



LABOUR MARKET AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OVERCOMING GENDER STEREOTYPES

A TRANSNATIONAL ACTION PLAN
PROMOTED BY BUSINESS WOMEN AND
GENDER EQUALITY ORGANISATIONS

COUNTRY REPORT FOR BULGARIA



This project is co-financed by the European Commission, Directorate General for Employment,
Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.





Labour Market and Entrepreneurship Overcoming Gender Stereotypes

A Transnational action plan promoted
by Business Women and Gender Equality Organisations

This project has been carried out by AFAEMME Association of Organisations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (Barcelona, Spain) in association with:

KARAT Coalition (Central and Eastern Europe)
WAD - Women's Alliance for Development (Bulgaria)
SEGE - Greek Association of Women Entrepreneurs (Greece)

With the co-financing of the:

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Chair Committee:

M^o Helena de Felipe Lehtonen (President of AFAEMME)
Philippe Lambert (Project Director)
Anna Colamussi (Project Assistant)

With the support of:

Elizabeth Villagomez PHD (Content)
Anita Seibert PHD (Content)

Production and editing:

Lourdes Acedo (Design and Layout)

Special content collaboration from:

Stanimira Hadjimitova (Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation)

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Context

A key priority for the European Commission is to create equality for men and women throughout Europe. AFAEMME, Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Business Women (Barcelona) was awarded by the European Commission, in partnership with important organizations in Central and Eastern Europe - KARAT Coalition, WAD - Women's Alliance for Development (Bulgaria) and SEGE, Greek association of Women Entrepreneurs (Greece) to implement a unique project "*Labour Market And Entrepreneurship Overcoming Gender Stereotypes*".

The main objectives of this project are:

- to improve the understanding of the issues underlying gender equality and equal opportunities in the fields of employment and entrepreneurship in this area of Europe
- to strengthen gender equality and businesswomen organizations and their active partnership in influencing decision makers on social and economic policy
- and to improve the general economic status of women

The project includes the elaboration of 12 national reports from Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. Which report the obstacles experienced by women in business and assess the impact of EU Employment Strategy on the situation of women in the new ten EU Members states and two candidate countries with case studies of a typical businesswoman in those countries relating to gender stereotypes in the labour market and entrepreneurship, with a final global report containing concrete policy recommendations addressed to European Commission and national governments. The publication is launched at a large scale European conference in Brussels in February 2006.

This report contains the national study from Bulgaria



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Executive summary

The principle of equality and prohibition of any type of discrimination is proclaimed in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and therefore all items of legislation related to employment are based on that idea. However, the Constitution does not explicitly provide specific regulations on gender equality.

The main challenge, faced by Bulgaria, is the achievement of equality between women and men, which will be realized by drafting policies and establishing mechanisms for their implementation. The development of such policies and mechanisms for gender equality is a requirement for the accession of Bulgaria to EU.

The first thing to note is that women have lower employment and activity rates and levels, but also have slightly lower unemployment. This means that compared to men, women have a similar probability of being employed than men once they are in the labour market. The participation of women in economic activities has increased. It is important to note, however, that activity and employment rates of women are lower. Women are less likely to be active in comparison to men, and are also less likely to be employed. The difference between men's and women's employment rates, indicating the weaker economic activity of women is due to the following reasons: childbirth, child care, and larger share of women in the overall number of students in universities.

Traditionally, women in Bulgaria have made up half of the workforce. At the same time, however, they tend to work in defined occupations rather than share the whole range of occupation equally with men. Research indicates that the level of gender discrimination on the labour market is not declining and that women still have a very limited choice of employment opportunities.

The share of women in the total amount of employed people in the middle of 2002 was about 47%. They are concentrated in economic sectors stereotypically considered to be "female" work. This type of employment does not offer many opportunities from the point of view of pay, career development and possibilities to participate in the decision-making process.

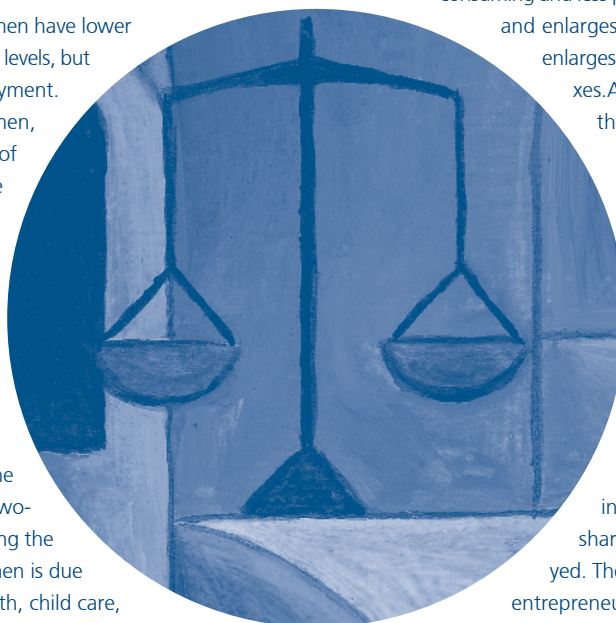
With regard to the employment status, women and men with higher education seem to have the same employment opportunities, but women with lower level of education tend to be less likely to be employed than men with the same education level. The existing stereotypes related to appropriate professions for women and men are reinforced by the "new values" of capitalism. This does not help young women to make professional's choices. Most girls applying to university choose the humanities, or in some cases medicine and pharmacy, where there is already restrictive quota for girls (positive discrimination favouring boys).

The degrees focusing on technology are "saved" for boys. Additionally, young women tend to position themselves in less time-consuming and less profitable occupations. This creates and enlarges the digital divide, which further enlarges the pay gap between the two sexes. As in other countries in transition, the process of transformation brought a wide spread reorganization of work, life and family of the working women in Bulgaria.

Therefore, women are increasingly under pressure to be very flexible in overcoming of all changes in the society, work and family. As regards women entrepreneurs, they constitute, as in other EU countries, a very small share in the numbers of self-employed. There are proportionally less women entrepreneurs than men entrepreneurs. The latest figures indicate that only around 10% of all working women are entrepreneurs or self-employed, while men constitute almost 20%. Women-entrepreneurs face specific restrictions in their work, stemming from the stage of their life cycle, family status and number of children.

There are strong stereotypes where women are performers rather than innovators; submissive rather than aggressive; emotional rather than rational.

These characteristics result in the formation of cultural barriers to the success of women entrepreneurs. Bulgaria still has to make a lot of progress regarding gender equality, and to ensure the necessary conditions for the Bulgarian women to fully realize their potential as an equal participant in all spheres of life.



Legal Framework¹

The principle of equality and prohibition of any type of discrimination is proclaimed in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and therefore all items of legislation related to employment are based on that idea. The Constitution, however, does not explicitly provide specific regulations on gender equality.

Despite the positive changes to the Bulgarian Labour Code as far as equal pay is concerned, and irrespective of the EU concerns that much of the *acquis communautaire* in the field of equal treatment for women and men were already ratified, further efforts are needed to implement the existing legislation. The principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women should be integrated at all levels and in all policies. In connection with the concrete engagements taken by Bulgaria in Chapter 13 "Social Policy and Employment" for adoption of detailed and concrete anti-discriminatory legislation, a Law on Protection against Discrimination came into force in January 2004. It governs the protection against all forms of discrimination including gender, and aims to transpose a number of EU equality directives (75/117/EEC; 76/207/EEC; 97/80/EC; 2000/43/EC; 2000/78/EC; 97/80/EC). This law is mainly aimed to ensure protection against discrimination in different spheres of public life (employment, training, health care, social protection etc). It gives definitions of direct or indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, positive discrimination. It introduces a system of sanctions and envisages the establishment of a Commission for protection against discrimination as an independent body, which shall report to the National Assembly. This Law unfortunately could not replace legislation that establishes a national mechanism for elaborating, executing, monitoring and evaluating of gender equality policy at all levels. Such a complex document aiming to resolve issues related to gender equality in Bulgaria was the Draft Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which was rejected by the Parliament in 2003. The main reason of that rejection was that there was a belief that there was no gender-based discrimination in Bulgaria. That Law provided guarantees against discrimination in the fields of employment, political participation, education, and gender stereotypes.

The lack of women's machinery also puts Bulgaria behind the other new EU members and accession countries. It is important to point out that in the latest report on the progress of Bulgaria

towards accession, the European Commission points out that its organisational set-up related to gender equality needs to be improved².

On the other hand, the Labour Market is one of the areas that complies nearly entirely with the international commitments on equality between women and men³.

The principle of equal pay for men and women was reintroduced with the amendments to the Labour Code in 2001, thereby establishing the legal ground on which to bring a claim of discrimination in this field. The principle is valid for all payments in labour relations. There are no discriminatory provisions in the Bulgarian legislation that are contrary to the principle of equal pay for men and women. Bulgaria complies with Article 3 of Directive 75/117/EEC⁴.

However, it should be noted that until 1992, a general clause existed in the former Labour Code providing for equal pay for work of equal value, but it was subsequently abolished as incompatible with the principles of the market economy and reminiscent of socialist times applying to every worker without difference. As a result, women were put at a greater disadvantage during the transition period since the gender gap is particularly evident in the field of remuneration. The only provisions that could be applied for protection against discrimination in this field were, and still are the general anti-discrimination clause in Article 6 of the Constitution and Section 8(3) of the Labour Code, which prohibit, inter alia, discrimination based on sex.

Furthermore, the newly amended Article 243 (Labour Code) provides that women and men have a right to equal pay for the same work or work of equal value, and this principle is valid for all the payments in labour relations. While the amendment marks a definite progress, it is not as broad as the legal wording of Directive 75/117/EEC, either in scope or in its specification of the remuneration. The anti-discrimination clause contained in Section 8(3) has been broadened to prohibit both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex, which is defined in para.1 p.7 of the Transitional and Conclusive Provisions.

