

COUNTRY REPORT: CZECH REPUBLIC

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Alena Křížková, Radka Dudová, Martina
Rašticová & Monika Bédiová



Dynamics of Inequality
Across the Lifecourse:
structures and process

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COUNTRY REPORT: CZECH REPUBLIC

*Alena Křížková¹, Radka Dudová, Martina Rašticová and
Monika Bédiová*

Abstract

Policies aimed at extending working lives (EWL) have only been introduced in the Czech Republic over the last 15 years. This report first describes the situation of the 50+ age group in the Czech labour market. In the second part, it maps retirement, employment, pension and other relevant policies in the Czech Republic as well as policy documents supporting active ageing. In conclusion, the authors suggest that the real or potential impact of EWL policies on the situation of women and men aged 50+ should be approached from an intersectional gender and age perspective.

Keywords: Ageing, Czech Republic, Employment, Extending working life, Gender, Pensions, Retirement

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1. Dr. Alena Křížková, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic,
Alena.Krizkova@soc.cas.cz

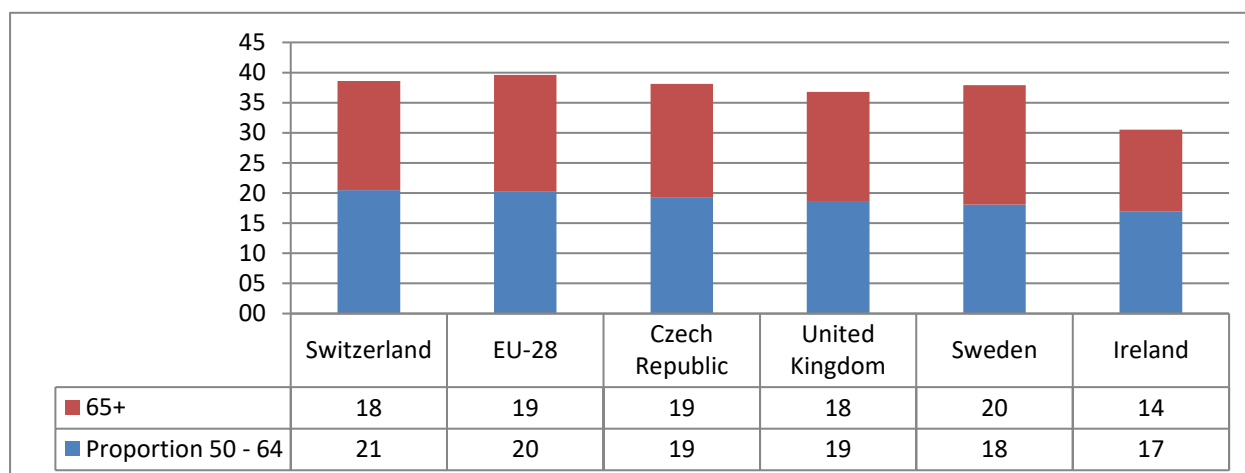
Introduction

Policies aimed at extending working lives (EWL) have only been introduced in the Czech Republic over the last 15 years. This report first describes the situation of the 50+ age group in the Czech labour market. In the second part, it studies retirement, employment, and pension issues (Ní Léime & Loretto, 2017) as a means of analysing EWL policies in the Czech Republic. In conclusion, we question the real or potential impact of EWL policies on the situation of women and men aged 50+ from an intersectional gender and age perspective.

Demographic Context

More than one third of the population of the Czech Republic is aged 50+: 36% of men and 41% of women. One quarter of the population is aged 60+: 23% of men and 29% of women; and 19% of the population is aged 65+. These proportions are lower than the EU-28 average and very similar to Switzerland and Sweden, but higher than the UK and Ireland (see Graph 1).

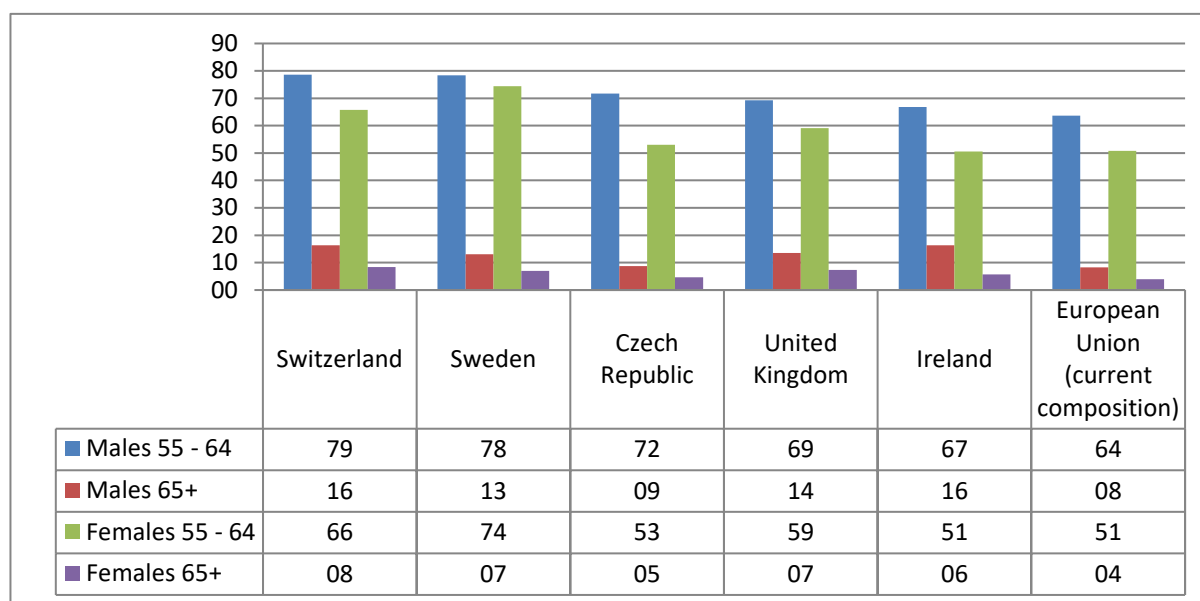
Graph 1 - Proportion of the Czech population aged 50–64 and 65+ years, in 2017



