

**The Story Behind the Numbers:**



**WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT  
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
EUROPE AND THE WESTERN  
COMMONWEALTH OF  
INDEPENDENT STATES**

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses on reducing feminized poverty; ending violence against women; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of UNIFEM, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

The Story Behind the Numbers: Women and Employment in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Commonwealth of Independent States

Copyright © 2006 United Nations Development Fund for Women

ISBN: 92-95052-01-3

United Nations Development Fund for Women

Grosslingova 35

Bratislava 811 09

Slovak Republic

E-mail: Bratislava.unifem@undp.org

Website: [www.unifem.sk](http://www.unifem.sk)

On the cover: Woman working in Hungary's chemical industry. Photo: J. Maillard /ILO

Overview: Cashiers in a "hypermarket" in Poland. Photo: Piotr Malecki/Panos

Chapter 1: Impoverished women and men sell local produce and home-cooked food at a stop on the Trans-Siberian railway, Russia. Photo: Gerd Ludwig/Visum/Panos

Chapter 2: Maintaining electrical cables, Hungary. Photo: J. Maillard/ILO

Chapter 3: This mother and child live on a subsistence farm in Albania. The family gathers wild herbs to supplement their income. Photo: Crispin Hughes/Panos

Chapter 4: Woman working in a personnel office in Hungary. Photo: J. Maillard/ILO

Chapter 5: Sales clerks in Serbia and Montenegro. Photo: George Georgiou/Panos

**The Story Behind the Numbers:**

**WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT  
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
EUROPE AND THE WESTERN  
COMMONWEALTH OF  
INDEPENDENT STATES**

## PUBLICATION TEAM AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

COORDINATOR: **Asya Varbanova**

BACKGROUND PAPER: **Eva Fodor**

### CONSULTANTS

**Eva Fodor**

**Silke Steinhilber**

**Joann Vanek**

**Elizabeth Villagomé**

UNIFEM

**Karen Judd**

**Joanne Sandler**

EDITOR: **Gloria Jacobs**

DESIGNER: **atelier2**

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Erin Barkley**

Network of East West Women

**Lilia Dimova**

Agency for Social Analysis, Bulgaria

**Monica Fong**

Organization for Economic Cooperation  
and Development

**Jafar Javan**

United Nations Development Programme  
Bratislava Regional Center

**Irena Kotowska**

Warsaw School of Economics

**Anna-Maija Lehto**

Office of Statistics, Finland

**Kinga Lohman**

KARAT Coalition

**Angela Me**

United Nations Economic Commission for  
Europe

**Joann Vanek**

Women in Informal Employment:  
Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)

**Petra Ulshoefer**

International Labour Organization

The team wishes to thank Osnat Lubrani, UNIFEM CEE Regional Programme Director, for initiating and nurturing this project. Thanks are also due to a large number of researchers. Angela Me and Enrico Bisogno from UNECE generously provided the most recent data from the UNECE Gender Statistics Database and contributed materials on gender statistics. Elvana Lula from the Gender Alliance for Development Center, Tirana, summarized findings and research from a case study of trafficking in Albania. Shireen Kanji from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Free School Lane, Cambridge shared her work on poverty in Russia. Elaine Fultz, Sandrine Cazes and Alena Nesporova from the ILO provided contributions on family benefits, the gender dimensions of pension reform and balancing flexibility and security. Raluca Popa from the Central European University conducted research on men's social disadvantages in Central and Eastern Europe. Brigitte Degen from DG Research in the European Commission contributed with a discussion of women in science.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| PREFACE .....   | 6  |
| OVERVIEW .....  | 7  |
| CHAPTER 1:<br>FROM REVOLUTION TO REVOLUTION .....                 | 11 |
| CHAPTER 2:<br>WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE .....                     | 21 |
| CHAPTER 3:<br>WOMEN WITHOUT EMPLOYMENT .....                      | 31 |
| CHAPTER 4:<br>PATTERNS AND CONDITIONS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT ..... | 40 |
| CHAPTER 5:<br>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....                | 53 |
| REFERENCES CITED .....  | 59 |
| APPENDIX .....  | 63 |

# PREFACE

How did women and men adjust to the collapse of the state socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in terms of work and livelihoods? What has been the legacy of the state socialist emancipation project in the region: Did women manage to retain their relatively advantageous positions in the labour markets or did gender inequality increase significantly? These are the key questions this report seeks to answer, utilizing data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Gender Statistics database. Its objective is not only to interpret the numbers but also to critically evaluate the dataset as a source of information on gender inequality in an international context.

The answers the report's findings provide to the questions above are interesting both theoretically and from the point of view of policy making. One of the conclusions is that the legacy of the state socialist emancipation project lives on, although in a different context. Vast numbers of women have suffered economic setbacks since the collapse of the state socialist planned economies: Unemployment and poverty emerged on a large scale, economic insecurity and exploitation increased, and anxiety about their precarious economic position, often accompanied by a real decline in social and health status, became the daily experience of significant portions of the population. Yet, it seems that amidst all these social upheavals, women did not fare worse than men did. Labour market gender inequality had existed in state socialist societies - official propaganda notwithstanding. But in the decades before the collapse of these regimes women had acquired useful resources in educational institutions and the labour force which allowed them - in most if not all of the countries included in this report - to retain their positions *relative* to men after 1989. According to the data collected through quantitative surveys (the UNECE dataset) and a series of qualitative studies (described in the boxes of this report) gender inequality did not increase significantly, but remained at a pre-transition high level.

