



WORLD CONFERENCE of the UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN:

**Equality,
Development
and
Peace**

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REPORT OF THE SEMINAR ON THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN
IN THE ECONOMIC EVOLUTION OF THE ECE REGION
THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ECE REGION
Items 8 and 9 of the provisional agenda



Report prepared by the Economic Commission
for Europe

SUMMARY

The present report is composed of the summary and conclusions of the Seminar on the Participation of Women in the Economic Evolution of the ECE region (ECE/SEM.5/9) which contain recommendations for consideration by the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women as well as recommendations for follow-up action by the Economic Commission for Europe.

Also included in the present report is a paper consisting of a summary and conclusions of a study prepared by the ECE secretariat, entitled The Economic Role of Women in the ECE Region, which examines several aspects of the increasing participation of women in the production of economic goods and services within the ECE region. Three aspects of women's economic activity are analysed: women's participation rates in the economy, patterns of women's employment and earnings, especially in relation to men's earnings; reasons underlying aspects of women's economic activity; and the study of some consequences of women's activity patterns on the use of time.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE SEMINAR ON THE PARTICIPATION
OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC EVOLUTION OF THE ECE REGION

1. The Seminar on the Participation of Women in the Economic Evolution of the ECE Region was held in Paris from 9 to 12 July 1979 at the invitation of the Government of France.
2. The Seminar was convened pursuant to Commission decisions B (XXXIII) 1/ and N (XXXIV). 2/ The topics discussed were defined at the Preparatory Meeting held at Geneva from 6 to 8 November 1978.
3. Prior to the adoption of the agenda, participants were welcomed, on behalf of the French Government, by M. Jean François-Poncet, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by Mme. Monique Pelletier, Minister-Delegate for Questions relating to the Status of Women. The meeting was also addressed by Mrs. Helvi Sipilä, Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.
4. The Seminar adopted its agenda as contained in document ECE/SEM.5/1.
5. At its first meeting the Seminar elected Mrs. M. Devaud (France) and Mr. V. Kalajdgiev (Bulgaria) Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Seminar, respectively. Ms. B. Leite (Norway) and Mr. R. Andorka (Hungary) were appointed general Rapporteurs.
6. The Seminar had before it a study prepared by the secretariat, entitled "The economic role of women in the ECE region" (ECE/SEM.5/2 and Add.1-4), synoptic notes prepared by government rapporteurs on the three themes of the Seminar: Mrs. M. Van Hemeldonck (Belgium), Mr. S. Karabin (Czechoslovakia), Mrs. V. Morris (United Kingdom), Mr. B. Welpa (Poland), Mrs. H. Hörz (German Democratic Republic), Mrs. D. Gaudart (Austria); country notes transmitted by Governments and contributions made by participating organizations.
7. The discussions at the Seminar were conducted in plenary sessions, and in three working groups, which examined the three main topics of the Seminar: (a) the structure of employment; (b) education and training; (c) time management.
8. In his introductory statement the Executive Secretary defined the objective and scope of the Seminar as being "regional", "economic" and "future oriented". Its "regional" character offered an opportunity for studying issues arising in industrialized countries which had different socio-economic systems. The problems had to be viewed from an "economic" point of view, always bearing in mind that economics are closely interrelated with social, political and other problems. The "future-oriented" approach would require clear thinking about likely future developments to permit identification of those problems which would call for

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1978, Supplement No. 7 (E/1978/47), chap. IV.

2/ Ibid., 1979, Supplement No. 12 (E/1979/47), chap. IV.

changes in policies. It was generally recognized that structural changes likely to occur in the world economy would imply a restructuring of domestic economies as well. Among these changes there were a few which might have a direct impact on the participation of women in the economic evolution of the ECE region. The already available technologies (inter alia, in the use of electronics) would provide women with an equal opportunity to accede to jobs previously considered as reserved mainly for men. The shortening of working hours could lead to changes in life-styles, and to a better integration of families, thus making it possible for women to participate in a creative way in the shaping of future developments.

9. The Secretary-General of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women welcomed the present Seminar, the first in a series of regional meetings, as an event of major significance in the preparations for the 1980 Conference. It was particularly welcome that the economic role of women had been highlighted at the ECE Seminar. There had been a marked increase in recent decades in the employment of women in the formal labour force. However, the work choices offered to women were limited and, in the context of a sex-segregated labour market, had built-in income disparities. A major factor inhibiting women's full development in their societies was the persistence of the concept of their traditional role in domestic activities and family care. The World Conference would have a double role, both to inform women of different regions of their common condition, and the devising of appropriate strategies for tackling the problems they had in common. It must also identify and attempt to find solutions for problems of particular concern to specific regions. The challenge facing the World Conference would be to help in constructing a humane and equitable world in which women could play their necessary role as targets and as agents of development.

