



gender & science

newsletter

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Dear colleagues,

In this newsletter from the Czech National Contact Centre for Gender and Science we are highlighting information on recent events and developments in the gender & science arena in the Czech Republic. On 22 June 2016 the Centre and the Senate of the Czech Republic organized the 4th national conference on gender and science. The aim of the conference was to explore ways to support gender equality and the professional advancement of women scientists in universities and research institutes. The keynote speaker of the conference was [Curt Rice](#), Rector of Oslo and Akershus College and globally recognised promoter of gender equality in science.

The achievements of women in all areas of science have been globally and consistently overlooked compared to the achievements of their male counterparts. Therefore 11 February was declared by the United Nations as the International Day of Women and Girls Science. To mark this historically first day dedicated to women scientists, the Centre conducted a survey among prominent Czech researchers and policy makers on their opinions about gender equality in research.

This newsletter also covers other events - from Marcela Linková being elected as the co-chair of the Helsinki Group Gender in Research and Innovation to our two book launches.

On behalf of the Centre I wish you inspiring reading and summer,

Nad'a Straková

4TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GENDER AND SCIENCE

Nad'a Straková

On Wednesday 22 June 2016 the Wallenstein Palace of the Senate of the Czech Parliament hosted the 4th national conference on gender and science titled **My Institution, My Responsibility**. The conference was organized by the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science and the Senate of the Czech Republic.



The aim of the conference, held under the auspices of the Deputy Prime Minister Jiří Bělobrádek, Minister of Education, Sports and Youth Kateřina Valachová, and Chairman of the Czech Academy of Sciences Jiří Drahoš, was to explore the ways in which of universities, colleges and research institutes and grant agencies can support gender equality and the professional advancement of women scientists through concrete actions and policies.

Our goal was to show the level of debate that is normal at international level, and to invite a speaker who is highly successful, inspiring and a man because in a country with a total of three men willing to positively engage in debates on gender equality in research, having a man giving a powerful talk on gender equality would carry a lot of weight. We were very happy that Professor Curt Rice accepted our invitation to be the keynote speaker of the conference. [Curt Rice](#) who is now Rector of Oslo and Akershus College gained notoriety as vice-rector for research at the University of Tromsø where he managed to lift the institution from the last to the first rank in women's proportion among professors (from 10% to 40%).

In his speech he talked about implicit discrimination against women in science. The most crucial point in a woman researcher's career comes when she decides to become mother. "When comparing men and women with the same personal and professional characteristics, the same academic productivity, and both with children, we see that having children affects women much more negatively: a man with children is more likely to be promoted to full professor than a woman with children," said Professor Rice. Leadership in organizations must acknowledge the implicit discrimination against women and must take specific steps to counter it. "When top politicians and scientific leaders are willing to sacrifice half of the pool of talent their society has, there is no reasonable expectation that the country will be able to compete internationally in areas requiring innovation and discovery", he added.

Professor Rice also talked about the positive effect quotas have on the quality of candidate pools. The issue of quotas is a highly controversial issue in the Czech Republic and provoked discussion and questions from participants. One participant argued that such a measure works against women candidates who are allegedly regarded as chosen because of their sex and not on merit. Women are therefore often opposed to quotas. Professor Rice responded: "Women that are against quotas should be against all gender quotas including those that have benefited men for centuries."



Kateřina Cidlinská and Marta Vohlřdalov of the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science presented data and outcomes of the Centre’s research which illustrates the barriers facing Czech women scientists. According to Cidlinsk, women scientists are under threat from the outset of their scientific career. Work precarity caused by the lack of positions, increase in temporary contracts and potential motherhood makes young women scientists weaker competitors compared to their male counterparts.



Vohlřdalov focused on work-life balance. She argued that women are mobile but not in the “right” way. What counts most is a long-term fellowship abroad. However, women often do not apply for these positions because their partners are unwilling to join them abroad or help with childcare. Men, on the other hand, can count on their partners’ willingness to be mobile and shoulder the responsibility for childcare. According to recent data, the difference in mobility between men and women scientists in the Czech Republic is one of the highest in Europe.

The concluding panel discussion brought together Jaroslav Bielek of the Faculty of Nuclear and Physics Engineering of Czech Technical University (VUT), Rut Bzkov, former President of the Technological Agency R, Petr Pavlk, chief consultant of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, and Olga Rusnkov of the Faculty of VUT Faculty of Nuclear and Physics Engineering.

