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Women in the Czech Republic in 2008

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1. Introduction: Gender equality as an issue within the family policy context

The Czech Republic has – similarly to other countries with centre-right government – found itself in a situation, which has proved to be the most evident in 2008, when the equal opportunities concept has been subordinated to family policy; thus, equal opportunities have only been discussed in this context. Those who have been working with this topic on a more or less expert level and understand it within larger perspectives than just the social one encounter more often depreciation of this concept. They now see that pro-family measures have been supported at the expense of gender equality, though, of course, their importance cannot be denied either. Parallel to all this, they can still experience misunderstanding related to the term *feminism* even in 2008.

It was recently proved by an event of 25 August 2008 when many women's organisations operating in the Czech Republic were truly happy to find that the long-awaited call for proposals was launched for projects to be submitted in the Operational Program Human Resources and Employment, priority 3.4 Equal Opportunities of Women and Men in the Labour Market and Work-Life Balance. Their joy has, however, been shadowed by a text following a few lines further down saying: *"Notice: Projects cannot have political character, must not be instrumental to promotion of any political or ideological goals, including ideologies of feminism and masculinism."*

It is more than interesting that this notice does not make part of the call for proposals, e.g. in the section specifying rightful claimants, nor does it define what is meant by "ideologies of feminism". It seems as if the notice intended to say, between the lines, that organisations that either openly endorse to some of the feminist ideas or that are in general – especially by relevant politicians – seen as feminist do not have the chance to succeed with their projects in this call for proposals. It should not be that difficult to find traits of "promotion of... ideologies of feminism" in any project that relates to equality of women and men and does not deny that the current concept of gender mainstreaming that has been underlined and promoted by the European Union builds upon feminism(s) and its principles. It might even seem that the Czech Republic has been slowly but surely getting closer to a situation when women's organisations that are based on feminist basis will not have any opportunity to realize their activities from neither Czech nor European resources. They will remain dependent on enlightened foundations that perceive existence and projects of women's organisations an important part of civil society and know that women's organization play an irreplaceable role in support to equality of women and men. The government is, to certain extent, aware of this as well as it often refers to operation of these organisations in various reports on the country's adherence to women's human rights. It does not, however, see their support to be relevant at all.

In relation to the quoted call for proposals, another interesting point cannot be overlooked – one of the specific aims of the given priority of the operational programme. It says: "Development of various types of childcare services and simplification of their accessibility with the aim of reconciliation of work and family, support of individual care for children up to 2 years of age and support of individual and collective care for two-year-old children and older." It is so in a period when media, employers and especially employees, both male and female, discuss serious lack of crèches and kindergartens in the context of the current baby boom; at the same time, various types of bodies at local, regional and national levels are not willing to support development of institutional care. All this is happening in a period of time when – in

most European countries – the institutional care has represented first choice for majority of parents. Moreover, individual care for children up to two years of age, which has been focused on in this call for proposals, cannot fully cover parents' demand for childcare.

It is also interesting to mention a few pieces of information that are based on interviews realized at the end of 2007 in relation to the new family policy that was introduced as of the start of 2008. These interviews (in total, there were 15 of them) were run with several politicians, both women and men, on the current setup of family policy. Apart from their rather low awareness related to the then proposal of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs on the so-called three-speed parental leave, another problem can be identified and proved as valid even in 2008. The problem is minimal willingness of MPs, irrespective of their political affiliation, to discuss shortening the period of parental leave. As they perceive the electoral term as maximum of time within which they consider any changes, they are not ready for discussing any perspectives of future parental care, or they are not open to it. Parallel to this approach, they do not think of the state's possibilities in the area of support of institutional care and underline responsibility of local and regional administration. It is true that towns and regions have been delegated this responsibility by the state: the issue of institutional care and its financial support has recently been far hotter than a hot potato. Unfortunately, no result has been reached so far with a direct impact on today's situation of parents of small children or future parents. If open to any type of institutional care, it is kindergartens that are welcome by politicians (the idea of crèches has been completely out of question); still, they rely on the private sector's initiative in founding their company kindergartens. The reason is that they either do not believe that the state (i.e. regional and local administration) would choose to invest in new kindergartens, or they point out employers' interest in investment into human resources and obtain certain allowances or relieves. However, such allowances or relieves have not yet been clearly defined.

Generalizing the above-given information, it can be said that under current circumstances there is no reason to try to lobby for serious changes in legislation that directly or indirectly relates to gender equality in the society. Members, both male and female, of the government coalition are open to discussion only within the context set up by family policy as it has been in power since 1 January 2008. It is positive to see certain interest of politicians and employers in fathers engaging in childcare. This has not, though, mirrored any dramatically in any of recent measures, except for recommendation of the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. It focuses on appointing Fathers' Day to be a parallel to Mothers' Day and expression of support to active fatherhood. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs also developed a pro-family package that was approved by the government in November 2008; this package, among others, includes introduction of a week-long fathers' leave as a new component of the health insurance that could be made use of by a father of a newborn. However, it cannot be assumed that transposition of the pro-family package from the government level to reality would be an easy one without complications. The pro-family package attempts to introduce a complex approach that covers new type of services in the area of childcare and babysitting, tax advantages for employers providing or assuring their employees childcare and changes in financing foster-care.

Due to more or less intense lobbying of women's non-governmental organisations and their provision of information (based on various researches, case studies, analytic work, international experience, and work with clients etc.) to political representation and media, it can be assumed that politicians have been growing more and more gender sensitive, though very

slowly. The problem is that these women's organisations lack adequate respect to their work and support, not only financial, to their activities. Media keep on playing one of the major roles in this context – fortunately, there are already several journalists with at least minimal gender sensitivity they acquired thanks to educational activities of NGOs in this area (it is important to mention projects of Žába na prameni – Frog on the Well, gitA – Gender Information and Press Agency, which was a project initiated by proFem o.p.s. and later on transformed into an independent NGO of the same name). Apart from increasing politicians', media and general society's gender sensitivity, there are two more perspectives that cannot be overlooked: active participation in institutional mechanisms that are open to women's organisations, and commenting on further potential measures in the area of equal opportunities and family policy (they may also relate to fathers' leave, company kindergartens or any other alternative types of childcare, tax relief for companies offering e.g. flexible and part-time jobs etc.). Both of these levels of active involvement of NGOs in institutional mechanisms have been – also thanks to support from e.g. trade unions – rather successful, though there are no major changes and results directly related.

