

SHADOW  
REPORT  
ON THE STATE  
OF GENDER  
EQUALITY  
IN THE CZECH  
REPUBLIC  
IN YEARS  
2016-2020

Shadow Report on the State of Gender Equality  
in the Czech Republic in Years 2016–2020



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Czech Women's Lobby  
Prague 2021

## Shadow Report on the State of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic in Years 2016–2020

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Czech Women's Lobby

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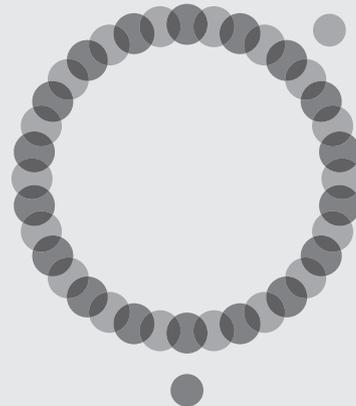
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# Introduction



Hana Stelzerová



The *Shadow Report on the State of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic* is a publication issued by the Czech Women's Lobby, an umbrella organization of 36 member organizations devoted to advocating women's rights in the Czech Republic for over thirteen years.

The Shadow Report is a joint effort undertaken by women active in a number of organizations addressing the various issues discussed therein, both as researchers and professionals, and as such presents a comprehensive analytical perspective from directly within the field. Its aim is to provide a survey of the shifts in gender equality within the Czech Republic over the past five years. The report is produced periodically thanks to the initiative of NGOs responding to the review of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>1</sup> and offers an independent view of the state of gender equality in the Czech Republic. The last national review of discrimination against women in the Czech Republic was conducted in the spring of 2016, with the participation of members of the Czech Women's Lobby.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the organizers of the project have continuously worked to improve the situation in the Czech Republic, and along with others to strengthen the rights and position of women in society.

The report reflects on the implementation of individual articles of the Convention, but is structured thematically – the chapter headings refer to the relevant articles of the Convention. The individual chapters provide a brief perspective on a specific social issue, supported by data and facts or the lived experience of those organizations working with the target group of women, and assess the progress made since 2016. At the end of each chapter we also present recommendations – measures to be introduced or strengthened – in order to help eliminate discrimination against women in that area.

Not all areas of gender equality are covered in the shadow report, compared for example to the 2015 report. Nor do we have the ambition to cover all of the various topics in an exhaustive way – our aim was instead to evaluate in particular those topics that draw on the expertise of our member organizations, and to offer an overview of insight derived from practice that might not be contained in other comprehensive publications.

1 UN 1979: *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, available online on <https://www.osn.cz/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/umluva-o-odstraneni-vsech-forem-diskriminace-zen.pdf> / CEDAW 29th Session 30 June to 25 July 2003

2 For more information see: <https://czlobby.cz/cs/spolupracujeme/cedaw-2016>. / <https://czlobby.cz/en/we-cooperate/cedaw-2016/>

## What is Gender Equality?

The definition of gender equality as we conceptualize and understand it in the shadow report (and also in our work) is taken from our previous shadow report by doc. PhDr. Irena Smetáčková, Ph.D.<sup>3</sup>

*Shadow Report on the State of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic 2016-2020* identifies currently existing problems related to women and men (or different groups of women and men), the elimination of which would bring Czech society closer to gender equality. Gender equality can be defined by the following three parameters:

- the social status, rights, obligations and opportunities of a specific group of men and women are similar,
- individual women and men are not disadvantaged and discriminated against because of their gender,
- gender as a socially classifying principle is relatively insignificant.

As “equal opportunities for women and men” is not a comprehensive concept, we prefer to use the term gender equality. The term may be seen to cover both equal opportunities, and the resultant equality in status. It is also more appropriate as it does not operate in terms of “men” and “women”, but rather with the notion of gender. In practice, gender as a classifying social principle is always deployed in combination with other such factors, such as ethnicity, social class, or disability. Thus the term gender equality covers not only equality between men and women in general, but also the equality of various subgroups of women and men. (If, however, within the text the phrase “equality of men and women” does occur, it should be read as synonymous with “gender equality” — editor’s note.)

### Marginalized Groups of Women

The shadow report focuses on discrimination against disadvantaged groups of women and includes two broader chapters addressing the situation of Roma and migrant women. These women are subject to structural inequalities that the majority group of women in our society also face, but are often affected by these in much stronger and harsher



<sup>2</sup> Czech Women’s Lobby 2015. *Stínová zpráva o stavu genderové rovnosti v České republice v roce 2015*. [Shadow Report on the State of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic], p. 14. Available online in Czech only on <https://czlobby.cz/cs/dokumenty/stinova-zprava-o-stavu-genderove-rovnosti-v-ceske-republice-v-roce-2015>.



ways. The inequalities faced by these groups of women cut across the themes of the other chapters in the report, but we also discuss them in the chapters specifically focusing on disadvantaged women. In their daily lives, Roma and migrant women face discrimination because of their gender, ethnicity, culture and social origin. They are currently the most disadvantaged group of women in our society, which is also reflected in their economic and social status.

### **The Impact of Covid-19 on Gender Equality**

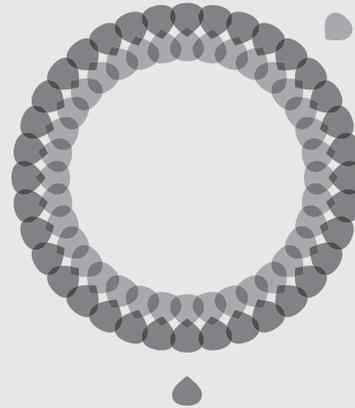
The Shadow Report was written in the second half of 2020, when our society was experiencing a crisis due to the first and then second waves of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even at the time it was obvious that this was having a direct impact on the position of women in society and widening the gender gap. We therefore revised some of the chapters additionally in 2021 to include the latest information on the impact of Covid-19 on gender equality issues. As the pandemic crisis continues, the trend that is underway is likely to further the gap between rich and poor, as well as between different professions, social groups, nationalities, and especially between men and women.

The Czech Women's Lobby and its member organizations continue to monitor the situation and, above all, seek to mitigate and address these problems — both at the political level, including through the government's Working Group on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, in which the CWL has a representative, and through expert research and advocacy, practical assistance and consulting at the grass roots level.

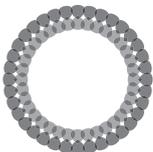
# Chapter 1

## **Institutional Framework for Achieving Gender Equality**

Referring to the Convention article no. 1



Veronika Šprincová



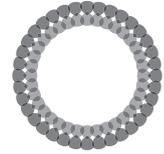
Sufficient capacity (financial, human or expert) is an essential prerequisite for positive developments in the field of gender equality. The structure of institutional support for this agenda at all levels did not undergo any major changes between 2015 and 2020, and it confirmed yet again that the orientation of policies in this area is not sufficiently systematic in nature and largely dependent on the personal commitment of specific individuals or political impulses. In the period under review, more progressive people tended to be replaced by more conservative ones, resulting in lower impetus in terms of addressing the issue of gender equality in a systemic manner.

### Government Level

Between 2015 and 2020, the agenda was stabilized in the sense that it remained under the responsibility of the Office of the Government throughout the period under review, which prevented repeated paralysis caused by relocating the agenda. In the years 2015–2017, Minister for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation was in charge of the agenda, but this post was not renewed after the end of the government's term of office.<sup>1</sup> After five years, the main responsibility for the issue has thus returned from the ministerial level to that of the Government Commissioner for Human Rights, which has in turn weakened the progress of the agenda.

The **Government Council for Gender Equality** remained as an advisory body throughout the period, with no significant changes in its composition and function. In view of the abolition of the post of Minister for Human Rights, the Council's leadership changed, with Prime Minister Andrej Babiš himself becoming its chairman in 2018. In principle, this should have meant the strengthening of the Council's influence and the importance of the agenda under discussion, but in practice no such positive shift occurred. The Prime Minister is the head of a number of advisory bodies to the Government, which does not allow him to deal with all of these in great detail as this would be too time-consuming, and thus only makes the functioning of the Council more difficult.

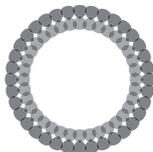
1 The move was in line with the pre-election program of the ANO political movement, which won the most votes in the 2017 elections and thus played a key role in the formation of both subsequent governments. The pre-election program literally states: "We will abolish the position of the Minister for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation and the Legislative Council of the Government, and will move all the agenda to the authority of the Ministry of Justice." *Program of ANO Political Movement for the 2017 Parliamentary Elections*, available online on <https://www.anobudelip.cz/file/edee/2017/09/program-hnuti-ano-pro-volby-do-poslanecke-snemovny.pdf>.



In addition to the Government Council for Gender Equality, we must also mention the **Government Council for Human Rights**, under which falls the *Committee for Sexual Minorities*. However, all efforts to date to systematically interconnect the activities of these two councils and their committees have not met with any success.

As in the previous period, the **Gender Equality Department of the Office of the Government of Czech Republic** (the Department) is still struggling with insufficient capacity and a general reluctance to increase the number of posts, especially in terms of guaranteed and therefore systemized positions. The functioning of the Department is thus largely dependent on the implementation of projects, which fundamentally threatens its existence in the future. The establishment of the *Government Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic for 2014–2020* was described as a clearly positive step in the previous period, but its implementation has not been entirely satisfactory. In general, it can be said that both the strategy itself and the follow-up action plans were well prepared and undertaken in cooperation with experts in the respective fields. The same applies for the preparation of the follow-up Gender Equality Strategy for 2021–2030. However, there is a lack of will to implement certain key positive measures, which did not even make it into the final version of the documents. There is also insufficient political will to implement the tasks contained in the strategic documents.

The position of **gender equality coordinators** continues to exist at the level of individual ministries, and their work assignments and the amount of time they can actually devote to this issue vary considerably. There are also differences in the composition and activity of the **working groups on equal opportunities for women and men**. Therefore, in 2018, the *Standards for the Position of Departmental Gender Equality Coordinators* were approved, regulating the minimum standards for this position. However, regular monitoring of the implementation of the Standards shows that there has been no significant improvement — mainly because the Standards were not binding in the period in question, but only recommended.



## Public Defense of Rights

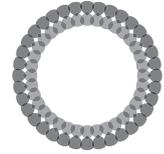
In 2009, the Ombudsman (Public Defender of Rights) became the national body in charge of the gender equality agenda within the provision of Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe on the basis of the Anti-Discrimination Act (CR 2009). Between 2014 and 2020 this position (ombudsman) was held by Anna Šabatová. In 2020 she was replaced by her former deputy, Stanislav Křeček, whose attitudes in regard the mission of the office of ombudsman and gender equality are highly questionable. Therefore, it cannot be expected that he will play an active role in monitoring the current situation or in developing and promoting policies leading towards the elimination of gender discrimination.

### Parliamentary Level

As in the past, the *Permanent Commission on Family Issues, Equal Opportunities and Minorities* continues to function in the Chamber of Deputies, but its leadership is currently conservative in orientation, so any active promotion of gender equality cannot be expected at the parliamentary level either. In the Senate, equal opportunities (for women and men) are not currently the explicit responsibility of any of its bodies. In both cases, gender equality is viewed within a broader 'residual' agenda, which in practice often leads to its being rendered invisible.

### Regional and Local Level

In terms of the institutional frameworks at the regional and local level, there is no formally formal commitment to deliver gender equality, and it is therefore entirely up to the leadership of the local government authorities to decide whether and how they treat this agenda. Since 2015, there has been a certain stagnation at this level as well, which is also reflected in the competition *Úřad na cestě k rovnosti* (Civic Authorities on the Road to Equality, formerly *Úřad roku Půl na půl – respekt k rovným příležitostem*, Civic Authority of the Year. Half-and-Half — Respect for Equal Opportunities) held by the Ministry of the



Interior (since 2019 in cooperation with the Institute for Public Administration), in which local authorities often promote activities that are only marginally related to gender equality, or even work directly against it by promoting gender stereotypes. In the previous period, a number of authorities did introduce positive changes both internally and in regard to the public, but it appears that there is generally a lack of deeper understanding of the issues and the reasons as to why this agenda should be implemented. Moreover, as is the case at parliamentary level, there is a (strategic) subsuming of gender equality within a broader agenda at the local government level, once again making it virtually invisible.

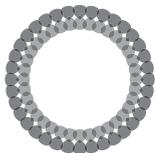
### **State Labor Inspection Office and Labor Offices**

As in the past, the State Labor Inspection Office and other labor offices are still not systematically integrated into the broader gender equality agenda. The implementation of the “22% to Equality” project by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, aimed at reducing the gender pay gap, has not helped in terms of bringing about any significant changes – either to the institutional set-up or in the reduction of inequality levels.

### **Subsidy Policy**

Gender equality remains a horizontal theme in terms of the European Structural Funds, especially for the ESF, but as in the past, it is still the case that this principle is implemented in a rather formal manner. Funds are allocated directly to gender equality through the *Operational Program for Employment 2014–2020*, but part of this was nonetheless in the course of the program period instead transferred to support for children’s groups and other priority areas. The development of the gender audit standard has also not had a major positive impact — the current updated version has dropped the prerequisite of education in gender studies and/or membership in the Gender Expertise Chamber of the Czech Republic.

The funding of the agenda from national sources has undergone a significant change. In 2013, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs established a subsidy program to support

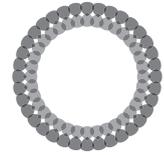


the activities of non-governmental non-profit organizations in the field of promoting gender equality with a total allocation of 5 million CZK. This subsidy was maintained after the transfer of the Department to the Office of the Government, and its allocation was even increased to 7 million CZK. However, after the 2017 elections and the appointment of the new government, the situation changed. During the 2018 budget debate, an opposition MP tabled a motion to transfer the funds to investment in sports. Although unsuccessful, the subsidy nonetheless came to the attention of politicians, the media and the public, and the situation was repeated in 2018, when the proposal was already approved and the total allocation was reduced to CZK 2 million in the budget, and in 2019, when the Office of the Government itself proposed an allocation of only CZK 2 million in the budget. In the call for 2021, the allocation of CZK 7 million is noted, but with the proviso that the amount may change subject to the approval of the state budget.

### **Achievements and Challenges**

From the above information, it is evident that the structure of the institutional framework has remained relatively stable in its main features over the past review period, and does offer a basic support system for the promotion of policies related to gender equality. The existence of a government strategy and the preparation of a follow-up document involving both the ministries themselves and outside experts is also positive. It is also positive that the subsidies program of the Office of the Government allocated specifically for gender equality activities has been preserved.

Institutional support for the agenda has remained stagnant for some time, and with the abolition of the post of Minister for Human Rights, the agenda has been weakened. It is still the case that the willingness to promote specific measures depends on specific individuals and their level of commitment. The political will to address the issue in a systematic manner has waned in recent years. Although good strategic documents have been approved, these are not implemented in practice, or else only formally. The situation surrounding the approval of the allocation of the subsidy program shows that the political representation does not, for the most part, recognize the importance of the issue and more often have a negative attitude towards it.



- Ensure adequate funding for the gender equality agenda. Further develop, strengthen and stabilize the institutional framework for the agenda at all levels.
- Systematically collect gender-based data in order to more effectively monitor developments in different areas.
- Establish a stable institutional framework for the gender equality and gender mainstreaming agenda, both at central (in particular, restoration of the post of Minister for Human Rights) and local government level.
- Strengthen the competence of the Government Council for Gender Equality as a working and advisory body of the Government, in particular the strengthening of its role in monitoring the implementation of tasks related to its remit.
- Ensure the sustainability, future functionality and development of the Department for Gender Equality of the Office of the Government in terms of personnel (i.e., an increase in systematized positions).
- Increase the number of gender equality coordinators within the ministries so that these can effectively promote gender equality both internally and within their respective agendas.
- Provide training (on a continuous basis) for people responsible for the promotion of gender equality as part of their job description, and also provide them with additional methodological support from the Department or from external experts.
- Consistently apply the gender impact assessment methodology.
- Ensure that the Ombudsman's Office has sufficient capacity to work in the area of gender equality and extend the powers of the Ombudsman's Office to be able to represent victims of discrimination in court or bring public actions in discrimination cases.
- Draft public budgets which take into account the principles of gender budgeting.
- Develop cooperation between the state administration, local government, academia and the business sector in promoting gender equality.
- Prepare and negotiate a comprehensive draft law on gender equality.

Chapter 2–4

# Women's Representation

**Women's Representation in Politics**

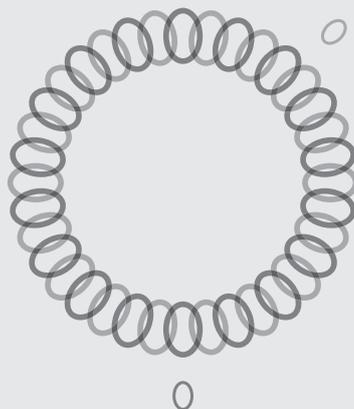
**Women's Representation in Media**

**Gender Stereotypes in Media and Advertising**

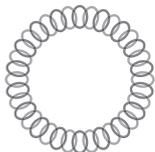
## Chapter 2

# Women's Representation in Politics

Referring to the Convention article no. 7



Veronika Šprincová



## Gender Representation in Representative and Executive Bodies in 2015–2020

Gender balance in politics is crucial and to a large extent determines other areas of society. It is here that the course of society as a whole is decided. The lack of women's representation constitutes a democratic deficit, as women are not able to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Currently, politics reflects mainly life experience and interests of men.

Women's representation in Czech politics has increased slightly again in the period of 2015–2020, however, in the international context, the Czech Republic has made no progress; the European Institute for Gender Equality's index<sup>1</sup> has fallen from 32 (2015) to 26.1 (2019)<sup>2</sup>. The Inter-Parliamentary Union<sup>3</sup> ranked the Czech Republic 73<sup>rd</sup> at the beginning of 2015, and 85<sup>th</sup>, i.e. twelve places lower, in January 2019. The overall ranking of the Czech Republic by the World Economic Forum<sup>4</sup> has long been lowered by gender imbalance in politics.<sup>5</sup>

Elections to the **European Parliament**<sup>6</sup> were held in 2019. While the overall share of female nominees dropped to just under 24% (the lowest share since 2004), women's representation among MEPs reached an all-time high in 2019, with 33.3% of women elected — thus, the Czech Republic broke the critical 30% threshold for the first time at any decision-making level.

Table 1: Women's representation in governments

	Share of Women upon Government Appointment	Average for the Whole Term of Office	Number of Female Ministers in Office throughout the Term
2007–2009	22.2%	20.8%	1
2009–2010	17.6%	19.0%	3
2010–2013	0%	10.3%	0
2013	6.7%	6.7%	1
2013–2014	17.6%	23.8%	1
2014–2017	17.6%	19.2%	1
2017–2018	26.6%	26.6%	4
2018–now	26.6%	28.6%	2

Source: Web pages of the Government of the Czech Republic ([www.vlada.cz](http://www.vlada.cz)), table: author

1 Available online on <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/CZ>

2 Total index for all categories fell from 56.7 (2015) to 55.7.

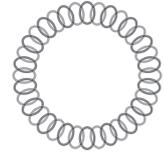
3 Available online on <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm>.