10. The secretariat study (ECE/SEM.5/2 and Add.1-4) was introduced by the Director of the ECE General Economic Analysis Division, who also drew attention to another ECE study entitled "Labour supply and migration in Europe". These studies provided information, inter alia, on the increased participation of women in gainful employment, on their clustering around some "typical" professions, on earnings, and on other issues relevant to the topics being considered by the Seminar. Participants were invited to make available to the ECE secretariat any additional relevant information which could be incorporated in a revised version of the secretariat study, which, it was intended, should be published early in 1980.

11. The Seminar on the Participation of Women in the Economic Evolution of the ECE Region, convened by the Economic Commission for Europe, had the task:

(a) To draw conclusions concerning the participation of women in the economic life of the ECE region, and to look for ways and means of shaping the patterns of education, training, employment, earnings, and working conditions. The topics selected for consideration at the Seminar (structure of employment, education and training, and time management) had been chosen because, while they were of direct relevance to the ECE region, they also corresponded to two of the three subthemes (employment and education) which would be considered at the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women to be held in 1980;

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(b) In the light of the main objectives of the World Plan of Action, i.e. equality, development and peace, to contribute at a regional level to the World Conference.

12. The Seminar focused its attention on the economic aspects of the development process, although it was understood that such aspects could best be tackled within the much broader framework of social, cultural, political and other aspects. It has been emphasized that peace was the most important general precondition of a favourable development.

13. During the course of the discussion it was noted that due to the limited participation or contributions from the countries of southern Europe, no valid conclusions could be reached on the specific problems of women in the countries of the ECE region which were developing from the economic point of view.

14. The economic development of the ECE region was marked by some fundamental changes in employment structures. The outflow of the labour force from agriculture into industry increased the participation of women in gainful activities not only within the agricultural sector, where their work had previously been considered as part of their household activities, but also in the newly established industries. This triggered a new demand for services which again offered additional jobs primarily for women.

15. The increased participation of women in gainful employment is a valuable contribution to the economic and social development in all countries of the region. However, this situation puts new demands on societies, e.g. the supply to employment services, child care facilities, and other social services.

16. Evidence shows that there are disproportions between jobs available and the distribution of jobs between sexes. These disproportions still prevail. There are also unjustified differences in earnings for men and women. The causes of these differences are varied but all countries are taking measures to overcome these problems.

17. The analysis of time-budgets shows that the burden imposed on women by household duties is still substantially higher than that of men.

18. It was found that the participation of women in education and in training had increased in all countries of the region. There were important differences in some countries, between the education of men and women: women's education is often less well related to the labour market demand than is men's. In many countries, women leave the education system with lower qualifications and with a narrower range of subjects than men.

19. Evidence suggests that the expansion of education and training provision for women has positive economic effects for society through increased output, for the individual, and for the family. Evidence also indicates that additional education and training increases women's labour force participation, increases women's earnings and may lower their vulnerability to unemployment (in the market economies).

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20. Average women's earnings in most countries of the region were lower than those of men. A distinct correlation was found between the share of women workers in a sector, branch or occupation and the average level of total earnings. Branches or occupations with a high share of women in the total labour force tended to have a low level of average earnings, while for branches with a low share of women in the labour force the opposite was true. In many sectors the rationalization process has diminished the demand for occupational skills, which has led to a decrease in the average earnings, and has been accompanied by an increase in female labour.
21. The adverse effect of differences in earnings for men and women was particularly pronounced in the case of female-headed, single parent households, a high proportion of which fall into the low-income category. This is particularly important since the number of female-headed households is tending to increase.
22. There were occupations where women were strongly underrepresented in many countries of the region, such as industrial jobs requiring certain technical skills, top administrative and managerial posts, and academic, scientific and other high skill professions.
23. A disproportionate number of women workers was to be found in the peripheral labour market (temporary work, part-time work, clandestine work and a kind of return to cottage industries) with the consequent disadvantages from the legal and social security point of view.
24. During the past two decades, the number of hours per day actually worked had gradually decreased for men as well as for women, and the length of paid leave periods had increased, especially for working mothers. Variable work schedules had been introduced in some countries, both through legislation and as a result of collective bargaining. Underlying factors responsible for the reduction of working time included increased productivity resulting from technological advances, especially in the industrial sector.
25. Part-time jobs varied widely according to occupation, industry and region. In general, a far greater proportion of women worked on a part-time basis than of men, although there was an increasing tendency for men to work part-time, especially in the youngest and oldest age groups.
26. While part-time jobs were sometimes rejected on account of loss of fringe benefits etc., a demand by women for part-time employment had been reported in some countries. At the same time there was a deficiency in regard to developing variable work schedules. It was noted that employers' incentives to implement different working-time arrangements were insufficient.
27. Some research has indicated that employees and employers using various flexible working time arrangements, had reacted favourably to these arrangements.
28. In some countries, women were concentrated in a limited number of "women's" occupations, often drawing on skills traditionally exercised on an unpaid basis in the home. In all countries a larger or smaller degree of occupational segmentation by sex existed, but the reasons were often different.

29. There is evidence from many countries of under-utilization of human resources in women, which in turn reflect occupational and other labour market factors. The tendency for women to follow occupations requiring less education and fewer professional skills, and for them to be concentrated in certain professions, can be explained by various factors, notably the persistence of prejudices affecting the mentality of teachers, employers, relatives and young girls themselves, and sometimes by structural deficiencies in teaching.

