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Gender Inequality in the Eastern European Labour Market

Twenty-five years of transition since the
fall of communism

Edited by
Giovanni Razzu

ROUTLEDGE


Gender Inequality in the Eastern European Labour Market

Under communism there was, in the countries of Eastern Europe, a high level of gender equality in the labour market, particularly in terms of high participation rates by women. The transition from communism has upset this situation, with different impacts in the different countries. This book presents a comprehensive overview of gender and the labour market since the fall of communism in a wide range of Eastern European countries. Each country chapter describes the nature of inequality in the particular country, and goes on to examine the factors responsible for this, including government policies, changing social attitudes, levels of educational attainment and the impact of motherhood. Overall, the book provides an interesting comparison to the situation in Western developed countries, outlining differences and similarities. No one single Eastern European model emerges while, as in Western developed countries, a range of experiences and trends is the norm.

Giovanni Razzu is Professor of Economics of Public Policy at the University of Reading, UK.

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Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CZSO	Czech Statistical Office
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EGEM	Estonian Gender Equality Monitoring
EU	European Union
EVS	European Value Study
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HDI	Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
ISSP	International Social Survey Programme
LFS	Labour Force Survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SILC	Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WDI	World Development Indicators

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Prologue

The gender dimension of labour markets in the Eastern European countries that have faced the transition from centrally planned to market economies has been the focus of a diverse set of literatures. It has received the attention of economists, sociologists and human resources specialists, who have all, with distinct methodological approaches, aimed to monitor and explain the impact that the transition has had, at various points in time, on gender inequality. These issues have also captured the interest of policy makers at the country level, as well as in international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and, of course, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

This specific geographic focus needs to be put into the wider context, whereby gender outcomes have in fact received substantial and growing attention from academics of various disciplines over time across the world. This has also been a reflection of the changing position of women in society and the labour market in developed, developing, emerging and transitional countries. In some nations, such as those in the developed world, girls have not only narrowed, but have even overtaken educational attainment gaps with boys. The participation rate of women in paid work has increased steadily over the past half a century (although this rate has slowed in the past two decades), at the same time as participation for working-age men seeing a sustained fall. However, the labour market outcomes of women, both the jobs they do and the pay they receive, often do not reflect their personal qualifications, at least relative to men, or their improvement in recent years. Despite the advancement in most dimensions of paid work, there is no evidence of gender gaps fully closing.

Notwithstanding differences that arise from disciplinary backgrounds, philosophical and political perspectives and methodological approaches, it appears that we have some overlapping consensus amongst scholars of gender inequality in the developed context on key areas of intervention to address the persistent gender inequality in the labour market. There is an overall agreement that gender inequality in the labour market is the product of many factors, most notably of a structured system of institutions and norms in which gender plays a very important part. This widespread, although not complete consensus – certainly

some disagree and would attribute gender inequality to choices women make – has led to a stronger focus, for instance, on the importance of the way gender gaps cumulate through the life cycle, start early and then develop from education to the transition into the labour market, motherhood and retirement. Within this overall approach, key areas of intervention are the gendered structure of education, particularly in some subject areas; the impact of motherhood and the household distribution of labour. Social attitudes on the role of women in the labour market are also very important, but represent a problematic area of intervention for policy makers. Moreover, the recent literature on gender gaps, while it acknowledges the role productivity and discrimination play in explaining gender inequality in the labour market, has explored different and fresh perspectives based on differences in preferences, attitudes and social norms (Croson and Gneezy, 2009; Flory et al., 2015; Leibbrandt and List, 2014, amongst others). Unfortunately, this kind of emerging consensus is not present in the case of transition economies. The existing literature in this field is extremely fragmented.

Overall, before the fall of communism, these countries were characterised by high levels of gender equality in some dimensions of the labour market, although it is difficult to be precise given the lack of robust and credible data. In general, women's labour market activity was high and countries had very high female employment rates as compared to the rest of the world, but gender gaps were still present to some extent, and more so in pay. Under communism, constitutions guaranteed the right to employment for the entire working-age population and the right to equal pay for equal work among men and women. There was no formal unemployment, and women generally worked full time throughout their adult lives. The public sector, which dominated the economy through state-owned enterprises, supplied jobs seemingly without limit. Women were seen as an essential economic input into the industrialisation process the countries embarked on. Was this enough to eliminate the gender gap in the labour market? Generally, the evidence shows this was not the case. Although women's participation in the labour market was remarkable, important gaps remained, most notably in pay and the types of jobs in which women and men tended to be employed. Moreover, the double burden of paid and unpaid work was substantial (UNICEF, 1999, Figure 2.2), not helped by the generally strong pro-natalist policies of the various governments. However, in most cases, this was accompanied by a generous system of support for families, including nurseries, kindergartens and after school programmes, but also lavish parental leave benefits. What has happened since the collapse of the centrally planned economic system and the transition to a market-based economy? To what extent has the transition upset this situation, and has it done so with different impacts in various countries of Eastern Europe?

This book discusses the experiences of eight countries that have gone through the transition and joined the European Union (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia) and one other former country, East Germany, which has experienced the collapse of the centrally planned economic system and reunification with West Germany at the same time.

A substantial amount of research has paid attention to the type of welfare systems the transitional countries have managed to develop since the collapse of centrally planned economic systems and the heavy state presence. The debates that have sprung up in this respect have seen a group of scholars suggesting that welfare systems in the region would eventually converge with those in Western Europe, the so-called Europeanisation of social policy paradigms in post-socialist countries (Lendvai, 2008; Toots and Bachman, 2010). On the other hand, another group of scholars suggest that post-socialist states might follow a different and non-traditional path, individually or as a region, in terms of welfare provision (Cerami and Vanhuysse, 2009; Manning, 2004).

However, despite this sizeable focus on welfare state regimes, a considerable evidence gap exists about comparative evidence of gender equality in the labour market for the whole period of transition covering 1990 to 2015. This is not to say that assessments of gender equality in the labour market have not been carried out: many studies have looked at the gender gaps in the labour market for transitional countries, but these have not covered the full period or the same countries consistently and have tended to focus only on a very few of them. The year 2015 marks 25 years since the collapse of the regimes – what we normally think of as a generation, from the birth of a parent to the birth of a child. Such a long-term focus is important as it allows one to see fully how, for instance, the experience of women of different ages compares: a cohort of women and men are now entering the labour market having had no direct experience of the communist past. What circumstances are they finding? How different are these from those of their mothers, who started their experience in the labour market just when these regimes collapsed, or from those of their grandmothers, who lived their working lives almost entirely under communism?

In 1993, in the very first year since the collapse of the centrally planned economic system, Barbara Einhorn (1993) in *Cinderella Goes to Market* provided a fascinating account of the impact of the early transition process on women's lives: state socialism attempted to achieve women's 'emancipation' via legislation and social provision, with a dominant focus on issues connected with the participation of women in the labour force. In contrast, the improvement of women's status was not included on the agenda of the newly democratised regimes: the predominant focus on stabilising the macroeconomic situation from the huge shock it received with the collapse of the centrally planned economy did not take into account the potential role of women in the labour market. An unfortunate combination of political objectives and rejection of the socialist past, a growing nationalism and a resuscitated ideology of the family and the economy's need to shed labour meant that the initial transition, in Einhorn's view, relegated women to the primary responsibility for the family. The attack on abortion rights in many countries was also seen as symptomatic of attitudes towards the role of women.

Has this changed during the rest of the 25 years since the transition?

Scope, objectives and limitations

The preceding questions outline the main compass of this book. This book's fundamental aim is therefore to examine the extent of changes in gender equality in the labour market in most of the countries of Eastern Europe that have experienced the collapse of communism and have then joined the European Union. Therefore, two comparative perspectives characterise this book's approach: one is over time and one is cross-country. The time-based comparison answers the question: what is the extent of gender inequality in the labour market now as opposed to the period around the fall of communism? The country-based comparison, instead, aims to shed light on why and the extent to which some Eastern European countries differ in the way gender inequality in the labour market has changed over time.

In order to address these points, we adopt a simple though systematic framework, based on an analysis of the most relevant factors that determine the extent of gender inequality in the labour market in the countries under analysis.