4 Available online on [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf).

5 In 2015, the Czech Republic ranked 83<sup>rd</sup> in women's political participation, 85<sup>th</sup> in 2016, 91<sup>st</sup> in 2017, 87<sup>th</sup> in 2018 and 77<sup>th</sup> in 2019.

6 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/statistiky/zastoupeni-zen-a-muzu-v-politice/evropsky-parlament/ep-2019>.

7 Overall, 6 women have been appointed to the Government since the beginning of its term of office; 2 female ministers have been in the office since the beginning of the term, 2 have taken over the office from someone else and 2 have resigned.



Women's representation in the **Government of the Czech Republic** has also experienced significant changes. The last election period has seen three successive governments and the number of women ministers went gradually up – the average share of women in Bohuslav Sobotka's government was 19.2%, while in Andrej Babiš subsequent governments the share was 26.7% and (as of August 15, 2020) 28.6%, respectively<sup>7</sup>.

The share of female nominees in the 2016 elections to the **Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic**<sup>8</sup> was 18.5% and the share of elected women was the highest since 2006 (22.2 %); and the overall share of female senators also reached an all-time high, although it was just 19.8%. In the subsequent elections of 2018, the share of female nominees fell to 17.8% (of which 20% advanced to the second round) and the share of elected women was dramatically low at just 7.4%. The overall share of women in the Senate thus dropped to 16%. The elections to the **Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic**<sup>9</sup> were held in the autumn of 2017 and did not result in any dramatic change; there were 28.6% of female nominees and the share of elected women increased by 2.5 percentage points to 22%, reaching the same level as in 2010. Given the personal changes in the make-up of the Chamber of Deputies, there are currently 46 female MPs, i.e. 23%<sup>10</sup>.

At the local administration level, two elections took place — regional and local. In the **2016 regional elections**,<sup>11</sup> the share of female nominees reached 30.1% and the share of women elected was at an all-time high at 20.3%. Compared to the 2012 elections, there was an increase if only by 0.4 percentage points. As for the regional leadership, there are currently 2 female and 10 male Governors in the office<sup>12</sup>. In 2018, the **local elections**<sup>13</sup> took place, where the share of women is historically the highest and the share of female nominees as well as women elected rises with each subsequent election. Overall, 32.8% of women were nominated and their representation has risen slightly from 28% to 29%. Regarding statutory cities, 4 of them are led by women who thus make up 15.4% of the incumbent mayors.<sup>14</sup>

8 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/statistiky/zastoupeni-zen-a-muzuv-politice/senat-cr/senat-2016>.

9 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/statistiky/zastoupeni-zen-a-muzuv-politice/poslanecka-snemovna/ps-2017>.

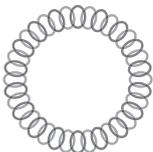
10 Data as of August 15, 2020.

11 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/statistiky/zastoupeni-zen-a-muzuv-politice/krajaska-zastupitelstva>.

12 Data as of August 15, 2020. In the Pilsen Region, the female Deputy Governor has been appointed the acting Governor after the resignation of the elected Governor. The share of women in regional leadership is currently 23%.

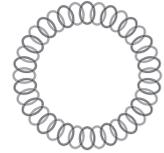
13 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/statistiky/zastoupeni-zen-a-muzuv-politice/komunalni-zastupitelstva/komunal-2018>.

14 Data as of August 15, 2020.

Table 2: Number and share of women elected in the last elections for each political entity<sup>15</sup>

	ANO		ČSSD		KDU-ČSL	
	Number of Women	Share of Women	Number of Women	Share of Women	Number of Women	Share of Women
EP (2019)	3	50 %	X	X	1	50 %
Chamber of Deputies (2017)	20	25.6 %	2	13.3 %	1	10 %
Senate (2016)	0	0 %	0	0 %	4	66.7 %
Senate 2018	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %
Regions (2016)	47	26.7 %	26	20.8 %	7	16.6 %
City of Prague (2018)	2	16.6 %	X	X	X	X
Statutory Cities (2018)	79	28.7 %	11	16.4 %	9	16.7 %
	KSCM		ODS		TOP 09	
	Number of Women	Share of Women	Number of Women	Share of Women	Number of Women	Share of Women
EP (2019)	1	100 %	1	25 %	0	0 %
Chamber of Deputies (2017)	3	20 %	5	20 %	2	28.6 %
Senate (2016)	X	X	0	0 %	0	0 %
Senate (2018)	X	X	0	0 %	X	X
Regions (2016)	19	22 %	10	13.2 %	2	10.5 %
City of Prague (2018)	X	X	2	14.2 %	2	15.4 %
Statutory Cities (2018)	16	24.2 %	27	18.4 %	2	8 %
	STAN		Piráti		SPD	
	Number of Women	Share of Women	Number of Women	Share of Women	Number of Women	Share of Women
EP (2019)	0 %	0 %	1	33.3 %	0	0 %
Chamber of Deputies (2017)	2	33.3 %	3	13.6 %	6	27.3 %
Senate (2016)	0	0 %	X	X	X	X
Senate (2018)	1	33.3 %	0	0 %	X	X
Regions (2016)	7	29.2 %	0	0	0	0
City of Prague (2018)	2	15.4 %	2	15.4 %	X	X
Statutory Cities (2018)	7	18.9 %	18	22 %	6	15.4 %

15 The political spectrum has not changed dramatically over the past five years, with the disappearance of Úsvit (replaced by the SPD), Svobodní, SPOZ and SZ (Green Party, which lost the 2017 elections to the Czech Parliament), while the popularity of the ANO movement, the Mayors and Independents and the Czech Pirate Party is growing rapidly. The table includes only parties that have been successful in majority of recent elections.



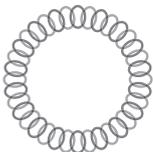
Given the above-mentioned political reluctance to actively seek a more balanced representation of men and women in decision-making positions, the continued work of the Committee on Equal Representation of Women and Men in Politics at the *Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* can be seen as a plus. Apart from experts, the Committee includes representatives of political parties. The Committee has been actively involved in the preparation of government strategies (both for 2015–2020 and the follow-up for 2021–2030) and follow-up action plans in this area.

**Monitoring of data** regarding gender representation in decision-making positions is handled mostly by the Czech Statistical Office. The data sorted by gender on elections to representative bodies are published on the website [www.volby.cz](http://www.volby.cz). Further data are published once a year in *Zaostřeno na ženy a muže* [Focused on Women and Men], however, these data are not fully consistent, which makes it difficult to follow development in the area in question.

Despite repeated recommendations and persistent inequalities, the Czech Republic has not yet adopted a legislative quota for the minimum representation of women/men on ballots. The first initiative appeared in 2010, when an amendment to the law related to elections to the Chamber of Deputies, regions and the municipality of the city of Prague was drafted, however, the amendment was not approved due to the appointment of a new government. In 2010, the draft went through an inter-ministerial comment procedure but it was never put forward to the Government for consideration.

The drafting of a similar amendment was therefore included in the Government's plan of legislative work for 2014, when the Ministry of the Interior also prepared a second draft, which also went through an inter-ministerial comment procedure, which, however, brought a contradictory result. In May 2015, the proposal was therefore redrafted and was approved by the Legislative Council of the Government, but then it was rejected at the Government meeting in June 2015.<sup>16</sup>

16 According to the proposal, women and men would have to be represented not only in the first two places, but also in each of the trios following the first and second place on the ballot. The minimum overall share of men/women on the ballot was set at 30%. A financial sanction was proposed in the form of cutting the money for the seats won. Based on the intra-ministerial comment procedure, the measure was amended. The proposal submitted to the Government stipulated an overall 40% share of men/women and gender representation in the first three places. The record of the discussion of the proposal, including all related documents, is available in the application ODok. Available online on <https://apps.odok.cz/kpl-detail?pid=KORN9MBDQQQ5>.



As regards affirmative action inside political parties, only the Green Party (SZ) currently uses gender quotas. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) has a similar rule in the form of a binding recommendation approved before each election. The Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) embedded a rule for a minimum 25% representation of women in party bodies in its statutes a long time ago, and in 2015, it also adopted a 40% quota for gender representation on ballots. However, the two measures were dropped in 2019.

Political reluctance to introduce similar measures was apparent also in 2016, when the Action Plan for Equal Representation of Women and Men in Decision-Making Positions for 2016–2018 was approved<sup>17</sup>, while the proposed measure in the form of quotas for minimum representation of women and men was excluded from the draft during the approval process. The fact that this is a crucial measure is shown by the report on the implementation of the action plan<sup>18</sup>, which states that the strategic target, i.e. at least 40% representation of women in decision-making positions, has not been achieved. Regarding the other targets, a many of them were not met or were met only partially. Low representation of women in politics is a systemic problem, and as such, it requires systemic solutions adopted by both the state and political parties.

### Recommendations

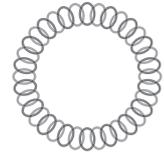
- Approve an amendment of the Electoral Act that would ensure balanced representation of women and men on ballots<sup>19</sup>. For the amendment to be effective, it needs to: 1) determine the order of women/men at the top of the ballots, 2) set effective sanctions for breaking the rule.
- Approve and implement quotas inside political parties.
- Support the creation and operation of women’s organizations and platforms inside political parties and their active involvement in intra-party processes.
- Introduce a thorough systemic monitoring of women’s representation in politics across all levels of decision-making. Not only quantitative, but also qualitative assessment of the situation (revealing the causes of low representation of women in politics). Proposing appropriate measures and updating them in the light of current developments.

17 Available online on <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/akcni-plan-pro-vyrovnane-zastoupeni-zen-a-muzu-v-rozhodovacich-pozicich-na-leta-2016---2018-147260/>.

18 Available online on <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Souhrnna-zprava-plneni-Akcniho-planu-pro-vyrovnane-zastoupeni-v-rozhodovacich-pozicich-za-rok-2018.pdf>.

19 Using the zipper system (candidates on the list to alternate between men and women), at least in the first half of the list, seems ideal based on foreign experience). If these requirements are not met, candidate lists cannot be submitted.

- Introduce support measures inside political parties (women empowerment, mentoring, networking, databases of women interested in holding a political office, adjusting meeting times, childminding, etc.) based on their individual situations.
- Develop cross-party cooperation of women's organizations and platforms inside political parties.
- Fund activities in this area and support cooperation between the State, political parties and expert community (academia and non-profit organizations) focused on the area in question.



## Chapter 3

# Women's Representation in Media

Referring to the Convention article no. 7



Petra Havlíková



As in other areas related to women's representation in the Czech Republic, the lack of data and research constitutes a significant problem here. Regarding low representation of women in (not only) public media, we can rely on just two analyses: the 2014 Forum 50% analysis "Ženy v médiích: Přináší polistopadová trpělivost růže?" ["Women in Media: Does Patience After November 89' Bring Roses?"]<sup>1</sup> and the 2015 Data Journalism analysis "Jak média ovlivňují realitu" [How Media Influence Reality]<sup>2</sup>. More recent data is not available.

However, women's representation in media management and supervisory bodies of public media and, as guests, experts and authors, in discussions and other relevant broadcast media output can be identified as the main issues in this respect.

As for women's representation in media management, the Forum 50% analysis shows that there are just 13% of women vs 87% of men in public media management.<sup>3</sup> The similar conclusions were provided by the Data Journalism analysis, which reveals that there are 12% of women in the Czech Television management, 17% of women in the Czech Radio management and 29% of women in the Czech Press Agency management, with the overall share of women's representation in public media management at 11.1%.<sup>4</sup> Given the fact that these data is 5 or more years old, it has been updated for this report according the same methodology (Data Journalism) as of August 31, 2020. The updated research shows that the current gender representation in public media management is 14.7% of women and 85.3% of men – the higher women's representation is thus rather symbolic and the situation has hardly changed over the past 5 years.

The second issue is women's representation in supervisory bodies, i. e. media councils. "Members of the councils are elected and recalled by the Chamber of Deputies for a period of five and six years with the aim to exercise the right of general public to monitor individual media and to ensure that the media provide unbiased and comprehensive information for the free formation of opinions. The members of the councils are to represent significant regional, political, social and cultural currents of opinion." An analysis of media councils (as of August 31, 2020) shows that gender representation in public media boards is 17.1% of women and 82.9% of men.

- 1 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/zeny-v-mediich-prinasi-polistopadova-trpelivost-ruze>.
- 2 Available online on <http://www.datova-zurnalistika.cz/jak-media-ovlivnuji-realitu/>.
- 3 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/zeny-v-mediich-prinasi-polistopadova-trpelivost-ruze>.
- 4 Available online on <http://www.datova-zurnalistika.cz/jak-media-ovlivnuji-realitu/>.



The representation of women experts in discussion broadcast output was mapped by the analysis of Forum 50%, with the result that women's representation in the three most watched discussion programs in public media was 17% compared to 83% of men. Given its scope, the analysis has not been updated for 2020.

### Recommendations

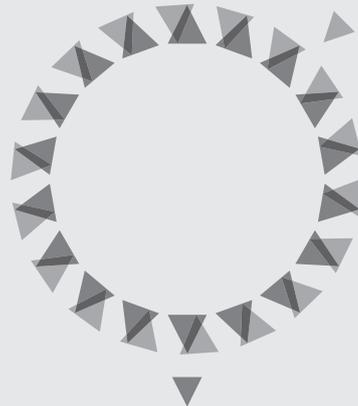
- Adequately map women's representation in public media and monitor it in regular analyses both at national level (e.g. in annual media reports) and at transnational level, participating in such project as Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)<sup>5</sup> and others.
- Support women in lower and middle management in order to promote their participation in upper management, for example through mentoring programs and +1 programs targeted to increase the share of the underrepresented gender in management.
- Encourage the participation of women as role models in media education in secondary schools and universities.
- Use existing databases of women experts when looking for people to express their expert opinion in public media and encourage staff to be more mindful to diversify representation in news coverage, journalism, specialized programs, etc. The database of women experts needs to be further expanded and updated.

<sup>5</sup> Available online on <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp>.

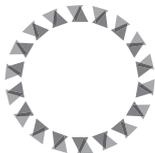
Chapter 4

# Gender Stereotypes in Media and Advertising

Referring to the Convention article no. 1



Petra Havlíková



Gender stereotypes in the media have been discussed in the connection with several issues in recent years. The first one is the assessment of sexist/discriminatory advertising by regional trade offices, courts and the ombudsman. Regional trade licensing offices imposed 21 fines amounting to a total of CZK 573,500 in the period of 2013–2018. The highest fine, CZK 80,000, was paid by Zastavárna Index, a pawn shop based in Brno. On a positive note, there is new case law on sexism in advertising from the Supreme Administrative Court, which ruled in April 2021 that advertising using photographs of naked women just to attract attention to unrelated products puts women in the position of sexual object and is against good morals, or to be more specific, it discriminates against women and harms human dignity. Currently, the Supreme Administrative Court is deciding another case of sexist advertising, so another case law together with the possibility of argumentation should be available soon.

The ombudsman's investigation has also shown that the decision-making of the regional trade licensing offices as well as the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT), which is the single body of appeal, is not uniform and the principle of the protection of legitimate expectations is not therefore fulfilled. "Client and advertising agencies may have objective difficulties to know in advance whether a particular advertisement breaks the law or not."<sup>1</sup>

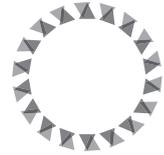
In the period under review, Sexist Piggie Award, which monitored the most sexist advertisements in the Czech public space, completed its ten-year run. One of the outputs of the campaign was a public survey conducted by CVVM in 2018, which showed that the majority of society disliked sexism in advertising, and for instance, advertising that depicts violence against women bothered 91% of respondents.<sup>2</sup>

Another resonating issue was the underrepresentation of women in discussions and opinion sections, especially in the public media. There are no relevant data on gender equality available in this respect, with the exception of the 2014 research conducted by Forum 50%, which showed that women make up only about 17% of guests on the public media's discussion/political programs.<sup>3</sup> On a positive note, some media outlets

1 Available online on [https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ESO/2024-17-VOP-VB-Z18-final.pdf](https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/ESO/2024-17-VOP-VB-Z18-final.pdf).

2 Available online on <http://zenskaprava.cz/nabidka/jak-vnimame-sexistickou-reklamu/>.

3 Available online on <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/zeny-v-mediich-prinasi-polistopadova-trpelivost-ruze>.



have been reflecting more and more on gender equality over the last 5 years and provide high quality information — for example Deník N, Alarm, Deník Referendum, Respekt or Heroine magazine.

The representation of the issue of stereotypes in the media in the Government Strategy for the Equality of Women and Men is also a plus. The Strategy until 2020 mentions the issue of advertising in the chapter Everyday Life and Lifestyle. The follow-up Strategy for the Equality of Women and Men for 2021–2030 includes a detailed chapter on society and the media.

### **Recommendations**

- Thoroughly revise the regulation of advertising — the concept of the law on the regulation of advertising is already insufficient (it imposes sanctions only on businesses) and the shift of advertising to the online space makes it even harder to address the issue. It is necessary to consider a more significant change of the law, and in particular for sexism in advertising, to designate a single supervisory body.
- Encourage gender equality in public media through the inclusion of programs on this issue and efforts to promote gender balance when inviting experts, etc.
- Conduct research of other issues, for instance the representation of diversity in gender identities in media or the impacts of media production on children and youth from the perspective of gender equality and the reproduction of stereotypes.

Chapter 5–6

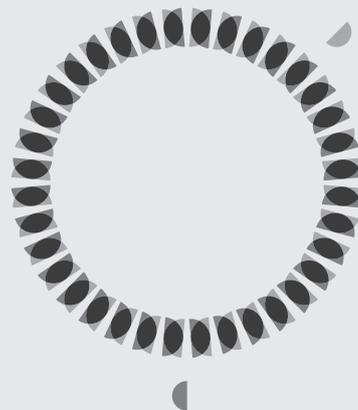
# Parenting and Childcare

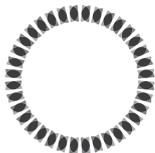
**Availability of Pre-School Care for Young Children**

**Birth Assistance**

## Availability of Pre-School Care for Young Children

Referring to the Convention article no. 5, 16





The European Commission's interim report on the Barcelona objectives released in May 2018<sup>1</sup> ranks the Czech Republic second when it comes to the biggest impact of maternity on women's employment. In meeting the Barcelona objective for children under the age of 3 (i.e. providing childcare capacity for 33% of children under this age), the Czech Republic ranks second to last. An analysis of over 12,000 households shows that women spend twice as much time doing household chores as men, a disproportion that holds true even when they have similar incomes and hours of work.<sup>2</sup> Combined with the low availability of part-time work, it means that mothers carry a heavier burden in terms of childcare and housework. Countries with a systematic support for work-life balance have long maintained a relatively high birth rate.

In the Czech Republic, pre-school education is still primarily organized by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for children between 3 and 6, but not before the age of 2. An amendment to the Education Act establishes a so-called "priority placement for three- and four-year-olds". A child may also be accepted to pre-school education during the school year, but this legal provision is not applied to a large extent. At the same time, it is still not possible to accept all applications for placement of children aged 2, or even 3 and 4.

In 2017, the Czech Republic had a total of 451,608 children up to and including 3 years of age, while 137,229 children up to and including 3 years of age attended kindergartens.