30. It is becoming more and more noticeable, particularly among the younger generation and among couples where the wife has received higher education, that the task of looking after the children devolves upon both parents, not on the wife alone, and that this task can be facilitated by the existence of appropriate services.

Recommendations of the Seminar

31. The Seminar made the following recommendations for consideration by the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women

(1) There must be a redoubling of efforts already being made to achieve equality of opportunity in education, retraining and employment. Studies should be made of the experience of those countries which have already introduced specific measures to deal with these problems.

(2) Steps should be taken to vary the working day, principally by shortening working hours and/or by adopting different work schedules.

(3) Effects of economic and technological development on the educational, training and employment opportunities for women, as well as on their working conditions, should be duly taken into consideration when identifying future policies.

(4) As the care of children in general is the responsibility of the society as a whole, conditions favourable for this purpose should be further developed. Employers and the society as a whole should also recognize the equal responsibility of the father and the mother.

(5) Provisions should be made for broader education and training relevant to all sectors of the economy so as to ensure greater job flexibility for women who enter and re-enter the labour market.

(6) Vocational and career guidance for school-leavers and women re-entering the labour market should be improved and expanded.

(7) A system for training-by-stages should be developed so as to link short-term and long-term vocational training courses.

(8) Action is needed to change attitudes of parents, teachers, employers and women themselves to career development for women.

(9) In order to achieve a better balance in family responsibilities the education system should provide an equal preparation for family-life for boys and girls alike and sex-stereotyped education, wherever it exists, should be eliminated.

(10) The problems connected with the growing participation of women in the migrant labour force should be more closely examined.

Recommendations for follow-up action by the Commission

32. At its next session, the Commission may wish to consider the possibility of including appropriate subjects of the Seminar into its future work programme.

33. The participants in the Seminar expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Government of France for its kind invitation and hospitality, for the generosity of its reception, and for the highly competent organization of the work of the Seminar.

34. This summary and conclusions were adopted by the Seminar on 12 July 1979.

THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ECE REGION 1/

(Summary and conclusions)

Prepared by the secretariat of the
Economic Commission for Europe

1. This study examines several aspects of the increasing participation of women in the production of economic goods and services within the ECE region. For women, far more than for men, economic activity - in the sense of paid employment - is in part an alternative, in part an addition, to "non-economic" activities within the household and society. It is recognized that these latter activities, although escaping the usual forms of economic calculus, are at least equally essential to the welfare of society, and also have their impact on the shape and progress of the measured economy.
2. Three aspects of women's economic activity are first analysed: the extent and trends of women's participation rates in the economy; the occupational and industrial pattern of women's employment; and the earnings of women, especially in relation to men's earnings. Secondly, we explore some of the reasons which appear to underlie these aspects of women's economic activity: changing demographic patterns; the influence of the educational and training system; and a variety of other influences with direct or indirect impact. Finally, some consequences of women's activity patterns on the use of time are studied.
3. The analysis is essentially comparative - seeking both similarities and differences among the varied groups of countries composing the ECE region.

Activity rates of women

4. Very large differences in the activity rates of women distinguish the countries of the region and may well be regarded as major features of their social and economic structures and ways of life. However, the countries fall, grosso modo, into fairly distinct groups. The highest rates are found in the east European countries, where between just under 50 and just over 60 per cent of all women (15 and over) are in paid employment (in some - Bulgaria, Romania - this is mainly due to the large share of agriculture in the economy). The industrial western countries fall into two groups. In most, the activity rates are around 40-50 per cent. But there are a few with rates of only 25-30 per cent - the three Benelux countries, Ireland and Italy. We note that the long-standing low activity rates in the Benelux countries, compared with others at similar levels of development in the west, is not explained by a general labour surplus and appears to be attributed to social attitudes. In southern Europe, the activity rates are also low outside agriculture, but over-all rates appear high (especially in Turkey and Yugoslavia) because of the substantial number of women reported as economically active in the large agricultural sectors.

1/ The present paper consists of a summary and the conclusions of a study prepared by the ECE secretariat entitled The Economic Role of Women in the ECE Region, to be issued as a United Nations publication. The full text will be available to participants at the Conference.

5. Most of these differences between countries are due to differences in the activity rates of married women. In the east European countries, for which statistics are available, between half and three quarters of married women are in paid employment. In the industrial west, the proportions are much smaller - around 40 to 50 per cent in most countries, but falling to around one quarter or less in Benelux, Ireland and Italy where over-all women's activity rates are low.

6. Activity rates in each country are, of course, linked with age and children as well as with marital status, but differently between countries. In many western countries, activity rates, high for immediate post-school or college girls, fall sharply in the main child-bearing ages (25-34), but increase again to a second peak at 40-50 as mothers return to work when family responsibilities are lightened (generally when the youngest child reaches school age). In some countries, notably Sweden and the United Kingdom, this secondary peak, or "M-curve", brings activity rates for women in their 40s and early 50s up to 60 per cent or more - as high as in the early 20s. But although activity rates are inversely linked with the presence of children in the family, figures (available for a few countries only) show significant numbers of mothers with small children in the labour force (it must be remembered that many of the women are working only part-time).

