



SOCIAL WATCH
CZECH REPUBLIC

**25 YEARS
OF THE BEIJING
PLATFORM
FOR ACTION**

**2020 Social Watch Monitoring Report
on Gender Equality**



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Editor: Markéta Kos Mottlová

Authors: Linda Sokačová, Branislava Marvánová Vargová, Šárka Homfray, Pavla Špondrová

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Social Watch, z.s.
Sokolovská 50
186 00 Praha 8
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Introduction:

Markéta Kos Mottlová, editor

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995 where the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were first adopted embodying the goals and recommended actions for improving women's access to their rights in 12 key areas.

The presented monitoring report of the Czech Social Watch Coalition on Gender Equality focuses in four studies on the following areas of the Beijing Platform for Action: women and poverty, violence against women, women and economic inequality, and women in decision-making positions.

The four studies evaluate what has changed for the better in the given areas in the Czech Republic, what are the persistent challenges, or shortcomings, and what policies of the Czech state are successful and in what aspects they fail. The monitoring report partly reflects on the events of recent months, and points to some gender contexts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Linda Sokačová's study deals with the topic of the gender dimension of poverty. In this context, she is interested in the issue of advance child support and the pension reform. She also mentions the evaluation of legislative changes not only in these areas, but also in the field of social housing. The study of Branislava Marvánová Vargová closely examines the topic of violence against women with an emphasis on the criminological approach. Among other things she also includes the debate on the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. Šárka Homfray's study focuses on the economic status of women in Czech society, where the main problem is the gender-based pay gap. She points out the connection of this inequality and the perception of care and unpaid work as women's work. And last but not least, the study of Pavla Špondrová looks into the position of women in decision-making processes, both in politics and in the society. It shows the manifestations of inequality in this area and points to the progress that has so far significantly lagged behind official policy documents.

Women and Poverty

Linda Sokačová

Regardless of their political affiliation, Czech governments have proudly declared that we have the least inequality, the lowest level of poverty, and recently also the lowest unemployment rate. Eurostat states that, in 2016, 9.7% of Czechs were living below the poverty line (people with an income no greater than 60% of the national median), and in 2017, the number dropped to 9.1%, which is low compared to the Europe-wide average of 17%. This is, however, a problematic indicator: above all, compared to wealthier European countries, the Czech Republic reports a significantly lower median income; with the price differential factored in, the threshold is two times lower than in the Western world.¹ When Eurostat calculated income poverty from the EU-wide median income in 2012, factoring in price differentials (in purchasing power parity), it concluded that the income-poor comprise 24% in Europe, and 30% in the Czech Republic.²

Female face of poverty

Statistics give the impression that, in the Czech Republic, the poor are those who deserve it and who are not working hard enough. This narrative is so strong that it has an impact on political and systemic solutions to poverty in the Czech Republic – increasingly, tested programmes, focused on a narrow range of the population, with a high level of control, are being advanced. This is reflected in the 2018 programme statement of the government and in individual steps of the government in the social sphere: “We will improve living conditions for those who are unable to improve them themselves. We will help everyone who has temporarily found himself in an adverse social situation. We will not, however, permit dependence on assistance from the state to become a lifestyle for individuals capable of working. The work of our authorities will be aimed at ensuring effective, individualised assistance.”³

1 Prokop, D. (2020). *Slepé skvrny*. Brno: Host, p. 34.

2 Prokop, D. (2020). *Slepé skvrny*. Brno: Host, p. 34.

3 2018 Programme Statement of the Government. Prague: Office of the Government. Available at: https://www.vlada.cz/cz/jednani-vlady/programove-prohlaseni/programove-prohlaseni-vlady-165960/#Socialni_politika_a_zamestnanost

The Czech Republic is characterised by relatively deep social inequality: regional, poverty strongly linked to level of education, and gender. In terms of household type and demographic group, single mothers and seniors living alone are disproportionately represented among them.

Single mothers have been a group on which, at least rhetorically, Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs, especially social-democratic ones (previously M. Marksová Tominová and presently J. Maláčová) have maintained a long-term focus. They, unfortunately, stand a far greater chance in the Czech Republic that they will drop into poverty, which is also manifest in the international comparison.

Incomplete families compared to complete families with children (SILC 2017, 2018)*	
Lower income per household and per person	More frequently two incomes from employment
Parent employment level dropping with the number of children	No change in employment level in men, employment of women tends to be lower
More frequently recipients of social benefits	More frequently applied tax discounts for children
Child support: one-third	One-tenth
Housing contribution: one-fifth to one-quarter	4 %
Share of social benefits in income: 17%	6 %
Greater poverty level: 30%, declining in time	6 – 9% in one- and multi-member families and 16% in families with multiple children
Cannot afford an unexpected expenditure: 51%	20 %
Cannot afford a vacation outside of one's home: 37%	15 %
Average child support set for fathers: CZK 3,200	

* Hohne, p. (2019). Finanční a materiální situace neúplných rodin – prezentace výzkumu. Prague: VÚPSV for MLSA.

Advance child support and pension reform

The main instrument for improving the lives of incomplete families and children living in them are to be child-support advances, on which Minister Marksová worked in Prime Minister Sobotka's cabinet and, in the present cabinet, it has been submitted by Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Jana Maláčová. The proposal is newly titled "On Substitute Child Support" and was approved by the government in June. Unfortunately, is it plagued with

a number of problematic aspects: substitute child support should be paid up to a level of CZK 3,000 and it should be paid for a maximum of two years. It will be possible to apply for substitute child support once it has not been paid by the obliged parent for 4 months. There is another problem hidden in this provision – the period when an application may be submitted could extend significantly. Only the amount corresponding to a payment for 4 months will be calculated, not the time itself. All these aspects lead to the question whether a proposal like this can indeed contribute to improving the situation and address the problem at least in part. This new draft is to be accompanied by further changes concerning divorce proceedings. So-called “undisputed divorces” should see a far faster progress in judicial decision-making.

Greater attention is being paid to the living conditions of seniors, both male and female, in particular to the pension amount, which does not suffice for covering costs required for living, especially for single pensioners. Poverty research shows that poor seniors expend a great portion of their income on housing and unfortunately do not have enough money left for medication and food and other “non-essential” expenses.⁴ Furthermore, women’s pensions are lower than men’s. As at 3/2020, the average pension in the Czech Republic was CZK 14,397; men received CZK 15,781 and women CZK 13,141.⁵ This inequality is caused by persisting differences on the labour market in wages, relatively high segregation on the Czech labour market, and it is also related to breaks in employment careers during maternity and parental leave. Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Jana Maláčová has focused intensively on reducing the differences between women’s and men’s pensions, but her proposals have not earned the support of the coalition partner and main government party, ANO. Furthermore, inequalities in pensions must be addressed during the work lives of women and men – by reducing inequalities on the labour market and, above all, in gender pay.

