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## ROLE OF WOMEN IN ROMANIAN FISHERIES

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### ABSTRACT

The paper presents the findings of a survey on the presence and role of women in fisheries in Romania, as part of a study conducted in 2018 for the European Union’s Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The field work carried out for this study consisted of face to face or phone interviews, focus group discussions and email exchanges. The conclusions regarding the situation of women in Romanian fisheries are the same as in the general context, maintaining women’s vulnerability to the labor market (including fisheries). This results from the occurrence and perpetuation of gender discrimination through the existence of a gender pay gap, the imbalance between personal, family and work life, the lack of representation of women in the decision making process and place in managerial positions, as well as situations such as harassment at work, violation of legal rights of women returning from maternity leave and parental leave.

**Key-Words:** women, Romania, gender equality, fisheries

### AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Fisheries have always been connected to the Romanian space, being part of the economic and cultural identity of the country. Although the contribution of the fisheries sector to the economy is relatively low (only 0.0054 percent in 2005) (FAO, 2012a), it is still considered an important sector. The financial resources that the fisheries sector generate support a relatively large population, especially on the coast. The fisheries sector also contributes to the protection of wetlands and biodiversity of the Romanian waters. The main sub-sectors include aquaculture, marine and inland fisheries, as well as processing and marketing. Romania’s main fish production comes from aquaculture, followed by marine capture fisheries. In 2015, according to NAFA statistics (NAFA, 2008-2017), aquaculture

production was 10,980.947 MT, marine fisheries 4,842.6 MT, of which *Rapana venosa* represented 92.10% and inland fisheries 3,742.4 MT.

In 2016, according to the information provided by NAFA - Maritime Policies and Inspection Division during the interview (unofficial data), marine fisheries employed 1,221 persons (95.9% men and 5.5% women) and takes place exclusively in the Romanian's Black Sea national waters.

Aquaculture in Romania is currently exclusively freshwater, as the two marine aquaculture farms (for the growth of turbot and mussels) were closed in 2014 and 2017, respectively. The country's land resources and availability of inland waters provide excellent conditions for the development of aquaculture. The most important farmed fish species are cyprinids, particularly common carp. Over the last decade, the total national aquaculture production has increased at an average annual growth rate of 2 percent (FAO, 2012b).

In 2013, 11 fish processing companies were registered (ROMPOP, 2014). Processed fish products are from both freshwater and marine species. There is a great variety of products coming from the processing sector, including salads, smoked fish, and marinades, as well as primary processed fish which are headless, gutted, or portioned.

Romanian consumers traditionally prefer meat products, and the consumption of fisheries and aquaculture products is far below the EU average. Consumption of fish has fallen from more than 8 kg / inhabitant / year in 1989 to a minimum of 2 kg / inhabitant / year between 1993 and 1999. Since then, it has risen again and reached 4.5 kg / inhabitant / year in 2005 (according with the "Operational Programme for Fishery 2007-2013") and 6.3 kg per capita in 2015. This is still among the lowest in the EU (EUROFISH, 2017).

The main needs facing the sector are the modernization of ports and fishing fleet, the promotion of fishery products, the implementation of an integrated traceability system for monitoring the entire supply chain, and the provision of compensation and subsidies for unforeseen circumstances.

Nowadays, Romanian women are involved in the different sectors and sub-sectors of Romanian fisheries, but their roles in fisheries is recognised only within academia and research. Out of this realm, for example, among public institutions and in the private sector, the role of women remains almost invisible.

