Gender Equality in the Czech Republic

STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE RECOVERY

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OECD

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Foreword

There is growing evidence on how gender-sensitive policymaking can underpin inclusive growth, build economic resilience and reinforce democratic values. In recent decades, the government of the Czech Republic has made many domestic and international commitments to ensure gender equality. It has also made some progress in the areas of women's employment, education, entrepreneurship and cabinet-level representation. Since the late 1990s, the government has adopted horizontal gender equality strategies to frame and promote action in this area across the public administration. In addition, the Czech Republic has adhered to the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life and the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship and has been an active member of the OECD Working Party on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance since its establishment.

Despite these advances, gender gaps persist in areas such as labour market segregation, earnings and leadership in public life along with the threat of gender-based violence. The government also faces internal barriers that limit its ability to make progress on gender equality such as limited capacities and competencies, the allocation of resources, and fragmentation of gender-related initiatives. These internal challenges were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing social and economic effects, which had differential impacts on women and men. The ongoing complexities of global and regional situations – including the economic and humanitarian crises caused by Russia's large-scale war of aggression in Ukraine, the global energy crisis and the climate crisis – create further pressures on the government's capacity to address gender equality issues.

To successfully realise more gender-equal outcomes, governments need strategic enablers such as legal, strategic and institutional foundations as well as government capacities and capabilities for gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive policymaking and decision making. This OECD Review was developed to help the government of the Czech Republic strengthen its capacities for implementing and mainstreaming gender equality across the whole of government. Gender mainstreaming can support inclusive growth and build resilience to future crises and emergencies. Gender-sensitive policymaking can also improve gender-balanced participation in the economy and the labour market, while making the green and digital transitions more gender sensitive. Moreover, it can provide an impetus for gender-balanced representation and inclusive participation in public life and thus contribute to a stronger democracy.

This report provides a baseline assessment of the policy and legal frameworks for gender mainstreaming in the Czech Republic, the roles and responsibilities of various institutional actors, and the use of tools and practices for gender mainstreaming. It offers evidence-informed recommendations tailored to the Czech context to improve governance and capacities for accelerating progress in gender equality.

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The report was overseen by Tatyana Teplova and co-ordinated by Pınar Güven (OECD Policy Analyst). Major drafting contributions were provided by Pınar Güven and Capucine Kerboas (Chapter 1); Lyydia Alajääskö and Valentina Patrini (Chapter 2); Veronika Fajmonová and Meeta Tarani (Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 7); and Scherie Nicol (Chapter 6). The authors thank Jonas Fluchtmann, Sophia Katsira, Sebla Kazancı, Réka Mihácsi, Giulia Morando, Arnault Pretet and Laura Uribe for their contributions and feedback. Susan Sachs edited the manuscript. Editorial assistance and administrative support were provided by Melissa Sander and Luís Dias de Carvalho.

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Executive summary

The COVID-19 crisis has had a differential impact on women and men in the Czech Republic and globally. Russia's large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, the ongoing global energy crisis, looming climate crisis and rising inflationary pressures all further imperil the prospects for an inclusive recovery from the pandemic. These crises, too, have gender-differentiated impacts; for instance, the impact of inflation on food and fuel prices can affect women differently due to gender gaps in employment, pay, pensions and so on.

In recent years, the Czech Republic has made several efforts to close gender gaps. However, these efforts have not managed to move the needle on gender equality, with noticeable gaps still seen in several areas. For instance, despite major progress in male and female employment, the gender employment gap remains high. While girls fare better in secondary education, gender differences persist in educational choices. Similarly, gender gaps exist in earnings, the work-life balance for mothers of young children, and women's access to leadership roles in both public and private sectors. Gender-based violence also remains a significant issue. The Czech government has adopted strategic frameworks over the past two decades and further solidified an institutional structure to co-ordinate gender equality efforts across the administration. Yet, many roadblocks to adequate governance have been identified, including limited capacities, competencies and resources to pursue the country's gender equality and gender mainstreaming goals.

Given this sluggish progress in reducing gender inequalities, hampered by the current regional and global situation, there is a need to adopt a two-pronged approach to promoting gender equality in the Czech Republic. This approach consists of both targeted measures and mainstreaming the gender perspective across government decision making.

To achieve this, the Czech Republic will need to reinforce governance structures and institutional capacities for gender-sensitive policymaking. Noting the main trends and gaps and the importance of accelerating efforts to improve gender equality in the Czech Republic, this report assesses four main areas in the governance of gender equality:

- legal, policy and strategic frameworks
- institutional set-up, roles and responsibilities
- the use of tools and practices such as gender impact assessment, gender budgeting, gender-sensitive data and citizen participation
- accountability and oversight mechanisms.

Based on these assessments, the report makes recommendations in each of the pillars to underpin better gender equality outcomes through gender-sensitive policymaking.

First, the report proposes formalising gender equality commitments legally by building on the existing policy and strategic frameworks for gender mainstreaming, such as the Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030, and linking them more strongly to the budget process. Doing so should improve the sustainability of their

implementation. The government could consider enhancing the autonomy and ownership of line ministries to implement the strategy and integrating gender equality goals in strategic planning at the sectoral levels.

Second, the Czech government could consider institutionalising the role of the Government Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure cabinet-level representation for gender equality policies. The Gender Equality Department's mandate and its location within the institutional set-up could be clarified legally. The department would also benefit from improved analytical capacities and resources for effectively co-ordinating gender equality efforts across the administration. Similarly, strengthening the mandate of the Government Council for Gender Equality to monitor and follow up on its recommendations would improve implementation. Systematic application of the gender focal point (GFP) standard in all ministries, backed with greater clarity of the role of the GFPs as providers of gender expertise, would help support the whole-of-government effort for gender equality and mainstreaming. Overall, there is a need for more sustainable financing and systematic training for this work.

Third, while gender impact assessments (GIA) have been introduced through a binding requirement, linking them formally to the GIA methodology would ensure quality control. The government could consider carrying out needs assessments and analyses to identify the most relevant sector-specific policy issues related to gender equality. Conducting audits for mapping the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data across sectors would improve evidence-informed policymaking. Formalising consultation and participation channels for civil society would improve stakeholder consultation in designing gender equality policy. Adopting a staged approach for the introduction of gender budgeting would allow time for institutional buy-in and building capacity.

Finally, the report recommends introducing various levels of accountability and oversight for the monitoring and follow-up of the government's gender equality and gender mainstreaming goals. On the executive side, the roles of the Government Council for Gender Equality, the Legislative Council, the Regulatory Impact Assessment Board and the Cabinet are good candidates for taking on monitoring related to gender equality work, thereby fostering accountability. Reinforcing the corrective powers of the Office of the Public Defender of Rights would give its decisions greater impact. A more proactive role for the Parliament of the Czech Republic and greater parliamentary oversight, for example through an annual report on gender equality, could also be considered.

1 The need for gender-sensitive and inclusive policymaking in the Czech Republic

This chapter discusses the relevance of gender-sensitive policymaking as one of the key elements to build the Czech Republic's resilience to current and future shocks and promote economic growth. It reviews how a gender-sensitive approach can support responsible and evidence-based decisions, particularly in a context of fiscal tightening, while strengthening democratic processes and boosting citizens' trust in public institutions. It highlights the importance of strengthening the government's strategic, legal and institutional capacities for gender-sensitive policymaking and previews steps that the Czech Republic could take to further its progress towards its gender equality objectives.

1.1. Gender-sensitive policymaking can help promote growth and strengthen the resilience of the Czech Republic to current and future crises

1.1.1. The Czech Republic's inclusive recovery is challenged as further economic and humanitarian crises unfold

COVID-19 has had different impacts on men, women and diverse groups in OECD countries and beyond primarily because the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing structural inequalities and gender norms. The Czech Republic was not immune to this differential impact. Since 2016, the European Union (EU) European Semester country-specific recommendations have regularly cited a number of structural gender inequalities in the country. For example, the 2020 country report for the Czech Republic stated that the gender gap in employment and pay is among the highest in the EU (European Commission, 2020[1]). The pandemic worsened the situation, with Czech women more affected by the crisis than men in several areas, due in part to women's higher rate of employment in commercial services and in part to the traditional division of household and childcare responsibilities (Chapter 2).

Over the course of 2020 and 2021, there was growing recognition across both the OECD and the EU of the importance of supporting an inclusive approach to exit the crisis and promote recovery. During preparation of national recovery and resilience plans, the European Commission called on EU member states to take a two-pronged approach to reflect gender equality considerations in their national plans, including both gender-specific measures and gender mainstreaming throughout the national plans (European Commission, 2022[2]). This two-pronged approach has been highlighted in the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life (OECD, 2016[3]) and the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (European Commission, 2020[4]). The Czech Republic took steps in this regard, as discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

However, the window of opportunity for an inclusive recovery faces threats due to mounting economic and humanitarian crises stemming from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the soaring energy prices, and the Czech Republic's heavy reliance on energy imports from Russia. These challenges pose a risk that gender policy may become less of a priority. In this context, there is a need to better understand the potential gender-differentiated impacts of rising inflation and how to account for these differences going forward.

1.1.2. Gender-sensitive policymaking can support responsible and evidence-informed policy and spending decisions in a tightening fiscal context

Responsible budgetary policy and efficient public spending, coupled with evidence-informed policymaking, are high priorities for the Czech government. It has set out to tighten its fiscal policy over the medium term, with fiscal consolidation planned for 2023 (OECD, 2022[5]). In this context, there are difficult tax and spending choices to be made that will determine how the cost of fiscal consolidation will be distributed across society. Fiscal consolidation can undermine progress made in improving female employment and closing the gender gap, as shown by evidence on the effect of the austerity measures adopted by most OECD countries in response to the post-2008 recession. Measures to lower wages and decrease labour market incentives often target second earners and groups with lower expected productivity, among whom women continue to be over-represented. Another frequently used austerity measure, cuts to care services, increases the burden of unpaid care and family work, which often becomes the responsibility of women (Vladisavljević, Jelena and Perugini, 2019[6]). According to OECD evidence, commonly used fiscal consolidation tools, such as across-the-board expenditure cuts that affect women disproportionately, are inefficient and are not likely to deliver a long-term consolidation. Instead, reforms focusing on sophisticated workforce planning in the public sector, with flexibility given to managers across the portfolio, can help ensure an equal distribution of the burden of costs (OECD, 2011[7]). An evidence-based decision-making

process and whole-of-government approach that include key actors in gender equality, paired with stakeholder engagement, can help identify both risks and opportunities in how fiscal policies impact women.

Unless carefully considered, the very policies aimed at improving people's lives and well-being in the Czech Republic could inadvertently further deepen inequalities in the economy, in the workplace, at home and in society. Evidence from across the OECD shows that the laws, regulations, policies and budgets designed by governments often affect prevalent gender norms and gender gaps in society. For example, seemingly gender-neutral tax policies may have implicit biases that disadvantage women due to existing socioeconomic factors such as differences in income levels of women and men from diverse backgrounds (OECD, 2022[8]). Box 1.1 offers an example from Canada on how laws can inadvertently deepen gender gaps if not analysed for their gender impacts.

Gender-sensitive policymaking is a form of evidence-informed policymaking as it can provide decision makers with useful information about the anticipated impact of proposed policy and budget measures on different groups in the society. It aims to improve the quality, responsiveness and accessibility of public services. Gender-sensitive policymaking goes beyond implementing targeted policy actions to address specific forms of gender-based discrimination such as pay gaps, gender-based violence and unpaid care responsibilities. It also entails integrating a gender equality perspective across all government actions (OECD, 2021[9]). This approach helps decision makers collect, use and analyse the best available evidence regarding gender as a social construct and employ multiple sources of information including statistics, data and research to inform their decisions. Key tools of gender-sensitive policymaking include gender impact assessments and gender budgeting, which are explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this report.

While such an approach requires allocating sufficient capacities, capabilities, skills and resources across the public administration to achieve full impact (Chapter 4), closing gender gaps can in turn provide a boost to a country's economy and public finances (Nicol, 2022[10]). On the other hand, a failure to invest in gender-sensitive policymaking processes can mean higher societal and human costs.

