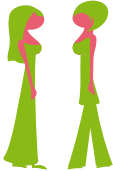




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CAREER
FAMILY

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

STUDIES ON WOMEN AND MEN IN THE CZECH LABOUR MARKET

This publication is part of the EU Equal project
“Fifty - fifty: Equal Opportunities for Women and Men”
coordinated by Gender Studies, o.p.s, and is co-financed
by the EU European Social Fund and the Czech Republic state budget.



CAREER – FAMILY – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES:
STUDIES ON WOMEN AND MEN IN THE CZECH LABOUR MARKET

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Editor: Linda Sokačová

Authors: Věra Kuchařová et al., Štěpán Jurajda, Daniel Münich, Kateřina Machovcová

Design a obálka: Bára Mottlová

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Kateřina Machovcová – Gender Studies, o.p.s.

Dear reader,

The following pages provide the results of various studies concerning the position of women and men in the Czech labour market. The analyses were carried out as a part of the EU Equal project "Fifty - fifty: Equal Opportunities for Women and Men" coordinated by Gender Studies, o.p.s, and co-financed by the EU European Social Fund and the Czech Republic state budget. Each study focuses on a topic that had received very modest coverage in earlier research or had not been explored at all.

The first paper is a summary of qualitative and quantitative studies carried out by the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs team headed by Věra Kuchařová. The team's objective was to find out the possibilities parents have in juggling childcare and work responsibilities and the potential constraints or sources of discrimination that can make the parents' situation difficult. They looked at the issue from both the mothers' perspective and that of the employers. The main focus was on finding out to what extent the parents draw their sick child leave and claim their maternity/parental leave entitlement, which are the basic measures enabling parents to balance their personal and professional lives. One of the main findings is the fact that the facilities allowing people to balance their personal and professional lives are used much less in the Czech Republic than in the vast majority of western countries. In the Czech Republic, the range of the flexible work arrangement possibilities used is narrower and can usually be summed up in three options: reduced working hours, part-time work and flexible working hours. However, they are usually not offered systematically, they do not fall within internal company guidelines and are used solely on an individual agreement basis.

In the Czech Republic, it is still mostly women who take parental leave to provide care for children and ensure other forms of full-time childcare. It is rather exceptional to see a father on parental leave, with men representing about 1% of all persons drawing the parental benefit. The reason can be financial (as men have statistically higher salaries), but it can also lie in the unsupportive attitude on the part of the employers who expect that the working hours arrangement facilities should be primarily used by women.

The extensive quantitative research carried out by the Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education of Charles University (CERGE), supervised by Štěpán Jurajda and Daniel Münich, focused on issues of identifying the differing position of women and men in the labour market, in particular against the backdrop of a price difference analysis. The research included a comparison with practices used in the EU. Unlike the other two studies featured in this publication, this research is not a sociologic analysis, but an economic analysis. It exploits data on results describing interactions between employees and employers (i.e. on employment structure and salaries), deriving the sources of the gender gap from them. However, the methodology used does not allow for any definite answer to the question as to what extent the pay gap related to employment segregation can be described as a result of discriminatory practices in access to employment and career development, and to what extent it is due to free choice made by the men and the women. Likewise, it is impossible to grasp the influence of the so-called gender stereotypes that are involved as early as the time of choosing the study field, long before the person actually enters the labour market. The CERGE research on the "Relative Position of Women in the Czech Labour Market" shows that the segregation rate, i.e. the rate of unequal representation of women and men in various types of work, dropped moderately over the 1994-2004 period in the Czech Republic. This decrease was due mainly to changes in female representation in the individual work fields, and it applies especially to the population under 35, being rather steep in this age group – over ten years, the segregation rate dropped by more than 10%. Moreover, the research showed that on comparison of salaries in a specific position in the same company, the average hour rate difference between women and men was 11-12%. The reasons for this gap are impossible to specify, since further necessary data are unavailable.

The last paper sums up a research lead by Kateřina Machovcová from Gender Studies, o.p.s. The objective was to find out what HR managers need with a view to developing equal opportunities for women and men within the company HR management policies, and what are the constraints and options in this respect. The main data collection method was that of focus groups, completed by semi-structured interviews. The participants included persons working in positions involving human resources management, or in other management positions related to the issue. The general focus was on personal experience and the attitudes to how the principles of equal opportunities between men and women can be put into practice. Most respondents had on-hand experience with measures implementing equal opportunities for women and men, providing interesting and practical information on how the issue can be linked to other challenges involved in human resources management.

All three analyses provided results pointing to the unequal position of women and men in today's Czech labour market. The collected information is important in order to identify correctly the issues that must be tackled in our society. They show that it is crucial to introduce schemes that will encourage equal opportunities of women and men and bridge the existing gaps between men and women. Promoting equal opportunities of women and men is not only a feature of a democratic society responding to the needs of all citizens, but also a characteristic of a mature company culture, appreciating the input of the employees and trying to set up the best conditions for their work performance.

This is yet another publication issued by Gender Studies, o.p.s., an organisation studying equal opportunities policies, especially in the labour market and in decision-making positions, both practically, working with various target groups, and theoretically. In this respect, we largely rely on the Gender Studies library, numbering over 7 thousand volumes and a few hundred grey literature publications.

Having taken part in many meetings and interviews at various levels, with people having a very different grasp of the equal opportunities issue ranging from a very basic understanding to a relatively comprehensive knowledge, we realised that we often lacked up-to-date data and reliable arguments based on research and analyses to back up our statements.

Unable to find up-to-date studies focusing on the Czech Republic, especially on the aspects of female and male participation in the labour market, the life-work balance for both genders and work lives and other very specific issues, we decided to take up the challenge. And this publication is the first important step in this direction.

It answers many questions that we had often asked ourselves, and I believe we have not been the only ones.

Therefore, I hope that it will help you, the reader, to gain better insight into issues that are, generally or specifically, related to equality between women and men in the labour market, provide support for arguments you use, and help further promote equal opportunities in the Czech Republic. Moreover, we will be grateful for any feedback from you – we will use it in our equal opportunities related work and activities.

I hope that this publication will answer as many questions as might have crossed your mind when you first opened the book.

Alena Králíková – Gender Studies, o.p.s. director



**EMPLOYMENT AND
EARLY CHILDCARE:
PARENTS' AND
EMPLOYERS'
PERSPECTIVE**

Věra Kuchařová, Sylva Ettlerová, Olga Nešporová, Kamila Svobodová
– Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs

In its studies, the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs has focused on finding out the possibilities parents have in juggling childcare and work responsibilities, and the potential constraints or discrimination against parents of pre-school children. The issue has been looked at from both the mothers' perspective and that of the employers. The output shown below was generated by three studies carried out in late 2005 and early 2006. Two quantitative sociologic surveys have been conducted: "Employment and Childcare", targeted at mothers with at least one child aged 3 to 10 (E-deti05), and a research in selected companies (E-zam05). Moreover, we carried out a qualitative field survey in fifteen companies and at five job centres (E-kval05).

Dividing family roles

The division of family roles and responsibilities is an important factor affecting the parents' possibilities to juggle their career and family. To a large extent, the division of family roles corresponds with social stereotypes; to a lesser extent, personal preferences and new, alternative models are involved. The research has shown that most families still apply traditional gender role division, based on the complementariness principle: the woman looks after the family more often and she mostly gives preference to family over work, while the man devotes more attention to work, sometimes even to the detriment of the family.¹ This phenomenon is almost universal, even though working women try to involve the partner in household chores and family responsibilities slightly more often than women who do not have a job.

Usually, then, it is the woman who takes care of the children and the household (Chart 1). In 87% of all households, women having children aged 3 to 10 do most housework²; only in 13% of the families do women and men share the housework responsibilities more or less equally. Moreover, a considerably large majority of all women ensure childcare and go shopping. Men, on the other hand, do everyday maintenance and repairs in most households included in the study (72%). Both partners spend an equal amount of their free time with the children in most households (63% of the families) and they normally decide on money matters together (71% of the families).

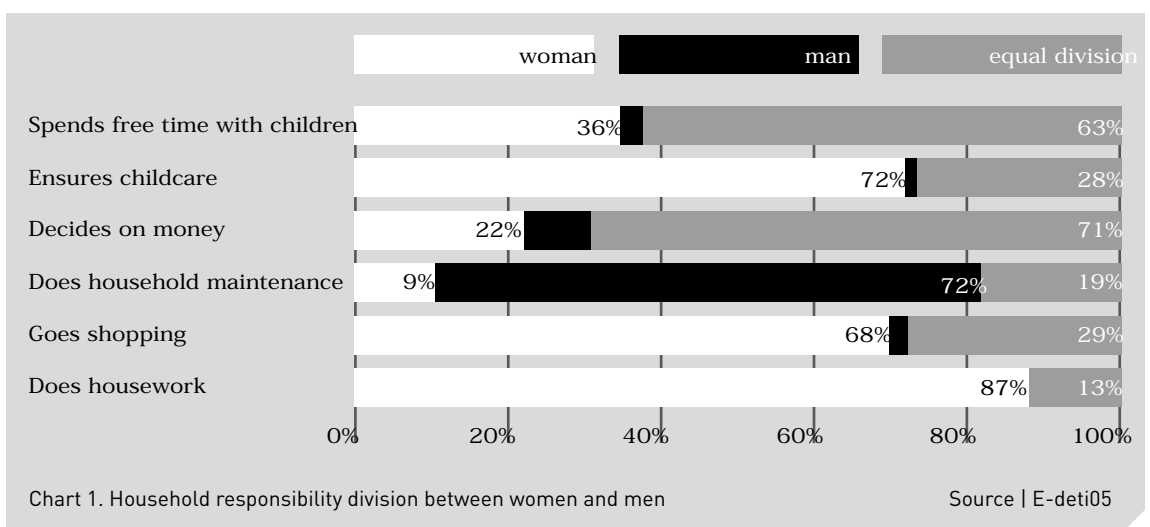
Furthermore, it was established that a large majority of the women is happy with the role division between them and their partner. The survey was targeted at women at a specific stage

of the family cycle where care of small children predominates, undoubtedly affecting the gender role division that does not necessarily need to correspond with general attitudes to gender issues on the part of the respondents. At early parenthood stages the female respondents prefer traditional role division more often than at later stages when the children are older or independent of the parents.

