



Description of the current status in the area
**of reducing working time and
introducing flexible forms of work**
in the Czech Republic

ISBN: 978-80-86809-14-4



Evropská unie
Evropský sociální fond
Operační program Zaměstnanost

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INFORMATION MATERIAL



Prague 2016

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This information material was elaborated within the framework of the project "Reduction of working time", Reg. no. CZ.03.1.52/0.0/0.0/15_002/0001831, financed from ESF means by way of the Operational program Employment and state budget of the Czech Republic.

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Published by: Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů, Prague 2016
www.cmkos.cz

Printed by: ASTRON studio CZ, a.s., Praha

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ISBN: 978-80-86809-14-4

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1. INTRODUCTION

Our effort in compiling this material was aimed not only at providing them to the foreign participants of planned project conferences, but also for ease of orientation of the members of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Labour Unions (Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů, or ČMKOS), employees and the Union of Industry and Transportation of the Czech Republic (Svaz průmyslu a dopravy České republiky, or SP ČR), employers in the area of development and in general for orientation in the current status of the reduction of working time and flexible forms of work in the Czech Republic.

When selecting the individual chapters, we held on to the project's subject matter and fully focused on four basic chapters – reduction of working time and health and safety at work (HSW)¹, the ability to compete, legislative and the balancing of family and working life.

Our ambition was not to create a book that would fully encompass all aspects of the above problem and outline all possible solutions – our ambition was to elaborate an expert basis for further development and direction for discussions in the form of social dialogue on all its levels.

It is evident from the individual chapters that Czech Republic is heading the countries of the European Union, where this area is the focus of interests, and it has certain prerequisites for further positive development towards further reduction of working time a introduction of flexible forms of work.

It is more and more apparent that life is very variable, and so is work life. It is not always possible to find an unequivocal answer or solution to every question or situation. That is why this material concentrates only on select basic situations that occur or may occur in any employment, with any employer and any employee.

1 HSW = health and safety at work

2. REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME AND HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Working time and health and safety at work in EU laws

The legislation regarding working time in the Czech Republic, even the old Labour Code, underwent substantial changes connected with the harmonisation of our national law with that of the EC countries, as the first so-called Euro-amendment in 2000 transposed the EC directive no. 93/104/EC about certain aspects of determining working time, which may be considered the basic European regulation regarding working time, as well as the Convention of the International Labour Organisation no. 1, which regulates the limitation of working time in industry, into our national labour law. The EC Directive no. 93/104/EC was amended several times over the years and subsequently in 2003 it was published as directive 2003/88/EC regarding certain aspects of working time regulation, which is also the basis of our current legislation.

Both cited European directives on working time refer in their preambles to the Council directive no. 83/391/EEC dated June 12th 1989 on the implementation of measures to increase health and safety at work, in the wording of Council directive no. 91/383/EEC (so-called framework directive on HSW), and among else set out that:

- the improving of safety at work, work hygiene and protection of health at work are goals that must not be subservient to considerations of a strictly economic character and that all employees should have sufficient time to rest,
- employees in the Community must be granted minimum daily, weekly and annual times of rest and adequate breaks at work, in this context it is also necessary to set a maximum weekly working time,
- special working conditions may have a harmful effect on the health and safety of workers, the organisation of work according to a given schedule must take the general premise that work must be adapted to man into consideration.

It ensues from the above that European law sees the reduction of working time and prolonging of rest time of employees, including prolonged holiday time for recuperation as basic preventive measures in the area of health and safety at work (hereinafter referred to as "HSW"), which significantly affects prevention of risks as such and prevention of work injuries and occupational illnesses.

This is also why EC countries consider the reduction of working time and prolonging of rest time of employees in all possible ways as the basic option for reducing the number of work injuries. Thanks to these varied reasons, individual EC countries approach the problematic of working time in different ways. Some try to increase the number of various holidays and state holidays, others choose the form of state-wide introduction of reduced weekly working time.

Working time legislation in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the weekly work hours fully correspond to directive 2003/88/EC, which allows for the maximum admissible limit of 48 fixed weekly working hours, including overtime. In 2000, weekly working time was reduced by 2 ½ hours weekly for individual regimes of work, while at the same time it was specified that this means so-called net working time and that breaks for meals and rest, which used to be included in working time, are now no longer included in it.

Today, weekly fixed working time is regulated by s. 79 of the Labour Code. Generally, the fixed period of weekly working time is maximally 40 hours per week. This is the maximum limit of the so-called net working hours. The limit is set with regard to the employer's right to make employees work overtime for a maximum of 8 hours per week. The sum of the maximum fixed working time and work overtime cannot surpass the limit set by the directive – the average working time per week, i.e. per each period of seven consecutive days, cannot surpass 48 hours.

According to the Labour Code the fixed weekly working time is regulated as follows:

- for employees working underground mining coal, ore or minerals, in mining construction and geological survey mining stations the limit is 37 ½ hours per week,
- for employees with a three-shift and non-stop work regime the limit is 37 ½ hours per week,
- for employees with a two-shift work regime the limit is 38 ¾ hours per week,
- for those younger than 18 the limit is 40 hours per week, whereat the duration of a shift in a single day cannot surpass 8 hours. The fixed weekly working hours for an employee under 18 years of age that has more than one employment cannot in sum surpass 40 hours per week.

The important thing is that the law grants the same protection to all juveniles, i.e. people under 18 years of age. That is also why, in compliance with article 7 par. 4 of the revised European Social Charter, working time for juveniles up to 18 years of age is regulated separately and further, the requirement of article 8 of the Council directive 94/33/EC dated June 22nd 1994 on the protection of juvenile workers, according to which the work hours of a juvenile employee, employed by more employers, must be added up.

Further reduction of fixed weekly working time without reducing wages under the lawful limit may be agreed in a collective agreement or provided for in an internal regulation. In the Czech Republic, the collective agreement with the employer is concluded strictly by the trade union organisation, which acts on behalf of all employees. However, employers from the so-called budgetary or contribution sphere, the

financing of which is at least partially linked to the state budget or the budget of an autonomous region, cannot carry out such a reduction of fixed weekly working hours.

HSW legislation in the Czech Republic

Like working time regulations, the HSW regulations were also harmonised with the laws of the EC countries as early as 2000, during the so-called first Euro-amendment of the so-called old Labour Code. The above mentioned framework HSW directive and all 13 sub-directives valid at the time were transposed into the Labour Code at that time. The basis of this legislation was therefore also adopted by the Labour Code valid today.

