

<p><b>Country:</b> Czech Republic  <b>Session:</b> 47<sup>th</sup>, 2010  <b>NGOs represented by speakers:</b>  <b>Czech Women's Lobby</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APERIO – Society for Healthy Parenting,</li> <li>• Association of Women Entrepreneurs and Managers,</li> <li>• Czech Association of Doulas,</li> <li>• Czech Helsinki Committee,</li> <li>• Czech Women's Union,</li> <li>• European Contact Group,</li> <li>• Forum 50 %,</li> <li>• Gender Studies,</li> <li>• Movement for Active Motherhood,</li> <li>• Klub K2,</li> <li>• Manushe,</li> <li>• Moravian Association of Women Entrepreneurs and Managers,</li> <li>• National Contact Centre - women and science (Institute of Sociology, Academy of Science),</li> <li>• NESEHNUTÍ Brno,</li> <li>• Department of Gender and Sociology, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Science),</li> <li>• Open Society,</li> <li>• proFem,</li> <li>• Revue 50 +,</li> <li>• Family Center Pexeso,</li> <li>• ROSA – Center for Survivors of Violence,</li> <li>• Union of Midwives</li> </ul> <p><b>Persefona</b>  <b>La Strada</b>  <b>Faculty of Education, Charles University</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Issues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participation in Political and Public life and decision making</li> <li>2. Position of women in the labour market</li> <li>3. Legislative and institutional framework</li> <li>4. Access to public healthcare system for migrant women and children</li> </ol>
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## Oral Statement to the CEDAW Committee

### Presentation of the Shadow Report by the NGO Coalition for the Czech Republic

*Alexandra Jachanova Dolezelova*

Dear Madam Chair,  
Distinguished Committee Members,

I represent a joint Submission of a network called Czech Women's Lobby together with other NGOs, altogether representing 24 organisations. The urgent issues that I address today are:

1. **Participation in Political and Public life and decision making**
2. **Position of women in the labour market**
3. Legislative and institutional framework
4. Access to public healthcare system for migrant women and children

#### **1. Participation in political and public life and decision making**

The UN Committee in its comments on the third Periodical Report of the Czech Republic "reiterates its concern about the continuing underrepresentation of women in Parliament and Government, including in standing and ad hoc committees, at the international level, and in the private sector". Women are still highly underrepresented in all areas of decision-making, let alone awareness of the lack of women of various ethnic backgrounds. **One of the alarming examples to illustrate the situation is that there are no women in the present Czech Government.**

No temporary measures, either non-legislative or legislative, to enhance the representation and participation of women in decision-making processes have been introduced.

#### Recommendation:

- The government should adopt within the period of one year an amendment to the election law containing quotas for the representation of women and men on candidate lists for the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, regional assemblies and all the statutory cities. We suggest the quota system is based upon the zipper system where every trio of candidates contains one candidate of the opposite sex than the other two.
- In addition, the government should determine in the national action plan specific indicators and a time framework of two years for reaching the equal representation of women on top positions in all areas of decision-making – ministries, governmental advisory bodies, various commissions and councils and companies and enterprises with state share.

## 2. Position of women in the labour market

The Czech Republic is an EU country with the highest impact of parenthood on the employment of women. In 2007, for instance, the difference between the employment rate of women aged 20-49 with and without children aged 0-6 years was 43,2 percentage points. This phenomenon is due to discrimination based on motherhood at the Czech labour market, low availability of flexible and part-time working arrangements and a low availability of childcare services for small children.

Horizontal but also vertical segregations are the main cause for a wide gender pay gap in the Czech Republic. In 2009, the overall gender gap in average earnings of men and women was 27 percentage points. In management positions, this gap was 48 percentage points. In lower administration positions, the gap was 17 percentage points.

