



Women, work and equal opportunities in post-Communist transition

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ABSTRACT

This article examines gender, work and equal opportunities (EO) in five central eastern European (CEE) candidates to an enlarged European Union (EU): the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. It demonstrates how capitalist transition has eroded women's Communist economic and social legacy, and considers implications for EO of the EU enlargement process. Analysis of decline begins with an outline of women's position under Communism, showing both similarities in gender inequality to those of capitalism, but also significant differences and advances. Post-transition is then examined in terms of the UN Gender Development Index, women's loss of social support, their decline in labour force participation and changes in employment and political representation. A limitation in available data is lack of information on unregulated employment and informal work – both major developments in CEE. The objective picture is then set against subjective responses to change – a key factor in gender EO prospects. Finally, developments in EO monitoring and enforcement agencies are reviewed, with the conclusion drawing these levels of enquiry together to assess the possibilities of EU enlargement as a spur to greater commitment to gender equality in CEE.

KEY WORDS

central eastern Europe / employment / equal opportunities / post-Communist / women / work

Introduction

This article examines gender, work and equal opportunities (EO) in five central eastern European (CEE) candidates to an enlarged European Union (EU): the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. It analyses how capitalist transition has eroded the Communist gender equality legacy, and considers the possibilities for progress and possible impact of the EU harmonization and access criteria, which include gender mainstreaming in all aspects of the National Action Plans for Employment.¹

Aggregate indicators of decline, such as the United Nations Gender-related Development Index (GDI), are significant, although these obscure complex processes. For example, women left the labour force, and growing poverty and inequality were largely feminized. Yet the average gender wage gap narrowed – at least for a time. Surveys also reveal women's ambivalent attitudes towards capitalist transition. Democracy has been welcomed, but many feel betrayed by the loss of former social rights (Lokar, 1999: 3). Previous enforced 'emancipation' has fomented resistance to engaging in gender issues, and an embrace of conservative sex roles. Yet new women's organizations have emerged too, many of which promote gender awareness and EO.

Analysis of change begins with an outline of women under Communism, showing both similarities in gender inequality to those under capitalism, but also significant differences and advances. Post-transition is then examined in terms of the GDI, women's loss of social support as mothers/carers, their decline in labour force participation and changes in employment, the gender pay-gap, occupational hierarchy and political representation. A major limitation is lack of data on the quality of work, the growth of unregulated employment and casualization. The objective figures are then set against subjective responses to transformation and gender relations. Finally, developments in EO monitoring and enforcement agencies are reviewed, with the conclusion assessing the possibilities for change in the context of EU enlargement and wider socio-economic policies.

Women under the command economy and capitalism

Similarities in women's domestic and labour market position in capitalism and the command economies have long been observed. Despite laws guaranteeing women and men equality in marriage under Communism, women endured the double burden of primary responsibility for household labour as well as paid employment. The total workload of women in CEE approximated 70 hours per week, about 15 hours more than in Western Europe (UNICEF, 1999: viii). Employment segregation, both horizontal and vertical, has been similar in both systems, with women concentrated in a limited range of sectors and occupations, in 'light' manufacturing, the services and caring professions, and over-represented at the bottom of job hierarchies. The male to female wage ratio has

also been similar, with women earning between 70 and 80 percent of men's earnings. In CEE, most of this was due to segregation, but also to discrimination: in some light industry plants, women earned 24 percent less than men in the same job because of differences in bonuses (Scott, 1976: 5). Growth in research on women's disadvantage in the 1960s revealed similar findings to those in the West: women had to perform better than men to gain recognition, and even when this was achieved, equivalent posts had poorer conditions.

At the same time, there were significant differences, particularly in Communist era women's professional work and high education. Western capitalist post-war expansion of women's employment was gradual² and based on growth in service employment. Widening sexual segmentation by occupation and sector developed, even in countries such as Sweden with high female employment and political representation (Anker, 1998: 185; Ruggie, 1988: 181), and between full-time and part-time work, the latter accounting for 30 percent of women's jobs in Sweden, the UK and Canada by the late 1980s (Jenson et al., 1988: 21). Service sector growth was delayed in the command economies. State policy was dominated by labour shortage and the imperative of industrialization and women were absorbed into the labour force rapidly. In the Czech Republic, women as a percentage of the labour force grew from 38 percent in 1948 to 47 percent in 1969. Between 70 and 90 percent of working-age women (15 to 55 years) were employed in the Communist countries in 1989 – similar to the Swedish level, but much higher than the 50 percent European average (Einhorn, 1993: 113; UNICEF, 1999: 24). After transition, sectors such as retail, hotels and catering expanded from 40 percent of employment to 48 percent in 1992 (Employment Observatory, 1993: 23). Whereas service sector work accounted for over three-quarters of women's employment in most advanced capitalist countries from the mid-1980s, in the Czech Republic and Hungary it still accounted for only 60–70 percent in 1998 (OECD, 2000: 91). Part-time employment (other than in the informal sector) remains insignificant.

The impact on women of the 'double burden' of responsibility for the family and full-time employment – and even the 'triple burden' including public office – has received widespread attention (Einhorn, 1993; Heitlinger, 1979; Wolchik and Meyer, 1985). State policy was always ambivalent about treating women as producers or reproducers, and improvements in state childcare facilities, maternity grants and paid maternity leave were usually conceded only when pressure from women coincided with policies to address declining birth rates (Einhorn, 1993: 23). Yet, while western European 'second-wave' feminism arose in the 1960s and 1970s partly in response to failures of EO policies (Hoskyns, 1996: 25), during Communism a contradictory process entailing some real progress for women as workers, state polemic on women's emancipation and failure to challenge the sexual division of labour combined to quell such development. An egalitarian 'socialist family' was encouraged in rhetoric, but women's 'natural' responsibilities for reproduction and the family permeated public discourse. Furthermore, the actual provision of public service

was inadequate: although universal health care contributed to women's well-being (hence high GDI – see below), it was not of a high standard, public childcare was overcrowded, and social support for family crises was lacking (UNICEF, 1999: viii).

Nevertheless, by comparison with the West, women made inroads into gender-atypical occupations. In Czechoslovakia, until the 1950s, women were crowded into two out of 17 sectors (agriculture and health/social welfare services), but because of labour shortages, by 1966 they accounted for over half the employed in 10 out of 18 industries (Scott, 1976: 2). Women's exclusion from the high pay and status of heavy industry also led to the unintended consequence of their high educational attainment, which drew them into certain professions. Their only way upwards was through higher qualifications, a route facilitated by progressive education policies (Einhorn, 1993: 48). Even so, a male industrial technician or administrator with only nine years of compulsory education earned almost as much as a woman with a university degree (Scott, 1976: 6). Only particular graduate professions became feminized, however. In Poland, women moved into medicine, specialized legal areas, business and economics, including accountancy – occupations with lower status and pay than those in heavy industry (Bialecki and Heyns, 1993: 116). In Czechoslovakia, women predominated in nursing, office work, teaching and library work. They comprised 40 percent of doctors, 60 percent of medical students and 90 percent of pharmacology students. Yet despite segregation, women entered qualified professions in larger numbers than in the West.