This prologue is followed by an introductory chapter, which sets the wider context for the following eight chapters, one for each of the countries studied. In Chapter 1, therefore, we look at changes over time for, first, a set of wider economic and development indicators and, second, for a set of key labour market indicators. The aim is to establish a helpful context to interpret the more detailed country-focused analyses that follow in the subsequent chapters.

Chapters 2 to 10 are devoted to each of the countries selected and are written by respective country experts on gender inequality. Although the experts' backgrounds vary, ranging from economics to sociology and social policy, each of these chapters has a common approach, which is composed of two distinct elements. First, each chapter describes the extent of gender inequality in key labour market variables: employment, unemployment, inactivity, pay and occupational segmentation. The gender gaps in these variables are presented for both the latest available data point and for the one as close as possible to the fall of communism. This allows for a consistent description of the changes in labour market inequality in each country. Second, based on their deep knowledge of the country's context, each contributor discusses those changes, looking to assess the main determining factors. These generally include assessment of policy interventions (i.e. childcare provision, taxation, legislation on discrimination), the role of educational and human capital factors and the role of motherhood, as well as changes in social attitudes. In this way, contributors can expand on the assessment of possible explanatory factors on the basis of their knowledge of the country's experience. The result is, we hope, a journey through eight different countries, characterised by two common starting points: a political background of communism and the fact that for all of them, at the same point in time, through 1989 and early 1990, communism collapsed: the demise of a centrally planned economic system started the transition to a market economy. What have we learnt from this journey? The epilogue draws out the key messages.

However, before we start this journey, it is important to outline some of the key limitations. The first and perhaps the most relevant one is data issues. In order to assess changes over the entire period since 1990, we need both the latest available information and consistent data for the time as close as possible to the fall of communism. However, consistent and standardised data on labour market outcomes for the countries we study in this book are only available from Eurostat from around 1997. Therefore, these data do not allow us to capture, in a fully comparative way, the first years of the transition, when economic conditions deteriorated considerably. Some data exist from other sources, and when possible and relevant we make use of them. This lacuna needs to be kept in mind, particularly for the first chapter, when we look at the wider context from a regional, cross-country perspective. However, national data sources exist for most of the countries we study and each contributor uses them to assess changes over the entire period since the transition in the respective countries. Therefore, data for the earlier period of transition will be different in each country, depending on specific data development and availability issues: in some countries, for instance Germany, the labour force data go back much further than in other countries, where other sources, such as temporary surveys, have been carried out. Indeed, this is one of the reasons we have opted for a detailed assessment of individual countries' experiences, within a mostly common framework.

There are various dimensions of the experience of transition economies this book does not discuss, and particularly the theoretical ones. No specific theory characterises this book's approach. Moreover, this book does not aim to enter the debate on what kind of welfare states transition economies can be classified as, which we have briefly mentioned in this prologue. The reason is simple: this is the product of various scholars, all with their own background and disciplinary approach. There is no dominant disciplinary approach but, instead, a recognition that gender inequality in the labour market is the product of a series of factors that relate to the economy, society, culture and politics, to mention only a few.

Finally, a note on the geographical focus and the terminology used throughout this book. The aim of this book is to assess changes in gender inequality in the labour market in countries that have experienced the fall of the communist regimes, for the entire period since 1990. Due to time and resource constraints, some of these countries are not studied in this book. We have attempted to cover those countries that have joined the European Union, but even in this case, we have not been able to cover Slovakia, Latvia and Croatia. However, the experience of the eight countries and East Germany do provide a very rich account of the experience of transition economies in terms of gender equality.

Terms like *totalitarianism*, *communism*, *socialism* and *regime*, but also, although to a lesser extent, *transition economies*, *the fall of the Iron Curtain*, *centrally planned economies* and *democracy* might all have a different meaning in different contexts. In some, a totalitarian regime prevailed in the immediate post-war period; in others, such a regime continued or strengthened up until 1989. Although all were characterised by a lack of free elections, it is arguable

whether the main aspect of the transition we focus on here is that from a lack of democracy to a democratic system.

For this reason, we use these terms interchangeably across the chapters of this book and do not define them precisely. This is because we use these terms to describe a specific point in time (i.e. 1989–1990) or a period of time (i.e. the transition since 1990), and therefore to define a time frame for the assessment of changes in gender equality in the labour market. Although we recognise that the pre-1990 legacy has affected the path taken from 1990 onwards, and various chapters make this point forcefully, we think the focus on the transition since 1990 does not require a full discussion on the meaning of terms such as *communism*, *socialism*, *totalitarianism*, *regime* and so on. The key dimension is the transition from a centrally planned to a market economic system.

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1 The wider context

Giovanni Razzu

In this chapter, we describe key facts with the aim of providing the reader with the relevant context to interpret the more detailed country-focused analyses that follow in the subsequent chapters. We will focus on two kinds of facts: first, we will present the wider economic and development context, describing trends over the time period since the fall of the communist regimes in 1989–1990, in economic growth as well as in economic inequality and in human development; second, we will concentrate on crucial labour market variables from a comparative perspective.

As said in the prologue, one of the objectives of this book is to understand the extent of the changes in gender equality in the labour market the countries under analysis have gone through over the past 25 years. Although we cannot assume they all started from a similar gender equality situation around 1990, when the centrally planned economies collapsed, as we will see in subsequent chapters, the Eastern and Central European countries discussed here did share one characteristic: they were united by a similar set of ideological principles about gender equality. This set of principles could be traced back to Friedrich Engels' work on the interaction between the family, private property and the state, according to which, once the means of production pass into common property, private housekeeping is socialized and “the care and education of children becomes a public matter” (Engels, 1884). Although it can be argued that echoes of this can be seen in modern legislation on gender equality as well as in various policy initiatives on women and work in Western and economically advanced countries with no socialist or communist past, it is certain that an explicit commitment to gender equality from the state was common to our Eastern EU countries before the transition to a market economy. Moreover, this commitment was to be pursued through economic independence of women and active participation in the labour market, facilitated by direct provision of childcare facilities and the “socialization” of household duties.

Naturally, this political commitment was accompanied by specific economic policies, and in particular those associated with a centrally planned approach whereby, for instance, wages were set in each sector of the economy. In some instances, the extent of gender inequality in the labour market during the totalitarian period was also determined by a recognition of the need to industrialize

what had been traditionally rural societies: female participation was therefore required with the promise of equal pay for equal work (Brainerd, 2000).

However, despite the fact that women in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe drove tractors, the socio-economic system did not prevent gender inequality in work, as will be evident in the country analyses when, for instance, we look at gender segregation, the division of labour within the household and, in some instances, the gender pay gap.

As already pointed out, one aim of this book is to compare the experience of the Eastern EU countries during the past 25 years. Comparisons about changes over time are hampered by lack of consistent data on labour market outcomes for the earlier period around the fall of the centrally planned economic systems in 1990. This is one of the reasons we have opted for detailed assessments of individual countries' experiences, within a mostly common framework. Therefore, in the remaining part of this chapter, we will provide a brief overview of the wider economic context and changes over time for a set of key variables for which consistent data for the earlier period can be presented with a degree of confidence. However, for the labour market variables, in this chapter we have to report changes over a shorter period of time, mostly from the beginning of the second half of the 1990s when consistent Eurostat data become available. This lacuna, however, will be more than compensated for in the individual chapters, which can fill the gap with national data sources and provide a detailed picture of changes over time.

We start with the wider context, particularly the economic one. Although there is a tendency to group these countries together – a tendency sometimes justified by the fact they all shared a similar political regime and economic policy approach – an initial look does reveal this is a set of heterogeneous countries in many respects.

Table 1.1, for instance, shows these were countries of different population size: Poland and Romania were large countries with populations of around 37 and 23 million people, respectively. Estonia, Slovenia and Lithuania were instead small countries, with populations of between 1.5 and 3.7 million people. In between, we find Hungary and the Czech Republic, with around 10 million people in 1990. The latest available data show that, by 2014, three countries (Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Poland) experienced positive, although very limited, population growth, while the others saw their populations decrease over the past 25 years, the most pronounced decreases occurring in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania.