Source: Eurostat Database (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

One third of all employed persons in the Czech Republic are aged 50+. There is significant – 19% - gender gap in employment rates. While the employment rate of men aged 55–64 is 71.7%, the employment of women in the same age group is only 53% (LFS 2017, Eurostat Database). Graph 2 shows that the gender gap in employment in the age group 55–64 is higher in the Czech Republic than in the other DAISIE project countries. It also demonstrates the sharp decline in employment after the age of 65 for both women and men. The employment rate of men aged 65+ is only 8.7%, and for women it is only 4.7%.

Graph 2 - Employment rates by sex, age, and country in 2017



Source: Labour Force Survey, 2017, Eurostat Database (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

According to Labour Force Survey (LFS) data for 2017, out of all unemployed (registered with the Public Employment Office), 29% of men and 33% of women were aged between 51 and 60 years. More than one third (38%) of all unemployed in the Czech Republic is aged 50+. Although the unemployment rate was low in 2017 (2.3%), it was the highest in the 51–60 age group (4%). This group is also more often victim of long-term unemployment (longer than 1 year).

Concerning those who are employed, with age the number of hours worked decreases only slightly. The average number of hours worked a week for 65-year-old men was 35 hours and for women 27 (LFS 2017). With age, the share of self-employed and entrepreneurs with employees increases. At the age of 65, 22% of working men and 29% women were self-employed compared to 15.5% of men and 11% of women aged 40, and 10% of older men are entrepreneurs with employees (LFS 2017).

There is also a higher share of part-time work amongst older than younger cohorts: 26% of men in paid work and 63% of women aged 65 work part-time, compared to 1% of men and 10% of women aged 40 (LFS 2017).

The share of fixed-term contracts is also significantly higher than in middle-age cohorts: 23% of employed men and 36% of women at the age of 65 are on fixed-term contracts, with short-term contracts prevailing, compared to 4% of men and 10% of women aged 40.

These employment characteristics indicate the precarious position of people aged 50+ on the Czech labour market, with women being at greater risk than men of early retirement from economic activity, unemployment, short working hours, and precarious working conditions. These inequalities are partly explained by different educational structures, since 10% of women aged 51–60 and 19% of women aged 61–70 have only primary education levels, compared to 4% and 6% of their male counterparts. However, in the age group 51–60, the share of men

and women with tertiary education is almost the same: 16.5% of men and 15.5% of women (LFS 2017).

The unadjusted gender wage gap in the Czech Republic is 22%, which is among the highest in the EU-28. It is one of the main reasons for the gender pension gap, which currently stands at 18%. There is also a significant gender inequality in wellbeing. According to Eurostat data, 14% of women and 6% of men aged 65+ are at risk of poverty (EU-SILC 2017).

For the assessment of the situation and conditions of women and men aged 50+ in the labour market it is important to consider gendered societal norms related to caring (Ní Léime & Loretto, 2017) as well as family policies and institutions. Strong gender inequalities in the labour market which have long-term negative impacts on employment and the financial situation of women probably result from the following factors:

- up to three years parental leave per child without any motivation (or quota) for fathers to share the parental leave with mothers;
- highly traditional division of work and care in families, where care for children as well as for older dependants is provided mostly by women;
- scarce childcare services, especially for children under three years of age;
- scarce flexible and part-time working arrangements.

The result of these gendered norms and policies are specific life-course gender scripts (Le Feuvre, Kuehni, Rosende, & Schoeni, 2015). In the Czech Republic the gender scripts are traditionally highly differentiated, between a male breadwinner with a continuous, linear employment history and a female secondary breadwinner and carer with interrupted career patterns (Hašková & Klenner, 2010; Hašková & Uhde, 2009).