Finally, in politics, the Communist system combined female representation with political weakness. The quota system ensured women filled between 23 and 30 percent of parliamentary seats, and guaranteed some positions in the Party and unions. However, women were excluded from real power. In the 1960s and 1970s in the Soviet Union they never exceeded 5 percent of the highest Party organ, the political committee, and fewer than 4 percent of urban and district Party first secretaries were women (Moses, 1978: 334). The fact that female representation was conferred by a paternalist state devalued it and contributed to a declining interest in women's emancipation (Heitlinger, 1979: 65; Musilová 1999: 200), although at times the policy of containment backfired. In Czechoslovakia, for example, after the 1966 Party Congress, the women's committee established the Czech Union of Women, which prompted improvement in paid maternity and childcare leave (Scott, 1976: 114–31). However, this fell short of strengthening women's position in the labour market and incorporated only those elements of women's demands that fitted the pronatalist policies.

The parallels between capitalist and command economies' deeply structured processes of female subordination, but differences in employment and family policies, have left similarly gendered labour markets but distinctive household–employment interfaces and complex and varied approaches towards gender equality goals. These broad patterns make it appropriate to make some generalizations about Communist and capitalist gender-order legacies and their futures. However, there is always a danger of glossing over significant national

variations in such a 'systems' approach. Within Western capitalism, there are diverse state traditions regulating gender, household income, citizenship and reproduction, as comparative welfare-state studies illustrate (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Pierson and Castles, 2000). There is no evidence that these welfare structures are converging in the West, nor would it be appropriate to predict which, if any, of these traditions are being approached by post-Communist countries. The ensuing discussion traces the trajectory of gender relations change in CEE and unfolds a complexity and indeterminacy of development which, at this stage, makes it premature to make a prognosis in terms either of convergence or divergence both within CEE, and between Western and Eastern Europe. It does, nevertheless, show how deeply entrenched male power remains across both systems, and how change is the complex interplay of inherited structures and attitudes, the current political-economic priorities of 'transition' and the actions of men and women, capital, labour and the state.

Women in post-Communist transition

The Human Development and Gender Development Indices

Despite the flaws and contradictions of policy, women under Communism enjoyed significant gender equality advantage in comparison with other industrialized countries. This is demonstrated by the United Nations Development Reports' indicators of development, the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI).³ From the time a GDI was first calculated in 1991, it was evident that CEE countries ranked high internationally in gender equality, and 10–15 places higher than their HDI. An alternative index, the Relative Status of Women, which avoids conflating absolute human development with gender equality as does the GDI, places post-Communist countries even higher, outstripping advanced Nordic countries. On these calculations, using UNDP sources for 1995–96, Estonia came first, followed by Latvia, the Russian Federation, Lithuania, the Slovak Republic, Finland, Poland, Hungary and Sweden (Dijkstra and Hanmer, 2000: 69). Other rankings, such as UNICEF's 'State of the World's Children' also suggest that UN calculations underestimate the achievement of 'transition' countries in key areas of development pertinent to children and women's welfare (UNICEF, 1999: 3). There is thus broad consensus on the gender-equality advantage of the command economy legacy. The UN GDI figures are referred to here, since they provide the only means of tracking gender inequality over time.⁴

Table 1 shows that for human development, the nadir of transition for most CEE countries was 1995, with some recovery thereafter. However, the pattern for gender equality is different (Table 2). Just after transition in 1990, Czechoslovakia (the only country for which longitudinal tracking is possible) ranked at eighth place in Gender Sensitive HDI (UNDP, 1991: 17). By 1998 it had sunk to 33rd. Some of this plunge followed the drop in HDI due to

Table 1 HDI Ranking of Five CEE Countries, 1990–1999

Country	HDI 1990	HDI 1992	HDI 1995	HDI 1998	HDI 1999
Czech Republic*	27	38	39	34	33
Slovakia*	27	40	42	40	35
Hungary	30	50	47	43	36
Slovenia**	34	–	37	29	29
Poland	41	51	52	44	38

*Czechoslovakia until 1993; **Yugoslavia, 1991, 1992 reports.

Source: UNDP Human Development Reports, 1991, 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2001 respectively.

recession, decline in welfare and growth in inequality and poverty, but GDI ranking continued to *drop*, whilst HDI began to *recover*. By 1998–99, the two indices had converged – (a feature of most capitalist economies) – indicating that the relative advantage of *gender*-related human development became eroded with capitalist transition. All the CEE countries for which GDI is available show a similar trend, with some (e.g. Poland) having a steeper decline than others (e.g. Slovenia). The recent (1999) recovery of GDI is an encouraging sign and needs tracking, although this remains a long way from return to the 1992 positions.

Some of these changes reflect only relative changes, since from 1992 to 1995 GDI *values* hardly changed. However, from 1995 to 1998, values actually dropped (Table 2) showing absolute decline, while from 1998 to 1999 they rose, although still not back to their 1992 levels. In sum, these trends show that capitalist transition not only failed to maximize the female human resource legacy left by the Communist regimes, but damaged it. What are the processes contributing to this deterioration?

Table 2 GDI Ranking and Values of Five CEE Countries, 1990–1999

	Gender sensitive index 1990		GDI 1992		GDI 1995		GDI 1998		GDI 1999	
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value
Czech Republic*	8	0.830	15	0.858	25	0.864	33	0.841	32	0.842
Slovakia*	8	0.830	16	0.855	26	0.861	36	0.822	34	0.829
Hungary	–		23	0.836	34	0.834	38	0.813	35	0.826
Slovenia**	–		–		24	0.867	28	0.857	27	0.871
Poland	–		22	0.838	35	0.834	40	0.811	36	0.826

**Yugoslavia, 1991, 1992 reports. *Czechoslovakia until 1993. GDI Figures for 1990 and 1992 indicate new 'gender sensitive DHI' in the years before GDI was systematised in 1995.

Source: UNDP Human Development Reports, 1991, 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2001.

Transition and the household–employment interface

While the two-earner household is as essential as ever, the shift away from the former ‘worker-mother’ state policy has made combining child-care and employment difficult. Women’s family position and number of children are increasingly affecting their labour market chances (Kuchařová, 1999: 180). Public childcare has been reduced. In Hungary, childcare allowance became means-tested in 1996, which confined it to only the very poorest women, and in the Czech Republic privatization has made it expensive: a month’s childcare in 1998 cost around 10 percent of the average monthly wage (Čermaková, 1999: 129).