7. The pattern outside the industrial west is rather different, especially at the main child-bearing ages. In the east European countries and Yugoslavia, women's activity rates fall off very little in the main child-bearing ages, remaining relatively constant until about 50. This difference from the western pattern is only due in part to the continued participation of many middle-aged women in agriculture.

8. In contrast with these differences between countries or groups of countries, a common feature of development almost throughout the region is the general increase in women's activities, very marked during the "boom" years of the 1960s in both east and west, and from the less complete information available, probably continuing during the 1970s. The increases in over-all activity rates occurred despite longer schooling for the young and earlier retirement for the old. Further, it is clear that practically all the increase in activity rates has been among married women, including those with young children. For example, the average activity rates of married women in the industrial west rose from one quarter around 1960 to about one third by 1970. A striking example is Sweden, where the proportion of "economically active" women of 25-34 with children doubled from 1960 to reach nearly 30 per cent by 1970.

9. Because the male labour force has been increasing only slowly, or not at all, in most countries during the last decade or so, ^{2/} women generally account for the largest part of the increase in the total labour force or, in a few countries, have

^{2/} There are several exceptions: Canada, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey, the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Yugoslavia, where the national demographic increase remained strong for men of working age; and the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland, where a large influx of immigrants served to swell the male labour force.

helped to offset a decline. Thus by the early 1970s, women made up close to half the total labour force in the east European countries (except Hungary - 40 per cent), and between about 35 and 40 per cent in most western countries (except for Benelux, Ireland and Italy where, because of the low women's activity rates, the proportion is only 25-30 per cent).

Unemployment

10. The rising number of women in the labour force has been accompanied, in the west, by increases in unemployment among women, particularly during the last few years of general recession. In several countries, the percentage of unemployment is higher for women than for men, especially for young women whose unemployment rates have risen to 15 per cent or more in a few countries (the same is true, however, for young men).

11. Part of the increase in unemployment, for women and for men, is the result of the unfavourable turn of the business cycle; opinions differ about the extent to which current high rates of unemployment in the west represent a long-term trend. However, certain special features of the unemployment trends for women may be distinguished. First, improvements in the functioning of employment services and extensions of social security have attracted to the unemployment register and vacancy offices many women who would not previously have applied. Some women may seek work in a period of recession when the principal bread-winner is unemployed, or earning less than previously. On the other hand, women who lose their jobs may withdraw from the recorded labour force if employment prospects are poor ("discouraged workers"); the result is an apparent decline (or slowing down of the increase) in recorded activity rates which can be regarded as hiding a certain amount of concealed unemployment to the same extent as, during years of excessive growth, activity rates might be artificially inflated.

12. It is difficult to say whether the impact of the recession has been more serious for women than for men. On the whole, employment has been more stable in some sectors (white collar workers, public sectors and services generally) in which a large proportion of women work. But against this, women tend to be more vulnerable than men to lay-offs, because of shorter service, less training and less security. The balance for women differs, however, between countries, and no clear generalization can be made.

Part-time women workers

13. Increases in women's employment must, to a certain extent, be discounted in terms of changes in the total labour supply - if expressed, for example, in worker-hours - by the increasing prevalence of part-time working by women. ^{3/}

^{3/} Hours worked by women on part-time employment are generally about half a normal working week. Very few men work part-time in any of the socialist countries.

In some western countries such as Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, between 40 and 50 per cent of the total women's labour force are working part-time. In most others, the proportions are lower but still substantial (15-30 per cent). Furthermore, part-time workers account for a large proportion of the recent increases in employed women.

14. In some of the service sectors, part-time work for women, especially for married women, has increased most, particularly in the public services of some countries. The expansion of part-time work, as of other forms of flexibility in working hours for women, demonstrates the capacity of managements to modify work organizations when sufficiently induced to do so by the need for growth in the face of limited labour supply.

Sectoral and occupational distribution of women workers

15. If the economy is divided into the three broad sectors of agriculture, industry and services, we find the service sector as the dominant employer of women in the market economies. Over half of all employed women are employed in the services, ^{4/} and the proportion rises to 70 per cent or more in several countries; these proportions compare with around 40 per cent of men. The proportion of women in industry nowhere exceeds 30 per cent and is mostly much less.

16. The east European countries present a somewhat different picture. The services employ around 40-50 per cent of all employed women; the main difference from the west is that the numbers of women in industry are about the same, or not much less, than in the services. (In Poland and Romania, however, both sectors are outweighed by agriculture).

17. Thus the expansion of the women's labour force is to some extent linked with the general expansion of employment in most service sectors relatively to employment in industry or agriculture - the normal course of long-term change in employment structures. But this is not the only reason for the expansion of women's employment. In the east European countries - but not to any substantial extent in the west - the proportion of women in industry as well as in services, has risen at the expense of agriculture.

