

Information relating to the implementation of the General Assembly resolution Women in Development (A/RES/74/235) – Reply by the Czech Republic

General information relating to all issues outlined below:

*The Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030*¹ was adopted by the resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 269 of 8 March 2021. Following up on the *Government Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic for 2014-2020*,² the *Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030* is the Czech Republic's second framework government document for the implementation of gender equality policy.

The Strategy sets 434 concrete measures concerned with promotion of gender equality. Every measure includes a date by which it is to be implemented and information on which state administration bodies are responsible for its implementation. Bodies of central state administration are to report annually on how they implement the measures set by the Strategy to the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

The Strategy is divided into eight chapters: labour and care, decision-making, security (concerned with the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence), health, knowledge (concerned with both education and research), society (concerned with gender stereotypes, the public opinion on gender equality, and the media), foreign affairs, and institutions (concerned with capacity-building and institutional framework). Intersectional perspective is a cross-cutting principle of the Strategy.

Concrete examples of measures taken at the national level with regard to the issues outlined below, highlighting results achieved, lessons learned and opportunities for up-scaling and replication, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- *Strengthening and implementing gender-responsive poverty eradication strategies, including social protection systems, to help ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls, especially in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (paragraph 10)*
- *Increasing investments in and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes for full and productive employment and decent work for all women, including their participation in and access to labour markets, and addressing women's disproportionate job losses during the COVID-19 crisis (paragraphs 31 and 32)*

In March 2020, the Czech government adopted the Targeted Programme for Employment Support,³ which aims to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on employment in the Czech Republic. The Programme has sets rules for the partial compensation of the employers' expenses which were allocated on the employees' wages for the duration of obstacles to work arising from the quarantine and extraordinary measures adopted due to the COVID-19 crisis. By adopting the Programme and partially compensating the employers' wage expenses, the government has mitigated the rise of unemployment due to the crisis and provided another incentive to the employers to keep their staff.

¹ <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/gcfe/Gender-Equality-Strategy-2021-2030.pdf>

² https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Projekt_Optimalizace/Government_Strategy_for-Gender_Equality_2014_2020.pdf

³ https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/antivirus-programme-employment-support-czech-republic-against-covid-19_en

In April 2020, the Czech Parliament adopted a financial help scheme for self-employed persons.⁴ The help, which was set to a fixed amount of 25,000 CZK, was intended for those whose businesses were affected by the COVID-19 crisis and is available upon presenting a statutory declaration. Due to the scheme, losses in certain female-dominated sectors and jobs, such as hairdressing and cosmetics, were partly offset.

In the Czech Republic, women constitute the majority of the employees in healthcare; according to the data collected by the Czech Statistical Office, as of 2020, 79 % of those working in the sector are women.⁵ Women dominate among nurses and midwives (98 % in 2020) but are also a majority among doctors (54 % in 2020). Several hospitals have offered bonuses to front-line workers since March 2020 when the first wave of the pandemic hit the Czech Republic. For example, the Motol University Hospital in Prague paid out a bonus of 4,000 CZK (approximately 170 USD) per eight-hour shift to doctors and nurses who worked in the ward where COVID-19 patients were being treated. In March 2021, the government approved bonuses for healthcare employees. Up to 75,000 CZK (approximately 3,150 USD) was given as an extraordinary bonus to doctors and other medical staff in facilities providing inpatient care for patients with COVID-19.

Gender impact assessment must be undertaken in all materials concerning natural persons that are presented to the government.⁶ In 2018, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic carried out a pilot analysis on whether the gender impact assessment tool (i.e., the Methodology on Gender Impact Assessment for the Materials Presented to the Government) is sufficiently utilised by the ministries.⁷ The analysis, which was presented to the government, revealed significant gaps, as 40 % of materials did not include gender impact assessment despite having an impact on women and men. To counter these gaps, the Office of the Government launched a series of practical training seminars on gender impact assessment for state sector employees. On average, three such seminars take place annually. There has been a significant interest in the training seminars.

