



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Economic Commission for Europe

Agenda Item 2

7 May 2002

ISSUE PAPER

**GENDER ASPECTS OF CHANGES IN THE LABOUR MARKETS
IN TRANSITION ECONOMIES**

by

Ewa Ruminska-Zimny

Regional Adviser on Gender and Economy, UNECE

Summary

The Paper presents a gender perspective on trends and policy implications of changes on the labour markets during the first ten years of the transition process within a context of UNECE activities in the area of Gender and Economy. It has three parts. Part I shows gender asymmetry in selected labour market developments based on available data. Part II presents policy implications and part III UNECE programmes and activities. It concludes that gender asymmetry requires more attention at policy levels in order to achieve equal opportunities for men and women on the labour market, minimize social costs of restructuring and fully utilize human resources for stimulating economic growth. This requires more data, analysis and exchange of best policy practices among countries.

The UNECE activities in the area of Gender and Economy aim at assisting member countries in reaching equality of opportunities for men and women in the economy reflected in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and other UN documents. These activities include collection and improvement of gender data and analysis, raising the awareness on key issues and problems and promoting gender sensitive economic policies, including those related to entrepreneurship and development of SMEs. Many of these activities focus on transition countries. The UNECE activities are developed in close cooperation with UN agencies and other international organizations.

Introduction

Men and women have entered the transition process unprepared to face the loss of job security and massive lay-offs. The situation at the onset of the transition process reflected the past system, where women played in most cases a role of second-earners employed in less strategic sectors within the industrialization led by heavy industries. Despite participation in the labour force, women remained responsible for childcare and family. As a result, many working mothers had less interest in management positions and/ or engaging in related activities, such as trade unions or professional associations.

High participation in full-time employment, work experience, sectoral structure of employment and level and profile of education, could be considered as factors, facilitating women's adjustment to a new situation on the labour market. Women had a general educational profile (often secondary or tertiary) as opposed to narrow vocational training typical for men working in the industrial sector. A high share of women's employment in the service sector, though in the past less prestigious and less paid, placed them in some dynamic branches (retail trade, banking, insurance) as opposed to many men trapped in declining industries, where job opportunities were rapidly shrinking.

Important factors facilitated men's adjustment to the new situation on the labour market. Top management posts in the economy, higher wages and male oriented labour market institutions, such as trade unions and chambers of commerce, ensured more benefits from privatization and opening of national economies. These benefits were realized through a better access to information, networks, jobs as well as domestic and foreign markets. Similar patterns of male advantages could be observed in other countries (Elson, 1999).

I. Gender asymmetry in labour market developments

Men and women were affected by the loss of job security, GDP decline and restructuring. Gender asymmetry, however, was seen in employment cuts, sectoral changes of employment and access to jobs in the private sector. The overall trends show that, until recently, women absorbed a disproportionately large share of employment cuts. Data on sectoral changes and self-employment in selected countries show that they did not benefit as often as men from job opportunities in the private sector and in the most dynamic branches of the service sector. Women's share in part-time employment increased, which could indicate the trend towards feminization of this market segment. The gender asymmetry should be seen in the context of significant differences in the economic situation, progress in reforms and policies in countries and sub-regions.

Decline in employment

Some countries, especially Russia and CIS countries, managed to keep employment cuts at a relatively low level, when compared to the fall of output at the expense of lower labour productivity and mounting wage arrears. In many other the cuts remained in double digits and up to over 20% in some countries in central and south-eastern Europe and in the Baltics. Economic recovery in the second half of the 1990s improved the situation on the labour market, but employment continued to decline in a number of countries.

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 (11 out of 17) (Table 1). The differences ranged from 2-5 percentage points in Armenia, 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, women's employment declined more than men's in 9 out 17 countries, or, as in Slovenia, increased at a lower rate. It should be noted that for women in the Baltic States (except Estonia, where some improvement was noticed), all CIS countries, as well as Albania, Hungary and Slovenia, this was a continuation of asymmetric cuts in female employment. The opposite was true in some other countries, where men continued to be more affected than women, such as in Romania, Macedonia and Yugoslavia, or benefited less from the increase of employment, such as in Poland and Slovakia.

During the last two years, the available data show that men were more affected than women by employment cuts in all countries, except Armenia, Slovakia and Slovenia. The explanation of this trend requires further research. Probably, it 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.

Presented trends do not capture the diversity of the situation and factors explaining gender asymmetry and specifics by sub-regions and countries. Men, especially those with narrow technical skills and living in declining regions, have been hard hit by employment cuts. In many regions of the Russian Federation or Ukraine, but also elsewhere, they have little chances for new

jobs. A sharp decline in male life expectancy seen in Russia and a number of CIS countries in the early 1990s is now largely associated with the stress of losing a job and social position.

Sectoral changes in employment 1992-1997

During the restructuring process, there was a shift of employment from agriculture and industry towards services. Data for selected countries in central Europe, the Baltics and the Russian Federation show that women took over the large share of the costs of this shift, as indicated by changes in women's share in employment by industry (Table 2). The decline in employment in agriculture seen in all countries (except Slovenia, Estonia and Latvia), and industry was not compensated by the increase of employment in services (except Slovakia and Slovenia) (Table 2). Cuts of women's jobs in industry reflected shedding-off clerical positions and restructuring of light industries, such as textiles, which lost state support already in the early phase of transition as opposed to the male-dominated heavy industry.