The panellists unanimously agreed much progress has been achieved in promoting gender equality in the past 15 years. The media are more willing to cover the issue of gender equality and the negative backlash from academia has decreased. There has been progress at the Technology Agency CR, the first research funding organization in the country to adopt a gender equality plan, a guide on gender sensitive communication and a guide on how to integrate the gender dimension in research and innovation. Some progress is seen also at the Czech Science Foundation, which has altered some of the eligibility rules to address pregnancy and childbirth during grant implementation. The Ministry of Education was also commended for its support for the Centre, the institutionalization of the Milada Paulov Award for life-long achievement of women researchers, and integrating support for cultural and institutional changes in the Operational Programme Science, Research, Education.

To close the conference Marcela Linkov presented a set of recommendations in the [Resolution For Fair and Responsible Science](#), challenging Czech institutions and university leadership to promote gender equality in science. The resolution can be signed online. The Centre will use the petition when negotiating with respective institutions.

CURT RICE: SHOCKED TO ENCOUNTER EXPLICIT SEXISM IN CR

Curt Rice

I was both impressed and pleased that the event I participated in had high level representation from around the country. It was held in the beautiful and prestigious Senate facilities, and attracted engagement from the government as well. All of this was positive.

Having said that, I was struck by the “yesteryear” nature of some of the comments and questions I received. Some men in top leadership positions asked me if there really was a problem for women today. Others said that it all boils down to biology. Still others showed an immovable commitment to the idea that policy should be determined by opinions and anecdotes rather than research-based arguments. I’ve spent so much time in recent years talking about the massive

research literature on implicit sexism that I have to confess it was a bit of a shock to encounter so much explicit sexism, especially from people in power. These attitudes cannot be held by people genuinely committed to moving the country and its scientific community forward.



Such attitudes are a cause for great concern regarding the potential for progress in the Czech Republic. When top politicians and scientific leaders are willing to sacrifice half of the pool of talent their society has, there is no reasonable expectation that the country will be able to compete internationally in areas requiring innovation and discovery. I regret this, both for the lives of individual women who will meet structural barriers as they attempt to put their education and brainpower to work on behalf of their country, but also for the lives of everyone, since the quality of living in CR will not advance as rapidly as it could if greater efforts were made to remove these structural barriers.

MARCELA LINKOVÁ ELECTED THE CHAIR OF THE HELSINKI GROUP ON GENDER IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Marcela Linková



The Helsinki Group (HG) was established in 1999, then as an advisory body to the European Commission for women and science. It is a policy forum of representatives of Member States and Associated Countries, and its goal is to give advice and recommendations to the Commission on gender equality in research and innovation. The HG played an important role in promoting gender equality in Framework Programme 6 and especially in Horizon 2020. A vital aspect of the Group's activities is exchange of experience and mutual learning as regards implementation of policies and actions to advance gender equality in research, and thus it serves as a great source of inspiration especially for countries that are relatively or totally inactive in this area.

At the end of last year I received 25 nominations from Member States and Associated Countries to be elected chair of the Group, and since February 2016 I have the honour of being the co-chair of the Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation. **My primary goal as the chair is to increase the involvement of the HG in the policy process at the EU level and to contribute to the negotiations of the upcoming framework programme, making sure that gender equality is to stay.** Our priorities for this year include gender balance in decision-making positions. We are now in process of data collection to map how EU countries address this issue. After we assess this information and impact of existing actions, we will propose recommendations which Member States should implement starting next year.

We also repeated a survey among our members concerning their cooperation with National Contact Points (NCPs) on gender equality issues. We found that only 30% of NCPs received any form of gender training despite the fact that Horizon 2020 contains not only topics specifically focused on gender issues (such as in the Science with and for Society Work Programme) but also the flagged up topics which call for sex/gender analysis in research content. Our survey points to **a gap between gender equality being a priority of Horizon 2020 and how much information is provided to applicants by the NCPs.** The HG will present the results of the survey to the Commission and Council.

