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Der tschechische Arbeitsmarkt – einige Aspekte zur Geschlechterproblematik **Czech Labour Market – Some Gender Aspects**

Zusammenfassung:

Der tschechische Transformationsprozeß zu einer Marktwirtschaft ging einher mit umwälzenden Veränderungen im gesellschaftspolitischen System. Solche Veränderungen wirken sich gewöhnlich unterschiedlich auf gesellschaftliche Gruppen aus. In Bezug auf das Geschlechterverhältnis deuten zahlreiche soziale und wirtschaftliche Daten seit 1989 auf einen alarmierenden Trend hin: Männer profitierten vom postkommunistischen Transformationsprozeß ungleich mehr als Frauen.



Petr Pavlik (rechts)

Das asymmetrische Geschlechterverhältnis wird in dem Beitrag deutlich gemacht an den schlechteren Bildungsabschlüssen von Frauen, der höheren und längeren Arbeitslosigkeit von Frauen, am vertikal und horizontal segregierten Arbeitsmarkt und den Lohnunterschieden, die mit höheren Abschlüssen sogar noch steigen. Trotz der sehr hohen Vollzeitbeschäftigung der Tschechinnen liegt die Zuständigkeit für Haushalt und Familienarbeit fast ausschließlich bei den Frauen. Seit der Wende wurde das Angebot an öffentlicher Kinderbetreuung stark reduziert.

Für diese Entwicklungen war die Regierung bis Ende der 90er Jahre blind. Die seit 1998 unternommenen Schritte – Gleichstellungsreferat, interministerielle Fachkommission, Gleichstellungsstellen in den Ministerien – waren bislang völlig unzureichend, weil sie personell und finanziell zu schlecht ausgestattet sind und über keine Instrumente zur Durchsetzung ihrer Politik verfügen.

In the period from 1989, virtually no facet of life and no social institution in the Czech Republic have remained untouched by the vortex of social change following the fall of communism. Labour markets have not been an exception. The transition to a Czech version of “market economy” along with fundamental changes of the socio-political

system have had a profound impact on their character and structure. Since profound social changes usually have different implications for different social groups it is important to keep an eye on this aspect of the Czech society's "transition-to-freedom." It is even more urgent considering that various social and macroeconomic indicators suggest alarming trends in the process of reconstitution of gender relations in the Czech Republic after 1989. While a few would dispute that the end of communist nightmare brought the people new freedoms and opportunities, it seems that men have profited from the post-communist transformation disproportionately more than women have.

This is particularly relevant in light of the fact that, with the end of communism, the Czech Republic is also said to be returning back to the family of democratic countries. That means, returning not only to a certain level of economic development, but also to certain social, cultural and labour market values and policies. Gender equality is, of course, one of the most important issues. Its overall aim to change the current unequal gender regime, which systematically works to the advantage of one gender, men, is one of the key challenges for any democratic society.

Existence of a wide range of gender inequalities is today a widely accepted fact and most democratic governments take all kinds of measures to improve the social standing of women and level the playing field. The EC is no exception.¹ Given the Czech government's effort to join the EC, one could, therefore, reasonably expect that gender issues would have a prominent place also in the Czech Republic's post-communist transformation. This expectation is further belayed by the fact that the Czech Republic undersigned the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in March 1982² as well as the Beijing Declaration adopted during the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995).

However, despite all the international commitments and rhetoric of public service, gender equality was a non-issue for Czech politicians until the late 90's. Needless to say, that since then things changed quite slowly. But that is not the focus

¹ See Article 2, 3, 13, 141 of the Treaty establishing the European Community and a host of Council Directives (75/117/EEC, 76/207/EEC, 79/7/EEC and so on).

of this paper. Here, we want to present some of the Czech labour indicators concerned with gender equality.