## **EXPERIMENTAL**

Data collection carried out for this study consisted of:

- Face to face or telephone interviews with 11 institutional stakeholders (governmental agencies, control authorities, research etc.): over the period 14 to 28.06.2018;

- A focus group discussion organised with 12 women on 18 May 2018 in Constanta (6 women present and 6 others online via Skype). The average age of the participants was 44.4 years, all the participants were graduates (fishery experts, biologists, audit, marketing, custodian of protected area etc.) and from different locations on the coast area (Constanta, Mangalia, 23 August, Agigea), Bucharest, Galati, Targoviste, Giurgiu).
- Email exchanges and telephone interviews with 3 invited women, who provided their views on the focus group discussion questions: from 3 private companies involved in the marine fishery sector (fishing and processing - 23 August, fishing and tourism - Agigea, fishing - Mangalia).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Women's presence in fisheries sub-sectors and related activities

According to existing data, processing is the sector where the participation of men and women is more balanced (see Table 1 below). On the contrary, women's registered employment is quite low in the aquaculture sector and marginal in the catching (both in marine and inland fisheries).

**Table 1.** Number of men and women formally employed in fisheries, aquaculture and related activities (EUROFISH, 2017; Fisheries Operational Programme for Romania (2015); National Strategy for Fisheries, 2012)

Country: ROMANIA	Men	Women	Total
Catching: marine fishery (2005)	614 (97%)	19 (3%)	633 (100%)
Catching: inland fishery (2005)	2,480 (98%)	51 (2%)	2,531 (100%)
Processing (2005)	365 (42%)	501 (58.85%)	866 (100%)
Aquaculture (2012)	2,549 (86.88%)	419 (14%)	2,968 (100%)
Fisheries-related activities and professions	Not available	Not available	Not available

In terms of the profile of fisheries workers, data exists for those working in the aquaculture sub-sector only. Most men employed are over 40 years old (38% are aged 40-50 and 27% are over 50), whereas women workers tend to be younger (13% are aged 20-30, 29% are aged 30-40 and 29% are 40-50). According to the national statistics, 76% of both men and women working in aquaculture are full-time workers and 24% work casually (Romanian Annual Report on National Data Collection Programme for Fisheries, 2015).

Official information on the population and profile of female workers in the fisheries sector and sub-sectors is not available; even estimates are

difficult to obtain because the tasks performed by women are not recognised by any of the stakeholders as such. For example, some of the women accept that there are women who “help“ the fisher husband without being paid, and they work especially in the administration of the activity. Only one case was reported in sea fishing where a woman goes on a boat with her fisherman husband and participates in the fishing process.

Institutional stakeholders estimated that the number of women working in the fishery sectors/activities was more accurate in the questionnaire completed by the National Agency for Fishery and Aquaculture, Maritime Directorate, regarding the situation of the sector in the coastal area. These new data have been collected during the field work, but it has to be underlined that these data are unofficial and not yet published (Table 1).

In addition to unconscious bias affecting the recognition of the presence of women in the sector, the slow growth of the sector, hard and poorly paid physical work were deemed responsible, according to the focus group participants, for the decline observed in the participation of women in aquaculture over the years. For example, in 2010, 603 women were active in aquaculture and in 2012, only 419 (from which 313 were full time) (National Strategy for Fisheries, 2012). This, as Table 2 suggests, was followed by a further decline in numbers in subsequent years. Most people said the passion for the chosen job was the reason why they kept their job.

**Table 2.** Estimation of the number of women working in the fishery sectors/activities in the coastal area (unofficial, unpublished data)

<b>Sector</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Marine fishery	total: 1005 (women - 4%)	total: 1124 (women - 4.5%)	total: 1221 (women - 4.1%)
Aquaculture	total: 195 (women - 8.17%)	total: 224 (women - 2.67%)	total: 158 (women - 11.39%)
Fisheries-related activities: marketing / first sale fish centers	total: 207 (women - 16.43%)	total: 226 (women - 19.03%)	total: 162 (women - 16.67%)
Processing	No new data		
Recreational fishing coastal area, in 2017	150 women		

### **Roles played by women in fisheries sub-sectors and related activities**

Institutional stakeholders engaged through interviews explained that

the profile of women working in the different fisheries sub-sectors and related activities is as follows:

- average age: 30-50 years old;
- nationality and ethnicity: Romanian mostly, but in the Danube Delta area, there are women from other ethnic groups (e.g. Lipovan, Hahol) or nationalities (e.g. Ukrainian);
- average level of education: secondary and higher education;
- nature of employment: in general, women are employed full-time (for example, in the aquaculture sector, in 2012, 313 out of the 419 women employed were full-time). However, during the periods in which more workforce is needed (such as during harvesting, fish breeding etc.), numbers of part-time / casual employees increase;
- status of the job performed: most women are formally employed; no stakeholder recognizes the existence of the women engaged in non-remunerated jobs, for example, in family businesses where they undertake activities like maintenance, cleaning, book-keeping etc.
- women are more present in fishing operation, especially recreational (in 2017, in the coastal area, there are 150 women involved).

Institutional stakeholders considered that women are involved especially in the following activities/occupations: repairing and production of fishing gear; technological engineering in aquaculture (especially in recirculating systems); pathology; fish processing and fishery products; and administration.

Regarding the profile of women working in the fisheries sectors and related activities, although official statistics show that the women are younger than men (Section 1.0), focus group discussions contradicted this, with the participants agreeing that women are, on average, older compared to men. Reasons given were that when women are younger, they are more likely to be completing their studies or taking care of their families and children.

Generally speaking, the share of men in the marine catching sector is almost 97% (in 2005), but women occupy 57.85% of the jobs (in 2012) in the processing sector. Gender balance is perceived as a beneficial factor for the sustainable development of the sector, being, for example a prerequisite in the evaluation of projects for funding by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), which are obliged to respect the “Statement of compliance with the provisions of the current legislation on equal opportunities and treatment of women and men in the field of employment and work as well as equal opportunities and non-discrimination”.

Although the case of self-employment was not reported during the interviews, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Men and

Women underlines that this can be an important way to increase women's participation in the labor market in Romania in general, and in the fisheries sector, in particular.

During the **focus group** discussions, it was highlighted that:

- In the catching sub-sector, women work in offices and/or have maintenance roles.
- In the aquaculture sub-sector, women have managerial and/or desk-office duties such as pond preparation, storage, feeding, fertilizing and feed manufacturing.
- In the fish processing sub-sector, women are involved in packaging, quality control, filling cans and supervising.
- In fisheries-related activities, women find jobs in sales, marketing, tourism, sports, education and research. Teaching, book-keeping and cleaning are among the typical activities carried out by women.
- It remains difficult to shine a light on the “invisible presence” of women in the sector.
- Women who participated in the focus group suggested that, over the last years, an increasing number of women have applied for permits in new areas such as “sports and leisure fishing”. Another new area where women are becoming increasingly involved is environmental protection, in jobs such as rangers in national parks.
- Some women are involved in consultancy (Fisheries Local Action Groups - FLAGs) - in Romania, there are 16, 14 of them being financed through the Operational Programme for Fisheries 2007-2013), but only a few have managerial responsibilities, being involved mainly in administrative issues.
- Women also mentioned that in the fisheries-related research sector and in higher-education, around 30% of the staff are women.

### **Remuneration of women in fisheries sub-sectors and related activities**

No information about women's remuneration in the fisheries sector was publicly available. However, institutional stakeholders interviewed provided the information below, which should be taken with caution as it could not be verified against other sources.

Theoretically, the level of salary is the same for men and women as it is not granted on a gender basis, but on knowledge and competencies. Although specific data on the level of remuneration could not be gathered, the official minimum wage of women working in the fisheries sector and sub-sectors is 1900 RON per month, equivalent to 413 EUR per month (Salary Calculator, 2019). During interviews, no wage differences between different sub-sectors were reported.

In general, in the Romanian fisheries sector, formally employed women are paid with salaries. There appears however to be some discrimination between men and women in terms of salary levels because the work of women is considered to be “easier” and as a consequence, they are paid less. Although there is no evidence of this, this practice was reported by many participants of the Focus Group.

Women’s remuneration levels have changed over time in line with economic trends, considering inflation, implementation of a minimum wage, etc.