The legal provisions on protection from gender based discrimination in employment do not differentiate between the public

1 - This section draws extensively from the National Study: *Bulgaria of the Gender Assessment of the Impact of EU Accession on the Status of Women in the Labour Market in CEE*. Published by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation and KARAT coalition with the support of UNI..FEM.

2 - "2004 Regular Report on Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession" COM(2004)657 final, 6.10.2004.

3 - See section on Issues for Women Employees below which addresses the National Action Plan on Employment.

4 - Council Directive 75/117/EEC of 10 of February 75 on the approximation of laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women.

and private sphere, but daily practice and research reveal differences between the two. In particular, the economic constraints of the private sector resulted in women suffering inequalities in employment conditions, including pay. Workers who consider themselves discriminated against, in terms of remuneration, have the right to initiate court proceeding according to Chapter 18 of the Labour Codes⁵.

There have been no recorded complaints concerning the principle of non-discrimination in remuneration between women and men and the Labour Inspection has not been particularly active in identifying such discrimination in the private or the public sector. Instead of focusing on inequalities, the inspections tend to focus more on identifying cases of employers evading payment of social security contributions. The examples come mainly from the garment industry in the south of the country, where foreign employers use to employ women on the basis of minimum salary and then extended their working hours without additional pay, or where sometimes women were employed without any contract. The principle of equal rights for men and women and non-discrimination is incorporated in the Bulgarian legal framework, although it is a tradition for Bulgaria to prioritise and overestimate equality de jure.

The Bulgarian legislation adopted so far refers to equal rights and non-discrimination on the grounds of sex in the Bulgarian Constitution⁶, in Section 8(3) of the amended Labour Code, Article 2 of the Act on Employment Promotion, Article 7(4) of the Act of Civil Servants. The fact that the principle of equal treatment of women and men must be explicitly expressed in domestic legislation, separately from the guarantee of non-discrimination on other grounds, was one of the main arguments for the need for the specific Act on Equal Opportunities in Bulgaria. Despite the new provisions of Section 67 and 68 of the Labour Code, created to ensure stability in the duration of contracts, these measures are not effective enough to regulate the disadvantaged situation of women in the labour market.

Bulgaria is a signatory to the United Nation's conventions on the rights of women including: the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, ratified by Bulgaria in 1955; the Convention against Discrimination in Education, ratified 1962; the Equal Remuneration Convention, ratified 1956. Bulgaria is firmly committed to the principles and goals of the final documents, adopted at the UN

6 - Under article 359 of the Labour Code, workers must not pay a court fee in cases of labour litigation. This is the only provision so far that assists the worker, but it has been questioned by the Association of Foreign Investors in Bulgaria (BIBA), who believe that this clause puts the employer and worker in unequal position.

7 - Article 6 declares that women and men have equal rights and also prohibits discrimination based on various grounds, including sex; Article 46(2) stipulates that spouses have equal rights and equal obligations in matrimony and the family; Article 47(1) stipulates that the upbringing of children until they reach full age is the obligation of both parents who must be assisted by the state.

8 - Under Article 5(4) of the Constitution, international documents signed and ratified by Bulgaria are deemed part of Bulgarian legislation



World

Conferences on Women in: Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995). It is important also to note that Bulgaria has ratified CEDAW in 1982, but the ratification was not published in the State Gazette and this is the reason why CEDAW has a particular status as regards national legislation. The fact that CEDAW was not officially promulgated in the State Gazette means that although it is a part of national legislation, it does not supersede the regulations that contradict it.

Bulgaria reports regularly before the CEDAW Committee. The second and the third Regular Reports have been assessed in 1998 and at that time the Committee noted that women's unemployment has to be tackled as well as the cases of discrimination in employment when employers evidently prefer men or very young women without family engagements. The Committee noted with concern that the Bulgarian Government did not understand the meaning of the affirmative actions as a means to achieve de facto equality.

Bulgaria signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW on June 6, 2000, but has not ratified it so far. In the year 2000, the State started the EU accession negotiations, whereby, Bulgarian legislation is being harmonised with the *acquis communautaire*.

Bulgaria has also ratified the ILO Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration and the revised European Social Charter, Article 4(3).⁷ Through the EU accession procedure, equal treatment for women and men as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions⁸ has also been passed.

As to the protection of pregnant women from the inherent risk of certain activities and related employment rights⁹, Bulgarian legislation envisages the special protection of women, especially pregnant women and mothers, and already meets the requirements of Directive 92/85/EEC to a significant extent. The Labour Code provides for a number of privileges for women in relation to preserving their health and that of their children, some of which (such as paid maternity leave) also aim at stimulating the birth rate.

Concerning the risk to the safety or health of a pregnant worker and employer's obligations, Bulgarian legislation fully corresponds with the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 92/85/EEC, and is also in line with CEDAW.

Regarding maternity leave, Bulgarian legislation fully complies with international standards related to maternity leave, and Bulgaria has ratified the ILO Convention No 3 and Convention No 183 on Maternity Protection (2000). The State reports under both Conventions.

The principle of equal treatment of men and women in occupational social security schemes¹⁰ must be analysed in the context of a radical reform of the pension system in Bulgaria that was introduced with the promulgation of the Code of Obligatory Social Insurance (COSI). According to the previous Act on Pension, the retirement age for men and women differed according to the category of job performed. The COSI introduced the second pillar to the social insurance framework, which came into existence in 2001.

There is no officially published data on the impact of the reform of the social security system on the status of women in Bulgaria after 1999. Women are privileged only in respect to the right to receive an old age and served time pension - they can retire at an earlier age than men, all the other conditions are the same. The implementation of a pension-scale system for served time and old age retirement resulted in a considerable increase in the age at which the very right to pension is granted. By 2007 the age difference between men and women will gradually be reduced to just 2 years. In fact, these 2 years of served time and income receiving affect the amount of pensions. And yet, traditionally, women in Bulgaria have always retired earlier than men and the public opinion is still inclined to accept this fact as normal. For

women, the transition to an older retirement age (for the third labor category) from 55, as stated in the previous Act on Pension, to 60 years of age, according to the new COSI, has proved much more difficult in comparison with men. Because of this fact, at present, the age at which the right to old age and served time pension is granted is not equal for men and women.

The retirement age for men (for the third labor category) has been increased from 60 to 63, according to the new legislation. Women's retirement age has gradually increased by 5 years, and men's - by 3 years. If, at this stage, the retirement age for men and women were equalized, this would lead to an increase by 8 years for women, and such a transition would prove to be too difficult. That is why, for the time being, women have been allowed to keep their privileged position concerning the right to served time and old age pension. There is a possibility that the retirement age for men and women in Bulgaria becomes equal in the decades to follow, just as it is in most other European countries. However, this would take not just political initiative, but also wide public support to make this decision. As far as the pension calculation formula is concerned, there is no difference in its implementation regarding men and women, and they are absolutely equal in this respect.

The **Bulgarian National Plan of Action** in implementing the commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria undertaken at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), was approved by the National Council on Social and Demographic Issues with the Council of Ministers on July 2, 1996. This document was a combination of government initiatives and ideas suggested by NGOs. The results of the implementation of that Plan were mainly achieved by the nongovernmental sector. This Plan of Action was in operation till the beginning of 1997, when a new, right wing Government came in power. Very recently, at the end of 2004 - half a year before accomplishment of its mandate, the Bulgarian Government approved a new National Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion in 2005. The Plan has been drawn up to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. It would provide researches, statistics and education in the subject to increase and develop the gender equality.

It has 11 main objectives:

> Promotion of gender equality as a part of the State policy

9 - Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working condition.

10 - Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

11 - Council Directive 96/97/EC of 20 December 1996 amending Directive 86/378/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes.

- > Legislative confines for gender equality and prevention and elimination of discrimination, based on gender indication
- > Guaranteeing of equal opportunities for women and men in the access to economical activities
- > Promotion of the policy for harmonizing family and professional duties for parents, raising small children or taking care of dependent family member
- > Equality of women and men in their access to health cares and preservation of the generative functions of women
- > Gender equality in the education sphere
- > Fight against domestic violence. Fight against traffic in humans
- > Promotion of gender equality in the sphere of the state governance
- > The equality between women and men as a horizontal priority of the Framework for support of the European Community and the Operative Programmes
- > Observation and assessment of the effectiveness in the application of the gender equality principle
- > The civil society and its influence over the public opinion - promotion of the public awareness of the gender equality issues and measures for elimination of the stereotypes of the women's and men's roles, cooperation with the medias.

The expenses, related with the realization of the Plan, are provided by the framework of the approved resources under the budget of the responsible for its realization Ministries and other State Bodies. The organization, coordination and control of the realization of National Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality for 2005 are assigned to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, jointly with the Minister of Finances.

Institutional Framework

In addition to trade unions and employer organisations, there are a number of institutions that also have a direct impact on the labour market position of women in Bulgaria. There are also a number of government institutions that deal with gender equality and discrimination issues that will be described in this section.

Trade Unions

The de facto lack of gender equality in Bulgaria has been taken up by trade unions which, having sought other avenues for achieving equality, have now changed their tactics and again focus their efforts on parliament. The unions have started a new round of discussions with the leaders of parliamentary groups, calling for legislative measures to be improved. (Ivan Neykov, Balkan Institute for Labour and Social Policy). Below is a brief description of the Unions and of the Employer Organisations.