Figure 1.1 shows the age distributions of the populations both in 1990 and in 2014. We have focused on three main age groups: the young (below 17), the main working-age population (18 to 59 years old) and those older than 60. Two main points emerge from this figure: first, no major differences are seen between the countries in the proportions of the three groups, in both years. Second, all countries experienced a reduction in the proportion of young people aged below 17 – which represented around a quarter of the total population in 1990 and around 18 per cent in 2014 – and an increase of the older population aged 60

Table 1.1 Total population at the beginning of the year, 1990–2014

	1989	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Male Population							
Czech Republic	5,033,142	5,035,658	5,020,464	5,001,062	4,980,913	5,157,197	5,162,380
Hungary	5,106,715	4,984,904	4,941,620	4,865,194	4,793,115	4,756,900	4,703,391
Poland	18,467,046	18,540,495	18,778,040	18,547,799	18,470,253	18,428,742	18,629,535
Slovenia	968,350	968,252	964,375	970,812	977,052	1,014,107	1,020,874
Estonia	731,392	734,538	671,264	653,080	631,710	620,800	614,919
Lithuania	1,738,953	1,747,473	1,717,208	1,644,301	1,562,264	1,450,199	1,355,995
Bulgaria	4,439,333	4,323,773	4,129,966	3,991,161	3,767,610	3,659,311	3,524,945
Romania	11,402,309	11,450,831	11,143,398	10,980,041	10,417,145	9,880,409	9,738,445
Female Population							
Czech Republic	5,326,892	5,326,444	5,312,697	5,277,036	5,239,664	5,349,616	5,350,039
Hungary	5,481,899	5,389,919	5,395,081	5,356,450	5,304,434	5,257,424	5,173,974
Poland	19,417,609	19,497,908	19,802,557	19,715,504	19,703,582	19,738,587	19,866,124
Slovenia	1,027,975	1,028,125	1,025,102	1,016,943	1,020,538	1,032,869	1,040,211
Estonia	834,270	836,061	776,811	748,170	727,140	712,490	700,900
Lithuania	1,935,849	1,946,235	1,925,783	1,867,773	1,792,956	1,691,777	1,587,477
Bulgaria	4,547,303	4,443,535	4,297,452	4,199,715	3,993,439	3,904,399	3,720,732
Romania	11,709,212	11,760,564	11,568,996	11,475,444	10,965,209	10,414,274	10,204,197

Source: Transmonee 2015 database

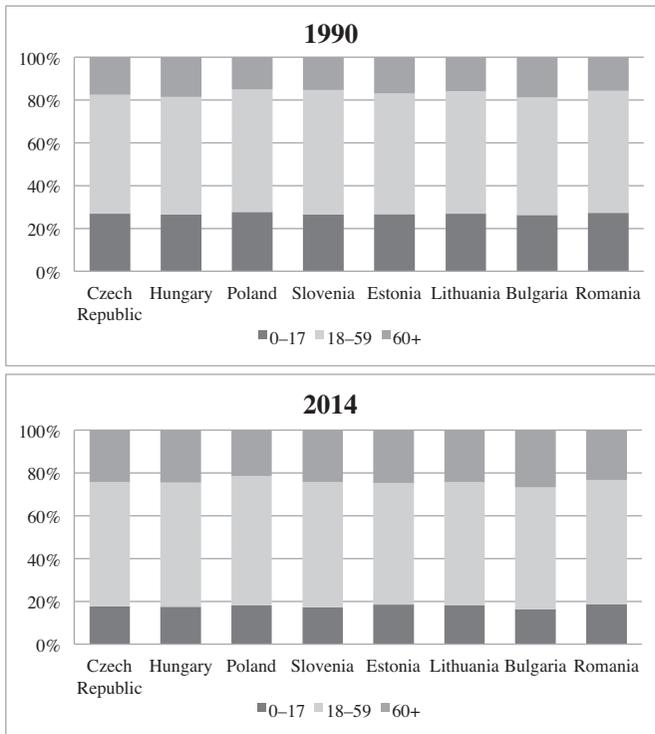


Figure 1.1 Population by age group, 1990 and 2014

Source: Transmonee 2015 database

or older – which was 16–17 per cent of the total population in 1990 and became almost a quarter in 2014.

The size of the population contributes not just to the overall size of the economy, but also to the per capita GDP, which we show in Table 1.2, also in terms of the gap from the average EU countries.

Table 1.2a GDP per capita (constant 2005 US\$, PPP), gap from EU, 1990–2014

<i>10.1.1 GDP per capita (constant 2005 US\$)</i>						
	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2013</i>
Czech Republic	10,332	9,944	10,939	13,318	14,640	14,638
Hungary	7,516	7,601	8,916	11,092	11,109	11,430
Poland	4,761	5,235	6,874	7,976	10,038	10,782
Slovenia	–	12,423	15,316	18,168	19,326	18,634
Estonia	–	4,995	7,102	10,336	10,364	11,997
Lithuania	6,726	3,975	5,122	7,851	8,871	10,549
Bulgaria	2,859	2,597	2,780	3,786	4,560	4,808
Romania	3,820	3,509	3,327	4,652	5,635	6,073
European Union	21,820	23,316	26,697	28,844	29,672	30,241
Euro area	25,064	26,760	30,368	31,938	32,610	32,789

From Transmonee 2015; Data source: World Bank, World Development Indicators database, accessed April 2015

Table 1.2b GDP per capita (constant 2005 US\$, PPP), gap from EU, 1990–2014

	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2013–1990 difference</i>
Czech Republic	0.47	0.43	0.41	0.46	0.49	0.48	0.01
Hungary	0.34	0.33	0.33	0.38	0.37	0.38	0.04
Poland	0.22	0.22	0.26	0.28	0.34	0.36	0.14
Slovenia		0.53	0.57	0.63	0.65	0.62	0.09
Estonia		0.21	0.27	0.36	0.35	0.4	0.19
Lithuania	0.31	0.17	0.19	0.27	0.3	0.35	0.04
Bulgaria	0.13	0.11	0.1	0.13	0.15	0.16	0.03
Romania	0.18	0.15	0.12	0.16	0.19	0.2	0.02
Gap from EMU							
Czech Republic	0.41	0.37	0.36	0.42	0.45	0.45	
Hungary	0.3	0.28	0.29	0.35	0.34	0.35	
Poland	0.19	0.2	0.23	0.25	0.31	0.33	
Slovenia		0.46	0.5	0.57	0.59	0.57	
Estonia		0.19	0.23	0.32	0.32	0.37	
Lithuania	0.27	0.15	0.17	0.25	0.27	0.32	
Bulgaria	0.11	0.1	0.09	0.12	0.14	0.15	
Romania	0.15	0.13	0.11	0.15	0.17	0.19	

Source: OECD database; WDI for EU, Romania and Bulgaria

Note: The first data for Hungary refers to 1991.

In order to facilitate comparisons, we use GDP per capita at 2005 prices in US\$. Unfortunately, the earliest comparable data we have for Slovenia and Estonia is for 1995, 4 years after Slovenia split from Yugoslavia and Estonia left the Soviet state and became independent countries. Using this indicator, again we can see that the extent of economic development in 1990, compared to the average in the European Union, varied widely across the countries we study here. The Czech Republic had a GDP per capita, at 2005 prices, equal to almost half that of the EU average, while Bulgaria and Romania had GDP per capita equal to 13 and 18 per cent of the EU average, respectively. In 1995, 5 years after the collapse of the centrally planned economy, the GDP per capita of Estonia was equal to 21 per cent of that of the European Union, similar to that of Poland. The table shows clearly that, for all countries (but Poland) for which we have data, GDP per capita, relative to the European Union, fell in the first 5 years of economic transition. For Lithuania, the fall in this measure of living standard was particularly marked. However, the latest data available show that the progress these countries have made in this respect has been mostly disappointing: although, overall, they have all started to fill some of the gap with the EU average GDP per capita, progress over the past 25 years has been almost nil for the Czech Republic but also negligible for Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Hungary. Estonia and Poland have instead covered much more ground and increased their GDP per capita compared to the EU average by 19 and 13 percentage points.