Most women who are unpaid and/or whose jobs are not formally recognized, work on a seasonal basis in the catching sector. For example, they help their husbands in the fishing process - fish sorting, distribution, etc.

Men and women receive the same state benefits from their fisheries employment.

The representative of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women underlined that regarding the salaries, in the last few years, the process is improving at the level of central and local public agencies: a unitary approach is applied and the new law on salaries aims at improving and disseminating the principle enshrined in the Constitution, art 41. Labor and social protection of labor (4) “*For equal work, women have equal pay with men*”.

### **Legal status of women working in the fisheries sector**

Desk research highlighted that equal opportunities, including access to benefits, are enshrined in several legal and policy documents: the Governance Programme 2018-2020 included for the first time in Romania a distinct subchapter dedicated to the gender perspective, called “Respect and dignity for women». This measure is the result of gender inequality identified in the previous period at all levels in fields such as the labor market, education, decision-making, leadership, balanced distribution of roles and family responsibilities (Governance Program, 2018-2020).

In addition, some particular laws and regulations include provisions on non-gender discrimination:

- Romanian Constitution (art. 4.2); Labor Code (art. 3.2; art. 5.2); Law 202/2002 on equal opportunities for women and men (modified and completed by Government Emergency Ordinance nr. 83/2012; Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, recast (European Commission (2010).
- Government Emergency Ordinance no. 1050/2014 on the approval of the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for the period 2014-2017 and the General Action Plan 2014-2017 for

the implementation of the Strategy / Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination (art. 1 para. 2 lit. i) sets a goal to reduce gender pay gap (Romanian Government, 2010). Further, Law no. 62/2009 for the approval of GEO no. 61/2008 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women regarding access to and supply of goods and services; and Government Emergency Ordinance No. 67/2007 on Equal treatment schemes professional social security forbid direct and indirect discrimination (Romanian Government 2009, 2007).

- The Multiannual National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture 2014-2020 and Operational Programme for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs 2014-2023 include provisions on non-discrimination (UN,1999).

Institutional stakeholders interviewed explained that the country's legal framework recognizes the role of women in the sector and, in particular, it recognizes the status of “assisting spouses/life partners“ by transposing Directive 2010/41 into national legislation. Thus, in the Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and treatment of women and men (amended and completed; enforced) to art.7.2, it is specified: “...*equal opportunities and treatment of women and men in employment relationships shall be enjoyed by all workers, including self-employed persons, as well as spouses of self-employed workers who are not employed or associated or associated with where they, under the conditions laid down by national law, are habitually involved in the activity of the independent worker and perform either the same tasks or complementary tasks*”.

Women interviewed during the focus group said that there are equal rights and social rights and benefits for workers in formal/legal employment and they confirmed this as the reality. Regarding ”invisible“ women working in fisheries, they attested their existence, but they could not provide additional information on this. It was impossible to contact any of them and to invite in focus group discussions.

Generally, Romanians, both men and women, are not aware of any gaps and/or challenges that need to be tackled regarding the current legal framework to ensure that the role and presence of women in the sector is formally recognized. In theory, women have access to social benefits, training, subsidies and other types of support. For example, there is a specific social security scheme implemented and applied at the national level which gives benefits regarding social security, health care, family allowances and benefits.

The interview with the representative of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between men and woman highlighted that, however, there are several factors that prevent women from fully exercising their rights and



accessing jobs and employment benefits. The following factors can already be noted:

- lack of education and its essential role in acquiring the necessary knowledge for insertion into the labor market;
- segregation in the labor market: there are still some sectors in the economy where men are predominantly engaged and the incomes are significantly higher than in sectors with predominantly female employment;
- career breaks due to maternity and / or care for dependent family members;
- gender stereotypes, cultural patterns, customs and participation / low involvement of men (fathers / spouses) in family life;
- insufficient development of childcare services and / or other dependents in the family to allow for both women and men full participation in the labor market and assuming professional responsibilities;
- low degree of ownership by employers and / or their low interest in the benefits of labor flexibility like: part-time contracts, flexibility of working time, work at home, other innovative measures to promote reconciliation between work and family life. The participants to the focus group admitted that there is reluctance and low interest in the use of atypical employment contracts at the level of employers.