Here the Labour Code expressly sets out that the employer is obliged to ensure HSW of employees with regard to all risks possibly hazardous to their lives and health and determines to whom this obligation applies and who is responsible for the fulfilment of tasks resulting from this obligation of the employer. According to this provision, every manager of the employer is responsible for ensuring the safety of employees and status of working conditions within the sector he/she is directly in charge of or managing.

These principles may at first glance appear general and apparent to employers and employees, however their significance in practice is great. The moment damage occurs, whether it is to the employee or the employer, an integral part of assessing the overall situation and circumstances is the assessment of how HSW principles were adhered to and how the immediate superior, i.e. the employer's manager, oversaw adherence to HSW principles. From experience we learned that in fact it is the breaches of basic HSW principles that are the most frequent reason for damage occurrence, whether on one or the other side of the employment relationship.

The direct consequences of breaches of HSW principles arise when work injuries or occupational illnesses occur, however in such cases it is only the reason for such damage that is investigated, i.e. what HSW principles were breached and to what extent by either party of the employment relationship. In case a work injury occurs (this basically cannot apply with regard to occupational illnesses), it is possible under Czech laws for the employer to "deliberate", or divest himself from the obligation to compensate material and immaterial damages in connection with a work injury or occupational illness, this in full or in part. The employer may be released from liability in full, should he prove that the damages were due to a breach of the employee himself or herself in breach of legal or other regulations and/or directions to ensure HSW, though the employee was duly acquainted with them and knowledge and observance of them was continuously required and checked, or as a result of the inebriation of the injured employee, or as a result of the use of other addictive substances, whereat the employer could not prevent the

damage, and whereat these facts were the sole reason for the damage. Reasons for the employer's partial release from liability are similar, whereat they were one of the causes for the damage. Generally it applies that the employer may not successfully deliberate in case a reconstruction of the work injury proves that e.g. a managing employee tolerated work under the influence of alcohol.

Prevention of risks

The whole sphere of HSW in the Czech Labour Code is based on the prevention of risks, the transposed article 6 of the EEC framework directive on HSW. The Labour Code

The Labour Code may devote only one provision to prevention of risks, however it is treated as a crucial principle and therefore the general duty of the employer when ensuring HSW, it is also reflected throughout the Labour Code in relation of risk prevention. The aim is to ensure HSW in all aspects connected to work, starting with continuous screening for risks, and finally adopting measures to protect employees against their consequences.

According to the Labour Code, the employer is obliged to create a safe working environment and conditions, which would not be hazardous to health, this by suitable HSW organisation and by implementing measures to prevent risks. This provision, with regard to its preventive character, must be complied with already at the stage of production and work activity planning, positioning of machinery and equipment, as well as building and machinery maintenance. Suitable HSW organisation means an effective division of work among individual managing employees, regular monitoring of work stations and establishing responsibility for removal of defects found. The gist of this provision is to guide not only employers, but also employees, to determine the admissible level of risk.

It is practically impossible to attain a so-called "zero risk" environment, i.e. fully eliminate work injuries and occupational illnesses, within the framework of an employment relationship. For this reason, the law makers put special emphasis on this provision and imposes the responsibility for risk prevention on the employer.

Requirements on organisation of work and work procedures

Aside from the Labour Code, Czech law also regulates HSW principles in the Act on further requirements concerning occupational health and safety in labour law relations as well as the provision. In a separate provision, this act obliges the employer to organise work and work procedures in such a manner as to ensure adherence to the principles of safe behaviour at work. This provision constitutes the legal framework for the organisation of work and work procedures, ensuring

a lesser risk of the employees' health being damaged. In fact and content the provision adopts the old legislation.

The employer must organise work and implement work procedures in such a manner as to prevent risks set out here as an example – the list of risk factors given here is not taxative, it is solely for demonstration purposes, as a legal norm cannot encompass all possible risks in all types of work in all types of situations. The list in this provision is understood as a basic minimum for the prevention of work injuries, which must be adhered to by each employer and each employer should adapt it to their specific working conditions.

In practice it is important that the employer is hereby obliged to organise work in a suitable manner, therefore also the employee's working time and rest time. In case of monotonous activities and activities that place a specific load on the organism it is suitable to arrange for work to be interrupted for safety breaks. This concerns namely work in construction, driving, work with display units, work in loud environments and work with/near where chainsaws are used.

What we learned from experience

ČMKOS and the trade unions associated in it often encounter employee and trade unionist complaints about their employer's organisation of work and working time. This is why ČMKOS would like to find out, as part of the project's focus on HSW, to what extent work hours and their scheduling impact HSW, specifically the occurrence and quantity of work injuries.

The findings made by the State Labour Inspection Office (SÚIP) do not seem to indicate this so far. For illustration, we present several tables from the Report on work injuries in 2015, elaborated by the SÚIP, which are related to working time.

Development of work injury levels in the Czech Republic

Year	Number of insured parties	Number of work injuries with disability for work	Number of days of disability for work	Average % of disability for work per work injury	Average duration of work injury
2002	4 466 699	90 867	3 788 076	0,23	41,69
2003	4 435 434	83 019	3 599 340	0,22	43,36
2004	4 389 251	81 688	3 565 634	0,22	43,65
2005	4 442 703	82 042	3 702 310	0,23	45,13

Year	Number of insured parties	Number of work injuries with disability for work	Number of days of disability for work	Average % of disability for work per work injury	Average duration of work injury
2006	4 497 033	82 296	3 766 313	0,23	45,77
2007	4 597 021	77 233	3 600 581	0,22	46,62
2008	4 572 443	71 281	3 548 355	0,21	49,78
2009	4 253 139	50 171	2 767 757	0,18	55,16
2010	4 310 960	51 678	2 692 547	0,17	52,10
2011	4 211 579	45 111	2 592 537	0,17	55,03
2012	4 471 889	44 108	2 423 425	0,15	54,94
2013	4 440 326	42 927	2 391 689	0,15	55,72
2014	4 464 057	45 058	2 466 635	0,15	54,30
2015	4 507 012	46 331	2 568 798	0,20	55,44

Number of work injuries in relation to the time of injury within the framework of a workday in 2015

Time of day of injury	Number of work injuries
10:00 – 10:59 AM	4 507
9:00 – 9:59 AM	4 260
8:00 – 8:59 AM	3 531
11:00 – 11:59 AM	3 378
1:00 – 1:59 PM	3 314
7:00 – 7:59 AM	2 936
12:00 – 12:59 PM	2 744
2:00 – 2:59 PM	2 657
3:00 – 3:59 PM	1 951
6:00 – 6:59 AM	1 861

Number of work injuries in relation to days of the week in 2015

Date of injury – weekday	Number of work injuries
Monday	8 570
Tuesday	8 110
Wednesday	7 717
Thursday	7 304
Friday	6 420
Saturday	2 101
Sunday	1 729

Number of work injuries in relation to time worked prior to injury, given in full hours

Time worked prior to injury	Number of work injuries
0:00–0:59	8 802
3:00–3:59	4 931
2:00–2:59	4 689
4:00–4:59	4 531
1:00–1:59	4 408
6:00–6:59	3 853
5:00–5:59	3 711
7:00–7:59	3 545

Conclusion

From the given reasons, the expert group KA 01 is elaborating an HSW questionnaire within the framework of the project, to verify, in a group of basic organisations of five select labour unions, to what extent the employer's work hours and scheduling affect HSW and the frequency of work injuries.

3. REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME AND THE ABILITY TO COMPETE

Theoretical premises

The economic levels of individual countries are different due to different productivity of work, as well as due to different utilisation of labour resources. Demographic factors, determining the ratio of the population in the productive age, are also a significant influence.

The most significant factor affecting a country's economic level is the **competitiveness** of its economics. The basis for competitive economics is the competitiveness of the companies within the economy. Companies must accommodate many dimensions, besides macroeconomics there is the political, social, cultural dimension, education etc. Competitiveness is the result of mutual – sometimes complementary, other times substitution – effects of a number of factors. Topmost among them are both the conditions for production to perform on the market, and the scope, structure and quality of available production factors (labour, capital and natural resources). No less important is the economic policy of the government, not only with its basic elements (monetary and fiscal policy), but also other complementary policies (such as a deliberate system to support the competitiveness of companies).

The institutional structuring of economics, namely laws as the rules of the game for the behaviour of economic entities, along with the highly significant enforceability through the legal system and the state's ability to sanction the breaches of these rules – these represent the second important factor. The internationalisation of economy, i.e. the scope in which it participates on foreign trade and investments, is also of growing importance in determining competitiveness within globalised economics. Also growing is the importance of such competitiveness factors as the performance of capital markets and quality of financial services, education, science and technology, modern infrastructure for business activities and the ability of the management to manage companies in an inventive, profit-oriented manner etc. In this material – with regard to its scope and focus – we only deal with some of the factors, namely those that profile as the most decisive in the long-term perspective.

Productivity of work

The basis for the competitiveness of economics is the productivity of work. On the level of national economy, it is expressed by the index of the **GNP per hours worked or per employee as the purchasing power strength (PPS)**². The difference between both indexes is the most general characterisation of differences in the length of time of actual work. The following table shows the difference between both indexes in relation to EU 28. The table clearly shows that for all member countries of the EU in central and eastern Europe (CEE) it is typical, to a greater or lesser extent, to use longer working time (as opposed to more developed countries). It is a typical extensive method of increasing productivity (and performance) in less developed economies.

GNP per employee and per hour of work in PPS in EU 10 countries in 2013 (EU 28 = 100)

	GNP per employee	GNP per hours of work
Czech Republic	71,9	60,7
Hungary	70,6	62,0
Poland	74,6	57,3
Slovakia	82,6	60,4
Slovenia	81,1	83,2
Estonia	70,0	48,6
Lithuania	74,6	54,2
Latvia	66,9	38,3
Bulgaria	43,4	32,1
Romania	51,5	34,9

Source: Eurostat, own calculations

Hourly productivity of work in individual EU member states in central and eastern Europe (CEE) fluctuates between one quarter and one half of the level of Germany, with the exception of Slovenia, where it verges on two thirds. The convergence of this index after entering the European Union in the CEE 5 is shown in the following table.

² PPS = Purchasing Power Standard is a unit of measurement that transforms data from national currencies into one currency – Euro – and onto the same price level. At present, 1 PPS represents the average purchasing power of the Euro in EU 27 countries.

The convergence of productivity of work in select CEE states upon entry in the EU in the years 2005–2013 (productivity of work per hour of work in PPS, %)

	2005	2007	2010	2013
Czech Republic/EU 28	67,3	66,9	57,3	62,8
Czech Republic/Euro (18)	60,0	59,0	52,3	55,8
Czech Republic/Germany	52,8	51,2	44,8	49,4
Czech Republic/Austria	59,8	58,8	51,0	56,5
Slovakia/ Czech Republic	96,7	93,6	102,1	97,4
Poland/ Czech Republic	74,8	70,2	91,4	91,8
Hungary/ Czech Republic	85,1	81,8	102,4	102,3
Slovenia/ Czech Republic	122,6	124,0	135,9	131,6

Source: Eurostat, own calculations

It is evident that in the long term the index of productivity of work (GNP in PPS per hour of work) in the Czech Republic is far behind both the EU 28 as a whole and its most developed members. It is alarming that the relation of this index both with regard to the average EU 28, and to the Eurozone (Euro18) has dropped by almost 5 points in the years 2005–2013. In relation to Germany and Austria, this drop was less dramatic, however this changes nothing on the evidently negative development in the monitored period.

From the data shown it is apparent that in order for Czech economy to maintain the value of the summary output (GNP in purchase power parity) in relation to other countries, it must perform a growing number of hours of work – i.e. it is dealing with decreasing productivity, or a growth of productivity that, in Czech economy, is far behind the growth of productivity in these countries. That is why Czech economy with its summary output cannot maintain the relation of created products to that of other countries – both developed and countries on a lower economic level. An hour of work in the Czech economy still produces less value than in other countries and if the Czech economy wants to maintain its relation to these countries, it must invest a greater number of hours of work into it.

The data shown proves that the development of productivity in the Czech economy stands far apart from other CEE countries, where on the contrary the convergence is very notable both with regard to the Czech Republic and to more developed countries. It is apparent that the essence of this negative development of productivity of work on the level of national economy lies in the development of the gross national product. Naturally, the problem is more complex and that is why

we must also seriously address the issue of the declarative ability of the reported productivity of work and the underlying factors that may be influencing it.³

The uncommon portrayal of the development of the **index of productivity of work in currency conversion rate** slightly eases up the above strict evaluation, however the trend remains basically the same (in contrast to the previous comparison, the development of this index also reflects the devaluation of the Czech Crown in 2013).