Box 1.1. Limited gender-sensitive decision making risks inadvertently widening gender gaps

In 2016, as part of a ministerial mandate commitment, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) developed a proposal to remove a regulatory requirement that sponsored spouses and partners of Canadian citizens and permanent residents must live with their sponsor for two years as a condition for maintaining their permanent resident status. In the process, IRCC applied gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) that acknowledged a sponsored spouse or partner may be vulnerable for many reasons, among them gender, age, official language proficiency, isolation and financial dependence, and that these factors can create an imbalance between the sponsor and the sponsor's spouse or partner. It was further assessed that the two-year co-habitation requirement for conditional permanent residence could compound these vulnerabilities in situations of domestic abuse. Given that a majority (70%) of affected individuals who asked the IRCC for an exception to this requirement based on abuse or neglect were women, the IRCC assessed that this regulatory requirement may potentially result in vulnerable spouses and partners remaining in abusive relationships out of fear of losing their permanent resident status in Canada. The conditional permanent residence requirement was repealed on 18 April 2017.

Source: OECD (2019[11]), *Fast Forward to Gender Equality: Mainstreaming, Implementation and Leadership*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9faa5-en.

1.1.3. Gender-sensitive policymaking can support economic resilience and growth by increasing women's participation in the workforce

Policy action to increase women's employment and thus boost domestic labour supply is key to developing a more productive and skilled labour force in the Czech Republic and to expanding its currently tight labour market (Chapter 2). As stressed in the OECD Employment Outlook (OECD, 2022[5]), the Czech Republic's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is facing difficulties deriving from supply disruptions, rising prices and overall uncertainty related to the war in Ukraine. High gender employment gaps and childcare costs in the Czech Republic, alongside a decline in its economically active population, have created a labour shortage that could negatively impact the national economy.

Reducing the gender employment gap is one way to help mitigate this imbalance. Recent OECD analysis suggests that by addressing gaps in labour force participation and working hours, OECD countries may see an average increase of 9.2% to GDP across the OECD by 2060 (OECD, 2023[12]). In its Policy Statement and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Czech government has already taken important steps in this regard by committing to make childcare facilities more accessible, which is expected to drive increased women's labour force participation (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[13]; Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[14]). These steps build on the national-level operational programmes adopted in the context of the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund that have provided crucial support for the expansion of childcare services in the Czech Republic, especially for the creation of children's groups.

Relatedly, gender-sensitive policymaking can also help the energy transition and green recovery agenda consider gender impacts as well as ensure that women are not left out of both of these. An example from Germany in Box 1.2 shows tools that can help inform climate policies from a gender lens.

Box 1.2. Germany has developed a tool to assess the gender impact of its climate policies

Conducting regulatory impact assessments of climate policies, including with a gender perspective, has the potential to allow lawmakers to assess gender effects of such policies and to take gender equality goals into account in the development and implementation of climate policies.

A climate gender impact assessment tool developed by Umweltbundesamt, the German Environment Agency, uses the common two-step methodology of impact assessments – i.e. a relevance test and a main assessment. But it also builds on six gender-related dimensions that reflect diverse areas of life where gender inequality is (re)produced such as in care work, the labour economy and public resources.

These gender dimensions draw upon empirical evidence from research on climate and gender equality, and help identify and analyse gender-unequal effects of climate policies. The tool also incorporates an intersectional approach to take into account the interplay between gender or sex and other factors of inequality and marginalisation.

Source: (Sauer, 2018[15]; OECD, 2021[16]).

1.1.4. Gender-sensitive policymaking can underpin gender equality as a democratic value and a driver of trust in government

Greater gender equality can help support democracies and trust in the government. Ensuring gender-balanced and inclusive representation in public life and leadership and promoting gender-sensitive public institutions and policymaking processes can contribute to strengthening democracies. As forthcoming OECD research suggests, gender-balanced representation in parliaments is associated with increased satisfaction with democracies and citizens' trust in government decision making (OECD, 2023[12]).

Promoting gender balance and diversity in public life is particularly important in the Czech Republic given that gender imbalances and stereotypes persist across society and trust in government institutions is low. As elaborated in Chapter 2, while 70% of adult respondents to a 2018 survey said they believe that violence against women is a problem in the Czech Republic, 58% indicated they believe there are cases in which a woman is partially to blame for being raped. In addition, only 30% of citizens report trusting the national government and 26% report trusting the national parliament (Amnesty International, 2018[17]). As also discussed in Chapter 2, despite improvements over time, important steps are still needed in the Czech Republic to promote women's participation in public life, which remains below the OECD average in the areas of women's representation in the parliament (26%), ministerial positions (31%) and the Supreme Court (23%).

In line with the relevant objectives of the national Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030 (*Strategie rovnosti žen a mužů na léta* 2021-2030) (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[18]), (hereafter, Strategy 2021+), gender-sensitive policymaking can help in prioritising the necessary steps to close gender gaps. Such an approach can also help policymakers anticipate and address emerging challenges and new barriers to women's participation and representation in public life. These include, for example, cyberviolence, misinformation and disinformation that are increasingly targeting female politicians (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018[19]). These threats are major impediments to equal participation as they can drive women to step aside from leadership roles.

1.2. Additional efforts are needed to embed gender-sensitive policymaking as the way of doing business in the Czech public administration

In recent years, the Czech Republic has taken policy steps towards greater progress in gender equality, evidenced by the launch of the government's first gender equality strategy in 2014 and the subsequent Strategy 2021+ currently in force. Gender focal points (GFPs) are in place to support the integration of gender considerations in the work of line ministries. In addition, a government resolution requires all submissions to the Cabinet to include a gender impact assessment (GIA), a process supported by an implementation Handbook provided by the Gender Equality Department. All of these efforts are aligned with the provisions of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life. While the economic and social benefits of gender-sensitive policymaking are clear, additional efforts are needed to institutionalise this approach as intrinsic to the way of doing business across the Czech public administration.

Several factors have hindered the government's ability to fully realise the expected impacts of these steps. Among others, these factors include the marginalisation of the gender equality objectives by key stakeholders, varying levels of political support, the limited sustainability of government initiatives due to its reliance on external funding, limited resourcing capacity and inconsistent implementation as a result of due to changing responsibilities among different Cabinet members. Analyses undertaken by the Gender Equality Department have found, for example, that GIAs are insufficiently utilised in government materials and that GFPs, while responsible for implementing gender mainstreaming, usually fill the position on a part-time basis and often face limited competencies. Lessons from COVID-19 have highlighted the

importance of having building blocks in the form of formalised institutional structures, capacities and processes to effectively mobilise the state apparatus for gender-sensitive emergency management and recovery.

This report assesses the Czech Republic's gender equality efforts and outcomes in accordance with the standards set forth in the OECD Gender Recommendations[1] and in view of well-tested good practices across the OECD aimed at strengthening government capacity for gender-sensitive policymaking and inclusive recovery. The Review consists of seven chapters (including this introductory chapter) that cover the following issues:

- **Chapter 2** provides a brief overview of how the Czech Republic ranks in various established gender equality indices relative to other countries in the OECD and the EU in terms of key gender indicators in the areas of labour force participation, wage gaps, time spent in paid and unpaid work, parental leave and childcare policies, and women's participation in public and private sector leadership and in public employment. It also considers, to the extent possible, the specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on these areas.
- **Chapter 3** assesses the legal and strategic frameworks for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the Czech Republic, how they have evolved, and key success factors and lessons learned.
- **Chapter 4** reviews the institutional set-up for gender equality in the Czech government including the roles, responsibilities, capacities and capabilities of various public institutions engaged in advancing the country's gender equality agenda. It further assesses whole-of-government co-ordination structures for the promotion of the gender equality agenda.
- **Chapter 5** examines the extent to which GIAs are employed in the Czech Republic and ways to strengthen their use and enhance citizen participation in policymaking to achieve greater gender equality. It also discusses the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data and evidence to support gender-sensitive policymaking.
- **Chapter 6** discusses recent efforts in relation to gender budgeting in the Czech Republic and how gender equality considerations might be incorporated in a more explicit and effective way throughout the budget cycle to build an effective gender budgeting framework.
- **Chapter 7** reviews accountability and transparency mechanisms for gender equality policies, in particular, the roles played by the Office of Government of the Czech Republic in co-ordinating gender equality policies; the Ombudsperson in handling gender-related complaints; the parliament in ensuring the government is effectively implementing gender mainstreaming in line with the legal, policy and strategic frameworks; and the public administration as a whole in ensuring senior leadership and managers are adhering to gender equality and anti-discrimination policies and principles (e.g. through performance appraisals).

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Note

[1] The OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship [OECD/LEGAL/0398] and the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life [OECD/LEGAL/0418] are together referred to as the OECD Gender Recommendations.

2 A comparative overview of gender equality outcomes in the Czech Republic

While the Czech Republic has made progress in advancing gender equality, gender gaps persist in areas such as education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life. Gender-based violence and stereotypes also remain a concern. This chapter assesses the current state of gender equality in the country, including trends over time and how it ranks on key international indices compared with other OECD countries and its regional peers. It also discusses the importance of strengthening institutions and capacities for gender mainstreaming to promote inclusive recovery, economic growth, and national well-being.

2.1. Introduction

This chapter assesses the current situation in the Czech Republic with regard to key gender equality outcomes, highlighting how it compares with the situation in other OECD countries The information and analysis are mainly based on desk research, data extracted from OECD and other international databases, consultations in the form of individual or group interviews with government stakeholders, and insights that emerged from a focus group with non-government actors in the Czech Republic. The gap analysis is also complemented with some targeted policy reflections focusing on cases where the gender gaps are considerable.

Despite improvements, participation in tertiary education remains low for both women and men in the Czech Republic but with wide gender gaps. Gender disparities persist in educational choices, leading to segregation in fields of study, with women under-represented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields and over-represented in fields such as education, arts and humanities, health, and welfare (Czech Statistical Office, 2022[1]).

The Czech Republic has made major progress in male and female employment rates, but the gender employment gap remains high. While education plays a relatively small role, this gap fluctuates sharply across age groups (sub-section 2.4). In particular, gender employment gaps are wider among parents – especially for mothers of very young children (aged 0-2) – than among persons without children. This "motherhood penalty" results in important disadvantages in terms of wage and career progression over the women's lifetime and is also reflected in differences in average old age pensions for men and women and in the higher risk of poverty in old age for women. This chapter provides policy reflections on how to close the gender employment gap, especially for mothers with young children, for instance through work-life balance measures.

Public spending on families in the Czech Republic is higher than the OECD average and includes generous family benefits (mostly in the form of cash benefits) and long parental leaves (until the child reaches the age of three). The limited availability of childcare places together with fairly traditional attitudes on gender roles (relative to the OECD overall) result in scarce participation of very young children in childcare, with mothers staying out of the labour market for a long time after childbirth. More generally, persistent gender stereotypes and social norms remain at the root of gender inequalities in the economy and society overall.

Labour market segregation and gender earning gaps persist due in part to the fact that women make up a relatively low share of managers in the Czech Republic and few of them reach the highest positions. Gender gaps in public life are even larger, with women struggling to access leadership positions, as evidenced by the relatively small share of women in parliament and in supreme courts.

Women continue to be less likely than men to create a business or to be working on a new start-up, to operate an established business, or to be self-employed. However, an overview of entrepreneurship policies through a gender lens suggests that women's self-employment and motivation are increasing. This increase is particularly strong among women with young children and those of pre-retirement age.

Violence against women is a significant issue in the country and apparently seen as such by a majority of the population. A rise in intimate partner violence among young people and adolescents is among the serious problems related to gender-based violence in the Czech Republic (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[2]).

2.2. The Czech Republic according to key international gender equality indices

Although gender equality in the Czech Republic is improving slowly, disparities between men and women in its society and economy persist. Various cross-country indices allowing for international comparisons rank the country lower than other OECD and European Union (EU) countries in different areas such as gender equality in public and private leadership and in the division of household tasks. This section presents data from three different indices covering the gender dimension as well as comparisons among the Visegrád Group of countries. Overall, these indices show limited improvements in terms of gender equality over the years.

2.2.1. The Social Institution and Gender Index

The OECD Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI) is a global index assessing gender equality in four areas: discrimination in the family, restrictions on physical integrity, limited access to resources and limited civil liberties (OECD, 2019[3]). It evaluates the level of inequality in a country on a scale of 0 to 100%, with 0% indicating the absence of any inequality.

In the 2019 edition of the index, the Czech Republic scored 19.8%, ranking 33rd out of 120 countries, and is categorised as having very low levels of inequality (OECD, 2019[3]). However, among the 29 OECD countries assessed, its performance is ranked the eighth poorest. The SIGI identified high inequality in the Czech Republic emerging from discrimination in the family, particularly towards working mothers, as well as restricted civil liberties, violence against women and a gender gap in feelings of security. The index also points to the lack of female representation in politics and corporate governance.

Apart from Hungary, which is categorised as having a low level of inequality, all other countries from the Visegrád Group (the Czech Republic, Poland and the Slovak Republic) have very low levels of inequality, according to this index.