With Figures 1.2 and 1.3 we move beyond narrow measures of economic growth to show, first, the extent to which income is distributed among the population and, second, the extent of human development, and also changes over time in the two indicators. The Gini coefficient is a widely used measure of income inequality. As income can be measured in various ways, it is difficult to

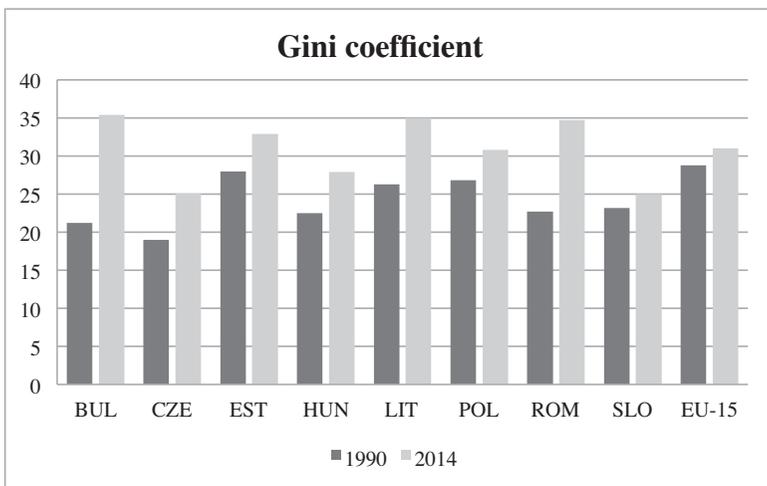


Figure 1.2 Gini coefficient, 1990 and 2014

Source: UNU-WIDER, World Income Inequality Database (WIID3.0b), September 2014

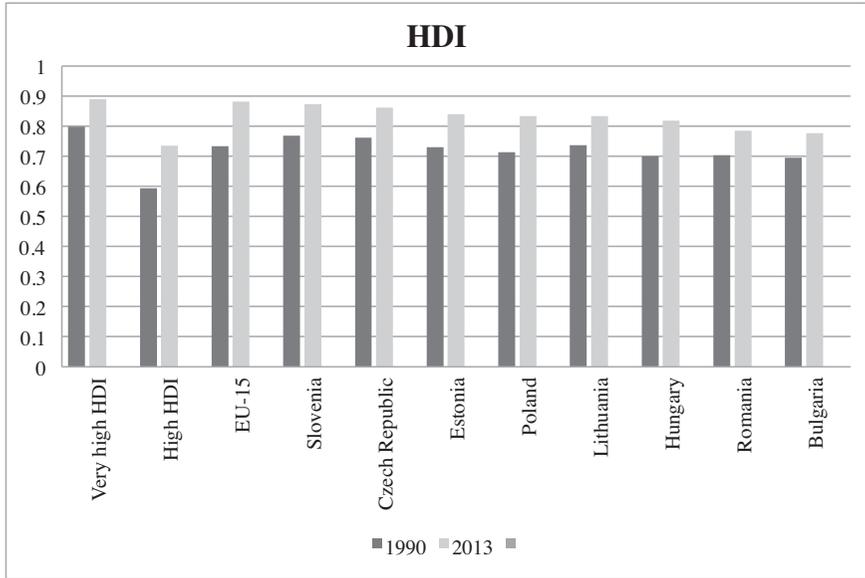


Figure 1.3 HDI, 1990 and 2013

Source: HDRO calculations based on data from UNDESA (2013a)

construct a consistent and standard measure for the countries and the whole period under consideration here. Eurostat provides a standardized measure from around 2000. For the preceding 10 years since 1990 we use an average of various coefficients collected by UNU WIDER; the average has been computed on a set of coefficients for the years around 1990, using the same source as far as possible, excluding outliers and considering coefficients based mostly on household income. Although imperfect, these data suggest two main points: income inequality was low in the Eastern EU countries around the fall of communism in 1990 and relative to the EU-15; moreover, income inequality has grown in all the countries, and in some of them, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania, the increase has been substantial enough to have reached in 2014 higher income inequality than that in the EU-15 countries. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite indicator measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. It is interesting to note, from data presented in Figure 1.2, not just shows that the HDI increased for all our countries between 1990 and 2013, but that the extent of human development in these countries has always been very high. Both in 1990 and 2013, the HDI of the countries we study here is much closer to that of the very high HDI countries, including the EU-15, than to that of the high HDI countries. Therefore, in terms of human development,

the Eastern EU countries have had and have maintained a very high ranking, not dissimilar to that of the EU-15.

This brief overview of some macro indicators reveals that the Eastern EU countries we are studying here are characterized by heterogeneous experiences of economic development and more homogenous experiences in terms of income inequality and human development, the former low and the latter high.

In what follows we focus on the labour market outcomes that will be analyzed in more details in the individual country chapters. As reported earlier, the time period we cover here in a consistently comparable way is shorter than the 25 years since 1990. For some variables, we can use the data from the World Development Indicators database, which allow us to see changes since 1990. However, for more detailed breakdowns of the variables, we would need to rely on the standardized Eurostat data, which will allow us to show changes between 2000 and 2014.

We start, in Figure 1.4, with female labour force participation rates as a percentage of the total labour force: the overall conclusion is one of limited or no progress in female participation over the past 25 years for most countries, only Lithuania and Hungary having experienced an increase over time. The other countries saw either a decrease in female labour market participation or no change at all. This is in stark contrast to the average of the EU-15 countries. Participation rates remain well below 50 per cent across the countries and over the time period under consideration, apart from the Lithuania figure for 2013, which is just above 50 per cent. Although this is revealing of very limited progress, if any at all, in female labour market participation over the past 25 years, it tells us nothing about the gender gap.

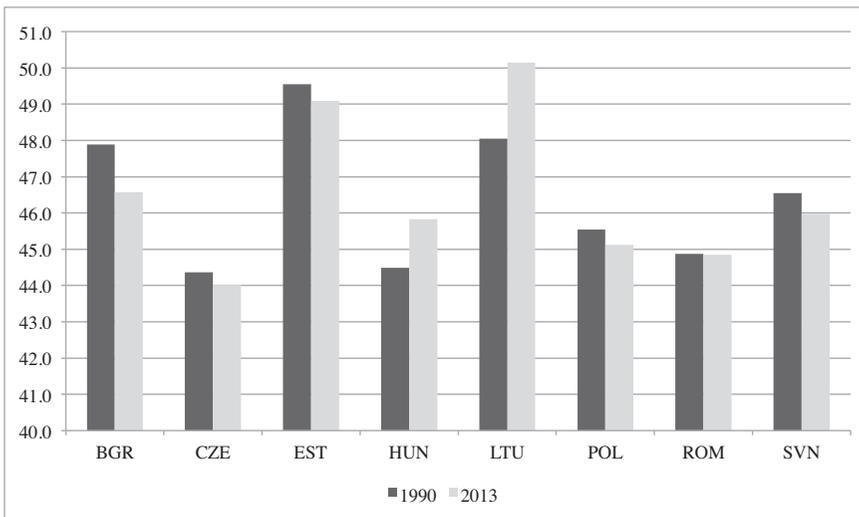


Figure 1.4 Female labour force participation, 1990–2013

Source: World Development Indicators database

Figure 1.5 used Eurostat data to show the gender gap in the activity rate for the working-age population, aged 15 to 64, between 2000 and 2014. Over this time period, the gender gap has narrowed in all countries but Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania. Lithuania stands out as having the narrower gender gap in activity rates, and it is also a case where the gap has been halved over the past 15 years. However, it is notable that the gender gap was narrower in the countries with former centrally planned economies than in the average EU-15 countries in 2000, but that is not the case in 2014.

Figure 1.6 shows the gender gap in the activity rates over time for three broad age groups, the young aged 15–24, the prime working-age group aged 25–54 and the older workers aged 55–64. Again, the diversity of experiences amongst the countries is evident. Whilst the EU-15 average saw a reduction in the gender gap for all three age groups, only Hungary has experienced the same. Romania has seen the gender gap increase over time for all three age groups. Poland, the other similarly populous country, has seen an increase of the gender gap for younger and older workers but a decrease amongst those aged between 25 and 54. It is interesting to note that, in Lithuania, the gender gap is minimal for those aged 25–54, but one of the largest amongst the young. Estonia, another Baltic country, has the smallest gender gap in the activity rates of older workers and has, moreover, seen the largest reduction over the past 15 years, from almost 20 per cent to just 2.6 per cent.