Many young families, trying to balance their family and work responsibilities as efficiently as possible, turn to their parents for help or they use institutional services (especially kindergartens). Almost three quarters of the families are helped by their parents in childcare, especially by babysitting. This can be done when the basic prerequisites are met; in fact, the main reason for grandparents not participating in childcare is that they do not meet the said prerequisites. The most frequent circumstances limiting the grandparents' childcare possibilities are the following: they work and have no time, they live far away, or they have health problems. The accessibility and availability of kindergarten services are important especially when the women go back to work after parental leave; however, the families are in very unequal situations, depending on where they live. Alternative childcare options (individual or collective childcare ensured by a childminder, but not in crèches or kindergartens) are generally in demand in big cities, where the crèches and kindergartens are relatively numerous and accessible, but they are especially asked for by women living in specific areas (Prague, Northern Bohemia and Northern Moravia).

The traditional role division between men and women is fostered by certain social and family policy measures, although many of these were conceived to do quite the opposite. Such is the case of the persisting difference between men and women in parental leave entitlement, the absence of paternity leave, the irresolute parental leave concept, the limited possibilities for both parents to take sick-child leave, or the structure of the social welfare benefits that are not derived from the lost income but from the current family income (not quite, though – income from previous periods is checked too), whose level is by far lower than the average male wages.

Traditional attitudes and stereotypes in role division between men and women are typical for their employment relationships and for the employers' approach to their employees who are mothers and fathers with small children. In the Czech Republic,



the possibilities for balancing family and career consisting in alternative working hours are used less than in an overwhelming majority of western countries³. The country is characterised by its high proportion of full-time jobs occupied even by mothers with small children shortly (or immediately) after the parental leave. Moreover, the range of the adjusted work arrangement possibilities used is narrower and can be summed up in three options: reduced working hours, part-time work and flexible (rearranged) working hours. The findings based on the data from all the sources exploited here point to the fact that the low utilisation of reduced working hours is not only the employers' "fault", but is also due to the lack of interest on the part of the employees. The lack of interest, in turn, originates under the pressure of the disadvantages presented by reduced working hours, both as regards the family interests and the equal opportunities of women and men in the labour market. The disadvantages are mainly financial – for shorter working hours, the employee gets a lower wage, while the amount of work to be done is not always reduced in an adequate manner. What is more, the career development possibilities are rather limited.

So far, the employers still offer mostly three basic forms of employee benefits – granting leave for urgent family matters, financial contribution for culture and leisure, which, however, does not grant any advantage to parents with dependent children as compared to the rest of the employees, and support during studies (for actual employees, not for persons such as women that are about to start working after parental leave)⁴. Support for day care establishments, usual before 1990, is largely inexistent; no new child care forms have developed and they are almost never required from the employers.

Claiming parental leave entitlements

The preponderance of the traditional role division is clearly indicated by how the parental leave entitlements are used. However, in recent years, a few legislation measures have been taken to bridge the gender gap, the most important step being the new provision allowing fathers to go on parental leave, in force since 2001. This new option should make it easier for women with small children at the time of an increased need for balancing family, household and career – their partner can take over and take care of the children in daytime. Moreover, the father will establish a close relationship with the child over this period, and he will get used to doing housework. These skills are beneficial for the family even at later stages, as the man who had been on paternity leave usually helps the woman considerably with household responsibilities and childcare.

Nevertheless, fathers on paternity leave are still exceptional, representing about 1% of all persons drawing parental benefits.⁵ Their participation is associated with specific circumstances. In the survey (E-deti05) there was less than 4% of mothers whose partner has ever taken full-time care of a child under four years of age for at least a month, while less than a half of the women in this group stated that their partner has been on parental leave for some time (1.6% of the respondents in total have shared the parental leave with their partners). A typical man having been on parental leave has taken care of the child for more than a year, the child being older than two years of age. The most common reason for why the father has ever taken care for a child on a full-time basis was a less traditional attitude to the division of roles between the partners⁶ ("the father should participate in childcare"), but "unfavourable" circumstances were a frequent factor, too (the partner was unemployed). At the same time, many wo-

men who have had the experience with the fathers taking full-time care of a small child would have had appreciated a more significant state support, especially as regards the paternity leave being introduced to promote the participation of fathers in childcare while the mother herself is on maternity leave. This proves the common finding that women are not very keen on passing their "mother competences" onto their partners.⁷

Therefore, it is mostly mothers who engage in parental leave and full-time childcare. Due to this one-sided trend, their position in the labour market is generally more difficult. The employers harbour stereotypes about their performance at work when taking care of a small child at the same time. These stereotypes are based on real-life situations – indisputably, it is the women who bear family and household responsibilities, thus taking leave more often in situations where the family needs it, for instance when the child falls ill. While the institute of parental leave should guarantee the woman the right to return to her last job, it does not necessarily happen in reality.

The return to work after parental leave is a time at which the interests of the persons as parents and employees collide with those of their employers, though not necessarily generating conflict (see Kuchařová 2005). Unquestionably, this collision, involving the effect of many factors, is reflected by real-life behaviour. One of the important factors affecting the return, or non-return, of the woman to work after parental leave is pregnancy or birth of the next child. In such cases, the parental leave with the older child is directly followed by the next parental leave with the younger child, and the decision-making situation is, therefore, different. At the same time, these women can represent, among mothers on parental leave having two or more children, about two thirds of the total, for each child that is "not the last". Accordingly, their absence in the labour market can become as long as six or more years.

For women not having their next child before the end of the parental leave, however, what are the reasons for the differences in the length of full-time childcare? While the motives for the varying full-time childcare duration (on parental leave, plus childcare until the child reaches the age of four or even longer) can be many, there are five most important factors involved: the financial situation of the family, the woman's position and outlooks in the labour market, the preference for family values vs. career values, the importance of family benefits for the family in the given situation, and support from bodies helping with family and work balance, in particular the availability of day care establishments for children of working parents.

Economic reasons (the first two in the list, and possibly other reasons) are important for women with a child having reached the age of three, who are facing the decision whether or not they should continue taking care of the child full-time even after their parental leave. They are less significant for those who start working even before their parental leave entitlement has expired and the least important for those who stay at home the longest. Women returning earlier or when the child is three years old often realize or have been made aware of the problems posed by the return to the labour market, should they decide not to claim their entitlement to the same job after the parental leave. They try to prevent the difficulties by ending their parental leave early or by accepting a new and interesting job offer. Most of them consider that the parental benefit does not adequately compensate for the work income lost due to childcare. As compared to the rest, the women returning before the end of the parental leave tend to be motivated by the need of maintaining their skills and the contact with the profession, their clients, colleagues, etc. On the other hand, the mothers who stay on parental leave the longest are

those who are the most family and motherhood oriented. However, all the aspects that have been mentioned so far have been largely subjective.

As for external factors that are involved, the most frequent reason delaying the return to work is, according to the respondents, the lack of interest on the part of the ex-employer in having the mother back, which can be due to changes in objective circumstances but also to more or less apparent discriminatory practices. The next most common external circumstance is the availability and accessibility of daily childcare facilities. A sufficient offer promotes earlier returns, while an insufficient offer results in the opposite. Many women delaying their return to work are motivated by the parental benefit, however we do not know to what extent the benefit tends to be an adequate compensation of the mothers' work incomes and to what extent it is a more or less significant complement of other kinds of income (partner's salary, money the woman earns on the side, etc.).

Our research has shown that it is more common for mothers to stay at home with the child after the child has reached the age of three, rather than going to work when the child is younger. However, the time spent at home after this "age limit" is usually not too long, even though it varies considerably. In general, though, it becomes shorter with every child. Moreover, the duration of the parental leave is very much dependent of the mother's education and skills – the more educated she is, the less time she tends to spend on parental leave. Basically, women occupying jobs requiring higher qualifications devote less time to their parental leave than women at worker positions or less demanding jobs. Undoubtedly, to some extent, it has to do with professional self-fulfilment, but also with the incomes that the respondents can earn at their respective work positions.

Furthermore, women with a university degree return more often to the same employer after parental leave, as compared to women with lower education. Apart from women who go on to their next maternity/parental leave or who have not worked before their last maternity leave, the difference between women with various education levels is considerable. While only 26% of women with primary education or vocational training return to their last employer before the child reaches the age of three, the figure is 63% for university educated women (see Chart 2).

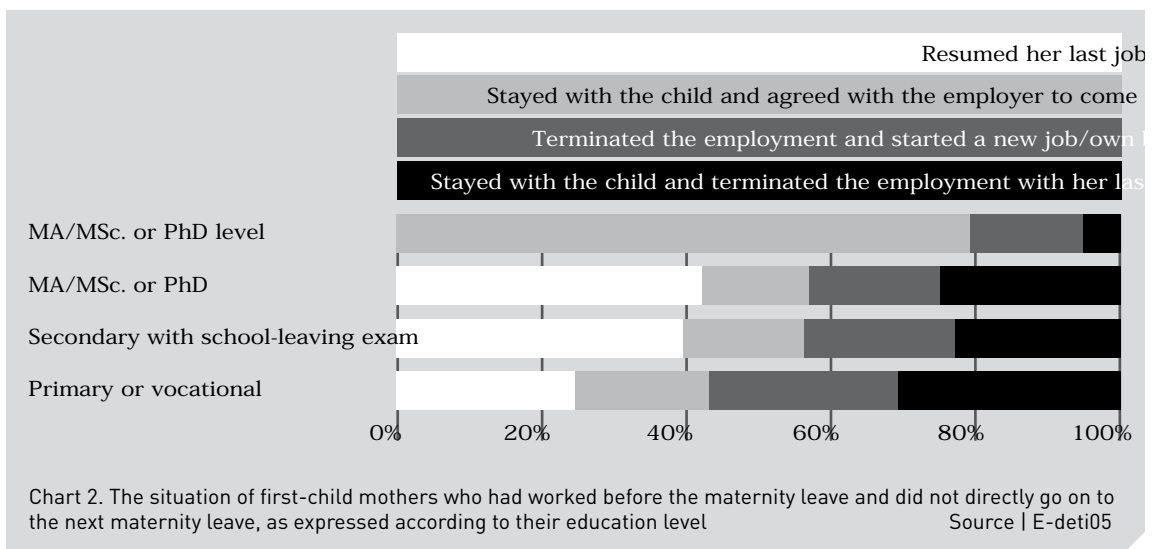
In total, almost 80% of women holding a university degree come to an agreement with their ex-employer and return to their old jobs, as opposed to only 43% of women with primary education or vocational training. Therefore, education and skill do not only affect the duration of parental leave and subsequent full-time childcare, but also the possibilities for the women to resume their old jobs and be useful to the employers again. Female professionals are obviously more motivated to come back to their last employer, and the employers apparently try harder not to lose their skilled employees.

