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Women's status in Romanian media organizations: Social and cultural influences on the work environment

Abstract: This article examines various aspects related to women's advancement in media organizations in Romania, based on data from the International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*. The two authors of this article functioned as Regional Coordinator for Eastern Europe and respectively country-based researcher for the study at the basis of the report. The data is discussed in the context of the influences of social circumstances and cultural dimensions on media occupations.

Keywords: status; gender; media outlets; news.

1. Introduction and overview

In present day Romania, women have a strong presence in media organizations. They work side by side with men in newspapers, radio stations, and television stations across the country. They have various attributions at many levels across different types of newsrooms. However, advancements of women in media professions in Romania parallel concerns regarding women's work load in comparison to men's and regarding the feminization of the media field, enhanced by the absence of gender equity policies in media organizations and by the population's lack of trust in the media.

These considerations are supported by data from the International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* (Byerly, 2011), based on a study for which the two authors of this article functioned as Regional Coordinator for Eastern Europe and respectively country-based researcher in Romania. The report confirms that there is less of a gender gap in media organizations in Eastern Europe than in similar organizations in other parts of the world, and that women have reached parity with men in terms of employment and salary in most media-related jobs in Romania. Yet the report also highlights that, "on other pro-equality issues" such as women in governance, childcare institutional support, and gender-related policies, media organizations in Eastern Europe, including in Romania, "show less progress" (p. 269).

In this article, the findings for Romania from the International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* are interpreted through a reflection on social and cultural influences on the media occupations. Specifically, the article provides an examination of both positive and negative aspects related to women's advancement in status in the media professions in Romania in conjunction with reflections on women's

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work and the country's social circumstances as well as on women's work and the country's cultural dimensions.

To provide a background to the data, the article includes a section on social circumstances, women's work, and media occupations in Romania, as well as a section on cultural dimensions, women's work, and media occupations in the country. Next, the International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* is presented in terms of approach, methodology, findings, as well as brief descriptions of results around the world, for Eastern Europe, and for Romania. Finally, the article discusses the research information from the report regarding women's status in news media organizations in Romania in terms of social and cultural implications.

2. Social circumstances, women's work, and media occupations in Romania

In Romania, like in other totalitarian states of the Eastern European bloc between the end of the 1940s and the end of the 1980s, the communist party and its propaganda apparatus organized large campaigns to determine the population to believe specific ideas or to act in specific ways (Kligman, 1998). Such a campaign was that through which a "new identity" for women was prescribed, promoted, and reinforced. This new identity encompassed the themes of the socialist worker, participating in the construction of the multilaterally developed society, and of the socialist mother, contributing to the breeding of the country's new human. Women's constructive and reproductive functions were instrumentalized in the service of the state, and the efficiency of women in their labor for building up the society and for making up a family became the criterion by which every woman was supposed to be socially recognized (Deletant, 1997).

The official position regarding women, stated in the constitution and reinforced in numerous party documents, was consequently that of equality with men. Marriage and family were declared to be liberalized, sexually exploitative images and writing were prohibited, and equal educational and professional opportunities were firmly stated (Makkai, 1994). Women were granted equal access to education, and by 1970 women's literacy, which used to be under 25% between the two world wars, increased to over 95%. Women were employed not only in jobs traditionally assigned to them, but also in areas considered heavy work, for example in factories and plants, in mining and construction. By 1980, a 30% compulsory quota of representation was established for women in domains such as politics, the military, science, and sports (Pascall & Manning, 2000).

Yet in spite of the official equalitarian propaganda, gender inequality was hidden rather than absent under the communist regime (Sassen, 2002). With pro-natalist policies prohibiting family planning and criminalizing abortion practices, the work duty found itself in competition with the maternal duty for women. Early age childcare facilities were available to everybody but were poor quality, and after school children's programs were inexistent, so women had to juggle the work outside of the house and the raising of children. Additionally, occupational segregation was high in spite of the rhetoric of equality. The division of labor remained sexist both because there was an obligation for women to be available for paid work and for family care, and no obligation for men to do so, and because women's earnings were

lower than those of men. There was also no legal protection of women's rights at work or in the family (Popa, 2003).

The collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s seemed to provide a chance to harmonize institutional justice and care, and thus enhance the lives of men as well as women (Cipkowski, 1991). In particular, the social, political, and legislative void that occurred in the aftermath of the anti-communist revolution in Romania in 1989 appeared to present an opportunity to incur positive transformations, including steps taken towards changing reproductive policies, addressing gender equity, and improving family-related services. However, while the abortion policy was reversed early on after the anti-communist revolution, and while specific educational and healthcare public services benefitting women and families continued to be offered, issues regarding the women's work load and gender equity did not come to the forefront of civic dialogue and civic action (Karsanyi, 1993).

Overall, women's social condition worsened in Romania in the transition from a totalitarian regime to a democratic one (Pasti, 2003). After 1989, many large factories and plants built during communism proved to be no longer economically viable and as such they functioned under capacity or were shut down. Women were the first to be offered less work hours or to be laid off, and thus they had to either look for new job opportunities immediately or to stay home temporarily. With many women underemployed or unemployed, and with cost of living and prices of housing surging, the level of dependency of women on men as well as the risk for women to be abused by men increased dramatically in the early 1990s. However, having one income per family proved to be insufficient for supporting most households in Romania, so women had to return to the workforce, numerous times in positions under their qualification levels and underpaid. In the course of these changes, women continued to have multiple workloads that were considered their duties yet that received little recognition. However, some success stories were recorded, as women's flexibility on the market led to the emergence of a wave of women entrepreneurs and to the prevalence of women in an array of professions that did not exist during the communist period (Einhorn, 1998).

From the early 1990s to the present day, large numbers of women have become media professionals. During communism, media professions and occupations were accessible primarily based on allegiance to the communist party, and there were few and highly centralized media outlets. After 1989, media professions and occupations became accessible primarily based on skill, or often available for those who were willing to learn skills on the job. Moreover, the number of media outlets with national coverage and with local/regional coverage grew, while employment opportunities in other areas decreased. As many women were looking for new employment and were willing to change career paths, they reoriented professionally towards the emerging and soon booming media opportunities, which also occasionally allowed work from home and flexible work hours. Media organizations have offered many women stable employment and decent salaries. However, the access of women to the media jobs has led to the perception of the media as a feminized field. This tendency, together with the commercialization of the media formats, the entertainment-orientation of the media content, and the sensationalism of the news, has contributed to bringing down the reputation of media work and the population's trust in the media (IRES, 2012).

3. Cultural dimensions, women's work, and media occupations in Romania

This article approaches women's advancement in media occupations in Romania in connection not only with the country's social circumstances but also with the country's cultural dimensions. There are issues related to workplace activities and organizational climate that can be illuminated by reference to Romania's cultural profile and positioning. Specifically, this section of the article reflects on women's work and media occupations in Romania with the aid of the theories of Hofstede (1991/1998, 2001) and of a 2005 survey by Gallup Institute and Interact which employs Hofstede's five cultural dimensions in a comparison of European countries. The development and current state of media organizations in Romania are thus considered as part of a broader discussion about what is deemed as acceptable and appropriate organizational practice within the Romanian culture.

