

**THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**  
**The Department for Co-ordination of the Labour Market and Wage**  
**Policy**  
**THE DIRECTION FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

**THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN**  
**ROMANIA**  
**DURING 1995-2000**

**National Report**

*to serve for the preparation of the Extraordinary Session  
of the UN General Assembly on*

*Women Beyond 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the XXIth Century*

**BUCHAREST**  
**1999**

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## PREAMBLE

*The National Report on the Status of Women in Romania during 1995-2000, has been elaborated on the basis of the UN Questionnaire submitted to national governments by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women. This report will serve for the preparation of the Extraordinary Session of the UN General Assembly on: "Women Beyond 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the XX1th Century", and is meant to emphasise Romania's undertaking towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

*The National Report follows the distribution and succession of UN Questionnaire indices. Part I outlines directions in promoting equal opportunities and the empowerment of women. Part II describes financial and institutional measures relevant to the subject. Part III tackles ways to implement critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, emphasising innovative policies, programmes, projects and positive practices, barriers, commitments for future action and initiatives. The annexes to the Report provide relevant statistics.*

*The present document has been elaborated by the Direction for Equal Opportunities within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection<sup>1</sup> - MMPS - being based on the Direction's activity and on information provided by other ministries and national institutions. The following seven ministries responded to MMPS' invitation to complete the UN Questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: the Ministry for National Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry for the Interior and the Ministry of National Defence.*

*Wherever relevant, the present Report also refers to the activity of gender equality and women orientated NGOs. However, as known, the contribution of the respective NGOs is reported from a civil society perspective.*

*The present Report also contains information from bibliographical sources listed in the annex document.*

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<sup>1</sup> MMPS - The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection  
DES - The Direction for Equal Opportunities

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION**  
of  
**DIRECTIONS IN PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE  
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

An important step in Romania's endeavour to apply international provisions and recommendations as well as the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action was the establishment, in October 1995, of the **Department for the Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights**. The Department was set up by a Governmental Decision, as part of the Ministry for Labour and Social Protection and is co-ordinated by a secretary of state. It includes the *General Direction for the Co-ordination of Women's Rights* and the *Direction for Development of Family Policies*.

The strategy for the promotion of women's rights, equal opportunities for men and women and social advancement has been developed in the past 10 years. However, in the early '90s, decision-making agents showed but little interest in gender issues, although one of the first laws to be passed in 1990 was intended to lift the prohibition on abortion. This was accompanied with the start of the civil society's self-organising process. Over time, civil society has become increasingly aware of its role in the democracy building process. The Beijing World Conference on Women marked a change in gender mainstreaming in Romania. Following the event, the Romanian Government decided to nationally apply the provisions of the World Conference final documents, previously endorsed by all participant countries. Moreover, Romanian decision making agents became more aware of the importance of acting in line with relevant ratified international Conventions.

Started in 1998, the governmental authority reform process also affected the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. A new **Department for Co-ordination of the Labour Market and Wage Policy** was set up, including, since 1999, a *Direction for Equal Opportunities (DES)*. The latter's overall objective is to implement gender mainstreaming in the current social policies of Romania.

DES has the following liabilities:

- to monitor the discrimination-free access of women to the labour market, as well as the improvement of working conditions for women;
- to propose measures for the improvement of the relevant legal frame and to monitor the implementation of the law in this sector;
- in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations, to develop reports and studies on the social status of

women and to advance solutions for the elimination of identified negative aspects.

The central institutional frame expanded by the establishment of two new Centres, also part of the MMPS and co-ordinated by a secretary of state:

- *The Pilot Centre for the Protection and Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence* - its role is to provide assistance and protection for victims of domestic violence; to develop a relevant database to be used by DES in its research activity.
- *The Family Information and Consulting Centre* - its role is to provide assistance for couples in crisis; to monitor trends in family development; to identify necessary means of support for young families and families facing social problems.

DES is also responsible for providing methodology related guidance to the above mentioned centres.

In addition to this, the local Social and Family Assistance Departments within MMPS include *units for family assistance and equal opportunities for women and men*. This is a gender mainstreaming based structure and reflects a new approach, orientated towards the improvement of the social status of women based on equal opportunities and equal rights principles. It also reflects an improved efficiency in programme development.

The national institutional frame created in 1995 was enlarged in April 1997 by the establishment of a *Sub-commission for Equal Opportunities* as part of the Parliamentary Commission for the Accession of Romania to the EU. Its activity consists in providing information and also informing specialised Parliamentary standing commissions and other interested institutions on all relevant international recommendations, regulation, norms and standards. In addition, it facilitates and accelerates the legal harmonisation process, so much needed for the implementation of equal opportunities principle in Romania. This sub-commission is made up of MPs from all the political parties represented in the Romanian Parliament and has a group of experts in gender issues.

Within the newly created Ombudsman (which started operating in 1998) a *Department for Child, Women and Family Protection* was created, aimed at defending the rights of its beneficiaries.

The equal opportunity legal frame includes two major draft laws:

- the **Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men**, already debated by Senate's specialised commission and to be debated by the Chambers of Parliament;
- the **Law on Parental Leave**, approved by the Romanian Government and the specialised Commission of the Deputy Chamber and currently debated by the Romanian Parliament.

Other relevant laws are under preparation:

- a) the Draft Law on the Establishment and Operation of Brothels (proposed by the Parliamentary Sub-commission for Equal Opportunities);
- b) proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, particularly the introduction of penalties for domestic violence (initiator: the Ministry of Justice; the Human Rights Commission of the Senate).

Various legal provisions regarding women in special situations - such as redundancy, unemployment among older women, and the retirement of women working in harsh conditions - have been passed.

In recent years more efforts have been paid towards the harmonisation of national law to international human rights legislation, as a step towards the accession of Romania to the European Union. This was additionally in order to bring the internal legislation towards standards ratified by Romania through its regional and international partnerships, including those on women's rights.

All these confirm that Romanian legislation is in favour of the advancement of women's rights in all fields - politics, economy and culture. Yet, there are still mentalities and behaviours that encourage gender discrimination. Besides, Romania lacks the legal implementation mechanism (or lacks cohesion between the existing elements) and penalties for the infringement of the law.

The main activities in the social sector have been focused on four basic directions:

- the establishment of a social dialogue related institutional frame by setting up advisory bodies for social partners at both central and local level;
- strengthening the role of social partners;
- decentralising the decision making process in industrial relations, followed by the attraction of social partners in the above mentioned process;
- ensuring social protection focused on needs and categories of the population.

The Law on the Establishment and Functioning of the **Economic and Social Council** provides the general operating frame for the social dialogue at national level. It is a legally registered tripartite, autonomous body of public interest and aims to achieve social dialogue between Government, employers and trade unions. The Economic and Social Council is consulted in the development of economic and social policy. At the same time, on the request of the parties involved, it acts as mediator in disputes between social partners. The Economic and Social Council assesses the country's economic and social situation and makes proposals related to the restructuring and development of the national economy, the privatisation of economic units, industrial relations, wage policy, social protection, health care, education and research.

On the basis of a Governmental Decision, **Commissions for social dialogue** were set up within ministries and prefects' offices. These are advisory bodies that include representatives of public authorities, trade unions and employers and are meant to develop ties between social partners (employers, unions) and consult with them on legal, socio-economic, restructuring and labour re-conversion issues.

Women's organisations have been set up within the trade union confederations. Over time, they developed into **departments for equal opportunities**. Their activity is primarily focused on the promotion of equal rights for women and men at work and within industrial relations.

There are over 90 women and family orientated NGOs whose programmes focus on civil and political education, vocational/occupational training, development of business opportunities, health care/reproductive health and family planning, counselling of women in crisis, and assistance for victims of domestic violence.

Despite the interest of NGOs in collaborating with governmental authorities, the two sides failed to develop a consistent dialogue. This is probably due to the Government's limited capacity for action and to some deficits in the non-governmental sector. At present, there are no sound and coherent partnerships within the non-governmental sector intended to help NGOs develop into a distinctive dialogue partner able to clearly define its priorities of action.

As far as equality programmes are concerned, Romania is currently participating in **the IV EU Medium-term Action Plan for the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men**. Two programme proposals - on the establishment of an Information Centre for Women and a network of centres for the support and protection of victims of domestic violence - have also been developed and presented in the meeting of the G24 Advisory Group for Romania (Brussels, November



1997). Representatives of international financial organisations were also present in the meeting.

Through its *"Partners for Change"* programme, UNDP has offered the central and local authorities working in the equality sector an opportunity for training, specialisation and information; national and local workshops on the status of women in Romania, and the active role of men in the implementation of equal opportunities have also been organised.

The present report outlines the 1995-1999 evolution of the status of women within some major components of public policy (economy, health, education) as follows:

- The recent unequal distribution of the **female workforce** as well as the gradual reduction of job opportunities for women have resulted in the increase of unemployment among young women and female university graduates. Young women are more exposed to sexual harassment at work and other forms of direct and indirect sex discrimination related to employment, promotion, and dismissal.

Yet, there are some positive effects in the economic evolution: the development of the private sector and the presence of women at management level. Using their entrepreneurial and organisational capacities, many women adapted to the new economic climate and have started business. Women have become very competitive in sectors such as trading, banking, health, journalism and culture.

- In Romania, women represent the majority of the population (51%). A 1995-1999 analysis by age groups and residence areas reveals a **strong ageing process among the female population**, particularly in rural areas. And this, in the general context of a decline in the birth rate; a fall, by 21.4%, in the young population (0-14 years of age); and an **increased life expectancy**.

Indeed, in Romania the share of women in the population affected by ageing has increased, particularly in rural areas. Unfortunately, there are but a few research studies focusing on women's needs and to help set the premises for an adequate action plan.

In the last four years, despite the increase in percentage of fertile women (15-49 age group), the birth rate has gradually declined, the lowest being registered in 1996. Slightly higher for the last two years, the birth rate is still too low to stop the decline in number of the population. Heart disease and cancer (manly breast and cervical) are the most common death cause among women. Mortality at birth is high - 5 times higher than the average level for Europe.

- The Law on Education (1995) includes no education related gender discrimination. *There are no major gender discrepancies in the gross*

*school enrolment and school abandonment rates at all pre-university education levels.* The female enrolment rate into higher education has increased in parallel with the number of places available. Thus, in 1997 there were 799.0 female students per 100,000 inhabitants (compared to 329.0 in 1990).

The number of women in the education system is high, both as students and teachers. The gross enrolment rate is almost evenly shared among men and women (62.5% in 1998 compared to 61.6% in 1996); women account for 71.1% of total teaching staff (83% in primary and secondary school and 30% in higher education).

However, there are gender discrepancies in enrolment opportunities in both rural and urban areas. Thus, whilst the fall in the enrolment rate in primary education is general, enrolment and graduation levels are lower among high-school female pupils. The 1996 national female gross enrolment rate was 58.4%, with severe rural-urban discrepancies: 8.8% in rural areas compared to 93.2% in the urban ones.

Although lower than in the early '90s, the female illiteracy rate is still high: 4.6% in 1997 (compared to 5.0% in 1992). Women over the age of 50 years account for 85.5% of the total number of illiterate women. By area of residence, the female illiteracy rate is higher in rural areas for both the young and older female population.

Apparently, polarisation among women is deeper in sectors such as education and vocational training. Thus, despite the high number of qualified women, there is a growing number of unskilled female workers.

Unfortunately, **domestic violence** as a social phenomenon remains at a critical level, being generated and encouraged by a number of complex psycho-social factors. Most frequently, the victims are children and women. Yet, there is an increasing concern among state institutions and civil society for the prevention, alleviation and control of this phenomenon, hence the initiatives in the legal sector and the focus on specific actions. *The Pilot Centre for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence* was set up in 1996 and is the only centre of its kind, financed by the state. Its activity was summed up in a study on domestic violence. The study is based on a three year case study compilation. In addition to this, non-governmental organisations became involved in non-violence education programmes and in raising public awareness on the gravity of the issue. Counselling centres have been set up in various localities, aimed at providing assistance and advice to women in crisis, victims of domestic aggression and abuse. Unfortunately, due to their low

numbers, they have failed to solve the problem. Moreover, their activity is insufficiently supported by other state institutions (police force, justice, medical system).

- The expansion of **prostitution and the international trafficking in girls/women** are among the more alarming situations that are particularly difficult to eradicate, being a result of the harsh economic situation and the lack of job opportunities. Recently, a draft law has been prepared aimed at controlling prostitution. Thus, this is intended to legalise brothels and allow the strict supervision of staff by specialised state institutions.
- Within the general context, the status of **Roma women** must be one of particular concern. Thus, relevant analyses have revealed that, in this respect, there is a need for special policies, to involve both public institutions and NGOs. Here are some factors that justify this concern: the rapid growth of poverty among Roma population; isolated community life, governed by its own rules; lack of education, particularly in the early stages; marriage and motherhood widely spread among teenagers; lack of qualifications and job opportunities; high rate of unemployment; the predominantly violent living environment, a high criminal potential. All these contribute to the deterioration of the status of **Roma women**, particularly girls and young women, who are more exposed to abuse in the context of total economic dependency and strong prohibitions at community level (e.g. the ban of modern birth control methods).
- Socio-demographic data reveals that there is still a general trend to comply with the traditional pattern of early marriage. In many cases, this diminishes vocational training opportunities for young families and, implicitly, reduces the chance to meet the requirements of a competitive labour market. Although Romanian legislation is free of explicit discrimination, some legal provisions may favour gender discrimination. Thus, according to international provisions, the Family Code stipulates different minimum marriage ages for boys and girls - 16 years of age for girls (and, if medically endorsed, 15 years) and 18 years for boys, provided that they are in their full civil rights. This may have negative effects such as: discrepancies related to the status of partners (in regards to the exercise of civil and political rights at marriage and divorce); interruption of the education/training and reduced career opportunities for girls; excessive housework and domestic tasks inducing premature health problems that amplify over time.

Single parent families have increased in number. In most cases, women bear all household related responsibilities and are in charge

with the procurement of resources. This situation is more alarming as the social protection system cannot provide adequate support or adapt to changes generated by the transition to private sector.

