



GENDERED: Combatting gender stereotypes in education and career guidance

**National Diagnostic Report
Romania**



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MODENA

This research was conducted within the framework of the European programme entitled GenderEd, which is coordinated by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies and co-financed by the European Union. It was carried out in parallel in four European countries. This report presents and discusses the research results from Romania.

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Introduction

The research was conducted in the framework of the European co-funded project GenderEd: *Combating Gender Stereotypes in Education and Career Guidance*. The aim of the research was to identify attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate or challenge gender stereotypes in education across four EU countries: Cyprus, Italy, Romania, and Lithuania. Each partner country used the same methodology to conduct the research on a national level.

The research focused on the role that schools, teachers and curricula play in terms of perpetuating or challenging gender stereotypical behaviours and expectations among girls and boys. The research also explored the impact of gender stereotypes on the attitudes and beliefs of girls and boys in relation to their career choices.

Background

As revealed by a number of recent studies (Legewie and DiPrete, 2014; Deligianni-Kouimtzi, 2010; Athanasiadou, 2002; Francis, 2002), the gendered socialisation, or stereotyping of boys and girls greatly influences study and career choices resulting in persistent gender segregation, both in the field of education and in the labour market across the EU (Francis and Skelton). Stereotypes are problematic in that they present simplistic caricatures of particular groups, which can then negatively affect individuals in a variety of ways, such as limiting their academic and professional achievement (Kauchak and Eggen, 2011). Gender segregation has been identified as a cause of diverging educational and career choices that are based on dominant stereotypical assumptions about which fields are “more appropriate” for women and men respectively (Deutsch, 2007). For example, parents and educators are more likely to expect boys to pursue a path in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), regardless of their level of academic performance compared to girls in these subjects. Conversely, girls are expected to follow paths that focus on care-giving and are people-oriented (EIGE, 2016). These expectations are internalised and perpetuated by individuals when making career or educational choices (Ridgeway and Correl, 2004) in a self-fulfilling manner. According to the Nesses Network of Experts:

Young people wishing to affirm both their sexual and gender identities at the formative stage of adolescence are expected by peers to choose subjects that affirm their identities as females or males. Dominant (hegemonic) gender norms governing what are the ideal-type masculine and feminine identities impact strongly on educational choices.

Social norms and expectations are mirrored in the pattern of educational choices in Europe; as a result, these are **horizontally segregated** by gender. Women in education are underrepresented in STEM fields (EIGE, 2016, Caprile M. et al, 2012); the biggest gender gap exists in the field of engineering, where the presence of women is only 28% (EIGE, 2016). Women are also severely underrepresented in the field of scientific research, with only 33% of researchers in the EU being women (European Commission, 2015). On the other hand, men are still reluctant to pursue care-related studies and professions. Educational choices are strongly related to future career opportunities and they heavily contribute to the perpetuation of horizontal segregation in the labour market. In pre-primary education, for example, only 4.9% of teachers are men (Eurostat, 2015; Eacea, 2015), while women remain scarce in STEM (Caprile M. et al 2015).

In addition to horizontal gender segregation, gender stereotypes, prejudices and expected roles also lead to **vertical segregation**. Men in Europe are over-represented in leadership positions and have higher rates of employment (European Commission, 2015). Vertical gender segregation reflects gender roles in society, where men are associated with professional success and advancement, economic strength and the image of breadwinner, who is primarily responsible for providing for the family. In contrast, women's identity is a conflicted construct, with traditional aspects of femininity often clashing with more modern, emancipated roles (Deligianni-Kouimtzi, 2010). Thus, a woman's role is linked to the reconciliation of work and family life and reaching academic success that does not necessarily lead to professional success. What remains is a strong social 'expectation' or 'obligation' for women to sacrifice their careers in order to focus on maternal and family care; this in turn pushes women into 'supporting' professions (i.e. professions with little specialisation) or part-time/flexible working patterns, adopting a complementary role in relation to their contribution to the household income.

Education is key in eradicating gender stereotypes that lead to horizontal and vertical gender segregation and gender inequalities across all spheres of social life (EIGE, 2016). In the course of efforts to mainstream gender equality in education, research has revealed the role that both teachers and teaching material play in terms of perpetuating stereotypical gender behaviours and expectations both in and outside the classroom (EIGE, 2016). Teachers consistently indicate differing expectations from girls and boys. For example, they consider girls to be quiet and therefore often dismiss girls' disruptive behaviour in class, rarely choosing to reprimand them. On the contrary, boys tend to be considered "trouble-makers" in class, and are therefore more often reprimanded and punished more strictly. They are also more likely to be subject to suspicion in light of wrongdoing or damage to property. Teachers also seem to expect girls to demonstrate more "appropriate" behaviour (Nesse, 2009; GEAR, 2016; Gender Ed, 2017). Outside the curriculum, girls are usually assigned "easy" chores, duties that involve cleaning or decorating a room, or caring for guests at a school event. By contrast, boys are assigned duties that involve moving objects (regardless of weight/size) and chores or jobs that have to do with construction, repair or the use of technology (GEAR, 2016). Teachers

also use differing language and manners when interacting with girls or boys. Boys seem to dominate in both space and volume (Alvarez-Nunes, 2014), more likely to confidently “blurt out” an answer. This is why they are praised more frequently, which in turn boosts their confidence (Raghavendra T., 2014). Teachers seem to have higher expectations of girls in relation to their academic performance (GEAR, 2016). While they acknowledge that girls get higher grades, they interpret each gender’s success differently: they believe that boys’ performances are a reflection of their intelligence, while girls’ performances are the result of their diligence and efforts (Deligiannis-Kouimtzi et al., 2003, Elwood, 2005). Even boys with lower academic performance are still considered intelligent (Jones and Myhill, 2004b). Although they acknowledge boys’ and girls’ equal performances in science subjects and mathematics, teachers continue to believe that boys have an “innate” aptitude for these subjects (Murphy and Whitelegg, 2006; Stavridou, Solomonidou and Sachinidou, 1999).