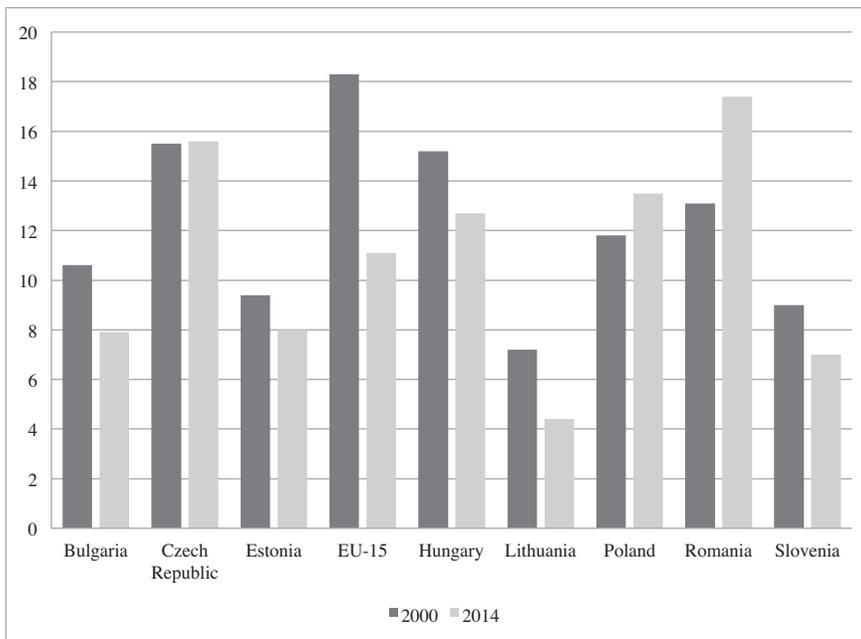


Figure 1.5 Gender gap in activity rate, 2000 and 2014

Source: Eurostat database

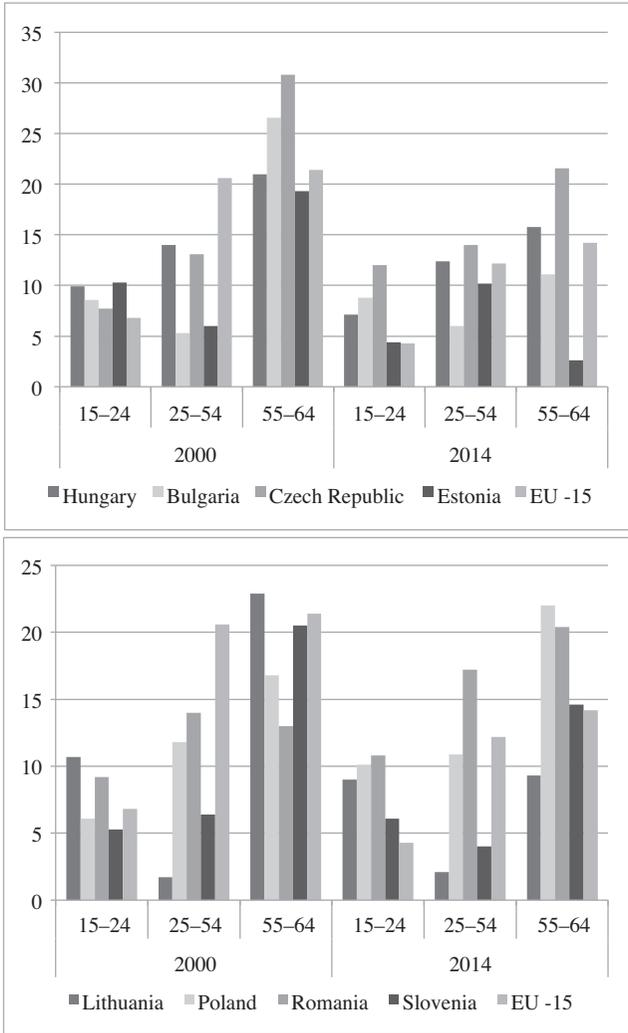


Figure 1.6 Gender gap in activity rate by age, 2000 and 2014

Source: Eurostat database

The female employment rate is shown in Figure 1.7, for women aged over 15 years. The key message is one of no overall change when the 1991 rate is compared to the 2013 rate. However, changes have occurred in between these two data points: in this measure, all countries but Romania experience a decrease in the female employment rate in the initial period of transition from a centrally planned economy, and a later subdued recovery.

Using the same measure, Figure 1.8 shows the changes in the gender employment rate gap in 1991 and 2013. This has declined in all countries but Bulgaria,

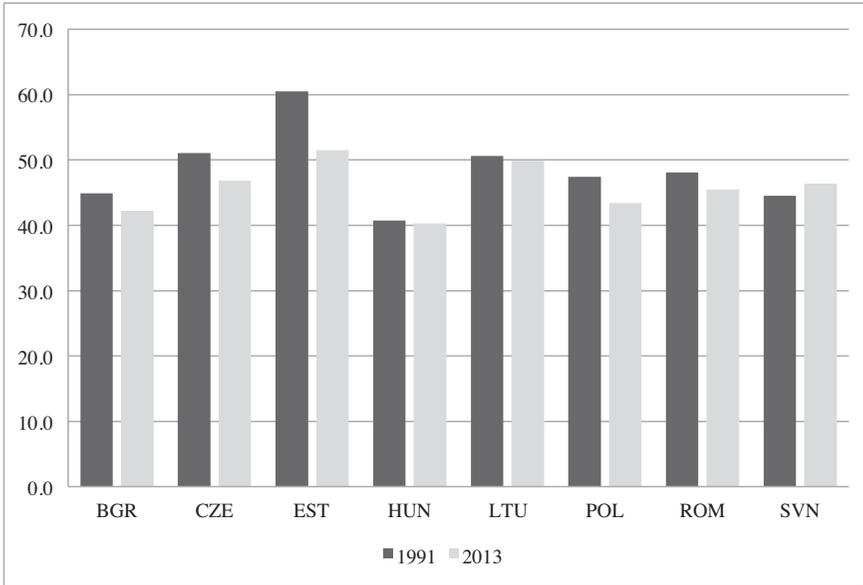


Figure 1.7 Female employment rate, 15+, 1991 and 2013

Source: World Development Indicator database

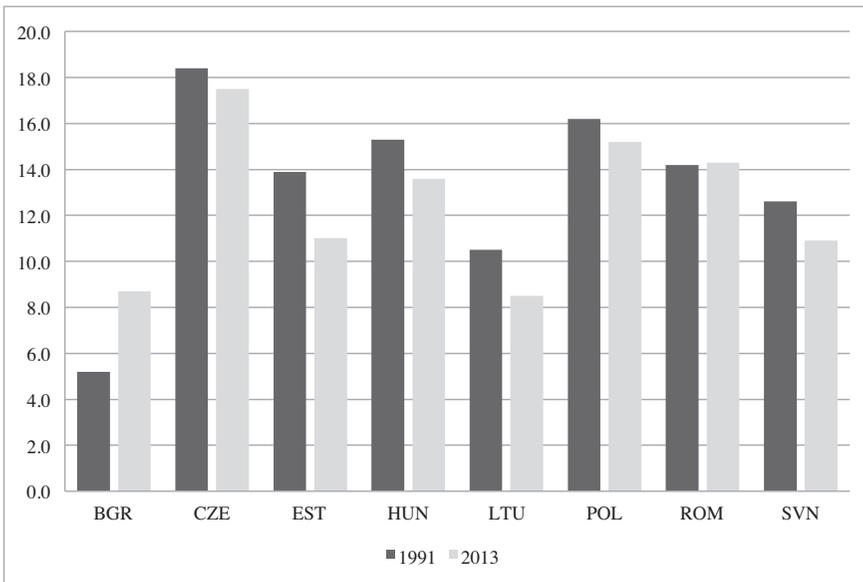


Figure 1.8 Gender employment rate gap, 15+, 1991 and 2013

Source: World Development Indicator database

where it is low, and Romania. The Czech Republic has the highest gender employment rate gap of the countries under consideration here, at around 18 per cent. Again, although not shown here, Eurostat data indicate that this is in contrast to the decreasing gender employment rate gap experienced in the average EU-15 countries, although the latter started from a higher level.

There are, of course, important differences by age and educational qualification, to mention only two factors, which we do not report here but which will be discussed in some detail in each country chapter. Figure 1.9, instead, reports data on part-time employment, the earliest year we can report consistent data on is 1998, while Figure 1.10 shows data on gender gaps in employment in the three main economic sectors of agriculture, services and industry.