- The fall in the standard of living is also reflected by high indices such as: the mortality at birth rate, the number of abortions, infant mortality rate, and the rate in underweight births. The decline in the birth rate is generalised, but it varies by income level groups: the birth rate is extremely low among the population with a medium and high income, and quite high in poor and marginalised communities, with limited opportunities for the normal development of children.

The situation of girls/women in rural areas is also alarming, as here the standard of living is much lower. The latest census revealed a high number of inappropriate accommodation units, lack of an adequate water supply and the lack of access to the health care system.

Above all these, girls/women in rural areas have minimal education, vocational training and job opportunities, hence their economic dependency within the family.

- Offering a more diverse approach on the status of women in Romania, data provided by the ministries build up a better understanding of the matter, whilst tackling various sectors of activity and aspects of social life.

Thus, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture provides additional information on the socio-economic status of women in rural areas: the serious fall in the birth rate has resulted in an intensive ageing process of the rural population. Also, the share of women in the total rural population has increased, particularly for some age groups. Therefore increased attention should be paid to the women's role in rural economy. In these areas, women tend to be more economically isolated, primarily due to the low level of vocational training (much lower than for men). Thus, only 18.2% of vocational school graduates, 20.8% of college graduates and 29.4% of higher education graduates are women coming from countryside. Although access to education is unlimited, the structure of the rural education system fails to facilitate the access to all levels of education: primary and secondary schools account for 96.9% of the rural education units.

Gender classification by socio-professional status shows that a high number of women in rural areas work as unpaid family workers and freelancers, being officially registered as housewives.

Likewise, data from the Ministry of National Education show that women account for 75% of the illiterate population, particularly those living in the countryside or in Roma communities.

Despite their prevalence in the education system, there are but a few women holding top management and administrative positions (no female minister/secretary of state in the Ministry of National Education, no female rectors, a few female deans and less female professors/doctors than men).

Women have managed to break into male dominating socio-professional sectors. Yet, only few of them hold top positions, particularly within the active military staff.

The increased number of activities based on collaboration between ministries reflect the concern for equal opportunities for women and men at the central authority level. A Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law was created within the Ministry of the Interior. This is a minister's advisory body that co-operates with governmental and non-governmental organisations to defend citizens rights, particularly the rights of categories predisposed to violence. The Ministry of Interior has taken part in the negotiation of inter-governmental co-operative bilateral agreements on organised crime primarily focused on the fight against trafficking in human beings. Moreover, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of National Education have develop mutual activities meant to prevent crime and victimisation among pupils and addressing the specific problems of girls.

- Substantial progress has been achieved in raising public awareness on equal opportunities for women and men. Paradoxically, in 1989 the population of Romania was, and still is, marked by the communist ideology of forced gender equality. Gender discrimination had been apparently eradicated (by ensuring an equal access to education, vocational training and, particularly, by equal job opportunities and equal remuneration). Yet, the social and professional empowerment of women came in a context of traditional discrepancy where, unlike men, the latter bore all household related responsibilities. Therefore, there was no actual equality between women and men. After 1989, the economic restructuring and privatisation has created an increasing competitive labour market and, simultaneously, led to the reduction in job opportunities. This in the context of a growing rate of inflation and low job security. Deprived and marginalised, women are more often victims of these economic circumstances which affect their existing social position and job opportunities. This aspect is to be tackled in the chapter on the status of women of the herein paper.

- **Romanian media** is still far from promoting positive messages on the partnership between gender and the social role of women. Sexist clichés are still used therefore helping to create a distorted public image of women, hence the distorted role of women in both public and private life.. A 1997 study developed by the Romanian Society for Feminist Analyses, AnA, on the status of women as reflected by various daily newspapers reveal the use of sexist clichés and approaches such as:

- enhancement of women's aesthetics, frivolity, maternity related features;
- enhancement of the sensational connotation of violence against women (sometimes violence against women is minimised);
- lack of media reports on successful carrier women;
- denigration and banter of female politicians;
- gender discrimination in job advertising.

Using the gender perspective in the elaboration of structural reforms and policies for the stability of macro-economics is a recognition of women's contribution to development.. Furthermore, gender-orientated economic analyses are needed for the development of fair policies aimed at reducing women's vulnerability to poverty. In 1997, a *National Commission for Poverty Alleviation* (CNPCS) was set up in Romania, under the patronage of the country's President. In collaboration with the UNDP, the Commission developed the **National Strategy for Poverty Alleviation**, as a priority of the current development programme, which provides a series of coherent poverty alleviation recommendations. It also includes policies for the assistance of groups at high risk, among which are women, and action for: the economic empowerment of women; child care orientated financial/material assistance and services; recognition and valuation of unpaid work; effective protection of women against violence, crime and abuse.

The improvement in the social status of women and the promotion of equal opportunities are also part of the **National Strategy for Sustainable Development beyond 2000**.

**ANSWERS TO  
THE UN QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

**PART I  
REVIEW**

**on  
THE DIRECTIONS FOR PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY  
AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN ROMANIA**

**1. Directions for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Romania**

For Romania, a crucial step towards the implementation of the international provisions, recommendations and objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action was the establishment, in October 1995, of the Department for the Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights. The Department was set up within the Ministry for Labour and Social Protection by Governmental Decision and is co-ordinated by a secretary of state. It includes *the General Direction for the Co-ordination of Women's Rights and the Direction for the Development of Family Policies*.

Setting up this governmental body was vitally important, as it sums up the efforts paid by both decision making factors and Romanian society to accelerate the democracy building process. Moreover, this institutional frame has facilitated the identification of major problems that have a negative impact on the social status of women, as well as the development of strategies to eliminate these problems.

The **National Action Plan**, presented before the Sub-regional Conference of High Governmental Experts on the implementation of the Platform for Action (Bucharest, 1996), outlines the national policy streamlines and expresses the Romanian Government's commitment to assist in the achievement of gender equality and the promotion of women's participation in social life.

As a central part of the Governing Programme, the **National Action Plan** on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action recognises that the progress of modern society can be based only on the recognition of equal participation of women and men in social life.

The National Action Plan includes major objectives and a national strategy tackling critical aspects related to the implementation of Beijing's final documents.

The major objectives as defined by the National Action Plan are:

- a. To create and develop institutional mechanisms to co-ordinate the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities for women and men.
- b. To promote fair access of women to public and decision making positions.
- c. To improve the economic situation of women, to provide equal access to labour market, the control and use of economic resources.
- d. To improve women's health condition .
- e. To prevent and reduce domestic violence, particularly against women and children.
- f. To stimulate women's participation in environmental protection and alleviation of environmental pollution.
- g. To implement gender mainstreaming at all social, cultural, educational levels; and in this respect, to enhance the role of the media.
- h. To collaborate with national non-governmental organisations and international bodies in the process of implementing the National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities.

The mainstreaming strategy has been developed in the last 10 years. In the early years of democracy the decision-making agents showed but little interest in gender issues, although one of the first laws to be passed in 1990 lifted the ban on abortion. At that time, civil society had just started to organise itself and become aware of its role in the democracy building process. Major changes occurred after the Beijing World Conference on Women. The Government decided to nationally apply the provisions of the World Conference's final documents endorsed by all participant countries. To this, one has to add the increasing awareness of Romanian decision making agents towards acting in line with the ratified international Conventions in the sector.

Since 1996, once relevant national policy and strategy had been passed, major progress has been achieved in the promotion and application of women's rights, as well as in creating favourable conditions for the implementation of equal opportunities.



## 1.1 Achievements and barriers in the implementation of the National Action Plan

### A. *The institutional frame*

Started in 1998, the **governmental authority reform** process also affected the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. A new **Department for the Co-ordination of the Labour Market and Wage Policy** was set up, including, since 1999, a ***Direction for Equal Opportunities (DES)***. The latter's overall objective is to include the non-discrimination and equal opportunity principles within the current social policies of Romania.

DES has the following responsibilities:

- to monitor the discrimination-free access of women to the labour market, as well as improving working conditions for women;
- to propose measures for improving the relevant legal frame and to monitor the law implementation process in the sector;
- in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations, to develop reports and studies on the social status of women and to advance solutions for the elimination of identified negative aspects.

At central level, the institutional frame consists of two Centres developed within the MMPS and co-ordinated by a secretary of state:

- **The Pilot Centre for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Domestic Violence** - with a role to provide assistance and protection for victims of domestic violence; and to develop a relevant database for use by DES in its research activity.
- **The Family Information and Consulting Centre** - with a role to provide assistance for couples in crisis; to identify trends in family development; and to identify the necessary means to support young families and families facing social problems.

In addition to this, the local Social and Family Assistance Departments within MMPS include ***sections for family assistance and equal opportunities for women and men***. This structure reflects a new approach in respect of improving the social status of women, based on equal rights and opportunities. It also reflects a more efficient programme development process.

The national institutional frame created in 1995 was enlarged in April 1997 by the establishment of a ***Sub-commission for Equal Opportunities*** as part of the **Parliamentary Commission for the Accession of Romania to EU**. The sub-commission's activity focuses on

providing information on all relevant international recommendations, regulation, norms and standards to all specialised standing commissions within the Romanian Parliament, as well as to all interested institutions. In addition, it facilitates and accelerates the legal harmonisation, so much needed for the implementation of an equal opportunities principle. The sub-commission is made up of MPs from all political parties represented in the Romanian Parliament and has a group of gender issue experts.

Within the newly created *Ombudsman* (which started functioning in 1998) a *Department for Child, Women and Family Protection* was created in order to defend their rights.

*The limited development of the equal opportunities related institutional frame is primarily due to the lack of financial resources. This is also a major barrier in the overall application of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

### **B. The legal frame**

Romanian legislation includes clear provisions on equal rights, irrespective of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, gender, faith, political views, wealth or social origin (The Romanian Constitution - art 4, item 16). Both the Romanian Constitution and the Family Code stipulate equal rights and liabilities in marriage. Likewise, the Labour Code stipulates the equal right to work the advancement of women in conditions of full equality - work, payment - as well as special protection measures.

Romanian legislation complies with the international equal rights principles. Thus, Art. 20 of the Romanian Constitution stipulate that constitutional provisions on citizens' rights and freedoms shall be interpreted and applied in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In cases of discrepancy between national legislation and ratified international agreements/treaties on fundamental human rights, the latter shall prevail.

As far as equal opportunities are concerned, two major draft laws were elaborated:

- the *Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*, already debated by the Senate's specialised commission and to be debated by the Chambers of Parliament;
- the *Law on Parental Leave*, approved by the Romanian Government and by the Specialised Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and currently being debated by the Romanian Parliament.

The *Draft Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* is a modern expression of the non-discrimination principle, a gender code of

conduct in a complex social context, particularly in the labour area. Although formally focused on the activity of authorities and social partners, the law sets moral and political obligations for a number of private and public structures.

The draft law guarantees equal opportunities for women and men in all social sectors and makes public authorities in charge of applying this principle. It also defines direct and indirect sex discrimination and forbids discrimination in the field of industrial relations, and specifically in: the conclusion, interruption, alteration and dissolution of labour agreements; negotiation and modification of wages; the granting of social benefits, other than wage related ones; vocational training and re-conversion; and promotion.

Furthermore, the draft law regulates two aspects regarding the socio-professional status of employees:

- it stipulates a gender free job advertising that is also neutral from the point of view of marital status;
- it tackles sexual harassment at work and its forms, as a reflection of the violation of personal dignity.

The law also stipulates compensations for victims of discrimination and harassment at work: discrimination related to training and/or job re-conversion opportunities, promotion, and remuneration. In addition, it sets penalties for: the interruption, alteration and dissolving of labour agreements on a gender criteria; sexual harassment in circumstances other than related to industrial relations; failure, by companies, to display the text of the law in suitable places accessible to employees.

The **Draft Law on Parental Leave** promotes the principle of equal participation of partners in family life and the fair distribution of child care and education related responsibilities. This is intended to encourage the father to assume a role in bringing up the child and, therefore, to undertake part of a mother's traditional responsibilities.

The law stipulates 5 days paid leave - plus a 10 days extension - provided that the father attends an infant-care training course and possesses a certificate to attest his participation in the course. Infant-care training courses may be organised by medical units and run by specialised medical staff.

The above mentioned draft laws comply with the European standards for the elimination of gender discrimination and are part of the broad harmonisation process of Romanian legislation to the EU dispositions and recommendations.

#### **Other initiatives in the legal sector:**

- a) the Draft Law on the Establishment and Operation of Brothels (initiator: The Parliamentary Commission for Equal Opportunities)

b) proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, specifically the introduction of penalties for domestic violence (initiator: the Ministry of Justice; the Human Rights Commission of the Senate).

The recently passed **Law on paid child care leave for children up to 2 years of age** is also intended to improve equal opportunities related legislation. This law provides optional paid leave for one of the parents, provided that he/she is a contributor to the state social insurance system. The novelty of the law stands in the fact that it offers parent-employees the opportunity to reconcile work and family life. It is the first time fathers are recognised as having the right to participate in the care of a child.

Specific provisions referring to women in special situations such as mass redundancies, unemployment among older women, and early retirement for women working in harsh conditions have been included in other laws (**Law no. 2/1995 on the early retirement of unemployment benefit recipients; Emergency Ordinance no. 9/1997 on the protection of redundancies resulting from company restructuring/privatisation/winding up - endorsed by Law no. 108/1997 and amended by Emergency Ordinance no. 52/1997 endorsed, at its turn, by Law no. 103/1998; Law no. 57/1998 endorsing the Emergency Ordinance no. 39/1997 on early retirement for women working in the mining industry).**

In recent years further efforts have been made towards harmonisation of national and international human rights related legislation, with the view to prepare for the accession of Romania to the European Union. This was also in order to bring the internal legislation up to the standards ratified by Romania through its regional and international partnerships, including those on women's rights.

Although the above mentioned confirm the fact that Romanian legislation favours the advancement of women's rights in all fields - politics, economy and culture, there are still mentalities and behaviours that encourage gender discrimination. Besides, Romania lacks the mechanisms to implement the law (or lacks cohesion between the existing components) and penalties for the infringement of the law.

### ***C. The development of social dialogue***

Romania's Development Programme up to the year 2000 and elaborated by the current Government at the beginning of their mandate, places great importance on dialogue with social partners in finding solutions to problems related to industrial relations policy, social

insurance and the protection of the unemployed. The state is one of moderator in the social partners' dialogue and of a guarantee of the fairness of the process.