18. The division by major sectors does not, however, tell us much about women's actual occupations; for example, a considerable proportion of the women in industry is likely to be employed in "service" occupations, such as clerical or administrative work, rather than in direct production. A more significant analysis of the tendency for women to concentrate in certain kinds of work can be better obtained from analysis by occupations.

19. Such an analysis for 25 countries shows that certain occupations are almost completely filled by women: some obvious examples are stenographers and typists, nurses and midwives, cleaners, tailors and dressmakers, where nearly 80 per cent or more of the workers (on the average of 25 countries) are women. Women make up

^{4/} Excluding Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia where agriculture is a large employer of women.

substantial proportions of several other service occupations such as catering jobs. Except, perhaps, for secretarial work, these are mostly occupations regarded as "typically female" in the sense of drawing on skills also exercised, on an unpaid basis, in the home.

20. Occupations can be distinguished in which women can be said to "specialize" or to be "over-represented" in the sense that the proportion of women to men is above average. 5/ Out of about 40 occupational classifications representing about 80 per cent of all women workers in virtually all countries (the figures for USSR, Canada and the United States of America are rather smaller), such jobs account for about a half.

21. However, some significant differences emerge in the pattern of women's employment between countries. There are occupations in which women dominate in some countries but not in others. A particularly striking example is the medical profession: women make up 70 per cent of the profession in USSR, around 50 per cent in other east European countries, and much smaller proportions elsewhere. Among manual workers, the percentage of women in the industry of the Soviet Union is remarkable, and not only, as in many other countries, in the traditional women's branches of manufacturing.

22. The degree of concentration of women by occupation, in each country, can be measured in a summary manner by the coefficient of variation between the proportions of women in each occupation. On this measure, it appears that in general the spread of women over the various occupations is distinctly greater, or the extent of specialization is less, in the east European countries than elsewhere.

23. There is little evidence that the occupational specialization of women in employment has changed much in recent years. The rise in demand for labour in clerical jobs and in services has meant that the increasing numbers of women in work have, for the most part, been employed in the range of occupations in which women have always specialized. However, there has been a change in the industrial structure of employment: the decline in the traditional women's industries, textiles and clothing, has been offset not only by the expansion of services but also by the growth of women's employment in a few other industries such as light engineering and electronics.

The women's pay differential

24. The principle of "equal pay for equal work" has been accepted in most countries of the region and incorporated in national legislation. Yet in all countries for which data are available, the average earnings of all women in employment are significantly less than those of men.

5/ The calculations have been done taking each country separately, since there are, as will be shown, certain differences between countries and are restricted to non-farm employment.

25. National differences between the percentage of average earnings of women to those of men are considerable. Judged from rather diverse and incomplete statistics for a variety of countries, it appears that the over-all percentage of women's monthly pay to men's pay may be as high as 80-90 per cent in Sweden and in Italy. 6/ It is probably as low as about 60-65 per cent in the United Kingdom, in the United States of America, in Hungary (among the few east European countries for which statistics are available) and also in the Netherlands where the ratio is affected by the exceptional dominance of young women in the female labour force; the ratio for adults only is substantially higher. 7/

26. There is no doubt that the gap between men's and women's pay has been narrowing in the last quarter of a century, in many European countries associated with legislative provisions made just after the war. The biggest changes in the 1970s have been in the United Kingdom where the over-all ratio of women's to men's pay, currently about 60 per cent, had been over many years as low as 50 per cent before the Equal Pay's Act of 1970 began to take effect. In the Netherlands, in part as a result of new minimum wage legislation, and Finland, Italy and Sweden, the women's pay differential also narrowed appreciably during the 1970s. In other countries, so far as the data go, there were only small or no changes.

27. Some of the reasons for the continuing average differential - an apparent but not necessarily real discrepancy between principle and practice - can be measured.

(a) Hours worked per week, on a full-time basis, are generally less, on average, for women than for men, mostly because men work more overtime and less part-time. Thus, the women's pay differential is less when measured by the hour than when measured by the month or week. This particularly affects manual workers in some countries where the over-all gap between men and women in hourly pay is up to 5-10 percentage points less than in monthly pay;

(b) A second general factor is the difference in age distribution between employed women and employed men. On average, working women are more concentrated than men in the younger age-groups, particularly in the west where retirement from paid work for family responsibilities - even if a proportion of them return to work later - is more marked. The age effect is especially strong for non-manual occupations, where incremental scales and promotion for seniority are generally more frequent than for manual workers. The age effect on pay is of course associated with experience and length of service in the same firm or organization; the double career of the majority of women, and the consequent interruptions to paid employment, reduce the possible income gains from continuous service. The growth of "internal labour markets", i.e. the tendency to restrict promotion to those already employed in an organization, could intensify this factor. Such differences between the age and career structures of men and women can account for several percentage points of the over-all pay differential;

6/ Data for Italy exclude the extensive parts of the economy in small establishments and other areas escaping the net of most official statistics.

7/ These and all other figures on this subject relate to full-time workers only.

