

PARENTHOOD **and/or** **WORK?**

*Problems related to return to
the job market after parental
leave*

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Introduction

Family policy should ideally be closely connected with other components of social policy, namely in the sphere of employment. According to McDonald (2002), the complex of measures respecting the aims of general population policy, employment policy and migration policy can bring better results, than if a given country tries to influence each of these policies separately. Demeny (1997) within this context warns, that a society facing natural decrease must cross over “*from the sphere of trivial economic calculation to plutonomy – from persuasion in a form of redistribution to the union over the basic changes of the constitutional agreement* “. McDonald (2002) however within this context warns, that **the right instruments used with the wrong mechanism do not reach the marked result**. To meet the purpose, first **all-society support** of the given mechanism must be reached. In other words, it is necessary to change our way of thinking, so as the instruments can act in the right direction.

Development of natality and employment of parents with little children in the Czech Republic within the last decades reflects, that **the fertility and social policy fail**. The main reasons were already described by the above-mentioned authors – **both policies are not sufficiently complementary**, some **measures taken are isolated** and the mutually rival. And the most important think – our **society did not adopt fractions of these policies goals**.

McDonald (2002) mentions the categories of measures, which can be used practically in the sphere of pro-natality and social policy. We can specifically use these measures in the sphere of

- Financial incentives,
- Support of parents in the sphere of tuning up work and care of children,
- Social changes supporting children and parents.

The Czech Republic primarily focuses at the financial sphere, despite of the fact, that in some countries it is clearly seen, that **stimuli in the field of work and family are more effective than the financial ones** (see Berget, 1996). This is also the reason why this study is aimed at the questions of **personal employment of people returning to the job market after maternity or parental leave**. In in a relatively short span of time they should find out the optimum way for tuning up their family life and working life.

The main task of the study is to **propose measures** in legislation and executive spheres, which could bring the Czech Republic **positive results in a form of increased employment** for the monitored group of people. The proposed measures will be documented by the conclusions of the quantitative and quality empirical research.

The structure of the study is as follows. The first part of the study will be aimed at the historical perspective and intergenerational comparison from the point of mothers 'return to

the job market after maternity or parental leave. Number of social norms valid in the socialist era are already outmoded, still we can identify positive examples and at the same time to learn from mistakes, which the Czech society had already experienced. The second part of the study is aimed at the current position of parents on the Czech job market. The introductory chapter of this part is dedicated to the results of our qualitative research. Hard data related to parenthood will be, in the following chapters, fulfilled by the results of the qualitative research. Specifically, the third chapter of this study will describe the main risks related to the return to the labor market after parental leave. The fourth chapter will deal with the position of the most endangered groups of people on the labor market, these are single parent users. In the fifth chapter we will more closely specify the conditions for self-employment with a special social consideration to woman entrepreneurship. Mothers with little children are often forced to carry on business (i.e. this is not a matter of voluntary choice), this way so called Schwarz system is coming (employees invoice their “employers”). Business activities of mothers with little children can meet indicia of precarious work and as such it should not be aside our attention. The sixth chapter will sum up recommendations, which should be considered, while projecting legislative measures in the monitored sphere.

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1 Return of mothers to the labor market in historical perspective and intergenerational comparison

In the first part of this analysis we are going to examine strategies used by currently employed mothers when returning to the labor market after their parental/maternity leave. It is necessary to consider, that the tragedies of the women returning to the labor market are frequently influenced by structural factors as for example policy, set up of family and social policy (i.e. possibility/impossibility to use preschool care), but also cultural factors as for example gender stereotypes or expectations of men's and women's roles. This could be put on the public discourses about the right children's care, where there is also the theme solving when should women ideally return to the labor market from the point of the quality of such care about little children, or if a child should be placed into preschool institutions. In this chapter we will see a short historical excursus (from the fifties of the previous century up to now) about possibilities of employed women to combine work and care of children and about the possibilities to return to the labor market. Further on, we want to present how the above-mentioned factors presented themselves within these possibilities.

1.1 Changed duration of maternity/parental leave

In this chapter we will present, how the time, which was spent by mothers with children at home, not only changed, but above all grew up and what caused this change.

Post war period was problematic from the economic point of view for many European countries. In our country **after 1948** and after accession to power of the Communist Party of the Czech Republic there was a substantial social change, which implicated the expectations from man's and woman's role in society. Woman's role should not be in taking care about children and household, but on the contrary, **woman** was anticipated as **working, emancipated and economically independent**. The background of this social change was especially caused by **shortage of laborers** and house-wife for the central planned economy represented one of the most numerous groups, which could enter the labor market (Kalinová, 2007). Due to it the employment rate of women increased, and even today it is on a relatively prominent level. In 1948 the share of women within the employed was about 37 % and in 1983 this share of women among all employed was 46 % (Křížková and team., 2011; Kuchařová, 2013). Socialistic support of employed mothers on the labor market was based, for example on relatively **extended construction of nurseries and kindergartens** (Srb and Kučera, 1959; Hašková, 2011b; Dudová and Hašková, 2011; Hašková and Dudová, 2010). Czech mothers after the war were interested to get jobs, however the demand for nurseries and kindergartens was higher than offer (Dudová and Hašková, 2011), and not all requirements of employed mother could have been fulfilled.

The quantity research of Life and Work Career 2010¹ reads, that **the time spent by mothers with children at home in 50s and 60s was lower than in following years.** $\frac{3}{4}$ of women, whose child was born from 1957 to 1974, stayed at home 0 - 24 months before returning to work or a birth of another child (Hašková, 2011a). Within the spirit of the time i.e. emancipation and support of women at work, their return to the job market was quite fast, on the contrary staying at home was shorter.

In the following years i.e. **in 70s and 80s**, when the role of **a woman who cares** is being stressed up (in professional discourses but also in the family and social state policy) we can see growing number of months, which women spent at household. This growth is also related to the gradual growth of the duration of maternity leave and so called further maternity leave². The third of women, who delivered babies in 1975 - 1979, spent 25 - 36 months at home and already $\frac{3}{4}$ of mothers, who delivered babies in 1980-1989, spent two to three years at home.

After 1989 the legislation changes. Namely there is another lengthening of already parental leave up to three years³. Already 43 % of women delivering babies in 1990-1999 stayed at home for 25-36 months, 27 % of women even stayed at home for more than 37 months (Conversely the previous generation for more than 3 years 8-13 % of women stayed at home). There is a change, in women's lives so called **sequence model** starts to dominate, when the **phase of further stay at home is shifted by the phase of full time work** (not the model of gradual balancing between work and care) and working and caring roles of women's lives are separated more distinctly.

Lastly it is necessary to mention, that **legislation in the sphere of family and social policy** was and still is quite **rigid** in terms of opportunities, i.e. how families can/cannot spend their maternity or parental leaves. In 2008 came in force so called three speed parental leave⁴, which had to enable more flexible use of the family allowances and faster return of women to the labor market, but unfortunately the desirable flexibility was insufficient. Currently there is a process of marking up and approving the new conception of family policy, with proposals to change functions of maternity/parental leave. The impacts of these decisions will be again seen even in the coming years.

¹ The research sample consists of 4,000 respondents (men and women) at the age of 25-60 years in the Czech population, the sample is representative due to standard selective proportional share. Data gathering was supervised by SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i. The research design was proposed so as the respondents could precisely date life events and consequently also the generation analysis of life's careers.

² Act No. 65/1965 Coll. In force from 1968 defines the length of maternity leave for 26 weeks (originally 22 weeks) and with effect from 1970 so called further maternity leave is prolonged up to two years of children's age (before this period was up to one year of children's age).

Available from: http://www.mpsv.cz/ppropo.php?ID=z65_1965_3#par153; dated 13.4.2016

³ § 157 section 2 Act No. 65/1965 Coll. defines the duration of maternity leave for 28 weeks and parental leave up to 3 years. The law enables to stay at home up to 4 years of children's age, but in a form of so called unpaid leave, after this time mother has no guaranteed job by her employer.

Available from: https://i.info.cz/urs-att/p_065-65-114812361719638.htm; dated 13.4.2016

⁴ See for example. http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/4876/MPSV_A4_bezorezu.pdf; dated 29.6.2017

The quantitative researches show that the decision making about the time, which women are spending at home taking care of children until the moment of returning to work might be strongly influenced by the state social and family policy. For example, in generations when the maternity leave was short more women chose their faster return to the job market and shorter stay in household. This shows that seemingly individual decision about the time spent in household and return to the job market might be strongly connected to the political decisions and state legislation. Not all the women consider this type of set up of the family and social policy convenient.

Recommendations:

Cary out more flexible state family and social policy, which will be able to

- i. **Fulfill individual needs of parents** (and specifically of women) and families
- ii. **Respond flexibly** especially in v
- iii. **The sphere of using the parental assistance** and
- iv. **Enable easy return to the job market** (i.e. enables setting up of flexible conditions to relieve the above-mentioned return to the labor market)

1.2 Mothers 'return to the job market after before 1989

In this and following chapter we are observing the way of changing opportunities of employed mothers from the point of the labor market participation, most of all of opportunities to combine work and care, and of the return strategy of women back to work after their parental leave (using of qualitative research⁵).

Since 50s, as we have already mentioned, the employment of women grows. The growing employment of women is reflected even in the distribution of everyday reality of theirs – **during 60s and 80s the time dedicated to women's paid work grows** (in 1961 the time allocate to work and working day was 7.2 hours per day, inn 1980 it was already 8.4 hours per day (Kuchařová, 2013). Significant role in the distribution of everyday life of women plays also **professional discourses of "right" care about children**, which also (beside

⁵ Here we used the data of the qualitative research (32 biografic interviews) aimed at intergenerational anlysis of mother practice in the Czech environment from 50s up to now, realized within the framework of the project Everydayness in Life Stories of Mother Across Three Generations, grant number 4216, Grant Agenca of the Charless University.

the above mentioned set up of the state family and social policy) can become a part of the women's decision making about returning to the job market, also if their children should attend some preschool institution. As an example, we can use **the attitude of specialists in preschool education** (Dudová and Hašková, 2011; Hašková and Dudová, 2010). **After 1948** the pre-school education was **appreciated positively** e.g. **quality boarding** was stressed up). Women, who became mothers **in 50s and 60s** also quite often positively appreciated preschool institutions, namely due to **practical skills, which were learnt by preschool children there**. Further reason of positive assessment of the pre-school education by mothers could be also that time **technical condition of household** (no hot water, heating by wood, necessity to warm up water etc.), which consumed time of these women in time of maternity leave, the time, which could be spent with children. The following passage illustrates the positive attitude of this generation of women to the preschool education, de facto also trouble-free fast return to the job market:

„ ... you cannot play with them, because you have your household, you have to wash, iron, do shopping, so it is impossible (...) I was telling my son, that we were going to see other little kids, they had toy trains there and my son was looking forward to going to see the children (...) besides he can learn various things there, useful for him later. “(Vlasta, 2 children, born 1960, 1963)

At the end of 60s there are first **critical analysis of preschool education**, especially written by psychologists, pediatricians etc. Their refutations were mostly related to high sickness absence, which they criticized, early separation of a kid and mother, followed by consequences of this separation affecting the development of children etc. This critical discourse on preschool education escalates in **70s and 80s**, when more and more, **the role of solicitous role of a woman was stressed up**, together with mother's case within the first months of the child's life. This was noticeable at doctor's attitude, e.g. breast-feeding, when in 70s (Šráčková, 2004a, b) breast-feeding was more frequently recommended as important for the development and immunity of children. Further breast-feeding however meant for mothers a longer pause in their professional career. The above described critical discourse is also reflected in stories of the women, their return to the job market is becoming more complicated. It was in 70s and 80s and the main aspect was high sickness absence of children:

„Until the fourth year they accepted my soon to kindergarten (...) I commuted several bus stops with him, it was terribly complicated to get him to the kindergarten, still, he was permanently ill and exactly, there were just health problems out of it. “(Radoslava, 3 children born 1975, 1978, 1979)

The return to work, in the story of this woman generation, starts to be problematic and women are opening discussions the negative aspects of preschool education – and together with it, positive impacts of the full-time mother care. Hašková (2011b) writes, that

in **70s** the trend of **refeminization is coming**, so called the trend of women returning to family care, which escalates here in 90s. This trend is surely related with prominent differentiation of gender roles in society and gradual **repeated consolidation of the model – women tenderers and men breadwinners** (which also culminated in 90s). This gradual effort to return care of children back to families is accompanied by the escalating critical discourse about preschool education (Dudová and Hašková, 2011; Hašková and Dudová, 2010), growth of maternity leave, but also the state ideology, which starts to claim so called **pro natality measures** (response to decreasing natality since the end of 60s). All this effort lead to changed role of a woman and expectation from them – the role of tendering mother is more and more stressed up. Women should not only be just emancipated and economically independent, they should also be minders (i.e. coming of sequence model). Women should not, due to financial reasons they could not, leave their jobs permanently, the new model is a “**superwoman**” managing care of children and work together (i.e. double burden). Also coming normalization made home the only safe place protecting before traps of the outer political world, the place of individuation and place, where inadequacies in the public sphere were substituted (e.g. services). Women were arrogated to protect this place and take care of it (Vodochodský, 2007; Havelková, 1993).

It is necessary to keep on mind, that the then job market (i.e. job market in 60s – 80s) had its prominent specificity, affecting the decision making of women in relation to return to the job market. For example, we can speak about artificial employment (even over employment), about systematic redistribution, pretension system of social security or work assessment, which was not based on personal effort or skills. All this influenced working biography of employed mothers. The labor market was offering quite **wide scale of working positions**, which **were not oriented to performance**, which enabled women **better combination of work and care**, but **worsened their position on the labor market**. The consequence was **prominent level of job market gender segregation** and gender differences in incomes (however to secure families, they needed two incomes). Job market, set like this together with family policy established for men and women countless opportunities to share care about children and household – while **this system strengthened the breadwinner's position of a man**, it on the contrary, **strengthened the role of tenderer** and flew into so called **double shift** (Kuchařová, 2013; Večerník, 1998).

1.3 Mothers' return to the job market after 1989

The generation of women, who delivered children in 90s and later, there are the above-mentioned trends, as for example long parental leave (Hašková, 2011a). Even in their stories about their attitude to combination of work and care there is a shift from their working role to the role of a women who takes care. Their stories are increasingly gaining rhetoric of mother instincts and child position in her life and this is being described as the principle of life and mission (unheard of from previous generations):

„Then something switches over, and immediately in your head, you know, what to do (...) on the instant, when the child is yours, something somehow blinks and suddenly, it is there somehow.“ (Renata, 1 child born in 1995)

Hays (1996) describes this phenomenon as **intensive motherhood**. Intensive motherhood relates to the idea, that taking care of a child is woman's life mission and that her task is care and development of such child spending with him maximum time and energy. Simultaneously there is also a premise, that **solely the mother is responsible for development and advancement** and mother is also seen as a person, who, due to her reproductive ability is the only one, who can provide her child the best care. All this and related consequences deepen gender differences. Intensive motherhood became a norm, even in the Czech environment, mothers are judged through it and they also realize it by themselves. These norms are seen everywhere around us (in structural factors as for example legislative possibilities of women and men, i.e. how fast to it is possible to use/not use parental allowances, since what age is the child entitled to go to kindergarten etc., but also in cultural factors, as expectations from men and women, namely considering the appeal to the role of a solicitous woman, long term stay of women in household, necessity of long term breast-feeding, criticism of women who return to work soon etc.). These norms of intensive motherhood consciously and unconsciously influence women while deciding about their return to work. Women in their stories describe feeling of guilt (emaciating the child, when they leave soon to work) or they describe effort after work and at the weekends, when they dedicate maximum time to children:

„When we were already at work, my husband told me, that he would not stay at home with children, that we should hire a nanny. But I said that I did not want my kid to be with a nanny that long (...) now I work, but I still, keep the hours (...) I think, that I subordinate the time, even the working time, to children. Even today, I am trying to work half time and I think, I am not going to work full time, I want to be with them in the afternoon, when they have hobby groups, collect them and want to be with them some more time.“ (Diana, 3 children born 2005, 2006, 2009)

The above described cultural and structural conditions changed even the strategies and rhetoric of women related to their return to the job market after 1989. This could be shown for example on the working position of women on the job market in various phases of family life or in context of how much or little families use pre-school institutions. Provided that the women delivered children from 70s to 90s, the third of them, in time, when the youngest child was 3 years old, worked full time. Women, who delivered children after 1990, this figure decreases to less than half. On the contrary, **the number of women, who are at household up to 3 years of age, vigorously grows** (their children delivered in 90s and later), up to **more than 80 %**. In the period, when the youngest child was between 3 - 5 years, there is also substantial intergenerational change – percentage of

women working full time is decreasing (from about 60 % of women, who delivered children 1975-89, to 55 % of women, who delivered children 1990-99) and on the contrary, percentage of women at household is growing (see above).

Similar intergenerational change occurs also in the prevalent care of children. If the women deliver babies from 70s to 90s, then more than half of households with both employed parents used institutional care – even in the time, when the youngest child was younger than 3 years. On the contrary women, who delivered babies after, support the growing number and percentage of households with both parents working, who take turns in care or they use support of grandparents. In time, when the youngest child is between 3-5, analogical trend was identified (Hašková, 2011a). Also, these changes can be attributed to the escalating **critical discourse of preschool care** and on the contrary to the positive assessment of mother's care by various specialists.

Decision making about return to the job market or about opportunities, how to tune up family and working life are not individual decisions, several external factors are entering: set up of family and social care by the state, political system, professional discourse related to the "right" care about children, positive/negative discourse related to preschool education, gender stereotypes etc. Women's decision making is strongly influenced by these factors. These factors are entering the decision-making process, into life reality of women (also of families). If in the society prevails such a discourse, which is not critical and disapproving of preschool education, real use is higher than in the opposite case.

Recommendation:

- **Always analyze the legislation related to family policy considering long term impacts on both parents** (in context of this chapter primarily on mothers) **and their opportunities to participate on the labor market.**
- Legislation related to family policy should **always analyze the circumstances considering historical development** of similar measures and their previous impact on women and their families.
- **Offer numerous opportunities combining work and care of children**, which are reflecting various needs of employed parents.
- **Measures taken should result from previous experience, impacts and limits for women, men and all families.**

B. CURRENT SITUATION

2 Parenthood in figures

Family policy should ideally be complex and the creators of it should use complementary tools or measures. The requirement of **complex family policy** yet, cannot be fulfilled without **suitable data support**. The main aim of this chapter is to refer to the main problems, with support of various data sources, which are linked with parenthood in the Czech Republic. This chapter will be focused at the development of birth rate and fertility, economic activity or incomes of families, where especially children are members of.

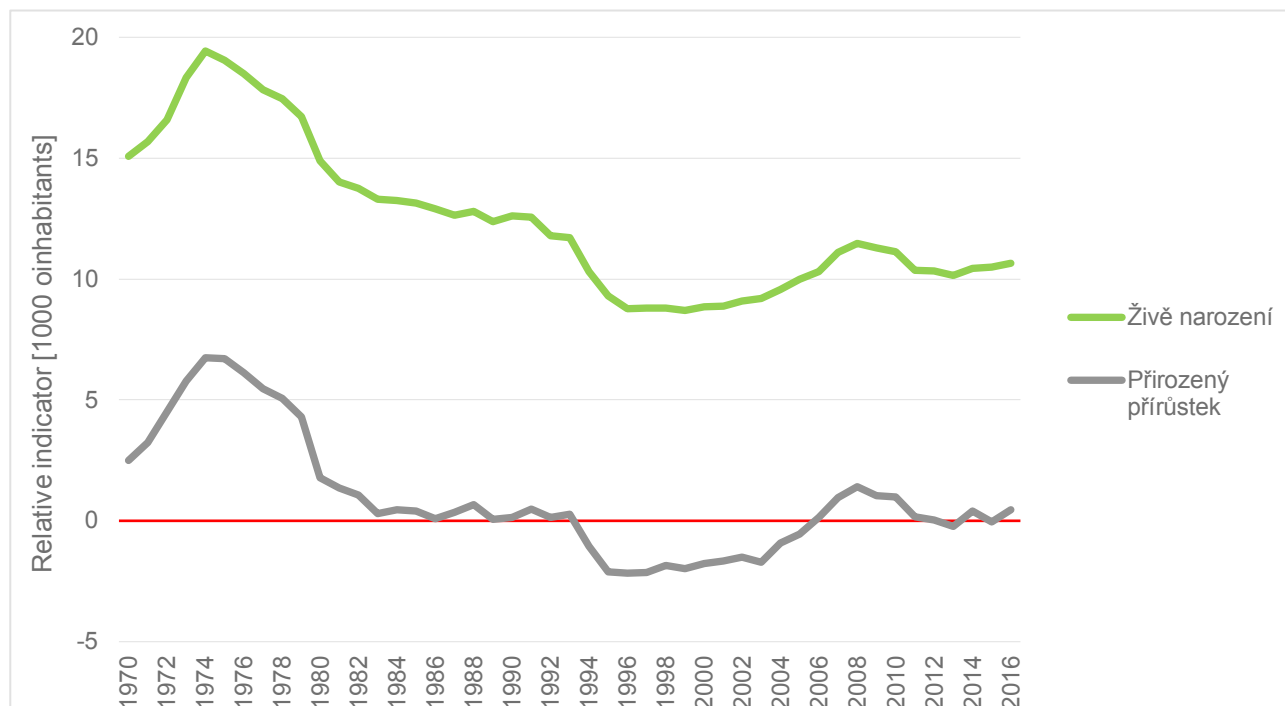
2.1 Birthrate

The Czech Republic in the long-term skirmishes with **low birth rate and fertility**. The consequences of this second demographic transition started to show in all Europe, in the second half of the 20th century (van der Kaa, 1987), and they did not miss the Czech Republic. The adverse development of birth rate and fertility was strengthening up in 90s due to all-society changes and transformation of the economy. The number of live-born children since 70s of the 20th century de facto permanently decreased, while from 1995 to 2005 the Czech Republic experienced **natural depopulation**. In other words, in the Czech Republic fewer people were born, then died (see picture 1).