Revenues – another determinant that is usually observed – do matter to a certain extent, but only as regards certain specific indicators. Our survey showed that the mother's current net work income is relevant. However, this result should be interpreted as confirming the link with education and skill, rather than showing that the woman's pre-maternity leave income has an influence on when the woman will go back to work. Moreover, no relevance of the household income was proven, as its effect on the behaviour studied is not direct and the part it plays among other factors is minor.

Higher education and qualification, implying higher salaries, is a motivation for women not to stay on maternity leave for too long; at the same time, or partly for that very reason, it improves the woman's prospects to find a universally satisfactory job even while she tries to tackle work-family balance issues. Presumably, in at least some jobs of a more or less qualified nature, an earlier return contributes to better employment of the women.

For some women, however, a successful return to the labour market is not a priority. The surveys also showed that the women who stay at home longer are those who prefer to see their mother role as complementary to that of the breadwinner father, in other words they are women who have a "traditional" attitude to motherhood. The mother's family situation is relevant, too – single or widowed mothers return to the labour market earlier.

Mothers and fathers are entitled to parental leave with children younger than three. What, then, do mothers do at the time of their first child's third birthday? About one fourth returns to their last employer and another 12% agrees with the last employer to come back later (Chart 3). 18% of the women terminate their employment and stay at home with the child, while 20% also stay



at home, the reason being another maternity leave with their next child. About 15% of the women find another job or they set up their own business after the maternity leave, and the remaining 10% face a more difficult situation than the rest as they had not worked before the child was born and they have no job to come back to.

A circumstance contributing to a better balance between work and family responsibilities is keeping in touch with the profession or the employer while taking care of the small child full-time. Current legislation makes this possible by setting looser conditions for simultaneous parental leave or parental benefit and gainful activity. In theory, many various options are possible, but their practical application is rare.

Extract from an interview with employers concerning early return from maternity/parental leave:

Respondent: ... the thing is that they usually try to keep the job I guess. ... they are often worried that if they leave... even though we take employees to stand in for people on maternity or parental leave, on temporary contracts... But they [the women on maternity and parental leave] follow where the company is going. And they really keep an eye on it. When they see what's going on, how the company is doing, they just want to get back. Especially at this time, because they want to be in a part [of the company] that is newly created or reassigned. Because if they are not there, they stay here and when they come back [after parental leave], the new company has no obligation to them. And the company can't employ them... . So nowadays it's really topical, those who want [job security] come back even earlier, but the average is, there are those who had been at home a year ago and now they're back.

Extract from an interview with employers concerning the solutions for returning from maternity/parental leave:

Respondent: What sometimes happens is that the position is cancelled while the mother is on parental leave.

Interviewer: What do you do then?

Respondent: We are a fair company, so what we do is that when the mother comes back, she receives a notice. She stays at home for three months, we pay her, and if she is entitled to days off, she also gets days off. But it's not like we pay the days off, she gets her severance payment though. But we never do what happens in other companies, where they tell her that they could offer her an inferior job, hoping that she will refuse to avoid paying the severance payment, no way. We aren't even in a position to do it, because this thing I have here is an organisational structure where it's impossible to say "we offer you a cleaning lady job" that we don't have at all.

Respondent: ... well, when she's at home [the woman on maternity and parental leave], there are efforts to save, you know, people and money, and the position can be cancelled. She gets her severance payment and the work is split among others.

Interviewer: OK. Do you think that the women are happy when they get the severance payment and have, so to say, nowhere to go?

Respondent: I think so. Well, nobody has complained and said they wanted their job back. They are happy to get some money.

Interviewer: OK.

Respondent: As I say, it's not easy, when she lives I don't know where and she has to leave the kid somewhere. I don't know about you but I had reduced working hours and at two o'clock I already had to run to pick up the child at kindergarten. The time it takes her to get there, and you also have to spend some time with the kid...

Sick leave for family care purposes in practice

Despite our attempt to use diverse data sources, it was impossible for us to find out details about the person taken care of under Section 127 of the Labour Code that stipulates the entitlement to sick leave for family care purposes. As employers do not record information on whom the person taking this leave takes care of, we do not know exact figures on the extent to which care is taken of a child under ten years of age and to which it is another family member. However, it was confirmed that care of children under ten predominates. For older children or other family mem-

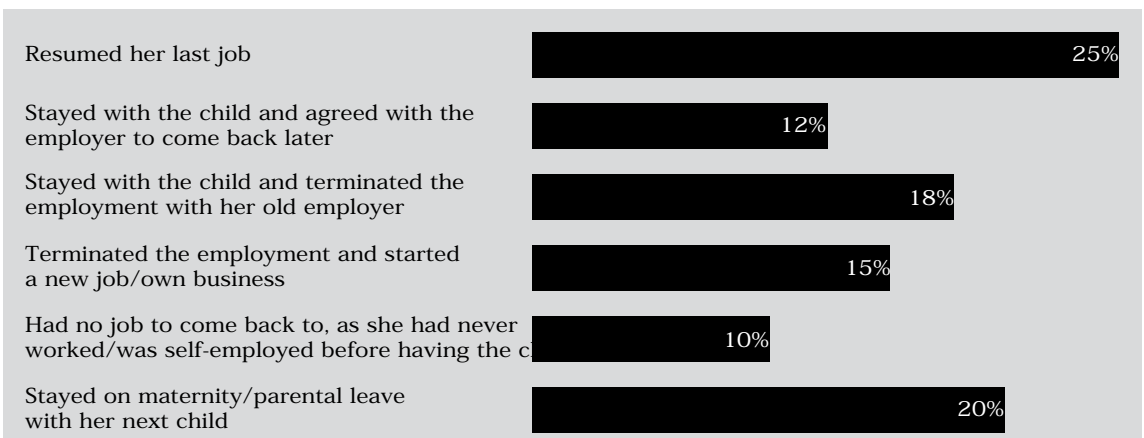


Chart 3. Mothers' employment situation at the time of their first child's 3rd birthday

Source | E-deti05

bers, the leave is taken rather exceptionally (in about 10% of all cases).

Nevertheless, we found more detailed information on the division of responsibilities in this respect between women and men. The employers stated that in the first half of 2005, 11% of all employed women and 4% of all employed men took sick leave for family care purposes. Similarly, among working parents with children under ten who take sick leave for family care purposes, women predominate over men (76% and 38% respectively). As opposed to men, women tend to take sick child leave more often. Likewise, as opposed to men, relatively more women use the maximum number of days guaranteed for sick leave for family care purposes. It is probable that men tend to take sick leave for family care purposes to help take care of the sick child temporarily, but not so often to stay at home with the sick child (family member) for a longer period of time. Furthermore, the maximum number of sick leave for family care purposes days is taken considerably less often in companies mostly employing persons with higher education. Even the share of women among parents with children younger than ten taking sick leave for family care purposes is lower in these companies.

According to the respondents, in almost 90% of the families it is mostly the mother who takes care of the sick child (Chart 4); in two thirds of those cases it is exclusively the mother, in one third of the families she takes turns with her partner or another person. Where both parents work, it “only” happens in one half of the families that the woman takes care of the sick child on an exclusive basis, in one fourth of the cases the man sometimes participates and in the remaining fourth it is another person. For 84% women, the (alleged) reason for the partner not (or hardly ever) being involved in caring of the sick child is financial.

The share of other persons taking care of the sick child is motivated by value preferences or larger possibilities on the part of a person other than the working mother. Where the mother does not provide care for the sick child predominantly or at all, it is usually the father or another person who assumes the responsibility. The main motives include their own interest and time possibilities that outweigh the mother’s workload and the financial disadvantage. Among other persons taking care of the sick child, the respondents tend to mention the child’s grandparents.

Working parents have a few other work-related options to ensure that their sick child will be taken care of. These options include working from home and flexi-time, however they are used exceptionally. The financial support during sick leave for family care purposes is (almost) always drawn by two thirds of employed women and sometimes by one fourth. On the other hand, 83% of employed men never use their sick child benefit (Chart 4). This is mostly the case in households where it is exclusively the woman who takes care of sick children. And this fact, in turn, is

one of the main reasons why the man does not use this option. Otherwise, financial reasons are predominant over the employer’s objections. As compared to fathers, only one mother out of ten never asks the employer for sick leave for family care purposes. To take care of their sick children, these women take days off, they work from home and, most importantly, they adjust their working hours.

On average, more than one half of all parents (59% of women and 73% of men) draw the benefit for no more than one calendar week each time the child under 10 years of age is sick, the most frequent sick child care period being five to seven calendar days.

For the employer, it is necessary to find a suitable organisation arrangement in the situation where the need arises and he is legally obliged to grant sick leave for family care purposes to the employee. Normally, the employer does not incur any extra costs when granting this leave, as the benefit drawn by the employee is paid by the sickness insurance. However, the parent’s absence at work can imply other issues for the employer and needs to be dealt with. In bigger organisations, where many employees are absent at the same time, it is not necessarily very difficult, as the employee can be temporarily replaced by another, or the most urgent work can be temporarily split among other colleagues, or the company can simply wait for the person to come back to work. If the employer allows for a certain form of time and work flexibility, the employee can easily compensate for the lost time later, which reduces the need for taking sick leave for family care purposes (Hein 2005:109). Unfortunately, Czech employers do not realize this very often.

According to the employers’ experience, the employees do not take sick leave for family care purposes too often and they definitely do not take advantage it. The absence rate due to sick leave for family care purposes is about one tenth of the absence rate due to sickness leave. Even in companies that do not translate absence into salaries, the employees try to take sick leave for family care purposes as rarely as possible. The main reason mentioned by the employers is unquestionably financial loss, as the benefit provided by the sickness insurance system is always considerably lower than the employee’s salary. Another decision-making factor for the parents is performance pressure and teamwork – knowing that the employee’s absence will have a substantial impact on their colleagues’ workload can mean looking for other arrangements and limiting the absence.