The truth is that equal opportunities have remained a topic that has been rather neglected and far from favoured by top political representation. The situation is different in the private sphere where – due to many aspects – changes took place leading employers to far greater sensitivity to diversity and multicultural environment. At that level, there is also definitely certain space for discussion on various issues within gender equality that would be worth opening. The same applies to public administration level, esp. in towns, cities and regions that do have certain independence and may even bring forward different view of current political culture and thus impact on perception of different social issues.

2. Changes in institutional mechanisms related to gender equality policies, incl. anti-discrimination law

Compared to 2007 when there were almost no major changes in institutional mechanisms assuring equal opportunities policy in the Czech Republic, 2008 brought forward several partial changes and – to certain extent – set forward discussion on equality between women and men. It has been so also thanks to some activities of the minister for human rights and minorities whose position was only established by the current government. It has, nevertheless, been often argued by human rights activists that introduction of such a position does not directly imply active approach towards equality policy and concrete steps in the area of human rights. Together with her team the minister focuses on adherence to human rights, development of the civil society and non-profit sector, and issues of Roma community and ethnic minorities; she has also systematically supported facilitation of lives of handicapped citizens.¹

Among her priorities, she also underlines the so-called anti-discrimination law. Though it suffered – according to non-governmental organisations – several changes compared to its original version, they agree with the minister on its necessity and support its adoption. The contrary is the opinion of part of the political representation that sees it as unnecessary. On a

¹ To find more information of goals of the minister for human rights and minorities see: <http://www.vlada.cz/cs/vlada/clenove/stehlikova/uvod/default.html>.

long term basis, the Czech Republic lacks anti-discrimination legislation; some of the present laws also refer to the non-existent law. The idea of the anti-discrimination law, or Code on equal treatment and legal remedies of protection from discrimination, consists in enlargement of the anti-discrimination concept so that it covered further issues, i.e. right of all to equal access to education, work, healthcare, social benefits or living for all citizens of the Czech Republic. At the same time, the law would ban discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, state of health, religion or faith, and some other potential reasons (e.g. language, political and other opinion, nationality, membership or activity in political parties or political movements, trade unions and other groups, social background, possessions, matrimony or parenthood and duties towards family). The fate of the anti-discrimination law has not yet been decided upon though it has represented an important issue – according to website of Poradna pro občanství, občanská a lidská práva (Counseling Centre for citizenship, citizen and human rights) – already for three years.

The Counseling Centre has, among other initiatives, developed arguments concerning a vast variety of reservations that may be raised in relation to discussion on non-discrimination, anti-discrimination or definition of the law as such.² Thanks to the fact that they have followed genesis of the law since its very first version, it is possible to compare the original and current wording of the code and contextualize the current version of the law in relation to other relevant pieces of legislation that covered or has covered anti-discrimination regulation, e.g. Employment Code or Labour Code.

Apart from the position of the minister for human rights and minorities that was for the first time set up by the current government, there are a number of other institutional mechanisms that were already introduced in previous years. It is primarily the position of so-called gender focal points, i.e. civil servants responsible for equal opportunities conception at each ministry; this position is minimum a part-time job. The system of gender focal points was established as of 1 January 2004, while in 2004 it was allowed that the part-time job definition might be widened to a full-time position. Until the end of 2007, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs played the role of a coordinator of gender policy in the Czech Republic: Department for Equality of Women and Men was originally subordinated to the International Relations and European Integration Section, and since 1 November 2006, it was integrated in the Family and Social Policy Section. As of 1 January 2008, it has been transferred under the responsibility of the minister for human rights and minorities, i.e. at the Governmental Office that has also fulfilled the role of a secretariat of the Government Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men. No other changes took place apart from the transfer of the department to the Governmental Office – e.g. the number of civil servants was not increased though the fact that the department is undersized was often criticized by experts on equal opportunities of women and men.

The foundation of the Government Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men was initiated in 2001 by non-governmental organisations. In 2007, the council was more or less groping in the dark, but in 2008, it became functional again, invited more representatives of non-governmental organisations as its members and created two committees – Committee for prevention of domestic violence and Committee for equal opportunities in family and working life. Both committees were very active in 2008 and succeeded in opening several

² <http://www.diskriminace.cz/dt-zakon/faq.phtml>.

issues and making them part of a discussion. Let us mention e.g. the issue of financial support to non-profit organisations focusing on women's human rights and equal opportunities.

The Committee for equal opportunities of women and men (in the past, it was called Committee for elimination of all forms of discrimination against women) that operated as a committee of the Government Council for Human Rights was dissolved in autumn 2008 referring to an argument that its coverage of issues overlapped with the Government Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men. Its original principle of existence was primarily to follow and evaluate activities of the Czech Republic in relation to the UN Committee for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In the first place, the committee was renamed in 2007 and one year later dissolved. The disestablishment was already speculated since the beginning of 2008; thus, its members were notified of this final decision of the government only via email that did not include any reasons for the committee's dissolution or definition of what body/-ies would take over the committee's responsibilities.

Institutional mechanisms related to promotion of equal opportunities also include a document entitled *Priorities and Practices of the Government in Promoting Equality of Women and Men*³ that has always been valid for one year, and a comprehensive report covering the document's fulfilment over the given year.⁴ History of this document that could be perceived as an action plan in the area of equal opportunities for women and men dates back to 1998.

Priorities for the year 2008 were approved of in May 2008 and their structure is the following: (1) Promoting principles of the equality of women and men as part of Government policy, (2) Ensuring the legal prerequisites for gender equality and raise legal awareness, (3) Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in their access to economic activities, (4) Levelling out the social status of women and men caring for children and needy family members, (5) Taking into account women's reproductive function and physiological differences, (6) Combating violence perpetrated against women, (7) Monitoring and assessment of efficiency in applying the principle of the equal status of women and men.

The document covers a number of issues that form a wide concept of equal opportunities of women and men and in case it was strategically fulfilled, we could definitely talk of an effective approach towards completion of equality principles.

The reality has been different in many respects, which is – among other – confirmed by the commonness of the comprehensive report related to 2007. It is true, however, that the report tries to be critical in assessing activities at the level of different ministries and in reflecting comments and additional information received from NGOs. The truth also is that a variety of activities that are referred to in the report were fully realized by non-governmental organisations, often supported by foreign foundations that have nothing to do with the state grants or any kind of financial support provided by the state (and this was not only the case of the 2007 report but also the earlier ones). Far more detailed comparison of the Government's

³ Document *Priorities and Practices of the Government in Promoting Equality of Women and Men*: http://www.vlada.cz/assets/cs/vlada/clenove/stehlikova/rovnoprilezitosti/dokumenty/UV_540_2008_priloha.pdf.