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) is the largest representative trade union organisation in the country, established on 17th of February 1990. Since the end of 1995 CITUB is recognized as a full member of the European and world trade union community through its affiliation to ETUC and

ICFTU. CITUB represents the interests of workers and employees in Bulgaria and maintains an efficient bilateral cooperation with over 25 trade union centers from all over the world and is a constructive participant in the activities of ILO and its operational units. Its main members are 34 National branch federations, trade unions, unions and 29 Regional Coordinating Councils representing the interests of over 400.000 workers and employees in Bulgaria.

On the initiative and with the support of Confederation of Independent Trade Unions on December 12th, 1999 a Women's Public Parliament - 21st century have been established in Bulgaria. It is one of the largest non-governmental organizations with unique and specific activity in Bulgaria.

The Women's Public Parliament is organization of the individual members and its main tasks are:

- > Providing answers to the questions that are interesting the women
- > Initiatives for support the women in their realization
- > Social protection to all members

Confederation of Labour Podkrepa¹¹ was created on February 8, 1989. It is a trade union organization that affiliates 36 regional unions and 30 branch unions. Podkrepa CL has about 150.000 members. The headquarters are situated in Sofia. This confederation includes several of the most important federations that are very relevant to women such as culture, medicine, trade, teaching and administrative employees. The Women Union Podkrepa is an associated member. There is a Women's Committee set up in 1995 and other 24 women's committees to the regional and branch structures that are working in a network. The Women Union's education programme includes a seminar targeted "to inform the women trade unionists with their role and their main rights in the frame of the trade union movement and the working place as well. The Bulgarian laws are debated in the part where they deal with women rights as well as international conventions that guarantee equal treatment". Podkrepa CL was an initiator of a campaign for ratification of the ILO Convention 156.

According to the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB), the proportion of women members of trade unions was higher than that of men (51%). By 2003 this proportion had dropped to 48%, but is still rather high compared to old EU members and similar to that of new MS.

The Institute is an autonomous research organisation. Its main focus is analysis of the processes associated with social and economic reforms in Bulgaria in the transition to a market economy and prospects for trade union policy. Research is being conducting at three levels: theoretical, applied and as ordered by public organisations.

Social dialogue

The amendments and supplements to the Labour Code (enforced on 31 March 2001) and the newly adopted Employment Promotion Act (enforced on 1 January 2002) are among the normative acts which contribute to strengthening of the social dialogue in Bulgaria according to European and international norms in this area.

The Employment Promotion Act regulates, inter alia, the promotion of the social dialogue and the enhancement of the possibilities of the social partners to influence the employment policy through:

> Enlarging the participation in the social dialogue, which is going to contribute to higher transparency and democracy in discussing the decisions to be taken by the Government

> Creation of a possibility for optimising the management of active policy through establishment of functioning interinstitutional horizontal and vertical links between partners on the labour market

> Establishment of a National Council on employment promotion based on the tripartite principle as a permanently functioning body for cooperation and consultations in the elaboration of employment policy at national level

> Establishment of a Council with the Executive Director of the Employment Agency with the participation of the social partners

> Establishment of temporary and permanent commission on employment with the district councils for regional development with the participation of the social partners and the nongovernmental sector

> Establishment of cooperation councils on a tripartite principle with the territorial units of the Employment Agency for exercising control over the implementation of the active policy Podkrepa CL declared in 2005 that is going to abandon the tri-partied collaboration because of the introduced by the Government "yellow" pro-government Syndicate.

Currently a Draft of an Agreement between the International Labour Office and Bulgaria on cooperation in the sphere of European integration is being elaborated. It also covers the social dialogue issues and the labour legislation. The Agreement is aimed at strengthening the social dialogue, while planning a series of activities, including a consultation mission of ILO experts or a workshop session of the economic and social councils in the EU context. Although there is no information available on the content, in other EU countries gender mainstreaming and reconciliation of work and family life are becoming more and more common in the themes addressed by the social dialogue.

Other government institutions

A formal structure for gender equality issues has not yet been established in Bulgaria. In November 2004 under the Government Decree No. 313 a National Council on Gender Equality with the Council of Ministers was set up. It is a Body for consultations, cooperation and coordination between the governmental and Non-Governmental Bodies in relation to elaboration and implementation of the National Policy on Gender Equality. Chair - Minister of Labour and Social Policy; Permanent members of the National Council are representative of the Ministries; Associated members

11 - <http://www.education-cee.org/oldsite/centres/podkrepa/index.htm>

of the national Council are representatives of other organizations, academic institutes, national organizations of the social partners or NGOs, invited for the purpose form the National Council' Chair.

In April 13th, 2005 the process of creation of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination that had to be set up by the end of March 2004, started with the appointment of its Chair (a man); Deputy Chair (a man) and three members (one man and two women) by the Parliament and was finalised in May with the President's Decree for the appointment of the rest four members (including one woman).

In the 39th National Assembly there was no specialised body working on gender equality. The Human Rights and Religious Affairs Committee considered bills on human rights and religions, submitted by members of the Parliament or the Council of Ministers. It also considered bills on anti-discrimination, gender equality, rights of children, rights of convicts, rights of refugees and religious freedoms. The Committee organized roundtable and other discussions on these issues together with international institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The National Statistical Institute (NSI) compiles statistics on different issues divided by gender, nevertheless a lack of gender-disaggregated data still exists. Since 1998 a special publication of the NSI "Employment and Unemployment" has been published, where a number of indices are disaggregated by gender, e.g levels of employment, education, employment by sector and types of activity.

NSI also provides some demographic indicators segregated by gender. The most recent data from the last Census in 2001 includes information on population, birth rate, life expectancy, deaths, and migration flows, etc. In 2002 the NSI published its most detailed evaluation so far, on equality in social opportunities and positions between women and men- Women and Men in the Republic of Bulgaria, which is based on the main statistical data both in the field of demographic and social development, and in the fields of employment and unemployment.

Also, the Ombudsman Act, adopted in 2003, was enforced on the 1 January 2004. The main objective of this newly established state institution is to defend the rights and freedoms of all physical persons, irrespective of nationality, gender, political orientation or religious beliefs, violated by state institutions, municipal authorities and their administrations by legally stipulated means. The legal regulation on the Ombudsman has a deficiency: the lack of lawful opportunity to refer directly to the Constitutional Court. In February 2003, a Consultative Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was set up within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Commission consists of re-

presentatives of the state authorities responsible for the implementation of gender equality policy, social partners and NGOs. It is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The Deputy chair is a representative of the nongovernmental organizations working on women's issues. Its aim is to improve the co-ordination of the process of gender and social equalization in Bulgaria and to reinforce the administrative capacity of state institutions and organisations responsible for the policy of equality.

The main aims of the Consultative Commission are as follows:

- > Promote and strengthen the administrative capacity
- > Improve the co-ordination in regulating the process of enforcing the principle of equal opportunities in Bulgaria
- > Promote social and civil dialogue for strengthening the equal opportunity policy

Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Sector has been established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2004. It is in charge of developing, coordinating and implementing the state policy on equal opportunities for men and women. The responsibilities include a number of various activities, such as:

- > Involving state institutions and organizations in the development of a policy on protection of women against risks, by conducting the respective research and surveys and introducing new forms of work organization;
- > Developing and coordinating the implementation of a National Action Plan on Equality for Men and Women;
- > Developing gender training programs, designed for civil servants and creating focal points in the individual ministries and institutions;
- > Enhancing the dialogue and undertaking joint initiatives with social partner and NGO representatives in order to apply the gender equality principle by preparing and conducting awareness-raising campaigns, aimed at combating negative gender stereotypes;
- > Informing the broad public about the international and EU standards on human rights as a whole and the current situation, concerning certain aspects of equality between men and women;
- > Preparing a general strategy for cooperation with international donors and/or creditors - in bilateral and multinational aspect. In order to ensure more active participation of women in the Labour market, several training projects were launched in 2004.



The Project "Development of a system of gender mainstreaming indicators for assessing the quality and efficiency of labour market measures" is aimed at providing the means of equal access of men and women in employment and convergence of their employment levels.

The existing projects are focused on developing and implementing a policy for ensuring a balance between professional and family life; promotion of entrepreneurship among unemployed women by providing information, consultations, and support for starting a private business, related to child care services; offering training to unemployed women, aged above 50 and to women returning to work after leave due to pregnancy, childbirth or raising children, aged 2 or 3.

Third sector institutions/NGOs

Social partners and non-governmental organisations. The work of the non-governmental sector in the field of equal opportunities for women and men during the last decade is remarkable. Many organizations (like Women's Alliance for Development, Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation, Center Nadja Foundation, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Animus Association Foundation etc.) contributed significantly to the adoption of the legislations and determining the legal framework guaranteeing gender equality.

There are more than 100 organizations working actively in the four critical areas of concern - violence against women, trafficking in human beings (including trafficking for sexual exploitation), participation of women in decision-making and in political life as well as encouraging women's entrepreneurship.

These organizations were supported in their activities mainly by international donor organizations. The Open Society Foundation (OSF), the Global Fund for Women, Mama Cash, Stability Pact Gender Task Force, the Netherlands's Foundation and PHARE are

only some of the donors traditionally connected with gender issues in Bulgaria. There is still a lack of the governmental funding for the activities of women's NGOs.

Women's non-governmental organizations continue to grow and take a particular theme for their work place in the third sector. They have also established permanent relationships with representatives of the legislative, the executive and the local governments, as well as with the media. The pressure exerted by non-governmental organizations, working on gender equality issues is one of the factors influencing state policy ensuring and guaranteeing a higher status for women in the social, economic and political life of the country. One of the most influential factors in the consolidation of the sector and putting issues on the agenda is the Annual Meeting of non-governmental organizations addressing women's issues in Bulgaria. This is traditionally organized by the Women's Programme of the OSF, and since 2004 - by its successor, the *Center of Women's Studies and Policies Foundation*.

