



*newsletter*

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Dear colleagues,

In this issue we are bringing you an overview of some of the activities of the National Contact Centre for Gender in Science carried out in the first half of 2017.

In February, we joined the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. On this occasion we organized a hashtag campaign featuring people's favourite women researchers. With over one hundred posts it turned out to be very successful. We also invited Kateřina Lišková, associate professor at Masaryk University in Brno and a recipient of a Marie Curie People International Outgoing Fellowship who specializes in sexuality and gender in Czechoslovak sexological discourses during communism, to give an annual talk. The room was packed and the debate touched on all kinds of topics – progressive work of Czechoslovak sexologists in the 1950s and 1960s, equality between women and men during communism, and a conference organized in the 1960s which was solely devoted to female orgasm.

January 2017 marked the 40th anniversary of the publication of Charter 77, a proclamation calling on the Czechoslovak government to comply with international human rights commitments it signed up to in the Helsinki Final Act. On the occasion of this anniversary, our team at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences launched a small project to examine the role and activities of women in dissent movement.

On behalf of the Centre I wish you inspiring reading,

Nad'a Straková and Marcela Linková

## THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE



To recognize the critical role women and girls play in science and technology, the United Nations Member States established an annual International Day of Women and Girls in Science on 11 February. This year we celebrated the Day in cooperation with the Information Centre of the UN in Prague. With a hashtag campaign titled *My favourite woman researcher* (in Czech #mojeoblíbenavedkyne), we asked people to take a photo of themselves with a picture bearing the name of their favourite woman researcher and post it on our Facebook.

There were over hundred participants and 700 likes of the Facebook page. The group of the participants could not be more diverse. They included researchers, students of science subjects, journalists, representatives of embassies, and writers. To name a few: the head of the Czech Academy of Sciences Eva Zažímalová, minister of education, sports and youth Kateřina Valachová, Chargé d'affaires of the French embassy Marianne Carré, many employees of the US Embassy in Prague and others.



## SEXOLOGY IN COMMUNIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA

On 10 February 2017 the Centre for Gender and Science invited associate professor Kateřina Lišková, expert on sexuality and gender in Czechoslovak sexological discourses during communism, to give an annual talk. It was the fifth iteration of the Centre's annual lectures by outstanding woman researchers.

The room was packed and the debate touched on all kinds of topics – progressive work of Czechoslovak sexologists in the 1950s and 1960s, communists' concept of equality between women and men, state-driven emancipation, and a conference organized in the 1960s which was solely devoted to the female orgasm.

Little known is the fact that one of the first sexology laboratories was established in 1921 in Czechoslovakia. The research of sexology quickly developed and it overtook the West in many respects. In 1949, the family law forged equality between men and women in marriage. As early as the 1950s, Czechoslovak sexologists started doing research on many progressive topics, including female orgasm. Debates about women's emancipation in the household and workplace,



sex life or sexual pleasure, contrasted with the trends in post-war West where women were expected to stay home and dedicate their time to child care and housework.

Progressive sexology research of the time was reflected in Czechoslovak legislation. In 1961 homosexual acts were decriminalised. There was also a conference devoted to female orgasm. The topic of sexual equality and relationships soon became a very popular subject debated on the radio and television. Socialist sexologists focused

on the importance of the equality between men and women as a core component of female pleasure. "Some sexologists insisted on men sharing child care and household work. According to them, that was the condition for quality of sex in both partners," said Kateřina Lišková. A socialist marriage was to be based not on economic dependence of the woman upon the man, but equality in a relationship and economic independence of the woman.

In the 1970s, Czechoslovak sexologists noted a non-functional sexual life in marriage as one of the main reasons for the rising divorce rate. The survey at that time reported incredible 42 percent of people who stated non-functional sexual life as grounds for divorce.

Since the end of the 1960s there was, however, a stronger push for women to take up child care. After the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies in 1968 and the political purges the country saw the onset of what is termed "Normalization." With political reprisals and many prominent sociologists fired from their academic positions and relegated to medial jobs. This shift occurred just at a time when the second wave of feminism was picking up in the West, with the aim to liberate women in sexuality, family, workplace.

## H2020 PROJECT GENDERACTION KICKED OFF IN PRAGUE

**GENDER  
ACTION**

The H2020 GENDERACTION project kicked off in Prague on 22 and 23 May. The project is coordinated by the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science of the Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences.