Therefore, depending on circumstances and possibilities, the parents use various other strategies. Above all, the parents (again, mostly mothers) take days off to take care of the sick child. This option is widely used especially when the sickness is short or when the parent can combine the holiday with other strategies (getting additional free days, care ensured by another person, etc.). This option can be handily put to use when the

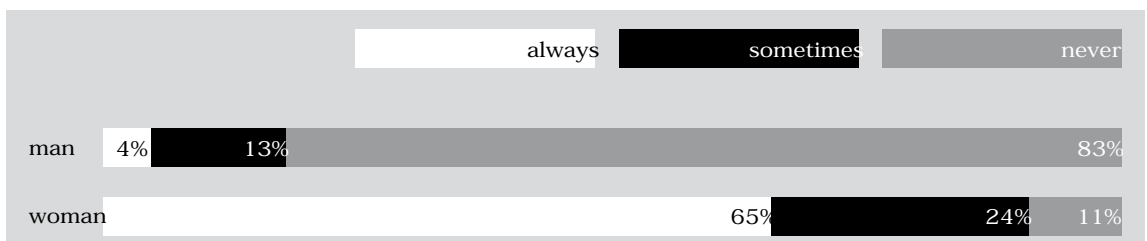


Chart 4. Using sick child leave to provide care for a child younger than 10, as against gender Source | E-deti05

parents work twelve-hour shifts – they can swap shifts with colleagues and stay at home if necessary.

Extract from an interview with employers:

Respondent 1: I think they used to use it somehow in the past, but now they make other arrangements so they do not have to use it.

Interviewer: You mean the [sick family member] leave?

Respondent 1: Yes, they use it very rarely.

Respondent 2: Sometimes they don't even want to use it, as they don't want to have problems.... So what they do is that they work extra hours later, they take days off, or they take turns with their husband.

Respondent 1: Now that we have five weeks [of holiday], everybody uses this solution of course.

Respondent 2: Being on sick child leave is really not the same at all, because the [financial] support is low and if she has other responsibilities she can't afford it.

Respondent 1: But if you look here at the figures [numbers of employers who took sick leave for family care purposes in the first semester], you see clearly that in comparison, the figures are low.

Respondent 2: That's one thing, the responsibilities, and there's also the workplace environment, there's quite an efficiency pressure, performance pressure, and if you're absent too often then what can happen is that =

Respondent 1: = It's teamwork, and you are always part of the team.

Respondent 2: The person is just not there, and to be honest, people just don't like them, because they're always absent, so everybody thinks twice about it. The relationships in the workplace are very important. So they try to find another way.

Respondent 1: And the salary is also a lot of money and she [the mother] definitely doesn't like to lose it.

Respondent 2: The salary and the performance definitely play a major part in why people choose another option in taking care of the child.

Employers' attitude to parents of small children

The qualitative research showed that the attitude big companies have to employing parents with small children was fair, in principle – as compared to other employees, parents were not manifestly discriminated against. However, from what the women and job centre representatives said, it is clear that discriminatory practices against women with small children do exist in the labour market. Possibly, they are more frequent in smaller companies and organisations, where the absence of each employee is more noticeable. Moreover, among the companies that were willing to participate in the research, the share of the “fair” ones was probably higher.

On the other hand, however, it is clear that in most cases the parents do not enjoy any specific advantages either, and except the statutory measures (maternity and parental leave, sick leave for family care purposes, and possibly granting leave in view of securing the health and other important needs of the family), the employers are not very helpful in contributing to family and work balance. Parenthood and related care responsibilities, especial-

ly for small children, is not a factor motivating the employer to arrange such conditions for the employees to help them balance their work and family lives. For the employer, it is the employee who should adjust to the working hours and the performance requirements.

Nevertheless, parenthood and childcare responsibilities can be taken into account on lower levels, for instance within work teams, based on an agreement of a small collective and a decision of their direct supervisor. The possibilities for solutions of this kind are limited, however, and they mostly consist in time flexibility or swapping work shifts with colleagues, if this does not pose any risk to collective work. Usually, this applies to exceptional situations (sick child, need to take the child somewhere, etc.), rather than helping parents on a daily basis. Only in very few cases is it possible to adjust the employees' working hours on demand, so that they can balance their family care and work responsibilities more efficiently.

Most employers demand that the employees adapt wholly to their schedules and needs (based on the production process rhythm or the clients), the employees' personal and family matters being disregarded. At the same time, from their experience, the employers presume that any childcare related requests will be made by mothers rather than fathers. The question that is yet to be answered is how the employers would react if the fathers asked for parental leave, sick leave for family care purposes and adjusted working hours for childcare reasons more often. In some companies, this might pose a problem and the men might be dissuaded from these intentions by the employers. On the other hand, the experience with the fact that family responsibilities (especially childcare) affect the work life of mothers more often and more considerably sometimes leads to covert discrimination against women (especially mothers with small children) in the labour market.

Several factors would contribute to reducing the discriminatory practices against mothers with small children. One of them is for example a more considerable involvement of fathers in childcare and household responsibilities, leading to less frequent absence of mothers from work, as the father could sometimes take over the necessary full-time childcare (parental leave, taking care of a sick child). The employer, then, would not be so certain that a mother with a small child or children will take more statutory leave and will be absent more often than other employees, just because she is a mother. Moreover, the absence rate due to sickness leave is much higher than that caused by sick leave for family care purposes (mostly to provide care for a sick child). The employers should realize that parents with young children are stable employees who rarely change their jobs voluntarily, and if they get the possibility of juggling their family and work responsibilities, there is no reason why they should be worse workers than those who have no children.

The legislation should provide employers with more options with a view to helping the employees to balance their family and work responsibilities better. A wider choice would probably improve the relationships between the employers and the employees, as both parties would be able to choose freely among several options according to specific conditions and needs. Strengthening the legal position of mothers against employers substantially would unfortunately, in the Czech Republic, imply the risk that the employers could avoid employing women with young children even more than today. Therefore, widening the range of options should rather involve increasing awareness or sensitivity to the employees' needs on the part of the employers; the happy employees would in turn be more often helpful in relation to the employer and respond to the employer's needs. On that account,

it is desirable to draw attention to the fact that being a family friendly employer can be beneficial to the company prosperity.

As for the employers, any family friendly approaches, based on a better mutual respect for the interests of the employers and the employees and having positive effects for both parties, are non-existent. There is still a lot to do as regards flexible working hours and better employee benefit variety. There is absolutely no initiative in working together with employees on parental leave. Employed parents on parental leave themselves should also be among the stakeholders who can contribute to better conditions for returning to work after parental leave. While still on parental leave, they should try to keep up their skills and the contact with the employer.

Part-time employment and other forms of flexible work arrangements seem to be suitable tools for the women to maintain their position in the work market even in early stages of parenthood where the child is younger than three. In this way, the woman can keep up her skills, which is very beneficial for her later career, especially if she has several children in short intervals and thus can easily stay out of work for six years or even more. The abolishing of the cap on extra money earned during parental leave, valid as of 2004, was indisputably a very good measure. However, to fully meet the needs of the women in question, more childcare facilities for children younger than three should be developed. Moreover, it is indispensable to convince employers that reduced working hours or special employment contracts do pay off for them. Nowadays, in the Czech Republic, these arrangements are rather exceptional.⁸ At the same time, though, it is necessary to eliminate or at least minimise the negative impacts of part-time work translated into inadequately low income, increased demands for social welfare and pensions, labour market segregation, etc.

Notes:

¹ This is confirmed by many other surveys, e.g. Čermáková 2002; Chaloupková, Šalamounová 2004; Tuček 1998.

² Some surveys mention up to 90%, e.g. Křížková in: Čermáková 2002: 18.

³ Compare with, for example, Hardarson, O. S., Romans, F. 2005, or Aliaga, Ch. 2005; for more (detailed) data for the CR, see „Organizace práce...”, 2005; for comparison with EU countries see Bastelaer A. V., Vaguer, C. 2004.

⁴ Similar findings showed in other surveys, too – compare with, for example, Ettlerová, Štátná 2006; Kuchařová 2006.

⁵ For more details on the characteristics of families with fathers taking full-time care of children younger than four, see 2005: 13-26.

⁶ The men who have ever taken full-time care of the child are more involved in housework and shopping, but they always share these responsibilities with their partner.

⁷ Women are not very willing to leave their parental leave up to their partners, see Kuchařová et al. 2006; Nešporová 2005: 22-23.

⁸ Hospitals, for example, are exceptional in this respect, as they have good experience with granting reduced working hours. They are often used by women on parental leave, earning some extra money and keeping up their contact with the employer and their professional skill.

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Data sources:

E-deti05: Sample survey “Employment and Childcare”. The target group consisted of mothers aged 20 to 50 living with their husband or partner and having at least one child older than 3 and younger than 10 but no child younger than 3. Other selection criteria included the size of their town of residence and the region. 829 respondents from all over the Czech Republic were addressed in standardised interviews.

E-zam05: Employer survey within the regular Czech Statistical Office business cycle survey carried out in September 2005. This survey was targeted at selected “production sector” companies, i.e. those that operate in industry, construction, trade and certain service sectors. In total, we obtained data from 2202 companies.

E-kval05: Qualitative survey in companies based on non-standardised semi-structured interviews with representatives of 15 employer organisations and job centre staff members from 5 regions with different unemployment rate levels.



**THE RELATIVE POSITION
OF WOMEN ON THE CZECH
LABOR MARKET:
A RESEARCH SUMMARY***

Štěpán Jurajda, CERGE-EI¹

Abstract

In this research summary, I survey a set of new analyses of the relative position of women on the Czech labor market, based on recent micro-level data. The discussion of the results is complemented with brief methodological notes.

1. Introduction

What does the relative position of women on the labor market consist of? A natural start is to focus on the economy-wide relative male/female **employment gap** and on the **gender pay gap**², as well as on the differential propensity of men and women to be employed in specific industries, firms or occupations, termed **gender segregation**. Indeed, much of the existing empirical economic research attempts to provide an understanding of the sources of the observed gender pay gap. In this survey, I provide a brief summary of recent Czech gender-gap research, which follows this basic organization.

What determines the relative position of women on the labor market? First, one may look at the importance of pre-market productive and other characteristics, such as the level of education and the field of study (technical fields versus the humanities), health status, access to health and child care, or occupational and career preferences (inherited versus acquired through gender stereotyping). Second, one is interested in measuring how women are treated on the labor market relative to men; in particular, are they discriminated against by employers in hiring or promotion, and in wage setting?

It is important to consider gender equality as equality of opportunities, not necessarily of outcomes. A fundamental problem in much of the analysis I discuss is its limited ability to separate gender differences in free choice or unobservable skills from discriminatory treatment that women may face on the labor market. Yet, the descriptive analysis summarized here (and based on individual-level representative data capturing the interaction of employers and employees on the labor market) leads to a quantitative understanding of several important sources of the observed gender differences and thus provides useful guidance for the application of anti-discrimination policies.