During discussions with the institutions' representatives, it was clear that it is important to promote measures to encourage women's access to university education, to encourage the increase of women's access to high-level positions, to promote gender equality a key factor in combating poverty and reducing the gap between Romania and the majority of European states regarding the role and position of women in society.

### **Involvement of women in decision-making and representative organisations**

There are no fisheries-related women organisations in Romania. This was also confirmed during interviews with stakeholders and focus group with women. The main organisations in the fishery and aquaculture sectors are:

- the Association of Processors and Importers of Fish from Romania,
- the Black Sea Consultative Council (BISAC), and
- the Advisory Committee for the Fisheries Sector.

These organisations gather the most relevant stakeholders, but none of them reports information on the proportion of women that are involved in them or that they represent (NAFA, 2014). Moreover, the National Agency for Fishery and Aquaculture has six regional branches (NAFA Romania) and

14 Local Action Groups for Fisheries funded through Fisheries Operational Programme 2007 - 2013 (Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2012), but there is no information about the share of women represented in them either.

According to institutional stakeholders interviewed, although women (including both formally employed women and “invisible“ female workers) are not organised in women organisations, trade unions, producer organisations or workers’ councils, women are members of different associations/organisations at national/regional level, sometimes holding leadership positions. For example, the Executive Committee of the Black Sea Advisory Council (BISAC) is composed by 11 members, of which 3 are women. Generally, the share of women members in those organisations is not known, and neither is the share of women elected in advisory or management boards.

The representative of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (NAEOMW) underlined that Romania has a substantial gender quota in the central public administration. In 2016, women occupied 52% of positions (compared to the EU average of 35%), placing Romania in second position for women’s employment in public institutions among EU countries. Indeed, the decision-making positions in all the central public administrations are occupied in the proportion of 48.06% men and 51.94% women. Regarding business leaders, women are recorded at lower percentages than men, but there is an upward trend: they were 33.39% in January 2017 and 33.67% in June 2017. There is, however, no information available on the situation in the fishery sector specifically.

### **Factors affecting women’s work in the sector**

There is a lack of secondary information on factors affecting women’s work in the fisheries sector.

In the view of institutional stakeholders, the factors that affect women’s work in the sector are the access to resources (e.g. knowledge, credit, boats, and property rights), the access to benefits like childcare access to education, training and information and access to innovative technologies. For example, many women are being forced to stay home and care for their children because of the lack of childcare services. It was also reported that the economic crisis has affected women more than men. Insufficient development of childcare services and / or for other dependents in the family hamper both women and men to participate fully in the labor market and to take on professional responsibilities.

Women who participated in the focus group believed the main factor affecting women’s access to and partaking in fisheries activities was the idea that they require physical strength and that certain physical qualifications are required for these activities. Furthermore, in Romania, there are still

important gender stereotypes, cultural models, customs and traditions that prescribe gender roles and directly influence work-life balance and the choices and opportunities women and men have to partake more equally in domestic and professional activities.

Focus group discussions revealed that other barriers to women's progression, responsibilities, decision-making and entrepreneurship capacity in the fisheries sector include the dangerous nature and difficult conditions linked to fishing (fisherman, fish keeper, guardian etc.) which women are reluctant to engage in and for which there is no alternative to male staff, basically for considerations of physical protection of women. For the rest of the positions in the organization chart of a business (that is, for those who do not require a good physical condition), there is no gender discrimination.

### **Future opportunities and challenges**

The main challenges for the men and women in the fishery sector are linked to the future development of the sector, especially through the establishment of fishing infrastructures (cold stores, processing stations, commercial spaces, new facilities, etc.) in Romania. These are currently poorly developed. New developments would allow the creation of new jobs where women will have a well-defined place.

