

# Gender differences in tourism behaviour in the European Union

Bogdan-Constantin IBĂNESCU\*, Oana Mihaela STOLERIU\*\*,  
Alexandra GHEORGHIU\*\*\*

## Abstract

*Given its increasing role in today's societal and economic realities, tourism is seen more and more as a discursive area and a successful channel for transmitting gender equality issues. The purpose of this article was to examine the differences regarding gender gaps in tourist behaviour between core-members and the latest accession states in the European Union. We used the number of trips, overnight stays, and the values for travel expenditures from Eurostat database as indicators to study the participation of men and women in tourism for both leisure and professional purposes. The results indicated small or almost non-existent differences between the core-members of the European Union and the latest accession states regarding gender gaps in tourism; however, both groups manifested an underrepresentation of women in professional or business tourism as well as smaller values of expenditures overall for women. The results seemed to indicate the existence of a "glass ceiling", despite the overall progress made in the gender equality area.*

*Keywords:* tourist behaviour, gender gap, European Union, "glass ceiling"

## Introduction

During the last decades, tourism was one of the fastest growing economic sectors at a global scale and its societal importance as well as impact made it one of the most important development directions of national policies.

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\* Bogdan-Constantin IBĂNESCU is researcher at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in European Studies, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași; e-mail: ibanescu.bogdan@uaic.ro.

\*\* Oana Mihaela STOLERIU is lecturer at the Faculty of Geography and Geology, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania; e-mail: oana.stoleriu@uaic.ro.

\*\*\* Alexandra GHEORGHIU is Teaching Assistant at the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania; e-mail: gheorghiu.anda@yahoo.com

In its most recent annual report on tourism impact, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimated that in 2017 the number of international tourism arrivals reached a new all high value of 1,323 billion (showing an increase of approximately 100 million tourist arrivals compared to 2016). The forecasts for the following years are even more encouraging, with an expected increase of 3.3% by year until 2030 (UNWTO, 2018).

Given its role and impact in today's society, tourism can and should be a channel for promoting gender equality and social empowerment of women; therefore, it is not surprising that many political and institutional discourses have approached the relation between tourism and gender. Various policy papers highlighted the role of tourism in empowering women socially, politically, and economically, particularly in developing countries (UNWTO, 2011; Bettio and Verashchagina, 2008), therefore promoting a higher level of gender equality in tourism-related aspects. However, several scientific papers have identified gender differences in both tourism behaviour and consumption (Pritchard, 2007; Swain, 1995).

It is pertinent to consider gender relations in tourism as being similar with other relations influenced by gender biases since they are an extension of rapports existing in the society as a whole (Kinnaird *et al.*, 1994; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2015).

Research on gender influence in tourism has often focused on issues related to labour workforce divisions, payment equality, women economic empowerment, social construction and promotion of tourism destination of sites, or tourist motivations (Baum, 2013; Kinnaird *et al.*, 1994; Rozier-Rich and Santos, 2011; Sinclair, 2005; Swain, 1995), repeatedly mentioning evident differences between men and women. And while a rich scientific literature has studied the issues of gender segregation and women's underrepresentation at the professional level in tourism companies or in tourism labour force, far too little attention has been paid to the role of gender in the differentiation of tourist behaviour (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2015).

The idea of studying women as tourist consumers and travel decision makers started in the mid-1990's (Kinnaird *et al.*, 1994; Pluss and Frei, 1995). Gender differences in tourism behaviour have been found to be related to factors involved in destination choice, with women paying more attention to the issues of security, reliability, and social benefits than men (Rosmann, 2006; White, 2003). Still, gender stereotypes make no exception when applied to tourism: due to their underprivileged role in the decision making process, women's participation in tourism was reported as being generally adjusted to the needs of their family or partner (Khan, 2011; Deem, 1986). This behaviour is considered to be a consequence of economic factors linked to their lower contribution to family income, socio-cultural factors, education, or religious restrictions (Khan, 2011; Bartos, 1982).

Nonetheless, our study focuses on the European Union (EU), a space with lower social and economic inequalities due to gender equality policies. Equality between men and women has been a central tenet of EU institutions since their beginnings despite fundamental contradictions in the approaches to gender equality (MacRae, 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that a number of studies have claimed the lack of a gender effect on tourist behaviour in developed countries (Carr, 1999; Lin *et al.*, 2014) even when related to decisional factors such as tourist motivation (Jönsson and Devonish, 2008) or variations in travel expenditures (Moutinho and Vargas-Sanchez, 2018). The authors suggested several possible explanations, such as women empowering, equal gendered access to education and better jobs, social changes and evenly distributed family responsibilities (Khan, 2011; Mowl and Towner, 1995). However, a few gendered differences linked to tourism behaviour persist. For example, women are more involved than men in travel decision making and holiday planning (Rosmann, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2004; Pan and Ryan, 2007; Mottiar and Quinn, 2004).

As regards Eastern European (EE) countries, previous research has found that international tourism, especially in the case of women, could sometimes be disguising an international workforce migration rather than genuine tourism trips and that the gendered biases could be in reality more important (EC, 2013; Bettio *et al.*, 2012; Montanari and Staniscia, 2009; Passerini *et al.*, 2010).