- *Promoting the transition of women from informal employment to formal employment, including access to decent work, improved wages, social protection and quality childcare (paragraph 11)*

The proportion of children under the age of 3 registered with formal care facilities in the Czech Republic remains low in the Czech Republic. The situation is, however, slowly improving. Throughout the past few years, the Czech Republic worked on expanding the availability of childcare facilities providing care to the youngest children via so-called children's groups. Children's groups are a non-commercial childcare service that was established in 2014 by Act No. 247/2014 Coll., on the provision of childcare services in a children's group and on amendments to related acts. Children's groups were firstly financed from the EU funds; however, the amendment to Act No. 247/2014 Coll., effective from 1 October 2021, has introduced a contribution for the operation of a children's group from the state budget. As of 2022, children's groups provide care for over 16,000 children.⁸

⁴ Act No 159/2020 Coll., on the Compensatory Bonus in relation to the Crisis Measures due to the SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus.

⁵ <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/142141209/3000022102.pdf/abc0339d-1740-42a3-84e0-c77068d108e2?version=1.3>

⁶ https://www.vlada.cz/assets/jednani-vlady/legislativni-pravidla/LEGISLATIVNI-PRAVIDLA-VLADY_platne-od-1-2-2018.pdf

⁷ https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Projekt_OPZ/Vystupy_projektu/Analiza-uplatnovani-Metodiky-GIA.pdf

⁸ <http://evidence.mpsv.cz/eEDS/index.php>

- *Prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women, including in the world of work, including against women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant women and women with disabilities (paragraphs 16, 43, 44, 47)*
- *Promoting and protecting women's labour and human rights in the workplace through targeted measures, including universal minimum wage, social protection and equal pay for work of equal value, reducing occupational segregation and gender pay gaps and ensuring collective bargaining and recruitment, retention and promotion of women (paragraph 28)*
- *Recognizing, reducing and redistributing women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and representing and rewarding women's paid care work, especially given the increases in the unequal burden on women and girls during the COVID-19 period (paragraphs 29, 33 and 44)*

In April 2020, the Czech government approved the increase of the benefit available to a parent who is unable to work due to taking care of a child under the age of 13 whose preschool or school facility is closed. For the period between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2020, the benefit was increased from 60 % of a daily assessment base to 80 % of a daily assessment base. Subsequently, for the period between October 2020 and February 2022, the benefit was set at 70 % of a daily assessment base and was available to those caring for a child under the age of 10 whose preschool or school facility is closed. The daily assessment based is calculated using the applicant's average earnings over the past twelve months.

- *Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, sexual harassment and discrimination against women and girls, including in the world of work, and addressing the increase in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 period (paragraphs 16 and 35)*

Measures taken to address gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic:

In early 2020, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic launched a campaign to raise victims' awareness of available assistance during the pandemic. Information material directing victims to available support services was distributed through government social media and communication channels of organisations providing assistance to victims of domestic and sexual violence and organisations providing therapeutic programmes for violent people. In cooperation with transport companies and private carriers, the Office of the Government also distributed nearly 2,000 leaflets containing relevant information on city and intercity routes. Furthermore, the Office of the Government requested that other institutions (e.g. municipalities, and cities) distribute leaflets on their premises.

Information about the Bright Sky Domestic Violence Victims app was also disseminated. The Bright Sky App allows victims to assess their situation and risks, obtain advice, preserve evidence of violence and connect them with relevant organisations or the police.

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."*

Czech NGO "ROSA" trained mail couriers to recognise signs of domestic violence, communicated with victims and provided information on available help.

Measures taken to address gender-based violence in general:

The Act No. 43/2013 Coll., on victims on crime, was amended in 2021. Due to the amendment, the victims of domestic and sexual violence will have to be automatically assigned the status of particularly vulnerable victims. As a result, law enforcement agencies will be required to approach victims of domestic and sexual violence more sensitively. For example, the law stipulates that the law enforcement must comply with the victim's wish not to meet with the perpetrator. Legal aid provided free of charge will also become more easily accessible for victims.

In December 2021, a new sub-committee for domestic and sexual violence was established under the Constitutional Law Committee of the Chamber of Deputies. It is the first time a specific permanent body specifically aimed at domestic and sexual violence has been established within the Chamber of Deputies.

