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### **Ženy na trhu práce: realita a perspektivy**

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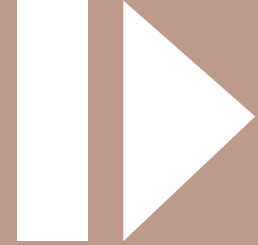
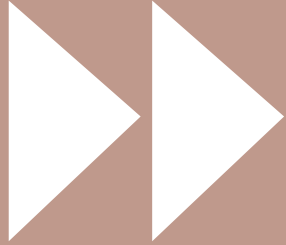
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# WOMEN ON THE LABOUR MARKET: TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE

## Women on the Labour Market: Today and in the Future

Textbook of international composite authors on equal opportunities on the labour market

Published by Gender Studies within a project Fit for Gender Mainstreaming – Gender-Sensitive Transcending of Borders between East and West

“Fit for Gender Mainstreaming – Gender-Sensitive Transcending of Borders between East and West” Project

This EU-sponsored project (12/2006 to 02/2008) involves project partners from the European countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria and Germany. Based on cross-border qualification initiatives for multipliers and public events in all countries participating in the “East-West Dialogue”, the goal is to advance gender mainstreaming strategies on a local level and enhance exchanges of experience and qualifications. The core approach is learning together in and from Europe.



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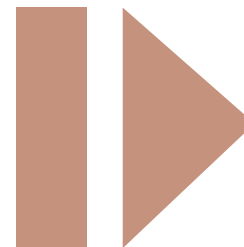
### Dear readers,

We are pleased to bring to your attention *Women on labour market: today and in the future*, a book, which is one of the outcomes of the project *Fit for Gender Mainstreaming - Gender-Sensitive Transcending of Borders between East and West*. Based on cross-border qualification initiatives for multipliers and public events in all countries participating in the "East-West Dialogue", the goal of the project is to advance gender mainstreaming strategies on a local level and enhance exchange of experiences and qualifications.

The publication follows up the international conference *Future of Women on the Labour Market*, which took place under the auspices of Kateřina Jacques, a Member of Parliament, in Prague in October 2007. Our goal is to assess situation of women on the labour market, refer to persisting inequalities and inspire discussion about the future. We are aware of the fact that gender equality policies need a thorough evaluation to prevent biased application, which may lead to cementing gender stereotypes instead of disrupting them. Our texts address not only decision-makers, but they also represent a call for solidarity between women, since its lack often stands for a barrier in achieving equality. Thus, we decided to focus some of our current activities especially on women.

### We wish you pleasant and useful reading,

**Alexandra Jachanová Doleželová, project manager, and Kateřina Machovcová, editor, Gender Studies, o.p.s.**



## Foreword: Vladimír Špidla

Equal position of women and men is a fundamental right and common value of the European Union. It is also a necessary condition for achieving European goals of growth, employment and social cohesion.

One of the areas where equal position of women and men is of extraordinary importance surely is labour market. The participation of women in the labour market is a necessary condition of their self-realization in the society and in economic independence. Significant progress has been lately reached in this area, in particular within the range of European strategy for growth and employment. The situation of women has been constantly improving in the majority of countries of the European Union as far as participation in the labour market is concerned. With respect to this improvement (increase from 54.8 % in 2003 to 57.2 % in 2006), it now seems that the goal of 60 % employment of women by 2010 can be met .

Nonetheless, as far as employment level, remuneration and opportunity of balancing professional and private and family life are concerned, great differences between women and men persist. It is still necessary to exercise enormous effort to promote participation of women in the labour market in quality professions, in particular to ensure equal treatment to minimize stereotypes concerning women and men and to make sure that there is same pay for work of women and men. Furthermore it is necessary to introduce flexible working time and further develop the systems of children care and care for other dependent people. Last but not least, it is necessary to incorporate equal position of women and men to all policies cross-sectionally.

European Commission has committed in 2006 to support of equal position of women and men by means of a plan related to the period of 2006–2010. This commitment has been supported by member states by means of European pact for Gender Equality which was accepted

at the spring session of Council of Europe in 2006. To be able to handle the task of equal position of women and men in employment, it is necessary to engage all participants, including social partners and civil society. Therefore I welcome this publication, which together with a conference “Perspective of Women in the Labour Market” organized by Gender Studies o.p.s. purposefully contributes to increasing the awareness and discussion about the problems at stake in the Czech Republic.

Vladimír Špidla, PhD.

EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities



## Foreword: Kateřina Jacques

Dear readers,

I had been delighted to accept the patronage over the conference Perspective of Women in the Labour Market. The topic/the spirit of conference belong to great political challenges. These appeal to me also from the reason of strong personal experience. As a mother of two, I used to study, work and at the same time used to be politically engaged. A story of women who want to be mothers and at the same time find their place in other social roles is also my life story.

There is an image still rooted in our society assigning a woman a role of a woman in childbed and a governess. Fortunately, this purely traditional view slowly steps back to modern approaches calling for the greatest degree of equality between women and men as possible. Women of course want to be mothers but they want to find their place outside the family circle as well.

This trend is perceptible also in politics, similarly as in other areas. Many political parties declare their will to provide women with greater space. The public express their view that they are interested in women in politics. The question is how much this declaration finds its real reflection in practice. A pathetic fact remains that the representation of women in the Czech politics is unfortunately still more than modest. So far.

Despite the fact that the policy is formulated by men in particular, the situation of women in the labour market is gradually improving. It could be faster, but still: pro-family flexible policy is developing – the main pillar is enforcing the freedom of choice. I really welcome introducing the institute of the so-called multi-rate parental leave and parental leave of fathers or the support of flexible (shortened) work loads.

It is however necessary to admit that only political changes as such do not solve the situa-

tion of women in the labour market. It is not only laws but the whole of atmosphere. It will be necessary to eliminate all-society nuisance, where the difference in remuneration of men and women in particular belongs – these are in the Czech Republic one of the highest in Europe. Czech women earn less also because of the fact that they work at posts which are worse paid. The fact that women are underestimated and do not feel the support of the whole of society in their effort to find their place and win recognition is a serious all-society taboo. It is therefore important to encourage their self-awareness and to promote their active approach in finding their professional place. The key factor is harmonizing family and professional life, which cannot be achieved without quality family background and just role and task division in family.

I firmly believe that this anthology will lead to a wider debate contributing to the desirable improvement of situation. Women make a half of the society and they simply belong to power and decisive positions. I wish them not only courage but also unshakeable will and enlightened men without whose this goal remains only wishful thinking.

PhDr. Kateřina Jacques

Member of Parliament, Chair of the Green Party Parliament Club



## Foreword: Agnieszka Rochon

Globalisation and the technological revolution have brought about the end of an era for stable, mass employment. The relocation of jobs from Europe (in particular from highly developed western countries) and the USA to countries with lower labour costs, as well as the replacement of manual labour with cheaper and more precise computers and robots has become widespread. Such tendencies, defined as a “fleeing” or “end” of work raise concerns and act as an incentive to search for future solutions.

According to experts, the development of a modern, post-industrial and globalised economy is conditioned on investment in science, research and innovative technologies, as well as on much needed reforms in the existing, often archaic social safety mechanisms and models of employment. Such changes are never painless, as they require a redefinition of the work ethic from a governmental, employer and employee perspective which must be followed by fundamental changes in society and culture, without which resources such as social and cultural capital cannot be fully taken advantage of.

Bearing in mind that constructive, engaged discussion concerning the global labour market and the possibilities of shaping it is particularly needed in this time, Regional Office of Heinrich Böll Foundation in Warsaw published in 2006 a report “The future of work. Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia faced with challenges of a globalised world”. Its authors – Ewa Lisowska and Edwin Bendyk – attempted to show how prepared were Central European countries for the challenges posed by competition in a globally changing labour market, and what steps must be taken in order to take advantage of the opportunities offered in order to achieve long term economic growth. The 2006 Report contained an in depth analysis of the position of women in the labour market. Its authors stated that women’s social capital is insufficiently used: even though

they have a higher level of education than men, are capable of a more flexible division of work and more open to changes, they have more difficult access to the labour market. This is caused by cultural and structural barriers which are even made greater by current political populism what makes women’s access to employment more difficult, or even fully excludes them from the workplace. However, it is very likely that the twenty first century – being the era of information and knowledge – will serve women since they are more prepared to further changes of the labour market. As Ewa Lisowska pointed out, women are better educated, they are motivated to take up new challenges and they possess the skills necessary in the contemporary business (the ability to communicate, cooperate and to express emotions etc.).

We are very pleased that our report has provided for our colleagues from Gender Studies – an organization with which we have a pleasure of long-term cooperation – with an inspiration to initiate an innovative debate on the women’s perspectives in the labour market in the Czech Republic. Issues raised in Ewa Lisowska’s article have been further discussed by Czech and international experts who analyze the possibilities of reconciliation of professional and family life, flexible working patterns, women’s professional carrier in science and research and in the ICT sector. We hope that this publication will deepen discussion on the opportunities and challenges related to women’s access to employment, resulting from the development of the labour market, and will help to develop solutions which will ensure full use of potential social capital that is women.

Agnieszka Rochon

Director of the Regional Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Warsaw

## Women and labour market – Poland, Czech and Slovak Republic

Ewa Lisowska

### Introduction

Women's access to employment is more difficult due to a perception held by potential employers of women having many family responsibilities. There are evident signs of women being treated unequally in the work place in Poland, Czech<sup>1</sup> and Slovak republic despite the implementation of EU anti-discrimination laws into national legislation.

Below it is presented the situation of women on the labour markets of these three countries in the view of statistical data.

### Difficult access to employment

Employment rates in Poland and Slovakia are lower for both sexes than the average in the EU-27 Member States, whilst in the Czech Republic they are close to the EU average, and among men they are higher than the EU-27 average (see table 1). Among the countries with the highest female employment rates (at least 66 %) are Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom. Poland has one of the lowest employment (48 %) rates of women in the EU. Employment rates lower than these in Poland can be found only in Italy, Malta and Greece.

When comparing the three countries – Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republic, it is worth noting that the relative difference in employment rate between women and men is the highest in the Czech Republic (almost 30 %), as well as in the Slovak Republic (29 %). In Poland it is the lowest (26 %).

**Table 1. Employment rates by sex in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovak Republic and the EU, 2006 (in %)**

Country	Women	Men	Relative difference in employment rate
EU (27 countries) average)	57,2 <sup>a</sup>	71,6 <sup>a</sup>	25,2
Czech Republic	56,8	73,7	29,8
Poland	48,2	60,9	26,3
Slovak Republic	51,9	67,0	29,1

<sup>a</sup> Provisional value

Source: Eurostat 2007 and own calculation based on: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

High unemployment that affects both women and men is a significant social problem in Poland and Slovakia as it is the highest among the EU-27 countries (see table 2). The unemployment rate in Poland and Slovakia was close to 20 % in 2004, and decreased to 15 % in 2006, whereas in the Czech Republic was 10 % in 2004 and 9 % in 2006. The lowest rates of female unemployment are found in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (about 4 % in each of these countries).

Of significant interest is the relative difference in unemployment rates between the sexes – the highest one in the Czech Republic (approaching 40 % in 2004 and 52 % in 2006) and the lowest one in Poland (9 % in 2004 and 20 % in 2006). On the basis of statistical data concerning employment and unemployment rates of the sexes, one can conclude that women's access to employment is the most difficult in the Czech Republic. In the period of 2004-2006 relative difference in unemployment rate increased. It means without any doubt that it is easier for men to find job than for women.

**Table 2. Unemployment rates by sex in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia and the EU, 2006 (in %)**

Country	Women	Men	Relative difference in unemployment rates	
			2004	2006
EU (27 countries) average)	8,9	7,6	25,9 <sup>a</sup>	17,1
Czech Republic	8,8	5,8	39,4	51,7
Poland	14,9	13,0	9,4	14,6
Slovak Republic	14,7	12,3	13,5	19,5

<sup>a</sup> According to EU-25

Source: As in tab. 1.

The higher rate of unemployment among women as well as longer time spent in unemployment (in Poland, average time spent searching for employment has been in recent years on the average one month longer for women than it has been for men) (Cichomski, 2006, p. 256) is explained by Becker's theory of discrimination, which is rather result of employers' prejudices towards certain social groups (in this case women), thus making it harder for representatives of these groups to find work after a period of unemployment. In contrast, the model of statistical discrimination explains that potential employers perceive men as the ones who possess greater experience and higher qualifications than women, and it results then in selecting

<sup>1</sup> Antidiscrimination law in the Czech Republic is still in the process of negotiations.



a male workforce, as this reduces costs involved in the recruitment process and in assessing the competency of each potential employee (Cichomski, 2006, p. 183). After all even well educated and highly capable women have difficulties in finding suitable employment.

Low employment rate of women in Poland is a result of an overall low employment rate in the services and manufacturing industries, and a consequence of a shortage of institutional childcare. The Lisbon Strategy recommends that by the year 2010 there should be such conditions which ensure access to kindergarten care for 90 % of children aged between 3 years and school starting age, while 33 % of children aged below 3 years should have access to pre-kindergarten (crèche) care (Sztanderska, 2004, p. 197). In Poland during the period of transformation number of kindergartens decreased significantly. In urban areas around 50 % of all children benefit from kindergarten care, while in rural areas it is only 14 %. The European average amounts to 80 %.<sup>2</sup> Among the analysed countries, the Czech Republic has the highest percentage of children in preschool care and the highest employment rate of women (Report on social development, 2004).<sup>3</sup>

Hindered access to institutional childcare limits women's vocational empowerment, and has a negative impact on procreation. In countries which enforce equal opportunity laws, including those concerning the reconciliation of work and family life (e.g. in Sweden where access to kindergartens is free of charge and parental leave is shared equally between mothers and fathers) the fertility rate (the average number of children per woman aged between 15-49) is higher than in the Central and Eastern European countries: in Sweden it amounts to 1.85, in Finland 1.84, in Denmark 1.83, whereas in Poland only 1.27, in the Czech Republic – 1.33, in Slovakia – 1.24.<sup>4</sup>

### Women earn less

Discrimination of women is reflected in lower salaries obtained by women for work of the same or of similar quality. Lower remunerations of women compared to men appear in all countries and all occupational groups. At the same time, low level of potential earnings that a woman may receive has a negative influence on her vocational activity, and on how much she invests in herself for the sake of backing up her qualifications and gaining new skills.

Slovakia, followed by the Czech Republic, is characterised by the highest range in earnings, while the smallest differences are observed in Poland (see table 3). In other EU member states, namely in Germany, Estonia, Cyprus and the United Kingdom, the range of average earnings is

similar to that of Slovakia. The smallest differences in earnings are in Malta and Portugal. In Sweden the pay gap is 16 % and it is slightly major than the one of European average.

**Table 3. Differences in average earnings of women and men in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic and the EU, 2006 (in %)**

Country	Average difference in %
EU (27 countries)	15 <sup>a</sup>
Czech Republic	18
Poland	12
Slovak Republic	22

<sup>a</sup> Eurostat estimate 2005

Source: As for the table 1.

An analysis of detailed statistical data of Poland leads to the conclusion that the largest difference in earnings occurs in managerial positions, in particular in large organisations recruiting over 1000 people. Overall, the largest differences in female and male earnings are found in industry sector, smaller in services and the lowest in agriculture. Women with occupational qualifications and higher education earn significantly less than men from the same occupational groups (Cichomski, 2006, p. 318).

Why do women earn less, despite the fact that their education is on the average of a higher standard than that of men? From a historical perspective, women have generally obtained poorer education and have therefore been a cheaper work force in terms of labour costs. Perceiving women as a cheaper labour force and the work carried out by them as easier, less prestigious and less strenuous has become imprinted in our social consciousness.

Seen from the macroeconomic point of view, differences in female and male earnings are a result of:

- career segregation and feminisation of certain occupations (in the so-called „female occupations“ earnings are by definition lower than in the so-called „male occupations“);

<sup>2</sup> E. Nowakowska, Powiedz Jasiu, powiedz Olu, „Polityka“, 6, 2003. See also: W trosce o pracę. Raport o rozwoju społecznym – Polska 2004 [Concerns for employment. Report on social development], UNDP, Warsaw 2004, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> According to American calculations, investing in pre-school care is economically viable. Every 1000 dollars spent on pre-school care results in a sevenfold profit as children who have been in pre-school do better in school, are more successful in work and earn more, which means that they pay higher taxes, and what is more, take advantage of benefits less frequently. See Lazar, Darlington, (1982).

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat 2006, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>.

the small number of women in highly paid, executive managerial positions as a result of the glass ceiling phenomenon, i.e. the existence of barriers to the promotion of women to such positions;

- prejudices (stereotypes) concerning the perception and evaluation of women's qualifications as being less significant for the economy than qualifications held by men;
- a lack of safe-guard mechanisms on a national level which would counterbalance negative influence of prejudices and cultural factors, and which would promote and ensure law enforcement within the area of equal rights for women and men in the work place.

On the microeconomic (enterprise) level lower remunerations of women are a result of the following factors: women are on lower positions in remuneration tables, women earn less than their male predecessors in a given position, women are promoted more slowly (both financially and in the workplace hierarchy), a lower value that is given to women's work, finally their responsibilities that are described in very general terms without taking into consideration skills such as: assuming responsibility for others, manual dexterity, caring for other people, good self-management, interpersonal communication and intuition.

Despite the tendency for a narrowing of the gap in male and female earnings in all countries (e.g. in Poland in 1998 the gap equalled 30 %, in 2003 - 18 %, and in 2004 - 16 %), it is still obvious, even for work of the same value.

The variability in women's earnings cannot be explained solely by the human capital theory, as women's level of experience and number of qualifications are increasing as well as their motivation to invest in themselves in order to find employment and earn a good salary. The lasting differences between male and female salaries, observed also in Sweden – a country famous for its effective equal rights policies, can be explained by employers' prejudices towards women. They perceive women as a less flexible and effective workforce due to their family responsibilities, as well as by the theory of a dual labour market – competition is much greater in the women's sector of the market, and correspondingly it is smaller in the male sector, so the number of potential employers available to men is much greater (Cichomski, 2006, p. 343).

### Difficult access to managerial positions for women

Working women have better education than working men; there are more female than male students in tertiary education (see table 4). Moreover, women possess skills that are highly suitable for modern business: interpersonal skills – teamwork, communication skills,

negotiation skills, as well as intra personal skills and emotional sensitivity, despite this their numbers in the top executive managerial positions such as directors and company presidents are very low<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 4. Women students in tertiary education in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic and on average in the EU, 2005**

Country	Percentage of women among		
	Total students	Students of Maths and Computer Science	Students of engineering subjects
EU (27 countries) average]	55	37	24
Poland	58	33	26
Czech Republic	53	36	21
Slovak Republic	55	33	28

Source: As for the table 1.

Women lack collective experience in maintaining managerial positions, they do not have networks of contacts or mentors, and are surrounded by social prejudices which regard them as less suitable for management than men are.

The greatest number of women can be found in the lower managerial positions. Among all managers in Poland, women make 33 %, a similar number to Slovakia (31 %), while in the Czech Republic this number is lower – 30 %. The highest percentage of women holding managerial positions is found in Lithuania (41 %), Latvia (38 %) and Ireland (39 %).

**Table 5. Women and men in managerial positions in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic and the average in the EU, 2005**

Country	Percent of women	Percent of men
EU (27 countries) average]	32,2	67,8
Poland	32,5	67,5
Czech Republic	30,3	69,7
Slovak Republic	31,2	68,8

Source: Eurostat. Labour Force Survey, spring 2005. Also: Report on equality between women and men 2007.

<sup>5</sup> There is a lack of statistical data concerning the number of women among the top executive managers in these countries. For example in the Netherlands it is 7 %, but it is lower in other countries ranging from 1 % to 5 % (based on material obtained during a study visit to the Netherlands on April the 19<sup>th</sup> –20<sup>th</sup> 2006).

## Setting up a business as a way to escape from discrimination and the glass ceiling

The threat of unemployment and lower chances of finding a paid employment are one of the main reasons why women are getting interested in becoming self-employed. The Labour Force Survey indicates that among the total number of the self-employed, women make up 35 % in Poland and 26 % in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia<sup>6</sup>. Obvious conclusion is that in all three countries women took advantage of opportunities which appeared at the beginning of the 1990's and have established their own companies more often than men have done.

Surveys carried out inter alia in Poland (Lisowska, 2001) and in Bulgaria (Stoyanovska, 2001) indicate that female business owners are usually women aged 40 years or above, are married with commonly one or two grown up children and have many years' experience of working in public sector. Male entrepreneurs are also mostly in their forties, compared to women however there is a lower percentage of unmarried men among them. With the exception of agriculture which is dominated by poorly educated people, the share of female and male entrepreneurs with vocational secondary, post-secondary or tertiary education is high.<sup>7</sup> A comparison of female and male entrepreneurs with respect to their educational level does not indicate any significant differences.

While the majority of male entrepreneurs are technicians and engineers, followed by qualified workers, female business owners are more often economists, humanists or without any particular occupation, i.e. with a general secondary education. Anyway types of business conducted by men and women also differ. The activities of male entrepreneurs are concentrated in four areas: trade, construction, manufacturing and transport, while the activities of women are more dispersed - most often in trade followed by various services including business related services (book keeping, public relations, consulting, office interior design).

Making a decision of setting up a business is more burdensome for women because more often than men they must overcome their own fear of failure, a lack of faith in success and a lack of faith in their own abilities. They therefore need support and specific aid. Such aid is though offered only by non-governmental organisations and generally there is a lack of government programmes promoting entrepreneurship among women in Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Agency for the Development of Entrepreneurship operates in Poland, as in Slovakia, but unfortunately has no special offers for women.

Next to other European Union countries, Poland has a relatively high percentage of women

among the self-employed (see table 7), and a high proportion of female entrepreneurs among the total number of employed women- 25 %, compared to 7 % in Slovakia, 11 % in the Czech Republic and 11 % for the old EU-15 countries<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 7. Participation of women among the total number of self-employed in selected member states of the European Union**

Country	Share in percent
Austria	34,2
Belgium	27,7
Czech Republic	27,2
Denmark	20,8
Finland	32,8
Špain	26,8
Ireland	24,9
Germany	27,8
Sweden	25,6
United Kingdom	26,5
Poland	36,3

Source: Financing Women Entrepreneurs, OECD Small and Medium Enterprise Outlook, Geneva 2000, p. 53-63.