## Kindergartens

Abolition of the approved entitlement to priority placement in kindergartens for 2-year-olds that came into effect from 2020 significantly reduced the potential accessibility of childcare services for children under the age of 3. A child under the age of 3 is not eligible to be accepted in kindergarten. Kindergarten capacity for children under the age of 3 is not always sufficient and is also regionally disproportionate. While some municipalities admit children even at the age of 2, elsewhere, children are admitted only after the age of 3 (based on the obligation of priority placement in kindergarten). If a child reaches the age of 3 in September, i.e. in the beginning of the school year, he or she does not

1 Available online on <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0273&from=NL>.

2 Available online on <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ezsu85tbjhgby9o/draft2.pdf?dl=0>.



have to be admitted, especially due to insufficient capacity, which may not become available during the school year. In the school year of 2018/2019, 32,804 applications for a place in kindergarten were enrolled in kindergartens in the Czech Republic, with almost 90% of them older than 3.<sup>3</sup>

## Children's Groups

On November 29, 2014, the Act on Children's Groups came into effect<sup>4</sup>. Children's groups (CGs) provide childcare for children from 1 until the start of school attendance in groups of 4–12 children, or up to 24 children (a group of 13–24 children has the parameters of a kindergarten).

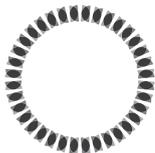
Statistical data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) show that non-profit organizations make up the majority of children's groups' providers, i.e. approximately 80% of the total number of CGs. Facilities established by organizational units of the state, regional self-government units or state-funded organizations amount to approximately 15%, with the rest of CGs (approx. 5%) provided by companies, universities or churches.<sup>5</sup>

According to analyses, children under the age of 3 make up 75% of children in CGs, with children aged 2 making up over 50%. Advantages of CGs are small groups, individual care, age-specific CGs settings, time flexibility, support for early start/return to work.

The MLSA runs a pilot project for micro-nurseries, a new childcare service for children aged between 6 months and 4 years in small groups of up to 4 children. The first 3–4 years of life play a crucial role in later life. Research show that children are less likely to suffer from emotional problems if they attend a high-quality pre-school facility with small groups of children.<sup>6</sup>

The first micro-nurseries were established in 2016, thanks to financial support from the European Social Fund. In total, of the micro-nurseries (74 different founders), 6 are directly established by the municipality, one is established by a municipality-funded organization and the remaining 87 are established by non-profit organizations. There are 7 micro-nurseries in caregivers' homes, 3 on school premises, 84 in municipal or rented premises.

- 3 *Analýza dostupnosti zařízení péče o děti v předškolním věku MPSV* [Analysis of the availability of pre-school childcare facilities of the MLSA] updated as of November 23, 2020. Available online on [http://www.dsmpsv.cz/images/ke\\_stazeni/Analýza\\_dostupnosti\\_zarizeni\\_pec\\_o\\_predskolni\\_deti.pdf](http://www.dsmpsv.cz/images/ke_stazeni/Analýza_dostupnosti_zarizeni_pec_o_predskolni_deti.pdf).
- 4 Act no. 247/2014 Coll., on the provision of childcare services in a children's group and on amendments to related laws, as amended.
- 5 *Šetření o dětských skupinách, jejich nastavení a vnímání poskytovateli i rodiči* [Investigation of children's groups, their setting and perception by providers and parents] Available online on [http://www.dsmpsv.cz/images/galleries/galerie3/FIN\\_REPORT\\_Mindbridge\\_MPSV\\_detske\\_skupiny\\_1\\_7\\_2019.pdf](http://www.dsmpsv.cz/images/galleries/galerie3/FIN_REPORT_Mindbridge_MPSV_detske_skupiny_1_7_2019.pdf).
- 5 See, for example, research published by Prof. J. Heckman, H. Hašková, J. Mundrák, S. Saxonber, E. G. Melhuish and others.



The current capacity of 1,111 CGs is 12,532 children, while 98 micro-nurseries cater to 404 children, in fact, given the attendance on a rotating basis, 30% more children attend the facilities. According to the MLSA's analysis, there is a shortage of approximately 20,000 places for children under the age of 3 in kindergartens, CGs and micro-nurseries (MLSA records on CGs).

### **The 2019 MLSA's analysis shows the following findings:**

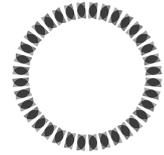
Awareness of CGs among municipal representatives, employers, let alone the general public is not at a level that would make it easier for CGs to be easily mainstreamed throughout the care service system for pre-school children. Considerable satisfaction among parents of children from CGs fostered by informal sharing provides one of the most efficient communication channels to reach the primary target group (parents of pre-school children), but has significantly lower impact outside of it.

Currently, the number of CGs is not sufficient for the distance to CGs not to be a disincentive in some cases. Especially compared to the accessibility of kindergartens.

The Czech Republic has long suffered from a lack of sufficient supply of affordable pre-school facilities of high-quality for children under the age of 3, and even for older children in certain regions, which has a negative impact on parents' employment and exacerbates family poverty. CGs are a flexible service that provides care and education for children in small groups with a focus on individual approach.

Other facilities that provide care and education to pre-school children include childcare for profit under the Act no. 455/1991 Coll., on Trade Enterprise, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Trade Enterprise Act"). Other childcare services are not regulated by law, however, childcare services provided by some entities are in compliance with the general legislation and are used by parents (particularly in family and maternity centres).

In the 2018 National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic declares that work-life balance remains one of the main priorities in terms of gender equality. It also states that affordable and locally available childcare services of high quality are an important measure in this context. Based on the findings from the four years of the CGs' existence, the aim is to improve the quality of the service, to enshrine the change of name to



“nursery” given the appropriateness of the term for available childcare for very young children, to adjust the conditions for childcare for children from 6 months in groups of up to 6 children and to ensure a sustainable system of funding nurseries from the state budget after the end of the ESF subsidy support for CGs (and micro-nurseries).

### **The Amendment Approved by the Government on July 20, 2020**

Currently, in the Czech Republic, the law on the provisions of childcare services in CGs is being amended, with expected entry into force on July 1, 2021. CGs and micro-nurseries will be renamed nurseries. The amendment aims to improve the quality of care and ensure stable funding from the state budget for all children up to 3 years of age. In mid-2022, the European Funds’ support for these facilities will end, which is the reason why the MLSA prepared new conditions for their existence.

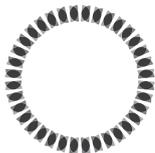
The funding of childcare facilities as put forward in the government amendment will only ensure the operation of large-scale childcare facilities (corporations, municipalities, big employers, state-owned enterprises). Yet the MLSA’s own analyses prove that childcare in small groups of children is of higher quality and in higher parental demand.

Positive features of the amendment include (co)financing from the state budget, enshrining of quality standards of care and obligatory training of caregivers (at least 8 hours per year). But the amendment also includes significant negatives: the funding is undervalued, which will particularly affect small childcare facilities (4–12 children) that are provided by non-profit organizations; expected closure of some facilities, or their transformation into facilities with a different mode of operation<sup>7</sup>. The approach to the qualifications of caregivers is also inadequate. The proposed age limit for children (who will need to be 4 by August) will cause difficulties for both parents and children.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure the sustainability of existing care facilities for the youngest children, in particular for children under the age of 3 and enable the expansion of the capacity of these

<sup>7</sup> Research of the Association of Children’s Groups. Available online on [www.mojedetskaskupina.cz](http://www.mojedetskaskupina.cz).



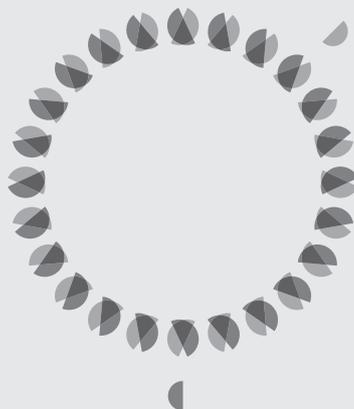
facilities to integrate working parents, especially women-mothers with pre-school children into the labour market.

- Ensure the availability and funding of care facilities for the youngest children from the age of 6 months until their enrolment to kindergarten regardless the age of the child, taking into account regional specifics.
- Strengthen promotion and communication support to raise awareness of CGs among employers, employees of large companies and institutions and the potential target group of expectant and future parents. Support the development of micro-nurseries that provide care in small groups (up to 4 children) for children as young as 6 months
- Create/innovate the profession of nannies caring for young children and to provide an adequate educational system of a social-pedagogical nature with medical support so that the qualification will not require only medical education but also communication and emotional skills that are not included in the curriculum of nursing schools.

# Chapter 6

## **Birth Assistance**

Referring to the Convention article no. 12



Ivana Antalová,  
Marie Vnoučková



Care provided by midwives is an important and integral part of Czech obstetrics. This profession is mainly performed by women, who provide expert and comprehensive care to women during pregnancy, childbirth and the period of six weeks after delivery. In the context of Czech obstetrics, care provided by midwives faces a number of challenges and obstacles when it comes to both the health system and raising public awareness, which will be addressed in this chapter. We will focus on the promotion of the profession of a midwife and the availability of midwifery care. The evaluation of the development and the description of the status quo is based on the findings and work of organizations involved in the cultivation and humanization of obstetrics for more than 20 years (UNIPA, Czech Association of Midwives, Czech Chamber of Midwives, Stork Maternity House, Active Motherhood Movement, Aperio - Society for Healthy Parenthood, and others) associated within the working group on obstetrics of the Czech Women's Lobby. Czech obstetrics struggles with a number of obstacles that are partially caused by the paternalistic nature of health care in general, which is in this case manifested by the legislative and procedural dependence of midwives on doctors. Midwives in employment are fully dependent on doctors' orders, even in case of such care they are trained for and allowed to carry out independently under Czech law. Birth assistance lacks independent care provided by midwives that would be covered by public health insurance.

If they want to work as community midwives, they have to apply for a permit to work as self-employed to Regional Authorities.<sup>1</sup> Upon issuing the permit, Regional Authorities limit the scope of their work and often specify that they issue permits with limited registration — without the authorization to conduct childbirth<sup>2</sup>, which effectively prevents midwives from exercising the full scope of their competences. In case of full authorization, midwives face inspections by Regional Authorities and are fined for providing care at home birth under the pretext of marginal irregularities (e.g. flawed paperwork). When a midwife files an appeal, the State extends the duration of proceedings, which often leads to the midwife ceasing to provide home birth care.

Another obstacle to the availability of care by independent midwives to women is the fact that this health profession is not included in the public health insurance. For midwives to be covered by the public health insurance, their services must always be indicated by a doctor, with the total number of check-ups limited to four for the entire

1 Available online on <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2004-96>.

2 Available online on <https://www.unipa.cz/manual-jak-se-stat-komunitni-porodni-asistentkou/>.



pregnancy, childbirth and the period of six weeks after delivery. Doctors hesitate to issue indications for care by midwives as they often see midwives as threatening competition.<sup>3</sup> Women thus have to seek and pay for midwives out of their own pockets. The State does not actively promote this service and does not even support its inclusion in the health system. To support midwifery paid by public health system, a petition called I Want My Midwife was initiated in 2021;<sup>4</sup> it was signed by more than 5,000 signatories within a month.

Following the recommendations on the implementation of the 2018 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>5</sup>, the analysis carried out by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic and on the basis of lobbying by professional and non-profit official and unofficial platforms, the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic launched a pilot project of the Midwifery Centre at the Bulovka University Hospital.<sup>6</sup> The idea behind the project is to allow midwives to conduct childbirth, which is not yet allowed under the Public Health Insurance Act.<sup>7</sup> In 2021, the Chamber of Deputies passed an amendment to this act,<sup>8</sup> which allows midwives to conduct childbirth independently in maternity wards. Unfortunately, the amendment to the law that would allow independent midwifery to be covered by public health insurance during pregnancy, birth and the period of six weeks after delivery and in a location according to the needs of the woman, was not approved,<sup>9</sup> even though the number of breastfed children is on the decline,<sup>10</sup> the provision of care for the increasing number of women who suffer from psychological problems after delivery and have difficulties to cope with their new role of as mothers is not systematic<sup>11</sup> and women with perinatal loss lack sufficient support.<sup>12</sup> The outcome was to a large extent influenced by the political representation, in particular by the doctors/gynaecologists among it, as well as by the Ministry of Health, which is heavily represented by doctors who actively opposed this amendment.

In 2020, the Parliament of the Czech Republic debated a bill on the Chamber of Midwives.<sup>13</sup> Although the creation of a chamber of midwives could potentially help empower the voice of this profession and serve as a tool to improve the status of midwives in the Czech Republic, it turned out that this particular bill was questionable in many respects. First of all, it dealt exclusively with the creation of a professional chamber

- 3 Available online on <https://www.facebook.com/porodni.asistentka.Martina.Suchardova/photos/a.1537672753185360/2954632138156074/>.
- 4 Available online on <https://chcivojiporodni.asistentku.cz/>.
- 5 Available online on <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1483381>.
- 6 Available online on <https://www.mzcr.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Centra-porodni%3%AD-asistence.pdf>.
- 7 Available online on <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1997-48>.
- 8 Available online on <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/historie.sqw?o=8&T=992>.
- 9 Available online on <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/hlasy.sqw?G=76757&mp;fbclid=IwAR0v33Xcnn4xrYALYD3nvzIABL2j7-nXFBF6-YPFiUl2rIOcV-vwZHR3Dos>.
- 10 Available online on <http://sestinedelky.cz/pruzkom-o-kojeni/>.
- 11 Available online on <https://www.businessinfo.cz/clanky/prulomovy-software-pomuze-tehotnym-zenam-a-matkam-po-porodu-prekonat-stres/>.
- 12 Available online on [https://theses.cz/id/d1vwzt/Disertan\\_prce-Ratislavov.pdf](https://theses.cz/id/d1vwzt/Disertan_prce-Ratislavov.pdf).
- 13 Available online on [https://senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/psenat/historie?ke\\_dni=5.3.2020&o=8&action=detail&value=4529](https://senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/psenat/historie?ke_dni=5.3.2020&o=8&action=detail&value=4529).



with very broad powers of self-government (Regional Authorities) without simultaneously defining the actual content of birth assistance. Currently, there is no professional consensus on standards of care in pregnancy, childbirth and the period of six weeks after delivery. The State<sup>14</sup> refuses to publish non-anonymized results on the quality of care during delivery. Last but not least, there is a disparity between the number of midwives employed in hospitals who work under the direction of doctors (4,000 midwives) and midwives who work independently of doctors without the option to be included in the system of public health care (100 midwives). The adoption of the law in this form carried the risk of perpetuating a paternalistic approach<sup>15</sup> and abusing the majority to push through measures preventing and making it even more difficult to provide birth assistance outside hospitals.

Both the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the largest international organization of midwives, and the national professional organization, the Midwives' Union, have expressed negative opinions about the bill.<sup>16</sup> The proposal was in direct contradiction with European Union law in fundamental areas and in some aspects in clear contradiction with the constitutional laws of the Czech Republic; it would have led to a further and significant decline in the already insufficient number of midwives, it disregarded the UN recommendations to the Czech Republic in the field of midwifery, the call of the European Court of Justice for Human Rights to improve the status of midwives in the Czech Republic and the opportunities for pregnant and childbearing women and women and children in the period of six weeks after delivery, and disregarded the opinions of the working group on obstetrics at the Office of the Government and the professional opinions and standards of international midwifery organizations (EMA and ICM).

In March 2021, the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic dismissed<sup>17</sup> a constitutional complaints in which a woman defended herself in court<sup>18</sup> against medical interventions that were performed without her free and informed consent (CTG monitoring, acceleration of labour, administration of synthetic oxytocin, administration of antibiotics, blood collection, forced lying down with legs in handholds, incision of the perineum against the woman's will, as well as cutting of the umbilical cord and separation from the child). The Constitutional Court thus again failed to provide women with judicial protection against obstetrics violence.

14 Available online on <http://jaksekderodi.cz/>.

15 Available online on [https://www.senat.cz/cinnost/webtv/archiv.php?video=false&id\\_schuze=&zacatek=20200723065410&konec=20200723071723](https://www.senat.cz/cinnost/webtv/archiv.php?video=false&id_schuze=&zacatek=20200723065410&konec=20200723071723).

16 Available online on <https://www.unipa.cz/vyjadreni-unie-porodnich-asistentek-k-navrhu-zakona-o-komore-porodnich-asistentek/>.

17 Available online on <https://www.usoud.cz/aktualne/vyhlaseni-nalezu-ustavniho-soudu-sp-zn-iii-us-2480-20-dne-22-brezna-2021-rozhodnuti-zverejnene-s-tiskovou-zpravou>.

18 Available online on <https://lp.cz/blog/zdravotnici-nerespektovali-rodicku-a-provedli-zakroky-bez-jejihou-souhlasu/>.



With the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government of the Czech Republic prohibited the presence of selected relatives and attendants at childbirth despite WHO recommendations,<sup>19</sup> and prolonged the separation of babies from their mothers. Combined with the exhaustion of hospital staff caused by the Covid pandemic and the lack of emotional and psychological support, obstetrics care deteriorated further. Currently, the decision to allow the presence of relatives and attendants at childbirth lies with hospital management; thus, the access is often limited, which is a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>20</sup> that guarantees children the right to the presence of their parents.

The practical experience in the Czech Republic shows that the State is failing to implement the recommendations given by the last CEDAW review in the area of women's reproductive rights,<sup>21</sup> and, given the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation is further deteriorating in many respects. The new Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030, which for the first time ever addresses the topic of obstetrics separately under the health chapter, appears to offer hope and was approved by the Government in 2021.<sup>22</sup>

## Recommendations

- Develop a concept of women's reproductive health care in compliance with the EU standards and the UN recommendations in the field of women's reproductive rights and availability of midwifery care,<sup>23</sup> the European Union directives on the education and practice of midwives<sup>24</sup>, and the recommendations of the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>25</sup>
- Make available online transparent standards of care in pregnancy, childbirth and the period of six weeks after delivery to the general public in collaboration with community midwives as well as hospital midwives and doctors.
- Enable midwives to provide care in the full extent of their competence and support the continuous midwifery care during pregnancy, childbirth and the period of six weeks after delivery covered by public health insurance.<sup>26</sup>
- Provide psychological supervision to protect emotional health of health professionals. Publish regular and timely data on the quality of care related to women's reproductive health, in particular during childbirth, disaggregated by departments and procedures.

19 Available online on <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pregnancy-and-childbirth>.

20 Available online on <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

21 Available online on [https://czlobby.cz/sites/default/files/spolupracujeme\\_download/doporuceni\\_komise\\_cedaw\\_2016.pdf](https://czlobby.cz/sites/default/files/spolupracujeme_download/doporuceni_komise_cedaw_2016.pdf)

22 Available online on [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Strategie-2021\\_online.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Strategie-2021_online.pdf).

