romania, but the average for 2007-2020 (equal to 23.0%) places us below the average of European Union countries (equal to 36.2%).

The employment rate of people aged between 20 and 64 (employment_rates) in Romania reached a maximum in 2019. It is observed that males have a higher employment rate compared to females. The situation is the same in the European Union.

3.3. The role of women compared to men in the economic growth

Economic growth is a concept that refers to the quantitative dimension of development and is measured mainly by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This macroeconomic indicator represents the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period. GDP per capita expressed in Euro or adjusted to price level differences (as expressed in purchasing power standards, SPCs) is used as a tool for comparing living standards or monitoring of the process of economic convergence or divergence in the European Union (EU).

A positive evolution of GDP does not always mean the increasing of well-being for people. GDP growth can be generated by growth in consumption that is not sustainable in the long term. There are countries that benefit from high GDP growth rates, but are characterized by deep social and economic inequalities, being societies polarized between the few who concentrate large wealth and the many who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. From a strictly economic viewpoint, GDP measures how much a national economy produced in a reference period. This is also the case in Romania, a country where economic growth coexists with a high rate of poverty.

For this study, we calculated the Gross Domestic Product per capita based on data from the National Commission for Strategy and Forecast, for the period 2008-2020 (GDP divided by the usual resident population of the counties). The

evolution of GDP per capita for each county, in the period 2008-2020, will be considered a dependent variable, which it will be explained using the following independent variables:

- employment rate (women vs. men) is the ratio, expressed as a percentage, between the employed population and labour resources (all people who have the physical and mental abilities to work);
- unemployment rate (women vs. men) is the ratio, expressed as a percentage, between the number of unemployed (registered with the employment agencies) and the active population (characterizes the potential labour supply, including the employed population and the unemployed), defined according to the methodology the workforce balance of the National Institute of Statistics;
- the average number of employees (women vs. men) includes persons employed with a fixed-term or indefinite employment contract / employment relationship (including seasonal workers, manager or administrator) whose employment contract / employment relationship has not been suspended during reference period (average number of employees is calculated as a simple arithmetic average resulting from the sum of the daily number of employees in the reference period, including weekly rest days, public holidays and other working days, divided by the total number of calendar days, 365/366 days);
- the average net monthly nominal earnings (women vs. men) is obtained by deducting from the monthly gross nominal earnings the mandatory social contributions of employees (social insurance contribution, respectively social health insurance due by employees) and the corresponding tax;
- the number of graduates (women vs. men) includes pupils / students who have passed the last year of study of a school / faculty, regardless of whether or not they passed the graduation exam, baccalaureate, bachelor's degree, etc. (the number of graduates refers to the end of the school / university year, after the correctness exam; the graduate with a diploma is a person who passed the graduation exam at the end of an educational cycle and obtained a diploma).

Based on these variables by sex / county / year of period 2018-2020, we set a database for statistical processing with the XLSTAT program (comparative boxplot analysis, Pearson correlation, linear regression). Using PHILCARTO software we made a series of graphic elements (cartograms) based on the processing of the analysed variables.

In statistical analysis, the boxplot is a special method of graphical representation of grouped numerical data by their quartiles. Cassette diagram shows variability outside the upper and lower quartiles. Outliers can be represented as individual points (outlier). The distances between the different parts of the cassette indicate the degree of dispersion (scattering) and asymmetry of the data, including outliers. The line inside the box represents the median and

