

RECOMMENDATIONS

To CSW and National Governments:

To thoroughly investigate the impact of privatization and other elements of neoliberal economy on the dramatic decrease of the activity rate of women in CEE/CIS region.

To National Governments:

To gather gender desegregated statistics allowing for the monitoring of the informal work and the position of women within it.

To develop policies specifically targeting groups of most disadvantaged women in the labour market and create centers which respond to the realities and needs of poor women, women with low level of education and skills, women from ethnic minorities, and women otherwise marginalized in order to facilitate their reintegration in the formal labour market.

To create national strategies for improved inclusion of women to the labour market and facilitating other forms of economic activity of women such as entrepreneurship, based on equal opportunities policy for women and men and to ensure that local and regional development plans take full and separate account of enterprising women's role in creating jobs and diversifying economy.

¹The economic and political transformation took place in the CEE/CIS during the period 1989-1991.

²All statistical data in the Bulgarian case study are based on data of the National Statistic Institute

³Source: SDGS / Labor Statistics Division

⁴Official data by Republic Statistical Office

⁵Please note that internationally comparable labour market data is only available for years after 1998.

⁶Activity rate, female, 2nd quarter, %. Source: Labour Force Survey, Statistical Office of RS (SORS)

⁷Source: SDGS / Labor Statistics Division

⁸Source: CSO, 2004

⁹Unemployment rate of women in the formal economy, official data registered by Labor offices, Republic Statistical Office.

¹⁰Unemployment rate, female, 2nd quarter, %. Source: Labour Force Survey, SORS

¹¹Source: SORS. Calculations: IMAD

¹²Exchange rate for the calculation Euro-SIT: 1995: 153,1177; 1996: 169,5098; 1997: 180,3985; 1998: 186,2659; 1999: 193,6253; 2000: 205,0316; 2001: 217,1851; 2002: 226,2237.

¹³Source: CSO 2004

¹⁴Own calculations on the basis of exchange rate provided by NBP, figures for 1996 and 1998 calculated on the basis of the exchange rate for 1999 and are provided for comparison purposes only.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editorial Committee would like to thank numerous Karat members and partners who were so kind to provide the information used in this document.

Editor: Anita Seibert (Poland)

Contributors: Jivka Marinova (Bulgaria) Shorena Dzotsenidze (Georgia), Regina Barendt (Germany), Gordana Trenkoska (Macedonia), Tomka Dilevska (Macedonia), Kinga Lohmann (Poland), Ruzica Rudic Vranic (Serbia and Montenegro), Jana Javornik (Slovenia)

Design: Aleksandra Solik (Poland)

The preparation of the publication was possible thanks to Global Fund for Women. Participation of the group of women from Karat Coalition in the 49th UN CSW session was possible thanks to the Global Fund of Women and Mama Cash.



Women in the Labour Market

in Bulgaria, Georgia, Macedonia, Poland, Serbia & Montenegro and Slovenia

The commitments made in Beijing by the governments of the 6 selected countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States created an opportunity for significant improvements to the situation of women in the labour market. Unfortunately no drastic improvements have been noted. In some of the countries the situation has even deteriorated. This is despite the fact that some of the countries experienced quite a significant economic growth at least during some of the years since 1995. Therefore, the lack of evident improvement of the position of women in the labour markets of Bulgaria, Georgia, Macedonia, Poland, Serbia & Montenegro and Slovenia cannot be simply explained by the economic turmoil experienced by the countries but rather by the lack of political will to ensure gender justice.

OVERVIEW

All the countries of CEE/CIS region, including the 6 countries discussed in this information sheet are relative 'new comers' to the capitalist neoliberal economic system¹. Consequently there are many commonalities in the impact of the economic processes taking place in the countries and the situation of women in the labour market. One of them is increased, often hidden discrimination of women. At the same time however, there are some marked differences. They are related to the differences in the economic and political 'starting point' of each country, differences in methods adopted to embrace capitalism, and differences in gender relations. Additionally some countries experienced military conflicts during the analyzed period. Further in 2004 Slovenia and Poland have joined the European Union, with Bulgaria preparing to join it very soon.

In most of the 6 countries the position of women in the labour market has deteriorated. This is despite the fact that both men and women have been heavily affected by unemployment due to processes such as privatization, flexibilisation and globalization. Women, however, are the ones who bear most of the responsibilities for family related tasks, they are more likely to be earning less than men and are more likely to be pushed into informal work. Further, some of the aspects of the situation of women in the labour market are difficult to monitor and do not come up in statistic and macroeconomic analyses. For example, in Macedonia being employed is not only a way of earning a living, but it is also a way of gaining social status. Therefore, the women who are unemployed become marginalized and excluded from main stream society. In Poland women with lowest level of education are pushed out of the labour market and do not come up in unemployment statistics. One of the most important characteristics of economic situation of women in Serbia is feminization of poverty. Reasons of increasing feminization of poverty are both financial and psychological and they include: loss of previous employment, lack of new employment opportunities, feminization of some professions, "unfriendly" legal and social environment for enterprising, and women being forced into informal work. In Slovenia labour market shifts resulted in shrinking of labour force regardless of sex. In the country female employment has traditionally represented a high proportion of total employment and that has not been changed even in critical period of transition. But because of the recent labour market shifts combined with major societal changes a trend of slight deterioration of the position of women in the labour market became apparent. Job shortages, persistent levels of unemployment in combination with changing family structures have marginalized many women, indicating the need for the reassessment of the relationship between paid work and family life.