Number of born children is largely influenced by the number and structure of women in population. Even after clearance of the age structure influence, it is clear, that the **total fertility** in the Czech Republic stays deeply below **limits of simple population reproduction** (see picture 2). From the long-term viewpoint, **optimal pro-family policy is vital to save** (or else for the decrease lessening) **the number of inhabitants** in the Czech Republic.

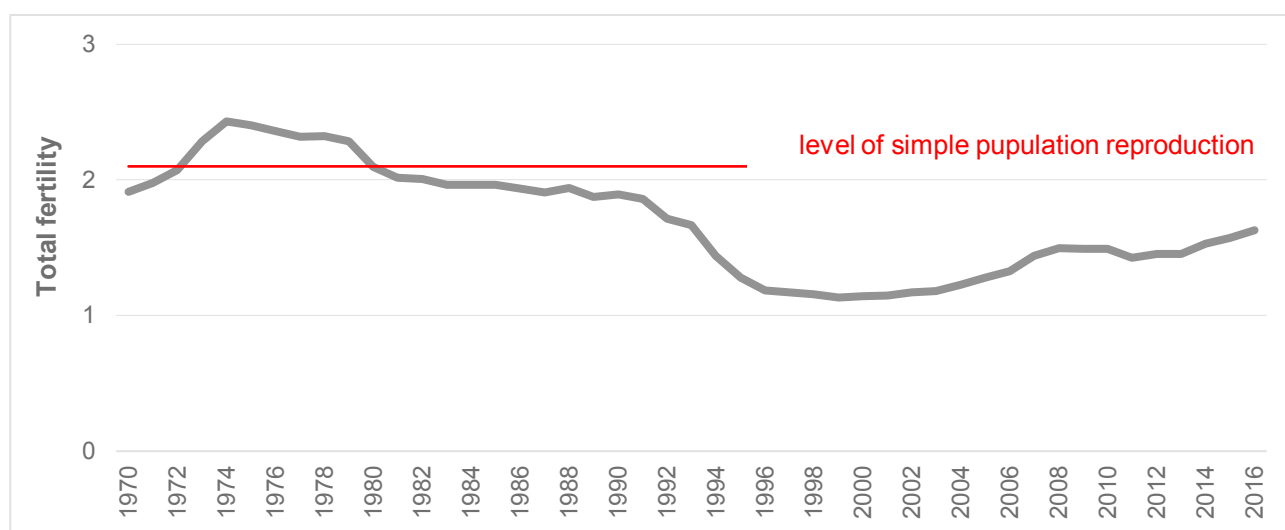
The second demographic transition means **complex change of reproductive behavior**. On the outside, this expresses itself not only by tempered decrease of fertility, but also by **postponing parenthood and growth of the primipara average age**. The average age of primipara mothers in the Czech Republic within last years, came near to 29 (see picture 3). The grooving age of primiparas is one of the outer manifestation all-society values changes, which hang together even with **the change of woman's role in the Czech society**. On the other hand, this progressive trend of primipara growing age can involve further risk from the point of population reproduction, namely due to the growing riskiness of pregnancy in later age.

Picture 1: Live-born and natural increase in the Czech Republic 1970-2016



Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office), own calculations. Data valid as at k 1. 9. 2017. (GR-life born, G-natural increase)

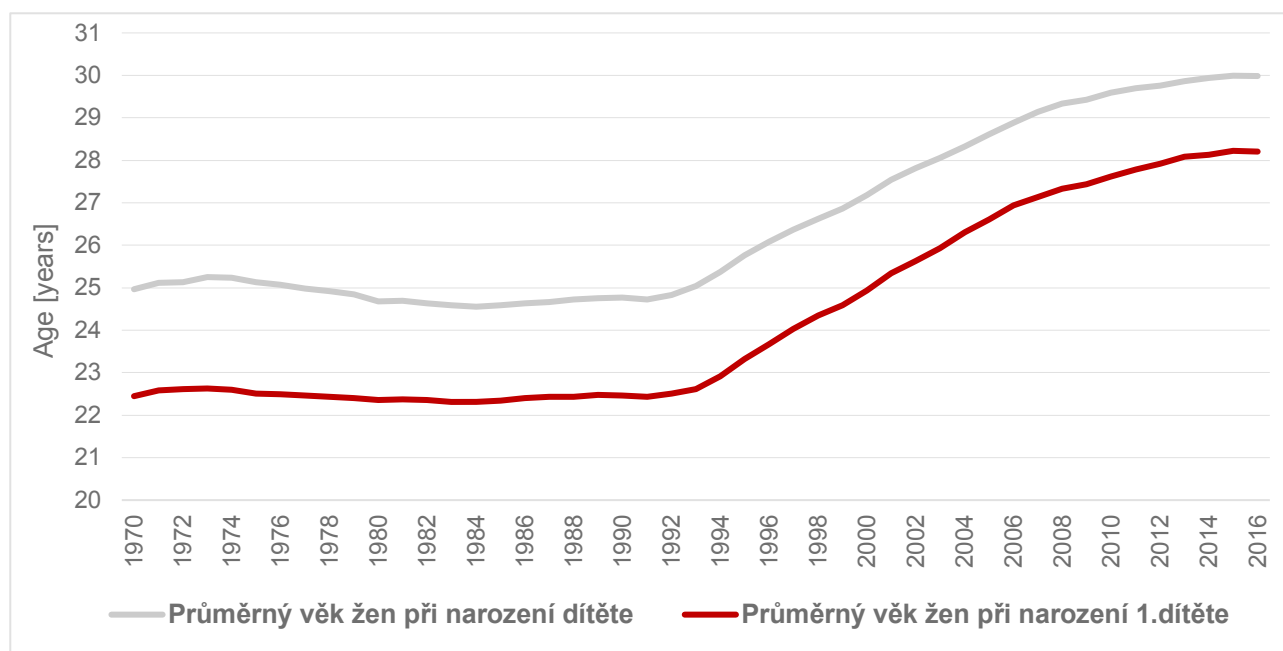
Picture 2: Development of total fertility in the Czech Republic 1970-2016



Note.: Limit of simple population reproduction responds to total fertility 2.1 children per one woman (van der Kaa, 1987).

Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office), own calculations. Data valid as at k 1. 9. 2017.

Picture 3: Average age of women when delivering children 1970-2016 (red – the first child) (grey-born child)



Note: Average age of mothers is related to the distribution of age specific rates of fertility.

Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (R – first child, G – average age of mothers)

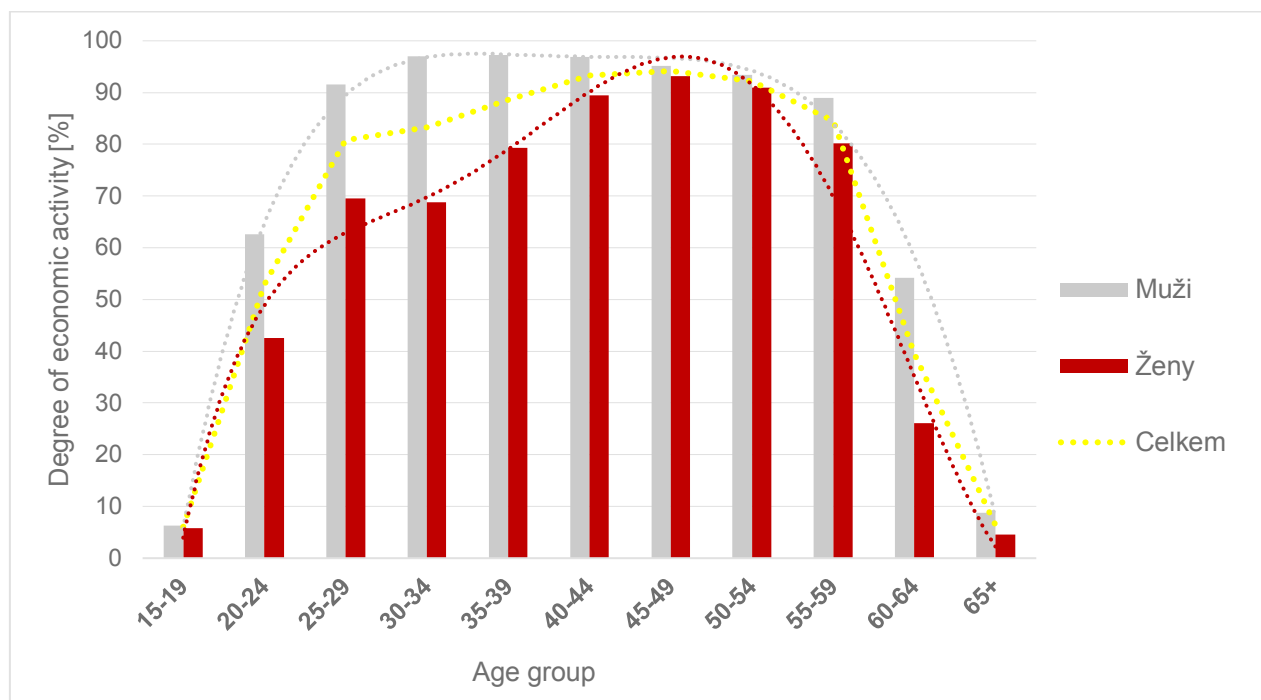
Postponing parenthood until later age can bring more intensive problems i.e. so-called **sandwich generation**. Sandwich generation is mostly created by women in the middle of their life biography and they are **scrapped by work, needs of their children and ageing parent** (Brody, 2004). **Fulfilling all these roles** is more complicated for these women, it is **time consuming**, their main fear is potential loss of job. Currently, the sandwich generation is related mainly with women 40-60 years old. We can assume, that most of them takes care especially of elderly children (high school student and university students). Age shift of mothers when delivering the first baby upwards can, **in future generations** mean, that **potential mothers start to take care about ageing parents now, when they decide to have the first child**. Decreasing number of populations in one century is bringing not only positive, but also negative effects and pressure on the sandwich generation alias **women in the middle** will be growing.

2.2 Economic activity

Indicators connected with the economic status of inhabitants in a form of economic activity enable assessment of how many persons are engaged in productive activities of national economy (employed persons), how many persons would like to engage (unemployed persons) and on the contrary, how many persons is out of labor market (economically inactive persons). The following part will be aimed at the economic activity of men and women in productive age, whereby special attention will be paid to economic activity of women at about the age of 30 – i.e. the age which is, on the Czech Market, considered critical just due to parenthood. In the following part we will use only indicators adjusted for the influence of the population age structure (i.e. they are not affected by weak and strong population years).

The essential conception of inhabitants' economic activity can be acquired based on data covering the degree of economic activity. The degree of economic activity is defined as a share of work force and population of 15 years old and older persons. The total degree of economic activity shades with specificities of behavior of men and women in single age groups, therefore picture 4 shows, except the total degree of economic activity also specific results based on age and gender.

Picture 4: Degree of economic activity according to age and gender in the Czech Republic 2016



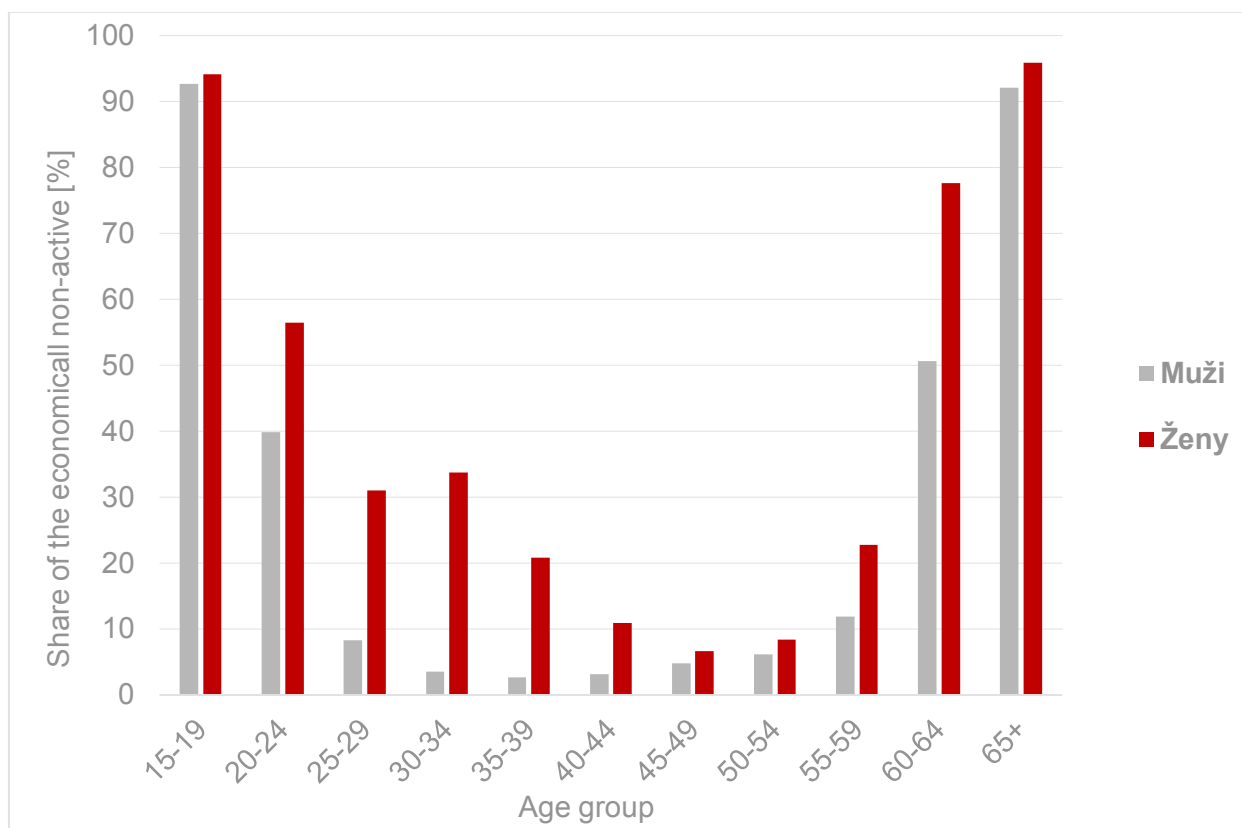
Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (G – men, R – women, Y – total)

Picture 4 clearly shows, that **more than 90 % men enter the job market before 30** and until 60 their degree of economic activity moves at a comparable level as of the younger age groups. **Substantial decrease in the economic activity of men starts after 60** and unambiguously relates reaching their legal old age pension limit.

At women the development of economic activity relates with motherhood and care of children. Their degree of economic activity balances **not until the age group 45-49 and reached it maximum comparable with the economic activity of man** at the same age. Women start to leave the labor market earlier than men – substantial decrease of economic activities comes already in the age group of 55-59 years old women, which relates to reaching statutory old age pension limits.

These finding are illustrated by the level of economic non- activity, respectively the share of economically inactive inhabitants in given age. At men the development of economic non-activity meets the standard idea of a life cycle. Roughly **before 30 years of age the share of economically non-active men decreases to minimum level**, which relates with finishing of formal education and full entry to the job market. Since this age the share of economically non-active men stays on a low level until 50 years of age. Then the share of economically non-active men increases and after 65 it is coming to 100 %. In other words, after 65 only minimum men stays on the labor market.

Picture 5: Share of economically non-active inhabitants the Czech Republic 2017 in each age group according to gender.



Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (G – men, R – women)

Women embody from the point of economic non-activity **different behavioral patterns**. In younger age women are entering the job market more gradually and less than men. Entering the job market of women is affected by motherhood, which is illustrated by **growing share of economically non-active women in the age group of 30-34** (see picture 5). Motherhood is therefore one of the reasons why the share of economically non-active men and women balance at about 50 years of age. Therefore, women **do not have to meet the hypothesis of Modigliani about life cycle** (Modigliani and Brumberg, 1954 and Modigliani and Ando, 1963, resp. 1964), according to it young employees are paid worse in comparison with the older ones, but there is strong probability, that their wages will grow with their age. Shorter time on the labor market, however can cause that this assumption will not be fulfilled in time.

For the group of women, it is characteristic, that after 50 their share of economic non-activity grows much faster than of men. In age group of 55-59 there already 23% economically non-active women, non-active men of the same age reach 12 %. **Lower economic activity of women and shorter engagement on the labor market** however

brings **long term consequences**, which express themselves through e.g. lower old age pensions (read on).

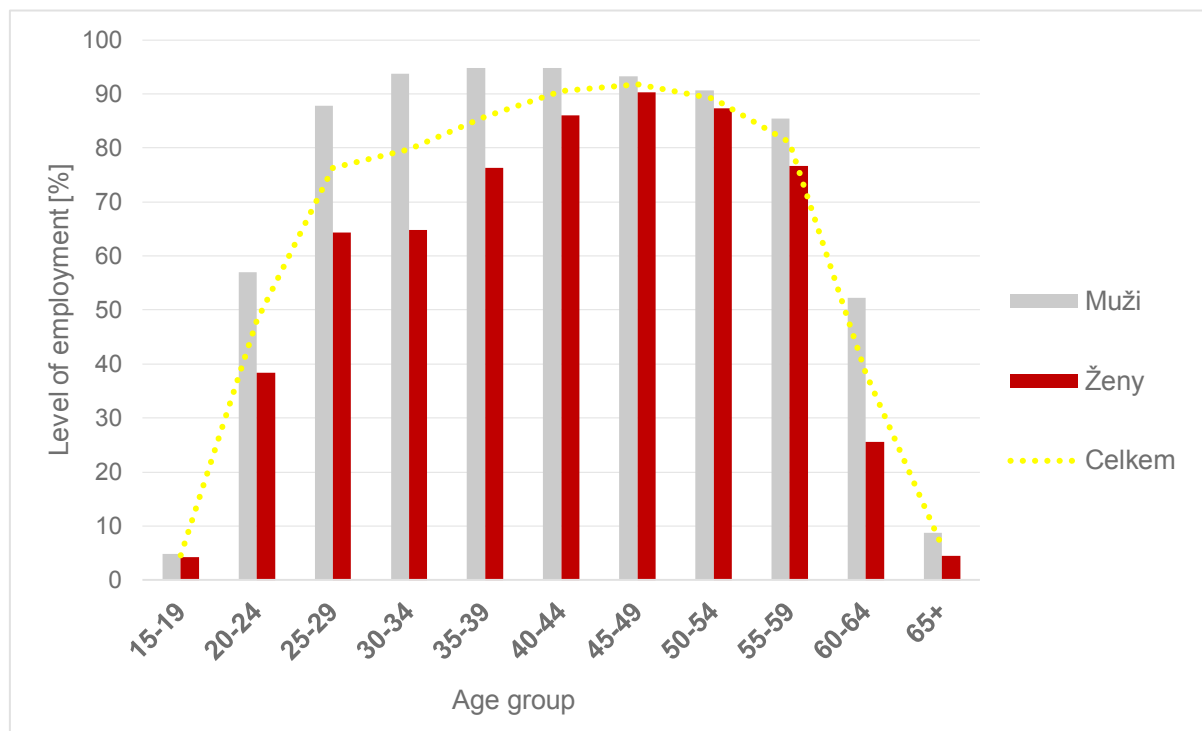
2.2.1 Employment

Economically active inhabitants can be subdivided into employed and unemployed persons. This subdivision is a key factor even from the point of researching the influence of parenthood on work activities of single persons.

Employment level according to age and gender in picture 6. It is clear, that the specific **degrees of employment** according to age and gender show **identical trends as the degree of economic activity** in picture 4. This result is not, from the analytical point of view, surprising – employed people make up 95 % economically active inhabitants.