describes the central trend. If the median is close to the bottom edge, then the distribution is inclined to the left (small values predominate and there are few cases with large but extreme values); if the median is close to the upper edge, then the distribution is tilted to the right. The box itself represents the distribution of 50% of the characteristics (values) of the variable; the bottom edge of the box shows the 25% percentile value, and the top edge of the 75% percentile. The larger the box, the greater the variability of results are. The outer limits of the boxplot chart (above and below the box) are called whiskers and are drawn from the smallest to the highest value located within 1.5 box lengths, also representing a measure of variability. Extreme cases located in the 1.5-3 long box range are represented by small circles filled with colour ● which have passed the case number or the value of a feature. Extreme cases located at distances greater than 3 box lengths are represented by small asterisks * that have passed in their case the case number (Lahoz-Beltra, 2021; Rotariu, 1998).
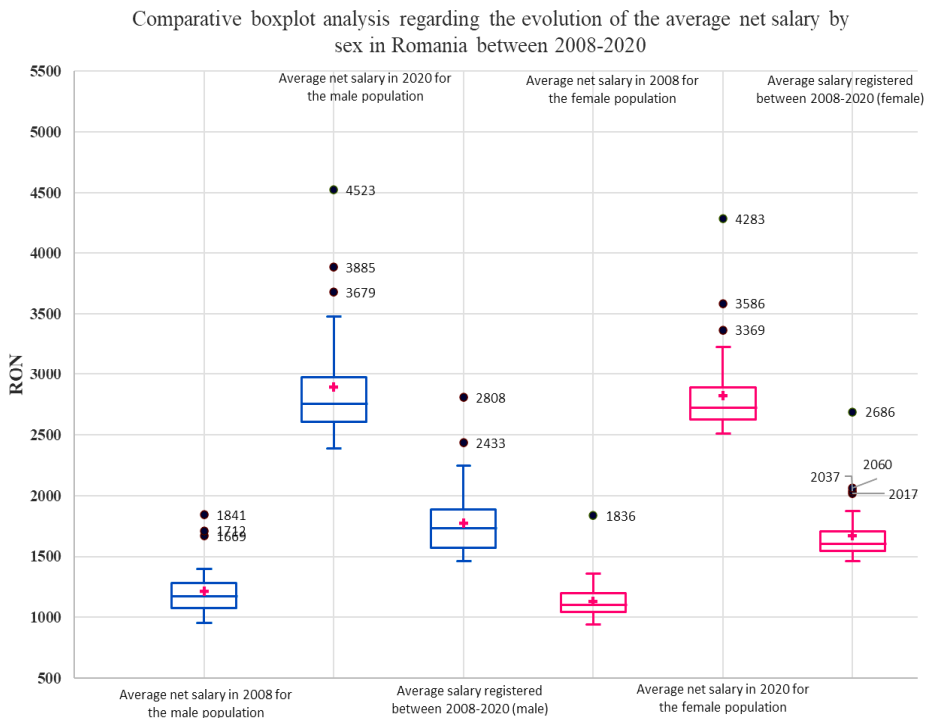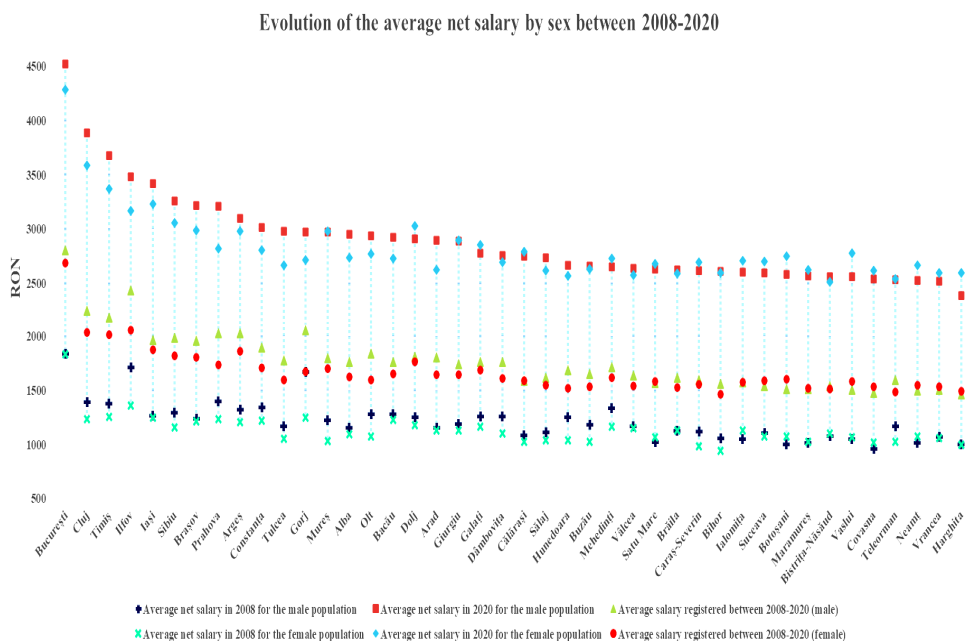