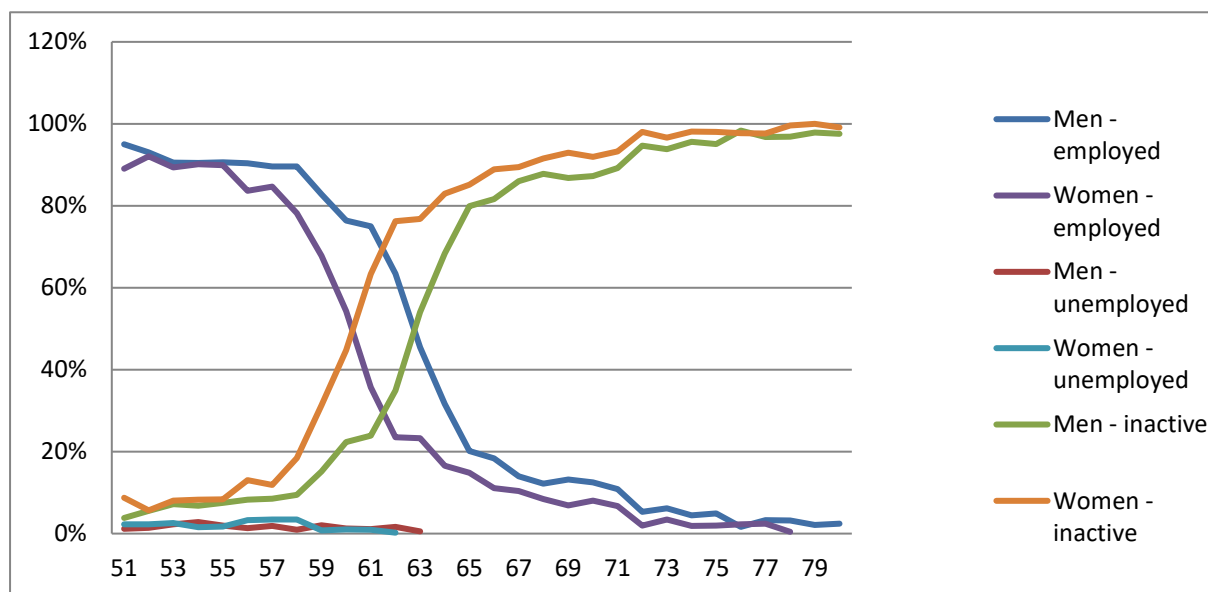
Assessing extended working lives policies

In line with the recommendations made by Áine Ní Léime and Wendy Loretto (2017), we propose to map the existing retirement, employment and pension policies in the Czech Republic, in order to assess their impact and implications for extending working lives.

Retirement

The retirement age of men and women in the Czech Republic is between 57–61 years for women and 60–63 for men (see Graph 3). At the moment, the (average) actual retirement age is almost identical to the age of entitlement to a state pension: 61 years for women and 63 years for men. Thus, the differences between actual and statutory retirement age in the Czech Republic are very small compared to other European countries (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs 2017 Actuarial Report).

Graph 3 - Employment by age



Source: Labour Force Survey 2017, 4th quarter, own calculations.

Most people say that the reason for retiring was reaching state pension eligibility. However, previous research (Rašticová, Krekula et al., 2017) has suggested that there are also other factors influencing early retirement for both men and women: *job satisfaction* (the higher the satisfaction, the lower the likelihood of early retirement), *fear of health limitations* (the higher the fear of health limitations, the more likely early retirement), *physically demanding job* (the more physically demanding a job, the more likelihood of early retirement). Significant factors for older male workers are: *adequate salary* (the more men perceive their salary as adequate, the less likely they are to opt for early retirement) and *time pressure and stress* (the more men feel time pressure and stress in their jobs, the less likely they are to take early retirement). The following factors are relevant for older female workers: *receiving support* (the more support women receive in their jobs, the less likely they are to retire early), *skill development* (the more skill development is provided in their jobs, the less likely women are to take early retirement), *little freedom to decide* (lack of freedom to decide is positively associated with the tendency to retire early on the part of older Czech women) (Rašticová, Krekula et al., 2017).

Currently, the state pension eligibility depends on two conditions: achieving the given age and the number of years of pension contributions. The eligibility age for full state pension for women depends also on the number of children raised (the more children, the lower the minimum eligibility age for state pension). The most recent reform occurred in 2009 when changes were made to the state pension eligibility rules. Since 2010, the required number of compulsory pension contribution years has been increasing by one year every year. In 2019, it will stop at 35 years. The full state pension eligibility has been set by Czech government in 2016 at 65 years of age. The increase is gradual and based on year of birth, and sharper for women than for men in order to equalise gradually their full retirement age. It stops with the cohorts born in 1971 (who will be eligible for state pension at 65 years of age in 2036, under

the condition that they also reach 35 years of pension contribution). For the cohorts born after 1971, the men and women's full retirement age will be equal irrespective of the number of children. Early retirement is possible three years² before eligible retirement, however, with a pecuniary sanction. The differential penalty for early retirement is 6,7 % for a person with average salary retiring one year earlier, 15% for retiring two years earlier and 25% when retiring 3 years earlier (compared to a person working 40 years for an average salary of 29 000 CZK).³

Different statutory retirement ages are still in force for women and men. These will be equalised gradually by 2019 for men and childless women and by 2036 for men and women irrespective of the number of children. The equalisation of the retirement age for women and men may have a positive impact on gender equality. For this reform to work, however, it should be accompanied by measures to prevent age discrimination against older women in the labour market as well as by measures supporting a more equal division of care in families between men and women. In 2016 the employment gender gap in the 55-64 age bracket was 19 percent, which means that, for five employed men, there were four employed women. Moreover, it is very difficult for an unemployed woman at this age to get a job.