The 5-year partnership work of more than 18 Bulgarian women's NGOs within the 7 regional projects of the Gender Task Force - Bulgaria on political empowerment of women was remarkable. A review of the Bulgarian electoral legislation for possible gender discrimination was conducted; the Working group for Equal Opportunity Act elaboration was supported; 30 Trainers were regionally trained; 63 seminars were conducted with more than 1200 participants.

The conjunction of the above activates led to the idea for further development "Gender Task Force - Bulgaria" into a broader Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition with the respective Plan of Action. It was set up as an informal structure at the National Meeting on February 20th, 2004. Around 100 representatives of political parties, the Parliament, Trade Unions, Media, National Institute of Statistics, National Security Institute, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, National Employment Agency, National Social Security Institute, National Public Opinion Center, women Mayors and the non-governmental sector declared interest in working together.

In May 2005 Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation was granted by the MATRA-KAP Programme of the Embassy of the Netherlands with amount, which is giving an opportunity for 8 regular Forum meetings to be organized once a month for a period of eight months; gender training of 25 journalists to be conducted and Strategy to be elaborated for overcoming gender stereotypes in Media. The Information Centre of the Council of Europe based in Sofia is partner that will provide premises and facilities for the Forums for free. Different policies from gender perspectives will be elaborated.

Challenges to gender equality



The development of policies and mechanisms for gender equality is a requirement for the accession of Bulgaria to EU. Such policies are included in the First National Report on the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as well as in the measures provided by the government for the implementation of its commitments under Chapter 13 of the negotiations for the accession of Bulgaria to the EU.

These can be based on:

- > Stimulating political and social sensitivity to gender equality issues
- > Establishing executive bodies, responsible for gender equality
- > Studying indicators for the equal treatment women and men, providing necessary information for developing and implementing relevant gender equality policies.

Issues for Women Employees

Women represent 51.4 % of the Bulgarian population. The main labour market indicators for Bulgarian women and men are reflected in the following tables. These figures do not differentiate between those who are employed and those who are employers or are self-employed. The first thing to note is that women have lower employment and activity rates and levels, but also have slightly lower unemployment. This means that compared to men, women have a lower probability of being active and once they are in the labour market their probability of being unemployed is slightly lower than that of men. This can be due to several reasons. One of these is that women might have higher levels of education on average and can find work more easily. A second issue is related to the fact that more women might be engaging in informal market activities as self employed. Third issue which has been documented in various reports¹² is related to the concept of "social dumping" which consists in women accepting lower conditions of work (a form of informalisation of working conditions) and that employers prefer them over men as they are cheaper while being better qualified.

It needs to be stressed the activity and employment rates of women are lower than those of men. This means that overall, women have less employment opportunities as compared to men.

This can in turn be explained also by several factors. One of them is that women might be discouraged workers (they would like to work but feel that there is no work available

for them so they are not actively looking and are not classified as unemployed). Another reason is that their family responsibilities might be keeping them away from paid work. In this case their absence from the labour market might be

"voluntary" or might be explained by the un-affordability and unavailability of care for dependent family members (children and adults). The difference between men's and women's employment rates, indicating the weaker economic activity of women is due to the following reasons: childbirth, child care, larger share of women in the overall number of students in universities or to the lower retirement age that used to be in force before the changes to the pension. Furthermore, a tendency in a decrease of the labour force (economically active population) during the period 1998 - 2003 has been recorded. It was most evident at the beginning of the period - until the end of 2000. In 2003 the labour force was 3 283.1 thousands persons and the activity rate was 49.2%. The number of the economically active population decreased by 48.9 thousand in comparison with 2002, and the activity rate decreases by 0.2%. One of the main reasons for this

12 - WAD And Lilia Dimova...Unifem sponsored study

drop is the continued emigration, particularly among younger people. It is important to note that this migration has also been identified as one of the elements that have increased women's vulnerability to trafficking for sexual exploitation. The male employment rate is higher than female employment rate in all age groups of the population. In 2003, men's economic activity rate was 65.4% while women's economic activity rate was 56.5%. The highest employment rate is in the 35-44 age group (74.4%),

followed by the 45-54 age group (67.9%) and finally the 25-34 age group (65.4%). In 2003 the employment rates for different levels of education are in proportion to the level of education and they vary from 67.9% for higher education to 9.5% for primary and primary unfinished. The increase of the employment in the private sector continues by 2003 2/3 of all employed persons were in the private sector.

MAIN LABOUR INDICATORS FOR 2003 AND 2004 (average annual data)

| Indicators | 2003 | 2004 | Changes 2004 - 2003 |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| Labour force in 1000s | 3,283.1 | 3,322 | 38.9 |
| Male | 1,746.1 | 1,772.2 | 26.1 |
| Female | 1,537 | 1,549.8 | 12.8 |
| Activity rate - % | 49.2 | 4.7 | 0.5 |
| Male | 54.5 | 55.3 | 0.8 |
| Female | 44.2 | 44.6 | 0.4 |
| Employed - in 1000s | 2,834 | 2,922.2 | 88.2 |
| Male | 1,500 | 1,550.7 | 50.7 |
| Female | 1,334 | 1,371.5 | 37.5 |
| Employment rate % | 42.4 | 43.7 | 1.3 |
| Male | 46.8 | 48.4 | 1.6 |
| Female | 38.4 | 39.5 | 1.1 |
| Unemployed - in 1000s | 449.1 | 399.8 | -49.3 |
| Male | 246.1 | 221.6 | -24.5 |
| Female | 203.3 | 178.2 | -24.8 |
| Youth unemployed (15 - 24) | 86.4 | 79.2 | -7.2 |
| Unemployed rate - % | 13.7 | 12 | -1.7 |
| Male | 14.1 | 12.5 | -1.6 |
| Female | 13.2 | 11.5 | -1.7 |
| Youth unemployed rate | 28.2 | 25.8 | -2.4 |
| Long term unemployed - % total | 65.4 | 59.3 | -6.1 |
| Discouraged - 1000s | 434.5 | 392.6 | -41.9 |

Source: Eurostat (8.03.2005)

| LABOUR FORCE, EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND SEX IN 2004 (average annual data) | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Place of residence and sex | Labour force | | | Persons not in labour force 1000s | Activity rate % | Employment rate % | Unemployment rate % |
| | Total 1000s | Employed 1000s | Unemployed 1000s | | | | |
| Total | 3,322 | 2,922.2 | 399.8 | 3,357.6 | 49.7 | 43.7 | 12 |
| Male | 1,772.2 | 1,550.7 | 221.6 | 1,434.8 | 55.3 | 48.4 | 12.5 |
| Female | 1,549.8 | 1371.5 | 178.2 | 1,922.7 | 44.6 | 39.5 | 11.5 |
| Urban | 2,511.3 | 2,229.9 | 281.5 | 2,142.6 | 54 | 47.9 | 11.2 |
| Male | 1,312 | 1,160.1 | 151.9 | 905 | 59.2 | 52.3 | 11.6 |
| Female | 1,199.4 | 1,069.8 | 129.6 | 1,237.6 | 49.2 | 43.9 | 10.8 |
| Rural | 810.7 | 692.3 | 118.4 | 1,214.9 | 40 | 34.2 | 14.6 |
| Male | 460.3 | 390.6 | 69.7 | 529.8 | 46.5 | 39.4 | 15.1 |
| Female | 350.4 | 301.7 | 48.7 | 685.1 | 33.8 | 29.1 | 13.9 |

Source: Eurostat

After 2001 the unemployment rate has quickly decreased - from 19.7% in 2001 it reached 17.8% in 2002 and in 2003 was 13.7% (below the level of 1998). The number of unemployed persons in 2003 was 449.1 thousand, of which 54.8% were men and 45.2% were women. The male unemployment rate (14.1%) is higher than female unemployment rate (13.2%), however, one must keep in mind that activity and employment rates for women are much lower. At the same time it has to be noted that the rate of employment in the informal economy (which in Bulgaria is very significant) as well as in agriculture is difficult to assess. The tendency of higher rural unemployment rate (14.6%) compared to the urban rate (11.2%) continued in 2004. The values of unemployment rates are in inverse proportion to the level of education and they change from 6.8% for higher education to 33.5% for primary and primary unfinished. The comparatively long-term unemployment in the country is a big economic and social problem: 293.7 thousand persons have been unemployed for more than one year. The relative share of long-term unemployed persons increased from 57.0% in 1998 to 65.4% in 2003. These results point to the problem that has been recorded in other EU countries where while the unemployment in general is decreasing, long term unemployment is increasing. This indicates a possible use of unemployment benefits as an early retirement, when a growing number of those with the lowest qualifications find it increasingly difficult to find work. Increasing numbers of women returning to the labour market, or those who have been made redundant also find it increasingly difficult to gain employment; the large numbers of youth are also in the same situation. All of these groups contribute to the increase of long term unemployment.

In 2003 the number of discouraged workers was 434.5 thousand, of which 230.1 thousand were men and 204.4 women. The discouraged persons represented 12.8% of all persons not in the labour force of which 15.8% were men and 10.6% were women.

In the territorial aspect the employment was highest in South - West region at 47.3% of the population 15 years of age and over in 2003. The lowest employment rate continues to be in North-West region at 35.3%. The unemployment rate varies from 11.1% for South Central region, to 19.4% for North-East planning region.

The Council of Ministers adopted National Action Plans on Employment (2002, April 2003, February 2004) that includes a section on the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men. In this respect, this Plan expresses the state policy, which introduces several consistent and special measures for encouraging the participation of women in the labour market, the reconciliation of work and family life, support for women entrepreneurs, equality mainstreaming within the administration and strengthening

the equality objectives etc. The Employment Strategy (2004-2010) envisages measures for establishing legislative, institutional and resource foundation, guaranteeing equal opportunities for men and women.

