

## Romania

### 1. Discrimination in the family

#### a) Overarching legal framework for marriage

Women have the same rights as men to enter into marriage, and the Constitution states that ‘family is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses’ (Constitution, Article 48). While the latter highlights the notion of consent, there are no specific provisions criminalizing forced marriage nor any public policies to prevent child marriage, despite the fact that early and forced marriage is reportedly common among certain groups, particularly among some Romani communities. Only marriages performed and registered at a state registry office are legally recognised in Romania. Informal or de-facto unions are generally not regulated by law, with some exceptions with regard to social aid, family allowances, and domestic violence.

#### b) Child marriage

The legal age of marriage for both men and women is 18 (Civil Code, Article 272). However, exceptions can be made for minors who have reached the age of 16, on the basis of a medical notice, and with the approval of his/her parents or legal guardian and the authorization of the Court (Civil Code, Article 272). Child marriage is prohibited (Civil Code, Articles 294 and 297), but there are no legal sanctions for facilitating a marriage of an individual who is under the minimum age of marriage.

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) notes high rates of child marriage among Roma in Romania, often conducted informally and not registered. They report that child protection authorities often do not see child marriage as a child protection issue, and are reluctant to intervene in cases of child marriage because they do not want to interfere with Roma ‘cultural customs’ (ERRC, 2011; CEDAW Shadow report, 2016a). A recent CEDAW report (CEDAW 2017a, p.34) mentions the existence of a ‘Governmental Strategy on Roma inclusion’ which contains iterative mentions on preventing child marriages, but there are no concrete public measures to generate social support for the enforcement of laws on the minimum age of marriage.

An Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM), created by the Council of Europe, has highlighted the main factors contributing to child marriages, including poverty, marginalization, community traditions, and dearth of other opportunities and perspectives in Roma communities, combined with a lack of conceptual clarity on early and forced marriage in the legal and policy frameworks. A recent CAHROM report notes with concern that child marriage is almost absent from the policy framework in Romania (CAHROM Report, 2015, p.6)

### c) Household responsibilities

Women have the same rights as men to be recognised as head of the household and they are not required to obey their husbands (no applicable provisions found). Married and unmarried women also have the same rights as men to choose where to live (Constitution, Article 25). Under the Constitution and the Family Code, women and men have the same rights and responsibilities, as well as rights to be legal guardians, with regard to their children during marriage and in informal unions (Constitution, Article 48; Civil Code, Articles 503 and 505). While informal unions are largely not regulated by law, families based on consensual unions and cohabitation do have access to some social benefits (e.g. social aid and family allowances).

Although female participation in the labour force is on the rise, household responsibilities are often seen as primarily a female domain, with women viewed as caretakers and nurturers and men as primary breadwinners (CEDAW Shadow Report, 2016). Such roles are reinforced by a weak social protection system, where services to support older or younger members of the family are lacking (CEDAW Shadow report, 2017b). Among the Roma community, decisions are often made by men, with the approval of the elders. A young bride or mother has little or no decision-making power within the family, her role is running the household, raising the children, and following her husband (CHAROM report, 2015).

### d) Divorce

Women have the same rights as men to initiate and finalise divorce (Civil Code, Article 373). They also have the same rights to be legal guardians, and rights and responsibilities over their children after divorce (Civil Code, Articles 397 and 504). Prior to modifications to the Civil Code in 2011, mothers were likely to be the sole custodians of children after divorce, but increasingly custody is assigned to both parents (Civil Code, Article 504).

Divorce rates are relatively low in Romania, where cultural models strongly favour the preservation of the family within marriage. Such practices are, however, changing as Romanians become more open to the idea of children born out of wedlock, approve a more equal distribution of domestic tasks, and place higher value on women's careers (as opposed to the family before all else) (Pantea, 2013).