2.2.2. The Gender Equality Index

The Gender Equality Index (GEI) of the European Institute for Gender Equality provides a comprehensive assessment of gender equality in the EU across six areas: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021[4]). Assessments are scored on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 indicating full gender equality.

The Czech Republic has consistently scored below the EU average on the GEI and ranks among the poorest-performing countries. The 2022 GEI ranked the Czech Republic 23rd out of 27 EU member states, with a score of 57.2 compared to an EU average of 68. The country ranks lower than the EU average across all six areas assessed, with the scores for health (21st of the 27), work (24th), money (15th) and knowledge (14th) falling slightly below the EU averages by about four score points. The low rank is likely due to particularly poor performance in the area of power, which measures women's representation in political and economic decision-making positions; in this area, the Czech Republic is assigned a score of 29.7 versus the EU average of 57.2, putting it in 25th place among the 27. The Czech Republic also scored poorly (57.3 versus the EU average of 64.9) in the area of time due to unequal distribution of care and housework, placing it 17th. Since 2010, the Czech Republic's scores on the GEI have ranged between 55 and 57.2, with a dip in 2017 to 53.6, which suggests that development in gender equality is stagnating in the country.

Among the other Visegrád countries, the Czech Republic ranks second in the overall GEI after Poland (57.7) and Slovak Republic (56), with Hungary being the lowest-ranked country (54.2).

2.2.3. The Global Gender Gap Index

The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) computed by the World Economic Forum concentrates on gender equality in health, education, economic opportunities and political empowerment. Countries are assigned scores ranging from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating full gender equality. The Czech Republic scored 0.711 on the 2021 edition of the GGGI, having increased only by 0.03 since 2010 (World Economic Forum, 2021[5]). Of the OECD countries assessed, only five (Greece, Hungary, Japan, Korea and the Republic of Türkiye) ranked lower than the Czech Republic. A likely explanation is that apart from improvement in women's political empowerment (from 0.088 in 2006 to 0.203 in 2021), large gains have not been made in other facets of gender equality. The Czech Republic ranks lowest in the area of economic participation and opportunity (91st out of 156) due both to poor performance in female representation among legislators, senior officials and managers and to low wage equality. In political empowerment, the country ranks 73rd due to the lack of women in politics and political leadership positions. Notably, the country achieved a score of 1 in educational attainment, reflecting women's high enrolment rates in all levels of education.

In general, the four Visegrád countries scored similarly on the GGGI in 2021. The Czech Republic ranked 78th among 156 countries assessed, just below the Slovak Republic (77th) and Poland (75th); Hungary lags further behind in 99th place. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic has the lowest scores in both economic opportunities and health outcomes while it has the highest scores in education and political empowerment.

2.3. Gender gaps in education

In OECD countries, access to compulsory education is becoming almost universal, and the enrolment rate among 15-19 year-olds in the Czech Republic is one of the highest among the OECD countries for which data are available (OECD, 2021[6]). Nonetheless, gender differences persist in educational outcomes and access to tertiary education as well as in career choices. As reflected in international indices, segregation in educational choices and fields of study represent key obstacles to gender equality in the Czech Republic.

2.3.1. Boys continue to lag behind girls in reading, but both perform similarly in science and mathematics

In the 2018 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the scores of students in the Czech Republic were not significantly different from the OECD average in reading, higher than the OECD average in mathematics and higher than the OECD average in science.

There were gender differences in PISA scores, with girls performing better than boys in reading across all participating countries. In the Czech Republic, the gender gap in reading was not significantly different from the average OECD gap (33 versus 30 score points). Furthermore, the gap has narrowed since 2009 (from 48 score points) as boys' performance improved and girls' performance remained stable over the period. Across the OECD, girls also slightly outperformed boys in science (by two score points) in 2018. While boys have historically registered better performance in mathematics, girls' performance has improved in recent years to five points in favour of boys in 2018. In the Czech Republic, however, such gender differences are less noticeable as girls and boys performed similarly in both science and mathematics (OECD, 2019[7]).

2.3.2. Girls fare better in secondary education, but gendered differences emerge in vocational education

In the Czech Republic, about 1% of students in lower secondary and 8% in upper secondary initial education repeated a grade in 2019, compared to 2% and 3%, respectively, on average across OECD countries. Both in the Czech Republic and across the OECD, six of ten repeaters at lower secondary level

were boys. At upper secondary level, the share of boys repeating a grade in the Czech Republic was 64%, compared to 57% on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2021[8]).

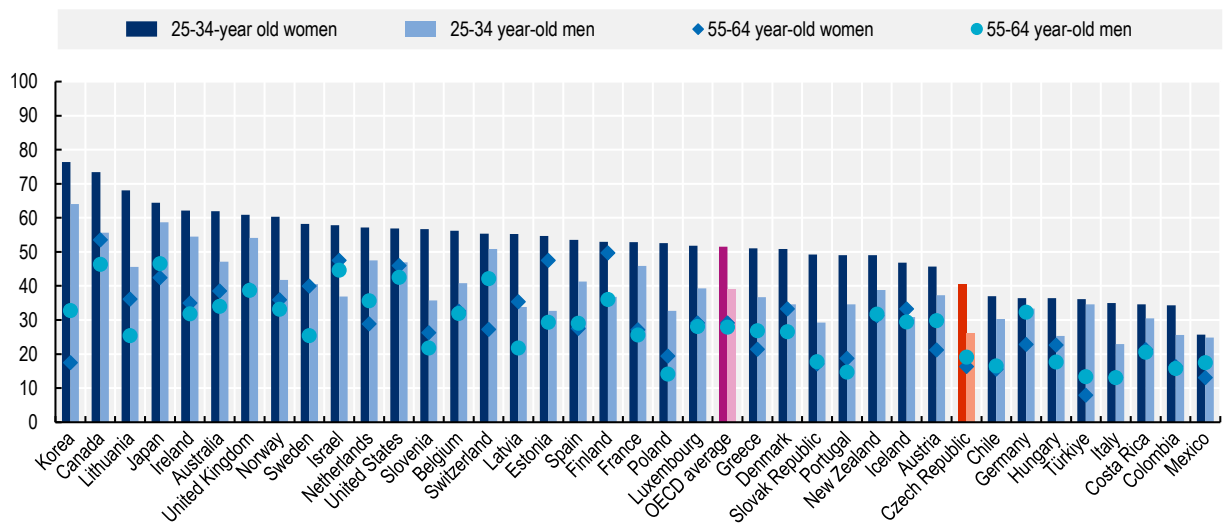
Men are more likely than women to pursue a vocational track at upper secondary level in most OECD countries. Likewise, in the Czech Republic, most (56%) upper secondary vocational graduates in 2019 were men (compared to the OECD average of 55%). Women represent most of graduates from upper secondary general programmes both across OECD countries (55% on average) and in the Czech Republic (60%) (OECD, 2021[8]).

2.3.3. Participation in tertiary education remains low for both women and men, and wide gender gaps persist despite improvements

Attainment of tertiary education has expanded in the last decades, especially for women. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, when it comes to attainment by age and gender, the trends in the Czech Republic resemble those in many other countries: Among older generations (aged 55-64), the share of women who attain tertiary education is lower than the share of men, while the opposite is true among younger generations (aged 25-34). Despite overall increases in attainment, the share of 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education in the Czech Republic remains well below the OECD average both for women (40% in 2020 compared to 52% in the OECD) and for men (26% compared to 39% in the OECD), with a gender gap higher than the OECD average. Among Visegrád countries, the share of young women (aged 25-34) who attain tertiary education is the second lowest in the Czech Republic, followed by Hungary.

Figure 2.1. Attainment of tertiary education is low in the Czech Republic and gender gaps are wide

Population with tertiary education by age and sex, 2020 or latest available year



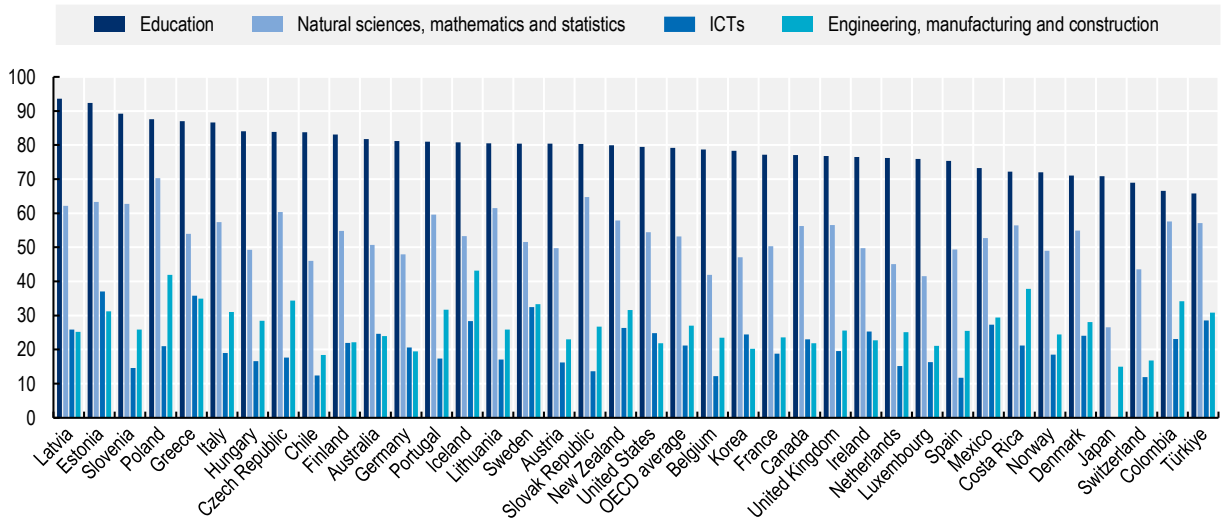
Note: Data refer to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 classification. Data for the United Kingdom refer to 2021, data for Japan and Türkiye refer to 2019, and data for Chile refer to 2017. The OECD average excludes Israel.
Source: OECD (2022[9]), *Gender Data Portal - Education* (database), www.oecd.org/gender/data/education.

In tertiary education, women and men largely choose different fields of study. In most OECD countries, women tend to be under-represented in certain fields of STEM. In 2019, on average in the OECD, women represented 21% of STEM graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction (versus 18% in the Czech Republic) and 27% in information and communication technologies (ICT) (versus 34% in the Czech Republic) (Figure 2.2). The share of women in natural sciences and mathematics and statistics is

considerably higher both in the OECD (53%) and in the Czech Republic (60%). This is most likely driven by the relatively high proportion of women in natural sciences; indeed, in the Czech Republic, women made up 59% of tertiary graduates in natural sciences in 2012 (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022[10]). Among the Visegrád countries, both Poland and the Slovak Republic have higher shares of women in STEM than the Czech Republic, while Hungary is well below the OECD average. Different stakeholders have noted that to counteract these trends, the Czech Republic has several initiatives in place to further support girls in STEM, including counselling and career advice.

Figure 2.2. Girls remain under-represented in information and communications technologies and engineering fields of study in the OECD and the Czech Republic

Share of women among tertiary graduates by field of education, all ages, 2019 (%)



Note: Data refer to ISCED 2011 classification. The OECD average excludes Japan in the field of ICTs and Israel for all fields.
Source: OECD (2022[9]), *Gender Equality - Key charts on Education* (database), www.oecd.org/gender/data/education.

In contrast, the field of education is traditionally dominated by women. Indeed, in the Czech Republic, 83% of new entrants to the field of education in 2019 were women, more than the OECD average of 78%. Across all education levels in the Czech Republic, 24% of teachers were men compared to 30% on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2021[8]). According to stakeholders consulted for this report, there is a bigger share of men among school directors in the country than among teachers. Reasons for this may relate to salary considerations and reputational issues.

Traditional gender roles are one of the causes of the feminisation of the teaching professions. The stakeholders consulted stressed that in the Czech Republic, teaching professions are of a caring nature and therefore seen as typically female professions, especially positions in early childhood education and care (ECEC). According to data as of September 2021, 99% of the teachers in nursery schools are women, with the proportion decreasing in subsequent grades and falling to 60% in secondary schools (Czech Statistical Office, 2021[11]).

To start tackling the issue of gender gaps in the field of education, the government in 2022 promised that teachers' salaries will be kept at 130% of the average wage (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[12]). Given that the minimum wage is increasing, this is an important step towards making the teaching profession more financially attractive to both men and women.