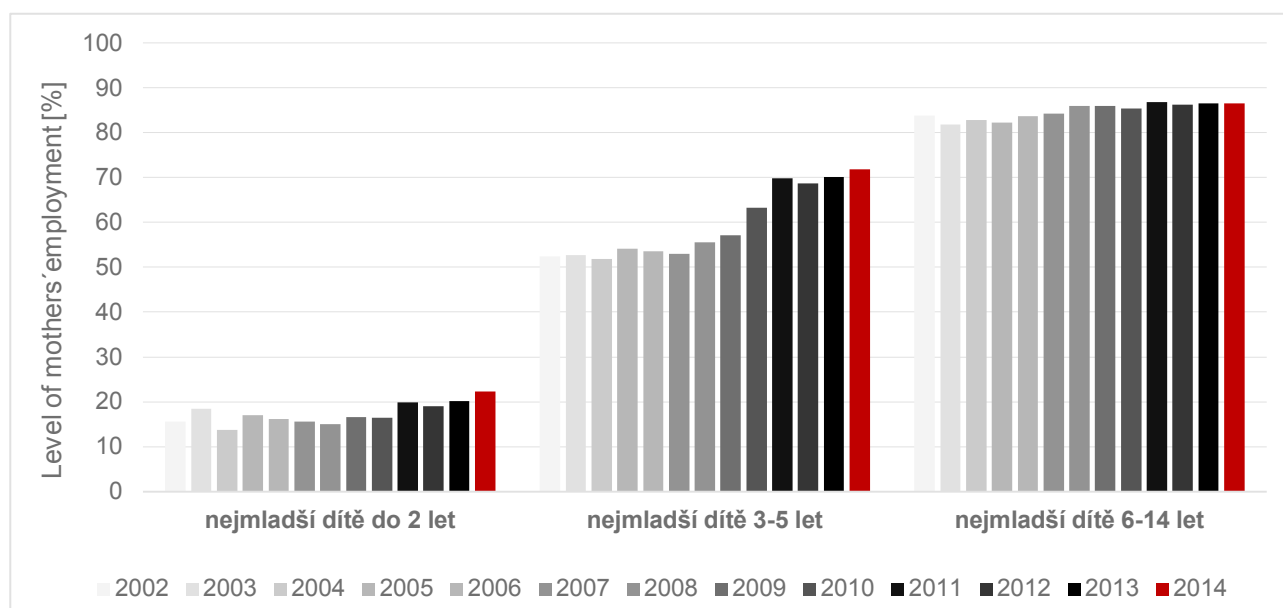
Level of specific employment degrees could be analyzed in detail also according to the youngest children age. In the Czech Republic, **mothers 'employment degree with children to 2 years, is one of the lowest in Europe**. Picture 7 shows that within more than last ten years the degree of employment of women with the youngest child up to 2 years of age grew by 6 % and in the last years it balances around 20 %. Prominent change in employment of women started at **mothers with the youngest children at the age of 3-5 years**, their **employment** from 2002 to 2014 **grew by 20 % and came near to employment of mothers with older children**.

Picture 6: Employment level according to age and gender in the Czech Republic in 2016



Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (G – men, R – women. Y – total)

Picture 7: Level of mothers' employment according to the age of the youngest child in the Czech Republic 2002-2014



Source: OECD, own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (youngest children before 2, 3-5, 6-14)

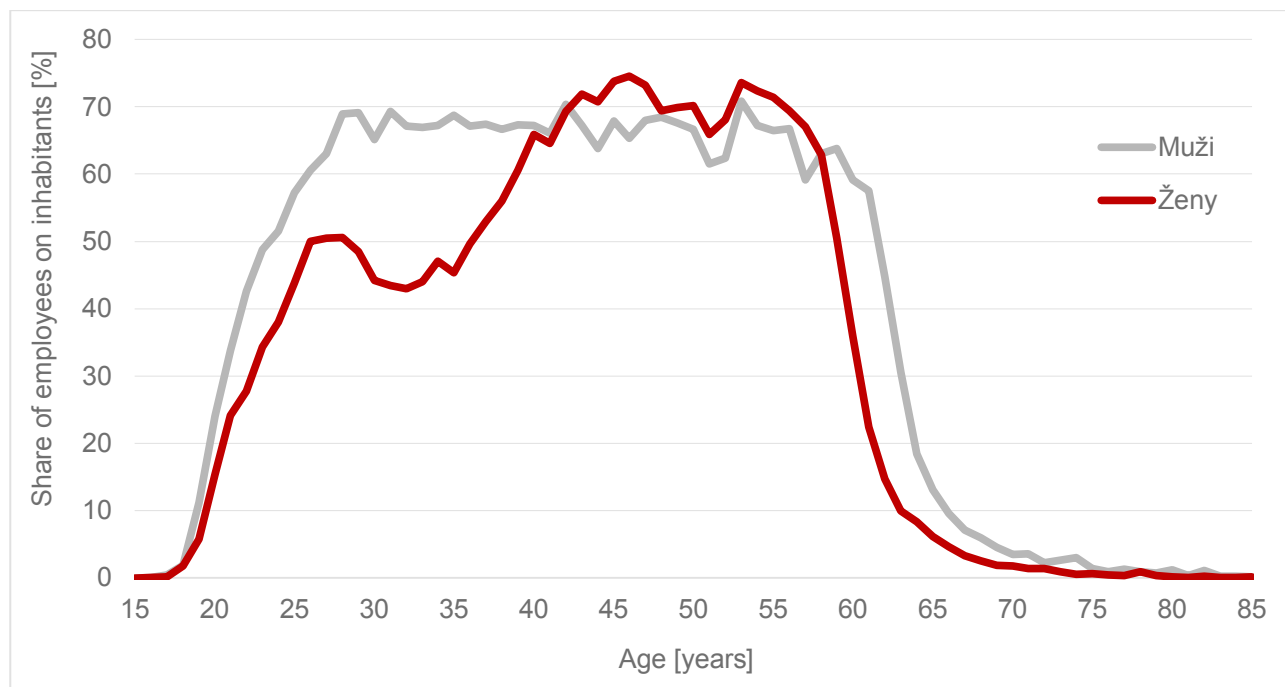
Employed people could further be subdivided according to their position at work. Following this subdivision, in the Czech Republic there are most numerous **employees**, who, on a long-term basis establish roughly **80 % employed people**. The second most numerous group are self-employers, according to the definition of the selective labor force research, i.e. entrepreneurs with employees (so called employers), entrepreneurs without employees (people working on their own account) and supporting family members. Each of these mentioned categories of employed people is facing specific problems, when returning to the job market after maternity leave or parental leave. Employees should respect rules of the work organization and their employer, while self-employers can adjust their work organization easier just following their potential and preferences. This advantage of self-employers is redeemed by numerous disadvantages (e.g. unsure income). Due to the fact, that this topic will be covered by chapter 5, now, in this chapter we will just pay attention to employees.

Following employment data will be taken from the structural income statistics in a form of **Informačního systému o průměrném výdělku (ISPV)/Information System on Average Income**. ISPV contains data about 2 mills. employees, and enables quite precisely assess behavior of employees in the Czech Republic.

Picture 8 shows the share of employees in the Czech population according to age and gender. It is clear **work potential** in the Czech Republic, **namely of employed women between 25 and 40**. In this period women are less engaged on the labor market than men, which is unambiguously related to the length of parental leave (and eventually with its chaining). The picture clearly shows, that the optimal conditions for faster return to the job market after maternity or parental leave in the Czech Republic are not provided. Also, this is one of the reasons, why Kalíšková and Münich (2012) call this phenomenon “**waste potential of the country**”.

The decision, when a woman is going to have her first child and how fast she returns to the job market, is influenced by numerous factors. It turns out, that the substantial role is played by **the character of concrete job**, which is surely followed by reached education. Picture 9 shows the share of employed women in their population according to age and type of profession, i.e. in groups of manual and mental labor. Picture 9 clearly shows, that women with mental job embody different behavioral patterns in comparison with manually working women. For **mentally working women** it is characteristic that they **leave labor market in later age** (after 28) and **return sooner** (employment is reaching maximum at about 40 years of age). Mentally working women show noticeably lower local fluctuation between 40 and 45, which could probably cohere with the second, but less prominent maternity wave in later age. This phenomenon could confirm, that postponing the first child to later age and further delay between first-born and second-born children (or further children to come).

Picture 8: Share of employees in Czech population according to age and gender 2016



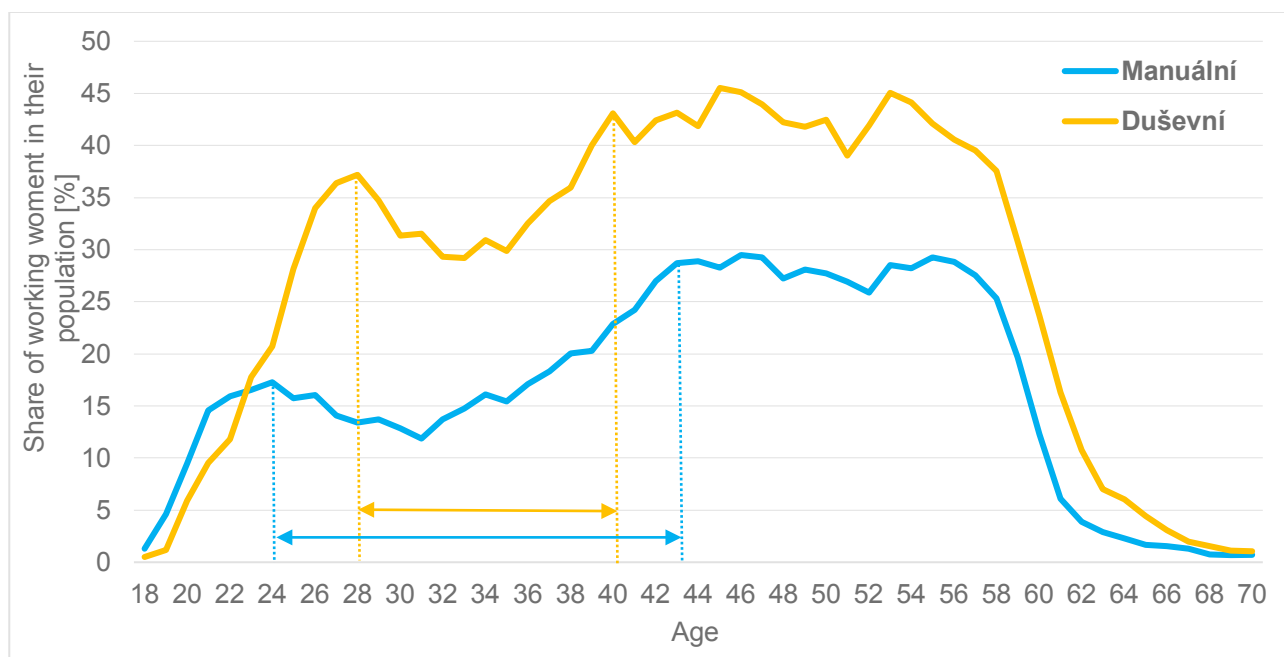
Note: The share of employees on inhabitants is, for this analysis, calculated as a share of employees on inhabitants according to units of reached age. The number of employees relates to full time equivalent according to ISPV, while we used methodology of conversion for results related to indicators coherent with working hours. The number of employees in each age relates to mean status of inhabitants in each year according to age and gender.

Source: ČSÚ (demographic statistic), ISPV (MPSV – Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs), own calculations. Data valid as at 29. 6. 2017. (grey – men, red – women)

Manually working women leave the labor market much earlier (evident decrease already at the age of about 24) and they **return much later** in comparison with mentally working women (employment starts to get closer to maximum at the age of 44). For manually working women there is characteristic more open return after parental leave. This could be caused by intentional postponing returns to work and using further parental leave. These jobs suppose lower pressure towards personal self fulfilment. Manual job is often characterized by **worse working conditions and lower level of remuneration**, which does not motivate manually working women to return soon to the job market as well.

Picture 9 shows, that **the patterns of woman behavior differ especially in fertility age**. What is interesting, that **the patterns of leaving to old age pension are not different at all**. Mentally and manually working women therefore leave the job market on a massive scale, when they reach the limit of their regular old age pension.

Picture 9: Share of manually and mentally working women in the population of women according to age in 2016



Note: Amongst mental employees their people, who work in the main class of employment 1.-5. According to CZ-ISCO classification. Manual employees are in the main class 6.-7. According to CZ-ISCO classification.

Source: MPSV (ISPV), ČSÚ (demographic statistic), own calculation. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (blue – manual, yellow – mental)

2.2.2 Unemployment

Women after maternity/parental leave are often mentioned related to unemployment. Main task of this chapter will be to describe real situation of men and women from the point of unemployment risk. Attention will be paid to the unemployment level detected in the framework of selective research of working power (VŠPS) and its subfolder of long term unemployment.

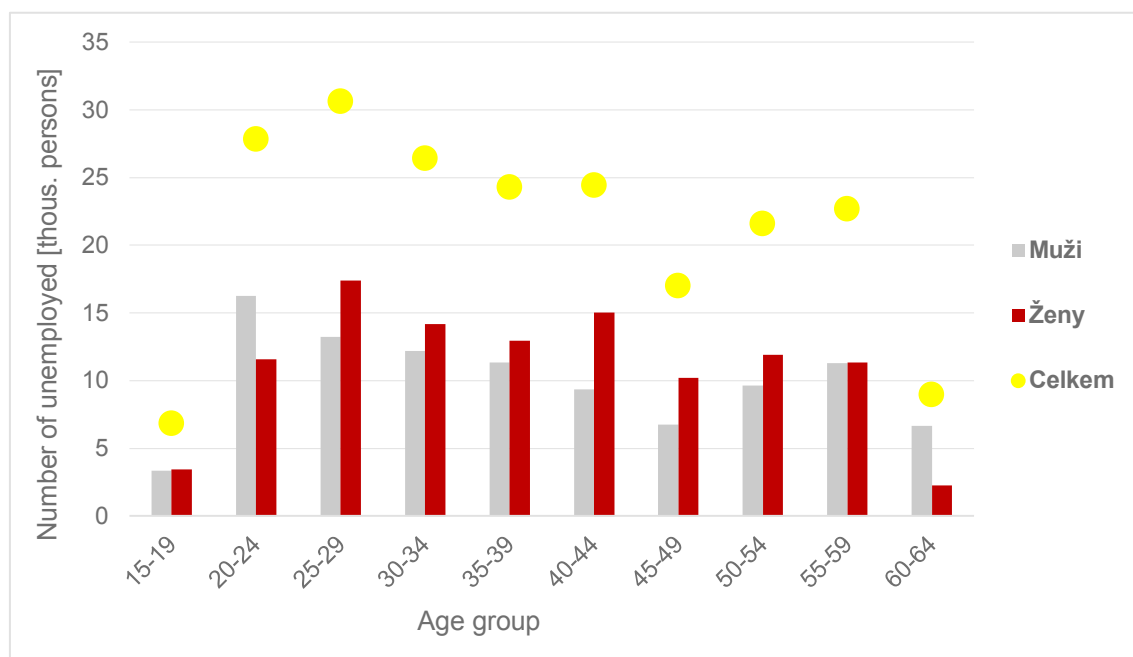
Unemployment data are gathered within VŠPS, i.e. the scope of research and unemployment indicators fully meet the definitions the International Labor Organization (ILO) and methodological recommendation by Eurostat. According to international standards an **unemployed person** is a person of 15 and older, usually living on a monitored area, which meets three conditions:

- **The person is unemployed** (i.e. with no paid job or self-employment);
- Commonly **ready to start work** (i.e. within the reference time the person can immediately or at the latest, within 14 days, start paid job or self-employment);

- **Actively looking for a job** (i.e. within last 4 weeks was active to find a job – through labor office, private job agency, relatives etc., or actively securing resources to establish own business).

Number of unemployed people in the Czech Republic, see picture 10. The picture clearly shows, that problems related to unemployment are mainly about younger age groups. The highest numbers of unemployed men are currently in the age groups before 30 let. For women there are very **problematic age groups of 25 - 44**, where in 2016, **the highest absolute numbers of unemployed persons were identified**. High number of unemployed women can be closely related to the return of women to work after maternity and parental leave. Women in the Czech Republic return to the job market after several years of separation, which negatively affects their chances for their exercise.

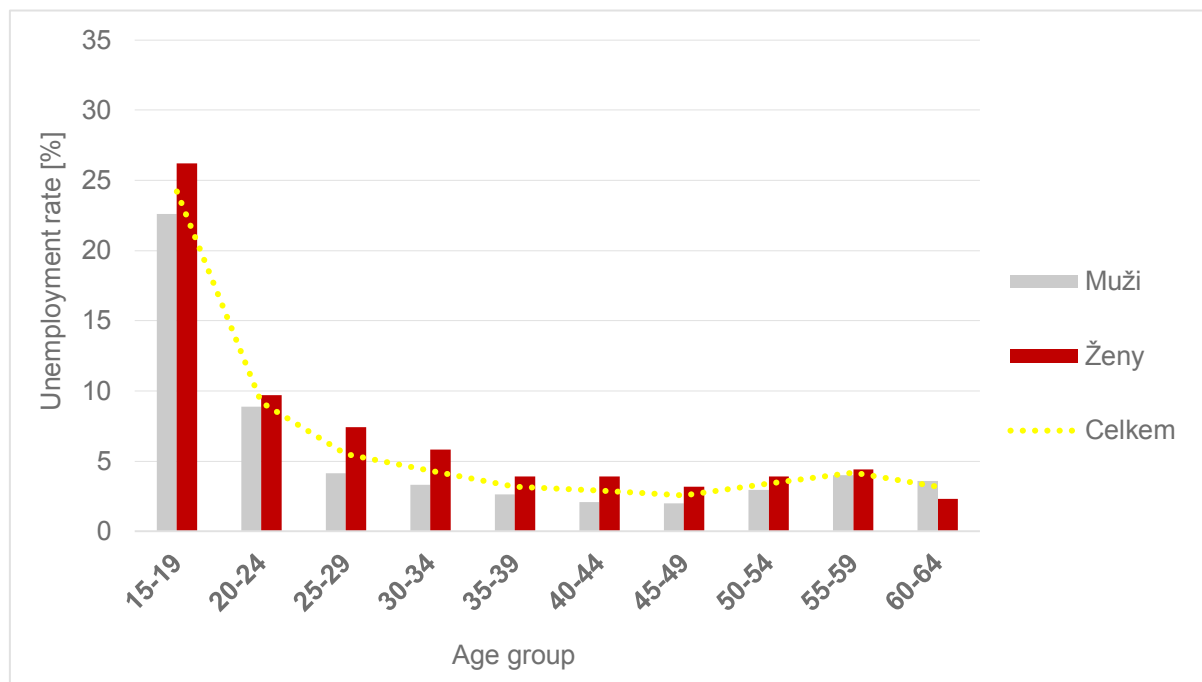
Picture 10: Number of unemployed according to age and gender in the Czech Republic 2016



Source: ČSÚ (VŠPS), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (R – women, G – men, Y – total)

The above-mentioned trends are proven also by picture 11, showing the development of specific unemployment degree according to age and gender. Even after filtrating away the influence of the size of single age groups, it is clear, that **the unemployment rate of women in fertile age exceeds the unemployment rate of men** in appropriate age groups. In these mentioned age groups between 25 and 44 the unemployment rate of women is in some cases nearly doubled in comparison with men. **Successful situation solving for unemployed women in the incriminated age is just apparent.**

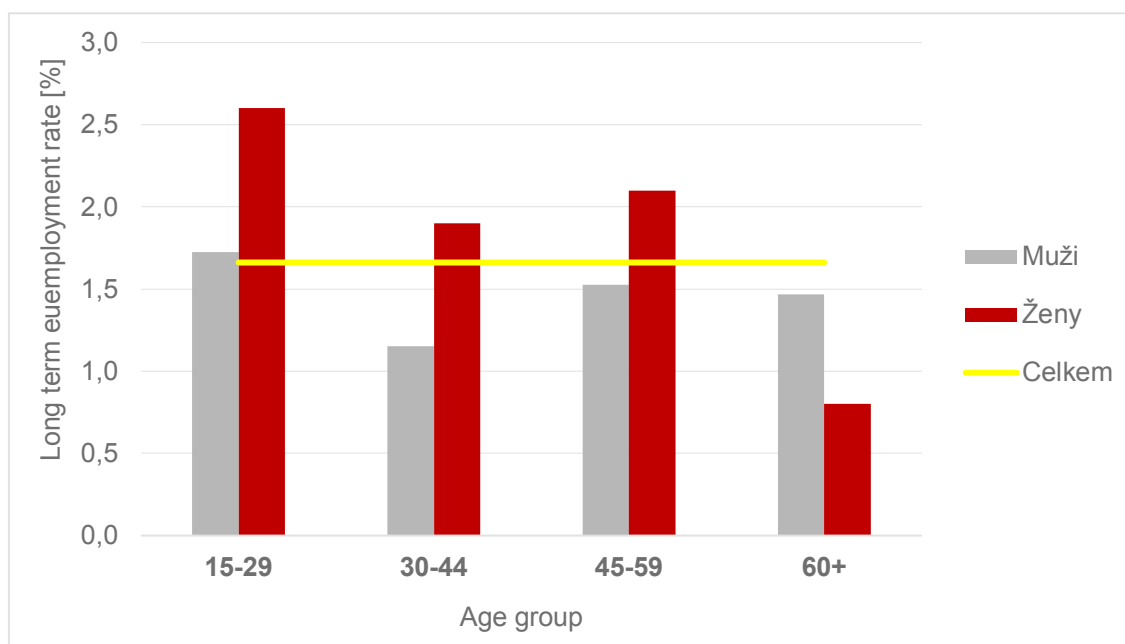
Picture 11: General unemployment rate according to age and gender in the Czech Republic 2016



Source: ČSÚ (VŠPS), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (R – women, G – men, Y – total)

The number of unemployed itself and unemployment rate in each age group do not have to present any substantial problem, if the people do not stay in the unemployed position too long. In situations when the job market can adsorb the unemployed in fast cycles, there are no prominent changes in psychical state of the unemployed people. Practical though even during the period of economic growth some unemployed cannot find a job in bearable time and after crossing the imaginary line their working habits are rapidly vanishing, social contacts are limited, and unfortunately the income of a given person decreases. Finding a job is more complicated and the unemployed person is wandering around in an imaginary circle of unemployment. **The period, when the psychical breakage of the unemployed person comes, is different for each single person. For statistical purposes this line is considered to come in one year.** For this reason, the **long-term unemployment rate** is quantified as a share of the number of unemployed in one year and total labor force. Long term unemployment rate in single age groups in 2016 is show in picture 12. It is obvious, that **women deal with the problem of long term unemployment more frequently than men.** Dramatic improvement of long term unemployment rate after 60 years of age at women is just fallacy, because people older than 60, who cannot find a new job leave the job market for ever.