### e) Inheritance

Women enjoy equal inheritance rights of land and non-land assets in Romania as wives and daughters, under the country's revised 2011 Civil Code (Civil Code, Articles 970-974 and 260, 963, and 975). Customary and religious law are not considered valid sources of law under the constitution, in regard to inheritance or any other matters (Constitution of Romania) and women have the same rights as men to make a will (Civil Code, Article 1034). Disinheritance of the surviving spouse is prohibited by law (Civil Code, Article 1086) which sees a reserved portion of the succession go to forced heirs. There do not seem to be any marked customary, religious, or traditional practices that discriminate against daughters' or surviving spouses' legal rights to inherit.

## 2. Restricted Physical integrity

### a) Violence against women

Romania ratified the Council of Europe 'Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence' in March of 2016, with broad support in the Parliament (Law 633/2015). In addition, an amendment in 2000 to the Criminal Code introducing family relationship as an admissible aggravating factor in cases of violent assault (Law 197/2000; Criminal Code, Article 77 and 199), increasing the penalty by one-quarter of what it would have been otherwise. However, the US State Department (2016) reports that courts prosecuted very few cases of domestic abuse, and many cases were resolved before or during trial when the alleged victims dropped their charges or reconciled with the alleged abuser.

This was followed in 2003 by the adoption of Law no. 217 on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence, later amended in 2012 to introduce restraining orders. Law 217 addresses the role of social workers, prevention measures, mediation, shelters, protection measures and sanctions in regard to domestic violence. In addition, the government carries out national-level campaigns and activities for raising awareness on domestic violence as well as maintains a special website to provide information on domestic violence and its prevention. Romania also implemented a national strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence during 2013-2017 (CEDAW, 2017a). However, CEDAW Shadow Reports raise concerns that relevant legislation is not effectively implemented (CEDAW Shadow report, 2016a, 2017b) and violence against women, including spousal abuse, continues to be a serious problem that is not effectively addressed (US State Department, 2016).

### b) Domestic violence

Law 217/2003 law (Article 2) defines domestic violence as 'any physical or verbal act committed intentionally by a family [member] that causes physical, psychological, or sexual suffering, or material damages. Domestic violence also includes preventing women from using their fundamental rights and freedoms.' The law allows victims to request a restraining order and shelters are available.

However, a CEDAW shadow report expresses concern that the number of shelters are insufficient. Moreover, they are run mainly by private organisations, with little support from the state and access to state-run shelters requires identification papers and forensic proof of the violence suffered (CEDAW shadow report, 2017a). Moreover, restraining orders, shelters, and other services are not available to victims of violence who may be in a relationship but do not cohabit with the alleged abused (US Department of State, 2016).

As of 2012, with the adoption of Law 25/2012, which amended Law 217/2003, a juridical court can issue a protection order, once the victim has completed a standard request and provided evidence like forensic medical certificate, penal complaint registered to the police along with two witnesses that are not related with the victim (Law 217/2003). A restraining order can be issued for a maximum of six months and violation of the latter is punishable by imprisonment for one month to one year. If the parties reconcile, criminal liability is removed.

The law requires that the court must decide on the issuance of the order within a three-day period. The court may also order the abuser to pay some of the victim's expenses, such as the cost of the victim's accommodation in a shelter or domicile apart from the abuser, as well as order the abuser to undergo psychological counselling. A CEDAW Shadow report (2017a, p.4; Shadow report, 2016b, p.1) notes, however, that court demands are not coherent throughout the country. Law 25/2012 does provide that the victim is entitled to privacy, dignity, special protection, counselling, rehabilitation, reintegration, free medical care and legal aid, as well as provides some penalties to the abuser, including psychological testing, psychological counselling, detoxification programs and fines. A free and anonymous hotline for victims of domestic violence has also been established.