Since 2004, it is possible to work past retirement and still receive a pension (until 2004 there was a very low maximum threshold of earnings for pensioners). Up until 2010, the person who wanted to draw the state pension and have earnings from work had to work on a (renewable) fixed term contract of maximum 1 year. This condition was abolished in 2010. Since then the same conditions apply to all workers, including those who receive full state pension. Early retirement can't be combined with paid work (or only up to a very low earnings threshold). Pensions are not taxed, with the exception of very high pensions (higher than 1500€ / 36 600 CZK per month, only the part exceeding this threshold is taxed). The income taxes and benefits follow the same rules as for any other employees or self-employed.

There are also credits for pension deferment or for drawing a half-pension while working, although the take-up rate of these options is currently low. Economic analysis shows that institutional incentives to work in paid employment for seniors at retirement age are not greater than those for persons at productive age. (Šatava, 2015). One example is the active employment policy (see Box 1 below).

Employment

Antidiscrimination legislation in the Czech Republic follows EU Directives on employment and equal treatment, and includes age discrimination. The concepts of active ageing and age management have only quite recently been introduced into the Czech labour market policies (see below). Active employment policy (AEP) measures (see Box 1) focus on assistance to employers in the employment of vulnerable groups of the population, on training allowances, and support for self-employment to individuals in unemployment or who are at risk of

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2. It will be 5 years (but minimum 60 years) for persons whose full retirement age is higher than 63.
 3. This is just an example as the calculation rules are too complex to be explained in detail here. The penalty varies between 6% (for those on the minimum wage) and 7,2% (for those who earn more than twice the average wage) for those who retire one year early, 13,6% and 17,2% for those who retire two years early and 22,8% and 28% for those who retire three years early.

unemployment. The main purpose of the AEP has been to keep the unemployment rate low. Nevertheless, the funds allocated to this AEP measure have been decreasing in favour of passive unemployment benefits. According to Sirovátka (2005, p. 41), the implementation of activation strategies is hampered by a difficult financial situation and the diminished HR management capacities of public institutions. In the Employment Act (since 2004), older workers are regarded as a group of citizens that require special assistance, so the unemployed in the 50-55 age group are entitled to eight months unemployment benefit, while those older than 55 years can claim unemployment benefit for 11 months. The AEP also helps older employees stay in the labour market by making it possible for them to participate in retraining programmes that enable them to change occupation or avoid redundancy.

Box 1 - Active Employment Policy (AEP)⁴

Active employment policy is a collection of measures to ensure maximum employment. The active employment policy (AEP) is pursued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the Public Employment Office (PEO), cooperating with other entities if necessary according to the situation in the labour market. The AEP tools include:

- a) *Qualification training courses* — organised by the PEO regional branches. Eligible re-training costs may be reimbursed.
- b) *Investment incentives* — financial assistance to employers. The government will define an allocation per job created and the sum contributed towards re-training courses according to the situation in the labour market, as indicated amongst other things by the unemployment rate, the group of persons eligible for the new positions created, as well as the exact form of financial assistance.
- c) *Community service* — part-time jobs such as public janitorial services, cleaning and maintaining public buildings and roads, or other such jobs serving the communities, government, or other public institutions, which the employer may offer to job seekers for a maximum of 24 months. These job offers are based on an agreement with the Public Employment Office, from which the employer may get compensation.
- d) *Socially useful jobs* — jobs that the employer, based on an agreement with the Public Employment Office, offers to job seekers that cannot be offered other jobs. The Public Employment Office may provide an allowance of up to a maximum of eight times the average national wage.
- e) *Bridging allowance* — for a self-employed person who is no longer a job seeker and who has been paid an allowance. The bridging allowance serves as compensation for the operational costs incurred and is paid in the period for which the bridging allowance is given. A bridging allowance may be given for a maximum period of five months. The bridging allowance may reach a maximum of the average national wage.