2. Research Organization and Data

One of the key parameters of the relative standing of women on the labor market is the average pay gap between men and women. However, to approximate more closely what we have in mind when we ask about relative gender-specific wages, one should compare ‘comparable’ male and female workers, i.e. compare the wages of workers employed in the same industry and firm and with the same level of experience and education, etc. Such measuring of the gender pay gap would correspond more closely to the object of the Equal Pay Act. A fundamental problem with finding comparable men and women is the ability to take account of skills that are not observed (i.e. abilities and qualifications that are not captured by simple age and education indicators and therefore not recorded in most data sets). A closely related fundamental problem is that in most countries a large fraction of women does not work and the selection of which women end up being employed is often related to their skill level (observed and unobserved). This issue is at the core of how we interpret the typical measures of gender equality.

The result of most empirical exercises focusing on the relative position of women on a given labor market is some quantification

of the extent of gender segregation and of the gender pay gap. To interpret the size of these measurements, one typically relies on international comparisons. For example, we ask whether a given country has a “better” gender wage gap than other economies. Similarly, we often compare the gap over time within a country. However, such comparisons represent a potentially misleading indicator of differences or changes in discrimination against women if the differences in the relative gender outcomes are driven to a large extent by the variation in the skill structure of female employment participation.

Why should this be the case? If most low-skill (low-educated) women in a given country are not employed, but both low-skill and high-skill men are working, then the gender pay gap will be very small even if there is a substantial degree of discrimination. OECD (2002), a cross-country study based largely on the European Community Household Panel, suggests that cross-country differences in female employment rates are driven mainly by the degree of integration of less-educated, lower-paid women into employment and that such compositional effects are important for understanding international differences in the gender pay gap as well as in the extent of segregation³. Countries with a higher degree of participation of less educated women in employment would therefore be expected to feature a relatively high level of gender segregation and gender wage gap. Similarly for time changes in the gender pay gap: Hunt (2002) suggests that large changes in the observed gender wage gap (even after we attempt to compare comparable male and female workers) can be linked to major changes in the skill structure of female employment in East Germany.

The differences in the level and structure of female labor-market participation can then be either related to discrimination (if women are discriminated against, they may be less likely to participate in the labor market), labor-market institutions (such as high wage floors, which may prevent low-productivity workers from being employed) or be driven by country-specific culture or history⁴.

Hence, before one interprets specific relative outcomes of women on a given labor market, it is useful to put into international perspective the aggregate gender-specific age and education structure as well as the overall level of female employment. The Czech analysis summarized here therefore starts with such comparison in Section 3.1. Next, the presented research focuses on measures of gender occupational segregation and compares the Czech findings to those from other EU economies (Section 3.2). In Section 3.3, I summarize the estimated gender wage gap decompositions for all employees, while Section 3.4 presents such results for managerial occupations. Finally, Section 3.5 discusses the tantalizing results of a direct test for the presence of gender discrimination.

The analysis covered in this survey is primarily based on two data sources: on a firm-level survey providing worker-level wage information and on the Czech Labor Force Survey (LFS), which allows one to study gender employment patterns, but which does not give any wage information⁵. While the LFS data needs little introduction, the wage data is somewhat unusual in the EU context:

The Information System on Average Earnings (ISAE) consists of a sample of firms, each of which reports the hourly wage rates of all of its workers; it is therefore an almost ideal source of information for monitoring the relative wage position of women. First, the data offer well-measured administrative hourly wage rates and hours worked. Second, the data allow for a detailed classification of occupations and industries. Third, the data are close to being

a census for large firms. Fourth, the data allow one to compare the wages of workers of different gender working on the same job (firm and occupation). The key weakness of these data with respect to gender analysis is that there is no information available on the number and age of children and the labor market experience of women⁶.

3. Results

3.1. Aggregate Gender Employment Patterns

Jurajda and Franta (2006) use a decade of Czech LFS data to show that the main reason why the aggregate employment rate in the Czech Republic was higher than that of the EU-15 in 1999 was the higher Czech employment rate of women aged 25-54 with less than a tertiary level of education. They also show that the main reason why the aggregate Czech employment rate is lower in 2004 than in 1999 is the significantly lower employment rate of less than tertiary educated males and females aged 16-24, likely related to higher school enrollment. The international comparisons provided in Jurajda and Franta (2006) provide a backdrop for the gender-gap and segregation results presented below.

3.2 Occupational Gender Segregation

Jurajda and Franta (2006) also present descriptive statistics on the 'femaleness' of specific Czech occupations and then go on to calculate a summarizing measure of gender occupational segregation—the Duncan index of segregation—at various employment divisions. The index slowly declines during the whole period of 1994 to 2004. This decline in gender occupational dissimilarity is driven by changes in the gender composition of occupations, not by a changing occupational structure of the economy. Most importantly, the study finds that occupational gender segregation in the Czech Republic decreases only among those aged under 35, and that this decline is rapid.

This decline makes the Czech degree and structure of occupational gender segregation converge to the EU-15 average because it diminishes the only major difference in segregation between the EU-15 and the Czech Republic observed in a 1999 comparison. Czech occupational gender dissimilarity is more stable for older cohorts where it was already at the EU-15 level in 1999. Finally, Jurajda and Franta (2006) also provide some preliminary evidence linking the occupational gender segregation of young, tertiary-educated people to their gender dissimilarity in subject of study.

3.3 Gender Wage Gap

As was argued in Section 2, the simple overall average wage gap between men and women is not a useful tool for detecting the way women are 'treated' on the labor market. To approximate more closely the potential violations of the Equal Pay Act, one should compare wages of only 'comparable' male and female workers, i.e. those with similar qualifications, performing similar tasks. A simple descriptive way of doing so is made possible by the recent availability of matched employer-employee data, such as the Czech ISAE data, i.e. data where there are several (all) workers available from a given company (employer). Using such data one can compare the wage rates of workers working on the same job, i.e. employed in the same firm in the same detailed occupation. One can take the average wage gap within each such job cell and then average over all job cells in the data. This generates a simple and more useful descriptive gender wage gap measure.

A more general, traditional way of monitoring differences in factors affecting wages between two groups of workers is the estimation of log-wage regression functions (often called Mincerian regressions after Jacob Mincer) that simultaneously quantify the relationship between wages and a set of explanatory factors, such as age and education. Many studies attempting to measure the extent of wage discrimination then follow Oaxaca and Blinder in decomposing the overall mean wage difference between the advantaged, i.e., men, and disadvantaged, i.e., women, into two parts. The first part reflects the difference in average productive endowments of individuals in each group and the second part is due to the differences in the regression coefficients and is often interpreted as being possibly related to gender wage discrimination.

It is important to repeat that a fundamental problem with finding comparable men and women is the ability to take into account skills that are not recorded in most data sets (i.e. abilities and qualifications that are not made apparent by simple age and education indicators). To the extent that some productive factors remain unaccounted for, the remaining 'pure' gender wage gap will provide only an upper bound on the possible extent of discriminatory gender wage differences, i.e. those wage differences that cannot be explained by observed factors.

Jurajda and Munich (2006) use the ISAE data to calculate simple job-cell gender wage gaps and also extend the existing wage gap decompositions for the Czech Republic (by Jurajda, 2003, 2005) using newly available ISAE data from the first quarter of 2004 and they compare them to similar decompositions available for other countries. The new results confirm the earlier findings that about two thirds of the gender wage gap in the enterprise sector of the Czech economy remain unaccounted for even after one monitors all the information available in the data, including the extent of gender segregation. In the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, one can explain only up to 36% of the total log wage gap using a full set of controls consisting of (i) workers' education and age groups, (ii) firm ownership and size categories together with 2-digit industry indicators as well as (iii) the fraction of women in a given 2-digit occupation and the fraction of women in each firm. The majority of the 'explained' part of the gap is attributable to different forms of gender segregation; both forms of segregation considered (at firm and occupation level) are important sources of overall wage differences between men and women.

To generate a consistent time evolution of gender disparities, the study goes on to create a firm-panel sub-sample spanning the first quarters of 2000 to 2004, which comprise 1506 firms in each year. Using this panel data set, Jurajda and Munich (2006) first measure the gender wage gap within 4-digit occupation job cells (groups of workers with the same occupation in the same firm) and find the mean gender wage gap within such job cells to be remarkably stable between 2000 and 2004, at about 11%. Next, they estimate total gender wage gap decompositions on the panel data and also find the gender wage gap to be highly stable both in terms of its overall level and detailed structure.

3.4 Czech Female Managers and Their Wages

There is growing international evidence that women face a 'glass ceiling'—a barrier to career prospects, which precludes them from holding high-paying positions. Of particular general public, as well as academic, interest is the representation of women among top-level managers and their relative wage position⁷. There is so far no evidence on this issue from the post-communist economies of Central Europe, even though the relative pay position of women among the employee workforce has been extensively studied there.

Jurajda and Paligorova (2006) therefore analyze the representation of women and their relative pay in a large sample of Czech top- and lower-level managerial employees from ISAE during 2000-2004. Their managerial gender wage gap decompositions appear to be the first available outside of the most developed economies. Furthermore, unlike the existing literature on gender pay differences among executives, they recognize the adverse consequences of the low and uneven representation of female managers for the standard parametric Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition technique. Parametric assumptions lead to over-estimation of the 'unexplained' component of the gap, i.e. the part of the gap attributable to differences in rewards to individual characteristics and often interpreted as an upper bound on the extent of gender discrimination. They therefore employ a nonparametric matching wage gap decomposition approach.

They find that at 7% women are severely under-represented in top managerial positions in the Czech Republic, and that there is a clear gender divide between lower and top-level managerial ranks, given that the raw average pay gap between men and women increases with the firm hierarchy level. However, their wage-gap decomposition analysis suggests that the size of the wage gap that cannot be linked to observable differences between men and women is quite similar across hierarchies. In other words, after comparing the wage rates of women and men who are comparable in terms of basic demographic characteristics, employer type and within-firm hierarchical position, there remains a gender wage gap of about 20 percent. The key reason for why the relative wage position of Czech female top managers is worse compared to lower-ranking female employees is that they tend not to be present at the top of the highest-paying companies. The policy implication of these findings is that equality-enhancing policies aimed at the highly visible group of executives are more likely to be effective in equalizing wages of male and female top managers if they focus on promotion policies in the most prestigious companies.