⁴ Comprehensive report on fulfillment of priorities of practices of the government in promoting equality of women and men in 2007: <http://www.vlada.cz/assets/cs/vlada/clenove/stehlikova/rovnoprilezitosti/dokumenty/souhrnna-zprava-za-rok-2007.pdf>.

priorities in the area of gender equality and their concrete realization in practice can be found in the Shadow Report in the Area of Equal Treatment and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2008⁵ that was published by the Open Society Fund Praha. It covers past two years in the context of equal opportunities in the day-to-day practice of the Czech Republic.

There are two more components that need be mentioned as parts of the institutional mechanisms of equal opportunities policy in the Czech Republic: two permanent commissions of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. They are Permanent Commission on Family Issues⁶ that has been chaired by Tomáš Kvapil, MP of KDU-ČSL (Christian Democrats), and Permanent Commission on Equal Opportunities⁷ that has been chaired by Soňa Marková, MP of KSČM (Communist Party). These two commissions were established by the current members of the Chamber of Deputies; nevertheless, to certain extent they follow activities of the Permanent Commission on Family Issues and Equal Opportunities that was effective in the previous election period.

3. Gender equality priorities in the EU presidency priorities of the Czech Republic in the first half of 2009

In the first six months of 2009, the Czech Republic will be chairing the Council of the European Union where it will follow France and precede Sweden. Similarly to other chairing countries, the Czech government set up several priorities⁸ it intends to focus on primarily; many of them are shared with those of France and Sweden in the context of so-called Troika. The Czech presidency's motto is "Europe without Barriers" that should do justice to the Czech approach towards European integration and cover the fact that overcoming barriers in different senses of the word and context form part sector priorities of the Czech EU presidency. It will be competitive advantage that will stand for the key area of interest, along with forthrightness of Europe and security as well as energy safety and sustainability, and last but not least – cooperation with countries outside the European Union.

Gender inequality has, however, been not perceived as a barrier though to certain extent this issue can be viewed in the context of the chapter entitled Increasing employment rate and flexibility of the labour market via general principle of flexicurity – this chapter represents one the areas the Czech presidency shall be working on. Women's organisations forming the Czech Women's Lobby thus decided to develop alternative priorities of the Czech EU presidency. In the first six months of 2009 they will solely focus on underlining inadequate attention that has been provided by the Czech Republic to the issue of equal opportunities of women and men. In the general version of their invitation to events planned for the January-June 2009 period, they mention that "the period of the Czech EU presidency is ideal for promotion of equal opportunities of women and men at the Czech level and in introducing this issue as one of the priorities of the European Union. In case of the Czech Republic it has been so, unfortunately, only in its shadow version. "Shadow activities of equal opportunities

⁵ <http://www.proequality.cz/res/data/005/000588.pdf>.

⁶ <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/fsnem.sqw?f1=5&f2=3&id=809>.

⁷ <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/hp.sqw?k=95&ido=810>.

⁸ http://www.vlada.cz/assets/cs/eu/dokumenty/sektorove_priority-cervenec2008.pdf.

of women and men” as realized by the Czech Women’s Lobby will point out problems concerning situation of women in the society and will relate these to the European context. They will do so via five seminars/ roundtables/ happenings and press conferences to discuss some of the areas where equal rights of women and men have not yet been assured.”

Despite reservations of women’s NGOs towards the structure of priorities of the Czech EU presidency, the Czech government cannot be denied its efforts to cover various issues – including diversity and multiculturalism. This can be proved, among others, by the programme of events to be held at official and working levels during the first half of 2009 – it includes conferences and meetings of different size and focus. Talking of gender-specific events, we can mention e.g. conference on women in science, high-level meeting on gender mainstreaming or international gender conference. If we look at the presidency programme from a wider perspective, attention provided to the situation of Roma minority, role of non-profit organisations in the society, and situation of migrants or seniors in the context of demographic development can be appreciated. These issues can definitely be also analyzed from gender perspective though they are not primarily concerned with women and men.

It is thus not lack of attention of the Czech government to equal opportunities of women and men in European countries that can be called problematic; it is inappropriate communication and lacking forthrightness of the government, or relevant bodies, towards non-profit organisations. They have not been invited to co-organize or comment on issues and matters that are content-wise relevant to their work. Experts in lobbying and communication have, among other suggestions, recommended that one person who cooperates on the governmental activities and programme in the area of gender equality should also be a “liaison person” to keep contact between the government and NGOs dealing with gender issues. It is inspired by sessions of the UN Committee for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in New York where a representative of the country delegation regularly updates members and representatives of NGOs and networks on issues that were discussed at governmental level (this practice was e.g. confirmed by women’s rights activists from Germany and the United Kingdom).

Hereby the government would guarantee that all relevant pieces of information were shared with non-governmental organisations and could also reach wider media coverage of these issues and support of the civil society; it would also prove to the NGOs in question that it does not consider the area of equal opportunities as a minor one though it has not been part of the top five priorities of the presidency. It is especially the media coverage of the whole presidency context that would be desirable: at the very end of 2008, there are still many citizens of the Czech Republic who have no clue that its country will be taking over the EU presidency and what it means. At the same time, women’s organisations would be granted certain respect for actions and activities they have been dealing with for years, and for results they reached so far, sometimes even doing the job of the state or its regions.

4. Women and politics and decision-making positions in public offices with special focus on regional and senate elections

The year of 2008 was a year of elections – in autumn 2008, regional election took place along with the Senate election when 1/3 of all senator posts underwent changes. The elec-

tions did not only bring forward doubt about the governmental politics of the coalition of ODS, KDU-ČSL and the Green Party represented by major winning of ČSSD, which also impacted the power division in the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, but also increased representation of women in the Senate.

As of 26 November 2008 when the Senate started its session with new Senators, the Upper Chamber of the Parliament has counted higher representation of women than the Chamber of Deputies – instead of 11 female Senators there have now been 14 women out of the total of 81 Senators, i.e. women have 17% representation. It is still far from reaching the critical margin of 30% but still every little improvement towards higher participation of women in politics can be seen as positive. In total, there were five women elected in the autumn Senate election:

Alena Gajdůšková from ČSSD in Zlín (64% of votes), Hana Doupovcová from ČSSD in Uherské Hradiště (51%), Marta Bayerová from KSČM in Znojmo, Eva Richtrová from ČSSD in Frýdek-Místek (68%) and Dagmar Zvěřinová from ČSSD in Žďár nad Sázavou (59%).

