# Gender Assessment of the Impact of EU Accession Process on Women and the Labour Market in CEE

**The Czech Republic**

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# II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# *Chapter I* presents a comparison concerning the situation of women on the labour market between four countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

# *Chapter III* describes the economic situation in the country - before and mostly after the accession process started in 1996. It shows that the low level of unemployment grew rapidly after the crisis in 1997. Despite of this, the Czech Republic remains one of the richest among the post-socialist countries. The European Commission has concluded, that the country is a functioning market economy and that the continuation of its current reform path should enable it to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union - but at the same time, the Commission stated, that reforms of social expenditures must be pursued, which is bit daunting for the future, because it always affects more disadvantaged people - and among them lots of elderly or retired women and women with children.

# Within the accession process, the civil society was practically not involved at all. Concerning at least participation on the pre-accession EU funds, the women´s NGOs were very much omitted, because the fund were distributed by Czech agencies which were totally non-gender sensitive; at the same time, it became apparent, that the fulfilment of gender mainstreaming, proclaimed in all the funds, was not checked by the responsible bodies in Brussels.

The Chapter further informs on the existing National Machinery in the country and a document called „Priorities and Procedures of the Government towards Enforcement of Equal Opportunities between Men and Women“ which represents the National Action Plan. It also describes changes of the legal framework focusing on the Amendment of the Labour Code which entered into force on January 1st 2001 concerning equal opportunities of women and men.

It further brings an overview of the labour market situation for women, focusing on the group of women between 24-35 who are mostly affected by unemployment. As for the wage gender gap, it shows, that the higher the education and post, the larger the gap; the biggest difference occurred in the employee group with the highest salary - „legislators and seniors“ - when women reached only 55% of men´s salary in 2001.

The Chapter also includes description of gender segregation within the education system and note on demographics and fertility rate and on the end brings gender analysis of most important documents connected to the EU accession process - the National Action Plans for Employment and Progress Reports.

***Chapter IV*** brings a more detailed analysis on the position of women on the labour market. It shows, that Czech women spend much more time working than women from the EU countries, because only about 9% of Czech women work part time and they do not stop working even when having small children. The curve of women´s economic activity practically copies the male curve. But the costs of it are that women postpone having children and the birth rate drops dramatically.

Concerning unemployment, although it has been growing since 1997 and it is still higher than the male one, the female unemployment remains relatively low comparing to other post-socialist countries. The gender wage gap in salaries is on average 26% in full time jobs, despite the fact, that Czech women have a similar or even better education and more qualification than men and have been working full time for the past 50 years. As one study founds out, that in the private sector about two thirds of the gap remain unexplained.

***Chapter V***brings information on social services and women´s employment. It describes the supports and benefits connected to motherhood and parenthood; although woman receives 22 weeks after the birth 69% of her salary, the father, although he can officially take care of the child, receives straight only parental benefit (about EUR 85 per month).

The chapter further analysis that although there are several conditions connected to the parenthood which at the first sight look as a good measure for women/parents, they in fact turn against them: the parental leave has been prolonged to 4 years and the employer is obliged to secure their job position for 3 years.

Concerning child care facilities, there are no comprehensive data on the situation in the country. But it is known that Czech Republic belongs to countries with the longest average attendance of children between 3-5 years in kindergarten (2.7 years); whilst in the year 1989/90 97,4 % of children of this age attended kindergartens, in 1998/99 it was 90,6%. The situation is much worse concerning nurseries for children 0-3 years old – today it would be possible to place into them only 5% of children from the number in 1990.

The chapter informs as well on the situation of single mothers (84,6% of incomplete families are those with lonely mothers and they belong to households which are among most dependent on the social policy of the state). Further, it comments on the situation of retired and elderly women - in 1998, 38 % of all new pensions for women were for those women who decided to be retired by 3 years earlier. The average amount of women’s old-age pension reaches on average 82% of men’s old-age pensions. One reason for this is that women make less money throughout their lives and also the fewer number of years included in the insurance plans as a result of the lower retirement age.