The main activities in the social sector have been focused on four basic directions:

- the establishment of a social dialogue related institutional frame by creating advisory bodies for social partners at both central and local levels;
- strengthening the role of social partners;
- decentralising the decision making process in industrial relations, followed by the attraction of social partners in the above mentioned process;
- ensuring social protection focused on the needs and categories of the population.

The Law on the Establishment and Operation of the *Economic and Social Council* provides the general operating frame for social dialogue at national level. It is a legally registered tripartite, autonomous body of public interest and aims to achieve social dialogue between Government, employers and trade unions. The Economic and Social Council is consulted in the development of economic and social policy. At the same time, on request of the parties involved, it acts as mediator in disputes between social partners. The Economic and Social Council assesses the country's economic and social situation and makes proposals related to the restructuring and development of the national economy, privatisation of economic units, industrial relations, wage policy, social protection, health care, education and research.

Based on a Governmental Decision, *Commissions for social dialogue* were created within ministries and prefects' offices. These are advisory bodies that include representatives of public authorities, trade unions and employers and are intended to develop ties between social partners (employers, unions) and consult with them on legal, socio-economic, restructuring and labour re-conversion issues.

Women's organisations have been set up within the trade union confederations. Over time, they developed into departments for equal opportunities. Their activity is primarily focused on the promotion of equal rights for women and men at work, and within the industrial relations field. Unfortunately, the status of women in the labour market fails to be a well defined priority for trade union decision making bodies, and this is partly due to the absence of women at union leadership level.

Since 1989, Romanian civil society has become involved in an increasing number of sectors of activity, undertaking important roles in

community life. Initially operating in the humanitarian sector they soon started being involved in information, raising awareness and education programmes, and having a substantial contribution in the change of mentality and the development of a democratic society.

Among the newly established NGOs some have focused on women's problems, aiming to promote women's rights and improve the status of women in Romania, and building their experience over the past ten years. Many non-governmental organisations disappeared whilst new ones emerged, others have managed to gain considerable experience in their ten years of existence. At present, at national level, there are over 90 NGOs focusing on the status of women, family and gender issues.

They run programmes of civil and political education, vocational/occupational training, business opportunities, health care/reproductive health and family planning, counselling of women in crisis, assistance for victims of domestic violence. Some NGOs were recognised by participating in international, regional programmes and/or being integrated in the global information network.

*Despite the NGOs interest in collaborating with governmental authorities, the two parties failed to develop a perpetual dialogue. This is probably due to the Government's limited capacity for action and to some failures in the non-governmental sector. At present, there are no sound and coherent partnerships within the non-governmental sector intended to help NGOs develop into a distinctive dialogue partner able to clearly define its priorities of action.*

International agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, ILO, WHO) present in Romania play a major role in encouraging participation of social actors in health, education, and research programmes. Thus, they fund and assist projects initiated by representatives of civil society and government. The exceptional results of these projects are a proof of the fruitful collaboration between partners with similar objectives.

#### **D. Equality orientated programmes**

The national strategy for equality complies with European programmes. Currently, Romania participates in *the IV-th European Union Medium Term Action Programme (1998-2000) for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*. As for sharing the programme implementation costs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection allocated the equivalent of ECU 70,000 for the enforcement of the EU equal opportunities programme.

Two programme proposals have also been developed and presented at the meeting of the G24 Consultative Group for Romania (Brussels, November 1997). The projects aim to set up an Information Centre for

Women and a network of centres for the support and protection of victims of domestic violence. Representatives of international financial organisations were also present in the meeting.

The resident UN agencies have supported and encouraged governmental initiatives related to gender discrimination and promotion of gender equality. Thus, through its *"Partners for Change"* programme, UNDP offered the specialised central and local governmental authorities an opportunity for training, specialisation and information; national and local workshops on the status of women in Romania and on the active role of men in achieving equal opportunities have also been organised. The programme for economic empowerment of women in rural areas is another priority and so is the introduction of sex disaggregated statistics, essential in identifying the deficiencies in the overall empowerment of women process.

The specialised governmental structure within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has collaborated with UNFPA and UNICEF and developed partnership programmes focused on women's health care, the elimination of violence against women and children, the publication of relevant mass information materials - the MMPS and UNFPA elaborated and published a PRACTICAL GUIDE on maternity rights (50,000 copies).

### ***E. The present status of women in Romanian society***

Below is some information concerning the 1995-2000 evolution of the status of women in a few major sectors of activity.

#### *Women and the economy*

The proportion of women within the total population of Romania and within the active population is high. The latter is due to a long tradition in the vocational training of women. Although the occupancy rate amongst the female population is relatively stable (nevertheless declining over time, particularly in recent years), their participation in the economic development is barely visible. A great deal of women's initiative in the labour market remains almost unrecognised and unvalued due to the absence of sex disaggregated statistics (where gender equality has not yet been introduced in statistics).

#### *Data on female labour resources*

The current economic participation of women is relatively high. Yet, social discrepancies have increased. Women seem to be highly motivated to work in the private sector, proving an excellent capacity to

adapt to market requirements. However, nationally, women working in the public sector are under-occupied and discouraged.

An analysis of the evolution of the occupied population reveals a fall in the number of occupied people and increasing unemployment, and an increase in the non-active population. Eighty-one percent of the total population is represented by people aged 15 years and above, of which 51.6% are women. Yet, women account for only 45.1% of the **occupied population**. During 1998-1999, the share of women in the occupied population has dropped. Likewise, in the first quarter of 1999, the **female occupancy rate** was lower than men (45.1%).

The age group of *60 and over* is the most affected by the **decline of female activity rate** in the active population. The male activity rate is systematically higher for all age groups (this is also due to different retirement ages for men and women). The **activity rate for the active population** of 15 and above has diminished compared with the first quarter of 1998, particularly among men over the age of 65 and women between 15-24 years.

- **Distribution of the occupied population by occupational categories** reveals considerable gender disparities: in 1997, women held less than half of the total positions in top administrative and business structures (by 1999, their number reduced to one third). In 1997, women prevailed in occupations such as: office workers (72.8%), service and trading operational staff (72.3%), technicians, foremen and assimilated staff (62.2%), farmers and skilled workers working in agriculture, forestry and fishery (50.4%). At the beginning of 1999 the situation was almost the same.

There are also **gender disparities** in the distribution of the occupied population by socio-economic activities. Thus, some sectors of activity were female dominated for the whole period between 1995 and 1999. At the beginning of 1999 women held 77.7% jobs in health care and social assistance, 68.1% in education, 68.1% in financial, banking and insurance services, 66.0% in hotels and restaurants, and 54.8% in trading.

- **By income level**, the most considerable gender disparities occur in sectors where a female workforce prevails: agriculture, trading, education, health and social assistance. This situation has had a negative impact on the standard of living of women and has led to generalised poverty among them. Women working in the financial, banking and insurance services are better paid. Yet, women cannot penetrate into the top hierarchy levels.

A positive aspect of the transition consists in the high percentage of women working in the private sector - 49% of the total population



working in this sector. Thus, in the period 1995-1999 women account for over 20% of the total number of employers and over 34% of the freelancers. More than 40% of women work in the private sector. There is also a high percentage of women working as unpaid family workers (over 70%).

• **Opposite trends in economic participation of women (side effects of the transition):**

→ the apparent decline of the training level resulting in the reduction of income levels for jobs that are accessible to women. Although slow, this process is obvious when comparing male and female wages;

→ an increased participation of women in part time activities that are poorly paid, require no skills and are very often not legally registered;

→ a persisting discrimination of women in the labour market - compared to men, job opportunities for women have reduced due to a number of socio-economic factors. Furthermore, the new system of individual wage negotiation encourages perpetuation of the old sexist clichés and paternalistic behaviour;

→ motherhood jeopardises entry into the labour market by women. Young mothers are particularly affected since they face increasing difficulties in finding jobs in an organised/legal work climate. It has to be mentioned that, in order to benefit from social security services, mothers must be legally employed (in many cases, the precarious financial status of large families with young children is due to the fact that the mother cannot benefit from social security because she is not employed);

→ motherhood, in present circumstances, may lead to structural discrimination on the labour market: reduced job opportunities for mothers with young children has a negative impact on women's reintegration in the labour market; the accessible workplaces required, but low level of training and, therefore, low income.

**Labour and social protection data - the evolution of unemployment**

The female unemployment rate for the last 5 years has been relatively high, with minor variations:

Period	Female unemployment rate	Total unemployment rate
December 1995	10.3%	8.9%
December 1996	7.3%	6.3%

December 1997	9.1%	8.8%
December 1998	10.5%	10.3%
July 1999	11.1%	11.3%

An analysis of the unemployment by socio-professional groups, age groups and length of unemployment for the first three months of 1999 reveals the following:

- of the total number of unskilled female high-school graduates, women under 25 years account for the highest unemployment rate;
- likewise, among female university graduates, women of 30-39 years of age account for the highest unemployment rate;
- the average unemployment rate for age groups such as 15-24, 35-49 and over 50 is higher among women;
- in general, women are the most discouraged in finding a job, mainly due to the lack of skills, age, repeated failures, lack of information and hope;
- apparently, the number of women working occasionally on black market economy has increased. They work without a legal labour agreement and, therefore, they are denied access to the social insurance system and are exposed to under-occupation, insecurity, abuse related to payment conditions and personal dignity, etc.

Recently, in addition to the uneven distribution of the female workforce (particularly in poorly paid sectors), women have also been affected by a gradual restriction in occupational sectors and, therefore, unemployment among young women and female university graduates has increased. Moreover, girls and young women are more exposed to sexual harassment at work and other forms of direct and indirect sex discrimination (at employment, promotion, dismissal).

Yet, there are some positive effects of the economic evolution: the development of the private sector and the presence of women at management level. Using their entrepreneurial and organisational capacities, many women adapted to the new economic climate and have started business. Women have become very competitive in sectors such as trading, banking, health, journalism and culture.

### *Women and health*

In Romania, the majority of the population is represented by women (51%). A 1995-1999 analysis by age groups and residence areas reveals a strong ageing process among the female population, particularly in rural areas, and this, in the general context of a decline in

the birth rate; a fall, by 21.4%, in the young population (0-14 years of age); and an increase in life expectancy. Since the last census (1992), life expectancy for both male and females has increased (1.8 for women and 1.6 for men).

Despite an increase in the percentage of fertile women (age group 15-49), the birth rate has gradually declined, the lowest being registered in 1996. Slightly higher over the last two years, the birth rate is still too low to stop the decline in the number of the population. Heart disease and cancer (mainly breast and cervical) are the most common causes of death among women. **Mortality** at birth is high - 5 times higher than the average level for Europe. This is mainly due to pregnancy and birth related risks associated with some chronic diseases, and the effects of socio-economic conditions (depreciation in the standard of living, unemployment, lack of access to socio-medical services, etc.), that threatens the general health of women.

In 1989, maternal mortality was extremely high due to unassisted abortion. This, in the context where abortion was prohibited by the Ceausescu's regime and birth policy denied the access of women to family planning services. Subsequently, in 1990-1992, maternal mortality dropped considerably. Since 1999, this has been constant, approximately 40 deaths per 100,000 births. Romania also accounts for one of the highest rates of infant mortality in Europe, despite its constant fall in the last ten years.

On the contrary, the **abortion rate** has increased: compared to 1989 when abortion was prohibited by law. In 1990, once the ban was lifted, the rate of abortion rose to alarming levels. At present, this is a problem of great concern.

In 1992, the Ministry of Health developed a national family planning programme, providing the establishment of an urban family planning network. However, modern birth control methods are still very little known, particularly among the population living in rural areas. Unfortunately, abortion remains one of the most popular means of birth control, alongside conventional methods. Yet, the latter are far less efficient than modern methods and, therefore, remain the cause of unwanted pregnancy and child abandonment.

The reform of the health care system started in 1997, once Law no. 145 was passed. Since then, a series of mother and child protection measures have been adopted. Thus, the social insurance system provides gratis pre/postnatal medical services and free health care for children up to 16 years of age. Health policy is accompanied by a series of family and child orientated social measures: material and financial assistance, and the establishment of specific services.

A **National Strategy for the Promotion of Reproductive Health** was developed by the Ministry of Health, with the participation of public institutions and non-governmental partners. Its overall objective is intended to inform and educate the population, particularly young people; to promote modern birth control methods and healthier sexual practices.

In Romania, the share of women in the population affected by ageing has increased, particularly in rural areas. Unfortunately, there are few research studies to focus on women's needs and to help set the basis for an adequate action plan.

#### *Women and education*

Offering equal accomplishment and participation opportunities depends on the decision making agents' concern for creating a fair education and training environment.

Current legislation, particularly the Law on Education, contains no education related gender discrimination. At high-school level, there are no major gender discrepancies in the gross school enrolment and abandonment rate. The number of female students enrolled in higher education has increased in parallel with the number of places available. However, there are rural-urban discrepancies in respect of **enrolment opportunities**. In Romania the share of women in the population affected by ageing has increased, particularly in rural areas. Unfortunately, there are few research studies to focus on women's needs and to help lay the foundations for an adequate action plan.

During the school year 1997-1998, the share of women in the total number of graduates was 49.6% for gymnasium, 55.3% for high schools, 34.6% for vocational training, 58.6% for higher education. In 1997, 53.2% of the total number of graduates were female students and the 1997-1998 female graduation rate was 97.2%, higher than the male rate at both national and regional levels.

There are no major gender disparities in both gross enrolment and school abandonment rates for primary and secondary education. Yet, there are serious discrepancies at high-school level.

As for **higher education**, the number of places in universities has increased in parallel with the share of female students in the total number of enrolled students; thus, in 1997, there were 799.0 female students per 100,000 inhabitants (compared to 392.0 in 1990).

However, the percentage of illiterate women is high: 75% of the total illiterate population are women living particularly in rural areas or Roma communities.

Although lower than in the early '90s, the percentage of illiterate women is still high: 4.6% in 1997 (compared to 5.0% in 1992). Of their

total, women over the age of 50 account for 85.5%. By area of residence, the female illiteracy rate is higher in rural areas for both the young and older female population.