Changes in the employment structure within the service sector show that women moved towards public services and benefited less than men from the expansion of market driven services. In all countries, women's share in employment in education increased reaching 70-80%. A similar trend was seen in health and social care. At the same time women's share in financial intermediation declined, except in the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania. The decline was as big as by 24 percentage points in Latvia and by 10-14 percentage points in Hungary, Lithuania and Russia (Table 2). When compared with relative wages in the financial services and education, these changes represent a move towards less paid jobs (Table 3). These jobs are also becoming increasingly insecure under the pressure of reforms of education and health services, which have to involve employment cut to increase their efficiency. According to the World Bank, using the OECD benchmark for student-teacher ratios, up to one third of the teaching labour can be reduced in most transition countries (World Bank, 2002).

Unemployment

The pattern of unemployment does not indicate consistently higher unemployment rates for women as compared to men. In 1997, only in five out of 11 transition countries reviewed in the *Economic Survey of Europe 1999* was female unemployment rates higher than the men's. Female unemployment rates were lower than men's in Hungary, Latvia, the Russian Federation and Slovenia but higher in the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania. This is confirmed by recent data from the *Economic Survey of Europe 2002* (Chart 1). In 2001 women's unemployment was higher in four out of 10 countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia) and only in the first two countries the difference was substantive. The decline of the ratio of female to male unemployment during 1998-2001 also indicates the relative improvement of women's situation in the labour market, except in Estonia and Slovenia.

In many countries, however, lower unemployment rates reflected women's withdrawal from the labour market, especially in the first phase of the transition process. 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 (Table 4). 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.

Presented data on unemployment does not provide the full picture. More research is needed to explain unemployment trends and evaluate the situation of men and women in countries with very high total unemployment rates in South-Eastern Europe, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia (around 40%), Croatia and Yugoslavia (22-26%), which are not included into Chart 1. In countries where benefits are higher than those related to unemployment, many women choose extended maternity leaves, rather than unemployment. Finally, surveys from several countries show the specifics of female unemployment, which is characterized by more difficulties in finding a new job. Women largely rely on government services in finding employment while men use a more efficient method to finding a job through personal contacts and networks.

Income and wages

Prior to 1989, average female wages were 20-25% lower than men's. The differences were largely due to occupational segregation in less paid sectors and lower positions in the economy. These differences were not very significant in value terms due to relatively flat distribution of wages under planned economy and across-the board access to free public services. However under market conditions and rapid diversification of wages, the wage gap had increasingly negative impact on women's financial situation.

During the transition the level of education was an important factor behind raising wage disparities, especially in eastern Europe (Rutkowski, 1999). So far, there is no evidence that women have benefited from the increase of returns on education. In Ukraine women constitute 60% of workers with higher education, but their average wage is 29% lower than average wage of working men (Ukraine report for UNICEF 2000). Data from some countries also suggest that the wage gap may have increased. In 1997 women's wages in Russia were estimated at only about 55% of male wages as compared to about 70% in 1989 (Russian NHDR 1999). The opening of the gender gap is partly explained by growing wage differentiation in favour of male dominated industries and better job opportunities for men in the private sector.

In all countries family incomes were seriously affected by the decline in social services and family related transfers. The decline took place through several channels including the decline of the share of family related public expenditure in GDP, but also changes in the structure of social expenditure (cuts on health and education as compared to pensions), moving from in-kind to cash benefits, the value of which sharply eroded through inflation and the deterioration of the quality of public services. Decentralization of provision of many services had also negative effects as responsibilities were transferred to local levels without adequate resources. Due to the traditional pattern of sharing responsibility for raising a family, women were more affected than men by these changes as there was an increase of the demand for their time and unpaid caring functions and financial pressure to cover the costs of many services related to child-care, including medical services and education.

The trend towards feminization of poverty is shown by several studies including those looking at women and child poverty (World Bank 2000; UNICEF 1999). Most vulnerable to poverty are single mothers, large families and older women living alone. There are big differences in the situation of women in countries and sub-regions. The most affected are women living in countries and sub-regions affected by political instability, war and/or military conflicts, such as many countries in the South –Eastern Europe and in the Caucasus. In these countries, many families were displaced and have lost their jobs, homes and property.

Private sector jobs and entrepreneurship

In all transition countries there are success stories of women entrepreneurs. The number of women entrepreneurs is, however, much lower than men. In countries, for which there are data, men start their own businesses usually twice as often as women (Chart 3). During the 1990s the gap between men and women in entrepreneurial activities has widened in most of these countries (seven out of 11 countries) (Table 5). National studies confirm lower levels of women's entrepreneurial activity and underline the significance of gender specific barriers starting businesses in such countries as Bulgaria (Stoyanowska, 2001), Hungary (Nagy, 1999) and Poland (Lisowska, 2001). These studies also indicate that most women businesses are small or micro-enterprises, and that many women became self-employed only due to the lack of other job opportunities. Many women are involved in such activities as cross-border trade ("suitcase trade"), subcontracting work at home or street trade.

Clearly, women's entrepreneurial potential remains untapped in transition countries, especially, when compared to global trends. The number of women entrepreneurs has rapidly increased during the last ten years, contributing to GDP growth and creating new jobs in most countries in western Europe, North America and elsewhere. Between 1992 and 1997, the total number of women-owned firms increased in the United States by 16 per cent, that is two-and-a half time faster than the average growth rate of all businesses. By the end of 1990s about 8.5 million women-owned businesses accounted for over one third of all businesses and employed one out of four workers. In the United Kingdom, women start one in four new businesses. In France, Germany, Italy and other developed market economies, there is a fast rise of women-headed companies (Ionescu, 2000).

Some women and men find attractive jobs in the private sector, often in foreign firms and FDI related activities. This labour market segment is, however, shallow and very competitive. Best job offers are addressed to young (25-30 years old) people most often with degrees in law or economics and fluent in foreign languages. Women and men have to adapt to busy work schedule, frequent travels, long hours working hours and/or work over weekends. Competitive pressure, however, most often means that these are women, who have to choose between career and family (Ruminska-Zimny, 1999).