Domestic violence is seen by many police officers as a 'family matter', and they are consequently often reluctant to intervene. In addition, victims lack confidence in authorities while also fearing consequences they might face from their aggressors after reporting the violence. Moreover, in cases of violence against Roma women, there is a tendency to internalize violence as a cultural attitude without solution and apply double standards in access to justice (CEDAW shadow report, 2017a, p.5). A 2016 CEDAW Shadow report notes that aggressors that trespass protection orders are not always properly monitored, investigated and prosecuted (CEDAW shadow report, 2016b, p.1).

The Department of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men has carried out specific trainings on domestic violence for police officers within a larger program on gender equality, resulting in almost 500 officers obtaining certification as equal opportunities experts (CEDAW, 2017a, p.2). In addition, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, subordinated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, was established by Law No. 229/2015. The latter is responsible for the development, coordination, and implementation of the Government strategy on domestic violence (CEDAW, 2017a, p.5). The agency may also fund national programmes aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence (through the Ministry of Justice), and these have included awareness and public information campaigns, developing national mechanisms, and systemic and integrated measures on the prevention, control, monitoring and intervention in the field of domestic violence, as well as training activities for professionals active in the field of domestic violence (CEDAW, 2017a, pp. 5 and 9).

### c) Rape

Rape is a criminal offence under Article 218 of the Criminal Code, and explicitly criminalises marital rape (Articles 165 and 217). Clauses regulating 'reparatory marriage' in cases of rape (i.e., allowing the perpetrator to escape prosecution by marrying the victim) were removed from the Criminal Code in 2000. The law provides three to 10 years' imprisonment for rape, which increases to 5-12 years if there are aggravating circumstances and 7-18 in the event of death. Rape is defined as 'sexual intercourse, oral or anal intercourse with a person, committed by constraint, by rendering the person in question unable to defend themselves or to express their will or by taking advantage of such state' (Criminal Code, Article 218).

Rape cases are reportedly difficult to prosecute as the latter require medical evidence and witnesses, and/or the active cooperation of the victim. Many rapists avoid imprisonment

because their victims do not report the rape, or withdraw their complaint (US Department of State, 2016). A CEDAW Shadow Report (2017a, p.6) notes that victims are often treated with disbelief, including by the police, or are blamed for the aggression suffered, such that they often avoid filing a complaint. More broadly, societal views on rape remain a concern. A 2016 European commission survey noted a high number of respondents (55%), who agreed that certain situations may justify non-consensual sex (Shadow Report, 2017a, p.6; US State Department, 2016; European Union Open Data Portal, 2016).

#### d) Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment in the workplace is addressed under Law 202/2002 on Equal Opportunities and Treatment for Women and Men (Articles 4 and 11), and is defined as any unwanted conduct having a sexual nature, manifested verbally or non-verbally, having the purpose or effect of affecting the dignity of the respective person and creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating and offensive environment. A 2015 amendment to Law 202/2002 added psychological harassment to the list of prohibited behaviours, understood as any inappropriate behaviour carried out for a period of time, which is repetitive or systematic and includes physical behaviour, oral or written language, gesticulation or other intentional acts that could affect the personality, dignity or physical and psychological integrity of a person (Law 229/2015). While the definition of sexual harassment covers the workplace, it does not cover educational or sporting establishments, public places, cyber harassment or cyber stalking. There are both civil remedies (Ordinance 137/2000, Art 21(1); Law 202/2000, Art. 33 and 34) and criminal penalties (Criminal Code, Art. 223; Law 202/2002, Art. 37(1)) for sexual harassment.

The offence is also included under the Criminal Code (Article 223), which sanctions acts of repeatedly demanding sexual favours in a labour or a similar relationship, if by doing so the victim has been intimidated or placed in a humiliating situation. The Criminal code is thus restricted to the framework of labour relations. A victim complaint is necessary to initiate a criminal investigation. Penalties range from fines to imprisonment of three months to one year (Criminal Code, Article 223; Law 286/2009).