Stereotypical assumptions about boys and girls are also dominant among students as well. Students often feel pressure to conform to gender norms in order to avoid negative reactions from peers (EIGE, 2016). According to behavioural psychology, girls tend to show less confidence and underestimate their skills, especially in lessons where they feel they are more strongly in competition with boys, or where achieving high marks is perceived to be more challenging (Van De Werfhorst et al., 2003). By contrast, boys seem to overestimate their abilities and appear overly confident (Niederle and Vesterlund, 2007). This tendency is particularly marked in subjects such as mathematics and the sciences, which results in girls underestimating their potential to succeed and opting out of these subjects, in what Kurtz-Costes et al. (2008) call the self-efficacy adjustment process.

As discussed, gender segregation in labor is a result of educational and consequently, professional choices. These are shaped by a number of factors, including the environment in schools, teachers, peers, school curricula and the way the information about fields and occupations is presented to boys and girls (Legewie and DiPrete, 2014). The findings of this research will help develop innovative pedagogical tools (such as guides, training material and an online game) for teachers, students, and career counsellors, as well as contribute to a drafting policy recommendations and messages in relation to the eradication of gender stereotypes in education.

At European level, Romania still ranks among the last countries in the Gender Equality Index, and this also applies to the fields of education and labor. Considering the fields under analysis in the [EIGE](#) Gender Equality Index, the situation in the knowledge domain has improved in most member states from 2005 until 2015. Despite some progress, Romania is still ranked among the last European countries to reach gender equality (according to the 2017 EIGE Gender Equality Index, Romania had scored 52.4, compared to the European average -

66.2), and the fields manifesting the greatest inequality are: access to access to management positions (in the politics, economy and social domains), time and money.

In Romania, there are no major differences between women and men from the viewpoint of the literacy rate (around 97% for both women and men), nor of the higher education graduation rate (about 13.1%). But beyond literacy and higher education graduation rates, which may induce the impression that women and men have equal opportunities, gender inequality is creeping in various subtle ways in the education system. Gender segregation in education is a persistent challenge, which gravely hinders the gender equality progress in the domain of knowledge. An indicator used by EIGE is the number of students who choose humanities as their major, and Romania registers a significant difference: 30.1% female students compared to 17% male students choose humanities faculties (training the workforce in education, health, social care - fields in which women and low salaries are predominant).

According to the National Institute of Statistics¹, the continuous decrease of the country's population over the last two decades also affected the school population. In the school year 2015/2016, the number of students in Romania was 16.5% lower than ten years before. This decline was higher in the case of female students (-17.1%) than in that of male students (-15.9%). In general, the school population is roughly balanced from the viewpoint of sexes, at all educational levels. In secondary education, the number of female and male students is approximately the same, as over 49% are girls. However, according to the data published by school inspectorates, one of the main reasons for leaving school during secondary education is early marriage for girls, especially Roma girls. On the other hand, during higher education, the situation is more favorable to girls, as in this regard Romania confirms a European trend. For example, in the school year 2015/2016, 53.3% of the students enrolled in BA program, respectively 55.9% of the students in MA programmes, postgraduate and doctoral classes and courses were female.

Gender Segregation in the Labor Market

In Romania, the differences between men and women become very clear if we look at the data regarding the labor market broken down by sex. 53.2% of women have a job, while, in the case of men, this rate is much higher at 69.5%². Moreover, women have jobs in humanities, rather than technical fields, which are the most poorly paid (education, health, etc.).

¹ http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/femeile_si_barbatii_parteneriat_de_munca_si_de_viata_1.pdf

² Source: EIGE Gender Equality Index 2017

Romania presents high levels of horizontal professional segregation compared to other EU countries, with women concentrated in professions that are traditionally low-paid (such as service provision, education, health, social care, tourism), while men dominate technical occupations, the construction industry and technology-related jobs. This is also referred to as the “Glass Walls”, a phenomenon which refers to the “invisible” segregation into occupations that are considered suitable for each gender.

According to the data in the National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence 2018-2021, in 2015, the fields in which women are much more present than men are health and social care (81.5%), education (74.7%) and hotel and restaurants (59.7%). More men can be found in the following sectors: constructions (93.6%), the production and distribution of electricity, heat, gas and water (81.4%), public administration and defence (58.5%).

Vertical Professional Segregation concerns the absence of women from managerial or senior managerial positions. This is also referred to as the “Glass Ceiling” phenomenon. In 2015, Romania was ranked last from the point of view of women in management positions in big companies, scoring 11.3% compared to the European average of 21.2%. In public administration, women only make up the majority of administrative clerks who hold no management positions. Out of 41 counties, the position of city council president is only held by a woman in Sibiu.

Research methodology

The research used **mixed qualitative methods**. Specifically, observations which took place in schools, focus groups with teachers, school counsellors and students, and desk research (review of textbooks). We outline and justify the methods below.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

In schools, we used observation to explore the ways in which gender stereotypes are embedded in the school environment. We wanted to discover first-hand the ways in which gender stereotypes are reinforced or challenged in schools during classes and school breaks. Gender stereotypes might be internalised by students and educators, which would therefore preclude them from being able to identify or discuss those aspects of their behaviour. Observation is also the best way to explore behaviours that are not easy to describe in an interview (Merriam and

Tisdell, 2016). An external observer in such a case is better placed and equipped to identify stereotypes and stereotypical practices. Observations also provide the research team with real incidences and behaviours in schools, which could then act as a starting point for the forthcoming in depth interviews.

Recruitment of participants

Before starting the observation activities, A.L.E.G. signed collaboration protocols with 8 schools which agreed to be involved in the project. Schools of various backgrounds and level of “fame” were selected, provided that they included the project’s target group age 13-16, namely 7th and 9th grade. Due to the fact that the observation was conducted in the last school semester (April-June), the 8th-graders were not involved because they were preparing for final exams.

Observation took place in 8 secondary schools and high schools, at the 7th and the 9th grades. The total number of pupils in these classes was 214, of which 116 girls and 98 boys. We observed 32 academic hours of 50 minutes each, both STEM, and socio-humanistic, most of them taught by female teachers, with two exceptions in which the teachers were men.

The observations were conducted at different subjects such as Math, Physics, Romanian, Literature, Religion, Entrepreneurship, Geography, Biology, Chemistry, foreign languages, IT, vocational and technological counselling, etc.

The observer was an experienced social researcher who applied the following rules:

- remain silent; avoid any intervention or interaction with students or teachers,
- maintain confidentiality and avoid discussion with others on what has been observed,
- hold a written record of what was happening in an objective, factual, impartial way and without including any personal judgement, and write down as quotes things as they were said.