In March 2020, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic launched a project on capacity building and methodological support in the prevention and domestic and gender-based violence. Among other activities, workshops for primary and secondary school pupils, which focus on prevention of sexual and cyber violence, have also been organised within the project. The workshops focus on the development of soft skills, which are important for the prevention of sexual violence and recognition of sexual violence and new forms of cyber violence. Discussions about the need for consent in sexual conduct and about respect and boundaries are also integral parts of the workshops. The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic cooperates with the Czech NGO Konsent, which has extensive experience in the prevention of sexual violence, on the organisation of the workshops. As of 1 March 2022, 173 workshops, which were attended by 3,390 pupils, were organised. Full-day seminars were also organised for the students of the faculty of education on how to work with young people and speak to them about sexual violence and cyber violence.

The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic and the Office of the Czech Public Defender of Rights published a handbook on the prevention of sexual harassment in the state sector. The handbook was distributed to ministries and offices of state administration. Following the publication of the handbook, training seminars for the management and persons responsible for investigating complaints have been organised.

- *Providing equitable and universal access to affordable and quality health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, for women and girls in order to achieve the realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, particularly in contexts of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 (paragraph 17-19)*

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The Czech health insurance system is based on universal coverage and a basic universal benefit package for all insured individuals. Health insurance works on the basis of solidarity, which means that contributions are not linked to health care received or to health status and it is characterized by equal availability of healthcare for all insured persons⁹. The healthcare system

⁹ Insurance is mandatory (no opt-out). Insured are all permanent residents and employees of companies residing in the country. Given that the health insurance system is universal all employees and self-employed are subject to universal coverage through mandatory wage or revenue-based contributions. Economically inactive persons

strives to create conditions in which there are no differences in the availability of healthcare (regardless of gender, race, religion, health and economic status and others). The range of benefits for individual is very broad and includes inpatient and outpatient care, prescription of pharmaceuticals, rehabilitation, some dental procedures, spa treatments and over the counter pharmaceuticals (if prescribed by a physician).

Life expectancy in the Czech Republic has steadily improved over the last 10 years and in 2020 it was two years below the EU average. As in other European countries, life expectancy is gender unbalanced, reaching (in 2020) 81.3 years for women and 75.3 for men¹⁰. However, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily set the country back to 2013 levels – it had a larger impact than in many other EU countries. Reducing the effects of health inequalities is one of the five specific objectives of the *Strategic Framework for the Development of Health Care in the Czech Republic until 2030* (so called "Health 2030"). In line with international practice, this new strategy takes into account the new concept of health care quality, the core of which is the concept of patient-centred health care. Health 2030 set four strategic goals for health inequalities:

1. *Reducing inequalities between women and men in access to health and healthcare - especially focused on strengthening health literacy and prevention (oncology screening programs);*
2. *Increasing the capacity to provide gender-sensitive health and social services;*
3. *Improving the working conditions of people working in health care;*
4. *Increasing mothers' satisfaction with care during pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium.*

Regarding the provision of care during the COVID-19 pandemic, women/girls were provided with the same health care as other population groups during the pandemic. The gender perspective played no role, but there was age stratification, and some differences were applied in the case of applied government measures, given that young people tend to have a better course of the disease. The Czech Republic, like other countries, divided the population into various risk groups, which were related to the priority in providing vaccinations at a time when there was a shortage of vaccines (primarily spring and partly summer 2021). The government has focused on active outreach to senior populations and other hard-to-reach groups to accelerate coverage among more vulnerable sections of the population. Subsequently, the Government rapidly opened up the vaccine registration to the wider population, including young people. It is currently possible to vaccinate children from the age of 5 and, in the case of the third (booster) dose, from the age of 12. The government has also paid attention to the mental health of young people. There have been several measures that increase mental health support, including a significant increase in funding for child/young outpatient psychiatry.

