

The Coalition for Gender Equality is a non-institutionalized union of 10 NGOs with diverse experience and knowledge in the field of gender equality which aims to develop a range of capabilities and common intervention work of NGOs in the field in order to produce legislative changes, changes in public policies at national and local level and to increase public awareness so that various aspects of gender equality issues become a priority on the public agenda.

With regards to the CEDAW Convention and its implementation by the Romanian authorities there are some urgent aspects that the Committee should take into consideration when reviewing Romania's report.

Gender roles and stereotypes are still a big part of the Romanian social culture, both in the public area and especially in the private (family) context, which prevent women from occupying highly paid jobs or highly-ranked positions in the decision making process. The Romanian Government has not, in the last 6 years, implemented a public campaign to combat gender roles and stereotypes to evidence, for example, women's inferior positions at different levels of occupations or to combat negative perceptions /representations in the media.

Women are still the most **trafficked persons** in Romania, with the aim to be sexually abused in other European countries – 74% of the trafficked persons in 2014 were women and 68% of them were sexually exploited – but the most serious issue is that girls represent the majority of the trafficked group of women. The mechanism set-up by the Romanian government to assist and rehabilitate women victims of traffic is often understaffed and underfunded, especially at local level. Moreover, the police and other specialists who come into contact with the victims do not always follow the procedure and sometimes cause further damage to the victim's psyche.

As far as the **presence of women in elected and appointed bodies**, Romania has one of the lowest percentage in Europe - 11,5 % in the national parliament and 13% at the local level. This has not been an important issue during the last four years for Romanian parliamentarians (the Senate Commission on Equal Rights for women and men is made-up of men only), but at the end of last year and due to the election campaign around the corner, one party has launched two drafts to modify the laws which regulate the elections for Parliament and for local authorities, enforcing a minimum 30% quota of representation for women and men on all party lists of candidates.

Education is a very fresh topic of debate nowadays in the Romanian public space and it has a very important gender perspective, although this aspect is rarely mentioned. In Romania, in 2011, 1,36 % is the rate of illiteracy and more than a half is made-up of women (1,74%). The illiteracy rate is 3 times higher in rural areas and roma women represent the most vulnerable group (more than 40,000 women). This is also linked to the school dropout rate which, in Romania's case, is rising each year and already is one of the highest in EU. Women are still the majority among the higher education graduates but that is not reflected on the labor market.

The employment rates of men and women still show a 15,4 % difference in favor of men in 2014 but the unemployment rate is higher for men than for women by 0,8 %. The question is always: where are the women? They are not active on the **labor market** and the Government has to take measures to ensure a better representation of women. Of course, inactivity is not inactivity at all, it has roots in the lack of proper and affordable care facilities (for children and dependents), in the gender pay gap which was, in 2012, 9,7 %, in the number of victims of domestic violence, in the low access to decision – making positions, in the availability of labor in feminized sectors such as public administration, education, health, which are the lowest paid jobs.

As for the **health system** in Romania, it suffers each day more and more because of the lack of proper infrastructure, of specialists and of financial support. This reflects also on women who are both the majority of staff and the majority of patients. There are many aspects that have to be taken into consideration: there is the access to health care, which has become less and less available, due to the disbandment of many local hospitals in the last 5 years. There are scarce prevention programs, which never manage to cater to all requirements and are underfinanced (e.g.: Romania doesn't have a free breast cancer prevention program). Health care is a huge issue in itself, due to poor equipment, especially in local hospitals and clinics, unsanitary conditions, lack of necessary medicines and low numbers of staff and specialists. Moreover, there is discrimination within the health system that limits access for women from vulnerable groups, such as women from rural areas, roma women, women with disabilities, women living with HIV. Sexual and reproductive health and rights of women are not properly dealt with by public authorities and women in Romania have limited access to contraceptives and abortion (there is a low number of doctors that perform this kind of intervention in the free public health care system and, at the local level, some counties do not provide this intervention or refuse to perform them due to religious issues). On the other hand, there are abuses reported within the system, related to women with disabilities or ageing women. Romania has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the EU, three times bigger than the EU average, and ranks second in the EU as far as the teenage birth rate is concerned.

Such data has motivated the Gender Coalition to start a public campaign aimed at introducing comprehensive sexuality education as a compulsory subject to be studied in schools, but the Ministry of Education is reluctant to include it in the national curricula under debate.