23 Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Czech Republic, March 14, 2016, CEDAW/C/CZE/CO/6

24 Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council. Available online on <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32005L0036&from=cs>

25 Case of Dubská and Krejzová v. the Czech Republic. Available online on <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-168066%22%5D%7D>

26 Available online on <http://www.biostatisticka.cz/porodni-domy-ve-svete-praxe-data-vysledky/>.

Chapter 7–8

# **Education and Science**

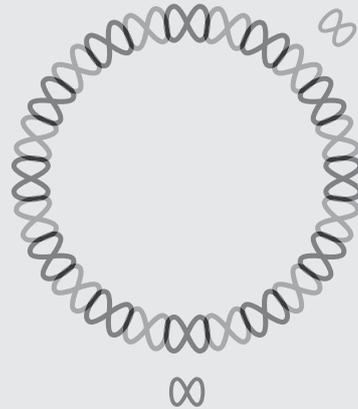
**Equality in Education System**

**Gender Segregation and Discrimination in Academic Sector**

# Chapter 7

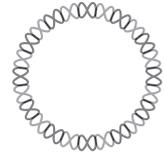
## Equality in Education System

Referring to the Convention article no. 10



Lucie Čechovská





and teaching methodologies cover prevention of bullying, but they do not consider its gender dimension ignoring the context of violence, power dynamics in these situations, and the effect of gender stereotypes on young people's relationships.<sup>6</sup> The necessity of including the gender perspective in programs for violence prevention is also indicated by statistical data on suicide. Suicide is the second most frequent cause of death in people under 24 in the Czech Republic (with the suicide rate of men being quadruple compared to women). Besides psychological disorders that significantly affect young people's suicide rate, the gender dimension appears to be important as well.<sup>7</sup>

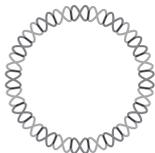
### Gender Differences in Specialization Choices

The fact that boys and girls often take different directions in education resulting in different career choices and opportunities is usually covered as part of career counselling in the Czech Republic's educational policies and documents. However, this issue is a cross-cutting one and it requires the teachers' ability of self-reflection and evaluation of their pedagogical work.<sup>8</sup> One-time activities focused on support in further career specialization must be accompanied with systematic efforts in making school environments more inclusive. This includes, for example,

- 6 Examples have been provided by NESEH-NUTÍ, an organization that organized workshops and focus groups with high school students in 2018. In classes and groups consisting of boys only, the tolerance towards violence is higher than in mixed-gender groups. Their experience also shows that bullying is frequently motivated by homophobia.
- 7 A frequent problem is the fact that men often refuse to ask for help as it tends to be seen as their failure. See e.g. Wong, Y. J., Ho, M.-H. R., Wang, S.-Y., & Miller, I. S. K. (2017). Meta-analyses of the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and mental health-related outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 64 (1), pp 80–93. Available online on <https://doi.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fcou0000176>.

In the Czech Republic, this issue is covered in the project Nejsi sám [You Are Not Alone]. Available online on <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/nejsi-sam/r~8a29017a2e3511e9b73ea1f6b220ee8/>.

- 8 The factors affecting different career choices of boys and girls are related to framework education programs, stereotyped contents of textbooks, organization of everyday school activities and disproportionate gender representation of teachers. See Policy paper *Muži v systému vzdělávání* [Men in Education System] published by the Government's Council for Gender Equality. Available online on [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/pracovni-skupina\\_muzi\\_a\\_rovnosti\\_zen\\_a\\_muzu/Policy-paper\\_muzi\\_v\\_systemu\\_vzdelavani.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/pracovni-skupina_muzi_a_rovnosti_zen_a_muzu/Policy-paper_muzi_v_systemu_vzdelavani.pdf).



improved presentation and access to the STEM area for all students regardless of their gender and social status (i.e. providing all capacities, including material ones, required for development of STEM competences).

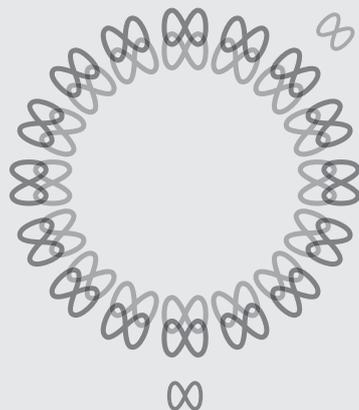
### Recommendations

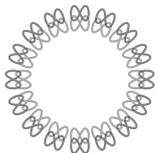
- Create a conception of gender-sensitive sex education based on the WHO standards for sex education in Europe.<sup>9</sup>
- Include gender-sensitive sex education in curricular documents on all levels of the education system.
- Pay attention to developing individual capabilities of all pupils regardless of their gender and advance equal conditions and equal treatment for girls and boys on all levels of the education system.
- Enrich curricular documents with ongoing support for teachers in mutual feedbacks and self-reflection of their everyday pedagogic work in relation to diversity and avoiding (often unintentional) gender stereotypes and routine expectations.
- Prepare specific methodologies for inclusive approach in various fields of education (STEM, development of social and emotional competences etc.) by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in partnership with experts and best practice examples from abroad etc. including funding and expert counselling in schools. This should also include a time schedule of implementation of these measures in schools.
- Include prevention of gender-based violence in curricula for all levels of the education system, provide methodology and training for educators and create a network of schools and organizations in order to solve gender-based violence incidents.

<sup>9</sup> Available online on [https://www.planovanirodiny.cz/storage/Standardy\\_pro\\_sexualni\\_vychovu\\_v\\_Evrope.pdf](https://www.planovanirodiny.cz/storage/Standardy_pro_sexualni_vychovu_v_Evrope.pdf)

## Gender Segregation and Discrimination in Academic Sector

Referring to the Convention article no. 10



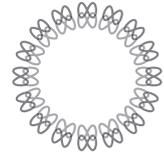


Generally, we can state that in the academic sector, horizontal and vertical gender segregation remains, including differences in salaries between women and men. As of 2018, women made up 36% of academic employees, with only 15% full professors and 26% of associate professors being women. Horizontal segregation is reflected in the fact there about 40% women academics in social sciences, medicine, and humanities but only 27.3% in technology and engineering and natural sciences (24 %). Gender pay gaps were observed at all levels of the academic career. In terms of women in top academic positions (full professor — grade A), the Czech Republic ranks among the worst in the EU. In terms of the situation in research and development, the share of women stagnates in the long term with 2018 showing one of the lowest values since the start of the monitoring in 2000. In international comparison, the Czech Republic is among EU countries with the lowest share of women in research positions. This corresponds with the situation of graduate and postgraduate students: in 2018, women made up almost 60% of graduate and 45% of postgraduate students. International comparison shows the number of female university graduates in the Czech Republic roughly matches the EU average, but the number of female fresh doctors falls below the EU average. The highest dropout of women in ideal and typical career path in research happens in the postdoctoral phase and later. Women in STEM are under-represented at all levels of their academic and professional careers from the graduate level on. Their dropout among doctoral and postdoctoral researchers is more intense than in other fields. In terms of decision-making, it remains dominated by men. The share of women in top positions in research institutions, universities and other research and development institutions (Academy of Sciences, Czech Science Foundation, Council of Czech Universities, Czech Rectors Conference, R&D Council, etc.) was only 15% in 2018. Decision-making, policy-making and control bodies of these institutions have only 23% of female members and the share of women in advisory and expert bodies was 28%.<sup>1</sup>

The presented data shows persistent gender inequalities in the academic and research sector.

The report on working conditions in the Czech academic sector has also shown that women are more often in positions with little career prospects, are tasked with work necessary for institutional operation, which is not assessed as academic and face bias work environments concerning especially their (potential) parenthood. The whole public academic sector is

1 Hášová, Veronika, Oliverius, Vojtěch. 2020. Postavení žen v české vědě. Monitorovací zpráva za rok 2018 [Position of Women in Czech Science: 2018 Monitoring Report]. Praha: Sociologický ústav, v. v. i.



also divided with academics in tertiary education facing most stress due to low financial remuneration and precarity facing academics except associate and full professors.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of gender studies programs at Czech universities which guarantee local gender expertise, the only BA program in gender studies (Masaryk University, Brno) was recently cancelled although the department's staff is now in decision-making positions at the department of sociology. While the only MA programme in gender studies (Charles University, Prague) stands, the planned internal restructuring of the Faculty of Humanities threatens its stability.

The following recommendations are intended for all parties in the academic sector (state administration, funding agencies, academic and research institutions; decision-makers and managers)<sup>3</sup>.

## Recommendations

- Adopt measures aimed at increasing the number of women in all types of decision-making on tertiary education and research. These need to concern not only the respective ministries but also councils and e.g. boards deciding on the awarding of scholarships.
- Adopt measures guaranteeing pay transparency in order to eradicate the pay gap at all levels of tertiary education and research including their management.
- Introduce the obligation for all public educational and research institutions and institutions receiving public resources for research and education to publish gender- and qualification-segregated statistics of applicants for tenders and grants, including internal ones.
- Review the funding structure so that at least 70% of wages are covered from institutional resources.
- Focus on support for junior researchers and doctoral and postdoctoral fellows to limit their attrition.
- Focus on measures aimed at securing childcare and care for family members of academics. These include especially providing high-quality childcare for children under the age of 3.
- Specifically support the development of social sciences and humanities both at tertiary educational institutions and in research, including gender studies.

- 2 Vohlídalová, Marta. 2018. *Akademičtí a akademičky 2018: zpráva z dotazníkového šetření akademických a vědeckých pracovníků a pracovníků ve veřejném sektoru* [Men and Women Scholars: Proposal of Measures to Increase Equality in Research and Academia]. Praha: Sociologický ústav, v. v. i.
- 3 The recommendations are largely based on the results of research into working conditions at Czech academic and research institutions. Linková, M., Čidlínská, K., Fárová, N., Maříková, H., Tenglerová, H., Vohlídalová, M. 2018. *Akademičtí a akademičky 2018: Návrhy opatření na podporu rovnosti ve výzkumném a vysokoškolském prostředí* [Men and Women Scholars: Proposal of Measures to Increase Equality in Research and Academia]. Praha: Sociologický ústav, v. v. i.

Chapter 9–12

# **Economic and Social Area**

**Labour Market**

**Feminization of Poverty**

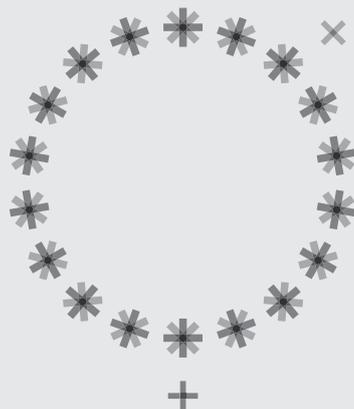
**Women of Advanced Age**

**Violence against Women**

## Chapter 9

# Labour Market

Referring to the Convention article no. 11



Hana Stelzerová



The issue of gender equality has not shown a very promising development over a long period. In the Global Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap Study, which currently compares 153 countries around the world,<sup>1</sup> the Czech Republic ranked an unflattering 78th in 2020. Gender gaps in decision-making positions, both in the management of companies and organizations and in political representation, have long scored the worst. According to the Report, this ranking was also caused by a labour market area called Economic Representation and Employment Opportunities<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, the index (in the period under review) has been slowly but steadily improving since 2014 (the 2014 value was 0.622 and the 2020 value reached 0.657). Similarly, in the Gender Equality Index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the Czech Republic scored 56.2 points for 2020, which is far below the EU average of 67.9 points. In the long term (comparison since 2013), the Czech Republic lags behind the European average by more than 10 percentage points.<sup>3</sup>

In this context, the question arises in which ways the European Funds, which have focused on the key area of labour market equality in the Czech Republic for over a decade, help alleviate these issues. Plus, considering that gender relations on the labour market belong to the Funds' long-term agenda, the changes seem to be rather slow in coming.

The Czech Republic has set national employment targets for 2020 within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, namely to increase the overall employment rate in the 20–64 age group to 75% and to increase the employment rate of women in the same age group to 65%. The Analysis of Employment Trends of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) for the first half of 2018 shows that the employment rate of the population aged 20–64 rose by 1.6 percentage points year-on-year to 79.5%, while the employment rate of women of the same age rose by 1.8 percentage points to 71.4%. The targets for these indicators were therefore met, as evidenced by the data. The CSO (Czech Statistical Office) data for the first quarter of 2019 showed more unemployed<sup>4</sup> men than women for the first time since 2010 – the number of employed men rose by mere 14,000 year-on-year, compared to 33,000 for women. The rise for women was concentrated in the 45–59 age group. On the other hand, the number of unemployed women decreased by 17,000, while the decrease for men was just 3,000.<sup>5</sup>

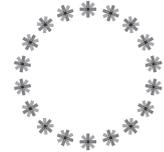
1 Global Gender Gap Report 2020. Available online on [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf).

2 Global Gender Gap Report 2020. Available online on [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf).

3 Gender Equality Index 2020. Available online on <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020>.

4 "According to the ILO definition, the unemployed are persons who were not employed within the period in question, did not work even one hour for pay or remuneration and were actively seeking employment that they would be able to take up no later than within two weeks." Available online on <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/cr/zamestnanost-a-nezamestnanost-podle-vysledku-vsps-1-ctvrtleti-2019>.

5 Zaměstnanost a nezaměstnanost podle výsledků VŠPS – 1. čtvrtletí 2019 [Employment and Unemployment according to the LFS Results – Q1 2019], Czech Statistical Office, 2019. Available online on <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/cr/zamestnanost-a-nezamestnanost-podle-vysledku-vsps-1-ctvrtleti-2019>.



The gender pay gap in the Czech Republic is one of the highest within the European Union. For a long time, it was around 22%. In 2019, the gender pay gap narrowed to 18.9% compared to the also falling EU average of 14.1%<sup>6</sup>. “The Czech Republic has long had one of the highest gender pay gaps, not just within the EU countries but also compared to other countries, and even when comparing the same jobs in the same workplace. Occupational and workplace segregation is a significant factor when it comes to inequality in the Czech Republic, but even when after deducting the effects of these two types of segregation, approximately half of the total gender pay gap remains unexplained.”<sup>7</sup>

Statistics thus suggest that development in terms of women and men employment was positive until 2019 – however, the increasing employment rate for women (and men) can be to a large extent attributed to the favourable economic conditions rather than pro-active measures of the state. Labour shortages in a number of sectors helped to increase the employment rate of those persons who tend to be, under different economic conditions, excluded from the so-called “talent pool”<sup>8</sup> – i.e. women, seniors, the low-qualified, etc. The development of economic conditions in the context of the 2020 crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic to a large extent affected the situation on the labour market, which was up to that point favourable. As shown in a gender study of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Analysis (IDEA CERGE-EI), the economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 crisis hit women harder than men due to at least three reasons:

1. Women are usually employed in sectors more severely affected by quarantine measures adopted in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic (travel industry, hospitality, retail, services).
2. Women bear a larger share of caring for children of all age groups.
3. Women are much more often victims of domestic violence that have risen during lock-down.

“Unemployment data from Czech Republic for April and May 2020 shows a stronger increase in unemployment for women than men, whereas in previous recessions, this was typically the other way around. The stronger increase in unemployment for women is driven by women above age 44. This large increase in unemployment for older women exacerbates the already higher risk of falling into poverty in retirement age for women.

6 Eurostat. Gender pay gap in unadjusted form. Available online on <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem180/default/table?lang=en>.

7 Rozdíly v odměňování žen a mužů v ČR. Pracoviště, zaměstnání, stejná práce a rozklad faktorů [Gender Pay gap in the Czech Republic. Workplace, employment, same work and the analysis of factors], 2018. Available online on [https://www.soc.cas.cz/sites/default/files/publikace/gpg\\_studie\\_2.pdf](https://www.soc.cas.cz/sites/default/files/publikace/gpg_studie_2.pdf).

8 Dopady opatření proti pandemii na ženy a muže na trhu práce [Gender Impacts of Pandemic Measures in the Labour Market], Institute of Sociology of the CAS, 2020. Available online on <https://www.soc.cas.cz/aktualita/dopady-opatreni-proti-pandemii-na-zeny-muze-na-trhu-prace> a Gender Economic Effects of the Covid-19 crisis in the Czech Republic. IDEA CERGE-EI, 2020. Available online on [https://idea.cerge-ei.cz/images/COVID/IDEA\\_Gender\\_dopady\\_covid-19\\_cerven\\_21.pdf](https://idea.cerge-ei.cz/images/COVID/IDEA_Gender_dopady_covid-19_cerven_21.pdf).



Before Covid-19, women with children in Czech Republic spent almost twice as much time on child-care than fathers. Even full-time employed women spend 50% more time than full-time employed fathers. It is likely that the increased time for child-care needed by parents due to the closure of schools and child-care facilities will be unevenly distributed in similar ways.

26% of men vs 21% of women report in a survey of 3,000 Czech persons that they are able to continue to do their main job from home via tele-work, reducing the risk of job loss more for men than for women. Women report to be worried more about the health and economic impacts of Covid-19, and take more pre-cautionary measures against it, such as avoiding public transport, etc. In the long run, the strong increase in use of home-office and tele-commuting may help women to develop their careers.”<sup>9</sup>

### Recommendations

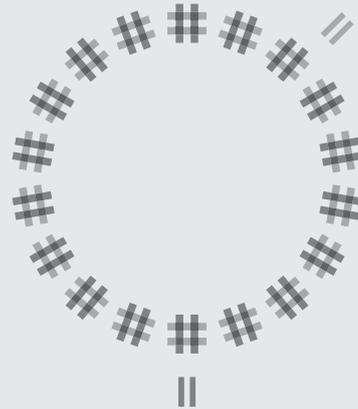
- In addressing the pandemic crisis, bear in mind gender perspective when introducing support and follow-up measures.
- Continue to promote active employment policies for women and other disadvantaged groups (50+ persons, people with lower education, minorities, etc.).
- Support measures for better work-life balance, in particular accessible care facilities, legislative support for flexible and part-time employment, support for paternal care in terms of parental leave).
- Implement instruments to narrow the gender pay gap.
- Introduce pension reform to narrow the gender pension gap to ensure dignity in old age.

9 The Different Economic Effects of the Covid-19 Crisis on WoMen and Men in the Czech Republic. Available online on [https://idea.cerge-ei.cz/files/IDEA\\_Gender\\_dopady\\_covid-19\\_cerven\\_21/IDEA\\_Gender\\_dopady\\_covid-19\\_cerven\\_21.html#p=5](https://idea.cerge-ei.cz/files/IDEA_Gender_dopady_covid-19_cerven_21/IDEA_Gender_dopady_covid-19_cerven_21.html#p=5)

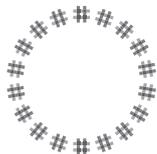
# Chapter 10

## Feminization of Poverty

Referring to the Convention article no. 13



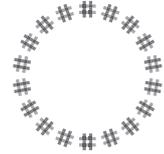
Eliška Kodyšová



- 1 Source: CSO (2011) Census of Population, Houses and Flats.
- 2 We draw on data from 2018, the year of economic boom. The Covid-19 pandemic has a bigger economic impact on single mothers than other families. See also PAQ Research's study *Ekonomické problémy domácností v polovině května* [Economic Problems of Households in mid-May] that shows that single parent families are significantly more likely than other types of households to report a drop in income of more than 50%. Available online on <https://www.paqresearch.cz/post/ekonomicke-problemy-domacnosti-v-polovine-kvetna>.
- 3 Dudová, R. 2020. *Analýza postavení sólo matek na trhu práce* [The Analysis of the Labour Market Position of Single Mothers] Prague: Aperio. Available online on [https://aperio.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Analýza\\_solo\\_matky\\_na\\_pracovnim\\_trhu\\_201124.pdf](https://aperio.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Analýza_solo_matky_na_pracovnim_trhu_201124.pdf).
- 4 CSO (2011) Census of Population, Houses and Flats.
- 5 Dudová, R. 2020. *Analýza postavení sólo matek na trhu práce* [The Analysis of the Labour Market Position of Single Mothers]. Prague: Aperio.
- 6 Dudová, R. 2020. *Analýza postavení sólo matek na trhu práce* [The Analysis of the Labour Market Position of Single Mothers]. Prague: Aperio.
- 7 Höhne, S., Kuchařová, V. and Paloncyová, J. 2016. *Rodiny s dětmi v České republice. Sociodemografická struktura, finanční a materiální podmínky* [Families with Children in the Czech Republic. Socio-demographic Structure, Financial and Material conditions]. Prague: VÚPSV. In: Dudová, R. (2019) *Výživné po rozchodu rodičů: Zkušenosti z praxe* [Maintenance after Divorce: Experience from Practice]. Prague: Aperio. Available online on [https://zustavamerodici.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Aperio\\_analyza.pdf](https://zustavamerodici.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Aperio_analyza.pdf).

