

# ROMANIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS MOBILITY FOR WORK FROM A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE\*

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## **Abstract**

*Employment strategies in the European Union laid stress on the importance and on the need to increase the participation of women on labour market. On the other hand, evidence shows that international migration has been feminised in Europe and that, in the past decades, geopolitical conflicts and economic restructuring in Eastern Europe and the Third World generated new patterns of female migration. This article explores Romanians' attitudes towards mobility for work from a gendered perspective. Based on the Special Euro-barometer 337 – Geographical and labour market mobility – conducted in 2009 on behalf of the European Commission, the main findings of the article are that gender is an important aspect in analysing people's economic behaviour. The research argues that in order to increase women's participation on labour market, a deeper understanding of the situation of females on labour market is required.*

**Keywords:** migration, geographic mobility, attitudes, employment, gender differences

**JEL Classification:** A<sub>14</sub>, D<sub>10</sub>, D<sub>63</sub>, J<sub>61</sub>

## **Introduction**

Migration is a form of social behaviour in closer dependence with other social and economic processes, which is why when investigating this subject we must see its complex, multi-dimensional, and dynamic feature (Castles, S., 2011).

Research in the field of migration revealed that Romania has a recent tradition with regards to international migration for work, as a consequence of the difficult transition from the communist regime to democracy, for which reason migration became a strategy of life (Sandu, D., 2000; Vlase, I., 2013). The economic crisis from 2008 brought changes in relation to migrant workers' behaviour. Although in 2008, voices of Romanian decision makers announced that Romania would not be directly affected by the global economic crisis, evidence showed that the predictions were not accurate and that Romania suffered even worse and for a longer period of time than other countries. One of the effects of the

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economic crisis is related to the financial provision of Romanians working abroad reduced by half compared with period 2007-2008 (Zaman, G., 2011).

Studies also show that migrant population is not a homogenous group with regards to the socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age and education level, for which reason the attitudes toward mobility for work may differ accordingly (Vlase, I., 2012). Analysing the determinants of the Romanian temporary labour migration, research showed that there are important differences between genders regarding the migration decision (Prelipceanu, R., 2010). Yet, research regarding the motivations behind the economic behaviour of women and men is poor (Vlase, I., 2012).

One important perspective in the study of the economic behaviour of men and women is represented by the attitudes that individuals have towards working abroad. Paying attention to people's attitudes with regards to geographic mobility for work might help to find interesting data on Romanian women's motives to seek for work abroad, away from their children, husbands, friends and enlarged families. Therefore, by using data collected through the Special Eurobarometer 337 – Geographical and labour market mobility, this article analysis a series of aspects regarding Romanians attitudes towards mobility for work from a gendered perspective.

### **Establishing context for discussion**

Until the '80s, migration studies generally focused on the economic side. Thus, male migrants were seen as the main economic actors and women were seen as their passive followers (Lutz, H., 2010; Mahler, S., Pessar, P., 2006). Yet, in time, migrant women came to account for almost 50% of all migrants and the number of women migrating to find jobs as individuals also increased. The phenomenon of female migration experienced interesting changes in the past decades, as a result of geopolitical conflicts and economic restructuring in Eastern Europe and the Third World (Kofman, E., 2003). Researchers came to acknowledge that women equalled men regarding the rate of migration for work, which means that they too undertake economic active roles during migration and participate to the improvement of the quality of life of their families left behind and also contribute to the development of their communities of origin (Sørensen, N., 2005). The scholars now describe migration as an empowerment factor for women, as access to education, work experience and economic independence abroad may help women to better negotiate gender roles with their partners and exercise their rights more effectively.

European Union guarantees the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States to all its citizens, this right being one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the European legislation (Paşnicu, D., 2013). Moreover, since the implementation of free movement of people within the territory of the Member States, this has become a symbol for European integration (European Commission Report, 2010).

On the other hand, European Community policies draw attention to the importance and the need to increase female labour market participation rates. In Western Europe, the employment rates of women are higher than in Eastern Europe

where Romania is located. As an eastern European country, Romania experienced a smaller gender employment gap during communism as the State encouraged women's participation on labour market, but the post-socialist picture is different. This is one of the reasons for which some Romanian women move to other countries seeking for work and leaving behind their families, even their children.

## **Data and Method**

The database employed for this article is based on the Special Eurobarometer 337 – *Geographical and labour market mobility*. This special Eurobarometer is part of Wave 72.5 survey and was conducted in 2009 on behalf of the European Commission, under the responsibility of the Directorate-General Communication. The total number of interviewed persons was of 26.761 citizens from all the 27 member countries of the European Union. Respondents were residents in the investigated countries, nationals and non-nationals but EU-citizens, and aged 15 and over. It was used a multi-stage, random (probability) sampling design and only one interview was conducted in each household, using face-to-face technique. The survey was designed to take a closer look at Europeans' mobility experiences and intentions. The survey also explores the reasons, factors and incentives that make people migrate. For this article, the Romanian national sample was used, composed of 1,008 subjects.