Institutional stakeholders, as well as women interviewed during the focus group agreed that in order to improve women's participation in the fisheries sector it is necessary that these women organise and develop a specific association that promotes their rights and engages in an active social dialogue with other stakeholders. It was also suggested that there is a need to improve access to EU funds for fishing, especially for coastal family-businesses.

The representative of the National Agency on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (NAEOMW) appreciated that one challenge is the development of a female entrepreneurial culture that can change social norms surrounding the roles of women, but also on building the self-confidence of women. This change can be made both through access to women's education and by challenging gender stereotypes promoted in the family and society. In order to encourage and develop female entrepreneurship in general, but also in fisheries in particular. The public policies implemented in Romania should help in this regard as they aim for:

- reducing the wage gap between women and men;
- achieving a balance between family life and work;
- allocating financial resources to support initiatives;
- developing programs and projects to support initiatives.

Women who participated in the focus group suggested that despite the fact that the role of women in fisheries is unanimously recognised and

that the current Romanian legislation ensures equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, men are still considered as the drivers of the sector. However, most interviewed women would not leave the sector as they are pleased with their jobs.

Gender equality in Romania is a subject that continues to give rise to controversy, although more women have managed, over time, to occupy important positions in society. Romania has a national gender equality strategy that aims to respond by concrete measures and activities to problematic situations that have been identified over time with regards to education, the labor market, life social roles and gender stereotypes, participation in the decision-making process. The strategy has been developed in the context of overcome gender discrimination in the Romanian society and gender differences in access to, participation and involvement in the labor market, social, political, economic and cultural life. Although the Gender Equality Index (a composite indicator that measures the complex concept of gender equality and, based on the EU policy framework which assists in monitoring progress of gender equality across the EU over time) increased in Romania in the last few years (from 49.9/2005 to 52.4/2015), it remains the smallest in the EU (66.2) (EIGE, 2017).

Table 3 summarises the study findings through a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis of gender equality and women’s participation in Romanian fisheries.

**Table 3.** Summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting women’s participation in the fisheries sector in Romania

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well-developed and diversified post-harvest/transformation sector where women dominate the workforce.</li> <li>- Women in highly specialised (but ancillary) positions, e.g. academia and research, where their status is well recognised (30% of staff with higher education is female).</li> <li>- Processing sector is more egalitarian: women involved in packaging, quality control, filling cans and supervision.</li> <li>- Employment in aquaculture is more formal in general, compared to catching fisheries.</li> <li>- In principle, strong legal and governance framework to prevent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of traceability in the seafood value chain, which fails to expose any differences in work conditions and employment between men and women.</li> <li>- Labor force in formal employment in fisheries and aquaculture is highly divided (e.g. 97% men in catching sector, 86% in aquaculture production): a result of gender stereotypes in the overall fisheries and aquaculture industry and perception of the physically demanding nature of the activities.</li> <li>- Lack / unreliability of official employment data, no data on</li> </ul>

