

## GENDER EQUALITY, CHANCES EQUALITY AND INTANGIBLE ASSETS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

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### *Abstract*

*Achieving a high level of competitiveness and sustainable development and the consolidation of a real democracy is requiring a balanced participation of women and men in all the areas of socio-political and economic development. The dissemination of the related studies shows that women are one of the groups of people vulnerable to the effects of transition. In this regard we note an increased rate of the long-term unemployment by limiting the access to jobs, generally the better paid but also by participating in the underground economy, it does not provide support and access to a social security system. Human capital, as an essential component of the intangible assets, constitutes a real mean of production and the future growth of investments in production. It is leaving, but not transferable as land, labor and capital assets. Investing in human capital is considered to be one of the most cost-effective and should be a priority for any community that you propose to support its sustainable economic and social development. Regardless of gender or age, human capital is and will remain the main source of economic growth and sustainable development.*

**Key words:** chances equality, gender equality, human capital, intangible assets, sustainable development

## INTRODUCTION

Kofi Annan (2002) stated that gender equality is more than an end in itself [9]. It is a prerequisite to counter the competition reducing poverty, promoting sustainability (sustainable development) and building good governance.

Globally, gender equality and chances equality is a fundamental right in the European Union.

*Equality chances* imply the existence of equal opportunities of development that promotes equal treatment for men and women, with no differences or differences caused by religion, ethnicity, age, disability or sexual orientation. In other words, it promotes non-discrimination and social inclusion. Is the concept that all human beings have the right to develop their capabilities and skills can make choices without the limitations imposed by strict roles. The existence of different behaviors, make the aspirations and needs of

women and men are considered, valued and favored equally, demonstrating that these two parties have every right to enjoy the same freedom to fulfill dreams or aspirations.

In the context of equal opportunities we discuss on the insurance of full participation of all persons to economic and social life, taking into account the capacities, needs and aspirations of people of different male and female, as well as their equal treatment.

According to the Inclusion Barometer 2010 [4], equality is a concept familiar to the entire population and there were made the following progress in this area:

- number of women in employment is increasing, but remains below that of men, even if the majority of students and university graduates are women;
- women still earn on average 17.8% less than men for every hour worked and this figure remains at a stable level;
- women are still underrepresented in political and economic decision-making positions,

although in the last decade, the number of those who occupy such posts has increased; -family responsibilities are still unevenly distributed between women and men; -risk of poverty is greater for women than for men; -women are the main victims of gender based violence and human trafficking.

By equal chances and equal treatment between women and men in labor relations is thy discriminatory access [8]:

- choice or free exercise of a profession or activity;
- employment on all vacant posts and at all levels of the professional hierarchy;
- equal pay for work of equal value;
- counseling and vocational guidance programs for initiation, qualification, improvement, specialization and retraining;
- promotion at any hierarchical and professional level;
- working conditions that comply with health and safety at work, according to the legislation in force;
- benefits other than salary, as well as public and private systems of social security;
- organizations, trade unions and professional bodies, as well as the benefits granted by them;
- social benefits and services, granted under legislation.

*Gender equality* involves the process of assessing the implications for women and men irrespective of the planned action, including legislation, policy programs, in all areas and at all levels.

The gender term takes into account beliefs, stereotypes, ways of action, roles and social statuses, which apply depending on specific contexts.

In society, women and men do not have the same roles, resources, needs or interests. They do not have an equal contribution in making decisions. The values attributed to "*women's work*" and "*men's work*" are not the same. The differences vary from one society to another, from one culture to another and are termed "*gender differences*". Gender has direct references to social differences between women and men that are learned and constantly changing over time. It represents a

conceptual tool which can analyze the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of men and women regardless of the contextual plan. Gender roles and needs are influenced by class, age, race and ethnicity, culture and religion and geographical environment, economic and political. In any social context, gender roles can be flexible or rigid, similar or different, complementary or might be even conflicting. Besides differences between women and men, there may be differences within the same category in terms of socio-economic level, the power of decision or age.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To discuss this topic easily, we analyzed the gender indicators system that monitors and evaluates the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, which aims primarily interest of humanity, ensuring equality, development and peace for women. The indicator system includes 52 indicators structured on key areas such as:

- Economic structures, participation in the activities of production and resources;
- Education;
- To healthy and related services;
- Public life and decision-making process;
- The human rights of women and female children.