Single parent families make up about a quarter (26%) of all families with dependent children. The vast majority of these families have women in charge, with only 16% of them headed by a single father<sup>1</sup>. And it is single mothers and their families who are at much higher risk of income and material poverty<sup>2</sup>.

The 2018 EU-SILC data show that single mothers are more likely to have lower education and be unemployed compare to mothers with a partner (6% vs. 2.4%). Given the fact that a single parent family results from the break-up of a two-parent family, the average age of their children is higher and women are much more frequently in full-time employment; mothers from two parent families are more likely to be economically inactive due to parental leave<sup>3</sup>. A particularly high share of single parent families is to be found in socially excluded regions, such as the Ústí Region or the Moravian-Silesian Region<sup>4</sup>. Single mothers are also more likely to work in the so-called “non-standard jobs” compared to mothers with a partner — fixed-term contract (14.3% vs. 11%) or contract work (1.8% vs. 0.5%); women of any other than Czech nationality, women with low education or young children also face similar risks. The age of the youngest child and the woman’s low education are risk factors for lower incomes<sup>5</sup>. This is again related to the inaccessibility of care facilities for the youngest children.



Although average gross monthly income does not significantly differ between single mothers and mothers with a partner (CZK 24,035 and CZK 23,788, respectively), single mother households have significantly lower total net monthly incomes (averaging CZK 27,217 and CZK 51,712, respectively)<sup>6</sup>. Child maintenance makes up on average 15% of the income of single parent families, with at least 39% of single parent families experiencing default on payment (or irregular payments)<sup>7</sup>. Defaults on payment or disputes over child maintenance are mostly caused by conflicts related to childcare, confusion about the amount of maintenance or lack of official agreement on the amount of maintenance<sup>8</sup>. In the Czech Republic, there have been no substitute or advance maintenance payment, the relevant law was only approved in December 2020<sup>9</sup>. The lack of the institute of custody proceedings that would determine the amount of maintenance often leads to an escalation of conflict between the parents, and consequently to problems with child maintenance payment. Although some courts encourage processes leading to an amicable agreement between former partners and parents, this practice is far from widespread and its availability is subject to chance, depending on the place of permanent residence.

## Recommendations

- Amend the Act on Substitute Child Maintenance. In particular, it is necessary to remove time limitation on the payment of substitute maintenance.
- Adjust the process of proposing and proving payment/non-payment of maintenance in such a way that it does not burden the recipient of the benefit. The State should also pay substitute maintenance in cases the obliged entity is completely missing.
- Ensure affordable care for children under 3 in all regions of the Czech Republic.
- Ensure stable affordable housing, including through the Act on Social Housing.
- Improve working conditions, in particular for precarious contract employment.

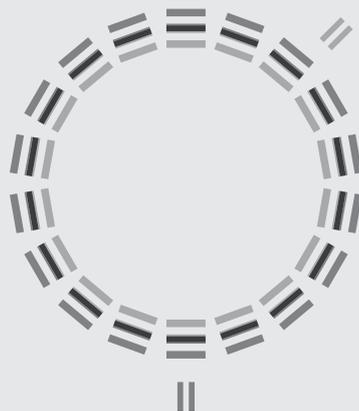
<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> The Act on Substitute Maintenance addresses the poverty caused by non-payment of maintenance to some extent, but it is problematic that substitute maintenance is paid only for two years and, in some cases, the law shifts the burden to the recipient parent.

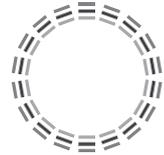
## Chapter 11

# Women of Advanced Age

Referring to the Convention article no. 13



Klára Čmolíková Cozlová,  
Michaela Stachová



During the period under examination, the situation in terms of support for the elderly — both women and men — was largely the result of changes which took place in the previous review period, particularly those in regard to the pension system. In the Czech Republic, pensions are the main source of income for elderly men and women. Eligibility for and the amount of the pension are therefore crucial factors for the risk of poverty in old age.

In 2011, the so-called “small pension reform” (*malá důchodová reforma*) was introduced, followed in 2013 by the introduction of the second pillar of the pension system (the so-called “major reform” — *velká reforma*). Both reforms proved controversial in nature, and in the end the second pillar was abolished at the beginning of the period under review, effective as of January 1, 2016. An amendment to the Pension Insurance Act ended an increase in the retirement age, and introduced a ceiling of 65 years. At the turn of 2018 and 2019, a new committee — the Commission for Fair Pensions (*Komise pro spravedlivé důchody*)<sup>1</sup> — was set up to draft another attempt at pension reform. The Commission includes members from NGOs focusing on senior citizens, as well as advocating gender equality. The Commission’s agenda highlights, among other things, the issue of pensions for carers — mainly women — and following on from that also the issue of pensions for widows and widowers. In December 2020, the main objectives of the reform were presented to the media — the stress being on reducing income poverty among retired people, and especially on improving the situation of low-income women. However, it is highly unlikely that the reform will be implemented in the current parliamentary term.

From a gender perspective, such reforms have always (and continue to do so) primarily affected women, since changes to the pension system require women to be more adaptable and flexible, to keep track of changes to the pension system (given the rise in women’s retirement age), and at the same time they require a relatively high degree of orientation to the reconfigured pension system, even if the changes are for their benefit.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of its high level of redistribution, the Czech pension system still shows a significant gender gap in terms of pensions. This disparity between the pensions of women and men is largely the result of the pay gap that working women face in the

1 Available online on <http://duchodovakomise.cz/>

2 Volejníčková, R. 2015. *Gender Gaps in Pay and Pensions: the Czech Republic*. Prague: Gender Studies and Open Society. See also Dudová, R. 2013. *Reformy důchodového systému v ČR a jejich dopady na muže a ženy* [Reforms of the Pension System in the Czech Republic and their Impact on Men and Women]. Prague: Gender Studies.



labour market (during the last period this remained frozen at 22%), as well as of the fact that women with children can claim an earlier retirement than men, and thus the average period during which they pay pension insurance is shorter. The gender pay gap thus translates into a gender pension gap.

At the end of 2019, pensions were valorized, with a positive impact mainly on the amount granted to women, which are still statistically lower than those paid to men. The valorization was designed to be differentiated in this way and with this expressed objective. The average pension for senior citizens in 2019 was CZK 15,486, while the average pension for senior women was CZK 12,858. On average, women benefited from the valorization by 6.77%, and men by 6.50%.<sup>3</sup> Even so, at the end of the first quarter of 2020 the gender pension gap continued to be noticeable, amounting to circa 20% (see chart below).<sup>4</sup>

	Average	Average for Men	Average for Women
Old age pension	14,397	15,781	13,141
Early retirement	12,875	14,186	11,698
Widows' pension	9,525	-	9,525
Widowers' pension	8,534	8,534	-

The average amount of old age pensions – 14,397 CZK in the first three months of 2020 – also highlights the issue of the risk of poverty. If the income poverty line is defined as being 60 percent of median income, then even an average old age pension is barely above poverty level. The income level of the 36.9% of senior citizens living in one-member households (i.e. on their own) falls well below the poverty line; while according to the data of the Czech Statistical Office, 65.9% are at risk of income poverty.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a considerable percentage of those living in single person households are women.<sup>6</sup> Earlier data indicates that women are more than twice as much at risk of poverty than men,<sup>7</sup> as is evidenced by Eurostat data<sup>8</sup>: and the situation grows significantly worse with women of advancing age.<sup>9</sup>

Insufficient income in retirement is often compensated for by the possibility of receiving an old age pension while at the same time continuing to earn money by working.

3 MSLA 2019. Press release, September 30, 2019. Available online on [mpsv.cz/-/vlada-se-pripravuje-na-zvyseni-duchodu-schvalila-narizeni-o-jeho-parametrech](https://mpsv.cz/-/vlada-se-pripravuje-na-zvyseni-duchodu-schvalila-narizeni-o-jeho-parametrech).

4 Available online on [https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/99428/Prumerna\\_vyse\\_solo\\_duchodu\\_v\\_CR\\_v\\_casove\\_rade.pdf/a9b4355f-343f-7f3c-eaef-485a15ec2098](https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/99428/Prumerna_vyse_solo_duchodu_v_CR_v_casove_rade.pdf/a9b4355f-343f-7f3c-eaef-485a15ec2098).

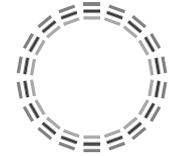
5 Available online on <http://duchodovakomise.cz/>.

6 Available online on [https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/99587/2018\\_Statisticka%20ročenka%20z%20oblasti%20dúchodového%20pojištění%20za%20rok.pdf/6ac9652b-93c3-357a-4c86-aeb41068c54f](https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/99587/2018_Statisticka%20ročenka%20z%20oblasti%20dúchodového%20pojištění%20za%20rok.pdf/6ac9652b-93c3-357a-4c86-aeb41068c54f).

7 Volejníčková, R. 2015. *Gender Gaps in Pay and Pensions: the Czech Republic*. Prague: Gender Studies and Open Society. See also Dudová, R. 2013. *Reformy důchodového systému v ČR a jejich dopady na muže a ženy* [Reforms of the Pension System in the Czech Republic and their Impact on Men and Women]. Prague: Gender Studies.

8 Statistical data at-risk-poverty. Available online on <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&plugin=1&langua=ge=en&pcode=tespn240>.

9 MSLA, Strategie přípravy na stárnutí společnosti 2019–2025 [Strategy – Preparation for Ageing Society 2019–2025].



This is nonetheless possible only for those who are still able to work and only as long as they remain in demand on the labour market. In 2017, the data of the Czech Statistical Office showed a growing trend in the number of working pensioners – up to 341,000 – with women outnumbering men by almost 17,000<sup>10</sup>. However, current developments around the post COVID-19 situation indicate that it is precisely these jobs which are the first to be abolished, and compensation for these target groups will also be the hardest to push through.

Research studies into poverty in the context of old age show that poor elderly people, both men and women, spend a very high portion of their incomes on housing, and as a result often do not enough left for medication or food, or other “expendables”.<sup>11</sup> The proposed solutions to this problem must therefore include the issue of social housing.

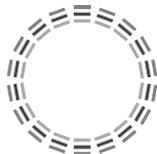
The social isolation of elderly people is also a major issue. It is roughly estimated that around 500,000 to 700,000 people over 65 live on their own. Additionally, most of these are widowed women. There is no specifically targeted survey regarding how many of them actually feel lonely and isolated. According to many research studies, from the point of view of health, loneliness presents the same degree of risk as smoking or alcohol. The absence of social contact heightens the risk of mortality by half. One of the mechanisms by which loneliness affects physical health is the deterioration of immunity. The WHO publication *Social Determinants of Health* cites that “social isolation is associated with a higher risk of premature death and poorer chances of survival after a heart attack. People who have low social and emotional support from those around them are also more likely to be depressed, have a higher risk of complications in pregnancy, and have more significant complications associated with chronic diseases.” In addition, Holt-Lunstad, Smith and Layton, authors of a metastudy on the association between social relationships and risk of death note that the 50% increase in risk of death associated with loneliness may in fact be an underestimate.<sup>12</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the issue of loneliness and social isolation, but it is clear from the above data that social isolation is a long-term problem. As a result of the pandemic, demonstrably more people died in care facilities for the elderly. According to Czech Statistical Office data, 129,000 people died in the Czech Republic in 2020, an increase of 15 percent compared to 2019, by almost 17,000 more people.

10 Czech Statistical Office. 2018. Ženy a muži v datech. Pracující důchodci podle odvětví činnosti. [Women and Men in Data. Working Pensioners by professions]. Available online on <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/grafy-j705xlii3o>.

11 Sokačová, L. 2020. Ženy a chudoba. In: Social Watch: Rovnost žen a mužů v nedohlednu. Monitorovací zpráva Social Watch k genderové rovnosti 2020. [Gender equality is not in sight. Social Watch Monitoring Report on Gender Equality 2020] Available online on [http://www.socialwatch.cz/wp-content/uploads/sw\\_zprava\\_gender\\_cr\\_2020.p](http://www.socialwatch.cz/wp-content/uploads/sw_zprava_gender_cr_2020.p).

12 Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-Analytic Review. Available online on <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>



The growth in mortality rates was most pronounced in the 75–84 years of age category.<sup>13</sup> Detailed analyses are currently being undertaken by the Czech Institute of Health Information and Statistics. According to expert estimates, many of these deaths are related to the social isolation of older people in institutions and poorer access to information and health care.

### Recommendations

- Bring the issue of poverty among older women back into the spotlight, and implement projects, statistics and research that take into account its specificities
- Implement pension reform to help reduce poverty in old age and reduce the lifetime income gap between women and men
- Mitigate the risk of the senior citizen housing crisis among the elderly and better ensure affordable housing, among other measures undertaken through the Social Housing Act.
- Introduce data collection in relation to social isolation. Currently there are no statistics on loneliness, but without this information it is difficult to move towards a systemic solution. By mapping the location of the loneliest and most isolated older people in the Czech Republic and analyzing the data collected, a cross-ministerial strategy can be developed.
- Taking inspiration from good practice abroad, including in the UK, where, for example, the social isolation agenda has been added to the portfolio of the Minister for Sports and Civil Society, so that she is also the “Minister for Loneliness”.<sup>14</sup> An example of data that can be used is the London School of Economics’ estimate of the ‘cost of loneliness’.<sup>15</sup>

13 Available online on <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/v-roce-2020-zemrelo-pres-129-tisic-obyvatel-ceska>

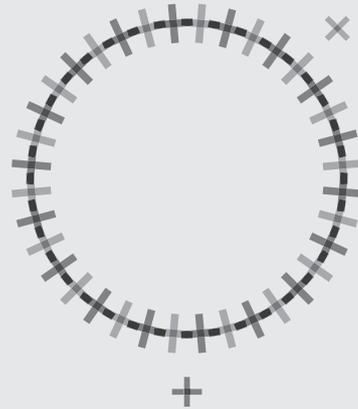
14 It is the responsibility of this agency to implement measures to combat loneliness in society. In addition to clearly anchoring the agenda in the Ministry, the measures also include data collection and analysis, as well as regular reporting and funding for initiatives to combat loneliness.

15 For information on the campaign against loneliness see <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>; for details of the costs of loneliness see: <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-41349219>

# Chapter 12

## Violence against Women

Referring to the Convention article no. 2



Branislava Marvánová Vargová,  
Blanka Nyklová



Violence against women is considered one of the main obstacles to achieving gender equality in society and one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations. According to available data, 47% of women have experienced one of the forms of psychological violence. More than 20% of women have also had direct experience of physical or sexually motivated violence. And approximately 5–10% of Czech women have experienced rape, but most of them never seek help and report it to the police. High latency rates can also be observed in sexual harassment, stalking and gender-based cyber-violence.<sup>1</sup> Domestic violence and violence against women is a very latent issue and administrative data register only a sliver of the lived reality due to a low reporting rate. There is evidence of approximately 2,500 cases of domestic violence in families per year, yet up to 300,000 women are afraid to return home. Approximately 168,000 victims per year seek medical help as a result of physical harm caused by domestic violence. The year 2019 alone brought over 1,250 cases of evictions from the home due to violence and 2020 brought another 1,170 cases.<sup>2</sup>

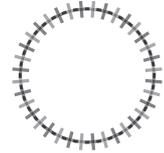
Very little is spoken on the topic of violence against women in public sphere, and when it is, the discussion usually quickly turns to the question of “why we talk ‘only’ about violence against women.” Instead of getting to the crux of the matter, attention is drawn to defending whether violence against women is or isn’t a societal problem worthy of a separate discussion. This shows dominant stereotypes and gaps in raising awareness about these issues among the general public, however, this attitude is even more striking when it comes to some institutions that should be familiar with the matter. Violence against women as a stand-alone topic remains a bit “suspicious” for society; it is intertwined with a number of myths and strongly associated with concerns about abusing the issue by “false” victims (see some of the responses of the Czech lay and expert public to the #MeToo movement, the topic of rape or sexual harassment).

Violence against women is not yet sufficiently perceived by Czech society as a human rights issue in all its scope and manifestation as it is described in international definitions, standards and documents;<sup>3</sup> it is fragmented into the individual crimes related to it. This prevailing criminological approach to the issue of violence against women thus fails to adequately reflect its causes and structural and social context, and reduces the

1 Office of the Government of the CR. 2019. *Akční plán prevence domácího a genderově podmíněného násilí na léta 2019-2022* [Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence 2019-2022], p. 3. Available online on <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/AP-DN---grafikaFINAL.pdf>

2 Asociace pracovníků intervenčních center [Intervention Centre Employee Association] 2019, 2020. Statistics. Available online on [http://www.domaci-nasilici.cz/?page\\_id=255](http://www.domaci-nasilici.cz/?page_id=255)

3 See for example the 1979 Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; General Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women no. 12, 19 and 35; the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Recommendations of the *Council of Europe's* Committee of Ministers (2002) on the protection of women against violence; Conclusions of the Council of Europe on combatting violence against women and availability of support services for persons at risk of domestic violence from December 6, 2012, etc.



widespread experience of women with different forms of violence to criminal law definitions and individualized experience. As a result, a significant number of women who experience the whole range of psychological violence, coercion, control, intimidation, economic oppression and other forms of violence, including women without sufficient evidence for criminal proceedings (or unwilling to initiate such proceedings for various reasons), find themselves insufficiently protected.

## Legislative Framework

Alignment with international standards and commitments is sought in the documents of the Department of Gender Equality of the Office of the Government. In cooperation with the Committee for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women (an advisory body of the Government of the Czech Republic), the third *Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence* was developed, this time for the years 2019–2022. The Action Plan focuses not just on domestic violence, but also on other forms of gender-based violence as they are commonly defined by relevant international standards.<sup>4</sup> However, in real life, its implementation often lacks the gender aspect of domestic and other forms of violence.