The above is partly a result of women's determination caused by limited job opportunities in paid employment, as well as by a typical situation when supply of labour is high and employers select male candidates who are more available for work and traditionally have fewer family responsibilities. It also confirms the entrepreneurial skills of Polish women and their need for paid employment.

<sup>6</sup> Own calculations based on the Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2005, p. 233, Statistical Yearbook of the Czech Republic 2005, p. 92 and Statistical Yearbook of Slovakia 2005, p. 320.

<sup>7</sup> A relatively high level of education of women entrepreneurs is common in Europe, as shown by the results of many surveys, erg. the survey of 2004 carried out among women members of the Eurochambres in all 25 EU countries; <http://www.eurochambres.be/women/index.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Women and men on the labour market, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2004 and Statistical Yearbooks of Slovakia and the Czech Republic 2005.

Nevertheless, as surveys carried out in Poland show, many women make the decision to start their own business out of choice and not out of necessity, for owning a company gives independence both financially and in decision making. This is escape from the „glass ceiling” (it is easier for a woman to start her own business than to be promoted to a managerial position)<sup>9</sup> and escape from gender related discrimination (Krug, 2003, p. 62), it is also an opportunity to receive higher income, and at the same time a way to reconcile paid employment with family responsibilities and leisure.

No research has been carried out yet which would show the scale on which women are “pushed” into self-employment by their employers, or which would tell us if women are treated in this way more often than men are. Therefore, it is impossible to prove the thesis that self employment is a substitution for contract work.

### Part-time work, teleworking and other flexible forms of employment

Poland, as well as the Czech Republic and Slovakia are characterised by inflexible labour markets, indicated among others by a relatively small number of people employed on a part-time basis out of the total employed population. The lowest rates of part-time employment are found in Slovakia where only 4.8 % of female and 1.2 % of male labour force are part-time workers. In the Czech Republic this percentage is almost twice as high – 8.7 % among women and 2,3 % men, while the highest percentage of part-time workers is found in Poland: 13.5 % in case of women and 8.4 % in case of men (see table 8).

**Table 8. Part-time employment in Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republic and average for the EU (27), 2006**

Country	Woman	Men
EU (27 countries)	32,9	7,7 %
Czech Republic	8,7	2,3 %
Poland	13,5	7,1 %
Slovak Republic	4,8	1,2 %

Source: Eurostat. Labour Force Survey, spring 2006. Also: Report on equality between women and men 2007

In all European Union member states the percentage of part-time work is higher among the female population. Men are rarely employed on a part-time basis, with the exception of Den-

mark where the part-time employment rate is higher for men than for women. Compared to the 27 European Union countries, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have a low part-time employment rate, particularly among women (e.g. in the Netherlands significant majority of women – as many as 75 % – work part-time, in Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Luxembourg – the percentage amounts to about 40 % in each and every).

Other flexible forms of employment such as teleworking, job sharing or flexible work hours are rare and are mostly used by large companies with foreign capital (e.g. Hewlett Packard, Xerox Poland) as solutions to reconcile work and family responsibilities. Surveys indicate that teleworking is used approximately in 2 % of Polish enterprises (Report on social development, 2004).

### Epilogue – the future of work

One must agree with J. Rifkin (2001) that „the times of mass labour are ending”, manual work in particular is decreasing as a result of the end of industrial era. New technologies are replacing simple tasks hitherto performed by people.

Services play an increasingly important role in the economy. The development of the service sector requires higher standards of education in society. As the standard of education increases, the economic activity of the population including the one of women, the frequency with which they take advantage of various types of services also increases. Development of intellectual work provides opportunities for women, as according to F. Fukuyama (2000, p. 102): „the economy of the information age turns manual work into intellectual work, and in such a world women by nature have a greater role to play”.

New technologies are created for women. Moreover, they are not biased with gender stereotypes. Therefore, women should find it easier to enter fields related to new technologies, including establishing their own companies based on new technologies. Some branches of Western companies are willing to employ women and have specific inclusion programmes, e.g. IBM, Hewlett Packard or General Electric.

The high unemployment rate among women might be reduced by developing their entrepreneurial skills, encouraging them to become self-employed and thus to create jobs not only for themselves, but also for other women and men. There is a need for specific programmes

<sup>9</sup> The glass ceiling is defined as invisible barriers in the professional careers of women and ethnic minorities. The presence of this phenomenon in Poland is indicated by the results of surveys carried out by the IFiS PAN in 2002. See Titkow (2003.).

to support educated, unemployed women who show an interest in setting up their own businesses.

The European Union emphasises the importance of achieving a growth in the employment rate of all social groups, including those that are discriminated on the labour market (women, the disabled, the elderly). Therefore, the Lisbon Strategy, a programme supporting economic growth on a broad scale, envisages an increase in the employment rate of women, men and people aged 55 years or above.

Flexible employment is becoming increasingly common. In the United States there is already evident that a life-long job and stable position in a single company may soon be a matter of the past. Nowadays an average professional career consists of series of jobs for various employers; self-employment and other atypical forms of work are wide spreading; office and administrative work is getting increasingly scarce as a result of computerisation; contract and project work are becoming more common (Peters, 2005, p. 235-247).

In Poland, as well as in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, both employers and employees are still attached to full-time employment. Therefore, these countries face the task of making their labour markets more flexible. In the future this will lead to more job opportunities for women, as hitherto they have been more willing to choose these forms of employment, as they allow women to reconcile work and family life. There is a need for legal regulations which would firstly allow a wide range of flexible forms of work for women and men alike, and secondly, would prevent working conditions being poorer than those of the full-time employed, for example establishing the same pay per hour for full-time and part-time work and the same privileges for part-time and full-time workers. Increasing productivity of societies will allow higher remuneration, including that one of part-time workers. This will eliminate trade unions' and female workers' concerns related to the worse treatment of part time workers.

It is important to promote new, flexible forms of employment in society and to inform people – women and men – that there are already available many jobs which can be performed as telework, i.e. at home with the use of a computer and the Internet.

The key achievement of women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was gaining access to education on all levels and in all fields. As a result, women have been able to enter the labour market and find their permanent niche there. It is thanks to education that women have gained access to typically male occupations, such as law, construction and security. Women's' access to higher education has resulted in an increasing number of female students in tertiary education. High

qualifications improve women's chances to reach managerial positions, including the most prestigious positions.

Tom Peters – quoting results of studies carried out by the American anthropologist Helen Fisher – states that women are more suitable for leadership than men are and are better at winning peoples' trust. Women make better salespersons and investors, they push forward by gaining qualifications and being open to changes, and they possess skills which are very useful for today's economy. The new economy values women over men, because they are less aware of hierarchy than men are, are better at making and sustaining contacts, they prefer to cooperate than to compete. „Women's' talents are a golden opportunity knocking at our doors. I'm employing women” (Peters, 2005, p. 271).<sup>1</sup>

Women are highly responsible, can view matters in their wider social context, value both intuition and rationalism, can accept unclear situations, can perceive many options and possible results, are flexible and tolerant of cultural differences. Increase of women's participation in economic and political life, particularly in decision making areas stands in the best interest of every society. We can quote Helen Fisher's (2003) words, that in the future women will change the world into a place more friendly for both sexes.

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<sup>10</sup> See also: H. Fisher, Pierwsza płeć. Jak wrodzone talenty kobiet zmienią nasz świat [The First Sex. The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World], Wyd. Jacek Santorski i Spółka, Warszawa (2003, p. 33-86).

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## Perspective of women in the labour market

Helena Skálová

**Motto: “Women are 50 percent of the equation. Choosing not to work with women is like trying to progress with one hand tied behind your back.”<sup>1</sup>**

How simple and logical, and despite the above-mentioned quote unfortunately still non-realistic, equal engagement of women and their full participation in the labour market is. Women are the most often discriminated group, respectively, discrimination with respect to sex is most wide-spread type of discrimination, in the whole-European scale.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the experience of non-governmental organizations, the main discrimination factors are motherhood (or potential motherhood) and the greatest drop in the working life of a woman occurs after delivery. We certainly must not forget also other potential sources of unequal approach which can be age, race, nationality or health disability. The combination of certain characteristics increases the risk of potential discrimination and significantly makes the chances for equal place in the labour market harder.<sup>3</sup>

Women in the labour markets of Central Europe (specifically the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany and Austria) have been dealing with comparable restrictions, the scope and causes of discrimination are similar, but also the chances and means enabling its solution – by means of opening the space for alternatives.

### Position of women in the labour market of the Czech Republic

As far as employment of women is concerned, Poland holds the third worst position within the range of the European Union – 48.2 %<sup>4</sup>. The Czech Republic is in this area close to the European average and with its 58.6 %<sup>5</sup>, it has a good chance of meeting the Lisbon Strategy for sixty percent employment of women by 2010.

As far as Czech labour market is concerned, the discrimination is manifested in particular in the area of job recruitment, equal treatment during the course of employment and remuneration. Also subjective feelings of discrimination in Czech informants (both women and men) have been investigated in one of the pieces of research<sup>6</sup>. It has been manifested that 30 % of men and 40 % of women feel unequal treatment, while men feel most often discriminated due to their age and women due to their sex.

The shift of sensitivity of Czech society towards the question of discrimination has been

monitored in different research<sup>7</sup>. When compared to pieces of research from the 90s and today, it follows that more people perceive women as a discriminated group. This result can be interpreted either by a higher degree of sensitivity towards the problem or also as a signal that a real degree of discrimination in the labour market is growing. Women are perceived as a risky labour force particularly because they are the most likely minders for young children or when ill. The possible solution of this situation would be a greater engagement of men in care. If parental roles of women and men are balanced, the mother (potential) mother will not be a less valuable contribution for an employer than a (potential) father.

In relation to a stereotypical division of roles, we can also justify the pay inequality. In a society where the principal role of a woman is viewed in the care for family and work is only an extra earning; employers are seemingly authorized to pay a lower pay.

The phenomenon of labour market horizontal segregation (based on industry), degree of which is significant in the CR (though similar to the rest of Europe), is worth mentioning here. Socialist regimes quite strongly supported industry and the entry of women to this area and other technical areas; it is also why the countries of former Eastern block more often have higher representation of women in technical professions than western countries.

When all variable factors meet, the differences in the salaries of women and men are smaller, inequalities are more lucid with the segregation based on industry; company size and sphere of business play certain role as well – a woman has a greater chance to get to top management in a smaller company and in a less sunrise industries – e.g. in textile industry, as opposed to prestigious industries as is e.g. banking where their chances go significantly down.

<sup>1</sup> Author of the quote: Brian Schwartz, CEO Ernst & Young Australia [http://www.eowa.gov.au/EOWA\\_Events\\_LandingPage.asp](http://www.eowa.gov.au/EOWA_Events_LandingPage.asp)

<sup>2</sup> Europe in figures - Eurostat yearbook 2006-07 ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1073,46587259&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&p\\_product\\_code=KS-CD-06-001](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-CD-06-001))

<sup>3</sup> For example Gender Studies, o.p.s. runs a cost-free legal aid for those discriminated in the labour market within the frame of fifty-to-fifty project (<http://www.rovneprilezitosti.cz/poradenstvi.php?poradna=open&PHPSESSID=1bd842581d493758faafcaeea2ed1120>)

<sup>4</sup> Source: Eurostat ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1996,39140985&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=en&product=STRIND\\_EMPLOI&root=STRIND\\_EMPLOI/emploi/em012](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,39140985&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=en&product=STRIND_EMPLOI&root=STRIND_EMPLOI/emploi/em012))

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Research Souvislosti proměn pracovního trhu a forem soukromého, rodinného a partnerského života v české společnosti (Context of changes in labour market and forms of private, family and partner life in the Czech Society) (N = 5510, representative quota selection, informants aged 25–54 years, Institute of Sociology Academy of Sciences CR, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Křížková, A. (ed.), Dudová, R., Hašková, H., Maříková, H. 2005. Kombinace pracovního a rodinného života v ČR: politiky, čas, peníze a individuální, rodinné a firemní strategie. (Combination of working and family life in CR: policies, time, money and individual, family and company strategy) Prague: Institute of Sociology Academy of Sciences

Apparently, there is a certain shift to the better; in particular in the area of public awareness of discrimination and rights, it is only the first step on a long way. Practical impact is missing so far – we know of a minimum of specific cases when people successfully fight discrimination, which is closely related to the state of Czech legal state where it is difficult and cost-demanding to get a lawyer and legal proceedings tend to be lengthy and ineffective.

### **Flexible working time arrangement**

Flexible working time arrangement is definitely one of the possibilities how to open the labour market to women more. It is however necessary to bear in mind at all times, that there are two sides to a coin and as new forms of work bring many positive, they also have their limits. At the same time, this phenomenon may not exist in vacuum, a clear legislative definition is essential (valid code<sup>8</sup> does not forbid home office but does not define it precisely) and also concrete participation of state – e.g. well-processed and effective children's care system (it follows from the results of research conducted in Poland, that a functioning system of nursery care is a priority for women, whereas flexible forms of work are on the second place).

Czech employees do not have the same possibilities for achieving flexible working arrangement in international comparison yet, it is not a habit to use partial work loads and working people have minimum opportunity to influence their working time. Another problem in the event of partial work loads is that the decrease in the number of paid hours necessarily does not mean less work. There are also problems with transport etc. According to available data, only 7-15 % of people use the opportunity to work from home at least partially.

Speaking about work flexibility, it is necessary to distinguish the so-called positive and negative work flexibility. Positive flexibility is perceived as a set of tools and specific measures, which are to enable employees to better harmonize personal and professional duties, which represents certain costs for employers which do, however, pay in the long run. Negative flexibility is, on the contrary, such approach of an employer when they require constant availability of their employees, they do not respect stipulated working time or sets working shifts in insufficient time advance. Such working time arrangement is in the CR unfortunately quite common and the concept of flexibility is perceived by employees very often in this perspective. According to Ivana Šindlerová from European Contact Group (ECG), home office can be even very stressful. According to research conducted by ECG, in the CR it is primarily manual work often performed in inappropriate or even dangerous conditions. Women doing this work are in

addition perceived as being at home and their principal task is care for family.

### **Information and communication technologies as a tool and industry**

One of the fundamental principles of new work forms functioning, as for example teleworking is, are advanced information and communication technologies (IT, ICT). With regard to positive flexibility, they are really essential aid but at the same time they place increased demand on corporate culture ethics because they may tend to feeling that an employee is more available – at anytime and anywhere.

Self-discipline is also important – a clear distinction between time for family and time for work. Also mutual respect between employees and employer – grounded on clear communication and set rules to minimize privacy violation. The advantage for people working by a form of teleworking is that they can be at home, the disadvantage is a risk of social isolation and negative feelings from the lacking contact with people and, in extreme cases, also the incurrence of addiction on the technology.

It is important for the introduction of various measures for harmonizing work and family not to be targeted at women only. It follows from experience of Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Berlin branch, that if flexible working trends are presented as specifically pro-women, it confirms their primarily minding role. The measures should therefore be such that they could be – and ideally also wanted to be – used by men as well because this is the only way to balance working and private roles of the both sexes in the long run.

Information and communication technologies can represent a space for women not only in the figurative sense but as a specific area of working opportunities. In this sunrise, well-paid and developing industry, there is a great demand for qualified specialists both men and women. It is also why HR managers of big IT companies have been lately dealing with women as a specific group. They are trying to have edifying role, in particular at secondary schools with the predominance of women, but also for women on maternity and parental leaves – they develop for them e.g. e-learning programmes.

At the same time, they motivate their current employees to shorten their parental leave or to a combination of children's care and their jobs. Apart from the already mentioned e-learning programmes, they organize happenings for parents on parental leave, they communicate with them and they offer them various opportunities to use shortened work loads. There are, for

<sup>8</sup> Act No. 262/2006 Coll.



for example, 40 % of people using home office in IBM CR. IBM in Prague also financially supports a private nursery school near company headquarters, and gains thus advantage when their own employees use its services. All these measures are considered, among others, investment to the knowledge capital of their employees which is most valuable in information and communication technologies industry.

### **Asserting equality between men and women policies and strategies**

The principle of equality is mentioned already in Founding Agreement of the EU (1957) and in reality one of the priorities in all areas. There is a whole legal framework (13 guidelines) related to the problem of discrimination in various spheres and a skeleton plan of the European Commission for a period of 2006–10, targeted at the independence of women and men, harmonizing personal and professional life, representation of women and men in decision-making processes but does not avoid such topics as human trafficking, pay inequality and the position of women outside the European Union.

Based on experience of Kateřina Jacques, the Parliament CR deputy, Czech society is momentarily rather anti-feminist and the public perceives the topic of equal opportunities rather negatively. It is therefore a success that five years ago The Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was established in the Czech Republic. Currently, it is necessary to strive for it to have also specific powers, budget and in particular practical activity. Jacques views the purpose of specialized institutions, as is e.g. European Institute for Gender Equality in experts working for them who can provide relevant basis for decisions of politicians.

As far as trade unions as social partners of the EU are concerned, the concept of flexicurity is very important and beneficial, which is new form of labour market management. Flexicurity joins the concept of flexibility and security. Labour market is more flexible but at the same time safe – more employees are dismissed but also hired. Protected are not only standard forms of work but also the non-traditional and alternative.

### **Summary**

Both employees and employers perceive and apparently will continue to perceive the concept of flexibility in a different way and adversely, on the basis of their different needs. Therefore it is necessary to continue looking for balance in all spheres. Legislative framework and

active engagement of politicians at all levels is also important – from regional to European. In none of the considered innovative concepts, men must not be missing, with respect to equal chances, it is necessary to join social and family roles of the both sexes.

It depends mainly on the cooperation of political, economic, social, educative and non-governmental subjects in connection with the effective use of advanced information and communication technologies and, last but not least, also on the personal engagement of all of us, what will be the real perspective of women in the labour market.

Presentations which were heard at the conference Perspective of Women in the Labour Market on October 25, 2007 organized by Gender Studies in cooperation with a Network of mother centres (NMC) and Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS) have become the sources for this article.

Experts from company management, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and political sphere from the Czech Republic and abroad presented in three panel discussions. They presented some problem aspects of women's position in the labour market and at the same time, opened a discussion on new chances and concept of employing women in future.

## Flexicurity - flexibility through security

Alexandra Jachanová Doleželová

European Union has been promoting flexible work arrangements in order to make the labor market more flexible, to increase the level of employment and to achieve the objectives of Lisbon strategy, such as the 60 % employment rate of women. Flexibility, on one hand, enables to reconcile private and work life, but on the other one, it can also have negative consequences for workers' salary or their other work and legal conditions. That is what gave rise to flexicurity strategy which strives to balance flexibility and social security. The ideal concept of flexicurity links interests of social partners (i.e., employers, state and unions) with interests of individual employees. Flexicurity creates such conditions which provide necessary flexibility, but at the same time, secures international working standards (ČMKOS, 2007).

Flexibility in relation with security first appeared in EU documents in 1996<sup>1</sup>. A special attention was paid to the role of social partners in creating flexicurity, particularly in work organization and in collective bargaining. In 2006, a Green Paper demanding reflection of this concept was issued. In 2007, European Commission issued a Communication „Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security“ which explained the main principals of flexicurity. Flexicurity should insure higher degree of competitiveness of European markets within global economy and simultaneously secure good work conditions.

### Some of the flexible work arrangements are:

- Flexible working hours: part-time, weekend working, flexitime, shift work, compressed hours (often in the form of a „short“ and „long“ week), staggered hours, night working, overtime, fixed-term work, piece work, working time account.
- Flexible workplace: teleworking, telecommuting, jobsharing, homeworking.
- Flexible work contracts: fixed-term contract, agreement to complete a job, agreement to perform work, jobsharing, agency work, freelance work.

Other forms of flexible work arrangements are for example research or study leave, working hours corresponding to school year, phased retirement, etc.

## Flexicurity - a link between employees' security and employers' needs

Flexicurity started as an answer to the fact that many employers understood flexibility as their right to employees' full time. Employers have often used of unemployment as a threat to low-qualified workers in order to require from them long working hours for low wage. This is called social dumping and it describes the situation when flexible arrangements have negative consequences for workers' wage, legal and other conditions (ČMKOS, 2007).

Eurofound<sup>2</sup> points out that workers on fixed-term contracts are exposed to poorer work conditions than those on permanent work contracts. For many employers, flexibility can often mean that their employees are at their disposal any time.

Flexicurity, however, combines flexible work arrangements with high level of social security, while both elements must be cautiously balanced in order to suit all stakeholders.

Flexicurity should also provide for such labor market which would promote and enhance employment of persons at risk of poverty and discrimination. Furthermore, it should help fight against inequality and should grant sustainable employment for all. All employed people should get wages for their work allowing them to fulfill all their basic needs and to play active role within society. One of its main principles is to prevent poverty and social exclusion. Its strategy is to integrate vulnerable persons in labor market and to grant them adequate education and training (EAPN, 2007). Active employment policy is a key factor in guaranteeing security. It must be granted that a person who loses job shall get support while looking for a new one so that the person does not stay out of work too long. Therefore it is necessary to provide training to persons in search of new employment. It is also necessary to try to balance supply and demand in the labor market. A comprehensive lifelong learning is yet another strategy of active employment policy.

When applying flexicurity, the member states shall adjust their social systems so that a balance between flexibility in labor market as required by employers on one hand and security for employees on the other one is achieved. To attain this, some reforms of labor market as well as social security systems on national level are necessary. Based on the common principles, flexicurity should be tailored to the specific circumstances of each member state.

<sup>1</sup> Green Paper on Partnership for New Organisation of Work

<sup>2</sup> European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions – an EU body which works to improve living and working conditions of EU citizens.

Employers play an important role in support of their staff's employability, especially in form of training, mentoring and financial reward. They can influence the type of work contract as well as flexibility of working hours. Infrastructure is another vital factor of flexibility. An example of this is a satisfactory access to childcare facilities. One cannot require flexibility from parents (particularly from mother who usually take up a bigger part of responsibility for childcare) if they cannot secure care for their children while they work.