### **Travel behaviour of EU countries and gendered obstacles to travelling**

One of the first surveys on the Europeans' attitudes towards tourism published after the accession waves of 2004 and 2007 showed that the lowest shares of respondents who travelled in 2008 were almost exclusively in EE (Hungary – 45%, Romania – 51%, Portugal – 52%, Malta – 53%, Bulgaria – 54%, Latvia – 56%, Slovakia – 58%, Poland – 60%, Czech Republic – 62%, all under the EU27<sup>1</sup> average), while the highest shares were recorded in Northern Europe (Sweden – 88%, Finland – 87%, and the Netherlands – 84%) (EC, 2009). However, the same report showed a constant increase in the case of the EE area in the number of short trips between 2007 and 2008, presented as a positive sign of a EU membership side-effect (EC, 2009).

Regarding the gendered differences in tourism, the report indicated a clear overall preference of women for public means of transportation during their travel (airplane, train, or bus) while men manifested a higher preference for autonomous means of transportation such as cars or motorbikes. In fact, a possible connection could exist between the means of transportation and the percentage of travelling respondents, as the countries reporting the lowest shares of travelling respondents also reported the highest percentages of travelling by car or motorbike (Slovenia,

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia, the 28<sup>th</sup> state, only became a member in 2013.

Portugal, Bulgaria, France, Romania and Poland - all at approximately 60%). A second conclusion from the report was that a smaller percentage of women had short private trips or holiday trips in 2008 (37% vs 40% for men) (EC, 2009).

A more recent report (EC, 2016) showed encouraging signs from EE countries, all of them having registered increases in their share of inhabitants who travelled in 2015, compared to 2008.

Regarding the obstacles encountered for not going on a holiday in 2008, financial reasons were more frequently mentioned in Bulgaria (68%), Hungary (68%), Portugal (66%), Romania (64%), Greece (62%), Poland and the Baltic states (51%), all above the EU 27 average of 41%, while for North-Western Europe personal reasons came in first (EC, 2016).

Job security was another important factor influencing travel decisions (EC, 2016), strongly influencing tourist decisions, especially in the Mediterranean countries. In 2016, the highest women's unemployment rates in the EU were registered in Southern Europe (EC, 2017): Greece (27.2% versus 18.9% for men), Spain (20.7% versus 17.4%), Cyprus (13.6% versus 12.5%), Croatia (12.2% versus 9.8%), Italy (12% versus 10.2%) and Portugal (10.8% versus 10.5%). The relation between unemployment and tourism has been previously studied and proved that unemployment and/or the risk of job loss reduced significantly tourism participation and expenditures during trips, with case studies applied in Southern Europe (Alegre *et al.*, 2013; Smeral, 2009).

Interestingly, the report indicated gender gaps in relation to the obstacles to travel, this being one of the first official reports at the EU level mentioning clear gender differences in tourist behaviour. Thus, men more frequently invoked the lack of free time due to work and studies (26% vs 15% for women), whilst women more frequently mentioned financial reasons (54% vs 46%) and health (27% vs 18%) as main obstacles.

## **Gender inequalities in Europe and their impact on travel behaviour**

Gender has been an important topic in the EU policy and the construction of the EU identity (Macrae, 2010). However, most of this EU policy concerns labour market regulations (Macrae, 2010; Mazey, 1998; Hantrais, 2000).

EU policies combined with EE countries' aspirations for membership have strongly influenced the gender balance policies in the recently accepted states, one of the most visible effects being the increase of women share in elected offices in EE countries (Anderson, 2006). An analysis of gender policies in 4 EE countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, and Poland) has concluded that Europeanisation and the prospect of EU membership have been the biggest steps of these states towards gender equality (Bego, 2015). The author observed a high level of adoption of regulations regarding gender equality, but a significant lag in implementation (with higher values in the Czech Republic and Latvia compared to

Bulgaria and Poland). A serious weakness with this argument, however, is that the abovementioned states share very few similarities in terms of culture and economic development and consequently, the comparison could be slightly forced. On a similar note, Hassentab and Ramet (2015) revealed the role of church in explaining the low levels of implementation of gender discrimination laws in EE (in former Yugoslavia and Slovenia).

A recent study on gender tourist behaviour across Europe (Stoleriu *et al.*, 2015) highlighted a spatial discontinuity between a group of countries where men dominate tourist flows (largely overlapping Central Europe but also including Great Britain, Spain or Finland) and a European periphery (Eastern Europe - overlapping many territories with lower economic development levels and important feminine migration - Portugal and Ireland) with higher shares of women travellers. According to the study, Romania and Bulgaria shared a similar travel pattern related to gender, supported by similar political and socio-economic contexts. Similar conclusions were drawn on the three Baltic EU member states.

Additional studies suggested that women from European countries tend to travel less for work than men (commuting and business), especially in countries traditionally characterized by higher gender disparities in the level of labour market participation (i.e., Italy, Spain). However, women travel more frequently for shopping, for escorting family members, and household issues (Khan, 2011; Mowl and Towner, 1995; Reeves, 1994).