*Apparently, polarisation among women is deeper in sectors such as education and vocational training. Thus, despite the high number of qualified women, there is a growing number of unskilled female workers.*

The number of women involved in the education system, both as students and teachers, is high. Women account for 70.1% of the total teaching staff (between 83% in primary and secondary education levels and 30% in higher education).

In recent years, gender issues have been introduced in various types of school studies, particularly in humanities orientated higher education. This reflects the concern of the education system for the status of women.

- **Institutionalisation of gender training/programmes:**

- The introduction of gender studies/training modules in various universities (Bucharest, Cluj, Timisoara, Craiova);
- The introduction, in 1998, of a gender's master degree at the National School for Political and Administrative Studies, Bucharest.

- **Basic research on education related gender disparities:**

- "Gender and Education - AnA, 1997, a study on gender dimension in school books at primary education level;
- "Gender dimension and education" - 1998, a project financed by UNDP based on data and surveys by the Ministry of National Education.

*Despite their prevalence within the education system, there are but a few women holding top management and administrative positions (no female minister/secretary of state in the Ministry of National Education, no female rectors, a few female deans and less female professors/doctors than men).*

#### *Current problems*

The state's concern for the younger generation is reflected in the Romanian Constitution which forbids any kind of exploitation of minors (Child and Youth Protection, art. 45, item 3).

Romanian legislation does not include specific provisions on violence against young girls, particularly domestic violence. However, there are provisions on the protection of children's rights inside and outside the family. Unfortunately, domestic violence as a social phenomenon maintains itself at a critical level, being generated and encouraged by a number of complex psycho-social factors. Most frequently, the victims are children and women.

Yet, there is increasing concern among state institutions and civil society for the prevention, alleviation and control of this phenomenon, hence initiatives in the legal sector and the focus on specific actions. *The Pilot Centre for Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence* was set up in 1996 and is the only centre of its kind, financed by the state. Its activity was summed up in a study on domestic violence. The study is based on a three year case study compilation.

In addition to this, non-governmental organisations became involved in non-violence education programmes and in raising public awareness on the gravity of the subject. Counselling centres have been set up in various localities, aimed at providing assistance and advice to women in crisis, victims of domestic aggression and abuse. Unfortunately, due to their small numbers, they have failed to solve the problem. Moreover, their activity is insufficiently supported by other state institutions (the police force, justice, and medical system).

The growth of *prostitution and international trafficking in girls/women* are among the more alarming situations that are particularly difficult to eradicate, being the result of the harsh economic situation and lack of job opportunities. Recently, a draft law has been prepared aimed at controlling prostitution, and is intended to legalise brothels and allow strict supervision of staff by specialised state institutions.

Within the general context, the status of *Roma women* must be one of particular concern. There are some factors that justify this concern: the rapid growth of poverty among the Roma population; isolated community life, governed by its own rules; lack of education, particularly in the early years; marriage and motherhood widely spread among teenagers; lack of qualifications and job opportunities; high rate of unemployment; a predominantly violent living environment, including high criminal potential. All these contribute to the deterioration of the status of Roma women, particularly girls and young women, who are more exposed to abuse in the context of a total economic dependency and strong prohibitions at community level (e.g. the ban of modern birth control methods).

*All these aspects warn of the complexity of current circumstances and their negative effects on the social status of women, which must be assessed, analysed and addressed within a strategy for elimination of gender discrimination and the promotion of equal rights and opportunities.*

## **1.2 Opposite trends in the evolution in the status of women in Romania**

In recent years, a coherent policy and a direct commitment by the decision making agents towards the improvement of the status of women in Romania have become vital. Thus, a national strategy for the promotion of equal rights for women and men has been developed.

The status of women in Romanian society has developed around opposite trends. Thus, the equality of rights and non-discrimination are guaranteed by all statutory laws - the Romanian Constitution, the Family Code, and the Labour Code. However, the lack of a capacity to apply these principles makes all these laws mere statements. Although there is no direct women's discrimination, there is a so called '*subtle discrimination*' that consists of paternalistic attitudes and, conducts and practices that place women on an inferior level (*women are 'second class' citizens*). This is mainly due to cultural and religious traditions. This is also a barrier in the social advancement of women, in their professional and decision making related progresses.

This 'subtle' barrier deeply affects the status of women, being the cause for:

- unbalanced distribution of women in the labour market - women prevail in low paid sectors of activity, subject to economic restructuring and high redundancies;
  - low economic autonomy and increased dependency on the social protection system and, within the family, on their partner's income;
  - implementation of over-protective policies, with a focus on the protection of mothers and which do not address the real needs of women. In the long term, these policies may generate opposite effects, by preventing women access to vocational training; and
- a lack of recognition of women as equal partners in decision making and as participants in the management of resources and benefits. Due to the poor number of women in political and economic decision making levels, issues related to the improvement of the status of women are marginalised (fail to be included among the Romanian government's priorities) and women are not perceived as participating in the development process of the country

Below are some **socio-demographic** data on the female population in Romania:

- women account for 51% of Romania's total population; in the last few years the female population has been predominant;
- surveys on the female population by age groups and living regions showed that the female population between 0 and 14 dropped in urban areas and increased in rural areas; the number of women between 0 and 60 has increased in both areas; and the fertile population is concentrated in rural areas;
- the slight increase in the number of fertile women (from 24.1% in 1990 to 25.9% in 1998) has not resulted in an increase in the birth rate;
- the marriage rate among the age group of 20-30 years is higher. In 1998, the average age for the first marriage was of 22.9 years for women and 26.2 years for men. It is obvious that marriage at a young age is still common among girls. Trends in family life show that women are more inclined to realise their first pregnancy.
- the (official) divorce rate remains at a moderate level (1.5 divorces per 1000 inhabitants), which confirms the inclination for a conventional pattern of living.

The above data reveals that the **traditional pattern** of early marriage is still wide-spread. In many cases, this diminishes vocational training opportunities for young families and, implicitly, the chance to meet the requirements of a competitive labour market. Although Romanian legislation is free of explicit discrimination, some legal provisions may favour gender discrimination. Thus, according to international provisions, the **Family Code** stipulates different minimum marriage ages for boys and girls - 16 years of age for girls (and, if medically endorsed, 15 years) and 18 years for boys, provided that they are within their full civil rights. This may have negative effects such as: discrepancies related to the status of partners (in regards to the exercise of civil and political rights at marriage and divorce); interruption of the education/training and reduced career opportunities for girls; excessive housework and domestic tasks inducing premature health problems that amplify over time.

Living outside of marriage is another common trend, particularly among young couples. This is the result of increased socio-economic pressure and economic insecurity. A couples' life will also be affected by the low level of education for life-skills among younger people. Thus, they encounter great difficulties in relating to each other and coping with a crisis.



Both the Romanian Constitution (art. 44) and the Family Code (art. 1) provide equal rights for spouses and guarantee the protection of marriage and family by the state. Despite the strong social orientation of the legal measures adopted in the last few years, offering protection for deprived categories that are more vulnerable in the process of transition (large families, the unemployed, the elderly, etc.), there is a lack of economic and social measures aimed at protecting young families and stimulating a growth in the birth rate.

Single parent families have increased in number. In most cases, women bear all household related responsibilities and are responsible for the procurement of resources. This situation is more alarming as the social protection system cannot provide adequate support or adapt to changes generated by the transition to the private sector.

The fall in the standard of living is also reflected by high indices such as: the rate of mortality at birth, the number of abortions, the infant mortality rate, and rate of underweight births. The decline in the birth rate is generalised, but it varies by income level groups: the birth rate is extremely low amongst the population with medium and high incomes and quite high in poor and marginalised communities, with limited opportunities a child's normal development.

The situation of girls/women in rural areas is also alarming, as here the standard of living is much lower. The latest census revealed a high number of inappropriate accommodation units, lack of an adequate water supply and a lack of access to the health care system. Above all, these girls/women in rural areas have a minimal education, with minimal vocational training and job opportunities, hence their economic dependency within the family.

The status of girls/women living in Roma communities is also alarming, for they are totally dependent on the decisions of men and have no means of living of their own.

### ***1.3 Placing the gender equality principle within the major objectives of national policy***

A major objective of national policy's is the integration of a gender equality principle in all components of social life, and the achievement of mainstreaming.

Integration of western values such as parity democracy into current practices is of major concern and is the essence of social reform related measures and programmes. Elimination of gender discrepancies related to participation in the political and decision making structures, as well as the recognition of a woman's role in the country's development process are major objectives of the present mainstreaming strategy.

High quality and responsible management of human resources, irrespective of gender, requires an ample reform in education and training. In this respect, The National Action Plan for equal opportunities aims:

- *to promote an active policy for the introduction of gender equality in the education process. This will be achieved by adapting institutional structures, restructuring programmes and the school curriculum;*
- *to stimulate women's participation in alternative, informal, long-distance and uninterrupted education;*
- *to promote family orientated education programmes, aimed at helping to change traditional life patterns and discriminating behaviour and mentality;*
- *to raise awareness and encourage the media to eliminate sexist clichés, negative connotations of media reports on violence against women, and pornographic material and patterns that jeopardise the dignity of women; and*
- *to support women orientated cultural and radio-TV programmes, aimed at mobilising the potential of women to contribute to the spiritual life of the community, and the quality of life and gender partnership.*

In order to achieve these objectives, particular attention has lately been paid to education reform. In Romania, primary and secondary education are compulsory. Special sports and art schools or schools for children with special needs are an alternative to these educational structures.

The private education system emerged in 1990. In the last two years, alternative education systems such as Waldorf and Montessori have been implemented (covering pre-school, primary and secondary education). At present, there are private schools at all levels of education. As an alternative to state education, these offer new opportunities for study.

Higher education has developed more rapidly. Female students prevail although no explicit policy for the promotion of women has been carried out in the sector. In the recent years, gender issues have been introduced in various types of university studies. This reflects an increasing concern in the education system in the status of women.

As for the integration of the gender equality principle in all components of social life, herewith are some of the solid actions carried out by governmental authorities:

- the elaboration of the *Draft Law on equal opportunities for women and men*, addressing the need for bringing national law in line with the EU legislation;
- strengthening collaboration with other institutions, particularly the *National Commission for Statistics*, towards the introduction of sex disaggregated statistics meant to reflect accurately and thoroughly, gender disparities, and the participation of women in the socio-economic sector and in the decision making process. The final objective would be the elaboration of Romania's first statistical gender publication. A first step has already been taken: the 1997 National Human Development Report, of the Romanian Academy and UNDP, introduces and examines complex gender indices such as the "Gender Disparity Index" and the "Gender Empowerment Index";
- the elaboration of the draft law on the establishment of the *Family Information and Consulting Centre*. The centre provides a structure for the promotion of partnership and non-discrimination principles within family, for the achievement of domestic stability, and for the social support and counselling of families in crisis;
- the elaboration of the draft law on the establishment of the *Inter-ministerial Advisory Commission for Equal Opportunities*, working towards the integration of an equality principle in current policies and practices; and
- the encouragement of a social dialogue and partnership with civil society representatives, and the development of mutual programmes for the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Action Plan - national priorities**

The primary objectives of the National Action Plan in respect of Equal Opportunities are:

- a. *To set up and develop institutional mechanisms to co-ordinate the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities for women and men.* The government's legal and administrative action taken so far aims to create a national institutional structure capable of developing and managing coherent and relevant policies. Thus, a specific body was set up within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and, regionally, within the Country Directions for Labour and Social Protection. This collaborates with other women's rights orientated governmental bodies.
- b. *To promote fair access of women to public and decision making positions.*

- c. *To improve the economic situation of women, to offer equal access to the labour market, the control and use of economic resources.*
- d. *To improve women's health condition.*
- e. *To prevent and reduce domestic violence, particularly against women and children. A coherent action programme is intended to be developed in order to prevent, control and alleviate violence against women and children.*
- f. *To stimulate women's participation in environmental protection and reduction of environmental pollution.*
- g. *To implement gender mainstreaming at all social, cultural, and education levels and to enhance the media role in this respect.*
- h. *To collaborate with national non-governmental organisations in order to implement the National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities.*

### **1.5 The mainstreaming and the main ministries in Romania**

This section aims to identify the sectors where mainstreaming has been successfully implemented. We will be using data from central authority institutions interested in the equal opportunities issues as reflected in various relevant policies and programmes. Depending on their specific responsibilities, some ministries are more involved in the equal opportunity issue:

The **Ministry of Justice** has elaborated draft amendments to the **Romanian Criminal Code**, including distinct provisions on *the trafficking in women and children, and domestic violence*.

The **Ministry of Food and Agriculture** is running a programme on the "Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas", financed by FAO (USD 400,000), aimed to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit among women.

Through its ongoing reform, the **Ministry of National Education** aims to include policies, programmes and projects focusing on the education/training of women. Thus:

- in the "Values for Education" document, the Minister for Education recommends that schools should take into account the fundamental value of "education for life" (this document also includes concrete suggestions regarding the means to eliminate gender discrimination in the education process);
- gender issues are envisaged as part of the new draft curriculum (e.g. civil education guidebooks for primary, secondary and high-school education and gender courses in universities); and
- research studies on gender discrepancies in education are intended to be conducted.

Data provided by ministries complement each other and, therefore, offer a comprehensive view on the status of women in Romania in various sectors of activity and aspects of social life.

The **Ministry of Food and Agriculture** offers additional information on the socio-economic status of women in rural areas: the serious fall in the birth rate has resulted in an intensive ageing process of the rural population. Also, the share of women in the total rural population has increased, particularly for some age groups. These facts justify the need for an increased concern for the role of women in the rural economy. Women living in rural areas tend to be more economically isolated, primarily due to the low level of vocational training (much lower than for men). Thus, only 18.2% of vocational school graduates, 20.8% of college graduates and 29.4% of higher education graduates are women from the countryside. Although the access to education is unlimited, the structure of the rural education system fails to facilitate access to all levels of education: primary and secondary schools account for 96.9% of the rural education units. This has a strong negative effect on the education of women in the countryside.

A distribution of population by socio-professional status shows that, in rural areas, the percentage of women working as unpaid family workers and freelancers is high, many of them being officially registered as *housewives*.

Likewise, data from the **Ministry of National Education** shows that women account for 75% of the illiterate population, particularly those living in the countryside or in Roma communities.