The significance of this index lies primarily in its actual level, not just in characterising trends. This is because it shows how the level of currency exchange rate devaluation against the purchasing power parity decreases the level of productivity (converted by nominal exchange rate) to a value of hardly a third of the hourly productivity attained in Germany. **This level is in fact a key value, as it is this level on the basis of which nominal wages are derived in the Czech Republic.**

Convergence of productivity of work in select CEE countries upon entering the EU in the years 2005–2013 (productivity of work per hour of work performed in conversion rate, %)

	2005	2007	2010	2013
Czech Republic/EU 28	38,7	41,5	41,4	40,8
Czech Republic/Euro (18)	33,6	36,1	35,8	35,1
Czech Republic/Germany	29,3	31	31,1	30,6
Czech Republic/Austria	32,4	34,1	33,4	32,8
Slovakia/ Czech Republic	88,9	90,8	94,6	100,8
Poland/ Czech Republic	71,8	67,7	75,4	80,9
Hungary/ Czech Republic	91,4	85,4	84,6	87,8
Slovenia/ Czech Republic	155,6	154,6	158,5	163,4

Source: Eurostat, own calculations

³ Austria or other developed countries is accepted as a fact on the level of national economy, without consideration of its dynamics, which also predetermine the possible growth of consumption etc. On the other hand the low level of productivity in the Czech Republic raises substantial doubts in actual practice (especially in companies, spheres or areas of business or industry, where it is possible to compare this level of reported “financial” productivity of work with the level of real, or natural productivity – number of products per unit of time).

Productivity of work per hour of work in EUR in the European Union countries, including Norway, in the years 2004–2013 (conversion rate calculation)

Country/Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Norway	72,3	73,1	72,5	71,1	68,8	69	69,3	68,9	69,5	69,6
Luxembourg	60,9	63,1	63,9	62,9	60,8	59,4	60	59,35	58,2	
Denmark	50,5	51,4	51,9	52,2	51,1	49,8	52,4	52,5	52,6	53,4
Ireland	43,8	44,1	44,6	45,1	45	46,5	48,2	50,1	50,4	48,8
Belgium	45	45,4	45,8	46,2	46	45,3	45,9	45,8	45,7	45,9
Netherlands	43,8	44,7	45,5	46,2	46,2	45,1	46	46,1	45,6	45,8
France	43	43,6	44,9	44,9	44,5	44,2	44,7	45,3	45,4	45,6
Sweden	41,5	42,7	44	44,1	43,3	42,3	44	44,4	44,9	45,5
Germany	39,4	39,9	41,3	42	42	40,9	41,7	42,4	42,6	42,8
Austria	35,3	36,1	37,3	38,1	38,3	38,2	38,9	39,1	39,5	39,9
Finland	37,7	38,5	39,5	40,8	40,3	38,2	39,4	40	39,5	39,7
G. Britain	38,1	38,9	39,7	40,8	40,3	39,3	39,8	40	39,3	39,2
Eurozone 18	34,4	34,8	35,5	36	35,9	35,5	36,3	36,7	37	37,3
Italy	32,1	32,4	32,5	32,6	32,4	31,7	32,5	32,5	32,2	32,2
EU 28	29,8	30,2	30,9	31,3	31,2	30,7	31,4	31,8	31,9	32,1
Spain	27,7	27,9	28,1	28,5	28,7	29,4	30	30,4	31,5	32,1
Cyprus	19,7	20,1	20,4	20,8	21,2	21	21,3	21,2	21,5	21,6
Slovenia	17	18,2	19,3	20,1	20,1	20,1	20,6	21,4	21,3	21,4
Greece	20,1	19,8	20,8	21,5	22,2	21	20,4	19,9	20,2	20,2
Portugal	15,4	15,6	15,8	16,1	16,1	16,1	16,7	16,9	17	17,1
Malta	16	15,3	15,5	15,4	15,4	14,6	15,2	14,2	14,5	
Slovakia	10,1	10,4	11	11,8	12,1	11,8	12,3	12,6	12,8	13,2
Czech Rep.	11,1	11,7	12,4	13	13	12,8	13	13,3	13,2	13,1
Hungary	10,3	10,7	11,1	11,1	11,3	10,9	11	11	11,3	11,5
Estonia	8,7	9,2	9,7	10,3	10	10,3	10,9	10,8	11,2	11,4
Poland	8,2	8,4	8,6	8,8	9	9,1	9,8	10,2	10,4	10,6
Lithuania	7,5	7,7	8,2	8,7	8,8	8,3	9,4	10,1	10,3	10,6
Latvia	5,5	5,9	6,3	7,9	7,3	7,2	7,6	7,9	8,2	8,4
Romania	4,4	4,6	4,9	5,2	5,6	5,4	5,3	5,4	5,4	5,6
Bulgaria	3,9	4	4,1	4,3	4,3	4,3	4,5	4,7	4,8	4,9

Source: Eurostat (database)

Convergence of productivity of work calculated per employee in select CEE countries upon entering the EU in the years 2005–2013

– productivity of work per employee in PPS, %

	2005	2007	2010	2013
Czech Republic/EU 28	73,1	76,4	74,3	72
Czech Republic/Euro (18)	67,5	70,4	68,4	66,2
Czech Republic/Germany	67,3	70,4	69,6	67,2
Czech Republic/Austria	61,7	65,2	64,6	63,4
Slovakia/ Czech Republic	94,1	100,1	110,8	109,4
Poland/ Czech Republic	84,5	81,5	94,3	96,5
Hungary/ Czech Republic	92,6	87,3	96,5	102,8
Slovenia/ Czech Republic	113,8	108,9	107	112,8

Source: Eurostat, own calculations

– productivity of work per employee in conversion rate, %

	2005	2007	2010	2013
Czech Republic/EU 28	42,1	47,4	53,7	46,8
Czech Republic/Eurozone*	37,8	43,1	46,8	41,6
Czech Republic/Germany	37,3	42,7	48,3	41,6
Czech Republic/Austria	33,4	37,8	42,3	36,8
Slovakia/ Czech Republic	86,3	96,8	102,6	118,8
Poland/ Czech Republic	81,0	78,4	77,7	91,0
Hungary/ Czech Republic	99,2	90,8	79,7	84,2
Slovenia/ Czech Republic	144,1	135,4	124,7	139,9

Source: Eurostat, own calculations

Another index of productivity of work provides an interesting comparison – **GNP per employee in PPS**. For the Czech Republic, this means first of all a significantly higher level of productivity as opposed to the previous index of hourly productivity.

The difference between these two indexes is notable. On the EU 28 and Euro 18 level it is at 10 percentile points, with Austria it is at 6,5 points, but in case of Germany it is an unbelievable 17,6 points (hourly productivity is at 49,4 %, while productivity per employee is at 67 %). Similar differences can be seen when we compare these two indexes using a conversion rate, where the differences are at around 6 percentile points on the level of the Community, 4 percentile points vs. Austria and 11 points vs. Germany.