### **Good practices: Denmark and the Netherlands**

The main link between flexibility and security is trust. One of the countries where citizens trust their social system is Denmark. "Danish-style flexicurity, the hallmarks of which are a mobile labor market, achieved through elements of social security and an active labor market and training policy, does, it would appear, help make the country more competitive" (Official Journal of EU, 2006). Even though the Danish labor market is subject to a very high turnover (25 %), people do not fear unemployment because they know that they will be able to find quickly and easily a new job of the same quality as the previous one (Hurley & Vermeylen, 2007). Within flexible work organization, an employee has to be certain that s/he will be able to stay in labor market. The Danish social partners agreed that flexicurity has positive impact on employment in all its aspects.

Flexicurity can be applied in different ways. One of them is based on flexibilisation of workers in traditional, permanent work or with 'typical contracts' (they represent 80 % of workforce). This can be achieved for example through new ways of organizing work or through more diverse or flexible working time arrangements. This should be complemented with some form of employment security (Hurley & Vermeylen, 2007). Danish system combines comparatively relaxed employment protection legislation with a high level of unemployment benefits (including other social benefits). In Denmark, the security is guaranteed by the state, not by the employers (Official Journal of EU, 2006).

Another way is the normalisation of the rights of 'atypical' workers while retaining flexibility. This approach has been chosen in the Netherlands where more social protection rights are provided for non-standard workers (in particular part-timers and workers on non-permanent contracts) while guaranteeing the same social security entitlements to them as to their permanent and traditional counterparts in the labor market (Hurley & Vermeylen, 2007).

### **Flexicurity and equal opportunities for women and men**

Flexibility influences women to greater extent than men. Women suffer from higher level of unemployment and because of maternity or parental leave their qualifications often deteriorate. They take more frequently care of dependent persons such as elderly people. Lifelong learning may help women to smooth their return to labor market after a leave for childcare or other kind of care.

Flexible work arrangements can help women and men to better balance work and private life. But at the same time, they can also represent some drawbacks. This can be shown on the example of part-time arrangements. They appear ideal for women who take care of small children, but a study of Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (VUPS) reveals that part-times bring more disadvantages than advantages to workers, for instance in terms of their future career progress. Side effects of part-time arrangements are lower wages or less qualified work; it is also typical that part-timers work on fixed-term contracts or on agreements to complete a job. Other drawbacks come to light as a part-timer becomes unemployed: the unemployment benefits or maternity leave allowances the part-timers get are usually considerably lower. Part-timers have also lower prospects of being granted a loan or mortgage (Myslíková, 2007). Flexicurity should thus present such solutions which would not disadvantage part-timers.

In assessing flexicurity, as well as other EU Strategies, gender mainstreaming perspective must be applied; this means that the impacts of flexicurity on men and women and their equal opportunities must be considered.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

1. Flexicurity has the potential to substantially enhance the competitiveness of the European economy and create higher levels of employment.
2. Companies, workers and society have to be able to agree and trust in flexicurity (Hurley & Vermeylen, 2007).
3. Flexibility must go hand in hand with social security.
4. When creating and assessing flexicurity it is necessary to apply gender mainstreaming perspective and support equal treatment.
5. One of the main objectives shall be the fight against poverty and social exclusion.
6. Social protection shall ensure security where flexibility is already a reality. Sociální
7. All stakeholders, i.e. social partners and the employed as well as unemployed, shall be involved in discussion on flexicurity (EAPN, 2007).

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## Analysis of the impacts of a career break for motherhood on further development of Czech women's career

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### Introduction <sup>1</sup>

According to indicators such as female general participation in labour market and female employment rate, number of women having paid job keeps increasing while differences in participation in labour market between women and men are decreasing (Eurostat, 2006). Despite this general improvement, empirical studies show that the extent and quality of women's work activity remains largely influenced by their family duties. The employment rate of women with child or children is lower than that of childless women. In most European countries, the work activity of women drops as the number of their children increases (OECD, 2002). Women who interrupt or restrict career for childcare can face various problems connected with depreciation of their human capital, with loss of work opportunities and with risk of slower career progress (Salsbury 1996, Román 2006, Rhum 1999). European countries and European Union attempt to minimize these disadvantages through accepting antidiscriminatory regulations which aim at reducing the negative consequences of part-time work, through guaranteeing smooth return to the former employment after parental leave; they introduce parental leave for both parents, they offer re-training and further education for women who try to reenter labour market. Despite these welfare attempts to eliminate the negative consequences of parenthood on parents' further career, it remains questionable to what extent these measures in fact help.

We can analyze the effects of such interventions either through objective or subjective indicators. The objective indicators can, for instance, show us what women's average income is or what position mothers who interrupted or restricted the career have on professional ladder compared to women or men who did not formally restrict the career. The subjective indicators, which are based on a self-reflection and personal feelings of the respondents, reveal how different social actors perceive their respective situation.

In this article, we shall analyze the subjective impacts of the career break, while we shall relate the results of these analyses to women's objective situation in labour market<sup>2</sup>.

### Work Inactivity for childcare

Women who want to take care of their children in person and who cannot or do not want to go on maternity or parental leave or work part-time are left with only one option: to become

inactive in labour market. In other words, they formally leave the labour market for the time when they stay at home with their children.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, we shall focus on inactivity for family or personal reasons among mothers. Looking at Eurostat data for year 2004 reveals that the lowest percentage of inactive women aged 25-54 for family and personal reasons can be found in Slovenia, Scandinavia, France and Lithuania: there are 2-6 % of all inactive women in this age category. Estonia, Poland, Latvia, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic identify family and personal obligations as the main reason for inactivity of 7-15 % of inactive women. The family obligations have the biggest impact on women's inactivity in labour market on Malta, in Luxembourg, Ireland, Greece and Italy: 15-57 % of inactive women state that they do not participate in labour market for family or personal reasons (Harderson, 2006).

A great part of women between 25 to 54 who are inactive in labour market have at the same time at least one child under six years. On Malta, in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy and Estonia it is 40-72 %. In the first three countries it is even more than a half of inactive women. This indicates that mothers of small children prefer to stay or are made to stay out of labour market to higher degree than in other countries.

Break in work activity can have negative consequences for individual's future career. Math and Meillard (2004) claim that a long absence from labour market might make employee's knowledge and skills outdated which would consequently decrease his/her qualifications in labour market. To re-enter labour market, for instance after a longer period of childcare, might be problematic as the employers might prefer workers who have increased their qualifications continuously. If a person interrupts career too often it is very likely that this person will appear less attractive to potential employers than someone with an uninterrupted and boosting résumé. We can therefore expect that women who stepped out of the formal labour market for a certain period of time will face more serious problems when resuming career than those who just restricted their work activity for childcare or than mothers who interrupted the career for maternity or parental leave.

<sup>1</sup> This text is based on the research report compiled within IVRIS project carried out at Faculty of Social Studies in Brno, Czech Republic.

<sup>2</sup> The analyses are based on data from European Social Survey – ESS for year 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Inactivity should not be mistaken for temporary leave, because persons on maternity/parental leave and the unemployed are officially included among the workforce.

## **Absence from labour market for maternity and parental leave**

A means of work-life balance is maternity and particularly parental leave. These are welfare state measures which enable a mother or both parents to leave labour market for certain time and concentrate on parenthood obligations.

European Union's Pregnant Workers Directive from 1992 sets out the minimal time of maternity leave in EU countries to 14 weeks. Furthermore, it says that pregnant women should receive allowances equal to at least respective sickness allowances. Parental Leave Directive (96/34/EC) stipulates the minimal time of parental leave in all member states to three months and the possibility to take up the leave until the child turns eight (Leon, Millns, 2006). Moreover, the return to the same work position as before the leave is guaranteed. The Directive shall apply to both parents.

If we compare the guaranteed time of maternity leave and the relative financial compensation we can see that the differences among member states are not of a substantial character. In most countries, the time of maternity leave is near to the minimal time required in the above-mentioned directive, i.e. 14 weeks. The exceptions are Sweden (68.6 weeks), Italy (5 months), the Czech Republic (28 weeks), Slovakia (28 weeks) and the Great Britain (26 weeks).

However, we can see that despite the attempts to unify the provisions concerning parental leave in individual states there are still considerable differences among the member states. The length of parental leave varies from three months in Belgium, Portugal and Netherlands to three to four years in Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Estonia and Spain. In other words, the Czech Republic has one of the longest parental leaves. The amount of allowed financial compensation is another important aspect of parental leave. Contrarily to maternity leave, the parental leave is not paid in all EU countries and where the leave is paid the amount of allowances differs considerably.

Parental leave should help parents to reconcile family and work. The EU countries, however, differ in what extent parents, in our case women, make use of this measure. In Ireland and the Netherlands where parental leave is not paid, it is taken up by less than 40 % of parents, while in Germany, Denmark and Finland more than 90 % of parents take up the leave (Math and Meiland, 2004).

As the tradition of parental leave in the Czech Republic has been rather strong already since the time of socialism and the availability of childcare facilities for children under three years is relatively limited (Valentová, 2004) we can expect that women in the Czech Republic will make

use of the parental leave to high degree.

Rhum (1999) and Sainsbury (1996) admit that maternity and parental leave influence positively parents' participation in labour market. Parents, especially women, get in this way an opportunity to keep their job after they have child/children. Both authors, however, point out that qualifications and competences of women who stay on parental leave for a long time may decrease together with the chance to be offered interesting job.

Bernhardt (2000) and Rhum (1999) point out, in relation to negative consequences of maternity and parental leave, that employers, especially those in primary sector, are aware of the fact that their female employees are much likely to take up maternity and parental leave than their male counterparts. The strategy is consequently as follows: important positions where certain continuity is necessary are offered to men, while women are appointed to positions where they can easily be replaced. In this situation, the measures such as maternity leave contribute to an environment where "troubles" with mothers are prevented by not letting them to certain positions at all. Discrimination on entering the labour market should prevent later administrative costs (such as recruitment or training of a new employee).

The general data on different forms of career-breaks or reduction of work activity of women show that the overall inactivity rate for personal and family reasons in the Czech Republic is close to the European average. But if we look closer at the category of women with children under six years, we see clearly that the inactivity rate is much higher than elsewhere in Europe.

## **What affects the consequences of work activity break for childcare?**

As we have seen, career break or career restriction can jeopardize further career path. There are two main types of risk factors:

1. individual/micro-level factors (such as age, marital status, number of children, education; years of work activity, achieved work position, segment of labour market; the degree of one's participation in unpaid housework, individual's values),
2. system/macro-level determinants (problems of demand for female workforce - employers' reluctance to employ women in active age at certain professions and positions, legislation guaranteeing equal opportunities in labour market, existence of childcare facilities and services, maternity and parental leave, etc.; for more, see Chang, 2000).

Even though both types of factors are important, we shall focus only on the first type in this article. Esping-Andersen (2002) or Hakim (1992) underlines that career and self-realization through work means much more to younger women than to older ones. ESS data from 2004 for the Czech Republic confirm this observation. According to the statistics, women between 14 and 35 are considerably less likely to agree with the statement that a woman should restrict her activity in labour market for the benefit of her family. Therefore we could expect that younger women will, given their ambitions and competition in labour market, tolerate less than older ones any restrictions of their work activity. It is also quite probable that the category of younger women had their first child after the fall of communist regime in 1989 and have had to face considerable changes in family policy such as drop down of state benefits for parents, decrease in number of childcare facilities, particularly for children under three (Saxonberg, Sirovátka, 2006). Moreover, they have had to face changes in labour market where full employment has been replaced by competitive environment and unemployment has become a serious threat. This exemplifies how difficult it is to discern between the impact of respondents' age and that of social changes the respondents had experienced.

Another important socio-demographic indicator is the number of children that a woman raises. An OECD report (2001) indicates that the female employment rate drops down as the number of children rises<sup>4</sup>.

The third determinant which plays a role in how respondents perceive consequences of career break for childcare for their future work activity is respondents' marital status. A woman with a steady partner can, to certain extent, rely on him taking care of some of family duties or breadwinning. Therefore we can expect that women with steady partners worry less about how to reconcile career and childcare. Lone parents, i.e. divorced women, widows, separated or single mothers have to take care of both breadwinning and childcare and can rely less on their partners (Kilkey, Bradshaw, 1996).

The fourth socio-demographic factor in stake is level of education. With regard to the theory of human capital which is based on the thesis that the higher qualifications of women, the higher is their participation in labour market and their income (Chiplin, Sloane, 1976) we suppose that women with higher level of education face less frequently the negative consequences of career break or career restriction. The results of an OECD survey from 2001 also support this hypothesis. This survey indicates that the employment rate of mothers of preschool children with a university degree is higher than the employment rate of women with secondary or basic

education (OECD, 2001).

With regard to the debate on human capital, let us now look at the individual factors connected with women's position in labour market. The degree of individual's human capital does not depend only on one's education and knowledge, but also on the one's experience gained through the activity in labour market. Desai and Waite (1991) claim that the longer women are active in labour market and the higher their work position is or the higher their income potential is, the earlier they return to work after having a child. Women with long-term and highly appreciated experience in labour market have most likely achieved a position which they will not wish to lose. Therefore it is probable that they will interrupt career for shorter periods of time than women with less work experience. We can also suppose that a woman with a good position at work who has interrupted her career for childcare will not, thanks to her previous qualifications, face difficulties with return to labour market.

When discussing the impacts of career break for childcare on mothers' further career, we should also mention the length of the break or restriction. There are studies which prove that the longer a person stays out of labour market, the more competences and opportunities the person loses and his/her chances to return to labour market decreases together with his/her competitiveness (Rhum, 1999, Math and Meiland, 2004). We can therefore postulate that the longer women stayed out of labour market, the worse the consequences of their absence were.

The last category of factors includes women's values and strategies. For example Hakim (2002) identifies three main types of women's life strategies. i.e. strategies of women who are:

- household-oriented (who see children as their utmost priority which cannot be threatened by their work ambitions; they do not participate in labour market unless necessary and they benefit from the social system measures designed for mothers at home);
- work-oriented (who prefer career to family life, often childless, invest into their professional development)
- adaptable (those who try to reconcile family and work, who often work part-time, who benefit from regulatory measures designed for women in labour market, from employment policy measures and equal opportunities provisions).

<sup>4</sup> We shall not verify this hypothesis here.

We can expect that family-oriented women will appreciate the maternity and parental leave or total work inactivity and consequently will not perceive - with regard to their values - such career breaks as problematic.

## Data and methodology

The main aim of this study is to analyze the subjective perception of impacts of motherhood on further career. We have asked two principal research questions: First, in what way, according to Czech mothers, does career break for motherhood influence their future career, in comparison with mothers in other European countries. Second, what factors influence the perception of impacts of career break. We have analyzed answers of women who filled in the questionnaires that they had at least one child and had interrupted career for childcare for at least some time<sup>5</sup>. However, we shall focus here only on the situation in the Czech Republic<sup>6</sup>.

We shall use independent variables (i.e., factors and their impact on dependent variables that we are going to analyze) in our model. We can divide them into three groups:

1. socio-demographic factors (marital status, at least one child born after 1989, respondent's education),
2. factors related to respondent's work position (the length of career break or for how long respondents restricted their work activity for childcare to part-time, what their current work position is, whether they have occupied senior position in current or last employment, what type of work contract they are on, the degree of autonomy in current or last employment, what their partner's work position is, whether partner works on senior position, etc.),
3. factors related to individual's value system (importance of family and career: to what extent a woman should restrict her participation in labour market for family's sake).

## Results

In the first question, we focused on the subjective perception of impacts of career break for motherhood on future career as seen by mothers in different European countries. We encounter the most negative perception among respondents from Austria, Germany, the UK and Luxembourg. In these countries, approximately one in three women who spent some time out of labour market for childcare is convinced that such career break influenced negatively her further career. On the other hand, Estonian, Finnish, Czech, Danish and Slovenian mothers complain least about negative consequences of career break. Their percentage was under 15

%. Thus, even though one in six Czech mothers thinks that there are some disadvantages connected with career break for childcare, they perceive their situation relatively well compared to women in other European countries

**Table 1: Negative consequences of full time childcare for women's future career**

Country	Strongly agree	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Strongly disagree	In total	N
Czech Republic	4,8%	9,7%	85,5%		100,0%	965
Finland	5,0%	6,5%	19,4%	69,1%	100,0%	643
Estonia	5,3%	5,3%	30,5%	58,8%	100,0%	748
Denmark	6,8%	7,9%	19,9%	65,5%	100,0%	443
Sweden	7,0%	11,7%	26,4%	54,8%	100,0%	639
Slovenia	7,3%	7,8%	31,6%	53,3%	100,0%	396
Norway	7,7%	12,1%	24,4%	55,7%	100,0%	594
Poland	8,2%	12,3%	37,1%	42,4%	100,0%	415
Portugal	9,2%	13,3%	18,3%	59,1%	100,0%	487
Belgium	10,2%	10,5%	16,3%	63,0%	100,0%	362
Spain	11,2%	11,2%	21,5%	56,1%	100,0%	223
Switzerland	13,2%	13,7%	13,7%	59,4%	100,0%	577
Greece	13,6%	9,3%	19,5%	57,6%	100,0%	375
United Kingdom	14,4%	16,4%	26,5%	42,6%	100,0%	298
Luxembourg	17,3%	11,1%	17,7%	53,9%	100,0%	243
Germany	18,8%	14,2%	24,3%	42,7%	100,0%	810
Austria	20,1%	16,0%	26,0%	37,9%	100,0%	601

Source: ESS 2004, own analyses

Note: The respondents were only women who had at least one child and who had spent at least some time out of labour market for childcare (i.e. who were inactive in labour market during childcare)

During the communist era, there were rather few women who interrupted career for childcare (most of our respondents are those who had small child/children in that period) and if they did so, it was just for maternity leave which is generally characterized as a period with only limited risks linked to career break. No surprise then that Czech women see their career break in more positive light than women in other European countries.

<sup>5</sup> There is only a negligible percentage of men who interrupt career for family reasons in EU-25 (less than 1 %) (Hardarson, 2006) or who are on parental leave (Math, Meilland, 2004). We could not draw any general results by analyzing such a limited sample.

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, we are not able to discern between women who are not active in labour market and who just went on parental leave.



Let us now look at the individual factors which influence how women evaluate the impacts of career break on their future work life. If we look at the data presented in the table below we can argue that women with secondary education tend to perceive interruption of their work activity for childcare more negatively than women with basic education. A plausible reason is that women with higher education risk in higher degree to lose qualifications and with it prospects of promotion if they interrupt career. We can also observe that career break has been seen in more pessimistic colors by divorced and separated women as well as lone mothers and widows than by married women.

Women who interrupted career for more than two years tend to perceive the break less negatively than those who stayed at home with child/children less than one year. This might seem rather unexpected as it contradicts the hypothesis that the longer women stay out of labour market the worse the consequences of the break are. An explanation can be that most women in the Czech Republic stay on parental leave as long as the state guarantees that the employer keeps their former job for them. Only women with higher education who usually have well paid jobs in rather competitive segments of labour market on one hand, or women with only basic education who cannot afford to absent from labour market for too long on the other one, return to work as soon as possible after their children were born.

Whether a respondent had in the time of survey or in her last employment a permanent contract diminishes the risks of negative consequences of the career break. This might be explained by the fact that women who had a steady and stable job position when they decided to interrupt the career belong to the successful ones in the labour market and therefore, they have little reason to worry about their prospects after the break.

An important finding is that women who had at least one child after 1989 are twice as likely to see the career break in negative light as those who had children before 1989. There are two possible explanations for these numbers. One is the fact that career matters more and more to women in all developed countries and generation after generation, they favor less and less the traditional division of roles in family. Younger women (those who had child/ren after 1989) see the time spent out of labour market as risky and disadvantageous to their career. The other one, more plausible in the context of the Czech Republic, is that social changes, such as repeal of many measures of welfare state (including closing down of many childcare facilities) together with higher risk of unemployment and uncertainty in labour market make mothers perceive interruption of career more negatively.

**Table 2: Logistic analysis results - factors influencing perception of impacts of work inactivity for childcare on mothers' further career path**

		Model 1 socio- demographic factors	Model 2+ length of inactivity for childcare	Model 3 + labour market	Model 5 + attitudes
Education	Basic school (RC)				
	Secondary vocational	1,524	1,561	1,475	1,436
	Secondary school with A-levels	1,854	2,077*	2,130*	2,064*
	University	2,457*	2,750*	2,626*	2,214
At least one child born in or after 1989	None after 1989 (RC)				
	At least one after 1989	3,034*	2,666*	1,805*	2,010*
Marital status	Vdaná (RK)				
	Rozvedená, odděleně žijící, vdova, nikdy vdaná	2,064*	2,108*	2,150*	2,117*
Time spent out of labour market for full time childcare	Under one year (RC)				
	1 - 2 years		0,658	0,638	0,730
	2 - 4 years		0,406*	0,373*	0,373*
	Over 4 years		0,504*	0,454*	0,469*
Main type of activity	Paid work (RC)				
	Unemployed			0,792	0,740
	Retired			0,576	0,556
	Housewife			1,699*	1,594
	Other (student, disabled, other)			3,766*	4,900*
Senior position in current or last employment	Yes (RC)				
	No			0,808	0,829
Contract type in current or last employment	Permanent contract (RC)				
	Fixed-term contract			1,559	1,791*
A woman should restrain her paid work if it is for family's good	Agree (RC)				
	Neither nor				0,291*
	Disagree				1,120

N: 825  
Source: ESS 2004, own calculations  
Note: (RC) = reference category  
\*degree of statistic significance equals to 0.05

## Conclusion

The main purpose of this article has been to analyze impacts of work inactivity for childcare on further career of mothers in the Czech Republic. We have analyzed the subjective perception of the impacts in two steps. First, we looked at how Czech women perceive the impacts of career break in comparison with certain European countries. Second, we tested different hypotheses on how various socio-economic factors influence women's perception of impacts of career break for childcare.

ESS data for 2004 showed that rather many Czech women interrupt career for childcare. There are only 2 % respondents who have never interrupted career either for maternity or parental leave or for work inactivity. This places the Czech Republic to the front positions among

the countries where women interrupt career for childcare. Given the fact that there is a low percentage of women in the Czech Republic who are inactive in labour market, we can infer that the most frequent reason for inactivity in labour market is the take up of maternity or parental leave. Czech mothers use in large scale the state guaranteed maternity and parental leave. The fact that they resort to maternity and parental leave in order to balance their family and work life so often may be caused by the limited access to official childcare facilities for children under three.