Seating arrangement

In most classrooms, desks were arranged in lines, and two pupils sat in each desk, most of the times girls sat next to girls and boys next to boys, while mixed desks were exceptions (based on friendship, on rejection by colleagues or on the need to make the boy “behave”, as the teachers said); the cases when a pupil sat alone were rare (situations when the pupil was rejected by his/her colleagues because of their behaviour or simply chose to sit alone and the class seating arrangement allowed for this).

In the case of one technological high school, as well as in the laboratories in theoretical schools, desks were arranged in horizontal lines of 5-7 seats and pupils

sat together based on personal preference. We also noticed a certain segregation by sexes: boys packed in the rows in the back of the room, while the other rows were predominantly occupied by girls; in the cases where boys were present in the rows in the front of the class, the teachers explained that “*this is a way to keep tabs on them, as they are rather unruly/less attentive/noisy/disturb the class*” or “*they are the diligent boys, who want to pay attention*”.

In the case of certain subjects (Chemistry, Romanian, Technological Education), the pupils sat in groups of 4-6, according to personal preferences, not taking gender into account.

Atmosphere during classes

We observed that the atmosphere during classes mainly depends on the teacher's capacity to ensure a stable, disciplined and interesting framework. Therefore:

- teachers who combine authority and open, sympathetic communications manage to hold classes characterized by order, attention, interest, and involvement of the students;
- more permissive or, on the contrary, too authoritarian teachers, who don't communicate with pupils efficiently (neither when it comes to interpersonal communication, nor to specialized information), or those who stick to strictly teaching their lesson are the ones whose classes are characterized by a noisy and messy atmosphere, as students do not pay attention (they move around in the classroom or talk to each other) and lack interest or involvement;
- teachers who made connections with current events and the lessons they taught caught the pupils' interest, providing them with food for thought and starting useful discussions.

At the same time, the atmosphere was influenced by the volume of information that pupils must write down during the class. Thus, in math classes, some Romanian classes, in classes for which no text book is available and learning is exclusively based on notes taken during the lesson (e.g., work health and safety, technological education, locksmith classes), the atmosphere was generally quiet, as pupils were busy writing.

We didn't notice a negative or tense atmosphere in any of the classes which we observed, regardless of the subject.

Gender distribution and its implications.

In technological high schools, we noticed a 2:1 ratio boys to girls - these are high schools with “traditionally male” specializations (mechanics, wood processing), and respectively a 2:1 ratio girls to boys in technological high schools specialized in textiles and pedagogics.

In theoretical schools, two of the classes we observed were gender balanced, while the others showed a 2:1 ratio girls to boys.

The class composition had different implications, depending on the school profile. Therefore:

- in theoretical schools, regardless of the girls/boys ratio, pupils seem to be approximately equally involved in class activities. Occasionally, we noticed that girls were more involved. The class atmosphere was mainly characterized by a relative state of order, quietness, organization.
- in technological high schools, the dominant gender was more involved in classes: boys in high schools with “typically male” profiles, respectively girls in the textile high school. The class was louder and a bit less organized than in theoretical schools, with small variations depending on the subject.

Teachers

Out of the 32 classes we observed, only two were taught by male teachers. We did not identify any differences in teaching style, the interaction with pupils, the involvement in activities, the interest for the subject, from the gender perspective.

With regard to communication with pupils, we noticed that most teachers used general formulas to address them, most of the times not mentioning their names. For example, when formulating questions, they did not mention particular persons to answer them, but addressed the entire class, leaving pupils to decide whether they wanted to answer or simply indicating the pupil who should answer with their finger or by using the designation “you” - *“Hey, do you not have a pen to write with? Let’s help him!”*

A few teachers constantly used the pupils’ first names when interacting with them. They were the ones with a more open, collaborative, sympathetic, and closer approach to them. For example: *“Andrei, explain to Maria what she has to do.”*, *“Ionică, tell us a quality of a priest - he sings beautifully, right? We like to listen to him.”*

In many cases, the word “pupil” was used, which has become a neutral/general form of addressing, even when girls were more numerous in that class (they also noticed this aspect). For example: *“I want you to look at your desk mate (male form of the noun in Romanian) and to write down what you think about...”*, *“I want each pupil (male form of the noun in Romanian) to mention a wrong idea.”*, *“Can a teacher change a lazy pupil? What about an entire class of lazy pupils?”* *“Each pupil writes what he wants to know about... and what he would like to know.”*

We ascertained that teachers addressed the pupils directly by their last name, when drawing their attention on behaviors considered to be inappropriate. Teachers corrected boys more often, as they were the ones who manifested disturbing behaviors, by being noisy or talking out of turn.

When girls showed sanctionable behaviors, teachers also took action; we did not notice major attitude or severity differences compared to the teacher's attitude to boys. In certain classes, they drew boys' attention to disturbing behaviors, i.e. be less noisy, revise their vocabulary and tone, while in the case of girls, the reproach was somehow connected to their gender: "*You're a girl, you should be quieter.*", "*That's not a girly behaviour.*"

During most of the classes we observed, the teachers' attitude towards the students was fair: they granted equal attention to girls and boys, asked both genders to get involved in activities, not showing discriminatory or biased behaviors.

Some teachers' approach was more sympathetic, collaborative, solidary with the pupils' problems and concerns, but at the same time authoritative enough to impose order and discipline. They often gave the feeling of team work. We should mention that these teachers facilitated students' understanding of the contents discussed by frequently resorting to examples from the children's daily life (for example, equal opportunities between women and men, love, healthy vs. unhealthy relations, marriage, respect, virtue, mock professional interview etc.), by encouraging them to think critically, to make connections between their knowledge or daily life occurrences and the information taught. We noticed the use of this approach by female teachers of English, Biology, Romanian, Entrepreneurial education and by those who were also form teachers.

Teachers of Physics, Chemistry, Math, German were rather distant, less collaborative, less interested in the way in which specific information was sent, received and processed by pupils. This gave the feeling they drew a clear line between pupils and teacher, as the latter focused on conveying information, but not on the way in which it is sent or received, and cared little about their relation or interaction with students.