The regional election also reached first break-through: the first female regional commissioner was elected: Milada Emmerová in the Plzeň region. Former minister of health is thus the first woman who succeeded to change the so-far valid rule that regional commissioner in the Czech Republic were men only. Looking in further detail into her election, it is interesting to note that she received the highest percentage of preferential votes. According to Forum 50% she got 36.4% of preferential votes.⁹ The NGO that analyzed both Senate and regional election from gender perspective also dealt with the title of her position, which does not exist in female version in the law but Ústav pro jazyk český (Czech Language Institute) “puts in word for use of use the female version of the word commissioner”. Considering the fact that political discussions at regional levels concerning posts within the offices were not concluded by the end of November, it is possible that women’s representation among commissioners could increase. For example, on 27 November 2008, another female commissioner was introduced in the Ústí nad Labem region: Jana Vaňhová candidate of ČSSD.

Women’s representation in regional councils reached 17.5% after the autumn election. The highest number of women is in the Pardubice region (22.25%) and in Central Bohemia region (21.5%). There are 20% of women in four other regional councils: in Moravia-Silesia, Zlín, Plzeň and South Bohemia regions. The lowest representation of women can be found in the council of the Hradec Králové region (11.1%).¹⁰

Recently, all political parties registered in the Czech Republic have started preparatory phases for the European Parliament election that are due in June 2009. ČSSD also calls for – due to weakened power of the government and the coalition in the Chamber of Deputies for early election in the Chamber of Deputies to take place at the same period of time. It will surely be very interested to see strategies of political parties in putting together candidate lists. Forum 50% followed closely decisions of political parties in the 2008 Senate election – it analyzed numbers of female candidates and came to a sad conclusion: there were only 34 women among 200 candidates. They also considered space provided to women by political

⁹ http://www.padesatprocent.cz/?c_id=601.

¹⁰ All data was gathered by Forum 50%; they also looked at women’s representation in region from the perspective of political parties: http://www.padesatprocent.cz/?c_id=590.

parties. There is nothing extremely positive in case of parties present in the Parliament: ODS did not nominate any woman, KDU-ČSL nominated only one female.¹¹

At the moment, there is 15.5% representation of women in the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament (in the previous election period, their representation was 2% higher); at local level, women's representation grew from 22.7% to approx. 25%. According to the chart developed on a regular basis by the Inter-Parliamentary Union,¹² the Czech Republic can be found only as far as at 76th place. Among the first ten countries with the highest representation of women in top politics, there are: Rwanda (56.3% in the Lower House of the Parliament), Sweden (47%), Cuba (43.2%), Finland (41.5%), Argentina (40%), the Netherlands (39.3%), Denmark (38%), Angola (37.3%), Costa-Rica (36.8%) and Spain (36.3%). From among other European Union member countries, there are only few to be found behind the Czech Republic in the chart: Greece (14.7%), Ireland and Slovenia (in both countries, there is 13.3% representation of women in the lower house of the Parliament) and Rumania (9.4%).

There are two women among Czech ministers – Minister for Human Rights and Minorities and Minister of Defence; this government used to have one more woman in the team: Minister of Education, Youth and Sports.

Women's membership in political parties varies from 30 to approx. 50%: the highest number of women can be found in KDU-ČSL (52%), the lowest in ČSSD (30%).

It is also interesting to note that in December 2008 when the congress of ODS took place, a new presidium of the party was elected. All of the top positions (chair, 1st vice-chair and four vice-chairs) were taken by men. The party executive board is formed of 39 people and there is one woman among them.

5. Women and economy, incl. work-life balance programmes

Women in the Czech Republic are highly economically active: in 2006, their economic activity rate reached 62.3% (in case of men, this rate was 78.3%).¹³ According to other data of the Czech Statistical Office, women's economic activity was only 50.5% and men's economic activity reached 68.6%.¹⁴ In case of the first quoted data, the Czech Republic would be already fulfilling the goals set up in Lisbon, i.e. to reach 60% economic activity of women by 2010. The next number, however, would mean that the Czech Republic should be seriously focused on barriers in higher economic activity of women and how to overcome them gradually.

¹¹ http://www.padesatprocent.cz/?c_id=553.

¹² <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.

¹³ International comparison in the EU: [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9FB/\\$File/1413074402.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9FB/$File/1413074402.pdf).

¹⁴ [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9F5/\\$File/1413074401.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9F5/$File/1413074401.pdf).

Total employment rate of women in 2006 was 46.1% while men's employment rate was 64.6%. In case of both sexes the total employment rate has been rather stable; it was only higher in 1993 and 1995. It is interesting to compare in this context the employment rate of women and men aged 25-39 when women's maternity and parental leave is very much mirrored in the data.¹⁵

Women are also those who work more often part-time – approx. 8.7% of economically active women¹⁶ take advantage of this opportunity though this rate could have changed since 2006 since due to big demographic changes and baby-boom that has been identified in the country during the last two years, there is an increasing demand and offer of various types of flexible and alternative working hours. It can be expected that recently there are many more positions offered allowing part-time jobs that could be taken by women or men on parental leave. It will probably still take some more time before the Czech Republic reaches the average level of EU 27 where there are 31.2% of women and 7.7% of men working part-time and in alternative working hours.

According to the data gathered by the Czech Statistical Office, women's average income in 2006 represented 75.4% of men's average income in the same period. Women's median income in the same year reached 81.7% of men's median income, i.e. the gender pay gap was 18.3%. This gap has been narrowing slowly during the last years: in 1996, it was 21.1%.¹⁷

Women are also those who represent majority among the unemployed people – in 2006, there were 8.8% unemployed women and 5.8% unemployed men.¹⁸ It is very similar when looking closely at long-term unemployment that totalled 4.1% in 2006 (5.2% of women and 3.2% of men).¹⁹ The difference in women's and men's participation in the group of the unemployed and long-term unemployed people has been more or less the same during last years. Since early 1990s women form more than half of both these groups.

The Czech labour market has distinct characteristics of both horizontal²⁰ and vertical²¹ segregation. Women form majority in the "typically" female professions – in education and health and social care; there are 76.2% of women in schooling and 78.7% of women in health and

¹⁵ [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA16/\\$File/1413074417.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA16/$File/1413074417.pdf).

¹⁶ [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9EF/\\$File/1413074430.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9EF/$File/1413074430.pdf).

¹⁷ [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA04/\\$File/1413074436.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA04/$File/1413074436.pdf).

¹⁸ [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9E8/\\$File/1413074424.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BC9E8/$File/1413074424.pdf).