Law 202/2002 lays out the responsibilities of employers in regard to protecting employees from sexual harassment, and stipulates penalties and disciplinary sanctions. The “Say No to Sexual harassment!” campaign ran in 2006-2007, raising awareness of sexual harassment in the workplace and providing guidance to employers (‘Violence against women at work’ Project (n.d.). There do not appear to have been any similar campaigns since, nor do schools educate students on sexual harassment, gender violence, and gender equality. The US Department of State (2016) notes that public awareness of sexual harassment is low and is severely underreported. However, the National Strategy in the field of equal opportunities between women and men for the period 2014-2017 and the General Plan of Action for its implementation, adopted by Government Decision No. 1050/2014, includes among its main objectives that of combating acts of harassment and sexual harassment at the workplace (CEDAW, 2017a, p.12)

#### e) Female genital mutilation

There is no evidence to suggest that female genital mutilation is practised in Romania.

#### f) Abortion

Abortion is available upon request during the first trimester of pregnancy and is permitted to save the life of the woman, to preserve her physical or mental health, for reasons of rape, foetal impairment, or other social or economic motives (Law 140/1996; Criminal Code, Article 201).

A CEDAW Shadow Report (2017a, p.16) notes, however, that women in Romania have limited access to contraceptives and abortion. There are few doctors willing to perform abortions within the free public healthcare system and, at the local level, some counties do not provide this intervention or refuse to perform abortions for religious reasons (CEDAW Shadow Report, 2017a, p.16). Abortion rates have decreased but remain relatively high in Romania, suggesting that the latter continued to be used as a form of contraception.

### 3. Restricted Access to productive and financial resources

#### a) Secure access to land and assets

Married and unmarried women and men have the same rights to own, use, make decisions and use as collateral land and non-land assets (Constitution, Article 44; Civil Code, Articles 30 and 339). The default marital property regime is partial community of property (Civil Code, Articles 339-341) and both spouses must agree when administering marital property (Civil Code, Articles 345-346). Customary and religious law are not considered valid sources of law under the constitution, in regard to land and property rights or any other matters. There is relatively little available information on women's access to and control of land. A July 2017 CEDAW report inquires as to the percentage of women who own land and whether there are programmes that help women undergo activities in rural areas, but a response has yet to be delivered (CEDAW, 2017b).

#### b) Secure access to formal financial resources

Married and unmarried women have the same rights as men to open a bank account and apply for credit (Civil, Articles 37 and 38). Ordinance No. 137/2000 specifically prohibits discrimination by creditors on the basis of gender in access to credit (Articles 2, 3(c), and 10(d)). There are also government programmes to facilitate the provision of credit to Roma women to start or support small businesses (CEDAW 2017a). In addition, beginning in 2016, the National Multiannual Programme for creating and developing small- and medium enterprises in rural areas (implemented according to the provisions of Law 346/2004) was begun, facilitating access of the latter to financing. Among the 85 companies allocated funding, 31 were set up by women (CEDAW, 2017a, p.26).

#### c) Workplace rights

Romania has ratified ILO conventions 100, 111, and 183, but not 156 or 189.

Discrimination on the basis of sex in employment is prohibited under Article 5 of the Labour Code. Moreover, Article 9 of Law 202/2002 specifically covers job advertisements, selection criteria, recruitment, hiring, terms and conditions, promotions, training, assignments, and termination. The law also mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value (Law 202/2002, Article 9; Law 53/2003, Article 6). Women may enter the same professions as men and there are no restrictions on working night hours. The European Council (2015) reports that female labour force participation in Romani is relatively low compared to other European countries. In part in response to this, the Ministry of Labour developed a National Strategy for employment 2014-2020, setting as a priority that of increasing women's participation in the labour market, including support measures to reconcile work and family, and the promotion of entrepreneurship, and raising awareness relative to the benefits of flexible work schedules, the wage difference between women and men, and combating gender stereotypes (CEDAW, 2017a, p.25). However, the US State Department (2016) notes that a gender pay gap persists, as does segregation by profession (with women over represented in lower paying jobs such as education, health care, social work) (see also CEDAW Shadow report, 2017a, p.14). The CEDAW committee has also raised concern over the continued discrimination against women in employment (CEDAW, 2017b; CEDAW Shadow report, 2017a) and the absence of government initiatives in terms of public campaigns to combat gender stereotypes (CEDAW Shadow report 2016).