Part-time and atypical forms of employment

During 1990s, atypical jobs started to emerge along with the expansion of the private sector, enterprise restructuring and expansion of the parallel economy. The latter consisted of activities, which were legal, though not registered, and illegal and/or criminal activity, such as drug trafficking. The expansion of these activities was a response to high social security contributions in the formal labour market, which many firms could not afford, and to institutional weaknesses, including lack of law enforcement, which allowed for high profits from illegal operations.

Many women are interested in atypical working contracts because of their flexibility in combining maternity with paid work, but also because other jobs may not be available. Atypical jobs include a variety of working arrangements (fixed-term contracts, part-time, telework). Though some could be prestigious and well paid, such as free-lance journalists or part-time lawyers, most jobs are created to cut labour costs and/or in the parallel economy. This opens way

to abuse in terms of the wage level, safety and working conditions and social benefits. Data on part-time employment from western Europe, where this segment of labour market is highly feminized, show that these jobs often lack social benefits (maternity leaves and/ or pensions), are less paid than full-time jobs and include mostly low-status occupations (cleaning offices, serving in restaurants) (EUROSTAT 1998).

There is not enough data to evaluate trends in atypical employment in transition economies. Data for eight countries, however, show that women have higher share than men in part-time employment, except in FYR Macedonia (Chart 3). Gender asymmetry is especially big in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Republic of Moldova. It could be expected that these jobs have similar disadvantages as elsewhere.

A growing number of young women in transition countries are finding jobs in the booming sex business. This is not only the case of Russia, Ukraine or CIS countries, or poorer countries in eastern European countries, but also countries in central Europe. In most countries, sex business is related to organized crime and reaps huge profits along with drug business. Many young women are “exported” to western countries, including as far as to Japan, to become “hostesses, singers or dancers”. Many young women do not realize that this is an euphemism for prostitute. They are victims of their own “naivete”, but also of poverty and illusions for a quick improvement in the living standards.

II. Policy issues

Against the background of trends in the labour market key policy issues to be addressed include: lack of a gender perspective at policy level, proliferation of discriminatory practices, the need for support to women entrepreneurs, social protection and care functions, access to knowledge economy, and ICT.

Lack of a gender perspective at policy level

The lack of a gender perspective in transition policies could be explained by a number of factors, including their focus on macroeconomic policies and building market institutions. Labour market policies, especially in the first phase of the transition process, reflected the traditional male breadwinner model at the macro and micro levels. Women were encouraged to leave the labour market through early retirement policies (the Czech Republic and Poland) and more attractive parental leave schemes (Belarus and Ukraine). Concerns for maintaining jobs for male breadwinners, as well as the decline of social services and child care, were important factors behind these policies. Being at home, women were expected to have more children, a concern especially in countries with declining fertility trends prior to 1989. There were also arguments that women should be liberated from a « forced » participation in the labour market under socialism and/or return to their « pre-destination », most often advanced by the extreme right-wing political parties and supported by fundamental wings of organized religions.

The experience of ten years of the transition process has demonstrated that the breadwinner model could not provide a proper framework for economic and labour market policies. Few women could afford to leave paid work for economic reasons. At the same time for younger and well-educated generations of women in transition countries housewife as a career model has no appeal for similar reasons as in other countries. They want independence and

financial security coming from paid work, which includes pensions, important under market conditions and eroding of a « cradle to grave » state protection. They also want satisfaction and social position, which come with a professional career.

Policies of many transition countries of the 1990s were run against the worldwide trends, which increasingly acknowledged women's contribution to economic growth as a result of empirical studies (World Bank 2001, D'Intignano 1999). At the same time, progress in academic research allowed to conceptualize the links between gender and economy, facilitating advocacy to engender economic policies (Elson and Cagatay, 2000). This is reflected in many UN documents adopted by member countries in the second half of 1990s, especially the Beijing Platform of Action and the Millennium Declaration. Labour market issues are integral parts of these documents. They stress that sustained economic development requires policies aimed at building a partnership between men and women both in the labour market and within a family.

Integration of a gender perspective at policy level in transition countries requires data and analytical background to evaluate and monitor changes on the labour market. More detailed analysis is needed on sectoral and occupational changes in employment and wages. There is also a need for more discussion and exchange of best practices as countries have to evaluate different options and adjust them to the conditions and policy priorities in individual countries. This requires political support and commitment, now limited by a low level of women in parliaments and at decision-making positions.

Proliferation of discriminatory practices

The increase of discrimination of women under the new situation on the labour market in hiring, employment, career advancement, dismissal and wages was documented by ILO surveys (Paukert, 1996). The discrimination was noted especially in the private sector where employers favoured young women and offered short-term contracts, or casual work to avoid costs, which might arise from maternity and child care. Women were often requested to bring medical certificates that they are not pregnant before signing the contract. Older women and women with small children have difficulties to find a job in the private sector (Lisowska, 1998). Main reasons of discriminatory practice in hiring are claims that women are less available to work under pressure and longer hours required by many firms in the private sector and the perception that women are more expensive workers (Fong 1996).

Fighting discrimination in the labour market is difficult due to the lack of clear definition of such discrimination in labour market codes in all transition countries. In the past, this problem was less relevant due to job security. The legislative system enables *de facto* uneven treatment of men and women, as for example through specifying sex in recruitment ads. In general, while women are discriminated in the existing labour market codes, men in turn have fewer rights in family matters, especially in contacts and care for children after separation and/or divorce.

The framework for fighting discrimination is provided by ILO conventions as well as equal opportunity policies in the European Union and national policies in many countries. The EU framework is especially relevant for accession countries, which have to adjust their legislation to the provisions embodied in the *Acqui Communautaire* during the accession process.