¹⁹ [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA10/\\$File/1413074425.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA10/$File/1413074425.pdf).

²⁰ Horizontal segregation is defined as higher representation of women (or men) in certain sectors or jobs that are then described as "typically" female or male. Many stereotypes are then related to these jobs and are developed since the earliest stages of educational process. Female jobs are, moreover, often automatically connected to lower incomes.

²¹ Vertical segregation is defined by lower representation of women (or higher representation of men) at positions with increasing responsibility and decision-making opportunities. It is possible to name as an example positions of male directors of primary and secondary schools – though the education sphere is "over-feminized", there is much higher percentage of male school directors than it could be expected considering their representation among teachers.

social care.²² Contrary to that, professions where there are 82-90% of men, i.e. those in mining and construction industries, have not been defined as “masculinised”, nor perceived as problematic just like education, for example.

From the legislation point of view there were on major changes realized in 2008 – the Labour Code underwent certain amendments already in 2007, including the fact that it got rid of anti-discrimination measures and referred since then to the so far non-existent anti-discrimination law. We can, however, mention briefly that the first important amendment to the Labour Code came into effect on 1 January 2001 when it – for the first time – prohibited direct and indirect discrimination based on various reasons, including gender. The same approach was then also taken by a number of other laws – on employment, on wage and on salary etc. At the beginning of the 21st century the Czech legislation also recognized the institute of parental leave (recently, the term of “leave” that in Czech indicates holidays has been discussed as unsuitable in this context), prohibited unwelcome behaviour of sexual nature and allowed transfer of burden of proof in cases of discrimination and sexual harassment. Thanks to further amendments of the Labour Code direct and indirect discrimination in employment and in access to employment were defined in greater detail, as well as harassment and sexual harassment or right to equal pay. The gender equality concept mirrored in other laws as well – e.g. in the one on work inspection. The fact that the process of anti-discrimination law adoption has been more than problematic for quite a long period can definitely be considered a setback – also considering all the above-mentioned steps and positive changes reflection equal opportunities principles that showed up in the Czech legislation over a period of time.

The so-called three-speed parental leave was another big change that was approved of in 2007 but has been experienced in reality since 1 January 2008. On one hand it has introduced more freedom into parents’ decision-making on their work-life balance plans; on the other hand, it has not offered any alternative for the case when parents opt for the two-year-long version and then would like to put their child in crèches and later on in kindergarten. Due to lack of places in both types of care institutions and lack of interest of the government as well as regional and local administration, parents often have no chance to find place for their children in either crèches or kindergartens.

Recently, increasing interest of both employees and employers in various types of non-standard working hours and setting can be identified. Thus, there are different programmes or concepts in companies prepared or realized focusing on alternative working hours – how to approach them, offer them and secure them. According to Ana Lužaić and her article in HR forum magazine 7-8/2008 the Labour Code namely regulates two types of workload: flexible working hours and part-time jobs. The law also allows for work done on the basis of an agreement defining clearly type of work and period of time of the agreement’s validity. The law does not specify other types of work that have been also more or less popular in companies: home office, tele-working, compressed working week, shared position etc.

It is more than relevant to quote here a survey realized in October 2007 among employers based in Prague that covered use of flexible working hours. It came to a conclusion that 80% of companies use flexible working hours; 69% of companies allow its employees to work part-time and 74% of employers claim they make return of their employees from parental leave back to work smoother. It seems that at least in Prague and some other cities in the

²² [http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA0E/\\$File/1413074411.pdf](http://czso.cz/csu/2007edicniplan.nsf/t/B7002BCA0E/$File/1413074411.pdf).

Czech Republic women and men are provided a host of opportunities to balance their private life with their work irrespective of having a family or not, pursuing their studies or dedicating their time outside work to different activities.

Another survey run by the Czech Society for Human Resources Development at the turn of 2007 and 2008 was concerned with interest in alternative workload and had two target groups: women²³ and employers²⁴ who might be interested in offering such working possibilities not only to women, but also students, handicapped or seniors. The results were the following: women were most interested (34%) in standard part-time (4 hours a day, 5 times a week), 32% of women were interested in $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ workload via home office or tele-working, 25% of those who responded in the survey would prefer flexible $\frac{1}{2}$ -time job, 23% of women were interested in a part-time job combining home office with work in the office and 9% would opt for shared position. Most of the women expressed their interest in working part-time or flexibly only for a limited period of time: 30% of them would work part-time for 2-4 years, 27% of women would like such a job for 1-2 years and 16% of women would choose such a job for less than 1 year. Rest of them would consider working part-time constantly; though 73% of women would like to get back to full-time work after certain period of time. From content point of view, they would opt for alternative jobs in administration (57%) or in lower or middle management (32%); many of them actually ticked more options. It is more than positive to note that women participating in the survey were highly motivated to further education and training: 95% of them showed interest in some kind of education (IT, managerial skills, communication skills etc.) during their part-time work.

Employers mention among the mostly used types of flexible working hours work based on agreement concerning concrete work (more than 85% of companies), part-time jobs and flexible working hours (80%). Management (lower, middle, higher) mostly takes the advantage of flexible working hours. Other professions (administration, production) mostly work using temporary work agreements and part-time jobs. Mothers and fathers on maternity/ parental leave are mostly employed in administration (46%), then equally in production or multi-shift operation (25%) or in lower management (18%). A rather small number of parents on maternity or parental leave work in middle or higher management (11%).

There are several non-profit organisations that regularly bring forward examples of good practices in the area of equal opportunities, diversity or various concrete work-life balance programmes. Among them, the following can be named: Gender Studies, o.p.s. and its pro-

²³ 98% of all those who responded in the survey expressed their interest in alternative working hours. The questionnaire was filled in by 390 women aged 20-65. Among them, there were 44% of those aged 31-40, 25% of women in 20-30 age gap and 20% of women between 41 and 50 years of age. Most of the women had secondary education (65%), 32% had university degree. 44% of women who responded was at that time at maternity or parental leave, 27% were working full-time, 17% part-time. 64% of women was ready to commute to work. At the moment of filling in the questionnaire (or before starting their maternity leave), 30% of women were working in administration, 25% in lower and 27% in middle management. The rest of them worked or have worked in production, commerce, multi-shift operation or in higher management.