The Law mandates a paid maternity leave of 126 days. While on maternity leave, women receive 85% of their salary, financed through the state health insurance budget (Ordinance 158/2005, Articles 23-25). The law also mandates a fully paid paternity leave of 15 days, paid entirely by the employer (Law 210/1999, Articles 2 and 4) as well as a partially paid parental leave of up to 302 days, paid by the government (Ordinance 111/2010, Article 2 and 6; Ordinance 148/2005, Article 1). While mothers are guaranteed an equivalent position after maternity leave (law 202/2002, Article 10), there is no law prohibiting employers from asking about a woman's pregnancy or her intention to have children during the recruitment or promotion process. A CEDAW shadow report notes although women are discriminated against at work, or in the recruitment process, few report such discrimination (CEDAW Shadow report, 2017b, p.5).

#### **4. Restricted Civil liberties**

##### **a) Citizenship rights**

Married and unmarried women have the same rights as men to acquire, change, and retain their nationality (Constitution, Article 5). They may also confer nationality to their children and married women may confer nationality to their spouse (Law 21/1991, Articles 5 and 8).

Married and unmarried women have the same rights as men to register the birth of their children (Law 119/1996, section 4), although among the Roma population, the roles and obligations imposed by the community, as well as the fact that many Roma children are not registered at birth constitute a barrier in their access to different public services, including education (CEDAW, 2017, p.36). Registration of births are to be done with the competent authorities within 15 days following birth (art. 17 para. 3 of Law no. 119/1996); if birth

registration is conducted after the 15-day term, but within one year following birth, the approval of the Mayor of the village / town or city will be needed. When the declaration of birth is done after one year following birth, registration will only be possible based on a final and irrevocable court decision, which will have to include all data necessary for the issuance of the birth certificate (art. 21 para. 1 of Law no. 119/1996). In June 2016, the government amended the law on birth registration of Romanian nationals, simplifying late registration procedures to reduce the number of unregistered children, with the aim of ensuring them access to health services, social assistance, and education. A CEDAW shadow report notes, however, that there is not always an awareness of the law and the possibility of late registration, such that some postponed indefinitely the birth registration of their children (CEDAW shadow report, 2016).

Married and unmarried women have the same rights as men to apply for passports (passport application procedures) and national ID cards (Government Ordinance 82/2012, Article 18). They also have the same rights to travel outside the country (Constitution, Article 25). There is no evidence to suggest that there are customary, religious, or traditional practices or laws that discriminate against women to this regard.

Prohibition of multiple discrimination is included in the Anti-Discrimination Law (Law 324/2006 for the amendment of the Government Ordinance 137/2000) as an aggravating circumstance in cases of discrimination and sanctioned as a minor offence. If any of the elements of a case of multiple discrimination is covered by the provisions of the Criminal Code, the case will, however, be tried as a criminal offence (Law 324/2006, Article 2(6)). There is a lack of data on multiple discrimination cases in terms of number of complaints or decisions on discrimination filed in application of Romanian Anti-Discrimination law (Government Ordinance 137/2000). A CEDAW shadow report (2016a, p.1) notes that multiple discrimination is difficult to prove, there is a lack of awareness of multiple discrimination in statistics, legal cases and courts. The European Commission (2016, p.40), similarly reports that enforcement in the jurisprudence of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) is scant.

#### **b) Political voice**

Married and unmarried women have the same rights as men to vote (Constitution, Article 36). The law also provides women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the legislature, judiciary and executive (Constitution, Article 16).