Support to women entrepreneurs

Establishing of a sound environment for the development of entrepreneurship and SMEs is an important priority of economic policy in all transition countries. The instability of the tax system and other regulations in the private sector, the lack of access to credit, weak institutional framework of business support services limit the development of new businesses in all transition countries.

The development of women's entrepreneurship requires, however, elimination of gender specific barriers in starting own business. There is a need to open women's access to networks (trade and business associations), information and training. Women need also more assistance in financing, finding business partners and access markets. These are the consequences of uneven distribution of privatization assets, time constraints due to more family responsibilities but also due to traditional views of gender roles, which translate into a negative public attitude towards women entrepreneurs, unequal treatment by the state administration and/or discrimination in bank lending. In many countries, women are also more vulnerable to new forms of offence, including racketeering widespread in a number of transition economies.

The growing gap between women- and men-entrepreneurs is an important policy argument in favour of special programmes, supporting women's entrepreneurship. Such programmes exist in a number of ECE member countries, especially in North America, in Nordic countries as well as in some countries in western Europe. Many of these programmes are initiated and implemented by municipalities and/or local authorities. Programmes supporting women-entrepreneurs, however, should be an integral part of gender sensitive employment policies as not all women or men could start own company. Thus, self-employment cannot be seen as a solution of all problems related to unemployment (Ruminska-Zimny, 2000)

Social protection and care functions

Though changes in the welfare system were driven by constraints of public finance they reflected also the move towards less state and more individual responsibility. This was reflected by the commercialization of many public services and a move towards funded social protection schemes, such as private pensions. Reforms of social protection schemes in transition countries are far from being completed, and various options are under discussion in individual countries.

Despite variety of approaches to social reforms, there is a clear trend towards shifting the costs of having children from the state to family level. These costs have sharply increased in all transition economies. Changes in welfare systems put thus women at a double disadvantage. They remained overpriced in terms of welfare provisions, but lost benefits, helping them to combine paid work with maternity. Having children became in many ways „the worst economic decision a women can make” (Crittenden, 2001; Badget and Folbre, 1999). This decision is now much less often taken than prior to 1989.

The decline of fertility rates brings gender issues into the very center of long-term transition strategy with serious implications on labour force and pension system in the future. During the 1990s, fertility rates in transition countries moved from relatively high level, by western standards, and centered on replacement (2.1 child per women in 1982) to some of the lowest levels on record. By the end of 1990s, all transition countries have the lowest fertility rates in Europe (1.35), and in the world, lower than that in western economies (1.53). The decline of fertility rates was accompanied by the departure from a relatively youthful pattern of marriage and childbirth in many transition countries (UNECE, 1999). Though factors behind demographic

trends are complex, re-designing of a market based family support system, in which responsibilities and costs of having children would be shared among the state (central and local levels), private sector and households is an important policy priority.

The main policy issue is how to adjust welfare system to a two-career model of the family. The Scandinavian model is often presented as the most progressive one, allowing for gender equality in access to paid employment, level of wages and social provisions to combine paid work and family life. This may not be an option for many transition countries due to constraints of public finance, differences in economic realities and value systems. Clearly, equal opportunities in the labour market cannot be solved without adequate family and social protection policies. 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 UNIFEM, OECD and the Nordic Council, now provides the framework and good examples to analyze any form of public expenditure from a gender perspective and identify the impact on men and women (Elson, 2001). The reformed system of social protection should create conditions to provide women and men with equal choices between paid work and family. This involves redistribution of responsibilities not only among social partners but also within a family (OECD, 1999).

Access to knowledge economy and ICT

Education plays a key role in determining employability. From a gender perspective, two issues are important: first, women's access to a "male" education profile, which includes mathematics and computer science, and second, women's access to the life-long learning.

Though women are often better educated than men, their education profile remains "female". In most countries women are a majority among university graduates, but only in some countries their share in commerce, law, mathematics and computer sciences is close to that of men's. Women continue to choose a „female" education profile, which locks them into „female" segments of the labour market. Among university graduates, they still dominate in arts and humanities, social services and medical studies. To meet the challenge of new information and communication technologies (ICT) more investments in women's education is required.

Inadequate access to life-long learning is another factor, which affects women's employability. The global market requires frequent adjustment of skills and knowledge to the changing demand under the influence of competition and evolving information technologies. This type of learning is most often provided by employers, including through on-the-job training. The most important barrier to life-long learning is related to constraints on women's time, which is limited by caring functions.

Prevention of the growing gap in access to education at all levels is a policy priority in a number of countries, especially in Central Asia, such as Tajikistan, where in 1991-1998, the share of women with high education sharply declined, and is now under a quarter of all those in tertiary education (Falkingham, 2000).

III. UNECE activities on gender and economy

The UNECE activities on Gender and Economy were initiated by work on the gender statistics and UNECE contribution to the Beijing process, which included organization of two intergovernmental meetings: the High-Level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Beijing Conference in Vienna in 1994 (E/ECE/RW/HLM/7) and the Regional Beijing+5 Meeting in Geneva in 2000 (E/ECE/RW.2/2000/7). The recommendations from these meetings provided the framework for Regional Advisory Services established in January 2001, which further developed gender related activities within UNECE. Advisory Services on Gender and Economy have a cross-sectoral character, combine analytical work and operational activities and the diversity of partners and beneficiaries, including non-governmental organizations.

The UNECE activities respond to concerns of members states and reflect more attention being paid to economic aspects of gender equality. Special attention is given to gender inequalities, resulting from the transition process in countries in eastern and central Europe, central Asia and in the Caucasus. These activities fill the niche in programmes of other UN agencies and international organizations, especially in terms of geographical coverage but also their economic focus. UN programmes have a global perspective (UN/DAW, UNIFEM) and/or focus on the specific situation of developing countries (ILO, UNCTAD).