Gender-based pay differences

Unfortunately, the topic of reduction of pay differences between men and women has not gained broader support on the cabinet level. The topic remains a part of the Family Policy Concept of the Czech Republic drafted in 2017,⁶ but it is merely a soft measure. The topic of equal remuneration, which may, in the long-term, fundamentally reverse the adverse trend in inequalities in pension levels between men and women, is neglected, and rather, non-systemic solutions, in the form of one-off increases, are chosen for remedying the situation. The MLSA pays attention to the issue in the system project “22% Towards

4 E.g., Sýkorová, D., Nytra, G., Tichá, I. (2014). *Bydlení v kontextu chudoby a stáří*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita, FSS.

5 ČSSZ: average solo pension amount. Available at: .

6 Family Policy Concept of the Czech Republic (2017). Available at: https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225508/Koncepcce_rodinne_politiky.pdf/5d1efd93-3932-e2df-2da3-da30d5fa8253.

Equality”, which tests the Logib tool for ascertaining pay inequalities on the employer level – a statistic that has been largely missing up to this point.

A positive trend in remuneration is the raising of minimum wage, which some 15,000 people earn in the Czech Republic. As of 1 January 2020, the minimum wage has risen from CZK 13,350 to CZK 14,600.

Inadequate support for parents

Since February 2018, fathers in the Czech Republic have been able to take advantage of a new financial benefit: father support. A new father is entitled to a week of paid leave after his partner delivers. As at 31 March 2020, the benefit had been paid to 11,563 fathers; in 2019 to 11,179. Predominantly, however, it is women who interrupt their career for maternity leave: according to the ČSSZ statistics, men accounted for a mere 1% of the persons receiving financial assistance in motherhood.⁷ Women also more frequently take parental leave, with the number of men on parental leave stagnating at 2 to 3% in the long-term. The government has relatively intensively focused on improving old-age pensions. Parents, and primarily women who do the brunt of intensive care for children in the Czech Republic, have, however, remained neglected groups. A fundamental change came in the form of an increase of the parental contribution, from CZK 220,000 to CZK 300,000 for families with one child.

The increase in parental contribution is clearly positive news for Czech parents of children up to 3 years of age or as the case may be 4 years of age. But unfortunately, nearly the only piece of good news. -The MLSA did not fulfil its coalition promise of increasing parental contributions, to take the opportunity to take a broader look at maternity and parental leave, including in the context of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, which will be key for the duration of fathers' leave (which should double in length). It will also be necessary to address so-called transferable parental leave days for the other parent, which will definitely not be an easy task in the Czech system. Unless the MLSA and its Minister hurry up and present proposed changes, it can be expected that we will not accomplish the mandatory harmonisation and have to pay a high penalty to the EU. Unfortunately, we are also neglecting to discuss the length of maternity and parental leave, which does not necessarily need to mean its shortening, but rather, a change in the overall concept and discussion about whether it would be worth it to extend maternity leave and increase financial assistance in motherhood to a greater percentage of the daily assessment base, from the current 60%. Unfortunately, no change has been presented for those women and men who are, thanks to right-wing government reforms between

⁷ ČSSZ: average solo pension amount. Available at: https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/99428/Prumerna_vyse_solo_duchodu_v_CR_v_casove_rade.pdf/a9b4355f-343f-7f3c-eaef-485a15ec2098.

2010 and 2013, still excluded from financial assistance in motherhood, and the possibility to choose the time for which they will receive parental contributions, and automatically qualify for the slowest, i.e., four-year, version (these are, for example, students, women with limited-term contracts that terminate in between their pregnancies, etc.). This remains one of the most asocial regulations, which has affected primarily mothers of small children, and there has been no courageous government politician to demand and advocate a change.⁸

Lack of places in child-care facilities

The European Commission and the OECD have long pointed out that the Czech Republic does not have sufficient capacity in facilities for caring for children up to 3 years. In terms of financing, responsibility for kindergartens lies with the state, but municipalities are key for the building and development of kindergartens and creches. For many of them, this is not an issue to which they want to pay attention and which they think is the responsibility of parents. A positive change in the availability of facilities for caring for children up to 3 years of age came with the development of child groups, which gave rise to many concerns, e.g., with respect to their quality, when they first appeared. The concerns did not materialise and there are approximately 12,000 children in them. This is due to, among other things, an MLSA project that focuses on the quality of child groups, provides advisory services, and also monitors the quality of this type of care. Child groups are financed primarily from European funds. The MLSA expects child groups to continue to be financed from European funds; however, financing of the same extent cannot be expected, as the system of child groups will no longer be in its pilot and innovative phase. In order to arrange systematic and sustained financing, the MLSA has drafted an amendment to the Act on Child Groups. The draft has already been approved and, unfortunately, it introduces a fundamental change in the concept of child groups: newly, they will be replaced with creches and conditions for their establishment will be made stricter. Furthermore, the contribution from the state will be reduced to CZK 5,000 or CZK 7,000 per each spot of their capacity. Co-financing from EU funds and parent fees is expected, but the parent fee will be capped by law. For “creche” founders, this will mean a continuation of project-based and non-systemic financing with an uncertain financial outcome, in particular due to the fact that this is a non-profit form of care provision. There is also the risk that some of the capacity of the child groups built will transfer to the mode of private, commercial services, with reduced possibilities for low- and medium-income parents.

8 A change was demanded by the Pirate Party in the Chamber of Deputies during a vote on an increase of parental contributions.

The Czech Republic is failing in social housing and addressing homelessness

No systemic change has occurred in social and affordable housing in recent years. The previous social democratic government (2014 to 2017) did approve a draft act on social housing and housing contribution authored by the MLSA, but the draft was never discussed by the Chamber of Deputies. The situation was not resolved by either of the two subsequent governments and there is still no act on social housing or a systemic proposal for the financing and building of affordable and social apartments. The housing situation is becoming worse – the prices of housing for purchase or rent in the Czech Republic are growing the fastest in all of Europe. The situation is becoming critical for the young generation, which will not profit from the privatisation of public housing as did their parents' and grandparents' generations. No fundamental changes have occurred in terms of a conceptual and systemic solution of homelessness – primarily due to the above-mentioned non-existence of a social housing system.