Despite their prevalence in the education system, there are few women holding top management and administrative positions (no female minister/secretary of state in the **Ministry of National Education**, no female rectors, a few female deans and less female professors/doctors than men).

As for the standard of living and the health condition of women living in rural areas, the information provided by the **Ministry of Food and Agriculture** and the **Ministry of Health** coincide, reflecting their constant concern for the harsh living conditions in rural areas.

Here, women's health condition depends very much on the availability and quality of basic socio-medical services. Generally speaking, such services are available in all localities, but they lack in accessibility, and in human and material resources. As rural areas are poorly developed and less socially and economically attractive, qualified medical staff are reluctant to live in the countryside and will even abandon their job if this is located in deprived zones. The poor infrastructure and lack of urban-like living standards also work against a good rural medical service.

Here are some relevant indices that reflect the difficulties encountered by women in rural areas:

- the number of people per doctor = 1350 (compared to 363 in urban areas; the national average is 543)
- the number of hospital beds/1000 inhabitants = 1.8 (compared to 12.6 in urban areas and the national average of 7.7).

As a result, the **infant mortality rate** is much higher in rural areas.

Data provided by **Ministry of National Defence** and **Ministry of Interior** is focused on the presence of women in male predominant sectors of activity.

Thus, within the **Ministry of National Defence**, women hold positions in both the military force (officers, non-commissioned officers, and technical military staff) and among the army's civil employees (university graduates, high-school graduates, workers).

Since 1990, the training of female military staff was interrupted, including the training of women for top military positions initiated in the '80s. Likewise, no approval has been granted to women applying to attend courses at the Military Academy and, therefore, women's access to major positions in the sector was thus denied.

At present, women account for 3% of the total number of the *military force*: 2.55% of officers, 4% of non-commissioned officers and 0.67% of technical military staff.

In March 1999, 49% of the total number of *civil employees* were women (they account for 63% of the total number of staff with a university degree, 81% the total number of post-high school and high school graduates and 27% of the total number of workers). Of the 28 civil management staff, 8 are women. Women are represented in virtually all structures of the **Ministry of National Defence**, but most of them hold executing jobs in the army medical and education systems (teaching/auxiliary staff).

The principle of equal rights is rigorously applied and observed by all army structures. Thus, there is no gender discrimination related to the employment, remuneration, promotion and involvement in trade union activity. The principle of equal opportunities is also reflected in the new human resource policies of the Ministry's civil component. These policies are based on:

- recruitment and selection based on competence only;
- equal employment and promotion opportunities;
- access to training and development throughout the career.

The **Ministry of Interior** also applies a gender discrimination-free employment and promotion of staff policy, particularly in public services.

A brief review of the **Ministry's** staff reveals the following:

- 11.7% of the total number of employees are women, of whom 90.8% are high school graduates and 9.2% have a university degree;
- 4.03% of women hold leading positions;
- 0.67% of women employed by the **Ministry of Interior** are teaching staff;
- 14.68% of female non-commissioned officers and 4.21% of female officers have participated in training programmes.

*Taking into account the above mentioned, it is obvious that women have managed to break into the predominantly male socio-professional sectors. Yet, only a few of them hold top positions, particularly in the military force.*

The development of activities based on the collaboration between ministries also reflect the concern for equal opportunities for women and men at central authority level. A **Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law** was created within the **Ministry of Interior**. As a minister's advisory body, it co-operates with governmental and non-governmental organisations to defend citizens rights, particularly the rights of categories predisposed to violence. The **Ministry of Interior** took part in the negotiation of inter-governmental co-operative bilateral agreements on organised crime, primarily focused on the struggle against trafficking in human beings. Moreover, the **Ministry of Interior** and **Ministry of National Education** have developed mutual activities meant to prevent crime and victimisation among pupils and which address problems specific to girls.

### ***1.6 Changes towards the integration of equal opportunities principle***

The integration of gender equality in national policies is a major future objective. The establishment of a body responsible for the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities and the development of the National Action Plan were essential steps in the government's commitment towards the implementation of the Beijing final documents and Platform for Action.

The National Action Plan sets out major objectives related to the 12 sectors of interest of the Beijing Platform for Action. Good collaboration between interested institutions and a sound co-ordination of

programmes and activities are essential for the achievement of these objectives.

Thus, the Romanian Government decided to create an **Inter-ministerial Advisory Commission**, with which to help implement gender mainstreaming in sectorial policies. The Commission will work towards a more efficient achievement of the Plan's objectives. Procedures for approval by the Government of the National Action Plan are virtually completed and the public sector will very soon be assigned specific responsibilities related to the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities for women and men. In the civil society's opinion, an institution authorised to identify/report all types of gender discrimination, to ensure/guarantee and assess the integration of gender equality principles in all components of social life will be of vital importance.

The above mentioned objectives are priorities, particularly on the agenda of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Considerable progress has been made in raising public awareness on equal opportunities and the treatment of women and men.

Paradoxically, in 1989, the Romanian population lived by the communist official ideology of forced gender equality. Apparently, by that time, gender discrimination had been eradicated (equal access to education, vocational training and, particularly equal job opportunities and remuneration were provided). Yet, the forced social and professional empowerment of women alternated with traditional gender discrepancies: unlike men, women bore all household related responsibilities. Therefore, there was no true gender equality. After 1989, economic restructuring and privatisation led to an increasingly competitive labour market and, simultaneously, to the reduction in job opportunities. These in the context of a growing rate of inflation and job insecurity. Deprived and marginalised, more and more women were deeply affected by this economic climate. The chapter on the status of women between 1995-1999 offers a more comprehensive outlook on the situation.

Media plays an essential role in presenting aspects of social life and disseminating contemporary values and patterns. Yet, in Romania, the media is still far from promoting a positive image of gender partnership and women's social role. Sexist clichés are still used, helping to enhance a distorted public image of women, hence the distortion of the women's role in public and private life.

However, some media elements show interest in the status of women in Romania. They participate, together with public institutions, in mutual programmes focused on: the protection of women against violence of



any kind (in and outside family), and the protection of children and women.

A 1997 study of the Romanian Society for Feminist Analysis, AnA, on the status of women as reflected in daily newspapers show that the following sexist clichés and approaches prevail:

- women's aesthetic, frivolous, and maternal features;
- the sensational connotation of violence against women (sometimes violence against women is minimised);
- lack of media reports on successful career women;
- denigration and banter of female politicians;
- gender discrimination in job advertising.

For the last five years, there have been many changes in the education system, reflected by new laws elaborated in line with art. 32 of the Romanian Constitution, on the right to education. The Education Law no. 84/1995 is most representative and it guarantees the equal right to education at all forms and levels, irrespective of social status, nationality, sex or religion. In addition, Law no. 128/1997 on the status of teaching staff is free of gender discrimination of any kind.

The structure of the education system ensures equal access opportunities to all education levels for both girls and boys. In the recent years, measures have been taken to increase tolerance among young people, to develop their respect for the universal values of democracy. These are reflected in the new school curriculum, based on modern generous principles, respect for differences and gender awareness. Teaching objects such as civiil education and human rights play an important role in the dissemination of the above mentioned principles.

Women's rights have been recently included in the education process with the view to develop the pupils' sense for a fair appreciation of the harm associated to gender discrimination and its effects. Therefore, there is a commitment for the promotion of a discrimination-free family and school education, of educational patterns based on gender partnership and of violence/conflict prevention programmes.

The number of places in universities has increased in parallel with the share of female students in the total number of enrolled students.

Some universities have introduced gender issue in their training packages:

- a gender issue and public policies module has been included in the post-university study package of the National School for Political and Administrative Studies;

- modules of feminist philosophy and sociology, gender and communication, and women's rights are part of broader philosophy, sociology, media and law studies within the University of Bucharest.

The newly introduced long distance and alternative forms of education are means to disseminate information, to improve the professional level of women and retrain those who abandon school temporarily, thus enabling them to meet the requirements of a competitive labour market. The concept of **uninterrupted training** has recently become part of the 1998-2000 education reform strategy. It is estimated that this form of training will have a positive impact on the social status of marginalised categories, particularly women.

Despite the equal right to education stipulated by law, there are still sectors where the access of girls is denied and where competence and individual efficiency criteria is ignored. Institutions such as the Military Academy, the Police Academy and Theological Institutions condition the admittance of students by gender criteria, thus denying access of women to these sectors of activity and, ultimately, denying the equal opportunities principle.

**Gender studies and analyses** have been carried out in the education sector. These helped raise awareness among decision making agents and introduce a new, gender orientated approach in the school curriculum. Yet, some teaching staff persist in promoting the traditional sexist pattern, hence the difficulties in adopting this new approach on a larger scale.

A structure of teaching staff by gender criteria reveals an overwhelming predominance of women in the education system. Recent statistics show that more than 70% of the teaching staff are women.

Their distribution by levels of education is as follows: a high percentage of female teaching staff in primary and secondary education, an extremely low percentage in higher education. A small number of women have high university degrees.

### ***1.7 The impact of globalisation on the status of women***

Globalisation of economy as a complex process has incontestable effects on the occupation of the labour force, the access to resources and trade exchanges. Whilst, in Western countries globalisation is an irreversible process of decentralisation of economic and cultural power, in eastern European countries, particularly the countries in transition, globalisation is unpredictable and disturbing.

For women from eastern European countries, globalisation is associated with progressive poverty and marginalisation. This is reflected by the growth of the unemployment rate among women as a result of the economic restructuring process and the development of high technology. The status of women is even more affected if taken into account the gradual decline of social protection in the context of the transfer of state control to expanding transnationals.

The growth of international labour migration in these countries is more a source for increasing vulnerability rather than increasing job opportunities. Migration is a masked form of trafficking in women, favoured by poor living conditions in the country of origin and by the discriminating attitude of authorities in Western countries.

In Romania, the traditional family pattern based on very strong ties, the lack of autonomy in decision making and the dependency of women on the decisions of the "head of the family" are barriers for women's participation in the labour market.

In this context, NGOs play an important role in the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities, for they help overcome barriers in the empowerment of women process. However, NGOs activity generate but minor changes in the people's mentality. **International non-governmental organisations** have played an essential role by offering Romanian women the opportunity to participate in public debates, to develop dialogue with their Western colleagues and, thus, to gain experience and embrace Western behavioural patterns.

Participation in international cultural and information networks through gender publications has also helped Romanian women become more aware of their capacities.

Yet, the existing social and political discriminating practices as well as some persistent antiquated macro and micro economic structures obstruct women's professional initiatives and, ultimately, their high adaptability to the modernising process.

The elaboration of structural reforms and policies for macroeconomics stability from a gender perspective is a recognition of women's contribution towards development. Furthermore, gender-orientated economic analyses are needed in order to develop fair policies for the reduction of women's vulnerability to poverty. In 1997, a National Commission for Poverty Alleviation (CNPCS) was set up in Romania, under the patronage of the President of Romania.

In collaboration with UNDP, this Commission developed the **National Strategy for Poverty Alleviation**, as a priority of the current development programme. The strategy include a number of coherent poverty alleviation related recommendations. It also stipulates social

assistance policies for groups at high risk, among which are women, as well as measures focused on: the economic empowerment of women; child care orientated financial/material assistance and services; recognition and valuation of unpaid work; and effective protection of women against violence, crime and abuse.

In its turn, the **National Strategy for Sustainable Development beyond 2000** includes objectives such as the improvement of the social status of women and the promotion of equal opportunities.

## PART II FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES

### 2. Financial measures

The allocation of funds from the state budget is activity orientated rather than departmentally orientated. Thus, the state budget fails to provide a distinct budget line for the gender governmental structure within the MMPS, its operational costs being covered from the MMPS budget (together with the costs involved in the operation of its two centres). Moreover, there are no additional internal sources for funding, except for programmes based on collaboration with other public institutions.

It has to be mentioned that the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection allocated additional funds to some major activities of international impact, such as:

- The *Sub-regional Conference of High Governmental Experts* on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (September, 1996) and
- the *Annual Forum for Acknowledgement of National Gender Equality Policies - Elimination of domestic violence: actions and activities* (November, 1998).

Governmental Decision no. 72/1999 allowed the state budget to cover a part of Romania's membership fee to the **EU VI-th Medium Term Equal Opportunities Programme for Action**. For the period 1998-2000, this sum, in Romania's national currency, is paid through the allocated budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Subsequent to the Beijing World Conference on Women, Romania organised a follow-up sub-regional conference, assisted by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women. Furthermore, the Council of Europe, through its Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, participated in organising and running the Bucharest Annual Forum on Violence.

A number of relevant programmes run by the Direction for Equal Opportunities have been funded by resident UN agencies:

- editing and printing **The Practical Guide on Maternity Rights** (UNFPA);
- the programme for the **Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas** (UNDP);

→ programmes for the promotion of women's rights and child protection that have been funded by other UN agencies such as UNICEF and by USAID, etc.

The establishment of the **Information and Counselling Centre for Unemployed Women** was funded by the PHARE-SESAM Programme. The Centre was initiated and established within the relevant structure of the MMPS, in collaboration with a non-governmental organisation. PHARE funds are also granted for the participation of Romania in the EU VI-th Medium Term Programme for Action on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000).

*At present, the Direction for Equal Opportunities sub-ordinate to the MMPS Department for Co-ordination of the Labour Market and Wage Policies is the only body responsible for the promotion of women's rights. As mentioned above, the Direction does not benefit by any funding from the state budget and there are no other governmental institutions managing funds in the sector of gender equality and the advancement of women.*

### **3. Institutional measures**

#### **National structures and mechanisms**

Following the Beijing World Conference, Romania has made progress in terms of gender equality. The efforts of governmental and non-governmental factors have caused a number of substantial changes in a relatively short period of time.

In this context, a Governmental Decision sets the following responsibilities for the Direction for Equal Opportunities within the MMPS Department for Co-ordination of the Labour Market and Wage Policies:

- a) to develop studies and analyses on the social status of women and to further propose solutions for the elimination of all negative aspects;
- b) to propose amendments for relevant legislation and to monitor the implementation of these amendments;
- c) to monitor the discrimination-free access of women to the labour market and the improvement of their working conditions.