In general, the pupils in all classes raised their hands when they wanted to answer. Some teachers especially nominated pupils who they thought would not know the answer, then admonished them, and indicated the name of "good" students, who had prepared. Then they made remarks such as: "*You've been missing, that's why you don't know the answer.*", "*Let's move on; we're wasting time.*", "*Some of you know the lesson, others don't, you should hit the books!*", "*Bianca, the question is related to the lesson you had to prepare for today!*"

Elements Strengthening Gender Stereotypes in the Teachers' Behaviour and Discourse

- When boys showed sanctionable behaviors, they were told to speak less loudly and revise their vocabulary, while in the case of girls, the rebuke had to do with their gender: *"You're a girl, you should be quieter."*, *"That's not a very girly behaviour."*
- A female teacher said that *"forestry is not for girls"*.
- To a girl whose mother came to school to talk about her daughter's situation, the form teacher said: *"Forget about your football training, you're in the 8th grade, you should be learning, leave the training to boys."*
- When students turned projects in, the teacher said: *"You're a girl, you should be tidier, look (showing a boy's notebook to the class), this is what your project should look like too, and he's a boy."*
- Female teacher while handing worksheets to pupils: *"They boys will die if they get such difficult exercises."* - we can deduce the teacher's perception that boys are less involved in the tasks they received and prefer to make less effort.
- *"The girls worked more neatly, while boys' projects are so wrinkled it's as if they worked in a stable."*
- *"This girl is playing with that (rubik) cube all day long; boys can't solve it, though you'd think they should... at least she's good at it and solves it in no time."*
- While a female pupils presented her project in front of the class, the teacher said: *"That's how women dress, beautiful as for a fashion show."*
- *"If you're talented, for example, when sowing, the girls' work looks like embroidery - because they do it (i.e. use the magnifying glass)."*
- *"Talk to the girls; they were more hardworking."*
- *"You may be beautiful, but that's not the right answer to my question..."*

Elements Combating Gender Stereotypes in the Teachers' Behaviour and Discourse

- Following a practical task (cutting newspapers, making a collage by sticking) which generated trash, the Romanian teacher asked all pupils to get involved in the cleaning, insisting that boys should participate as well.
- When students worked in groups, the teachers also asked both the girls, and the boys to move desks around the classroom.
- When the blackboard had to be cleaned, girls usually volunteered to this; in some situations, teachers suggested boys too should clean it.

- The form teacher, who won the pupils' approval during the lesson about occupations, said that "*there is no exclusive occupation, both men and women can do the same work*"; she then went on to say that "*our skills have nothing to do with gender*" and approved a pupil who said that "*we have female colleagues who work on the lathe*": "*During wars, women took over all these tasks.*"
- The teacher made a connection about the lesson she was teaching - the job market and accessing jobs based on one's gender, and the date - May 8th, Day of equal opportunities between women and men. She started discussions: "*Do we have equal opportunities? Do we have a similar work schedule? Have we reached equality, or should we do so?*"
- During a class about love ("Romeo and Juliet"), the teacher openly discussed relations, marriage, decisions, communication. She also drew a parallel between the time when the play was written and the present, starting a debate on this topic: "*What's it like to get married at 14?*"
- During a Romanian lesson, the teacher talked about women's condition, about women-victims (Ana, the main female character in the novel "Ion" by Liviu Rebreanu): "*Think of literary works including women who aren't victims of aggression.*" When a male pupil said that "*The Romanian man goes home to beat his wife!*", she insisted on the topic, drawing a parallel between past and present times.
- When a female student said that "*Nowadays, we can't trust female gynecologists; when a woman gets pregnant, she chooses to go to a male gynecologists - I know it for a fact, I've heard it's better.*", the teacher discussed being a doctor, explained why it was more difficult for women to be accepted in the field, talked about the need to treat everyone with respect and give everybody a chance, regardless of their gender.
- Male teacher to a male pupil: "*Why were you ashamed to clean the mess in front of the school? Anyone can clean; this isn't something only girls should do.*" He discussed mentalities and the importance of girls and boys helping each other.
- During a biology lesson about contraceptive methods, the discussion reached some statistics which showed the great number of underage mothers, which led to an interesting and open debate, showing that the class had previously talked about this: "*The child is the responsibility of both parents, as mothers don't conceive them alone. That's why using contraception is a good thing.*", and "*When your boyfriend says he doesn't want to use contraception, you tell*

him goodbye!". The teacher also talked about consent and insisted on the pupils understanding its importance in a relationship.

- During a biology class, when they talked about a rather sensitive topic, the teacher did not eschew the subject, but talked about it in a funny way, to catch the students' attention: *"It's good to see we're past the stork story."*

*****Observations**

When analyzing the teachers' behavior, we must consider that some of them perceived the observers as inspectors, so it is highly possible that their conduct was different from the way they generally behave during classes. Some teachers informed the class about the observation and then made up all kinds of excuses during the lesson: *"This is a rather weak class."*, *"We should have taken you to another class."*, *"They prefer optional classes, where they only speak and don't learn anything."*

Some of them organized demonstrative group activities, but it was obvious that they didn't normally work that way: *"They don't know how to work together, as a team."*

Others insisted a lot on offering a positive image, and when the students didn't cooperate or didn't show much interest in the lesson, they stated things like: *"They aren't like this usually."* or *"Come on, you used to give better answers."*

Some pupils' statements strengthened our impression that certain teachers behaved differently due to our presence: *"You should come more often; they behave better when you're here."*

Pupils' interest for the subject, their involvement in activities

Both male and female students seem to grant more attention to subjects considered to be "important" (Math, Romanian), i.e. the subjects which are to be tested during final exams (high school admission and baccalaureate exams).

We noticed a higher degree of interest for and of involvement in the classes held by teachers who interact positively with their pupils (by communicating, stimulating them to get involved, showing interest for their way of thinking, for their reactions to the topics discussed) and whose approach stimulates the children's interest for their subject (by presenting information in a clear manner, offering explanations, drawing parallels with every-day examples, by themselves showing interest in what they teach, emphasizing the practical relevance of their subject, stimulating critical thinking).

We constantly noticed the pupils' low interest for subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Math. The number of absences we ascertained doesn't seem to be connected to the subjects taught.

