



newsletter

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Dear colleagues,

In this issue we are bringing you an overview of some of our activities in the second half of 2016 in the gender & science arena in the Czech Republic.

In September, the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science organized a debate about migration, women, security and masculinity. The room was packed and the debate touched on all kinds of topics – Czech security policy, the prevailing anti-migration rhetoric in the local political arena, lack of women in the debate on the country's security issues and masculinity of Czech and Russian presidents. In November, one of our colleagues launched a book of interviews with Czech top female politicians, which she co-authored. We are also bringing you a report on the achievements of the Working Group for Change and establishment of the historically first Association for Doctoral Students in the Czech Republic. On top of all that, we are pleased to share good news with you - two women researchers will lead major science institutions in the Czech Republic. Please see for more details at the end of our newsletter and enjoy!

On behalf of the Centre I wish you inspiring reading,

Nada Straková

Nad'a Straková

In the past few years the topic of security has been the centre of the media attention more than ever. How is the debate on security issues affected by the fact security units are run largely by men? What type of masculinity do Czech top politicians represent and support?



The National Contact Centre for Gender and Science posed these questions at a panel debate organised as part of the 12th Researchers' Night, which took place on 30 September 2016. The panellists were Tomáš Pavlas of the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University and the Open Society Organisation (Otevřená společnost), Ondřej Dytrich of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, and L'ubica Kobová of the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University.

The panellists agreed that Czech politicians often abused the topic of migration, using anti-migration rhetoric to boost state security units and actively assume the role of protectors of "Czech women against the Barbarians flooding Europe". Politicians also do not hesitate to link terrorist attacks in Europe to the ongoing influx of migrants and show very little solidarity with Syrian war refugees. These are the primary factors that polarise the Czech society.

Ondřej Ditych argued that the attacks in Paris in the spring 2016 were a breaking point for the current security policy in the country. Czech military equipped with heavy machines were deployed to patrol the streets of Prague. Ditych believes it had the opposite effect on the citizens' perception of security. "This symbolic measure of deploying military across the city undermines people's trust in security units and instead evokes danger and fear," said Ditych.

Tomáš Pavlas sees the anti-rhetoric trends across the globe as "one of the last attempts of the white man to protect his territory" before it is "invaded by foreign cultures". Russian president Vladimir Putin also actively employs anti-migration rhetoric. L'ubica Kobová then made comparison of the Czech President Miloš Zeman and Vladimir Putin. They both share the so called "unbreakable masculinity". "As much as you try to break them, they bodies will stand firm," said Kobová. "While Putin is physically fit and works on it, Zeman can stand endless amount of alcohol and cigarettes, which wins respect from many Czechs," said Kobová.



Higher Representation of Women Needed

The higher presence of women in the debate on security would not guarantee a change of the discourse, says Lubica Kobová. "Look at Condoleeza Rice or Sarah Palin. They also accepted the military rhetoric set by men," she explained. The quality and content of the debate is given by the type of people who contribute to it. Currently, it is military people or political scientists whose concept of security is very narrow and limited. They do not reflect on the security of other social groups in the debate – domestic violence victims, old people as well as men that are also vulnerable. According to all panellists, the debate needs to have a higher variety of participants hailing from different spheres of life.

WORKING GROUP FOR CHANGE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Marcela Linková

Established in 2015 with the triple goal of supporting awareness raising, networking, and experience sharing, the Working Group for Change, run by the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science, is a platform to build competences for implementing cultural and institutional changes for gender equality in Czech academia. Today, it brings together more than 50 people from research funding and performing organizations – universities, institutes of the Academy of Sciences, research centres, grant agencies and bodies of the state administration.



Four workshops were organized in 2016: one to address support for promoting women to leadership positions, the second on gender equality policy in the EU which featured the deputy prime minister for science, research, and innovation, the director of the Research and Development department from the Minister of Education and the chairwoman of the Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation, an advisory group to the Commission and the Council.

The third workshop aimed to share good practices and contribute to mutual learning among different research environments. The Working Group invited Gary Loke, a senior policy officer from the Equality Challenge Unit in the UK, to talk about the experience of implementing and overcoming resistances in the UK Athena Swan. Gary Loke emphasized that despite the differences in working conditions in Czech and British academic and research communities, both countries deal with similar problems as far as gender equality is concerned: low proportion of women among professors, the leaky pipeline in academia, horizontal segregation etc.



The last workshop was related to a call for proposals recently launched by the Ministry of Education under the Operational Programme Science, Research, Education, which aims at strategic development of institutions in the field of human resources development and gender equality. A condition for applying for the funding is that the applicant apply for the [HR Award](#) in the first year of the project, and implement an institutional strategy for the development of human resources, including gender equality. This is the first action taken by the Czech State at national level to support structural change implementation.

AWARD WINNER ZDEŇKA SVOBODOVÁ: WOMEN RESEARCHERS HAVE MORE THAN ONE MISSION

On 30 November 2016, Professor MVDr. Zdeňka Svobodová, DrSc. of the University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences Brno received the 2016 Milada Paulová Award, organized by the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science and awarded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The award is given every year in recognition of scientific achievements and contribution to advancement of science.



Professor Zdeňka Svobodová works at the Faculty of Veterinary Hygiene and Ecology at the University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences in Brno. She concentrates on pedagogy and research into veterinary toxicology, especially toxicology of fishes and the protection of aquatic environments.