First, let's briefly review some of the features of the current female labour in the Czech Republic as summarised by Cermakova et al. (2000). The features are "long-term, multigenerational employment of women...women working full-time (i.e., 42.5 hours per week) predominate (i.e., more than 90%)...the traditional model of woman in a household is marginal (a maximum of 1% of women in the economically active age)" (p. 21). The authors (Cermakova et al., 2000) also mention an ILO study indicating that 80% of Czech women worked more than 40 hours per week in 1996, i.e. "the average number of hours spent at work per year is the highest compared to OECD countries" (p. 21).³ An overview of male and female employment indices is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Employment indices (2001)

	Women	Men	Women (%)
Total number	5,264,218	5,005,508	51.2
Economically active	2,289,800	2,881,400	44.3
Economic activity rate (15-59)(%)	67.1	82.3	
Economically inactive (15 years of age +)	2,175,400	1,269,200	63.1
Employed	2,063,400	2,686,800	43.8
Unemployment rate (%)	9.9	6.8	

Source: Czech Statistical Office, *Focused on women/men*, 2002a.

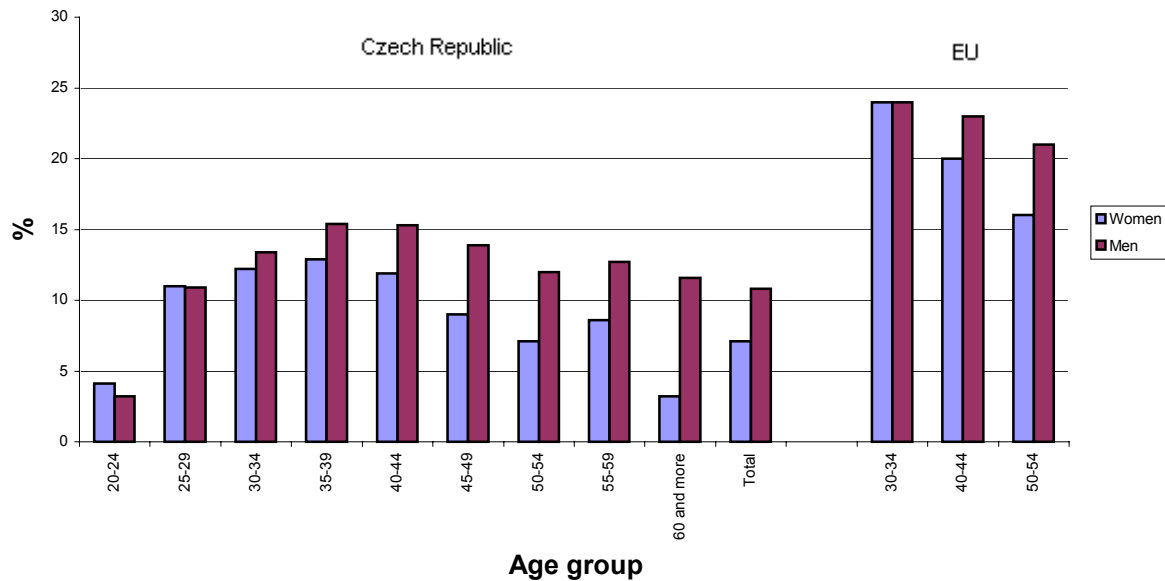
We may add that female employment has been very stable in the Czech Republic over the last several decades ranging between 44 and 46%. It is slightly above the EC average of 42% in 2000 (Paoli & Merlié, 2001). However, with respect to education, Czech labour force lags way behind the EC levels. For example, according to the Czech Statistical Office – CSO (2002a), there are only 12% of women and 14% of men aged 30-34 who have tertiary education in the Czech Republic, compared with 24% for both women and men of this age group in the EC (Paoli & Merlié, 2001) (see Chart 1⁴).⁵ Chart 2⁶ offers a break-down of the labour

² The Convention was adopted by Parliament as part of the legal order only in 1987. Subsequently, it became also part of the legal order of the newly founded Czech Republic after 1993.

³ Krizkova (2000) reports that "only 11% of 'European women' but more than half of Czech women work in their paid job more than 40 hours a week (our translation)" (p. 5).

⁴ Sources: Czech Statistical Office, *Focused on women/men*, 2002a. Paoli & Merlié, 2001.

force by education and sex.⁷ It is relevant to mention in this context that women make only about 32% of the people receiving continuously vocational training in the Czech Republic (CSO, 2002b).