Despite its positive effects on women's empowerment, a negative gendered side effect of tourism was women's commodification in promotional campaigns (Pritchard, 2014). In a study focused on the examination of gender depictions in state tourism promotional materials, Sirakaya and Sonmez (2000) found that women were illustrated in stereotypical poses (e.g. subordinate, submissive) disproportionately more often than men. International media has reinforced some negative stereotypes associated with Eastern Europe as countries with beautiful and available women and as sex tourism destinations (Hall, 2011; Hall, 1999). Furthermore, tourism promotion campaigns, usually coordinated by national tourism authorities, have often contributed to reinforcing a perspective specific to Western tourism advertising, centred on a masculine and superior Northern (or Western) visitor who consumes the exotic feminine landscapes of less developed Southern or Eastern countries (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000). With these gender representations, tourism promotion campaigns in EE have contributed to the West-East travel patterns, by communicating gendered country images, with beautiful women greeting and entertaining male Western visitors (Stoleriu, 2016). But the gendered tourism promotion is not limited only to Eastern Europe, other countries from Northern Europe (i.e. Iceland) being affected as well (Alessio and Jóhannsdóttir, 2011).

In this context, the aim of this paper is to determine whether differences in tourism behaviour shaped by gender are visible between the EU15<sup>2</sup> and EU13<sup>3</sup> groups. We will argue that the EU acted like a harmonising structure influencing the gender balance policies in the recently accepted states, therefore balancing gender participation in tourism related aspects. The paper is organised as follows: first, a review of the methodology used is given, then the results are presented and discussed, and finally some conclusions and recommendations are given.

## 1. Methodology

This paper provides new insights in gendered tourism research by analysing territorial differences in tourism behaviour based on geographical origin and type of travel. We attempted this by first performing an analysis by group of countries – EU 15 versus EU 13. The second step consisted in a detailed country-level analysis of the variables related to the trip purpose and gender.

The main challenge of the methodological approach was the difficulty in measuring the gender differences in tourism behaviour within the EU13 group before their admission. The absence of reliable and harmonised data on tourism trips before 2012 made it impossible to further investigate the significant impacts of gender and geographical location on tourist behaviour. Several studies have used similar methods to observe the effects of gender on tourist behaviour in the EU (Stoleriu *et al.*, 2015; Bego, 2015).

We used tourism data provided by Eurostat for the 2012-2016 period for our analysis. Eurostat is the official statistics portal of the European Union with the main objectives of providing statistical information and harmonisation of statistical methods across its member states and candidates for accession. We focused on the following indicators: number of trips, number of nights spent at destination and travel expenditures, all three divided by gender, country of origin and trip purpose. Detailed information about the indicators used in the study is inserted in Table 1. The selection of indicators was primarily motivated by the available data on the Eurostat portal but also by the gender dimension (impact) of tourist behaviour. Despite the fact that the Eurostat databases offered values for the European Economic Area, including Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, our study was only focused on the differences between the EU15 and EU13 groups.

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<sup>2</sup> In this article, the EU15 Group designates the first 15 member states of the EU: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> In this article, the EU13 Group designates the latest 13 member states of the EU: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia.

**Table 1. List of indicators used in the study and their description**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description</b>
number of trips	All tourism trips made by residents, aged 15 or over, for personal or professional/business purpose, with at least 1 overnight stay
number of nights	All tourism nights spent by residents, aged 15 or over, outside their usual environment for personal or professional/business purpose. A tourism night (or overnight stay) is each night that a guest actually spends (sleeps or stays) or is registered (his/her physical presence there being unnecessary) in a collective accommodation establishment or in private tourism accommodation
travel expenditures	The total consumption expenditure made by a visitor or on behalf of a visitor for and during his/her trip and stay at destination
gender	Men/Women
location	All countries from the European Union
group	EU 15 / EU 13
trip purpose	For leisure or with family and friends / Professional, business

Source: Eurostat (2018)

Although previous studies proved the existence of gendered differences in the European tourist behaviour in relation to the travel destination (Wilson and Ypeij, 2012), we choose not to divide the indicators by travel destination and trip duration in order to better emphasize the differences shaped by gender and country of origin indicators.

## 2. Results and discussions

Data management and statistical analyses were performed by using the IBM SPSS 22 software (IBM Analytics, Armonk, New York, USA).

The first analysis in our study focused on the gender differences in tourism behaviour between the two groups of countries (EU15 and EU13) for the three main indicators: number of trips, number of nights and the total value of tourism expenditures. The main objective of this analysis was to observe if there are any differences in tourism behaviour related to gender. The results of the preliminary analysis are shown in table 2 and Annex 1. Table 2 is quite revealing in several ways.

First, it shows that no major differences between men and women exist in either group when the purpose of trips is related to leisure, family or friends. The difference observed in absolute values between the EU15 and EU13 groups is probably due to different economic standards and resources available for tourism at population level. However, no differences between males and females could be observed within each group – EU15 or EU13.

A second result shows that gender differences exist within each group (EU15 and EU13) when the purpose of the trips is related to professional or business. In

both groups, there are more men in the professional, business tourism area for all three main indicators: number of trips, number of nights, and value of expenditures.

However, the high values of standard deviations as well as the heterogeneity of the countries from both groups made us consider a deeper, country-level data analysis. For the second analysis, we only considered the relative values (percentages) in order to have a better view on the gender balance without being biased by the existing differences in economic standards between the two groups. A graphic representation per country of women's share in the tourism phenomena represents a better approach for the identification of gendered differences in tourism behaviour. The results are presented in Annex 2 (for personal, family and leisure purposes) and Annex 3 (for professional, business purposes).