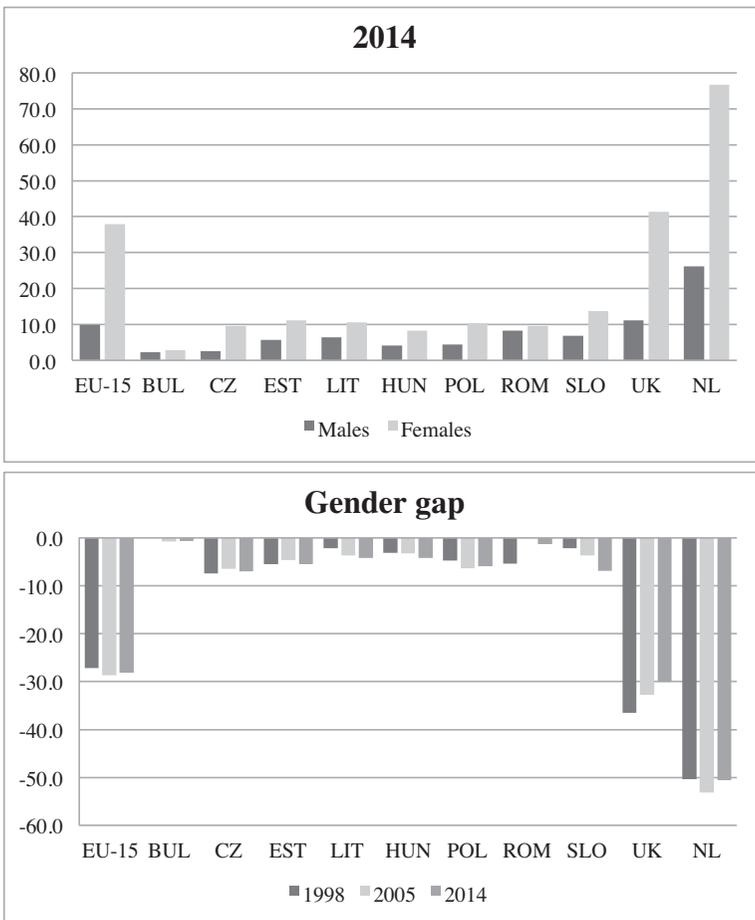


Figure 1.9 Part-time employment rate by gender, 1998 and 2013

Source: Eurostat database

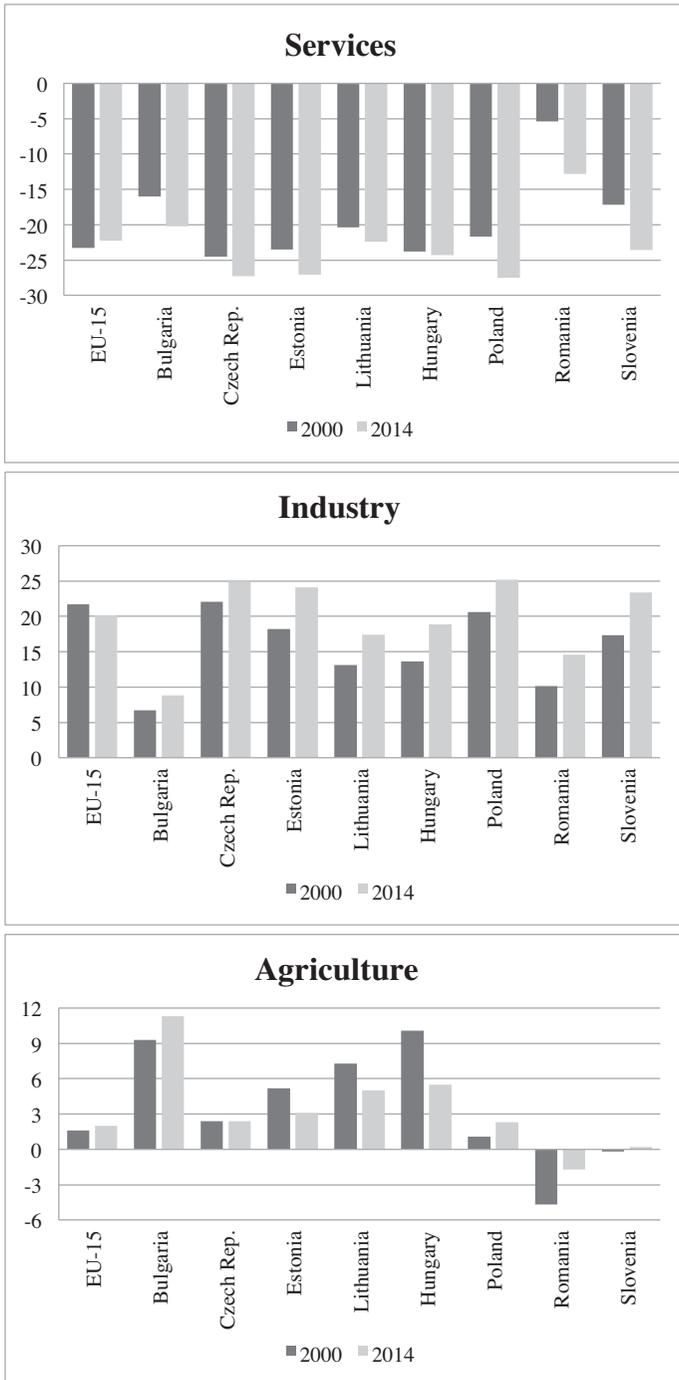


Figure 1.10 Gender employment rate gaps by sector, 2000 and 2013 (panels a, b and c)
 Source: Eurostat database

Panel a shows the part-time employment rate for both males and females in 2014, while panel b shows the gender gap between 1998 and 2014 (for Bulgaria we have data from 2005 only). In this figure, we also compare to the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and not just to the EU-15 average, as they are two of the countries with the highest rates of female part-time employment. It is noticeable that female part-time employment and the gender gap are substantially lower in the countries we analyze here than in the EU-15 countries, and even more so when compared to the Netherlands. Excluding Slovenia, the other countries all report rates of female part-time employment just above or well below 10 per cent, Bulgaria's female part-time employment rate being just above 2 per cent in 2014. Over the 16 years covered by these data, female part-time employment has increased, although not substantially, in four countries (Slovenia, Hungary, Lithuania and Estonia), remained the same in the Czech Republic and decreased in Poland and Romania. The gender gap, instead, has increased in Slovenia, Poland, Hungary and Lithuania, remained stable in Estonia and decreased in the Czech Republic and more pronouncedly in Romania.

In terms of main economic sectors, we see that more women than men are employed in the services sector, where gender gaps in the countries we consider here are, overall, slightly higher than the average of the EU-15 countries, but for Romania, where the gap is much lower. In fact, while in the average EU-15 countries the gap has narrowed between 2000 and 2014, in the Eastern EU countries we analyze here the gap has increased. This latter pattern is also found in the industry sector, where the gender gap is instead positive. There is more diversity in this case with respect to the EU-15 average, with Bulgaria and Romania having a substantially lower gender gap than the average EU-15 countries and the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland and Slovenia a larger one. Gender gaps are overall smaller in the agriculture sector. They are very small, and comparable to the EU-15 average, in Poland, the Czech Republic and Estonia, and larger in Bulgaria. Romania has a negative gender gap, more women than men being employed in the agriculture sector, although this gap has narrowed over time.