3.5 A Direct Test for Discrimination

The analysis of gender wage gaps or gender segregation presented above faces a fundamental difficulty when trying to disentangle the gender differences in outcomes driven by gender discrimination from those based on different free choice or unobservable gender differences in skills and preferences. However, one can conduct a direct test for employer gender discrimination based on the Becker (1971) theory of discrimination. The theory implies that if equally productive men and women are paid differently, then those firms that have a higher share of women in its workforce should be earning higher profits. To test for the presence of such a relationship, one should regress some measure of firm profitability on firm-specific profit-determinants such as industry, size or age as well as on the firm's female employee proportion in total employment. Evidence that among otherwise comparable firms those that employ more women enjoy higher profits would then be consistent with gender wage discrimination.

Becker also argues that if employer taste-based discrimination leads to hiring less able men rather than more able women, then such employers will fail to thrive in a competitive market environment. Similarly, competitive conditions should limit employers' ability to wage discriminate. Hence, one should look for the presence of a positive link between firm profitability and gender composition of firm employment only among firms that enjoy positive economic profits and/or have significant market power, as such employers have the economic room to discriminate. Indeed, the findings of several papers based on U.S. data are in accordance with the predictions of the theory⁸.

Jurajda (2006) provides such evidence on the firm-level link between the share of women and profitability for a recent sample of Czech firms. A major part of the work summarized in this paper consisted of the process of merging firm-level financial reports to worker-level data for each firm. Unfortunately, this process resulted in only small and unrepresentative samples, rendering the evidence merely tantalizing. The empirical results suggest that among firms with higher profits and/or wages, that is among firms with presumably higher product market power, those with a higher fraction of female employees enjoy higher profitability. However, one cannot draw strong conclusions based on these Czech results because of the small and non-representative nature of the firm sample used. The results should therefore be thought of as motivating future data research directed at creating better matched employer-employee data. Such research could be easily based on the ISAE wage survey used here and the firm census data reported to the Czech Statistical Office, which owns both data sources.

4. Conclusions

The set of studies of the relative position of women on the Czech labor market surveyed here provides a detailed account of Czech employment and wage gender patterns, based on both household and firm-level surveys analyzed at the micro level, using state-of-the-art econometric techniques. They highlight the fact that the overall gender wage gap is not a useful measure for guiding gender policies. Instead, the research focuses on the gender pay gap between highly comparable workers and quantifies the part of the overall gap that is attributable to different forms of gender segregation. The studies also focus on the employment patterns of both gender groups, particularly on occupational segregation.

The results suggest that the overall extent of gender segregation in the Czech Republic is similar to that observed in EU-15 economies, thanks in part to the recent decline in occupational segregation for younger workers. Czech gender pay differences appear quite stable and among their important sources are occupational as well as firm-level segregation. When comparing the wage rates of women and men of the same age, education and employer type, we find that women's wages are about one quarter lower than men's and that about a third of this difference can be attributed to different forms of segregation. There is a significant pay gap even among men and women working in the same firm in the same very detailed occupation. Finally, one of the studies covered in this summary focuses on managers and finds that while women are well represented in the lower-managerial ranks of Czech firms, only about 7 percent of top-level Czech managers are women. The overall pay gap is higher for top managers than for lower-level workers, but this appears to be due mainly to the highest paying firms having fewer female top managers, rather than to a different 'treatment' of women at various firm hierarchy levels.

Notes:

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¹ CERGE-EI is a joint workplace of the Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education, Charles University, and the Economics Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

² The gender employment (wage) gap is the difference between the employment (wage) rate of men and women.

³ Olivetti and Petrongolo (2005) reach the same conclusion regarding the gender pay gap. Along similar lines, Dolado et al. (2002) suggest that the reason why among the EU-15 countries gender segregation is highest in the Nordic economies is that they feature an unusually high female share on employment in female-dominated occupations such as education, health care, and some social services which, at the same time support the high labor market participation of women in these countries.

⁴ See Algan and Cahuc (2005) for related evidence on cultural determinants of cross-country differences in the employment rates of women.

⁵ The collection of the EU-SILC longitudinal data was just starting when this research was conducted.

⁶ The data would also make for a stronger analysis of gender differences if it were possible to follow workers over time within or even across firms, i.e. if there was available a person-specific identifier, and if the data was merged with firm-level performance indicators collected by the Statistical Office.

⁷ For results from the U.S. see Bell (2005) and Bertrand and Hallock (2001).

⁸ See, e.g., Ashenfelter and Hannan (1986), Black and Strahan (2001), or Hellerstein, Neumark, and Troske (2002).

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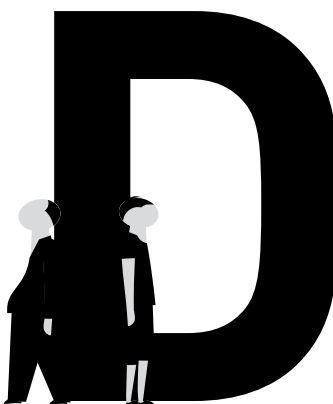
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A large, bold, black letter 'D' is the central focus. To its left, two small, black silhouettes of a man and a woman are standing side-by-side, appearing to be looking at the letter. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right. The background is plain white.

D EVELOPING EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
WOMEN AND MEN:
A STUDY ON HR MANAGERS'
NEEDS, THE CONSTRAINTS
AND THE OPTIONS

Kateřina Machovcová – Gender Studies, o.p.s..

The study on HR managers' needs was carried out by Gender Studies, o.p.s. together with SC&C agency in August 2005 – January 2006. While the study is not representative, the statements it includes are often supported by additional indirect experience, and at the analysis stage they were compared with specialized literature concerning equal opportunities for women and men. Therefore, we believe that the issues raised and the recommendations following from the group meetings and the interviews can be relevant even in a more general context.

Above all, we were interested in personal experience and the attitudes to the practical implementing of the principles of equal opportunities for men and women, and what we found were interesting and inspiring views on factoring gender¹ perspective into human resources management. Most respondents had on-hand experience with measures implementing equal opportunities for women and men, providing interesting and practical information on how the issue can be linked to other challenges involved in HR management.

By way of introduction, the text describes the methodology related aspects of the study. It goes on to present a global summary of some practical recommendations, followed by study outputs broken down against HR management processes, such as recruitment or work load setup. Each category includes quotations from the survey, completed by a simple interpretation and the recommendations inferred from the statements.

Survey Description

The objective of our survey was to get a global idea about on-hand experiences with implementing policies regarding equal opportunities for women and men, identify areas that pose problems and find good practice examples. The information we collected can be an inspiration for those who have just started implementing equal opportunities in their companies.

The main data collection method was that of focus groups, completed by semi-structured interviews. The participants we addressed included persons working in positions involving human resources management, or in other management positions related to the issue. Active interest in equal opportunities issues was an important prerequisite for participation. In total, the survey included thirteen respondents, ten of which coming from companies with more than fifty employees. Among the companies represented, three were all-Czech. The companies operate in sectors such as IT, economic consulting, manufacturing, trade and services.

Results of the Research

Summary of Recommendations

Analyse the company's situation and its market position: Start by analysing the situation in the given company, then go on to analyse the relevant labour market segment; get all necessary data and prepare information on the current state of things in the company or the sector. Factor in future trends and demographic developments. Try to make the company attractive for the employees.

Consider the area influence: You can consider either your location within a specific town district or within a region in the Czech Republic. Be conscious of the differences, for example between the capital and smaller towns, in aspects such as the unemployment rate, education structure, life strategies or service accessibility.

Work on sensitivity towards equal opportunities: Raise awareness in this respect and take action against gender stereotypes – do not foster them by introducing measures such as life-work balance programmes offered only to women and not to men. Apply gender mainstreaming², and promote female solidarity and cooperation within the company. Learn to harness differences between people – they should be an asset and inspiration, not a source of conflict.

Lay emphasis on efficient work organisation: Improve work organisation principles, exploit and enhance leadership potential, focus on training management in psychosocial skills, improve time management, become familiar with current concepts (life-work balance, etc.³).

Look for continuity: Link equal opportunities with other issues, introduce gender perspective in a programme that is already being carried out or that is important for the company (such as retention or motivation programmes) to make it more efficient, extend its accessibility and availability to all groups of employees.

Evaluate work performance in a transparent manner: Appraise work performance against results, quality, efficiency and the amount of the work done, not against misleading indicators such as the number of hours spent in the workplace or weekend work.

Take action: Take an active approach against discrimination, consider introducing quotas, and set measurable goals for the company. Set up a working party to address the issue, monitor the situation and communicate both externally and internally.

Communicate with the employees: Get feedback from the employees. Be sure that the employees know about the programmes and can comment on them. Be aware of the fact that it is impossible to accommodate everybody. Explain the purpose of the programmes, stressing that they do not imply discrimination against other employee groups but are a form of promoting equal opportunities and tackling stereotypes. Be receptive to what the employees need and support their own initiative.

Gather information: Take part in conferences on equal opportunities issues – while you cannot apply everything in each company, it is good to know what works for other firms. Look for possibilities of sharing best practices, try to find examples from abroad and draw on them for inspiration in defining your own way.

Get your own experience: Get started right now and get your own experience as soon as possible, no matter how minor changes you introduce – the statutory obligation to respect equal opportunities principles applies to all companies. Start with one thing that makes sense for the employer, follow it through, document it and make it visible.

Get to the media: Become a role model for others, become a leader in newly introduced concepts, take part in specialised contests, such as The Best Czech Company with Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Contest⁴.

Recruitment

According to the statements in both groups, discriminatory practices can occur as early as the recruitment stage. One of the participants, who has worked in recruitment for several years now, says the following about her experience with her previous employers: “...**The management or the companies themselves would specify requirements... nobody would tell you this in writing, but the discrimination was obvious, there was a lot of age discrimination but also gender discrimination, it was implicit...**” It is then up to the recruiter to decide whether they will offer to the management a person who does not necessari-

ly comply with the discriminatory criteria (specific age range, only men or women, etc.) but who meets all qualification related and personal pre-requisites for the given position and can help diversify a team that is too homogenous – an opinion of an older and more experienced person or a single mother juggling both childcare and her job can help prevent certain risks or appeal to a new target group of customers. That is one of the reasons why employers should aim for heterogeneous teams: **“In our view, what matters is day-to-day teamwork. Nowadays, in a workplace, you hardly ever find an independent profession where there is no need to work within a team. In fact, any profession we have is a part of a larger unit and each part of the unit contributes to meeting a common challenge...”** The diversity concept can also cover considerable variety of character or attitudes between individual women or men; there is no point in including one woman (one man) in a team and expecting them to represent the relevant group⁵. At least a one-third gender representation is desirable, covering a sufficient range of views, and such a team set-up is really beneficial for the employer, as it makes it possible to avoid simplistic and clichéd attitudes influenced by generalising gender stereotypes⁶. They are the reason why men tend to be considered more suitable employees than women (McElhinny, 1998, quote as in Mills, 2003), regardless the value of the given person's potential.