Picture 12: Long term unemployment rate according to age and gender in the Czech Republic 2016



Source: ČSÚ (VŠPS), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (R – women, G – men, Y – total)

2.2.3 Maternity and parental leave

Decisions of parents in the Czech Republic about entering the job market is substantially influenced by the conditions for **making use of maternity and parental leave**. Both allowances (financial support in motherhood and parental allowance) respect **the principle of solidarity**, i.e. by means of the mechanism of daily basis of assessment handicaps people with higher incomes⁶. This motivates parents, who had higher income before their maternity or parental leave, **to return faster to the job market** and the time of apparent decrease of income is therefore eliminated at full blast. **Decision making about return to the job market** was by this year substantially **influenced by parameters for making use maternity or parental leave set up**. Parameters were not set up optimally for parents, who wanted to return to the job market sooner, **de facto they gave up a partial sum allocated for parental allowance**.

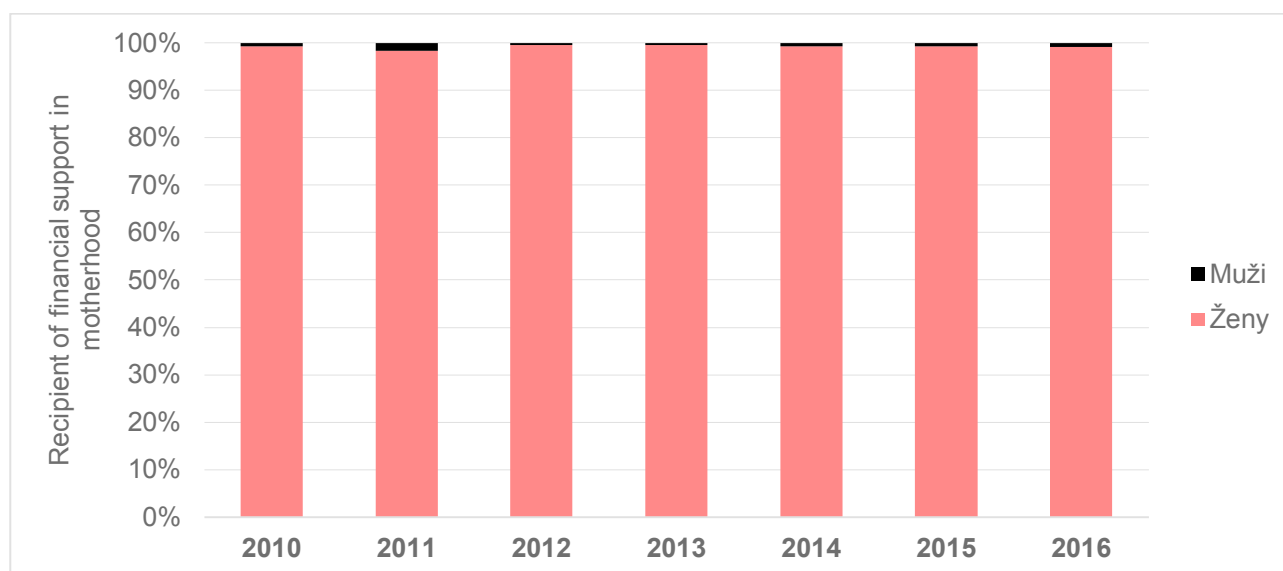
From 2018, there should be a substantial change in set up of parental leave and – besides other positive changes – making use of parental allowances **will consider individual needs of single parents from the point of their level and pace of making use of parental allowances**.

⁶ Partly explained, why women work mentally return to the job market sooner (see chapter 2.2).

Because especially within the last years there is a noticeable effort to adjust the conditions for making use of maternity leave and parental leave, to fit flexibility demands, not all the measures taken fulfilled the original expectations. One of the examples can be **engagement of fathers to care about children**. This aspect experienced great (even media) attention, because higher share of men taking care about children **indicates shift in all-society perception of woman's role**. Considering the purpose of this study and conclusions in the first chapter related to the historical perspective in the coming part we are going to aim at this aspect, so at the structure of recipients of the financial support in motherhood and parenthood within the last years.

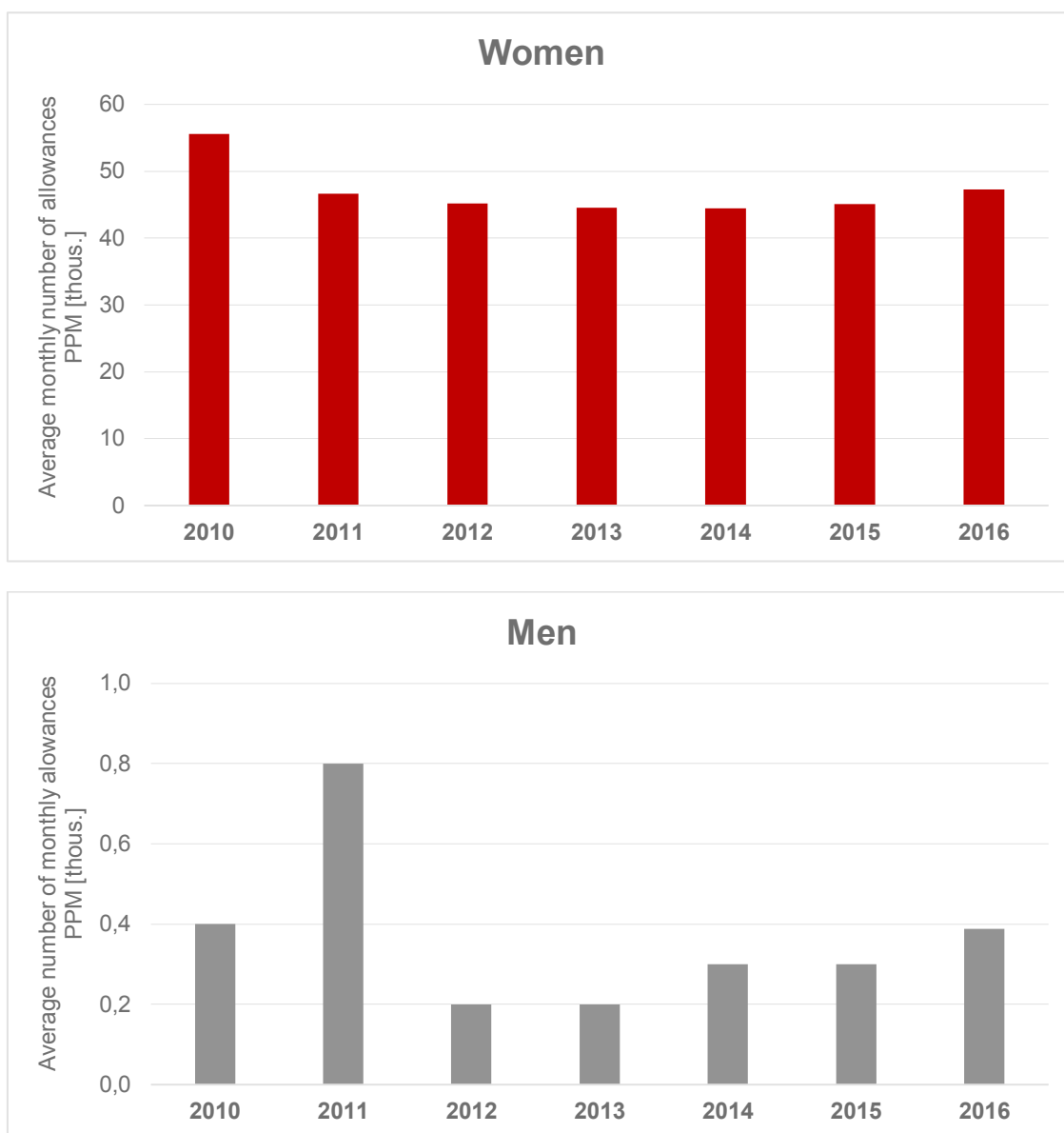
Picture 13 clearly shows, that even despite higher effort the tendency to engage men more intensively into case about the youngest children fails. The rate of men within all recipients of allowances in motherhood and parenthood stagnates at single percentage points. **In 2011 there was prominent increase of number of men** (but still in hundreds (see picture 14), which unambiguously relates to the economic crisis. In other words, the **model of "father on maternity leave – working mother"** could become, **during the economic crisis an optimal strategy**. Since 2012 the number of men on maternity leave decreased again and even in 2016 did not reach a half of men compared to 2011. Even this development proves the conclusion, that the above-mentioned model of "father on maternity leave - working mother" **is used just on a short-term basis** and in time, when the family does not have any other choice.

Picture 13: Structure of recipients of financial allowances in motherhood according to gender 2010-2016



Source: MPSV, own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (B- men, R – women)

Picture 14: Average monthly number of motherhood financial allowances in motherhood according to gender 2010-2016

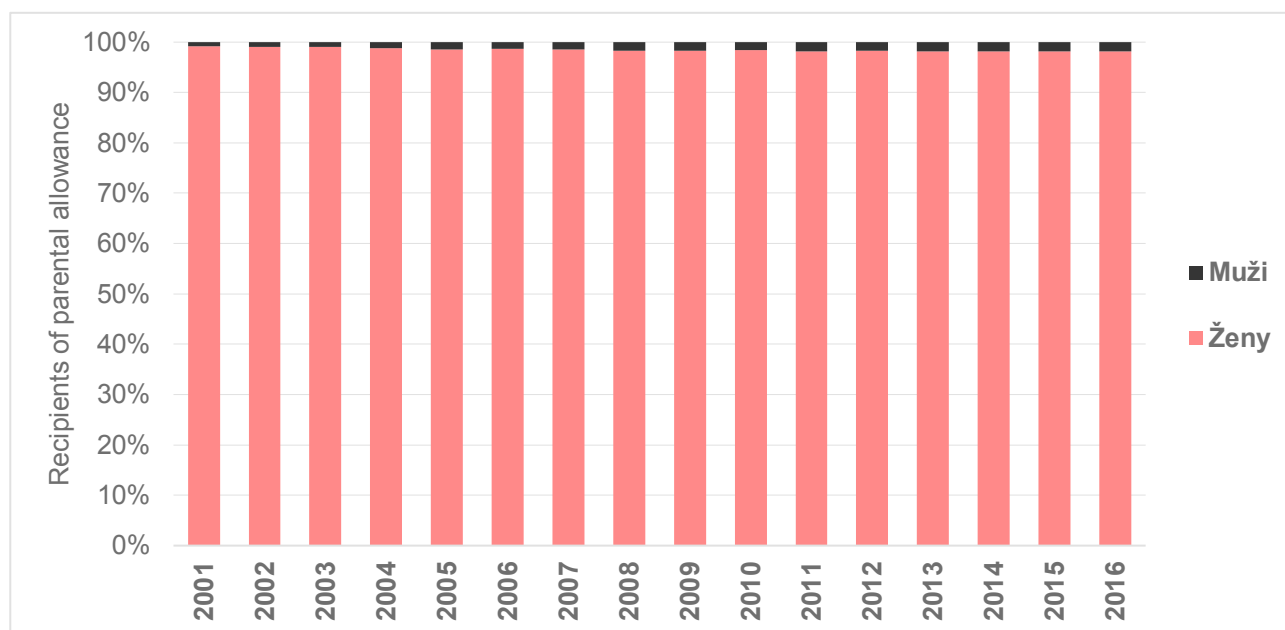


Source: MPSV, own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017.

Low share of men in the role of recipients of financial support in motherhood is not, from the point of decreasing exercise of mothers on the job market so principal, because this allowance is provided roughly just to 6 months of child's age. High share of mothers who are taking care about children in this period, is in tune with recommendations of psychologists considering the viewpoint of early child development and in tune with effort to provide a child the possible care including breast feeding (see chapter one).

Obsolescence of mothers 'human capital comes especially in time of parental leave, respectively more precisely **in time of making use of parental allowance**. This could be used, according to the existing conditions, up to the fourth year of child's age, despite of the fact, that employers must maintain the working position for parents only 3 years. Passing away negative impacts from the point of economic activity (i.e. transition from parental leave directly to work, which is at his moment rational decision), such long separation from the labor market shows itself especially in **treatment of human capital** and partly in **changed working habits**⁷. **Period of uninterrupted parental leave** is a **critical period**, when usability of a given parent on the job market decreases. In this respect there is **the key role of the second parent** and more active engagement in care about children even in time considered social from the point of working regime (i.e. especially during working days). Reality in Czech families is utterly different. Picture 15 shows, that **women** are most of **parental allowances recipients**. Even if the share of men receiving parental allowance gradually grew, it never overcame, in any monitored year, level of 2 %.

Picture 15: Structure of parental allowance recipients in a monitored year according to gender



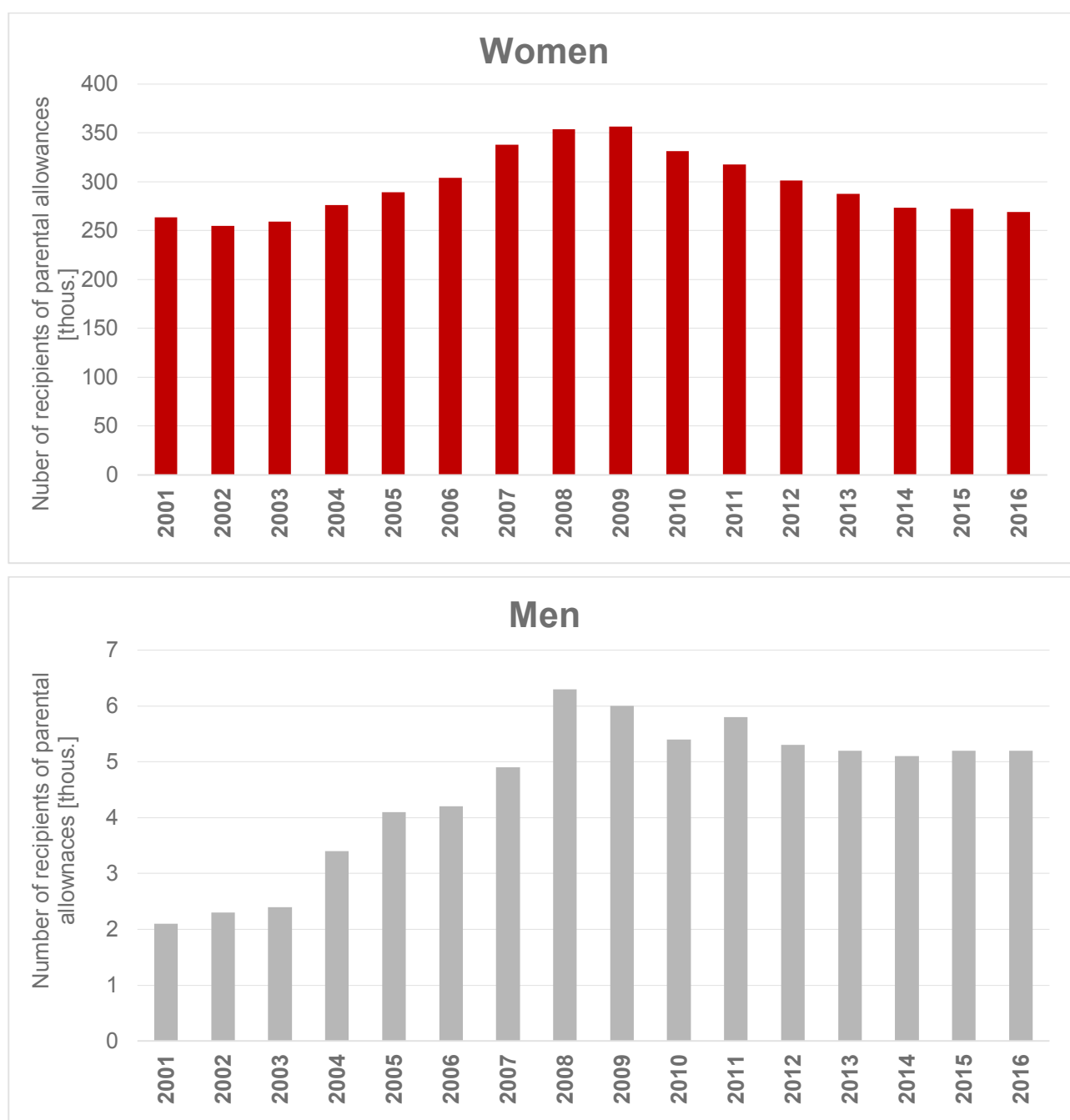
Note: Shares are calculated from average monthly number of parental allowance recipients in a monitored year.

Source: MPSV, own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017. (B – men, R – women)

⁷ Impacts of parenthood are different for each profession.

Development of absolute numbers of men and women receiving parental allowance (picture 16) indicates, that the change in perception of man and woman role in the Czech society is very gradual and **traditional division of roles prevails**, which is **economically beneficial** for many families.

Picture 16: Development of the number of family allowance recipients according to gender 2001-2016



Note: Number of recipients refers to average number of recipients on parental allowances in a monitored year.

Source: MPSV, own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017.

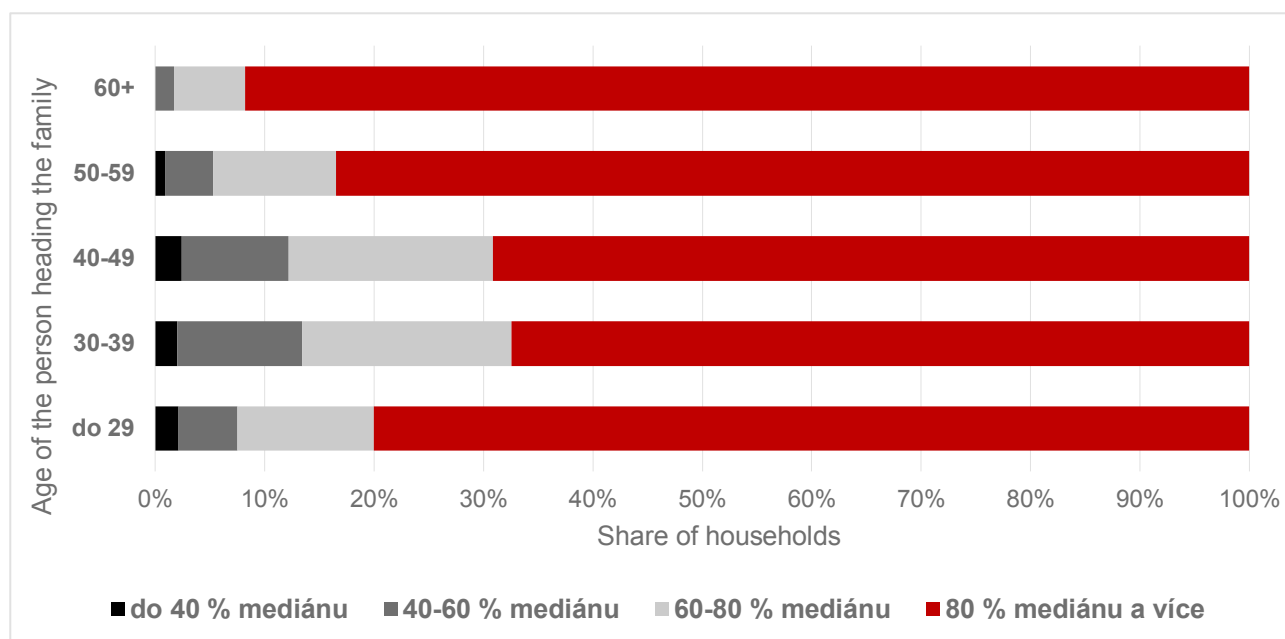
2.3 Family income

According to McDonald (2002) costs per child could be divided into direct and indirect. **Direct costs**, according to McDonald reflex **actual costs per child** after deducing all financial advantages (e.g. taxation). **Indirect costs** are based on **costs related to lost opportunities**, the biggest part of which is income, hypothetically lost by parents due to preparation for parenthood and then care of their child. Direct costs mentioned by McDonald are unambiguously connected with family incomes, therefore this first part of the chapter is dedicated to family incomes and poverty related to it, plus material deprivation. Further part of this chapter is dedicated to indirect costs, specifically to lost income due to parenthood.