²⁴ The survey was responded by 105 from the total of 250 approached companies. They employed 1-7917 employees. Majority of those companies that responded was in a group with 500-3000 employees. They operated in production, banking, IT, telecommunication, education and training and services.

ject entitled Company of the Year: Equal Opportunities, Aperio, o.s. and Otevřená společnost, o.p.s. with their gender audits. Apart from these organisations, several expert media also deal with best practices, i.e. HR forum, HR Management, CSR Forum, along with dailies or their online versions (Mladá fronta Dnes, Hospodářské noviny) and sometimes also women's magazines (Marianne, Elle, Marie Claire, Žena a život, Žena+ etc.).

Let us mention at least a few concrete examples from companies. Most employers usually start their programmes with an analysis: Nestlé started its project "Opportunities and limits of alternative working schedules" already in 2006. Its aim was to find out which positions/jobs could be performed in alternative working schedules, how to introduce them to satisfy all parties engaged, what are their positives and negatives, how to promote the alternative working schedules among employees and how to balance their offer and demand for them. Gradually, they succeeded in the project's realization. Among its positives, there are: the possibility to stay in touch with the company, keep and develop further on knowledge and skills during parental leave, care for family member or longer illness; the chance to retain high potential employees in the company who could not – for any reason – work under "standard" conditions; the feeling of satisfaction leading to higher work performance and increased productivity; the improvement of family situation; the possibility to work from home and without interruption on creative tasks (outside the open-space); and the home office that saves time otherwise spent to travelling to and back from the office.²⁵

Motivation of SAP to introduce non-standard working hours was different: it was the interest in employing students, parents – especially mothers – at parental leave and seniors. They offered three types of working schedules: $\frac{3}{4}$ working time (6 hours a day), $\frac{1}{2}$ working time (4 hours a day) and a special programme for students of max. 20 hours a week with flexible working time and practice in the Internship programme. Following this set-up, they launched a campaign that largely appeared e.g. in the so-called women's magazines. Within a few following months, the result was 41% increase in employment applications. Students were the group with the highest interest (68%), followed by mothers (25%), people in pre-retirement age (6%) and the handicapped (1%). 60% of all free positions in the company were staffed by shorter working schedules.²⁶

Citibank decided to launch its project so as to stay in touch with mothers at parental leave – it happened at the moment when the part of employees on maternity and parental leave reached 12% of the total 1100 people working in the company. In autumn 2006, the HR department initiated a project entitled "Contact with employees at maternity and parental leave", which aimed at keeping the employees' interest in continuation of their career in the bank, facilitation of employees' return to work process, keeping communication and information exchange about news in the company and allowing for parents' partial involvement in projects during maternity and parental leave, which contributes to keeping parents' knowledge and improving their financial situation. Parents, especially mothers, receive not only the company magazine *Citinews* but also *CitiMumsWorld*, a bi-monthly special bulletin only for mothers that is distributed by email and includes information about the bank. Women at maternity and parental leave are regularly invited to take part in different projects and occasional

²⁵ Prepared on the basis of an article published in a special supplement of HR forum magazine 9/2007.

²⁶ Prepared on the basis of an article published in a special supplement of HR forum magazine 9/2007.

work for the bank during their parental leave. Apart from this cooperation with mothers during their leave, employees are also offered flexible working set-up in positions and departments where the business allows for it. The company also provides financial benefit for babysitting.²⁷

6. Women and violence

In the Czech Republic, violence against women has not represented – just like in many other countries – an unknown phenomenon. It can, however, be claimed that it has been provided strategic attention and approach from relevant bodies only in a few recent years. It all happened primarily thanks to tireless work of women's non-profit organisations that kept on discussing violence against women as an issue that needs to be dealt with in legislation. Their first success happened with amendment to the Criminal Code that – as of 1 June 2004 – introduced factum of “maltreatment of a person living jointly in the same flat or house”. From 1 July 2004 has the same law included duty of bodies active in criminal proceedings to instruct victims or witnesses who might endangered by an accused or convinced person when at liberty of the fact that this person was either released from arrest or that this person escaped.

Since 1 January 2007, another amendment has been in power. It covers obligation to provide legal measures of complex protection to people that find themselves in danger of domestic violence. The aim is to allow them to stabilize their situation psychically and socially and to have the chance to solve their situation effectively. This measure should help to victims of domestic violence, especially women who represent victims in majority of cases, in solving quickly their problematic situation and – if necessary – in looking for shelter accommodation and other forms of support. In practice it means that since 1 January 2007, the Czech legislation has included the so-called institute of expulsion of violent person from jointly inhabited flat or house for a period of 10 days. Since 1 January 2007, another amendment has also been valid – it forms part of the Social Services Code and it should – in the long-run – improve level of care for victims of domestic violence, cover shelters, both public and with secret address, for victims of domestic violence from legislative point of view. This amendment also introduced a new social service: intervention centres for victims of domestic violence. Since 2007, there is at least one centre of this kind in each region. The centre provides help free of charge to endangered people within 48 hours following delivery of a verdict of expulsion or entry prohibition. The intervention centres also ensure communication with other relevant bodies (police, public offices, departments of social and legal protection of children etc.).²⁸

²⁷ Prepared on the basis of an article published in a special supplement of HR forum magazine 2/2008.

²⁸ Further details concerning the institute of expulsion and other relevant aspects can be found in chapter 8 (Domestic violence against women) of the 2008 shadow report concerning equal opportunities in the Czech Republic: Stínová zpráva v oblasti rovného zacházení a rovných příležitostí žen a mužů 2008.

According to information noted in the Record from meeting of the Committee for prevention of domestic violence dated 18 January 2008,²⁹ there were 790 people in total expelled in 2007, of which 8 were women. According to data gathered by Bílý kruh bezpečí (White Circle of Safety), during September 2008, there were 43 people³⁰ expelled and in the January-August 2008 period, the number was 459 people.³¹ In comparison to the same period of 2007, data and analyses of Bílý kruh bezpečí (which reflects data received from 15 intervention centres) prove that there is a decreasing tendency in number of expulsions of violent people: in 2007, 72 people per month were expelled, in 2008, this number reached 57.³²

In 2008, upon the initiative of the Committee for prevention of domestic violence, the government started to deal with the so-called stalking. Stalking has been described as dangerous pursuit that is used to gain power and control over another person, his/her uncertainty and constraint on the person.

Stalking can have different forms: from annoying behaviour, getting into contact via different media, searching for contact with the victim, spoofing of third persons etc. Stalking is often accompanied with physical violence, menace and assault even to close people of the victim. It can impact psychical health, social isolation, need to change domicile and/or employment etc. Following the discussion on this issue in the Committee mentioned above, media also gave certain attention to the topic and wider discussion on this dangerous phenomenon was started.³³ It happened despite the fact that representatives of the Ministry of Justice gave the Committee reasons – when providing information on changes prepared in the Criminal Code and other pieces of legislation – why factum of stalking was not included in the draft of Criminal Code.³⁴

In 2008, the Committee for prevention of domestic violence succeeded in developing several major documents, e.g. suggestion to the Council concerning factum of a new crime of stalking,³⁵ suggestion concerning shelters with secret address,³⁶ or suggestion related to re-codification of law of criminal procedure.