There are currently no quotas in place to promote women's political participation, at national or sub-national level, although two parties have voluntary political party quotas (Quota Project). Furthermore, this is no information on Roma women representation in the local or general elections (CEDAW Shadow report, 2017a, p.9). For the Parliament, there are reserved seats for the Roma minority, as of the last elections, these seats were occupied entirely by men (CEDAW Shadow report, 2017a). While the law does not restrict women's participation in government or politics, societal attitudes present a significant barrier and women remain underrepresented.



The is currently a proposal in Parliament for a minimum quota of 30 per cent for each gender on any party lists for both local and general elections. The Senate has approved the measure and the latter is under discussion in the Chamber of Deputies (CEDAW, 2017a, p.14)

### c) Access to justice

The law provides married and unmarried women the same rights as men to sue and be sued (Civil Code, Articles 28-30). Married and unmarried women's testimony also carries the same evidentiary weight as a man's in all types of courts cases (no restrictions found). There is no specific legislation or measures in place to protect women from violence in political and public life, although the Romanian Ombudsman is tasked with investigating and addressing complaints made by citizens, including within the domain of women's rights. Amnesty International (2017) reports that the Roma in particular continue to experience systemic discrimination, forced evictions and other human rights violations. The report further expresses concern that the Romania government does not have an effective system that would hold local authorities accountable for non-compliance with human rights treaties to which Romania is a state party (Amnesty International, 2017). That said, according to Article 28(2) of the Anti-Discrimination Law (GO 137/2000), associations with protection of human rights as their mandate can file complaints on their own behalf, both with the National Council for Combatting Discrimination and with the courts, when the target of discrimination is a group or a community.

The European Commission (2016) notes that special legal aid is not available to victims of gender discrimination. A CEDAW shadow report (2016a, p.1) similarly reports that access to the juridical system is expensive and high bureaucracy in obtaining restraining orders leaves women with little security. However, a recent CEDAW report (2017a, p.8) explains that for those persons for whom financial means may impede their access to court procedures, the Romanian legal framework provides for civil legal aid (Law 51/1995; Government Ordinance 51/2008), including lawyer counselling. Moreover, women who are victims of domestic violence and are in court trial, receive legal and psychological counselling for entering the labour market and pursuing financial independence (CEDAW, 2017b). In addition, Law 25/2012 provides that victims of domestic violence are eligible for legal aid.

Law 229/2015 amending the Gender Equality Law reinstated the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES). ANES had been closed down since 2010 due to budgetary cuts. Its main responsibilities include coordinating the implementation of government policies and strategies in the field of equal opportunities between women and men, proposing legal amendments and national plans of action and ensuring their implementation and harmonization with international law, and collecting statistical data, development reports, surveys and analyses (CEDAW, 2017a, p.11). ANES also has the mandate to receive complaints in the field of equal opportunities between women and men and non-discrimination. However, it only has the power to forward these complaints to the competent authorities in order to examine them, such as the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD). It also provides counselling to the victim of discrimination.

The aforementioned NCCD is the national equality body dealing with all grounds of discrimination, including sex and was established by the Anti-Discrimination Law (GO

137/2000). The national equality body has a mandate to prevent discrimination through awareness raising and information and education campaigns, to mediate between the parties, to provide legal assistance to victims of discrimination, to investigate and sanction discrimination, including to initiate ex officio cases, to monitor discrimination cases, as well as to propose legislative bills and public policies to ensure harmonisation of legal provisions with the equality principle. The European Commission (2016, p.16) notes, however, that the budget of the NCCD has been continually reduced as a part of the reform package in response to the financial crisis. In addition, some of the activities of the NCCD (e.g. investigations or awareness campaigns) have been affected by the lack of funds or delays in making funds available due to difficult financial procedures. Moreover, the European Commission (2016, p.36) expresses concern that the NCCD has not thus far developed an operational mechanism to monitor infringements of anti-discrimination legislation or to monitor compliance with its decisions.

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