In employment, the legal continuation of other benefits, such as extended maternity and sick child leave,⁵ has become a pretext for employers to discriminate against women as ‘expensive’, ‘unreliable’ and ‘poorly attached to the labour market’. In the context of weak trade unionism, women are left to enforce their social rights individually and fear of victimization or job loss deters them from trying (LaFont, 2001; Nowakowska and Swêdrowska, 2000: 5; UNICEF, 1999: 54). If they do take up their entitlements, many are discouraged from returning to work (Lakatos, 1998: 6). Full-time work remains the norm and comprises a long working week (for example 42.5 hours in the Czech Republic) and case study evidence shows not only that former tolerance of informal time-off for domestic reasons has disappeared, but women are also pressurized to work overtime (Pollert, 1999: 208–26). With the increase in the unpaid work burden resulting from the cutbacks in social services and withdrawal of state benefits (UNDP, 1999: 7), the ‘double-burden’ has become even heavier.

As well as suffering new pressures in employment, women as providers and carers bear the brunt of managing reduced household incomes. Average real wages have only just returned to their pre-1989 levels in two countries – the Czech Republic and Poland. Growing inequalities, both of earnings and of household incomes have created greater relative poverty in CEE (Flemming and Micklewright, 1999: 56–66).⁶ One recent examination of Hungary estimated that 30 percent of the population now lived on ‘minimum subsistence’ levels (Galgóczy, 2000: 15) and even absolute poverty⁷ has grown. For example, in 1987–88 in Hungary, only 1 percent of the population lived in poverty, and by 1993–95 this had grown to 7 percent (UN/ECE, 2000: 126). Throughout CEE there has been an erosion of cash benefits, such as family allowance, which replaced Communist-period non-cash support, such as price subsidies.⁸ Apart from dealing with material problems, women as carers also deal with greater family stress and health problems, and spending cuts in health have made matters worse. In Hungary, between 1990 and 1998, health care expenditure as a percentage of GDP almost halved, from 9.8 percent (just above the EU average) to 5.6 percent (Galgóczy, 2000: 21). There has also been a rise in violence against women and a rise in the divorce rate from over one in three marriages in Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1989, to over half in 1997 (UNICEF,

Table 3 Share of women in labour market indicators in selected CEE transition countries, 1985 and 1997 (percentages)

	Women as % employment		Women as % unemployment	Women as % long-term unemployment
	1985	1997	1997	1997
Czech Republic	46.2	43.4	57.0	53.9
Hungary	47.9	44.0	38.6	35.8
Poland	46.2	44.7	53.8	59.7
Slovakia	–	45.0	49.0	50.6
Slovenia	46.5	46.3	47.0	43.2

Source: UN/ECE, 1999: 138, based on UN/ECE secretariat estimates based on national labour force surveys, statistical yearbooks and direct communication with statistical offices.

1999: 53, 129). There is also a higher incidence of depression among women than previously (UNICEF, 1999: 75).

Women's job loss and changes in employment

Although changes in labour statistics make comparisons of employment rates over the transformation period difficult, it is clear that while both men and women suffered from the recession, women were disproportionately affected. Women's share of the labour force (i.e. employed and unemployed), as well as of employment, has declined from 1985 to 1997, while their share of registered unemployment (and long-term unemployment) is higher than their share of employment (except for in Hungary, see Table 3).

In the Czech Republic, women's unemployment increased further relative to men's between 1997 and 1998, and in Hungary, although unemployment went down, the women's rate began to approximate the men's. Only in Poland did a general rise in unemployment in this latter period affect men slightly more than women – although the female rate remains 3.1 percent higher than the male rate (Table 4).

However, it is change in the size of employment, rather than unemployment, that shows the relative deterioration in women's employment most clearly, because this figure includes those who have not registered as unemployed but have left the labour force (Table 4). In Hungary women's employment declined by 40 percent from 1985 to 1997, although their unemployment rate was lower than men's. In the Czech Republic, the decline in female employment (11.8%) was almost 10 times the decline in male employment (1.2%).

Female job loss followed large cuts in public services (which were and continue to be highly feminized) and gendered patterns of sectoral change. Between 1992 and 1997, agriculture declined faster than total employment in most

Table 4 Male and Female Labour Force and Employment change, 1985–1997, and Unemployment 1997, 1998

	Labour force*		Employment		Unemployment rate			Unemployment rate		
	change %		change %		% 1997 and female			% 1998 and female		
	1985–1997		1985–1997		minus male rate			minus male rate		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	F–M	M	F	F–M
Czech Republic	2.9	–5.5	–1.2	–11.8	4.00	6.7	2.7	5.0	8.2	3.2
Hungary	–22.5	–35.1	–29.8	–40.1	9.5	7.8	–1.7	8.1	6.9	–1.2
Poland	0.4	–1.6	–8.3	–13.4	8.7	12.0	3.3	9.5	12.6	3.1
Slovakia					10.8	12.5	1.7			
Slovenia	–9.2	–9.7	–15.6	–16.2	7.0	7.2	0.2			

*Labour force = employed + unemployed.

M = male, F = female.

Source: Selected countries from UN/ECE, 1999: 136 and 137 and UNDP Human Development Report, 2000: 259.

countries, and within this, women's employment dropped more than men's (UN/ECE, 1999: 138). In manufacturing the pattern varied between countries. In the Czech Republic, women suffered in light industries, such as textiles, which contracted as a result of trade deregulation and competition, although in Poland, women took an increased share of labour-intensive branches of textiles (UN/ECE, 1999: 138). Women's labour force activity (the share of the working-age population participating in the labour force) has also declined, partly because of higher enrolment rates in education among young women and partly because of difficulties with childcare. Women over 50, who would normally have worked until 55, are increasingly taking on the role of childcare, or are being encouraged to take early retirement⁹ (UNICEF, 1999: 26). In Hungary, for example, the female participation rate was 75.8 percent in 1989 but had dropped to 57.4 percent by 1994 and 53.2 percent by 1997 (Frey, 1998: 2). However, a general feature across CEE was that many women left the labour force because employment became uneconomic due to the combination of the drop in real wages and loss of social benefits and services associated with employment (UN/ECE, 1999: 135). This does not mean that these women ceased working. There are no accurate figures on the growth of the informal economy, but research on clothing production in Poland, for instance, estimates that around Lodz and Katowice, 50 percent of manufacture is in the grey economy (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2001: 7).