2.3.1 Family incomes and link to poverty

Position of a family from the point of their income is necessarily influenced by the family structure. It is obvious, that economic situation of childless families will be better than of the families with comparable income but with supported children as family members. Quite logically, with the growing number of family members the income per one-member decreases. This indicated by subdivision of families with working members, see picture 17. **Households, headed by a 30-49 years old person, embodies lower incomes** in comparison with median average income per person than in other families. One of the factors causing the lower income level of these families is just now parenthood.

Picture 17: Subdivision of families with working members according to median average income per person in the Czech Republic 2016



Up to 40%

40-60 %

60-80 %

80% and more

Note: Graf shows subdivision of families according to monthly income per person in households with at least one working member in relation to median average income per person.

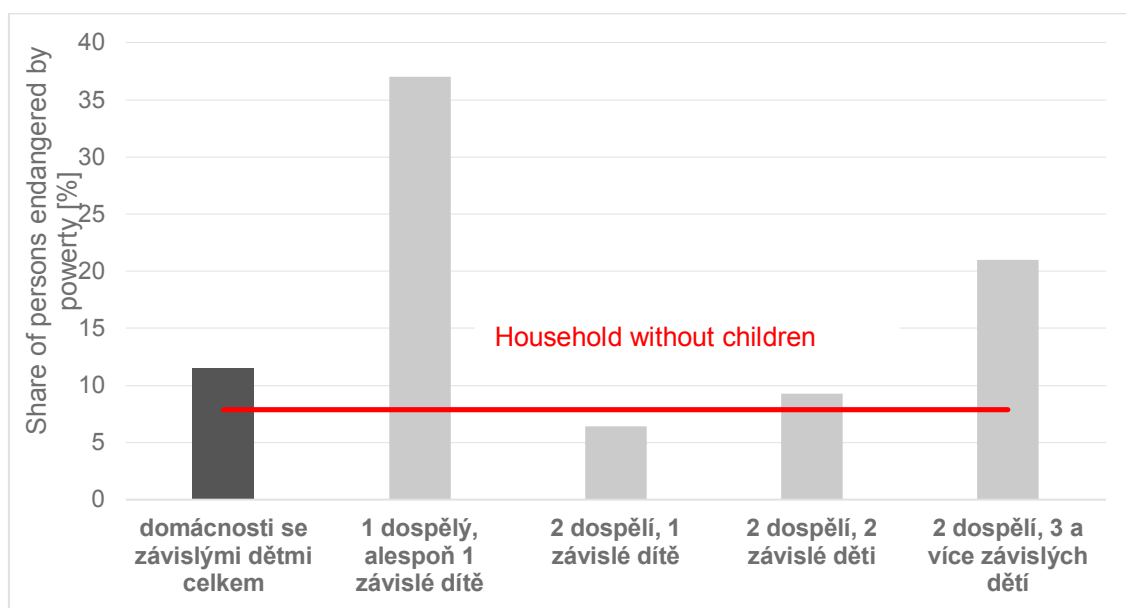
Source: Living conditions (ČSÚ), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017.

Parenthood relates to higher costs and/or their changed structure. In the Czech Republic the costs related to child upbringing are promoted in the media, which does not thrive natality policy being mentioned without necessary consequences. Excessive costs related to parenthood can easily be mistaken for the risk of poverty. Picture 18 shows, that **parenthood itself does not necessarily mean higher risk of poverty.** Poverty endangers **single parents**, where **the risk of poverty is almost 5 times higher than in a childless family.** On the other hand, households with 2 adults and one child embody lower share or persons endangered by poverty then already mentioned childless families.

Following picture 18, we can conclude, that **delivering the second baby** in the Czech Republic in order, can be **slightly risky from the point of poverty danger.** This statement can be in time with the hypothesis by McDonald (2002). Women, while deciding about their first child consider more likely indirect costs. This could be partly the reason, why households with just one child are better positioned in terms of incomes, then the others. In other words – for the first child are mostly decided women able to minimize indirect costs. Decision making about other children in order is, according to McDonald, influenced by direct costs. This is absolutely in tune with picture 18. With growing number

of children in households the risk of poverty growing, so the decision of the parents to be is rational.

Picture 18: Persons endangered by poverty in selected types of families in the Czech Republic 2016



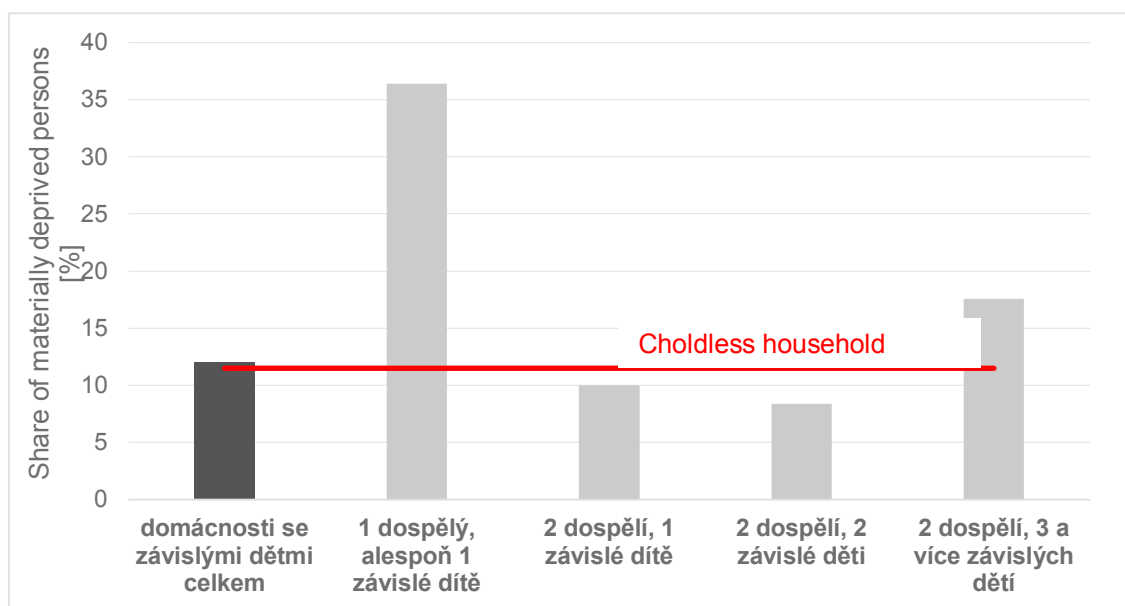
Households with dependent children total/1 adult at least one dependent child/2 adults 1 dependent child/2 adults and 2 dependent children/2 adults 3 and more dependent children

Note: Graf shows share of children in an appropriate type of household with income lower than 60 % median. Equivalent of dispensable income.

Source: Living conditions (ČSÚ), own calculations. Data as at 1. 9. 2017.

Alternative view of income situation of households in picture 19, showing the rate of **material deprivation**. Same as in the previous case **the most endangered are households with single parents**, where the share of materially deprived persons is more than triplicated in comparison with childless families. Considering the alarming income situation of these households, chapter 4 will be dedicated to problems of single parents.

Picture 19: Share of materially deprived persons in selected types of households in the Czech Republic 2016



Households with dependent children total/1 adult at least one dependent child/2 adults 1 dependent child/2 adults and 2 dependent children/2 adults 3 and more dependent children

Note: Graf shows the share of persons in appropriate types of households, which could not afford 3 and more items from the 9 selected indicators of material deprivation.

Source: Living conditions (ČSÚ), own calculations. Data valid as at 1. 9. 2017.

2.3.2 Indirect parenthood costs

Parenthood is connected not only with decreasing incomes per family member, but also with indirect costs. Indirect costs connected with parenthood respond to costs of lost opportunity of zero variant. In other words, **indirect costs** are made of **part of income lost by parents due to their parenthood**. According to McDonald (2002) **indirect costs decrease**, if the social structure **enables tuning up family and professional life**. This effect partly explains the fact, why **countries with higher level of participation of mothers have relatively high fertility**, while countries with low participation of mothers are characterized by low birth rate (Coleman, 1998). **Indirect costs** are, according to McDonald (2002) **key factors when deciding if a woman is going to have her first baby**. In decisions about further children, indirect costs do not play such a substantial role and decisions are aimed at direct costs. Chapman and team (1999) prove through the example of Australia, that birth rate can be maintained at women firstly in childbed at an elevated level due to measures, which makes it easier for them to stay a part of work force, and decrease the share of income, which could be lost due to their maternity (i.e. they decrease the share of lost income).

In the Czech environment the topic of indirect costs gets minimum attention, though it is one of the key factors when deciding if a woman is going to have a baby or not. Indirect costs are logically **higher in countries**, where **the job market is rigid** and does not enable parents, for distinct reasons to return to the labor market easily. The Czech labor market, following the above mentioned, could be included.

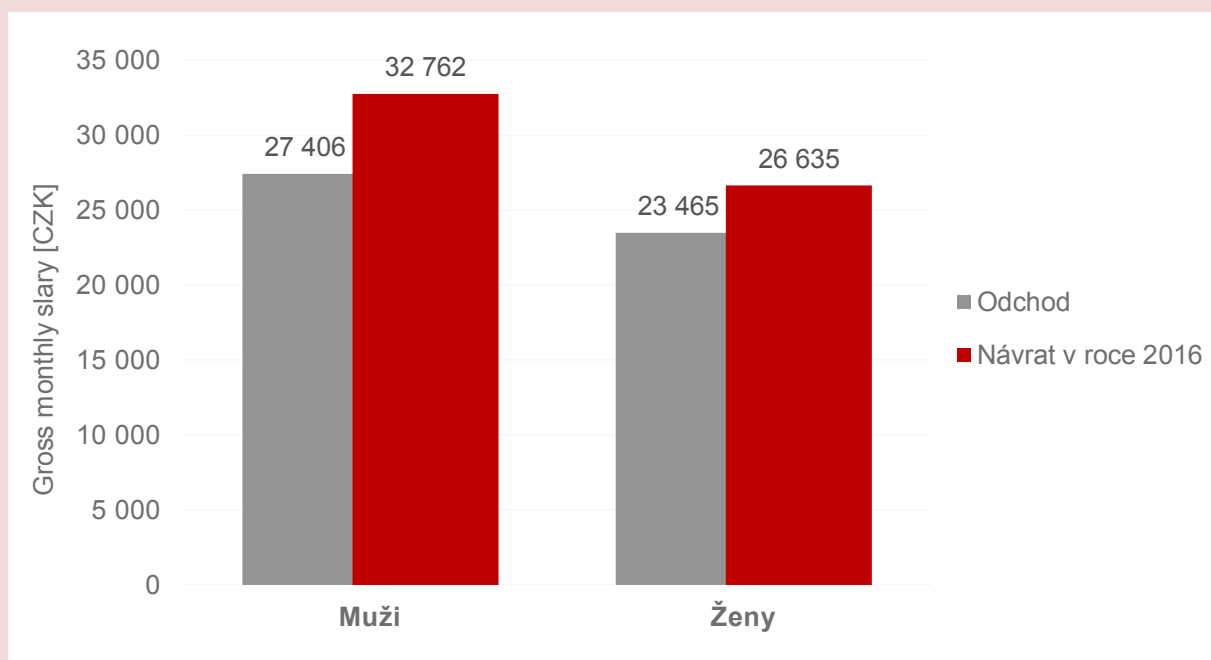
Indirect costs connected with parenthood are however in a long term horizon much higher. Key role is played by not only the level of employees' remuneration – i.e. parents, but also the development of their income in comparison with other employees. Even the group of employed parents is not homogenous – significant role is played by the fact, who of the parents provides bigger part of children's support, with all consequences in working life (higher absence at work, shorter working hours, lower total income etc.). Calculations from the Information system about average income show, that **women at the age of 20 – 40 returns minimally after 2-year absence to their work with lower growth of their incomes than men** in the same situation (see Box 1).

Box 1: What is the salary of employees returning to work after longer absence?

In the Czech Republic there is no current data source to enable quantification, within all employed population, differences of remuneration levels for employees – parents and other employees. Structural salary statistics in the Czech Republic presented by **the Information System on Average Income (ISPV)** enables by means of sophisticated mathematic and statistical methods monitor **wages development of single employees in time**, nevertheless within this framework there are data related to parenthood (number of children, their age etc.). ISPV however enables quantification of wage levels for selected groups of employees in an alternative way, and that is why hereunder we will present results of the pilot analysis.

For this study we created a panel of economic subjects and besides of employees for period 2002-2016. This panel integrates all employed population i.e. employees of wage and salary sphere no matter the size of the economic subject. economic subjects were in time connected by means of a unique indicator (identification number of such economic subject, ID). Employees were in time connected by means an employee identification number (if it was at the disposal and simultaneously it was stable in time), or based on indicators monitored by ISPV (age, gender, education, employment code etc.). Within the panel just persons at the age of 20 – 40 were monitored, as we, based on the available demographic data, suppose the highest fluctuation related to parenthood. From this panel **primarily persons, who returned in 2016 after at least 2-year absence** to their working position, were observed. For these persons gross monthly wage in 2016 was quantified (i.e. in the year of their return to their working position) and in the year of their temporary leave from their working position. The results of this pilot calculation from ISPV are shown by the following picture.

Picture 20: Average gross monthly salary of the 20 – 40 years old employees in time of temporary leave from working position and after minimum 2-year absence according to gender



Source: ISPV, own calculations. (G-leave, R-return/men – women)

The graph clearly shows, that within the monitored group of employees, **men had higher average salary, namely before their long-term leave and after**. This result is in tune with salary allocation in all the Czech Republic and is influenced by numerous factors, which are not related to the length of their absence (e.g. different structure according the work). When we take a closer look at single genders and relative change of average salary before and after two-year absence, we can see, that **men returned to their working position with their salary higher by 20 % in comparison with the salary in the time of temporary leave**. The salary level of women increased on average by 14 %, i.e. by 6 percentage points lower in comparison with men. This result can be largely influenced by reasons hidden behind the long-term absence. Concrete reasons are not monitored by ISPV, but following the above-mentioned information we can assume, that women absent in this age namely due to maternity reasons, while men absent namely due to other reasons (e.g. professional internship). Significant role is also played by the length of such average absence – men monitored within this panel say recorded shorter absences (4.1 year) compared to women (4.4 years).

The results of the pilot calculation indicate that the long-term absence at work negatively affects especially women. Considering the chosen age group of 20 – 40 years old employees we can assume, that **indirect costs related to parenthood outlive even after return to the job market**, namely at women. Within the pilot analysis though, we identified several problematic zones, which should be better solved. After elimination of the below stated problems the results will testify about the situation of employees with long-term

absence, without the predicative value decreased by undesirable error of bias. Due to the monitored issues the following partial problems should be solved:

- Identification of mistaken values and their differentiation from missing values (for reasons of non- response, mistakes or neglect),

- Identification of long-term absence reasons of men (men also embody long-term absence and it is necessary to remove the errors of bias – e.g. internship – e.g. usage of data about salary development or additional data resources),
- Alternative clearance of the panel according to usual length of parental leave (e.g. 3, 6 and 9 years), which could support clearance of the above-mentioned problem related to identification of reasons of man absence,
- Interconnection of results with other data sources (demographic development including development of birth-rate, economic status etc.),
- Detailed analysis of structure and numbers of men and women in all population and panel,

- Detailed analysis of interconnected data at the level of economic subjects (problem of predecessors and successors), at the level of employees (e.g. correct identification of changes within the level of education considering appropriate duration of studying).

3 Risks related to return to the job market after parental leave

Care about little children in CR has higher negative impact on women's employment than elsewhere in Europe. The difference between the employment rate of women without children and with children to six years of age, is in the Czech Republic one of the highest in Europe, on a long-term basis. It exceeds 32 percentage points (European commission, 2015). While employment of mothers of pre-school children in CR is in European comparison substandard, employment of mothers with school children on the contrary exceed the average in EU.⁸ **CR is characterized with specific model of woman employment. This means long-term economic non-activity of mothers and they do not return to work between childbirths of single children.** International studies show, that paid parental leave has positive effect on employment of women, but only if the interruption of economic activities is not long (Thévenon and Solaz, 2013). Long-term allowances related to care about family members together with little investments into care services, on the contrary decrease the employment of mothers (Morgan and Zippel, 2003). **CR combines long parental allowance with insufficient care services about pre-school children, which results in one of the lowest mother employment rate of pre-school children in Europe.**

3.1 Duration of parental leave

More than 4/5 mothers with children younger than three years and half of mothers with the youngest children 3 - 5 years old stay at household or they do just some temporary work (Hašková, 2011a). It is typical for CR, that **mothers do not return to the job market between deliveries of children.** Linkage of parental leaves occurred, due to changes of parental allowances set up (before maternity) with increasing tendency already before 1989 (ibid.). On the contrary **fathers of little children on the Czech labor market compared to Europe, one of the highest numbers of hours per week** (Fahlén, 2015). At the same time, they belong to the most dissatisfied groups with the number of worked hours (Hora, 2009).

In 2015, according to MPSV **parental allowance** was drawn by 3/5 parents for 25 – 36 months, 1/4 parents for longer than three years and 15 % parents up to 24 months. According to the responses of mothers, the length of drawing the allowance follows institutionally: kindergartens accept children usually from three years of age, protection of the working position lasts up to three years. **Two-year option was more often chosen by graduated women and for year mothers with primary education.** Their wish to care

⁸ See OECD Family Database data <http://www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm>

about children is accompanied by the fear of unemployment and often also the fact, that they did not have right for a shorter option due to their previous low incomes (Hašková, 2011a).

3.2 Increased risk of unemployment

Low share of mothers in CR return to their employer after their maternity leave comparing to international data (Riedmann, 2006). Study by Bičáková and Kalíšková (2015) also showed, that nearly 30 % women with two-years old children and 60 % women with three-years old children become unemployed just after finishing their parental leave and besides, many women become unemployed even after shorter period of employment. **Most of unemployed women with 5 – 7-year-old child are in addition unemployed longer than one year** (ibid.), which can bring profound consequences for economic provision of families and through consequences between long-term unemployment, poverty and deprivation it cases serious social incidences.

3.3 Short – term work

Among working **mothers of preschool and younger school children** there is statistically **higher share of workers with fixed term labor contracts and contract of services/ of work** than among other working women (Hašková, 2011a; Hašková and Dudová, 2017). These temporary and limiter regimes of work are usually worse paid and do not provide stable and secure income. Whereas the Czech population has these contracts highly among manual workers with low qualification, people with disabilities and short-term labor experience on the labor market, among mothers with pre-school and lower school age, this is seen in an **extended** (but regionally differentiated) **level across education and age groups** (ibid.).

Not only economic non-activity and unemployment, but also short-term work can have **negative impact on economic and social situation of families**. Mothers working with limited work contracts or agreements assess their living standard statistically much worse than mothers working with a contract for indefinite period. These women also often work part time/shorter working hours, as standard employees and they earn less (ibid.).

3.4 Decreased incomes

Long interruption of gainful occupation of mothers implies not only higher unemployment risk and short-term jobs, but also irreversible decrease of future income from gainful occupation. Study by Pytlíková (2015) reads: **Each extra year, when mother does not work, decreased their future incomes by 1 %**. Long-term leaves of mothers from the labor market have negative impact on their future position on the labor market and support the difference between salaries of men and women, which with the level of 22 % is one of the highest in Europe.⁹ In old age they consequently result in low level of pensions and due to high divorce rate in CR and in poverty of children, growing up in families just with mothers (see chapters 4 and 5 of this study).

