

***Putting equality on the political agenda in the Czech Republic*****Gleichstellung auf die politische Agenda in der Tschechischen Republik setzen****Zusammenfassung:**

Bislang lässt sich nicht sagen, ob die EU-Erweiterung die politischen Ansätze von tschechischen PolitikerInnen oder ihre Wahrnehmung der Agenda der Gleichstellung verändert oder dramatisch herausgefordert hat. Dasselbe gilt vermutlich überall in Mittel- und Osteuropa.

Es sind natürlich gewisse Fortschritte zu verzeichnen, sowohl im Bereich der Wirtschaft und der Politik als auch in den Medien und ihrem Verhältnis zur Gleichstellungspolitik. In erster Linie sind jedoch das Ergebnis der Ereignisse vor dem EU-Beitritt, wie z.B. die Harmonisierung von Rechtsvorschriften, die Herausforderungen innerhalb von Partnerschaftsprojekten, die Gender-Strategien einiger Regierungs- bzw. öffentlichen Einrichtungen oder die Einführung von Gleichstellungsmaßnahmen durch gender-sensibilisierte Vertreter des öffentlichen wie auch des privaten Sektors. Noch ist die EU-Mitgliedschaft von zu kurzer Dauer, um eine konkrete und messbare Wirkung auf die Gleichstellung und ihre Position auf der politischen Tagesordnung feststellen zu können. Zudem hat man weitere Veränderungen kaum erwartet, da die meisten schon im Lauf der Beitrittsverhandlungen eingetreten sind.

Das stärkste Merkmal der tschechischen Situation bleibt die Tatsache, dass strukturelle Ansätze zur Förderung der allgemeinen gesellschaftlichen Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern einfach nicht existieren, dies gilt ganz besonders für den Arbeitsmarkt. Es sind keine allgemeinen Strategien definiert worden, es gibt keine strategische Unterstützung von Unternehmen, die Gleichstellungsmaßnahmen durchsetzen wollen, es gibt auch keine politische Reaktion auf die Gleichstellungssituation.

Obwohl die Erfolge sichtbar und für die Entwicklung der tschechischen Gesellschaft sehr bedeutend sind, hat Gender Mainstreaming bislang nur wenig Aufmerksamkeit erhalten. Die Zusammenarbeit von Staat, Privatsektor und Nichtregierungs-Sektor sowie ihre verschärfte Wahrnehmung von Gleichstellungsfragen sind Schritte auf dem richtigen Weg, d.h. in Richtung einer Schwerpunktsetzung auf die Gleichstellung und der Entwicklung von funktionellen Strategien auf der Grundlage von Gender Mainstreaming in allen relevanten Bereichen. Dies muß im Kontext der vorraussichtlichen Entwicklung gemeinsamer Projekte der drei Sektoren positiv betrachtet werden.

*It is as yet too early to confirm whether EU accession has significantly altered or challenged the political approach to or politicians' perception of the gender equality agenda either in the Czech Republic or – presumably – in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. Naturally, certain progress is noticeable in both the business and political fields, as well as in the media and their relationship to gender policies. This primarily reflects the influence of the pre-accession period, i.e. legislation harmonization, best practices of some twinning projects, implementation of gender strategies in some of the governmental/state institutions, or the application of gender sensitive measures by gender sensitive representatives both in the state and private sectors. EU membership has been too short to have had a concrete and measurable impact on equality and its position among key elements of the political agenda. Moreover, it was not actually expected to bring any further changes since all of them had already taken place in the course of pre-accession negotiations.*

*With regard to women in politics and decision-making as compared to their coverage in media it may be noted that although women represent 50% of the Czech population, there make up only 12 % of the Senate and 16 % of the Chamber of Deputies. Compared to this, women are more often represented (i.e. described or quoted) in television broadcasting (20%). This means that women appear more often in the media than might be expected from their representation in politics.*