Hofstede's indices or dimensions (scored 1-100) account for cultural characteristics of specific countries as well as for cultural differences among countries. They include: the power distance index which measures power equality between people situated at different levels of the social hierarchy (with low scores for countries promoting equality and high scores for countries accepting inequalities); the individualism index, which evaluates possibility of individual advancement based on a person's own efforts (with low scores for countries granting prevalence to individual efforts is worth and high scores for countries granting prevalence to collective efforts); the masculinity index, which assesses attribution and valuing of gender functions and responsibilities (with low scores for countries promoting integration of gender roles and of cross-gender features such as human integrity and quality of life and high scores for countries promoting separation of gender roles as well as male-specific features such as physical strength and wealth accumulation); the uncertainty avoidance index, which measures social acceptance of incertitude (with low scores for countries focusing on integrating novelty and high scores for countries focusing on excluding novelty); and the long-term orientation index, which evaluates perseverance in accomplishing duties (with low scores for countries taking a near future perspective on projects and high scores for countries taking a wide span perspective on projects).

The 2005 survey by Gallup Institute and Interact compared Hofstede's indices across the European countries (Luca, 2005). This study showed that European countries are similar in that all have short-term orientation, but that they differ in all other dimensions (see *Table 1*). The study scored the Balkan countries (including Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece), the Latin countries (France, Italy, and Spain), and Germany as high on the power distance index and on the uncertainty avoidance index, while scoring the Northern countries (Holland, Denmark, and Sweden) and the United Kingdom as low in both of these areas. The study also scored the Balkan countries, the Latin countries, and the Northern countries as low on the masculinity index, and Germany and the United Kingdom as high on this index. The study scored the Balkan countries as low on the individualism index and all the other groups of countries as high on this index. Overall, people in Balkan countries, including Romania, were presented in this study as allowing significant power distance between people situated at different levels in the social hierarchy, valuing collective efforts over individual efforts, promoting integration of gender roles and of cross-gender features, having low tolerance to and acceptance of incertitude and novelty, and having short term perspective on projects. The val-

ues registered for Romania were: power distance index 70; individualism index 49; masculinity index 39; uncertainty avoidance index 60; and long term orientation index 42.

Table 1. Comparative results for European countries.

Index/Country	Balkan Countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece)	Latin Countries (France, Italy, Spain)	German Countries (Germany)	Northern Countries (Holland, Denmark, Sweden)	English Countries (The United Kingdom)
Power distance index	High	High	High	Low	Low
Individualism index	Low	High	High	High	High
Masculinity index	Low	Low	High	Low	High
Uncertainty avoidance index	High	High	High	Low	Low
Long-term orientation index	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Numerous connections can be drawn between these cultural dimensions identified for Romania and organizational settings in Romania. Due to the high power distance and to other factors (an often encountered nostalgia for communism, under the consideration that safe jobs are not worth sacrificing for political rights; a disenchantment with capitalism and democracy, viewed by many as marked by corruption and scandal), there is a high occurrence of an authoritarian leadership style in workplaces. The high power distance, together with the low individualism, also accounts at least partially for the passivity, lack of involvement, lack of participation, and lack of responsibility of employees in numerous organizations in the country. The high uncertainty avoidance and the low long-term orientation contribute to a lack of openness to change and a lack of perspective regarding what is needed for change, which makes many organizations inflexible and uncompetitive. The low masculinity index, accounting for rejection of traditional gender roles and for valuing of such features as human integrity and quality of life seem like good news, although this might be to some extent a remnant of the communist propaganda of gender equity and to some extent the consequence of the impossibility for families to survive without two incomes in the household (which forces women to take duties inside as well as outside of the household but does not compel men to necessarily do the same). Additionally, there is a lack of workplace and countrywide policies and legislation regarding gender-related harassment, abuse, and violence.

The cultural dimensions identified for Romania can also be tied to the presence of women in the media professions. As already mentioned in this article, there are many women in the media professions in Romania. Their jobs are relatively safe and decently paid. However, the status of women in the media profession is lowered due to organizational culture as well as to public perception. Many media organizations in Romania, like other types of organizations in the country, feature predominantly male leadership in an authoritarian style, which together with the passivity of the employees, a lack of openness to change, and a lack of overall perspective severely affect women who work here. Additionally, as people increasingly

prefer the rendering and interpretation of news by family and peers rather than by media outlets, and as public communication is often filtered by group identity rather than by personal experience, the social status of the media professionals is low (IRES, 2012).