It can definitely be said that due to the fact that the Committee consists of representatives of ministries as well as experts and representatives of non-governmental organisations who have been involved in the issue for a very long time, this topic is an area where different parties are capable of finding joint approaches and solutions.

Talking of violence against women, a survey concerning this problem is worth mentioning. It was organized in mid-2008 by the Slovak-Czech Women's Fund in cooperation with a re-

²⁹ http://www.vlada.cz/assets/cs/rvk/cinnost/Z_pis_VDN_180108.pdf.

³⁰ <http://www.domacinasili.cz/cz/novinky-cz/analyza-za-zari-vykazani/-zakaz-vstupu/n149>.

³¹ <http://www.domacinasili.cz/cz/novinky-cz/analyza-za-srpen-vykazani/-zakaz-vstupu/n145>.

³² <http://www.domacinasili.cz/cz/novinky-cz/analyza-za-srpen-vykazani/-zakaz-vstupu/n145>.

³³ E.g.: <http://www.britske-listy.cz/2008/6/20/art41322.html> and <http://turnovsky.denik.cz/zlociny-a-soudy/stalking20080929.html>.

³⁴ See addendum 9 in this document: http://www.vlada.cz/assets/cs/rvk/cinnost/Z_pis_VDN_180108.pdf.

³⁵ <http://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=35401>.

³⁶ <http://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=41733>.

search agency Data Collect and supported by the Vodafone Foundation in relation to the thematic call for proposals focused on violence against women. According to the survey's results, 85% of Czechs agree that violence is more often committed by men against women and almost ¾ of them perceive violence against women in the Czech Republic to be a major problem. Nearly 90 % of Czechs say that victims of violence fear searching for help. 46% of women see the cause for unsolved cases of violence in lack of information on the issue and institutions to turn to for help. In most cases, people relate violence to its physical (94%), psychical (86%) and sexual (70%) demonstration. They do not associate violence that often with economic dimension (33%). 42% of them were already in the situation when someone was scanting them physically or psychically. Almost 2/3 (63%) already encountered psychical violence in their surroundings, and 45% with physical violence.

7. Situation of women's and gender NGOs and networks

Similarly to 2007, the Czech Women's Lobby was very active also in 2008. It is a network of women's organisations that is member of European Women's Lobby, a Europe-wide platform of national networks of women's organisations and international women's organisations of different thematic focus. The Czech Women's Lobby continued its support to the anti-discrimination code – for example, it developed a series of arguments in support of its adoption:

Why does the Czech Republic need the antidiscrimination code and what will it bring to victims of discrimination?

Adoption of the antidiscrimination law is a clear signal to the society that the Czech Republic does not only declare its support to the ideas of equality and non-discrimination, but also struggles for true fulfilment of these ideas in daily life and perceives discriminatory conducts as intolerable. It will thus change the social climate towards the better.

Antidiscrimination law will define precisely in what situations, to whom and how protection will be provided. The law will prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, age, handicap, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or faith and world view. Discrimination will be prohibited in employment, access to employment, access to education, access to healthcare, admission of claim and provision of social benefits and provision of products and services, including housing.

The law will provide victims of discrimination effective instruments how to defend against discriminatory conduct. In courts, victims of discrimination may demand waiver of discrimination, elimination of consequences of discrimination, appropriate compensation (e.g. apology) or financial compensation of non-financial damage.

The law will define precisely legal conceptions related to discrimination, especially the concept of discrimination in itself. Recently, any unfair conduct has been often identified as discriminatory – it may be unlawful but still has nothing to do with discrimination. The fact that the term 'discrimination' is overused leads to this problem being disregarded in the society as unsubstantial and unimportant. Hereby, position of victims of discriminatory conduct is deteriorated.

An antidiscrimination body will be established: it will be the Ombudsman, the public defender of rights who will systematically deal with equality and antidiscrimination; victims of discrimination could turn to this office with request for assistance. The law will also support everyone who want to join in the society but are rejected to the margin due to prejudices and stereotypes in thinking.

Similarly to another 60 non-governmental non-profit organisations, the Czech Women's Lobby joined the Call of non-governmental organisations to Members of Parliament concerning the antidiscrimination law – it was adopted by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate but the president vetoed it on 16 May 2008 and it has not been provided any space since then in the pipeline in the Chamber of Deputies. For the last time, it was supposed to be discussed in the 32nd meeting of the Chamber of Deputies; it was not decided in the end and the vote was hung up. The next date when the law was expected to be voted on was the 43rd session of the Chamber of Deputies which started on 25 November 2008.³⁷

Along with the Czech Women's Lobby the antidiscrimination law has also been intensely discussed – especially on its legal dimensions – by Poradna pro občanství, občanská a lidská práva (Counselling Centre for citizenship, citizen and human rights). It has followed the whole process of adoption of the law thoroughly and documented all details concerning it on its website, including an overview of how it was voted by every MP.³⁸ Arguments developed and brought up by human rights organisations in favour of the law are very brief and formed part the above-mentioned call to MPs:

Right to equal treatment, which is a pillar of modern society, is one of the major human rights of every person. No one should be treated differently because of their age, sex, colour of their skin, handicap, sexual orientation etc.

Though right to equal treatment is set in the Declaration of Basic Rights and Freedoms, a law is needed to be in place so that impletion of the right can be enforced in everyday life. The law that has been for so long disputed is, indeed, a compromise in its current form. Despite of that, non-governmental organisations are convinced of the necessity of adoption of this bill that has been awaited by victims of discrimination for several years.

The Czech Women's Lobby was also active in a wider context of its activity – with regard to sustainability and further development of the non-governmental sector in the Czech Republic, it supported, together with a number of other organisations, a Call of NGO representatives: the civil society substitutes for the state's activities but the state does not was to support it. This call was supported by 107 subjects (by 31 July 2008). The aim of this call was "to call on relevant individuals and state bodies, i.e. all ministries, to inform the public clearly and as soon as possible of binding dates and programmes of utilization of structural support to the non-profit sector, and to allow hereby the non-profit sector to take part in public services and projects contributing to the development of the Czech Republic. Special emphasis is put on the requirement of clearly formulated priorities in support of non-profit organisations providing social services and on guarantee of instruments to fulfil these priorities."