Post-transition employment decline for both men and women was partly compensated for by growth in services, but in contrast to the West European pattern, male job growth was greater than female. Although women still make up over half of service sector employment, their share has not increased overall and has actually declined in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, especially in trade and repair, hotels and restaurants, and transport and communication

Table 5 Share of women in selected services, 1992–1997

	Czech Republic		Hungary		Poland		Slovakia		Slovenia	
	1993	1997	1992	1996	1993	1997	1994	1997	1993	1997
Total Services	54.8	54.4	54.2	52.6	56.4	55.0	56.5	57.3	55.8	56.0
Trade, repair	57.0	55.1	58.2	51.4	56.9	52.2	56.2	57.7	56.3	52.3
Hotels, restaurants	56.7	55.8	57.9	50.7	70.4	67.7	64.7	64.0	64.3	65.8
Transport and communication	35.0	31.1	29.8	26.3	28.6	24.9	30.4	30.6	25.5	19.6
Financial intermediation	66.8	67.8	76.0	66.3	58.2	70.3	77.0	72.5	68.8	66.7

Source: from UN/ECE, 1999: 141.

(Table 5). The only major increase has been in financial intermediation in Poland, probably as a result of the legacy of women's high qualifications in finance and economics. Otherwise, occupational change data suggest that within services, women hold the same types of low-level, routine jobs, as they do in the West, although more qualitative research on women's experience of work, both in the formal and informal sectors, is needed.

Employment segregation and the wage gap

Changes in sexual segregation can partly be gleaned from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88),¹⁰ which has been used in some CEE countries since 1993, and in all since 1995. Calculations, based on ILO data, of women's spread across occupational groups between 1995 and 1999, show a similar distribution in CEE as in western European countries, such as Sweden and the UK. The majority of women workers are spread across technical and associate professionals, service work and clerical and elementary occupations. Group 4 (Clerks) is 75 to 90 percent female and Groups 5 and 9 (shop workers and elementary occupations) are between 50 and 66 percent female. By contrast, only a quarter to a third of Group 1 is female, although in some countries a slightly higher percentage of women have entered Groups 1 and 2 (Slovakia and Slovenia), and in several countries there are higher proportions of women in these higher groups than in western Europe, possibly reflecting the legacy of women's presence in the professions discussed above.

Whilst the gender pay gap between men and women is remarkably similar across CEE, and similar to that in the West (in 1997, women's average monthly earnings were between 78 and 81% of men's), the situation is in flux (Table 6). Although there has been a narrowing of the gender gap since Communist times, subsequently there appears to have been some variation between countries. In Slovenia, where the gender pay gap was narrow by western European standards

Table 6 Gender pay ratios, selected countries, 1987, 1992, 1996

Country	Female monthly wages as a percentage of male monthly wages		
	1987	1992	1996
Czech Republic	66.1	73.0	81.3 (73.4%[1997])
Slovakia	66.1	73.3	78.2
Poland	73.7	79.0	79.0
Hungary	74.3	80.8	78.1 (1997)
Slovenia	87.0	88.6	85.4

Source: selection from UNICEF, 1999: 33; NB monthly figures do not give information on hours worked and are less satisfactory than average gross hourly earnings, the basis for the 1995 European Structure of Earnings Survey (EOC, 2001).

in the 1980s, after some improvement in 1992, it widened again in 1996. In Hungary, after early improvement, women's wages dropped again in 1997 to 78 percent of men's, while in Poland there has been no change since 1992. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia the gender gap narrowed until 1996, but by 1997 had widened again in the former – back to women earning 73.4 percent of men's earnings (Čermaková, 1999: 132).

Initial conclusions were that the pay gap was narrowing in CEE and was not due to a 'selectivity bias', because of the exclusion from the labour force of low-paid female workers (Brainerd, 2000; UNICEF, 1999: 33). However, Brainerd's data refer to 1992 and recent research suggests that the narrowing of the gap was a temporary phenomenon of early transition due largely to deterioration in men's pay and employment. A study of the gender pay gap in Poland (Grajek, 2001) found that 80 percent of the change between 1987 and 1996 occurred in 1989, when managers of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were first free to reduce labour costs. Since men were in the majority in the SOE industrial sector, they were particularly exposed to early job and wage cuts. In this early period there was also a brief window of opportunity for educated women to use their 'human capital' advantage, and some did enter better-paid jobs. Yet after this initial narrowing of the gap, the pattern was reversed after 1992, with women suffering pay and job losses, particularly through economies in the public services (Grajek, 2001: 13). Similar processes may have occurred elsewhere. The gender pay pattern in Hungary is similar, and it is plausible that draconian bankruptcy laws early in transition may also have similarly affected men's jobs and wages. In the Czech Republic, where SOEs were protected by the state for longer (Pollert, 1999: 77), this process may have been delayed, which would partly explain the continuing improvement in the gender wage gap, but its later widening. These speculative hypotheses need further research in order to forecast future trends. The current gap remains wide and is roughly equal to the EU 15 countries, where women's average full-time gross hourly earnings were 75 percent of men's in 1995.¹¹

A further factor in CEE likely to exacerbate gender pay disparities is the emergence of the private sector, and women's under representation in it. It appears that the public-private sector divide is more significant in terms of pay than, for example, occupational grade. In Hungary, private sector women workers earn 10 percent more than those in the public sector, which is almost three-quarters female (Lakatos, 1998: 11). The role of discrimination has been demonstrated across the region (UNICEF, 1999: 31). Although the pay gap narrows when the effect of labour-market segregation is taken into account, its main component remains. Comparative research based on 1993 Social Stratification Survey data concluded that half of the gender wage gap was due to discrimination at the point of recruitment, with women equally qualified to men lower down the hierarchy (Pailhé, 2000: 514).

Recent econometric analysis in the Czech Republic and Slovakia using 1998 hourly wage rates isolated the significance of discrimination. In the private sector, the Czech gender pay gap was about 30 percent and was slightly lower in Slovakia. Two thirds of this was due to 'gender differences in wages that remain after accounting for most forms of workplace segregation as well as for other explanatory variables' (Jurajdna, 2001: 24). Qualitative research exposed the discriminatory process. In Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia managers were not 'systematically hostile' to women, but thought them 'docile' but 'hard-working', while men were 'technically competent' with 'supervisory skills'. More than three-quarters of respondents considered their female workforce posed a problem due to family responsibilities (Pailhé, 2000: 517).