Conditions of work/quality of employment

Traditionally, women in Bulgaria have made up half of the workforce. However, they tend to work in defined occupations rather than sharing the whole range of professions equally with men. Research indicates that the level of gender discrimination on the labour market is not declining and that women still have a very limited choice of employment opportunities.

The share of women in the total amount of employed people in the middle of 2002 was about 47%. Women are concentrated in economic sectors such as education (79.6%), health care (75.7%), finances and insurance (61.7%), hotels and catering (57.7%), commerce (51.4%), etc. Those occupations are widely perceived, based on social stereotypes, as "female" work. This type of employment does not offer many opportunities from the point of view of pay, career development and possibilities to participate in the decision-making process. The number of occupations where men are in the majority exceeds almost seven-fold the number of occupations dominated by women.

These 'male' professions are also, as a rule, more prestigious. Even when women hold administrative or managerial posts, most often they are managers at the low or middle level. The key positions in areas such as entrepreneurship, freelance work and politics, are taken nearly exclusively by men. The increase of the number of employed persons in economy, which started in 2002 continues in 2003.

In 2003 (by preliminary data) their number reaches 3,020.7 thousand persons or by 1.4% higher compared to the previous year. The number of employed persons decreased by 4.2% in comparison with 1998 and by 26.3% compared to 1990. The structure of employed persons by economic sectors continues to change. The employed persons in sector 'Services' has increased and by 2003 they represent 47.2% of all employed persons and this share is 4 percentage points higher compared to 1998. During the period 1998-2003 the relative share of the employed persons in the agriculture sector decreased by 1.1 points and reached 25.1%. In the industrial sector the share decreased by 2.9 points and reached 27.7%.

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The decline of public employment has been continuous, but fairly irregular. The decrease in public employment was extremely pronounced in 1997 (-18%) with the actual commencement of the privatisation process and in 2000, public employment dropped by 20% from its 1999 level. Women are mostly affected, as their share in the public sector was much higher. The data clearly shows the prevalence of women with higher education in the public sector and of women with secondary education in the private sector.

As pointed out above, the employment in the private sector has been increasing and in 2003 it was 0.8% higher in comparison with the previous year and 17.5% compared to 1998. The relative share of employed persons in the private sector was 3/4 (74.8%) of all employed persons in 2003. The highest increase compared to the previous year is registered in 'Education' - by 12.7%, 'Financial intermediation' - by 9.7% and 'Construction' - by 6.6%.

The average annual number of employees under labour contract by Labour Code and under contract according to Civil Servant Act is 1,999 thousand persons and it has increased by 3.7% in comparison with the previous year, but has decreased by 4.2% compared to 1998. In comparison with 1998 the total employees in the private sector have increased by 44.0% and they decreased in the public sector by 38.2%. Again, the gains in the private sector have benefited mostly men and the losses in the public sector have affected mostly women.

Finally, the employees under labour contract by Labour Code and under contract according to Civil Servant Act (in November 2003), who work in enterprises or organizations, where the monthly average wages and salaries are between 200 and 300 Levs have the highest relative share (28.4%). This group includes nearly the half (46%) of the employees in the sphere of the budget financed organizations, which are 10.2% of all employees. Near 70% of the employees under labour contract by Labour Code and under contract according

to Civil Servant Act work in enterprises and organizations with average wages and salaries up to 300 Levs. In the section analyzing the wage gap below there is further analysis of this issue.



**EMPLOYEES UNDER LABOUR CONTRACT BY
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY GROUPINGS AND SECTOR IN 2003
(Average annual number)**

| Economic activity groupings | 2003 | | |
|--|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| | Total | Public sector | Private sector |
| Total | 2,079,932 | 763,418 | 1,316,514 |
| Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing | 74,935 | 11,740 | 63,195 |
| Mining and quarrying | 32,756 | 17,432 | 15,324 |
| Manufacturing | 597,947 | 32,055 | 565,892 |
| Electricity, gas and water supply | 58,748 | 53,737 | 5,011 |
| Construction | 108,110 | 14,554 | 93,556 |
| Trade, repair of motor vehicles and personal and household goods | 282,492 | 2,608 | 279,884 |
| Hotels and restaurants | 75,059 | 6,327 | 68,732 |
| Transport, storage and communication | 159,742 | 98,993 | 60,749 |
| Financial intermediation | 29,125 | 5,785 | 23,340 |
| Real estate, renting and business activities | 113,660 | 29,955 | 83,705 |
| Public administration; compulsory social security | 111,745 | 111,745 | x |
| Education | 193,906 | 189,517 | 4,389 |
| Health and social work | 132,431 | 116,475 | 15,956 |
| Other community, social and personal service activities | 109,276 | 72,495 | 36,781 |
| Budget sector | 435,932 | 435,932 | x |
| Self-financing organizations | 1,628,690 | 327,409 | 1,301,281 |

Source: National Statistical Institute (NSI), 2003

Access to training

During the years of transition, the entire education system was significantly challenged. First, the decrease in the school-age population led to the closing down of many educational institutions and brought about a decrease in the number of teaching staff. Secondly, the average salary in the field of education lags behind the average salary for the country as a whole. Thirdly, the traditionally feminised sector became even more feminised with the exception of the higher hierarchical position as school directors, university professors, and deans.

At the same time, there are no substantial differences in the education level of men and women in Bulgaria. The real difference lies between the population living in towns and those living in villages. The data clearly shows that women prevail in the group of population with higher and undergraduate level of education and men prevail in the group with secondary and lower secondary education. As the data is calculated on the basis of absolute numbers, this reflects the true picture of the educational breakdown of the population without reference to the employment status.

With regard to the employment status, women and men with higher education seem to have the same employment opportunities, but it is also evident that women with lower education are less likely to be employed as compared to men with the same education level. Generally, the education level of the Bulgarian population is high in comparison to the countries of the EU and similar to other Eastern European countries.

Currently, however, a serious disparity exists between the high level of women's educational attainment and their low professional status. Often this is due to the fact that the majority of female university students choose to study the humanities and social sciences which lead to work in government or administration positions.

The employment of highly qualified women in low skilled jobs is also exacerbated by reduced opportunities for women in engineering, construction and farming (previously sectors in which well-educated women found work) as a result of the transition. While the National Statistical Institute suggests that more women than men are enrolling in professional training classes, which is leading to wider employment opportunities¹³, the Women's Alliance for Development (WAD) on the other hand, found that more young women are finishing secondary school without any vocational training. This is due to increased pressures from family responsi-

bilities and child-rearing¹⁴. WAD notes that often training courses are not designed in a way that allows mothers from minority groups, and women and children with disabilities to attend, thereby adding to the problem.

As regards the secondary education system, the equality and equal access to education are guaranteed, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. As regards the gender ratio among secondary school students, the surveys of the National Statistical Institute for the academic year 2002-2003, show that: "The share of girls is higher than the share of boys in the education system - 50,6% and 49,4% respectively of the total number of students", whereas in vocational training "boys predominate, accounting for 61,1% of the total number of students".

As regards the higher education system, equal rights and access to education are provided to all citizens, without any gender discrimination. No privileges or restrictions shall be applied in terms of age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, social environment, political opinions and religion, excluding the cases, explicitly indicated in the Rules on the Higher Institute Activities, based on the Specificities of Training and Future Professions.

Special policy is under consideration, as regards the promotion of women's involvement in higher education and the facilitated access of women, combining maternal responsibilities and training. It is aimed at creating conditions, which facilitate the admission in universities of successful candidate students, belonging to the following groups: with equal entry exam grades, disabled persons of the first and second category, disabled soldiers, orphans, mothers of three or more children and twins, who have sat entry exams simultaneously at the same higher education institutions and have been admitted.

Besides full-time studies, there are other forms of training - correspondence and distance learning, as well as evening classes. In that way women are provided equal access to higher education in case of family and social barriers.

Stereotypes related to the professions appropriate for women still exist and are reinforced by the "new values" of capitalism. This does not help young women to make professional's choices. Most girls applying to university choose the humanities, or in some cases medicine and pharmacy, where there is a restrictive quota for girls (positive discrimination in favour of boys). The tech-

13 - National Statistical Institute, 2000

14 - "Jobs, Gender and Small Enterprises in Bulgaria" (Series on Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender in Enterprises - WEDGE), Antonina Stoyanovska, 2001

nological fields are "saved" for boys. This creates and enlarges the digital divide, which further enlarges the pay gap between the two sexes.

The wage gap

In the following table some information about pay and labour costs is offered. Unfortunately, there is no breakdown by sex. In fact in Bulgaria until now there is no source of data on wages that allow its reliable assessment in general. This is an important indicator that is missing in the national statistics. As women and men's participation in different economic sectors is very different, and therefore very complex to

determine, the differences in pay have been left aside. On the basis of the existing research addressing occupational and sectorial segregation one can say that women are concentrated in the public sector, but that not enough data is available to establish if women in public sector employed in occupations with higher salaries.

In 2003, the average annual nominal wages and salaries - total for the country was 3,408 Levs (4,110 Levs in the public sector and 2,974 Levs in the private sector) and its nominal increase is by 10.3% in comparison with 2002 (6.2% in the public sector and 13.8% in the private sector).

The real average wages and salaries in 2003 increase by 7.7% compared to the previous year and the real minimum wages and salaries by 7.5%. The highest wages and salaries gains were made by personnel in "Financial intermediation" - 7,102 Levs in the public sector and 7,915 Levs in the private sector. The employed persons in "Electricity, gas and water supply" take second place according to the amount of wages and salaries with 6,127 Levs in the public sector and 5,850 Levs in the private sector.