4. Based on Sections 104 - 120 of Act no. 435/2004 Coll. concerning unemployment

- f) *Training allowance* — received by the employer hiring a job seeker from vulnerable groups as defined by the PEO (for his or her health condition, age, childcare duties, or for other reasons). The allowance may be paid for a maximum of three months. The monthly allowance for a person being trained may reach a maximum of half the minimum wage.
- g) *Business plan change allowance* — for an employer who, due to changing their business plan, can no longer offer employees the weekly working hours as agreed. The allowance may be paid for a maximum period of six months. The monthly allowance per employee may reach a maximum of half the minimum wage.
- h) *Consultancy* — provide consultancy services related to searching for a job, training, retraining, choice of career etc.
- i) *Support for the employment of disabled persons, with the exception of allowances under Section 78* — allowance for the creation of a protected job (i.e. a job offered by the employer to a disabled person based on a written agreement with the PEO) may reach a maximum of eight times (for a disabled person) or twelve times (for a heavily disabled person) the average pay in the national economy over the first and third quarters of the previous calendar year. If an employer offers 10 or more protected jobs, the allowance may reach a maximum of 10 times (for a disabled person) or 14 times (for a heavily disabled person) the average pay in the national economy over the first and third quarters of the previous calendar year.
- j) *Targeted programmes to lower the unemployment rate (Section 120)* — a set of measures that enhance the options of persons or groups in finding jobs; the programme includes the setting of conditions of its implementation and a timeframe for its application. Nationwide targeted programmes are approved by the Czech government while communal and regional programmes are subject to approvals by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. As a targeted programme can also be regarded a programme to support the renewal or technical adaptation of property, plant and equipment used to employ disabled persons; within this programme, employers employing more than 50% of disabled persons were given an allowance of up to 70% of the purchase price of the property.

Source: MoLSA, 2012, online: <https://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/zamest/dotace/apz>

Only one collective agreement in the Czech Republic contains specific arrangements related to older workers and the promotion of their health. This agreement covers the textiles sector and guarantees knowledge transfer from experienced and qualified (often older) employees in key professions via the creation of instructor and counsellor positions. It also encourages employers to introduce or extend health promotion and rehabilitation programs to support the health of employees aged 55 and over. These provisions have been included in the collective agreement since 2009 and are binding for employers with at least 20 employees (Broughton et al., 2016).

At the company level there are very few collective agreements related to older workers. Skoda's collective agreement includes six basic provisions concerning the working conditions

of employees who have worked for the company for a continuous period of 30 years. These are aimed at retaining employees and promoting the health of employees, including provision for the transfer of older employees to other suitable positions if, because of a medically certified health condition, the individual loses the ability to carry out their job in the long term (Broughton et al., 2016). In 2013, the nongovernmental platform Business for Society founded an ‘Age Management Thematic Group’, an expert group composed of employers’ representatives from companies such as GE Money Bank and Škoda Auto. The objective of this expert group is to support the introduction of good employment and HR management practices.

Access to flexible work is scarce in the Czech Republic (Formánková & Křížková, 2015; Vohlídalová & Formánková, 2012). Only 6% of the population work part-time. Although only 6% of 50 to 64-year-olds work part-time, this rate increases considerably after 65 years of age: to 28% of 65+ men and 63% of 65+ women.

Since the end of the 1980s, up to three years parental leave is available. The parental leave allowance has been increasing over time, but the replacement rate is still quite low. Until 2004 there was a very low limit for earning while drawing a parental leave allowance, therefore most mothers were caring for their children full-time up to three years without any other form of economic activity. There has never been any quota or specific incentive for fathers to take a share of the parental leave entitlement, although one week of paternity leave was introduced in 2018, to be taken within the first 6 weeks after the birth of a child. Since 1998, fathers are entitled to parental leave and parents can also alternate who stays home. Nevertheless, only one parent can claim care credits for their pension. The division of care for young children between parents will therefore have a long-term impact on future pension benefits. Since 2008, there is increasing flexibility in the length of parental leave as well as the length and level of parental leave allowance. Parents can now draw the total amount of leave entitlement in higher monthly payments and return to paid employment faster. However, this increased flexibility has not been accompanied by a sufficient increase in the availability of childcare services, especially for children under three years of age (Hašková & Uhde, 2009; Křížková, Dudová, Hašková, Maříková, & Uhde, 2008).

The result of these institutional arrangements has been to reproduce the three-year norm of labour market exit for mothers, although there is some variation in this practice by socioeconomic status. Women with higher income, or in wealthier households tend to have more access to expensive childcare services, shorter parental leave, higher parental allowance, and faster return to paid employment. Women with lower earning power, from poorer households suffer from the lack of provision of affordable, publicly-provided childcare services, and tend to take longer parental leave on a lower monthly parental allowance.

There are strong traditionally-gendered societal norms related to caring in the Czech Republic. Women aged 50+ represent the “sandwich generation”. They still care for their dependent children and they might also care for their older relatives. Data from the longitudinal SHARE study indicate that the Czech Republic, along with Poland, has the largest share of long-term care that is provided informally in Europe: 97% of occasional care needs and 78.5% of daily care needs are met by family members or friends (Bettio & Verashchagina, 2012). Family members care for approximately 80% of adults in need of everyday care (Nešporová,

Svobodová, & Vidovičová, 2008). Women account for 80% of primary carers (i.e. the people who see to another person's daily hygiene and feeding needs) for adults with disabilities (Dudová, 2015). Men also provide care, but with less frequency and intensity than women, and their share of caregiving decreases with the increasing level of dependency of care recipients (Dudová & Vohlídalová, 2018).