Education does not seem to be helping women's labour market chances, as human capital theory in the new market economy might predict. Across CEE female educational enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education improved from 1995 to 1997 (for instance, from 76 to 82 percent in Slovenia and 68 to 75 percent in Hungary) (UNDP HDI and GDI ranking 1998, 2000), but women still suffered disproportionate employment loss. Analysis of Czech educational data between 1994 and 1997¹² suggests a consistent pattern of disadvantage. At almost every level of educational attainment, the percentage of women unemployed is almost twice that of men. While apprenticeship attainment for men and women remained roughly static over the period (around 47% and 31% of the labour force respectively), unemployment for men in this group rose only slightly (from 3 to 4%), but for women, it rose further from 5 to 7 percent. While women university graduates' percentage of the labour force rose from 8 to 9 percent over this period, female graduate unemployment doubled from 1.3 to 2.6 percent. The male graduate percentage remained at 11 percent, as did the male graduate unemployment at 1.4 percent. The explanations are likely to lie partly in the segregation of the labour force, and declining job opportunities in feminized graduate professions (retrenchment in the public sector, including teaching and medicine), but also in lack of entry through discrimination.

Czech research on women graduates also shows that the higher up the educational ladder women reach, the more likely they are to suffer pay inequality,

suggesting a 'glass ceiling' similar to that experienced by British women (Hansard Society, 1990). Women doctors earn 76 percent of the salary of their male colleagues, university lecturers 85 percent, lawyers 91 percent, chemists 73 percent, and programmers 82 percent (Čermaková, 1999: 136). In general, women university graduates have the same earnings as men with a secondary school certificate – i.e. one level of education lower. At this top level, little seems to have changed.

Women's political representation and involvement

The decline of female representation in politics since 1989 has been widely observed (Havelková, 1999; Šašić Šilović, 2000: 472; UNICEF, 1999: 94). In 1996, the poorest female political participation rates at ministerial level in CEE were in the Czech Republic (0%) and Hungary (5%), although the average at sub-ministerial level was 11 percent – just slightly below the OECD average of 14 percent. After 1996, there were some improvements at ministerial level, notably in the Czech Republic, but also some declines in Slovakia and Slovenia (Table 7).

Some have argued that the decline in women's political representation allows greater transparency about real gender power relations, which is an advance on former tokenism (UNICEF, 1999: 95). However, women's absence at senior levels early in transition left the path clear for conservative policies that undermined women's social protection, as well as sexism in the media and public discourse (Havelková, 1999; Lokar, 2000: 75). The post-Communist aversion to quotas and 'special treatment' EO also flows against the current in the EU, where gender disadvantage has been confronted with positive action

Table 7 Senior government positions held by women pre- and post-1996 (percent) and sub-ministerial level, selected countries

	Ministerial level 1996 %	Ministerial level post-1996		Sub-ministerial level, 1996 %	Total, 1996 %
		Election date	%		
Central Europe	7.2			11.4	10.7
Czech Republic	0.0	1998	15.0	12.6	10.6
Slovakia	15.0	1998	12.7	15.7	15.6
Poland	8.3	1997	13.0	10.1	9.8
Hungary	5.6	1998	8.3	7.1	6.9
Slovenia	9.1	1996	7.8	19.7	16.9
OECD	16.8	–	–	13.8	14.6
Nordic	33.1	97/98	38.0	19.0	22.3

Source: UNICEF, 1999: 97 for 1996 figures. UNDP, 1999: 66 and Appendix II, compiled by Inter-Parliamentary Union for post-1996 figures.

initiatives¹³ and increased the number of countries where over 20 percent of parliamentary seats were female from six to 10 between 1980 and 2000 (Lokar, 2000: 74).

At the municipal council and local authority levels, women fare better (UNICEF, 1999: 100), and they have been crucial in the creation of 'civil society' in forming NGOs. These vary in nature, but include gender equality, women's business, cultural, human rights organizations and those concerned with children, family, health, education, community and ecological issues. The Network of East-West Women has over 2000 members in 40 countries (LaFont, 2001: 216) and its website lists around 30 NGOs in the Czech Republic, 20 in Slovenia, and 6 in Poland, including several, such as the Prague Gender Studies Centre and the Women's Rights Centre Warsaw, which have produced important research on women and transformation.¹⁴ In Hungary, there are at least 30 women's 'civil organizations', including feminist networks, an Equal Opportunities Society, Society of Romany Women in Public Life, Women's Federation for World Peace, and Green Women. These grassroots activities are fertile areas for research.

Women have also become organized in professional organizations and women's sections of political parties and trade unions (ILO-CEET, 1998). At executive level, CEE women's position is not markedly inferior to the still poor female representation in trade unions across the rest of Europe (Table 8). Although they comprise between a third and half of union membership, their representation at congress and in union leadership varies between 11 and 28

Table 8 Women's Representation in Trade Unions, 1998

	<i>Trade union organization</i>	<i>Trade union membership % women</i>	<i>Women delegates to congress %</i>	<i>Executive committee % women</i>
Czech Republic	CMKOS	43	20	18
Slovakia	KOS SR	48	25	11
Hungary	LIGA	30	31	14
	MSZOSZ	50	28	18
Poland	Solidarity	42	9	10
	NSZZ			
Austria	OGB	32	21	13
Germany	DGB	24	28	24
	DAG	55	41	25
France	CFDT	46	25	25
Norway	LO	44	40	20
	AF	44	30	42
UK	TUC	38*	33	19

Source: ETUC 1998, 23–25. *Figure for UK TUC from 'Labour Research', March 2000: 17. NB no figures for Slovenia.

percent (except for in Poland's Solidarity NSZZ, where women have no more than 9–10 percent of decision-making posts).

In spite of (and because of) the general inertia towards gender issues in the union movement, women have been involved in grassroots self organization (Musilová, 1999: 201; Šašić Šilović, 2000: 471). In 1997, women from CEE, the Balkans and the Baltic states formed an International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Women's CEE Network. In spite of organizational barriers, the Network, together with the International Labour Organization's Central Eastern Europe Team, set out a programme in 2000 to strengthen gender awareness in trade unions, ensure a gender dimension in trade union programmes and build a gendered database of trade union members (Petrović, 2000).

Contradictory attitudes towards gender and transition in post-Communism

Post-Communist attitudes toward gender relations are nuanced and contradictory. This complexity stems both from pre-Communist legacies, and the tainted Communist experience of politically imposed 'emancipation' and continuing sexual subordination. Such layered views and ideologies have differing national, historical legacies, and while the Czech composition is alluded to here, similar constellations of views in which 'conservative' gender relations stereotypes co-exist with desires for greater gender equality, have resulted elsewhere.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Czech women's movement fought for universal suffrage, which was achieved in the declaration of Czechoslovak independence in 1918 (Musilová, 1999: 199). At the same time, however, there was strong public support for the middle-class model of the male breadwinner family (Rendlová, 1999: 168). While the later Communist promotion of women's public engagement favoured the emancipatory legacy of the First Republic, 'traditional' views on women's domestic roles now thrived, both as a form of resistance to state rhetoric on women's emancipation and as a response to experience which added little to support the 'liberation' of paid work (Musilová, 1999: 200). The family was now the social/political refuge in which women were the centre of support, whilst female networks supplemented inadequate state welfare and poor consumer goods supplies.

