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## **Labour markets in transition countries: gender aspects need more attention**

“In transition economies\*, the overall trends show that, until recently, women absorbed a disproportionately large share of employment cuts” stresses Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, Regional Adviser on Gender and Economy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Employment cuts were the deepest in the first half of 1990s, when GDP sharply declined and countries introduced major reforms and austerity measures to stabilize the economy. During that time the decrease in the women’s employment was larger than for men’s in the majority of countries (see table 1). The differences ranged from 25 percentage points in Armenia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or Estonia to close to 10-13 points in Albania, Lithuania and Russia. Significant gender gap in employment cuts was also seen in Kazakhstan, Slovenia and Ukraine. During 1995-1998 asymmetric cuts in female employment continued in the Baltic States (except Estonia), all CIS countries, as well as Albania, Hungary and Slovenia.

During the last two years, the available data show that men were more affected than women by employment cuts, except Armenia, Slovakia and Slovenia. “It probably reflects the pattern of structural changes and longer protection of men’s jobs in industry. It may, however, also indicate women’s flexibility in adjusting to the demand, including through accepting jobs at the lower end of the labour market.” (see chart 1)

Furthermore, in many of these countries, lower unemployment rates reflected women’s withdrawal from the labour market, especially in the first phase of the transition process (see table 4). In all countries for which data was available, the decline in women’s activity rates was sharper than for men between 1985 and 1997, except Slovenia. This may be less relevant to explain lower unemployment rates for women since 1997 as in a number of countries women’s activity rates declined less than men’s, or, such as in Hungary or Russia, increased more than men’s.

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\* **Eastern Europe:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Yugoslavia; **Baltic states** Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania; **CIS:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

Despite successes of woman-entrepreneurs, men start their own businesses usually twice as often as women. During the 1990s the gap between men and women in entrepreneurial activities has widened in most of countries for which data are available (see table 5). As demonstrated by studies from Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland, this gap could be partly explained by gender specific barriers, such as lack of access to networks, negative attitudes towards women-entrepreneurs or discrimination in bank lending.

"Gender aspects need attention at policy level in order to achieve equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market, minimize social costs of restructuring and fully utilize human resources. Clearly, equal opportunities in the labour market cannot be ensured without adequate family and social protection policies" says Ewa Ruminska Zimny. "This involves more discussion on the impact of budgetary cuts on men and women, gender aspects of pension reforms and changes in fiscal system. The initiative on gender responsive budget, supported by the UN and other organizations provides the framework for such analysis."

For more information please see:

"Gender aspects of changes in the labour markets in transition economies"

<http://www.unece.org/commission/2002/Ruminska-Zimny.pdf>

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TABLE 1

**Growth rates of GDP and employment in eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the CIS,  
1991-2000**

(Cumulative, percentage)

	1991-1994 <sup>a</sup>			1995-1998			1999-2000		
	GDP	Employment		GDP	Employment		GDP	Employment	
		Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women
<b>Eastern Europe</b>									
Albania .....	-20.7	-14.3	-24.2	24.1	0.4	-16.2	15.6	-5.2	4.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina .....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bulgaria .....	-14.7	..	..	-11.1	..	..	8.4	..	..
Croatia .....	-32.2	..	..	24.0	..	..	3.3	..	..
Czech Republic ....	-10.0	-11.0	-10.5	8.3	-	1.2	2.5	-4.1	-3.7
Hungary .....	-12.5	-25.5	-26.3	12.7	-0.6	-2.4	9.6	3.0	4.3
Poland .....	4.2	-9.9	-4.8	27.1	5.1	8.5	8.2	-4.9	-4.7
Romania .....	-16.1	-8.5	-6.6	-0.5	-13.8	-10.8	-0.6	-4.3	0.4
Slovakia .....	-19.3	-20.4	-18.5	25.4	1.0	5.0	4.2	-2.4	-3.1
Slovenia .....	-6.7	-14.8	-20.5	17.0	7.3	5.8	10.1	-1.2	-1.7
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia .....	-20.3	-22.2	-21.6	4.9	-23.9	-17.8	8.8	-1.9	4.2
Yugoslavia .....	-54.7	-12.5	-8.3	23.5	-12.5	-8.3	-11.8	..	..
<b>Baltic States</b>									
Estonia .....	-30.7	-14.1	-18.4	26.1	-9.8	-5.1	6.2	-5.1	-4.7
Latvia .....	50.0	-22.6	-23.7	15.5	-3.4	-4.0	7.7	-0.6	-0.4
Lithuania .....	-43.8	-2.2	-15.9	21.9	1.9	-4.2	-0.2	-6.8	-1.5
<b>CIS</b>									
Armenia .....	-50.6	-7.0	-10.6	25.5	-10.0	-10.3	9.4	-2.7	-6.4
Azerbaijan .....	-52.5	..	..	4.1	..	..	19.3	..	..
Belarus .....	-27.8	-8.4	-9.0	11.2	-4.1	-7.9	9.4	-3.6	4.5
Georgia .....	-72.4	..	..	29.5	..	..	5.0	..	..
Kazakhstan .....	-33.1	-12.4	-19.1	-8.0	-5.1	-8.9	12.8	-2.6	5.6
Kyrgyzstan .....	-46.4	..	..	13.7	..	..	8.8	..	..
Republic of Moldova.....	-60.0	..	..	-11.8	..	..	-1.5	..	..
Russian Federation	-35.3	-4.7	-13.4	-11.1	-5.8	-7.9	14.2	0.3	1.3
Tajikistan .....	-59.2	..	..	-21.8	..	..	12.2	..	..
Turkmenistan .....	-32.0	..	..	-7.8	..	..	36.4	..	..
Ukraine .....	-45.5	-5.6	-12.8	-25.0	-1.0	-4.8	5.6	-5.0	-4.6
Uzbekistan .....	-18.1	..	..	10.7	..	..	8.6	..	..