Overall, women's participation (number of trips) in tourism for personal, leisure, and family purposes is slightly higher than men's (about 52% in average in EU28) and rather constant for the study period (Annex 2). However, the evolution of this indicator at the national level does not reflect any difference between the EU15 and EU13 groups. Only few countries register decreasing values (e.g. Estonia, Latvia and Czech Republic), the rest registering positive changes, more obvious in Slovenia, Belgium, Denmark or Portugal. These results are in line with previous studies that indicated a slight increase in the role of women as tourist consumers (Baum, 2013; Wilson and Harris, 2006) and travel decision makers in the family (Rozier-Rich and Santos, 2011; Pan and Ryan, 2007; Jaffé, 2006).

The same results can be observed in the analysis of the weight of women in the total number of nights spent at destination (Annex 2). Women display higher number of nights spent for leisure and family trips with a share of about 53%. These results are more frequent among EE countries, reaching the highest values again in the Baltic States (58.7% in Latvia), Slovakia (59%) and Poland (56.3%). The increasing opportunities to travel abroad, such as the West-East development of low cost flights and the increasing share of Eastern European women travelling for studies could be stimulating factors for this trend, as indicated by previous studies (Dobruszkes, 2009).

As regards travel expenditures for leisure and family trips at the EU level, the average women's share is slightly higher than men's (51.9% in 2016). There are some differences between EU15 and EU13, with slightly higher representations of women in the second group (except for Romania and Croatia). The highest values are registered in the Baltic States, followed by Poland or Slovenia.

Overall, the participation of women in tourism is above the average in both study groups when related to leisure, personal, and family trips and, except for Baltic States, where values are closer to 60%, all other EU countries present constant values of 52%-55%.

**Table 2. Tourism behaviour by gender in EU 15 and EU 13 groups**

		EU - 15						EU - 13					
		Number of trips		Leisure, family, friends		Professional, business		Leisure, family, friends		Professional, business			
		Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males		
Valid N	207	207	207	207	207	207	195	195	174	187			
Mean	20408676,34	18878967,37	1506368,70	3813964,72	3958981,15	3538456,22	186338,84	411504,50	22432	5416212			
Minimum	212213	252984	9441	32953	100893	111077	6351	22432	6351	22432			
Maximum	109925760	104928155	12488389	36376558	28639510	23909084	1798552	5416212	1798552	5416212			
Std. Dev.	26142316,22	24286552,59	2320897,51	6296280,94	5300169,28	4650564,53	231796,04	610850,21	231796,04	610850,21			

		EU - 15						EU - 13					
		Number of nights		Leisure, family, friends		Professional, business		Leisure, family, friends		Professional, business			
		Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males		
Valid N	207	207	207	207	207	207	195	195	174	187			
Mean	112683130,51	101524409,60	5166141,85	12723102,63	19379317,34	15957371,11	921435,19	1935287,47	13542	48078			
Minimum	450668	531422	65353	202679	210867	227837	13542	48078	13542	48078			
Maximum	644530769	588872315	44952842	107249342	166198295	129059079	15768932	27371794	15768932	27371794			
Std. Dev.	164827071,66	147588606,11	7865978,87	20129632,38	31075100,23	24488213,33	1828444,74	3476097,93	1828444,74	3476097,93			

		EU - 15						EU - 13					
		Expenditures		Leisure, family, friends		Professional, business		Leisure, family, friends		Professional, business			
		Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males		
Valid N	204	204	204	204	204	204	195	195	174	187			
Mean	6884336,15	6644521,42	658793,95	2078456,33	681835,77	624112,30	55893,76	159971,63	55893,76	159971,63			
Minimum	70750	76376	12813	29126	22364	26754	1435	1363	1435	1363			
Maximum	46587524	47990407	6415409	23919430	6347125	6401738	585710	2682003	585710	2682003			
Std. Dev.	10322784,48	10091498,47	1039177,02	3859408,12	1082846,38	976601,58	68534,22	271828,90	68534,22	271828,90			

However, in business and professional trips (Annex 3), the share of women is much lower, reaching only about 32% of the EU28 average in the overall number of trips. This situation is in line with previous European reports indicating that women tend to travel less for work compared to men, especially in several countries with higher gender gaps in labour market participation, such as Italy, Czech Rep, the Netherlands, or Malta (EC, 2017). Surprisingly, high shares of women participation in professional and business trips appear in several EU13 countries: Romania (56,8%), Bulgaria (39%) and the Baltic States (slightly below 40% for all three states), a fact probably linked to the strong migration of feminine labour force from those countries towards Western Europe (Montanari and Staniscia, 2009; Passerini *et al.*, 2010; Stoleriu *et al.*, 2015; Favell, 2008).

The share of women in the total amount of nights spent for business and professional trips has stronger variations for the period analysed and again lower and even slightly decreasing overall shares of women (about 31% in average in 2012 and only 28% in 2016 for EU28). The chart indicates that European women travel less for business purposes and for shorter periods. This could be linked to the gender pay gaps and the glass ceiling effect, previously found as significant in the tourism industry (Knutson and Schmidgall, 1999). At the national level, there is only Romania as a major outlier. The strong feminine migration to Western Europe for seasonal work, often with a tourist visa, could be an explaining factor (Maticescu *et al.*, 2015).