Figure 2. Evolution of the average net salary by sex in Romania (2008-2020)

The comparative boxplot analysis in Figure 2 shows the dynamics of the differences between the average net nominal earnings for women and men, in Romania, for the period 2008-2020. The differences between earnings by sex are observable by comparing the differences between average and median,

respectively the values for the graphically represented variables, including the aberrant values that mean the counties with the highest earnings.

In order to make a ranking of the counties with the highest earnings for women and men for the period 2008-2020, we used a Lollipop Chart as shown in Figure 3. This chart is an alternative to the classic bar chart or lines chart and is preferable when analysing data with large and close values. The counties where the best earnings are registered, with a small difference between women and men are Bucharest, Cluj, Timiș, Ilfov and Iași; at the bottom of the ranking are Harghita, Vrancea, Neamț, Teleorman, Covasna).

Evolution of the average net salary by sex between 2008-2020

Figure 3. Evolution of the average net salary by sex în România (2008-2020)

The Pearson correlation is used as a statistical method that seeks to confirm the hypothesis that all variables are correlated. The resulting correlation coefficient is very high, for all indicators used, which confirms the hypothesis launched. Some of the variables were also correlated by the similarity of the variables, a situation encountered for the variables that are part of the same category, with a differentiation instead by gender of the data.

Correlation matrix (Pearson):

Var.	Variables	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8	Var9	Var10	Var11
1	Average GDP per capita recorded between 2009-2019 (GDPperCapita)	1	0,7585	0,5421	-0,6390	-0,5684	0,8984	0,8831	0,8698	0,8849	0,8090	0,8160
2	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	0,7585	1	0,7875	-0,6494	-0,5624	0,5983	0,5895	0,5367	0,5159	0,4932	0,5049
3	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	0,5421	0,7875	1	-0,2784	-0,3521	0,5476	0,5583	0,2840	0,3532	0,4422	0,4647
4	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	-0,6390	-0,6494	-0,2784	1	0,9168	-0,4554	-0,4447	-0,5160	-0,5001	-0,3773	-0,3823
5	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	-0,5684	-0,5624	-0,3521	0,9168	1	-0,4475	-0,4458	-0,4575	-0,5103	-0,3548	-0,3732
6	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (male)	0,8984	0,5983	0,5476	-0,4554	-0,4475	1	0,9984	0,7540	0,8642	0,9612	0,9670
7	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (female)	0,8831	0,5895	0,5583	-0,4447	-0,4458	0,9984	1	0,7328	0,8523	0,9638	0,9707
8	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (male)	0,8698	0,5367	0,2840	-0,5160	-0,4575	0,7540	0,7328	1	0,9305	0,6997	0,7006
9	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (female)	0,8849	0,5159	0,3532	-0,5001	-0,5103	0,8642	0,8523	0,9305	1	0,8276	0,8375
10	Total graduates 2008-2019 (male)	0,8090	0,4932	0,4422	-0,3773	-0,3548	0,9612	0,9638	0,6997	0,8276	1	0,9970
11	Total graduates 2008-2019 (female)	0,8160	0,5049	0,4647	-0,3823	-0,3732	0,9670	0,9707	0,7006	0,8375	0,9970	1