On the other hand, there have been fundamental changes on the level of social services providers and organisations devoted to homelessness, social housing, and social services: they have significantly innovated their services for homeless people, focusing on the 'housing first' principle and individualised social support in housing. European funds had a key impact on this area: the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP). The ESF supports projects focused on innovative approaches to homelessness and supports people suffering from housing distress. The MLSA has implemented a long-term system project titled Support for Social Housing, involving various types of municipalities from all over the country in its realisation. The IROP fund has unfortunately been abused by a number of subsidy recipients: for example, some entities were established only a few days before the end of the call, yet the MRD still does not have a control system focused on identifying what target groups indeed live in the social housing supported.

The MLSA focused on gender aspects and inequalities in housing: e.g., by focusing on target groups – for example, households of single mothers or victims of domestic violence.

Conceptual measures and activities of the ESF that were launched under the former Minister of Social Affairs (from 2014 to 2017) are totally ignored by the current MLSA leadership. The present minister (for ČSSD) decided, in spite of the sharp criticism of social services providers, but also municipalities, other ministries, academia, and expert organisations, to advance radical changes in the system of social housing benefits: merging a benefit focused on people in extreme housing and social situations and a benefit focused on people with financial difficulty to pay their housing costs (whether private or tenants), thereby

radically weakening housing support for the poor and middle classes. Furthermore, she wants to introduce conditions in the system, such as conditioning benefits on children attending school, which is criticised by the MEYS. Analyses clearly show that unstable and poor housing have a significant impact on children's success in school. Also problematic is the system of price maps, aimed at capping the amount of the new benefit – the housing contribution – at amounts approved by the municipality. Often, these amounts are far below actual rent in commercial rental housing, this in a situation of a municipal housing shortage and of rising prices of rental housing. A fundamental impact can also be expected on the households of single mothers, families with children many of which draw housing benefits during parental leave, the unemployed (where also women prevail), people plagued by debt collection, as well as the Roma. Non-profit organisations and providers of social services also fear that restrictions in housing support will result in an increase in authorities removing children from affected families, an increase in short-term stays in facilities for children requiring immediate assistance, or splitting up of families that will increasingly use asylum housing. The Minister often resorted to anti-Roma and anti-social discourse in discussions concerning the new proposed housing benefits, nearly identifying housing benefit recipients as people who intentionally do not work and do not take care of their children, taking advantage of “decent, working people”. The present government has basically cast aside the issue of “traders in poverty”, carrying on in the course set by the right-wing governments between 2010 and 2013.

The coronavirus crisis has revealed the weaknesses of the Czech social system

Problems of the Czech social system and conceptual solution of the problems of poor or at-risk families were also manifest during the coronavirus crisis. Often, Labour Offices and the ČSSZ were not able to respond in a timely fashion to problems related to the closing of establishments and reduction in production. Even though the MLSA reports that these are isolated failures or problems, there are a number of people, e.g., single mothers, families which children, etc., waiting more than a month for social benefits or care contributions. The reasons include complex and often erroneous forms, as well as the long-standing inability of the Czech state to effectively use and provide Extraordinary Immediate Assistance (EIAB) benefits. The approach in this area is needlessly restrictive. Government representatives do not understand that extraordinary immediate assistance pays, from the medium- and long-term point of view. People at the height of the coronavirus crisis received state assistance of up to CZK 2,999 in most cases. This was at the time when it was confirmed that the MEYS had great problems ensuring equal opportunities for children throughout the system of education. Only after schools switched to remote tuition did the Czech School Inspectorate discover that a relatively high percentage of families do not have adequate equipment and an internet connection. In this situation, EIAB could

have been a good form of help. Unfortunately, children's homes and facilities for children requiring immediate assistance did not have adequate computer equipment.⁹

For many at-risk families (including single mothers and fathers), the opening of schools after the lockdown was problematic. In some locales, schools did not open at all, after-school care is not operated to the original extent, and traditional tuition does not take place, so education still depends on parents' involvement.

Also, people working on quasi-employment contracts (on agreements on the performance of work or agreements on work activity), many of whom are women on parental leave or after the leave had to wait for a long time for systemic support. Unresearched territory in this regard is the position of seniors who supplement their pensions by working on these agreements, for existential reasons. It remains to be seen whether they can be identified in a timely manner through social work and social services.

9 In the Hradec Králové Region, the Regional Authority decided to purchase equipment for remote education for children's homes.

Violence Against Women

Branislava Marvánová Vargová

The 2019 index of gender equality shows that the Czech Republic ranked 21st of the 28 Member States, having dropped by four places since 2005.¹ Violence against women is deemed a major obstacle to achieving equality of women and men and one of the most widespread forms of human rights violations.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action defines violence against women² as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”³

According to 2014 data, 21% of women in the Czech Republic have experienced a form of physical and/or sexual violence from their partner.⁴ 47% of Czech women experienced a form of psychological violence. Respondents were asked about their experience with various forms of psychological violence, such as controlling conduct, psychological abuse, or extortion. The most frequent type of psychological violence is probably controlling behaviour, with which 41% of Czech women have experience.⁵

There is very little talk in public fora about violence against women, and, if there is, the discussion usually immediately turns to the question why we discuss violence against only women. What about men who experience violence? Attention is therefore paid not to the core of the issue, but rather to a defence of whether violence against women exists at all as an independent problem. 25 years after the Czech Republic acceded to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (and other international documents), this points to the prevailing stereotypes and gaps in awareness-raising about this issue among the general

1 <https://www.euroskop.cz/9003/33871/clanek/index-rovnosti-zen-a-muzu-eu-ziskala-67-4-bodu-ze-100/>

2 <https://www.icsspe.org/system/files/Beijing%20Declaration%20and%20Platform%20for%20Action.pdf>, p.76

3 Ibid.

4 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2014. Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. 2014. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

5 Dvořáčková, J. 2017. Analýza existujících výzkumů v ČR v oblasti partnerského násilí. Department of Equality of Women and Men of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. <https://www.tojerovnost.cz/images/analyzy/Analyza-existujicich-vyzkumu-v-oblasti-partnerskeho-nasilii.pdf>

public. Furthermore, this approach is striking on the part of certain institutions that should be aware of the documents.