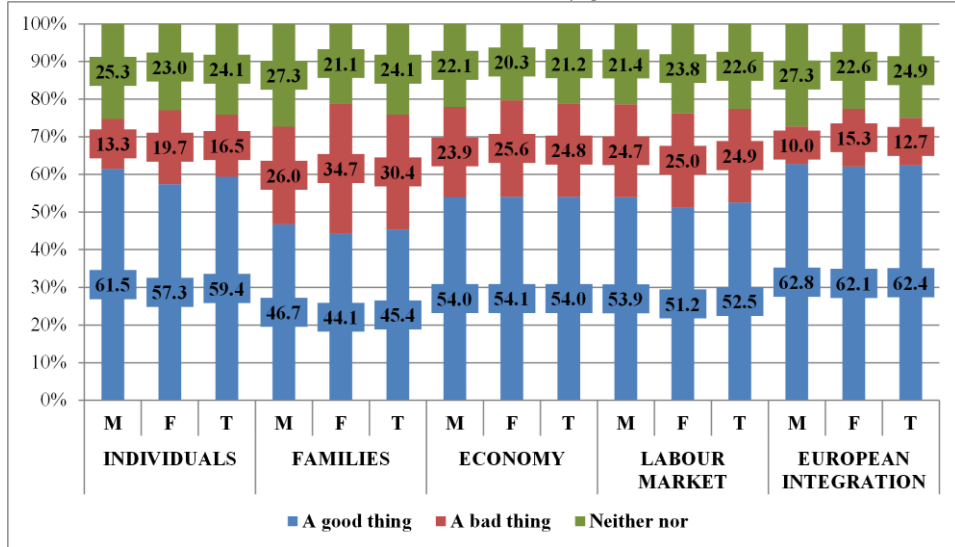
Data were analysed using SPSS 19. Descriptive statistics were used while running the database, based on the post-stratification weights. This weighting procedure ensures that each country is represented in proportion to its population size aged 15 and over, by gender, age, region (NUTS II according with EUROSTAT nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) and size of locality.

## **Discussions**

*Is it good or bad to move across regions or countries within the European Union?*

As all the other European citizens, Romanians were asked to give their opinion about the impact of people moving across regions or countries within the EU on *individuals, families, the economy, the labour market and European integration*. Geographic mobility is considered to be good especially with regards to *European integration and individuals* (Chart 1). Just over half of Romanians think that geographic mobility is also a good thing for the *labour market*. When asked to take family into consideration, respondents from Romania are less convinced that the geographic mobility is a good thing, especially in the case of female respondents. There is a significant difference between women opinions and the ones of men with regards to the impact of geographic mobility on families: *only 26% of men compared to almost 35% of women consider that families are affected by the geographic mobility*.

**Chart no. 1.** Subjective evaluation regarding the impact of people moving across regions or countries within the EU, by gender (%)



Source: Author's calculations based on Eurobarometer 72.5, GESIS Data Archive, 2009

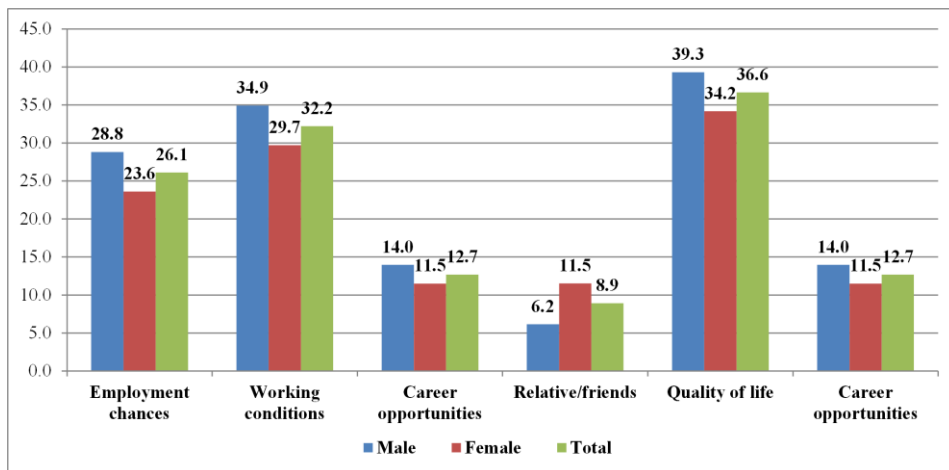
#### *Why would want Romanians to work in another country*