Values in bold are different from 0 with a significance level alpha=0,05

p-values:

| Var.	Variables	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8	Var9	Var10	Var11
1	Average GDP per capita recorded between 2009-2019 (GDPperCapita)	0	0,0000	0,0002	0,0000	0,0001	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000
2	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0002	0,0005	0,0009	0,0007
3	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	0,0002	< 0,0001	0	0,0743	0,0222	0,0002	0,0001	0,0683	0,0218	0,0034	0,0019
4	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0743	0	< 0,0001	0,0024	0,0032	0,0005	0,0007	0,0138	0,0125
5	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	< 0,0001	0,0001	0,0222	< 0,0001	0	0,0030	0,0031	0,0023	0,0006	0,0212	0,0149
6	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0002	0,0024	0,0030	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
7	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (female)	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0001	0,0032	0,0031	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
8	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	0,0002	0,0683	0,0005	0,0023	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
9	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (female)	< 0,0001	0,0005	0,0218	0,0007	0,0006	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
10	Total graduates 2008-2019 (male)	< 0,0001	0,0009	0,0034	0,0138	0,0212	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001
11	Total graduates 2008-2019 (female)	< 0,0001	0,0007	0,0019	0,0125	0,0149	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0

Values in bold are different from 0 with a significance level alpha=0,05

Figure 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix

The statistical analysis showed a series of negative correlations, such as the unemployment rate at county level (average of 2008-2020). These negative correlations also indicate an atypical situation, more precisely the negative correlation between the unemployment rate and the employment rate, a situation due to an opposition effect of the characteristics of the variables in the analysis: the mirror representation of a two-variable from the analyzed phenomenon.

The table with the significance of the correlation confirms from a statistical perspective the validity of the correlations resulting from the analysis.

The two linear regressions are a form of identification and graphical representation of a series of correlations. In the present case, the correlation between the female unemployment rate and the GDP per capita was represented, the resulting correlation is a negative one with a low correlation coefficient (0.323). Linear regression, which represents the GDP per capita and the average net salary recorded at the female gender level, has a high correlation coefficient (0.783), and the resulting correlation is a positive one.
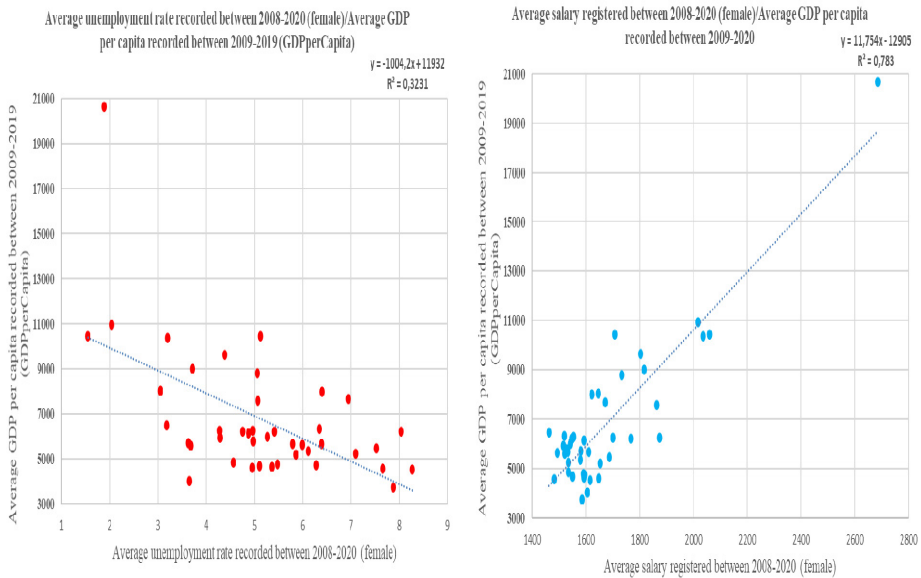
Figure 5. Linear regression analysis

The cartogram represents the differences in LEI (RON) between the average net salary earned by women compared to the average net salary earned by men in Romania, showing a series of social and spatial disparities between genders.