A survey "Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)" conducted in 2002 for the World Bank by the Agency for Social Analyses (ASA), Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation (GPF) and Women's Alliance for Development (WAD) show that the most significant inequalities between male and female workers are in payment.

That is not however because for the same job with the same qualifications women in Bulgaria receive lower payment than men do just due to their sex. The main reason for the gender gap in wages comes from unequal access to high paid jobs, which is due to horizontal and vertical employment segregation.

WAGES AND SALARIES AND OTHER LABOUR COSTS IN 2003
(Average Annual Wages and Salaries of the Employees under Labour Contract by Economic Activity Groupings in 2003(BGN))

| Economic activity groupings | 2003 | | |
|--|-------|---------------|----------------|
| | Total | Public sector | Private sector |
| Total | 3,280 | 4,118 | 2,790 |
| Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing | 2,424 | 3,009 | 2,315 |
| Mining and quarrying | 5,167 | 5,740 | 4,513 |
| Manufacturing | 2,951 | 4,526 | 2,861 |
| Electricity, gas and water supply | 6,137 | 6,156 | 5,932 |
| Construction | 2,788 | 3,552 | 2,669 |
| Trade, repair of motor vehicles and personal and household goods | 2,413 | 5,343 | 2,385 |
| Hotels and restaurants | 1,948 | 2,983 | 1,853 |
| Transport, storage and communication | 4,108 | 4,631 | 3,245 |
| Financial intermediation | 7,508 | 7,361 | 7,544 |
| Real estate, renting and business activities | 2,985 | 3,541 | 2,785 |
| Public administration; compulsory social security | 5,182 | 5,182 | x |
| Education | 3,567 | 3,544 | 4,550 |
| Health and social work | 3,567 | 3,766 | 2,131 |
| Other community, social and personal service activities | 2,324 | 2,080 | 2,812 |
| Budget sector | 3,688 | 3,688 | x |
| Self-financing organizations | 3,166 | 4,687 | 2,780 |

Source: National Statistical Institute (NSI), 2003

Gender wages gap

| | Male | Female | F/M |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|-----|
| | (leva) | (leva) | (%) |
| Received salary | 249 lv. | 186 lv. | 75% |
| Fair salary | 710 lv. | 382 lv. | 54% |
| Received / Fair salary (ration in %) | 35% | 49% | |

Informal Employment

Bulgaria still has an important informal sector estimated to account for 20-36% of the GDP in 2000 and to employing a significant share of the workforce, mainly in precarious and low productivity jobs, without any employment protection. The prevailing number of women in the informal sector is a gender-specific labour indicator. While the exact proportion of women is not known it is very likely to be similar to other EU countries (higher proportion of men than of women). The incidence of work in the informal sector for the year 2001 has been assessed to be more than 1/3 of that in the formal economy, according to expert estimations of trade unions and private researchers. Unfortunately, the official statistics do not offer any indicators for measuring the extent and characteristics of the informal sector. In a recent study by WAD and the Agency for Social Analysis of Bulgaria (with support from UNIFEM) it is pointed out that according to a qualitative survey which was carried out in both rural and urban areas, women in the informal sector work in all sector of the economy (industry, services and agriculture) and their work consists mainly of the sewing, textile and food-processing industries, and the applied arts; teaching and language-related services, hotel and restaurant services, hairdresser's and cosmetic services, home- and office-cleaning services, services providing for the care of children, old, sick or disabled people; and growing fruit and vegetables (either for personal consumption or for sale), stockbreeding and other farm-related activities. The working conditions in the informal sector according to this same study, are, as a whole, harsher compared to the ones offered by formal enterprises. It is for the sake of their children and families that women are inclined to accept harsh work conditions of the informal sector, except in cases of severe infringement of their rights, health or dignity. The study also found that women want incomes guaranteeing them a decent life, secure jobs, fair-minded em

ployers, safe working conditions and the opportunity to provide for their children at least the kind of childhood they themselves had. Furthermore, the study found that the reasons for engaging in the informal market activities varied widely among women depending on their education and experience, on general labour market opportunities, and geographical differences. As a rule, women are more affected by the negative aspects of informal economy. Compared to men, they are more willing to do odd jobs under unregulated working conditions, wages or social security conditions. On the other hand, employers prefer women for such jobs, because they are compliant, do not pursue their rights, and because they more readily accept poorer work conditions. Additional evidence is visible in the condition prevailing in retail industry after the deregulation of the working time¹⁵. The results show that the working time model being implemented during the last fourteen years has very negative impact on workers in this sector. Workers sometimes spend more than 45 hours a week at work and have only one day of rest. It is a model of exploitation, especially as far as rest and recreation, entertainment, training, personal development, time for families and children are concerned.

Impact of tax and benefit system on women employees

In the sphere of social security the Act on the amendment and supplement to the Compulsory Social Security Code was enforced on 1.01.2002. It provides for a unified regulation of the insurance relations system, insured social risks and related insurance rights through enlarging the coverage of the state social security with the risk of "unemployment".

15 - Survey made by Lyueben Tomev and Violeta Ivanova from ISTUR, under the Project "Employment, unemployment and social protection"/Fifth framework program of European Commission, 2005

The social security tax rate in Bulgaria is 37.7% of the global annual wage. From which 25% is paid by the worker and other 75% is paid by the employer.

There are 5 ordinances from this field were amended and supplemented by several Decrees of the Council of Ministers in February 2002, namely:

- > the Ordinance on Pensions;
- > the Ordinance on social security of self-insuring persons and Bulgarian citizens posted to work abroad;
- > the Ordinance on the elements of remuneration and incomes, on which insurance contributions are made, and for the calculation of cash benefits in case of temporary incapacity for work or pregnancy and birth;
- > the Ordinance on detecting, investigating, registering and reporting the employment accidents;
- > the Ordinance on the functions of the National Social Security Institute related to collection and distribution of compulsory insurance contributions.

To assess how these different ordinances and their specific rules affect the entry and retention of women in the labour market, more specific information is needed. According to the Labour Market Assessment by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation¹⁶, since the end of the 1990s social contributions have been gradually cut. According to the document this is also the reason why people have stopped paying taxes and encouraging high engagement in the informal market. Consequently the benefit systems fails to cover major portions of unemployed persons and those who are particularly disadvantaged. "In December 2001, only 15% of the unemployed received the maximum benefit, 20% had a benefit under the maximum but above the minimum wage, 17% had a benefit over the minimum but below the minimum wage and 47% had the minimum benefit" (p. 81) which was set as a percentage of the minimum wage (85% to 140% depending on the recipient personal and family circumstances).

On the other hand, the tax system, again according to the same report, does not take into account number of family members and their incomes, which means that working parents pay the same amount of tax regardless of the number of dependants (children or adults) and the status of their partner (if there is one). This situation is especially disadvantageous for single parent households. Furthermore, Bulgaria has not ratified the major ILO Convention 156 for workers with family duties. The Convention prescribes the creation of infrastructure for working parents with the

aim of facilitating the upbringing of children. The conclusion is that the general cut in social expenditures at state level affects mostly single mothers and mothers with small children and thus additionally complicates the already worse situation for such groups.

Reconciliation of work and family life

With regards to the protection of mothers, the 1991 Constitution guarantees the special protection of mothers, while the Labour Code introduced special rights for the mothers: 135 work days of paid leave for pregnancy, childbirth and upbringing of a child (of these 45 days before the date of birth), paid leave for raising a child up to two years of age and one year of unpaid leave up to child's three years of age. The positive aspect of these regulations is that the three years of maternity leave is recognized as length of service. The possibility to use paid leaves, however, is conditioned on the existence of paid social security instalments for a certain period of time.

In 2002 a law was adopted on child allowances, which distinguished between parents according to their income. Thus, only socially disadvantaged parents receive child allowances and the latter have more of a symbolic nature in Bulgaria - some 15 BGN (7.5 EURO) per month up to eighteen years of age of the child. New types of family benefits were introduced with the last amendments to Law on Family Benefits for Children, which entered into force in August 2004 (SG, issue 69 06.08.2004). Thus, the coverage of the persons and families assisted was extended. Granting of a one-off benefit for pregnancy for the period of 45 days before childbirth was regulated, as well as monthly benefit for raising a child up to one year old for insured mothers without the required length of insurance and targeted benefits for school children were introduced. The age required for granting of monthly family benefits for child till reaching the age of 18 was raised. Such benefits shall be paid until completion of child's secondary education, but not later than 20 years of age.

The transition period also changed the social services provided to working mothers for the upbringing of their children. The number of kindergarten decreased (to a large extent because of the demographic decline in the country), the fees for kindergarten increased. There is another tendency: some of working and well-paid women prefer to hire a carer for their children instead of sending them to kindergarten. In general, the stereotype of grandparents taking it upon themselves to bring up the grandchildren has been preserved. This is also due to the legally provided possibility of maternity leave being granted to a close relative, who works under an employment relationship (Art.162, para. 2

16- Edited by Jivka Marinova and Maria Gencheva and published by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation and KARAT coalition with the support of UNIFEM.

of the Labour Code), as well as mostly to the financial necessity for the mother to continue working, since child allowances for children over the age of 2 are a "privilege" of socially disadvantaged families only. This is an outcome of the last amendments of the Social Security Code (only for families with an income of no more than 150 BGN per person per month in 2002).

As in other countries in transition, the process of transformation brought a wide spread reorganization of work, life and family of the working women in Bulgaria. This is confirmed by the statistics. In response to this women try to be very flexible in overcoming of all changes in the society, work and family. The present tendency of more women entering into politics, legislative power and private enterprises as well as the expanding influence of the specific NGOs on gender issues, indicate that women are becoming decision-makers in issues related to their positions.

