



Peer Review on “Work-Life-Balance: promoting gender equality in informal long-term care provision”

Peer Country Comments Paper – Czech Republic

Caregiver’s dilemma – how to balance care and work?

Online, 3 and 4 December 2020

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



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1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared for the Peer Review on "Work-life balance: promoting gender equality in informal long-term care provision". It provides a comparative assessment of the policy example of Germany and the situation in the Czech Republic. It dominantly concerns caregiver leave arrangements and related benefits, the gender care gap and flexible work arrangements. For information on the host country policy example, please refer to the Host Country Discussion Paper.

2 Situation in the peer country

The sector of care is underfinanced and professional caregivers are regarded as unattractive in the Czech Republic. Informal caregivers even face a worse situation. 57 % of informal caregivers in the Czech Republic face problems to reconcile work and family; in comparison with an EU average of 36 % of informal caregivers (McNeill Adams a Janta 2018). Some of the Czech carers give up their profession, their own financial income and free time for care provision. In 2018, 18 % women and 0,5 % men were unemployed because of the inability to reconcile of care and work duties¹.

However, if someone freely chooses to devote their time to care and family, they must not be punished by the system for this, but rather rewarded. The importance of care in families will also become crucial in the future due an ageing society.

This is a characteristic feature of demographic change not only in the Czech Republic, but also in other EU countries. It relates to an increase in the proportion and number of people aged 65 and older, combined with low fertility rates. At present, there are 2 million seniors over the age of 65 in the Czech Republic (approximately one fifth of the population). In 2030 this number will increase to 2.4 million and in 2050 to 3 million, which will be almost 30 % of all people living in the Czech Republic.²

In the Czech Republic, there is no system of comprehensive support for people caring for their loved ones - disabled partners, children or dependent parents or grandparents, even though informal care is very widespread in the Czech Republic.

The capacity of services to provide longer-term care is insufficient. For many families, social services also remain financially and often locally inaccessible. The low availability of flexible working arrangements also seriously affects the situation of informal caregivers.

Thus, the provision of care mainly affects women as the main caregivers in families (almost two thirds of informal care in our country is provided by middle-aged women between 35 and 64 years³), who, after raising children, find themselves outside the labour market again due to the need to provide care. In addition, women are more likely to work in informal care daily, while men provide care less frequently.

In connection with an ageing population, it is necessary to respond to this situation and find the optimal solution that will allow families to take care of their loved ones, cope with a difficult life events and at the same time maintain a certain dignified standard of living.

¹ Source: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/91605937/300002190404.pdf/4188b8e2-134c-4e18-b522-c943a11b67f8?version=1.1>.

² CSO. *The Age Structure of the Population - 2018*. Praha: Czech Statistical Office, 2019. Source: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/vekove-slozeni-obyvatelstva-g598foxrzn>.

³ Klímová Chaloupková, J. „Informal care in the family: socio-demographic characteristics of caregivers.“ 2013. *Data and Research – SDA Info*, 7(2), 107–123.

3 Assessment of the policy measure

In the following section, the caregiver leave and related benefits, care allowance, flexible work arrangements and other measures are presented as comparative examples of policy measures targeted at informal care, especially to support of caregivers.

Provisions related to long-term care are found mainly in the Sickness Insurance Act, the Social Services Act and in the Labour Code.

3.1 Caregiver leave and related benefits

In the Czech Republic, similarly to Germany, we have the option of shorter and longer caregiver leave.

- If a family member suddenly needs support at short notice, close relatives may stay away from work for up to nine days. During this time, they receive a cash benefit of 60 per cent of their wages. However, there are two basic conditions. The caregiver must have sickness insurance and must share one household with the family member who needs care.
- Since July 2018 Long-term Caregiver Leave can be used. The Long-term Caregiver Leave allows citizens to stay at to care for a family member who requires care. The need for home care is decided by the attending physician of an inpatient health care facility (usually a hospital) after discharge from hospitalisation. Long-term Caregiver Leave is for a maximum of 90 days, during which the caregiver draws a benefit of 60 per cent of his or her salary. However, for the benefit to be paid to the caregiver, his or her participation in sickness insurance is also a basic condition. At the same time, the condition of hospitalisation, which lasted at least 7 consecutive calendar days, and the need for all-day care at home for at least 30 days following discharge from the hospital must also be met. Finally, the employer is obliged to accept the employee's absence from work during the provision of long-term care, unless there are serious operational reasons.

In 2019, there were 10,939 beneficiaries of Long-term Caregiver Leave in the Czech Republic. The gender difference associated with this benefit is huge – only 22, 6 % beneficiaries were men⁴.