The pitfalls of a criminological approach

In the Czech Republic, violence against women is not sufficiently perceived as a human rights problem, as is defined by international definitions, standards, and documents.⁶ Rather, it is divided into individual criminal offences related to it, but without regard to its gender base. This topic is pulverised into terms such as domestic violence, battering of a person in a household, dangerous stalking, rape, harm to health, murder, etc. There is a major pitfall to this prevailing criminological approach to the issue of violence against women: it does not sufficiently reflect its causes and the social context and reduces the broad experience of women with various forms of violence to criminal-law definitions. This, however, puts a significant portion of women who have experienced a whole range of violence against women and who do not have sufficient evidence for criminal proceedings (or do not wish to initiate them) out of the reach of sufficient support and protection. Subjective perceptions of pressure or threats (despite the Act on Victims of Criminal Offences) are often not taken seriously.

The Department of Equality of Women and Men of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic is responsible for the harmonisation of the Czech legal order with international standards. In cooperation with the Committee for Preventing Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women, it established the Third Action Plan for Preventing Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (for 2019-2022). The Summary Report on the Fulfilment of the Action Plan for Preventing Domestic and Gender-Based Violence between 2015 and 2018 indicates that only 49.4% of the tasks assigned by individual grants were fulfilled (85 tasks), 21.2% were fulfilled in part (25 tasks), and 21.2% were not fulfilled at all (18 tasks).⁷

6 E.g., the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979 and General Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women No. 12, 19, and 35; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995; recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Rec(2002)5 on the protection of women against violence; conclusions of the EU Council on combating violence against women and provision of support services for victims of domestic violence of 6 December 2012; and others.

7 Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. 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 https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/Beijing-25+-National-Review_english-version_.pdf

Key legislative changes and their implementation

Still, much has been done since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration. Key legislative changes have been adopted that make it possible to prosecute certain forms of violence against women. These include, in particular, changes in legislation contributing to protection of victims, better definition of the criminal offence of battering a person in a household, etc.

With a view to the implementation of the legislation enacted, training for police officers in this regard must be appreciated. Given the seriousness of the issue, however, it is important for the system of education to be set up systemically, for the long-term, and to receive due priority.

Looking at the quality and effectiveness of the implementation of legislative measures from the point of view of women who are experiencing violence and looking for assistance and protection, however, we encounter certain obstacles and challenges in practice. The issue of jurisprudence in cases of rape is pointed to, for example, by analyses of the organisation proFem (2017) and of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2018).⁸ They indicate that the ratio of imprisonment sentences without probation and suspended imprisonment sentences is nearly 50:50.⁹ A persisting problem is the insufficient reflection of a history of family violence by SLPC authorities (social and legal protection of children) and courts, due to which mediation or shared custody are ordered even in cases when violence carries on after the partners' breakup. One of the causes behind such decisions is the lack of knowledge of the issues at hand.

The problem is yet more complicated by the fact that there is factually no type of social service for extended stays, such as asylum homes with an undisclosed address (or another type of specialised stay service for victims) or specialised services for victims of gender-based violence. The draft amendment of Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services, strove to fill that gap, but has not yet been enacted.

Right to safety and availability of specialised services

Viewing the issue of violence against women through the prism of adherence to human rights, tendencies can be noticed in practice that may run contrary to human rights (right

8 Comp. to proFem, o.p.s. 2017. Jen ano je ano – trestný čin znásilnění ve světle Istanbulské úmluvy. http://www.profem.cz/shared/clanky/550/A5-JenAnoJeAno_WEB.pdf; Ježková, V. 2018. Overview of jurisprudence concerning rape. Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. Department for Equality of Women and Men. https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Projekt_OPZ/Vystupy_projektu/prehled_vhodne_rozhodovaci_praxe_soudu_znasilneni.pdf

9 Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. 2019. Action Plan for Preventing Domestic and Gender-Based Violence for 2019-2022, p. 13. <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/AP-DN--grafikaFINAL.pdf>

to safety or life free of violence, right to self-determination, etc.). An example is a situation when a woman takes her children and leaves her violent partner. Subsequently, she is informed by SLPC authorities that only she is entitled to leave, whereas she must return her children to their original residence to the violent partner, as he did not consent to her removal of the children. Similarly, courts in some cases restrict the victim's possibility to move to a safe place, by determining how close to her violent partner she must stay, such that his right to contact with his children is not breached. This limits not only her right to safety and self-determination, but also that of the children, as she is forced to decide between leaving on her own and remaining in a violent relationship.

According to the national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration,¹⁰ the greatest challenge in the system of assistance and protection is ensuring access of victims and their children to specialised services and ensuring adequate and foreseeable financing for non-governmental organisations operating in the sphere of domestic and gender-based violence.¹¹

In particular, handicapped women, foreigners/migrants or other women with multiple disadvantages have a hard time accessing the system of assistance. The results of an Analysis of the availability of specialised stay-based social services for adult victims of domestic violence, drawn up by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in 2017, showed that only 5 registered stay-based social service facilities provide their services exclusively to victims of domestic violence. Those 5 facilities are operated by three organisations in two cities in the country. The capacity of those facilities is approximately 90 beds, which is approximately 30 family spots.¹² The Council of Europe recommendations on minimum standards for asylum homes for victims of domestic violence is 1 family spot per 10,000 inhabitants, which means that there should be a thousand of them in the country (more than 300 family spots). The Czech Republic is at 10% of that standard. The same recommendation also refers to standards of the availability of services for victims of rape and sexual violence, with the minimum standard being one specialised centre for rape victims per 200,000 women (or at least one centre per region) and one specialised centre for victims of sexual violence per 400,00 women, which should offer easy access to help and the possibility of reporting attacks, and ensure a high quality of judicial and medical services.¹³ There is no such specialised centre in this country.

10 Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. 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 https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/Beijing-25+-National-Review-_english-version_.pdf

11 Ibid, p. 18

12 The analysis is available at: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/Analiza-dostupnosti-a-kvality_final_s-opravami_revize-leden.pdf

13 Kelly, L.; Dubois, L. 2008. Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services.

Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence

Addressing the issue of violence against women is about human rights. No international human rights convention has raised such a stormy debate and polemic as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (hereinafter referred to as the “Convention”). The debate in the Czech Republic is not about violence, but about the imagined threats that the Convention allegedly entails for our society.

One of the most broadly discussed topics is the concept of gender-based violence (and gender in general). The discussion in the last two years may give the impression that it is an entirely new and ground-breaking term that encompasses dangerous hidden potential for our society. A comparison of the definitions in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to which the Czech Republic acceded back in 1995, with the terminology used in the Convention reveals that the definitions of violence against women are nearly identical in the two documents and that both use the term gender-based violence. Furthermore, since 2015, action plans approved by the Government of the Czech Republic have been concerned not only with domestic violence, but also with gender-based violence. Hence, the term is not new. The Convention clearly reflects the fact that men, too, may fall victim to domestic violence and that they are entitled to identical protection and support.