A survey¹⁷ discovered the largest gender differences in distribution of household roles and responsibilities. They are related to childbearing and domestic tasks. Women and men are equal within the family and household in budget management and taking important decisions. Management of the family income in cooperation is a widespread practice (for 65,6% of women and 71,6% of men). The role of women in the situation of limited resources increases and they take the responsibility to distribute in an optimum way what the family or household receive. Data showed that household work is mainly the responsibility of females. Women do almost everything at home and that situation becomes the case in an increasing number of households more and more. The impoverishment makes women take all domestic duties while their spouses try to find some income sources to improve the quality of life. In general women spend 2,5 times more time than men do for domestic tasks.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF WEEKLY TIME SPENDING ON HOUSEHOLD TASKS (Hours per week)

| Respondents by occupational status | Female | Male | F/M |
|------------------------------------|--------|------|------|
| Total | 25h | 10h | +15h |
| Employed | 21h | 7h | +14h |
| Unemployed | 28h | 13h | +15h |
| Pensioners | 27h | 11h | +16h |



Working week for women employed continues for almost 8 days. Working men spend only 7 hours at home on domestic tasks, while employed women spend 3 times more time on them. Women work outside home, they are expected to contribute family budget, but at the same time the household tasks are mainly women's territory.

Men do not mind if women earn money but they do mind if they themselves do "women's work". Both men and women estimate this however as a non-fare share. Women's responsibilities of domestic work increase as the size of their location decreases. The smaller the location the more domestic work women do at

home. Rural women are the most burdened compared with other counterparts. That is because they do not only do ordinary tasks like cooking, washing, etc., but in addition they work in the garden and family firm. Even men, in rural areas, spend less hours on household tasks than women do. The data is very clear why women are in less favourable position as compared to men in relation to the distribution of gender roles at home. Women are responsible for almost everything at home. The paradox is that the market offers a huge variety of services that could make domestic work rather easier but because of poverty they are out of reach.

As a result, women in the country take on double and triple burden. Both men and women agree that women's share is not fair. Women however that insist for equal partnerships at home when both spouses have a paid jobs are with 10 % more than men are (70% of men against 80 % of women).

17 - Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)", World Bank 2002, Agency for Social Analyses (ASA), Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation (GPF), Women's Alliance for Development (WAD)

TIME SPENT FOR HOUSEHOLD TASKS BY LOCATION AND GENDER (Hours per week)

| Location | Female | Male | F/M |
|------------|--------|------|------|
| Village | 26h | 11h | +15h |
| Small town | 25h | 6h | +19h |
| Big town | 25h | 9h | +16h |
| Sofia | 22h | 11h | +11h |

Stereotype of working women

For the last 50 years female employment in the country has turned out into a socio-cultural norm. Labour market participation and full employment of both male and female used to be one of the top political priorities of the socialist regime and as a consequence women working out of home are accepted as quite normal thing. The trend in the last century is for women to take up positions in the past reserved for males only.

There was not a parallel shift of males into positions formally reserved for females. In 2002, the Bulgarian society showed a mass public understanding¹⁹ that both men and women should support family budget. And not only because of the financial hardship, but also because a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person:

PUBLIC APTITUDES TOWARDS FEMALE EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER

| | Agree | | Neither agree, nor disagree | | Disagree | |
|--|-------|--------|-----------------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Work is the best way for a woman to be an independent person | 65.0 | 73.9 | 21.8 | 18.4 | 12.2 | 7.7 |
| Both women and men should support the family budget | 89.3 | 99.0 | 7.2 | 4.9 | 3.5 | 1.1 |

¹⁹ - "Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)", World Bank 2002, Agency for Social Analyses (ASA), Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation (GPF), Women's Alliance for Development (WAD)

Issues for Women Entrepreneurs

The transition from hired labour to private entrepreneurship became possible after the radical political changes, when a consensus was reached in society on the directions of the economic reform.

The establishment and development of *own business* is a new opportunity for employment that has been created by the post-socialist reforms¹⁹. In the first years of transformations many men and women were enthusiastic to start their business and to become self-employers. With the years of transformations however, their number declined. The main reasons consist in the business climate in the country what is evaluated as non-good by the public. In addition, the high taxes and bureaucratic barriers also make people give up on such form of self-employment.

The present legal and regulatory status of starting and conducting business in Bulgaria can be assessed as over regulated²⁰. According to the Heritage Index of Economic Freedom, Bulgaria has a stable high level of regulation. The score of Bulgaria for regulation is 4, which is poor compared with the other East European countries

The main Indirect Taxes payable in the country are:

- > Value Added Tax (VAT);
- > Excise duties;
- > Custom duties

The Value Added Tax rate is as follows:

> 20% for each taxable delivery or import of goods or service

> 0% for export of goods and services within the sense of VAT Law;

> 0% for delivery of precious metals on which recipient is the Bulgarian National Bank

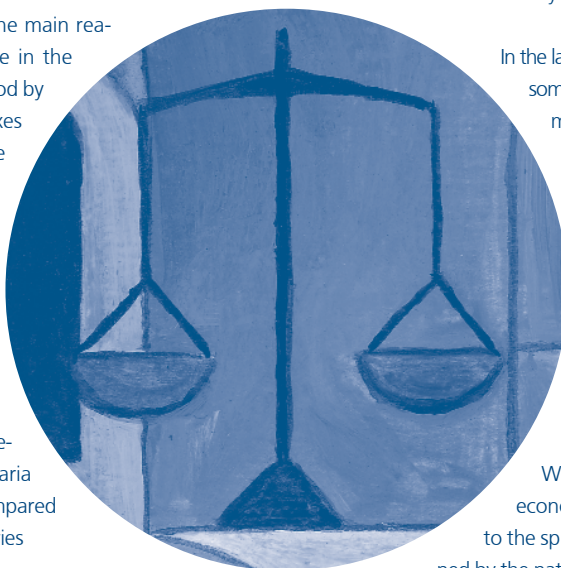
> another 19 tax exempted deliveries are listed in the law²¹

The specific features of entrepreneurship among women are determined above all by this group's labour market situation.

In the last decades employment among women sometimes reached the demographic maximum.

Even more often than in Western Europe, the Bulgarian women entered traditional men's jobs and professions. In the mid-eighties the women accounted for half of the employed workers in industry and for 36 per cent of engineers and technicians.

Women's ability to adapt to the new economic conditions and their advance into the sphere of entrepreneurship are determined by the nature of professional knowledge, the level of skills and motivation, and by the nature of the structural changes that have taken place in the economy. As a whole the entrepreneurial activeness of women is lower than that of men. Although the figures in the table below are from a decade ago, it is clear that the proportion of women self-employed and entrepreneurs is lower than that of men. More recent figures (albeit only from Vratsa) in 2001 show that the level has increased for both women and men, but that women continue to lag behind (9.6% of women against 18.9% of men).



19 - "Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)", World Bank 2002, Agency for Social Analyses (ASA), Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation (GPF), Women's Alliance for Development (WAD)

20 - *Microeconomics environment for business in Bulgaria (as of early 2001)*, Yordanka Gancheva, Latchezar Bogdanov, IME

21 - Which are as follows: deliveries connected with land; rent of residential building; financial services; insurance and reinsurance services; social security and health insurance services; welfare services; medical services; pharmaceutical products; educational and cultural services; legal services; transfer of enterprises; disposal of goods derived or left in favor of the state; free of charge disposal of assets by the state or the municipalities; legal action to secure accounts receivable; deliveries under the labor code; donations; betting and gambling; delivery in agricultural goods and services; delivery of cultural values and sales of admission tickets..

| EMPLOYERS AND SELF-EMPLOYED (% from all those employed) | | | |
|--|-------|----------|------------|
| | Total | % of men | % of women |
| June 1994 | 9.9 | 12.1 | 7.3 |
| June 1995 | 10.4 | 12.9 | 7.5 |

Gender discrimination affects not only female employees but also to women who decide to start their own business. Even when they set up businesses, women entrepreneurs have to overcome more obstacles in organising and expanding their business than men. One of the major difficulties they face is having themselves and their businesses taken seriously, as well as getting men to work for them. There are reportedly many cases of 'concealed' but real discrimination against businesswomen by creditors, suppliers and customers. Men dominate all business associations and are often less than friendly towards female entrepreneurs in their field.

The link between previous employment and entrepreneurial activeness among former trade workers and clerks has proven to be the strongest. The concentration of women in the field of services, trade and finance has coincided with these sectors' expansion over the last few years, which is due to the low capital consumption and quick capital turnover, typical of this kind of economic activities.

Women-entrepreneurs face specific restrictions in their work, stemming from the stage of their life cycle, family status and number of children. According to a survey of women in entrepreneurship, carried out by the Institute of Demography, the link between family and business creates problems for 80 per cent of women. They believe that work in both spheres is hard to combine, partially or totally incompatible. Asked if the two types of work can be combined, 35.7 per cent of women aged below 25 answer "yes, fully so". Yet this view is shared by a mere 8.7% of women aged between 31 and 35, so those ones most likely to have small children. This is among the major reasons for women's abstaining from entrepreneurship.

The group of women-entrepreneurs is not homogeneous from the viewpoint of motives for starting up a private business and as regards strategies for its development. The first group of women-entrepreneurs can be labelled "traditionalists". In self-employment and entrepreneurship they seek a means of adding up to their family incomes and a flexible combination of work and family. The second group comprises "innovators". This type of fe-

male entrepreneurship is not just a response to economic coercion, but is motivated by a desire to achieve an economic success. It is not just an escape from constraints in formal organizations, but a striving for creativity. Most often these are highly qualified women motivated to create something new, to manage their own life and to utilize their knowledge and skills to the full.