As expected, women are under-represented in the total expenditures for business trips as well, with a 28.7 average share in 2016 for EU28. It is difficult to identify a spatial pattern for this indicator within the EU member groups. The high values registered in some EU13 countries (Romania -54%, Bulgaria -37%, the Baltic states – all above 30%) seems to be rather linked to the frequency of business travels than to their duration. An additional explanation could be offered by the Eurostat data regarding the overall gender gaps in payment, which were the smallest in Romania. With the exception of Portugal and Greece, most of the EU15 group have shares similar or under the EU28 average. They mainly reflect the same connection to the business trips frequency. One of the explanations for the high differences in expenditures category could be offered by the under-representation of women at the professional level and the overall underpayment (UNWTO, 2011). A supplementary study published by the European Commission on women representation at the top executive level in large EU companies found a clear under-representation of women (EC, 2017). The number of trips, overnight stays, and the values of expenditures for professional and business purposes are directly dependent on the share of women at the top executive level.

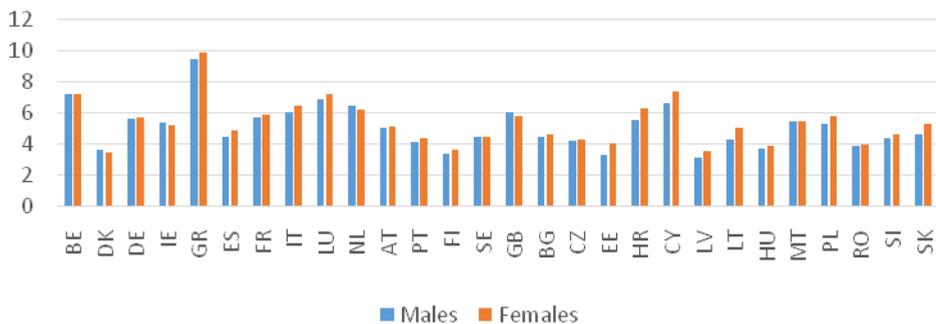
Studies have reported that economic constraints are usually stronger for women and that these are often linked to their lack of or lower financial contribution to family incomes (Khan, 2011, Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983, Blood Jr and Wolfe, 1960, Green and Cunningham, 1976). The vertical segregation of women, meaning

differences of access to promotion and career opportunities (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2008; EC, 2016; Baum, 2013) is another factor that could explain the professional status and earning differences between men and women and therefore, different expenditures afforded or allowed for business travels that have been observed in the results of this study.

However, a major source of uncertainty in the method is represented by the annual variations for each country. In order to avoid the biases induced by annual variations, we calculated the average length of trips and the average spending for personal, leisure, family, and professional business purposes. Both indicators provide deeper insights on the gendered behaviour by emphasizing the resources available for tourism purposes.

Overall, the average length of leisure or family trips between 2012 and 2016 (Figure 1) indicates a West - East gradient, with higher values (above the EU average) in EU15, decreasing towards EU13 (under the EU average, except Croatia). Exceptions are the Northern states (Finland, Sweden and Denmark) whose citizens travel for shorter periods but more frequently. The West-East opposition seems to reflect the differences at the economic development level. This is confirmed by recent European surveys, as in 2009, the financial reasons for not going on holiday were more frequently mentioned in EE and Southern Europe states (EC, 2009).

**Figure 1. Average length of voyage for personal, leisure and family trips (in days)**

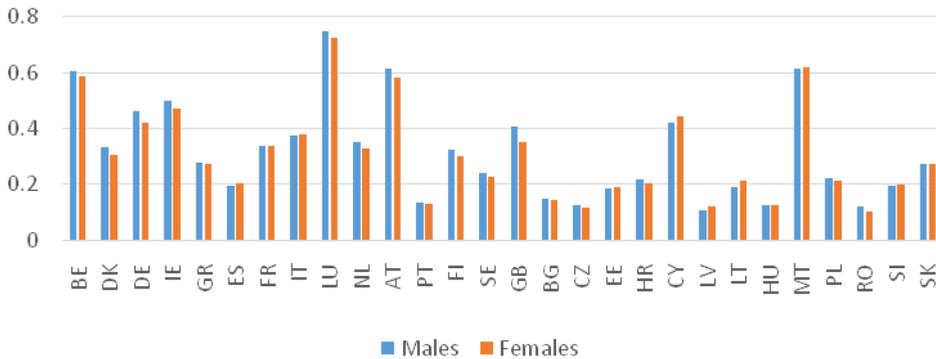


*Source:* authors' representation based on Eurostat data (2018)

Small gender differences in the overall average length of leisure or family trips can be observed: 5.09 days for men and 5.35 days for women. The differences are more prominent in the Baltic States (where female unemployment is above the EU28 average, according to Eurostat statistics) and in Southern Europe (Cyprus, Spain, Greece, Italy - states with a more traditional society). In very few cases, men take significantly longer leisure trips - in the UK, Netherlands, or Ireland, which is probably also linked to a stronger gender pay gap for the first two countries, according to Eurostat data. The fact that, overall, women tend to take longer trips

could also be linked to their traditional family role as caregivers (Deem, 1986) and to the fact that they are usually frequent companions for children and elder relatives (Khan, 2011; Mowl and Towner, 1995; Reeves, 1994).