The gender pay gap in transition economies has been the subject of many studies. There is no overall consensus yet. In the very early period, for instance, Fong and Paull (1993) predicted that gender inequality would increase as a result of wage liberalization. However, some evidence suggests the contrary in some contexts and countries: Brainerd (2000) found that women's relative wages increased in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia while they decreased in Ukraine and Russia (which are outside the scope of this book). This is confirmed in studies by Munich and colleagues (2005) for the Czech Republic, Riphahn and colleagues (2001) for East Germany, Orazem and Vodopivec (1995) for Slovenia and Rutowski (1996) for Poland. On the contrary, Newell and Barry (2000) found no substantial change in the gender wage gap during the first decade of transition. These divergent findings are due to the fact that comparability of analysis is hampered by data limitations and the time period the specific studies covered. The most consistent gender pay gap measure we

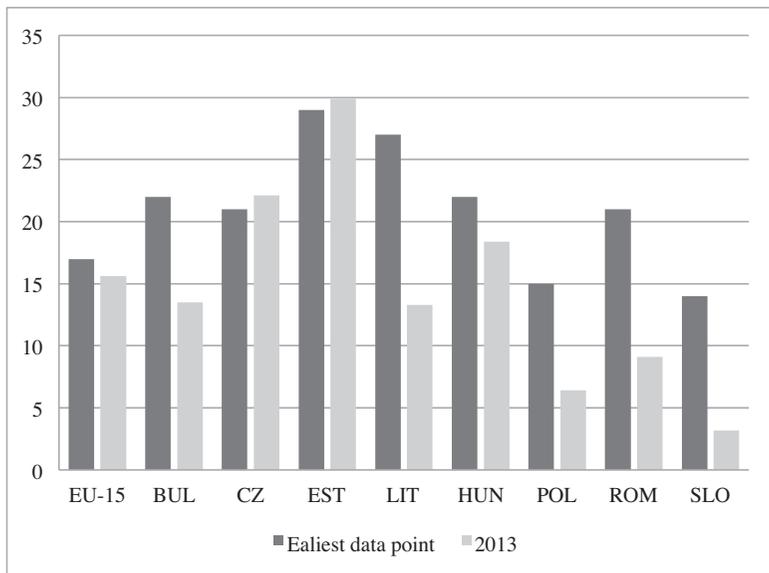


Figure 1.11 Gender pay gap, mid-1990s and 2013

Source: Eurostat database

could use for the countries and the time period covered here is in Figure 1.11. This shows the gap in gross hourly earnings: the earliest data point differs for the countries (most being 1994 or 1995, but for Poland it is 1999 and for Estonia 2001) and is based on national data sources and the overall economy, while the latest data point is based on the Structure of Earnings Survey methodology and includes industry, construction and services except public administration, defense and compulsory social security. So the two data points are not exactly comparable, but they offer the best available approximation to changes in the hourly pay gap for all employees for most of the period under analysis here.

No single pattern emerges from these data: some countries show a gender pay gap larger than the EU-15 average in both the early 1990s and 2013 and some countries a smaller one; for some, it was larger in the 1990s and smaller in 2013. According to this measure, a substantial reduction in the gender pay gap has been experienced by Slovenia, Romania, Poland and Bulgaria while Estonia and the Czech Republic saw the gender pay gap increase over this time period. However, it is difficult to make a robust assessment considering the limitations of the data available. In comparative terms, the main message is, again, one of diverse, heterogeneous experiences.

As for employment, we find that the gender pay gap differs by age group and educational level, and for part-time work as well as for other factors.¹ Here we focus instead on an issue often left aside in discussion about gender pay inequality.

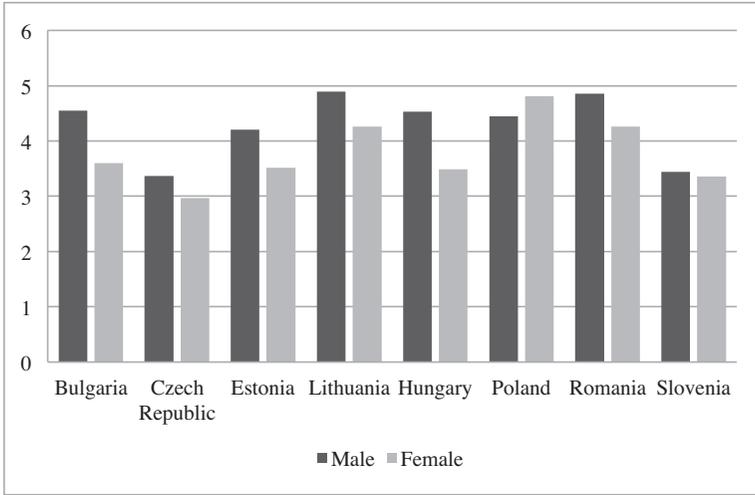


Figure 1.12 90/10 ratios in earnings by gender, 2010

Source: Eurostat database

Figure 1.12 reports the 90/10 ratios in gross hourly earnings in 2010 for males and females. This is an indicator of the extent of pay inequality, more precisely, the gap between those with earnings in the top 10 per cent of the distribution and those with earnings in the bottom 10 per cent. It therefore offers us an indication of the extent of within-group inequality in pay.

The 90/10 ratios are greater for men than for women in all countries but Poland, where pay inequality between high- and low-paid women is higher than between high- and low-paid men. This indicator is low for women in the Czech Republic, where high-paid women earn three times more than low-paid women. In the other countries, it ranges from 3.3 (or 330 per cent, in Slovenia) to 4.8 (or 480 per cent, in Poland). Important, this pay inequality is much greater than the gender pay gap between men and women, which, as we have seen in Figure 1.11, in 2013 ranged from 3 per cent in Slovenia to 30 per cent in Estonia. It therefore is a misconception to believe that addressing the gender pay gap would eliminate pay inequality.

Before moving on to present data on social attitudes regarding gender equality in the labour market, we explore the relationship between gender pay and employment. Overall, cross-country data appear to show a trade-off between the gender pay gap and female employment: a higher female employment rate seems to be associated with a larger gender pay gap; in other words, we would need to accept a wider gender pay gap if we wanted to increase the rate of female participation in the labour market.

Figure 1.13 plots this relationship for a set of countries in the European Union. Overall, there is a positive relationship between the gender pay gap and female

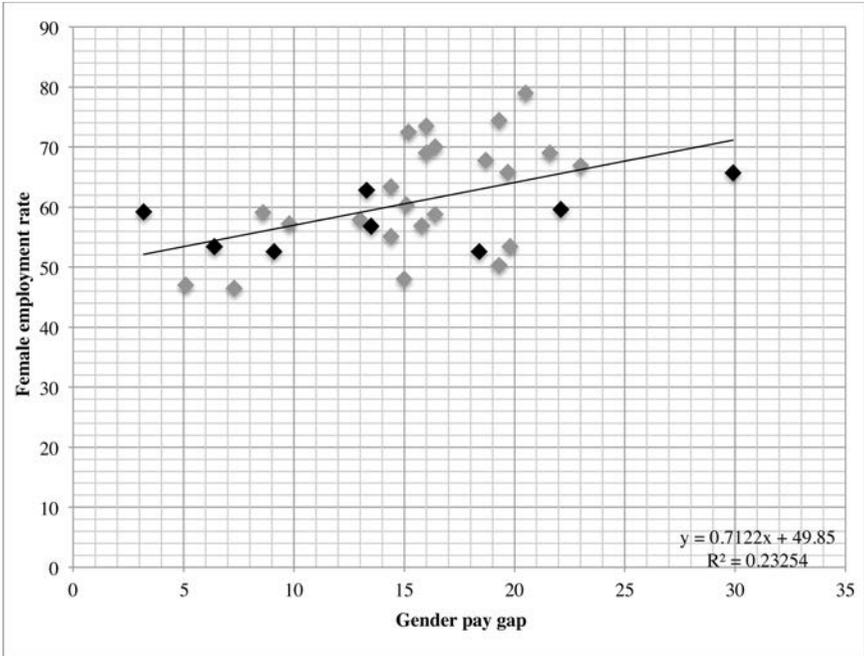


Figure 1.13 Gender pay gap and female employment rate, 2013

Source: Eurostat database

employment rate. However, when we focus only on the countries under analysis here (the darker diamonds in Figure 1.13), this positive relationship breaks down completely. At one extreme, Slovenia has a very narrow gender pay gap and a high female employment rate; at the other end, a similarly high female employment rate in Estonia is associated with a very wide gender pay gap.

We conclude this introductory chapter with a brief overview of social attitudes towards women and work. The European Value Study collected information on social attitudes through a series of standard questions relevant to our analysis and available for the period since the 1990s. These ask participants whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children.
- A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.
- Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person.
- Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income.