4. Approach, methodology, and findings of the study

The study at the basis of the International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* was pursued to provide, for the first time, a comprehensive global picture of gender positions in news organizations based on systematic and sound research data gathering and analysis. The study and the subsequent report thus represent groundbreaking benchmarks from which to track and monitor the performance of media companies in regards to opportunities for media professionals. Overall questions posed by the study included: If news content is the final outcome of a series of steps involving the participation of a number of individuals, what then is the role of women in determining and shaping the news agenda? Who decides how many stories are by women and feature women as pivotal subjects in news operations? Are media companies currently organized to promote gender equity within their organizational structures or to accommodate women's voices as well as men's perspectives in coverage? (Gross, 2011, p. 7).

The International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* was endorsed by organizations such as the American Society of News Editors (ASNE), the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME), the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM), the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, the South Asian Policy Analysis Network (SAPANA), the Australian Press Council, the Estonian Public Broadcasting, the Center for Independent Journalism, the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the World Editors Forum (WEF), and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Janis Karklins, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for the Communication and Information Sector stated about the report: "This publication represents a significant milestone in the debate on gender inequality and news media. It adds value to UNESCO's ongoing work on developing gender-sensitive media indicators, by highlighting the gaps that such indicators could possibly address" (UNESCO News, 2011).

The study was conducted over a two-year period (2009-2010) by a team of researchers that comprised over 150 country-based researchers and 17 regional coordinators, supervised by principal investigator Dr. Carolyn Byerly from Howard University and supported by the International Women's Media Foundation. The researchers met face-to-face with executives of more than 500 media companies in 59 nations around the globe, and gathered data about approximately 170,00 news media professionals based on a 12-page questionnaire. The news organizations surveyed included newspapers, radio stations, and television stations, with traditional as well as online delivery formats. Questions addressed referred to status in news media ownership, governance, reporting, photojournalism, editing, publishing, broadcasting, and other media jobs. Across all these areas, questions referred to operations with respect to men's and women's occupational standing, hiring, salaries, promotional policies, and other workplace practices. In spite of challenges along the way such as the refusal of some media organizations to participate or to provide salary information, the study was finalized in a timely manner and was launched through a panel discussion featured on C-SPAN in the spring of 2011.

In this extensive study, researchers found that globally men outnumber women in media organizations. Across the organizations studied, men represent 66.6% of the full-time news media workforce whereas women represent only 33.3% of this type of news media workforce. In the organizations surveyed in the Asia and Oceania region, men outnumber women 4:1, and in organizations surveyed in the Middle East, Africa, and South America, men outnumber women 2:1. Across the organizations studied, 73% of the top management jobs are occupied by men, compared to only 27% of these jobs occupied by women. In the Asia and Oceania region, women are barely 13% of those at top management level, although the numbers for men and women at top management in this region vary greatly from one nation to another. In the Middle East and in North Africa, men earn three to five times more than women in governance and top management positions. Across the organizations studied, men hold nearly two-thirds of the jobs at the rank of reporter, compared to women who hold 36% of the jobs at this rank. However, among the ranks of senior professionals, women are coming close to parity with men, with 41% of the news-gathering, editing and writing jobs globally (Byerly, 2011, pp. 9-13).

The study found a higher representation of women and a higher status for women in news media organizations in the Eastern Europe region. Eight nations from Eastern Europe were represented in this study: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. It is well known that all of these nations were part of the communist bloc (although some were Soviet Union republics and some were independent countries), and several of these nations are now part of the European Union (namely Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania). It is less well known however that these countries share some commonalities but also have some differences regarding gender-related issues, specifically gender aspects of the news media professions. The 85 companies that took part in the study in Eastern European countries (31 newspapers, 27 television stations, and 27 radio stations) employ 6,057 men and 5,592 women, or 52% men and 48% women. Women have moderate to excellent participation in all occupational levels, even exceeding the numbers of men in some of the news reporting levels such as the editorial categories of junior and senior professionals, in which women score 59.9% and respectively 56.4%. Women are also more represented than men (69.4%) in the support occupational category, which includes secretariat, human resources, and advertising (Byerly, pp. 263-270).