Unlike in Germany, the Czech Republic does not systematically enshrine the right to longer leave for care. A certain similarity can be seen in the care allowance (cash benefit - see below), which may to some extent replace the caregiver's income. However, the caregiver is not entitled to any form of caregiver leave.

3.2 Care allowance

Care allowance is provided to persons who, due to a long-term unfavourable state of health, are dependent on the help of another person. With this cash benefit, the State contributes to the provision of assistance that can be provided through social services or other forms of assistance, for example by informal caregivers, in managing the basic needs of people.

The amount of the allowance varies according to the age of the person in need of care, but also according to the degree of dependence. The monthly amount ranges from CZK 880 to CZK 19,200 (approximately EUR 34 to EUR 730). A similar type of benefit exists in Germany as well. It is provided to the person in need of long-term care and therefore supports often also the informal caregiver.

⁴ In total amount 10 939 beneficiaries were 2 469 men and 8 470 women. Source: https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/208838/4Q_2019_Ukazatele_prosinec.pdf/dd368ea8-9da1-6fd6-9351-e20ab311700a.

3.3 Flexible work arrangements

There is a big difference between the Czech Republic and Germany in terms of flexible work arrangements. In average, only 6 % people work in part-time jobs in the Czech Republic, but more than 25 % employees use this form of flexible work arrangement in Germany⁵. Part-time work is used as a strategy to combine family and working life when family care is low in intensity.

The Czech Labour Code regulates several types of flexible work arrangements (part-time work, flexible working hours, teleworking etc.) with the aim to reconcile family and professional life.

An employee needs to prove that he or she predominantly provides long-term care for a person who is dependent on another person's assistance to request shorter working hours or other appropriate adjustment to his or her working hours. The employer is then obliged to comply with the request, unless this causes serious operational reasons.

From January 2021 the concept of job-sharing will be regulated by the Labour Code. The novelty is that one position is shared by more employees with shorter hours. The aim is to improve the employment of older workers, people with disabilities or parents and informal caregivers.

Companies will be able to get up to CZE 14,600 (EUR 550) for one shared job for a period of six months, probably in the form of a subsidy from European funds. Depending on how this will function in practice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is responsible for the Labour Code, is ready to adjust the conditions to ensure its use.

It is still not common in corporate culture in the Czech Republic to offer flexible work arrangements. But nowadays during the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees have started to work from home. The COVID-19 pandemic shows that it is technically and procedurally possible to use teleworking to a greater extent than in the past. The COVID-19 pandemic also proved that much depends on companies to support work-life balance.

3.4 Other measures

In the following chapter, the Family Policy Strategy (MoLSA 2017), Caregiver of the Year Competition and other projects are presented as comparative examples.

The German Paper describes in detail measures relating to gender equality in care. There are no specific measures in the Czech Republic to address gender equality in care provision, but there is the aim to highlight the issue and to improve the situation of informal carers (in the conceptional way through the Family Policy Strategy and in the practical way by a competition of Caregiver of the Year).

Family Policy Strategy

The Family Policy Strategy was approved by the government in 2017. It contains specific measures to support families and senior citizens, including long-term care provision. One of the measures is a planned comprehensive proposal for financial and social support of care, including a fundamental improvement of the situation of informal caregivers via education, respite services and the reform and expansion of outreach social services and social work.

Caregiver of the Year Competition

⁵ Part-time jobs use 11 % Czech women and 3 % Czech men. Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem100&language=en>.

The Caregiver of the Year Competition highlights the neglected issue of informal care and expresses support for all those who provide support. There are three categories: 1st care for the elderly, 2nd care for a person with a disability or long-term illness under 18, 3rd care for a person with a disability or long-term illness over age 18 years. The results of the competition are announced at the Family Policy Forum, which is an annual two-day international conference on family policy.

System projects

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs implements several system projects focused on family and social policy topics.

The 22 % TO EQUALITY project focuses on addressing the gender pay gap in the Czech Republic. To do so, it cooperates not only with the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, the State Office of Labour Inspection and the Office of the Public Defender of Rights, but also with other political actors, non-profit organisations and some scientific workplaces. Thanks to this unique cooperation, several specific tools and practical approaches can be created to solve the problem of unequal pay.

In this project, there is no specific focus on the gender care gap. However, thanks to an analysis of gender pay gap indicators and characteristics of labour markets, some causes of the gender care gap were just identified - insufficient opportunities to reconcile work and family obligations and stereotypical career choices for women and men.