If we compare the length of career break in the Czech Republic with other countries, we see that Czech women interrupt career for childcare mostly for two to ten years. Of course, the length of the break depends on the number of children a woman has. Further analyses have revealed that mothers of one child most frequently interrupt career for two to four years; mothers of two or more children mostly for four to ten years. This confirms that the length of career break corresponds roughly to the length of standard maternity/parental leave multiplied by the number of children.

If we look at the impacts of career break, we can see that women in the Czech Republic who were inactive in labour market for childcare are in general unaware of its negative consequences for their further career path (85.5 %). Only 14.5 % women stated that their work inactivity had had negative consequences for their further career. Compared to other European countries, this percentage is rather low. An explanation is obvious. Czech women are not aware of negative consequences of work inactivity since the main reason for the inactivity is predominantly the maternity or parental leave when the risks of negative consequences for re-entering labour market is minimal compared to formal work inactivity.

Even though the results cast rather positive light on the Czech Republic, we have decided to reveal what categories of mothers are exposed to negative consequences of career break in highest degree. Therefore we have analyzed how certain micro-economic indicators influence Czech mothers' perception of career break for childcare. The data show that women with A-levels perceive career break more negatively than women with basic education. Furthermore, the numbers have confirmed the hypothesis that unmarried women, i.e. separated, divorced, widowed or lone mothers see more of negative consequences a career break may bring about than married women. If a respondent had , in the time of survey or in her last employment, permanent work contract the probability that she would see her situation in more positive light dramatically increases. We have also seen that women who stayed out of labour market

for less than one year are considerably more pessimistic about the impacts of work inactivity for childcare to future career prospects than women who were at home with child/ren more than two years. Another important finding has been that women who have had at least one child after 1989, i.e. after the political and economic transformation, are twice as likely to see consequences of career break for childcare in negative light as women who had children before 1989.

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## How to be a good mother : work-life balance strategies and the hegemonic discourse of motherhood

Radka Dudová

The topic of work-life balance has become a discussed theme among Czech scholars and broader public in the Czech Republic. The conditions that local companies offer to their employees, especially to their female employees, have gotten under scrutiny; the measures of social politics have been evaluated and criticized; the expectations and preferences of the employed parents - i.e. of employed mothers, rarely of employed fathers - have been studied. The results of these studies could make us conclude that reconciliation of work and family life is a rather challenging, maybe even unfeasible project for Czech women. However, the everyday experience of most women, including myself, shows that it IS possible, i.e. that it is possible to do a good job at work as well as when raising children (even small babies). Yet, the price most women have to pay for that is remorse and feeling of inadequacy, the necessity to give up some of their ambitions and to accept work positions under their qualifications, not to speak of the work pace often on the verge of human capacity. Such price is considered as a necessary tax a working mother must pay. But must she indeed? Is a mother who returns to work before her child is three, or a mother of two children aged 6 - 15 who accepts a top manager position really a heartless mother, as the Czech public tends to think? The sociology as science shows that not all that is considered "natural" - and thus permanent and given for granted within a society - really bears these characteristics. The same applies for the cultural norms delimiting who a "good mother" is.

In this chapter, I will focus on what the ruling, or hegemonic, normative discourse of motherhood is in today's Czech Republic, and how this discourse delimits the strategies of work/life balance accessible for working mothers of small children. I will show some negative impacts of this discourse, such as the bad employability of small children's mothers, the loss of their qualifications, the discrimination against them at their re-entering of the labor market, the waste of work force, and last but not least the dependency that the women who decide to become mothers are forced to face under the current conditions. Finally, I will show how the current hegemonic discourse of "good" motherhood stigmatizes and marginalizes "other" mothers, i.e. those women who for different reasons cannot or do not wish to comply with the rules dictated by the culture, and yet who believe that they act in the best interest of their children.

## Hegemonic discourse of motherhood

Motherhood is not just a set of specific activities, tasks, feelings and practices - it can also be perceived as a type of discourse of power. We understand discourse as how a phenomenon or a situation is spoken, written or thought of. This determines what is considered right and acceptable, and what is beyond acceptance within a given society. Hegemonic or ruling discourse of motherhood sets forth what a woman must and must not say, think or do if she wants to go by a "good mother". Instead of discourse, we could also use the term "cult of a good mother" or "myth of a good mother". In a discourse, certain practices and attitudes are defined, and also reproduced, as "natural". This usually happens in such a way as to reproduce and conserve inequalities between the sexes. The dominant, socially constructed discourse of motherhood tells us what a mother should be like, what she should do and even what she should feel.

The theories of social science shows on one hand the attempts to find a universal pattern of motherhood (cf. Nancy Chodorow, Sandra Rudick), and on the other hand the attempts to examine and to highlight its different class and cultural variations. Nevertheless, the both approaches agree on the postulate that the motherhood is shaped, governed and dictated by an ideology. Thus, the motherhood includes not only a specific activities and practices, but also cultural beliefs, values and norms different for each culture.

To describe the prevalent discourse of motherhood in today's Czech Republic, we could use the concept of "intensive motherhood" (Hays 1996; Arendell 1999). The concept of intensive motherhood was developed in the United States, and it can be applied, with minor modifications, to the situation in the Czech Republic. According to this concept, a "good mother" is interested solely in care for her children; she identifies her own interests with those of her children, or even puts their interests beyond hers; she invests all her energy, time and emotions in her children. It is important to point out, that the intensive motherhood also accepts and strengthens the traditional gendered division of labor and roles: fathers are not expected to be equally intensive parents.

The motherhood means almost a synonym to womanhood; both motherhood and womanhood make an equal part of woman's identity. The caring is closely connected to the meaning of femininity which in its turn is connected to the ability to become mother. The ideology of motherhood remains usually unshattered even though the praxis shows that the gender roles have undergone many changes and transformations. Furthermore, it is closely connected with the ideology of family - the family policy usually reflects the prevalent normative discourse of

motherhood, and the situation in the Czech Republic univocally confirms this tendency. Despite the fact that the traditional family model where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is the carer, becomes inevitably obsolete (given the differentiation of family models, instability of marriages, as well the situation at the labor market where a family no longer can do with just one income and the model where an adult kept one job for entire life is no longer applicable), the ideal of a family with a male breadwinner can be found behind all social policy measures. The idea of a family with a male breadwinner and a female carer (and co-breadwinner) is present in all “subtexts” of policy measures, even though it no longer corresponds to the reality experienced by the families, or to the situation at the labor market.

The hegemonic discourse of motherhood determines what a good mother shall be like and simultaneously excludes any alternatives. It uses the identity of carers, both for children and carers for others in general, to restrict women. At the same time, it, however does not give mothers the same social and economic status as to men, no matter how well they meet the expectations imposed by the normative discourse of a “good mother”. This can be best observed when partners separate: the woman maintains her role of the main carer, but at the same time must assume the role of the breadwinner. Yet, to sacrifice her job and qualifications can turn out to be the worst for her children’s well-being

### **Hegemonic discourse of motherhood and strategies of work/life balance in the Czech Republic**

Even though we would, in all likelihood, find the main features of the hegemonic discourse of “intensive motherhood” in all western cultures of today, the individual sets of norms, values and beliefs differ in specific details. They differ among others because they are interconnected with individual systems of social policies, company policies towards their employees and with how childcare facilities are available in a given country. The specific form of a ruling discourse of motherhood, i.e. the ideal of a good mother, inevitably influences how mothers in a given culture approach the challenges connected with reconciling work and family. Thus, in different countries, different strategies are used and perceived as appropriate. The mere fact that these strategies vary with culture reveals the character of “good motherhood” as a socially constructed prescription.

Several unquestionable principles characterize the hegemonic discourse of motherhood in the Czech Republic:

▷ **The mother** belongs to the child: the mother should be constantly present by her child for as long period as possible; she should care for the baby intensively and she should show it the world around. This means that her own interests become no longer relevant, since she now “belongs” to the child; in a way, she becomes its property. Moreover, it is expected that she “enjoys” this period - that she chooses to dedicate these first years to the baby voluntarily, and that it will make her happy and that she would regret all the moments she did not enjoy together with her child. In this way, many young mothers feel that they are not good enough in their role, just because they are not constantly happy while at home with their children. Moreover, the mother belongs to the child for ever: until the baby is three or four, she belongs to it exclusively; while the child attends school she has to be at home for it when it comes back and she must be ready to support it if necessary. In the child’s teens, she is responsible for keeping it from destructive habits or bad friends - the best way to secure this is to be at home. And it goes even further since mother’s duty does not stop with child’s leaving home: when her grand-children are born, she is expected to take over her caring duties of a grand-mother.

▷ **The child** should stay with the mother until the age of three: the magic age limit of three years represents in the Czech Republic the time during which the mother should not leave her child for more than couple of hours, and even that should happen as exceptionally as possible. To be among other children is perceived as harmful for a child under three years; for children over three years, it is perceived, contrarily, as beneficial. Some children can be accepted as ready to interact with other children earlier, but others become ready even later than at the age of three, and then it is considered best for them to start attending kindergarten at the age of four. The social policy keeps strengthening the importance of this age limit, and it even tends to postpone it to a later age, either actively (by prolonging the period when parents are entitled to the financial benefit up to four years; by setting age limit of three years for children to enter the kindergarten) or more passively (by closing down nurseries; by not providing places in kindergartens for three years old children).

▷ **The woman** should manage everything by herself: A mother should manage not only the complete care for the child, but also the housework by herself without someone

else's help; the only acceptable help is from her mother or mother-in-law, who thus, in their turn meet the imperatives of the hegemonic discourse of motherhood, since they are there for their child even after it has started its own family). A good mother does not make use of a nanny or a housecleaner, ideally, she grows her own bio vegetables, she cooks and she always uses fresh ingredients.

We could keep describing other principles characterizing a good motherhood, but these three are the most important. Various sociological surveys show that most mothers in the Czech Republic influenced by these principles choose the following strategy of combining work with family life: before they start their family, they work full-time and their qualifications and pay do not differ very much from the qualifications and pay of their male counterparts. But after the first child is born, they stay at home three or four years on parental leave which is often immediately followed by another parental leave with their second child. During this long period, they do not keep any contact with their profession or former employer; in fact, only exceptionally do they expect to return to their former work place and position. The Czech Republic shows the least percentage of mothers returning to the former employment in Europe: one half of mothers terminate their employment by the end of the parental leave (Kuchařová, Ettlerová, Nešporová and Svobodová, 2006). After this period of intensive childcare, they start working full-time, even though they preferred a part-time work; however, these are not offered by the employers in the Czech Republic. In order to meet all the demands connected with the childcare duties, they choose such employment which does not require working overtime or where working hours would collide with kindergarten's opening hours. They choose such positions where they would be dispensable and where they could afford to stay at home when the child is sick. Thus, they accept under-qualified and especially under-paid positions; often they are even grateful for finding at least this kind of work. For they frequently have to fight unemployment, and they regularly face discriminatory behavior from the employers. As a result, the employment rate of Czech mothers of children under six years belongs to the lowest in Europe, whereas work activity rate of women in the Czech Republic is very high. Even though they eventually work full-time, they often do not make full profit of their education and qualifications and consequently, the gender pay gap widens.

### **The impacts of hegemonic discourse of motherhood in the Czech Republic**

The widespread practices of Czech mothers described above have many impacts not only for mothers themselves, but also for others. One of the negative consequences is the difficult position of women at the labor market. As mentioned before, the long break in work activity means a loss of contact with the former work place, the loss of expertise and practice, and their qualifications depreciate. Of course, the extent of such consequences varies according to the branch. Some segments of labor market remain more or less unchanged over time, some, however, develop rapidly, and after six years, women re-enter a completely different labor market. Studies show that in non- or little-qualified branches the loss of skills is not the major problem; it is rather the fact that in these fields, the unemployment rate is usually quite high, the work conditions are in general rather bad and the employers are not willing to tolerate specific needs of mothers of small children. Contrarily, the work conditions in qualified positions (such as higher administrative positions or management positions) are usually better, but the loss of expertise and experience (including the loss of social skills and self-confidence) represent here a more imminent risk. The result is a high unemployment rate among mothers after parental leave, low percentage of return to the former work position and acceptance of less qualified and less paid work.

The difficult situation of women at labor market caused by the norms connected with the motherhood concerns also other parties than mothers themselves. The women who are not yet mothers, and maybe never become ones, must also face the consequences of the hegemonic discourse of motherhood. Not only that the society requires through the voices of their families and friends that they become mothers, which as they are kept reminded, is the main purpose of their life; in the labor market, the employers rather logically, expect that they would act according to this imperative. To expect that any woman about thirty plans to have a family, i.e. to soon have one or more children and therefore that she will quit her job for at least three years still results in discriminatory practices the women have to face when they want to get a job.

Of course, it is necessary to require from the enterprises, either by tripartite negotiations, by legal regulations or by affirmative measures that they secure such work conditions which would reflect the private lives of their employees. However, we should be able to see the situation also from the employers' perspective: for many of them, it is difficult to guarantee, in the free labor market, to their female employees their jobs even after their absent for three or more years. Therefore, many of them try to avoid this obligation by more or less legal strategies.

But in such a system, they, too, lose since in this way, they lose experienced work force that they have to replace and re-train.

If we look at the situation from the state's perspective, we see an immense waste of human and knowledge potential in the Czech Republic caused by the hegemonic discourse of motherhood. Women who achieved education and gained certain qualifications mainly through state financial support stop working for a rather long period of time, and even after they return to labor market, they do not make full use of their originally achieved qualifications. During the time they do not work, they no longer pay taxes; contrarily, they receive financial support from the state, either as a parental benefit or as social and health insurance paid by the state during this period.

Yet, in my opinion, we can see the most serious negative impact of the hegemonic discourse of motherhood in the Czech Republic on the personal level in the form of dependency which a woman experiences as she becomes mother. Suddenly, she becomes dependent on her partner's income for a rather long time. This may not seem to be a problem for well functioning couples and their situation may appear as a result of a fair division of responsibilities. Yet, not all couples function well; the divorce statistics indicate that in fact such couples are in minority. In case that a couple breaks up, the mother suddenly becomes financially responsible for her children, and since she interrupted her career for several years and consequently returned to an underpaid position, her situation becomes rather precarious. The survey *Rodičovství po rozchodu partnerů*<sup>1</sup> (Parenthood after the partners' break-up) indicates that mothers, especially one year after the divorce, do face genuine poverty. In case that the partners do not divorce, the dependency can manifest itself as power inequality in the relationship and can get as far as physical violence.

No wonder that these negative consequences influence decisions of many young women to postpone the birth of their (first) child. For, to be a "good mother" requires from a woman an immense sacrifice, since she must change her life from scratches. Czech women consider these risks, either consciously or unconsciously. The result is an extremely low birth rate compared to both Europe and the world.

The governing normative discourse of motherhood has undoubtedly also some positive impacts. However, these are not always easily quantified, and often they can be rather disputable. They are frequently connected with children: children can benefit from the fact that they are taken exquisite care of until the age of three or four and that they come in contact with other

children only in presence of their mothers who is not distracted by her duties at work. But they can equally suffer from an unchanging approach of just one carer who can be, moreover, frustrated by lack of social contacts, appreciation and self-confidence as well by loss of self-realization in life. I tend to believe that mothers know best what kind of care is appropriate for their children at a given age and that they should not be influenced, forced or sanctioned by the existing hegemonic discourse of "good" motherhood. If we decide that child's interests are crucial and that it is for child's best that it spends the first years almost only with its parents, then it should not be only mothers who will take up the whole burden, as they usually do today. A possible solution could be shorter working hours, part-time jobs and other flexible measures accessible for both parents, as well as affirmative measures stimulating fathers to take more intensive care of their children; mind, however, that such measures would have to be designed in such a way that they, contrarily to their former purpose, did not become yet another trap for mothers. The situation could be also helped by increasing quality of childcare facilities designed for smaller groups of children, which would be enriching for the child, and not frustrating as a place of a forced abandon.

At the same time, I would like to remind as a sociologist that the psychological norms which have a crucial influence on today's discourse of motherhood are also socially constructed. For what is perceived as ideal in one culture, is not necessarily perceived as such in another culture. When my son was ten months old, my French friends, also mothers, asked me several times when I am going to send him to the nursery – for a one year old child does need to spend time among other children otherwise it will not be able to socialize properly, as French psychologists argue.

### **Other discourses of motherhood**

There is yet another consequence of the hegemonic discourse of "intensive" motherhood that has not been mentioned. There are many alternative discourses arising around every ruling normative discourse. These other discourses can function subversive against the hegemonic discourse; however, their position is always subordinate. Individuals who are not willing or able to meet the requirements of the hegemonic discourse create their own truths and values,

<sup>1</sup> Qualitative survey „Fatherhood after the partners' break-up“ carried out by Department of Gender and Sociology in Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in 2005-2006 – 35 respondents. Qualitative survey „Motherhood after the partners' break-up“ carried out by Department of Gender and Sociology in Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in 2007 – 20 respondents.

but their position is constantly questioned and potentially sanctioned by the main normative discourse. In case of motherhood, we speak of "other" mothers. An example of these other mothers are those who return to work before their child is three, single mothers, i.e. unmarried or divorced ones, or women whose partners father actively, e.g. spend some time on parental leave. All these women must at all times cope with the normative pressure either in form of open discrimination, or disapproval, detraction, financial disadvantage, or alternatively in form of pity. Different women face this pressure differently according to what resources they have, what socio-economic conditions they live in and according to their psychological condition.

We can explain how the hegemonic discourse functions by the example of single mothers of small children. According to the governing norms, it is expected that a mother stays with her child until it is three or four and that she gives it all due care. At the same time, it is expected that the single mother provides living for her child. Therefore, single mothers are entitled to an exception to the rules: they can work because they have to (for their possible dependency on state support is perceived as inappropriate). Furthermore, nurseries should be run only for children of single mothers who "do" need them. However, this all means that a single mother can never be a "good" mother in the eyes of hegemonic discourse, regardless how hard she tries. According to the general belief, her children will always suffer, and she herself will on daily basis get into the situations that disadvantage her and her family explicitly or implicitly. Thus, we should add also the damage and problems that the stigmatization and exclusion of "other" mothers cause to them and their children to the negative consequences of the normative discourse of "intensive" motherhood.

## Conclusion

Strategies of reconciliation of work and family chosen by each family in a specific situation is not just a result of both external structural conditions and limitations (such as working hours or access to good childcare facilities) on one side and personal preferences of parents, fathers and mothers on the other side. An important role in the process of choice is played by the prevalent normative discourse which determines what a good motherhood (and fatherhood) should look like. This discourse is a compilation of how motherhood is described in a given culture (by experts, in media, in public but also in private within families) and it determines what is expected from a woman who wants to be taken for a good mother. The hegemonic discourse of motherhood in the Czech Republic corresponds to the concept of "intensive motherhood"

which can be broken down into three principles: 1) the mother belongs to the child; 2) the child should stay with its mother until the age of three; and 3) a good mother manages all by herself. These normative requirements have many negative consequences on personal, corporate and institutional levels. They are empowered and supported by the current social policy of the Czech Republic and at the same time, they also help to form and legitimize this policy. The hegemonic discourse of motherhood is nourished mainly by expert statements of many psychologists; however, these statements often mix scholarly level with the level of norms, values as well as personal level. They manifest Foucault's thesis which says that "knowledge means power." This normative discourse nourished by experts is based on the criterion of "child's interest". However, what this should be is not always defined as precisely as it is often pretended. Yet, simultaneously, the experts' discourse helps to reproduce the existing gender inequalities, the social inequalities in general (by labeling working mothers as bad mothers, even though mother's return to work can be, in many families, the only way of keeping a satisfactory living standard); and in this manner it helps to reproduce the existing social order.

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## Flexible working patterns and work-life balance in Estonia

Kairi Talves

### Introduction

New working patterns of post-industrial economy are eroding the boundaries of time dedicated to work and family. Non-fixed working time has become reality for many people. Much research has been conducted in aim to analyse the extent of flexible working forms and the way they influence economy and labour market in Europe. Not so much attention has been paid to the positive and negative effects of flexibility from the individual point of view, especially to workers' private lives and families. The goal of this paper is to analyse flexible working time in Estonia and its impact to work-life balance strategies of individuals.

In the first part there is given an overview concerning evolvement of flexible working patterns during the last decades. The second part analyses ESS 2004<sup>1</sup> data to demonstrate the impact of new flexibility to work-life balance stress in Estonia.

### Flexible working patterns in Estonia

Estonian labour market has been coming through significant structural changes since the beginning of the 1990's. Besides changes in sectors, transformation of working forms and diversification of the needs of employers have occurred. On the other hand, employees were to adapt new rules and needs of market economy after Soviet era.

Segregation of labour market has influenced both men and women. As in time of Soviet Union they talked about formal gender equality, nowadays occupational segregation prescribes different positions and statuses for both sexes in labour market. Flexible working forms are more common among women than among men in Estonia. Working part-time (less than 35 hours a week) has gained popularity among women, at the same time remained quite stable among men in the last few years. Working part-time is the most popular among young and elderly workers. In 2006, 21 % of women aged 15-24 were working part-time and only 8 % of men. Part-time work is losing its importance for the age group 25-49, only 3 % of men and 7 % of women of this age group work part-time, but then it wins popularity back in pre-retirement period again, as 7 % of men and 16 % of women are part-timers in the age of 50-74.

Part-time work is usually divided into two categories: voluntary and involuntary. In EU policies and guidelines voluntary part-time work is often seen as a favour in sense of reconciliation

of work and family which helps to achieve better balance between work and care obligations (e.g. see the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010<sup>1</sup>). In Estonia, the main reasons for working part-time are not because of the needs of balance between work and family, they are mostly connected with labour market entry or leave period. Though, total employment rate of women is relatively high, though only 34 % of working women have their youngest child aged 0-2. All these aspects - long child care leave and maintaining jobs in this period, parental benefit, poor availability for part-time jobs and for childcare facilities - clearly favour the commitment to family-life and do not support any working in this period at all. In addition, culture of full-time employment is changing slowly and in Estonia for the time being upholds traditional working forms (Värk 2007<sup>2</sup>).