It is evident that the differences between indexes are caused by differences in the scope of hours worked in individual countries. The Czech Republic, with its low productivity and the low wages derived from it, extensively supports the generation of GNP by a higher number of hours worked in comparison to most developed countries (especially our neighbours). The table below gives an orientation view of this manifest problem in the Czech Republic.⁴ For example the difference between hours worked in 2012 between Germany and the Czech Republic is 108 hours. With an eight-hour workday, this amounts to almost 14 workdays that a Czech full time employee works extra as opposed to an employee in Germany (in comparison to France it is more than 24 workdays annually, i.e. a full month of work).

**Annual number of hours of work per employee*
in individual EU countries in the years 2008 and 2012**

Country/Year	2008	2012	Difference
Norway			
Denmark	1588	1571	-17
Luxembourg	1790	1773	-17
Belgium	1541	1462	-79
Sweden	1665	1673	8
Ireland	1706	1616	-90
Netherlands	1747	1757	10
Finland	1656	1610	-46

⁴ This view is in fact only for basic orientation. If productivity is calculated per hours worked, as is done by Eurostat, the basis is the total volume of hours worked in the given state. In this table we only show comparisons per individual country regarding full-time employees. The differences in the numbers of hours worked per employee (regardless of full or part time employment status) shows far more dramatic differences between the actual hours worked in the Czech Republic and the developed countries in the EU. The point is that e.g. in developed countries, which attained a visually high number of work hours in full-time jobs in the previous overviews, part-time employment options are also far more notably explored there. This concerns the Netherlands as well as Austria or Luxembourg. For entirety it should be added that the fact that reduced work hours are not as common in the Czech Republic is not an "oddy" of our country in any way, nor can it be considered as a substantial source in the area of employment growth. The fact is that the Czech labour market actually offers (with substantial support of the state) a far more flexible manner of "employment". It is based on using, or abusing the work of trade license holders within the framework of subcontracting, the objective of which is to disguise an actual employment relationship. Source: Eurostat, Labour cost in the EU No 56/2015, 30. March 2015, *) working full time.

Country/Year	2008	2012	Difference
Germany	1650	1641	-9
Austria	1774	1751	-23
France	1583	1555	-28
Eurozone 18	1661	1629	-32
Italy	1614	1565	-49
G. Britain			
EU 28	1750	1735	-15
Spain	1738	1719	-19
Slovenia	1719	1704	-15
Cyprus	1711	1794	83
Greece	1707		
Malta	1861	1961	100
Portugal	1716	1680	-36
Croatia	1811	1764	-47
Estonia	1760	1787	27
Slovakia	1715	1705	-10
Czech Rep.	1735	1749	14
Poland	1698	1685	-13
Hungary	1782	1780	-2
Latvia	1806	1792	-14
Lithuania	1734	1749	15
Romania	1852	1850	-2
Bulgaria	1755	1723	-32

There is however another interesting fact that documents the position of the Czech Republic in the area of productivity of work, or the situation of its labour market. During the monitored crisis years practically all developed EU countries used the reduction of the number of work hours as a quite significant tool supporting employment, because if you decrease the number of work hours per one employee, you can employ more employees.

The opposite – increased number of work hours (profit preferred to employment) – occurred only in several countries. These were mainly island states and the Baltic countries. From the CEE 5, only the Czech Republic joined in. This rather atypical behaviour on the part of the Czech Republic, i.e. a further increase

of hours worked per employee at the already high figures, is only another (and, during an economic crisis, truly desperate) phenomenon of the very low level of wages in the Czech Republic.

Conclusions

It is evident that attempts to decrease working hours – now among the longest in the EU – in the Czech Republic will be hampered on the one hand by the very low officially reported productivity of work, on the other by the very low level of wages. In both cases, the maintaining or even increasing the number of work hours serves as a pillow to soften the still extreme differences of the indexes attained in the Czech Republic in comparison with those of the most developed EU countries.

On top of this, current economic growth manifests as an extensive pressure to boost employment within the structure of the Czech economy, focused on production with low-level processing. There is no doubt that the current structural problems – or the lack of labour in many areas – will clearly lead against the reduction of working time. In fact it is probable there will be pressure to prolong it further. On the other hand it is now becoming apparent that in many specific cases attempts to further prolong working time border on the limits of physiological endurance.

In Czech economy there are opposing forces in play. Basically we are standing on edge. The question whether “in the future” we go in the direction of reducing work hours, like all advanced European countries did or are doing, or we will further extend the already too long working hours, does not depend on what we want or don't want. In reality it reflects much deeper and graver issues – questions regarding the imperative change of direction of Czech economic policy.

The issue is nothing less than whether Czech policy will keep supporting cheap labour – cheap exchange rate of the Crown, low wage policies, low social standards and low taxes, or whether Czech Republic heads in the direction of developing effectiveness, fast growth and competitiveness, among else. Choosing the direction to take in economic policy and reducing or prolonging work hours – these are connected vessels and one cannot be separated from the other.

4. REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME AND THE LEGISLATIVE

Lawful number of weekly work hours in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the maximum weekly number of working hours is regulated by the law, i.e. the Labour Code. As set out in chapter 2, there are three applicable maximum limits of weekly working hours in the Czech Republic:

- 37,5 hours per week for employees working underground mining coal, ore or minerals, in mining construction and geological survey mining stations, further for employees with a three-shift and non-stop work regime,
- 38,75 hours per week for employees with a two-shift work regime,
- 40 hours per week for other employees.

This concerns fixed weekly working time and the so-called “net” working time, i.e. this time does not include breaks from work, to which every employee is entitled at latest after every 6 hours of consecutive work, lasting at least 30 minutes.

The given lawful limits of weekly working time are set without overtime. Work done overtime should be only in exceptional cases. Overtime work is outside of the fixed weekly working time, which is pre-scheduled, and outside the framework of the scheduled work shifts.

The employer can only order employees to work overtime due to serious operational reasons. Ordered work overtime per employee cannot surpass 8 hours per week in individual weeks and 150 hours in a calendar year. The employer may only request more overtime work – above this fixed scope – from an employee with the express agreement of the employee.

The legislation covering fixed weekly working time is significant with regard to the scope of rights and obligations of the employee and employer in an employment relationship. If the work contract does not specify work hours, the employment is considered to be agreed for the fixed weekly working time. The employee is obliged to make good use of his/her working time in full and the employer is obliged to assign work within the scope of the fixed weekly working time. If there is not enough work to assign to the employee, this does not constitute an obstacle to work on the employee's part and the employee is entitled to compensation of wages for the time when he/she was not working.