The Regional Family Policy project operates directly in the regions and currently focuses on the target group of employers. The project seeks to encourage employers to provide tools to reconcile family and professional life.

As the German project "Pause – Sometimes, those who help others need help themselves" (*Pausentaste – Wer anderen hilft, braucht manchmal selber Hilfe*), this project focuses on networking of the various stakeholders and counselling. In the Regional Family Policy project, 14 regional network platforms⁶ are active and formulate proposals of regional family policy strategies and proposals of their implementation, while members of national network platform⁷ formulate principles of system cooperation between national and regional level of family policy. The project aims also at information activities, such as a practical and educational guide for (new) parents (printed and e-version), educational online seminars for employers, seminars on prevention activities, and videos on family policies⁸.

The German project offers telephone, email and webchat counselling. The Czech Regional Family Policy project offers telephone and email counselling, but webchat is not yet available. It is an inspiration for Czech projects to the future.

⁶ Since 2000, the Czech Republic has 13 regions and the capital city of Prague (every region has its own elected regional assembly and a regional governor). In all of them the regional family policy platform was established thanks to cooperation with various regional actors (representatives of municipalities, employers, non-governmental organisations etc.).

⁷ There are 14 members in the national family policy platform – each region has one representative. In the most cases, members are representatives of Regional Offices (councillors for social affairs, directors of social departments, regional family policy coordinators etc.).

⁸ Four videos focus on four themes: the importance of the family in society, the importance of prevention in family policy (especially in the area of partner and marital relations) the role of municipalities in family policy, the role of employers in support of work-life balance.

4 Assessment of success factors and transferability

As in Germany, the Czech Republic has an ageing society which means a growing number of people needing long-term care. In addition, the Czech Republic deals with the same situation as Germany with informal caregivers who are mostly women. Policies aiming at supporting working family caregivers are therefore much needed in both countries.

The Czech Republic and Germany are neighbouring countries, so they are geographically close. Long-term care systems in both countries have much in common, such as different types of caregivers leave or cash benefit provided to the person in need of long-term care, supporting indirectly also informal caregivers. On the other hand, there are some differences, for example the German focus on the gender care gap or a system of long-term support for the informal caregiver.

To what extent the policy instruments presented in the Host German Paper are transferable to the Czech Republic cannot be predicted in detail. However, drawing from the information provided in the host country paper and from experience in Germany, it seems right and crucial to focus on various forms of support, including care leave allowance and benefit arrangements for informal caregivers.

It is also recommended to focus on companies for the need of improving work-life-balance for caregivers, so that they can reconcile work and family life.

4.1 Caregiver leave and related benefits and care allowance

Germany provides three types of caregiver leave depending on the length of care. The Czech Republic has two types – the nine-day and ninety-day (long-term) caregiver leave. In addition, both are associated with a relatively large number of conditions that the caregiver must meet in order to take them. In the Czech Republic we lack the third type of caregiver leave as in Germany. This measure is very interesting and inspiring for us because it focuses on the longer-term possibility of reconciling care with part-time work.

The existence of an independent Advisory Board for the Reconciliation of Care and Work in Germany is also very inspiring for the Czech Republic, where such a body does not exist. From our point of view, however, it is essential that this body has an important voice in political decision-making on concrete measures.

4.2 Gender care gap

Germany is in comparison with the Czech Republic much more concerned about the issue of the gender care gap. Discussions and political attention in Czech Republic focus more generally on the gender pay gap. The expansion of interest towards gender inequalities in care provision is a future challenge for the Czech Republic. Thanks to good experiences within the '22 % TO EQUALITY project', the gender care gap could be addressed by a similar project in the future.

4.3 Company measures

There is a high rate of employment in the Czech Republic⁹, so it is crucial to cooperate with employers for the support of informal caregivers. Part of them support their employees in their attempts to reconcile caregiving responsibilities with work commitments through family-friendly measures (child groups, sick days, availability of flexible working arrangements). MoLSA is trying to affect attitudes of employers and motivate them for the implementation of these measures into practice and into company agreements through system projects (22 % TO EQUALITY project, Regional

⁹On average, 74 % men and 63 % women are employed in the EU – in the Czech Republic 88 % men and 73 % women are employed. Source: EUROSTAT. *Employment rate by sex*. [Online] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem010/default/table?lang=en>.

Family Policy project). MoLSA plans to support the implementation of these measures also within the new programming period of European Funds.