In the last few years, the issue of gender-based violence has seen some major shifts. There have been key legislative changes that allow for the prosecution of certain forms of violence against women. These include in particular o §199 of the Criminal Code, which defines the offence of abuse of a person living in a shared home, Act No. 135/2006 Coll., which established intervention centres and strengthened the powers of police and courts (the power to evict a violent person from a shared home) and §354, which punished dangerous stalking. In the context of criminal proceedings, it is now possible to ask for an interim measure to prohibit contact with certain persons or entry into a dwelling to protect victims. The amendment of the Act No. 250/2016 Coll. on the liability for offences and the procedure thereon also introduces the possibility of ordering perpetrators of domestic violence to attend programs for violent persons focused on the management of aggressive behaviour.

4 Office of the Government of the CR. 2019. *Akční plán prevence domácího a genderově podmíněného násilí na léta 2019-2022* [Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence 2019–2022] p. 3. <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/AP-DN---grafikaFINAL.pdf>



## Providing Assistance to Victims

With regard to the implementation of the adopted legislation, it should be appreciated that the police are being trained in this area. However, given the seriousness of the issue, it is crucial for the training system (not just for the police force, but also for all relevant professionals, including health care, social services, judicial system and education) is set up in a systematic, long-term manner and given due priority. But looking at the quality and effectiveness of the implementation of legislative measures through the eyes of women who experience violence and seek help and protection, we encounter certain obstacles and challenges in practice.

The fact that the Czech social services system basically does not provide any kind of residential social service akin to a shelter with a secret address (or any other specialised residential service for victims) or specialized services for victims of gender-based violence contributes to the complexity of the problem. The draft amendment to Act No. 108/2006 Coll. on social services sought to rectify this shortcoming, but it is yet to be approved.

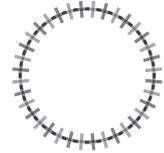
According to the national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration,<sup>5</sup> ensuring access of victims and their children to specialized services and ensuring adequate and predictable funding of the organizations active in the field of domestic and gender-based violence remains the biggest challenge of the assistance and protection system.<sup>6</sup> In terms of accessibility, access to the assistance system for women with disabilities, women migrants or women who are particularly vulnerable due to the overlap of multiple forms of disadvantage is also a cause for concern.

The results of the *Analysis of the Availability of Specialized Residential Social Services for Adult Victims of Domestic Violence* processed by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in 2017 revealed that only 5 out of the registered residential social services provide their services exclusively to victims of domestic violence. In addition, these are run by only 3 organizations in 2 cities within the Czech Republic with a capacity of approximately 90 beds — i.e. approximately 30 family places.<sup>7</sup> The recommendation of the Council of Europe on minimum standards for shelters for victims of domestic violence stipulates 1 family place per 10,000 inhabitants, which means the Czech Republic

5 Office of the Government of the CR. *Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) in the context of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2020*. Available online on [https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing\\_20/Czech\\_Republic.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing_20/Czech_Republic.pdf).

6 Ibid p. 18.

7 Available online on [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/Analiza-dostupnosti-a-kvality-final\\_s-opravami\\_revize-leden.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/Analiza-dostupnosti-a-kvality-final_s-opravami_revize-leden.pdf).



should have 1,000 beds (i.e. more than 300 family places). The Czech Republic thus achieves only 10% of the standard. The same Recommendation identifies as a minimum standard 1 specialized centre for rape victims per 200,000 women (or at least 1 centre per district/region) and 1 specialized centre for victims of sexual violence per 400,000 women, which would ensure easy access to assistance and reporting of assaults as well as high-quality of judicial and medical services.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, there is no such specialized centre available in the Czech Republic.

### Violence against Women at a Time of Pandemic

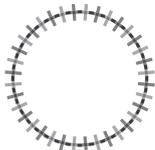
Measures adopted in the context of the pandemic of Covid-19 (working from home, closing schools and nurseries, restricting movement and access to certain services) have exacerbated social isolation for many people and provoked or deepened problems in many households that increase the risk of violence — whether it is stress level, job loss, worsening economic situation, etc. Restrictions imposed by the state of emergency have made it possible for violent persons to gain even greater control and more opportunities for manipulation, while making it significantly harder for victims to seek help.

A dramatic rise of violence in the context of the pandemic is a global phenomenon; the UN even speaks about the shadow pandemic and points out the rise of all forms of violence against women and girls, domestic violence in particular.<sup>9</sup> In the Czech Republic, this is evidenced by the practical experience of aid organizations and research data. During the state of emergency, low-threshold organizations registered the 40% increase of demand for their services in the first wave of the epidemic; for instance, the ROSA Information and Counselling Centre saw a 100% year-on-year increase in consultations conducted at a distance, but also an overall increase in demand for professional counselling for victims of domestic violence (almost 60%).

The development of domestic violence during the pandemic was also explored in qualitative research by experts from the Institute of Sociology of the CAS and the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University, which focused on the data from NGOs working with

8 Kelly, L. and Dubois, L. 2008. *Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services*. Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs Council of Europe, Strasbourg. Available online on [https://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF\(2007\)Study%20rev.en.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/EG-VAW-CONF(2007)Study%20rev.en.pdf).

9 UN Women 2020. *The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19*. Available online on <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.



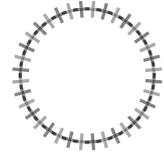
victims of domestic violence in the first stage in spring 2020.<sup>10</sup> The results suggested a high latency of domestic violence and a simultaneous inconsistency in the handling of individual cases by such institutions as the police, OSPOD (Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children), intervention centres and other entities. It was found that “while state institutions were brought by the state of emergency into a kind of paralysis, other types of aid organizations — especially NGOs — immediately introduced new on-line services, Skype counselling and other support measures. In this way, they seem to have been able to partially address the so-called “latent cases of domestic violence”. At the same time, the analysis of some of the cases that have been detected in this way has showed some gaps in the system that would be wise to address in the future.” As it was revealed, the system has other aid instruments at its disposal, but these are not sufficiently used at this point and need to be better connected and targeted to allow for fast and effective assistance to victims. The second stage of the research in summer 2020 focused on the relevant institutions and the actual functioning of the system.<sup>11</sup>

### Recommendations

- Ratify the Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. To this end, it will be necessary to support activities to raise awareness among the general public as well as politicians about the Convention’s content, including breaking down the myths and disinformation that are common in this area.
- Change the legal definition of rape in the Criminal Code so that the main aspect of the offence would be the absence of consent to sexual activity.
- To anchor the concept of gender-based violence by amending the Act on Social Services and to include this form of violence among adverse social situations, to include specialised shelters with concealed addresses in the social services system and to set quality standards for other specialised services for victims of domestic and gender-based violence.
- Ensure adequate and predictable funding of NGOs active in the field of domestic and gender-based violence.

10 Press release: *Domáci násilí za COVID-19: Když z pasti není úniku (a pomoc funguje jen někdy)* [Domestic Violence during COVID-19: When You Can’t Escape the Trap (and Help Doesn’t Always Work)] Available online on [https://www.soc.cas.cz/sites/default/files/soubory/tz\\_domaci\\_nasili\\_za\\_covid-19\\_kdyz\\_z\\_pasti\\_neni\\_uniku\\_a\\_pomoc\\_funguje\\_jen\\_nekdy.pdf](https://www.soc.cas.cz/sites/default/files/soubory/tz_domaci_nasili_za_covid-19_kdyz_z_pasti_neni_uniku_a_pomoc_funguje_jen_nekdy.pdf).

11 Institute of Sociology of the CAS 2020. Press release from October 22, 2020. Available online on [https://www.soc.cas.cz/aktualita/domaci-nasili-za-covid-19-je-o-lidech?fbclid=IwAR2\\_59mii9NJcLqkJ\\_giS3J9kqFibxDZYwD1svbpwUJk191HGk3cXYycoA](https://www.soc.cas.cz/aktualita/domaci-nasili-za-covid-19-je-o-lidech?fbclid=IwAR2_59mii9NJcLqkJ_giS3J9kqFibxDZYwD1svbpwUJk191HGk3cXYycoA).



- Ensure systematic training and raising the competences of all stakeholders in the aid system regarding the issue of gender-based violence in its full extent and specialized forms of prevention and support.
- Implement prevention of violence against women across the whole society – from general campaigns, to quality prevention programs in schools, to training of youth workers.
- Ensure a consistent system of assistance and support across the country, based on the involvement of all relevant actors (police, OSPOD [Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children], intervention centres, NGOs and others) in monitoring and handling individual instances of violence.
- Take into account that people experiencing violence have different needs and accordingly it is important to offer them different forms of support and assistance. In the case of multiple disadvantaged victims in the context of gender-based violence, the interdisciplinary cooperation between individual services that work with various target groups needs to be strengthened and methodically supported to ensure accessible and quality services.<sup>12</sup>
- Create new specialized services for victims of domestic and sexual violence with suitable regional distribution, and in this way, to improve their accessibility for victims.
- Increase the capacity of specialized shelters in compliance with the Recommendation of the Council of Europe, i.e. 1 family place per 10,000 inhabitants, which means to set up approximately 3,000 additional beds that would be appropriately distributed across the regions.

12 Profem 2021. Barriers in the system of assistance to victims of partner violence who face multiple disadvantages. Recommendation for public administration institutions. Available at Profem, [www.profem.cz](http://www.profem.cz).

Chapter 13–14

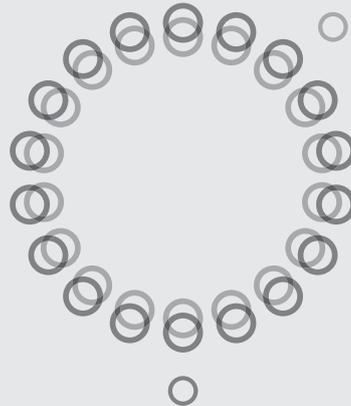
# **Global Reach of Gender Equality**

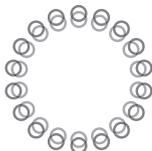
**Foreign Policy and International Collaboration**

**Climate and Environment**

## Foreign Policy and International Collaboration

Referring to the Convention article no. 2, 8





## Women's Representation in the European Parliament, Diplomacy and International Organisations

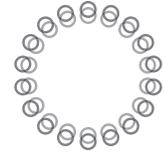
Women's representation among the MEPs elected for the Czech Republic in the 2019–2024 period has increased compared to the preceding period — 7 out of 21 Czech MEPs are women, i.e. 33.3%. The women to men ratio in the EP as a whole reached 40.4% in 2019. The persistency of relatively low number of Czech female MEPs reflects the indifferent attitude of many Czech political parties to the issue of gender equality on the ballot.

Women's representation in parliamentary committees dealing with foreign policy and external relations is also relatively low — there are 2 women (i.e. 11%) in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies as well as in the Defence Committee. In the Committee on European Affairs, there are three women MPs (17%). In the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, there is one female senator (18%) and two female senators are members of the Senate Committee on EU Affairs (18%). Upon taking office in autumn 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs Tomáš Petříček expressed, among other things, his ambition to increase the representation of women in key position in the Ministry. Although 2 out of 7 deputies are now women, these are the deputies of ministers without responsibility for running a specific division of the Ministry. However, Michaela Marksová Tominová's agenda includes the issue of promoting women in diplomacy, which can be considered a positive sign.

Among the 114 heads of offices in foreign missions, there are only 17 ambassadors or consul generals (15%). The Career Code of the Ministry disadvantages women as the career progression remains to a large extent linked to embassy posting abroad. In this respect, disadvantages persist in terms of achieving an acceptable work-life balance — for instance, the difficulties faced when giving birth and taking maternity leave abroad.

### Foreign Policy, Development Agenda and Humanitarian Aid

Both the Government Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic for 2014–2020 and the Strategy for Gender Equality for 2021–2030 respectively, and the Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2019–2020 in their relevant parts pay attention to gender equality



in external relations, reflecting the foreign policy, defence and security as well as the gender agenda of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The 2015 Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic<sup>1</sup> declares the intention to participate in global empowerment of women in society, although it also recognizes that this issue goes beyond human rights and development issues. Gender equality, coupled with the empowerment of women and girls, is mentioned as a cross-cutting priority associated with respecting human rights in the Foreign Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2018–2030.

Gender equality issues are thus important to Czech foreign policy, at least at the declaratory level. At the same time, however, interviews with relevant actors have shown that the Czech Republic has not historically been an advocate of this issue. The typical way of promoting the agenda seems to be to support the attitude of countries that have a long-standing profile of voicing their support on issues related to gender equality — historically, for instance, the Scandinavian countries.

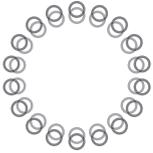
### **Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 „Women, Peace and Safety“**

The first Czech National Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325<sup>2</sup> was adopted in 2017, 17 years after the adoption of the resolution in 2000. The Action Plan for 2021–2025 was approved by the government in November 2020. Compared with the current NAP, characterized by rather ineffective indicators for individual goals, the new Action Plan is supposed to focus on specific, achievable and more measurable targets (SMART). For example, the gender dimension should be mainstreamed in the field of development and humanitarian cooperation.

The development of the second NAP was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the involvement of other relevant entities, in particular the Office of the Government, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Interior as well as representatives of the non-profit sector and academia. The circumstances surrounding the development of the Czech NAP are specific in that, while some other countries traditionally create and formulate their NAPs from bottom-up, i.e. with significant contributions of representative of the non-profit sector and civil society, the Czech Republic rather proceeds

1 Available online on [https://www.mzv.cz/file/1565920/Koncepce\\_zahranicni\\_politiky\\_CR.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/file/1565920/Koncepce_zahranicni_politiky_CR.pdf).

2 Available online on <https://www.databaze-strategie.cz/mzv/strategie/akcni-plan-ceske-republiky-k-implementaci-rezoluce-rady-bezpecnosti-osn-c-1325-2000>



in the opposite direction and the interest of non-governmental actors to shape the policy can be described as limited.

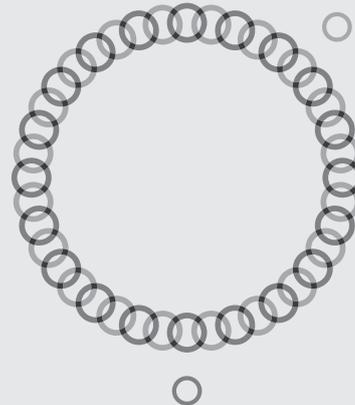
### **Recommendations**

- Pay more attention to the possibilities for improving work-life balance of male and female diplomats in embassies.
- Strengthen communication on supporting gender equality as one of the important topics of Czech foreign policy beyond the traditional support for respecting human rights.
- Include the issue of gender equality in all areas related to peace and security.
- Evaluate on regular basis the implementation of strategic documents related to gender equality in external relations.
- Continue discussions with representatives of the non-profit sector and civil society and increase their involvement in these discussions.

Chapter 14

## Climate and Environment

Referring to the Convention article no. 2, 14



Žaneta Gregorová,  
Petra Jelínková

- 1 EIGE 2012. *Review of the Implementation in the EU of area K of the Beijing Platform for Action: Women and the Environment. Gender Equality and Climate Change*. Available online on <https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Gender-Equality-and-Climate-Change-Report.pdf>.
- 2 WHO 2014. *Gender, Climate Change and Health*. Available online on <https://www.who.int/globalchange/GenderClimateChangeHealthfinal.pdf>.
- 3 IRENA 2019. *Gender Perspective*. Available online on <https://bit.ly/3d8JcDK>.
- 4 The report also states that “the impacts of climate change are experienced differently by women and men; whereas women are more vulnerable and face higher risks and burdens for various reasons, ranging from unequal access to resources, education, job opportunities and land rights, to social and cultural norms and their diverse intersectional experiences.” European Parliament 2017. *Report on women, gender equality and climate justice*. Available online on [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0403\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0403_EN.html).
- 5 The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic 2014. *Vládní strategie pro rovnost žen a mužů v České republice na léta 2014–2020 [The Governmental Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic in 2014–2020]*. Available online in Czech on [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovnost-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Projekt\\_Optimalizace/Strategie-pro-rovnost-zen-a-muzu-v-CR-na-leta-2014-2020.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovnost-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Projekt_Optimalizace/Strategie-pro-rovnost-zen-a-muzu-v-CR-na-leta-2014-2020.pdf).

Environmental problems and the climate crisis affect various communities disproportionately – their impact on those groups that are already vulnerable is significantly stronger, and so they tend to deepen existing inequalities and may establish new ones. Despite the fact that women contribute to production of greenhouse gas emissions less than men, they are more challenged in dealing with its negative consequence, among others due to lower incomes and other systems disadvantages<sup>1</sup>. The WHO study on *Gender, Climate Change and Health* points out that health risks related to the climate crisis are heavily gendered and appeals to governments to come up with mitigation and adaptation measures in climate plans which will be beneficial for both men and women<sup>2</sup>. Gender perspective is also discussed in an extensive 2019 study by the International Renewable Energy Agency with an emphasis on the women’s role in relation with just transition and opportunities stemming from future energy sector based on renewables.<sup>3</sup> The European Parliament published its Report on women, gender equality and climate justice informing that “women are particularly vulnerable to climate change and experience its effects disproportionately because of their social roles” such as household chores and caring for others.<sup>4</sup> The above mentioned inequalities are not only related to greenhouse gases, but also other types of emissions from energy and industry sectors which often have direct impacts on people’s health and the environment.

### Connecting the Environmental and Gender Agendas in the Czech Republic

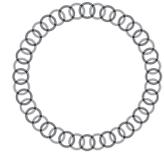
The Government’s Gender Equality Strategy for 2014–2020 takes into consideration that “environmental issues in relation to gender equality is addressed, among others, in the Beijing Platform for Action which mentions gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in protection of the environment as one of critical areas. Women usually have insufficient access to decision-making and management of institutions crucial for the quality of the environment, and they are also often underrepresented in institutions making environmental policies. At the same time, though, they are forced to bear consequences of negative decisions and their impacts on local communities.”<sup>5</sup> In this context, the document states that representation of women in decision making

related to the environment, transport and energy in the Czech Republic is below the EU average.

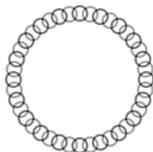
Departmental documents of the Ministry of the Environment on gender equality reveal that the Ministry's activities in this agenda mostly focus on internal and personnel issues (i.e. towards employees and recruitment), but only rarely in relation to the general public.<sup>6</sup> A similar situation can be seen at the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In 2016, the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in partnership with the Heinrich Boell Foundation Prague published a study on gender and energy providing a thorough description of the situation and numerous recommendations that can be applied at both above mentioned ministries as well as the Ministry of Transport, other institutions and generally in society.

The Gender Equality Strategy for 2021–2030 observes that “in the national environmental policy, specific needs of men and women are only considered sporadically and immethodically, despite the fact that a large part of these policies apparently has a significant gender dimension”. Based on this insight, strategic goals in this document also include integration of the gender equality criterium to the environmental protection and transport policies. The question is how systematically and effectively the gender (and social) perspective is going to be applied in this agenda – so far it has not been the case, as the below mentioned example of the Coal Commission shows.