(c) Probably the most important reason for the over-all pay differential, in most countries is, however, the difference between the occupational distribution of men and women, which can be regarded as the difference in "access to jobs". Again the effect is most marked for non-manual workers for whom the pay hierarchy of occupations is much wider than for manual workers. Thus, the concentration of women in, for example, clerical work and their rarity among the higher paid managerial and professional occupations, noted above, is inevitably reflected in a lower average pay level than for men. Among manual workers, the concentration of women in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs has a similar effect. The effect of the difference in occupational distribution varies between countries; it appears to account on average for at least about 10 percentage points of the over-all pay differential between men and women among the countries (mainly western) for which the necessary data are available. This, however, is probably a considerable underestimate, since it is based on internationally comparable data for only about eight fairly heterogeneous occupational groups; within each of these groups a substantial pay differential remains, suggesting that women are clustered at the lower pay levels within each group. A much finer classification of pay by occupation for one country (the United Kingdom) shows a considerably further narrowing of the differential. In this case, an over-all weighted average ratio for women's to men's pay of 63 per cent is increased to an unweighted average of 75 per cent for the 27 occupational groups reported.

(d) A final measurable factor is the different distribution of women and men between branches of industry. The well-known "women's industries", notably textiles and clothing, are nearly everywhere relatively low-paid branches, both for men and for women. They are "industries in decline" since they are subject to particularly strong competition not only from other industrial countries, but also from some developing countries.

28. A certain negative correlation thus appears, in most countries, between the relative pay level in an industry and the proportion of women employed in it. The correlation does not hold everywhere because there are also industries with high or average pay which in some countries employ substantial numbers of women (e.g. light electrical engineering, food processing, paper and printing).

29. It is impossible to calculate with any precision the relative importance of the four features of women's employment and pay structure described above. Nor can their effects, even when measurable, be added together for they obviously interact. It is clear, moreover, that their importance varies from country to country. On a very broad view, however, it seems likely that, on average, the most important feature in the difference between men and women is the difference in occupational distribution, the effect of which would appear even greater if it could be analysed for a finer occupational classification than exists; the second most important factor clearly linked to occupations is the difference in age distribution.

30. The other factors described - shorter hours of work for manual women workers and the concentration of women in low-pay industries - are significant, but in most countries quantitatively less important.

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31. The general conclusion is that differences in the kind and conditions of work account for the greater part of the differences between the over-all average earnings of men and women.

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32. We examine next some of the reasons which appear to underline these features of women's activity rates, occupational concentration and relative pay.

The impact of demographic change

33. Demographic change, particularly the radical and long-term transition from an era of high mortality and high fertility to one where both mortality and fertility have greatly declined, have had a strong impact on activity rates and on the capacity of women to take paid employment at different occupational levels. These demographic influences have been complex and to some extent contradictory. The long-term decline in fertility has clearly been associated with the rising participation of women in the labour force, although it cannot be determined to what extent it is the reduced number of children which has facilitated entry into, or continuance of, paid employment, or whether an increasing desire to take paid employment has helped to promote the restriction of births.

34. On the other hand, the trend towards earlier marriage might have been expected to reduce activity rates. However, earlier child-bearing, implying earlier completion of the family, considerably extends the period when women are able to resume work outside the home (in most ECE countries, three quarters or more of births are to women under 30). A rising proportion of "not currently married" women, contributing to the number of women regarded as heads of households, again tends to increase activity rates. At the same time, the changing age and sex composition of the population including the effect of longer life expectation and schooling, tends to increase the ratio of dependants to potential workers, thus stimulating the demand for women's labour.

Education and training

35. Existing educational systems, and provision for training for paid employment, tend to prepare women for a narrower range of paid jobs than men and thus have their influence - together with other factors - on the occupational distribution of women.

36. Differences in schooling begin to appear, in most countries, at the secondary level. In the present population, the proportion of women who have received second level education is generally rather lower for women than for men. At the third level, the disparity is even more marked.

37. However, the development of educational systems in recent decades have changed the picture. Current enrolment show, in most countries, at least equal participation of boys and girls (allowing for the slightly larger number of boys than girls in the population at these ages). At the third level of education

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(i.e. universities or similar institutions), a marked difference appears between different parts of the region. In most of western and southern Europe, and to a lesser extent in North America, men outnumber women. In eastern Europe, women outnumber men (except in Czechoslovakia and Romania). But in practically all countries of the region, women's enrolments in higher education have grown faster than men's. It must be noted, however, that in many countries a large proportion of women in third level education are in institutions giving relatively short courses, such as teachers' or nurses' training, rather than university degrees.

38. But the main difference between the educational patterns for men and for women lies in the choice of subjects for study. In nearly all countries of the region, women make up well over half of the students at third level in humanities and education. In science subjects, a marked distinction appears between western and eastern countries. In the west, women are heavily outnumbered by men in the natural sciences, and form a minority (about 41 per cent) in medical sciences; in engineering studies, women hardly appear. In eastern Europe, by contrast, women are generally a small majority in the natural sciences, a large majority in medicine, and even in engineering make up a very substantial minority (over a quarter on average).