³⁷ <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/ischuze.sqw?o=5&s=43&pozvanka=1>.

³⁸ <http://www.diskriminace.cz/dt-zakon/antizakon.phtml>.

The initiators and signatories of the call appreciated that shortly after the call was published the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs disclosed three calls for proposals in three thematic priorities. Nevertheless, they called attention to the fact that a number of calls for proposals from relevant operational programmes that were notified to be made public at the beginning of 2008 were not opened yet in mid-2008. This aggravates continuity of work of non-governmental organisations and makes their sustainability very complicated.

Talking of development of the Czech Women's Lobby as an umbrella organisation of more than twenty women's organisations, it is necessary to mention that it succeeded in receiving support to its activities planned for the first six months of 2009 in relation to the Czech presidency in the Council of the European Union and their respective activities. Its supporters include Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Open Society Fund Praha and Slovak-Czech Women's Fund. Hereby, temporary functionality of the organisation and sequence of events will be assured for the Lobby to realize with active support of its member organisations. There is another event that must not be forgotten in the list of activities of the Czech Women's Lobby: a happening on the occasion of the International Women's Day that took place on 7 March 2008, on the eve of this important day, on the St. Wenceslaus Square and in Ve Smečkách street where the building that used to be owned by the Czech Women's Club.

On 5 November 2008, the Czech Women's Lobby organized an international conference entitled "Equal Opportunities of Women and Men – a neglected priority (not only) during the presidency of the Council of Europe?". This conference provoked certain controversies among MPs of the coalition government and ČSSD as the opposition party; primarily, it discussed doubts of women's organisations that the concept of equal opportunities of women and men would remain rather forgotten in the context of the presidency. Although the programme of official events for the first six months of 2009 includes the issue of equal opportunities from different perspectives, it is difficult to resist the feeling that it will not take the form of a mainstream matter. In case it was realized widely, a public discussion could take place along with wider media coverage of equal opportunities as a complex set of aspects that need to be contextualized – i.e. from economic perspective. The programme, however, indicates that equal opportunities will be discussed at high-level debates without any concrete effect on lives of people in the Czech Republic and in Europe. It also seems to characterize the events that engagement or active participation of women's organisations is not very much welcome in these events. Nevertheless, the Czech Women's Lobby will take the initiative and table several themes in form of discussion in the first half of 2009.

In the first half of 2008, women's organisations operating in the Czech Republic were very effective in covering various up-to-date issues and they worked very intensely on their respective issues. As of summer months, most of the organisations (some of them found themselves in a difficult situation already in spring) started to face a serious problem with sustaining their activities, number of employees and financial questions. It is also one of the reasons why they supported the call of the non-profit sector on the political representation of the Czech Republic and people in decision-making positions. A large number of women's organisations suppressed their activities, many of them almost completely, had to part with some of the employees and has been since then in difficulties how to continue their activities that have been asked for by the public, experts or media with far less money than in previous months and years. Many of the women's organisations admit that they relied largely on receiving support to their projects from the call for proposals published in the Operational Pro-

gramme Praha Adaptability. The demand of projects submitted in the call considerably exceeded finances allocated to the priority of the programme in question.

In 2008, gitA o.s. organized again conference UDIVERSUM II – this time, it focused on media of public service and their approach towards diversity (with regard to gender, age, nationality, race, sexual orientation etc.). The conference also presented views of international experts (e.g. from BBC or WDR) looking at media as players in the area of diversity and responsibility to different “minorities” whatever their definition.³⁹ Another event that was also very successful was the Company of the Year awarded for the fifth time by Gender Studies, o.p.s. in the area of equal opportunities. The award is aimed to motivate employers to support equal opportunities of women and men and work-life balance. Winners of the 2008 round were: T-Mobile Czech Republic, Vodafone Czech Republic and Komerční banka. Special award of Gender Studies was given to Česká spořitelna for its well thought-over steps in programmes supporting equal opportunities and the company’s diversity concept. T-Mobile was appreciated for its systematic concept of work-life balance and accessibility of the company’s library to parents on maternity/parental leave with intranet and e-learning courses. Vodafone offers – apart from various work-life balance programmes – a “slow take-off” for parents returning to work from maternity/parental leave as well as interesting education opportunities. Komerční banka introduced an action plan for parents on maternity leave and supports fathers in taking parental leave.⁴⁰

In autumn 2008, ROSA, an organisation providing complex help to women-victims of domestic violence and running, among others, a shelter, celebrated 15 years of existence. It has not only been active in providing direct help to victims of domestic violence but has also taken part in expert discussions on domestic violence and educates the public. It is more than interesting to note that it has been supported from public budget only since 2003. A number of other important and interesting events and activities were organized and held by many other women’s organisations – e.g. Gender Information Centre Nora⁴¹, La Strada⁴², Žába na prameni (Frog on the Well)⁴³, Český svaz žen (Czech Women’s Union)⁴⁴, Otevřená společnost (Open Society)⁴⁵, proFem⁴⁶, eLnadruhou⁴⁷ etc. All of them played an important role in raising awareness of the public, media and various experts in the field of equal opportunities. It happened at different levels: education and training, provision of information, consultations, or support in legal or psychological matters.

39 <http://www.goethe.de/ins/cz/pra/acv/med/2008/cs3726121v.htm>.

40 [http://www.rovneprilezitosti.ecn.cz/rocnik.shtml?als\[ROK\]=2008&als\[PHL\]=2751](http://www.rovneprilezitosti.ecn.cz/rocnik.shtml?als[ROK]=2008&als[PHL]=2751).

41 <http://www.gendernora.cz>.

42 <http://www.strada.cz>.

43 <http://www.zabanaprameni.cz>.

44 <http://www.csz.cz>.

45 <http://www.osops.cz>.

46 <http://www.profem.cz>.

47 <http://www.elnadruhou.cz>.

8. Resources

Governmental Office of the Czech Republic – www.vlada.cz

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs – www.mpsv.cz

Czech Statistical Office – www.czso.cz

Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic – www.psp.cz

Inter-Parliamentary Union – <http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm>

Stínová zpráva v oblasti rovného zacházení a rovných příležitostí žen a mužů 2008, Open Society Fund Praha 2008

Media: Mladá fronta Dnes, Hospodářské noviny, Právo, Lidové noviny and their online versions, Aktuálně.cz

Websites of women's non-governmental organisations and their projects

Websites of political parties represented in the Parliament