Nevertheless, gender and social impacts of climate change are increasingly discussed in the non-governmental sector (including the Czech Women's Lobby<sup>7</sup>), grassroot movements and the academic sector. For example, NKC – Gender and Science has covered this topic in publications and public debates.<sup>8</sup> Launched in spring 2021, the HBS's publication *How to Design a City for Life*<sup>9</sup> is partly a follow up of HBS's earlier publications and provides gender-sensitive recommendations for energy and the environment, and it features best practice examples that can be used in climate change adaptation on the local level, especially with respect to elderly citizens, people with disabilities, children and those who look after them – that is mostly women in the Czech context.<sup>10</sup>



- 6 Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic 2020. *Informace k naplňování Vládní strategie pro rovnost žen a mužů v ČR na léta 2014–2020 a Aktualizovaných opatření priorit a postupů při prosazování rovnosti žen a mužů v roce 2019 na Ministerstvu životního prostředí*. [Report on Implementation of the Governmental Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic in 2014–2020]. Available online in Czech on [https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/zprava\\_o\\_plneni\\_priorit/\\$FILE/Pln%C4%9Bn%C3%AD%20rezortn%C3%ADch%20priorit%20na%20rok%202019.pdf](https://www.mzp.cz/C1257458002F0DC7/cz/zprava_o_plneni_priorit/$FILE/Pln%C4%9Bn%C3%AD%20rezortn%C3%ADch%20priorit%20na%20rok%202019.pdf).
- 7 Czech Women's Lobby – position on climate. Available online on <https://czlobby.cz/stanoviska>.
- 8 More sources on climate and gender injustice available online in Czech on <https://genderaveda.cz/dvojita-nespravedlnost-zmeny-klimatu/>) and <https://www.facebook.com/events/2364055040472755/permalink/2391617861049806/>.
- 9 Available online on <https://cz.boell.org/cs/2021/05/21/jak-navrhnout-mesto-ktere-prezije>
- 10 Positive examples can be found in, for example Atlas of evaluation of vulnerability and risks of unfavorable climate change impacts in Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic. Available online on <https://bratislava.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/Dokumenty/Atlas%20hodnotenia%20zranite%C4%BEnosti.pdf>.



## Decarbonization of the Czech Energy Sector and Just Transition

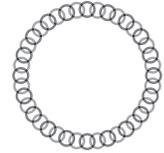
As opposed to international strategic documents and civil society, the Czech government has been lagging behind when it comes to application of gender and social perspectives in climate and energy policies. After all, the Czech Republic has not been among EU leaders in efforts to reach climate neutrality. On the contrary, it is among those member states that tend to delay solutions. More than a half of Czech energy depends on fossil fuels, and the country ranks among the worst in Europe regarding CO<sub>2</sub> per capita emissions. In July 2019, the Government established the Coal Commission with the aim to analyze possibilities of lignite phase-out and to define costs and impacts (lignite is currently the main source of energy in Czechia). Its outcomes were expected to be presented by September 2020, but there have not been any conclusions by mid-2021 either. The commission only proposed a possible phase-out deadline by 2038. The government acknowledged this and assigned the commission to elaborate and evaluate conditions, tools and impacts of potential earlier coal phase-out. The Coal Commission also has a working group focused on social and economic impacts of decarbonization which has not published any documents or outcomes yet.

As a response to the governmental Coal Commission which was criticized by civil society for being unbalanced and untransparent, an independent platform named “Shadow Coal Commission”<sup>11</sup> was formed consisting of scientists, experts and local citizens. In November 2020, it published its own position on coal phase-out in the Czech Republic. This document mentions health and social effects of coal mining and combustion, for example high morbidity in respective regions resulting in pressure on healthcare and care sectors. It recommends a participative and just approach to energy decarbonization and transformation emphasizing prevention of social problems and poverty. These aspects are crucial from the gender perspective as all above mentioned problems affect women and vulnerable groups more heavily and deepen their complicated situation.

### Recommendations

- Consistently integrate gender and social aspects in environmental and climate policies on all levels and evaluate impacts on various social groups.

<sup>11</sup> See Shadow Coal Commission website: [www.uhelnakomise.cz](http://www.uhelnakomise.cz)



- Include gender and social perspectives (gender mainstreaming) in strategic documents – especially on the municipal level – not only in relation to the environment, but also in urban planning, transport, safety etc.
- Enhance participation of local citizens, mainly on the municipal and regional level. It is critical to make sure that resources intended for just transition of mining regions will be used not only for transformation of industry, but also for improved quality of life considering needs of various groups. It is necessary to consider specific needs and risks of urban and rural areas.
- Increase awareness of environmental problems without excessive pressure on individual responsibility and at the expense of vulnerable groups. On the contrary, it is vital to improve accessibility of solutions that are simultaneously environment-friendly and cost-saving for households (e.g. affordable public transportation, community energy, cheap and high-quality local food).
- Support democratization of energy, i.e. better access for individuals and households to clean and cheap renewables (energy communities and cooperatives) and prevent energy poverty – especially in vulnerable groups such as elderly women, single parents, people with disabilities etc.

Chapter 15–16

# Women Facing Multiple Challenges

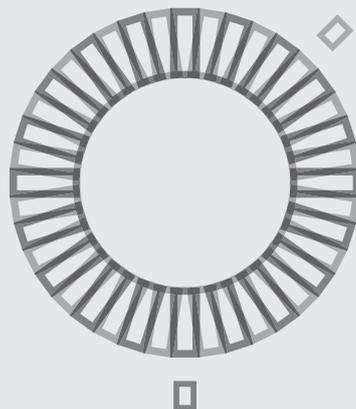
**Roma Women**

**Women Migrants**

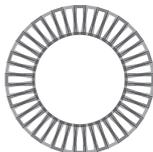
# Chapter 15

## Roma Women

Referring to the Convention article no. 3, 11, 12



Martina Horváthová,  
Petra Jelínková,  
Claudie Laburdová



Monitoring and efforts to improve the situation of Roma women in the Czech Republic have been made difficult by the fact that accurate and detailed data are not available – not even about the Roma population in general. In the 2011 census (i.e. the most recent one as the 2021 result will not be published before 2022), approximately 13,000 people stated Roma nationality, while more than 41,000 citizens stated Roma language as their mother tongue (Czech Statistical Office 2011). The real number of the Roma population in the Czech Republic is not known because authorities have not had the right to inquire and keep records on ethnicity since 1998.<sup>1</sup> The estimates of Roma living in the Czech Republic are thus based on educated guesses, currently reaching approximately 200,000 people, i.e. about 2 percent of the country's population.

Due to the lack of official data and statistics, most of this chapter is based on field workers' findings on Roma women's situation<sup>2</sup>. The relation of gender and other personal identities – and the lack of data in this area – was also mentioned in the Report on the situation of the Roma minority in the Czech Republic in 2019 which was approved by the Government in November 2020. The introduction says: "Although the report mentions disadvantaged position of Roma women due to their gender, the gender perspective was not dealt with in detail. It is obvious that many inequalities have different impacts on Roma women and Roma men. Nevertheless, there is not enough data and research for identification and in-depth analysis of such differences. The situation may be improved by the *Roma Integration Strategy* for years 2021–2030 and the *Gender Equality Strategy* for years 2021–2030 which defines intersectionality as one of key horizontal principles." Both documents were completed and approved in spring 2021, and the intersectional approach is applied both in general and specifically with Roma women.<sup>3</sup>

Strategies and documents focused on Roma integration have been made since 1997. The document implemented in the monitored period was the Roma Integration Strategy until 2020 which was based on the 2013 *Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States*<sup>4</sup> which assigned EU member states to adopt respective measures by 2016. Compared to its predecessor, this strategy put an emphasis on emancipation and empowerment of the Roma minority as a basic prerequisite for preventing discrimination and enabling full participation.<sup>5</sup>

1 According to the Act No. 101/2000 Coll., on personal data protection.

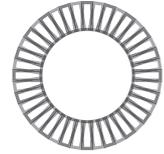
2 Source: Slovo 21 NGO – Roma women's group Manushe: [www.slovo21.cz](http://www.slovo21.cz)

3 Office of the Government of the CR 2021. *Gender Equality Strategy for years 2021–2030*. Available online on [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Strategie\\_rovnosti\\_zen\\_a\\_muzu.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Strategie_rovnosti_zen_a_muzu.pdf)

Office of the Government of the CR 2021. *Strategy for Roma Equality, Integration and Participation 2021–2030* (aka "Roma Integration Strategy"). Available online on [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/zmocnenkyne-vlady-pro-lidska-prava/aktuality/Strategie-rovnosti--zacleneni-a-participace-Romu-2021---2030---textovacast\\_OK.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/zmocnenkyne-vlady-pro-lidska-prava/aktuality/Strategie-rovnosti--zacleneni-a-participace-Romu-2021---2030---textovacast_OK.pdf)

4 Available online on [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)&from=CS](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)&from=CS)

5 Office of the Government – Department of Human Rights and Minority Protection, 2014, pp 29–33.

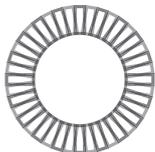


Since 1997, Roma have been the only national minority to have its advisory body, i.e. the Government Council for the Roma Minority. It consists of representatives of the Roma civil society and representatives of individual resorts. The Council is chaired by the Prime Minister. It is entitled to propose and adopt resolutions with recommendations to be referred to the Government. At the end of 2020, there were only four women (three of them Roma) among twelve civil society representatives. In total, there were four Roma women out of 27 members.

In 2017, the RomanoNet network was founded as an umbrella and a coordinating platform for 11 NGOs working with the Roma community in the Czech Republic. RomanoNet is a platform for negotiating and promoting social change and improved targeting and funding for Roma integration projects and addressing social exclusion. Roma women are represented mainly by the Roma women's group Manushe (operating under the Slovo 21 NGO) and representatives of forcefully sterilized Roma women from the Vzájemné soužití NGO.

### **Roma Population and Social Exclusion**

It is estimated that approximately a half of the Roma population in the Czech Republic is socially excluded or threatened by social exclusion. Social exclusion is understood as a complicated access to institutions and services and thus also possible help, and a lack or total absence of social contacts outside the excluded community. The unemployment rate for people in social exclusion reaches up to 70–100% in some communities. People are often unskilled, dependent on welfare, living in poor housing conditions or provisional accommodation facilities. Social exclusion results in health issues, indebtedness and other social issues. The combination of poor conditions, overcrowding, lack of privacy, both spatial and social exclusion, long-term unemployment, unsatisfactory housing and restrictions has a negative impact on citizens making them lose motivation and give up efforts to change. Regional Roma coordinators estimate that indebtedness of Roma households can reach up to 70%. For this reason, undeclared or illegal work is more prevalent in excluded communities.

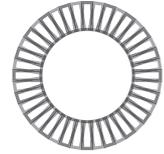


## Perspective of Roma Women: Main Challenges and Issues

Field work findings collected by organizations focused on the Roma minority and research done by the Manushe group of the Slovo 21 NGO have shown that in the monitored period, the intersectional disadvantage of Roma women based on their gender, ethnicity and the patriarchal structure of Roma communities mostly affects the areas of health care, housing, employment, education and domestic violence.

A frequent problem related to **health care**, and specifically in obstetrics, is an insufficient access to medical care and maternity hospitals for women from socially excluded communities. They often face discrimination, whether manifested as overtly racist and disrespectful behaviour, or lack of interest shown by the staff which can be very traumatizing for sensitive and vulnerable patients during and after the childbirth. Based on personal experience mentioned by respondents from the Ústí and Moravian-Silesian Region, there were cases of segregation of Roma patients in other rooms, sometimes of a worse quality – allegedly based on Roma patients' requests. In relation to general health care, rather than explicit discrimination, there can be problems with a lack of information, support and attention.

In the area of **employment and income**, there is a recurrent problem with job applications. When a Roma woman applies for a job and attends the interview in person, she is often told that the position is no longer available. Roma women's disadvantaged position in the labour market is also connected with the traditional family structure in Roma communities where women are expected to take care of household and children. This is also one of the reasons why Roma women are at a higher risk of poverty, especially as senior. Their pensions are often disproportionately low as they did not spend the required number of years in official employment due to their role of mothers and housewives. The position of single mothers is extraordinarily problematic. They often face problems with the children's father who is not willing or able to pay child maintenance, typically due to being in debts. There is frequently reluctance to take legal actions as conflicts in the community are seen as undesirable; however informal agreements usually only work temporarily. Roma women also have problems finding kindergarten and nursery care for their children due to deficient capacity and financial reasons. These obstacles



force some Roma women to accept undeclared work, for example cleaning in private companies, which leads to a poverty spiral with the lack of officially declared years of employment preventing them from social benefits and standard pension. As a last resort, they turn to prostitution, sometimes as early as teenagers.

The precarious position in the labour market is also related to **housing**. Opportunities to live outside excluded communities are rare due to exorbitant prices and low availability of municipal social housing. Many Czech municipalities also declared so called “zones with increased incidence of socially pathological phenomena” that prevents their inhabitants from taking certain housing benefits. Research (including the award-winning thesis by Robert Oláh<sup>6</sup>) as well as field work have evidenced discrimination of Roma people in the housing market during the monitored period.

Another critical issue is **domestic violence** that is sometimes considered a natural part of the family life in certain communities. This topic is typically a taboo, even in field research where respondents tend to be rather open in other topics.

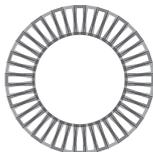
There are also persisting problems in the area of **education**. The Czech educational system tends to disadvantage Roma children from a very early age and it often forces Roma parents to place their children in special schools. There are still segregated schools with Roma pupils overrepresented in programmes for children with a light mental disability. In the last school year, Roma pupils constituted almost 4 percent of all basic school pupils, while their share in so called “reduced educational programmes” reached 29 percent.<sup>7</sup>

### Forced Sterilization of Roma Women

There have been long-term issues with compensations for women who underwent forced sterilization. This intervention is often associated with the totalitarian regime, but there were numerous cases from the period after 1989 with some of them as recent as 2012. Some of these women were sterilized without informed consent – in labour pains, when sedated or misled by the medical staff they needed the surgery as their life was in danger. Other women did not find the decision completely free as they were talked into it, in some cases under threats their children or welfare benefits might be taken away.

6 Olah, R. 2020. *Diskriminace Romů na trhu bydlení* [Discrimination of Roma in the housing market – a bachelor thesis]. UJEP Ústí nad Labem.

7 Amnesty International’s report *Human Rights in Europe – Review of 2019*. Available online on [https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0120982020\\_ENGLISH.PDF](https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0120982020_ENGLISH.PDF)



This topic has been continuously discussed since 2005 when the then public defender of rights, Otakar Motejl, published a record<sup>8</sup> estimating that thousands of women, mostly Roma, were forcefully sterilized in Czechoslovakia since 1972. The governmental committee against torture proposed compensations for forcefully sterilized women in 2006. In 2009, the Government led by Prime Minister Jan Fischer apologized for illegal interventions. In 2015, the then Minister for Human Rights, Jiří Dienstbier, prepared a bill proposing 300,000 CZK compensations for forcefully sterilized women to be paid in 2017, but it was not approved by the Government.

In November 2016, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in Budapest published a comprehensive report on forced sterilizations of Roma women in Czechia named *Coercive and Cruel: Sterilisation and its Consequences for Romani Women in the Czech Republic (1966–2016)*.<sup>9</sup>

A bill based on Dienstbier's draft was proposed in 2019 suggesting compensations for women who were forcefully sterilized between July 1, 1966 and March 31, 2012. Requests were to be submitted within three years after the law comes in force. It was estimated it may apply to approximately 400 women. The debates were repeatedly postponed. It was approved by the Chamber of Deputies in June 2021 and tabled to the Senate, however, some of the victims did not live to see the rectification as they died in the meantime.

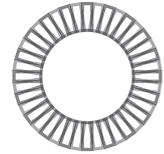
## Recommendations

- Ensure systematic data collection and research on Roma citizens and specifically women, mainly in relation to identified issues including education, social exclusion, poverty, housing, reproduction rights etc. while making sure these problems are dealt with in a comprehensive and interconnected way.
- Provide help for the most vulnerable groups, especially elderly women, single mothers and women with disabilities within the social housing system (adoption of the bill on social housing), social benefits and substitute alimony benefits.
- Remove barriers which prevent the most vulnerable people from receiving benefits and support (such as housing benefits suspension in selected excluded areas).
- Ensure immediate compensations for forcefully sterilized women.

8 Summary Report of the Public Defender of Rights 2005. Available online in Czech on [https://www.ochrance.cz/dokument/2010/Souhrnna\\_zprava\\_VOP\\_2005.pdf](https://www.ochrance.cz/dokument/2010/Souhrnna_zprava_VOP_2005.pdf)

9 Available online on <http://www.errc.org/reports-and-submissions/coercive-and-cruel-sterilisation-and-its-consequences-for-romani-women-in-the-czech-republic-1966-2016>

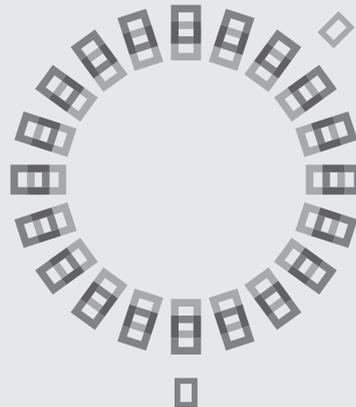
- Address discrimination of Roma women in health care facilities, especially in relation to obstetrics – providing high-quality care for all patients while respecting cultural differences and traditions).
- Desegregate schools, increase numbers of teaching assistants at elementary schools and prevent exclusion of Roma children from the pre-school level.
- Introduce measures, labour market policies and related programs for supporting employment of Roma women, especially those with low qualification, higher age and long history of unemployment.



## Chapter 16

# Women Migrants

Referring to the Convention article no. 3, 11, 12



Eva Valentová



As of December 31, 2020, there were approximately **272,500 women with foreign nationalities** in the Czech Republic, i.e. **women with a migrant status** in terms of Czech legislation. These women accounted for 42.92% of the total migrant population (634,790 persons in total) and approximately 2.65% of total population in the country as of that date.<sup>1</sup> After 2000, the number of women migrants rose rapidly and, even though the growth slowed down slightly in the period under review, the Czech Republic also sees a *feminization of migration*.