Ratification of the Convention is key for protecting women against violence in the Czech Republic, because it means a long-term commitment that may help achieve a long-term and systemic solution to the problem. In this regard, the activities of the Department for Gender Equality of the Office of the Government¹⁴ must be appreciated, with a view to cooperation and expert support for individual Ministries linked to the preparatory stages of ratification and activities to raise awareness on the part of the general public and Members of Parliament about the contents of the Convention, including the smashing of myths and disinformation that prevail in this sphere.

The process of the ratification of the Convention has turned a human rights issue into a political one. It is solely up to our current political representatives to realise and accept their liability for fulfilling international commitments, including the Beijing Declaration.

Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs Council of Europe, Strasbourg. [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)

¹⁴ See www.tojerovnost.cz

Care as (Un)paid Female Work and Related Economic Inequality

Šárka Homfray

The sustained difference in the remuneration of men and women – gender pay gap, can be identified as the central problem in connection with the economic position of women in the Czech Republic. At 20.1%, it is still the third highest among EU countries¹ and is not coming down significantly. There are several causes behind this figure, which we will analyse below.

Gender segregation of the labour market

One of those causes is the high gender segregation of the labour market, which is preceded by strongly gender-segregated education. On this issue, it can be noted that, even though many activities have been organised to support the entry of girls into masculinised disciplines (in particular those known as STEM), greater support for a higher representation of boys, for example, at secondary schools of healthcare is still absent. This lack of balance may be explained by the fact that, in an environment with a strongly rooted stereotypical division of gender roles, such as the Czech Republic, it is still relatively more acceptable (even through with large reserves) when the division of roles is disrupted by women rather than by men.

Strongly feminised sectors in the Czech Republic include, in particular, education (especially at lower levels), medicine (especially paramedical professions), social services and public and state administration, but also services and retail.² Aside from horizontal segregation, there is also strong vertical segregation: fewer women than would correspond

1 European Commission: Gender pay gap statistics. Statistics explained. (quoted 3 June 2020) Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/6776.pdf>

2 Statistics of employment and labour market divided by gender as well as other statistical findings can be found in the regular yearbook of the Czech Statistical Office “Focused on Women and Men” available on-line: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/zaostreno-na-zeny-a-muze-ffhk87f13g>

to their overall representation in the discipline can be found in higher positions and at the management level.

The average wage in these sectors is either low overall in relation to average earnings in the Czech Republic (applies to social services) or it does not correspond to the education structure of the profession, again as compared to the average structure of the labour market (public and state administration, education), or higher earnings are attained at the cost of a higher share of overtime work and difficult working conditions, including work on shifts or at hazardous workplaces (healthcare).³

In the first half of this year, i.e., after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the scope of this segregation manifest itself strongly, as did the consequences of strong feminisation of professions related to care. For example, right at the beginning when schools first closed and a number of parents had to stay at home with children, attention was drawn to the fact that, if mothers stay at home as the “standard”, they will be missed in healthcare and social services. As life shifted to the home front due to necessary restrictions, attention turned to the amount of work linked to caring for the family and household, which is, by and large, performed by women in this country. The study 22% K ROVNOSTI (22% TOWARDS EQUALITY) points to the large extent of women’s second shift, stating that women spend 22 hours per week doing unpaid work, which is 7.7 hours more than men, with most women in the country working full-time jobs (91.7%), which means 34.8 hours of work per week.⁴

Motherhood and women’s professional careers

A life condition that has an unquestionable impact on women’s professional careers is motherhood, and in particular the extensive parental leave. The model that still largely prevails in the Czech Republic is that of the woman remaining outside the employment market until her youngest child reaches the age of 3 years, regardless of whether the arrangement suits her. This is, for example, due to the shortage of part-time jobs and other available forms of work of a smaller scope and a lack of facilities caring for the smallest children.

According to data of the alliance Business for Society, up to 50% of women do not return to the position they held before their child was born. Furthermore, it turned out that many of these women search for work according to different criteria than childless women. Instead

3 Information about average wage by industry can also be found on the Czech Statistical Office’s website: https://vdb.czso.cz/vdbvo2/faces/cs/index.jsf?page=statistiky&filtr=G%7EF_M%7EF_Z%7EF_R%7ET_P%7E_S%7E_null_&katalog=30852

4 Alena Křížková, Marta Vohlídalová, Kristýna Pospíšilová, Hana Maříková: Aktuální rozdíly v odměňování žen a mužů v ČR. Hlubková analýza statistik a mezinárodní srovnání. MLSA, Prague: 2017, p. 20. (quoted 29 May 2020). Available at: <https://www.rovnaodmena.cz/www/img/uploads/336b8482.pdf>

of the pay or personal ambitions and preferences, they prefer aspects such as closeness to their house, possibility of a part-time job or flexible working hours.⁵

Mothers' long periods of economic inactivity have devastating effects, primarily on the position of single mothers who are significantly threatened by poverty in the Czech Republic (for details, see the relevant section of this report), whereas in families with both parents, it significantly supports gender-stereotypical division of care for family and household. The generally low level of wages in the Czech Republic, to which attention has been drawn for several years, for example, by the campaign "End to Cheap Labour", of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Union Associations, force fathers to increase their gainful activities after the birth of a child, which further limits them in their possibility to spend time with their families. It is no secret that many fathers are uncomfortable with this situation and it is also possible to identify with the opinion stated, for example, by the European Trade Union Confederation, that a child is entitled to both parents. Economic and precarity impacts of motherhood are not a "problem reserved to mothers" but rather impact the entire family.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is aware of this. In its policy papers from the previous term, it accented the need of supporting gender equality on the labour market⁶ and it also views, absolutely correctly, the issue of female unemployment as a component of family policy.⁷

Addressing the position of women on the labour market in the Czech Republic

As one of the solutions to this, one could refer to the issue of availability of facilities caring for small children. In 2018, the legal obligation to accept two-year-olds in kindergarten was done away with, which can be viewed as a step back. This obligation was to take effect in 2020. Its abolition was motivated by fears of kindergarten operators that they would be unable to care for children of such a young an age.

On the other hand, it is possible to rate positively the legislative efforts initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which presented an amendment act on child groups.