*Source:* Based on UNECE Common Database

<sup>a</sup> 1990 is not included due to the lack of data on employment by sex for 1989. This does not affect the general trend as in 1990, employment cuts were not significant ranging in all countries within 1-3 per cent, except Bulgaria, Poland and Slovenia where the cuts were between 4 and 6 per cent

TABLE 4  
 Male and female activity rates in selected transition economies,  
 1985, 1997-2000 <sup>a</sup>  
 (Percentage)

	1985	1997	1998	1999	2000	<i>Changes between</i>	
						<i>1985 and</i> <i>1997</i>	<i>1997 and</i> <i>2000</i>
<b>Bulgaria</b>							
Male .....	..	56.8	55.6	54.5	54.0	..	-2.8
Female ...	..	46.9	45.6	44.2	44.0	..	-2.9
<b>Czech Republic</b>							
Male .....	75.1	71.1	70.8	70.6	69.8	-4.0	-1.3
Female ...	59.3	51.8	52.0	52.1	51.6	-7.5	-0.2
<b>Estonia</b>							
Male .....	82.6 <sup>b</sup>	73.1	71.9	70.8	71.0	-9.5	-2.1
Female ...	71.7 <sup>b</sup>	58.0	57.8	57.0	57.6	-13.7	-0.4
<b>Hungary</b>							
Male .....	73.9	60.4	60.0	61.4	61.9	-13.5	1.5
Female ...	61.3	42.8	44.1	45.4	45.8	-18.5	3.0
<b>Latvia</b>							
Male .....	69.4	68.9	68.6	68.1	65.2	-0.5	-3.7
Female ...	68.4	52.6	51.2	50.2	49.9	-15.8	-2.7
<b>Lithuania</b>							
Male .....	70.1	70.3	69.6	69.2	67.1	0.2	-3.2
Female ...	65.1	53.9	54.9	55.7	54.8	-11.2	0.9
<b>Poland</b>							
Male .....	69.5	65.9	65.4	..	64.1	-3.6	-1.8
Female ...	54.9	50.3	50.0	..	49.7	-4.6	-0.6
<b>Romania</b>							
Male .....	..	72.5	71.4	70.9	70.6	..	-1.9
Female ...	..	57.7	56.3	56.4	56.4	..	-1.3
<b>Russia</b>							
Male .....	72.6	69.4	67.6	71.9	70.9	-3.2	1.5
Female ...	63.5	55.9	55.2	59.7	59.2	-7.6	3.3
<b>Slovakia</b>							
Male .....	..	68.6	68.9	68.7	68.6	..	-
Female ...	..	51.8	51.5	52.0	52.6	..	0.8
<b>Slovenia</b>							
Male .....	82.3	66.2	66.3	64.7	64.5	-16.1	-1.7
Female ...	65.2	53.2	52.9	51.5	51.7	-12.0	-1.5

**Source:** Based on Economic Survey of Europe No. 1, 1999 and Economic Survey of Europe No 1, 2002.

**Note:** Working age population used to calculate activity rates is: 15 and over except for Hungary and Estonia: 15-74, and Russia: 15-72.