The HG also took part in the recently completed consultation on the upcoming Science with and for Society 2018-2020 Work Programme. According to the HG, the WP should address research focused on understanding the impact of the changing work, organizational and financial conditions in research on professional advancement of women and men and research on the impact of measures for gender equality on the research system. We believe that stress should be placed especially on supporting gender research. **We also identified key areas that we consider to have major societal impact in the near future which should receive urgent research attention. One of these is the increasing antibiotics failure and the need to study whether there are any differences in antibiotic failure among women and men.**

BOOK LAUNCH - SEARCHING FOR A DYNAMIC EQUILIBRIUM: THREE GENERATIONS OF WOMEN RESEARCHERS

Nad'a Straková

On 17th February 2016 Hana Víznerová and Blanka Nyklová of the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science launched the book *Searching for a Dynamic Equilibrium: Three Generations of Women Researchers at the University of Chemistry and Technology Prague* (UTC) at the UTC Gallery in Prague. It is a collection of twenty interviews with women scientists who do research and teach at the UCT.

The subtitle of the book indicates that the researchers featured in this publication are in various stages of their professional career. The interviews focus on issues related to the process of combining a highly demanding professional career in science with family life.

When comparing professional and private paths of the three generations of researchers, the analysis shows a strong impact of socio-political changes on the scientific work environment and opportunities for the development of successful careers for women scientists. Shifts in the state family policy tend to affect women more than men.



Profound changes have occurred in the Czech social system in the last three decades, thus the middle and younger generations of women look for research jobs and build careers under very different conditions than their predecessors. The gender-conservative ideology of motherhood (up to three years of parental leave) and traditional division of roles in the family poses a major threat to career advancement in the early career stages.

The topic of motherhood clearly demonstrates generational differences. Paradoxically, the older generation of women researchers appears to have been in a better position to achieve balance. Older scientists used nannies and nurseries, which enabled them to quickly return from the maternity leave back to work. The middle and younger generations of women face different conditions today; there is a stark shortage of day-care centres, particularly for children under three, and private nannies are too expensive. Therefore, the interviewed researchers have only words of praise for the kindergarten at University of Chemistry and Technology Prague. Although the researchers do not speak negatively of women who do not have or want children, motherhood is the expected norm. All interviewees accept that the woman is primarily responsible for raising children and that her career is inevitably affected. Motherhood is cited as one of the main obstacles and an explanation of why women do not aspire to decision-making and managerial positions.

The interviewed researchers emphasize the importance of the partner's involvement in taking care of children, even if this should only mean support and appreciation of the partner's time-consuming scientific work. Both older and younger women researchers agree that men's scientific work is not influenced by family commitments in any way.

The book was launched as part of the TRIGGER project.

The first chapter of the book can be downloaded [here](#). The entire book can be downloaded in Czech [here](#).

THE CENTRE CELEBRATES THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE

Nad'a Straková



The achievements of women in all areas of research have been consistently overlooked compared to the achievements of their male counterparts. Therefore in December 2015, the United Nations Member States adopted a resolution to establish an annual International Day to recognize the critical role women and girls play in science and technology. The National Contact Centre for Gender and Science conducted a

survey and asked several prominent researchers and policy makers what they wish for women and girls in science. The Czech media covered the Centre's survey extensively.

Here is a selection of some of the answers:

Marcela Linková, Head of The National Contact Centre for Gender and Science

I wish for women scientists to have plenty of time to think and a workplace that is not only about competitiveness and the dull pressure on performance which translates ideas into evaluation points and money. I wish them a workplace where they can grow professionally without having to face bias: bias against women in technology, bias against women in leading positions, bias against mothers - scientists that are wrongly believed not to have the capacity to give science 100% of their attention.

Jiří Drahoš, Chairman of the Czech Academy of Science

I wish for them plenty of excellent scientific outputs, stimulating work atmosphere and family support.

Eva Syková, Senator and scientist

Understanding of colleagues and family, joy from their work and recognition, also health and good luck!

Zuzana Uhde, editor-in-chief of *Gender and Sociology* journal

I wish for each one of them not to allow her self-confidence to be hurt by the constant fight with institutional gender-based obstacles.

Tomáš Kostecký, Head of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Science

I wish good working conditions for women researchers, for their male colleagues to take them as equal partners and I wish them to feel happy and satisfied with their work.

L'ubica Kobová, Department of Gender Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University

Wishing them resilience is probably useless. Those who already work in science and research

know it is impossible without resilience and gritting one's teeth. I'll be pragmatic - I wish for them - for all of us - enough funds.

