

Response by the Czech Republic

Contact point:

The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic
Department of Gender Equality

Information relating to the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on violence against women

Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment (A/RES/73/148)

Measures to address sexual harassment against women and girls, as per resolution 73/148:

- In 2019, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic issued a “Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Public Administration” handbook, which aims to help authorities prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and increase their capacity to deal sensitively and effectively with sexual harassment when it occurs. The handbook was distributed to ministries and other state administration bodies. Following its publication training for state secretaries and the management of personnel departments on the topic of sexual harassment prevention in the workplace took place. The training was prepared in cooperation with the Office of the Public Defender of Rights and the Section of the Ministry of the Interior for the Civil Service. Further similar trainings for heads of state administration bodies working meetings for state secretaries and the management of personnel departments on the topic of sexual harassment prevention (following the published handbook for authorities) are planned in the following period.
- In 2019, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic also started preparations of the Strategy for the Equality of Men and Women for the years 2021 – 2030 which includes among others the strategic area of violence against women. This strategic area will also address sexual harassment against women and girls.

Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to violence against women and girls and measures undertaken to address those:

- Czech Republic has taken several measures in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus, including the quarantine and the obligation to stay at home with exception of travelling to/of work, shopping of basic items and short health walks. All public gatherings were prohibited. Many employees are also working from home. The lockdown of victims with perpetrators of violence in common households *increase the risk of violence in intimate relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic.*
- Ministry of the Interior has not registered any major increase in rates of evicted persons from common household (police can evict violent person from the household for 10 days) so far. Police of the Czech Republic has issued an instruction, in which it recommends police officers to expel the perpetrator with an ordered quarantine or isolation from the household in cases of immediate danger to the health and life of the victim.

- The system for combating domestic and gender based violence is available during the coronavirus measures: nonstop telephone hotline for the victims of crimes and domestic violence, 26 centres for victims of domestic violence (includes counselling, specialised support, advice and advocacy regarding legal options, housing and employment) and 3 specialised shelters for women – victims of domestic of violence. Many of the women’s counselling services for the victims of domestic violence started online counselling as a possibility to get help if the endangered person can’t come or call during the quarantine. For example organisation Rosa which provides counselling for the victims of domestic and gender-based violence has registered doubled increase in calls and almost threefold increase in the absolute length of calls during the corona period.
- The Government has launched a campaign to tackle the complicated situation of victims of domestic and gender-based violence during the crisis. Information materials alerting the victims to available support services have been distributed via the government’s social media and the communication channels of selected stakeholders and organisations. Institutions, organisations and companies are also to be approached with the request to put up leaflets containing relevant information within their premises. The Office of the Government also spreads information about the application called Bright Sky, which can help victims evaluate their situation, offer advice, store evidence about the occurrence of the violence, and interconnect the victims with relevant organisations or police.
- The Committee for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, an advisory committee to the Government Council for Equality of Women and Men, has issued a set of recommendations to the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, and Prosecutor General’s Office. The recommendations were concerned with the monitoring and evaluating of statistical data, issuing methodological recommendations to the Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children which would set the duty to regularly contact victims of domestic violence in families where children are at risk, maintaining confidentiality about the addresses of asylum housing, informing the wider public about organisations which offer help to the victims and perpetrators, and ensuring prompt testing of victims and their children who decide seek admittance to the asylum housing where tests on SARS-CoV-2 are required.
- The Prosecutor General’s Office published information on the prosecution of cases of domestic and gender-based violence during the state of emergency. According to the Prosecutor General’s Office, the declaration of the state of emergency due to the COVID-19 crisis justifies the application of aggravating circumstances under Section 42, letter j) of the Act No. 40/2009 Coll., Penal Code: “The Court may consider following circumstances as aggravating, particularly when the offender committed the criminal offence during an emergency situation, natural disaster or another event seriously threatening life, public order or property, or at the territory where evacuation is in progress or has been carried out.”
- The help to the victims of domestic and gender-based violence will also be provided by the Czech Post, as its personnel are among the few people who may be in contact with the victims due to the lockdown. The mail delivery personnel will be trained in recognising the signs of domestic violence, communicating with the victim and offering help.