The Direction's overall objective is to develop an **Equal Opportunities National Action Plan** and, within this plan, to set up priorities among which:

- *to monitor legislation and draft laws with a view to identify gender discriminating provisions and to suggest amendments accordingly;*
- *to harmonise the national law with human rights related international legislation in order to legally achieve the accession of Romania to the EU;*
- *to elaborate draft laws intended to ensure discrimination-free access of women to the labour market, as well as attaining the improvement of their working conditions;*
- *in collaboration with relevant non-governmental organisations and institutions, to develop research studies on unemployment among women, occupation of the female labour force, working conditions, domestic violence, social protection for women and youth in general;*
- *to establish contacts and develop collaboration with relevant national and international institutions and organisations.*

The national institutional frame created in 1995 was enlarged in April 1997 by the establishment of a **Sub-commission for Equal Opportunities** as part of the Parliamentary Commission for the Accession of Romania to the EU. Its activity consists of providing information and also informing specialised Parliamentary standing commissions and other interested institutions on all relevant international recommendations, regulation, norms and standards. In addition, it facilitates and accelerates the legal harmonisation process, so much needed for the implementation of equal opportunity principles in Romania. This sub-commission is made up by MPs from all political parties represented in the Romanian Parliament and has a group of experts on gender issue.

Within the newly created **Ombudsman** (which started operating in 1998) a **Department for Child, Women and Family Protection** was created, aimed at defending the rights of its beneficiaries.

The MMPS Department for the promotion of women's rights, which subsequent to the 1998 restructuring process became the **Direction for Equal Opportunities (DES)**, has participated in the elaboration of some laws initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. DES contributed to the introduction of non-discrimination and equal opportunities principles in social policies. DES has also participated in the elaboration of two major gender orientated draft laws: the **Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** and the **Law on Parental Leave**, both being currently debated by the Romanian Parliament.

The Ministry's department in charge with the strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities has defined Romania's participation in the EU VI-th Medium Term Programme for Action on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (1996-2000). Thus, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the government will make its financial contribution towards the budget of projects to be developed within the above mentioned programme.

Two programme proposals - an *Information Centre for Women* and a *National Network for the Support and Protection of victims of domestic violence* - have also been developed and presented in the meeting of the G24 Advisory Group for Romania (Brussels, November 1997). Representatives of international financial organisations were also present in the meeting.

In the same period, through its *"Partners for Change"* programme, UNDP has offered the central and local authorities working in the equality sector an opportunity for training, specialisation and information; national and local workshops on the status of women in Romania and the active role of men in the implementation of equal opportunities have also been organised.

#### **Co-ordination mechanisms (the role of DES)**

The Department for the Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights and, since 1998, the Direction for Equal Opportunities sub-ordinate to the MMPS Department for Co-ordination of the Labour Market and Wage Policies, have limited human and financial resources and a moderate activity co-ordination capacity. During the three years of its activity, the Department has developed good collaborations with other relevant institutions with a view to synchronise and harmonise gender orientated actions and initiatives.

Programmes have been developed in collaboration with the Parliamentary Sub-commission for Equal Opportunities and collaboration agreements with social partners, trade unions and other NGOs have been developed.

DES elaborated the Draft Law on the establishment of the **Inter-ministerial Commission for Equal Opportunities** intended to increase the efficiency of gender related activity and to strengthen the information and strategy co-ordination capacity within the sector. The Commission's enforcement procedure started at the beginning of 1999 and is expected to be completed before year 2000. Among others, this Commission has the following liabilities:



- to disseminate, within the central public administration structures, the concept of "gender mainstreaming"; this would ultimately lead to the introduction of social equality perspectives in the development and implementation of sectorial policies, and to the elimination of gender disparities from this process;
- to assess the application and observance of the relevant legislation; to stimulate development of action programmes aimed to train and raise awareness on equal opportunities for women and men;
- to elaborate recommendations and criteria able to support and offer guidance to governmental and non-governmental structures and local authority institutions in implementing gender mainstreaming policies;
- to promote exchanges of information and experience;
- to elaborate regular reports on the status of women in Romania and on the implementation of equal opportunities policies in all sectors of activity.

### **Partnerships**

Recent experience has showed that social dialogue may be a tool for promoting effective partnership between the Government, civil society, NGOs, local community and private sector. Non-governmental organisations play a considerable role in the development and implementation of programmes for the promotion of women's rights; improvement of women's living conditions and cultural level; dissemination of information; and encouragement of women's social involvement and participation.

According to the National Action Plan, partnerships with the NGO sector should be based on:

- *the active support for the NGOs' activities in order to increase their social role and efficiency;*
- *co-operation in the implementation of social and economic development programmes, social protection and assistance for women and children, reproductive health and the raising of awareness.*

After 1989, Romanian civil society has undertaken more and more responsibilities, becoming increasingly active in community life. The Fourth World Conference on Women marked a real boost in the activity of women orientated NGOs, as they became truly interested in participating in the process of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Government, through its specialised department, has developed collaborations with civil society, gender and social protection orientated NGOs, representatives of local communities and women's organisations within the main trade union confederations.

Women's organisations within Cartel Alfa, CNSLR-Fratia, the National Union Block and Romania's Democratic Unions Confederation - concluded a collaboration agreement with the gender governmental structure. This lays the basis for future common gender equality activities (e.g. activities related to the implementation of the National Workforce Redistribution Plan). It also stipulates the development of mutual training programmes for trade union members in the view of building respect for gender partnership.

Taking into account the serious problems Romanian society has to face; the low capacity of state services to address these problems; the limited budget and restricted human resources of the Direction for Equal Opportunities, DES decided to create a permanent collaboration with other relevant governmental and non-governmental sectors. Thus, in 1996-1999, the Direction and civil society representatives combined their efforts towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Thus, civil society actors, NGO representatives, associations and trade unions have become genuine and valuable programme/project partners in the implementation of the Beijing objectives. Partnership and collaboration have developed in sectors such as:

- **Domestic violence:** the activity of the Pilot Centre for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Domestic Violence was supported by a series of women's rights orientated NGOs among which are the League for the Protection of Human Rights (LADO) and the Romanian Independent Society for Human Rights (SIRDO). Together with the media, they organised a campaign aimed to inform and raise awareness among the general public on violence and its devastating effects on both individuals and society. This resulted in increasing concern and efforts towards the alleviation and prevention of violence against women and, ultimately, in the elaboration of new laws and amendments to the Crime Code and police force operational regulations. Many NGOs in the country set up shelters and counselling centres for women in crisis as a replication of the 'Pilot Centre'.
- **Women and health:** collaboration with NGOs in women orientated information/education/ communication programmes, was mainly focused on reproductive health, means and methods of family planning and birth control, birth control education, programmes for

young couples and crisis management, capacity building and empowerment of women in rural areas.

- **Women in decision making:** this is a very ardent matter, of high concern for society and, therefore, very attractive for relevant organisations who collaborated in programmes aiming at the economic and political empowerment of women, through training and education. A great number of women had access to these programmes, some of them already involved in politics or business. Thus, there is an increasing potential among women for both political and economic activities, which will play an important role in the near future.
- **Women and economic development:** both the Government and social partners have a deep interest in the growth of economic autonomy for women and the reduction of unemployment among women. Yet, the economic transition has had a negative impact on vulnerable social categories. The female unemployment rate is below the total rate of unemployment, but is still alarming. The collaboration between Government and the women's trade union organisations has led to better information on labour market opportunities, as well as to the adjustment and improvement of testing/training/retraining programmes for the female workforce. The newly created tripartite institutions (the Economic and Social Council, the National Council for Adult Vocational Training, and the National Agency for Occupation and Vocational Training) apply equal opportunities policies in the labour field.
- **Development of community services:** a working group has been set up to facilitate the community's access to governmental and non-governmental socio-medical services. The working group consists of representatives of the Community Care Foundation, the Counsel of Sector 6 - Bucharest, the "Estuar" Foundation, the Romanian Pensioners' Foundation and the Association for the Support of Physically Disabled Children from Romania. The group's activity lays the basis of a complex community service programme.
- **Women and human rights:** women's rights is a matter of particular concern for the Romanian Institute for Human Rights (IRDO), the League for the Protection of Human Rights (LADO), and the Romanian Independent Society for Human Rights (SIRDO). These civil society representatives promote the equality between women and men, gender partnership and the improvement of the social status of women, elaborate materials, studies, publications on women's economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights - "Women Rights - Equality and Partnership" (second edition), "Women's Rights at the

End of Millennium", "Women's Rights - compilation of documents and internal law". As a source of information and work tool based on a democratic and human rights perspective, these publications are addressed to the civil society, governmental bodies and institutions, and all factors interested in the status of women.

**PART III**  
**IMPLEMENTATION OF SOME CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING**  
**PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

**A. 4. Innovative policies, programmes, projects and positive practices**

**Initiatives in the legal sector**

*The Draft Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* guarantees equal gender treatment and opportunities in all components of social life. According to this Law, public authorities are responsible for implementation of the law. Although formally focused on the activity of public administration and social partners, the draft law sets out moral and political responsibilities for various public and private structures.

*The Draft Law on Parental Leave* creates a frame for effective participation of fathers in child care and for reconciliation of work and family life. It promotes the participation of couples in family life and the sharing of responsibilities for child-care and education. The draft law is part of the mainstreaming global strategy and a step towards the harmonisation of national legislation with EU Directives.

**Development of the national mechanism**

The **Direction for Equal Opportunities (DES)**, subordinated to the **MMPS Department for Co-ordination of the Labour Market and Wage Policies**, is the ministerial activity co-ordinator in the sector. DES also offers methodological guidance in applying institutional policies to the newly created centres:

- *The Counselling and Support Centre for the Long-term Female Unemployed*, located in Ploiesti and funded by PHARE-SESAM, is an experimental pattern of active measures addressing a well defined target group. Its overall objective is a rapid integration of women in the labour market.
- *The Pilot Centre for Assistance and Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence* set up in 1996. Its 1997-1998 activity is summed up in a **Study on Domestic Violence**, co-ordinated by DES. This is the first study of its kind in Romania and an invaluable source of information for a more efficient strategy for the control of violence in general and particularly of domestic violence in particular.
- *The Family Information and Counselling Centre* aims to promote the partnership within the couple, recognition of partners' rights within the family, social support and counselling of couples in difficulty.

The specific governmental structure continues to support the development of a national mechanism and the equal opportunities related activities by:

- elaborating the law on the establishment of the **Inter-ministerial/Interministerial Advisory Commission for Equal Opportunities**, the advisory body responsible for the evaluation of gender equality policies implementation;
- assessing *the process of harmonising of Romanian legislation with the aquis communautaire in respect of equal treatment and opportunities - there is still much to be done in this respect;*
- collaborating with the National Commission for Statistics, other public institutions and NGO-s in the UNDP funded *sex disaggregated statistics* project. The aim of the project is to introduce the sex disaggregated statistics intended meant to measure gender disparities and discrepancies related in terms of participation in the social development participation.

With the view to improve the status of women the following measures have been taken:

- an **Action Programme in the workplace on women's right to healthy at work and to and reproductive health** was developed. This is focused on the promotion of reproductive health among female employees and is a component of the Operational Plan for the Promotion of Reproductive Health, a 5 year plan (1998-2003) developed by the Ministry of Health and assisted/funded by UNFPA.
- a **Practical Guide to on Maternity Rights** was published in 1998, assisted by the UNFPA;
- a **Legal Guide on the Protection of Pregnant Employees at Work** (to be published in 1999). This will include equal opportunities related national laws, ILO Conventions ratified by Romania, and Directives of the Council of Europe.

Collaboration with resident UN agencies will continue and common democracy building and women empowerment projects will be developed, aimed at to:

- ◇ Increasinge women's productive capacity in rural areas (UNDP);
- ◇ Elaboratinge/releasinge the Romanian sex disaggregated statistical book (UNDP);
- ◇ Promoteing the reproductive health - "Policy-Project" (USAID);
- ◇ Promotinge women's women's equal rights and women's participation into community life - UNICEF.

Through its Romanian programmes, UNICEF works towards combining efforts at all social levels and raising awareness on women's equality as a social priority. Since 1992, through the MONEE project - "Women in transition", UNICEF has watched the economic impact of transition on woman and child in the Central and Eastern Europe.

In the future, more synchronised action is expected, based on permanent co-operation with the social partners, specific NGO-s, trade unions, professional and employers' organisations.

Below are several active NGO-s operating in the gender sector:

- **The Romanian Society for Feminist Analyses - AnA** collects data and disseminates information on the status of women; organises training courses on feminism; issues a magazine for feminist analyses; is involved in community development projects that include participation of women.
- **The Romanian Female Managers' Association - AFMR** aims to develop internal and external contacts and public relations with the view intended to support the general interests of female managers in Romania. AFMR is a member of business and employers' organisations - such as Business Opportunities for Women (BOW) with branches in the Eastern and Central Europe - and which help it assists women in their business initiatives women's business initiative. The BOW's objectives are: capacity building of female managers; assistance in applying for loans; and the establishment of regional information networks relevant to its activity.
- **The Foundation for Women's Equal Opportunities - SEF**, promotes equal opportunities for women and men and the development of women protection activities. One of its important projects, TACT ("Trafficking Awareness Campaign Training"), aims to raise awareness on trafficking in women, to provide assistance and support to victims or potential victims, and to build up public capacity to debate issues related to this matter. SEF runs support programmes for single mothers/parents, assisting them in becoming financially independent. Its *Centre for Research and Assistance for Victims of Sexual Abuse in and outside the Family* elaborates evaluations on victimisation and lobbies for relevant legislation.
- **The Society for the Parent and Child - SCOP**, focuses on social programmes for the assistance and protection of women in crisis and children in difficulty. SCOP is involved in education/training for life-skills programmes for children and young people.

In 1995-2000, the Government has focused on two major problems/issues: violence against women and women's participation in

the political life over for the last 10 years. These matters have been broadly discussed and presented in public debates in the last two years, such as:

- ***The Annual Forum for the Acknowledgement of National Gender Equality Policies*** - November 1998, organised by DES in collaboration with the Council of Europe, the Steering Committee for Gender Equality. The major subject for debate was the *Elimination of domestic violence: actions and activities*. A considerable number of governmental and non-governmental organisations from Central and Eastern European countries participated in the forum. The measures proposed by the participants were summed up in the final meeting document. They address all social partners and institutions involved in the prevention and alleviation of violence.
- The conference **"10 Years of Democracy - Women's Participation in the Political Life after since 1989"**, organised by the "Civic Education Project" NGO. This was an opportunity to discuss about relevant experiences in the area of public and political empowerment of women. The participants adopted strategies for the stimulation of political empowerment of women in a context where women's presence within political and decision making structures are is very limited.