Also, in 2013, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) [7] launched the ***European Index of Gender Equality*** that aims to scale phenomenon of gender equality. Also, to support this research, we discussed through case study of the Provident Financial Romania - company "*where people matter*" which allowed me to reflect on the importance of human capital regardless of gender.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

European Index of Gender Equality is organized into six main areas:

- (i) **Work:** analyzes the positioning of men and women in the labor market and relevant in formulating employment policies to increase the number of jobs and labor market participation in terms of gender equality. It

has three sub-areas, namely: *participation, segregation and quality of work*.

(ii) **Money:** examine inequalities in the economic and financial resources of women and men (principle of equal pay for equal work for women and men - the Lisbon Treaty). It has two sub-areas: *financial and economic situation*.

(iii) **Knowledge:** show differences in terms of education and training. Helps reduce risk of unemployment and social exclusion. It has three sub-areas: *participation in education segregation and training throughout their lives*.

(iv) **Time:** focuses on the relationship between labor, domestic work and care and other activities (social, cultural, etc.). It has three sub-areas: *economic activities, caring activities and social activities*.

(v) **Power:** examine differences in representation in political and economic structures. It has three sub-areas: *political, social and economic*.

(vi) **Health:** Analyze the differences between women and men on the health status and access to the structures of the health care system. It is divided into three sub-areas: *health status, behavior and access to health services*.

There is also a **satellite field** in turn divided into fields of intersectional inequalities and violence.

Intersectional inequalities satellite field is composed of sub-areas like: *age, nationality, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, social class*. Satellite violence field has two subfields:

(a) *Direct violence* as a direct form of discrimination between men and women as a human rights violation;

(b) *Indirect violence* with emphasis on stereotypes, attitudes affecting gender equality.

As values of this index are given scores from 1 (total inequality) to 100 (total equality).

The European average is 54 points, our country being last in the European Union, with a total value of 35.3 points, while in contrast, Sweden is in first place with 74.3 points.

Table 1. The European index of gender equality in relation to the main areas of action

	Index	Labor	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
RO	35.3	60.4	39.0	28.8	17.8	24.9	84.0
EU-27	54.0	69.0	68.9	48.9	38.8	38.0	90.1

Source: EIGE [7]

At European level, this index highlights that:

-women's access to labor market is not uniform for all professional categories;

-women have not yet come to occupy positions of responsibility in the same way as men;

-the choice of study certainly affect gender segregation in the labor market, both in terms of occupations and in terms of economic sectors.

Eurostat has defined a list of indicators of gender equality structured on the following subdomains: Education; The labor market; Income and social inclusion; Child care; Health.

#### **Case study: Provident Financial Romania - company "where people matter"**

This case study allows to reflect the importance of human capital regardless of gender.

Provident company focuses on developing human capital and invests in its improvement and furthermore, is actively involved in social life through programs aimed at helping people.

Provident former CEO, Steve Rice said in the magazine representatives provident: "*We are a company where people matter and we want to have an active role in the life of the communities in which we operate. Because our business is based on building lasting relations people cherish above all. We are committed to establish long-term relationships with our employees and customers; We get involved in the local community through programs aimed at helping people who live and work where are we today.*" [6]

The activity of the provident is guided by the triangle values: *respect, clarity and*

*responsibility* [2]. Clarity refers to the company's transparency and accessibility and honesty to customers, employees and business partners the rest. The company is committed to fulfill all that he proposed. Respect results from the appreciation of the people and to their viewpoint diversity and understanding of the differences existing between individuals. As an organization where "*people matter*", Provident encourages people to use their full potential and make a commitment to build sustainable partnerships work [11].