Pavel Bělobrádek, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Science and Research

Combining a scientific occupation and parenthood is very demanding. I wish for us to manage to bring more qualified and talented women into science and keep them there. Women researchers represent untapped potential.

Marcel Kraus, The Technology Agency of the Czech Republic

My wish is that they are always able to make decisions according to their own free will, and not under pressure, which they experience due to prevailing biases and stereotypes.

THE CENTRE AT ACADEMIA FILM OLOMOUC FESTIVAL: TWO FILMS AND A DEBATE ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT UNIVERSITIES

Blanka Nyklová, Marta Vohlídalová

A partner to the Academia Film Olomouc since 2010, the Centre this year screened two documentary films - **CODE - Debugging the Gender Gap** and **The Hunting Ground** and organized a debate about sexual violence in academia. The overall program of the festival covered topics such as extra-terrestrial contact, epilepsy, genetically modified organisms, disability, science in pop culture and last but not least, the burning issue of rape.

The [CODE documentary](#) explores how cultural mindsets, stereotypes, educational hurdles and sexism affect women and girls in computer science and why more American girls and people of colour are not seeking opportunities in engineering. The film raises the question: what would society gain by having more women in coding? In the U.S. over the last 20 years the number of women IT experts has declined. The Czech Republic also has a significant gender gap in the field of IT: in 2013, there were only 10 percent of women IT experts, whereas in 1996 there were 36 percent (the Czech Statistical Office). Examining the reasons for this gender gap is therefore much needed in the CR as well.

The debate about sexual and gender harassment in academia was opened by Marta Vohlídalová of the Centre for Gender and Science who presented results of her 2009 study which showed that two thirds of students encountered some kind of gender violence but they don't know what recourse to take and it also turns out they don't trust the school management.

Jaroslav Bielčík of the Faculty of Nuclear Science and Physical Engineering, Czech Technical University in Prague shared his experience with the negative impact of sexual violence committed by teachers on women students. He admitted sexual harassment can negatively affect the study and future work path of the victim. Based on specific cases he has witnessed at his university, punishment of the culprits is often only symbolic and inadequate to the damage caused. As he stated, it is a failure of the system which cannot be effectively resolved without the full commitment of the institution.

The rest of the debate was dedicated to discussing good practice. Brno's Masaryk University was presented as an example to emulate. The University adopted a code of ethics which defines what is and is not sexual harassment and where to look for help.

It was generally acknowledged among the students present that the situation is unbearable. A majority of them has some kind of experience with sexual and gender harassment or know someone who does. It is a high time the problem was tackled at institutional level.

BOOK LAUNCH - CHANGING COURSE: ON LEAVING ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Nad'a Straková

On 11th April 2016 one of our colleagues, **Kateřina Cidlinská**, launched a book of interviews at the Klub FAMU bar in Prague. The publication, titled *Changing Course: On Leaving Academic Research* (Změna trasy: o odchodech z vědy) brings together fifteen interviews with early-career researchers who decided to leave academic research during their doctorate or in the post-doc phase. The book analyses reasons why they decided to leave science, what could improve the working conditions in Czech science, and what choices lie ahead of them. For reasons of safety the interviews with the young academics in this publication have been anonymized.



The interviews show what kind of people decide to leave science, who decides to stay, who has no problem with the current conditions in science and what long-term impact on science this can have. Poor working conditions and the Czech research assessment system are the major reasons why young scientists decide to leave science. Many of the interviewed researchers criticize the evaluation system which quantifies the quality of science using a system of points. They stress that this approach has a negative impact on research and leads to salami publishing of texts of lesser quality. It narrows research to collecting the desired points to win grants more easily. “The assessment system based on collecting points is malicious and makes people less creative. Collecting points is more important today than doing good research. That is wrong,” said Professor Jitka Moravcová of the Czech Technical University in Prague and member of the government’s Research, Development and Innovation Council at the book launch.

The book can be downloaded in Czech [here](#).