The situation is even more complicated for women from migrant or minor ethnic background. These women often face problems such as multiple discrimination, harassment and bullying. Especially the third country nationals with no permanent residence permit are in particularly difficult position since their legal status and work permit is bound to a concrete job and thus they are vulnerable and often abused by the employers.

Further complications arise during pregnancy and/or parenthood:

Difficulties that are migrant women facing in the labour market may lead to an unwanted abortion. They risk losing their residence permit by having a child and going to a parental leave. And finally they are especially influenced by lack of childcare. It is more difficult for them to get a place in public childcare facility and they do not earn enough money to afford to pay for a private care.

### Recommendations:

- The government should develop public childcare facilities system accessible to everybody:
  - Develop a new system of financing nurseries, which will allocate more costs to the state and less to regions and parents.
  - Redefine hygienic and space norms for nurseries and kindergartens, which will better meet the real needs of children.
  - Conduct a study on childcare facilities and services based on sociological and demographical data, which will be used for the preparation of a long-term strategy in this area.
  - Improve communication between state and local authorities, which are responsible for childcare facilities.
  - Enable cooperation between public childcare facilities and private sector, which would allow private companies support financially public childcare facilities and allow companies to use part of the facility for its employees.
  - Motivate companies to open childcare facilities either by tax reductions or simplifying the legislation.

- Labour inspectorate should receive sufficient financial resources and be obliged to control employers for finding out discriminatory practices (e.g. wage discrimination, discrimination based on parenthood, multiple discrimination, etc.).
- Strategic documents and programs on equality between men and women should contain specific provisions concerning migrants, and particularly migrant women.
- The situation of migrant women in the labour market should be improved by following measures:
  - The government should adopt legislation, which would extend duration of working permit for the period of parental leave.
  - Labour Offices should provide job counselling and requalification services for migrant workers before they obtain permanent residence.

### **3. Legislative and institutional framework**

The institutional framework of human rights and more precisely women human rights has been significantly weakened. After the elections in May 2010 the position of Minister of Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities, who was responsible for gender equality for the past three years, has been cancelled. With dissolving this position and no concrete policy in the area of human rights, let alone gender equality, the fear is of backlash in the position of women in the Czech Republic and halt in the advancement of women's rights.

Law enforcement in the Czech Republic is very low. Although the Antidiscrimination Act has been finally adopted in 2009, there are only few cases being brought up to the courts (having several reasons: fear of stigmatization, long court procedures taking several years, little suspect of success, etc.). There is no training system organised for judges and the office of the ombudsperson (Equality Body) has very limited competences and tools to help the victims.

#### Recommendations:

- Government should create a permanent position of the minister for human rights. The post of the minister should be at the same level as the other departments and he/she should operate a separate departmental budget.
- The Antidiscrimination Act should be amended (after an assessment of its year-long effect) with the aim of reinforcing measures against discrimination and improving the situation for victims of discrimination when enforcing the law:
  - allow the office of ombudsperson to take cases into court,
  - use mediation as a tool,
  - enable NGOs to appeal with common accusation.

#### **4. Access to public healthcare system for migrant women and children**

It is not possible to claim that all women in the Czech Republic have an access to quality healthcare – this applies only to citizens, migrants with permanent residence, asylum holders and employed migrants. Migrants, who have not yet obtained permanent residence and are not employed (e.g. entrepreneurs, people coming on grounds of family reunion) cannot enter the public healthcare system.

This is especially problematic for women, since healthcare during pregnancy and labour demands a more expensive insurance scheme and an extra fee is required for the care of the infant. Newborn children might not be able to access the public healthcare services and there are reported cases where children born with special needs were refused to be insured by private insurance companies. Not being insured for the whole stay in the country may also lead to expulsion.

##### Recommendation:

- The Government should amend the law on public healthcare to ensure access of specific groups of migrants to the system of public healthcare (entrepreneurs, family members), especially as concerns the situation of minors, regardless of their residence status.

Thank you very much for allowing me to introduce you our concerns and recommendations!