Since capitalist restoration, the rise in conservative gender attitudes has received widespread attention in the transition literature. Most studies of gender attitudes reveal a spectrum from indifference to hostility to women's liberation and feminism (Heitlinger, 1996; Limanowska, 1993; Rendlová, 1999: 169; Watson, 1993). Questions of gender equality (in pay and job opportunities) have been regarded as superfluous luxuries in the serious business of transition – a male prerogative (Watson, 1993, on Poland). In the Czech Republic, a number of surveys between 1994 and 1999 found that women had 'virtually no sensitivity to the question of gender differences or the perceptions of dis-

crimination. Qualitative research also demonstrates an almost universal lack of knowledge of feminist or gender perspectives, among, for instance, women doctors or teachers' (Čermaková, 1999: 132). There are similar findings in Poland (Nowakowska and Swêdrowska, 2000: 9). Lack of interest in gender issues is associated with the legacy of accepting 'innate' difference, with the sexes having complementary roles. A Czech study found that, while men recognized women's 'rights and abilities', they were unwilling to 'relieve' them of domestic work, and while women aspired to some relief from domestic burdens, they also stressed their irreplaceable position in the family (Kuchařová, 1999: 184). Anecdotally, interviews with Czech women have revealed essentialist views of female superiority in the domestic sphere and the pointlessness of trying to involve men in what they are not good at – a sexual politics of difference (own research). A European comparative study of gender attitudes in 1994 noted that Czech replies expressed fairly strong beliefs in the damage to children and family life of female employment and in women's greatest fulfilment being in home and family life, and were considerably more conservative than British and Norwegian ones (Crompton and Harris, 1997: 186).

The rise in conservative gender attitudes has prompted some to assume a widespread post-Communist anti-feminism. Watson, for example, argued that this is a symptom of capitalist transition as a 'masculine' project, since bourgeois democracy was historically a male project, with the addition that in post-Communism, men appropriated the newly opened up public sphere of 'civil society' in reaction to former state control of the 'public domain'. Opening of the public sphere allegedly allowed men to 'recapture' their oppressed masculinity and unleashed a 'nostalgia' for 'traditional' sexual roles (1993: 477), whilst eliminating the need for the family as a source of independence and thus undermining the foundations of women's former power-base. Yet an alternative interpretation of men's appropriation of political and economic power, which avoids essentialist views on 'masculinity', is that deeply structured Communist-era male strongholds were perpetuated and encouraged by capitalist transition, rather than there being some 'recapturing' of masculinity. Post-Communist transformation as a 'male project' also obscures its class dimension as a *capitalist* project – an omission recently acknowledged (Watson, 2000).

Preoccupation with anti-feminism also distorts a much more complex reality. In particular, numerous attitude surveys belie any universal desire for domestic retreat and demonstrate women's strong attachment to paid employment. Women expect EO at work and are committed to their jobs, not only for financial independence, but also for self-fulfilment (Daszyńska, 1998: 1; Kuchařová, 1999: 185; Nowakowska and Swêdrowska, 2000: 14; Paukert, 1993). Both men and women regard women's absence from politics as detrimental to society (Rendlová, 1999: 168). Inconsistencies, such as those allowing men and women simultaneously to have 'a sense of equal rights', but not to view equality issues as problems requiring solutions have been characterized as part of the 'post-communist syndrome' (Musilová, 1999: 198). However, they can be seen to express a wider 'fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential'

consciousness in Gramsci's 'common sense' (1971: 419), also observed in sociological studies of developed capitalism (e.g. Nichols and Armstrong, 1976: 148; Pollert, 1981: 87).

Once the complexities of gender attitudes are acknowledged, the fact that women's response to transition has varied – with some embracing traditional gender values, others pressing for change and many holding contradictory views – becomes more explicable. Withdrawal, as well as activity, are possible responses (Lokar, 2000: 75). Women are also heterogeneous and there are national, regional and other lines of difference. Female union activism, for example, is regionally diverse. Among the three regional sub-groups of the ICFTU-CEE women's trade union network described earlier, it has been the Baltic and the Balkan groups which have developed the fastest, with CEE countries remaining slower to effect change (Petrović, 2000: 126).

CEE and EU gender mainstreaming

Possibilities for the politics of mainstreaming

The prospects for EO in post-Communism rest both on gender attitudes and practices and institutional structures to promote and monitor change. It is apparent that gender issues are surfacing in the proliferation of NGOs and gender studies centres. Entry to the enlarged EU, in which gender mainstreaming has formally become part of the social dimension of harmonization, could become a further incentive for progress.

In terms of the post-Communist erosion of state benefits, affordable childcare and 'worker-mother' policies, EU policies for reconciling work and family life could address new tensions experienced by women in CEE. Second, the National Action Plan guidelines facilitating reintegration into the labour market are pertinent to CEE women's disproportionate job-loss, and are in tune with 'active' labour market policies for employment promotion already in place. The gender pay-gap may not immediately seem as great a problem as the general fall in real wages, and may initially be experienced as the gap between the public and private sectors, but it is likely to become increasingly perceived as a gender issue. Finally, certain aspects of mainstreaming gender could have a particular resonance in CEE. Where EO implies 'becoming like a man', it is rejected, but where it involves a paradigm shift in which caring and parenting are valued beyond the private sphere, and where the implicit gendering of organizational structures and cultures is questioned, it may alter the hostility to 'feminism'.

However, while these espoused agendas appear promising, there are serious barriers to their achievement. Apart from EO remaining low in the political and economic priorities of CEE, where it is addressed, the fact that it is merely instrumental in the pursuit of another agenda – that of joining the EU – may weaken commitment further. Another factor that may fuel antipathy, is the fact

that it is a requirement imposed from the West. In the Czech Republic, the sociologist Jiřina Šiklová accused Western feminists of 'insensitive conduct' towards the East (1993: 10). Minimal and resentful conformity with political requirements of EO policy creates the danger of legislation and practice stagnating at the level of a proclamation (Musilová, 1999: 199).

Formal institutional conformity to EO requirements could also become a substitute for real change. Gender equality has been legally guaranteed across CEE since the Communist period, both in national constitutions and ratification of international conventions.¹⁵ In the post-transition period, CEE countries have also been signatories to the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 and their commitment to democracy includes guarantees for gender equality (Šašic Šilović, 2000: 472).¹⁶ Where national laws are inadequate on EO issues, international law can theoretically take precedence. Yet without enforcement agencies, the chances of this happening are remote.