5 Business for Society: Mothers returning to work face prejudices and insufficient labour flexibility, Prague: 2018. (quoted 29 May 2020) Available at: <https://diverzita.cz/matky-pri-navratu-do-prace-celi-predsudkum-a-nedostatecne-flexibilite-prace/>

6 Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Employment Policy Strategy through to 2020, Prague: 2014 (quoted 30 May 2020) Available at: <https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/848077/strategiepz2020.pdf/a666485c-355f-3d35-4fe7-0692661e271a>

7 Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Family Policy Concept, Prague: 2017 (quoted 30 May 2020) Available at: https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/225508/Koncepce_rodinne_politiky.pdf/5d1efd93-3932-e2df-2da3-da30d5fa8253

Child groups are not facilities set up pursuant to the School Act, but, rather, pursuant to the Act on Child Groups, which made their establishment and operation significantly easier. On the other hand, this Act gives no guarantees in terms of territorial or financial accessibility.

Regardless of family policy or recommendations, analyses, and action plans drawn up by the Government Council for Gender Equality, as the overarching advisory body of the Government, or by individual ministries or the non-profit sector, it has not been possible to note a coordinated effort to improve women's position in the labour market, beyond the work of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This applies not only to the gender pay gap and unequal remuneration of gainful work, but also to respect and appreciation of unpaid work linked to the home front, in particular with care for the family and other relatives.

Overall, it can be noted that the Czech Republic still has not fulfilled some of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. The problem lies in the persisting division into "male" and "female" professions, unavailability of facilities caring for children, and the set-up of certain regulations, especially tax regulations, that make it more difficult for mothers of small children to return to the labour market.

Women in Decision-Making Positions in the Czech Republic 25 Years Later

Pavla Špondrová

The Czech Republic is still behind in terms of fulfilling the Beijing Action Platform as concerns the position of men and women in decision-making positions. Indeed, it is at the very beginning.

A brief evaluation of the current gender representation in decision-making positions

An analysis of the persons in the highest leadership positions in key bodies of executive and legislative power (Parliament, government, President, key public prosecutors, leadership of the CNB) and of the judiciary shows that there are 14% of those 49 people are women.¹ Women comprise 11% of the CEOs and supervisory board chairmen in companies in which the state, regions, and municipalities² have an ownership interest, and comprise 13.4% of members of the supervisory or management boards of the largest Czech companies listed on the stock exchange.³ Women comprise 22.5% and 15% of the members of Czech legislative bodies (Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, respectively).⁴ Women are not a minority in terms of numbers in the Czech Republic, but they are a power minority.

1 Špondrová, P., Čí je právo in ŠIMÁČKOVÁ, K., HAVELKOVÁ, B., ŠPONDROVÁ, P. Mužské právo. Jsou právní pravidla neutrální? Prague: Wolters Kluwer ČR, 2020, not published yet. Data was collected from the websites of individual institutions where it is publicly available.

2 Otevřená společnost, o. p. s, Gender map, available at: <http://www.genderomapa.cz/> and the publication Bereme ženy na palubu. Analýza zastoupení žen a mužů ve vedení veřejných firem. Available at: <http://www.otevrenaspolecnost.cz/download-publication/845>

3 Gender Equality index is compiled by the European Institute for Gender Equality for 2019, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/domain/power/CZ>

4 According to the website of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic and the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, available at: www.psp.cz, www.senat.cz.

Platform for Action, strategic objectives, and an international comparison

In 1995, representatives of governments of UN countries set two general goals for the sphere of power and decision-making:

- 1) To adopt measures to ensure equal access of women to full participation in power structures and in decision making;
- 2) To enhance possibilities for women to take part in decision making and leadership.

These objectives refer to two levels of the issue.

The first is the nature of decision-making positions and decision-making, which entail high pay, a high level of prestige, are time-consuming, and require a strong network of contacts and support. A shared feature of those positions is their patriarchal set-up. For long centuries, they were held nearly exclusively by men, because, in many of them, they had quotas set 100% by law (e.g., in politics or public administration).

Logically, decision-making positions were thus tailor-made to suit the life career tracks of men. Men, who, as a rule, did not care for others, who only competed with one another and lived according to the saying “public man, private woman”. The first objective of the Platform for Action aims to transform political culture and decision-making processes towards greater openness for all.

The second objective points to the complexity of social reality. It is based on the knowledge that not only transformation of the decision-making positions themselves and access to them is required, but that changes are also required on other levels for increasing the share of women in decision-making. This includes, for example, the sphere of institutional support and care, stereotypes of what constitute “a proper woman and a proper man”, division of work between partners, education of girls and boys towards greater diversity of career path choice, unequal remuneration, and also the necessity of prevention and eradication of sexual harassment and violence against women. Aside from a transformation of the institutional order, also a transformation of the social ethos is required: of stereotypes, education, etc., to achieve a change, specific measures need to be introduced to balance out the representation of women and men in decision-making, which is not a breach of the principle of equal treatment, but rather its fulfilment.

A disadvantage in the effective advancement of the Platform for Action is that it is not enforceable in court. The implementation of individual measures is thus solely up to the political will of individual UN member states. If there is will, legislative change can be taken up, including constitutional regulations (in recent decades, for example France,

Slovenia, Belgium, Germany, and Austria amended their constitution, aiming to increase the share of women legislatively).⁵ On this depends the willingness to set gender shares in economic decision-making: some sort of quota has been introduced, for example, by Norway, France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands, with quantitative targets between 30% and 40%.⁶

Development in the Czech Republic – the government

What are the most important events noted on government level in recent years?

- In 1998, the government approved its first programme document pertaining to gender equality in connection with the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action.⁷
- In 2001, the Government Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men advisory body was set up.⁸
- Since 2002, individual ministries have been obliged to draw up their own ministry plan for promoting gender equality.⁹
- In 2009, an advisory body of the government named Committee for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Politics was established.¹⁰
- In 2010 and 2015, human rights ministers attempted to present to the government a proposed amendment of election laws, aiming to increase the share of women in legislative bodies. The government did not approve any of them and hence the so-much-needed debate on the level of the Parliament could not be opened.¹¹

5 For details, see Gender Quotas Database, available at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>

6 Smith, N. Gender quotas on boards of directors. IZA World of Labor 2018, available at: <https://wol.iza.org/articles/gender-quotas-on-boards-of-directors/long>

7 Government of the Czech Republic, Resolution No. 236 of 8 April 1998

8 Council website, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/rada-vlady-pro-rovnost-zen-a-muzu-121632/>

9 For details see Gender Equality Report from 2001 and 2002, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/souhrnne-zpravy-o-plneni-priorit-a-postupu-vlady-pri-prosazovani-rovných-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu-za-roky-1998---2018-123732/>

10 Website of the Committee, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/vyrovnané-zastoupení-v-politice-a-rozhodování/vybor-pro-vyrovnané-zastoupení-zen-a-muzu-v-politice-a-rozhodovacích-pozicích-121939/>

11 For a detailed explanation, see minutes from the Council of the Government for Gender Equality from those years, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?pgid=1074>

- In 2015, the government supported a draft European Union directive concerning greater representation of women in the leadership of large corporations.¹²
- In 2016, the Action Plan for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Decision-making Positions in 2016 – 2018 was adopted (hereinafter referred to as the “Action Plan”).¹³
- In 2018, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic issued a manual for political parties interested in promoting gender equality in decision-making, entitled “15 tips for supporting women in political parties”.¹⁴
- In 2019, the Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2019 – 2020 was adopted, which included a narrowed chapter covering decision-making positions.¹⁵

Thanks to international monitoring mechanisms, governments have paid at least minimal attention to gender equality since 1998, even in years when governments that did not deem gender equality a priority were in office. In recent years, however, a trend can be observed that even those governments that declare support for gender equality in their programme statements do not in their policies provide targeted measures yielding a tangible effect.