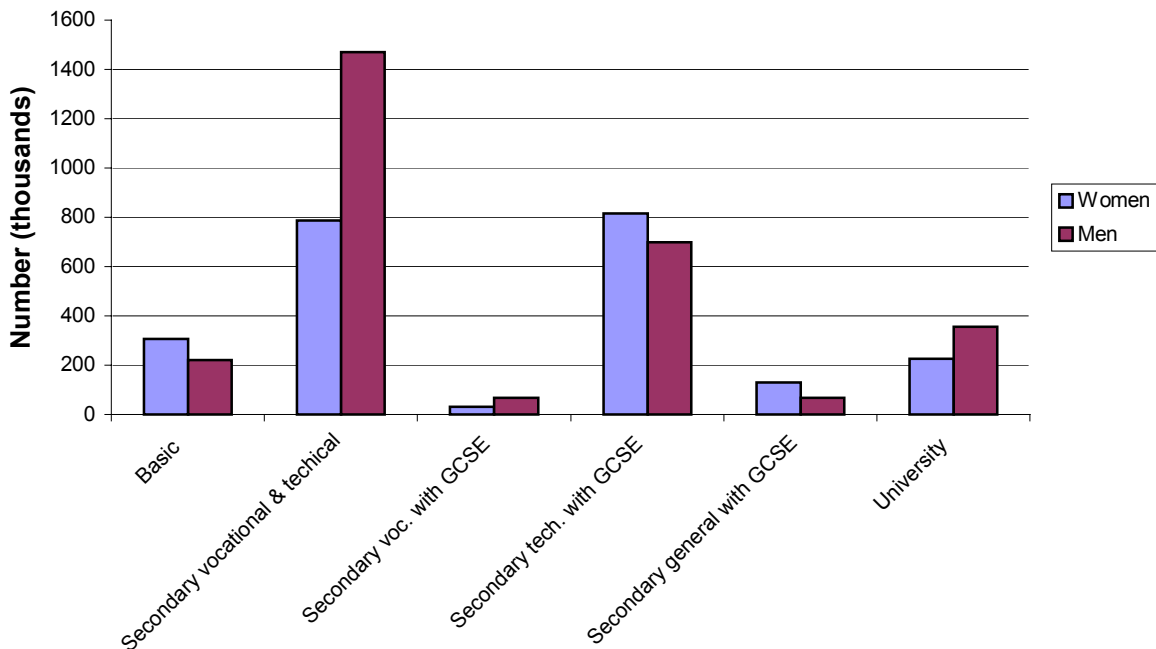


⁵ These data should be interpreted cautiously, though, since tertiary education has meant something different in the Czech Republic than in the EC. Up to the end of the 90's, one could graduate only after 4-5 years of study with a M.A. degree in the Czech Republic contrary to the EC with its two-step system (B.C. and M.A. degrees).

⁶ Source: Czech Statistical Office, *Statistical yearbook of the Czech Republic*, 2002b.

⁷ Gender dynamics are also apparently in the application procedure for the work at university. In the academic year 2000/2001, more women (55%) applied than men (45%), but more men were employed (55%) (Cermakova, 2002).

Chart 2. Labor force in the NE by education



Both women and men's unemployment numbers kept increasing over the last decade, but the rate of increase was consistently higher for women. This underscores the importance of paying close attention to the dynamic dimension of gender inequalities (see below). One should also be cautious when interpreting official data since they are very likely to underestimate significantly the rates of women's unemployment. Women's strategies of dealing with a bad job market, such as extending parental leave, tend to make some forms of female unemployment invisible to official statistical methods. It is revealing, for example, that women make 98% of the 344,600 economically inactive people, i.e. people who are not counted as a part of the labour force and who therefore do not enter into the calculation of the unemployment rates, who attribute their inactivity to "caring for family or being a housewife." A simple calculation shows that if we assume the same level of economic inactivity for women and men in this category (i.e. 5,500 people) and even concede that 1% of women pursue the traditional model of woman in a household (3,446 people) (Cermakova et al., 2000) female unemployment climbs to 23% if we count the rest as a part of the labour force. That is, it more than doubles.

Significantly, there are also 20% more women among the long-term unemployed than there are men (Evaluace Ex-ante, 2001) and gender is an important variable in the unemployment of fresh graduates. Women made 66% of unemployed in the group with vocational training and 60% in the group with bachelor degrees in 1999 (Souhrnna zprava, 2000).