### Flexible working time and work-life balance

We can have a look at analyses based on ESS 2004 data which was made to explain connection between working hours and balance between work and family life in Estonia (Värk, 2007). Generally, analysing WIF (work interfering family) and FIW (family interfering work) factors leads to findings that Estonian people are stronger orientated to work than to family as 24 % of men and 17 % of women think that job often prevents them from giving time to family. At the same time only 2 % of people in both sexes confess that family responsibilities make obstacles to work. Similarly, men feel bigger work related stress than women do and suffer more extensively in unbalanced work and family life.

Dissimilar types of working patterns influence workers' attitudes towards work-life balance differently. Men who make extra hours and work often more than 40 hours a week feel the strongest WIF, 36 % of overtime working men consider it as a problem. Among part-time working men, there is also a relatively high number of those who view high WIF as a problem - 25 %. The lowest WIF can be noticed among men who work normal hours (40 hours a week) - only 15 % think that they are often put under pressure because of work responsibilities.

<sup>1</sup> R Jowell and the Central Coordinating Team, European Social Survey 2004/2005. Data available from Norwegian Social Science Data Services homepage <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>

<sup>2</sup> Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> Värk, A (2007). Flexible working time. Thematical bulletin 1/2007. Statistics Estonia [Tööaja paindlikkus. Teemaleht 1/2007, Eesti Statistikaamet]

Women working overtime finds extra hours also as a problem that influences WIF factor, as a matter of fact 30 % of these women feel higher WIF and are often stressed because of work responsibilities then. Contrary to men, part-time working women are quite happy with their work burden and do not feel that work obligations are obstacles to family commitments – only 11 % admits this might be a problem.

Higher FIW is more disturbing for women than for men. As generally, quite few people in both sexes feel that family responsibilities makes worse their working situation, but many people think that sometimes it is still a problem. Of course, naturally it is a bigger problem for those who are working overtime, 31 % of women and 26 % of men with more than 40 working hours a week allows that family is sometimes interfering their work. At the same time, among part-timers there are 18 % of women and 10 % of men who says that family responsibilities sometimes interfere their work.

Having analysed WIF and FIW among people who work in different types of working times, we will look closer at working habits of these different groups of workers. General trend among both sexes leads to a conclusion that those who work less than normal working hours would like to work more (80 % of men and women) and those who work more than common working hours, would prefer to work less (47 % of men and 67 % of women). People with normal working hours are quite satisfied with their work burden, 55 % of men and 68 % of women would like to keep the existing working hours.

However, with a respect to big work related stress of Estonians, it is strange to see number of those who would like to work more, compared with the hours they work now. Especially men with normal working hours would like to have longer weeks; even 41 % of men with a 40-hour week confess that they would like to work even more. 27 % of men working more than 40 hours a week would also like to work more than they already do. The fact that women are trying to mitigate their workload more actively than men also reflects in the view on working hours, women find them ideal, as they are more satisfied with their present working hours or want to work less than they actually do. 25 % of women who work 40 hours a week would prefer to work more and 18 % of those who work overtime want to work more than they already do.

## Conclusion

Flexible working patterns are not very widespread in Estonia, therefore many people work in a traditional way. Still, flexibility and flexible working hours are becoming a growing phenom-

enon on Estonian labour market. For women 'non-traditional' often means a part-time work and for men it stand for an overtime work, extended working days or longer weeks. Also, it seems that a part-time work actually often brings non-fixed working hours without the ability of a worker to control them. This might partially explain why there is such a big work related stress among part-time workers as well as stressful reconciliation of work and family life.

On the other hand, culture of full-time employment seems to be fossilised in mindsets of Estonian men. Traditional gender roles and stereotypical point of view, which supports the traditional male breadwinner model, hugely affects people's attitudes towards balance between work and family. Work and success orientated society puts people under pressure, especially men seem to be concerned and as presented in this analysis, they are also vulnerable and depressed because of huge workload they are to be confronted to.

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## Science as a profession: female scientists and their academic career

Alice Červinková and Marcela Linková

**“I basically believe that only women who dedicate fully to the science and put off their private lives are the only potential candidates to senior positions in the field of science. But they must give up a lot. We could also understand it as a kind of self-discrimination, since it is always our own decision.”**

(A female participant of Young Scientists workshop, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2003, Prague, Czech Republic)

Science represents a complex system of knowledge creation and distribution<sup>1</sup>; at the same time, we can perceive science and research as a particular segment of labor market. The character and organization of science work require a rather long time for the scientist to achieve the necessary qualification, but simultaneously, it is typical for a considerable career uncertainty. Furthermore, mobility starts to play an important role in building up of an academic or science career, i.e. we have come to a transnational labor market.

In 1990s, the issue of equal opportunities for women in science became a political topic first in individual European countries, then on EU level, and later also in the Czech Republic. The issue is looked at mainly through numbers – attention is paid to the low number of women in science, especially in senior positions. It is often pointed out that the number of female and male university graduates is almost equal, but in the field of research, we find much less women.<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon is usually described as a leaky pipeline: as the academic career proceeds, more and more women drop out (e.g., among professors, there is one woman out of ten men). There are therefore two sorts of measures taken to improve the situation; first one focuses on recruitment of female students, the second one on the barriers and reasons for the high percentage of female scientist who drop their academic careers. The barriers are usually explained by the metaphor of the so called glass ceiling. This metaphor represents the invisible obstacles that hinder women from proceeding to higher, and thus more self-reliant and more responsible levels of their academic careers.

The situation of women in science becomes a political issue when science and research are perceived as a tool of society's economic development. Seen from the perspective of knowledge and employment policy, the low percentage of women in science represents a problem worth our attention because economic development is closely interconnected with innovation and knowledge, especially in science and technology as becomes obvious in strategic documents

of public policies (National Policy of Research and Development in the Czech Republic for years 2004–2008<sup>3</sup>, National Innovation Policy of the Czech Republic for years 2005–2010<sup>4</sup>, Economic Development Strategy<sup>5</sup>). Women are perceived as an underutilized human resource there; according to these documents, women's potential must be used better and more effectively in order to achieve better economic position of a society.

European policies deal mainly with vertical and horizontal segregation, with evaluating and measuring science performance, with promotion of women to decision-making positions and their access to financial resources<sup>6</sup>. In all these areas of political interests, the spotlight is cast on division of labor in private life which complies with the existing gender contract, i.e., the idea that family and household is primarily women's responsibility. The whole issue falls under the heading of work-life balance.<sup>7</sup> Thus, on one hand, we see a political, economic and equality<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Frascati manual, the science is defined as “systematic activities closely connected with creating, distributing, disseminating and applying of scientific and technological knowledge within all fields of science and technology”. In Frascati manual, the term science denotes both natural and social sciences. (Frascati Manual, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> In the Czech Republic in 2005, there were 32,2 % female PhDs, 15,6 % female associate professors and 8,7 % female professors in academia, e.g. (Czech Statistical Office. Research employers in state sector and higher education)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.vyzkum.cz/storage/att/1FA326578097CB71278DB3A833CF5841/NPVAV\\_%20aktualizovan\\_%c3%a1.pdf](http://www.vyzkum.cz/storage/att/1FA326578097CB71278DB3A833CF5841/NPVAV_%20aktualizovan_%c3%a1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.vyzkum.cz/storage/att/D585A235FD706523B2F40970946EC49B/NIP-%20851.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.vyzkum.cz/storage/att/2E19C964AA2946D68D17482DC5DDFA0D/SHR\\_%20Expert\\_%20Final.pdf](http://www.vyzkum.cz/storage/att/2E19C964AA2946D68D17482DC5DDFA0D/SHR_%20Expert_%20Final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Council Resolution of 26 June 2001 on science and society and on women in science [OJ C 199, 14.7.2001, p. 1–2], Council Resolution of 20 May 1999 on women and science [OJ C 201, 16.7.1999, p. 1–1], Council Resolution of 27 March 1995 on the balanced participation of men and women in decision-making [OJ C 168, 4.7.1995, p. 3–4], Women and Science – Mobilising women to enrich European research. Communication of the Commission adopted on 17 February 1999 (COM(1999)76 final) (PDF).

<sup>7</sup> A brief overview of under what heading the issue of work-life balance has fallen during the last thirty years shows that it was first tackled as a feminist problem, to be nowadays tackled as an issue concerning equal opportunities and economy. During this development, the issue has received its portion of attention in the process of general employment policy making or science policy making; today, there are even some financial resources allotted specifically to solve the issue (within European Social Fund, e.g.). What has changed is the main argumentation. The question of work-life balance is no longer negotiated as a matter of values, but as a problem concerning the institutions and women who strive to find a suitable model which is financially convenient for the institutions on one hand, and which, on the other one, enables women to work, raise children and take care of their households (either by themselves, or by securing financial means for a third party who helps with the family and household). In this way, the second and the third shifts have remained unchanged. The new measures do not even pretend that their goal is a change in division of responsibilities and roles between women and men (Linková 2007).

<sup>8</sup> I use the term equality interest to describe politically motivated steps aiming at solving the problems related to equality between men and women, which, however, do not solve the problems of unequal distribution of power, resources and responsibilities in private lives. They focus only on creating conditions on labor market which would secure full participation of women with children without changing the existing organization of work. This approach ignores the gender bias in evaluation of science work as well as the fact that the existing model of the linear research career is by definition discriminatory because it oversees the invisible values inscribed in the system.

interests in finding solutions for work-life balance, but on the other one, we encounter historical institutional conditions that are accepted as universal and non-discriminatory and anyone who cannot comply with them must negotiate on individual basis.

In the following part, we shall introduce four different approaches to the topic of women in science including their political implications, as elaborated by French sociologist Nicky LeFeuvre (2000). Her conceptualization shall help us to understand the variety of theoretical perspectives related to the issue of women in science and at the same time to reveal in what ways they are interconnected with public policy perspectives, specifically with knowledge policies. The below described approaches co-exist and develop reflecting different measures taken to support women in science. According to the first approach, the so-called perspective of "feminine values", women bring the so called female values, such as altruism, empathy, etc. into science and into the process of creating the scientific knowledge. An increasing participation of women in science shall lead to transformation of principles governing the science research, which in its turn is usually connected with male values, such as objectivity, spirit of competition, etc.) The measures based on this approach focus on planning such a career path which would accept that women are different, especially in that they are responsible for private sphere and care. The second approach, the so called accepted manliness, focuses on the female scientists who have achieved successful academic career while pointing out that these women have accepted male behavioral and value models; that is to say that they have adapted to the traditional male spirit of the academic environment. The measures which result from this perspective consequently attempt to secure the same conditions for female scientist as their male counterparts have. For example, a comfortable access to childcare and housekeeping services is introduced, however, without considering involving men into these activities, too. The male dominated approach to the issue of women in science focuses on low participation of women in academia.

Lack of women in science is explained by power distribution in society (i.e. male dominated society). While implementing equality measures, the male domination manifests itself for instance in that increasing feminization of a certain profession means decline of its prestige. This brings about mistrust in policy of equal opportunities, because the male dominated arrangements result after all in the restoration of gender hierarchies. The last approach to be presented is called gender erosion, i.e., disruption of gender order (it is the one I agree with). According to this approach, gender is understood as a social process situated in a certain time.

Gender differentiation and hierarchization are considered as two main social mechanisms producing inequality between men and women. In relation to the politics of equal opportunities, this approach reveals a paradox typical of these politics: to support women as a group with common biological characteristics encourages and maintains the construction of "natural differences" which are considered as the source of inequality. I suggest to concentrate rather on where men are different (and not to think that only women are different). Yet, this is not enough, the equality policies should also count with the socially constructed character of the gender binarity of men and women, and they should encourage the interchangeability of men and women in both work and private spheres.

### Academic career

Academic career is designed as linear (Murray 2000). This means that a professional continuity is expected, academic promotion and the continuity are stressed. With regard to the existing gender division of roles and responsibilities in a family, the ideal of such a career is hardly attainable for female scientists. And as breaks in career are unsolved on a systemic level, every woman who wants to make a science career must negotiate her particular situation in her institution on her own<sup>9</sup>. Maternal and parental leave may in some fields of study and in some institutions represent a barrier for a smooth progress of a successfully started career. This applies especially in natural and technical sciences, as these fields develop so quickly that the return after a career break becomes extremely difficult. As a female scientist once said, "I've survived".<sup>10</sup> After they return from parental leave, they struggle with a lower number of published texts compared to other colleagues who did not interrupt their careers. With this experience behind them and possibly with a perspective of another career break ahead, they are less willing to apply for grants and to lead research teams. Moreover, in a highly competitive environment of some laboratories, a "gap" in the résumé might be a sufficient reason to decline a candidate for a research position.

<sup>9</sup> For more, see Šaldová, K., Tenglerová, H. (2006). Here, everything is a matter of agreement. Best practices in the labyrinth of work-life balance, pp. 36 – 41. In Šaldová, K. (Ed.). Through a labyrinth. On science, private life and their reconciliation. Prague: Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

<sup>10</sup> Some female scientists speak about return to research work after the break for motherhood as of a „survival“ („I've survived it“). Research notes of M.L. KNOWING project.

In order to standardize career progress in science, certain criteria for career promotion have been created. Different systems of performance evaluations of both teams and individuals have been drafted. Science performance is mainly evaluated on the basis of the number of published texts in refereed scientific journals and reviews, and on the basis of rising citation index for a given period. Scientists and academics in Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic have to get through a whole set of attestations; at universities, a progress in achieving academic titles is expected. Thus, it is impossible to remain on the same position without developing further academic or science competences in a long-term perspective. The statements of female scientists<sup>11</sup> clearly reveal worries that a career break for motherhood would bring about a drop down in their publication activity. Since the evaluation of science employees takes place in certain, often five year intervals and since there are time limits within which an academic worker should move on to another academic position, a career break of for instance two years can have a crucial impact on person's evaluation and career development. When we compare publication activity of scientists who have interrupted their careers with those who have not, the disadvantaged ones are univocally those who have taken a break. Some institutions become aware of this problem and start considering measures that would help to reduce this handicap. A measure would, for example, be not to count the years spent on parental and maternal leave to the evaluation period. The evaluation would then be prolonged by the period spent on this type of leave.

Another evaluation criterion for a successful career progress is the ability to win grants. This is particularly important at the beginning of the career as well as throughout its whole track. For the beginners it is often difficult to compete with more experienced colleagues as one of the decisive factors when applying for a grant is a so called science competence which is measured by number of realized grants and by number of published texts. The beginners cannot usually present such résumés. A possible systemic measure to promote beginners in science would be to implement specific support programs for them. Grant Agency of Academy of Science of the Czech Republic (GA ASCR) introduced such program in 2002 and Czech Science Foundation (GA CR, Grantová agentura České republiky) followed in 2003. GA ASCR introduced junior research projects particularly for undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The age limit of 35 was set for applicants within this program. GA CR launched a public tender for postdoc grant projects. Similarly to the GA ASCR's program, the applicants' age is limited by 35 years and the time after receiving PhD is limited to four years. Both the age limit and limit on years after completion

of postgraduate studies reflect the idea of an uninterrupted linear and career path and is thus discriminatory against parents who spent some time on parental leave (which is usually three years in the Czech Republic). Both grant agencies made steps to correct these discriminatory measures<sup>1</sup>. Since 2006, GA AV CR has been adding 2 years for each child above the age limit of 35 years in junior grants in case that the applicant returns after parental leave. Moreover, it is possible to postpone the beginning of the project realization by nine month. Since 2007, the application criteria of the public grant tender for postdoc research projects have changed. The age limit of 35 years which could have been increased by the time spent on maternal leave, i.e. by 28 weeks, was replaced by the limit of four years following the completion of PhD studies. The time spent on maternal and parental leave (i.e. up to three years) is nowadays, not counted as a part of the four year period. In this way, GA CR has corrected the direct age discrimination as well as indirect sex discrimination on the basis of child rearing.

To receive a grant is also important later on the academic track, especially for leaders of research teams who are responsible for the whole team and its functioning particularly in cases when grant resources are crucial for both carrying out the reasearch itself and for financing the researchers. If one wants to receive a grant and carry out the project, one has to be able to be work on it for three to five years. Nowadays, there is only limited numer of grant programs which can be interrupted for childcare. In the Czech Republic, no such grant scheme has been introduced despite recommendations to do so issued by the National Contact Center - Women and Science at Institut of Sociology of Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic which is responsible for Czech grant institutions.<sup>1</sup>

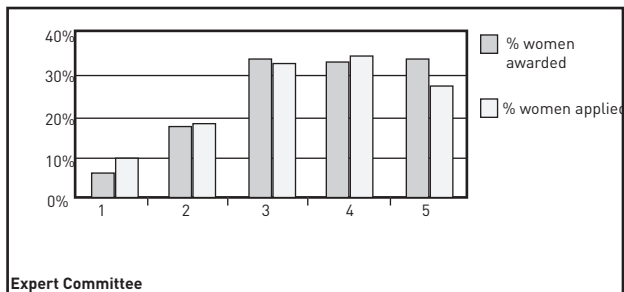
Female scientists are aware of the responsibilities connected with realization of grant projects and they usually realize how "dependent" the members of research team are on the main grantor. Because they are afraid that they will not be able to meet all these demands in case they get pregnant, less women in the end apply for grants. In the Czech Republic, one in five

<sup>11</sup> Research notes and group interview with female scientists in KNOWING project - M.L.

<sup>12</sup> This measures were introduced on the impulse from National Contact Center – Women and Science of Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic based on the outcomes of the conference Through a Labyrinth: why there are so few women in science, held on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2005 in the Parliament of the CR under the patronage of MP Anna Čurďová and of deputy prime minister for economy Martin Jahn.

<sup>13</sup> The current law says that it is no longer possible to prolong senior (five years) grants. The explanation is that the results of grants are entered into RIV database in five year intervals, and thus the results of prolonged grants could not be accepted. Prolonging of a grant can be considered only in case of shorter postdoc grants which are usually carried out within three years.

applicants for grant is a woman. The worries of collision of family duties and duties connected with the grant are one of the reasons for low participation of women in grant applications<sup>14</sup>. Currently, there are no programs or measures to deal with this problem either on European or Czech level. We can conclude that even if the rules for grant proposals may seem neutral, the process of application for grants is dramatically influenced by above described gender processes.



Source: Presentation of Prof. RNDr. Syka, DrSc, former President of Czech Science Foundation, presented at the conference Through a Labyrinth: why there are so few women in science, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2005. Parliament of the Czech Republic.

- 1 Technical sciences
- 2 Natural sciences
- 3 Medical sciences
- 4 Human and social sciences
- 5 Agricultural sciences

### Mobility – the transnational labor market

Long-term mobility (i.e. stays which take over one year) becomes an integral part of science career at all stages. However, it is particularly important at its beginning, immediately after the PhD graduation. The period following the post graduate studies has been institutionalized as the so called postdoc stage of science career, and long-term mobility is realized mainly through postdoc appointments. Such an appointment can last from one up to three years, and a junior scientist can go for several research stays at this stage of his/her career. The number of applications for such stays is limited only by age or number of years following the termination of postgraduate studies. For many scientists these stays are a chance to achieve certain position in their field, to see how they work in prominent research institutions around the world as well

as to put this experience on their professional résumés which shall help them with further progress in their careers. In some fields and institutions, a postdoc appointment is an integral part of a career. Junior scientists are not allowed to continue their careers at the institution where they took their PhD and they have to look for a position somewhere else. As the Czech academic community is rather small, the junior scientists must seek appointments abroad. In this way, they join the transnational academic labor market.

In the language of European science policy, mobility is a strategy. As D. M. Meyer, the President of EC program Marie Curie Fellowship, MCF (a support program for junior scientists) claims, “mobility is essential for creating common European research identity. It is essential for development and transfer of research competences and for science excellence support. Mobility of scientists is crucial for creation of a European research space and should be supported from the beginning of a science career.” (D.M.Meyer, 2005). Mobility of scientists is not limited to Europe - many scientists go for postdoc research stays to the United States; this fact became one of the impulses for launching MCF mobility scheme. European knowledge policies endeavor to keep the European postdocs in Europe and to draft junior scientists from the so called third countries to Europe.

Mobility and especially the long-term one may be a problem for female scientists who stand at the beginning of their careers. The time when they finish their PhD studies and start the academic career collides with the time when they usually want to start a family or when their children are small. To go to a foreign research institution for a longer period of time might be problematic under such conditions. In the field of science, we see the so called dual-career partnerships/marriages are rather common. In these cases, it is necessary to negotiate who will apply for a research position and who will follow. Some institutions react to the situation by introducing grant schemes for married couples, or they add some extra finances to the grants for married postdocs. A survey by Philipp Mogueuou (2004) focusing on postdocs’ mobility in France reveals that in case of single postdocs the sex is irrelevant in deciding for a foreign research stay, but in case of postdocs with families, the ratio of women leaving for foreign research stays dramatically decreases (they prefer choosing staying in France); in case of male scientist the family does not seem to be a decisive factor in transnational mobility at all.

<sup>14</sup> In standard grant projects supported by Czech Science Foundation in years 2002-2005, there were 18,6 % of female grantors, in postdoc projects, there were 27,4 % of female grantors. In 2006, 21 % of applications for standard grants were filed by women, 28 % of postdoc grants applications were filed by women.

## Conclusion

Science is a specific segment of labor market with its particular demands concerning scientific education and both temporal and spatial mobility. Moreover, it is an institution historically based on so called masculine values (objectivity, rationality); and for years, women had been excluded from it. The existing attempts to deal with the issue of equal opportunities in research get into impasse since they tackle general knowledge policies and policies of equal opportunities in research and development separately. While general knowledge policy is rather based on the idea of sameness (supposing that the system suits everybody, that it is neutral and that it does not have different and uneven impact on different researchers), the arguments of equal opportunities policy is usually based on the idea of difference. Since women have different social roles and obligations, it is necessary to create such conditions which would take these differences into account and which would help women to participate more in research and development. This duality related to general organization and research priorities on one hand and equal opportunities on the other one then maintains the gender inequality. Unless gender is genuinely mainstreamed into the process of knowledge policy making (i.e. mobility, work organization, evaluation and career promotion in knowledge policy), the situation in research and development will not improve, as the issue of gender will remain invisible for decisions concerning general science and knowledge policies.