The UNECE activities aim at assisting the member countries in the implementation of the Beijing commitments in the area of economy based on expertise and comparative advantages of the organization. These advantages include: economic database and analysis of regional trends, sex disaggregated data and expertise in gender aspects of the transition process, inter-governmental platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices, networks of experts, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and national machineries for promoting gender equality.

The UNECE activities draw on a broad UN mandate to promote human rights, gender equality, social justice and economic development and a specific mandate to mainstream gender into the economy, which is defined by the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and other UN documents including the Agreed conclusions of ECOSOC (1997), the documents of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (1996 and 1999) as well as the Millennium Declaration (2000) and the Follow-up resolution of the General Assembly GA 55/162.

Main areas of activities are: (i) data and analyses; (ii) raising awareness, promoting dialogue and building networks; (iii) exchange of experiences and best practices, which could be used for policy recommendations in selected areas. These activities help to forge partnership among Governments and civil society movements at the national and international levels and to facilitate the process of policy convergence based on best practices. They are implemented by the Regional Adviser on Gender and Economy but also through other Advisory Services, especially those on Entrepreneurship and SMEs Development and UNECE core programmes and activities.

Data and analysis of trends

UNECE has been active in the area of gender statistics since the early 1980s. The UNECE Task Force on Gender Statistics works within the programme of the Conference of European Statisticians, which gathers the heads of national statistical offices and international institutions, such as EUROSTAT. The meetings of experts focused on such issues as women's labour force

participation over the life cycle; combination of paid work and unpaid caring activities; time-use methodology; measurements of labour inputs and the valuation of outputs.

The UNECE Task Force has recently adopted a common set of indicators to monitor women's and men's contribution to national and household economies. The set includes, among others, indicators on work and economy and women's income, power and influence. These data are included into the *Gender Statistics Website for Europe and North America*, developed with the support of UNDP and presented at the UNECE website. The Website provides also examples of good practices in selected policy areas, including labour force. The main objective of the Website is to build up a set of statistical data that could be used as a tool to monitor the implementation of gender policies in member countries.

The Economic Survey of Europe, a flagship publication of the UNECE, provides occasionally the analysis of labour market trends by sex in transition countries. It is envisaged to improve the scope of data and analysis in order to enable the continuity in monitoring trends in the ECE region.

Rising awareness, promoting dialogue and building networks

Since 1991 UNECE has organized several regional and sub-regional workshops, discussing gender aspects of entrepreneurship and labour market development. A Regional Workshop on Women and Labour Markets was organized in cooperation with UNIFEM and the World Bank in January 2001 (Warsaw, Poland). Recommendations related to the process of integrating a gender perspective into economic policies and national budgets, strengthening government's capacity in this area and establishing standards to measure progress. The proceedings were published by the World Bank.

The First Forum of women-entrepreneurs was organized in October 2001. The Forum was attended by over 350 participants from 39 member countries. The discussion focused on personal experiences of successful women entrepreneurs, the role of professional and business networks among women-entrepreneurs, and access to new technologies and markets. The Final Report of the Forum (OPA/AC.21/6) and other documents prepared by the Secretariat (OPA/AC.21/1, OPA/AC.21/2, OPA/AC.21/3, OPA/AC.21/4 and OPA/AC.21/5) are available at the UNECE website (www.unece.org/oes/gender). Sub-regional workshops on women's entrepreneurship were organized in cooperation with CEI (Sibenik, Croatia, June 2001; and Trieste, Italy, November 2001) and BSEC (Moscow, Russian Federation, June 2001).

In 2001, the UNECE created a Portrait Gallery of Excellent Women Entrepreneurs at its website to raise the awareness and promote role models for women (www.unece.org/operat/gallery). The Gallery includes profiles of over 180 women entrepreneurs from member countries. An on-line network of women business associations from the UNECE region was also established to facilitate business contacts and exchange of experiences.

In 2002, the UNECE will organize the Second Forum of Women Entrepreneurs (21-22 October 2002, Geneva). The Forum will discuss financing of women businesses and access to E:business and ICT. Round Table on women-entrepreneurs in south-eastern Europe will be organized in cooperation with CEI at the 5th CEI Economic Summit (Skopje, November 2002).

Preparatory works have begun to organize a follow-up event to the Beijing +5 Regional Meeting. The event is planned for Spring 2003 and will be organized in cooperation with UNIFEM and other interested partners. It will gather representatives of governments, experts, private sector, international organizations and NGOs. The Workshop will focus on selected themes in the area of gender and macroeconomics.

Exchange of experiences and best practices

The First meeting of the Team of Specialists on Women's Entrepreneurship was held in February 2002. The Team works within a Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development (WP.8) in close cooperation with other Teams of Specialists. Its mission is to assist Governments and women in the ECE region in fully utilizing women's skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial potential to stimulate economic growth and job creation in their countries, which is a condition to improve living conditions and alleviate poverty.

To this end, the Team of Specialists has begun to collect information on the situation of women-entrepreneurs and best policies and practices, organizes the exchange of information and experiences involving governments, business community and civil society to prepare recommendations on how to incorporate concerns of women-entrepreneurs into institutional and legal frameworks for business activities and to address gender specific barriers and promote the organization of training courses and life-long learning for women-entrepreneurs, to facilitate start-ups and on-going business activities under the conditions of globalization and rapid progress in information and communication technologies (ICT).