Furthermore, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic has worked closely with the Working Group on Obstetrics and Midwifery on ensuring more freedom of choice concerning the method, circumstances, and place of birth, and establishing the first midwifery unit in the Czech Republic.¹¹ After the recommendation drafted by the Working Group was adopted by the Government Council for Gender Equality in 2018, the Office of the Government organised a follow-up meeting with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health, and members of the Government Council on Gender Equality on the topic of the obstetrics and midwifery. The first

(children, students, persons on parental leave, pensioners, unemployed, prisoners and asylum seekers) are covered by state contributions.

¹⁰ OECD Health Statistics

¹¹ The Working Group on Obstetrics and Midwifery is a working group of the Government Council for Gender Equality, which itself is the advisory body to the government on gender equality issues.

alongside midwifery unit was subsequently established at the Bulovka Hospital in 2019. While the alongside midwifery unit does not fully meet the criteria of a midwifery unit, where midwives could work independently, it has been the most advanced attempt to establish a midwifery unit in the Czech Republic and the first such attempt that was enacted in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, following the establishment of the unit, the Ministry of Health started working on a conceptual support for alongside midwifery units.

The Act No. 297/2021 Coll., on one-time compensation for persons sterilised in violation of the law, was passed in July 2021. The compensation is made available to those who were sterilised in violation of the law in medical facilities located in the present-day Czech Republic between 1 July 1966 and 31 March 2012. According to the act, sterilisation in violation of the law means, in particular, exerting pressure, coercion or persuasion so that the person submitted themselves to a fertility-preventing medical procedure, as well as not informing the person intelligibly and sufficiently about their medical condition and about the purpose, nature, expected benefits, potential consequences and risks of the medical procedure and other options for addressing the medical condition. The claimants shall submit their compensation claims within three years after the Act entered into force; otherwise, their claim expires. The compensation amounts to 300,000 CZK (12,500 USD). It is expected that 400 persons, both women and men, may be eligible for the compensation.

- *Promoting and protecting women's and girls' right to education and ensuring their safe and equal access to and participation in education throughout the life cycle and at all levels, given the prolonged suspension of educational activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and redressing the attrition of women and girl students (paragraph 24)*

Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (Education Act), as amended, states that education is based on the principles of equal access of every citizen of the Czech Republic or another Member State of the European Union to education without any means of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, creed and religion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, gender and the state or health of a citizen. Following the amendment of the Education Act, in September 2016 came into the effect Decree No. 27/2016 Coll. on the education of pupils with special educational needs and talented pupils, which facilitates the use of entitlement support measures so that those pupils can achieve their educational potential more effectively. Support measures include pedagogical support, special aids, adjustment of the organization of education, etc.

The Czech Republic has several strategic documents, their main goals aim to ensure equal access to education for all (children, pupils, students, including foreigners). In these documents, i.e. the *Charter of Basic Rights and Freedoms of the Czech Republic* of 1992 (which is part of the constitutional order (Article 3 of the Constitution of Czech Republic of 1992, Article 22/2)), the *Long-term Plan for Education and Development of the Education System of the Czech Republic for the period 2019-2023*, specific measures were taken to ensure the fulfilment of the given goals.

In October 2020 new *Strategy of education policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+* ("*Strategy 2030+*") which focuses fully on sustainable development competences, on elimination of inequalities, in access to quality educations, which supports digital literacy of pupils as well as digital competences of teachers, was adopted.

In the Czech Republic, inclusive education is also supported by means of ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds). The Operational Program Research, Development and Education enables, within its calls, among other things, to implement projects aimed at improving the quality of school counselling services or supporting of schools located in socially excluded areas.

For the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (MEYS), another important area within the inclusive education is the support of socially disadvantaged Roma pupils.

Pre-primary education in Czech Republic is compulsory from the beginning of the school year following the day when the child reaches the age of five, until the beginning of compulsory school attendance at a primary school. Education in a kindergarten established by the state, region, municipality or association of municipalities is provided to the child free of charge from the beginning of the school year following the day when the child reaches the age of five. It is provided free of charge even in the case of granting a postponement of compulsory school attendance.

Primary education at basic schools in Czech Republic is compulsory from the age of six for a period of nine years. Compulsory school attendance in schools established by the state, region, municipality or association of municipalities is provided free of charge.