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## Media Analysis: Gender Stereotypes behind the Pro-Equality Arguments

Monika Bosá

One of the main feminist concepts is differentiation between sex and gender. In the context of our current legislation, it becomes particularly important. Especially in the countries where the autonomous women's movement was interrupted by a totalitarian power the necessity to follow up and rethink feminist theories and apply them in their specific conditions is felt as particularly acute. I believe that we should focus on rejecting gender stereotypes which lie behind the gender inequality.

Gender stereotypes are mostly defined as the surviving and obsolete ideas or prejudices related to femininity and masculinity (e.g., Jarkovská, 2004, p. 20, Lukšák, 2003, p. 45).

I am convinced that this definition is, however, not sufficient, because it does not say anything about how gender stereotypes influence our thinking and behaving, and above all, because it does not explain how comes that they persist in our society in spite of the democratization process and the changes in gender roles. In my opinion, the definition of social stereotype as presented in the Concise Sociological Dictionary can help understand the character of gender stereotypes. Stereotype is defined there as „a set of prejudices related to masculinity and femininity which are considered given and irrevocable. It is a very strong element of the conscious. In other words, it is a psychological and social mechanism regulating understanding and evaluating of certain phenomena influencing our opinions, attitudes and behavior. Associating certain qualities to all members of a given group without making difference between the individuals is the main characteristic of the stereotype. Emotionality and irrationality as well as simplification of given phenomena are its other important feature. Therefore, it is often misused by propaganda. Stereotypes are extremely persistent and change very slowly. They influence considerably but rather imperceptibly our conscience” (Tomek, 1996, p. 1230). The structure of stereotypes defined by Zuzana Kiczková (2001, p. 4-5) by means of three characteristics (dichotomic character, impassable boundaries and hierarchic relation between the binary oppositions) helps to explain the persisting inequality between men and women, despite the attempts to eliminate the inequality.

Even though we often see that authors mistake gender and sex (and thus refute the very essence of gender as a concept and reduce the vast possibilities which could be otherwise researched and analyzed), to differentiate between the terms sex and gender is particularly

important in our conditions. Moreover, the consistent use of the term gender should, above all, concern the area of social relationships and structure.

The findings presented in the text are based on the media analysis of Slovak daily press<sup>1</sup>. In this article I shall focus exclusively on identifying the gender stereotypes and the mechanism of how stereotypical concepts of femininity can contribute to raising barriers for full and equal participation of women in labor market. I chose as a starting point the definition of gender by Sandra Harding (1993) who identifies three (mutually interconnected) „levels of gender” which should all be taken into account in gender analysis. She defines these levels as processes which represent and reproduce gender in the social structure:

**Gender symbolism** means ascribing masculine and feminine characteristics to phenomena that, however, have nothing to do with sex differences. Gender symbolism is present in language itself as well as language usage. It is important to note that using „male” or „female” connotations implies hierarchy and evaluation and creates the impression of a binary structure of the society. (Symbolic level of gender)

**Gender structure** of human activities refers to associating gender characteristics to whole areas of human activities and institutions no matter whether they are in fact carried out by women or men. In this way, the division of labor between men and women becomes perceived as „natural”. And again, the element of hierarchy is ascribed to the male or female characteristic. (Structural or organizational level of gender)

**Gender identity** means the identity that individuals build up in a gendered society, the identity they accept and the identity they have to deal with. (Individual or identity level of gender)

Her characterization of gendered universe enables to understand the reasons for low efficiency of provisions based on „sex equality” deprived of „gender equality”. The situation will not change if people assert the existence of equality between men and women, but only if gender relationships change on all three levels.

<sup>1</sup> The media analysis was a part of Plus pre ženy 45+ (Plus for Women 45+) project. We analyzed texts and pictures from daily newspapers Nový čas, Sme, Hospodárske noviny and Pravda. In total, there were 359 articles analyzed in detail. The analysis was carried out together with Mgr. Milan Minarovič.



## Women's Images - Fragments of Discourse

The discourse analysis helped reveal some fragments of media discourse on femininity which I call images.

### First Image: Family as Women's Primary Interest.

It refers to the dual character of the public and private sectors which serves as a basis (and excuses) for inequality between women and men in the society. It is presented as an undeniable fact that does not need any explanation and that makes part of general knowledge. If arguments for this image are used (which happens only indirectly), they are based on biology. Within this image, women are praised for their devotion, especially as mothers, which is presented as their „nature“. Placing women primarily in private sphere, i.e. family, the issue of care and relations appeared in all analyzed newspapers. Professional and work potential of women is, in this way, moved, or even „expelled“ to the sector of unpaid work and relations.

### Second Image: Beauty is a Must

It focuses on „beauty“ as a main „quality“ of women. We learn much more about politicians' wives than about female politicians. Except for good looks, politicians' wives must also have motherly qualities: they must be gentle, generous, devote, supportive, moderate,... Beauty disqualifies women on labor market: As women's beauty is often defined as young and fresh, experience of older women is disregarded. As Naomi Wolf (2000) says: „Women who want to be successful must be talented and experienced, but they must not look like it...“

### Third Image: Women for Men - Women as (Sexual) Objects

The image of women in media is sexualized. It is particularly visible in pictures: women are used in order to evoke "pleasant sensations" to the reader (a man); their purpose is decorative. Also in other contexts than sexuality, women are not pictured as autonomous persons; on the contrary, their lives are presented in relation to others. They are pictured as supportive persons, as mothers, mothers-in-law, wives, partners,...

### Fourth Image: Successful Women

In daily press, we meet successful women rather in the „backstage.“ As if to balance their prominent position in society, they are placed in supplements where readers can relax over their stories. And yet, almost all successful women have to struggle with the first image, and frequently, they have to face other people's astonishment over their success and even doubts about its legitimacy.

To me the fourth image is the most interesting, since the articles analyzed within this category belong to those which eventually could help to disrupt the existing gender stereotypes and motivate women to move to the sector of paid work.

## Successful Women

Middle-aged and senior women active in labor market can be "met" on the pages of daily newspapers and magazines predominantly in the role of successful women. Since they are regularly placed in the supplements, the women presented there are active and successful in such areas as culture or high society. The exception to this rule is women who should serve as models for other women - they appear in career supplements. Women 40+ are represented by senior employees or senior managers.

Almost univocally, a woman in senior position, or a successful woman, is presented as a sort of curiosity which does not really correspond to the reality we are used to<sup>2</sup>. The question is, however, whether the presentation of successful women in media as exceptions can really motivate other women or whether it rather maintains the stereotypical image of women in senior positions (or financially independent women) as a curiosity.

The following article on women in senior positions is meant as a positive one, yet it can be also understood in the above-suggested way. It presents some of the "typically feminine qualities" as their assets:

**"Women are - not always, but in many respects - better bosses than their male counterparts. They communicate better, they can follow more things at a time, they are better team players, and they are creative"** (My boss is a woman: Hospodárske noviny, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004)

However, later in the article, some other female qualities are pointed out as those that should be avoided:

**"Don't show too much of your femininity;... it doesn't help your authority"** (My boss is a woman: Hospodárske noviny, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004)

<sup>2</sup> There were 32,4 % of women in senior positions, including law-makers in 2004 (Filadelfiová, 2007, p. 60)

There are many articles, especially in Career Supplements, with advice for women. In order to help women to succeed in business, "survival instructions in men's world" are presented most frequently:

**„Overall professional looks: a woman should look fresh and likable. She should act nice and should move and gesture with grace. A part of professional looks is an appropriate outfit”.**

**“Behavior: a woman must know how to behave in the society. She shouldn't be too bold, arrogant and self-confident, but neither too fearful nor timid. Men appreciate sense of humor, however it is important to avoid too much camaraderie or flirt. One has to focus on work performance and there is no place for close relationships.**

**But if a colleague offends you by something he says, you must let him know in an appropriate way.”**

**“Communication: speak quietly, with balance and to the point, always look into your partner's eyes. Too expressive gestures distract listener's attention and can weaken woman's position. Avoid flippancy.”**

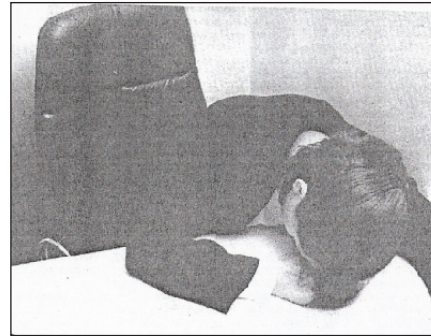
**“Professional attitude: Professional attitude to your work performance is the only way to gain authority among men. Don't be too open and don't tell your colleagues about your private problems.”**

**“Accept advice from men: woman's authority won't suffer if she asks a male colleague for help when she's at a loss. They won't take it as her inability; on the contrary, they'll be happy to show off their knowledge and skill.”**

(“Woman at male work place” Pravda - Career Supplement: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2005)

The above-quoted set of advice documents the stereotypical understanding of female and male worlds as completely different ones and mutually incomprehensible. They encourage dichotomist understanding of masculinity and femininity. The article makes us believe that men act “natural” in the environment of paid work, while women have to acquire special communication skills. Even though most of these tips could be useful for both men and women, it is the “femininity” that is accentuated. This concerns particularly the point when women are urged to accept advice from men.

It is also worth noticing the picture accompanying the article. Its title is, paradoxically, **“successful woman”:**



In Naomi Wolf's words: "If you want to be successful in building-up your career, you must be feminine, but not too much..." (Wolf, 2000, p. 43). The above-quoted recommendations are too vague to know exactly where the limit of the "acceptable" femininity lies. Therefore, women risk constantly to be too feminine or not enough feminine. Moreover, the definition of "appropriate femininity" is unstable, and always depends on circumstances, on who defines it and what are his/her motifs. The responsibility to meet the requirement, however, always lies with the woman.

In spite of the claimed refusal of stereotypes concerning women and men, the gender stereotypes in form of unconscious mechanisms functioning on the symbolic level can be found in the article as a matrix and as a control mechanism manifested in the language:

**“This process [of women's assertion in labor market and in senior positions] is accompanied by prejudice, worries and stereotypical barriers”** (“My boss is a woman” Hospodárske noviny 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004)

In this way, the stereotypes become undeniable and undenied part of world's order. This example only proves how difficult it is to see the stereotypes that lie deep in us. At the same time, it shows that without a deeper understanding of gender as an organizational principle of

the society it is not possible to avoid barriers created by gender stereotypes.

In the context of the quoted article, it must be pointed out that to be a woman is considered here (and elsewhere too) more important - and from media's perspective also more interesting - than the work activity itself. Men do not have to strive to justify and legitimize their being at work. Yet, we must remember that stereotypical image of masculinity plays also its role in building-up of a career. But masculinity does not represent any barrier in career progress and employment; it is simply not a matter of interest. Masculinity is not openly presented as an issue when talking to men about their employment, as it is the case with women. Masculinity in the realm of work is considered as something common, as a "norm". This is also one of the reasons why women must, in bigger extent, determinate their positions at work place, why they have to prove their working and managing qualities and successes "despite" their femininity.

**"What is the most difficult for you as a manager of a mainly male work team?"** (I like working...: Hospodárske noviny, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004)

Women in labor market are not a new phenomenon in Slovakia. Women's right to self-realization in employment is not openly questioned. On the contrary. In several of the analyzed articles, the support for women in labor market is declared. We have encountered many statements which on the first sight praise women who want to run a business.

In spite of high percentage of women working full time<sup>3</sup>, the public/private dichotomy does have a negative impact on attitudes towards women's work activity. It is most visible in the need of reconciling work and private life, which media present as a challenge exclusively for women. At the same time, private life is understood as a family life of mothers with small children.

**"While running a business, they have to reconcile the work with children and family"** ("Men don't take women's interests serious": Hospodárske noviny, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005)

This statement is presented as one of the main barriers for women to start a business, even though in the introduction to the article where it appeared, it says that women's interest in business increases particularly after they turn fifty ("Men don't take women's interests serious": Hospodárske noviny, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005). At the same time, this article is one of the few positive examples of reflection of the stereotypical understanding of femininity as an obstacle

for women's full realization in labor market:

**"A man shouldn't be the dominant one, while a woman takes care of the family; she has the right to run a business and to work. That's why there exist support programs for female entrepreneurs"**

("Men don't take women's interests serious": Hospodárske noviny, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005)

This reflection documents the attitude to women's work activity which is supported and highlighted in the text as a means of their financial independence and self-reliance. Setting up measures to support female entrepreneurs, particularly in relation with their caring activities within family, however, shows indirectly that "family duties" are seen as women's task. Of course, we could object that the article only reflects the situation in Slovakia where such division of labor between men and women still exists. But the fact that nowhere in the article the necessity to incite men to take over the care for family and household is mentioned (contrarily to the necessity for women to engage in paid work) supports indirectly the existing public/private dichotomy since it takes the issue of work-life balance as purely women's issue as a starting point. Women's right to run a business thus becomes something extra, which requires special measures from the society. The article does unconsciously support the stereotypical division of labor between men and women as well as the public/private dichotomy, but at the same time it depicts its negative impacts on women:

**„If a woman helps her husband with running a business, it may lead to that she is not fully appreciated"**

**„Men's position [in labor market] is easier; they don't respect businesswomen or a woman who wants to start a business"** ("Men don't take women's interests serious": Hospodárske noviny, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005)

We could find other articles in Hospodárske noviny which presented consequences of gender stereotypes (even though the essence of gender inequalities was not mentioned).

One of the most precarious ways of using gender perspective which mistakes sex for gender

<sup>3</sup> Women working full time represented 96 % of all employed women in 2004 (Filadelfiová, 2007, p. 64).

perspective which mistakes sex for gender can be observed in the area of work-life balance when private life is interpreted as family life and particularly as childcare which is exclusively associated with women. To exemplify this, we can show several interviews where women are repeatedly asked how they manage their "double roles" as well as their senior position at work:

**"Isn't it difficult to be a top manager and a caring mother at the same time?"**  
**"...what is the most difficult for you as a manager of a mainly male work team?"**  
(I like working...: Hospodárske noviny, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004)

One of the prominent and generally accepted success markers in the field of science, arts or social involvement is the Nobel Prize. How newspapers use the positive examples of successful women - the Nobel Prize winners is astonishing, in fact shocking.

The space given to the women who have won this highly prestigious award has been minimal: the press merely informed about the fact, or in longer articles, it even doubted the importance of the award.

When Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2004, the daily Pravda used the opportunity to question the meaning of the Nobel Prize in literature:

**„What is the merit of the Nobel Prize in Literature?"**(Pravda - Literary Supplement, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2004)

Except for publishing the picture of the laureate, they mention her only at the beginning of the article when writing that she did not take over the prize in person and that she held her lecture only via television. They labeled her as enfant terrible of Austrian literature<sup>4</sup>.

In a similar way, another Noble Peace Prize winner was discredited on the pages of the daily Sme:

**"Many people were surprised by the decision taken in Oslo. They expected for example President of the International Nuclear Power Agency, the Pope or... Václav Havel... to be the winner"**

**"Kenyan Maathai is almost unknown to the world"** (The African who planted trees": Sme

9<sup>th</sup> September 2004)

There is a picture at the article showing a woman planting trees in distance, while in foreground, there is a man holding a portrait of Wangari Maathai. This layout strengthens the impression of insignificance and the unrealistic character of the Nobel Peace Prize winner<sup>5</sup>.

This way of presenting in media the ultimate success of women shows a kind of schizophrenia: On one hand, we encounter a claimed support for equality for women as well as support for measures of women's advancement on the pages of daily newspapers, but on the other hand we witness that the "natural" character of women's ambitions is questioned and even that the most successful women are depreciated there. We believe that the reason for presenting women in media in this way is that gender stereotypes function as unconscious mechanisms which affect us emotionally via the masculinity/femininity dichotomy, especially in that public sector is associated with men's world and private sector with women's world. Therefore we cannot speak about a real equality between men and women in most of the analyzed articles, even if we wanted to. The reason is that all the images of women are framed by the idea of femininity limited to the private sector, passivity, devotion, submissiveness, [sexualized] beauty and insufficiency.

The fragments we have identified are mutually interconnected and they keep each other in life. The discourse of almost all articles is more or less identical. All newspapers want to be politically correct, and on the conscious level, they refuse any form of discrimination. Yet, as the gender stereotypes are not consciously reflected, in any attempt to present women in a positive light which most newspapers (with the exception of the yellow daily Nový čas) make the stereotypical perception of women and men, however, leaks through. This is most apparent in insisting on the public/private.

<sup>4</sup> Cf: In Sme of 8<sup>th</sup> October 2004, the article „Nobel Prize for Elfriede Jelinek from Austria" was written in a matter of fact way; it presented author's short biography.

<sup>5</sup> Cf: On 11<sup>th</sup> December 2004 Pravda published an interview with Wangari Maathai. It was a borrowed text, the questions aimed directly at laureate's work. The article was accompanied by a picture of Maathai holding the Prize („Nature, too, needs freedom": Pravda - World Supplement, p. 8)

## Motherhood: A Mission or a Trap?

It seems that most stereotypical concepts of femininity which we can encounter on pages of Slovak daily press are based on the image of motherhood and maternity as the essential aspects of femininity.

However, the maternity does not refer to woman's situation, but rather to the qualities associated with motherhood in general, such as willingness to perform unpaid and invisible work, the devotion to others, empathy to others' hardships, emotionality and the permanent readiness to help others. Maternity thus becomes a quality which is expected from all women regardless their real marital status, age, personal aspirations and attitudes. Absence in work and reduced efficacy are expected automatically, therefore a lower income for women is perceived as "normal". This again has nothing to do with the real situation of an individual woman.

In this way, motherhood becomes a trap, as EVERY woman is a mother. The social control is most obvious when we look at the role of mother. Women and even small girls are raised to sacrifice for others, to give up their own ambitions for others' wishes. This should prepare them for their future role of mothers. It is expected that this is their true "nature" and that they must live accordingly. In reward, the motherhood is depicted as a mission. Regardless what motherhood means in a given time, it is required from all women unconditionally. Maternity is identical with femininity. Women are even expected to feel the right time when the emotions associated with maternity should be felt, and what these are like is also prescribed. In this way, motherhood no longer belongs to women. A personal, intimate relation to the child is replaced by a set of rules and limitations. The genuine motherhood is not the one that a woman experiences, but the one she is supposed to experience in a given time and in given social conditions. It is more likely that we consider childless women to be bad mothers, rather than to accept that in fact they are no mothers at all. And mothers who are mothering in an alternative way are, too, taken for bad mothers. A permanent threat of accusation of being a bad or selfish mother hangs above women with or without children.

Seen from the perspective of women in paid work, there exists a paradox then: The qualities for which they are praised - the qualities which are even the main source of their respect - are exactly those that make the employers doubt their qualities as workforce, such as loyalty and efficacy. Expecting that women shall prefer family relationships to work performance, that emotionality is their essential characteristic and that they are ready to help their relatives at any cost makes us believe that paid work will always be secondary for women. One would

believe that women's paid work should be considered as a complementary income, not a fulfillment of their ambitions. Even if we could retort that family represents the most important value for majority of people regardless of sex (Bútorová, 1996), the motherhood myth makes us associate these expectations primarily with women. The motherhood myth together with the idea of maternity as the essential and even ideal female characteristic represent in fact a gender stereotype: it functions as an unconscious psychological mechanism which influences our thinking. The public/private dichotomy survives in our expectations as well as in our behavior regardless of how many women and with what success participate in the public sector. The symbolic meaning of this dichotomy still exists and functions.

Many articles reflect this problem as one of the main barriers for women's full participation in labor market. However, they are not able to move from the seemingly irrevocable and "natural" character of this phenomenon. This leads to an increasing praise of politicians introducing measures of work-life balance. The aim of these measures is to help women to tackle the barriers, but in the society with above described gender stereotypes, they rather threaten women's position. Some of the reasons follow:

What countries with efficient gender equality policies call "reconciliation of PRIVATE and work life" is in Slovakia formulated as FAMILY and work life reconciliation. The meaning of family life in the stereotypical context implies at least two facts:

- The private life is reduced to family life which makes us believe that persons without "family obligations" (understood exclusively as parental obligations!) are ready and willing to realize their lives (exclusively?) at work.

- Parenthood is reduced to MOTHERHOOD. The measures, even though formulated in a gender neutral way, are implicitly targeted at women-mothers.

Even though there is almost an infinite number of specific work-life balance measures that employers and the government can use, we learn in media that they apply mainly the following two (besides company nurseries, excursions for families with children etc.): part-time jobs and home-work. But especially the part-time jobs are, in a long-term perspective, rather risky, since they represent an imminent threat of economic dependency. A part-time job means lower income and consequently a lower pension. Home-work, in its turn, does not suit all employees, and neither all employers are enthusiastic about this provision.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See for example the survey carried out by MYMAMY mother center in Prešov and by Banbino mother center in Poprad under the title „WORK VS. FAMILY? Reconciliation of work and family life in the eyes of employees.“

Moreover, if these special provisions are perceived as extra costs designed for a particular group, i.e. female employees, no wonder that this well meant help means in the end another reason for reluctance in giving work to women.

Is it possible to avoid this trap? In my opinion, the only way is to keep consequently in mind the gender context of all measures applied under given conditions. Also a set of basic requirements could help solve the impasse:

▶ **To** support consistently the measures of reconciliation of PRIVATE life and work life. We can expect that there will still be groups of employees in a bigger need of support, but at the same time we can believe that if the help is not associated merely with specific groups, the reasons for the discrimination against them will disappear.

▶ **To** present parenthood as a set of relations and obligations towards a child independent of parent's sex. What is expected of fathers must be comparable to what is expected of mothers. Similarly, the caring activities shall not be associated solely with women, as it is implied by the existing stereotypes. However, this requirement cannot be applied only to the situation in labor market. Consistent advancement of gender equality by elimination of gender stereotypes in all areas must happen. And all governments and policies leading to this goal play their important roles here and should include all sectors of public policy ranging from education over social policies to gender desegregation of labor market.