The four panels in Figure 1.14 report the percentage of people who said they agree or strongly agree with these statements. We show this for 1990 and 2008

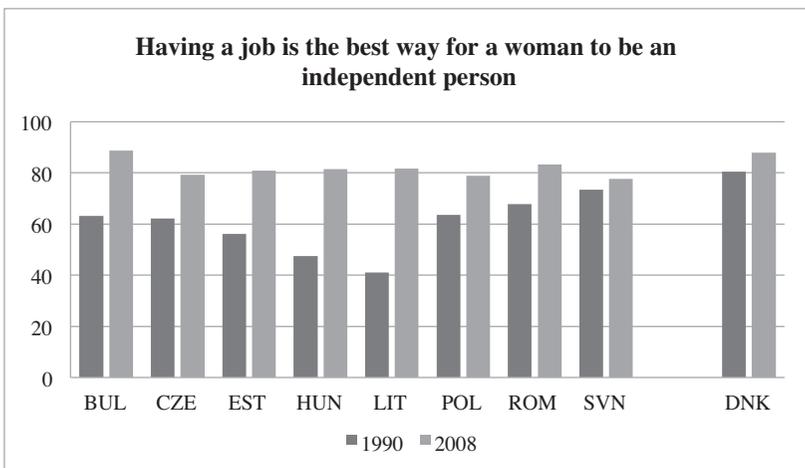
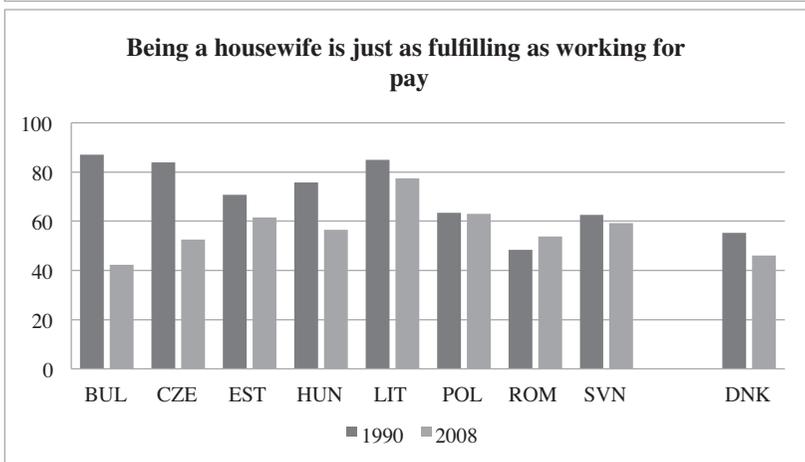
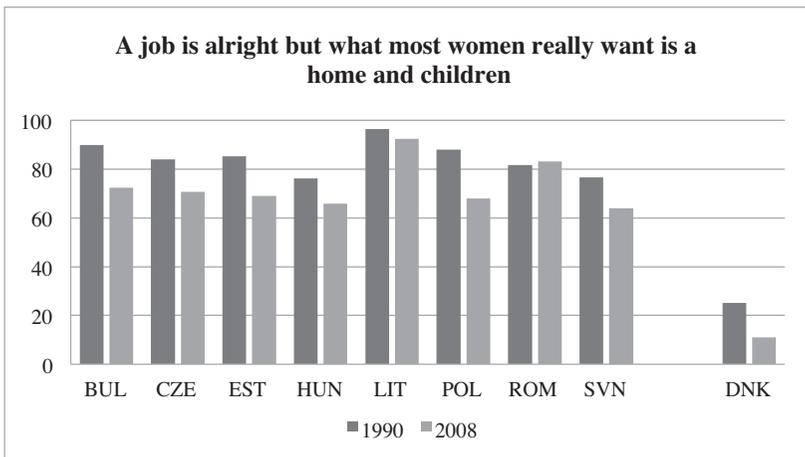


Figure 1.14 Social attitudes on women and work, 1990 and 2008 (five panels)

Source: European Values Study

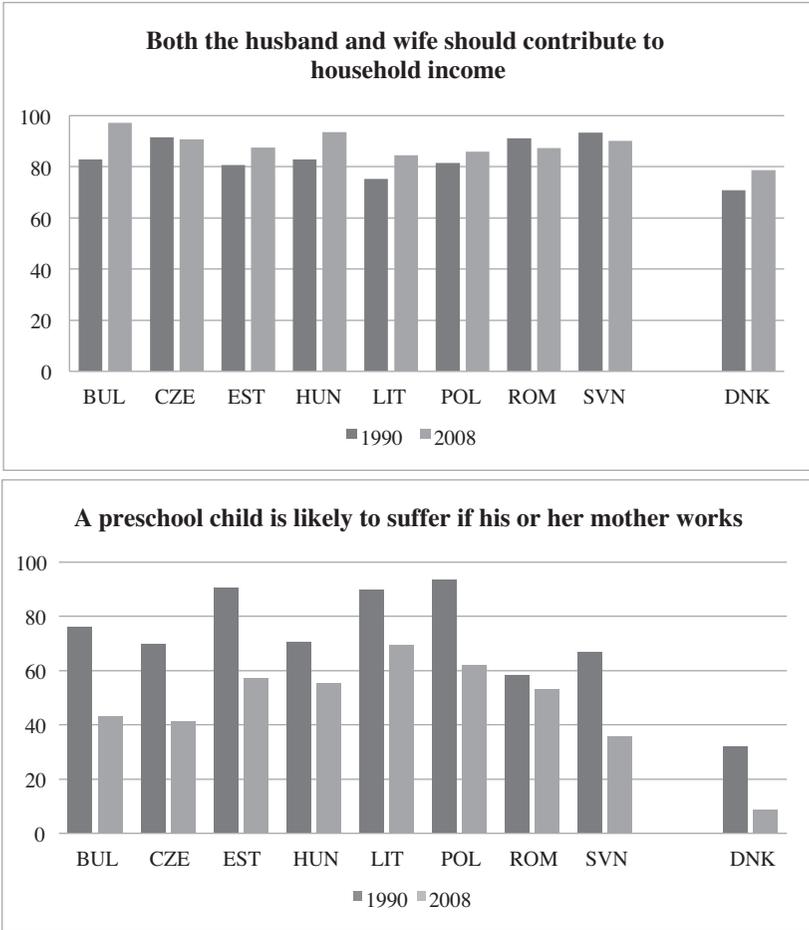


Figure 1.14 (Continued)

and, for comparison, also consider the responses given in so-called more liberal Denmark.

In 1990, a large majority of respondents – around 80 per cent – in all of the countries agreed that both the husband and the wife should contribute to household income, reflecting the positive role of women in paid work and the higher employment rates we have seen under centrally planned economies. This percentage has increased slightly in most countries (in Bulgaria reaching almost 100 per cent) but for a slight decline in Slovenia, Romania and the Czech Republic. Interesting, this was and remains a larger proportion of individuals than in Denmark, when around 70 and 78 per cent of respondents agreed in

1990 and 2008, respectively. Instead, in 1990, there was much more variation between countries in those who agreed that having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person: around 60 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Poland, but 47 and 41 per cent in Hungary and Lithuania and 68 and 73 per cent in Romania and Slovenia, while in Denmark it was just above 80 per cent. However, in 2008, around 80 per cent of respondents in all countries – and almost 90 per cent in Bulgaria – agreed with that statement. Substantial differences from Denmark appear when the implication of female employment on family life is taken into consideration: while in 1990 Denmark, a quarter of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children,” in the centrally planned economies we look at here, the rate was around 80 per cent, and 96 per cent in Lithuania. In 2008 Denmark, the proportion fell to 11 per cent, while in the Eastern EU countries it has decreased marginally but remains well above 70 per cent, and in Romania, it increased to 83 per cent.

Similarly, the proportion of those who agreed or strongly agreed that “A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works” was around a third in 1990 Denmark while it was around 90 per cent in Estonia, Lithuania and Poland and between 60 and 80 per cent in the other countries. It decreased to 8.6 per cent in 2008 Denmark and to 35–40 per cent in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovenia and to around 60–70 per cent in the remaining countries.

What do we make of this general comparative overview across a common set of indicators? What key messages emerge from this introductory chapter? One important point to make is certainly that the countries of Eastern Europe we analyze here appear to have had heterogeneous experiences during the transition from a centrally planned to a market economic system. Indeed, there does not appear to have been much in common, apart from the centrally planned economic systems and some high-level indicators in terms of income inequality and human development. These countries have had very diverse experiences in terms of gender equality since the transition from central planning to market economies. This is not surprising once the complexity and multidimensional character of gender labour market outcomes is acknowledged. The very many factors that contribute to gender labour market outcomes rarely move in the same direction and to the same extent in different countries, and, therefore, different experiences should be expected. This fully justifies a detailed focus on each country, the approach we take in the chapters that follow.

Note

- 1 See, for instance, Council of the European Union (2010). The gender pay gap in the member states of the European Union: quantitative and qualitative indicators. Belgian Presidency Report.

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