According to ISSP 2012 data, the burden of care rests mostly on women in the 55–64 age group (Klímová Chaloupková, 2013). This means that when a dependent elderly person in the family has care needs, women in pre-retirement (or early retirement) age groups are usually expected to meet this need. Almost half of the caregivers are economically active, however in cases of more time-consuming everyday care needs, retiring from economic activity is the preferred option. According to a survey among 858 informal carers (caring for 20 hours/week or more) conducted by Fund for Further Education⁵ in 2015 in the Czech Republic, 27% of carers who worked full-time gave up their jobs and another 17% retired with an old-age pension. Only 28% of the carers managed to keep a full-time job while providing care. Those who worked part-time prior to the providing of care managed more often (in 60% of cases) to keep their jobs. However, the options for part-time work were very limited – only 8% of those who had full-time jobs prior to the care needs shifted to working part-time while providing care.

Carers who are not engaged in paid employment can be registered at the employment and social security office, and health and social security protection is paid for them. If registered, these periods of leave are pensionable. The recipients of care are entitled to a care allowance, which they can use to pay their caregivers.

A long-term care leave (*dlouhodobé ošetřovné*) was introduced in 2018. This enables workers to care for a family member for a period of up to three months under similar conditions to sick leave (i.e. receiving 60% of their previous salary).

The Czech Pension System

The pension system consists of a public pension scheme, supplemented by voluntary personal pension saving schemes with a state contribution.

The public pension scheme, or the mandatory basic pension insurance (in the EU terminology labelled as the first pillar of the pension system), is defined by benefits (DB) and funded on a running basis (pay-as-you-go). It is associated with a survivor's (widows / widowers) allowance and an invalidity insurance scheme. The system provides for all economically active individuals. The legal regulation is the same for all the insured persons, there are no industry-specific schemes. Only in the area of organizational and administrative provision there are some variations in the so-called power sectors (e.g. soldiers, policemen, customs officers, firefighters). The pension from the basic pension insurance is drawn by more than 99 % of the population whose age is higher than the statutory retirement age.

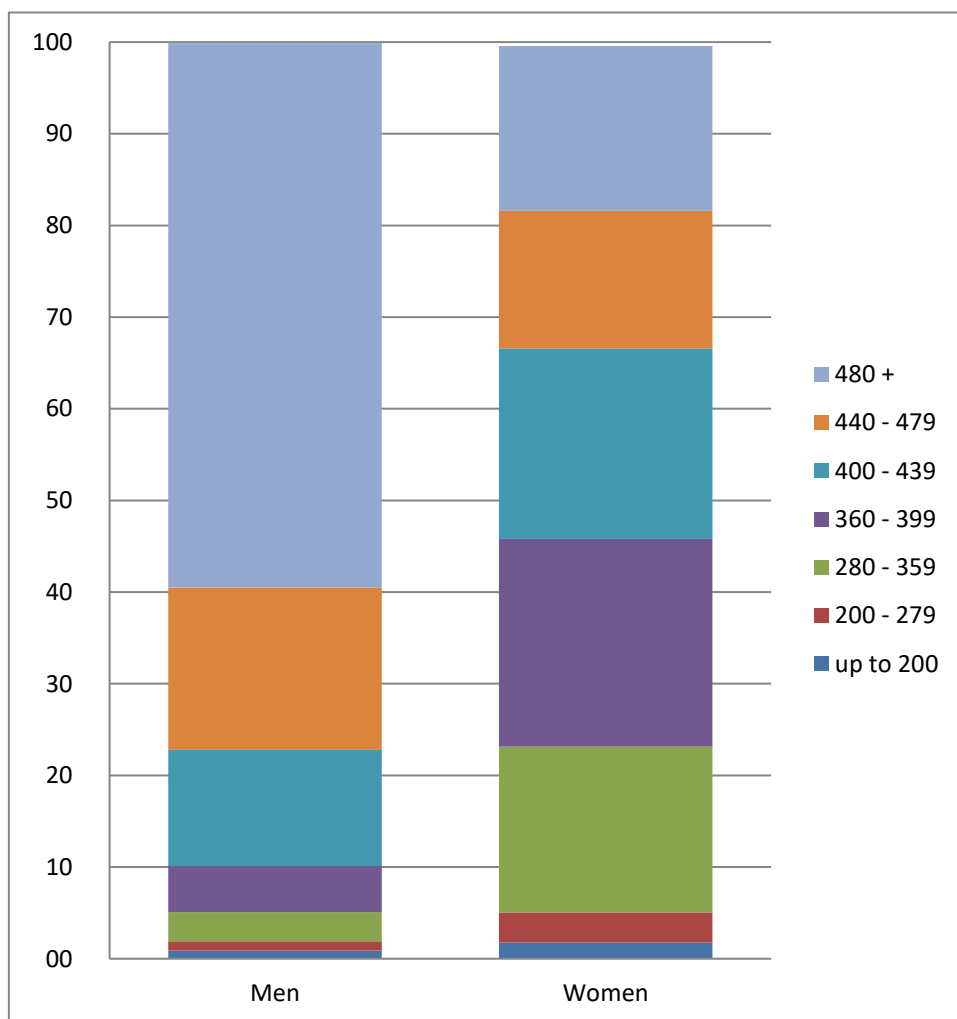
Participation in the basic pension scheme is compulsory for all who have earnings from work (beyond a very low threshold of monthly income). The amount of the pension results from two components: the universal basic assessment and the percentage assessment depending on the years of premium contributions and on life-long earnings. The amount of the basic