Partner organizations

The UNECE activities in the area of Gender and Economy are developed in close cooperation with UN agencies, especially UNIFEM and ILO. The Memorandum of Understanding between UNECE and UNIFEM was signed in February 2001. The first project implemented within the framework of the Memorandum focus on economic literacy and gender impact of EU enlargement on accession and non-accession countries. UNECE cooperates also with international organizations, such as World Bank and OECD, and sub-regional groupings, such as CEI and BSEC, as well as non-governmental organizations.

REFERENCES

Badget M. L and N. Folbre. 1999. "Assigning care: gender norms and economic outcome", *International Labour Review*, vol. 138: no 3.

Elson D. 2001. "Gender responsive budget initiatives: Some key dimensions and practical examples". Conference paper. UNIFEM-OECD-Nordic Council Conference on Gender Responsive Budgets hosted by Belgian Government, Brussels, 16-17 October 2001.

..... 1999. "Labour markets as gendered institutions: equality, efficiency and empowerment", *World Development*, vol. 27:3.

Elson D. and N. Cagatay. 2000. "The social content of macroeconomic policy". *World Development*, vol. 28, No. 7

EUROSTAT (Statistical Office of the European Union), 1998. *Social Portrait of Europe*, September 1998.

Crittenden A. 2001. "The price of Motherhood: Why the most important job in the world is still the least valued". New York. Metropolitan Books.

Fong M. 1996. "Gender barriers in the transition to a market economy", Discussion Paper Series, No.87. The World Bank.

Falkingham J. 2000. "Women and gender relations in Tajikistan". Asian Development Bank.

Ionescu D. 1999. "Women's entrepreneurship: Exchanging experiences between OECD and transition countries". In *Women's Entrepreneurship: East-West Cooperation. Proceedings of the Conference held in Brijuni*. Zagreb: Institute for International Relations (IMO).

Lisowska E. 2001. „Przedsiębiorczość kobiet w Polsce na tle Krajów Europy środkowo-wschodniej” (Women's entrepreneurship in Poland and central Europe). Warsaw. Warsaw School of Economics.

.....1998. „Przedsiębiorczość wobec bezrobocia kobiet i ich dyskryminacji na rynku pracy” (Entrepreneurship, female unemployment and discrimination in the labour market). *Women and Business*, No 3-4.

D'Intignano B.M. 1999. "Égalité entre femmes et hommes: aspects économiques. Conseil d'analyse économique". Paris: La documentation française.

Nagy B. 1999. "Businessmen and businesswomen: male and female entrepreneurs in the early 1990s", mimeo, Budapest University of Economic Sciences, Hungary.

Nesporova A. 1999. "Employment and labour market policies in selected transition economies". Geneva: ILO.

..... 2002. "Unemployment in transition countries". Paper for the UNECE Spring Seminar.

NHDR (National Human Development Report) 1999. Russian Federation. Moscow: UNDP.

OECD 1999. "A caring world: The new social policy agenda". Paris: OECD.

Paukert L. 1995. "Economic transition and women's employment in four central European countries, 1989-1994", *Labour Market Papers*, No.7. Geneva: ILO.

Ruminska-Zimny E. 1999. "Globalization and women in transition economies". In *Trade, Sustainable Development and Gender*, UNCTAD, New York and Geneva

..... 2000. "Is Entrepreneurship a solution to women's unemployment?" in *Women's Entrepreneurship: East-West Cooperation. Proceedings of the Conference in Brijuni*. Zagreb: Institute for International Relations (IMO).

UNECE 1999. *Economic Survey of Europe*, No.1, New York and Geneva: United Nations.

..... 2002. *Economic Survey of Europe*, No.1, New York and Geneva: United Nations.

UNICEF 1999. "Women in Transition". *Regional Monitoring Report No.6*. Florence: UNICEF.

World Bank 2002. "Transition: The First Ten Years. Analysis and Lessons for eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union". Washington D.C: EBRD/The World Bank.
..... 2001. Engendering Development. Washington D.C. EBRD/The World Bank.
..... 2000. Feminization of poverty in Russia. Washington D.C. EBRD/The World Bank.

TABLE 1

Growth rates of GDP and employment in eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the CIS, 1991-2000
(Cumulative, percentage)

	1991-1994 ^a			1995-1998			1999-2000		
	GDP	Employment		GDP	Employment		GDP	Employment	
		Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women
Eastern Europe									
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	..	..
Baltic States									
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
CIS									
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

^a 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 2

Share of women in total employment by industry in selected transition economies, 1992-1997
(Per cent)