Publications on women's rights and the status of women have increased in number. These are issued by research institutes, universities, and human rights orientated NGO-s.

### **B.5. Barriers**

The status of women in Romania is affected by a number of factors:

- tradition/customs/religion perpetuating the paternalistic, patriarchal mentality on gender partnership, particularly within the family;
- the 'empowerment of women' pattern pattern specific to the former political regime (non-discriminating and free education; high female occupancy rate; overwhelming responsibilities within and outside home; the emphasis on women's reproductive and child care roles; and purely theoretical equality of rights);
- the problems in the last years of transition: unemployment, gender related income discrepancies, disproportionate distribution of the female workforce - high concentration of women in poorly paid and insecure activities; and
- low participation of women in the leading structures of the political, economic and trade union sectors leading structures.



Having in view Bearing in mind the above mentioned aspects, the following are considered *major barriers* in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action:

- the lack of political consensus of decision making factors agents in respect of the status of women, which is not yet considered a priority and, therefore, is postponed or excluded from the political agenda;
- the lack of solidarity among female politicians in lobbying and promoting women's rights;
- lack of sex disaggregated statistics/research to reveal sectors that lack equal gender participation and a deficient problem-solving capacity;
- inadequate development of the a national mechanism for the promotion of equal treatment and opportunities - mainly at public administration level;
- lack of co-ordination and correlation between institutions and the civil society;
- lack of means/financial resources and qualified/specialised staff;
- lack of uninterrupted gender related training for public officials.

#### **C.6. Future commitments**

The Government's commitment towards the promotion and observance of women's rights and equal opportunities came into being in 1995, when a specific governmental structure was set up, as a body responsible for the development and co-ordination of gender equality strategies.

Subsequently, a *National Action Plan* was developed and presented for the first time atin the meeting of High Senior Governmental Experts in charge with the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Eastern and Central Europe (Bucharest, September 1996). The meeting was organised by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women and the Romanian Government in co-operation with the UN's Economic Commission for Europe and UNDP.

The *National Action Plan* includes national strategies on handling the major issues raised by the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the required means to achieve the Platform's objectives. Human and material resources have been mobilised in the implementation of the Platform's key measures, orientated towards the improvement of the status of women in sectors such as: legislation, labour, health,

education, social security, reconciliation of work and family life, elimination of violence against women, etc.

Collaboration with active women's rights NGO-s and trade union women's organisations was particularly encouraged.

Romania participated in gender international, regional, European and UN events and has developed collaborations with relevant European and UN bodies.

## C.7. The status of women by sectors

### I. Women and poverty

#### Government's commitments

Social protection policies have been developed intended with the view to alleviate the impact of the transition on vulnerable social categories such as women, children and the elderly.

Thus, the state child allowance was increased and in 1997 it became index linked. Since July 1997, families with two or more children are entitled to a monthly additional allowance. According to current legislation, people and families living on low income may benefit by social aid and women with more than one child are entitled to a birth allowance. The maternal leave (of 112 days) as well as the child-care leave for children up to two years of age, are paid by the state social insurance budget. This facility is applicable only for officially registered female employees.

In the recent years, social assistance policies have been shifting towards a *more active package of protection measures* and a closer collaboration with social partners participating in the community development process. A network of diversified services is to be set up created, based on the real needs for family support, and the assistance of the for child, elderly and marginalised people assistance.

A *National Solidarity Fund* was set up in July 1999, managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Based on the national solidarity principle, the fund aims to contribute to poverty alleviation within families in severe deep crisis. The Fund facilitates the entrepreneurs' access to micro-credits by entrepreneurs.

A newly created *National Dwelling Agency* is expected to solve the shortage of affordable dwellings by running a a long-term instalment pay-back system.

Special protection measures for the disabled have also been taken. These are mainly focused on their social integration, particularly the

integration into the labour market and attainment of their economic autonomy.

In order to reduce the existing regional discrepancies and to achieve a balanced development between regions, a regional development strategy and an institutional frame structure have been established. The former aims to harmonise the government's sectorial policies and activities by stimulating initiatives and capitalising on local and regional resources. The regional development programmes will be funded from a special fund and will also attract funding from other local and international sources.

The European Union, through its PHARE programme, provides permanent financial assistance and facilitates the access to structural funds to be granted to Romania as an EU associated member.

#### **New ways of action:**

- to identify discriminating legal provisions and to include the gender dimension in labour and social protection legislation and, in this respect, to have a permanent dialogue with all social partners;
- to encourage economic agents to create new jobs, particularly for young people and single mothers;
- to assess the economic and social components of women's activity, in order to clearly define its social and economic value and to have it recognised accordingly;
- to set up a social insurance system and state pension schemes for alternative forms of occupation;
- to create a system based on fiscal incentives, low tariffs and gratis services for vulnerable women and poor families;
- to develop a network of multiple, well spread, social services to assist female employees.

Women's assistance policies are also included in the *Medium-term National Strategy for Poverty Alleviation* and in its related action plan which stipulates:

- increased opportunities for the women's economic participation of women;
- economic support and child care orientated services;
- increased accessibility of women to family planning and education/information/counselling services;
- recognition and valuation of women's women's social role; and
- increased protection of women against violence, crime and, abuse.

## **II. Women and education**

### **Government's commitments**

Due to diversified forms of public and private education and the development of tertiary short term education (colleges), young people are trained to meet the demands of the labour market.

The development of an adult education system based on the 'uninterrupted vocational training' principle resulted in the establishment of the *National Agency for Occupation and Vocational Training*. The Agency organises labour training and re-training courses. In addition, the *National Council for Adult Vocational Training* offers more labour integration/reintegration opportunities.

Some universities introduced gender issues in their training packages: a gender issue and public policies module has been included in the post-university training package of the National School for Political and Administrative Studies; modules of feminist philosophy and sociology, gender and communication, with women's rights are being part of broader philosophy, sociology, media and law studies within the University of Bucharest.

### **New ways of action:**

- to harmonise the education reform with the current demands of the labour market: a highly qualified, flexible workforce, and, capable to adapt to economic changes;
- to introduce the gender dimension within the institutional structures, restructuring programmes and the scholarool curriculum;
- to promote and intensify the education of women in rural areas with the view to diminish gender discrepancies;
- to stimulate women's participation in the alternative forms of education - informal, long distance education - by co-operating with relevant institutions.

## **III. Women and health**

### **Government's commitments**

One of the major objectives of the health care reform - also included in the Governing Programme - is the improvement of the health of condition of the population in general, and of women and children in particular.

As a member of the *Reproductive Health Coalition*, DES has the opportunity to collaborate with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of

Youth and Sports, the Ministry of National Education, international agencies and non-governmental organisations.

In addition, as a result of consultations with experts inof the Ministry of Health, HIV/AIDS NGO-s and representatives of resident UN agencies, it was decided to create for a *National Multi-sectorial anti-AIDS Commission* to be set up. The Commission is an advisory body intended aiming to find solutions to HIV associated problems and includes representatives from the of civil society and of 15 governmental bodies including among which the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Parliament, and the Presidency and it.

Some actions have already been taken towards the achievement of the Platform's health objective:

- The development of an *Action Programme in the workplace on women's right to health and reproductive health* *Action Programme on women's right to health at work and reproductive health*, to be implemented in collaboration with trade union women's organisations;
- The elaboration of a *Legal Guide on the Protection of Pregnant Employees at Work* (to be published in 1999). This will include equal opportunities related national laws, ILO Conventions ratified by Romania, and Directives of the Council of Europe.
- The ongoing "*Policy Project*" *Programme* that actively promote women's rights and reproductive health. This includes campaigns and activities organised by a government/-civil society coalition.

The improvement of women's health condition is an objective of Government's programmes and national policies. In the recent years, the new concept of reproductive health has become an essential objective and a concern for the decision making factorsagents.

#### **What has been achieved:**

- Implementation of the Ministry's of Health's family planning, birth control and sexual education programme, and the establishment of a family planning centre network in collaboration with the World Bank;
- Elaboration of studies on reproductive health (1993, 1996 and 1999);
- Development of a national action plan for the promotion of reproductive health; and the development of an effective plan for women's health at work;
- Allocation of funds from the state budget for the National Health Protection Programme for Mother and Child; and
- Development and implementation of a life-skills the education for life programme, addresseingd to young people.

#### **New ways of action:**

- to promote research and dissemination of information on health services for women;
- to develop pre-natal medical assistance and health protection services for mother and child;
- to replicate family planning and counselling services;
- to complete, by the up to year 2000, the health care reform in compliance with the European "Health for all" European programme.

#### **IV. Women and violence**

##### **Government's commitments**

The Government has committed itself to ensure, through actions and activities, observance of women's rights as an integrate part of human rights and also to also eliminate all forms of violence against women. Herewith are a few measures taken in this respect:

- the establishment of a *Pilot Centre for the Protection and Assistance for Victims of Violence* and of a *Family Information and Counselling Centre*;
- a *Study on domestic violence*, based on a three years of activity at of the above mentioned Pilot Centre;
- collaboration with other social partners in violence prevention/alleviation programmes;
- an *Annual Forum for the Acknowledgement of National Gender Equality Policies* organised in collaboration with the Council of Europe. The 1998 meeting participants proposed ways of action.

##### **New ways of action:**

- to analyse the causes and effects of violence against women, as well as to asses the efficiency of violence prevention measures based on the collaboration between governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Interior, Justice, Education, Health and relevant non-governmental organisations;
- to systematically analyse the enforce legislation and to include sanctions penalties (criminal, civil, administrative) and protection measures for victims of domestic violence;
- to organise and expand the centres for assistance and protection of victims of domestic violence, authorised to provide medical assistance, psychological and legal services;
- to replicate training programmes for factors factors responsible for the implementation of the prevention/alleviation of violence against women (police force, lawyers);

- to support the the activity of NGO-s' and other civil society structures' activity so that theyto become more actively involved in the prevention/alleviation of domestic violence.

## **V. Women and armed conflicts**

Romania is a signatory of the "*South-Eastern Stability Treaty*". Aone of the parties of the. A "*South-Eastern Stability Treaty Women's Initiative*" was presented atin the high level meeting of the treaty members. The main women's organisations took this opportunity to claim a more active and equal role in the development and implementation of the Treaty. The women in the region have already organised national and regional networks and found solutions' to problems generated by conflicts such as: war crimes against women and children; the condition situation of the refugees and the missing people, and the rights of minority groupsies' rights.

Having in view Bearing in mind the recent Balkan crisis and being willing to participate in building a climate of co-operation and mutual understanding in the region, the Romanian Government has included specific objectives in its equal opportunities strategy.

### **New ways of action:**

- to promote equal participation of women and men in the peace process - national/international diplomatic lobbying, peace negotiations and mediations;
- to promote equal participation of women and men in all peace forums and activities;
- to ensure protection, assistance and training for refugees, particularly women and children;
- to stimulate women's participation in the elimination of conflict elimination process; and
- to develop and disseminate information on the physical, psychological, economic and social effects of armed conflicts on women and girls. This information will be the basis for programmes and policies to address these negative effects.

## **VI. The improvement of the economic status of women and their equal access to the labour market**

### **Government's commitments**

Among the activities carried out by the the MMPS's specific governmental structure during 1995-1999, the following are to should be mentioned:

- The implementation and completion of the pilot component of the ADMITRA programme - "Promotion of Equal Opportunities in the Management of Labour ". This programme was initiated and implemented with the assistance of the International Labour Office which elaborated monographs on the workforce dimensions and profiles (including the female workforce) in the counties of Sibiu and Suceava counties.
- The implementation of a "Women's Information, Counselling and Consultancy Pilot Centre" (Ploiesti, Prahova county), aimed to support unemployed and socially deprived women. Funded by the EU PHARE-SESAM programme, the project provides services related to social reintegration, as well as reintegration into the labour market.
- The development of a project whose overall objective is the creation of a "Guarantee Fund for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Managed by Women". This will help diversify women's women's economic activities, encourage their business initiatives and will assist unemployed women to reintegrate into the labour market.
- Collecting data for a national plan for active measures intending to plan for the reduction of ffemale unemployment.

#### **New ways of action:**

- to improve the access of women/female entrepreneurs to training and job opportunities in sectors such as resource administration and business management;
- to asses the labour market so that as to be able to adapt vocational training/retraining programmes to the labour market demands demands. This will ultimately result in a more flexible and adaptable female workforce;
- to promote coherent support, training and counselling programmes for unemployed women, women returning to work after maternal leave, young female graduates, and women in rural areas;
- to stimulate female entrepreneurs by facilitating the access to alternative capital resources and to long- term bank loans with low interest rates;
- to support female farmers by specially designed consultancy programmes,, and by economic and financial incentives in order to improve their participation in the community life life and increase their income. This will also be achieved by participation in agricultural tourism networks;



- ♦ to attain the reconciliation of work and family life by giving both parents the opportunity to participate in the child-care process, by introducing the parental leave, specific forms of employment, alternative and flexible work hours, and accessible high quality services meant intended to ease the hardships of household life.

## **VII. The access of women to power and decision making**

International gender equality standards also include the right of women's right to access and participate in the decision making process in all sectors and all levels of activity.

Despite the progress in guaranteeing political rights, in complying with human rights and the principle of equal participation of women and men in the social life, parity democracy is not yet fully implemented. The Romanian Constitution (art. 35 item 1) stipulates that citizens entitled to vote are eligible provided that they fulfil the conditions defined in art. 16 item 3; in item 2 the age is defined as the only election criterion for supreme state functions.

Actually, high political decision making structures (political parties or state institutions) are not equally accessible to women and men. The former are mostly involved in lobbying and organising activities, and lacking real opportunities to advance towards the top leading political structures.

A few parties - mainly the social democrats - have included gender equality principles in their constitution or programmes, but they lack appropriate implementation strategies. This has resulted in a small number of female MP-s (5.3% of the total), of which only three hold leading positions within the Parliament and Parliamentary commissions.