People might have different reasons for moving to another country: to search of a better place, to seek for a better education, to find a job, to obtain a higher income etc. When asked to nominate the reasons that might encourage them to work in another country, regardless of whether they have worked in the past or might work in the future, Romanians generally mentioned that they would be encouraged to migrate for work by *better working conditions* and by the *quality of life*, which is superior in other European countries (Chart 2). On the third place, there is Romanians belief that they have *better employment chances* abroad than in their country of origin. *Gender differences* with regards to the encouraging factors to migrate for work are seen when asked to take into consideration the *relatives of friends* who live abroad. In that case, women are the ones who mention in a greater percentage that they would accept to migrate for work motivated by their desire to be closer to their relatives or friends who live abroad. *Men find more appealing* than women to migrate in order to have a *better quality of life, better working conditions, better employment changes and better career opportunities*.

#### *Romanians' willingness in finding a job outside their country of origin*

Although Romanians generally believe that it is a good thing for people to move across regions or countries within the EU (see Chart 1) and despite the fact that one quarter of them believe that the prospects of finding a job in other countries are better than in their own (see Chart 2), more than half of them do not want to move neither to another region within their country of origin, nor to a different country in searching for a job if unemployed.

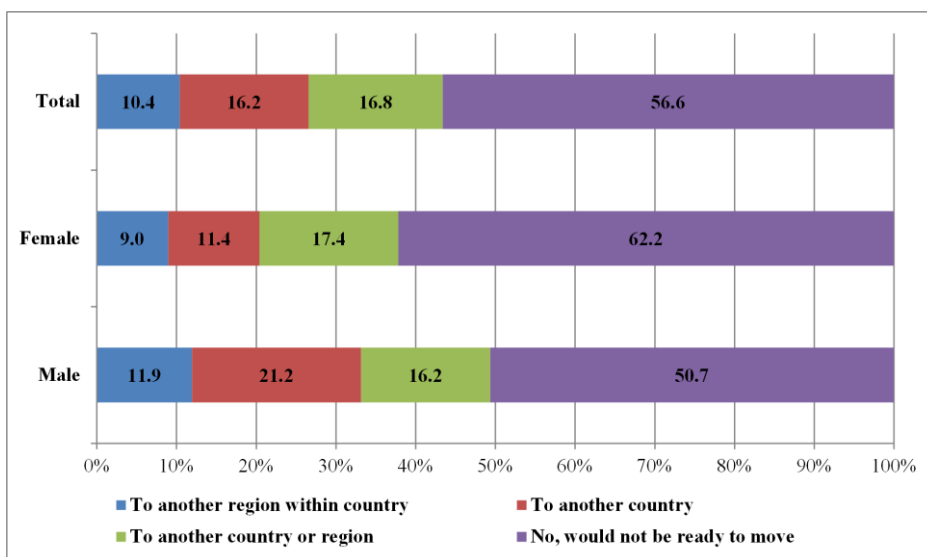
**Chart no. 2.** Romanians' motivations for working abroad regardless of whether worked or might work in another country, by gender (%)



Source: Author's calculations based on Eurobarometer 72.5, GESIS Data Archive, 2009.

Note: The chart contains the percentages of people who mentioned the categories of responses.

**Chart no. 3.** Romanians' willingness to move for work if unemployed, by gender (%)



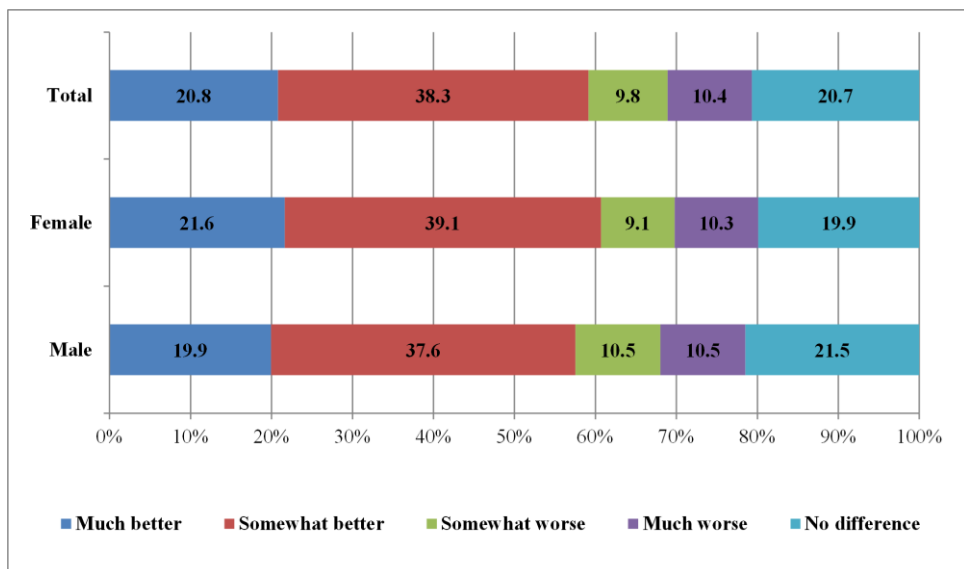
Source: Author's calculations based on Eurobarometer 72.5, GESIS Data Archive, 2009