<p>gender discrimination and promote equal rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gender pay equality is enshrined in the country's Constitution.</li> <li>- Non-discrimination is mentioned (on paper at least) in strategic development plans for aquaculture and fisheries &amp; maritime affairs.</li> <li>- The status of assisting spouses is legally recognised.</li> <li>- Women in the profession are passionate about their work.</li> </ul>	<p>“unrecognized” posts/helping partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence of women in managerial and decision-making positions is weak</li> <li>- In practice, inadequate enforcement and implementation of the legal provisions preventing unequal pay between men and women.</li> <li>- Women are not organized in fisheries-related women's organisations, but some de facto belong (and are in relatively high positions) to some fisheries-related organisations (e.g. BISAC).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seemingly important role of the EFFMA in financing new developments in fisheries and its obligation to give equal opportunities to men and women (NB: but this body is external to Romania itself).</li> <li>- Emergence of highly-skilled jobs in high-tech aquaculture ventures (funded by EFFMA), for which women are well placed.</li> <li>- Increasing number of women in allied sectors, e.g. environment: park rangers, sports/recreational fishing.</li> <li>- Equal number of men and women in decision-making positions in the administration (but not in the private sector in general).</li> <li>- The Agency for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women = enabling environment for equality in work to happen (from which fisheries and aquaculture should eventually benefit).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sluggish growth of aquaculture sector (freshwater only), and declining attractiveness of the sector.</li> <li>- Some conflicting views and perceptions between women (focus groups) and institutional stakeholders (e.g. regarding age of women, extent of formal and informal employment), suggesting that that policy makers are out of touch with realities.</li> <li>- Heavy weight of gender stereotypes, which are compounded by lack of childcare services to give women more opportunities to return to work after a maternity break.</li> <li>- Rigid employers' mentality regarding the implementation of flexible work measures (e.g. flexitime) that could facilitate women's (re)entry in the sector.</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSIONS

In Romania, the fisheries sector has various degrees of specialization of labor. In addition to a gender division of labor, there are other related factors such as differential access to resources, technology, family roles, participation in decision making, political participation affecting women's

equal participation in the labor force. All these factors result in differential vulnerability, requiring specific coping and adaptation strategies for men and women, in view of the dynamic changes that are taking place in the sector. The exclusion of women from many spheres of the fisheries sector is a symptom of this, evidenced, for example, in the reduced participation of women in marine fishing.

In Romania, women actively participate in all stages of the fisheries supply chain, from pre-capture to capture and post-capture, but especially in processing and research / academia. Their participation is however not the same in every sub-sector. For example, in catching, there are almost no women. Women's participation and access to leadership roles in specialised organizations are marked by enormous challenges. The existence of these barriers ultimately reflects that despite having obligations, fisherwomen do not enjoy full rights. Continuous advocating for women's rights with a special focus on mobilizing fisherwomen to get organized as a means to make their voice heard is becoming urgent to start reversing this situation.

Romania should invest sufficient resources in acquiring detailed knowledge of the fisheries sector in the country, as well as the historic and current roles of women, in order to be able to promote context-specific organisational solutions that ensure that the voices of all groups are heard by the administration.

It is necessary to know the correct and concrete situation of women in the fisheries sector, starting from clear statistics enabling the identification of the "invisible women" behind the "successful fishermen".

More research should be conducted on the roles and benefits of women's participation in fisheries organisations. Lessons should be drawn and to provide the applied solutions to address gender inequalities through social mobilisation and women's integration into organisations.

The activity of the Romanian fisheries sector has diversified in many ways in the last decades, with new sectors appearing where women have been able to find a well-defined role. For example, the financing of high performing aquaculture systems through EFFMA has led to the emergence of new jobs that require a lot of skill and patience (characteristic of women), which has been an advantage for them in occupying these jobs. Women are beginning to "become a voice" in the Romanian fisheries sector, occupying leading positions even if they are still numerically in minority.

Generally, women are involved in activities that do not require much physical strength, but mainly in those that require more finesse and accuracy; some of them occupy top positions in higher education or management of firms. At the individual level, there is limited quantitative data on the presence and roles of women in the Romanian fisheries sector. There are new data provided by the national authorities but these data are unofficial and

unreported. It is necessary that “invisible“ women in the sector acquire a status equal to men and not be regarded as only “supportive“ of their husband / family.

It is also highly necessary to unify women in Romanian fisheries in a dedicated professional association, aimed at promoting their rights and acting as active social dialogue partner.

In the general context, the occurrence and perpetuation of gender discrimination situations such as the existence of a gender pay gap, the imbalance between personal, family and work life, lack of representation of women in the decision making process by occupying managerial positions, as well as situations such as harassment at work, violation of legal rights of women returning from maternity leave and parental leave, maintains women’s vulnerability in the labor market (including fisheries) and requires urgent attention.

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