5. See <https://koopolis.cz/sekce/knihovna/499-vystupy-projektu-podpora-neformalnich-pecovatelu>.

assessment of the pensions has been set as 9% of average wage (2700 CZK (108 €) /month in 2018). The percentage assessment is 1,5% of the calculation base (based on the average monthly income from work in the period from 1989 till retirement) for each year of the insurance time reached before the entitlement to the pension arose. The amount of pension received thus depends both on the number of years spent in employment and on the salary of the recipient over the whole of his or her working life (since 1986). The system is redistributive, as the income exceeding a given threshold (13 191 CZK /528 €) is included only partly (26%) in the “calculation base”. However the redistributive element has been weakened by the reforms implemented in 2008 and 2011 (see Dudová, 2013).

The average monthly amount of state pension in 2018 was 13 615 CZK (545 €) for men, and 11 219 CZK (449 €) for women. The Czech pension gap (18%) is slightly lower than the gender pay gap of 22%, thanks to the redistributive nature of the public pension system. However only 18% of female pensioners receive more than the national minimum wage (12,000 CZK /48 €), compared to 59% of their male counterparts (see Graph 4).

Graph 4 – Distribution of Czech pensioners by pension benefit levels (Euro equivalent) and by sex, 2015



Source: Křížková, Vohlídalová, Pospíšilová, & Maříková, 2017

Retired women face a pension penalty resulting from the gender pay gap and career breaks for family caring. Women's lower pensions are also a result of fewer years' contributions, as women usually retire earlier than men. Years spent out of employment for childcare or other family care duties (maternity and parental leave, care for someone with a disability) are taken into consideration when calculating the number of years of service. The required period of insurance is 35 years, out of which a maximum of 5 years can be constituted by credited periods. However, only one parent can apply for the care credit, even though parents can share parental leave until the child is three years old. This arrangement might have negative effects on gender equality as it acts as an incentive for women to continue doing most of the care work within the household. Care credits should not lower women's pension benefits, as these years are excluded from the calculation of the pension. However, they are reflected in the life-long gender income gap, as the years spent out of employment result in lower career opportunities and lower earnings. The life-long gender income gap is thus reflected in the gender pension gap.

In addition to the public pension scheme, the pension system consists of a voluntary private pension insurance saving scheme with state contributions, defined by contributions (DC), capital funded. According to EU terminology, this additional pension insurance scheme can be considered as the third pillar of the pension system. The third pillar includes products offered by commercial insurance companies. Income from the third pillar pension schemes only represent a negligible portion of incomes of the current generations of Czech retirees. The personal savings can be complemented by an employer's contribution. Only personal monthly savings of 300 CZK and higher qualify for state contributions, and only personal savings of 1000 CZK and higher qualify for tax deductions. This means that the system is more advantageous for people on higher income who can afford to make higher savings.

Employer pension schemes, usually referred to as the "second pillar" in other EU member states, are absent in the Czech pension system. An equivalent scheme was introduced in 2013 by the right-wing coalition government, but was abandoned three years later by the coalition led by left-wing Social Democrats. Only people younger 35 could access this scheme, by opting out of part of their contribution to the first pillar, putting it to the second pillar and adding a percentage of their wage. The system was criticised for being more advantageous for higher income employees and for putting the financial stability of the public pension system (first pillar) at risk.

EWL in Public Debates, Research and Policy Measures

The ageing population has for some years been the subject of public debate in the Czech Republic, both at the government level and among the expert and scientific community, especially in connection with the sustainability of the pension and healthcare systems. There has been a gradual increase in the retirement age with no upper age limit, leading to growing concern about maintaining the employment potential of older workers. The focus in debates is on lifelong learning and training/requalification, health issues and flexible working conditions, as well as on negative stereotypes about older workers. European Social Fund (ESF) support is available for various actors to develop measures and run projects on these issues.

Policy concerning extended work lives is very recent in the Czech Republic. The Government's first scheme was launched in 1999 in the context of the International Year of Older People. The Czech Republic's accession to the European Union and the availability of EU funds for projects connected with older workers meant that the number of government initiatives has increased more recently (Vidovičová, 2007). In 2006, the Government Council for Older Persons and Population Ageing, composed of a range of experts and stakeholders, was established. This permanent body is a key player in terms of preparing policy proposals relating to population ageing. The Council has a number of working groups, of which one, established in 2014, promotes the employment of older people. The Council aims to address topics related to seniors and solve the problems associated with population ageing and promote lifelong preparation for healthy, active, and dignified life at old age and the active integration of older people into society. The concept of active ageing is used in a broad sense, referring not only to employment, but to social integration more generally. The Councils' secretariat is located within the Ageing Policy Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Ageing policy is implemented and coordinated via national programmes and National Action Plans (NAP) have been updated every five years since 2003. The first national action plan for the support of active ageing (MoLSA, 2003) was adopted in 2003, and focused on anti-discrimination measures in the following areas: ethics, natural environment, work, financial security, healthy lifestyle and quality of life, healthcare, complex social services, social activities, education, and housing. The document generally used the concept of active ageing, but its' main focus on anti-discrimination measures in the areas mentioned above. Gender aspects of ageing are not mentioned, although gender mainstreaming is mentioned once as a method which should be used in research on ageing.