EO monitoring and enforcement agencies

EO policy institutions at Government or Ministry level have been developed with varying degrees of complexity and overlap. As well as forming policy, they report to the ILO on compliance with Convention 111 and 100 and to other relevant UN treaty monitoring bodies. Research on their effectiveness is uneven. Slovenia appointed a Women's Policy Office at government level in 1992 to monitor the position of women, discuss regulations and legislation, prepare analyses and liaise with national women's organizations, and it appears a relatively unified structure (Milivojica, 1998: 30). The Czech Republic developed several institutions later in 1998, under pressure to join the EU, but their complexity may fragment responsibility and influence. A Department for the Equality of Men and Women in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs coordinates ministerial and national gender equality policy, but although EO laws have been improved, it appears not to have greatly affected other state institutions, such as other ministries, Parliament, the Senate and the courts (Musilová, 1999: 201). Other institutions dealing with EO include a Government Council for Human Rights (with representatives of members of the public and NGOs), with a gender equality section to evaluate the fulfilment of international obligations, including CEDAW. There is also a parliamentary Commission for Equal Opportunities and Family within the Committee for Social Policy and Health Care to conduct research and promote policies on family-relevant issues such as social security and pensions (ILO, 2001). In Slovakia, there are very similar institutional developments (Placintar, 1998: 17).

Hungary has a similarly complex system, but there have been cases of successful interventions into breaches of EO law. A Secretariat of EO in the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs has responsibility for employment issues and for drafting and enforcing labour-related legislation. There is a Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights, which can also investigate equal pay cases, and a Human Rights Policy Cabinet made up of government minis-

ters. These deal with human rights issues, including equal opportunities for women, and co-operate with groups formed after the 1995 UN conference in Beijing. There is also a Hungarian Gender Databank sponsored by the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs, which contains information on women's issues (ILO, 2001). Hungary also benefited from participating in an international EO programme in 1996, having been selected from CEE to join an ILO training and information dissemination project funded by the Netherlands Government. The project's outcomes included a comprehensive report, 'Women in the World of Work' (ILO-CEET, 1998), the development of 30 EO trainers, and the first successful litigation against a company for infringing the prohibition of discrimination in job recruitment in 1997. Its experience demonstrates the importance of international support and involving women in EO training and research.

In Poland, political changes made the advancement of women's cause erratic. In 1991, the government established the office of the Plenipotentiary for the Family and Women, which operated under the vigorous leadership of Anna Popowicz until 1992, including a challenge to the legal restrictions on abortion and contraception (Nowakowska, 2000: 1). However, Popowicz was recalled in 1992, and under Hanna Suchocka, the first woman prime minister of Poland, no further appointment was made of a plenipotentiary for women. The office was not recreated until 1995, and even then did not address women's issues, concentrating on youth instead. Only after the 1995 UN Beijing conference was the title of Plenipotentiary for Family and Women recreated – but the officer appointed admitted she had no interest in gender equality issues. Her Democratic Left Alliance successor was more committed and formed alliances with women's NGO's as well as dealing with the hostility of the Catholic Church. However, following the 1997 electoral victory of the conservative Solidarity Electoral Alliance, the title of the office was again changed to Plenipotentiary for Family and shortly afterwards, the entire staff of the previous bureau were dismissed. Although the office continued to be officially obliged to honour the previously agreed National Action Plan for Women, only certain parts, such as the National Statistical Office's objectives to include more gender data, remained. There is also an Ombudsman for Human Rights who monitors the rights of women. Whether the post-2000 election victory of the socialists makes any difference remains to be seen.

In all countries, revisions of the Labour Code included gender equality, although the pace of progress is uneven. Poland's 1996 Labour Code still only guarantees equal pay for equal work, whereas the Czech Labour Code of 2000 now includes the concept of equal pay for work of equal value. The Czech Republic also prohibits discrimination (both direct and indirect) in employment on grounds of sex, marital and family status and family duties, and dismissal of pregnant women or parents having care for a child under three. However, as argued earlier, these *de-jure* rights may become a pretext for discrimination. They also encourage law avoidance strategies in 'hide and seek' between employers' evasion strategies, attempts to overcome these by further legislation, and new evasions (Kollonay Lehoczky, 1998: 4).¹⁷ The legacy of gendered

legislative tone also remains as a problem. Childcare leave, for instance, has been extended from maternity to parental leave, but in Poland, the 1996 law addresses women, and it is mothers who are offered a further three years of extended leave (beyond the first three), if a child has a chronic illness or disability (Nowakowska and Swêdrowska, 2000: 4).

Finally, the new EO institutions have not yet affected wider language and practices, such as advertising. In the Czech Republic EO issues are still satirized or undermined in the mass media and political discourse (Havelková, 1999), and in Poland, discriminatory behaviour, such as stating the preferred gender of a job candidate, is common practice (Nowakowska and Swêdrowska, 2000: 9). Nevertheless, progress has been made both in the legislatures of CEE, and in the activities of women on the ground in NGOs and trade unions.

Conclusion and discussion

The foregoing analysis has demonstrated the failure of capitalist restoration in CEE to build on the gender equality advantage of the Communist legacy. The recession caused by the neo-liberal transition programme, and the ensuing growth of unemployment, poverty and inequality, was both a class and a gendered process in which the most vulnerable, including women and children, suffered. But the 'command-equality' of the past has left little nostalgia, and women's responses to their changed world have been contradictory and varied. Equality of opportunity to live like a man was part of the old agenda, and the new one replacing it is not popular. Gender mainstreaming, interpreted as a change in paradigm, may hold some promise.

Institutionally, there have been both advances and barriers to EO. But in drawing together the threads of social and economic change, ideologies of gender relations and institutional and legal developments, the prospects for change now need contextualizing in a wider political economy. So far, changes in political parties in CEE have made little difference to the neo-liberal policies of reducing state spending, privatization and deregulation. This must be set against evidence that progress on EO in western Europe has been poorest in countries following free-market tenets. The UK, the leading proponent of a European flexible labour force, has one of the worst gender pay-gaps in the EU, 30 years after passing its Equal Pay Act in 1970.¹⁸ The limitations of voluntarism as an EO strategy are also poignantly illustrated by an ILO attempt to conduct an internet company survey of EO policies in 2000–2001, to provide a database for its Gender Promotion Programme. Out of 5000 companies contacted and followed up with phone-calls, emails and faxes, only 100 completed the brief questionnaire – a two percent response rate, providing too little data for analysis (personal communication with ILO, 2001). Advances in gender mainstreaming have been greatest among countries with social democratic traditions, such as Sweden, Denmark and Finland, and where EO has been promoted by active state intervention, public spending and involvement of trade

unions and collective bargaining (European Foundation, 1996; Lemièrè and Silvera, 1999: 515). In CEE, however, social democracy, trade unions and the wider labour movement are weak (Crowley and Ost, 2001; Pollert, 1999).