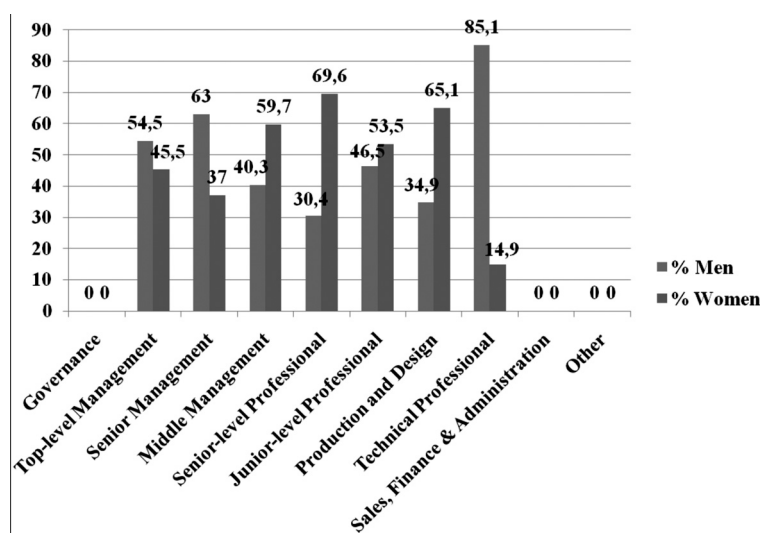
Although women have almost reached parity with men in the news media organizations included in the study in the Eastern Europe region, they are not as represented as men in specific occupational areas, namely at the highest levels and in technical positions. Women comprise 40.9% of those in senior management, 43.4% of those in top-level management, and 32.9% of those in governance in organizations surveyed in Eastern Europe. Compared to most other regions surveyed, these percentages are high. Yet within this region in which women dominate at some of the lower occupational levels such as junior and senior professionals, these figures reveal women's slight underrepresentation at the tops of their companies. Women's underrepresentation is more evident at creative and technical levels in Eastern Europe. Women are only 37.3% of the production category which includes scene designers, photographers, and video editors, and only 20.5% of the technical category which includes among others camera specialists and sound specialists (Byerly, pp. 263-270).

In terms of job benefits and security, women are slightly at disadvantage as compared to men in the news media organizations surveyed in Eastern Europe. Men's and women's salaries

are comparable across most occupational levels, with men's being slightly higher than women's at a few occupational levels. Women's job security is high in the Eastern European companies included in the study. However, of the approximate one-fourth of the news media workforce not holding regular, full-time jobs (including those with part-time, contract, and freelance employment), women are the majority. Of the 85 companies surveyed in this region, 88% declare to have well-established policies for maternity leave, but only 68% of these companies declare to have corresponding policies on paternity leave. 69% of the companies allow women to return to their same jobs after maternity leave, but only 32% offer some form of child care assistance. Only 16% of the companies have a broad policy on gender equity, and only 9% have a policy on sexual harassment (Byerly, pp. 263-270).