In 2008 the territorial disparities were not very high between women and men, although most of the average net earnings recorded in Romania were higher for males, the largest discrepancy was in Gorj County with 421 LEI in favour of men. In 2021, the discrepancies increased at the territorial level, but instead there were several counties where the balance tipped in favour of women. Many of the counties where high values in favour of women are registered present a series of social and economic problems, with a significant share of people engaged in the process of external migration.

The higher ratio registered in favour of women is generated by the significant share of the budgetary sector in the respective counties (Botoșani, Neamț, Vaslui), where there is a significant and disproportionate concentration of the share of female staff in the total human resources engaged in the public sector: public administration, education, health, etc.
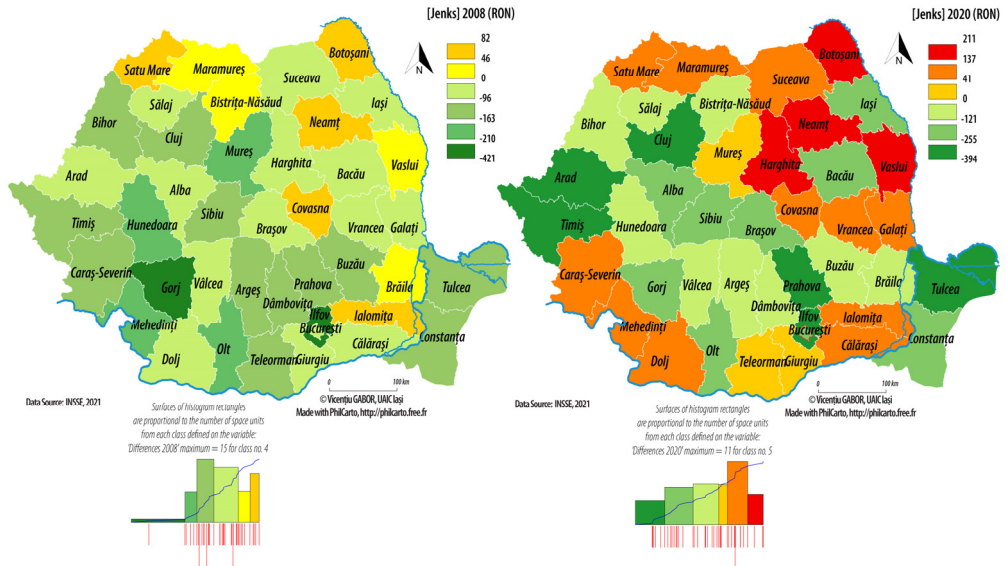
Figure 6. The net pay-gap in the counties of Romania (in RON)