3.5 Barriers for mother's profit making activities within family policy

Related to low employment rate of mothers with pre-school children, special studies most of all refer to barriers caused by unavailable quality of pre-school services and care about children. Other aspects and their impacts are also discussed, including lower tax rates and long-term parental holidays, almost entirely used by mothers.

In CR, pre-school education services are absenting together with care about children, especially for children below three years of age, but regionally even for older children. In European comparison, CR is a country with one of the lowest availability of these services for little children.¹⁰ In families, where both parents with a little child are moneymaking, CR in the new millennium and less already during 90s experienced not only **decrease of using preschool care and care of younger school children**. This is reflected by **lower availability of after-school care centers**. At the same time among two income families the share of parents relying upon help of grandparents increased, eventually they helped themselves, even though part time job, home office of flexi working hours adjusted by themselves are still limited in CR (see below). Apparently from financial reasons less frequently, but with a growing tendency, parents use paid babysitting in case of children younger than three years (Hašková, 2011a).

Parental allowance in CR is **used for relatively long time at relatively low level**. The amendment of the Act on Social Support from 2017 enables faster use of the allowance and extension of the range of parents who can chose it, this can accelerate return of mothers to the job market, if children care services are available. Sooner return though is

⁹ See Eurostat data <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/labour-market/earnings/main-tables>

¹⁰ See OECD Family Database data <http://www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm>

still limited by the persistent restrictions for using the care services in time of using the allowance and due to previous incomes of parents.

Recommendation:

Cancellation of limits for using children care services in time of receiving parental allowances

The fact, that in 2017 it failed fully, in the amendment of the Act on State Social Support, to put through **46-hour limit cancellation for using care about children before two years of age for the ones, who receive parental allowances**, will henceforth slow down return of mothers to the job market. If the existing character of parental allowances is preserved, it is necessary to cancel this limit.

Low participation of married mothers with children on the job market and their engagement in temporary jobs is supported by tax relieves for “supported wife/husband. “This is relief for married couples where there is a breadwinner (whose income is increased through tax relief) and wife with no income, or her income is low, corresponding to occasional pays (up to 68 thousand CZK).

Recommendation:

Cancellation or transformation of this measure, which gives preferential treatment to married couples, if one of the partners is not moneymaking or his/her income is low, i.e. related just to occasional pays.

To support return of mothers to the job market in a form of full-value, not just temporary and potentially precarious working regimes (see below), it is suitable **to transform tax relieves to “supported wife/couple“ either to a) direct support of families with children (eventually with other dependent members) without conditions of marriage and low or none income of one of the partners, or to b) tax relieve or bonus for less moneymaking parent from two income families with dependent children (and eventually with the dependent members) without any condition of marriage. To avoid undesirable relative disadvantaging of single parents, the right for applying these relieves or bonuses should be provided to working single parents.**

3.6 Working hours and work regimes

Specific employment model of employed women in CR is supported by long working hours and inability of an employee to influence their distribution and place of work. High number of worked hours can be found not only among employed men (42,1 hours per week in CR in comparison with 40,3 hours in EU27), but also among women (38,5 in comparison with 33,5 hours per week in EU27) (Eurostat, 2014). Besides, three quarters of CR employees influence it (Hašková and Kyzlinková, 2016). Working hours are also less influenced by employees in public sector, which is typical for women. In this sector 81 % employees (ibid.) have working hours fully defined by their employer. Not only that **this flexi time is less available** in CR, in comparison with countries to the west from our borders. In comparison with the European average CR employees must, on the contrary more often **obey various working regimes for operational reasons**, this means **shift work, night work and irregular working hours** (Kyzlinková and Dokulilová, 2007). These circumstances can also negatively influence possibilities of employees to combine work and care about children and **this way contributes to long absences of mothers on the job market**.

According to *Life and Work Careers 2010* research there were *seen the following figures*: in 2010-part time job among moneymaking parents with a child below seven years one quarter of mothers (1 % fathers), fewer than one tenth mothers and fathers (altogether) defined the time of their work and 5 % mothers (1 % fathers) worked (partly) from home. Research *Péče/Care 2013* confirmed, that employed mothers with pre-school children do not ask employers for shorter (less than quarter) or flexi hours (fifth) of their working hours so often, as it is possible in many other states of Europe, where the employment rate of mothers with pre-school children is higher (Hašková and Kyzlinková, 2016). According to Plasová (2012) **negotiating related to working hours and working place adjustment in CR is difficult**, because usually **there is no formal support existing** at the organization level. According to Formánková and Křížková (2009) such negotiation is in a form of individual deals, where the ideas of employer play the leading role, as he is considering costs and benefits of such a deal. Results are quite different for single employees, men and women, within one company and position. Similar findings were brought by researches among employers in CR 2011, which showed, that most of the employers in CR have no internal rules adjusting implementation of these working regimes, though bigger organizations in public sector and international companies do better (Hašková and Kyzlinková, 2016).

Recommendation:

Increased availability of flexi hours and job security not decreasing regimes of work on demand of employees, from the point of **working place** (home office and teleworking), **time** (flexi hours) and total **work capacity** (shorter duties)

Labor Code defines obligations of employers to satisfy applications of employed men and women, who care about children younger than 15 let (and other dependent persons) related to shorter working hours or another adjustment of working hours, but only if there are no serious operation reasons to prevent from it. In this respect it would be suitable to amend Labor Code with a provision, which would define **obligation of employers to inform their employees in writing about serious operation reasons, which caused impossibility of providing flexi hours**. At the same time such provision should be **extended by obligation of employers to satisfy**, under the same conditions, **applications for adjustment of working places. Specification of serious operation reasons and provision of higher support for negotiations about flexi hours (and job security) and regimes not decreasing job security. This is to be on employees request in collective labor agreements**.

3.7 Decision making of mothers

Qualitative research helps to understand, how mothers decide about their return to the job market together with mechanisms and processes leading mothers to prolonged economic non-activity, unemployment and temporary moneymaking, which could take the value of precarious work. The following study is based on secondary analysis of three-hour group discussions with 19 mothers with pre-school and early school ages from 2015. The theme is motherhood and insecure job. There are also 52 in-depth interviews with mothers of little children from 2009 and 2013, oriented to life carrier of mothers. Testimonies of mothers' show, that the decision making about when and how to return to the job market is clash against for and against return, the result of which could be just temporary moneymaking. Mothers take it for occasional and it is not appreciated in a long-term horizon.

Argument on behalf of return to moneymaking comprise, beside improving financial family situation and fears of losing job, loosing certification validity to do their jobs (in case of some professions) or lost clientele (in case of self-employment), also fears of losing gained working skills and knowledge. Besides, some mothers feel isolated in household and they understand their job as (one of) sources of self-actualization, social prestige and equality in partnership. Motivation to secure own income relates to it too, because money

distribution and decision making about its allocation is not always without problems for partners.

Arguments on behalf of prolonging economic non-activity of mothers comprise confidence about all-day long care of hers about her child up to three or four years for healthy development and self-fulfillment of some women through care about children. All interviewed mothers pointed out the barrier for return to work, in a form of conditions on the working place or on the job market generally (especially in **unavailable required work flexibility**), **unavailable children care** and low income of mother from work in relation to costs for child care and **loss of husband's tax relieve** in case of her regular income.

Below, we will illustrate two mechanisms, contributing to contemporary work of mothers.

3.8 Intergenerational assistance does not make up for care services

Intergenerational support of child care in CR is appreciated, but it is not usually apprehended as long-term substitution of child care services. Especially when grandparents are still economically active or very old. Support from the side of grandmothers enables mothers more likely occasional work but not stable salaried employment. Return to stable employment is usually connected with child care services. Renata, a doctor, explains her occasional moneymaking out of her branch by need of finances, but at the same time by irregular opportunities of baby-sitting from the side of her still working parents:

"(...) I do not dare to work as an employee (...) when I should rely just on grandmothers and their baby sitting (...) this will get better, when there is some kindergarten. "(Renata, 27 years, university graduate, 1 child – 3 years)

Skilled worker Tamara could return to work due to intergenerational support, when her three-year old child was not admitted to kindergarten, but the age of grandmother signalizes, that it is just stopgap. And simultaneously it signalizes a new commitment of care, which is awaiting Tamara soon.

Recommendation:

Local and financial availability of quality services for pre-school education and care about little and pre-school children, quality services of out-of-school care for younger school children.

Considering the fact, that pre-school educational services and care about little, pre-school and younger school children are currently competence of three ministries, MŠMT/Education, MPSV/Labor and Social Matters and MPO/Industry and Business, and local government is concerned financially about their operation, it is necessary **to secure effective coordination** of all mentioned **participants** or decrease their number for the purposes of this agenda. Abreast with it we have **reduce factors demotivating from provision of availability and quality of these services**. According to study by Kalíšková and team (2016), one extra place in a kindergarten, even under conservative assumptions, is a positive contribution for public. If faster return of mother is economically beneficial for the state, especially due to payments of health and social insurance, direct and indirect taxation of parents, **the costs should be borne namely by state**, not local administration. Due to the fact, that these services support preventions of social exclusion and poverty of children from disadvantaged environment, **parental costs there must be very low** (Gambaro and team, 2014).

For better planning and sooner return of mothers to the job market it is suitable **to establish legal claim for a place in a pre-school institution for each child up to certain age**. More and more European states take this measure. What is important, such a claim should be enforced no matter in which month the child was born. Inspiration in this aspect comes from Germany. In CR since 2020, even two-year old children will be preferentially admitted to kindergartens, not only the older ones. This preferential admittance keeps the link with age of children at the beginning of school year. A child born in autumn, will have, in contradistinction to a child born in summer, “right of preferential admittance” *de facto* one year later. And more, their “right of preferential admittance” is not connected with any sanctions and compensations in case, when such a child is not admitted. Planning return to the job market in CR is still problematic. To improve opportunities for return to the job market after real planning it is suitable in part to implement legal title, and **unconditioned age of children in relation to legal title for the beginning of the school year**.

Besides securing local and financial availability of pre-school education and care services, their quality must be attached. Quality services of this type have potential to develop children and prepare them for further education, which is mostly appraised by children from disadvantaged environment. For this reason, it is necessary **to determine (and consequently implement) minimum care**

standards for all operators and types of these services.

In some states child care services are provided by employers. In CR, **to support availability of child care services from one year of age**, and to simplify provision of these services among others by employers, Act No. 247/2014 Coll was approved, it is about provision of child care in a **child group**. To realize child groups, it is possible to withdraw funds from the European Social Fund. Should these services be maintained for the future, there should be secured **financing through the National Endowment Title**. Availability of care services should make us apprehend corporate services as supplementary.

3.9 Specialization of roles

In two-parent families, gender roles are usually getting stronger and specialized, after birth of the child. Woman is oriented to care of children and the man is becoming the main breadwinner. Employers rely on the time instantaneous availability of fathers. Mother's return to the job market is consequently being adjusted considering not only children, but also moneymaking activity of the partner, whose income became the main one for the family. **Specialization of roles can deepen** dependence of mothers on partners, lower work self-confidence, acceptance of temporary incomes and **unequal position on the job market, partnership and society**. Frequent requirement of mothers (not fathers) to get flexi or shorter working hours reflects specialized roles. Unavailability of these working regimes leads them to temporary jobs, which is just temporary strategy, rough-and-ready solution or trap (see below), potentially to minor self-employment, which is covered specifically by chapter 5 of this study.

Although neither Anna, nor her partner did not have any permanent job before her pregnancy, parenthood made her partner the breadwinner, which leads Anna to consider her return to the job market due to his position:

„ (...) my ideas were, it would be more equipollent (...) it's common, he works at the weekends, by night (...) if it is going like this, might be (...) I will decide to work just occasionally without any stable salaried employment. “(Anna, 26, high school education, 2 children – 3 and 1 years of age)

If the care is just on mothers, salaried employment seems to be unacceptable, when they are looking for a job. Orientation of mothers to less timely jobs and occasional incomes therefore brings negative impacts in sense of low financial rating and worse negotiation position on the job market and in family:

„I could return, but full-time job, which means up to 5 p.m. is impossible. (...) he was afraid that with his work load I will bother him with some care about children. (...) So, I studied a course of a social worker in social services. (...) when I calculate my income, and deduce health and social insurance, plus traveling expenses, it is just like pocket money. I feel it offensive (...).“ (Světлана, 34, high school education, 2 children – 4 and 6 years)

„My self-confidence is terribly degrading (...) Sort of speaking, before we were somehow equal (...) When I started to work from home with my little one, my husband did not realize, that was working. (...) I am working, have you noticed, haven't you? But I keep saying that I work, here I my computer (...) (husband) is often abroad, therefore I cannot say, that will be at work at 7.00. “(Zoe, 42, graduate, 2 children – 3 and 5)

„I am mother of three children (...) all the time, I was at home with them, I work occasionally, I left lucrative and financially interesting job, which I enjoyed. (...) The plan was to secure ourselves for the time of maternity and parental leave, during that time I wanted to work, just to do something, as I liked the job, and suddenly, what can happen, somebody could change business policy, HR policy and I will stay at home. (...) I work, fitfully and this cannot earn my living, just few thousand per month. (...) I felt well, I was making a lot of money, a there, I was in a position when I was asking ma husband (...) send me something from your account. (...) I would like a part time job, up to seven hours per day, so that I was in time to kindergarten and school with children, or if need be, return for them. (...) I mind it, one feels suddenly inferior. “(Barbora, 38, graduate, 3 children – 3, 6 and 9 years)

Even though **occasional job** is described as strategy for interim period, we cannot ignore **the context**, according to which mothers decide. **Limited availability of child care services** (geographically, financially, institutionally – limits for using pre-school education services and care while drawing parental allowance) substituted by occasional help of grandparents od secured just by parents, **tax relief for economically non active** (or with low incomes) **wife** (husband), **shortage of flexible working regimes** (time, place and working capacity) together with specialized roles after birth of children: all these factors support mothers to stay out of permanent job with just occasional earnings. Norms of “intensive motherhood” affect the situation (see the first chapter of the study) and “**psychological agreement “between employers and employees**, bringing mutual expectations, related to their roles (Guest, 2004). This could be in contradiction to formal rules and still, there is real impact on their behavior. Within the CR context this why there is such mother's attitude to the employment termination i.e. resignation and why they do not return to the job market, should that be just for a brief period between births.

Recommendation:

Support of more even care distribution between both parents

Currently the law enables parents to shift parental leaves, men are distracted to draw parental allowance by, among others, financial inexpedience and therefore they represent on a long-term basis less than 2 % of all, who draw the parental allowance. The amendment of the Act on Social Support of 2017 enables faster drawing of the allowance, which by itself does not bring more substantial participation of fathers. Experience from other countries show, that the effective feature is as far as introduction of **non-transferable right of each parent to draw parental leave**, in a form of quotas or bonuses within the framework of parental leave. More and more countries therefore accept this measure.¹¹ Effective measure to support participation of fathers in care necessarily involves **non-transferable right** to another person and **adequate lost salary compensation** for the person who cares. Likewise, the European Parliament and Council for Evenness between Professional and Private life of Parents and Solicitous Persons submitted in April 2017 draft European directive which contains also non-transferable right to draw four months of flexible use of parental leave for each of the parents, with salary compensation at the level of health insurance.¹² In an analogous way, the Concept of Family Policy, which is being prepared in CR 2015-2017, contains so called "alternation bonuses. "

More equal distribution of care obligations between both parents does not bring only barrier reduction for mothers to participate on the labor market and economically more effective use of their human capital. In case of women and men such measure has a potential to increase their real opportunities to reach balance between professional and family life.

More even care distribution of children care between both parents should bring positive effect and indirectly **measures reducing gender salary disbalance**.

3.10 Different perception of occasional earnings

¹¹ http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual_reviews/2015_full_review3_final_8july.pdf

¹² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD:2017:203:FIN> a
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52017PC0253&from=EN>

In analyzed interviews mothers we are removing within continuum from understanding occasional earnings as optimal **strategy for interim period**, over understanding it as temporary **fallback**, with other opportunities, or unacceptable ones, due to feeling of **deadlock in a trap of precarious work**. Precariousness of occasional work was felt most frequently by women whose income was necessary to secure family. Substantial role was also played by the time, during which they could not find permanent job. This was protracting namely at women with more types of disadvantages (e.g. low qualification and higher age due to care about more dependent persons).

Jana's statement illustrates changes in perception of occasional work during life, as she reconstructed it, but also above-mentioned quality aspects between mothers and employers. Occasional work for first Jana's strategy, how to "relax away from children „without "losing her ability to communicate with adults. "Due to the fact, she considered it her temporary strategy, the length of permanent job absence was further on felt as a handicap, which complicated finding a new permanent job:

„ (...) it was unfortunately in time, when (employer) (...) was decreasing the number of employees. And we decided, as I knew, that for at least five years I was not going to return (...) we did not want to have just one (kid) (...) so I sent my resignation letter and stayed on maternity leave. This was nearly 13 years (...) surely, I had some temporary works, but why, we did not want one kid, one did not want to apply for a job (...) where you would say, after half a year, excuse me. (...) The other question after the second kid, we were deciding if to have (another kid) (...) that time I firstly faced the situation, it was uneasy to find a job. " (Jana, 38, high school education, 3 children – 14, 11 and 7)

Specialized roles and related occasional work narrow the potential of future choices and limit their negotiation potential. Fragmented professional history decreases their attractiveness for employers. From the long-term point of view, short-term contracts marginalize mothers on the job market, bring negative impact on their incomes and strengthen the existing inequality. Another situation, when occasional pays are just complement to permanent job of mothers; they signalize low incomes and insufficient time for children. In case, when the mother's income is not necessary for the family budget and such woman expects improvement of her work situation in the future, when care will be less time consuming, occasional work is interpreted as a choice. In a long-term perspective these forms are not preferred, they are just a temporary solution. This temporariness though can be prolonged, not only due to incoherent professional history and ageing of such woman, but as a rule of later arising requirements to care about older parents. Specific situation of low income families with single mothers is described in chapter 4 of this study.

3.11 Summary

This chapter summarized when, how, why and with what consequences mothers return to the job market. Decision making of mothers about return to the job market is a process influenced by the conditions under which it is running. We paid attention namely to such barriers while combining professional and private life arising in mothers' decision making about their return to the job market, which could be reduced, after the fashion of other countries, i.e. reduce concrete social and political measures. This is important namely in the field of increased availability and reduced existing barriers related to availability quality services within pre-school education and care, in the field of increased availability of flexible work regimes on demand of employees, which do not limit their job security. It is also a field of more balanced care distribution between both parents and in the field of measures transformation this gives preferential treatment to couples, if one of the partners is not moneymaking or his/her income is low.

4 Parents – single users

Measures related to family policy affect various groups of inhabitants in numerous ways. Previous chapters clearly show, that one of the most endangered groups of parents are single users. For this reason, the following part is dedicated to the topic of single users/parents' engagements in the Czech labor market.

4.1 Single parents in data

4.1.1 How many single parent families are in CR and their economic situation?

Number and share of single parent families is increasing on a long-term basis and these families today represent one quarter of all families with children. National census data, census of houses, flats (SLDB) in 2011 says, that nearly 26 % of all families with dependent children¹³ are single parent ones. In 1991 it was 15 %; in 2001 it was already 24 %.¹⁴ If we consider only pure families, i.e. consisting of parents and dependent children without other members (no grandparents for example), single parents' families represent 22 %.¹⁵ Most of them are in Prague, Ústí and Karlovarský Regions – about 28 %.¹⁶ In most of them (71 %) there live only one child. According to data VŠPS¹⁷ 16 % dependent children and 13 % children younger than 15 live with only one parent, according to census it is even 22,5 % of all dependent children. According to data VŠPS of 2012 90 % single parent families with dependent children are supported by women. 7 % families are already incomplete in the first year of child's life (i.e. children are born to lonely mothers), at the age of five of the youngest child it is 13 %.¹⁸ **When mothers more often return to the job market each eighth one is a single parent.** In families with single parents there live 15 % children at the age of 0 - 3 and 16 % of all children at the age of 3 -5 years¹⁹.

¹³ Households of one family, except families living together (two and more) in one household.

¹⁴ <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20538314/41240403.pdf/c19b9cd9-c8f6-4bac-a6b9-18defbda3869?version=1.0>

¹⁵ Höhne and team (2016), p. 30.

¹⁶ Höhne and team (2016), p. 30.

¹⁷ Selective research of labor force 2008-2012, data different from SLDB. Different method of data collection and different character of "household".

¹⁸ Nývlt and Šustová (2014).

¹⁹ Höhne and team (2016).