Stakeholders consulted for this report also highlighted that the requirements imposed by EU funding are a major development for promoting gender equality in education as higher education institutions must have a gender equality strategy in place to be eligible for such funding.[1] For instance, since 2022, the Czech

Science Foundation requires all applicants to have an approved gender equality plan to be eligible for grants (Grantová Agentura České Republiky, 2022[13]). Similarly, starting in 2019, the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic evaluates how the gender perspective is reflected and integrated in research projects, assigning extra points to research organisations active in improving gender equality within their environment (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023[14]).

As part of the Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030+, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is in the process of revising the education curricula (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020[15]). ICTs are currently undergoing the most dramatic shift in this context (European Commission, n.d.[16]). According to the stakeholders consulted, this ongoing curricula review may also consider gender issues in terms of both implementing non-gendered content and actively promoting gender equality. Box 2.1 presents examples from other OECD countries aimed at reducing gender segregation in subject choices.

Box 2.1. Policy examples from OECD countries on addressing gender stereotypical subject choices

Gender segregation in educational choices is still prevalent in most OECD countries, with men much more likely to choose to study STEM subjects and women tending to choose subjects in the fields of education, health and welfare (OECD, 2021[17]). Gender stereotypes influence men and women's choices. For instance, the stereotype that men are better than women at mathematics and, relatedly, women's lower self-confidence in mathematics strongly influence young people's subject choices (OECD, 2019[18]).

Policies to address gender-stereotypical subject choices range from strategic commitment to self-evaluation practices for teachers and ensuring availability of well-trained career counsellors to encouraging children to engage with non-stereotypical subject choices. Most policies concentrate on incentivising girls to enter STEM fields:

- Some countries focus on providing guidance to young children. For instance, Ireland's 2022 *Recommendations on Gender Balance in STEM Education* suggest, among other actions, that primary school children and their guardians be provided guidance before the crucial transition to post-primary school, starting with STEM subject selections.
- In 2019, Luxembourg released the Gender4STEM Teaching Assistant, a self-assessment tool for teachers so they can evaluate their gendered education practices. The tool also recommends learning content based on teacher profiles to better manage gender diversity in classrooms.
- In Portugal, the Engineers for One Day project, launched in 2017, aims to establish engineering and technology as also female domains. The project mobilises universities and female engineers as role models and allows young people in secondary and further education to engage with practical challenges in engineering. GirlsInSTEM, a multi-country project set up in 2020, also organises bootcamps in Belgium, France, Poland and Spain to enable girls to engage with STEM and provides toolkits for educators.
- The Inspiring the Future project in New Zealand, launched in 2021, facilitates interactions between schools and volunteer workers using an online platform. These are important, as OECD Career Readiness research in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States has found that students who report positive career conversations experience better employment outcomes later.

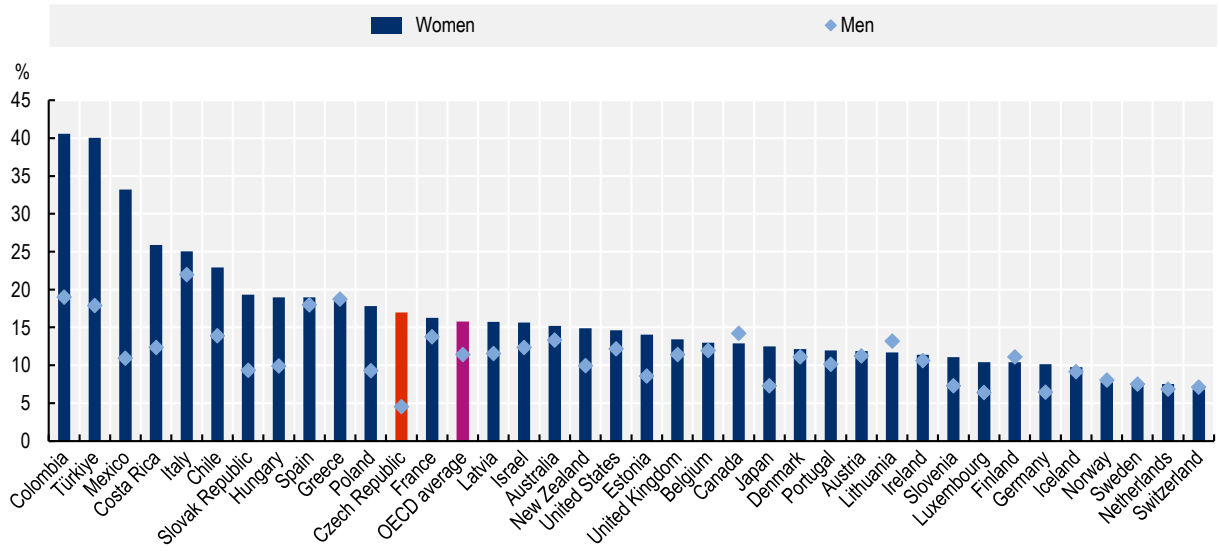
Source: OECD (2022[19]), *Report on the Implementation of the OECD Gender Recommendations: Meeting of the Council at Ministerial Level, 9-10 June 2022*.

2.3.4. There is a wide gender gap among young people not in employment, education or training

The incidence of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the Czech Republic (10.6%) is relatively low in comparison with the OECD average (13.4%). Yet, the gender gaps are considerable: In the Czech Republic, 17.0% of girls aged 15-29 are NEET compared to 4.6% of boys of the same age; on average in the OECD, these values are 11.4% and 15.8%, respectively (Figure 2.3). With a gap of 12.4 percentage points, the Czech Republic has the fifth-largest gap in the OECD (after Mexico, Türkiye, Colombia and Costa Rica) and the largest gender gap of any EU or Visegrád country. Several factors may account for this gender gap in NEET rates. It is possible, for instance, that businesses favour hiring young men over young women since young women are more likely to take career breaks for childbearing purposes (EuroStat, 2022[20]). This is especially the case in the Czech Republic, which offers lengthy paid parental leave (Figure 2.11) that is almost entirely used by mothers. Another factor is that young women may have trouble reintegrating into the workforce after giving birth and once reintegrated, are more likely to have either low-paying or unstable positions (EuroStat, 2022[20]).

Figure 2.3. The gender gap in rates of young people not in employment, education or training is high in the Czech Republic

Proportion of 15-29 year-olds who are NEET by sex, 2020 or latest available year



Note: Data for Denmark, Germany and Türkiye refer to 2019; data for Chile to 2017, for Luxembourg refer to 2018 and for Japan to 2014. The OECD average excludes Korea.
Source: OECD (2023[21]), *OECD Family Database - CO3.5 Young people not in education or employment*, https://www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm.

2.4. Gender gaps in the labour market

Before the pandemic, the Czech labour market was characterised by labour and skills shortages that were key barriers to growth and resulted in high wages and a record low unemployment rate (OECD, 2020[22]). Consequently, the employment rate rose over time and is now higher than the OECD average. While the Czech economy is expected to grow by 1.8% in 2022 and 2.0% in 2023, the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is hampered by supply disruptions, rising prices and overall uncertainty stemming from the war in Ukraine (OECD, 2022[23]). Given that the labour market remains tight, boosting domestic labour supply

through increased employment of women, and especially of mothers is a policy action that could contribute to a productive and skilled labour force.

Indeed, despite high employment overall, the employment rates of young people, the elderly, people with disabilities and especially women – namely, mothers of young children – are significantly below those of prime-age men (OECD, 2020[22]). Although the overall employment rate of women in the Czech Republic is higher than the OECD average, motherhood has a large negative effect on labour market activity. Generous family benefits when children are younger (mostly in the form of cash benefits), long parental leaves (until the child reaches the age of three) and limited childcare availability discourage mothers' return to work. Women remain outside the labour force for a relatively long time after childbirth, which has long-term consequences for wage and career progression (OECD, 2023[21]).

In addition, the gender pay gap in the country is relatively high, and women struggle to access leadership positions. The risk of poverty in old age is higher for women than for men. Nevertheless, due to strong redistributive features of the pension system, the gender gap in pensions is low in international comparison (OECD, 2019[24]).

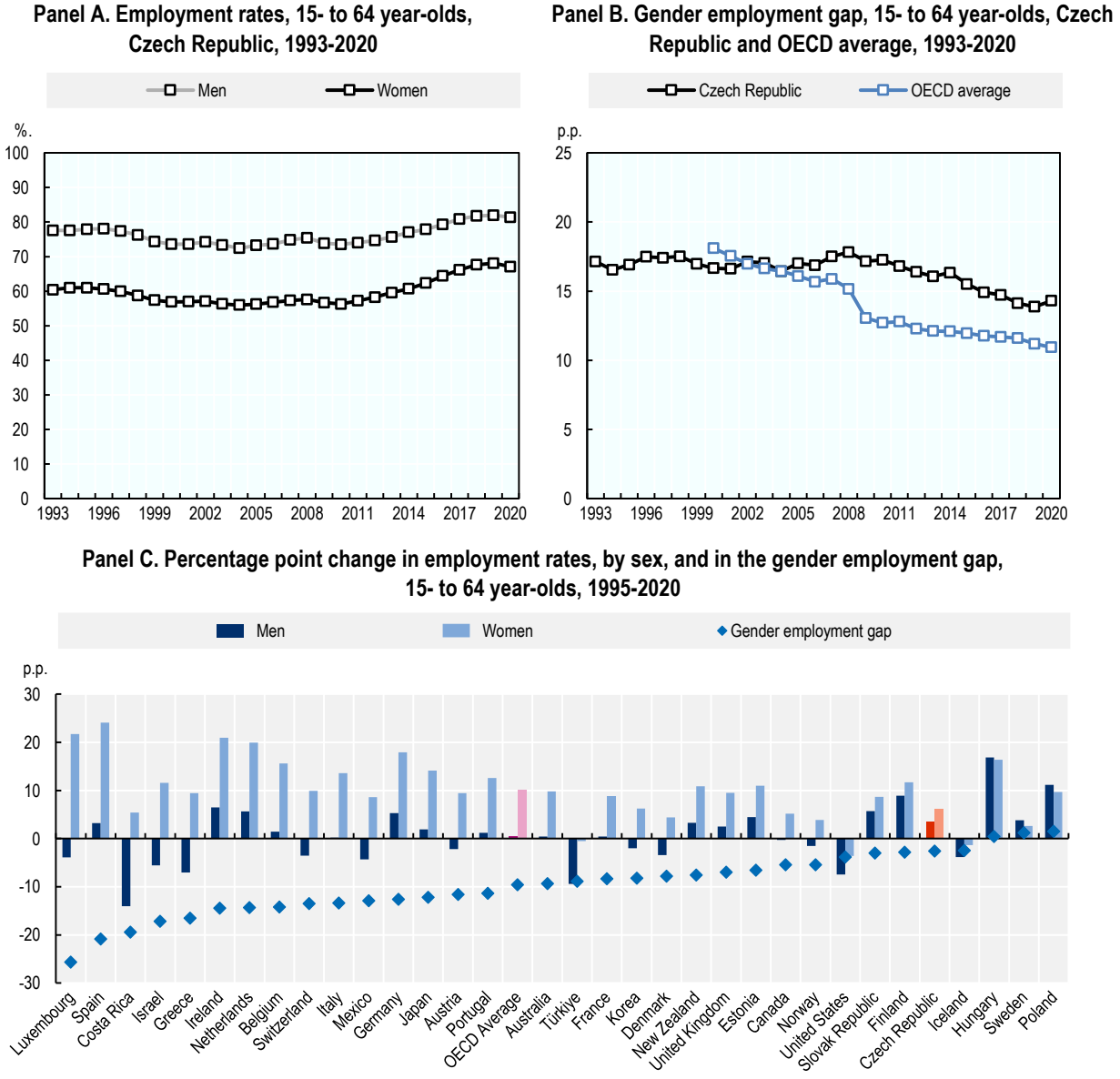
2.4.1. Despite employment growth, the gender employment gap in the Czech Republic remains wide

Over the past few decades, the gender employment gaps (the gap between men's and women's employment rates) have narrowed across the OECD – sometimes substantially (Figure 2.4, Panel C). The change derives from consistent growth in women's employment coupled often with stable or declining employment rates among men. The gender employment gap has also been decreasing in the Czech Republic, down to 14.3 percentage points in 2020, though it remains sizeable in comparison to the OECD average (10.9 percentage points). All Visegrád countries have recorded small percentage changes in the gender gap.

Furthermore, the gender employment gap remains wide despite strong employment growth in the late 2010s (Figure 2.4, Panels A and B). At 67.1%, the employment rate for working age women in the Czech Republic in 2020 was 9.5 percentage points higher than at the pre-crisis peak (57%) in 2008. Similarly, the employment rate for working age men (81.4%) was 6 percentage points higher than its pre-crisis peak in the same year (75.4%). Both increases rank among the largest employment rate gains in the OECD over the period (OECD, n.d.[25]), together with the gains in Hungary, Lithuania and Poland.