“Women researchers have one more mission apart from doing science – motherhood and household care. And this is not reflected when you aim at professorship,” says Zdeňka Svobodová. According to her to do a good job in science, a scientist has to find a problem that fascinates him or her.

During her career Professor Svobodová has worked with institutions of the fishing industry and private veterinarians on solution of cases of poisoning and animal death. Her major contribution lies in the discovery of the mechanism of the occurrence of auto-intoxication in fish by ammonium and in producing a methodology for the prevention of this failure.

2016 EDIT-A-THON: BOOSTING WOMEN RESEARCHERS IN WIKIPEDIA



Wikipedia is currently the fifth most visited website in the world. And yet, only around 17% of notable profiles on Wikipedia are of women and only 15% of Wikipedia's volunteer editors are female.

The National Contact Centre for Gender and Science organized its second edit-a-thon to boost the number of Czech women scientists in Wikipedia on 14 November 2016 as part of the annual [Week of Science and Technology](#).

Throughout the day around 20 volunteers created and edited Wikipedia entries about living women scientists. The edit-a-thon participants were largely women, thus the event also helped to fill the gap and raise the number of women editors. This year the volunteers hailed from all walks of life – not only from the scientific community but also from the public sphere.

Among the new entries in Czech Wikipedia are now ecologist [Jaroslava Vráblíková](#), art historian [Martina Pachmanová](#), nuclear physicist [Alice Valkárová](#), sociologist [Věra Martinová](#) etc.

BOOK LAUNCH OF SOLO FOR SOPRANO: ON WOMEN IN CZECH POLITICS

On 23 November 2016, a co-authored book of interviews (authors: Marta Vohlídalová of the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science; Hana Maříková, Marie Čermáková and Romana Volejníčková of the Gender and Sociology research department) was launched in the Langhans Gallery in Prague. The publication titled *Solo for Soprano: On Women in Czech Politics* (*Sólo pro soprán: o ženách v české politice*) contains 13 interviews with Czech top women politicians. Among the interviewed are Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Michaela Marksová, Minister of Education Kateřina Valachová, EU Commissioner Věra Jourová, Senator Ivana Cabrnachová and MPs Helena Válková and Soňa Marková and many others.

The publication analyses how attitudes to women politicians have been changing in the course of time and what factors are associated with this change. The analysis shows that people today are more tolerant toward the low proportion of women in politics and are less supportive of active measures promoting women in politics than they were in the past.

“The study also shows that the decline in support for women in politics is by far the most significant within the group of men, especially men with lower education and those who regard the living standard of their household as poor,” says Marta Vohlídalová.



HISTORICALLY FIRST ASSOCIATION FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS ESTABLISHED



One of our colleagues, Kateřina Cidlinská, is a co-founder and Chairwoman of the historically first Czech Association for Doctoral Students ([Česká asociace doktorandek a doktorandů](#) - ČAD).

Established in mid-September, the ČAD's mission is to serve as a united voice to advocate for the interests of PhD students in the Czech Republic, build a platform for sharing experience among PhD students, provide information about study and professional opportunities and help PhD students to enhance their competences.

ČAD will be working on all fronts to support the community of Czech doctoral students, starting with identifying the problems facing PhD study programmes in the country, communicating with state bodies and organising workshops and sharing experience.

EVA ZAŽÍMALOVÁ TO HEAD CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

On 15 December 2016, Professor of anatomy and physiology of plants at Charles University Eva Zažímalová was elected the President of the Czech Academy of Sciences by the Academy Assembly. There were no other candidates.



Professor Zažímalová was nominated for the post by 40 out of the Academy's 54 scientific institutes. Between 2007 and 2012 she was the Director of Institute of Experimental Botany.

Professor Zažímalová is no supporter of quotas for women researchers in leading positions in science. She does not believe quotas can increase the number of women researchers in leadership. At the same time she admits women often cannot reach higher positions in science due to their maternity and family duties.

“I admit this is wrong. A woman researcher should not face a dilemma – career or a child,” she told media shortly after she was elected.

Zažímalová wants to increase the budget of the Academy from 4.5 billion up to 7 billion CZK.

“We must show politicians what we know and all that science can achieve. Then I am convinced they will listen, at least a bit more than they have up until now,” Zažímalová said.

She is the second woman to head the Czech Academy of Sciences in its entire history. Helena Illnerová headed the Czech Academy of Sciences from 2001 until 2005.

ALICE VALKÁROVÁ APPOINTED TO LEAD THE CZECH SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Another woman is to lead a major scientific institution - Alice Valkárová of the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University has been elected the President of the [Czech Science Foundation](#), the main basic research funding organization in the country.

“Women have a tendency not to be assertive, they don’t want to appear too ambitious. However, if supported, they work well, are very committed and often have much better results than men do,” said Alice Valkárová in an interview for our website in 2015 when she [received the 2015 Milada Paulová Award](#).



The Czech Science Foundation was established in 1993 as the main independent public organization with the aim to support basic research in the Czech Republic and promote international collaboration of researchers and research teams on the bilateral and multilateral levels.

GENDER EXPERTS CHAMBER DATABASE LAUNCHED



Established in summer 2015, the Gender Experts Chamber of the Czech Republic ([GEK](#)) officially launched its database of experts in December 2016. The database brings together qualified gender experts from various fields of research, specializations and sectors of society and it can be now used by anybody who needs information in the field of gender education, consultancy, expertise and analytical activities. GEK is proud to see the media have already begun using it.

The Chamber has the ambition to become a partner for the state authorities, local administrations, and various working and advisory groups, expert bodies and media.

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