Basic rules for working time scheduling

Working time is scheduled by the employer who defines the beginning and the end of the shift. The employer must draw up the working time week schedule in written form and show it or changes in it to the employees at least two weeks before the period of time the working hours are scheduled for. The employer may negotiate a shorter time with the employee upon notice.

Working time is usually scheduled for five days of the working week. Possibilities of scheduling the working hours:

- evenly, i.e. scheduling, employer makes a working schedule for the given week and for the particular week or
- unevenly, i.e. working schedule made by the employer irregularly. For each week, considering the average work hours per week cannot exceed the given number of working hours for the period up to 26 ongoing weeks.

The employer is limited during the week scheduling of the work hours by numerous uncrossable legal limits. Firstly, the length of a particular shift cannot exceed 12 hours. After 6 hours of uninterrupted work, the employer is obliged to provide the employee with a lunch break and work rest for at least 30 min.

The employer should schedule the working hours so the employee would have continuous work rest for at least 11 hours between the end of one shift and beginning of another shift during 24 ongoing hours. This work rest can be shortened up to 8 hours during 24 ongoing hours if the employee gets the next work rest prolonged for the shortened period:

- in continual businesses, during unevenly scheduled working hours and extra working hours,
- in agriculture,
- in providing services for inhabitants (for ex. public boarding, health and social services etc.),
- in cases of emergencies, to protect the lives or health of employees in danger,
- in natural disasters and other similarly exceptional cases.

The employer is obliged to schedule the working hours so the employee has an uninterrupted pause for relaxation during the week lasting for at least 35 hours. If the working circumstances allow it, the employer gives the rest time to all of the employees on the same day and in such a way Sunday is included.

In similar cases, the same way the work rest can be shortened between the shifts and furthermore the technological processes that cannot be interrupted, employer may schedule the working hours of the employees so during one week they have to have at least 24 hours along with providing the employee with a continuous work rest per week so for a period of 2 weeks the work rest length would be 70 hours total.

If the employee works overnight (i.e. the time between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.), the length of his shift cannot exceed 8 hours within 24 consecutive hours. If that is not possible due to operational reasons, the employer is obliged to schedule the given week work hours in such a way so the average shift length does not exceed 8 hours during the period of 26 ongoing weeks, the calculation for overnight working employees is based on the five-day working week.

The employer can furthermore use a flexible working timetable. This way of work time scheduling is based on the employer defining a so-called basic and voluntary time period. In the basic work hours, the employee is obliged to be present at the working place and be ready for the employer. During the voluntary working time, the employee himself chooses the beginning and the end. Even in this case the total length of the shift cannot exceed 12 hours. According to this schedule the average working week time fulfilled in a compensating time period defined by the employer (for example within 4 consecutive weeks), but maximally within 26 consecutive weeks.

Exceptions for juvenile employees

Concerning juvenile employees under 18 years of age, the employer has to adhere to much more strict regulations making their working schedule. Firstly, juvenile employees are prohibited from working over night and over time. The length of their work shift should not exceed 8 hours each day. The employer must provide the employee with a break for food and relaxation after max. 4,5 hours of continuous work. Juvenile employees must have a continuous break between shifts lasting at least 12 hours within 24 consecutive hours and this work break is not to be shortened. A juvenile employee's work rest cannot be shortened during the week and relaxation time has to be at least 48 hours. If the juvenile employee has more contracts, his working time should not exceed all together 40 hours per week, i.e. the working hours summed up for all contracts.

Participation of trade union organizations on the modification of working

If there is a trade union organization acting under the employer, the employer is obliged to discuss changes of working hours, work over time, the possibility to require work on days the employees have continuous work rest during the week and during holidays (days of work rest) and overnight work with regard to safety and health protection during work, in advance with this union organization collective.

The employer is obliged to respect the legal limits during the regulation period concerning the scheduling of working hours; this regulation period is for 26 consecutive weeks. If the employer makes the schedule unevenly, only a collective

contract can state a longer period, up to 52 consecutive weeks maximum. The sum of overnight working hours is subjected to the same regulation.

Legal instruments affecting the length of working hours

The legal instruments affecting the actual length of hours worked are: vacation time and important personal obstacles to work on the employee's side.

The employee working under contract has the right for vacation time under the conditions given by the law. Based on the contract length and the required number of shifts worked to be entitled to vacation time, he becomes eligible to:

- a leave per a calendar year (the work contract lasts for a calendar year and the employee works at least 60 shifts),
- proportionate part of the leave per the calendar year (the employee does not meet the requirements of the contract for a full calendar year),
- leave for days worked (employee does not meet any from the basic requirements but is entitled to 1/12 of the average leave length for each 21 shifts worked).

The average leave length is 4 weeks, 5 weeks for the employees of the state authorities and public services and 8 weeks for the pedagogic workers and academic employees of the universities in a calendar year.

Important personal obstacles to work may occur in terms of legally approved situations in which the employee cannot work. The employee has the right to be provided with time off work, eventually a compensatory wage or salary for the time he/she is not working. During long term obstacles to work, like for example illness, maternal and family leave, sick child care or care for other needy members of the family etc., the employees are materially secured by different social systems (above all from the health insurance resources or state social support).

Short-term obstacles to work (for example a doctor's appointment or health tests, employee's own wedding or wedding of close relatives, funeral of close relatives etc.) are regulated by a legal directive that outlines the minimal time off work, eventually the right for wages refund. More importantly, other reasons why an employee is entitled to time off work or even compensatory wage for this time off may be negotiated or outlined in collective contracts.

Basic possibilities of reducing working hours

The Labour Code enables to shorten the given weekly working hours without a salary reduction under the legal limits. It is a collective adjustment and an individual agreement is not possible. Such a reduction of given weekly working hours occurs only by way of:

- an internal regulation of the employer or
- a collective agreement regulation.

An internal regulation is a unilateral arrangement of the employer, where the employer can define the rights in employment relations so the employee has more advantages than given by the law. If the employer decides to issue an internal regulation, it has to be done in written form and issued for a certain period, this period has to be at least one year. The employees must be properly informed about this regulation. The employer can make such internal regulations even if a labour union organization is present. The employer must at least discuss the regulation with the union organization in advance, because it concerns the collective adjustment of working hours and matters concerning the majority of employees.

Reducing fixed working hours per week without a salary reduction can be arranged in the collective agreement. It is usually a corporation collective agreement, signed by the employer and the labour union organization or organizations that are present in the corporation along with the employer. An concord within a higher level collective agreement is not excluded, concluded by social partners of the particular sphere in the Czech republic, however, it is not a rule.

Such reduced working hours become the fixed working hours of this particular employer.