Part of the reason for the strong employment rate growth is that the working age population in the Czech Republic is shrinking due to a rapidly ageing population, as is the case in several other OECD countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltics (OECD, 2020[22]). The people currently entering the labour market are fewer in number than among the generations leaving, leading to a decline in the number of potential workers. Between 2005 and 2020, the number of working age men (aged 15-64) in the Czech Republic fell from 3.7 million to 3.5 million and the number of working age women dropped from 3.6 million to 3.3 million (OECD, n.d.[26]). However, raw headcount employment growth has also been strong: Between 2005 and 2020, the number of employed working age men increased from 2.7 million to 2.8 million and the number of employed working age women increased from 2 million to 2.3 million (OECD, n.d.[25]).

Figure 2.4. Compared to most OECD countries, the Czech Republic has made little progress in closing the gender employment gap in recent decades



Note: The gender employment gap is defined as the percentage point difference between the employment rate for (15-64 year-old men and the rate for women of the same age group. Countries are shown in Panel C only if data are available for both 1995 and 2020; thus, the OECD average in Panel C excludes Chile, Colombia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia.
Source: OECD (n.d.[25]), *OECD Employment Database*, http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm.

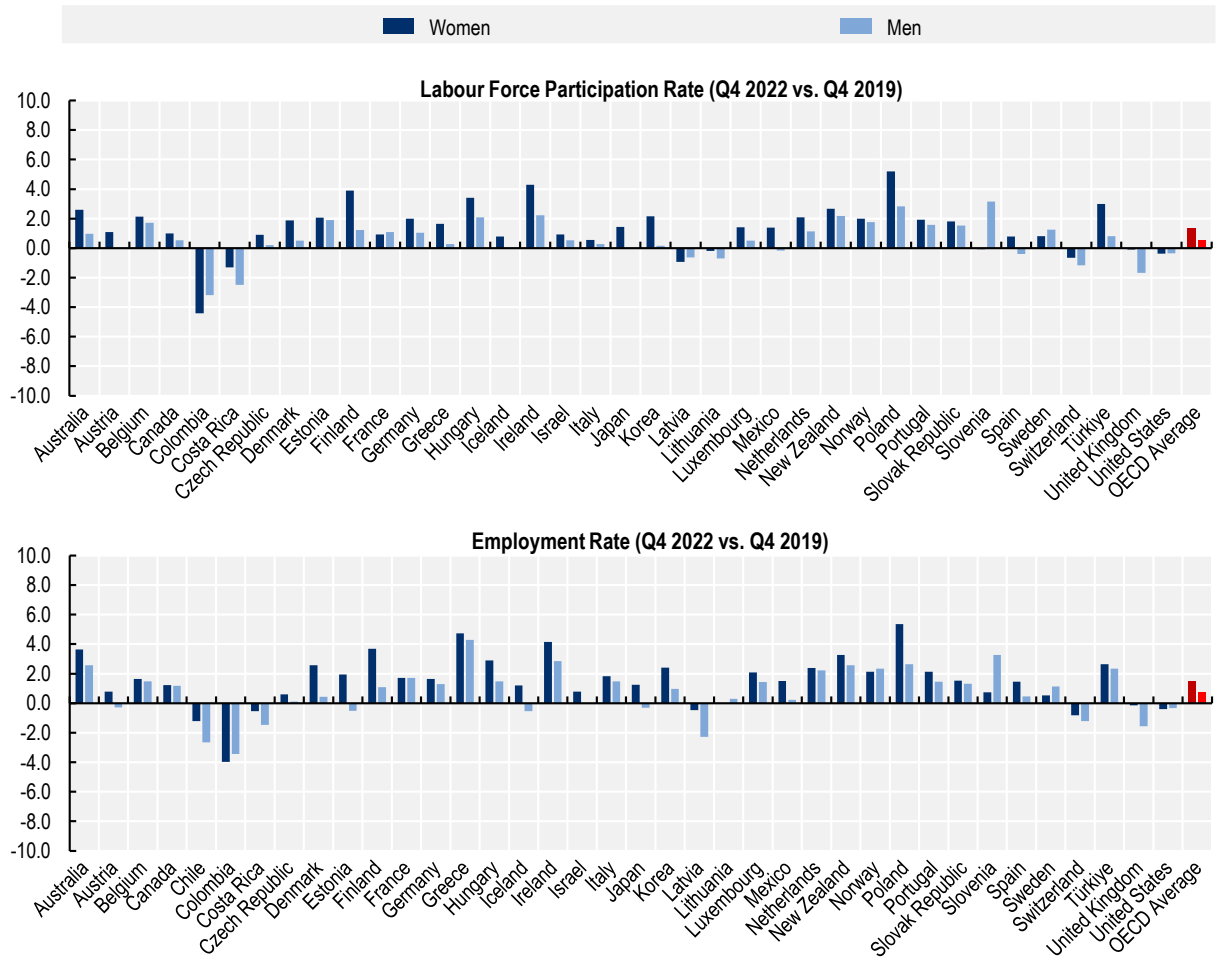
The COVID-19 pandemic strongly affected gender equality in the labour market, erasing some of the gains made over the last decades. Although it is too soon to know the full extent of the pandemic's (gendered) consequences, it is clear that the effects have been significant and heterogeneous across OECD countries (Figure 2.5).

Although the Czech Republic's strong integration into global manufacturing value chains led to a deep recession in the first year of the pandemic, growth resumed in 2021, and the short-term impact on the labour markets was relatively low, with relatively modest losses in terms of labour force participation and employment to date (International Labour Organization, 2022[27]). This is likely because the labour market

effect of the pandemic tended to be the greatest among mothers with young children, a group that is already under-represented in the labour force in the Czech Republic. Labour force participation was also supported by a robust COVID-19 response package that included job and income protection schemes representing 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020, and public guarantees for firms amounting to 15% of the 2020 GDP (International Labour Organization, 2022[27]). Yet, the recent drop in economic output related to the COVID-19 crisis, the rise in the unemployment rate and disruptions to childcare provision have posed additional challenges in terms of facilitating labour transitions for those not in employment, including women (OECD, 2020[22]).

Figure 2.5. The COVID-19 pandemic led to shifts in labour force participation and employment rates across the OECD

Percentage point change



Notes: Seasonally adjusted figures. The OECD average for changes in labour force participation rates excludes Chile as sex-disaggregated data on quarterly labour force participation rates are not available. Data for EU countries presented in both panels are affected by implementation of the new Integrated European Social Statistics Framework Regulation in 2021, which, alongside changes in sampling and in the structure of the questionnaire, adjusted the definition of employment, particularly in relation to maternity, paternity and parental leave.
Source: OECD (2023[28]), *Short-term Labour Market Statistics* (database), https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=35253.

As countries are gradually recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on their labour markets, current and upcoming challenges such as the energy crisis, rising costs of living and the effects of Russia's large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine put gender equality at further risk and will likely exacerbate some of the existing inequalities. Evidence on the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine indicates that these factors have deepened inequalities and raised risks for the most vulnerable (OECD, 2022[29]).

Fluctuations in the Czech Republic's gender employment gap across age groups are sharper than those in the OECD overall

Gender employment gaps often vary across the life course. Women's employment rates in particular tend to fluctuate with age, often because of career interruptions for care and family reasons. In many OECD countries, women frequently take leave while their children are young but return later for a "second career"; in some OECD countries, though, women often leave employment entirely following childbirth and either never return or do so only on a part-time basis (OECD, 2018[30]). Later in life, women are often more likely than men to retire early or to leave work to look after sick or elderly relatives especially in countries where public long-term care provision may be lacking and informal care is more prominent (OECD, 2019[24]).

Compared to the OECD values, the Czech gender employment gap fluctuates more sharply and more strongly with age (Figure 2.6). As in most OECD countries, the gender employment gap in the Czech Republic starts small. However, in the Czech Republic, it widens sharply as men and women start to form families in their 20s and early 30s. The reasons for this are the exceptionally low employment rates for mothers with young children coupled with the fact that women tend to have their first child at a slightly younger age than women in many other OECD countries (OECD, n.d.[31]). In 2020, the gender employment gap stood at 27 percentage points for 25-29 year-olds and at 34 percentage points for 30-34 year-olds against OECD averages of 13 percentage points and 19 percentage points, respectively.

However, the Czech Republic's gender employment gap narrows considerably as men and women move into their 40s and 50s, in contrast with the OECD average of a gender gap that remains stable at about 16-18% among people older than 30 (Figure 2.6). To a large extent, this narrowing can be explained by the move back into employment by many mothers as their children enter pre-primary and primary school. As is the case in many other OECD countries, the gender gap widens again as men and women approach retirement (Figure 2.6), reaching a value of 24% in the Czech Republic – well above the OECD average of 17%. The decline in women's employment between the 55-59 age group (85.8%) and the 60-64 age group (36.8%) is particularly sharp in the Czech Republic compared to other OECD countries.

Figure 2.6. The Czech Republic's gender employment fluctuates more sharply and more strongly with age compared to the OECD overall

Employment rates by sex and five-year age group and the gender employment gap by five-year age group, Czech Republic and OECD average, 15-64 year-olds, 2020

Note: The gender employment gap is defined as the percentage point difference between the employment rates for men and women for each five-year age group. OECD average refers to the population-weighted average across OECD countries.
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD (n.d.[25]), *OECD Employment Database*, http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm.

Gender employment gaps are wider among parents than among childless people without children and especially wide between mothers and fathers of young children

In many OECD countries, gender employment gaps among childless men and women are nominal or only small, and in some countries, childless women now earn more, on average, than childless men (OECD, 2017[32]). But this changes sharply once children arrive. Despite the evolution of men's and women's roles at work and at home over the past half-century or so, it is often still women who take the bulk of leave following childbirth, who reduce their hours when children are young, and who move in and out of jobs and adjust their patterns of paid work more generally to fit their family and care commitments (Causa, Luu and Abendschein, 2021[33]). As a consequence, across the OECD and markedly in the case of the Czech Republic, gender employment gaps among parents remain wide.

Across countries, virtually all employed mothers take a break from paid work around childbirth. But after this period, paid work dynamics differ due to variance in national parental supports, childcare arrangements and parental preferences. In some countries, mothers frequently return to work after a few months of paid leave (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal). In many other countries with lengthier parental leaves, including the Czech Republic and some others in Central and Eastern Europe, mothers tend to return to work only once children enter pre-primary education at around the age of three or, more commonly, at the start of primary school at around the age of six (Figure 2.7).

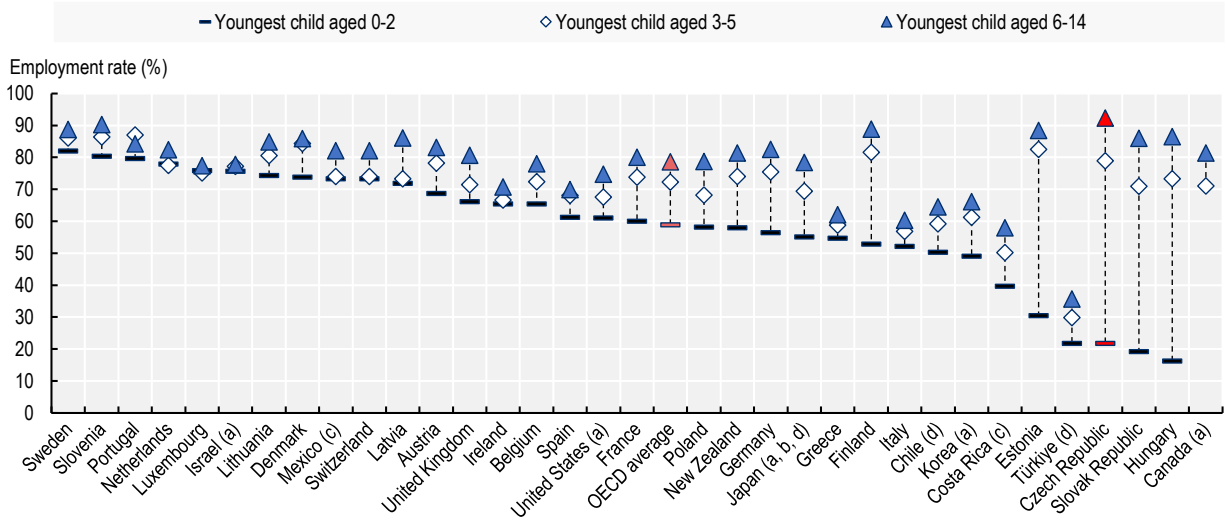
Just 21.7% of women with the youngest child aged 0-2 were employed and at work in 2019 in the Czech Republic. This percentage was the third lowest at-work rate across OECD countries with comparable data after Hungary (16.2%) and the Slovak Republic (19.2%). It also was well below the OECD average of 58.8%. The equivalent values for mothers with a youngest child aged 3-5 were 78.9% and 72.3% for the Czech Republic and the OECD, respectively (Figure 2.7).