▶ **To** advance active fatherhood, as it is closely connected with the previous requirement. This shall not be reduced to promoting paternal leave and fathers on parental leave, but rather working fathers. For men, equally to women, do not lose their responsibilities for child raising and childcare when entering the labor market. However, as in the case of the previous requirement, an effort must be made to avoid the risk of reducing the issue to just one sector.

▶ **Consequently**, a fair division of labor in family is another prerequisite. All caring activities as well as household responsibilities must be equally shared by women and men.

### **It is rather easy to draft an ideal image**

If we suppose that man as well as women can and shall interrupt their careers for childcare, that men equally to women shall be ready to stay home to take care for a sick family member, that all employees regardless of sex shall require the conditions for work-life balance, there will be no need to label ad hoc certain groups of future employees as risky or costly. Maybe,

we could expect that the term interrupted career shall lose its meaning when it becomes a "normal" career.

I realize how utopian this image is in our conditions. We can at least argue that if political decisions on advancement of gender equality do not consistently take into account the gender aspects of social and power relationships, they will do more harm than good.

The public/private dichotomy does not become less important because the female employment rate is high. Supported by the myths of motherhood and maternity as a primary female quality, it can lead to many a risk in spite of the best motivation of the political decisions.

To conclude my reasoning, I would like to quote Carol Gilligan: **"The belief that woman's quality lies in her devotion to other has made the history of women's development rather complicated as it placed the moral dilemma of goodness against adult issues of responsibility and choice. Moreover, the ethic of self-sacrifice is in strict conflict with the interpretation of rights used in the last century to advance women's claim of fair share of social justice."** (Gilligan, 2001, p. 150).

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## Blind and Invisible: Discrimination of Women in the Workplace: Male Face of Trade Unions

Jasna A. Petrovic

### Brain-washing During Socialism

Political commitment to combat discrimination and promote equal treatment and opportunities at the workplace is widespread, as shown by the almost universal ratification of the two main instruments in this area, the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)<sup>1</sup> and the Discrimination Convention (Employment and Occupation – No. 111)<sup>2</sup>, and especially in the region of former communist countries – ratification of all eight fundamental International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

Constitutions of almost all countries praise equality and non-discrimination on any basis. The principle of equal pay for equal work is established in the Labour Codes of the CEE and NIS countries, which prohibits any reduction of pay for equal work on the gender basis. However, there is a huge gap between theory and practice of implementation of equality. Women faced discrimination during socialism and are facing it even today. National statistics clearly state that the majority of women have lower salaries (on average 10-20 %), lower pension, higher unemployment rates, less opportunities for promotion; statistics state that women make majority in informal economy, in short-term employment and part-time work. They are vertically discriminated as they are minority among top managers or in supervisory positions. They are horizontally discriminated as they are visibly segregated in the less paid sectors; they have burden of maternity and family responsibilities; they have more hours of unpaid work and they are often harassed in the workplace. Women, as a consequence, own less cars and apartments/houses and do not have real access to the decision making bodies.

Access to justice is for women deficient in the region, as is the information about rights and legislation. There are several crucial trends in all the CEE and NIS countries in terms of legal culture: women are not aware of their rights or the way they can improve their daily lives; women do not have access to law enforcement system; and finally – the vast majority of women do not even trust the very structures that claim to protect them. In practice it is very difficult to prove a case of gender-based discrimination. Courts when making their decisions, move away from the principle of equality of evidence towards the detrimental testimonies of the parties and witnesses concerned. Priority is given to documentary proof, which is extremely difficult to present in cases of gender-based discrimination – like “she was fired not because she was

pregnant but because her short-term employment contract has ended”.

In many countries there is neither specialized anti-discriminatory legislation nor the institutions to make justice accessible. And, at the company level often there is no regulation to discrimination, advertised and implemented. Obviously, good laws and strategies are not enough to change or improve gender inequalities.

Collective agreements between employers and trade unions are from the past time and they lack gender and work and life issues; therefore, collective negotiating is stereotyped and poor. Trade unions do not fight against discrimination as they consider it “a state job”, and furthermore, trade unions discriminate women as well.

Just ten years ago, when the ICFTU<sup>3</sup> CEE Women’s Network was established (Gdansk, 27 November 1997), women did not want to recognise discrimination in their countries. Their discrimination reports prepared in 14 countries in 2000, when published, were called differently: “position of women”, “un-equality of women”, but only one had a title “discrimination of women”. Since that time, today’s ITUC\* CEE & NIS Women’s Network has been working on the awareness rising and empowering of women in trade unions and in the labour market. New surveys confirm that general awareness of the discrimination issue of women in different countries had been increased and in some countries even 80-90 per cent of citizens declare there is discrimination of women in general. But when you come closer to those who are considered discriminated in the workplace, you face huge dichotomy.

Simply, women routinely deny that discrimination of women in the labour force or in the labour market is a real problem. There are different reasons why: firstly, the impact of being brain-washed during socialism that equality in theory and practice was a reality. Second, women are not aware of their rights. Third, it is complicated for them to go beyond the stereotypes in their cultural environment. Fourth, Governments develop only formal gender strategy to meet the international requirements, not really paying special attention to the discrimination issue (e.g. labour inspectors lack will and training to investigate discriminatory recruitment practices). Fifth, there are no mechanisms which would enable clear protection of women

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.itcilo.it/actrav/english/common/C100.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C111>

<sup>3</sup> ICFTU/International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, after the merged with the WCL/World Confederation of Labour established ITUC/International Trade Union Confederation gathering 168 million workers from 153 countries.



against discrimination and sexual harassment. Sixth, work-life policies to aid workers in combining employment with their family and private life are not considered a priority (neither the trade unions take care of issues of special interest for workers with family responsibilities), etc.

### Male Face of Trade Unions

The trade union women organised in special women's structures and networks have in the last decade made an important step forward in awareness arising, education, training, campaigning, mostly thanks to the establishment of their regional Network and annual School. Women density in trade unions has increased and the level of discrimination of women in trade unions has decreased.

**Table 1: Women still invisible**

Year	% F Membership	% F Branch	% F Congress	% F „Parlam.“	% F „Gov.“	REPRES. RATE
2000	43,6	20,7	27,8	23,8	15,5	41,8
2007	52,9	21,2	33,3	26,1	22,6	55,2

As seen in the table 1, the share of women in the trade union membership has increased from 43.6 % in 2000 to 52.9 % in 2007, which makes now 30,646.576 women members in 28 countries of the region CEE-NIS. There is a visible increase in almost all segments of women representation in the trade union decision making bodies, although there is the lowest increase in the percentage of women presidents of trade unions' branch. Positive change in the last decade is not "a natural process", it is a result of the persistent fight of women's structures in trade unions for the introduction of positive policy measures (like "reserved seats" quota etc.). Unfortunately there are huge subregional differences, which tell us more about the character of discrimination. There is a huge disparity in the level of representation, especially between the countries in the South and Baltic subregions, which informs us in detail about the possible roots of discrimination connected with poverty.

However, women are discriminated in their trade unions although global trade union movement has achieved huge progress in developing standards for gender equality; although everybody knows that achieving equality between men and women is not a "woman's" concern, but that it is fundamental to the aims of all trade unionists; although, everybody should know that dynamic measures that target women are required in order to redress existing discrimination and change attitudes and conditions in the unions and by the unions.

Women workers need unions more than ever. Unions provide a medium in a struggle for fundamental issues affecting their home and work lives. Women through trade unions' activity foster not only personal empowerment but political awareness and collective solidarity, and, for more - they put on negotiating agenda issues that are not of the utmost importance for men (like health, child care, social assistance, housing, education...). Finally, women account for an increasing proportion of the workforce. Therefore, if unions want to be credible and strong, they must address priority concerns of their current and potential members. If unions want to be credible to women, they must demonstrate that gender equality is an integral part of their own policies and structures.

Let's put the question like that: Can the trade unions with low representation of women in decision-making bodies be considered democratic? Can such unions stand for non-discrimination and protect discriminated workers? Both equity and solidarity, i.e. unity in diversity, must be central to union strategies.

### Women Were Asked

The International Trade Union Confederation CEE& NIS Women's Network has launched the 24-country survey on discrimination of women<sup>4</sup>. The survey was not representative and had no real scientific objective, but mostly a mobilising one. 3350 women were surveyed from textile, commerce, health and education sectors, coming from 24 countries in the region.

### No regulation

Asked if there is any company level regulation against discrimination 74.2 % replied "NO". Only in Georgia (55.4) and Poland (46.9) a high percentage of women consider that their company has regulations against discrimination. The highest per cent of women who consider

<sup>4</sup> ILO-ITUC projekt "Women's Network in Central and Eastern Europe – Discrimination of Women in the Workplace!".

there is no regulation are from Macedonia (92.3) and Serbia (90.3). Furthermore, 86.4 % women state that there is no company level service for assistance in case of discrimination. Logically, 74.5 % women reply that in their companies gender based discrimination is not treated seriously. Only 8.1 % women in Slovakia and 11.6 % in Kosovo think gender based discrimination is treated as a serious discrimination act, compared with 49.3 % in Uzbekistan and 47.5 % in Georgia.

### **No work-family reconciliation**

Concerning work and family reconciliation, situation does not look well. 84.9 % women replied that there is no additional child-care financial assistance in their companies, the worst situation seems to be in Serbia (2.1 %) and Macedonia (2.9), and the best in Bulgaria (43.5), Uzbekistan (40.8) and Azerbaijan (38.1). Shocking data is that 71.5 % women replied there is no child-care facilities available in their communities (worst situation is in Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia; the best in Uzbekistan, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia).

Although collective agreements are foreseen to be used as a tool for improving employment and working conditions, 47.5 % women state there are no work-family reconciliation paragraphs in collective agreements in their countries, and huge percentage of them – 36.1 – claim they do not know.

If we compare three groupings of the countries (EU member/candidate countries; former Soviet Union countries and South-European countries), we can follow visible differences: while in the EU member and candidate countries women express high awareness of the issue and have relatively high per cent of collective agreements on work and family reconciliation (17.7), still it is lower than in former Soviet Union countries (23.1). Unfortunately that is not a case in South-Eastern Europe, where the situation is almost catastrophic with only 7.7 such agreements. When such special provisions are present in collective agreements, they are mostly related to free annual health checking or 100 % paid leave for sick child care (2.2 %).

### **Promotion and pay gap**

Women claim that in their firms there are no clear criteria for promotion (45.8 %) or they do not know if there are any (31.4 %).

Asked if there is any pay gap among women and men for the jobs of similar value, majority of women claim there is no pay gap (32.4 %) or they do not know (35.6 %). The level of awareness

is very low – only 32 % of women are aware of that well-known statistic fact. Serbia, Poland and Croatia have the highest number of statements that there is a pay gap.

When asked about male salaries in comparison to female salaries, majority of the surveyed women claimed that they are the same (39 %) or they do not know (27.2 %) and even 3.4 % say they are lower. It tells us about very high level of non-awareness of women of their real position in the labour market, as only 28.2 % state the male salaries are higher. Though the same is stated by 64.7 % of Czech women.

### **Low sexual harassment?**

When requested if they have ever witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace, 80.4 % women stated they did not! Good or bad news? There is such a low level of harassment or they are not aware of it? The four countries which have the highest number of “witnesses” are the following: Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia and Croatia (more than 30 %), and those who have less or do not recognise it come from Kosovo, Latvia and Georgia.

When asked if they have personally experienced any form of sexual harassment, only 15.8 % of women claimed they did and great majority (84.2) did not. Latvia and Lithuania are the countries in which only a few women declare they have experienced sexual harassment personally; compared to Slovakia, Macedonia and Serbia where almost 40 % of surveyed faced such hard experience. If we count both groups of women, on average there are 35.4 % who were witnesses or victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. This is the data that makes everyone worried, especially if there are many women who still do not take for serious some forms of sexual harassment.

Slightly more than 20 % of Croatian and Albanian women declare that they have experienced undesired physical touch or gestures, the same happened to less than 4 % in Latvia, Kosovo, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Sex comments, not desired as well, are quite often in Albania, Croatia and Serbia, not much less in Hungary and Poland, but not recognised by women in Latvia and Montenegro. Does it mean that Albanian and Croatian women have no talent for humour or they are too sensitive? Obviously it has no relation with religion or ethnicity.

Although 20-30 % of women in Albania, Poland and Serbia claim they face disturbing questions and comments on their private life, looks or habits; but still majority do not notice this phenomena.

Only in Albania, Serbia, Poland and Slovakia the perception of insults or gossips of sexual

nature is rather stronger (more than 15 %), but in many countries they absolutely deny such behaviour. On the other hand, only women from Macedonia and Serbia are rather higher exposed to the undesired invitations for meetings, drinks, dinner. If a woman wants to be promoted at her job, 10.5 % of them in Macedonia, and 5.0 % in Bulgaria are expected to make sexual favour to their bosses. In the same countries – Macedonia 12.8 and Bulgaria 6.9 – women are expected to make similar favours if they want to keep their jobs, but very rarely in the other countries. In Croatia, Poland, and Serbia more than 10 % of women are requested to be “nice” to their clients and customers; such behaviour does not exist in Central Asia and Caucasus.

It is very interesting to see differences among the three groups of countries in case of blackmailing due to an effort to keep a job:

EU member/candid.	5,10%
Former Soviet Union	3,10%
South Eastern Europe	9,50%

Huge difference between SEE countries, where such pattern of blackmailing is very high, and the former Soviet Union countries, where women are not aware or there is no such practice, makes us think of reasons.

### Young and old – vulnerable

It is very interesting that in the transition countries women state that the young and old women are mostly discriminated groups (below the percentage of surveyed who put them on the first position):

young women	47,9 %
elderly women	44,8 %
disabled women	43,3 %
women from minority groups	19,2 %
women of different sexual orientation	15,1 %
womens of different religion than the majority one	10,0%

Multiplied discrimination is quite often: being a woman, plus old (or young), plus disabled, plus from a minority group makes you double, triple... victim of discrimination.

### Blind and deaf?

Surprised or not? How to comment the perception of women when 44.4 % thinks that women and men are treated equally at work? 28.4 % states they are not equal and similar number of them does not know. 50 % and more surveyed women from Kosovo, Albania and Latvia declare men and women are not treated equally at work, while very few from Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro and Uzbekistan say something similar. “It is necessary to note that in Uzbekistan there IS NO discrimination of women on workplaces. The discrimination is provided with the State Laws. Women and men have equal opportunities and rights at employment.” That was a written comment added to the survey results made in that country. Or another written statement from Montenegro: “Still, public about discrimination rarely talk about and the reason is that women are formally legally equal in the working process ...”

### Most often forms

Women were asked about the most often forms (rare or often frequent) of discrimination they have to face. On the first position it is access to employment (recruitment, advertising for work, procedure during the selection process etc.) with 42.8 %, but more than 70 % Lithuanian, Moldavian and Kosovo women consider this form of discrimination very frequent, while less than 10 % of women Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia. On the second position it is assignment in departments within workplace; promotion, pay, other conditions of work (working time, possibility of overtime work, etc.) with 37.8 %, but again, Azerbaijan, Georgian and Uzbekistan women do not see their position in promotion, pay and the other conditions of work as a problem and do not foresee this as a frequent form of discrimination, at all. Employment contracts and status (short-term, part-time, contract renewal, etc.) are with 34 % on the third position, and training; career; advancement with 33.6 % on the fourth. It is interesting that, in contrast to the list of countries where women express a very high level of non-discrimination awareness, Kosovo and Tajikistan women find themselves frequently discriminated in training, career and advancement. On the fifth position we have a job security, redundancies and termination of employment with 33.2 %, no secure jobs for women are quite frequent in Lithuania, Poland, Moldova.

## „Places” of discrimination

The below ranking was done by the surveyed women when asked where discrimination “happens” more often:

Small and medium private companies	40,6 %
Informal economy (black market)	36,7 %
Big private companies	29,3 %
Public sector (education, health)	17,3 %
Multinational companies	14,5 %
State services (police, army)	16,5 %
State Companies	16,3 %
Export- processing zone	5,1 %
Trade Unions	4,5 %

In state companies, according to 47.3 % Kosovo and 40.3 % Albanian woman, followed by Polish and Romanian, it is due to discrimination very difficult to work. In public sector it is mostly perceived negatively by the women from Kosovo (72.3) and Montenegro, while when evaluating multi-national companies Hungarians (41.5), and Slovaks and Czechs see them as discriminating employers. The worst situation is in small and big companies, especially in Poland (75.2), Serbia and Bulgaria. When considering informal economy, the perception in Macedonia, Lithuania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina is the worst.

## Back to the unions

It is obvious that trade unions have a critical role to protect workers who are discriminated on the basis of sex, race, colour, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, disability, family responsibilities, sexual orientation or age. The importance of protecting vulnerable women workers was acknowledged in the Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), which called on governments

and all social agents to: “Recognize collective bargaining as a right and as an important mechanism for eliminating wage inequality for women and to improve working conditions; Promote the election of women trade union officials and ensure that trade union officials elected to represent women are given job protection and physical security in connection with the discharge of their functions”.

3350 women were asked if they are satisfied with their trade unions. The results are for the unions neither very positive, nor very bad.

Very much satisfied	6,3 %
Satisfied	30,9 %
Could be better	41,9 %
Not satisfied	20,9 %

The per cent of women absolutely not satisfied with their trade unions varies from very low rates in Czech Republic (2.8), Latvia (3.2) and Bulgaria (3.9), to high rates like in Kosovo (73.5), Serbia (45.5), Macedonia (34.4) and Croatia (31.8).

## No documents on discrimination

381 trade unionist from 24 countries were surveyed, 47.6 % from the company level. Asked if they have any document adopted at the national level that would correspond to non-discrimination policies against women, only 46.4 % of them replied that they have. But unfortunately it looks like a mixture of nothing: Statute/Constitution (22.1 %), Programme (19.2); Special document with strategy and action plan (1.7); Congress resolution (9.6); Declaration (8.2); Only women’s structure/committee documents (16.7) etc.

## Not a business of union?

Both equity and solidarity, i.e. unity in diversity, must be central to union strategies. But do the trade unionists consider discrimination a business of union? 37.7 % of trade unionists claim that trade unions have nothing to do with non-discrimination policies as they have to protect all their members equally, which is old fashioned socialistic view. But, only in Montenegro (46.7) and Poland (20.0) the surveyed trade unionist consider that it is an issue of branches and

company level unions.

Trade unionists (23.2 %), however state that only women's structure takes care of gender discrimination: Albanian and Montenegro trade unionists (53.3 %), and Serbians (50.0) think women are the only responsible ones, with no one from Uzbekistan and Latvia. The smallest number of trade unionist who agree with that, comes from the former SU (13 %), while almost double number can be found in the SEE (34).

### **Typical union attitude**

What is a typical trade union attitude towards discrimination in the average company in the country? That was a very important question, which 30.2 % of the unionists replied with a note that this not a business of union. Majority of them stated that there is but a mild interest for the discrimination issues. Not a business of union - is the reply which warns us most of all, and it seems incredible that the unionists from Uzbekistan (100 %), Kyrgyzstan (75), Bulgaria (69) and Ukraine (58.3) fully believe they have nothing to do with this. Incredible and painful: maybe there we should try to make comparison with the non-satisfaction with the trade union work or it is much larger issue of un-awareness of unionists and women.

Regional differences are visible as well: 48.8 % of trade unionists coming from the former Soviet Union are entirely sure they have nothing in common with sexual harassment, and that is why they do not deal with that, not because there are no such cases. Shall we change it?

Unions play an important role in combating discrimination of women in the workplace. They are the only organisations which operate at the level of the workplace and which are considered to be responsible to protect workers. Unfortunately, the unionists do not really care and they admit that. Women are discriminated – although majority of them are not really aware. Trade unionists do not see they are discriminated and majority of them do not think it is a matter of union. A lot of work for the unions to change. A lot of job to be done on awareness arising and training of women and trade unionists – both.

## Work and Labour in the Information Society: Opportunities and Challenges for Women's Human Rights

Heike Jensen

The political and economic striving for a global „Information Society“ has brought about profound changes in what types of work are available, how these are distributed regionally, and how labour is organized regionally as well as institutionally. My article seeks to discuss these changes from the perspective of women's human rights, assessing the opportunities and challenges encountered by women with respect to this global restructuring of work and labour. By implication, I will show that central women's rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) represent a vital touchstone for an assessment of current developments and the formulation of corrective policy measures. I will begin by explaining the concept of the Information Society and its ties to the economy. Next, I will provide a brief account of the history of women's human rights. Finally, I will discuss the ICT-based global restructuring of work and labour from the point of view of women's human rights and offer some conclusions.

### The Concept of the Information Society and the Economy

The academic concept of the "Information Society" or the "Information Age" originated with reference to qualities of northern nations that have been understood as post-industrial and hence as heralding a new epoch. For instance, as early as 1962, Fritz Machlup drew attention to the growing role which the knowledge sector was playing for the US economy and its gross national product (Machlup, 1962). Thus the concept of the Information Society has been closely tied to changes within the economic sphere of the global North. Central to its vicissitudes over the roughly 50 years of its existence have been the developments in its core field of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Initial work on the Information Society referenced mainframe computers, which were employed by the military, by governmental administrations and by businesses. It often addressed issues of organizational development and steering, from the changing nature of work to the shifting nature of nations. This preoccupation with cybernetics<sup>1</sup> waned with the introduction and comparatively rapid spread of personal computers since the early 1980s and their increasingly networked modes of application since the 1990s as well as with the rise of mobile telephony. By now, academic work on the "Information Society" ranges across the whole spectrum of the social sciences and humanities and every conceivable

aspect of human life, at times very much deemphasising economic aspects (Lyon, 1988, Alistair, 2000, May, 2002, Webster, 2002, Pekari, 2005).