Although these counties have a significant share of employed women, they also use labour in some economic activities in the private sector, where human resources tend to be disproportionate in favour of women, such as garments industry or the food industry. The private sector in these counties does not have a high degree of absorption of human resources, the majority and statistically visible remaining the budgetary sector.
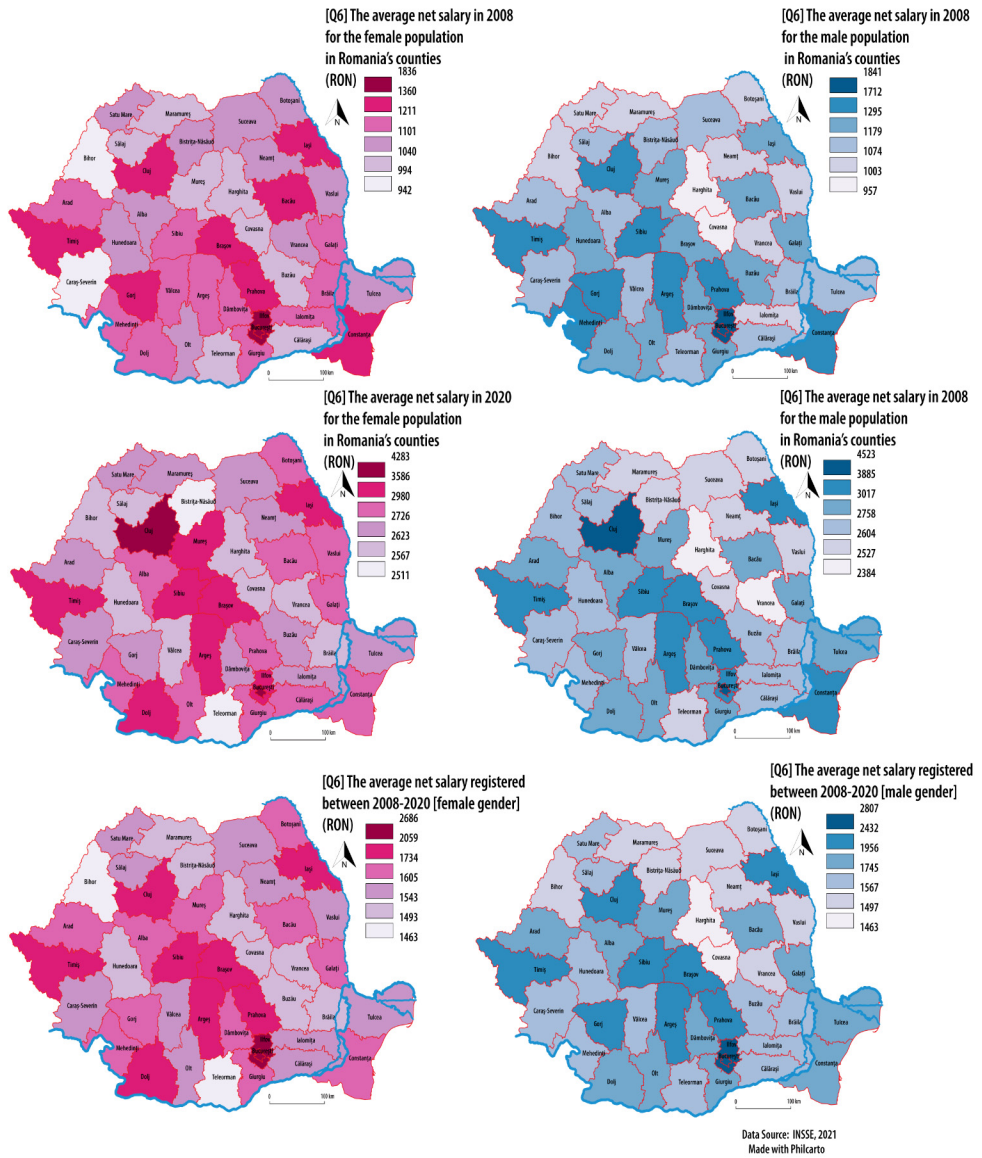
Figure 7. Cartographies representing the evolution of average earnings, women vs. men by counties (2008-2020)

3.4. The standard of living in Romania after accession to the European Union

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms and in all contexts in which it manifests itself (SDG 1). The National Institute of Statistics carries out an annual research called "Survey on quality of life" which has as main objective the production of statistical data necessary to characterize the living conditions of the population and to assess poverty: living conditions, health, education, employment work, income, equipping the home with various facilities and durable goods, etc.

For the evaluation of women's the standard of living compared to men in Romania after the accession to the EU (2008-2019), we used the following indicators from the INS - TEMPO Online database:

- relative poverty rate is defined as the share of poor people in the total population (people in households with a disposable income per adult-equivalent below the poverty line are considered poor);
- relative poverty rate before social transfers, excluding pensions, is defined as the share of poor people in the total population (those non-pension social transfers are deducted from disposable income, the latter being kept in the volume of income);
- at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) is the share in the total population of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. People who are subject to the AROPE indicator are those who are in at least one of the following situations: they have disposable income below the poverty line; are in a state of severe material deprivation; live in a household with very low labour intensity;
- rate of severe material deprivation shows the share of people over 18 who are in the following situations: cannot afford to pay bills on time, a vacation of at least one week away from home, meat consumption every two days, phone, personal car, ensuring adequate heating of the house, etc.