If we turn now to the division of labour by gender some other typical patterns emerge. For example, Chart 3 and Chart 4⁸ summarise employment in the national economy according to the CSO data (2002a). Not surprisingly, men predominate in typical "male" job categories like "management", "craft" or "machine-operator" and national-economy sectors like construction, mining or manufacturing. Women are more likely to work in education, health and social-work sectors and tend to occupy lower level jobs. With respect to status of employment, men make 77% of all the employers, 71% of all the "own-account" workers and 74% of legislators, senior officials and managers. Cermakova et al. (2000) also report that men control 73% of all the managerial positions. On the other hand, women account for 78% of contributing family workers. In other words, there is substantial horizontal and vertical segregation of the national economy in male and female domains.

Women are also significantly underrepresented among entrepreneurs in the national economy's civil sector making only 27% of the total 689,300 people. Further, women tend to aggregate in the arguably less lucrative fields of business like education (47%), health or social work (60%) and men dominate construction business (97%), transport and communications (91%).

⁸ Source for both Charts: Czech Statistical Office, *Focused on women/men*, 2002a.

Chart 3. The employed in the national economy by job classification

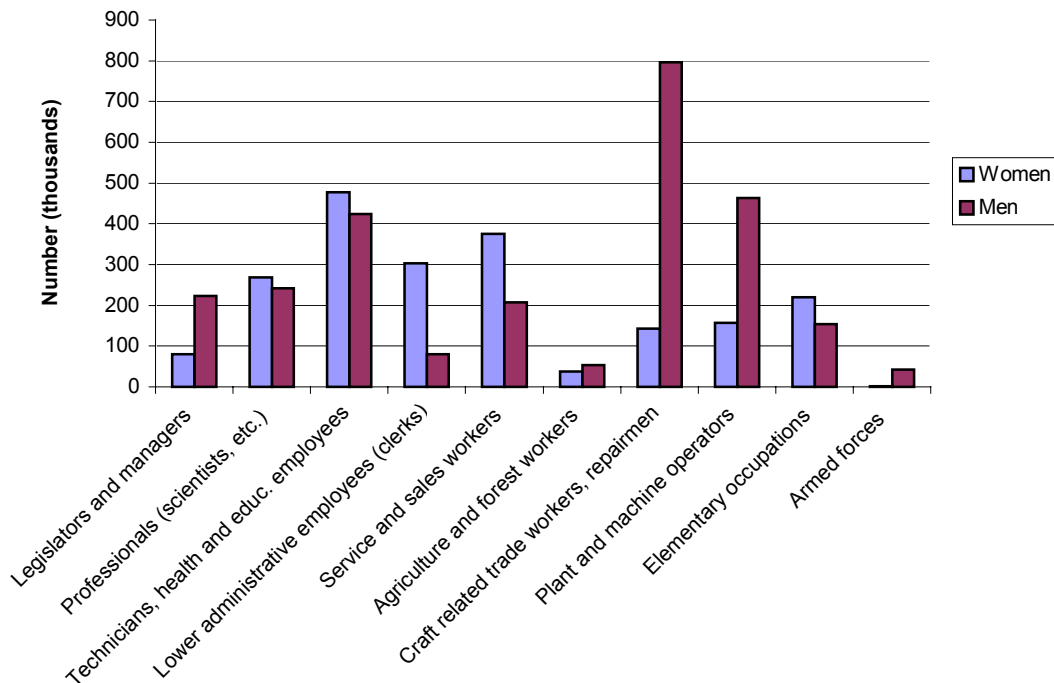
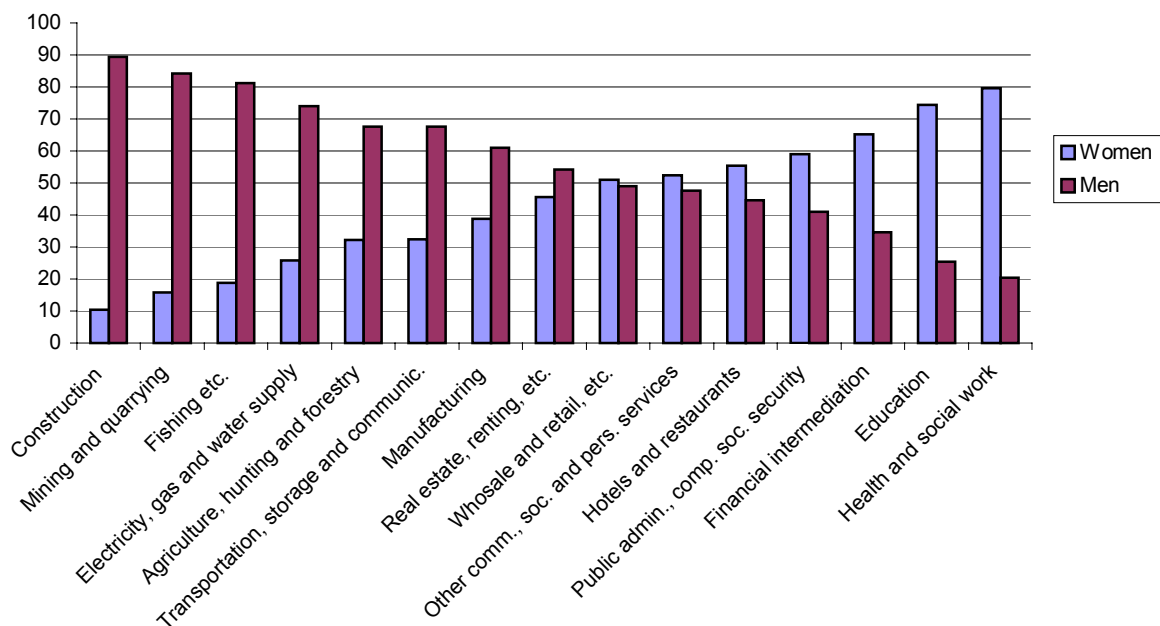