Hence, the government itself is inactive and is not helping non-profits that could introduce questions of equality in decision-making into public space, thereby substituting at least to some extent for the role of the state, not only in this sphere, but in many other spheres of equal opportunities. Government subsidy programmes directed at gender equality are underfinanced, offering support to only a handful of organisations. In 2019, a total of CZK 4 million was available.¹⁶ Compare this with the roughly CZK 216 million in the subsidy title Anti-drug policy of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in 2019.¹⁷ Clearly, the topic of gender equality continues to be a side topic for the government.

12 The government supported a directive for greater representation of women in the management of large companies, 2015, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/pri-uradu-vlady/jiri-dienstbier/aktualne/vlada-podporila-smernici-na-vyssi-zastoupeni-zen-ve-vedeni-velkych-firem-137746/>

13 Action Plan for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Decision-making Positions in 2016 – 2018, Office of the Government, available at: https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/vyrovnane_zastoupeni_v_politice_a_rozhodovani/vybor-pro-vyrovnane-zastoupeni-zen-a-muzu-v-politice-a-rozhodovacich-pozicich-121939/

14 Šprincová, V., 2018, 15 tipů, jak podpořit ženy uvnitř politických stran, available at: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Projekt_OPZ/Vystupy_projektu/Manual-pro-politicke-strany.pdf

15 Office of the Government, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/AP-pro-rovnost-209-2020.pdf>,

16 Office of the Government, Subsidies, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dotace/dotacni-program-podpora-verejne-ucelnych-aktivit-nestatnich-neziskovych-organizaci-v-oblasti-rovnosti-zen-a-muzu-123043/>

17 Office of the Government, Subsidies for Anti-drug Policy, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/protidrogova-politika/dotace/dotace-na-protidrogovou-politiku-103346/>

If adopted, measures take the softest form (action plans, educational activities, etc.) which do not have the potential to initiate fundamental processes, given their minimal effect on the conduct of key entities; and second, the government does not demand thorough fulfilment of these soft, symbolic measures, as is documented by the report of the Office of the Government on the fulfilment of the Action Plan.¹⁸ The current programme statement of the government does not even mention advancement of equality (let alone gender equality) as a general value of a democratic state.¹⁹

There is no cross-sectionality, i.e., the concept that the principle of gender equality be advanced across all topics, and hence, an absolute disproportion in the numbers of men and women can be created in the government's advisory bodies, whether it be the Council of the Government for Research, Development, and Innovations, where women currently account for 17.6% of the members, or the National Economic Council of the Government (NERV),²⁰ renewed for the resolution of the coronavirus crisis, where women account for 11.8% of the members. This is despite the fact that, for some time, the majority of people studying and graduating from schools of economics in the Czech Republic have been women, including at the University of Economics in Prague, where 57.5% of the graduates in 2018 were women and 42.5% men.²¹

Development in the Czech Republic – other important entities

There is no parliamentary political party or movement to apply quotas or quantitative targets in assembling together their ballots or establishing intra-party bodies.²² ČSSD did set quotas for its ballots for the regional and lower-house elections in 2015-2019, at 40%.²³ In 2017, women held 44.6% of positions on the ČSSD ballot for the election to the Chamber of Deputies; nevertheless, they accounted for only 13.3% of the actual elected members.²⁴

18 Office of the Government, 2017 Report on the fulfilment of the Action Plan for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Decision-making Positions in 2016 – 2018, available at: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Projekt_OPZ/Aktivita_projektu/Souhrnna_zprava_AP_VZ_2017.pdf

19 Government of the Czech Republic, Programme Statement of the Government, available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/jednani-vlady/programove-prohlaseni/programove-prohlaseni-vlady-165960/>

20 Between 2009 – 2012, women accounted for 0% of NERV members, available at: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/ekonomicka-rada/predstaveni_NERV_2010.pdf and at: https://www.idnes.cz/ekonomika/domaci/topolanek-predstavil-tym-na-zachranu-ekonomiky-je-v-nem-jahn-ci-dlouhy.A090108_110819_ekonomika_vem

21 ČSU, University students by university and faculty in 2018, available at: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/91605937/300002190311.pdf/8668ef2e-5925-4e88-9006-be72b11879b2?version=1.1>

22 It must be noted that the only party whose statutes set out binding rules for the population of ballots and party bodies are currently the Greens, who have a total of 8 Senators enjoying support of diverse coalitions, available at: <https://i.zeleni.cz/doc/stranicky-predpis/stanovy-strany-zelenych>

23 2019 text of the Statutes, Articles 36/4 and 48/5, available at: <https://www.cssd.cz/data/files/aktualni-stanovy.pdf>, text of the Statutes after 2019 available at: https://www.cssd.cz/data/files/registrovane-stanovy-19_1.pdf

24 Fórum 50%, 2017 election of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, available at:

This showed that quantitative targets in themselves, without a rule for regular alternation of men and women in electable positions, are totally ineffective. ČSSD subsequently did away with its quotas.²⁵ Some parties form women's associations, such as KSČM, ČSSD, and KDU-ČSL, but these association do not have any significant formal or informal impact.

As stated above, the question of gender equality in decision-making is not accented in the private sector in the Czech Republic, either. In particular, larger companies usually profess supporting democratic values, such as justice and diversity.²⁶ Any significant practical impact of the commitments is yet to be seen, however. For example, Vodafone ČR set itself the objective of having female managers comprise at least 30% of its leadership by the end of 2020.²⁷ Currently, there are 9 men and 1 woman in the management of Vodafone ČR, i.e., precisely 10% of women.²⁸ The government does not motivate companies in any way, not even by laying down legislative rules, in the form of tax benefits, or bonification in public procurement.