Targeted recruitment of women (men)⁷ in fields traditionally considered as more appropriate for the opposite gender (e.g. the stereotype that women are unsuitable for technical professions, and men are unsuitable for care and social services or for working with young children⁸) can provide solutions to an active approach to bridging the gaps. The challenge consists in being able of taking a different view on the situation – for instance, in IT: **“...it even can be good to employ persons without technical thinking... because our customers have no technical thinking either, or just some of them have...”**

The recruitment process (and a successful participation) involves assessment of the motivation to work in the given position. Women must often meet higher demands, which is apparent from what a female manager said: **“When I am to choose between a man and a woman for the same position, the woman needs to do more to convince the employer that she can do it... show that she can rely on the grandma, that she is bright... maybe then she can get the job...”**. It is questionable, therefore, if that which plays a more important part in practice is really low motivation on the part of the women who do not seek professional fulfilment and just work for financial reasons, or higher expectations on the part of the employers, who take for granted that the women are not motivated enough, and they consider a female employee as a risk.

Recommendations:

Try and push through general recruitment, organise recruitment combining various methods, involve more persons. Assess the candidate's qualities objectively against the position: define the expectations from the candidate for the given position in advance (specific skills, competence, and knowledge), set up evaluation rules and exclude any possibility of biased judgment.

Draw up targeted campaigns focusing on women and underrepresented groups in general.

Obligation to respect equal opportunities

It is mainly branches of foreign corporations from the West that tend to assume the mother company's practices and take over equality and diversity programmes, thus respecting equal opportunities for women and men. Based on an analysis, such internal guideline conceptions are adjusted to Czech environment, for instance to Czech legislation governing the position of parents⁹.

Any obligations to respect equal opportunities for women and men should be set out at a very general level, and defined as principles rather than specific provisions. The research participants voiced their concerns that too complex rules would be too hard to remember for the employees and therefore they would do a dis-service; efficient examples of best practices and their promotion are considered to be more important. Nevertheless, in principle, rules are perceived as useful: **“...you can refer to them... it's something that reflects the changes in the company, it's continuous...”**

Likewise, rules can address individual areas at issue; for example, they are a way of preventing sexual harassment¹⁰, which is considered by the participants to be an issue that often tends to be played down.

Rules:

Commit to understandable and simple principles of respecting equal opportunities.

Pass on the employees any information concerning discrimination; prevent complications by setting up processes for dealing with issues and complaints.

Adjusted working hours

Some participants enrolled in the study had experience with an open offer of various flexible arrangements including fully flexible working hours. These options are often used by women on maternity or parental leave¹¹. The respondents perceive the issue as complex, as applying such measures involves both positive and risky factors. The following statement points to certain negative aspects that must be considered while deciding on reduced working hours combined with work from home. **“... some colleagues from the foreign branch work half-time – some of them complement each other but mostly they have their own tasks... If they really work half-time and stick to that... the work is so dynamic that having to wait a whole day... I can feel myself that I'm kind of upset with them – even though I know they have a rational reason, as they work half-time –, because my work is blocked by the fact that I have to wait half a day... on the other hand, we all have laptops and most of us have internet access at home, so what usually happens is that I do see them sending e-mails at half past eleven at night, so their half-time may be less than eight hours a day, but it definitely is more than four hours a day. Their salary is lower, but they still need to do the tasks...”** Part-time work regulations define what is covered by the job description at a given position, minimising the above-mentioned risks.

One of the female participants commented on possible reasons for why the management is not necessarily willing to introduce flexible measures: **“Managers can't work with the fact that the woman is there for them only half a day, three days a week... I think the main problem is work organisation and leadership, that's where we still totally lag behind and for me it's**

the main reason why women can't work part-time or flexitime... in my department I wanted to create a part-time job, I wanted to try what it's like to manage a person like that. I have an assistant position for six hours a day, and it wasn't easy, but the assistant is great... At first the management was difficult. I have to give her tasks a day in advance, I must make a programme. It's a problem for people who can't organise their working time... Paying attention to equal opportunities requires an overall improvement of the management work; enough time must be devoted to meaningful planning and time management.

In some sectors, flexible measures may seem impossible to apply, but examples of companies from a similar sector that have introduced innovative measures suitable for the given context usually are available. Some flexibility in working hours can be based on the seasonal character of the work: **"For instance during school holidays, the women stay at home with the children and they do not work; they only work in the periods they're needed..."**

Sharing one position by two persons is another flexible solution: **"If we manage to get two women for the job, it's a win-win situation. Because the women are grateful to be able to devote their time to their families, so they are happy with the part-time job, and the manager is grateful too, because the women often cover more work than one woman would."** Good experience with sharing one job shows that flexible measures can in fact be an advantage for both parties. The parent stays in touch with the profession while making some extra money and the company does not lose a quality worker.

The following exchange about the issue of overtime work requirements as a gender discrimination factor touches upon a phenomenon described in literature, whereby manhood characteristics, as traditionally understood, are, without deeper reflection, considered as a norm that women have to adapt to (Křížková, 2004).

A: "It's not only about overtime work, but also about participating in various company events. When you work in a certain position, you're expected to play golf with clients on weekends or go to dinners in the evenings, and women necessarily need to be much more careful in deciding where to put their time that should be reserved for family, the partner or herself, whether they should devote it to the employer, the job, the career, which is something that is..."

B: "But if I may, this is no discrimination. If we want equal opportunities, let's make them equal all-in, even though it involves all these things. Otherwise it would be affirmative action, if this was taken into account..."

The behaviour in question (e.g. weekend work), then, is not perceived as specifically masculine¹², but as professional – as a pattern for the required work style, workplace organisation, normal relationships, etc. Maintaining these principles, valid for all those who participate in the labour market, but issued from male standards corresponding to the traditional division of gender roles (male breadwinner and female care person), means, in principle, putting the women in a situation where they have to adopt features normally expected from men as a pre-requisite for success. Implementing equal opportunities involves an effort to dismantle this distorted organisational structure, enable women and men to step out of the role as a breadwinner and a care person (who is nevertheless usually a breadwinner too, in Czech conditions) and adopt alternative role models, more acceptable for many.

Another point that this seems to reveal is the tendency to see parenthood-related behaviour and issues as something "extra" at

work that can be addressed but is not a part of the basic structure as such. Again, this points to the idea of a working place issued from masculine standards: **"...what is standard in our society, whether it is male values that are considered to have a higher status than female values, and whether equality refers to the male things..."**

Recommendations:

Apply flexible measures, but adjust the conditions so that they are straightforward and acceptable both for the employee and the employer.

Be conscious of the risks posed by flexible measures and do not expect them to always be the suitable solution.

Pay attention to work flexibility, good organisation, planning and time management, and respect the conditions you agreed (e.g. as regards the working hours).

Career advancement and remuneration

Equal opportunities for women and men are stimulated in a structured and transparent environment where it is impossible to do promotions against unclear criteria and informal relations. **"When planning career growths, we do not distinguish between men and women – each employee has equal conditions and they define their path for one year, they decide how it should develop and specify their own resources, workshops and training..."** In some cases, support for development of female potential is underestimated – one of the female HR managers comments on talent programmes as follows: **"I can easily prove that this is something where men are privileged, because we're talking about the middle level and for somebody this is the highest level they can reach."** For women who already have attained a certain position, the situation is not easy either: **"I think that a woman who wants to be an IT manager must be like five times better than a man to get the job, because it's taken for granted that female gender is no suitable qualification for any technical profession."** Another possible barrier was mentioned by a female manager working in a rather small company, who said that the hardest thing for her was to learn how to manage men, be respected by people who are often older than herself, and imagine their way of thinking in order to be able to work with them. Moreover, the masculine work style setup makes the equal opportunities efforts more difficult, as one of the female HR managers says: **"We don't have the right role models to show others the ways to go... Some successful women have even been counter-productive as role models, as they have had to be pushier than men; they have had to be able to get rid of the female role..."**

The above-mentioned examples are all covered by the umbrella term "glass ceiling"¹³; practical observations show that women often manage to climb up the corporate ladder and become managers, but while their skills suggest further advancement possibilities, the women cannot develop any further, as if there was a "glass ceiling" over their heads – an invisible but real barrier. One of the participants mentioned an example to support this, saying that among fresh graduates, they select an almost equal number of men and women, but in management positions the percentage is lower and in top management there are no women at all.¹⁴

Targeted initiation of mutual gatherings and selected training programmes can be a way of supporting female cooperation within the company. By way of example, a female group operating

in one of the companies included in the study brings together women who were appointed by the management and who have been confirmed by the assessment centre¹⁵. The programme consists in regular training and teamwork. As the HR manager points out, **“women have definitely become more visible thanks to this”**; moreover, the initiative has met with very positive overall response by the foreign mother company. They succeeded in drawing attention to the potential of capable women in the company; some of them were promoted to manager positions and they continue serving as role models for others.

Compulsory training can also contribute to gender equality: **“The law stipulates compulsory introductory training and there was no reason not to include an hour covering equal opportunities.”** The compulsory introductory training is thus utilised to address those who are not particularly interested in the issue, but should be familiar with matters such as anti-discrimination measures set out in Czech legislation. Similarly, training used together with the intranet can help support sexual harassment prevention.

In some companies, e-learning¹⁶ is intended mainly for new employees, as it facilitates the induction into the work environment and allows for participation of foreign mentors¹⁷. According to available information, these possibilities have not been used specifically to support women. Mentoring programmes with a specific focus can be useful in a situation where it is determined, for instance by gender statistics, that there are enough women qualifying for management positions, but they never reach them.

Both groups commented on remuneration in the context of women being underpaid as compared to men – the term to be used here is gender pay gap¹⁸. One of the male participants working in human resources management described how he managed to convince the company management about the need for equal remuneration for women and men: **“I had to be diplomatic, I couldn’t just say: I want this. ...The results were key. And you cannot be convincing with one-off results – you must monitor the results gradually, every week and every month... Look: this is what I found... Do you want the company to flourish? This group of people does contribute to prosperity too.”** This supports the view that the gaps often arise because the management does not even realize the problem. What we can conclude is that the role of the HR manager should be understood as that of a person who is one step ahead: they grasp the situation in a more sensitive and detailed manner and they do not only react to actual issues as they arise, such as potential complaints related to pay equality, but they anticipate possible problems and have a positive influence on the corporate culture.