**Figure 2. Average value of expenditures for, leisure and family trips (in thousands of euros)**

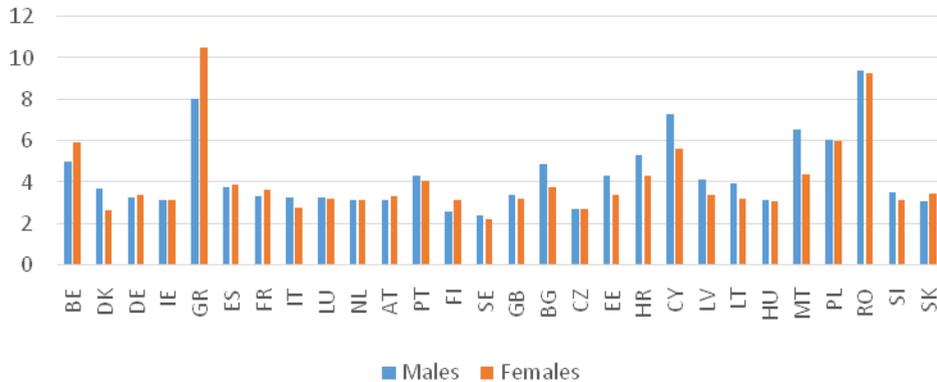


Source: authors' representation based on Eurostat data (2018)

The West-East (or EU15 versus EU13) gradient is more visible for the average expenditures during leisure and family trips (Figure 2), confirming the influence of economic factors. Most EU13 countries spend less on personal trips compared to the EU15 ones. A very small gender gap is noticeable in the overall average expenditures: 0.32 for men and 0.31 for women, with men spending slightly more than women in Northern and Central Europe, and with equal or slightly higher women's expenditures in Eastern and Southern Europe.

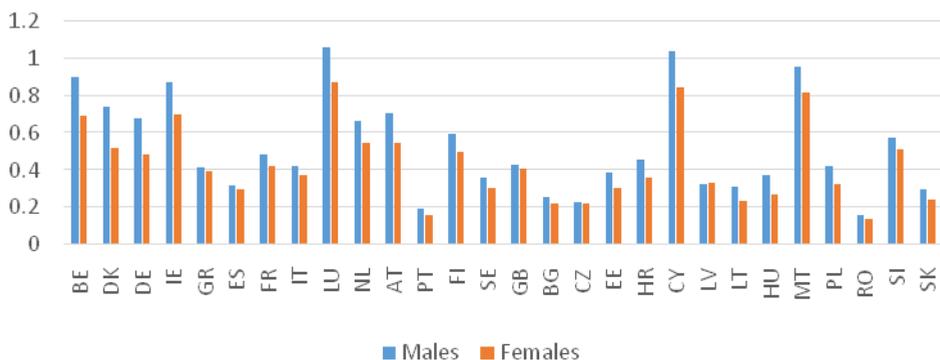
Overall, we can say that Figure 1 and Figure 2 do not indicate a significant gender gap in leisure-related travel behaviour.

As regards the average length of business and professional trips (Figure 3), gender gaps are also very small: 4.30 days for men compared to 4.08 days for women for EU28. This is a fact linked to increasing general women empowerment in society, supported by EU gender policies (Macrae, 2010) and increasing female labour market participation (EC, 2017). Women's role in business travel has grown in the last decades (Bhatia, 2006). Recent studies have underlined the increasing number of independent working women, favoured by their better access to education and better jobs, as well as by other factors, such as late marriages and changes in the structure of familial responsibilities or earnings (Khan, 2011). An increasing number of women travelling alone for study purposes has also been registered.

**Figure 3. Average length of voyage for professional and business trips (in days)**

Source: authors' representation based on Eurostat data (2018)

Overall, it can be noticed that EU13 countries have shorter business trips (under the EU average) compared to EU15. The intensity of gender gap largely follows a similar spatial pattern, with men taking longer business trips in Southern Europe and the Baltic states. In very few countries, women's trips are slightly longer (such as Greece, Belgium, or Spain). This business travel pattern, with shorter trips, seems to have been extended from the EU 15 group towards newer member countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, or Slovakia, possibly as an effect of contagion since those countries are the closest, from a spatial perspective, to the EU15 group.

**Figure 4. Average value of expenditures for professional and business trips (in thousands of euros)**

Source: authors' representation based on Eurostat data (2018)

The gender gap is more evident for the average expenditures during business trips (Figure 4): 0.52 for men compared to 0.43 for women. The opposition between EU15 vs. EU13 is no longer visible for this indicator. Yet, many of the EU15 states (except Spain, Portugal or Sweden) have higher expenditures for business travel as well as stronger gender gaps, with men spending more than women. These gender differences can be linked to the gender pay gap, which is higher in most EU15 countries (EC, 2017). It could also be an effect of the glass ceiling with a higher manifestation at the higher levels of payment.

## Conclusions

The present paper aimed to develop the existing literature regarding gendered tourist behaviour at the EU level. Given the intended harmonising effect of the European gender-related policy, the main research objective was to verify the existence of a gender gap between the older and newest EU member states (EU15 and EU13) as well as at the country level for the period 2012-2016.

Overall, there are no major differences between men and women in terms of leisure and family trips among the EU 15 and EU 13 groups. On the contrary, both groups showed a dominance of men for professional and business trips, for all the three indicators analysed (number of trips, number of overnight stays and expenditures). This confirms previous findings at the EU level and indicates the influence of a glass ceiling effect, with women given less access to higher professional positions and incomes.

At the country level, the situation is more complex and seems to be more closely linked to economic differences and gender pay gaps. Women are slightly over-represented in the leisure, personal, and family trips, confirming their stereotyped role of family's caregiver while travelling. However, in some EU15 countries, their dominance is an effect of disguised feminine migration.