Chart 4. Workers in the civil sector of the national economy by sector, 2000



It is no surprise that these segregation patterns work to the disadvantage of women when it comes to the earnings. For one, average earnings are generally

higher in the sectors and jobs dominated by men.⁹ Generally, the lowest paying jobs are the stereotypically "female" jobs such as cash-register person, cleaning person, nurse or secretary (Sramkova, 2002), which tend to involve the most tedious and repetitive types of work.¹⁰ While it is true that higher total average earnings in a sector sometimes translate into higher average earnings for women working there (see Table 2), this effect is greatly minimised by the most enduring feature of modern labour market, the pay gap. It is also characteristic that women can earn more in precisely those sectors where they are a minority and where the resistance to their entry is often very strong.¹¹

Table 2. Selected examples of average gross monthly earnings and pay gap by sector

Sector	Pay gap**	Percentage of women*	Total earnings (CZK)**	Women's earnings. (CZK)**
Construction	12.1	10.5	16,723	14,928
Electricity, gas and water supply	18.8	25.9	19,584	16,686
Transport, storage and communications	14.3	32.8	18,018	16,232
Health and social work	31.4	74.5	15,353	14,091
Education	30.4	79.6	14,348	13,205

Source: * For 2000. Czech Statistical Office, *Statistical yearbook of the Czech Republic*, 2002b.

** For 2001. Czech Statistical Office, *Focused on women/men*, 2002a.

Overall, the total pay gap has been increasing steadily and quite rapidly up to 1998. For example, according to official statistics, it grew from 23% to 28% between 1996 and 1999 (Souhrna zprava, 2001). In the last two years, we have seen a moderate decrease to about 26% in 2001. However, a word of caution is necessary before you start contemplating emerging positive trends. This is because in the last years, the fastest increases in the pay gap seem to occur in the most dynamic

⁹ The total average gross monthly earnings amounted to 16,353 CZK in 2001.

¹⁰ According to the Czech Statistical Office (2002a), in 2001, the highest average salary in the Czech Republic was recorded in the financing sector (26,688 CZK) followed by electricity, gas and water supply (19,584 CZK).

¹¹ One of the typical mechanisms is refusal to even train women for concrete „male“ jobs. According to the government's summary report on advancing equality of men and women (Souhrna zprava, 2000), there were more than 100 types of vocational training majors closed to women in 1999 on the basis of very extensive Czech legislation allegedly aimed at "protecting" women against harmful influences in the workplace. The same legislation is used by employers, including the state, to discourage or prohibit women from taking up a much wider range of jobs.

sectors of the economy such as banking and financing (almost 16% increase between 1996 and 2001), which record some of the highest average salaries and salary rises overall.¹²

What is even more alarming, the widest gap has been documented for the university-educated cohort (35%) and the third highest for people with post-secondary education (27%), suggesting an adverse relationship between the level of woman's education and her relative status vis-à-vis a man of the comparable educational capital (see Table 3).¹³ In other words, the better educated a woman is, the more discrimination she is likely to face.¹⁴ As if this was not bad enough, the trend is negative. For example, the pay gap for the university-educated cohort grew from 25% to 35% over the last five years. In addition, the weight of women's education in the differentiation of salaries of women has fallen contrary to the weight of men's education, which has increased in the post-1989 period (Vecernik, 1998).