Five women politicians, four spokeswomen and the former president's wife are among the ten most often quoted and/or described women. This reflects the lack of active women in the Czech Republic seen as important and interesting enough for media news coverage. It is important to understand the fact that specific ministries' spokeswomen do not express their own opinion, decision or standpoint; on the contrary, they only mediate the opinion of the concrete institution. Moreover, it is often a case of an institution headed by a man-minister. As to male representatives, the media deal with a much wider spectrum of male personalities than is the case for women. Thus, no spokesman is included in the list of the most often quoted and/or described men. It is also noteworthy that the fourth place in the female top ten most often described or quoted Czech women is held by the former president's wife. It would certainly be extremely difficult for a man – "a husband by profession" – to be represented among the top fifty male personalities since no woman is regarded as being important enough to attract media interest to her husband.

Although 77.6 % of people employed in the field of education are women, their participation in decision-making positions in education is far lower. Similarly, the news coverage dealing with women and their relevant education standpoints is much lower than we may expect; i.e. women's voice relating to education is monitored only in approx. 32 % of the total.

One of the most telling examples is the following concerning disregard for gender mainstreaming within industry but also political decision-making. In the beginning of the 1990s a number of textile factories were being closed, causing widespread unemployment in certain regions; women formed a majority of the affected group since the textile industry had long been "feminized". Towards the end of the 1990s coal mines and associated heavy industry factories were being closed down causing widespread unemployment among miners and other blue-collar workers in certain regions. Unlike the situation regarding the consequences the closure of textile companies might have for women and their social status, further employability etc., a significant discussion was started among trade unions, employers and political representation when it came to the men's situation. Often the argument of men being the family breadwinners was used despite the fact that women's economic activity has been very high for several decades in the Czech Republic since families usually need both man's and woman's income.

The Czech Government began to deal with the status of women in a systematic way only at the end of 1997 and on the initiative of Members of Parliament concerning the fulfilment of the Beijing Platform. This initiative resulted in the programme document entitled "Priorities and Procedures for Enforcement of Equal Opportunities of Men and Women '98" – the Czech national action plan. By approving this document, the Government expressed formally its will to contribute effectively to the elimination of existing obstacles that prevent women from achieving status comparable with men; in fact, however, the concrete tasks which the ministries have to fulfil according to this document have been postponed from one year to another due to the complete lack of understanding of these issues.

The fact that there do not exist any structural approaches to gender equality promotion in the society as such, and especially in the labour market, is, however, the predominant characteristics of the Czech environment. No overall strategies have been defined; there is no strategic support to companies promoting gender equality within their field of business; and there has been no response to the issue of gender balance from the political point of view.

*Although successes are visible and of high importance in the development of Czech society, gender mainstreaming has not received any broader attention so far at either level of its possible introduction. Positively speaking and foreseeing some of the projects currently being developed jointly by the state, private and non-governmental sectors, it can, nevertheless, definitely be said that cooperation between all three as well as their heightened insight into gender issues has developed in the right direction, i.e. towards attracting the necessary focus on equality and developing functional strategies based on gender mainstreaming in all relevant areas.*



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*Concerning the issue of cooperation between the state and women's NGOs: The state does not have any unified concept of co-operation between the government and women's non-profit organisations, in terms of activities or in terms of funding. Co-operation consists primarily in representatives' of women's organisations becoming members of various consultative bodies of the cabinet and working groups; they comment on documents dealing with the equality of women and men disseminated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, or they prepare their own proposals, including legal proposals (e.g. in connection with domestic violence, trafficking of women or changes to the electoral law). In all these cases the state uses women's NGOs' expertise without providing any kind of remuneration. With respect to funding women's NGOs from the state budget, the situation is equally unsatisfactory. Although the programme "support of equal opportunities for women and men" appeared in the governmental document entitled Main Areas of State Subsidy Policy for 2001, no ministry has as yet launched a special programme to support gender equality, not even the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the national co-ordinator of the equal opportunities agenda. Incidentally, women's NGOs have been alerting the MLSA to this situation for a number of years. Women's organisations that have received subsidies from the state budget usually deal with social assistance and the support they receive is not the result of any systematic state policy.*