



Economic Position of Women in Bulgaria, Georgia, Macedonia, Poland, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia - Summary

INFORMATION SHEET
 (49th Session of CSW, March 2005)
One most important thing about economic situation of women.

BULGARIA	GEORGIA	MACEDONIA	POLAND	SERBIA	SLOVENIA
Women (especially those who have family to support) are ready to accept any employment even much below their professional qualification.	Collapse of manufacturing sector and established business relations leading to extreme poverty where 54% of the population lives below the poverty line and 17% are extremely poor.	As consequence of restructuring many women are unemployed and since being employed is also a way of gaining social status, the unemployed women are marginalized and excluded from main stream society.	Transformation to free market economy a lead to a very high rate of unemployment among wome, with women with lowest level of education pushed out of the labour market.	Feminization of poverty. Reasons include: loss of previous and lack of new employment opportunities, "unfriendly" legal and social environment for enterprising, women being forced into informal economy and the margins of changing economic environment.	Job shortages, persistent levels of unemployment in combination with changing family structures have marginalized/segreated many women and some men, necessitating the reassessment of the relationship between paid work and family life.

Change of activity rate since Beijing Conference in 1995

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The biggest drop in activity rate of women has happened before 1995. Currently it remains much below the EU average.	Activity rate among women has been decreasing since 1996.	Activity rate of women is slightly increasing since 2000.	Activity rate of women has been dropping since 1994.	The activity rate of women the formal economy has been continuously decreasing in.	Activity rate of women decreased by 3,5 percentage points between 1998 and 2003.

Change of gender wage gap since Beijing Conference in 1995)

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According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in 2004 women earned 24% less than men. According to NGO estimations this difference is almost 30%.	According to the official data for 2002, average wages/salaries of employed women in total are 1.5 times lower than those of men.	In 2003 women earned 67% of men's wages.	The average wage gap in Poland is 20%.	There are hidden forms of gender wage gap in Serbia, especially in the newly privatized companies.	The gender wage gap has been narrowing since 1995, currently percentage of female gross wage in male gross wage is. 90,5

Is there a link between reproductive rights and economic position of women in your country?

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The legislation concerning abortion rights is liberal, but the on-going health reform excluded reproductive health from the social security payments and therefore women with lower income cannot afford basic reproductive health services.		There have been cases of employers requesting young female employees to remain single for period of three years in order to be available for work at any time.	Lack of reproductive rights (including legal abortion) impacts poor women in particular. Employers often treat women as 'risky' workers who cannot control their fertility due to limited access to sex education, contraception and abortion.	Economic and political instability leads to women (parents) being effectively denied the right to rise children. The conditions of Abortion still are regulated by adequate medical standards aimed at protecting women's life and health.	In Slovenia there does not seem to be a direct link between reproductive rights and economic situation of women.

Economic situation of women and implementation of Platform for Action

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The Beijing commitments have not been implemented properly due to the constant changes of government and the extensive crisis in 1996-1997.	Beijing Conference in 1995 did not influence the economic position of women. The response to the Platform for Action was only on a paper. Majority of women and the governmental officials were not informed about it.	Women continue to be in a disadvantaged economic position since the Beijing Conference in 1995. The Platform for Action was not implemented as far as the economic situation of women is concerned.	1997 National Plan of Actions – a response to Platform for Action was not implemented. Current National Action Plan has quite insignificant impact on the economic situation of women since has no budget.	Since 1995 none of the governments has responded to any "Areas of concern" of the Beijing Platforms for Action.	Since 1995 considerable progress has been made in implementing the Platform for Action. The most visible achievements are in the legislative area. The statistical data have been segregated by sex because of the Beijing conference.

Impact of privatization on the economic situation of women.

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The majority of women used to be employed in State owned companies and were the first to lose their jobs when the companies were privatized.	Privatization process started in 1992, but no tangible results are evident, especially in large and medium enterprises sector.	The interests of women as a group are not considered the process of privatization; hence it led to the deterioration of the position of women and other low income earning groups. In some cases of privatization women were the first ones to lose their jobs.	Due to the strengthening of the process of privatization after 1995 the economic situation of women deteriorated: unemployment has increased, access to the publicly funded child care services has been eroded, percentage of women living on, or below social minimum has increased.	Due to the weakness of Trade Unions and lack of Governmental intervention, position of women in private companies depends exclusively on the good or bad will of their employers.	

Impact of restructuring of social security system on women.

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The most important impact is the increase of the age for retirement to 60 years of age by 2009. It is a problem for elder, unemployed women and those who studied longer.	Social security system has not been restructured. The current system is very symbolic and requires restructuring. Pension system does not provide any security.	Social security system has been partially restructured following the EU Directives. This restructuring had a negative impact on women leading to decrease of social benefits, and changes in the pension and health system.	Changes to social security and social services systems decrease women's ability to compete in the labour market. This is largely due to child care for under 3 y.o being much less accessible to poorer women. This led to them being pushed out of employment.	Restructuring of social security system is not complete. Some of direct impacts on position of women are related to retirement age. Despite existing regulations social care is not functioning efficiently.	Different treatment of women and men was retained only in relation to determining conditions for obtaining rights to old age pension (the retirement age for women is 2 years lower than for men).

What hopes do women have in relation to economic situation and CSW?

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Only women's NGOs working closely in the field of women's rights are really concerned with the outcomes of the 49 Session. Their hope is that the PoA will be reaffirmed and that they will have one more document to lobby national decision making bodies with.	Majority of women of Georgia do not know about the upcoming event as no public campaigns were undertaken.	UNCSW 49 Session is an opportunity for lobbying and advocacy leading to the improvement of the economic situation of women.	Hopefully as a result of UNCSW 49 Session the alternatives to neoliberal system, privatization of service will be recommended to governments, and that the governments commit themselves to these alternatives, and will involve women in their development.	Women in general do not have hopes. For Women's NGOs, however, the outcome of the Session, can be an excellent tool for further advocacy and lobbying for economic justice for women in the country.	

Recommendations

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<p><i>To the government and women in Bulgarian Parliament:</i> Read the final document of the 49th Session and implement in practice its commitments.</p>	<p><i>To the National Government:</i> Establish and promote equal opportunities via establishing national gender machineries at national, regional and local levels.</p>	<p>To the National Governments and women's NGOs: Undertake joint actions for improvement and advancement of the economic situation of urban and rural women that could contribute in the development and growth of the society as whole.</p>	<p><i>To National Government:</i> to develop policies specifically targeting poorest, low educated women, that respond to the realities and needs of women should be developed. It is an urgent need to establish the centers for women facilitating their reintegration in the labour market.</p>	<p><i>To National Governments:</i> To activate the Parliament procedure for the adoption of the Law on all forms of discrimination of Women, activate the Parliament procedure for the adoption of the Law on Gender Equity and Equality, and the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy for Serbia.</p>	<p><i>To National Government:</i> To concentrate on at least six key prerequisites for future implementation of gender equality: 1/ formulating a master plan = A STRATEGY; 2/ capacity building; 3/ identifying key actors and obtaining commitment from them; 4/ education and training of key actors; 5/ preparing the documents; and 6/ monitor and evaluate the process.</p>

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