Fathers' employment patterns tend to be much more stable following the birth of a child. Across the OECD, many fathers take a short period of paid leave directly after the birth, normally for just a few days or a few weeks at the most. Almost all fathers in almost all OECD countries return to and stay in full-time work as their children grow up (OECD, 2016[34]). In recent years, many countries have improved their paid leave policies and strengthened the incentives for fathers to take more family leave and a more active role in childcare, with significant changes having been spurred by the 2019 EU Work-Life Balance Directive (2019/1158/EU), whose provisions had to be implemented by August 2022 (European Union, 2019[35]). For instance, in 2018, the Czech Republic introduced a one-week paternity leave with similar conditions to the maternity leave entitlements and then increased it to two weeks following the transposition of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive

Beyond leave provisions, labour taxation also helps explain mothers' low attachment to the labour market. Low-wage workers in the Czech Republic face substantial labour taxes that are among the most severe in the EU. The tax burden is relatively high for single parents with children and quite low for two-parent families. When combined with relatively high childcare expenses, this reduces the financial incentives to work for low-wage and second earners (European Commission, 2020[36]).

Figure 2.7. Very few mothers with very young children are in paid work in the Czech Republic

Employment rates (percentage of women (15-64 year-olds) with children (0-14 year-olds) by age of the youngest child, 2019 or latest available year



Note: For some countries in some years, sample sizes can be small. Estimates based on fewer than 50 cases have been removed. The OECD average excludes Canada for women with young children ages 0-2 and Australia, Colombia, Iceland and Norway for all age groups.
a. For Japan, data cover all women aged 15 and over and for Korea, married women aged 15-54. For Canada, Korea and the United States, data refer to women with children aged 0-17. For Canada, the age groups for the age of youngest child are 0-5 and 6-17; for Israel, 0-1, 2-4 and 5-14; for Korea, 0-6, 7-12 and 13-17; and for the United States, 0-2, 3-5 and 6-17.
b. For Japan, data refer to the employment status of the (youngest) mother in households with a mother and a youngest child in the given age group rather than to mothers as individuals. In households that contain more than one mother (e.g. some same-sex parent households and some three-generation households), the employment status of the older mother(s) is not covered.
c. For Costa Rica and Mexico, data cover mothers who are reported as the head of the household or the spouse or partner of the head of the household only.
d. Data for Japan refer to 2018, for Chile to 2017 and for Türkiye to 2013.
Source: OECD (2020[37]), *OECD Family Database - Indicator LMF1.2 Maternal employment*, https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

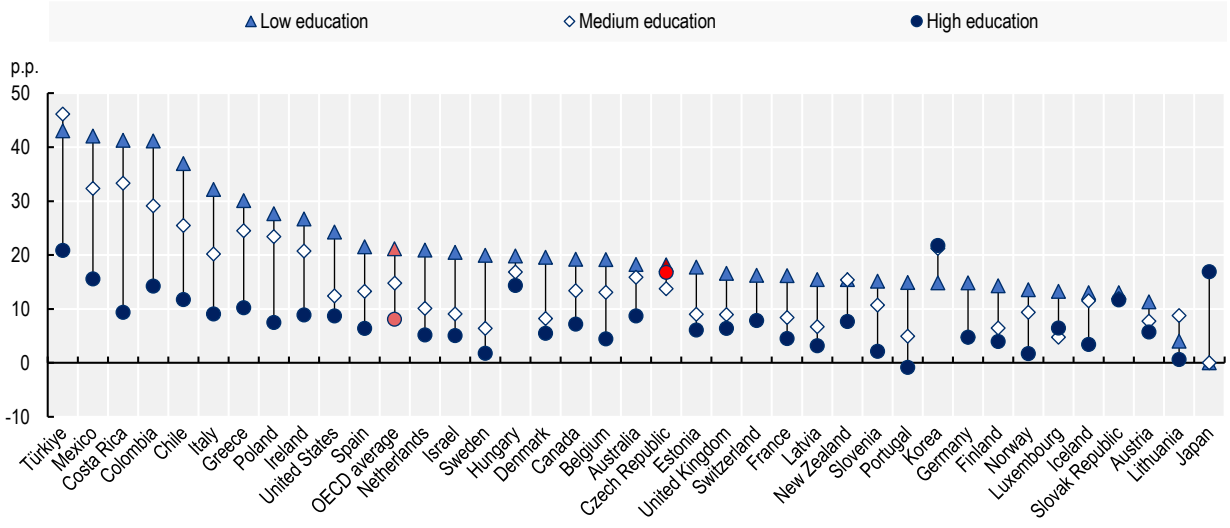
The gender employment gap in the Czech Republic does not vary much between education levels

In most OECD countries, gender employment gaps are smaller among men and women with higher levels of education. In 2020, the average employment gap between highly educated men and women stood at 8 percentage points, whereas the gap between men and women with low levels of education was 21 percentage points. In some countries including Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden, the gender employment gap for highly educated men and women was less than 3 percentage points. These days in many OECD countries, tackling the gender employment gap mostly means tackling the employment gap among less-educated men and women.

In the Czech Republic, however, differences in the size of the gender employment gap between education levels are among the smallest in the OECD (Figure 2.8); the gaps remain wide for all education levels. In 2020, gender employment gaps for men and women with low education was 18 percentage points, slightly lower than the OECD average, and the gap for men and women with high education was 17 percentage points, well above the average. The pattern is similar in several other OECD countries in Central and Eastern Europe, among them Austria, Hungary and the Slovak Republic. A major explanation for the relative similarity in the size of the gap across education levels in the Czech Republic is that both highly-educated and less-educated women often remain outside of employment for an extended period following childbirth.

Figure 2.8. Unlike in other OECD countries, gender employment gaps in the Czech Republic are similar across different education levels

Gender employment gap by level of education attained, 25-64 year-olds, 2020 or latest available year



Note: Data for Chile refer to 2017; data for Denmark and Türkiye refer to 2019. Education levels are based on the ISCED 2011 classification system. Low education corresponds to a highest level of educational attainment at ISCED 2011 levels 0-2 (early childhood education, primary or lower secondary education). Medium education refers to a highest level of educational attainment at ISCED 2011 levels 3-4 (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education). High education refers to a highest level of educational attainment at ISCED 2011 levels 5-8 (short-cycle tertiary education, bachelor or equivalent, master's or equivalent, and doctoral or equivalent). The gender gap is the percentage point difference between men and women.
Source: OECD (n.d.[38]), *Online Education Database*, https://www.oecd.org/education/database.htm.

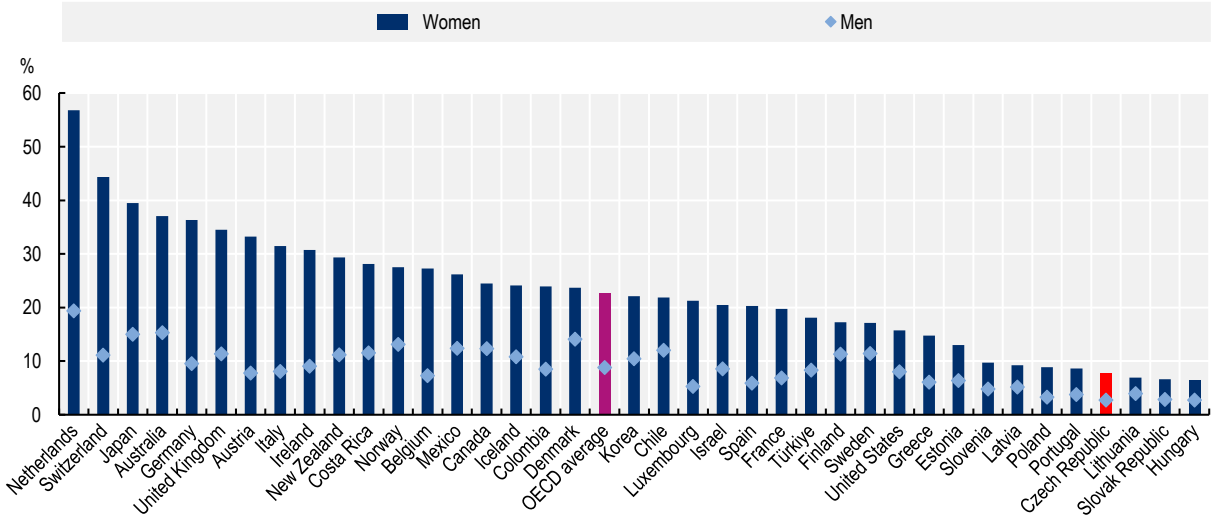
Once employed, women work almost as many hours as men and mainly full time

The Czech Republic's gender gap in working hours (2.9 hours per week, according to 2020 data) is one of the smallest in the OECD and about half the OECD average gap of 5.6 hours per week. On average in 2020, employed men in the Czech Republic usually worked 41.2 hours per week and employed women worked 38.3 hours per week (OECD, n.d.[25]).

A key reason for its relatively small gender working hours gap is that in contrast to many other OECD countries, very few women workers in the Czech Republic work part time (Figure 2.9). In the Czech Republic, almost all workers – men and women – work full-time hours, as is the case in the other countries in Eastern Europe and the Baltics. This is true for both women and men: in 2020, as few as 8% of employed women and just 3% of employed men usually worked part time in the Czech Republic (OECD, n.d.[25]).

Figure 2.9. Part-time employment is uncommon in the Czech Republic

Part-time employment as a percentage of total employment, by sex, all ages, 2020 or latest available year



Note: Part-time employment is defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 30 hours per week in the main job. For the United States, data refer to dependent employees only. For Australia, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Türkiye, data refer to usual weekly working hours in all jobs. For Japan and Korea, data refer to actual weekly working hours in all jobs. Data for Australia and Germany refer to 2019.
Source: OECD (n.d.[25]), *OECD Employment Database*, http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm (data extracted in December 2022).

The incidence of temporary employment is also lower in the Czech Republic than in the OECD overall. In 2020, 6.3% of men and 8.7% of women employed were in temporary employment in the Czech Republic compared to 11.3% and 11.6%, respectively, in the OECD. Yet gender differences in temporary employment have increased since 1995: in 2020, the gap was 2.4 percentage points, with more women than men in temporary employment, above the OECD average of 0.3 percentage points (OECD, n.d.[25]).

Public spending on families in the Czech Republic is above the OECD average

Given the analysis of employment gaps presented in this section, policy needs to give particular attention to closing the labour market gaps for mothers with young children. Supporting the employment of mothers with young children in the Czech Republic requires further expanding the availability of childcare services while supporting a more equal sharing of paid and care work by both parents and providing further opportunities for flexible working arrangements.

All OECD countries provide family support. The Nordic countries, for instance, provide service-heavy family supports to families with young children that aim primarily to encourage full-time dual-earning and to foster

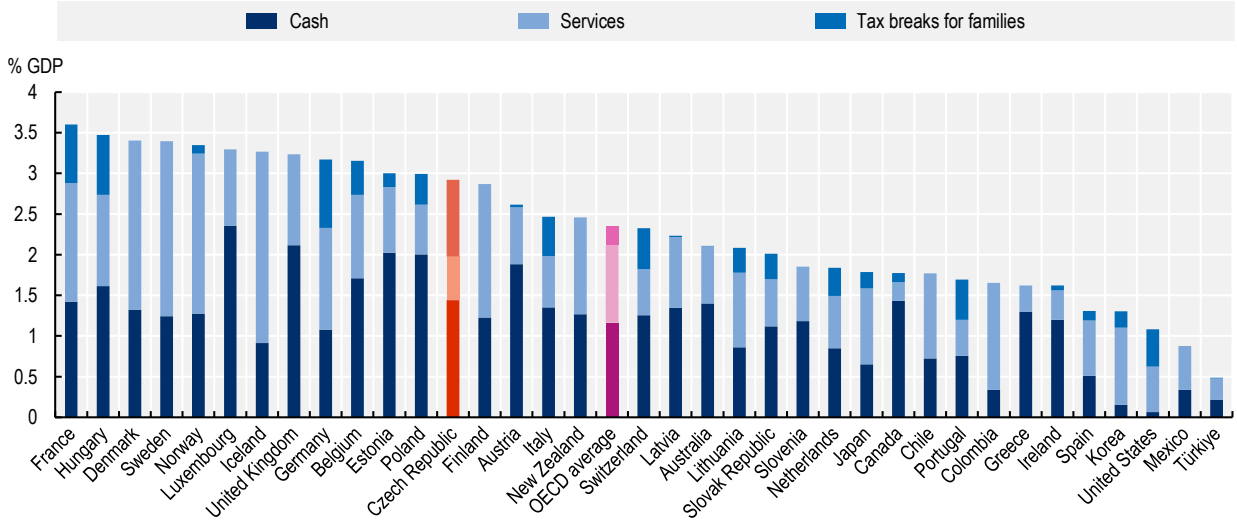
child development. These countries provide parents with a continuum of support from birth up until children leave school. Other OECD countries focus more on providing families with financial support through family cash benefits and tax breaks. In some countries, among them the Visegrád countries in Central and Eastern Europe, such support is done largely through universal cash benefits provided to all families. These benefits are often structured in such a way as to encourage one parent (typically the mother) to care for children at home, at least until they enter pre-primary education at about the age of three. Still, other countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom place greater emphasis on targeted benefits aimed at achieving specific objectives or directed at specific groups such as single-parent families or families with low incomes.