ACTIVITY RATE OF WOMEN

There two important issues connected to the women's activity rates in the countries in this region. Firstly, despite the fact that in most of the countries the activity rate is still relatively high, it continues to decrease. This is quite alarming for the region, which has a very long history of women being economically active. Secondly, many women who continue to be economically active do it in conditions far from ideal. In Bulgaria² the biggest drop in activity rate of women occurred before 1995. In the considered period the activity rate has reached a minimum in the years 2000-2001, which were the years of profound structural reforms. Since then the activity rate remains relatively stable, but even with the slight increase it remains much below the EU average. In Georgia³ in 2002 the activity rate of women reached 56% (decreasing by 3% from 1996), while during the same period activity rate of men increased by the same amount and reached 76%. In Macedonia, the situation seems to be more positive as according to the data provided by State Statistic Bureau the activity rate of women increased slightly since 2000. But the women are mostly employed in the badly paid sectors (agriculture, garment and textile industry, processing industry, trade, education, health and catering).

Activity rate of women

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Bulgaria				46.8	45.8	44,2	42.9	44	43.9	43.6	45.9
Poland	52,2	51,1	50,6	50,0	50,0	49,7	49,2	48,8	48,0	47,9	48,0 (3 rd quarter)
Serbia ⁴		43,81	Continuous decline of female activity rate in the formal work							41,61	No data
Slovenia ^{5,6}					53,7	51,9	51,7	51,3	51,9	50,2	

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF WOMEN

In Georgia the unemployment rate of women has actually slightly decreased between 1996 and 2002 (by 2.4 percent points). In most of the countries covered by this fact sheet, however, the unemployment rate of women is lower now than it was in 1995. Unfortunately this is not synonymous with overall improvement of the situation of women in the labour market. The drop in the unemployment rate is partly due to the fact that many women are so discouraged by difficulty to find (formal) employment that they are pushed out of the formal labour market and do not appear on the unemployment statistics. The situation is much worse in Macedonia, where not only the unemployment rate of women has increased, but also 62, 5% of women who were unemployed in 2003 were unemployed for at least 4, 5 years.

Unemployment rate of women

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Bulgaria			15.4	16	16.8	16.2	18.5	15.8	12.4	10.4
Georgia ⁷		13.4					10.7	11.0		
Macedonia		46,2	43,7	41,9	39,5	43,1		App 50		
Poland ⁸	14,4	13,4	12,0	12,2	18,1	18,1	20,0	20,6	20,3	19,1(3rd quarter)
Serbia ⁹	57,55								54,38	54,52
Slovenia ¹⁰			7,7	7,6	7,4	6,3	6,3	7,1		

AVERAGE WOMEN'S INCOME/WAGE

Being employed in CEE/CIS is not automatically connected to financial security, with many women earning the wages not allowing them to be economically independent. Unfortunately again not in all the countries gender desegregated data on wages is gathered. In Bulgaria where no disaggregated data on women and men's wages is available, it is still known that women are the larger part of workers receiving the minimum wage as well as the larger part of discouraged workers. The average salary in a typical women's profession (school teacher) is 110-120 Euro per month. Since 1997 when the Currency Board has been introduced, the minimum wage has increased from 35 Euro in 1997 to 60 Euro in 2004 but it remains much below the social minimum. The situation is similar in Macedonia where more women than men earn lower wages of 50- 80 EURO per month (2003 data).

Average women's income/wage

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Slovenia (SIT) ¹¹	105664	123558	139217	154460	162431	188940	210435	223456
Slovenia (Euro) ¹²	690	729	772	829	839	922	969	988
Poland (PLN) ¹³		747.24 (March)		162.05 (October)	1591.92 (October)		1988.78 (October)	
Poland (Euro) ¹⁴		169,82		264,11	358.54		497.19	

WAGE GAP

The wage gap does exist in the countries covered by this information sheet; however in many instances it is similar or even smaller than in other developed countries. For example in Poland the average wage gap is 20%. The situation is even better in Slovenia where the wage gap is smaller than in EU countries.

Still in a number of the countries there are discrepancies between official data and other data on the wage gap. This is very well illustrated by the example of Bulgaria where according to the estimations of the Ministry of Labor and Social The situation is quite different in Georgia where generally, both minimum and average wages have grown impressively in real terms between 1997 and 2002. At the same time however they remain very low and the average wage per month in 2002 was still below the official minimum subsistence level (125 Georgian lari) and provided less than US\$2 per day before taxes. Further, according to the official data of year 2002, average wages/salaries of women are 1.5 times lower than those of men.

The similarity of the wage gap in the countries discussed in this information sheet to other developed countries does not mean that wage gap is not an issue. Rather it illustrates that it is not exclusively a regional issue, but one which needs a broader approach. The regional characteristic of the wage gap in 6 countries covered in this issue is that the wage gap combined with low wages which are earned in most of the discussed countries contributes further to inability of great proportion working women to gain economic independence.

Policy in 2004 women have earned on average 24% less than men. According to NGO estimations, however, this difference is almost 30%. In Serbia there is no direct gender wage gap if we are speaking about the same working place in the same company. There are other hidden forms of gender wage gap, especially in the newly privatized companies, but there is no official data available.