The political concept of the "Information Society," on the other hand, has remained squarely tied to economic considerations. In national and regional strategy papers, it is often evoked as a goal that will bestow a competitive edge, as when the European Commission in 2000 decided that the European Union should become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world".<sup>2</sup> The dark underside of this picture, and its human rights dimension, come into focus when the deeply uneven spread, benefit and potential future development of ICTs around the globe is considered more systematically. The term "digital divide" was coined to draw attention to the fact that a strong demarcation line has so far separated a worldwide elite, currently involved in shaping ICTs and benefiting from them, from the majority of the world's inhabitants, who have been so far excluded from these privileges. Further examination of this divide has shown that it has been in a large part based on previous forms of systematic social stratification and human rights violations these imply, both within societies (Cherny, Wi-ese, 1996, Nakamura, 2002) and among countries and world regions (Mattelart, 2003, Castells, 2004, Loader, 1998, James, 1999, Wilson, 2004). Thus those benefiting most from ICTs and the changes they have induced, have started out in positions of privilege to begin with, while those that have been further marginalized by them were as a rule discriminated against previously.

A crucial question that arises in this context is whether the striving for an Information Society of necessity is a zero-sum game, where gains for some constituencies inevitably mean losses for another. To be sure, global political events such as the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in 2003 and 2005<sup>3</sup> portray the Information Society as a win-win goal, towards which everyone will follow the same path and thereby benefit. But the path to the Information Society, laid out by the dominant north, is circumscribed by the prevailing macroeconomic policy paradigm of neoliberalism inaugurated by the Washington Consensus of the 1980s. Neoliberalism is based on the belief that a free market is vital to create opportunities for all, healthy competition and thus a dynamic development characterized by growth and prosperity for all.

<sup>1</sup> The term was coined by Norbert Wiener in his book *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (New York: Wiley, 1949).

<sup>2</sup> European Commission. E-Europe 2002. Brussels: Information Society DG. *Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*. UNRISD, Paříž.

<sup>3</sup> See the official WSIS web site hosted by the International Telecommunication Union at <http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>.

It calls for the deregulation of labour and financial markets, export-oriented growth, and privatisation, while regulation and state monopolies are understood as market distortions. Further characteristics are fiscal austerity and significantly diminished social spending.<sup>1</sup>

Neoliberalism has been by now thoroughly criticized by many scholars as having augmented imbalances of economic power and instances of economic plight, from within families and within societies to among nations and world regions. The criticism has been particularly pronounced from feminist quarters, because the position of many women has deteriorated or at least become under neoliberalism more precarious.<sup>2</sup> Given that ICTs can be understood as an enabler of neoliberal globalization, it is not surprising that the gender divide has been diagnosed as “one of the most significant inequalities to be amplified by the digital revolution” (Khan, 2003, pg.5)<sup>3</sup> For this reason, ICT policy has become an important new field of feminist intervention (Hafkin, 2002), the general concern being that the development of ICTs be guided by the international human rights consensus in order to further protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights instead of promoting their further violation.<sup>4</sup>

Yet there are also those who get increasingly cynical about human rights and see them as not much more than a lie. Thus Arundhati Roy, in her 2004 Sydney Peace Prize lecture, said that the violation of human rights constitutes an integral aspect of the global neoliberal political and economic restructuring currently underway, and that the discourse about human rights is only a deceptive side, show that blurs this relationship and gives those discriminated against something imaginary to hold on to. While I sympathize with Roy’s frustration about ongoing human rights violations, I see the human rights consensus as a valuable tool to criticize the current developments. Also, I would argue that women’s human rights conventions and normative texts in particular contain many valuable insights into the causes, manifestations and consequences of discrimination faced by women and girls, and that these insights can be employed fruitfully to discuss women’s human rights issues with respect to the Information Society.

Argued slightly differently, I would claim that many of the decisive challenges to women’s human rights that arise with respect to the Information Society are not new but continue long-standing patterns of discrimination. Research shows that in the absence of corrective policy measures, ICTs intensify these previous forms of discrimination. They do so in particular at nodes where various forms of arbitrary social stratification intersect, which means that those girls and women are affected most negatively who are not only disadvantaged in terms of gender, but also with regard to race, class and other salient features. Before turning to examine

the challenges posed by Information Society developments to women’s rights in the sphere of work and labour, I will briefly explain the genesis of women’s human rights.

## Women’s Human Rights

With the United Nations Charter of 1945<sup>5</sup> setting the precedent, all central human rights conventions have stipulated the principle of equality between women and men and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex.<sup>6</sup> So why has there been a need for specific human rights conventions for women? The answer lies in the way in which the mainstream conventions have been interpreted: Human rights violations for a long time were understood according to traditional liberal thought as being committed by state agents in the public sphere against politically active men. Violations of women’s human rights have not come into focus in this view, but have been written off as private matters or as cultural or religious traditions. Only when the lived realities of girls and women were taken as the starting point for exploring how and by whom girls and women have been hindered from enjoying their fundamental rights and freedoms did human rights violations against women come into view. Then, reconceptualizations of human rights became necessary, because the general human rights instruments often proved to be insufficient both in terms of thematic scope and application to address these violations.

The first distinct human rights instrument of the UN focusing solely on women’s rights was the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, which entered into force in 1954.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See chapter 2 of United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) (2005): *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*. Paris: UNRISD.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Women’s International Coalition for Economic Justice (2004). *Seeking Accountability on Women’s Human Rights: Women Debate the UN Millennium Development Goals*. Navi Mumbai: Women’s International Coalition for Economic Justice. See also UNRISD, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> See also Sophia Huyer, Nancy Hafkin, Heidi Ertl, and Heather Dryburgh (2005). *From the Digital Divide to Digital Opportunities: Women in the Information Society*. Montréal: Claude-Yves Charron.

<sup>7</sup> See Deborah Hurley (2003). *Pole Star: Human Rights in the Information Society*. Montréal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. Much hope was invested in the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in this respect, but its outcome documents fell short of the expectations of many human rights activists. See section 1 of Heike Jensen and Olga Drossou (eds.) (2005). *Visions in Process II: The World Summit on the Information Society Geneva 2003-Tunis 2005*. Berlin: Heinrich Boell Foundation.

<sup>8</sup> UNX.122(73) C613, preamble and Article 1.3.

<sup>9</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 [A/RES/217 A (III)], preamble and Article 2), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [A/RES/2200 A (XXI), Articles 2(1) and 3, adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [A/RES/2200A (XXI), Articles 2(2) and 3, adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976].

<sup>10</sup> A/RES/640(VII), adopted by the General Assembly in 1952.

As explained by Hazou, it represents „the first worldwide treaty in which a charter principle of equal rights for men and women has been applied to a concrete problem” (Hazou, 1990, pg.133). Many other such instruments followed, which were either adopted by the UN General Assembly or its specialized agencies.<sup>1</sup> In 1981, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) entered into force.<sup>2</sup> It is still the most comprehensive convention concerning women to date; and more than 90 percent of the states of the world are now parties to it.<sup>3</sup> CEDAW tackles a wide range of issues that are of particular relevance with respect to women’s and girls’ human rights, and it understands human rights as indivisible, interdependent and integral parts of any space and all spheres of society, from the most private to the most public one. According to CEDAW, human rights violations are all forms of intentional or unintentional discrimination that prevent women’s equality with men – with men’s status understood as an abstract, privileged standard. Governments that are parties to CEDAW have broad responsibilities: They must refrain from committing human rights violations themselves. They have to protect women’s and girls’ human rights against violations perpetrated by any other factors. They have to address or punish violations in a systematic manner. And they have to promote and bring about equality between women and men.

In the wake of CEDAW, it was particularly series of UN world conferences during the 1990s that further promoted and fleshed out women’s human rights issues. Summit declarations, in distinction from conventions such as CEDAW, do not have the force of law. Yet they still represent a strong global normative consensus and may have a direct impact on how existing conventions are interpreted and refocused in the light of new developments. Experience also shows that summit declarations may exert a considerable influence on future conventions. The most important contribution to the articulation of women’s rights was made at the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, where violence against women was denounced as a human rights violation, and from where the rallying cry “Women’s rights are human rights” went around the world.<sup>4</sup> The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [BPfA]<sup>5</sup> formulated at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, builds on this and constitutes another comprehensive touchstone for women’s human rights.

In the next section, I will discuss some of the opportunities and challenges encountered by women with respect to the ICT-based global restructuring of work and labour, and I will do so in reference to women’s human rights concerns as laid out in CEDAW and the BPfA. The sample of relevant women’s human rights provisions that I will cite in the text is by no means meant to

be exhaustive, but it is to illustrate the long-standing identification of these issues.

## **Women and the ICT-based Global Restructuring of Work and Labour**

In virtually all societies in which women and men are gainfully employed, women as a gender group until this day earn for comparable work less money than men do. Also, women are less likely to be found in the top decision-making and money-making positions. In addition, a substantial amount of jobs is still gender-coded, so that either men or women predominate in occupations and entire industries, with women’s domains again being devalued economically (Anker, Melkas, Korten, 2003). These human rights violations against women with respect to job opportunities, career development and level of income have been duly noted in CEDAW Articles 11, 13(b), 16(g) and the BPfA Critical Area of Concern 6. With respect to the recent developments introduced by ICTs, it is vital to realize that a pervasive gender stereotyping has led to a seamless extension of these patterns to the new jobs and industries that have emerged.

The abolition of stereotyped roles and gender hierarchies is called for in CEDAW’s Article 5(a), and one might presume that old, traditional stereotypes create the problem. However, what can be gleaned from recent developments is that stereotyping tends to constitute a quite dynamic practice that constantly shifts the ground in explaining what women and men can or should do in societies on account of their differing “natures”.

<sup>11</sup> Three additional types of conventions are also important in this context. The first type are conventions that focus on the rights of specific groups of women, such as the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women [A/RES/1040 (XII)], adopted by the General Assembly in 1957 and entered into force in 1958. The second type are conventions that address issues of equality between the genders, such as the Convention Concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value [C100], adopted by ILO in 1951 and entered into force in 1953. The third type are other problem-oriented conventions that contain specific references to women’s or girls’ status, such as the Convention against Discrimination in Education, adopted by UNESCO in 1960 and entered into force in 1962.

<sup>12</sup> A/RES/2263(XXII), adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. In the year 2000, CEDAW was strengthened by an Optional Protocol [A/RES/A/54/4, adopted by the General Assembly in 1999].

<sup>13</sup> See [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm). Among the less than 10 percent of countries of the world that are not parties to CEDAW, the USA is the only OECD country left.

<sup>14</sup> See International Women’s Tribune Centre (1998). *Rights of Women: A Guide to the Most Important United Nations Treaties on Women’s Human Rights*. New York: International Women’s Tribune Centre. P. 20. According to Jutta Joachim, it was Charlotte Bunch who laid the conceptual groundwork for this kind of women’s rights frame in her article “Women’s Rights as Human Rights.” For the broader political context, see Jutta Joachim (1999). “Shaping the Human Rights Agenda: The Case of Violence against Women.” *Gender Politics in Global Governance*. Ed. Mary K. Meyer and Elisabeth Prüg. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield. 142-160.

<sup>15</sup> A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1 [96.IV.13].



Thus new types of ICT jobs may for instance be differentiated as „technological“ and therefore male or „administrative“ and therefore female. At the same time, the history of the development of ICTs contains key women in technology<sup>16</sup> and hence contradicts this picture, so that these women need to be written out of history and forgotten to establish the whole field as a male and technological one. Similarly, in regions such as CEE/CIS, women’s substantial involvement in the sphere of science and technology during communist times would need to be quickly unlearned to arrive at the more recent gender stereotypes.<sup>17</sup>

Gender stereotyping, it is important to realize, is a practice that under the current globalization dynamics has become so central that it shapes not only the division of work within each society, but also the worldwide division of labor. This worldwide division in its turn rests on the split-second coordination of processes of production, distribution and servicing enabled by ICTs. The possibility of this coordination has led to an outsourcing of components in the production and service chain from the global north to the global south, of which the Free Trade Zones of developing countries have become a symbolic and material new site, for instance in Jamaica or Barbados (Primo, 2003). Outsourcing and split-second coordination have enabled the global work context to respond more flexibly to fluctuations in supply and demand. For workers and companies deep down in the production and servicing chains created by transnational corporations, however, flexibility translates into precariousness: Jobs and orders may be there one minute and gone the next. This raises the issue of social safety nets, which are seen under neoliberalism as private concerns rather than public issues.

It is under these general conditions of rising flexibility and precariousness that women have entered the paid work force in larger and larger numbers.<sup>18</sup> Gainful employment gives women new opportunities to become more autonomous, and this is even true for the jobs in Free Trade Zones, which women have accepted for various economic and personal reasons. Yet if states and regions advertise their cheap female labor force, as happens in Free Trade Zones, they flaunt the fact that they do not protect women’s rights in the job market. Depending on the employment circumstances, discrimination may go well beyond wages and violate women’s right to social security (CEDAW Article 11(e)) and core labor standards stipulated by the International Labour Organization, such as workers’ rights to organize and bargain collectively. Other human rights violations such as sexual harassment might be added. In general, women’s employment is often seen as secondary to their “real” duties as homemakers, wives and mothers. This kind of reasoning is often employed when workers lose their jobs and women are let

go disproportionately, and it is similarly employed when employers do not want to invest in training their female employees.

With respect to developing countries in particular, it could be argued that in declaring and exploiting women’s labor as cheap and unskilled, these countries also sign away important possibilities to build a skilled work force as a prerequisite for better developmental routes opened up by better pay and taxes, which in turn could lead to stronger local business, research and development.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the rationale for women’s job ghettos is that these jobs do not require any skills but are just in female “nature”. Jobs like these have generally been characterized by low-pay, low appraisal, repetitiveness of duties and limited career opportunities. Hence, women have for instance been restricted to assembly line and low-grade technical occupations in the production of electronics and computer hardware, and they have also dominated the global service sector of computer-aided data processing and telecommunications, which has its centers in the Caribbean and in Asia.<sup>20</sup> Only in a few countries, for instance in Brazil, India and Malaysia, women have been promoted as skilled workers such as software programmers or computer analysts (Primo, 2003).

In the Philippines, India and Malaysia, call centers have had a high percentage of female teleworkers. In Europe, telework in call centers or at home also constitutes a feminized work option, in general characterized by single-task, repetitive duties, while male telework from home is usually seen as more varied, considered more prestigious and paid better.<sup>21</sup> While women gain the new job opportunities described, other feminized job sectors are diminishing due to an increased application of ICTs, so that women for instance lose their employment as bank tellers and telephone operators (Primo, 2003). When formal and informal employment structures are compared, it becomes obvious that women are underrepresented in the former

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, the special issue on Women in the Field of Computing of the IEEE Annals of the History of Computing edited by Betty Campbell (18.3, Fall 1996).

<sup>17</sup> That this is happening can for instance be inferred from the current strong gender imbalance in ICT-related tertiary level education, with enrolment levels of women at 13 percent. This figure from the eEurope+ 2001-2003 Final Project Report 2004, p. 23, is cited in: Bridging the Gender Digital Divide: A Report on Gender and ICT in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States published by UNIFEM and UNDP in 2004. P. xii.

<sup>18</sup> UNRISD, p. 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> See Ruth Pearson (1993). “Gender and New Technology in the Caribbean: New Work for Women?” Women and Change in the Caribbean. Ed. Janet Momsen. London. 287-296.

<sup>20</sup> See the following: Carla Freeman (2000). High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy: Women, Work, and Pink-Collar Identities in the Caribbean. Durham, London. Cecilia Ng and Anne Munro-Kua. (eds.) (1994). Keying into the Future: The Impact of Computerization on Office Workers. Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>21</sup> See Elizabeth Prügl (1999). The Global Construction of Gender: Home Based Work in the Political Economy of the 20th Century. New York 1999.

and overrepresented in the latter (Chen, Vanek, Carr, 2004).

If we now move from employment to business ownership and self-employment, we find growth patterns as in the case of employment, but we also find similar patterns of discrimination against women. To begin with, the world's wealth is largely in male hands, which makes it more difficult for women to start enterprises from their own resources than for men. In many parts of the world, women are still handicapped in their business autonomy and ability to own and inherit property (CEDAW Articles 15(2), 16(h), BPfA Critical Areas of Concern 1, 7). In the CEE/CIS region, a strong gender bias in a process of privatization after the communist era led to a decisive gap between entrepreneurial activities of women and men (Ruminska-Zimny, 2004). Therefore, due to different trajectories, women are in a much weaker position to start an enterprise and to obtain business loans for lack of collateral (CEDAW Article 13 (b) and BPfA A.3). Gender stereotypes play an important role in this context as well, because the belief in women's businesses is likely to be not as strong as the belief in men's business success, particularly when larger business ideas are at stake. Larger business ideas are often those integrating more than basic ICT components, so that there can be direct correlations between discouraging women from complex business schemes and discouraging them from ICT-intensive business schemes. At stake are for instance the abilities to improve business operations, to gain access to information, networks and markets, and to lower expenses of economic transactions with the help of ICTs (Ruminska-Zimny, 2004).

The new economy of the global north as the epitome of the ICT industry has become clearly symbolized as masculine: Most visibly, it is crowned by the mythical male figure of the software developer-genius, often self-taught, who either builds an "evil" empire or is a hero of free and open source software.<sup>22</sup> People like Bill Gates and Richard Stallman personify these figures respectively. The new economy has furthermore spurred a corporate culture of long work hours and total commitment that is next to incompatible with family and child-rearing responsibilities. These characteristics limit inclinations and possibilities of many women to work in the new economy, given the multiple burdens many of them have to shoulder (CEDAW Articles 5 and 11).

In fact, we are currently witnessing an increase in women's multiple burdens of gainful employment and unpaid domestic and care work. These multiple burdens grow because governments worldwide follow the neoliberal doctrine and cut social spending; and girls and women take up the largest share of the resulting increase in unpaid work. UNICEF has acknowledged

this dynamic as "invisible adjustment,"<sup>23</sup> and it violates the human rights principle of equality between the genders. It leaves women and girls less time for personal development, education (CEDAW Article 10) and career development (CEDAW Article 11) as well as for participation in the cultural life (CEDAW Article 13 (c)) and the political development of their communities (CEDAW Articles 7 and 8). Women may also respond to these days of impasse by allocating less time for gainful employment and more time for unpaid domestic work, so that women often constitute the majority of part-time workers in a work force. The question of whether women actually prefer part-time employment is misleading in those contexts in which a true alternative is absent and in which women choose part-time work even though it renders them very vulnerable to immediate poverty or poverty in old age.

In part due to lack of opportunities for wage labour, women may decide to become self-employed. The group of self-employed women comprises a large number of women who can barely make a living, including rural women, home-based entrepreneurs and women who are self-employed in the informal sector. Recently, poor women have been "discovered" by institutions such as the World Bank as quite reliable recipients of micro-credit for small self-employment schemes, including ICT-based endeavours such as village phone owners and operators (Dalgić, 2007). It needs to be seen whether this route will indeed lead a substantial number of women out of poverty. So far, it rather appears that poverty in general and women's poverty in particular is increasing everywhere. This "feminization of poverty" has been observed for quite some time, and it already constituted the first Critical Area of Concern addressed in the BPfA of 1995. It has been estimated that more than 70 percent of the world's poor are women. With respect to the issue of micro-credit for poor women, we may be faced a situation that appears typical for many special measures directed at girls and women: These measures may be successful at the level of the individual, but there will be no structural progress as long as the larger developments exacerbate the root problem instead of diminishing it in tandem with the special measures.

<sup>22</sup> See Karen Coyle. (1996). "How Hard Can It Be?" wired\_women: Gender and New Realities in Cyberspace. Ed. Lynn Cherny and Elizabeth Reba Weise. Seattle: Seal. 42-55. It is worthwhile to stress that this gender symbolism has sprung up in a field in which a central impediment that often disqualifies women for careers does not matter: the lack of formal education. IT specialists have often been self-taught, but the gender stereotypes relating to technology have had the effect of creating a virtual male homosocial sphere rather than equal opportunities for men and women for pursuing this field of expertise.

<sup>23</sup> See United Nations Children's Fund (1987). *The Invisible Adjustment*. Santiago de Chile: UNICEF.

This leads us back to the problem of the neoliberal, ICT-enabled restructuring that is currently underway, and of meagre chances of women to direct this development. For one thing, women have only made small inroads into the established centers of economic and political power. On the governmental plane, women's rights to hold public office (CEDAW Article 7(b)) and to represent their Governments at the international level (CEDAW Article 8) on equal terms with men are still severely curtailed (see also). While more women have gained parliamentary seats, the "irony" – as UNRISD calls it – is that "advances in women's access to decision-making bodies have coincided with a diminished opportunity for parliaments in particular to influence macroeconomic policy" (2005: 47). International financial institutions play an increasing role ever in this respect, and women have yet to establish a strong presence at the top decision-making levels there.

## Conclusion

The rise and uneven spread of ICTs across the globe has had profound effects on the kinds of gainful employment and self-employment that exist, as well as on how these kinds of employment are distributed globally. This development has been framed politically as the path to the Information Society, and this path has been circumscribed by neoliberal macroeconomic dictates and policies. The rule of the "free" market, the flexibility and precariousness of employment, and the cuts in social spending that these dictates and policies imply have proved to be hardly compatible with the systematic protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights in general and women's human rights in particular. In fact, using women's human rights documents as a lens, it is easy to see how neoliberal developments have exacerbated many of the previously existing human rights violations, including women's multiple burdens of paid and unpaid work, the gender segregation of the labour market and the attendant devaluation of women's work, and the difficulties women face when deciding to become self-employed and the small scale of business they are often relegated to.

This "big" picture suggests that many of the current special measures for girls and women are like drops in an ocean because they are systematically countered by the larger macroeconomic framework which they are situated in. In addition, the current zero-sum race towards the Information Society may well imply that some local gains for women in one region might involuntarily translate into losses for women in another region. What is hence needed is a comprehensive, globally sensitive approach to the failings of the macroeconomic framework from

the point of view of women's lives and human rights. Just like human rights were engendered and have come to encompass women's human rights by starting from the lived realities of girls and women, so now macroeconomic policy needs to be engendered from the same perspective, i.e. women's lives under the widely varying conditions that currently exist. From this perspective, the questions of how ICTs should develop, what they can best be used for and how they can possibly contribute to information and communication societies will find answers that are literally worlds apart from the currently hegemonic blueprint.

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## About Gender Studies

**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.

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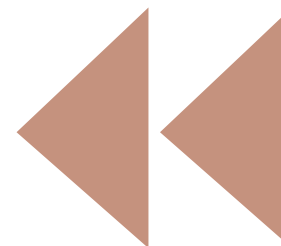
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