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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,

I am honored to be able to address you on the OSCE platform today. Let me thank the Swedish Chairpersonship for bringing forward the topic of women's empowerment. In the difficult times of Covid-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever that women have an equal chance to be included in the economic renewal discussion.

My topic today is the gender pay gap. I will not exaggerate by saying that it is a sticky and lasting stain on the fabric of the modern labour history. So far, no country managed to eliminate it, though, there are countries who are successful in reducing it, Sweden one of them, Iceland, Canada, and Switzerland just to name our best practice providers.

In order to explain the situation of the Czech Republic, let me go back to 2014 for a moment.

Back then the gender pay gap (meaning the difference between monthly average earning of men and women) in the Czech Republic was 22%. We found ourselves at the very bottom of the international statistical rankings (e.g. the second worst position among the EU members). At this situation a very wise decision was taken. It was decided that as a country we no longer want to leave the burden on individual women. No more leaving families to pay the price and having only NGOs and enlightened employers looking for solutions. It was decided to put in place a very complex and long enough project directly at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

The project got called 22 % TOWARDS EQUALITY (for an obvious reason) and as such it is a one of the strong signs that Czech Republic's commitment to its gender pay gap reduction is now serious.

Let me now briefly explain the working strategy and policy impact of the project.

First of all, we started mapping the situation to be able understand roots and causes of the pay gap very specifically. There is now a number of in-depth analyses, both qualitative and quantitative, and based on the most comprehensive data from the national Average Earnings Information System. Moreover, the knowledgebase currently includes a legislative analysis, a macro-economic analysis, and two public opinion surveys.

We developed and pilot-tested several methodologies. Let me name two of them:

Methodology for remuneration checks/inspections for the State Labour Inspection Office in order to optimise inspections of equal pay; and Methodology for the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in order to secure equal treatment for mothers returning to work after parental leave or women caring for family members.

We adapted the well-known and recognized Swiss tool called Logib. We tested Logib with number of employers and the results are really good in terms of feedback.

There is also one popular tool for individual women for which we got inspired in Austria – the online earnings calculator – which provides information on wages and the gender pay gap based on individual characteristics such as age, occupation, position, education degree, size of company, and region. It helps women to compare their real earning level with men and to negotiate their wage during the admission process.

Our strategy included social dialogue and developed “Model provisions of collective agreements” that include mechanisms how to reduce the gender pay gap.

Public administration training in form of e-learning was developed and integrated into training systems of state institutions.

Raising awareness was a crucial part of the project. Campaigning and talking to the media helped changing the discourse about the gender pay gap quite significantly.

Last but not least, a detailed Action plan for reduction of the gender pay gap has been prepared and will now be presented to the government. It is based on all the findings and 5 years of work of our experts.

Where are we regarding the GPG today:

Our gender pay gap is 5th highest the EU (not second anymore). It reaches 18 % (not previous 22 %). In terms of the adjusted pay gap, the Czech Republic is a country with one of the highest levels of pay inequalities between women and men in the same working position and at the same workplace. Women are paid on average 11 % less than men for the same job with the same employer.

The Czech gender pay gap increases:

- During parenthood.
- For women with more children (no effect observed for men).
- With education level: GPG 26 % among university graduates (while 15.3 % in the group with basic level of education). This happens although at present women in the Czech Republic exceed men in terms of the average highest level of education.
- In professions with low representation of women (typically very technical or high prestige segments).
- In sectors with highest average wages (28 % GPG is found among managers and directors). This means that women leaders not only suffer from the glass ceiling, but also face very high GPG.
- Gender differences in remuneration are highest in the age categories 40–44 years (25 %), 45–49 years (24 %), i.e. at the age when women usually take care of young children or return to the labour market after parental leave. Age is a fairly reliable indicator of the impact of motherhood and childcare on women 's remuneration.

The rate of employment in the Czech Republic is actually very high 72.7 % for women and most women work full time.

The degree of the gender segregation of Czech labour market is also closely related to the overall level of the gender pay gap. Women often concentrate in feminized

professions. There is an underestimation of female work that is considered low-skilled and is poorly rewarded financially.

Ladies and gentlemen, the past year has been especially hard on women. Many women have experienced a drop in their income due to losing a job or home-schooling their children. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the gender pay gap may widen again even more.

Sharing ideas on international platforms including OSCE may bring us new tools and policies to prevent such setback. It is my hope that this discussion will contribute to these efforts.

Thank you for allowing the Czech experience to resonate today and I am available for further debate.

Further information to be found here:

Website of 22 % TOWARDS EQUALITY PROJECT <https://www.rovnaodmena.cz/?language=EN>

What we know about differences in earnings of women and men - Summary of published studies within the project 22% TOWARDS EQUALITY. Authors: Alena Křížková, Kristýna Pospíšilová, Hana Maříková, Romana Marková Volejníčková, Lenka Simerská, Petra Sofie Haken, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021. Available for download:

https://www.rovnaodmena.cz/www/img/uploads/Shrnuti_o_GPG_168x240_EN_01_25032021.pdf

Average Earnings Information System <https://www.ispv.cz/en/homepage.aspx>