There is a significant statistically difference between men and women with regards to their desire to move for work if unemployed. *Male population is more opened to move to another country to find a job* if unemployed than female population: only 11.4% of women as compared with 21.2% of men say that they would be ready to migrate for work to another country (Chart 3). The main factors that discourage Romanians from working abroad are *the attachment to their homes* (47.1% of men and 52.8% of women say that their home is in Romania), *their family/children* (25.3% of men and 26.6% of women say that they would not want to impose big changes on their families and/or children) and *the hostile attitude towards foreigners* (17.5% of men and 17.9% of women).

*Romanians' chances in finding a job outside their country of origin*

The financial difficulties resulting from the global economic crisis might be one of the reasons for which Romanians generally think that *the chances of finding a job abroad are better* than the chances of finding a job in their own country. *Women*, generally known to be more affected by unemployment, are the ones who say in grater extend by comparison with men that the *chances of finding a job outside Romania are better*: 60.7% of female population and 57.5% of male population rate the chances of finding a job abroad as 'much better' or 'somewhat better'.

**Chart no. 4.** *Romanians' opinions with regards to their chances to find a job outside their country of origin, by gender (%)*



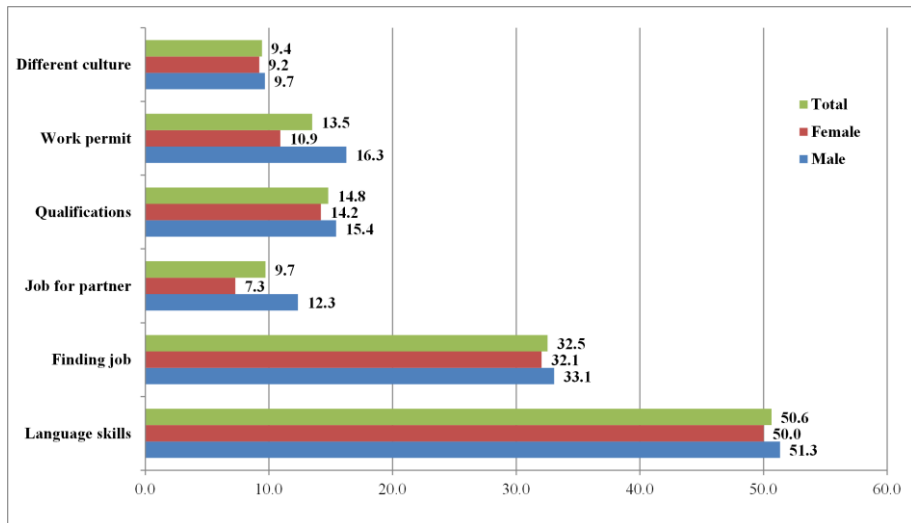
Source: Author's calculations based on Eurobarometer 72.5, GESIS Data Archive, 2009

### *Difficulties encountered when going to work abroad*

When asked to name practical difficulties that they encountered or would expect to encounter when going to work abroad, a half of Romanian population refers to the lack of language skills. Around one third of respondents fear that finding a job is/might be difficult, a possible reason being the educational and professional qualifications (the lack of skills or the lack of recognition of qualifications obtained in Romania).

Other reasons named in a greater extend by Romanians referred to obtaining a work permit and adapting to a different culture. Men are more concerned about obtaining a work permit and finding a job for their partner, which means that finding a job is perceived as more difficult for women than for men even outside Romania.

**Chart no. 4.** *Difficulties encountered or expected to be encountered by Romanians when going to work abroad, by gender (%)*



Source: Author's calculations based on *Eurobarometer 72.5*, GESIS Data Archive, 2009.

*Note:* The chart contains the percentages of people who mentioned the categories of responses.

### **Conclusions**

The article used descriptive statistics, in order to explore Romanians' attitudes towards mobility for work from a gendered perspective. Based on the Special Eurobarometer 337 – Geographical and labour market mobility – conducted in 2009 on behalf of the European Commission, results show that gender is an important aspect in analysing people's economic behaviour.

The research raised a number of questions, which would warrant further analysis. For example, it should be explored, in direct dependence of data availability, if other variables such as age, education, place of residence, previous

experience in working abroad are important determinants of Romanians economic behaviour. Also, it should be explored whether gender role attitudes are important predictors for the decision to migrate for work.

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