The dominance of men in professional and business trips re-occurs at the country level and is closely linked to the glass ceiling effect. European women travel for business purposes less frequently, for shorter periods and with fewer expenditures as compared to men. The exceptions to this pattern are some countries in EU13 with lower gender pay gaps and intense migration of feminine labour force (Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic states). Our study also highlighted the fact that the gender gap has higher values for business trips duration and expenditures and slightly lower values for travel frequency.

Future research should explore the correlation between the evolution of the tourist variables analysed and the evolution of other economic and social indicators such as gender pay gap, glass ceiling index, female employment or national gender policy, etc.

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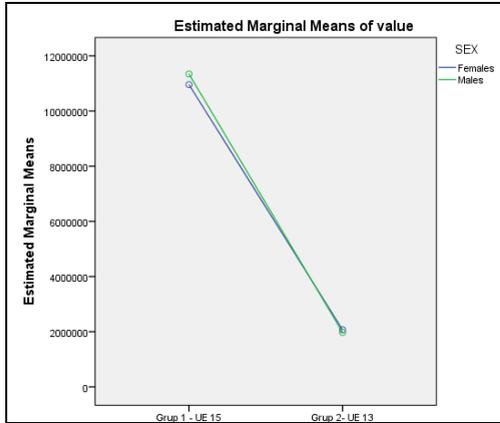
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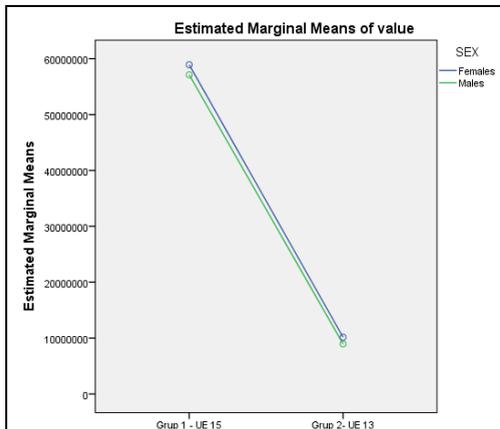
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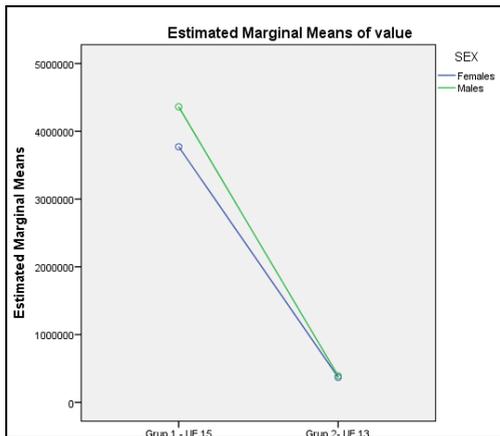
**Annex 1. Gender differences in tourism behaviour in EU 15 and EU 13 groups – Estimated Marginal Means**



a) Number of trips



b) Number of nights

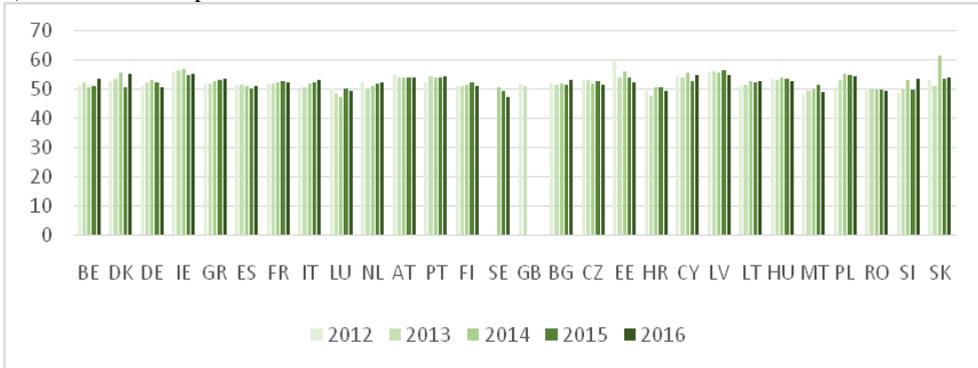


c) Value of Expenditures

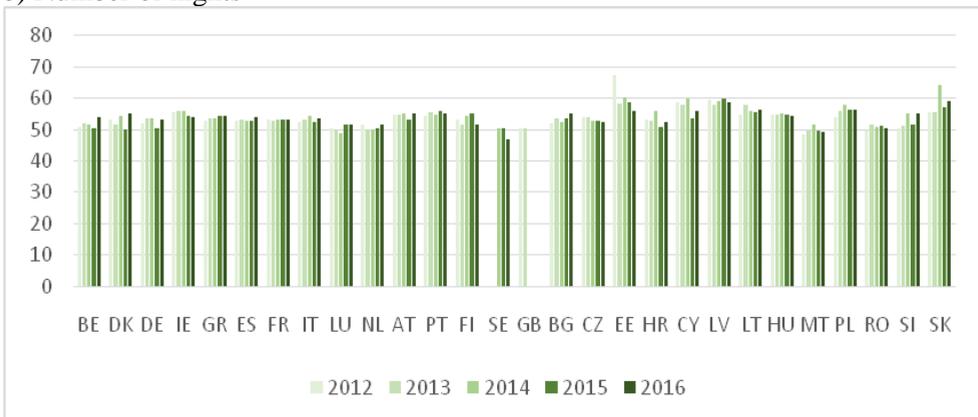
Source: authors' representation based on Eurostat data (2018)