In Germany, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and company networks published guidelines for companies and HR managers including information about the situation of employees who have to reconcile of work and long-term care, the legal framework, as well as tips and checklists for the company's internal practice, so that employees stay within the company. In the Czech Republic, the system project 'Regional Family Policy' currently focuses on the target group of employers – in 2021, one of the project outputs would be an informational leaflet with tips how to implement work-life balance measures and activities in companies and with examples of good practice. Education and dissemination of information measures are transferable to the Czech Republic quite easily, because there is no need to change the law.

5 Questions

- Can you describe the composition of the Advisory Board for the Reconciliation of Care and Work? What is its political power?
- Job-sharing will become effective in the Czech Republic in January 2021. As far as we know, you also have it enshrined in legislation. Can you describe how it is used in practice, mainly in connection with the situation of informal caregivers?
- Are there any measures that Germany is planning to encourage men to be informal caregivers?
- What is the role of local municipalities and non-governmental organisations in the support of informal caregivers?
- What are the German experiences of cooperating with employers in the area of work-life balance?

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Annex 1 Summary table

The main points covered by the paper are summarised below.

Situation in the peer country

- The Czech society is ageing, in 2050 almost 30% of all people living in the Czech Republic will be over the age of 65.
- Support of informal caregivers is very low in the Czech Republic, 57 % of them face the problem of reconciliation of work and family.
- The capacity of services to provide long-term care is insufficient. For many families, social services also remain financially and often locally inaccessible.
- The low availability of flexible working arrangements seriously affects the situation of informal caregivers on the labour market.
- Almost two thirds of informal care are provided by women in middle or early retirement age (between 35 and 64 years).

Assessment of the policy measure

- In the Czech Republic, similarly to Germany, there is the option of **shorter** (up to 9 days) **and longer** (up to 90 days – long-term) **caregiver leave** that is connected with a benefit in the amount of 60 per cent of the wage.
- **A care allowance** is provided to persons who, due to a long-term unfavourable state of health, are dependent on the help of another person. The State contributes to the provision of assistance that can be provided through social services or other forms, for example by an informal caregiver, in managing the basic needs of people.
- There is **low availability of flexible work arrangements**, only 6 % people work part-time in the Czech Republic.
- The Czech Republic targets the **gender pay gap** more than on gender care gap.
- The **Regional Family Policy project** focuses on networking of the various stakeholders and counselling. It seeks to encourage employers to provide tools to reconcile family and professional life.

Assessment of success factors and transferability

- The Czech Republic deals with the same situation as Germany with most informal caregivers who are women.
- It seems crucial to focus on various forms of support: caregiver leave and benefit arrangements for informal caregivers.
- In the Czech Republic we lack the third type of caregiver leave (the longest) which exists in Germany. This measure is very interesting and inspiring for us because it focuses on a long-term possibility of reconciling care with part-time work.
- The existence of an independent Advisory Board for the Reconciliation of Care and Work in Germany is very inspiring for the Czech Republic, because there is no such body.
- Germany is in comparison with the Czech Republic much more concerned about the gender care gap.
- Education and dissemination of information measures are transferable to the Czech Republic quite easily because there is no need to change the law.

Questions

- Can you describe the composition of the Advisory Board for the Reconciliation of Care and Work? What is its political power?
- Job-sharing will become effective in the Czech Republic in January 2021. As far as we know, you also have it enshrined in legislation. Can you describe how it is used in practice, mainly in connection with the situation of informal caregivers?
- Are there any measures that Germany is planning to encourage men to be informal caregivers?
- What is the role of local municipalities and non-governmental organisations in the support of informal caregivers?
- What are the German experiences of cooperating with employers in the area of work-life balance?

Annex 2 Example of relevant practice

Name of the practice:	Long-term Caregiver Leave
Year of implementation:	July 2018
Coordinating authority:	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Department of insurance social benefits and Czech Social Security Administration
Objectives:	The Long-term Caregiver Leave allows citizens to stay at to care for a family member who requires care. The need for home care is decided by the attending physician of an inpatient health care facility (usually a hospital) after discharge from hospitalisation. Long-term Caregiver Leave is for a maximum of 90 days, during which the caregiver draws a benefit of 60 per cent of his or her salary.
Main activities:	To allow leave for caregiver and to provide financial support to her/him.
Results so far:	In 2019, there were 10,939 beneficiaries of Caregiver Leave in the Czech Republic. The gender difference associated with this benefit is huge – only 22, 6 % beneficiaries were men ¹⁰ .

¹⁰ In total amount 10 939 beneficiaries were 2 469 men and 8 470 women. Source: https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/208838/4Q_2019_Ukazatele_prosinec.pdf/dd368ea8-9da1-6fd6-9351-e20ab311700a.



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