Living standard of people in single parent families is, in comparison with living standard of the remaining population, decreasing on a long-term basis. **Third of clear single parent families with children faces income poverty (34 %) ²⁰, more often with two children (39 %) or with at least one child before 5 (over 50 %).** Poverty implicates up to two thirds of single fathers and mothers without work income. Complete families with children are less endangered (6 % families with two adults and one child and 9 % families with two children). ²¹ With the number of children in a family the risk of poverty grows, with the age of children it on the contrary decreases. ²² More than 80 % parents, upbringing one or two children alone, declare difficulties with income management, great difficulties are felt by 22 % single fathers and mothers. With two children this share grows up to 30 %. Quite often single parents face difficult husbandry taking care at least about one child younger than 6 years (40 %). ²³

Single parent incomes reach roughly 70 % incomes of complete families ²⁴. The reason is especially existence of two work incomes in a family with two children and the fact, that the head of a single parent family is usually a woman, whose income from work is usually lower in comparison with men. Social allowances for single parents do not exist in the family support scheme since 2008, respectively 2012, tax relief (for children) are more often used by families with two parents. Currently there is only one advantage within the social system, for single parents, namely longer right for support while taking care about a such child (by 7 days). Single mothers cannot be without their approval send to a business trip by their employer, if they have child younger than 15 years – it is a question, how often is this measure used.

4.1.2 How single parents secure their living?

Single parents in the Czech Republic traditionally chose, for their living, above all these work strategies – **change of employer, increase of their qualification, more intensive paid job by means of another paid activity.** Compared to members of two parent families they less frequently prefer change of a job connected with separation or time heftiness. In their activities they are willing to prove higher working flexibility (e.g. increased qualification or accepting less qualified job if need be, or less financially attractive). ²⁵ Great part of single parents is also reliant to help of grandparents, namely as far as children care or accommodation go. Single parent families more often live in a flat together with another family, most frequently with parents (27 % in comparison with 14 %

²⁰ Household share, income under 60 % median, equivalent income.

²¹ Income and living conditions of households 2015 <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/prijmy-a-zivotni-podminky-domacnosti>

²² Höhne and team (2016), p. 97-98.

²³ Höhne and team (2016), p. 75.

²⁴ Data – living conditions (EU-SILC) 2015.

²⁵ See e.g. Lhotská and Petrová (1996) or Dudová and Hastrmanová (2007).

families with two parents). Grandparent most often support families with little children up to 3 years (all three quarters), and support is most often provided in time directly after divorce (in time to two years after divorce three quarters of families use help). This help is often necessary for the woman to be able to do her paid job.²⁶

In years 2008 – 2012, 17 % mothers heading single parent families were economically inactive. Mothers of dependent children at the head of single parent families were economically more frequently active than mothers of dependent families from two parent families; according to VŠPS 74 % single mothers were employed and 61 % mothers in two parent families. But they were more often unemployed: whereas in families with two children there was 5 % unemployed women, in families lead by mothers 9,5 %. More often than mothers with partners they worked in a full-time job. Single mothers were relatively less represented in higher positions and worked at less qualified positions²⁷.

Their incomes are mostly based on social allowances, more often than of two parent families, still the share of incomes from social allowances of single working parents are relatively low. The highest one is of families with children younger than 5 and of families where nobody is economically active. **Roughly one third of single parents are beside the labor market and social income represents 70 % their income. If a parent work, then two thirds of single child and half of two children families do not draw any social allowances.**²⁸

4.1.3 Single mothers and their return to the job market after their period of inactivity

Study by Bičáková and Kalíšková²⁹ proved, that women returning to work after parental leave are highly endangered by unemployment: at the age of 3 of children the unemployment rate reaches 12 % for women with higher education and baccalaureate and 28 % for women without baccalaureate. Almost 60 % of the ones returning to the job market at the age of 3 of their children after parental leave become unemployed. This unemployment does not have to be just short-term transition between parental leave, eventually return to their previous job and new employment. Greater part of unemployed women with five to seven-year-old children are unemployed longer than one year. Unemployment after parental leave affects more often women with lower education and women living in poorer regions, among which there are more of single mothers. **Though, unemployment is not always related to low level of education – the fact of single parenthood and its consequences play the role as well.** According to GGS 2005

²⁶ Lhotská and Petrová (1996).

²⁷ Kuchařová and Šťastná (2014).

²⁸ Höhne and team (2016), s. 74.

²⁹ Bičáková and Kalíšková (2015).

(Gender and Generation Survey) data, there is a chance, that a woman with at least one child before 14 unemployed. Single mother's ration is 1.8 times higher than of mothers with partners (even after check of education and the youngest child age)³⁰.

Single mother is motivated to work more, but on the other hand they are endangered by unemployment. GGS 2005 (Gender and Generation Survey) data show, that mothers without partners stay on their parental leave shorter time (in time of survey 29 percent mothers living with partners stayed on parental leave in comparison with 17 %single mothers). **Due to necessity to secure incomes and due to lower flexibility, they accept jobs with worse conditions.** In 2005 already, when the research was realized, Gender and Generation Survey, single mothers worked more often under disadvantageous work forms than mothers living partners: 0,8 % without written contract (in comparison with 0,3 % mothers with partners); 2,5 % contract of services (in comparison with 0,8 % mothers with partners) and 19,2 % with fixed-term-contracts (in comparison with 11,4 % mothers with partners)³¹. Currently, when the total number of mothers working in these forms of work contracts grew, we do not now precise data.

4.2 Returns to the job market – stories of single mothers

Barriers met by single mothers returning to the job market after parental leave or generally after their inactive work period cause by care about children will be best explained by the analysis of their life stories. This is result of five research projects in years 2006 - 2007, 2012 - 2013 and 2015 - 2016, realized by specialists from Sociologický ústav AV ČR in various regions of CR³². The analysis is based on 52 qualitative interviews with single mothers and two panel discussions with women, who were in a position of a single parent and they did not receive alimENTS by children's fathers.

The biggest problems had to be managed usually within the first period after parting – in time, when they must settle with the new situation, solve accommodation, if need be, property settlement with their former partner and they stabilize their working situation. Worse economic situation of women after divorce is caused by specialization, which is common in families with both parents: mam is usually targeted to paid work and family support, while woman performs greater deal of unpaid work related to family and children care. In time of partnership such subdivision of roles is more beneficial for both partners. After separation they do not share their incomes and the woman is the one with lower

³⁰ Kuchařová and Šťastná (2014).

³¹ Šťastná (2009).

³² Projects: Parenthood after divorce – roles of parents and identities of mothers and fathers, 2005-2007, GA AV ČR, reg. No. KJB700280503; Context of changes on the labor market and forms of private, family, parner life in the Czech society, 2005-2008, MPSV ČR, reg. No. 1J 034/05-DP2; Changed forms of parner and family life from the point of career concept, 2010-2013, GAČR, reg. No. P404/10/0021; Life long impacts of motherhood, 2015-2016, OSF – Norway Grants, reg. No. 274.

income and worse position on the job market (considering her lower previous experience and practice). This critical period last usually one year, even longer, if women gather more disadvantageous characteristics (little children, higher number of children, children with health handicaps, low mother's education etc.).

Paid is felt by the interviewed women as the main one, right and permanently sustainable economic strategy. Responding mothers suppose, that they should make money for their and children's living by means of paid jobs and they adopt their further decisions (e.g. domicile, secured care about children, education). They meet three basic problems. Specifically, the problem is:

1. To find a job,
2. To ballance work and care about children,
3. Insufficient income.

Each of the mentioned problems will be mentioned in a specific part of this chapter.

4.2.1 Finding a job

Problems related to finding a job relate namely for single mothers, who stayed alone in their children's early age, when they, due to their care, did not have any paid job. As a rule, they fail to find a job with standard working hours, or working hours to link together with care about children. The biggest problems on the labor market meet the women, who did not have any job before separation, were on a maternity leave or helped their partners for example in their business activities. They were trying, after separation, to find some income quite soon. If the divorce happened in time, when their children were little (before 5), the typical scenario looks like this: woman, by then on a maternity leave or unemployed, working partly, is obliged to find a job soon. They need sufficient income to cover at least fundamental family needs. **They usually accept less qualified or less interesting job for them, which is though sufficiently flexible and they could be "displaceable in case of children's illness"**. They seek for full time job, because the income from a part time job would not pay off related costs.

Women with low qualification were dependent on long-term and fitful part time jobs in combination with social allowances. The condition to get some allowances meant permanent residence in their domicile, which was not always fulfilled. Each irregular higher income in addition meant loss of the allowances and necessity to prove existence of their claims. **Exceeding a certain level of income lead to loos of excessive part of social allowances**; this level was in addition very low and supporting themselves nad their children from social incomes was impossible. The only solution was "illicit" occasional work, which enabled them to pay necessary bills. The level of subsistence, from which the right for social allowances starts, is at level, which does not enable covering necessary cost of living (CZK 4 880 per month for parents with a child younger than five years).

Communicative partners with lower qualification were fully aware of the fact, that even if they find a stable job, their salary supposedly will not exceed minimum salary sufficiently and it will not be enough to support their families.

“(...) we really do not have any possibility now (other than make money illicitly, author’s comment), because the living wage is not any living wage. “(Marcela, 43, high school graduate, 1 child, 9 years)

„My calculation says maximum one hundred to spend per day, and with two children it is not easy. “(Johana, 26, high school education, high school, 2 children 5 and 7)

The women, who before worked with a standard work load, had they return to work easier, after parental leave, and therefore easier situation after separation. For some of them a fixed-term-contract represented a problem: Petra for example returned to work sooner, then she wanted, it even was not financially advantageous, but there was a danger, that her contract would not be prolonged:

„The worst think was to calculate, when one wants hundred fifty, two hundred per hour, and spends there twelve hours, so, I would pay three quarters of my salary just for baby-sitting, which is absolutely disadvantageous. And again, a problem, so I said to myself, I kept saying, no, I do not accept it and I was said, if not, they would not keep the job for me, as my contract was expiring. I had my contract until 2011 or 10 and they would not prolong it to me, so I said to myself: I cannot afford it, I can lose my job for ever, because, with two kids I cannot find a job. It was terrible. “(Petra, graduate, assistance, children 2005 and 2008, separation in 2011, interview 2012)

4.2.2 Putting work and children care together

Women must look for such a job, which enables them to care about children at the same time. Kindergarten service life is insufficient, if they want full-time (standard) work load, they need support from other people. Considering insufficient capacity of children care institutions, women with little children are dependent on emergency help of parents of girlfriends. Some respondents sought for part time jobs, because to start full-time work immediately after parental leave was impossible, due to service life of kindergartens. Moreover, they felt, that they would not spend enough time with their children. This opportunity proved delusive, **they did not find any part-time job, or it amounted such working effort, that it finally needed full-time working hours.**

Communicative partners often mentioned necessity to resign at work, where they required occasional work by late afternoon or night hours, when they needed to collect children from kindergartens and school, and eventually prepare together to school. Gabriela for example started after birth of her children work as a charwoman, despite before she worked in IT. She is still a charwoman, the job is flexible in time and her absences are tolerated due to the illnesses of her children.

Because when we were divorcing, P. was two years old, or two and half, M. just at kindergarten and no chance to get a job. As I have said, a little kid, no interest or such services, that it was from seven a.m. to 7 p.m. When I said a little kid, no interests or something from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and simply, this was not possible to tune up. (Gabriela, daughter 13, son 10, charwoman)

Women very positively appreciated work, where they could balance children care and work, where their employer or workmates obliged. The often-experienced refusals and negative responses, as for example Barbora, who worked in a restaurant:

“so, I worked in that pub, they kept telling me quite sorely, if I have a baby, I should care of it and spend my time with my husband, don’t provoke or simply, do not have any kid, that (...) By her employer. “(Barbora, graduated, psychologist, child 2002, divorce 2005, interview 2012)

When Barbora finally found work, where she could solve unexpected situations flexibly, she was very grateful. **For number of women were such conditions provided just after accepting work in insecure regime – most often with a trade certificate.**

CR is missing flexible forms of work, which could enable not only of single parent families tune up family and professional life. This means shortened work load jobs, but also other forms like flexi working hours, home office or compressed working weeks – i.e. forms not bringing lower incomes, which is quite important for single parents. Labor Code reads the obligation of employers to satisfy requests related to working hours adjustment due to care or pregnancy (detailed definition see § 241 section 2 Act No. 262/2006 Coll., Labor Code). This is not currently effectively used.

Recommendation:

- **Implementation of tax relief for employers, who enable their employed**

men and women to care about close ones through some of the clearly defined flexible forms of work within the main employment (partial work load, compressed working week, remote/home office).

- **Extension of employer's obligation to accept requirement related to working hours adjustment due to care together with working place adjustment.** Employed men and women should be able to require for remote work/home office, unless there are serious operational reasons.
- **More precise conditions to use the institute "serious operational reasons" from the side of employers.** Employer should be obliged to specify in writing operational reasons, which caused that concrete employees were not accepted while asking for flexi work due to care about children.
- **Implementation of obligations to specify through connected social partners' serious operational reasons** in collective labor agreements for all employers with state property share and in organizations of state administration and local government.
- **Remove disadvantaging employees with lower wages, below minimum wages,** caused by existence of minimum basis of assessment for obligatory health insurance, which is calculated from minimum wage even for persons working part time, e.g. grant exemption for specific groups of employees as parents of children younger than 15 years, without condition of all day care for children.

Klára was facing a problem, blazingly felt by all single mothers with little children within last four to five years: for her nearly three-year-old child she could not find neither kindergarten, nor nursery. **As a result, single mothers in time if discontinued parental leave and parental allowance are without an income and they have no chance to enter a standard job.**

„...but still, when I was calling to some kindergartens and he was not three, yet, simply I was trying to get him there, as I had secured job, the replied, simply, no advantage would take place, that they had sort of different rules.“ (Klára, high school, self-employer, child 2008, divorce 2008, interview 2011)

Most often, care of children when the women were working, was provided by their parents (if they could not have children with them and children were not at kindergarten or school).

This was not always absolutely without problems – parents did not have to have ideal conditions to help and care, or they were not willing to help.

Concurrently with liquidation of social allowances giving preferential treatment to single parents, another preference was liquidated, i.e. prior claim for kindergarten, which was respected by most of kindergartens. In situation of huge shortage of places in kindergartens and through decision of ombudsman in 2012, reading that the age is the decisive factor not employment or family status of mothers, kindergartens changed their attitude and single mothers are not preferred any more. Unavailable kindergartens mean a great problem for them, in situation when they want to enter a job after parental leave. Without place in a kindergarten, they cannot, after three –year parental leave return to their former employer, they lose their claim on the previous working position and their families are without any working income. Private institutions are usually financially inaccessible.

Recommendation:

Provision of legitimate claim for a place in a child care institution is ideal from 1 year of age for all children (together with financial and geographical availability and sufficient quality of these places).

For employed women the problem was to secure care during holidays, but also in time, when children were sick. They could rarely work from home or plan their work flexibly together with their workmates. Frequent situation was, that they did not claim anything, not to endanger their position, as for example Darja:

“I will not provoke, I am afraid of losing my job. Getting a reasonable job, reasonable paid job, is quite a problem.” (Darja, trained shop assistant, children 1998, 2000 and 2002, divorce 2002, interview 2007)

4.2.3 (In) sufficient income

Standard employment enabling articulation of work and care of children is rarely providing sufficient financial resources for family needs. Still, mothers prefer this work, despite low salary, they prefer security. **Consequently, they often look for additional resources for living; if need be they must combine several non-standard work contracts to support their family, as they cannot find any standard employment.** Most often it is

about less qualified work, cleaning, leaflets delivering of gluing envelopes. We can also speak about work connected with the main employment of women, (e.g. tutoring for teachers) or work based on their qualification (translations, proofreading, accounting). As a result, there is a substantial number of working hours per week – higher than in standard work, without reaching the advantages related to employment. The effect is exhaustion, time stress and insufficient time spent with children.

„...myself, I directly started as a self-employer after maternity leave, I started the new one, so, I started new projects and it slowly started to get rolling, so I started the new job, it was half job in B, we were surviving somehow. There were days, just three days, I left to work and returned on Wednesday, as I had night shift (...) and so and on, then I went to work next day and has a few hours' sleep. Yeah, it had to be done, I would not maintain my kid, sort of speaking. (Barbora, graduate, psychologist, child 2002, divorce 2005, interview 2012)

Paid work must provide single parents sufficient income to secure family, including specific needs of little or school children. Single mothers are disadvantaged at the level of salaries of men and qualified women, higher flexibility is needed and just being a single parent brings discrimination. Tax bonuses, which is the main tool to support CR families, are worse reachable for single parents. Their families are disadvantaged by the fact, that there is just one potentially working adult, who can apply for the bonus. Quite similar, practical disadvantaged tax relief for supported wife (at the amount of CZK 24,840: While not working married woman can get this bonus, not working single mother cannot enforce it.

Recommendation:

Increasing minimum wages. Minimum wage should be at such level, so as working people drawing it, are not under the level of income poverty and entering a job should not mean higher costs in a form of lost social allowances and should lead to real increase of living standard.

Introduction of a specific tax bonus for a parent, who works solely and cares about children. Such bonus should meet the relief for supported husband/wife and should be provided in situation, when such a parent should exclusive custody.

Increased children's allowance together with increased preemptory income and title for it. Increased allowance by CZK 300 of working parents, approved in the amendment of the Act on State Social Support since 1. 10. 2017, will be, as the tax bonuses, less accessible for single parent families with just one adult, who can work.

This will push single parents to accept work under disadvantageous conditions.

Passing bill on spared (substitute) maintenance. The amount of spared maintenance should cover at least children's needs. Spared maintenance should be provided when maintenance is determined by court or agreement and is not paid or paid irregularly.

Support of quality social housing for parents with children. For families with single parents it is not easy to secure or keep the existing housing due to insufficient finances of discrimination attitude of lessors. Housing costs represent substantial part of their spending.

These three factors (impossibility to find a job, need of flexi work, insufficient salary in the main employment), together with adjustment of state support only for working parents, single mothers are led to choose and accept non-standard work: most often part time jobs (contract of services and temporary contracts DPP and DPČ), work as self-employers, or time limited work with lower duty. These forms of work represent the way, how after parental leave at least somehow enter the job market, how to get flexi working hours, to be able to balance work and care of children in situations of insufficient and time non-flexible care institutions, how to increase income and maintain flexibility home office, evening work, extra work together with standard employment). At the same time this work means unsuitable working conditions and low and/or insecure salary. **Factors complicating finding standard employment with good conditions are, due to lower age of children, mother's low education, child's health disability (and together with it higher need of flexibility), higher age, living in a region with high unemployment rate and minority ethnicity.** Lower children's age relates to problem of securing care about them, impossibility to get a place in kindergarten and higher need of flexibility.

This all makes single parents and their children one of the most vulnerable groups on the labor market and this group significantly endangered by poverty and social exclusion.

5 Insecure prospects: involuntariness, no support and uncertainty of self-employment of mothers after parental leave

259 thousand women in the Czech Republic are self-employed, women represent 30,6 % of total number 844 thousand self-employers (585 thousand are men). In years 2010 - 2015 self-employment of women grew up by 26,6 thousand, which is 11,5 % growth, while self-employment of men decreased (by 19,2 thousand/ 3,2 %). 44 % (113 thousand) of all self-employed women are from 25 to 44 years of age (ČSÚ, 2016). Data on self-employers sorted by number and age of children are not available, but we can suppose, that great part of these women have little children after parental leave. From 2010 to 2014, when we recorded the highest unemployment rate due to the economic crisis and gradual decrease of unemployment, the number of self-employed women at the age 35 – 44, grew by 17 %, this is more by 11 thousand women. Since 2014 the numbers of self-employed women slowly decreased, within this age category (ČSÚ, 2016). Nevertheless, from the data we can assess, that within the woman population there was higher than average growth of self-employed in the age groups, when women usually have little children and when they are finishing their parental leave.

2.6 times more men, than women are engaged in new self-employment activities³³ (11,01 % men and 4,19 % women). Speaking about established companies there are 3,8 more times men caring business than women. „*[E]ntrepreneurial activity of women her has considerable difficulties and economic policy should aim towards support of their entrepreneurial effort.*“ (Lukeš and Jakl, 2011)

In this text we aim at some important “difficulties “of self-employed women with little children, namely women returning to the job market after parental leave. Beyond simple survey of available statistic data and previous researches we use for our analysis qualitative research based on five group discussions altogether with 29 mothers of little children (each at about three hours with 5 – 6 participants) from 2015. Three discussions were aimed at insecure types of work and two discussions concretely to self-employment itself, i.e. life of mothers after parental leave.