Recommendations:

Analyse the situation at the planning stage, base the measures on established facts, analyse statistic differences against gender (gender statistics).

Use the possibility of targeted training in equal opportunities issues.

Apply e-learning and mentoring and other methods to improve equal opportunities; use these tools not only for awareness raising about equal opportunities, but also for specific support to women.

Promote female cooperation, facilitate their visibility in the company, and look for role models.

Parental/maternity leave management

Currently, this issue is understood mainly as that of allowing for arrangements such as flexi-time work involving partly work from home, or reduced working hours, or one job being shared by two persons, as early as during the maternity or parental leave. What is considered important is that the person taking care of a child should keep up with the company, at least occasionally, even though not at the same position as before.

To extend the maternity/parental leave management topic briefly, introducing retention and motivation programmes, while factoring in gender perspective, can contribute a great deal to improve the position of women or parents in general in the company. The programmes are above all about a detailed analysis of costs incurred by the company when a skilled employee leaves: **“We carried out analyses of how much it costs to find a new employee when they leave, and if a manager leaves, it takes a year or a year and a half. And what became apparent was that even if we were to pay the person, it still pays off for us to retain them. As opposed to looking for someone else. It’s just kind of short-term thinking: we’ll just find somebody else.”**

The objective is moreover to make sure that the people on parental leave can feel the company support, which will make them want to come back earlier. As many talented people go over to competitors or abroad, the situation must be viewed against the backdrop of long-term labour force trends, making the companies take good care of their skilled employees.

Recommendations:

Assess the life/work balance benefits with the given employer.

Carry out a survey among the employees (e.g. a satisfaction questionnaire), make use of the obtained data for further measures and development programmes, and find out about the needs of the employees.

Look for possibilities of staying in touch with parents on parental leave.

Cooperate actively with other entities (such as another firm active in the same sector or an organisation providing services).

HR management and its role in implementing equal opportunities

What is the perception of the part played by HR managers in enforcing equal opportunities?

The participants pointed out the importance of planning and focus on strategies that are beneficial in the long run: **“The role of an HR manager should be, sort of, about making the people in the firm think ahead...”** Likewise, they should try and anticipate the development and facilitate relationships within the company: **“It’s all about listening to people. The HR role in this respect is extremely important – HR people should be facilitators, they should offer programmes when they find out, for instance, that somebody got pregnant, they should go and talk to the person’s supervisor and ask if it’s possible to offer them a part-time job, go and talk to the employee and see if they’re interested... it’s about being a facilitator.”**

Needless to say, the HR manager’s job also consists in promoting

communication throughout the whole company: **“It’s all about people and discussion... the HR department must work, and they must say firmly: these are the options, this is a person whom we should retain... it’s about cooperation... not about written rules... . It’s more about people, about whom the company really needs and how helpful it’s ready to be... it’s about how willing people are to communicate”**. Similarly, measures promoting equal opportunities should also be communicated openly and unambiguously across the company, because, especially against Czech cultural background, it is important to explain very carefully why the company decided to support equal opportunities and how it intends to go about it.

The key starting point is support by the management: **“The thing is, if the company management does not believe that the firm needs to work hard on equal opportunities, it probably won’t be very open to discussion about things that work elsewhere and could work for us too. I think that the companies must start by convincing themselves that this is something they need and something that would be rewarding in every respect.”**

HR managers’ needs, as identified by research data analysis:

- management support, dialogue across the company, situation analysis tools providing arguments based on the characteristics of the given firm
- assessing the benefits for the company and the costs needed for implementing the programmes, while considering measures that basically do not require any financial/human resources
- a platform for sharing good experiences with specific programmes and measures
- media coverage about and promotion of the activities
- getting comprehensive, brief and practical information about issues concerning equal opportunities for women and men
- improvements on the part of the state, especially in legislation, services (such as transport services or childcare facilities) and the information available about support programmes funded by the state budget and the European Union funds.

Conclusion

The situation as regards equal opportunities can be monitored in satisfaction surveys that should include items concerning relationships between women and men or life/work balance issues, and should be assessed having regard to the respondent’s gender. With employees realizing their equal opportunities, the overall feedback and workplace appraisal improve. A link was established between a non-discriminatory environment and optimum labour productivity and quality; happy employees are more loyal, thus reducing staff turnover. This is considered to be an important factor for many employers, realizing the costs involved in finding and training new staff. Companies that care for life-work balance also factor in the employees’ health status, reducing accordingly sickness related absence rates, especially for illnesses caused or considerably affected by stress. At the same time, the risk of presentism, i.e. the employees being present but underperforming, becomes lower.

Notes:

¹ Gender: refers to social differences (as opposed to biological differences covered by the term sex) between men and women, but also among men and among women themselves; the differences are understood as being culturally and socially determined, they can vary in time and are culture specific. For example, gender affects the way in which ideas about manhood and womanhood are shaped, is linked to real life roles of women and men and influences sexual behaviour. Gender is body-related too – it is understood and altered depending on the idea of a desirable male and female body appearance in the given culture.

² Gender mainstreaming: a procedure whereby all conception, decision-making and assessment processes at all preparation and implementing stages are subject to the perspective of equal opportunities for men and women; one of the most efficient tools for eliminating the gaps between genders. It is not an end in itself but a means to achieve gender equality, or equality between men and women (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, www.mpsv.cz). Gender mainstreaming involves activities such as compiling gender-specific statistics.

³ Work-life balance: a balance between work and private life, possibility to get leave days beyond the statutory limit, and development of such working environment structure and organisation so as to allow women and men to juggle their work-related and family/personal responsibilities: flexi-time, part-time, possibility to partly work from home, anti-stress programmes, etc. The employee’s position is understood globally, not only in the light of work performance.

⁴ The Best Czech Company with Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Contest has been organised by Gender Studies, o.p.s., since 2004. For more details, go to <http://rovneprilezitosti.ecn.cz>.

⁵ Tokenism: refers to situations where a woman (a man), in a largely male (female) environment, is considered as embodying the symbols commonly attributed to their group without really corresponding to those symbols; on the contrary, they often try intensively to oppose them (Křížková, 2004).

⁶ Gender stereotypes: simplistic ideas about female and male characteristics, focused on the differences between the sexes rather than the women or men themselves, proceeding from ideas about traditional, “natural” female/male roles. Examples of how gender stereotypes can influence the labour market were mentioned by our research participants – a man was refused as an assistant candidate, the reaction of another (female) participant being that “men are expected to do more”. Another participant said that she used to give lower salaries to women than to men; she was influenced by the idea of a man as a breadwinner, and said that an able woman would have a chance to work up to a comparable salary, but her starting conditions were considerably different.

⁷ Employment Act No. 435/2004 Coll.: Positive measures: Employers can take positive measures aimed at eliminating constraints that follow from situations such as lower representation of one gender in the workplace. Accordingly, they can give preference to women if there are almost no women in the workplace or none at all, although there is no legal reason for it. In such cases we can talk about preferential treatment of a disadvantaged gender to achieve equality. Currently, neither this law nor the Labour Code contains quotas for the employers to respect when filling vacancies (Králiková-Lužaič, 2005).

⁸ Horizontal labour market segregation: the concentration of women and men in specific sectors and jobs; frequent differences in remuneration in individual jobs and sectors; usually, there are lower wages in sectors where women are predominant; the origins of gender typical jobs lay in the upbringing and the educational system conventions.

⁹ 65/1965 Coll., the Labour Code and other related provisions.

¹⁰ Sexual harassment: undesirable behaviour of a sexual nature that affects the dignity of men and women (including the behaviour of the superiors and workmates) (Čermáková, 2002), see Act 65/1965 Coll., the Labour Code.

¹¹ There is a difference between financial support in motherhood (69% of the last pay), granted exclusively to mothers for 28 weeks, and parental leave that can be taken by either of the parents with a child under 3. Accordingly, both parents can draw their parental benefit (currently CZK 3,635) before the child reaches the age of 4, the possibilities of making extra money being unlimited. For more details, see the Labour Code No. 65/1965 Coll., the State Social Support Act No. 117/1995 Coll., the Act on Social Security Organisation and Implementation No. 582/1991 Coll. and other relevant provisions.

¹² Masculine, feminine: features typically attributed to men and women, respectively; they are a social construct – they can differ in cultures and times, and are not necessarily linked to the actual sex of the individual – a man can have feminine behaviour and vice versa, the behaviour being often determined by the situation context: for instance, a woman in a leadership position can assume masculine behaviour characteristics, while a man taking care of a young child can display feminine behaviour characteristics.

¹³ As Křížková (2004) argues, glass ceiling is, above all, a consequence of a complex set of structures and promotion rules in organisations where men are predominant, or those that were set up for men. In reality, they are barriers as regards access to employment or education, the so-called difference barriers, institutional barriers, old-boy's network (a network of informal relationships between men) barriers, gender stereotype related barriers, together with possible "give and take" sexual harassment.

¹⁴ This type of division is called gender-based vertical segregation: women and men are concentrated at different levels at work, corresponding to responsibility and position levels (Čermáková, 2002).

¹⁵ Assessment centre: A method of employee selection from a large number of candidates. During the event, taking one or more days, the candidates, who are asked to carry out specific tasks, are assessed using various psychodiagnostic methods and techniques. Since several assessors are involved, subjectivity in the final evaluation is kept to a minimum.

¹⁶ E-learning: A type of training facilitated and supported by IT and communication technologies.

¹⁷ Mentoring: A principle whereby experience and knowledge is passed from a more experienced person (a mentor) onto another person (a mentee) who is new in the field or in the position and needs to understand the new environment.

¹⁸ Gender Pay Gap: Relative difference between the average male and female salary. In part, it can be explained by sector differences or the number of hours worked. According to Czech Statistical Office data (2005), in 2004, the median (= mean) wage of a woman was 80.9% of that of a man (GPG = 19.1%).

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Gender Studies, o.p.s. is a non-governmental non-profit organisation that has performed the function of an information, consultation and education centre in the area of relations between women and men and their position in society. The goal of the organisation is to gather, analyze, work with and disseminate further information related to gender-relevant issues. Via specific project, GS actively influences change concerning equal opportunities in different areas such as institutional mechanisms, labour market, women's political participation, information technologies etc. GS also runs a library covering variety of publications and materials related to feminism, gender studies, women's and men's rights etc.

Gender Studies, o.p.s.
Gorazdova 20
120 00 Praha 2
tel./fax: 224 915 666
email: office@genderstudies.cz
www.genderstudies.cz/en

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