In 2017, the latest year for which OECD-wide comparable data are available, public spending on families in the Czech Republic amounted to 2.9% of GDP, higher than the OECD average of 2.3% (Figure 2.10) (OECD, n.d.[39]). Such spending in the country is heavily tilted towards generous cash benefits for families with young children, while public spending on services, such as childcare provision and support and early childhood education, remains low. The government recently made family cash benefits even more generous. Total cash benefits accruing to families with young children relative to the average wage are the highest in the OECD (OECD, 2020[22]).

Despite high family supports, key stakeholders expressed the need for policies to further focus on work-life balance Specifically, more support is needed for working parents. Due to the lack of availability of childcare, especially for children under the age of three, some parents in the Czech Republic who want to work are not able to do so. In this respect, important developments are currently underway that aim to increase the childcare offer. At the same time, incentivising the use of flexible forms of work is also crucial to support parents' work-life balance.

Figure 2.10. Public spending on families in the Czech Republic is above the OECD average, but spending on services is low

Public expenditure on family benefits by type of expenditure, as a percentage of GDP, 2017 or latest available year



Note: Public spending presented in this figure refers only to public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits, and childcare support). Spending in other social policy areas such as health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included. Coverage of spending on family and community services in the OECD Social Expenditure data may be limited as local governments often provide and/or co-finance such services, and reporting requirements may not be sufficiently detailed for central statistical agencies to have a detailed view of the nature of local spending. For Japan, the value of tax breaks towards families is based on 2015 data. National authorities provided estimates of the value of tax breaks for Switzerland. Spending for the United Kingdom is likely to be underestimated as information on the tax part of the Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit are no longer available. The OECD average excludes Costa Rica and Israel.
Source: OECD (n.d.[39]), *OECD Social Expenditure Database*, http://www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm.

In the Czech Republic, parental leave is generous relative to that of other OECD countries but may act as a disincentive for women to return to the labour force

The Czech Republic maintains a generous parental leave compared with other OECD countries. The country's current system of leave around childbirth comprises 28 weeks of maternity leave (exclusive to the mother), two weeks of paternal leave (exclusive to the father), and shareable parental leave (following the maternity leave and flexible in duration) (Figure 2.11). For the shareable leave, one parent can stay at home while receiving a parental allowance until the child reaches the age of three without losing reintegration rights at their employer.

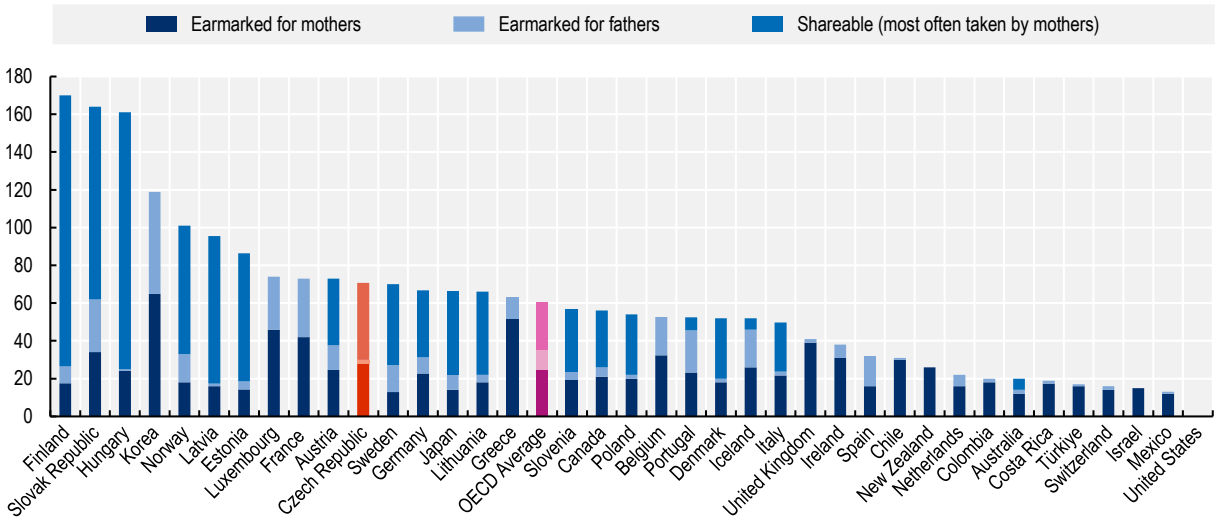
Employment-protected parental leave is available until the child's third birthday, while the parental allowance regarding the child in question is paid until the child is four years old. The Czech system is flexible and gives parents the option to choose their preferred duration of parental with varying payment rates. If Czech mothers were to maximise their weekly payment rate of parental allowance during parental leave, then they would take leave for 68.6 weeks (including the 28 weeks of maternity leave) at an average payment rate of 78.3%, which is higher than in many other OECD countries (Figure 2.11). However, according to the Czech authorities, the majority of families claim the parental leave allowance over a longer period of time (frequently until the child is three years old), due to which the average monthly payment is lower (26.4%)[2] (OECD, n.d.[31]). However, combined with child cash benefits, long parental leave can contribute to gender differences in the labour market as they discourage Czech women from resuming work in the first few years after childbirth. As stressed by the stakeholders consulted, it is very unusual for a woman returning to work after leave to obtain a wage increase.

A growing number of OECD countries have introduced "fathers-only" leaves, such as paid paternity leave and lengthier fathers-only paid parental leaves with the aim of encouraging men to spend more time at home caring for their children. In the Czech Republic, the legislation on parental leave that allows fathers to also take leave was introduced in 1990. Yet, the number of men receiving the parental benefit (parental allowance) is negligible compared to the number of women. It is estimated that currently, only about 2% of all recipients are men (Kocourková, 2022[40]).

The government has been more actively encouraging men to take on a larger portion of parental leave and in 2018, paternity leave of seven calendar days was introduced to encourage fathers to engage in childcare from an early stage. Following the transposition of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, paternal leave was increased to two weeks (European Union, 2019[35]). According to recent data provided by the Czech authorities, between January and September 2022, approximately 37 000 men claimed the two-week paternal leave (Czech Social Security Administration, 2022[41]). Paternity leave is paid with a replacement rate of 70% of daily earnings up to a ceiling of CZK 22 260 per seven days in 2022, but as the average daily earnings exceed the ceiling, the average payment is 63.7% of previous earnings.

Figure 2.11. Czech Republic has a lengthy parental leave but only a short leave reserved for fathers

Duration of earmarked and shareable paid family leave entitlements, in weeks, 2022



Note: Information refers to paid birth-related leave entitlements to care for young children in place as of April 2022, such as maternity-, paternity-, home care- and parental leave. Periods labelled "mother only" and "father only" refer to individual non-transferable entitlements for paid employment-protected leave of absence for employed parents, "mummy and daddy quotas" or periods of an overall leave entitlement that can be used only by one parent and cannot be transferred to the other, as well as any weeks of shareable leave that must be taken by one or both parents for the family to qualify for "bonus" weeks of parental leave. Weeks of shareable leave refer to parental- and home care leave entitlements that can be freely shared between mothers and fathers. For Japan, the individual parental leave entitlements for the mother must be taken used simultaneously with the father if both parents are to use the entirety of their entitlement. The bar is therefore shaded. For international comparison of leave system it is necessary to make certain assumptions on choice options and the children concerned, these include: the relevant birth is of a healthy single child who is the first child in the household; the parents are employed in the private sector at 100% of average gross earnings prior to birth and meet the eligibility criteria for leave entitlements and payments; where there is more than one option regarding length and payment rate (as in Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Norway), parents are assumed to take the option with the highest available weekly payment rate for an average earner; where participation of one of the parents (typically the father or partner) is rewarded with bonus weeks of paid leave, the number of weeks they need to take leave to qualify for the bonus are considered as "earmarked" for them; mothers are assumed here to maximise their pre-birth maternity leave. Thus, in the case of the Czech Republic it is assumed here that parents take the option with the highest available weekly payment rate for an average earner: maximising the parental leave allowance parents receive per week in April 2022, meant a maximum payment of CZK 7 385 per week for about 41 weeks.
Source: OECD (n.d.[31]), OECD Family Database - Indicator PF2.1 Key characteristics of parental leave systems, https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.xlsx.

The participation of very young children in childcare is very low in the Czech Republic

As is the case in most OECD countries, participation in ECEC is high in the Czech Republic for children aged 3-5, in line with the OECD average. Since 2020, the maximum that a child under two can spend in nursery or other pre-school facilities without the family losing the parental allowance has been doubled to 92 hours per month (European Commission, 2020[42]). Yet, enrolment of children under the age of three years is the fifth lowest in the OECD (Figure 2.12).

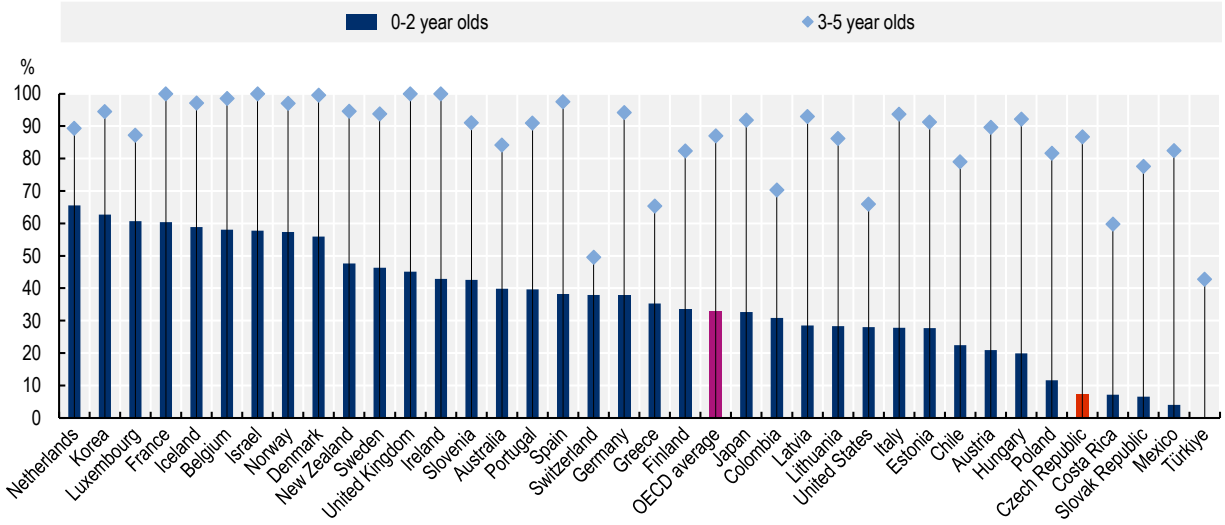
In recent years, investments have been promoted to expand the availability of various childcare provider modalities. Examples include so-called children's groups (for children from the age of one to the start of compulsory education), micro-nurseries (for children aged six months to three years) and public kindergartens (from the age of three to primary school) (OECD, 2020[22]). Notably, at the time of writing this report, there are 1 494 children's groups with capacity for 20 125 children in total (Czech Republic Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2023[43]). EU funding under the scope of the European Social Fund Plus and European Regional Development Fund has greatly contributed to expanding the capacity of

childcare. Moreover, the country's National Recovery Plan foresees the establishment of 303 new children's groups until 2025 to accommodate a total of 5 758 children. Importantly, the Czech government has decided to use national funds to ensure the sustainability of the investments and support the continuation of the ECEC services that were started using EU funds. Other important efforts have been made to provide childcare for Ukrainian children, as discussed in Box 2.3. Recent policy developments also include an increase in the number of hours a child under the age of two can be in a childcare facility without the parent losing the entitlement to parental allowance.