"It is my honour to coordinate the GENDERACTION consortium. Having been granted the project confirms the important position of our Centre in the field of gender equality in European Research Area," says Marcela Linkova, the project coordinator.

GENDERACTION will create an innovative policy community for the implementation of the gender priority in the European Research Area (ERA) by setting up a network of representatives appointed by national authorities in 13 Member States and Associated Countries, with 3 Associate Partners.

The objective is to foster policy coordination among Member States and Horizon 2020 and build competences for gender equality in research and innovation among various types of European and national stakeholders.

The network will map, monitor and assess implementation of actions foreseen in priority 4 gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the national ERA roadmaps of the participating countries; foster exchange and mutual learning among representatives of national authorities in order to achieve policy coordination in priority 4; provide various trainings to relevant stakeholders such as national authorities, RFOs and RPOs and NCPs with a view to building competences in priority 4; give strategic advice to key stakeholders on gender equality in research and innovation in Europe and beyond; foster the inclusion of gender equality in international cooperation in science, technology and innovation, and disseminate its results.

The network will cooperate closely with the Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation, the advisory body of the ERAC. GENDERACTION's impact will be enhanced policy process to implement gender equality in research and innovation; increased knowledge and exchange among less and more advanced countries; enhanced consistency of gender equality policies and actions across Europe; and better integration of gender equality in international cooperation in research and innovation.

GENDERACTION will be launching its website at [www.genderaction.eu](http://www.genderaction.eu) and its Twitter account [genderaction\\_eu](https://twitter.com/genderaction_eu) in September 2017.

## HELSINKI GROUP PUBLISHES POSITION ON H2020

The Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation, an ERA-related group giving advice to the European Commission and the Council, published its [Position Paper on the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020](#) and the next Framework Programme. The HG stresses the need to continue and reinforce provisions on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in R&I in the next FP, especially in evaluation, monitoring and capacity building. H2020 and FP9 are crucial instruments to strengthen the advancement of gender equality in R&I both at national and EU-level.

## REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON STRUCTURAL CHANGE

On 19 May 2017 the International Conference on Structural Change for Gender Equality in Research took place in Prague. The goal of the conference was to explore the various factors that affect the implementation of structural change initiatives for gender equality, including historical, geopolitical, and social factors as well as the organization of R&I system, research funding and evaluation or the gender equality regimes in given environment.

Experience and results of analyses were presented by organizations implementing structural changes as part of EU-funded projects (eg [TRIGGER](#), [GENOVATE](#), [INTEGER](#) and [PLOTINA](#)), a representative of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic and experts evaluating the process of structural change implementation.



In the introduction the organizer Marcela Linkova addressed the key issue which framed the whole day and individual papers: To what extent is experience and knowledge transferable among European regions and countries and among various types of institutions? Can we learn from each other and share good practices? Can institutions in “less advanced” countries take the same path as those that are more advanced, as is presumed in European policies?

One of the necessary preconditions for launching changes in an organization is to know it. But this seemingly simple aspect can already pose major challenges due to disciplinary differences. The experience made by the National Contact Centre for Gender and Science for example shows the difficulties encountered during an external cooperation with institutions in the natural or technical sciences. On many occasions the expertise of the gender experts was disputed (it is not a research field but an ideology) as was the social science and specifically qualitative methodology because frequently sociology is not science for natural scientists. The presenters agreed that gender expertise is in any case necessary, not only at the beginning of the process but during the entire implementation of gender equality actions.

One of the examples of good practice mentioned at the conference and which underscores that there is no single path to take, was discussed in the final panel by Helene Schiffbänker from Joanneum Research in Austria: in one project the existence of internal gender expertise worked as a success factor to start and implement actions which was guaranteed by women researchers, professors who were in top leadership positions and directed the project. In another international project in the field of physics, however, it was necessary to enlist external experts who, however, did not have any influence at the institution. What proved to work was to take advantage of knowing the disciplinary culture where emphasis is placed on solving problems. After an initial period when the topic was rejected at the institution, gradual explanation by the experts managed to frame the issue as a problem and at that moment the situation became much simpler because the issue started to be treated as any other problem to be solved. It became a research question.



Another case of using the culture of the institution was presented by Marcel Kraus from the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic in connection with the choice of argumentation that is in line with the discourse of the organization. In this case it was that supporting gender equality bring new research opportunities and innovation potential.