The risk of private business failure is not neutral in respect to gender. Every second male respondent visualizes the "ideal entrepreneur" as being a man. Only 10 per cent of women see the ideal entrepreneur as a woman. These ideas mirror traditional stereotypes, according to which women are performers rather than innovators; submissive rather than aggressive; emotional rather than rational. These characteristics result in the formation of cultural barriers to the success of women entrepreneurs.

These circumstances increase the risk of failure for women-entrepreneurs. They lead to difficulties in improving women's qualifications and acquiring managerial skills, because of their family and work overload, in getting loans because of the higher expectations of failure. Women to a lesser degree can rely on social networks to support their entrepreneurial activity. That is why, besides general measures to stabilize small business and self-employment, measures sensitive to women's specific problems are also required.

The establishment of a special **Fund for encouraging entrepreneurship among women** is a feasible task. It could finance projects by granting low-interest loans and a free of charge period of repayment. Special attention can be paid to women's qualification and development of managerial skills. Also important are the consultations for business start-up, as well as book-keeping, marketing and technical assistance. Non-governmental organizations are a major tool for establishing support social networks, avoiding isolation and for an intensive exchange of business information. Pressed by the deep recession and strong commitment to paid labour, women have been making efforts to adapt themselves to the new realities through self-employment and private entrepreneurship, to balance between business and family. The establishment of favourable legal foundations and ins-

stitutionalized support would contribute to the expansion of their capabilities for generating economic growth and personal self-fulfilment.

The main characteristics of the companies owned by women:

- > Geographic and Sector Distribution: 63% of companies are registered in the larger urban centres.
- > Legal Status and Company Establishment: Most women-owned companies are registered as sole proprietorships.

Main Constraints of women-owned companies:

According to various surveys of the FED and the UNDP, we can highlight several possible constraints to female entrepreneurship, such as:

- > the lack of confidence in their skills and experience;
- > the lack of family support;
- > ascribed gender roles;
- > family responsibilities;
- > limited savings.

However, overall it is important to highlight that most problems faced by entrepreneurship -such as sources of capital, high taxes, the state of the market- are common for both women and men.

Among the most serious constraints cited by businesswomen, are excessive bureaucracy, high taxes, lack of start-up capital, finding premises, the unreliable and unstable legal framework, and the lack of working capital. The surveys shows that more of the women entrepreneurs older than 40 years of age have fewer problems in the start-up phase compared to younger entrepreneurs. This may be in part due to their greater experience and access to personal networks. Younger entrepreneurs (under 40 years of age) have more difficulties than older women in financing their business.

Women entrepreneurs in smaller towns face more problems than those in bigger towns in aspects such as finding the initial capital, selling products and services because of lower demand, and problems in finding information. The surveys showed that in general, Bulgarian women entrepreneurs are young, well-educated and self-confident, and are trying to balance their various roles: businesswomen, mother and wife. The analysis showed that socio-cultural barriers to entering private business are higher for wo-

men than for men. As a result, there are only one-third as many women employers as men employers, and only half the number of women in self-employment.

The survey conducted by ASA, GPF and WAD showed that compare with men women have more limited access to ownership of the family firms. The correlation of private firms ownership is 2,2 : 1 for men. It means those men twice often than women are leaders of the family firm when is. Only 9,8% of men and 8,9% of women are willing to develop their own business in 2002. Women are interested mostly in trade, services and production. Men are interested mostly in private business in the field of services, trade and production.

Interesting facts were established through a survey carried out in the beginning of 2005 by "Women in Business" association as part of the project "The position of Bulgarian women in the EU". It encompassed 848 women aged 20 to 55 from 12 communities. 33.4% of them have their own businesses, and the rest are employees. 72% of the businesswomen believe that joining the EU in 2007 will bring about changes in the business environment and have a positive effect on their career. They think that 2004 was the year, in which the government implemented a policy of increasing economic freedom, encouraging investments and privatizing minor state shares, and improving the legislation concerning petty civic orders. 62.97% of Bulgarian businesswomen are university graduates, 37.14% have secondary education, and 0.59% have primary education. 0.35% hold a Doctoral degree. In this respect, Bulgarian women entrepreneurs are way ahead of their competitors in EU countries. 72% of businesswomen in Bulgaria are married with children; 29.65% of them started their career at the age of 31-35, and 19.44% began even earlier, at the age of 26-30. In this respect Bulgarian women are on the same level with EU businesswomen, who usually realize their entrepreneur skills at the age of 35. 77% of women entrepreneurs receive the necessary support in their families. In this respect, Bulgarian women are considerably ahead of their counterparts in EU countries, where only 43.5% of women receive family support. 32% of Bulgarian businesswomen work in the sphere of services, 16% are engaged in the public sector, 17.43% are involved in trade, 3.18% in health care, etc. Over 62% of the women claim that they set up their business with their own money, or with a loan, and 33% followed their parents' career and took over the management of the family business. 54% of the interviewees say that they started their business because it gave them the opportunity to make decisions, and 40% were urged by the wish to be independent. A better profit was the motivation for 38% of the women. 27% point out another important reason, and it is their willingness to work and devote their time and efforts to themselves. 82% of women entrepreneurs run businesses with staff up to 9 people, 15.5% manage small firms (10-49 employees), and 2.5% run companies with up to 249 employees. In this respect

Bulgaria matches EU countries. 85% of Bulgarian businesswomen work over 50 hours a week. In EU countries 62% of women entrepreneurs also work over 50 hours a week. As it was shown already, women's business is characterized predominantly as a small one. There is no debate on what are the roots and reasons for that fact. One explanation might be that nevertheless women were at the labour market before the democratic changes in 1989, they were again not at the highest decision making positions like directors of the enterprises and factories and thus they didn't have the contacts and the relations that were helpful in that very important period, when the private business started. This fact means that the Bulgarian women did not receive the same equal opportunities and starting position especially what concerns their participation in the process of privatization, which by some experts later on influenced the scope of their further activities. One supporting fact in this aspect is the observation made by the Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (ASME) in their Report for SMEs for the period 2000-2002 that "...women dispose of equipment more rapidly than men. In 57% of the women's companies, the equipment was purchased during the last five years, while about 45% of the men disposed of equipment purchased 5 to 14 years ago." The period pointed here definitely show that predominantly men are owners of the former state property. In the same analyze is pointed that "women-entrepreneurs view public attitudes towards them as negative. Nearly 40% of the women state that people envy them and even hinder their work, whilst the equivalent figure for men has been 30%. One-fifth of women feel that their work was approved of by society, which is close to the share of men".



Stereotype of self-employed/entrepreneurs

One of the main stereotypes existing in the country is that "business is gender neutral" and that the problems of both men and women entrepreneurs are the same and no one gender deserves special support and encouraging programs. This is an opinion shared not only by most men but also by numerous women. At the same time women continue to predominantly own small businesses and have less access to resources need to establish and maintain the business. Without training programmes, financial incentives, monitoring systems and special motivation programmes for women the existing stereotypes and barriers in front of women in business will not be overcome.

Strategies needed to overcome it should include additional specific tasks for a better balance between family and work life (the right to parental leave, introduction of flexible forms of employment for mothers of children aged up to 7, improvement of social infrastructure for raising and upbringing children aged up to 6, developing of child care system as regards children up to 3, etc.); measures for encouraging more men to come in "women's" professions, which will help the salaries in these sectors to become higher and will improve the image of the professions themselves, etc.

Case studies

Case study 1

In 1992 Ivana and three of her colleagues left the big state owned enterprise they had been working in for more than 10 years together and set up a private company. All of them - two men and two women, had equal shares as stakeholders in the new entity. Ivana was 40 years old and she was the youngest, but she had enough experience. She was the most active person in solving all the legal and accounting issues which were very difficult at the time of the beginning of democratic processes and transformation of the economy, because people did not have experience in this field. Although she was seen as the informal leader of the team, when the moment came to elect a director of the company - a person to make decisions and to represent it, the two other partners proposed the second man for this position, as he was the oldest (55 years old) and as they explained - it was a question of authority have a man as the leader. Ivana agreed without any objection although she knew she was the better one. She became a deputy. The company has been working successfully for 8 years. During all these years Ivana was the

driving force of the activities. She was the person to deal with the state tax inspections every month; she took the responsibilities in the most critical moments. In the fifth year they appointed the director's wife and son-in-law in office as they were unemployed. All the team was working hard with the exception of the director who was "the boss". The company became so successful that suddenly the "family" members decided that they could "privatize" the company and took all the profit without dividing it with the other three partners. Very secretly the director eliminated the deputy's rights to deal with the bank accounts and started to use all the company money for himself. Ivana suggested to the other two partners to dismiss him, but being close to retirement age, they were afraid of any change of the status quo and preferred to remain silent. Ivana decided to quit the company in the year 2000. Five years later the company is facing bankruptcy. Ivana and the two former partners regret having taken the stereotype decision to choose a man for a director, knowing that he did not have the personal qualities required for this position.

Case study 2

In May 2005 there was a TV live show dedicated to the gender discrimination at the work place. A young woman at 22 participated telling her story. She was employed as a waitress in a restaurant when she was 19. As she had secondary education at that time she negotiated with the owner (45 years old) this position as a starting point for becoming a salon manager later on. She started to work hard and seriously. A year later she was capable enough as to be promoted and she reminded the employer of what he had promised. He invited her in his office to discuss the matter. Here she was very surprised to hear that she might get the promotion only if she accepted to become his lover. The young woman refused and she was forced to leave the restaurant. Two years later she was still unemployed due to the trauma associated with the experience and was afraid to apply for a job. The reason for her to take the floor and to speak out in a TV show about her case was the adoption of the Act against Discrimination where there is a chapter dedicated to gender discrimination at the work place; there she also found a definition of sexual harassment. Now she is more optimistic that the law will protect women against such unacceptable behavior.