Table 3. Average gross earnings of employees: by education and sex

Highest educational attainment	Total	Males	Females	Pay gap
Basic	11,181	13,145	9,844	25
Secondary	13,258	14,527	10,279	29
Secondary with GCSE	16,742	19,669	14,659	25
Higher post-secondary	17,667	21,243	15,613	27
University	28,501	33,169	21,702	35

Source: Czech Statistical Office, *Focused on women/men*, 2002a.

The pay gap is also dramatically increasing as one goes up the corporate ladder and social hierarchy. For example, it was 45% in the category "legislators, senior officials and managers" in 2001 (CSO, 2002a). In the end of the day, more than 65% of all the working women face pay gaps higher than 30% and more than 80% of them earn salaries equal or lower than the total average gross monthly

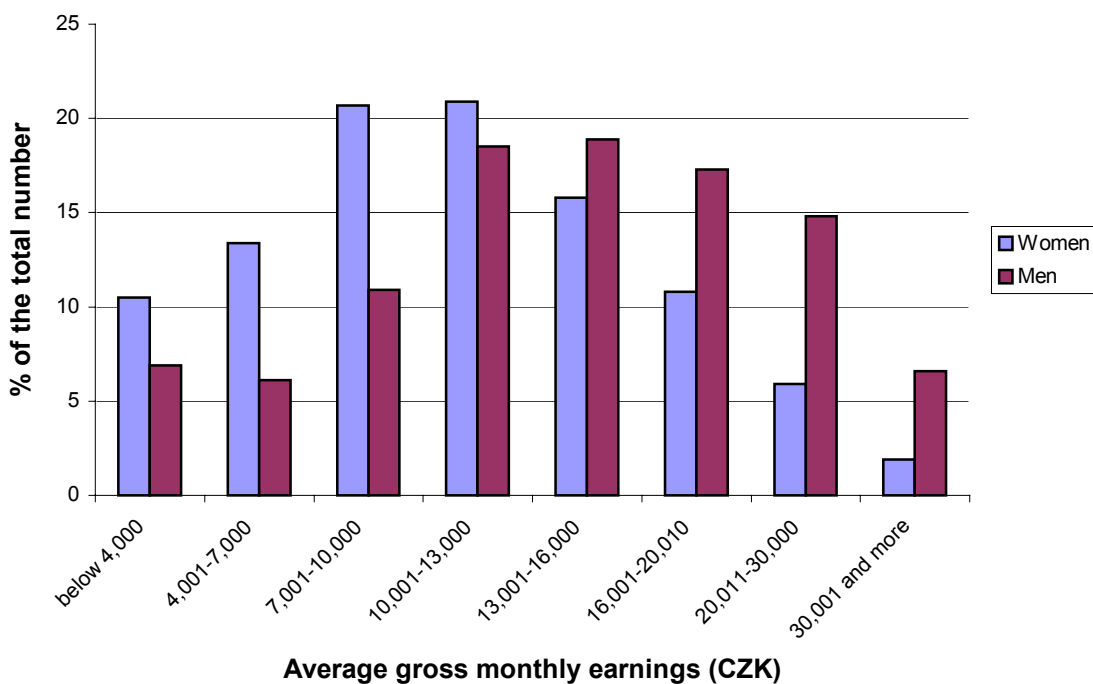
¹² This is most probably also connected with marked changes in the structure of the labor force in the financing sector. For example, while women made up 92% of the State Bank's management before 1989, their share is only 14% today (Donlevy, 2002).

¹³ Considering that university education guarantees women on average higher salaries, it is important to note that, according to the EC statistics (EC, 2002), the Czech Republic has the lowest women:men ratio with respect to tertiary education of all the candidate countries.