Conference papers invariably pointed out to the important role of disciplinary and organizational contexts. Their knowledge is the first precondition of success. The concluding panel discussed examples of successful strategies and good practices as well as the need to always critically consider their use in a given institution. Knowing the environment of one’s institution and the social context is a first step in the process of change. Without disciplinary cooperation which should be built on a “policy of solidarity” (Warnke 2012), for example the mutual respect and recognition of different methodologies, it is difficult to achieve success. Responsibility for this, however, cannot rest only with the gender experts but also with the leadership and researchers.



January 2017 marked the 40th anniversary of the publication of Charter 77, a proclamation calling on the Czechoslovak government to comply with international human rights commitments it has signed up to in the Helsinki Final Act. On the occasion of this anniversary, our team at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences launched a small project to examine the

role and activities of women in dissent. By doing this, we wanted to highlight that women were an integral part of the dissident movement and played an important role in its activities. We also wanted to explore in what ways the persecution they faced from the Communist regime was gendered, and what gendered ways they employed against the regime.

The book of 20 interviews will portray the experience of women who stood up to the regime through their narratives and memories. History is often the story of political events where men play the main part. Looking back, women are often invisible – either because not much attention is paid to the everyday events and the private sphere and secondly because even if women play a huge role in historical events, they often disappear from history. With the book *House revolt: How Women Did Dissent*, which will be launched on 17 November, day commemorating the change of the regime in Czechoslovakia, we want to partially repay a debt to generations of brave and courageous women who needed to live in line with their conscience and stand up to the normalization regime.

### **Gendered violence and gendered forms of subversion**

With one third among signatories, women formed a solid part of Charter 77. There were also eleven women (and twenty three men) among Charter 77 speakers, the most visible and exposed position in the movement. The speakers were the target of concentrated attention from the Secret Police and in some cases subjected to violence. One of those who were brutally attacked was Charter 77 speaker Zdena Tominova. Today it is hard to imagine the constant stress and pressure these women and men faced: summons, interrogations, detention for 24 or 48 hours, wiretapping and bugged apartments, surveillance, presence of the police behind apartment doors, custody and imprisonment.

Although women were subjected to physical beatings less than men, the Secret Police had other ways. Some of the interviewed women reflected on being subjected to constant male gaze during interrogations and surveillance when women were followed by male agents and were aware of them looking at their behind and legs. “It was hard to bear, the constant masculine presence. During the interrogations it’s worse for you as a woman. You sit and keep your knees together,” says Zdena Tominova. Intimate forms of violence were perpetrated by paediatricians and social workers too. Jarmila Johnova was forced to breastfeed her baby in front of the child’s doctor who

allegedly wanted to check whether she does it right. Women dissidents were often under the threat of their children being taken away by the social services. Women's bodies, intimacy and sexuality were used by the Secret Police as a specific form of violence directed at women.

On the other hand, women made use of everyday situations to fluster the police and agents. Eva Kriseova did her shopping on the way to an interrogation and disarmed her interrogators by saying that she had children, was busy and had to do shopping on the way to manage everything. Prams and wraps were used to smuggle and transport illegal materials, identical shopping bags to swap documents. The role of caring mothers helped to make these women to some extent invisible to the police.

### **Chained in the home: four shifts instead of the common two**

A large part of Charter 77 activities took place in apartments and this was one of the main reasons that women could be so active in the movement. The sharp divide between the private and public sphere was erased. Flats hosted meetings of the speakers, home seminars and discussions, it was there that petitions and other documents were signed and distributed, visitors and foreign journalists were received, and where secret samizdat documents and smuggled materials from abroad were hidden.



All these activities were either literally or figuratively taking place in the kitchen and so women were able to participate and contribute even when they had small children. "Women were chained to flats", says the current Ombudswoman Anna Šabatová, and these could function as hotels, editorial offices and hiding places, in the words of sociologist Jiřina Šiklová.

"The entire Charter 77 depended on flats and that women maintained a normal course of events," adds mathematician Kamila Bendová, whose flat was one of the most prominent "open flats" in Prague.

These women managed an unbelievable volume of work: instead of the normal two shifts that women had, women in dissent had to manage four. Women's labour force participation was high since the 1950s and they bore the brunt of most house chores and childcare in the home. On top of this, women dissidents also had to add the third shift of all the work done within the dissident movement and a fourth of managing the time demands of the secret police. Marie Růt Křížková was summoned to an interrogation approximately 260 times, and as she said, this equals one year in prison.

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