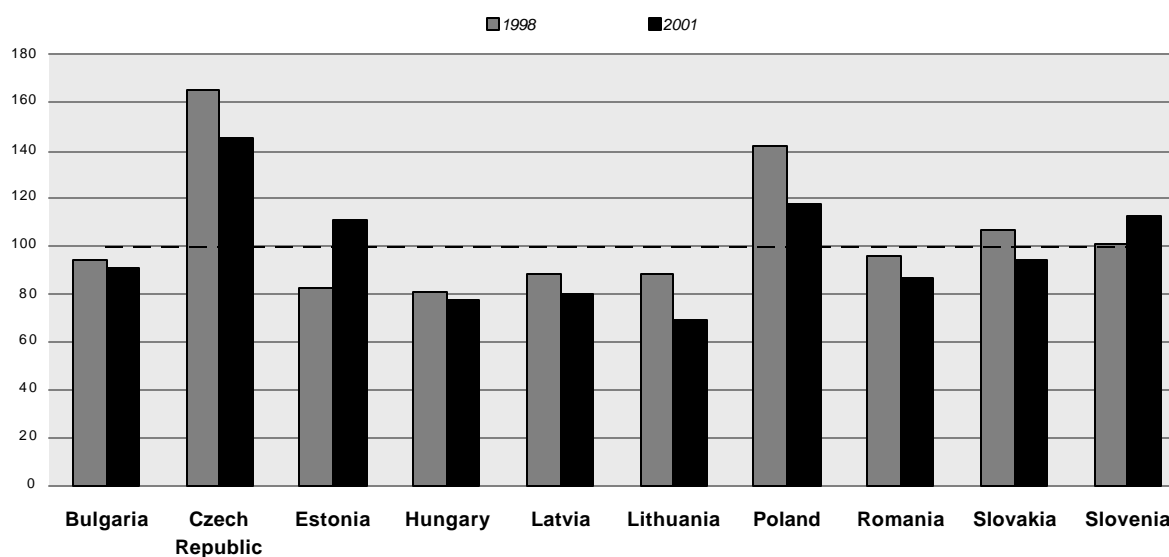
**a** Labour force/working age population.

**b** 1989, 15-69 years.

## CHART 1

## Ratio of female to male unemployment rates, in selected central and east European economies, 1998 and 2001

(Percentage, male unemployment rate=100)



Source: UNECE, Economic Survey of Europe, 2002, No. 1.

Note: A ratio of 100 means that female and male unemployment rates are equal. A ratio above (below) the reference line indicates that the female rate is higher (lower) than the male.

## TABLE 5

## Self-employment as a share of total employment in selected transition economies, 1993 and 2000 (Percentage)

Country	1993		2000		Differences	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	1993	2000
Bulgaria.....	12.9	9.2	18.3	10.6	3.7	7.7
Croatia .....	25.1 <sup>a</sup>	15.4 <sup>a</sup>	23.3 <sup>g</sup>	14.4 <sup>g</sup>	9.7	8.9
Czech Republic .....	15.8	9.4	18.8	9.0	6.4	8.9
Estonia .....	10.4	6.2	9.7	6.4	4.2	3.3
Hungary .....	17.4	11.3	18.7	9.6	6.7	9.1
Kazakhstan .....	0.1 <sup>c</sup>	0.2 <sup>c</sup>	..	..	..	..
Latvia .....	12.4 <sup>b</sup>	6.9 <sup>b</sup>	12.5	8.4	5.5	4.1
Lithuania .....	21.5 <sup>d</sup>	14.6 <sup>d</sup>	19.2	12.7	6.9	6.5
Poland .....	32.2 <sup>e</sup>	29.9 <sup>e</sup>	25.9	18.4	2.3	7.5
Romania .....	24.4	19.4	32.6	17.4	5.0	15.2
Russian Federation .....	10.1 <sup>f</sup>	5.6 <sup>f</sup>	8.4	6.2	4.5	2.2
Slovakia .....	9.0	3.5	10.9	4.1	5.5	6.8
Slovenia .....	16.0	7.6	15.3	6.5	8.4	8.8
Ukraine.....	..	..	8.3 <sup>g</sup>	9.0 <sup>g</sup>	..	..

Source: A. Nespovova calculations, based on Labour force surveys (Nespovova 2001).

a 1996; b 1995; c 1989; d 1997; e 1991; f 1994; g 1999.