Higher Education

The Czech Republic supports the inclusion and equity of access to overcome barriers to entry to higher education for non-traditional learners and disadvantaged groups. The Ministry's policy goal is to concentrate on the most practical measures that help the students to make a successful progress through the studies both formally and from the point of content and to reach the necessary goals of their studies, work and/or research. One of the measures in this sphere is financial support for institutions enabling access for specific groups of students. In 2012 it was established the fund which supports counselling services and school infrastructures which have to be guaranteed by the higher education institution to satisfy the needs of specific groups of students. The Ministry laid down Rules for providing support to public universities with a methodology which calculates and provides subsidies to individual universities and is updated each year. The calculation of the subsidy is then governed by the functional aspect of special educational needs of individual students for whom the university requests the subsidy. The decisive factor is therefore not the medical aspect, but the functional principle - special pedagogical. The functional principle is understood as an approach in which the decisive factor is not the medical diagnosis itself, but its practical impact on work and communication procedures, which must be ensured during the study to the students. These procedures are not decided by the student himself, but are the result of a mutual agreement between the student, the service department and possibly other participants (faculty management, teaching staff, etc.).

The main institutions that strive to improve the conditions for the students with specific needs are the support centres that currently operate in the Czech Republic at most universities. Thanks to these centres, more and more students with special needs complete their studies each year.

Act No. 111 Coll., on Higher Education Institutions

- Section 1 Introductory Provision: facilitating access to higher education in compliance with democratic principles; providing appropriate professional qualifications and training for research work and other demanding specialized activities
- Section 21 Other Obligations of Public Higher Education Institutions: A public higher education institution is obliged to make all possible provisions for ensuring equal opportunities for study at the higher education institution;

Strategic Plan for Higher Education Institutions 2021+

- Vision of Higher Education in the Czech environment: Higher education offers equal opportunities for education and is open to all persons, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity

or social and family background. Adequate support is provided to those who face economic, social, cultural, health or other barriers to accessing their studies.

Adult education and alternative learning

In 2007, Act No. 179/2006 Coll., on the verification and recognition of further education results, as amended (Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results), came into effect. This Act makes it possible for individuals to have their acquired competencies recognised by means of professional qualifications examinations that are described in the National System of Qualifications. Recognition may take place regardless of the way in which these competencies have been acquired and regardless of the necessity of prior education. A precondition for sitting a professional qualification examination is the minimum age of 18 years and basic education (not completed primary education). Following a successful professional qualification examination, an individual receives a professional qualification certificate, which has lifelong validity. The certificate proves a certain qualification, this individual has to pursue certain work activities, in certain cases even a profession. By obtaining the certificate the individual increases their chances of finding a job on the labour market.

Furthermore, the National System of Qualifications makes it possible to sit a final or school-leaving examination without the need for prior education in a school institution if a person has obtained a full professional qualification in a given field. In order to obtain a full professional qualification, professional qualification examinations that are the components of a full professional qualification have to be passed first.

Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary professional and other education (the Education Act) does not restrict an adult of any age in any way from having access to obtaining primary and secondary education free of charge.

- *Integrating a gender perspective into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes and providing adequate resources to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all levels of decision-making and implementation in these areas (paragraph 48)*

Women and girls are important partners in climate response with use of local and nature based solutions, as well as in sustainable rural development, including promotion of nutrition and food security. Another important area of development is water and sanitation, with safe sanitary conditions in schools for girls. In all our priority countries for bilateral development cooperation, women are integrated into programming of assistance as well as into its implementation and evaluation.

Furthermore, the Ministry of the Environment's Sustainable Development Unit currently deals with gender issues, assessing the implementation of the SDGs and translating their principles and implementation into national policies. Details on the implementation of SDG 5 and gender equality in the Czech Republic are included in the Second Voluntary National Review of the 2030 Agenda in the Czech Republic.¹²

- *Improving and systematizing the collection, analysis and dissemination of high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable disaggregated data, with a focus on women's employment, informal employment, access to decent work and social protection, entrepreneurship, and unpaid care and domestic work through time-use surveys and satellite accounts to assess the contribution of such work to national income (paragraphs 49 and 50)*

¹² https://www.cr2030.cz/strategie/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/07/VNR_ENG.pdf