The reduction of working hours per week through a collective agreement or by an internal regulation is not applicable to a wide range of the state employees and public services. There are state employees, regional authorities (municipalities and counties) and employees of employers working in public services as in for example state, county or municipal health care centres, social care institutions and public pre-school and school institutions, state, county or municipal cultural institutions (libraries, theatres, galleries, museums) employees of the national parks and protected landscapes and others. Reduction of working hours in this manner is furthermore excluded with regard to a large group of employees that have an employment relationship with the state (for example security forces, i.e. police force, fire fighters, customs officers, prison officers and others and also state employees working in the state administrative departments).

It is necessary to make a particular difference between reducing working hours per week without a salary reduction by way of a collective measure and the possibility of negotiating shorter work hours within the employment contract (so called part-time job). The outcome of such an agreement is that the employee's salary is reduced accordingly to the shorter working hours. This is why the agreement about reduced working hours is subject to an individual arrangement and the collective arrangement is excluded.

Further possibilities of reducing the volume of working hours

One of further possibilities is to reduce the number of hours working overtime. At this point we are talking about the organisational competences of the employer and the activity of the labour unions, if they are present at the employer's corporation. The extent of given and agreed overtime working hours may be defined in the collective agreement under the maximal legal limits.

A further possibility is to define in the collective agreement, or in an internal regulation, a longer leave above the minimal right for annual leave lasting 4 weeks. Here the same limits are applied for the employees of the regional authorities and public services who have their leave for 5 weeks given by the law and it cannot be increased neither by an internal regulation nor by a collective agreement.

Finally the reduction of total working hours can be achieved by prolonging the actual work break, during important personal obstacles to work or to extend it to other types of work breaks.

Conclusion

From the presented overview it is clear that the legal regulation of working hours and its scheduling in Czechia is not overburdened by restrictions and regulations. It enables the employer to react in a flexible way to actual needs during working time scheduling. The Czech legislation is based on the minimum or maximum requirements of the European legislation.

However, the liberation of the legislation has various negative consequences for the position of the employees. Overtime work loses its exceptional character and is even planned by the employers. There is more uneven work time scheduling that does not enable the employees to organize their personal life. There are also more working hours during the so-called exceptional time (in the afternoon, evening and overnight, on Saturdays and Sundays, during holidays), predominantly in trade and public boarding.

An abyss starts to gape between the employees in the commercial sphere and state employees, as well as those in public services. The employers in the commercial sphere keep wages low and negotiating better working conditions (like for example reduction of working hours, leave prolongation or negotiating further rights for a work leave) is getting more and more difficult; even if such benefits are agreed on, the employers try to abolish them.

In this situation it is necessary to take the path of changing the legislation. The content and extent of such changes should to be prepared and executed responsibly.

5. REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME AND BALANCING OF WORK LIFE AND FAMILY LIFE

Introduction

Reduced working time from the perspective of balancing work and family life

Reduced working time (reduced contracted work hours) is one of the tools of balancing work life and family life. From this viewpoint it appears that employees would appreciate shorter work hours to enable such balancing, as documented by e.g. the surveys undertaken by the Sociology Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences (AV ČR). In February 2016, the Sociology Institute carried out a survey on how families view individual measures in support of family policies, within the framework of which opinions on reduction of working time were also questioned.

The findings of this survey show that respondents consider shorter (or flexible) working time as the greatest benefit – about nine out of ten Czechs⁵ agree with the introduction of flexible working time or part-time work for parents with children (91 %). Reduced working hours would in fact be a measure more welcome than other pro-family measures, such as providing for kindergartens alongside all elementary schools (preferred by 87 % of respondents), reduction of taxes for people with children that are not provided for (87 % is definitely or rather pro) or the increasing of the number of kindergartens (83 %) or increasing of child support benefits (82 %). Reduced working time therefore appears to be a welcome measure from the viewpoint of employees.

1. Current legislation

Legislation in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the problematic of balancing family and work life and types of employment is addressed mainly by Act no. 435/2004 Coll., on employment (namely s. § 33), the Labour Code (Act no. 262/2006 Coll. – namely Chapter 1) as well as Act no. 198/2009 Coll. on equal treatment and legal means of protection against discrimination and the amendments of certain Acts (Anti-Discrimination Act).

5 See Opinions of citizens on select measures in family policy – February 2016. Centre for the research of public opinion, Sociology Institute at AV ČR, go to http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a7522/f3/es160314.pdf

Some provisions in EU regulations

• Main direction of EU economic policy no. 7: Improving the functioning of labour markets

Member states should take the principles of flexibility and security (“flexicurity”) into account. They should limit segmentation within the labour markets and prevent it, as well as fight against unregistered labour. The rules of legal labour protection, labour laws and institutes should create a suitable environment for the recruitment of workers and at the same time afford a suitable level of protection to all employed persons and persons seeking employment.

The creation of quality work posts should also be ensured from the viewpoint of socio-economic security, organisation of work, opportunities in the area of education and occupational training, working conditions (including health and safety) **and the balance between working life and private life.**

• EC statement from June 27th 2007 “On the general principles of flexicurity: a greater number of and better quality of work posts through flexibility and security”

The principle of flexicurity should support the equality of women and men by promoting an equal approach to quality employment for women and men and providing opportunities to balance work with family and private life.

The conditions for equal treatment of men and women / ban of discrimination, also contained in the following regulations:

- SFEU – article 157 – equal remuneration of women and men
- 2006/54/EC – equal treatment of men and women at work
- 2010/18/EU – directive on parental holiday (SP framework agreement)
- 2000/78/ES – general framework for equal treatment in work and in professions
- 2010/41/EU – equality of women and men in self-employment
- 2014 – 7.3. – EC recommendations to strengthen the principle of equal remuneration of women and men

2. Analysis of the current level of exploitation of reduced working time (part-time work) from the data of the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ)

Flexibility on the labour market is a significant trend in developed European countries and its significance may be expected to increase in the future as well. Companies expect flexibility from their employees, just as some employees expect it from their employers. In the Czech Republic, employees are more used to working full-time and conclude job contracts for an indefinite period, or even

to work overtime. Still there is a small segment of employees that take advantage of reduced working time.

To what extent the advantage of reduced-time work is taken can be seen on the statistic data of the Selective Labour Force Survey (Výběrové šetření pracovních sil, or VŠPS). The ratio of people working part-time in the Czech Republic is relatively low, especially in comparison to other EU countries. The main reason behind this is probably the low profitability of part-time work for employees, or e.g. larger work loads being assigned that do not correspond to the scope of the reduced work hours.

The ratio of people employed part-time in the Czech Republic is relatively stable, in the last 4–5 years it was around 6%, in 2015 it was at 6,3%.