The subject content

As a general observation, we didn't see any particular elements leading to the concept of gender in the didactic contents taught, as the main approach was not sensible to gender differences (*gender-blind*).

However, in certain situations, we did notice a special approach by some teachers who exploited elements related to gender. Thus:

- during a Romanian class, they read an extract from the autobiography of a woman who lived in the interwar period. Her situation was atypical: she had graduated from a university (in a time when this was very rare), came from a noble family (a negative element from the viewpoint of the Communist system), worked in a workshop as an unqualified worker (as a consequence of her being from a bourgeois family). The teacher exploited this generous topic very well, by referring to gender aspects and promoting gender equality through her approach.
- at another Romanian class, the teacher analyzed the character of Ana from the novel "Ion" and talked about violence against women;
- at a Biology class, while discussing contraception, the teacher insisted that a pregnancy is the responsibility of both the man and the woman;
- during a class about raw materials, when giving examples of clothes made of fibers, the teacher mentioned both female, and male items. During the same class, the pupils had to "dress up" a human silhouette drawn on a worksheet and could choose between men's and women's silhouettes.
- outside of class, the history teacher talked about a film called "Mute Wedding" and then discussed youngsters' life 70 years ago;
- the school counsellor talked about women who made history and about whom the pupils had never heard, such as Smaranda Brăescu, Ana Aslan, Florica Bagdasar, Maria Virginia Andreescu Haret, Elena Negruzzi etc. A girl remarked: „*Why don't we see these women's pictures on school walls? It would be good to see them too, not just men.*”

The pupils

In most schools, the boys were obviously more vocal, expressed their opinions more freely (even if the teacher didn't ask for them), commented more. We saw but few exceptions of girls disturbing the class, and in these situations the teacher especially highlighted this, saying things like "Though they are girls, they behave this way!" or "*She's such a tomboy!*", "*Bianca, you should have been a boy.*"

In some cases, the teachers' remarks indicated that some pupils - most of the times boys - were considered "problematic".

Regarding involvement in class activities, our observations differ from one school to the other. Thus:

- in technological high schools specialized in "typically male" subjects (mechanics, locksmiths and wood processing), boys were most active, answering the majority of the teachers' questions, showing more interest for the subject, while the girls' attitude was rather passive, as they were not involved (with some exceptions) and indifferent to the subject taught and to the teacher;
- in the "typically female" technological high schools (textile, humanities, foreign languages), though boys were more vocal (mostly on topics unrelated to the subject), the girls were more involved in the tasks to be solved: they focused more on the activity, worked faster and quieter. In some classes, the "quieter" boys sat next to girls or in the first rows (but the other colleagues mocked them).
- in theoretical schools, where girls were more numerous than boys, girls seemed more active and involved. During group activities, girls took on leadership roles, coordinating the group's activity and making decisions, while boys were rather passive or acted as subordinate collaborators. We noticed that boys were more interested and involved in practical tasks (cutting, sticking, making collages), rather than in written activities. Besides, when the group had to present their results to the class, girls usually volunteered to do the presentation.
- when the blackboard needed to be cleaned, only girls volunteered, while boys only did so when it was their turn or if appointed by the teacher..

Interaction between pupils

- **Between Girls**

In general, girls' behaviour to other girls was civilized, collegial, cooperative. In some situations, we noticed a certain rivalry between them (when they worked in the same team), manifested by not taking into account other girls' suggestions, through statements like: "I know better.", "I'm the only one who's smart this time.", by raising their voice.

Some of the girls displayed exaggerated demonstrative verbal and emotional behaviors. In some classes, girls talked to each other during lessons, and if the teacher was more permissive and didn't say anything, they made comments about him/her.

- **Between boys**

In general, boys' behaviour to other boys was civilized, collegial, cooperative. Occasionally, they simulated acts of violence, trying to intimidate, but didn't resort to physical violence.

We noticed a that boys tried (more than girls) to be noticed, to stand out, through immature actions: laughing loudly (exaggeratedly considering the situation), speaking more loudly, talking during the class, looking indifferent to the teacher's critiques, etc.

In most situations we observed, the boys were respectful to their teachers; however, in one case, the boys were disrespectful to their teacher (ironic replies, insolent answers). These acts were a reaction to the teacher's behaviour (tyrannical attitude, raised and confronting voice, ordering rather than collaborating, frequent threats, no interest in students' reactions or in whether they understood the lesson).

In one case, the class received the task of drawing clothes on a women's silhouette, a boy wanted to draw female body parts (which was not requested). The teacher intervened in a tactful and humorous manner, managing the situation and getting him back on track.

- **Between girls and boys**

We didn't notice any improper behaviors in class interactions between girls and boys. Nevertheless, in some situations, the impact of gender stereotypes was evident: when the students had to clean the classroom, the girls were more active, while boys dodged the work or even explicitly said that "*Sweeping is a girl's job.*" Girls' reaction showed that they expected this attitude: "*They always do this.*"

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups with teachers, school counsellors and students were used to identify attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate gender stereotypes and influence career choices.

Sample recruitment

In Romania we focused on school counsellors and form teachers with whom we collaborated in previous projects and who teach at high school, but we especially recruited teachers from secondary schools too, considering the project's age group. School counsellors are educational experts, who plan and hold individual or group educational counselling aimed at the child adapting to specific issues within the school environment; they also implement career orientation programs ("Counselling and Orientation") with a view to developing competences in the curriculum target fields; they organize extracurricular vocational orientation programs, promote and

implement health programs aimed at developing students' life style management skills. The school counsellor is a teacher specialized in pedagogy, psychology, sociology, who works in educational institutions set up according to National Education Law no. 1/2011 and who ensure that pupils participate in information and psycho-pedagogical counselling activities, through individual and group sessions, guidance actions for parents and teachers and collaborative actions with local communities, with a view to achieving students' school, professional and career orientation.

In Sibiu county, there are 54 school counsellors (50 women and 4 men!) working in one or several schools/high schools, depending on the number of pupils. A school counsellor works with a minimum number of 800 students.

Considering that some of the counsellors' responsibilities is to improve intra- and inter-personal communication, ensure career guidance, promote gender equality and equal opportunities, vocational counselling and health education, their participation at the *GenderEd* project was a good opportunity as focus group participants and as trainees.