Growing number of self-employed women can be put into context with precarious trend of the Czech market and economic crisis (Dudová and Hašková, 2014). Total figure of self-employed women in 2010-2014 grew by 22 200. This figure represents 1 % of all employed women. At the same time, the share of women working on their own account in all population of employed women grew from 11 to 12 % and by 1 percentage point decreased share of women, who are employed from 88 to 87 %. Steadily about 1 %

³³ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) research, defines new entrepreneurial activity, concrete steps to start business or running a company younger than 42 months (Lukeš and Jakl, 2011).

women are officially helping family members. This development meets the period, when in the Czech Republic unemployment rate culminated (in 2010 8,5 % for women and 6,4 % for men, in 2014 7,4 % for women, 5,1 % for men), the level brought fear and threat of unemployment for the groups of population, which were on the job market or they are planning to return e.g. after parental leave. The highest share of unemployed was in 2014 within women population of 35 – 39 years (16 %). Roughly each third woman in the age, when they usually have little children (30 - 39 years) was unemployed in 2014 (ČSÚ, 2015).

Self-employment is a type of precarious work which is more frequently seen at mothers with little children after maternity leave. Why self-employment respectively entrepreneurship could be considered precarious? Is characterized by long-term insecurity of work and income, together with administrative burden, which lies about the self-employed person. CR is totally missing support for self-employed and entrepreneurs.

5.1 Compulsoriness of self-employment after parental leave

Security of regular income, paid holiday, sickness leave, flexibility (flexible working hours, possibility to work at home), autonomy at work and feeling of fulfilment from work done are real advantages of employment, which mothers of little children consider important. If it is possible to find such employment, providing these conditions, mothers with little children would often prefer employment. But quite often self-employment is the only one possibility how to return to the job market, even to the former “employer “. In some cases, mothers of little children are offered so called Swarc-system. It means, that such person works with characteristics of employment (work for one organization, long-term doing the same work), but the work is invoiced as if being self-employer. Quite often the employer is interested in saving levy, on the other hand the employed woman is interested in paid job with at least some flexibility of time and working place.

„...I think, that plenty of women, now self-employed, would prefer employment, if this (flexi employment: flexible working hours, home office - author's note) was common, rather than being self-employer, you are permanently responsible and on your own. If kid is sick for a week, you cannot finish the job order and troubles are here. “(Sofie, 34, Uni graduate, 2 children: 3, 1)

It is very complicated to assess or reckon the scope of this problem on the Czech labor market. But the quality research shows, that the system of Swarc employment is used. This problem contributes to precarization of the CR labor market, namely for groups endangered by unemployment and economic inactivity, where mothers with young children after parental leave belong.

Growing unemployment and danger of unemployment (each third woman 30 - 39 years old is unemployed) and unavailability of secure job with good working conditions, which could enable combining with care, represent for mothers of little children decisive factors to enter employment, even in a form of so called Swarz-system.

Recommendation:

- **Provide data (e.g. by means of empirical research),** here you could learn the extent and consequences of involuntary self-employment.
- **Implement motivation for employers to employ mothers after parental leave, providing flexi work (flexi working hours and home office).**
- **Strengthen cooperation with employers,** e.g. in a form of consultancy to avoid employment of parents through Swarz system after return from parental leave.
- **Support availability of pre-school care institutions for children,** as their shortage can limit possibilities to enter a job without flexi or shortened working hours, despite mother's needs. **Due to it they choose involuntary self-employment.**

5.2 Insecure work and income

Secured employment is preferred by substantial number of mothers with little children compared with self-employment, if employment could be combined with children care. Principal disadvantage of self-employment itself is insecurity, if there is enough work and, if it is paid for. In self-employment it not only about insecure work, but insecure income – even in situation, when the work is provided. In comparison, employment provides higher security of regular income. As we can see in Jamila's statement, as self-employed, she never knows, if she will be paid for the work done. Discussion showed, that "enforcement of payment for the work done represents further work load, which self-employed mothers must overcome in comparison with employed ones.

"Principal advantage (position of the employed – author's note) is, that you know, how much money you will have each day each month on your account ... the consciousness "I do not know" when the money comes, the person does not answer my e-mails and phone calls, or something similar, this is horrible. Thus,

I know, or could know, that each tenth of a month at about 25 thousand landed on my bank account, I should pay this and that, this is to remain and how much. Then, in such a moment I perfectly know the amount of money to spent per month. "(Jarmila, 35, graduate, 3 children: 3, 4, 5 years)

Uncertain work and income in situation, when there is enough work, is quite considerable within the framework of self-employments of mothers with little children. Enforcement of payments for work done is another shift within self-employment.

Recommendation:

It would be suitable to create services supporting self-employed women – e.g. in a form of legal advisory services considering contractual relationships settlement and claims enforcement or in a form of platforms for sharing good practice and information about concrete branches and their specific problems.

5.3 Necessity to pay social and health insurance

Uncertain work and income substantially coheres with another important obstacle, which mothers with little children should manage, when they just begin with their businesses. This is necessity to pay cash advances for social and health insurance, now nobody is dispensed from it, even at the very beginning of self-employment. This represents expenses at least 4 thousand CZK per month. The beginning person must pay the insurance in situation, when there is still no income or quite low one.

Period during parental leave, when social and health insurance is covered, enables mothers with little children to start personal business. Advances for social and health insurance is not obligatory for the one, who, together with self-employment draws parental allowances. At the beginning of self-employment, it is favorable to draw parental allowances (does not matter if a parent is on parental leave) and choose the longest possible period of usage. The condition to pay obligatory advances for social and health insurance discourages part of women to start their own businesses, it is seen on the example of university graduate Zoe:

„Yes, I had an idea to start my business, but soon I backed away, I had learnt that social and health insurance goes with about 4 thousand. When I start my company, I surely do not earn 4 thousand at all. And so, nothing. ... when I start my business, where I can get four thousand per month, to pay?... to top of all after parental leave, not. “(Zoe, 42, graduate, 2 children: 5, 3 years)

Nela, graduate, started business in health care, but she shows, that the necessity to pay advances substantially contribute to unprofitability of her business.

To me, advances seem to be totally liquidating for little businesses. Really, I do it with my husband's support and in my case, it is not profitable. I am just a trash. “(Nela, 35, graduate, 1 child: 4 years, pregnant)

At the same time, we must draw the attention to the fact, that mothers with little children after parental leave do not consider paying advances higher than at the minimum level. Minimum level, from long-term perspective means only very low pensions (see further).

Advances for social and health insurance must be paid by self-employed mothers with little children after finishing with parental allowances even at the beginning of self-employment, which is, by the time, without any profit. Advances therefore represent prominent burden at the beginning of self-employment and they outright discourage women to start with self-employment.

Recommendation:

It would be suitable to prolong the period, when a parent – self employer does not have to pay advances for social and health insurance even for some period after ending with parental allowances. Similar tax allowance of self-employers can bring further growth of number of persons involuntarily engaged in so called Swarz system. These questions should be observed thoroughly.

5.4 Prospect of low pension

It turns to be financial problem for mothers with little children to pay even minimum advances for social and health insurance. Even if women can pay these advances on a long-term basis, it means, that this minimum level in the future affects level of old age pension, which is going to be very low. Currently, half of retired women get pension, which is below the poverty level (ČSÚ, 2016). We can suppose, that these long-term self-employed persons will be a group with very low pension due to low advancements for social insurance.

The topic of expected low pension seemed to be, in discussions, substantial and negatively perceived. Mothers with little children understand, that in their pension time they would not be able to rely on income from the state and they balance it in many ways. Some of them resign and do not expect any pension from the state. Nela is an example of a mother after parental leave, who is trying to rely on herself, whereas she does not have many reasons to be determined and optimistic in terms of future:

„I am a bit scared, I must say, because, I am unable to make enough money, despite trying quite hard. I save some money, I rely on my husband, but still I have to simply work. I am trying to study further on to direct myself to something, which can help me to make living even in my retirement.“ (Nela, 35, graduate, 1 child: 4 years, pregnant)

Like Nela, other self-employed mothers with little children expressed their fears about their future, they assessed their own situation as very uncertain, namely due to unsecured incomes.

Pension scheme reflects, not absolutely, previous incomes. Redistribution component was in addition lately in pension scheme in CR gradually more and more subdued (Dudová, 2013). Mothers are dependent on their partners' incomes significantly during parental leave and often even after up to the moment, before they develop their self-employment sufficiently. In addition, self-employment of mothers with little children can be braked by the tax scheme. Concretely discount on wife can represent the reason, why mothers with little children work e.g. after parental leave still like a helping family member in a family business (without salary), or she earns only a little for her partner to apply for a given discount (Dlouhá and team, 2014).

Necessity to pay advances for social and health insurance even at the beginning of self-employment, when the income is minimal, belong to the causes of economic uncertainty of mothers after parental leave. Quite often they are, for some time, dependent on the partner's income. Serious long-term consequences come in a form of lower pensions.

Recommendation:

- **Pension scheme should more consider the time, when women care about children and sick family members, and women should not be penalized for this “break in paid job “.**
- It would be suitable to **adjust claim conditions for tax relief on wife/husband**, in step with recommendation in chapter 3.5.
- It is suitable, **to implement support of self-employed parents** – whether in a **form of services** (consultancy, trainings of skills necessary for self-employment), **or in a form of microfinancing**, which could help to start business at the very beginning.

5.5 Insufficient children care services

Available quality children care services are principal for mothers with little children after parental leave, for their work engagement. The biggest problem is to get place in a financially and locally available institution, while success in this effort considerably affects possibilities and ways of employment or self-employment. Nela represents situation, when her son was not accepted to the state kindergarten and as she knew, that private children care is financially unavailable for her, she stayed at home with her son and works as a self-employed person, now, she can combine work and care of her son:

„This was my motivation, why I stayed at home, this was one of the things, as I knew, that they would not take him away from me and that I do not have money to pay some private service/babysitting. “(Nela, 35, graduate, 1 child: 4 years, pregnant)

Unavailable children care services after parental leave is the reason, why mothers after parental leave choose self-employment, which can be done at home together with care about children, or in time strapart from standard working hours, often in dissocial time (evening, night, at the weekends). Unavailable children care services also causes, that

mothers either limit time, which could be spent for self-employment, or they must pay expensive private instructions. This brings pressure and high work-load, so as mothers could secure sufficient income.

Quality children care services represent for mothers after parental leave quite essential condition of work engagement. It could be financial or local unavailability of these services, which brings self-employment. This could be done at home and somehow flexibly. This arrangement however brakes considerable development of self-employed mothers' activities, they must also manage care about children. Support of pre-school children care institutions also represents some potential to decrease the level of involuntary self-employment.

Recommendation:

It is necessary to support establishing and spread of quality and financially and locally available children care services and through this support:

- **Mothers' return to the job market,**
- **Mothers' return to their former employer,**
- **Prevention of involuntary employment through so called Schwarz system and**
- **Start of self-employment in a form of full-value employment.**

5.6 (Un)supported self-employment

The problem considered by mothers with little children is low support of small businesses in the Czech Republic. Enterprise support could be in a form financial contribution or loan (microfinances or microgrants), education/training in business or professional skills, or consultancy and assistance in concrete matters related to undertaking. Markéta summed up the situation of non-existing support and potential advantages, which should be provided to mothers with little children:

„... microgrants just for the women, so as they could have secured income for three months and could start up something, this is not here. The microfinances also do not work much. Support of little businesses, which is a terrific way for mothers with little children. Even being temporary, it is always better than to live

on benefits. This is not supported here at all. I think, this would be in quotes the easiest way. “(Markéta, 43, graduate, 2 children: 12, 4 years)

In CR there is almost no support of small businesses by the state, allocation of financial resources from state budget could be in principle organized by labor offices and trade unions. Quite high financial resources were in previous years invested to support of business groups disadvantaged on the labor market including mothers with little children i.e. from the European Social Fund. It was namely about educational activities in entrepreneurial skills, which were not distinctly connected with other ways of support with some kind of potential to improve situation of mothers with little children on the job market. It is necessary to extend the sphere of support even financial support in a form of loans and grants as it is common abroad. This support should be aimed specifically at mothers with little children and should be integrated into the system of other services e.g. specific consultancy for women starting business after parental leave, networking activities for mothers with little children etc.

The problem is low support of parent self-employment parents itself (especially mothers) with little children from the side of various institutions and nearly non-existing specific services to support business of parents after parental leave.

Recommendation:

- **It would be suitable to create system of support and organization of self-employed parents (and namely mothers), which would enable mutual promotion and negotiation about their rights.**
- **It would be suitable to create programs supporting business women in a form of microfinancing, consultancy and even training activities.**

C. RECOMMENDATION

6 Findings and recommendations

Within last years there was a positive trend established within family policy – increased flexibility of parental leave is coming (or it should come in the nearest future), (respectively usage of parental allowances), extended possibilities in usage of children's care services (view of decreased age limit of children, they could be placed in pre-school care institution without any sanctions, or from the point of obligation for institutions to secure place for children since certain age) or support of shared care about children between both parents (introduction of father leave, possibility for parents to take turns during parental leave etc.). These changes unambiguously and positively influence return of parents to the job market.

Despite effort to improve situation of parents on the Czech job market, employment rate of parents is not maintained (and namely of mothers) at desirable level. Single chapters of this study show, that even well-intentioned measures cannot help, unless there is all-society consensus related to observed tasks of family policy. Single chapters warned about absence of tuning up processes for family and working life in the Czech Republic, whereas all conclusions were supported by results of quantitative and qualitative empirical research. Hereinafter we will sum up single recommendations, which should support creation of complex – and namely efficient – family policy.

Selected recommendations in the field of family and working life reconciliation should be fulfilled in legislative and executive process without exception. These are the following **general recommendations**:

1. **Keep the enthroned trend of positive changes** from the point of increased flexibility in the sphere of balancing family and working life;
2. **Continue with strengthening all-society support** of observed aims (e.g. in a form of shared care about children by both parents, or voluntary faster return of mothers to the job market);
3. **All measures of economic and social policy to be considered due to impacts on family policy** (see below, e.g. tax relief for wife/husband), use right tools for right mechanisms (see the introduction of this study);
4. When choosing concrete measured or while setting up concrete parameters – **unambiguously use the results of the empirical research of** established institutions (e.g. fulfillment of requirements - *evidence-based policy*).

Beside these follow-up recommendations numerous concrete spheres were identified. **Critical measures** should be necessarily taken, in this respect, we propose the following **concrete recommendations**:

i. **Transformation of tax relief for wife/husband:**

- a) **Direct support of families with children** (and with other dependent members), no **conditions of marriage and low or none income** of one of the partners, or
- b) **Tax relief or bonuses for the parent** from two-income families with dependent children (and potentially with other dependent members), who has lower income, without the condition of marriage, potentially tax relief or bonus for parents – single users.

*Reasoning: The existing arrangement substantially **disadvantages single users or unmarried couples with children**. The right for such relief or bonus should be available for all parents without any legal status consideration.*

*The existing arrangement **motivates** one of the married couple (usually wife) **to low economic activity** and keeping the low income to get claim for this relief. This is clearly **demotivating element** from the point of decision making about return to the job market during parental leave.*

ii. **Increased availability and enforceability of flexi work regimes and extended scale of flexibility definition.** i.e. time (flexi working hours, compressed working week etc.), place (home office, teleworking etc.) and total working hours (shorter work-load)

*Reasoning: § 241 section 2 Act No. 246/2006 Coll. Labor Code, determines employers to meet employee's application, if he/she cares about a child younger than 15 (and other dependent persons), unless there are **serious operational reasons**. In apparent cases the employer **should be obliged to inform applicant in writing** about concrete operational reasons, why the claim was not approved and eliminate gratuitousness of employers. It would also be suitable to seek for **detailed specifications of serious operational reasons** and provide higher support for negotiations about flexible (not decreasing work security) work regimes demanded by employees **in terms of collective bargaining**.*

iii. **Secured locally and financially available quality children care services** for pre-school and lower school age, **implementation of legal claims for place in a pre-school institution** from certain age of children **for economically active parents** and secured effective coordination of the current participants in this field (MPSV,

MŠMT, MPO-Ministry of Labor, Education, Social Affairs, local government and administration)

*Reasoning: Kalíšková and team (2016) document, that **each extra place in any kindergarten is unambiguous advantage for public budget**. Considering this, cost should be covered especially by state, as the state is profiting from increased health and social security insurance payments by working parents.*

*Legal claims for a place in a pre-school institution is a key factor for convenient planning of parents returning to the job market. Since 2020, pre-school institutions should compulsorily accept all two-year old and older children, however there is still **problematic linkage of the age and the beginning of school year**. Child born in August already meets the requirements for preferential entrance, while children born in September do not. They have the right for pre-school care institution just one year later. The right of preferential entry is not linked with any sanctions and compensations, if such a child is not accepted by an institution. Planning of return to the job market will be easier for parents, as the link to children's age and beginning of school year will be cancelled, there will be real claim to get place in a pre-school institution.*

*Assessment to the claim for placing in a pre-school institution should take **economic activity of both parents** into account. Preferential treatment i.e. place in a pre-school institution should be provided to children, whose both parents (respectively for single-parent family only one parent) are employed or self-employed. This recommendation is not fully in tune with the decision of the Public Defender of Rights from 2012, however only this perspective enables to secure effective fulfilment of pre-school institutions capacities, balance of public budget in sense of conclusions by Kalíškové and team (2016) plus more active attitude of both parents in terms of returning to the job market. Thanks to this perspective it would be easier to decrease the age for entering pre-school institution from two to one year of age, for example.*

*Provision of financially available children care services is **preventing social exclusion and poverty impacts** (eventually material deprivation) of children from disadvantaged environment. **Share of costs for these services** related to parents' incomes must be kept at **low level**, even for the persons whose incomes are at the level of minimum wages.*

***Corporate kindergartens or children groups** are necessary fulfilment of public children services. These services should be sustained for the future, **financing** must be secured in advance, even after ending opportunities to draw resources from the European Social Fund.*

*Pre-school educational services should define **minimum care standards**, valid for all operators and providers of these services. Only quality services secure optimal development of children and prepares them for further education. This should be – together **with compulsory pre-school education** – appraised namely at the children from disadvantaged environment.*

- iv. **Cancellation of 46-hour limit for using children care services** up to two years of age of children for the ones, who **use parental allowance and are economically active at the same time** (especially in a position of employee or self-employment).

Reasoning: This limit will be – together with maintaining the character of parental allowance – braking return of parents to the job market in early age of children.

- v. **Support of more balanced care distribution between both parents**

*Reasoning: Changes in the system of using parental allowance will lead to more balanced share related to children care between both parents only in case of **non-conductible right of each parent to draw paid parental leave**. Efficient measure to support higher participation of fathers taking care must necessarily include **adequate compensation of lost income**.*

At the European level this question there is treated by the draft of the European Directive of European Commission COM (2017) 253 Final of 26. 4. 2017, according to which member states should secure non-conductibility of the right to draw parental leave for 4 months for each of the parents, while the claim should be supported by lost salary compensation at the minimum amount related sickness leave.

Balanced care distribution of care about children not only reduces barriers from the point of a parent entering the job market, it also contributes to reaching balance between working and professional life of both parents.

- vi. **Remove disadvantage for part time workers, whose salary is below the level of minimum one.**

*Reasoning: **Minimum wage** represents **minimum basis of assessment for health insurance** for employees (Act No. 592/1992 Coll., on General Health Insurance, as amended). Persons working **part time do not reach the level of minimum wage**, therefore **payments of health insurance are calculated** from the minimum basis of assessment, i.e. from **minimum wage** (higher wage than they really earned). This fact disadvantages the group of people working part time and discourages the specific*

group of parents with lower income since they entered the job market. For this reason, we recommend removing the disadvantage in a form of exception for parents with children under 15 without the condition of all-day and regular care about children.

vii. Minimize parenthood impacts on the level of old age pension

Reasoning: Pension scheme should consider more the period, when parents care about children. It is recommended:

- a) **Maintain the trend from the point of unification of statutory pension age claim for women and men**, not to disadvantage women from the point of working life length (Šatava, 2016);*
- b) **birth of a child** should be considered for **equivalent of simple allowance for social or pension insurance**, which balance lower payments from income decreased due to parenthood. The aim is to level impacts of motherhood and parenthood on mothers' pensions, which currently represent "values of hundreds of crowns per month" (Šatava, 2016).*

viii. Consultancy and adult education aimed at both sides of the labor market (i.e. employers and labor force) in the field of rights, obligations and opportunities.

Reasoning: In a form of adult education and consultancy we can eliminate effort of employers to employ selected group of people by means of so called Swarz system. Ignorance related to the field of labor jurisdiction can demotivate numerous parents from the very beginning of submitting application e.g. on adjustment of working hours, also employers can – due to groundless apprehension – refuse the application. Thanks to consultancy and adult education in this field employers should be motivated to approach the employment of parents more flexibly.

Special attention should be paid to support of self-employed women, who started their businesses during maternity or parental leave. Support should rest in legal consultancy (contractual relations settlement, enforcing outstanding debt), financial consultancy (financial planning, microfinancing, set up of parental allowances related to minimization payments of social and health insurance), creating platforms and networks (sharing good practice examples, business information or specific problems).

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