As for the central executive structures, women mainly hold executing jobs or positions of limited responsibility. There are few female secretaries of state but, since 1996, no female minister has been appointed.

Likewise, in the banking sector - be it private or public - there are no female bank presidents (the highest position held by a women is of vice president).

Women have better access to top economic positions, particularly in the private sector. This is as a result of the recognition of women's entrepreneurial and management capacities.

*Therefore, women are poorly represented at the top political level and, as a result, their specific needs and priorities are insufficiently supported and promoted.*

### **New ways of action:**

- to set up create national structures responsible for the implementation of equal participation of women and men in the country's political and socio-economic life;
- to introduce requirements for women's representation in government and local public services;
- to develop and implement training programmes for women, aimed at informing them of the opportunities, forms and mechanisms of involvement in the decision making process;
- to raise awareness among political leaders and public opinion in general on the women's potential role of women in the decision making process. This should be achieved by dialogue and co-operation between governmental and non-governmental organisations, research centres and institutions, and the media.

*Despite the high percentage of female party members - 20-55% of the total number, an assessment on women's political role reveals a low level of participation in the decision making process. The draft laws on women's a **balanced** participation of women in a party's leading structures and the one on **rewarding** of political parties that promote female MP-s have not been passed.*

## **VIII. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**

### **Government's commitments**

The national institutional mechanisms have diversified. To this, one must include add the improvement of the relevant legal frame.

The main bodies operating in the field of equal opportunities are:

- the MMPS specific structure;
- the Sub-commission for Equal Opportunities within the Parliamentary Commission for the Accession of Romania to EU; and
- the Department for Child, Women and Family Protection within the Ombudsman.

The main steps towards in the harmonisation of Romanian gender equality legislation to the European standards are the *Draft Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*, and the ratification of the relevant articles of the *Revised European Social Paper*.

### **New ways of action:**

- to increase Government's capacity to identify and find solutions to critical aspects in the process of the implementation of gender equality;

- to create the Inter-ministerial Advisory Commission with which to analyse and recommend sectorial policies for the promotion of gender equality principles, and to ensure the integration of these principles in common practices;
- to prepare and improve training of local and national experts and to raise awareness on gender equality among decision making factors agents, the civil society and the general public;
- to monitor the enforce legislation and draft laws in order to identify gender discriminating provisions and to prepare amendments accordingly;
- to set up databases structured on gender related criteria, including specific information and indicators; and
- to establish contacts and improve collaboration with relevant national/international governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations.

## **IX. Women and human rights**

### **Government's commitments**

Romania has made real progress in guaranteeing political rights to all citizens and complying with human rights and the principle of equal participation of women and men in the social life. Yet, well defined and fair legal provisions are not enough to ensure gender equality in a complex social and political context. This requires concrete social and economic measures and determined political action. During its process for the accession to EU, Romania has made constant efforts to modernise its legal and institutional frames.

Generally speaking, the national legislation stipulates women's rights as an integrate part of human rights. Yet, the lack of concrete implementation tools and mechanisms makes them inefficient.

In the recent years, particularly after the Beijing World Conference on Women, increased efforts have been made towards the implementation of international standards and Romania has been more open to international conventions on women's rights.

However, the results were beyond expectations, due to the lack of legal provisions to address specific cases of women discrimination against women and the abuse of women's rights - discrimination related to employment and promotion, to participation in the decision making and distribution of resources distribution. The limited number of women in political structures has led to severe delays in the gender problem-solving process.

#### **New ways of action:**

- to identify discriminating legal provisions and to include the gender dimension in the national legislation, particularly in the sectorial one;
- to increase the Government's capacity to identify and find solutions to critical aspects in the process of implementation of gender equality;
- to monitor the enforce legislation and draft laws in order to identify gender discriminating provisions and to prepare amendments accordingly;
- to harmonise the national legislation with the international human rights as a step towards the accession of Romania to the EU.

#### **X. Women and the media**

The post-Revolution media boom is a result of the current Romanian Constitution stipulating the right to information, freedom of press and speech.

Women have access to media related occupations, but prevail in the medium and lower professional levels - journalists/reporters. Only a few are promoted to leading positions (except for the radio-TV media section).

Women are the primary target group of for advertising campaigns for consumer goods advertising campaigns which, unfortunately, are a source of frustration among those lacking financial resources.

Modern publications have imported aspects of women's life style in western countries - career and self orientated, allowing more time for entertaining and health care. This opposes Romanian traditional patterns that encourage home activities and total devotion to family members.

Very often, women are the subject of sensational news as victims of sexual abuse/robbery or even as offenders.

On the other hand, there is a lack of media reports on women's social and professional achievements. An exemplary image of woman would help change the public perception on her role in society.

#### **New ways of action:**

- to promote full and equal participation of women atin all media levels;
- to establish a media - social partners' collaboration with a view to raise awareness and educate the public towards the elimination of sexist clichés and the change of the women's image of women;
- to raise media awareness and urge it to eliminate patterns encouraging violence against women, pornographic materials and materials that affect their dignity; and

- to allocate funds and broadcast time for the promotion of gender issue programmes intending to with the view to achieve the gender partnership.

## **XI. Women and the environment**

The evolution of the quality of life evolution based on sustainable development is also reflected in the impact of economic and technological development on the environment.

Despite their knowledge and experience in the management and conservation of natural resources and their high receptivity to environmental issues, women play a limited role in the sustainable development. In order to improve the population's health condition within the context of sustainable development, women must increase their role in the environmental protection programmes and their active participation in the development of rural areas.

Women's organisations have initiated and developed the first agricultural tourism scheme in Romania. At present, this network covers the whole country. Its exceptional results encouraged many women in rural areas to go into the hotel business sector. International organisations assisted them with funds and training.

### **New ways of action:**

- to stimulate women's participation in the development, planning, implementation and evaluation of environmental protection projects;
- to develop training programmes for women involved in specific environmental protection programmes;
- to raise awareness among female consumers to the dangers related onto inefficient consumption related danger and to encourage the production of healthy goods;
- to support environmental non-governmental organisations in their awareness and training activities; and
- to initiate and support research activity and the setting up of a database on women's vulnerability to environmental risks.

## **XII. Girls**

Both the Romanian Constitution and the Family Code stipulate special assistance for the protection of children and young people's rights, 's rights irrespective of gender. Romanian legislation forbids exploitation of minors and their involvement in unsafe and immoral activities (minors under 15 years of age shall not be employed). The state provides financial assistance and help for children under the school age and a

child allowance for children attending pre-school and primary/secondary education.

The legal and institutional child protection reform has been developed so that to be it is able to identify new means of protection of children at risk. One of the reform objectives is the family placement of institutionalised children. In Romania, there are no direct sex discrimination-direct and girls are protected by law. Yet, Roma communities still obey inner rules and patterns on girls' age and terms of marriage. Hence the high illiteracy rate and birth rate among Roma girls.

*Romania has ratified the international conventions on the protection of children's rights which are reflected in the national legislation. The child protection related primary objectives are defined in the National Plan of Action.*

**New ways of action:**

- to elaborate the action plan for the integration of girls into community;
- to co-ordinate assistance/protection orientated actions and activities for institutionalised girls, particularly focused on the elimination of abuse; and
- to collaborate with non-governmental organisations and other social partners from local communities in the implementation of school abandonment programmes and the development of socio-medical assistance services for children in difficulty.

**C.8. Medium and long term priorities**

With the view to fully implementing implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, an Action Strategy has been developed, setting out medium and long term priorities as follows:

**Medium term priorities (1999-2000)**

- to pass the law on the establishment of an Inter-ministerial Interministerial Advisory Commission for Equal Opportunities;
- to pass the law on the National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities and to set the responsibilities of relevant decision making factors agents;
- to participate, along with other national and regional social partners, in the EU VI-th Medium Term Equal Opportunities Programme for Action;

- to elaborate, together with the social partners, an Action Programme for the elimination of gender discrimination at work;
- to organise and run a training programme for the staff of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and other institutions operating in the field of equal opportunities (labour courts, labour inspection, etc.);
- to elaborate sex disaggregated statistics, intended meant to identify deficits in the equal participation of women and men;
- to amend and improve the national legal frame in compliance with European legislation.

#### **Long term priorities (2000-2002)**

- to develop and implement specific programmes for the improvement of the working climate environment and conditions, in compliance with the National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities;
- to implement the Action Programme for the elimination of gender discrimination at work;
- to create conditions for the integration of equal opportunities principles in the social policies.

### **C.9. Perspectives**

The decision making factors will work towards the promotion of equality, development and strengthening parity democracy, and towards defining practical and viable means of building a genuine gender equality based on gender partnership.

A genuine equal participation of women and men in the social development, at all levels and components, may be achieved solely by profound, structural changes in the institutional and legal frames, of benefits/resource distribution criteria and, last but not least, of attitudes and mentalities. A structural change of society should involve the elimination of traditional patterns that define the role of women and men, and the introduction of gender perspectives in the decision making policies of all sectors of activity.

The new perspective is based on the capacity to combine women orientated strategies with the compliance of women's civil, social and political rights, and the effort towards integration of gender perspective in all actions and sectors. This may be a long and complex process. Drawing up a specific, individualised strategy for each critical area of the Beijing Platform for Action has proved to be insufficient and inefficient. Therefore, future action should address critical Platform components as a whole, also taking into account external factors.

Attainment of parity democracy requires a complex strategy aimed at:

- increasing women's participation in the decision making bodies (structures);
- build up parity democracy.

This strategy may be implemented as part of a broader, specific action for the improvement of gender equality institutional and legal frames, for increased participation of women in the public sector and of men in the private one, and for equal participation in the decision making process.

Romania has made considerable progress in terms of ratification and compliance with human rights. Yet, there are still barriers to overcome in order to attain full participation of women and men into both public and domestic life.

The rapid implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action requires the integration of gender perspectives in the development of both sectorial and macro-economics related policies which, in the future, are expected to include modern concepts on international integration, liberalisation and interdependence. These will also promote the increase of the citizen's role, irrespective of gender, in the decision making process.



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## ANNEX I

### Human development statistical data/indices

#### Population and fertility

- Population
  - Total = 22488.6M = 11012.1 share in the total 49%
  - F = 11490.7 share in the total 51%
- Age groups 0-4; 0-14; 15-49; 60+ =
- Rural population (thousand people) 1997 = 10141.2
- Urban population (thousand people) 1997 = 12404.7
- Population growth rate: = -0.36%;
- Annual average population growth rate 1995-2000 = -0.3%
- Fertility rate: = 40.6‰
- Fertility index (1998) = 1.32
- Birth rate (total) = 10.5‰
  - Urban 9.0‰
  - Rural 12.4‰
- Fertility rate among women between 15-19 years of age:
  - Total 40.6‰
  - Urban 30.1‰
  - Rural 58.2‰

#### Mortality rate

- Life expectancy at birth (1994-1996): women = 73.1; men = 65.3
- Infant mortality rate (1996): = 22.3‰ live births
- Mortality rate under the age of 5 (1997) = 22.0‰ inhabitants
- Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 births): = 41.1

#### Health

- The access of population to health services:
  - Population per doctor (1997) = 546 (including private sector)
  - Population per medical staff (1997) = 178 (including private sector)
  - Hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants (1997) = 7.3 (including private sector)
  - Medical examinations per inhabitant in health care centres (1996) = 2.7

#### Reproductive health

- % of assisted births (of the total number of births - 1996) = 99.0%
- HIV among adult population: AIDS (per 100,000 inhabitants): 1997 = 22.8 of which children = 20.4%

#### Gender equality and the education

Secondary school graduates (% of the total population of 15 years of age and above) 1992:

Total = 71.9;

Women = 69.1

Higher education graduates (% of the population of 23 and over) 1992:

Total = 6.6;

Women = 5.3

### **Employment**

Unemployment rate (1997):

Total = 8.8%; (July 1999: 11.3%)

Women = 9.1%;

Men = 8.5%

- labour force occupation rate = 63.3%

Women in the occupied civilian population = 46.5%

Women in the occupied population by sectors of activity (1996):

- agriculture = 52.0%; industry = 41.3%; trade = 53.3%;

- health and social assistance = 75.6%; education = 66.8%

- financial, banking and insurance services = 66.5%

Women as a percentage of occupied population by occupation (1996):

- seniorhigh officials and managers = 26.0%

- intellectual based occupations and scientists = 49.7%

- technicians, foremen and assimilated = 61.6%

- civil servants = 71.9%

- services, trade and assimilated staff = 74.5%

- farmers and qualified agricultural, forestry and fishery workers = 53.3%

- tradespeople and qualified craftspeople, machinery and installation maintenance staff = 26.9%

- others = 26.7%

### **Economy**

GNP = Lei 249750.2 billion

GDP/inhabitant = USD 1545 (1999)

### **Income and poverty**

Total people living under poverty threshold of 60% of which

households in urban areas = 38.13%

households in rural areas = 61.87%

Underweight live births (1997) = 9.2%

### **Education**

Gross enrolment rate (%) in

primary education = 96.6

secondary education = 80.0

Gross enrolment rate at all education levels (%), school year 1996-1997:

women = 62.5%

- men = 61.6%
- enrolment rate among the age group of 15-24:
- primary education (1997): women = 96.6%
- secondary education (1997): women = 80.0%
- average completion of education cycle (1992):  
average duration of enrolment (years): total = 8.3; women = 7.7%

#### **Human security and social justice**

Victims of violence per 1000 people:

- number of murders (per 100,000 inhabitants) in 1997 = 7
- number of rapes (per 100,000 women) in 1997 = 9
- number of thefts and robberies (per 100,000 inhabitants) in 1997 = 229
- number of economic crime (per 100,000 inhabitants) in 1997 = 1

Number of prisoners per 100,000 people (1997) = 121

#### **Dwellings and the environment**

- average living space per inhabitant (sq.) total = 15.18  
urban = 14.69  
rural = 15.64
- number of people per room: total = 1.06;  
urban = 1.17  
rural = 0.98
- people with access to water supply (1992) = 54.4%
- people with access to electrical power (1992) = 98.0%

**Source: The National Commission for Statistics, 1998; The National Human Development Report, 1998; The Statistical Office of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 1998.**

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