Table 3. Poverty indicators. Romania: 2008 vs. 2019

Percent (%)	Relative Poverty Rate		Relative poverty rate before social transfers (excluding pensions)		AROPE Indicator		Severe Material deprivation rate	
Year	2008	2019	2008	2019	2008	2019	2008	2019
TOTAL	23.6	23.8	30.8	28.1	44.2	31.2	32.7	14.5
Male	22.8	22.7	30.1	27.0	43.0	30.3	32.2	14.5
Female	24,3	24.9	31.4	29.2	45.3	32.1	33.2	14.5

The data centralized in the table above show that poverty is a gender issue in Romania, in fact one of the poorest countries in Europe. Women are on average 2 percentage points poorer than men. In 2019, the relative poverty rate for men was 22.7%, and for women with two percentage points higher, 24.9%. In other words, in Romania, one in four women is poor. Without social transfers, excluding pensions, the relative poverty rate for women is 29.2%.

It is important to point out that, if the state did not intervene through social protection measures in the form of social transfers, the relative poverty rate in 2019 would have been about 5 percentage points higher (the difference between the relative poverty rate before social transfers, excluding pensions, and relative poverty rate).

After Romania's accession to the European Union, poverty did not decrease significantly, despite economic growth before the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that social policies for preventing and combating poverty do not achieve their proposed goals. Romanian society continues to be extremely economically and socially polarized, with major discrepancies between urban and rural areas.

4. Concluding remarks

The data provided by the European Commission, Eurostat and the European Institute for Gender Equality show that Romania (54.5 points) is the European average in terms of the gender equality index (67.4 points), in 2021. From reports the aforementioned institutions, women in Romania are affected by domestic violence, face problems in terms of accommodating working time with household activity, access to health, sexual and reproductive services, but also with political under-representation, especially in Parliament and Government. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates women's problems in the family /household, as they are needed to spend more time to educating children and helping the elderly, including straining family relationships.

The correlation and regression analysis show the link between independent variables (employment, unemployment, earnings, number of employees, number of graduates, by sex, period 2008-2020) and dependent variables (increase in GDP per capita in the period 2008-2020). There is a gap between the employment rate in women *versus* employment rate for men in Romania (16.5%), compared to the European average (11.9%). At the same time, the indicator regarding the inactivity rate of the labour force registers higher values in the case of women, explanations being the assumption of more complex and time-consuming family responsibilities compared to those assumed by men. Unpaid work of women in the household is unrecognized and not socially rewarded.

Regarding the situation of women in Romania, there are positive aspects reflected in the evolutions of some statistical indicators in recent years. We note that the share of women graduating from higher education has increased compared to men, including in the technical fields and IT&C - fields traditionally reserved for men. In terms of wages, the gap between the average net salary

obtained by a woman *versus* a man from Romania is among the smallest in Europe. The counties in which women and men earn the best is Bucharest, Cluj, Timiş, Ilfov and Iaşi. There are also counties where women earn better than men (Botoşani, Neamţ, Vaslui), where the share of public sector employees in total employees is higher than in other counties, women being the majority in areas such as education, health social care and public administration.

Poverty is a gender issue in Romania, with women being on average two percentage points poorer than men. The poverty situation would increase on average by five percentage points if the government did not intervene through social transfers. According to the latest data published by Eurostat, in 2020, 30.4% of Romania's population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The limitations of our study derive from the fact that not all aspects related to the quality of life of women were covered. The issue of violence against women is insufficiently explored due to the lack of official statistics. At the same time, issues such as the social and economic consequences of women's external migration, maternity of adolescent mothers, the situation of forced marriages, other forms of discrimination and abuse that impact the quality of life of girls and women remained unexplored.

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