39. Such differences between men and women in subjects of study are clearly associated with the differences in occupational distributions described above, both between men and women and between different parts of the region.

40. In a number of countries, notably in Sweden, efforts are being made by the educational authorities to modify the traditional "sex role" casting which begins at school level. But it is recognized that interaction between educational patterns and employment opportunities are a continuing problem which cannot be quickly resolved.

41. The limited provisions for training or retraining of women for specific jobs, whether provided by employers or institutions, is, again, a factor influencing the unfavourable occupational and industrial composition of the women's labour force. Unwillingness to provide more than short and basic training for women whose attachment to the labour force is believed to be short-term and unreliable is slowly diminishing as the increasing importance of women to the economy becomes better understood.

42. Comparisons for a number of countries show that for both sexes earnings increase with additional educational qualifications; but that women's earnings remain lower than those of men with the same education. For one group of countries it was found that women with a university degree earned on average no more than men with only compulsory basic education. It follows that a woman appears to need superior qualifications to a man to achieve the same income level. Of course, such comparisons are affected by the fact that many well qualified women interrupt their paid employment for family formation and lose opportunities for promotion, especially where "internal labour markets" prevail. Cost-benefit studies, relating income returns to investment in education, suggest however that the return on investment in women's education at higher levels is positive and could be increased by changes in traditional attitudes towards education and training.

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Other factors underlying labour market differences

43. Studies have been made of a number of other factors which are often believed to determine occupational differentials between men and women. Most of these are not easily identifiable and much less quantifiable in their consequences. Among the factors which have been studied are:

(a) "Sex stereotype" concepts, which include differences in behaviour patterns derived from childhood, differences in strength and fitness and susceptibility to mental stress. To some extent, such concepts persist from earlier generations before the demographic transition to lower fertility, earlier child-bearing and lower mortality noted above;

(b) Differences in basic intelligence: I.Q. tests, so far as they go, generally show no difference in average scales of boys and girls but do appear to show better performance by boys on some applications of intelligence and by girls on others with much overlapping in performance between the sexes. But it is notoriously uncertain how far such differences can be ascribed to inherent capacities and how far to the environmental and educational experience;

(c) Management attitudes are affected, justifiably or not, by the factors mentioned above; and also by the higher rate of absences from work for women than for men applying less to older than to younger women with family responsibilities. Similarly, women show on average higher rates of turnover than men, but this again applies chiefly to younger women.

44. These rather diverse factors have other effects, particularly on recruitment and promotion for higher posts, and contribute to management preferences for men and to women's difficulties of competing in the labour market. There are the makings of a vicious circle: since women have less chance to get experience in work corresponding to their qualifications, they are unable to demonstrate their full capacities.

The use of time

45. Studies of the use of time by samples of time budgets similar to the more familiar budgets of household expenditure have become recognized as a significant instrument for social investigations. Their importance has been reinforced by the increased participation of women in the labour force, particularly of mothers with young children who have to combine paid employment with the care of children and the home. The studies exhibit, in human terms, some consequences of labour force participation for women.

46. International comparisons of time budgets in the ECE region 8/ display common features. An average of 12 countries illustrates the pressure on time of the

8/ A. Szalai, The Use of Time, Daily Activities of Urban and Suburban Populations in Twelve Countries (The Hague, Mouton, 1972).

combined activities of paid employment and household activities of employed women. This can be shown by the amount of "free time" remaining after deducting paid work, household activities, child care, sleep, food preparation, etc.: 24 hours a week for employed women, against 33 for full-time housewives and 34 for employed men (data refer to a week including 5 working days). These figures allow for the fact that employed women spend one and a half hours less in their jobs than employed men but, according to the budgets, less than half as much time on housework and child care as full-time housewives.

47. The international study from which these results come is confirmed by a number of similar surveys in individual countries. Some of these bring out, in particular, that the figures for employed women quoted above mask a considerably smaller amount of free time available to married women especially those with small children.

48. Such studies also indicate the pattern of the division of labour within the family. The international study showed that on an average working day, employed women spent about three times as much time on housework, and twice as much on child care, as employed men. Surveys in a few countries, however, reveal a certain but not general increase in men's involvement in household and child care, most marked among young couples and positively correlated with the level of educational achievement. In some countries, notably Sweden, the principle of equality between men and women workers in household and child care activities have been pressed by unions in negotiations on working hours, and accepted by Governments, although the effects are so far limited. Management policies have helped to lighten the burden on women who pursue the double career. In the first place, as pointed out above, the demand for women's labour has led managements to accept part-time work, shorter hours for women than for men, and other flexible arrangements for working hours. Together with the general reduction in working hours for both men and women, these changes have significantly improved the possibilities for married women to enter the labour force.

49. Increasing social provisions for working mothers have had the same effect. In some east European countries, in particular, crèches and day-nurseries cover substantial proportions of children. Facilities for pre-primary school children appear to have expanded even faster, both in eastern and western countries. Arrangements for paid maternity leave have been increased in many countries, most conspicuously, again, in east European countries anxious to reconcile the demand for women's labour with pro-natalist population policies.