SEMINAR OF THE WORKING GROUP FOR CHANGE: GENDER EQUALITY IN SCIENCE

Nad'a Straková



In May we organized a seminar the objective of which was to present Czech and EU gender equality policy in research and concrete measures and actions taken by the responsible bodies in the Czech Republic to advance gender equality in research institutes and universities. The speakers were Arnošt Marks, Deputy Prime Minister for the Science, Research and Innovation at the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic and vice-chair of the Science, Research and Innovation Council, Lukáš Levák, head of the Office for Research and Development of the University, Science and Research Section at Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and Marcela Linková, the head of the Centre and co-chair of the Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation.

Marcela Linková introduced the cultural and institutional change, a strategic approach to advance gender equality adopted in EU strategic policy documents, including Horizon 2020. In the Czech Republic there are only three organizations – [University of Chemistry and Technology Prague](#), [CzechGlobe](#), [CEITEC](#) – that are implementing cultural and institutional changes through FP7 and H2020 projects. Linková stressed the key role of the state in creating financial incentives

to support cultural and institutional changes. In her speech Linková particularly [highlighted](#) the Council Conclusions on Advancing Gender Equality of 1 December 2015.

Arnošt Marks focused on the government policy in science and research, as set in the *National Policy for Science, Research and Innovation 2016 - 2020* ([Národní politika výzkumu, vývoje a inovací na léta 2016 – 2020](#)). One of the political goals is to focus attention on management and development of human resources, which has long been neglected in the country. Marks stated that supporting gender equality at institutional level should be part of the human resources management policy. He also discussed the research assessment methodology which the government is currently amending, which will highlight gender equality. So far, evaluation of institutions focused solely on research output and no attention was paid to management and human resources.



Lukáš Levák presented the national ERA Roadmap, adopted by the Czech Republic. In line with the priorities of the European Research Area, the National ERA Roadmap ([Národní cestovní mapa ERA](#)) contains actions for gender equality and human resources development. This document states that the country is missing a systematic strategy to promote gender equality and human resources in research and universities. Therefore the Ministry is planning to adopt such a strategy this year. The Ministry will also provide financial support to institutions to implement cultural and institutional changes for gender equality in the Operational

Programme of Science, Research and Education ([Operační programu výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání](#)). With a call for proposals to be launched in fall 2016, the Ministry will support development of strategic management tools, including gender equality plans, at universities and research institutions.

Marks and Levák both agreed that responsibility for gender equality lies with institutions, whereas the State should provide funding. “The problem is not the money but how to make institutions address human resources management,” said Marks. Linková stressed that in order to gender equality, state bodies need to put political pressure and provide support to institutions.

THE CENTRE WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBERS

The Centre for Gender and Science welcomes two new staff members:



Jiří Bartoš

Jiří graduated in sociology and social policy at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. During his studies and after graduation he organized personal development seminars. In April 2016 he joined the Centre for Gender and Science as the team’s assistant. In his free time he studies languages and personal development. Solidarity, empathy and cooperation are important life values for Jiří.



Laura Henderson

Laura graduated in History of the African and Asian Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Between 2004 and 2007 she worked at the Centre as a project manager of two FP 6 projects (CEC-WYS and KNOWING). Later she worked at Charles University where she focused on the transformation of higher education towards interdisciplinarity and competence-based learning. She has been back at the Centre since April 2016. She is currently training as an art/drama therapist working with feminist approaches for social change. She has two sons. She sings and plays the cello and ukelele with friends.

CZECH GOVERNMENT APPROVES NEW CONDITIONS FOR PARENTAL LEAVE

On 22 June 2016 the Czech government approved an amendment that will improve the situation of doctoral students with children. Parents that did not pay sickness insurance were forced to take a 4-year parental leave. The new amendment will allow parents enrolled in doctoral programmes to take a shorter parental leave.

TECHNOLOGY AGENCY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC PUBLISHED GUIDANCE ON EVALUATING THE GENDER DIMENSION IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



**PROLAMOVÁNÍ
BARIÉR**
ve výzkumu
a inovacích

In June 2016 the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic published Guidance on Evaluating the Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation. After its historical step last year to adopt a gender equality policy as the first institution in the country, the present Guidance marks another milestone on the path the Agency has taken to support gender equality in research. In March 2016, the Agency also published a

Guidance on Using Gender Sensitive Language in the Communication of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic. The Agency has a dedicated website section titled Breaking down Barriers in Research and Innovation where it features its gender equality activities. The National Contact Centre for Gender and Science is proud to cooperate with the Agency, a true gender equality pioneer in the country.

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