	<i>Czech Republic</i>		<i>Hungary</i>		<i>Poland</i>		<i>Romania</i>		<i>Slovakia</i>	
	1993	1997	1992	1996	1993	1997	1994	1997	1994	1997
Total	44.1	43.4	45.7	44.0	45.2	44.7	46.2	45.7	44.3	45.0
Agriculture	35.7	32.7	31.2	24.8	45.6	44.5	52.1	50.8	31.1	31.3
Industry	39.5	37.5	41.3	38.6	33.9	34.8	40.6	39.6	39.0	38.2
Construction	10.3	8.9	15.0	8.6	10.4	9.4	13.5	14.1	10.1	8.6
Total services	54.8	54.4	54.2	52.6	56.4	55.0	48.6	48.7	56.5	57.3
Financial intermediation .	66.8	67.8	76.0	66.3	58.2	70.3	61.9	65.3	77.0	72.5
Real estate, renting, etc..	43.7	47.1	51.2	46.8	45.5	38.9	53.4	43.3	46.2	41.8
Public administration	38.8	37.5	34.7	42.7	42.0	42.0	16.7	21.0	44.0	46.9
Education.....	72.1	76.9	75.8	76.1	73.8	76.1	69.0	71.8	75.1	79.5
Health and social care....	79.3	81.1	75.1	75.3	79.5	82.8	76.9	77.1	80.6	79.9
	<i>Slovenia</i>		<i>Estonia</i>		<i>Latvia</i>		<i>Lithuania</i>		<i>Russian Federation</i>	
	1993	1997	1992	1996	1992	1997	1992	1997	1992	1997
Total	46.7	46.3	47.2	48.4	47.8	49.1	52.9	49.2	49.2	47.4
Agriculture	44.4	48.1	36.6	37.5	34.2	37.3	41.2	37.2	36.0	31.5
Industry	40.7	39.4	45.7	40.9	46.4	45.1	51.7	41.8	45.1	39.3
Construction	15.2	10.9	16.5	12.9	12.4	13.7	15.0	11.0	25.0	23.5
Total services	55.8	56.0	59.2	57.5	59.0	58.2	67.3	62.5	61.9	58.7
Financial intermediation .	68.8	66.7	76.3	68.2	90.1	66.2	86.1	79.8	85.8	72.2
Real estate, renting, etc..	40.9	50.0	48.6	43.8	49.3	43.3	49.1	46.8	48.0	45.5
Public administration	48.6	52.8	48.1	40.1	39.8	41.5	37.1	35.8	68.3	50.0
Education.....	73.9	78.5	74.0	79.0	77.8	80.1	67.2	76.6	71.9	74.0
Health and social care....	78.9	81.1	86.5	82.1	81.7	83.6	82.4	84.2	83.0	80.9

Source: UNECE Economic Survey of Europe 1999, No. 1. Based on national labour force surveys.

TABLE 3

Changes of relative wages in the financial services and education, 1993 and 1997
(Average wage = 100)

	<i>Financial services</i>		<i>Education</i>	
	<i>1993</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1997</i>
Lithuania.....	305	211	78	86
Estonia.....	196	205	84	78
Hungary	190	199	98	86
Slovakia	187	194	82	84
Czech Republic.....	178	174	90	88
Romania.....	151	238	93	83
Poland	150	150	90	89
Slovenia.....	144	149	141	131

Source: Author's calculation based on ILO data (Laborstat).

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

	1985	1997	1998	1999	2000	<i>Changes between</i>	
						<i>1985 and 1997</i>	<i>1997 and 2000</i>
Bulgaria							
Male .....	..	56.8	55.6	54.5	54.0	..	-2.8
Female ...	..	46.9	45.6	44.2	44.0	..	-2.9
Czech Republic							
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
Estonia							
Male	82.6 ^b	73.1	71.9	70.8	71.0	-9.5	-2.1
Female ...	71.7 ^b	58.0	57.8	57.0	57.6	-13.7	-0.4
Hungary							
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
Latvia							
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
Lithuania							
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
Poland							
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
Romania							
Male .....	..	72.5	71.4	70.9	70.6	..	-1.9
Female ...	..	57.7	56.3	56.4	56.4	..	-1.3
Russia							
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
Slovakia							
Male .....	..	68.6	68.9	68.7	68.6	..	-
Female ...	..	51.8	51.5	52.0	52.6	..	0.8
Slovenia							
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.

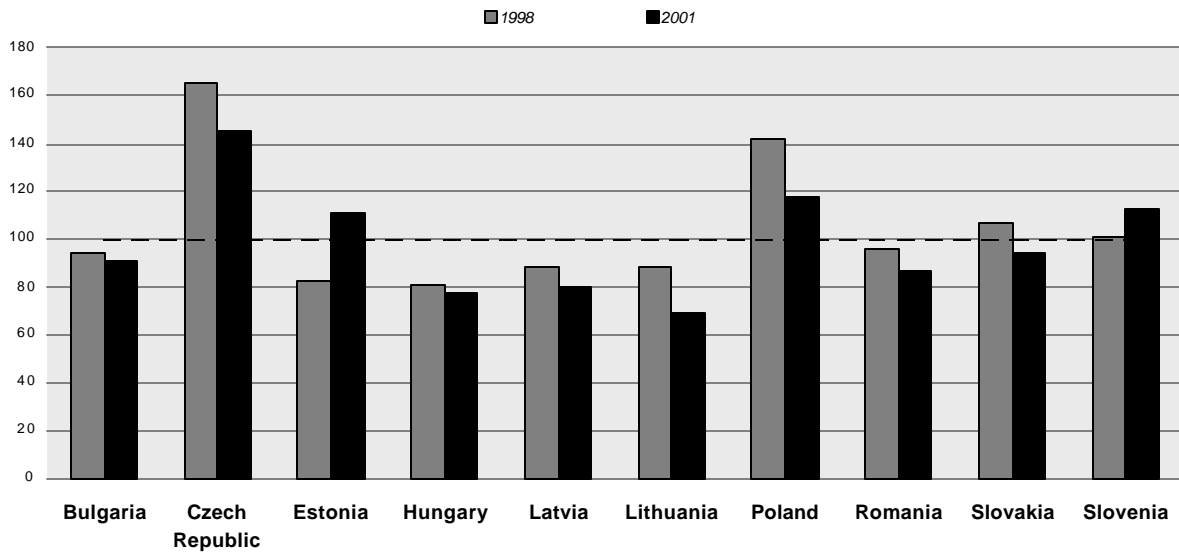
^a Labour force/working age population.