A total of 10 Romanian news media organizations (2 newspapers, 5 television stations, and 3 radio stations) participated in the study. These companies employ 614 people, of which 291 are men and 323 are women. Thus, women have already surpassed men in numbers at the newsrooms surveyed in Romania (the same as in Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, and Russia). The news reporting ranks are dominated by women, who represent more than half (53.5%) of those in the junior professional level and more than two-thirds (69.6%) of those in the senior professional level. Women also dominate (59.7%) in middle management. Data for Romania mirror data for the Eastern Europe region in what concerns the representation of women at senior management and top management levels (whereas at governance levels data was not provided for Romania). In senior management women are 37%, and in top management women are 45.5%. Like for the whole of Eastern Europe, the dramatic departure from women's strong representation in the other ranks of the companies surveyed is at the technical level at which women comprise only 14.9% of the employees; this cannot be compared with the representation of women at the support level, because data for this level was not provided by Romanian companies (Byerly, pp. 263-270).

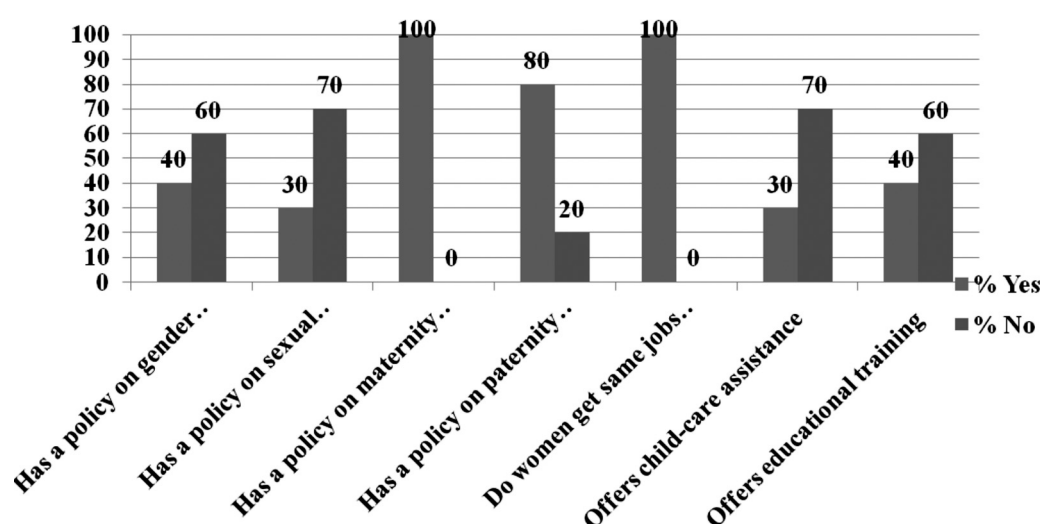
Figure 1. Occupational level by gender in Romanian news companies



(Source: *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*, author C. Byerly, International Women's Media Foundation, 2011.)

Specific data for Romania is in broad lines comparable to overall data for Eastern Europe in what concerns job benefits and security. Men and women earn similar salaries, although women earn more than men in senior-level positions, and men earn more than the women in technical positions (Byerly, 2011, pp. 294-295). Job security is good for both men and women, with a large majority of the people employed by the Romanian news media companies surveyed (276 of the 305 men and 302 of the 342 women) in regular, full-time jobs, yet with more women than men (29 men versus 40 women) in part time, contract, and freelance positions. In Romania, national laws regulate parental leave and child care assistance, whereas workplace provisions serve to reinforce or supplement these. All news media organizations surveyed have adopted policies on maternity leave, but only 80% of these organizations have also adopted policies on paternity leave. A small number of companies (30%) reported offering child care assistance adding to what is required by law. Less than half of the companies report having policies in place on gender equity and sexual harassment; the number is higher than for other countries in the region but is lower than in Western Europe, Northern Europe, and North America (see *Table 2*).

Figure 2. Gender-related policies in Romanian news companies.



(Source: *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*, author C. Byerly, International Women's Media Foundation, 2011.)