Another category of teachers is made up of those who have the skills to intervene in the pupils' career guidance; we are referring to the form teachers whose responsibility it is to implement the curriculum "Counselling and guidance".

In Sibiu, A.L.E.G. conducted one focus group with secondary and high school teachers and one with school counsellors, all working in public schools. As the County School Inspectorate of Sibiu is our associated partner, teachers were recruited through their schools and subject to permission granted by school management. The researcher asked the heads of schools to disseminate the invitation and consent form to teaching staff or in some occasions the researcher was invited to teachers' meetings to present and explain their role in the focus group. The school counsellors were invited through the County Resource Centre and Educational Assistance Sibiu (CJRAE) that works with the Sibiu County School Inspectorate. The researchers asked CJRAE to disseminate the invitation and consent form to their members.

We also conducted two focus groups with students aged 13 to 16. While selecting the sample, we tried to attain as good a spread as possible, as this tends to reduce bias and improve the richness of data. The students were encouraged to participate by their teachers who were involved in former A.L.E.G. projects or who attended the focus groups, or some came with their peers. Students were given written invitations to the focus group with the project description and a consent form to be signed by their parents.

A faithful transcription of what was said during the focus groups was made. We minimized the editing, once the transcript was finished it served as basis for the content analysis.

Things taken into account in the analysis:

- **Unsaid things:** Things that are not raised were very important. For example, if career counsellors didn't mention any gender-sensitive techniques during the focus group, this gave us important information on their level of awareness.
- **Time spent on one issue:** The amount of time interviewees chose to spend on a certain question was very important. For example, if in our questions "To what extent do you think gender plays a role in student's academic choices/how does gender affects their choices?" career counsellors gave a very brief answer on this and then started talking about another issue, ignoring the question, this again told us something about the level of their awareness.
- **Inconsistencies:** It is common in qualitative research that people say what we want them to say. They tend to give politically correct answers that are socially desirable. In the analysis, we had to pay attention to spot any inconsistencies; for example, if an interviewee says in the beginning "*We should let girls and boys choose whatever they want and combat gender stereotypes*" and then the same person later in the discussion says "*Well, a girl can't be a builder because physically she is weaker than a man*".
- **Coding:** In order to code our transcribed data, we used the "cut and paste method".

Below we listed the main topics that concerned our research and some of the most relevant quotes by the participants.

Focus group with TEACHERS

*****Ideas, examples, stories that perpetuate gender stereotypes in general and stereotypes in relation to career choices:**

"Girls usually learn more. Boys are more rational..." (Female)

***** Ideas, examples, stories that challenge gender stereotypes:**

- "I am lucky thanks to the subject I teach... I can analyze all sides. I remember that years ago I dreaded teaching 'Moara cu noroc' to classes full of boys; I was afraid." "He did well to kill her, Miss, because she cheated on him." "... I knew I had to fight them all and I used to present the other side of the story, about the woman that nobody listened to; now things are changing. ... In the end, if you bring the literary work to their own reality, you can win them over..." (Female)

- "I always try to balance things, i.e. not give boys the chance to answer questions more than girls. I have a son and a daughter, and I am always preoccupied with this. On the other hand, boys in philology classes blend in. The truth is, it's very hard to reach a balance when you have fewer boys. They either get more attention, or they are in the background..." (Female)

- *“When we role play... Girls want to be boys. Boys don’t really want to be girls. [laughter] ... Boys are very nervous when they have to play a girl...” (Female)*
- *“... hairstylist... we have wonderful boys... most of them find a job when they graduate from high school...” (Female)*
- *“Girls too have practical skills for STEM and can have a successful career in the field...” (Man)*

***** Factors that affect educational/career choices (e.g. ideas, examples, stories of children affected from parent’s expectations etc.)**

- *“In the case of both boys and girls, gender accessorizing and marking starts much, much earlier. I’ve noticed that this already becomes visible in primary school.” (Man)*
- *“... Parents want their children to go the best schools, even if they don’t know what the future holds... I think we’re under pressure from families, from the educational environment, from the hierarchies in the educational system, which allocates a certain number of positions, of classes, of high school, etc.” (Man)*

Focus group with SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

***** Ideas, examples, stories that perpetuate gender stereotypes in general and stereotypes in relation to career choices**

- *“Boys didn’t want to be kindergarten teachers... they preferred to teach at primary school level, as it was easier from the viewpoint of social norms: playing with children is beneath men’s dignity...” (Female)*
- *“Girls were taught that occupations involving a lot of physical work or of math are unsuitable for them... I had a student who had a passion for Informatics... But how was she to spend her time developing games? And many other such examples.” (Female)*
- *“A male nurse - many female patients who entered the practiced, when asked to undress, asked: You have a male nurse? If the doctor was a man, this was not much of an obstacle, but in the case of the nurse... Or parents are reluctant to send their 3-year-old daughters to be taught by a male teacher.” (Female)*

***** Ideas, examples, stories that challenge gender stereotypes**

- *“We’ve been trying since autumn to find a female driving instructor to teach the vocational school - hope we’ll find somebody...” (Female)*

***** Factors that affect educational/career choices (e.g. ideas, examples, parent’s expectations)**

- *“Car painter, mountain rescue personnel (salvamontist - masculine form of the Romanian term; teacher went on to explain the feminine form didn’t sound right). But some things have changed... in the past, we used to say ‘coafeză’ (female version of hairdresser), now we say stylist... (e.g., I go to the stylist where I meet*

Alin, and say to him: "My God, Alin, had you come to me back then, what would I have said? I would've ruined your life.") (Female)

Focus group with STUDENTS

*****Ideas, examples, stories that perpetuate gender stereotypes in general and stereotypes in relation to career choices**