^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)

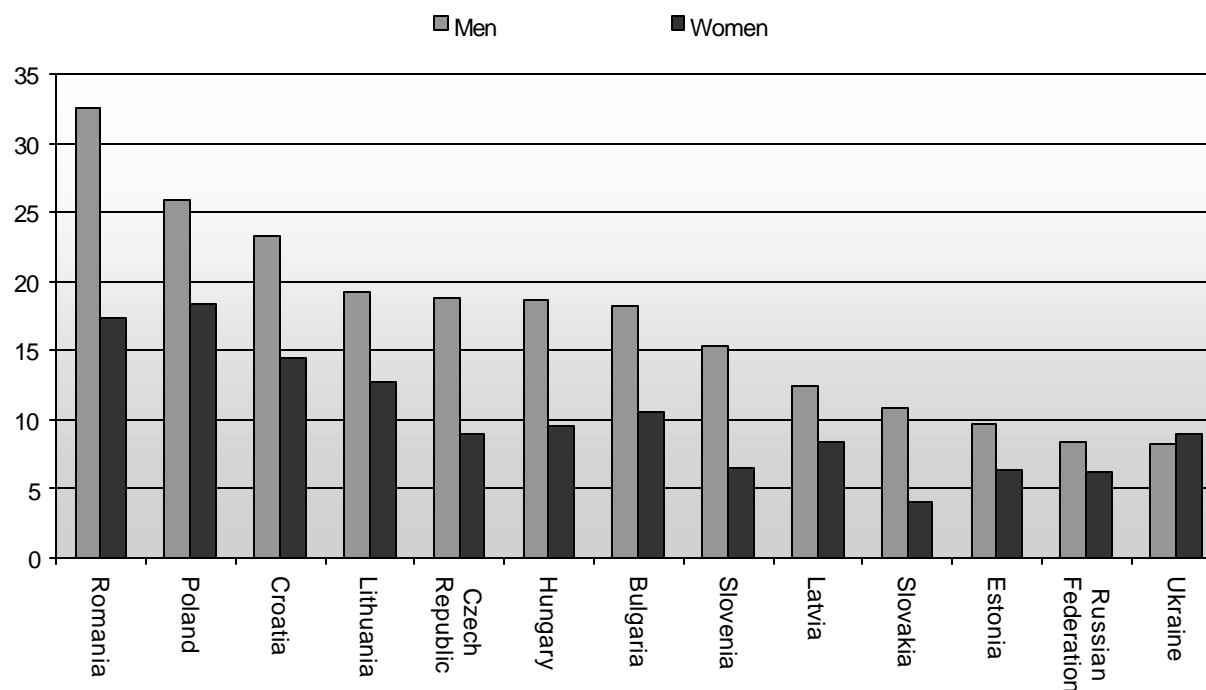


Source: UNECE, Economic Survey of Europe, 2002, No. 1.

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.

Chart 2

Share of self-employment in total employment in selected transition economies, 2000



Source: Table 5.

TABLE 5

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

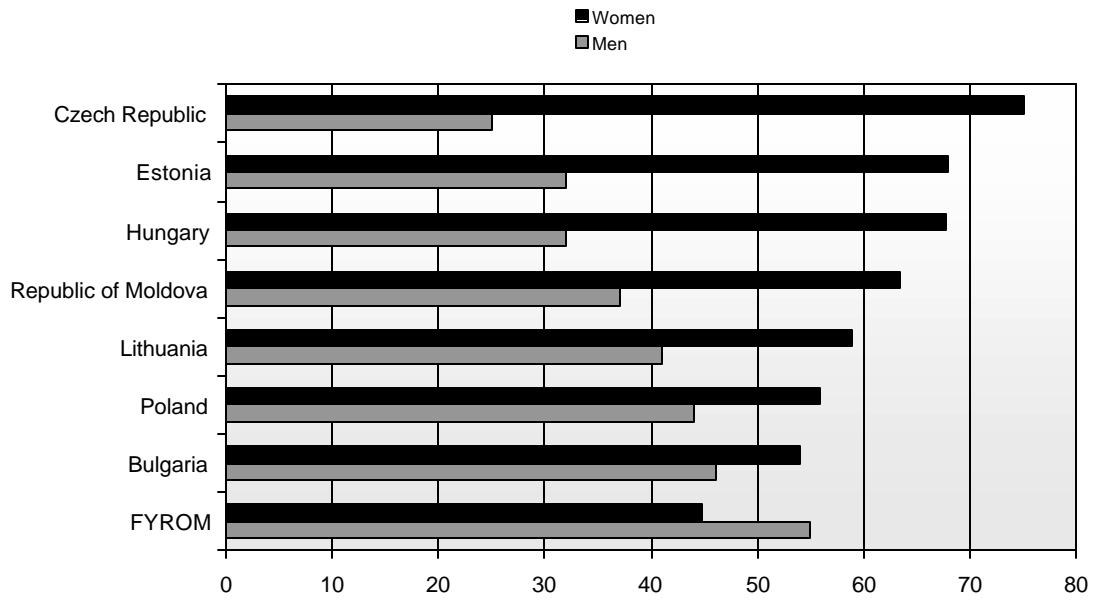
Country	1993		2000		Differences	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	1993	2000
Bulgaria.....	12.9	9.2	18.3	10.6	3.7	7.7
Croatia.....	25.1 ^a	15.4 ^a	23.3 ^g	14.4 ^g	9.7	8.9
Czech Republic.....	15.8	9.4	18.8	9.0	6.4	8.9
Estonia.....	10.4	6.2	9.7	6.4	4.2	3.3
Hungary.....	17.4	11.3	18.7	9.6	6.7	9.1
Kazakhstan.....	0.1 ^c	0.2 ^c	..	..	..	..
Latvia.....	12.4 ^b	6.9 ^b	12.5	8.4	5.5	4.1
Lithuania.....	21.5 ^d	14.6 ^d	19.2	12.7	6.9	6.5
Poland.....	32.2 ^e	29.9 ^e	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 ^f	5.6 ^f	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 ^g	9.0 ^g	..	..

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.

Chart 3

Share of men and women in part-time employment in selected transition economies, 2001
(Percentage)



Source: UNECE Gender website.