Provident priorities are: financial education, disadvantaged children, people with special needs, environmental protection [3] and volunteering.

Employment policies of Provident Financial Romania are designed to attract, develop and retain the best people, and that is the reason why this company believes strongly in respect for others and equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender, age or sex. The company is committed to treating employees right. Values diversity and differences and discourages discrimination. The company is aware of the need for employees to find a balance between work and personal life. Therefore, Provident provides a fair and competitive remuneration, rewarding the skills and performance of employees through training programs and periodic evaluations, opportunities for personal development and career progression. The company respects employees' right to express their views, even implementing systems that listen to their views. Lastly, Provident provides a safe and healthy work environment and strive hard to provide the best working conditions.

In 2010, Provident has hired 150 people, and 38 were promoted throughout the year, of which 31 in management positions. In 2011, the company had 640 employees in more than 40 cities in the country:

- Most senior management team members were recruited locally and are Romanians;
- 71% of employees have higher education, the average age being 32 years;
- About 51% of employees are women and 41% of middle and senior management positions are held by women.

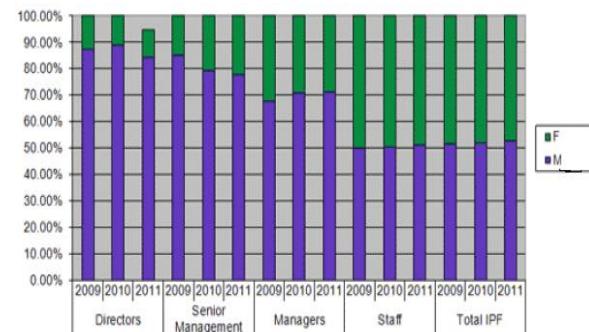


Fig. 1. Graphical representation of employees by gender, 2009-2011

Source: International Personal Finance Annual Report 2011, [www.providentfinancial.ro](http://www.providentfinancial.ro) [5]

From Fig.1, Provident appears that in the study period 2009-2011, men in control of the director or senior management positions registered a percentage between 69 and 89%, while women raised the bar on personal and financial staff posts total international (*total IPF*). 41% of middle and senior management positions are held by women.

When it comes to being an executive, women occupy a very bad position. When we think about personnel, men have the exact same situation.

Also, in the graph presented above, in the period of 2009-2011, it was noticed an equality between men and women, both categories representing 50%.

Provident provides equal opportunities in recruitment and promotion, and the criteria are transparent and comprehensible. Only in 2014, 72 of the employees were promoted [10]. They are concerned about the health and personal safety of employees and their agents and apply the most effective processes and procedures set up with the best experts in the field.

Provident has a special guide on the safety and health at work, which contains rules and tips for its employees, it provides each employee since it considers that "*man is the most precious capital*" [1].

## CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion spot we can mention that the firm Provident puts great emphasis on human capital development, it believes in the skills and capacities, to exploit to the maximum,

invests in the development and in the improvement of the employees and, last but not least, it recognizes the employees, regardless of gender. In other words, managers have done an excellent thing, namely that employees are responsible for the smooth running of the company.

We must remember that the term "*gender*" is not a replacement for the "*sex*" which refers strictly only to biological differences (for example, statistics are disaggregated by gender).

It is known that women are found mostly in jobs with low pay levels.

Increasing the number of women in the labor market, supporting their employment on the main positions occupied by males, promoting the program part-time, access ladies in management positions, ensuring the reconciliation between work and private life of men and women, causes removal of disparities women and men, including in terms of salary levels.

Now it has been proved that began to occur changes in the economic sector, where the women have begun to hold a sphere wider the functions of the board of the economic entities, especially in the private sector, where they are encouraged the capacities of the entrepreneurial spirit and managerial.

The elimination of discrimination based on the criteria of sex, express or understood, constitutes one of the conditions necessary to be able to build an equitable society and in order to be able to progress, which implies the state authorities and every politician. These measures will provide the opportunity for both parties involved.

Regardless of the decision-making process, there must be collaboration both categories of individuals.

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