Prospects for the future

50. It is not suggested that the various influences on women's position in the economies of the region summarized in this section offer a complete explanation. Although many of these influences are common to all or most countries, yet very substantial differences remain between the countries - in activity rates, relative pay and occupational distributions - which are by no means fully explained. Such differences seem to rest in part on economic factors and policies, in particular on policies for economic growth affecting the over-all demand for labour; in part on differences between countries in demographic structures, in educational

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and training systems and in institutional arrangements influencing the desire of women to take paid employment. But there remain national differences resulting from deep-seated social traditions and ways of life.

51. The future development of many of these complex influences likely to affect future trends in the economic role of women in the ECE region are impossible to predict. But it is possible to make some brief comments on two: demographic trends, and the possible influence of technological change.

52. The demographic influences can, within broad limits, be foreseen at least for a decade or more ahead. 9/ Up to the mid-1980s, the populations within the usual working ages will generally grow faster than in the last decade or so as a result, largely, both of the "baby boom" of the years around 1960 and also of low rates of retirement due to low birth rates during the first world war. Whether this acceleration of the growth of potential labour supply is translated into an acceleration of actual employment growth depends on the many economic and social factors influencing both labour supply and demand. Thus a continued upward trend in the proportion of women seeking paid employment, in particular of married women, would considerably accentuate the increased rate of growth of potential labour supply during a period when economic growth is generally expected to slow down and unemployment to remain relatively high in the west.

53. A major reason for the increased employment of women in recent years in many western countries has been the rapid growth of employment in public services, notably in education and health services. Current policies suggest that this relative growth of public services, the continuation of a very long-term trend, may well slow down, at least temporarily in the immediate future. Other factors, such as the continuing decline of employment in the textile and clothing industries, may have similar unfavourable consequences on women's employment. Thus, a continued expansion of women's employment could to some extent depend on whether the range of job opportunities becomes wider.

54. After the mid-1980s, the demographic picture changes. Mainly because of the low birth rates of the last decade, the working age population will grow more slowly.

55. There are signs of a dilemma being felt in some countries between economic growth policies designed to raise living standards and demanding increased

9/ Relevant demographic projections for western Europe are set out in more detail in UN/ECE "Labour force and employment in western Europe: the prospects to 1975 by major sectors, Economic Bulletin for Europe, Vol. 30, No. 2 (United Nations publication, Sales No. 79.II.E.10). This is partly based on the fuller analysis of population change (covering both western and eastern Europe) in UN/ECE "Labour supply and migration in Europe: demographic dimensions 1950-1975, and prospects", Economic Survey of Europe in 1977, Part II (United Nations publication, Sales No. 78.II.E.1).

employment of women, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, concern with low fertility levels and a pressure for pro-natalist policies which might not be easy to reconcile with high activity rates for younger married women. Whether this dilemma will in practice affect women's employment is uncertain.

56. It is natural to speculate whether new developments in technology and its applications throughout the economy on balance increase or diminish employment prospects in general, and for women in particular. The limited information available on the subject suggests that no clear conclusion is yet possible about the over-all impact of new technologies on women's employment. The studies so far made suggest counteracting forces. ^{10/} It is clear that automation of manufacturing processes has tended to diminish much of the routine work typically done by women (light assembly, conveyor belt work, packing); and some women's jobs requiring skill have been replaced by machines. The maintenance of the expensive equipment tends to be regarded as work for qualified mechanics and engineers - at present normally men. Similarly, and probably more important since more women are employed, many women's jobs in retail trade, banking, telecommunications etc. have been replaced by automatic machinery or computers - serviced by qualified (normally men) technicians and supervisors. The same can apply, if more gradually, to much of the vast women's field of office work (typing, book-keeping and general clerical work) typically done by women. A trend more favourable, in itself, to women's employment is, however, the constantly increasing ratio of clerical and information-handling work to direct production, both in manufacturing and other sectors, as well as the increasing share of the services' sector in the over-all economy.

57. The general pattern in such technical developments seems to be to reduce or downgrade the openings for routine work but to enlarge the opportunities for more highly qualified people. The obvious implication is the need for better education and more on-the-job training - not in all cases very advanced technical training - if women are to seize the new opportunities opened to them, as indeed to men, from the new technological developments. This means before all that production enterprises open up more training possibilities for women for such jobs, and that managers, but also men and women in general, overcome the psychological barrier of preconceived ideas about "typical" or "untypical" female jobs.

58. The task of this basically analytical report is not to propose specific recommendations for improving the status of women in the economy. This has been done in the recommendations adopted by the ECE regional seminar in July 1979. ^{11/}

^{10/} United Nations Seminar on the Effects of Scientific and Technological Developments on the Status of Women, Iasi, Romania, August 1969 (ST/TAO/HR/37); University of Göttingen, Frauenarbeit und technischer Wandel (Frankfurt/Main, 1973); I. Barren and R. Curnow, The Future with Microelectronics (London, 1979).

^{11/} See ECE/SEM/5/9, "Summary and conclusions", para. 32.