The situation in other spheres, such as the leadership of the judicial system, staffing of public prosecutors' offices, embassies, science and research, sport and the media, is similar to that in political parties and business.²⁹

Even though this document is critical of the government, it must be recognised that documents pertaining to gender equality, not only in decision-making, are of a high analytical and conceptual quality. The situation in all areas is described in detail, as are the solutions proposed in the Action Plan mentioned above.³⁰ The document clearly shows that the government's problem is not that it would not know what problems there are in the Czech Republic in gender equality in decision-making, but that, rather, it is unable to enforce already approved procedures.³¹

<https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/statistiky/zastoupeni-zen-a-muzu-v-politice/poslanecka-snemovna/ps-2017>

25 E15, Za ČSSD akceschopnější. Strana ruší ústřední výbor i kvóty na ženy, available at: <https://www.e15.cz/domaci/za-cssd-akceschopnejsi-strana-rusi-ustredni-vybor-i-kvoty-na-zeny-1356774>

26 Business for society, available at: <https://byznysprospolecnost.cz/category/byznys-pro-spolecnost/clenove-bps/clenove-bps-clenove-bps/>

27 The things we do, Vodafone ČR, available at: <https://www.vodafone.cz/udrzitelne-podnikani/>

28 Management of Vodafone ČR, available at: <https://www.vodafone.cz/o-vodafone/o-spolecnosti/vedeni-spolecnosti/>

29 Action Plan for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Decision-making Positions in 2016 – 2018, Office of the Government, available at: <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/>

30 Action Plan for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Decision-making Positions in 2016 – 2018, Office of the Government, available at: <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/>

31 Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2018 Report on the fulfilment of the Action Plan for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Decision-making Positions in 2016 – 2018, p. 28, available at: <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>

Summary

For the most part, decision-making positions are not accessible for women, as it is practically impossible to combine them with caring for children and other dependent family members and they are tailor-made to the male life trajectory. Hence, it is required to involve men in caring for their own family members more intensively, but also institutional change is required (e.g., sufficient network of facilities caring for children, the levelling of the gender pay gap, as well as support for shared parental leave). But that is still not enough. Holding a decision-making position is one of the most demanding activities in terms of time, social capital, and mental commitment, often results in a threat of burnout, or absolute neglect of one's own private life. The current set-up of decision-making positions is, in itself, harmful, both for women and men, and it must therefore be revised. That will create room both for more women in those positions and for improving how the positions are performed.

Conclusion

In terms of household types and demographic groups, single mothers and seniors living alone account for a disproportionately high number of poor people. The draft act on child-support advances, which is to serve as the primary instrument for improving the lives of incomplete families, is accompanied by several problematic aspects, including the condition that the benefit should not be paid out if child support proves to be uncollectable in enforcement proceedings, which leaves the most vulnerable families without help. Problems of the Czech social system and in the concepts of addressing the problems of poor or vulnerable families became manifest during the coronavirus crisis, when a number of groups appeared (e.g., single mothers and families with children) that waited for support in the form of social benefits or care-contributions for more than a month. People working on quasi-employment contracts, which specifically includes women on parental leave or thereafter, did not receive any systematic support from the government.

One of the main causes of differences in the remuneration of men and women is the great gender segregation of the labour market which is preceded by strong gender segregation of professional education and training. Women prevail in professions that are grossly underrated as a whole (education, healthcare, social services) and women are also less represented in higher career positions. Restrictions made due to the COVID-19 pandemic turned attention to, among other things, the volume of work related to caring for a family and household, which in this country is by and large performed by women, working a so-called second shift. As concerns child-care facilities, the deletion of the legislative obligation to accept two-year-olds into kindergarten can be viewed as a step backwards. On the other hand, a positive sign is the recently presented legislative regulation of children's groups that addresses the aspect of affordability.

A quarter of a century after the Czech Republic acceded to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and still prevailing are stereotypes and gaps in awareness-raising about issues of violence against women, not only among the general public, but also in certain institutions. A criminological approach to the issue of violence against women reduces the women's extensive experience with diverse forms of violence to criminal-law definitions, resulting in a significant portion of the women who experience a whole range of psychological violence, pressure, control, intimidation, economic oppression, and other forms of violence, including those women who do not have sufficient evidence for criminal proceedings, finding themselves unable to access sufficient support and protection. The greatest challenge remains ensuring access of victims and their children

to specialised services, as only 5 registered stay-based social service facilities provide their services exclusively to victims of domestic violence, which accounts for a mere 10% of the minimum standard for asylum homes for victims of domestic violence. The term gender-based violence, which is discussed most extensively in connection with the Istanbul Convention, and which allegedly entails a concealed threatening potential for our society, was already adopted in the Beijing Platform for Action to which the Czech Republic acceded back in 1995.

Women are not a minority in the Czech population in terms of numbers, but they are undoubtedly a minority in terms of power. Low representation of women in the renewed NERV is something to which the present coronavirus epidemic has pointed: that women and their specific life experience and roles, which men often do not perform, are, in many cases, irreplaceable, and hence it is necessary to take women and their experience into account. Introducing measures to balance gender representation in decision-making does not amount to a breach of the principle of equal treatment, but, on the contrary, its fulfilment. Examples of countries such as France, Norway, Belgium, or Slovenia show that only binding measures have the potential to change the status quo.

About Social Watch

Social Watch is an international network of citizens' organizations in the struggle to eradicate poverty and the causes of poverty, to end all forms of discrimination and racism, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. We are committed to peace, social, economic, environment and gender justice, and we emphasize the right of all people not to be poor.

Social Watch holds governments, the UN system and international organizations accountable for the fulfilment of national, regional and international commitments to eradicate poverty.

Social Watch will achieve its objectives through a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, awareness-building, monitoring, organizational development and networking. Social Watch promotes people-centred sustainable development.

Social Watch Czech Republic

The coalition Social Watch Czech Republic has been established informally in 2008 as a network of NGOs, academia, and experts from different fields of social science.

Since 2015 the coalition is established as a formal organization. Currently, its members are:

- ADEPTTs
- Alternativa Zdola
- EDUCON
- Ekumenická akademie
- EUROSOLAR
- Fórum 50 %
- NESEHNUTÍ
- Svět bez válek a násilí
- Trast pro ekonomiku a společnost
- Wontanara

The coalition Social Watch Czech Republic is supported by its individual member organizations and individual members. Some activities are covered by contributions from individuals, organizations or projects.

Further information and publications can be found at www.socialwatch.cz and www.socialwatch.org

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