It is thus in the broader political-economic context that the likely effectiveness of new EO policies needs to be assessed. Whilst CEE countries are tied to free-market policies, commitment to EO, however genuine, and whatever the arguments for the 'business case for EO' in capitalist transition, will be hemmed in by lack of public funding and a neo-liberal trajectory now also part of the EU integration programme. Not all the responsibility for success, therefore, lies within CEE. Unless the European Commission is serious in the substantive content of the social aspects of the *acquis communautaire*, including those of gender equality, with EO gaining prominence within enlargement policy, then there is little to force genuine integration and levelling-up of practice. EO policies could remain paper declarations to satisfy enlargement criteria and the opportunity to rebuild CEE's gender equality would be lost. More widely, unless social democracy gains ascendancy within the EU, then the future of EO mainstreaming is endangered in both the 'old' and the 'new' Europe.

Notes

- 1 The National Action Plans for employment were first devised at the European Summit on Employment in Luxembourg, 1997, and gender mainstreaming was integrated following critiques of the latter in 1999 (Lemièrè and Silvera, 1999: 504).
- 2 In 1950, women comprised between 20 and 35 percent of the labour force in OECD countries such as Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, the US and the UK. In 1982, this had risen to between 33 and 46 percent (Jenson et al., 1988: 18).
- 3 The HDI was created in 1990, to give a measure of the well-being of the nation beyond GDP, and included social welfare. It uses life expectancy at birth (representing a long and healthy life); a composite indicator for educational attainment (the adult literacy rate and educational enrolment) representing knowledge; and real per capita income (based on GDP and more recently, US\$ purchasing power parity), representing standard of living. In the UNDP 1991, separate HDIs were calculated for men and women based on life expectancy, adult literacy, wage rates, employment levels and mean years of schooling and an overall gender-sensitive HDI was developed for 30 countries. The GDI was introduced for all countries in 1995. The greater the inequality, the lower the GDI value. Another measure representing gender equality in the area of political power is the Gender Empowerment Measure (UNDP, 1995).
- 4 However, using these figures longitudinally is problematic, as the data used to formulate the index for any one year refers to different previous years. Thus, HDI ranking in the 1991 UN Human Development Report uses 1990 data, while in the 1995 report, it is for 1992. The GDI values and rankings for 1995, the first year gender disaggregated data was provided on a regular basis, are based on data from 1990 and 1992, while the GDI for 1998 is based on figures

from 1995. Other problems, which are discussed in the reports themselves, are associated with changes in methodology. In 1998, the difference between men and women's income was presented as 'share of earned income, %', whereas in 2000 it was presented as 'GDP per capita, in purchasing price \$'. Further discussion in UNDP, 2001: 245).

- 5 Previous (Communist period) maternity entitlements (generous by international standards) have remained, and extended childcare or parental leave until the child is two or three years old and guaranteed re-employment (in formal terms) have been provided.
- 6 The growth of inequality is nowhere as severe in CEE as in Russia. For details of the complexities of defining and measuring changes in earnings and income distribution see Milanovic (1998), Flemming and Micklewright (1999), UN/ECE (2000: 128). There is a difference between employees' earnings and household income (the latter will be sensitive to household composition correlated with job loss and to self employment and subsistence activities). This difference is illustrated by the fact that *earnings* inequality grew fastest between 1989 and 1997 in Hungary, followed by Poland, and in the Czech Republic, it widened in 1993–95, then narrowed again in 1996–97. Slovakia showed no change (Flemming and Micklewright, 1999: 56). However, *household income* inequality (dispersion of individuals' per capita income) grew most in Poland and the Czech Republic (although this was less than for employees' earnings), while Hungary registered only a modest rise in dispersion. Few explanations are offered other than changes in tax transfers.
- 7 Research is based on Milanovic (1998) and bases absolute poverty at \$4 (at 1990 international prices), per capita per day.
- 8 In 1997, the Czech Republic spent only 0.8 percent of GDP on family allowance, half of what it had spent before 1989. Across CEE the value of child-benefit in relation to average wages has declined – in Hungary to less than half its 1990 value by 1997 (UNICEF, 1999: 50).
- 9 Paradoxically, this occurs in spite of the official retirement age being raised, e.g. in Hungary, for women, from 54 to 55 in 1997 (Frey, 1998: 1).
- 10 The ISCO-88 provides information on vertical segregation – ranging from Group 1 (legislators, senior officials and managers), to Group 9 (elementary occupations), as well as gender distribution across different sectors and occupations, and gender composition of occupational groups.
- 11 EU figures may over-estimate the wage gap, because they excluded the public sector where pay equity may be higher (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2001: 15). CEE data include the public sector.
- 12 Own calculations from 'Labour Force and its Structure by Education, Age Group and Region', Statistical Year Book of the Czech Republic, 1995, 1997, 1998.
- 13 EU positive action has largely been confined to training (Rees, 1998: 29–40), but social democratic parties in the 1980s and 1990s in Norway, Denmark and Sweden introduced quotas to ensure that both sexes had at least 40 percent representation at elections (IDEA, n.d.: 4). In 1993, the British Labour Party introduced women-only short-lists for candidates in certain 'safe' constituencies, and although it was forced to abandon this in 1996 because it allegedly contravened the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, in 2000 it was again considering a legal change to permit positive action of this type (*The Guardian*, 8 March 2000).

- 14 An example is 'Polish Women in the 90s', covering women in education, work, politics and government mechanisms for the advancement of women (<http://free.ngo.l/temida/power.htm>).
- 15 For example, ILO Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No.111), the UN Human Rights Convention and the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- 16 For example, the Czech Republic's constitutional order, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of 1993, regulates basic legal provisions safeguarding human rights. Gender equity is contained in Article 1, which provides that all people are free and equal in their dignity and in their rights, and Article 3(1), which provides that fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed to everybody irrespective of sex, social origin, or other status (ILO, 2001).
- 17 In Hungary, employers' unwillingness to employ women because of their responsibilities towards them in the case of pregnancy and parental leave, was challenged with 'positive action' in a 1997 Act, which required pregnant women and mothers of a young child to be given preference in hiring (all other conditions being equal). However this was sabotaged by employers while the authorities turned a blind eye, or was overcome by issuing only short-term contracts.
- 18 The UK ranked 12th out of the 15 countries surveyed, with full-time women workers earning 74 percent of the male average (average for the EU was 75 percent), but when part-time workers were included in the calculation, the gender pay ratio dropped to 66.4 percent compared to the EU average of 72.7 percent (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2001: 15–17).

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