In the second NAP for the period 2008–2012 (MoLSA, 2008), active ageing is defined as the priority. Other themes include: living environment and community acceptance of ageing, health and healthy ageing, family and care, social participation and human rights. Here active ageing is strongly focused on paid work and on increasing the employment rate of older workers, for economic reasons, mainly the sustainability of the pension system. A gender-sensitive approach is included as one of the basic principles of this NAP. Labour market inequalities as well as the prevalence of women among informal family carers are mentioned. However, gender sensitivity is not mainstreamed in the 2008 NAP. The gender-sensitive approach is limited to one paragraph about the need to use a gender-sensitive approach in relation to healthcare, employment and care issues. It is not applied concretely in any measures even within this same NAP.

The introduction of the last NAP, covering the 2013–2017 period (MoLSA, 2013; *Podkladová studie. Národní akční plán podporující pozitivní stárnutí pro období let 2013 až 2017*, page 5) states: “An important part of the strategic approach to population ageing is the **gender dimension** that helps to take different situations and different needs of men and women in the ageing population into account, and to respond by appropriate measures. Economic **inequalities between men and women** during their participation in the labour market are also reflected in retirement. Women's greater involvement in childcare and household care and the **gender pay gap** during their working lives lead to **lower retirement income for women**. Due to longer life expectancy and lower incomes, older women have to live with lower incomes for

longer than older men. As a result, women in old age are at a much higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than men, especially women over the age of 65.” (our highlights)

However, this gender-sensitive perspective is not developed any further in the NAP document. No gender dimension is discussed and no gender-specific measures are proposed on any of the topics mentioned in the policy document. The topics addressed are: human rights of older persons, lifelong learning, employment of older workers and seniors linked to the pension system, volunteering and intergenerational cooperation, quality environment for seniors’ life, healthy ageing, and care for vulnerable seniors.

Targets in the 2013–2017 NAP that are relevant for EWL policy include:

- Revisions to the pension system in order to encourage people of pre-retirement age to remain in the labour market for longer,
- Adjustments to legal conditions and reinforcement of workplace age management and anti-discrimination practices, in order to encourage older workers to postpone retirement and extend their working lives. The focus is on training, flexible working conditions and healthcare.

Gender mainstreaming is not mentioned in any of the NAP targets. The NAP evaluation report (MoLSA, 2018) doesn’t refer to gender at all. It only mentions the European Social Fund employment program and cites two projects with some gender dimension: “Support of the position of vulnerable groups of women at work in a healthcare institution in Prague 4” and “Replacement grandmother – chance for education” (Náhradní babička – šance na vzdělání). This evaluation report concludes: *“Both projects offer an alternative to early retirement to the target group (of older women – note by authors) by providing vocational qualifications and job counselling in childcare, a field of employment which is relatively close to this age group.”* Therefore, although the 2013–2017 NAP mentions gender as an important factor in EWL, this isn’t fully applied in the NAP targets and measures, and it appears only under the guise of gender stereotypes in the NAP evaluation report.

In other policy documents, such as the National Reform Programme for the Czech Republic (2018), gender equality is only mentioned in connection to childcare and women’s work-life balance and not in the context of ageing or extending working life.

Conclusions

National employment data confirm the precarious position of people aged 50+ on the Czech labour market, with older women being more at risk of early retirement, unemployment, short working hours and precarious working conditions, than their male counterparts. The effective (average) retirement age in the Czech Republic is almost identical to the state pension entitlement age: 61 years for women and 63 years for men. Most people retire as soon as they reach the statutory retirement age, which is the main reason given for retirement, together with physically demanding working conditions and health issues. Job satisfaction is the main reason for staying in employment after the retirement age. Although it is possible to work past retirement age and still receive a pension, there are no significant institutional or policy

incentives to encourage older workers to stay in the labour market after reaching the statutory retirement age.

The long parental leave with low replacement rates, low availability of flexible and part-time working arrangements and strong traditional gender norms, which are embedded in policies and institutions, are the main causes of the unfavourable labour market position of older women in the Czech Republic. The 22% gender pay gap also results in significantly lower pensions for women, with a gender pension gap of 18%.

The first pillar of the Czech pension system is strongly redistributive, but recent reforms have limited this redistributive element. The third pillar is advantageous to those making higher contributions (savings), as lower monthly contributions (up to 300 CZK/12 €) do not qualify for state support.

EWL policies are very recent in the Czech Republic. In 2006, the Government Council for Older Persons and Population Ageing was established. Ageing policy is implemented and coordinated via the platform of national programmes and action plans (NAP), which have been updated every five years since 2003. The three NAPs published so far lack gender sensitivity or gender mainstreaming. Targets relevant for extended work-life policy are focused on the motivation of older workers, retraining opportunities, flexible working conditions, and healthcare, but don't address the main gender inequalities that are characteristic of the Czech context.

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