¹⁴ With respect to age, women face the highest pay gaps in ages 60-64 (38%) and 30-39 (33%). Three sectors with the highest pay gaps in 2001 were financial intermediation (48%), wholesale and retail trade, repairs of goods (39%) and manufacturing (32%). Three sectors with the lowest pay gaps were construction (22%), transport, storage and communications (24%) and Other community, social and pers. service activities (26%).

earnings (see Chart 5¹⁵).¹⁶ Only about 60% of men fall within the same bracket and men make 80% of the people who command the highest salaries. Add the overwhelmingly male-dominated privatisation of the state's property during the 90's and you get a good idea about the character of the wealth redistribution in the post-communist era. While there are no official statistics breaking down the wealth by sex, indirect data such as various lists of the "wealthiest people" (e.g. Bouskova et al., 2002), statistics on economic and political hierarchies (Zeny a muzi, 2000), or data concerning the wage gap suggest that the process has also been singularly disadvantageous for women.

Chart 5. Employees by average gross monthly earnings



Beside profound changes and discontinuities, the post-1989 period has also been characterised by a number of continuing trends and revealingly stable social arrangements. Arguably, the most important of those has been the double burden of paid work and household/family duties which women had to deal with during socialism and which they still face today. According to Cermakova et al. (2000), men

¹⁵ Source: Czech Statistical Office, *Focused on women/men*, 2002a.

“do not participate in these activities [cooking, shopping and cleaning] systematically even in 5% of households” (p. 68) and “[o]n average, Czech women spend almost three times as much time on housework than men...” (p. 68).

Women’s predicament has been made so much more difficult in the situation when the childcare system underwent a significant dismantling under the supervision of “liberal” right-wing governments during the 90’s. Here, numbers speak for themselves. While there were 1,313 day-care centers in 1989 in the Czech Republic, their number dropped to mere 62 by 2001 (i.e. 95.3% decrease).¹⁷ Over the same period, the number of kindergartens decreased by 21% (CSO, 2002b). Responsibility for caring for dependent elderly family members also falls disproportionately on women.

As this brief account indicates, the social condition of Czech women has been worsening over the last decade relative to that of men. In other words, the Czech Republic’s post-communist transformation has not been gender neutral. This naturally begs the question “What have the successive post-communist governments done about these alarming developments?” The answer is “Not much.” In fact, no explicit equal-opportunity policy existed and there was no governmental body charged with responsibility in this area prior to 1998.

On February 1, 1998, the Division for Equality of Men and Women (DEMW) was established in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. It consisted of only three people who were responsible to coordinate the policy on the state-wide level. Characteristically, the DEMW has virtually no policy instruments or resources to enforce the agenda within the MLSA, not to speak about the state bureaucracy as a whole. The government has yet to allocate any money from the state budget to advancing gender equality (Souhrnna zprava, 2002).

In 1998, the MLSA also initiated the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Equal Opportunities of Men and Women. This rather impotent “coordinating” body (due to lack of resources, powers and know-how) was transformed in January 2002 to another impotent body, the Government’s Council for

¹⁶ In this context, it is relevant that a survey investigating people’s experience with work discrimination indicates that about 25% of women but only 3% of men feel that they have been discriminated against (CSO, 2002a). At least some women are apparently aware that they are being shortchanged.

Equal Opportunities of Men and Women. The Council is conceived as yet another government's advisory body. It also does not have any policy instruments to enforce the implementation of the equal-opportunity policy. It is no more comforting to know that the GCEOP managed to meet only once during 2002.

The decree establishing the Council also provided for creating a one-half appointment at each ministry devoted to the equal opportunity agenda. However, the current structural position of these so-called "gender focal points" does not provide them with sufficient time, institutional support or protection. Apart from being new to the topic and working mostly in human resources (having no influence on the subject-matter policy), they are frequently expected to do the regular work first and have little time for the gender agenda. Also, while no one would say so openly, some feel that promoting gender equality too vigorously may spell problems for their future careers.

To sum up this brief account, the existing institutional structure is simply not conducive to an effective promotion of equal opportunities. The resources - financial, personal and institutional – that the government currently allocates to promote gender equality are absolutely insufficient. As far as we can tell, the EC does not care about this. After all, the EC Delegation to the Czech Republic is not exactly a shining example of gender equality (women staff 38%, senior leadership 14%) and they never gender-mainstream their agenda or documents.

¹⁷ Information provided by Mgr. J. Holub of the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic.

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