## Annex 2. Share of women in tourism participation in EU countries - personal, leisure

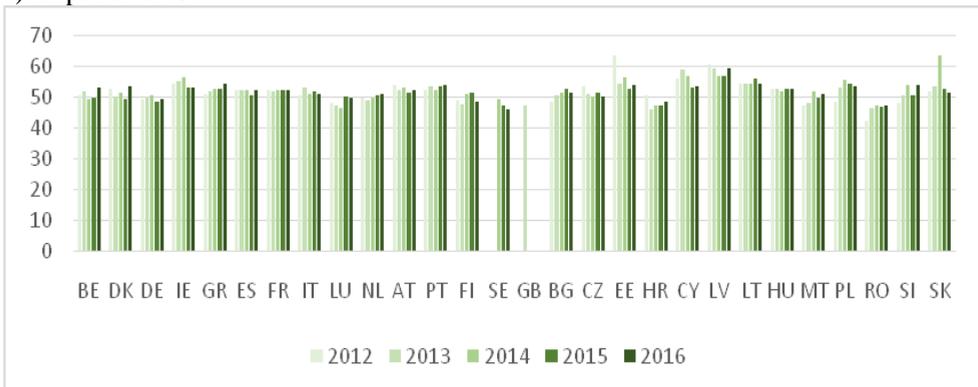
### a) Number of trips



### b) Number of nights



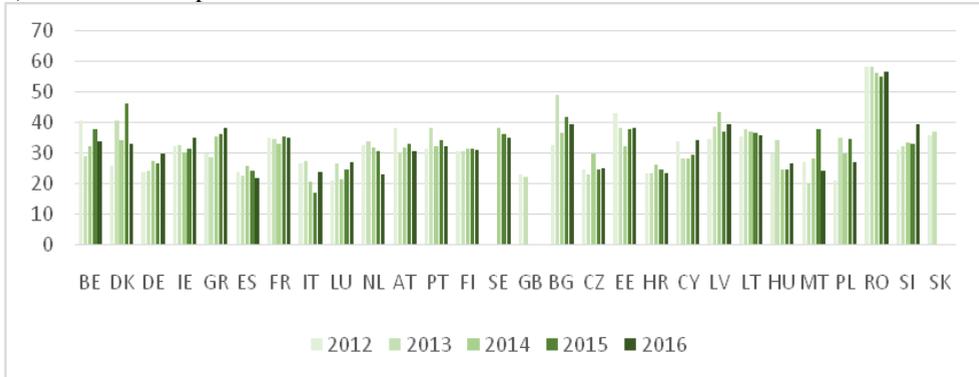
### c) Expenditures



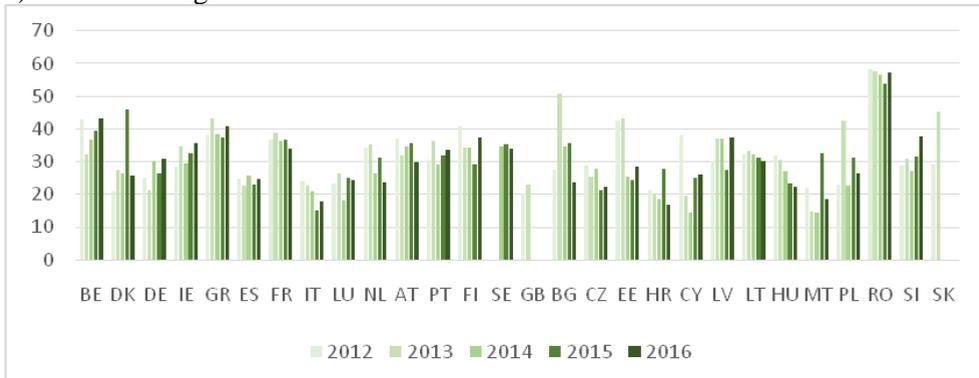
Source: authors' representation based on Eurostat data (2018)

**Annex 3. Share of women in tourism participation in EU countries – professional, business**

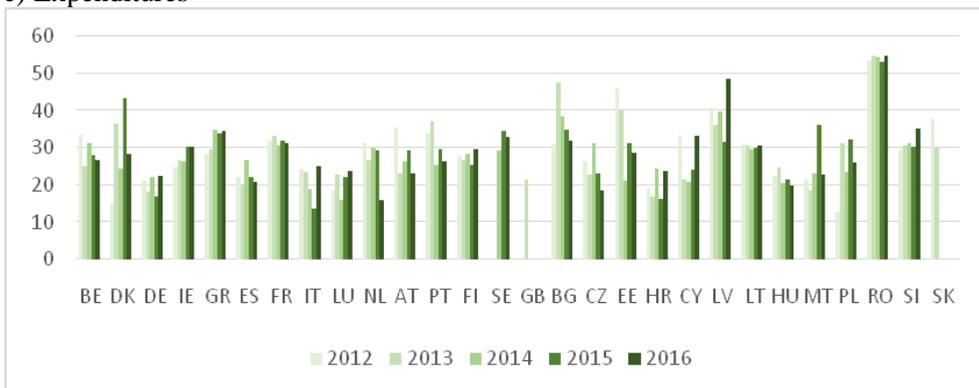
a) Number of trips



b) Number of nights



c) Expenditures



Source: authors' representation based on Eurostat data (2018)