This report analyses women's position over time as well as across countries within the region. One comparison, however, was not explored explicitly, namely: how the current labour market opportunities of women in post-state socialist countries compare to those living in developed Western capitalist ones. This issue has assumed increasing importance in the context of the European Union and the EU accession process, which will affect economic policymaking in all countries of the region.

Since the early 1980s women's lives in the eastern and western part of the European continent have become increasingly similar. Immediately after World War II, a sharp and politically buttressed contrast existed between the worlds of the female Communist factory worker and her Western counterpart, the stereotypically suburban stay-at-home mother. By the 1980s, however, women in most developed Western capitalist countries began to acquire paid jobs and demand equal treatment inside and outside the labour force, while women in state socialist societies were granted long maternity leaves and started to drop out of paid work for lengthy periods in their prime career years. These trends may have started decades earlier, but their convergence became even more pronounced in the 1990s after the collapse of state socialism and the related escalation in economic globalization. Most strikingly, as this report shows, East European women were forced out of the labour force in unprecedented numbers, exactly at the time when their Western counterparts started to take up paid employment in earnest at the encouragement of national and transnational governments as well as corporate employers. The connection between these two processes - for example, through the supply of cheap careworkers migrating West - should not be ignored.

As a result of these twin processes, in recent years the level and shape of gender inequality in most areas of the labour market seem comparable in post-state socialist and in developed capitalist societies: Roughly the same percentage of women are employed, in similarly segregated jobs, and for similarly lower pay than received by their male colleagues. Yet, while the outcome may be similar, the lived experience differs in at least one important dimension: While the labour market position of women in Western Europe has improved over the past generation, that of women in Eastern Europe has declined to reach this point. These differences have very different implications for policy makers in each of the regions, which the report sheds light on.

Perhaps the most interesting and strongest part of this report is that it not only describes the data, but it also allows us to gain a better understanding of the experience of gender inequality after state socialism through pointing to these and to similar stories behind the numbers.

Eva Fodor  
Budapest



## OVERVIEW

The social and economic changes that transformed Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the last decade of the 20th century had an enormous impact on the lives of the women and men living in the region. While the process of economic restructuring that followed the collapse of the state socialist regimes has brought new opportunities and benefits for some, it has also led to a dramatic increase in unemployment, poverty and social inequality, all of which have negatively affected the economic security of large numbers of women and men. One aspect of the restructuring has involved labour market shifts, and the ways they have impacted different groups of people.

Determining what precisely this impact has been is complicated, however, and at least in the case of women, is subject to a continuing debate among experts and policy makers. While analysts agree that labour markets throughout the region have changed radically since 1990, they have produced different evaluations of how these changes affected women's occupational chances and work opportunities. This is partly due to inadequate data but partly also to differences in the way the existing data are interpreted.

*The Story Behind the Numbers* explores the position of women in the labour market in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Western Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)<sup>1</sup>. The analysis is based on data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Gender Statistics Database, which contains comprehensive sex-disaggregated statistics for the region. The goals of this report are threefold:

- > To understand the impact of recent political, economic and social changes in the region on women's economic well-being and thereby shed light on the differing evaluations offered by recent reports on women in the region.
- > To show the utility of the UNECE dataset as a source

Working Conditions and Gender in an Enlarged Europe (European Foundation 2005). Although both survey the same region, the scope of the World Bank report is broader, covering all countries in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, while the European Foundation report focuses only on new member states and acceding countries of the European Union (EU). Both rely on similar data sources - labour force surveys and qualitative studies from each country, supplemented by information from well-known international databases. Seemingly, the two reports come to different conclusions about the trends in women's labour force conditions as well as the level of gender inequality in paid work.

The European Foundation finds that '[a]lthough women continue to constitute around 45 per cent of employed people, female labour force participation rates have gone down, and women have dropped out of the labour market to work in household and informal economies, or when still present are overrepresented among unemployed people' (2005: 66). The World Bank report, on the other hand, states that 'there appears to be no empirical evidence that the treatment of women in the labour market has systematically deteriorated across the region' (2002a: xi). These conflicting findings echo the ongoing debate in the academic world, where some analysts argue that women's labour force position has been harmed by the transformations in Eastern Europe, and that they are bearing the burden of social changes to a disproportionate extent (e.g., Funk 2004; LaFont 2001; Einhorn 1993), while others focus on the gains women have made, such as in narrowing the wage gap (Brainerd 2000; Fodor 1997).

## The Story Behind the Numbers

This report shows that it is not easy to assess what has happened over the past 15 years to women's economic

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_22322](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_22322)