- *They said I shouldn't eat too much, or else nobody would marry me. But in the meantime, I have to do my homework, get good grades and get into a good faculty. I have to be smart and beautiful. My 4-year-old brother is taught to be strong. Father bought him a bike, a penny board and toy cars and didn't let him play with my teddy bears, of which I took great care. I also wanted to learn to ride a skateboard and father said: "Why do you need that? You're a girl."* (girl)
- in order to be seen as attractive, we must behave "like girls", i.e. be beautiful, thin, always look good, delicate, mysterious, etc. If you don't fit the pattern, both girls, and boys mock you. (girl)
- I found an online list of advice for girls and boys, which I will repeat in short. *Boys must: "take care of their physical aspect, not avoid responsibility, trust themselves, be emotionally stable, be smart and sociable and enjoy competition."* (girl)
On the other hand, girls must: "wear make-up, wax, wear dresses and skirts, pink accessories, high heels, purses instead of backpacks, sweet perfumes, play with their hair, gossip sometimes, seem disgusted by some people's lack of personal care, not swear, not drink, and read women's magazines." (girl)
- *"Because of social pressure, all the boys in my class want to get to a mathematics-informatics class, even if they don't do well in those subjects."* (boy)
- *"Yes, in the case of some teachers, if girls don't know an answer they automatically think this is due to their gender; we are told we're better off in the kitchen or are considered objects that should accept sexist remarks or indecent suggestions."* (girl)
- Philology is for girls, science, maths and informatics are more difficult, therefore they are for girls. (girl)
- When a girl wants to do something that is normally typical of boys, she is praised for fighting stereotypes. *But if a boy does things that are typical of girls, he gets marginalized. From this point of view, when girls show moral features considered masculine (power, a strong character, independence), they are treated with more respect, while boys with feminine moral features (sensitivity, elegance, sympathy) are teased. Teachers wouldn't react.* (girl)
- *"If a boy cries, his friends say he has to be strong, because he's not a woman. They've associate expressing one's feelings with a certain gender and use this as an insult. On the other hand, if a girl is responsible, strong, independent, she is told she acts like a guy. This means that if you are a strong person, you're like a man, and if you're rather emotional, you get associated to a woman, in a derogatory manner."* (boy)

Men are told they must work hard and/or choose a masculine job (engineer, computer scientist, doctor), while women choose jobs that “fit” them (teachers, nurses). (girl)

- *Girls are not encouraged to embrace occupations in the field of science. (girl)*

***** Ideas, examples, stories that challenge gender stereotypes**

- *“More men work in my father’s company... before, only men worked there, but now they have quite a lot of women.” (girl)*

*****Factors that affect educational/career choices (ideas, examples, parent’s expectations)**

- *“In a subtle way, I was told that this may not be for me, perhaps I should think about it...” (Daniel, who wants to be a psychologist)*

DESK RESEARCH- REVIEW OF TEXTBOOKS

Teaching materials are very important, as they set the content of teaching. For the desk research we focused on textbooks potentially containing stereotypical portrayals of women and men.

We chose to analyze two textbooks, one theoretical and one STEM from each European country in order to examine pictures and texts that either reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes about girls/women and boys/men.

In Romania we analysed the following two textbooks

Theoretical text book - Civic Culture

1. *Blatant stereotype: image(s) or text in the text book where gender stereotypical are clearly reproduced.**

No blatant stereotypes were noticed. The textbook takes an equidistant approach towards social, historical, civic and political aspects, and there is some effort to take gender aspects into consideration.

*****Subtle stereotype:** Image(s) or text in the text book where gender stereotypical are subtly reproduced.

Throughout the textbook different drawings are presented, illustrating political and social situations. Most of the drawings present groups of people, in which women are always minority (e.g., if a group is made up of 5-6 members, just one of them is a woman).

*****Missed opportunities/Gender-blind:** Missed opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes in the text-book.

Although in Romanian nouns are inflected according to gender, the language used in the textbook is generic, with most nouns in masculine form (e.g.: *colegul, cetățean, elev, adversar, partener*). The authors have missed the opportunity to have a more gender nuanced expression. There are specific situations where both masculine and feminine forms of the nouns should have been used.

Throughout the textbook, there are different quotes, almost all pertaining to men. The authors could have also provided quotes from women.

In the beginning of the textbook, where the notion of citizenship is explained, the authors have missed the opportunity to point out that, in ancient times, the quality of citizen and the rights pertained only to men, women being explicitly denied any capacity in this matter. The text uses the expression “*daughter of a citizen*” but does not go into its implications.

At the end of the textbook there is a glossary of terms. We have noticed that although the term “*prejudice*” is defined, the term “*stereotype*” is absent.

*****Gender-aware:** Image(s) or text in the text book where gender stereotypes are challenged.

At page 13, there is an activity that points out the consequences of prejudice concerning certain gender aspects: “*men are better at politics than women*”, “*women are better caretakers than men*”. The students are invited to debate in groups on this kind of prejudices and the means to limit their impact.

At page 16, there is a distinct note that indicates the role of Eleanor Roosevelt in introducing the unequivocal expression of “*human rights*”, instead of “*men’s rights*”.

At page 19, there is a drawing illustrating the roles-symbol different people have in the society. A woman is present in the drawing, but she’s the only one without a specific role. The authors encourage a discussion on this aspect. Also, speaking of the roles in the family, the authors point out that there has been a change in the traditional roles and this is a positive aspect for women, their chances of career fulfilment being thus increased.

At page 20, there is a distinct info box referring to “*gender discrimination*”, as a phenomenon that manifests both in the society and in the family.

At page 47, where aspects of government and executive power are discussed, students are invited to express their opinion on certain debatable situations: the fact that Romanian governments after 1989 had an almost exclusive masculine composition, the fact that there a discriminatory behaviour may be found here, the fact that there are governments in the world that are run by women.

At page 58, another activity invites to analyzing gender stereotypes in society. Students are invited to question the validity of certain public beliefs, encouraged to

assert personal opinions, even when they oppose the common views in their community, invited to think about the influence of mass-media in shaping public opinions.

We noticed that all the group photos in the textbook illustrate different situations, but there is a gender adequate composition, men and women being roughly equally represented.

STEM text book - Biology

2. *Blatant stereotype: image(s) or text in the text book where gender stereotypical are clearly reproduced.**

The textbook has a scientific approach regarding biology. Not many aspects of gender were taken into consideration. The views expressed related to gender roles tend to be rather conservative. For example, at page 14, there is a section called *If you want to know more*, under the chapter *The Reproductive Function of Humans*. While explaining different concepts, the text contains a blaming attitude towards the mother when she faces difficulties during childbirth. The mother seems to be blamed for a potential spontaneous abortion, for having a different blood type than the partner (Rh+/-), for the child born prematurely, or for getting sick during the pregnancy.

