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Topic (i) Macro-economic changes and policy decisions

**Gender Differences in the Labour Market in Poland  
in the Light of Macro-economic Changes**

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The transformation of Poland from a centrally planned system to a market economy has had great social impact. The restructuring of the economy and the resulting unemployment has had different impact on various groups of the population. These changes were reflected in social relations and directly or indirectly caused changes in gender relations within the sphere of economic activity and in the context of family. Political actions geared toward achieving of equal status between women and men also had impact.

In this paper, the legal and political circumstances of gender status in the labour market are presented and compared for two periods. Then labour market conditions resulting from the changeover to a market economy are analysed. Data on women's participation in employment and gender differences in the labour market illustrate these changes.

Previously (in the socialist states) constitutions guaranteed the right to employment for the entire working-age population. There was no formal unemployment, and employed women usually worked full-time throughout their occupational lives. Transition to the market economy obliged women to face new difficulties as well as opportunities in the changing labour market. Nowadays they have to compete for work. Women are more affected by unemployment and by the difficulties involved in obtaining work than men, and the gap between their aspirations and the real situation is of essential importance.

In the last decade Poland has made good progress in achieving equal gender status. Significant changes were introduced to both the Constitution and Labour Code, and a real shift occurred in social consciousness. Many considerations concerning the equalisation of the status of both sexes in the labour market were accounted for in the course of implementing legislation changes. However, in practice there are still significant gaps in employment and in the remuneration of women and men.

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