Table 1: Development of the ratio of the total number of people employed part-time, according to sex (%)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total	5,0	5,0	4,9	5,5	5,9	5,5	5,8	6,6	6,4	6,3
Men	25,4	26,5	26,0	28,9	28,5	26,2	28,7	27,8	28,9	28,0
Women	74,6	73,5	74,0	71,1	71,5	73,8	71,3	72,2	71,1	72,0

Source: VŠPS ČSÚ

From the VŠPS data it is evident that **part-time work is more often the domain of women** (72% in 2015 as opposed to 28% of men). The highest portion is made up of women on maternal leave or with pre-school aged children, fresh graduates and retirees (aged 65 and over). The most frequent reasons for part-time work are health reasons (older people), inability to find full-time work, caring for children or another dependant person (mostly women), or studies (young people)⁶.

From the viewpoint of education, part-time employees predominantly have secondary education (35,2% – the last available data was from the 1st quarter of 2016) **and higher (university) education** (29,4 %). People working part-time are mostly on the one hand highly educated specialists, on the other unqualified workers. The largest share of people employed part-time are workers in services and sales (23,8 %), the second largest are specialists (21,8 %), the third were seasonal, unqualified workers (15,1 %), followed by clerks (13,2%) and technicians and experts (12,5 %).

⁶ For more see Flexible forms of work in select EU countries, VÚPSV, 2013, available at http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_366.pdf.

Table 2: Development of the segment of persons employed part-time from the total number of persons employed part-time by age category (%)

Age	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
15–29	14,5	15,3	16,2	19,0	17,5	17,6	18,5	20,9	18,9	17,9
30–44	34,2	31,0	31,3	30,6	33,5	33,8	30,5	31,7	31,9	31,7
45–59	27,0	25,7	24,9	21,8	22,5	22,2	23,0	21,9	23,5	22,3
60+	24,4	27,9	27,6	28,7	26,6	26,3	28,1	25,4	25,7	28,1

Source: VŠPS ČSÚ

3. Current status of employment policy from the viewpoint of the position of women and harmonisation of family and working life and the outlook up to 2020⁷

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs documents deal in details with the issues related to the given theme and also present some themes that should be introduced in the near future.

• Supporting the equality of women and men on the labour market

From the standpoint of the gender problematic, up to 2008 women were in the majority in job-seeker records. This trend however changed in the years when the impact of the crisis was most hard felt (2009 to 2011), when temporarily men took over the majority in the records of job-seekers, due to the effect of the economic crisis on industries where male labour is predominant. In the subsequent years the gender proportion of job-seekers gradually levelled, whereat with women the seasonal fluctuation is less evident and their share on the total number of job-seekers therefore oscillates in the course of the year.

As far as the level of employment and specific level of unemployment, or specific share of the unemployed, are concerned, the MPCs materials present the following data. The rate of unemployment for women in the age category 20–64, which is one of the national targets of employment policy, was 62,5 % in 2012, whereat the value of this target is set at 65 % by 2020.

The most notable factor influencing the employment of women in younger age groups is maternity. The employment rate of mothers with at least one child younger than 6 still remains below the EU average, regardless of the slight improvement in the past few years. In 2012, the specific rate of their employment was, according to EUROSTAT data, 36,3 %, whereat the EU 27 average in the same year was 64,6 %, the only country worse off was Slovakia.

⁷ Czech employment policy strategy (Strategie politiky zaměstnanosti ČR) 2020, MPSV CZ Prague 2015 (the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).

The basic problem of employment of women is insufficient space to harmonise family and work life. Here, the main problem is providing for quality and available child care, or care for seniors or elderly parents and other dependents, while at work.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs material also points out a negative influence apparent in younger age groups – the inability to **balance motherhood and studies** (especially with regard to the increasing duration of studies), where young mothers enter the labour market with a delay and their professional and career course is postponed, which reflects negatively on their remuneration and on the discrimination of women in the productive age on the labour market due to the employer's fear of their (potential) motherhood.

The problem with maternity is not only that mothers are not active economically during their maternity leaves, but also in the loss of and expiration of qualification, related to long-term abandonment of professional life.

Among other barriers connected to maternity, according to MLSA, is the insufficient exploitation of flexible work organisation, although since 2009 a gradual growth in the number of people working reduced work hours can be seen.

The obstacles to exploitation of flexible forms of organisation of work, namely part-time work, are constituted by both the approach of the employees or employers, and by the general Czech socio-cultural and legal environment. The cause of this lack of exploitation on the side of the employees, besides lesser security, are economic reasons, related to lower financial remuneration, which in case of low-income groups may not suffice to cover increased costs due to being employed (commuting, providing supervision for children/relatives). On the side of the employers it is barriers in the form of a greater administrative and organisational burden, as well as economic reasons (minimum health insurance limits, providing for a larger number of work posts).

However, the poor standing of women on the labour market is not connected only to the above said objective reasons, but also with the discriminatory approach of employers based on the socio-cultural environment of Czech society. Women are generally paid less for work than men, especially while young, in fertile age. The difference in the remuneration of men and women expressed as the gender pay gap (GPG) in median wages in 2011 was 15,6%, culminating in the age group 30–39 at a level of 22%.

• **Proposed government measures**

According to the current attitude of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the primary role of employment policy in the area of employment of women is to improve the balance of family and work life and to fight the discrimination of women on the job market.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs declares its goal is to broaden the spectrum of child care services, to increase both local and monetary accessibility of such services as well as making different people participate in the area of providing child care services from the earliest age until compulsory school attendance starts. The situation in the last few years shows that placing a child into a kindergarten is becoming more problematic in the Czech Republic, especially in certain regions. The numbers of denied applications are getting higher, in the last 4 years more than 10 000 denied applications a year.

The prognosis of the number of inhabitants of the Czech Republic counts until the year 2065 with a decrease of newly born children in the upcoming years to the level in 2005. Despite this expected decrease of newly born children in the upcoming years, one can still assume there will not be enough child care centres for preschool children.

The situation is also problematic in the area of nursery schools for babies up to 3 years of age that would make it easier for the parents to get back to work. In the Czech Republic, the nursery schools as facilities that are primarily for this age category have attendance only close to 2% of babies up to 3 years of age. While in 1990 there was little over 1000 nursery schools, in the year 2010 there were only around 46 of these nurseries. The capacity of childcare services for babies up to 3 years of age is quite insufficient in the Czech republic.

Regulations enabling the swapping of parents on parental leave should be supported and other activities that enable the parents' professional growth and staying in contact with the job market even during their parental leave.