5. Discussion and conclusion

Data from the International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* confirm that there are some positive aspects related to women's work as part of media organizations in Eastern Europe and in Romania. Many women who lost industry jobs in the early 1990s have indeed sought and secured employment in some new occupations and professions such as the media. The Eastern Europe region is one of the most advanced among those included in the study in what concerns numbers of women and payment for women in media organizations at various occupational levels, as well as in what

concerns terms of employment and overall job security for women in these organizations and across their levels. Romanian news media companies specifically have women above parity with men at junior professional, senior professional, and middle management levels, employ women as well as men mostly in regular, full time positions, and provide women (and mostly men too) with clear policies regarding parental childbirth leaves.

However, as described in the previous section of this article, women are not at parity with men in the news media organizations surveyed in Eastern Europe in such occupational areas as top levels and technical levels. Romania specifically, which has women above parity with men at junior professional, senior professional, and middle management levels, has women below parity with men at senior management and top management levels (with data for governance not available for this country). Moreover, across Eastern Europe percentages for women in the production and technical categories are in the 30s and respectively 20s, and in Romania in percentages for both of these categories are in the 10s. These trends regarding organizational leadership and technical occupations, coupled with an overwhelming presence of women in the support areas which include secretariat, human resources, and advertising in Eastern Europe (although no data available for this category for Romania), and with a majority presence of women outside of the regular, full time employment namely in part time, contract, and freelance employment in Eastern Europe including Romania, depict the organizations surveyed in this region and particularly in this country as having employment practices that reinforce women's multiple loads without appropriate recognition and also reinforce traditional gender roles rather than flexible gender attributions.

Social and cultural issues thus arise. While the study confirms that Romanian media organizations have hired numerous women in the aftermath of the fall of communism, it also shows that such organizations are maintaining the practice of promoting men to leadership positions. While these women have proved adaptability and flexibility on the market in identifying emerging occupations and learning new skills, the organizations for which these women work show a lot more rigidity. Moreover, these women continue to have duties and workloads in the household and outside of it, while continuing to lack recognition and promotion appropriate for their labor and efforts.

In terms of cultural dimensions, having more women at professional levels but less women in leadership positions is in tune with the ideas from the 2005 Gallup Institute and Interact research that organizations in Romania have high power distance (and thus high power inequality) as well as high uncertainty avoidance (and thus high resistance to novelty). Moreover, not seeming to have enough rewards for women in place as well as not having sufficient gender-related policies in place is in tune with the ideas from the 2005 research regarding low individualism (and thus potentially low employee involvement) and low long-term orientation (and thus actually little policy production). However, the media's reinforcement of traditional roles in employment goes against the idea of low masculinity index. Perhaps the Romanian society is open to a certain extent towards cross-gender characteristics (due to many factors which might include the lasting influence of the communist propaganda, the changes in workforce structure and gendered identities in the transition from totalitarianism to democracy, and the new requirements from the European Union), but it remains to a large extent fixated in a predominance and valuing of gender roles and male values. The low reputation of media work and the population's lack of trust in the media, as the media have become both commercialized and feminized, also account for this.

This article has examined data for Eastern Europe and particularly for Romania from the International Women's Media Foundation's *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*, in the context of the influences of social circumstances and cultural dimensions on media occupations. In doing so, the article has attempted to provide some answers for this region and especially this country to such questions as how women contribute to and shape media organizations, what voices they have in such organizations, and how they are acknowledged in and rewarded by such organizations.

Rezumat: Articolul examinează aspecte complexe privitoare la traiectoria organizațională a femeilor în instituțiile media din România. Datele provin din *Raportul global asupra statusului femeilor în redacțiile de știri ale instituțiilor media*, elaborat în urma unui proiect de cercetare la nivel mondial desfășurat de International Women's Media Foundation. Cele două autoare ale articolului au avut funcția de coordonator regional și, respective, de coordonator la nivel de țară în cadrul acestui proiect. Rezultatele studiului sunt interpretate într-un context mai larg, în corelație cu influențele dimensiunilor culturale și ale circumstanțelor sociale asupra mediului organizațional în instituțiile media.

Cuvinte-cheie: status, gen, instituții media, știri.

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