Just as everywhere else in Europe, women migrants in the Czech Republic face **multiple disadvantages** due to diverse structural, social, language and cultural barriers. In comparison with men and women from the majority population, women migrants clearly live in social and economic inequality. This inequality increases the risk of social exclusion and creates a fertile ground for dangerous situations, often connected to gender-based violence or multiple discrimination based on gender, social group, ethnicity or migration status.<sup>2</sup>

Despite partial progress in the field of migrant integration and equal rights, the relevant instruments of the state as well as activities of NGOs, social and other public services remain insufficient when it comes to systemically reducing the disadvantages of women migrants living in the Czech Republic. In addition, in the aftermath of intensified influx of migrants to Europe since 2015, the incidence of certain negative social phenomena, such as xenophobia, racism, hate speech or even hate violence, has increased in the country, with major impacts on the lives of Muslim women and other racially diverse groups.<sup>3</sup> Institutionalized stereotypes were also demonstrated by a well-known court case regarding the wearing of scarfs in schools where the courts failed to recognize that the plaintiff Muslim girl was discriminated against regarding her access to education.<sup>4</sup>

The unequal position of women migrants in the Czech Republic became even more obvious during the pandemic of Covid 19, when this disadvantaged group was barely taken into account in government protection measures in the area of employment and social affairs, despite the impacts on their situation in a number of respects (entry to

- 1 Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. *Foreign Nationals with Residence Permit. Overview for the years 2011-2021*. Available online on <https://www.mvcr.cz/migrace/clanek/cizinci-s-povolenym-pobytem.aspx?q=Y2hudW09Mg%3d%3d>
- 2 Hradečná, P. et al. 2016. Ženy na vedlejší koleji (?) Analýza postavení a situace migrantek a žen s migračním původem ve vyšším středním a seniorském věku [Women on the Side Track (?) The Analysis of Position and Circumstances of Women Migrants in Upper Middle and Old Age]. Association for Integration and Migration, Prague. Available online on [http://www.migrace.com/docs/161012\\_eny-na-edlejsi-koleji\\_analyza.pdf](http://www.migrace.com/docs/161012_eny-na-edlejsi-koleji_analyza.pdf).
- 3 HateFree 2018. "Muslim women wear hats instead of scarves, they are afraid" the expert says (article). Available online on <http://www.hatefree.cz/blo/rozhovory/2869-kalibova>.
- 4 Office of the Government of the Czech Republic 2017. *Zpráva o stavu lidských práv v České republice v roce 2017* [Human Rights Report for the Czech Republic in 2017] Available online on <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rtp/dokumenty/zpravy-lidska-prava-cr/zprava-o-stavu-lidskych-prav-v-ceske-republice-v-roce-2017-167857/>.



the country, limited possibilities of family reunification, increased precariousness of jobs in a number of sectors, work-life balance, threat of domestic violence, etc.). Perhaps the only exception was the possibility to have an interpreter present at the childbirth of women with language barriers at a time when, in any other instance, the Ministry of Health prohibited the presence of a third party at childbirth under its regulations.

### Mainstreaming Women Migrants in Cross-Cutting Public Policies

The neglect of women migrants while implementing government measures reflects the general reality of the invisibility of this group in social and other related public policies. Czech **integration and migration policy** itself has remained gender-blind on a long-term basis, in particular in terms of the identification of potential problems related to the integration of women migrants into the host society.<sup>5</sup> It was not until 2012 that the government's strategic material called *Updated Concept for the Integration of Foreigners* recognized the specific position of women migrants, and only its current version from 2016 identifies women migrants as one of the vulnerable groups and gives a partial response to their needs through a "targeted offer of integration measures", i.e. providing courses of Czech language and helping them get their bearings in society.<sup>6</sup> However, the Czech integration strategy still lacks sufficiently specific and enforceable measures aimed at individual rights and the social integration of migrants in key areas, such as employment, education, health care, etc.<sup>7</sup>

A slightly more open approach towards these women can be seen in the recent activities of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic regarding gender equality. The Government Strategy for Gender Equality in 2014–2020 clearly underscores the issue of the inaccessibility of public health care for women migrants and the issue of their multiple discrimination in the labour market.<sup>8</sup> The newly adopted Strategy for Gender Equality 2021+ already includes intersectionality as a horizontal criterion, thanks to which targeted measures for disadvantaged groups of women, including women migrants, appear primarily in the priority areas, such as employment, life without violence, health care and external relations.<sup>9</sup>

5 Hradečná, P. et al. 2016. Ženy na vedlejší koleji (?) Analýza postavení a situace migrantek a žen s migračním původem ve vyšším středním a seniorském věku [Women on the Side Track (?) The Analysis of Position and Circumstances of Women Migrants in Upper Middle and Old Age]. Association for Integration and Migration, Prague. Available online on [http://www.migrace.com/docs/161012\\_eny-na-edlejsi-koleji-\\_analiza.pdf](http://www.migrace.com/docs/161012_eny-na-edlejsi-koleji-_analiza.pdf).

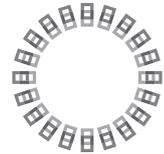
6 Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2019. *Postup při realizaci aktualizované Koncepce integrace cizinců v roce 2020* [Process of the implementation of the updated Concept for the Integration of Foreigners in 2020] Available online on <https://www.mvcr.cz/migrace/clanek/zakladni-dokumenty-k-integracni-politice-ke-stazeni.aspx>.

7 Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations 2018. *Integrace cizinců v Česku z pohledu nevládních organizací* [Integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic from the Perspective of NGOs] Chapter 1. Available online on <http://www.migracnikonsorcium.cz/cs/nase-vystupy/>.

## Structural Limits in Terms of Migration Policy and Legislation

Immigration policy and legislation establish conditions for migrants to enter to and reside in the Czech Republic, which also sets certain adaptation limits and integration barriers for them. Given the fact that the most common route of legal migration to the Czech Republic is family migration, these structural barriers have a bigger impact on women migrants than men migrants, especially when their residence in the country depends on the status of their spouses or partners.

The general **conditions for the reunification of migrant families** in the Czech Republic became already stricter in 2013.<sup>10</sup> These rules are criticised for the disproportionately high administrative fees, the need to prove high family income and, above all, the excessively long time limit (9 months) to process an application for a residence permit for family reunification, which, until recently, was often not respected by the deciding authority (the Ministry of the Interior).<sup>11</sup> Further difficulties arose due to the **non-transparency and poor functionality of the Visapoint registration system** at Czech embassies, which in some countries of origin prevented many people from entering the Czech Republic or prolonged the process of visa application by as much as several years. This problem concerned,



8 Smetáčková, I. (ed.) 2015. *Stínová zpráva o stavu genderové rovnosti v České republice v roce 2015* [Shadow Report on Gender Equality in the Czech Republic in 2015] Czech Women's Lobby, Prague. Available online on [https://czlobby.cz/sites/default/files/projekty/stinova\\_zprava\\_tisk.pdf](https://czlobby.cz/sites/default/files/projekty/stinova_zprava_tisk.pdf).

9 Office of the government of the Czech Republic 2020. *Government Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic 2021-2030*. Available online on [https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Strategie\\_rovnosti\\_zen\\_a\\_muzu.pdf](https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Strategie_rovnosti_zen_a_muzu.pdf)

10 Migration Policy Group 2020. *Migrant Integration Policy Index. Czech Republic*.

*Key Findings*. Brussels 2020. Available online on <http://mipex.eu/czech-republic>

11 Organization for Aid to Refugees 2016. *Analýza slučování rodin migrantů ze třetích zemí a práva rodinných příslušníků občanů EU na volný pohyb a pobyt* [Analysis of Family Reunification of Migrants from Third Countries and the Right of Family Members of EU Citizens to Free Movement and Residence] Prague 2016. Available online on [https://www.opu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Anal%C3%BDza-slu%C4%8Dov%C3%A1n%C3%AD-rodin-migrant%C5%AF-a-pr%C3%A1vo-na-soukrom%C3%BD-a-rodinn%C3%BD-%C5%BEivot\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.opu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Anal%C3%BDza-slu%C4%8Dov%C3%A1n%C3%AD-rodin-migrant%C5%AF-a-pr%C3%A1vo-na-soukrom%C3%BD-a-rodinn%C3%BD-%C5%BEivot_FINAL.pdf).



for instance, family migration from Vietnam. Both of these practices were abandoned only after interventions by the Ombudsman in 2016 and 2017.<sup>12</sup>

**The particularly restrictive definition of family members** in the Czech Aliens Act remains a persistent restriction on family migration to the Czech Republic, and this legal limit most often affects older women from non-EU countries. The fundamental difficulty of the status of family members (usually women and children) is that their **residence permit in the Czech Republic depends on the status of the so-called “sponsor”** (spouse, partner or parent). For example, a divorce can only be applied for after several years of residence in the Czech Republic, otherwise any disruption of family ties may lead to the revocation of the residence permit. As a result, residence dependency increases the risk of violation of the rights of these persons by the legally stronger partner. Immigration authorities are therefore legally obliged to take into account the adequacy of their decisions based on the status of family members, especially in cases of domestic violence.

Due to the poor enforceability of rights during long-term residence in the Czech Republic, many migrants, often women, **seek permanent residence**, which guarantees the rights similar to those enjoyed by Czech citizens (free access to the labour market, social rights and public health insurance). However, the conditions are relatively strict, and in particular, women often face difficulties when trying to prove economic self-sufficiency. From autumn 2021, the conditions will tighten even further with the need to pass a mandatory A2 level Czech language exam.

### Triple Invisibility of Women Migrants on a Labour Market

Since the Czech Republic accessed the EU, economic migration has been dominant in the country, which resulted in a significant involvement of migrants, both men and women, in the Czech labour market. The rate of unemployment in foreigners is either lower (for EU citizens) or comparable (for non-EU citizens) to the unemployment in the Czech population, and as for women migrants it has even decreased the most in ten-year period 2007–2017 in what was then EU 25.<sup>13</sup>

12 Ombudsman 2016. *Annual Report 2015*. Available online on [https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/Souhrnna-zprava\\_VOP\\_2015.pdf](https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/Souhrnna-zprava_VOP_2015.pdf).

Ombudsman 2017. *Rozšířený senát Nejvyššího správního soudu potvrdil stanovisko ochránkyň k nefunkčnímu systému Visapoint* [Extended Chamber of the Supreme Administrative Court confirms the Ombudsman's opinion on the non-functional Visapoint system] [press release]. Brno, July 12, 2017. Available online on <https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/rozsireny-senat-nejvyssiho-spravniho-soudu-potvrdil-stanovisko-ochrankyne-k-nefunkcnim/>.

13 OECD 2019. *Settling in 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*. Gender differences in Immigrant integration, p. 155. Available online on [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/settling-in-2018/gender-differences-in-immigrant-integration\\_9789264307216-10-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/settling-in-2018/gender-differences-in-immigrant-integration_9789264307216-10-en).



Despite the favourable economic conditions of recent years, women migrants, just as women from the majority population, work more often in short-term or precarious jobs, receive lower pay for comparable work and lower or no pensions. Women migrants are further disadvantaged by inequalities between majority and minorities, structural inequalities and legislative barriers regarding migrants' access to employment.<sup>14</sup> This so-called “**triple invisibility**” of women migrants in the labour market (at the level of social class, ethnicity and gender) condemns them to professional segmentation into several economic sectors, such as textile industry, cleaning services, hospitality industry, domestic and care work.<sup>15</sup> Switching to another sector is extremely difficult, even after retraining and language courses, due to the amount of paperwork necessary for the recognition of foreign qualifications or education (nostrification) or the lack of childcare support.<sup>16</sup>

Women migrants doing **domestic or care work**, which is mostly part of the grey economy due to the insufficient regulation of that segment of the labour market, are especially vulnerable. Especially for women who live in the same household as their employers (live-in workers), it is difficult to ensure and monitor compliance with labour regulations or to seek protection from any type of abuse. Recently, research has observed the increasing commoditisation of elderly care, which is increasingly being carried out by women migrants from Ukraine, replacing elderly care within the state structures of the social system. It seems therefore unfortunate that the Czech government has refused to ratify the 2011 ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, the adoption of which would have strengthened the rights of many Czech and women migrant workers and their enforcement options, the shortcomings of which have been made substantially obvious recently in the context of the pandemic of covid-19.<sup>17</sup>

### Health and Reproductive Rights of Women Migrants

Regarding the health of the migrant population in the Czech Republic, most attention is drawn to the problematic **access of the migrants to health insurance**. For years, there has been structural discrimination against certain groups of migrants, who, based on

14 See Hradečná, P. et al. 2016.

15 Mathéová, B. 2016. *Vykořisťování žen migrantek na trhu práce* [Exploiting Women Migrants on the Labour Market] Online portal Migraceonline. Available online on <https://migraceonline.cz/cz/e-knihovna/vykořisťování-žen-migrantek-na-trhu-prace>.

16 Leontiyeva, Y. and Pokorná, A. 2014. *Faktory bránící využití kvalifikace imigrantů na trhu práce v ČR* [Factors Preventing Migrants to Use Their Qualification on the Czech Labour Market] Multicultural Center Prague. Available online on <https://migraceonline.cz/images/publikace/kvalifikace-final.pdf>.

17 Uhde, Z. and Ezzeddine, P. 2020. *The political economy of social reproduction: cross-border care mobility in the Czech Republic*, In Melegh A., Katona N. (Eds.): *Towards a scarcity of care? Tensions and contradictions in transnational elderly care systems in Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 26–44, FES: Budapest. Available online on <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/16945.pdf>.



their citizenship and the type of residence permit, are not entitled to public health insurance, but can only obtain commercial health insurance for foreigners. However, this commercial insurance provides significantly worse conditions due to the limited network of providers, the scope of covered health services and administrative barriers. In addition, it is financially demanding as premiums must be paid in advance for the entire duration of the residence permit (up to two years in some cases). Thus, the insurance becomes an impossible burden especially for the most vulnerable groups of migrants: children, pregnant women, the chronically ill, the elderly, etc. Due to the above mentioned barriers, the people in question frequently choose other, often high-risk ways of dealing with their health issues, for example paying doctors in cash, self-medicating, or putting off treatment until visiting their country of origin or obtaining permanent residence in the Czech Republic and with it public health insurance.<sup>18</sup> Although the issue of discriminatory health insurance in the Czech Republic has been on the table for a number of years, the latest amendments of the Public Health Insurance Act did not bring a desired change. It is only in the amendment of this act started in 2020 and currently under way that an attempt is being made to resolve at least the issue of access to insurance for the so-called “uninsurable new-borns” of migrant parents.

In general, little is known or spoken about in the Czech Republic about the specifics or pitfalls of providing health care to migrants in individual areas of health. For instance, the **reproductive health of women migrants** is not statistically documented and has been the focus of perhaps the only research conducted by the University of West Bohemia in the project *Migration and Maternal Health*.<sup>19</sup> It shows that women migrants find themselves in a very vulnerable situation when it comes to contacting healthcare facilities and getting a grasp of the Czech healthcare system. Here, too, there are a number of problems related to commercial health insurance. Women migrants repeatedly report that commercial insurance companies refuse to pay for health care during pregnancy due to so-called “pre-existing conditions” (the emergence of an uninsurable condition or its symptoms prior to the conclusion of the insurance contract), or that they circumvent the impossibility of excluding pregnancy and childbirth from health insurance by tying up reimbursement for the care provided with various waiting periods.<sup>20</sup> Some women

18 See Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations 2018.

19 More on the research available online on <https://www.migraceporody.cz/projektu/>.

20 See Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations 2018.



migrants without public health insurance are therefore forced to give birth at home as they cannot afford the hospital bill.

Due to the recent tightening of abortion policy in Poland, gaps in Czech legislation when it comes to **women migrants' access to abortion** have become more visible. For many women from non-EU countries without permanent residency in the Czech Republic, this right is not enshrined in the law and in the case of EU citizens, the Ministry of Health repeatedly sought to clarify the situation, but only through legally non-binding opinions.<sup>21</sup> In practice, the Czech Medical Chamber and a number of healthcare facilities refuse to accept the interpretation of the Ministry, and the possibilities of performing abortions on foreign women remain inconsistent across the country. The questionable situation and its subsequent media coverage resulted in the beginning of 2021 in Senate proposals to amend the obsolete 1986 law on surgical termination of pregnancy, but these too will be the subject of heated discussions and ambiguous interpretations of the legislation draft.

### Specifics of Domestic Violence with a Migration Background

The experience of NGOs shows that the phenomenon of domestic violence often affects women migrants. As victims of domestic violence, these women are further disadvantaged compared to Czech women by their immigration status, which usually places them in the position of dependency on a family member in terms of the legislation in force regarding the residence of foreigners in the Czech Republic. Their vulnerability may also be aggravated by the inability to speak the language, low awareness of their rights and the options to defend themselves in case of their violation, or by social isolation. Because of their status, it is often harder for women migrants to access specialized services or to place trust in them. In particular, they almost never manage to access residential services.

In general, the Czech support system of these women with multiple disadvantages suffers from a significant lack of systematic approach, which is compounded by ignorance of the specifics of working with the migrant background on the part of service providers or responsible state authorities, language and cultural barriers, or the ostracism of the

21 Ministry of Health 2021. *Prohlášení Ministerstva zdravotnictví k otázce provádění interrupcí u cizinek* [Statement of the Ministry of Health on abortion provision to foreigners]. Available online on [https://www.mzcr.cz/tiskove-centrum-mz/prohlaseni-ministerstva-zdravotnictvi-k-otazce-provadeni-interrupci-u-cizinek/?fbclid=IwAR2F2PEgG1PiCyQgiBLNp98thW\\_g\\_Or1ebHsSbXaXnX4lot3kZJWHYv19Lg](https://www.mzcr.cz/tiskove-centrum-mz/prohlaseni-ministerstva-zdravotnictvi-k-otazce-provadeni-interrupci-u-cizinek/?fbclid=IwAR2F2PEgG1PiCyQgiBLNp98thW_g_Or1ebHsSbXaXnX4lot3kZJWHYv19Lg).



migration issue. These limitations result in a high latency of violence in these groups of people, while their invisibility is amplified by the fact that their particular position is not recorded in the relevant statistics on violence. Yet, available research and the experience of support personnel prove that the measure implemented during the pandemic of Covid-19 have resulted in an escalation of domestic violence also in migrant families.

### Recommendations

- Reflect the needs of the migrant population in all relevant government strategies of public policies based on positive actions and differentiation of the specific needs of men and women while taking into account the need for gender equality.
- Systematically advocate for the adoption of legislative commitments regarding the rights of migrant workers, including setting up standards for selected feminised sectors (e.g. caregiving, domestic work, agriculture and hospitality), for example in the form of guaranteeing decent pay, rights and protections in these professions.
- Develop integration measures, labour market policies and related programmes to support early labour market involvement of women migrants (including functional mechanisms for recognition of foreign education and qualifications as well as the upgrading of skills) as well as to support low-skilled, older and long-term unemployed women to increase their chances of positive integration into Czech society (e.g. through mentoring, assisted volunteering, job procurement, specialised language courses, vocational training, etc.).
- Systematically collect data on migration disaggregated according to gender, age, ethnicity and migration status for the purpose of making evidence-based policy and effective monitoring of migrant/refugee integration results.
- Ensure the necessary financial support for integration measures, both from EU funds and government sources.

Regarding reproductive rights and gender-based violence, adopt protective measures specifically focused on women migrants, e.g. ensuring sufficient availability of interpretation and continuous improvement of intercultural competence in health personnel, specialised service providers and responsible state authorities.

The Shadow Report on the State of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic in Years 2016–2020 brings new insights and particularly a comprehensive reflection on the state of gender equality from different perspectives. Thanks to the participation not only of the academia, but also of NGOs dedicated to helping and supporting various groups, it has been possible to summarize clearly the main issues that refer to the various articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At the same time, the report documents the development of gender equality in the Czech Republic over the last five years. At first glance, it may seem that the NGO sector perceives the situation more negatively. However, we believe that this is due to the fact that these organizations work directly (though not exclusively) with women who are most affected by the inequalities listed above, who experience direct and indirect discrimination, or are victims of violence. In their day-to-day work, the various NGOs see the negative impacts of gender inequality on individuals and their families at close quarters. And at the same time, the women working in the field of women's human rights are themselves often the target of hate speech and prejudice.

We believe that the present shadow report will help sharpen the understanding of these issues and ultimately contribute to positive changes in terms of achieving equality for women in Czech society. Indeed, without the perspective of women, who make up half of the population, our society loses out significantly. The experience of women and their participation not only in the labour market will help make the Czech Republic a thriving, economically stable, democratic society.

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