*****Subtle stereotype:** Image(s) or text in the text book where gender stereotypical are subtly reproduced.

Throughout the textbook, different drawings illustrate the human body. Most of the drawings present men as humans, and pictures of women only appear when describing parts of women's body.

*****Missed opportunities/Gender-blind:** Missed opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes in the text-book.

The language used in the textbook is generic, with most nouns in masculine form (e.g.: *individ, om*). The authors have missed the opportunity to use more gender-nuanced expressions. There are specific situations where both masculine and feminine forms of the nouns should have been used.

The body functions should have been explained emphasizing the differences between men and women. This differences are not so evident, as the separation between genders is only present in the description of the reproductive system. For example, the endocrinological system is not explained based on sex differences.

At page 77, the nervous system and the relation between senses is explained. The text book shows how the sense of hearing can be fooled during a particular job and

people can get in danger because of it. But the text book only shows men's occupations, not referring to women at all.

*****Gender-aware:** Image(s) or text in the text book where gender stereotypes are challenged.

At page 5, the definition of bodily functions is divided in female individuals and male individuals, instead of women and men. The authors prefer to use the neutral term – *individual (individ de sex feminin/masculin)*.

At page 23, there is a section called The Relationship between Sexes. It explains that the reproductive function is governed by the brain. Human relationships have to respect social norms, both sexes must respect each other and act responsibly to each other. The authors suggest that boys should be responsible for their colleagues and friends when it comes to sexuality and feelings, but this is not applicable in the case of girls too. Pictures make girls feel vulnerable and in need of protection. So unfortunately, even in situations where gender is considered, stereotypes get reinforced.

Page 81 describes ways to keep the nervous system healthy. One of the measures for preventing nervous system breakdown is good vocational counselling in relation to students' capacities and talents. Unfortunately, the text insists on the interpretation that there are some professions more suitable for girls and men, based on their physical capacities.

Research ethics and confidentiality

Protection of anonymity and confidentiality of research participants:

All necessary permissions and authorizations were secured by the relevant authorities for access to the schools where the research was implemented, in accordance to the national legislation of each partner country. All project outputs ensured the anonymity of the project participants. For school observations specifically, A.L.E.G. made signed collaboration protocols with each school institution involved. The real names of focus group interviewees were excluded from public documents; pseudonyms were used instead. All personal data collected from the participants were stored securely by the partner organizations. The voice recordings were saved on the personal computers of the relevant researchers and secured with a code.

Consent by the participants:

Informed consent forms were signed by the research participants following a clear presentation of the project, focus group aims and topics to be discussed. Consent from parents, schools and education authorities was requested and confirmed. Focus group interviewees had the right to withdraw consent from participating in the research at any time. No sensitive personal data were collected or reported in the research.

Research data

1. Ideas, examples and stories that perpetuate gender stereotypes, taken from curriculum analysis, focus groups and observations (include any inconsistencies that have been identified and skipped / overlooked questions).

As shown above at each section.

2. Good practices: Ideas, examples and stories that challenge gender stereotypes, taken from curriculum analysis, focus groups and observations.

At the beginning of 2017, the Institute for Educational Science opened a public consultation on secondary school curriculum projects. In this context, the organizations within the Coalition for Gender Equality, including A.L.E.G., expressed their concern regarding the fact that these projects did not mention gender equality, women's rights, gender stereotypes, discrimination, rights of sexual minorities, sexual education and reproductive rights. We think remedying these serious issues is urgent and necessary. Future generations must be educated to observe human rights, and education for gender equality plays an essential part. Considering how important the new school curriculums are and the social role of education, the Coalition for Gender Equality requests that public debates are organized, with experts in the field and human rights organizations. A work group on gender equality in education, of which the Coalition for Gender Equality was part, was put together in the spring of 2018.

3. Other factors that influence educational and career choices

Tackling and highlighting the harmful effects of gender stereotypes throughout the educational system, from primary school to life-long learning, can have an essential role in reducing gender inequalities in other life domains (EIGE, 2017). At the same time, tackling gender stereotypes and gender segregation is key in modernizing the higher education system (European Commission, 2011) and is a prerequisite for meeting the Europe 2020 objective to increase by at least 40% the number of youngsters aged between 30 and 34 who achieve tertiary education until 2020.

Recommendations

It is clear that gender stereotypes are present in the teachers' attitudes in class (remarks, language used) and even in the way they advise or guide students in making their vocational choices. Parents also reinforce traditional beliefs that lead to gender segregation in education and on the labour market. The textbooks tend to illustrate the status quo and miss the opportunities to encourage young people to overcome existing limitations, and to respond to the different realities and needs of women and men in a supportive way that gives visibility and recognition to the qualities of both women and men. There is a need for a structural change that could only happen through gender mainstreaming, so that both the school environment, the teachers' training, the type of counselling students receive in schools and the textbooks they study are revised in order to support gender equality and empower both girls and boys to find and pursue their calling, despite pre-conceptions about what women and men can and cannot do.

We recommend that the gender mainstreaming approach is introduced in education, as this may contribute, for example, to an increased participation by parents and caretakers in life-long learning and reduce gender segregation on the labor market. Gender mainstreaming plays an important role in facilitating the development of a reference framework as established in the strategic framework Education and training 2020 (ET 2020) to secure the participation of at least 15% of adults in life-long learning (EU Council, 2009).

Interventions to help identify and overcome gender stereotypes are extremely necessary, as well as to develop equality-based attitudes and behaviours at the level of primary and secondary education, both among teachers, and pupils, with a view to achieving long-term gender-equality on the labour market. Teachers trained to this end can play a key role in implementing such interventions aimed at general population. Such requests regarding “the improvement of training teacher on women’s rights and gender equality...” are also emphasized in CEDAW’s recommendations for Romania in their analysis of the report presented by the government in 2017. They recommend “eliminating traditional stereotypes and structural barriers that may discourage girls to join traditionally male dominated fields, such as science and technology, intensifying efforts to offer career counselling to girls regarding non-traditional careers and encouraging girls to take part in non-stereotypical professional training” (CEDAW, 2017)

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GenderEd



Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies
(Cyprus)
<http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/>



Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA)
(Cyprus)
<http://www.cyfamplan.org/famplan/page.php?pageID=1&langID=13>



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Women's Issues Information Centre (WIIC)
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Centro Documentazione Donna (CDD)
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