Nevertheless, the stakeholders' consultations highlighted the issues of large regional variations in service provision and limited ECEC opening hours that may not be sufficient to ensure that mothers can go back to work.

Figure 2.12. In the Czech Republic, participation in early childhood education and care is high for pre-primary age children, but very low for children under age three

Percentage of 0-2 year-olds enrolled in ECEC services (2019 or latest available year) and percentage of 3-5 year-olds enrolled in ECEC or primary education (2018 or latest available year)



Note: The OECD average excludes Canada. Potential mismatches between the enrolment data and the coverage of the population data (in terms of geographic coverage and/or the reference dates used) may affect enrolment rates. The OECD average for 0-2 year-olds and for 3-5 years-olds excludes Canada.

(1) For 0-2 year-olds, data generally include children enrolled in early childhood education services (ISCED 2011 level 0) and other registered ECEC services (ECEC services outside the scope of ISCED 0 because these are not in adherence with all ISCED-2011 criteria). Data for the United States refer to 2011; for Switzerland to 2014; and for Australia, Austria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye and the United Kingdom refer to 2018.

(2) For 3-5 year-olds: Data include children enrolled in ECEC (ISCED 2011 level 0) and primary education (ISCED 2011 level 1). For Greece, data include only part of the total number of children enrolled in early childhood development programmes (ISCED 01). Data for New Zealand, Poland and Mexico refer to 2017.

Source: OECD (2023[21]), *OECD Family Database*, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

The Czech Republic has made efforts to support flexible work, but there is room for improvement

Flexible working helps workers organise paid hours around care obligations, can reduce their commute times and can allow them to remain closer to dependent family members if regular caregiving is needed (OECD, 2017[32]). Greater access to flexible practices can reduce the number of workers who experience stress at home and/or at work and thus diminish absenteeism and increase productivity (Bond and Galinsky, 2011[44]). However, when poorly designed, flexible practices also have the potential to increase total working hours and work-life conflict. Regular part-time work is a commonly used form of working time flexibility. But flexible working also includes measures such as flexible starting and finishing times, working compressed work weeks, and teleworking.

While flexible working practices are often set at the firm level or through collective agreements, OECD governments are increasingly looking to facilitate access by providing workers with the right (to request) certain arrangements (OECD, 2016[45]; OECD, 2017[32]). A right to reduced working hours is one of the most common statutory entitlements, especially for parents. Most OECD countries allow parents to work reduced hours during their child's early years. In many cases, this is to permit breastfeeding, but in some countries, parents have a more general right to part-time employment. The Czech Republic has recently introduced new forms of flexible work.

More recently, several OECD countries have introduced broader rights (to request) flexible working arrangements. Beyond the number of working hours, some countries also include the scheduling of hours and the place of work. In some countries, these rights are given to all workers regardless of their family situation. For example, in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, all employees meeting certain tenure criteria have the right to request flexible working, including the scheduling of hours and the place of work, and employers can refuse only on serious business grounds. Such rights are not as expansive in the Czech Republic. Widening the right to request to all employees is important as it confers bargaining power and lessens the risk of discrimination against target groups of workers (e.g. parents).

Better sharing of paid and care work when children are very young

In many OECD countries, many workers – especially women – use part-time work as a means of combining their work and family responsibilities when children are very young, namely during the parental leave years. While such options can be relevant during the child's first years, it is fundamental that policy design does not relegate mothers to involuntary part-time employment.

Relevant international examples preventing involuntary part-time work are found in OECD countries. For instance, in 2019, Germany introduced temporary part-time work, allowing workers to reduce their working time for a certain period and to then return to their originally agreed working time (Box 2.2). In 2020, Norway strengthened reporting duties for public and large private employers, requiring them to map and account for the use of involuntary part-time (OECD, 2022[19]).

Box 2.2. Encouraging fathers' take-up of part-time leave and mothers' return to part-time work: The example of Germany

Germany provides 14 weeks of maternity leave at a rate of 100% of wages and parental leave of up to three years of employment-protected leave to each parent (of which 24 months can be used up to the child's eighth birthday).

Income-related benefits are available to parents who are on full-time or part-time leave. The parents can choose between or combine the regular Parental Allowance and the Parental Allowance Plus. The

latter was created in 2015 to help parents who want to return to work sooner and covers part of parents' lost income if they reduce their working hours for childcare reasons.

If both parents work part time (24 to 32 hours per week), four additional months of leave are provided (Partnership Bonus). Employers cannot refuse requests for part-time work from workers receiving a parental allowance and must offer them the option of returning to full-time work after their leave.

These measures have been shown to have positive effects such as fathers spending more time with their children and more evenly dividing family chores with their spouses. The percentage of fathers using the parental benefit has grown as a result of the introduction of a parental allowance. Between 2009 and 2019, the percentage of men on parental leave with a child under the age of six increased by nearly half to 1.6% (12.6% for mothers).

Source: (Reinschmidt, 2018[46]; Reimer et al., 2021[47]; German Federal Statistical Office, 2021[48]).

Beyond the existing provisions for part-time employment included in the Labour Code, the Czech government has introduced "shared jobs" that allow mothers with small children to work part time in a flexible way (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2020[49]). Shared positions provide good flexibility as employees can schedule their working hours based on mutual agreement with employers. The effective use of such shared positions will nonetheless also depend on the willingness and ability of employers; for this reason, the Labour Office of the Czech Republic developed a programme (Flexi) to support employers who create such a position (Bilinská, 2021[50]).

Teleworking practices

With the COVID-19 crisis, many firms and workers around the world used teleworking to continue working through lockdown and confinement. As of 2020, workers' access to teleworking came with different legal guarantees across OECD countries, with some granting a statutory right to request teleworking. Depending on the country, this right covers all employees (e.g. Spain and New Zealand) or only subgroups of employees (e.g. pregnant women, carers or workers with specific medical conditions/disability, among others, as in Australia and Lithuania). It can be non-conditional (i.e. it can be requested for any reason as in the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom) or reserved for particular motives (e.g. work-life balance, as in Spain). Crucially, in some instances, the right to request teleworking may allow employers limited possibilities to refuse or it might be that no justifications are needed for refusal. Where no statutory right to request teleworking exists, a majority of workers might be covered by a collective agreement that effectively grants them this right, either at the national, sectoral or firm level. By contrast, in a third group of countries that includes the Czech Republic, the conditions of access to teleworking are left entirely to negotiation in individual contracts (or to firm-level agreements covering only a minority of workers), even though the possibility to telework might be inscribed in the law (OECD, 2021[51]).[3] Many countries have introduced temporary changes to their teleworking regulations since COVID-19, and others introduced permanent changes after 2020.

2.4.2. Segregation and gender wage gaps persist in the Czech labour market

Across OECD countries and indeed across the globe, women continue to earn less than men. Labour market segregation along with discrimination, gender differences in education, working hours, employment histories, job and employer characteristics, and preferences are factors contributing to gender pay gaps (OECD, 2017[32]). These factors also contribute to more women than men being exposed to poverty: Across the OECD, 11% of men and 12% of women are experiencing poverty, while in the Czech Republic, 4% of men and 7% of women are exposed. Although the overall incidence of poverty is lower than the OECD

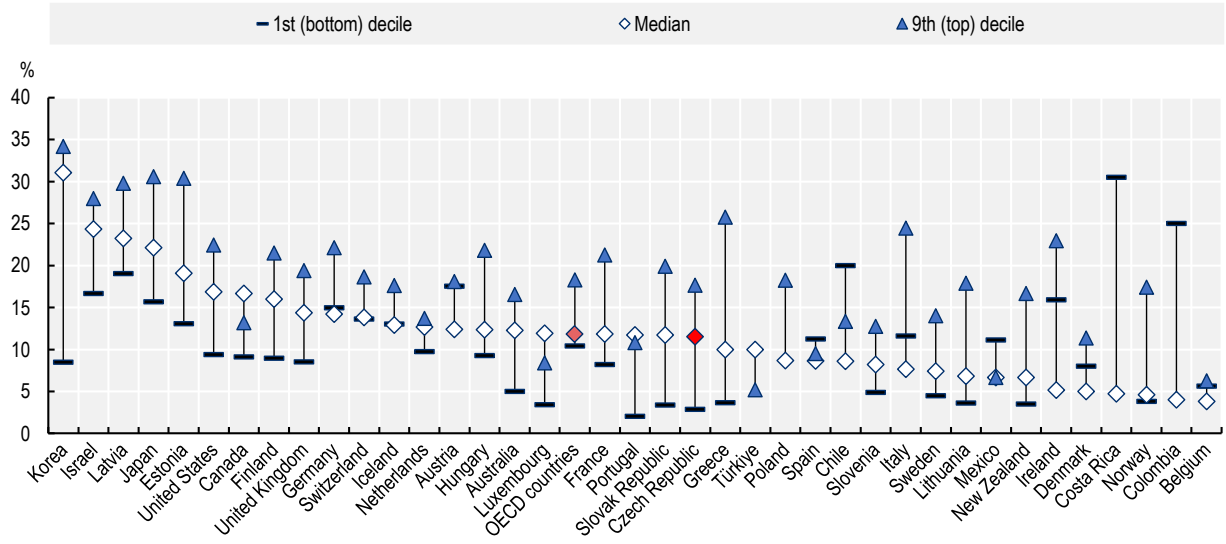
average, the Czech Republic has one of the higher gender gaps in poverty rates among OECD countries, after Latvia, Lithuania, Korea, Estonia and Japan.

Labour market segregation is prevalent in the Czech Republic, as it is in other OECD countries, and men and women often work in different sectors, industries and areas of the economy. Employed women are heavily over-represented in the service sector, for example. In 2019, three-quarters (74.7%) of employed women and around half of employed men (48.5%) were employed in services in the Czech Republic compared to OECD averages of 82.6% of women and 60.2% of men (OECD, 2022[9]). Compared to the OECD average (13.3% for women and 33.7% for men), a higher concentration of both women and men (23.6% and 48.1%, respectively) are employed in the industry sector in the Czech Republic.

The gender gap at the bottom end of the earnings distribution in the country, however, is very small – just 2.9.%, the second lowest in the OECD after Portugal (Figure 2.13). The gender earnings gap widens towards the higher end of the pay scale, meaning that the gap between the highest-earning men and the highest-earning women is comparatively large. The gender earnings gap at the 9th decile stood at 17.7%, just below the OECD average gap of 18.3%. With large variation in gender gaps across the earnings distribution, the Czech Republic's situation is very similar to that of the other Visegrád countries. The Czech gender gap in median earnings (12.4%) is slightly above the OECD average (11.6%) and the average of the Visegrád countries.

Figure 2.13. The gender gap in median earnings is comparatively narrow but is wide at the top end of the earnings distribution in the Czech Republic

Gender earnings gap at the 1st decile, at the median and at the 9th decile, full-time employees, 2021 or latest available year (%)



Note: The gender wage gap is unadjusted and is calculated as the difference between the earnings of men and women relative to the earnings of men. Estimates of earnings used in the calculations refer to gross earnings of full-time wage and salary workers. However, this definition may slightly vary from one country to another (see the OECD Employment Database and the individual country metadata data in OECD.Stat). Data for Australia, Austria, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland refer to 2020; data for Belgium, Colombia, Estonia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia and Lithuania refer to 2019; data for Costa Rica, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye refer to 2018; and data for Luxembourg refer to 2014. For Australia, data at the bottom and the top deciles refer to 2018. The OECD average at the bottom decile excludes Poland and Türkiye, and the OECD average at the top decile excludes Colombia and Costa Rica.
Source: OECD (n.d.[25]), *OECD Employment Database*, http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm.

OECD countries have launched various initiatives to directly support women's labour market integration and have promoted gender equality approaches in labour market policy strategies. In addition, countries are increasingly integrating an intersectionality perspective in policies supporting women's employment. For instance, in Canada, a task force will review the Employment Equity Act from an intersectionality perspective to help remove employment barriers for designated groups (OECD, 2022[19]). For the implementation of its Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030 (Strategy 2021+), the Czech Republic also identifies intersectionality as one of the cross-sectional principles to be applied.

Many factors drive the wage gap between women and men. But there are few straightforward solutions to close it. Across the OECD, closing gender gaps in educational attainment has helped, yet not enough. The same is true for family supports such as public childcare and paid leave, which have gone some ways to help boost women's labour force participation over the past few decades. Efforts to reduce horizontal and vertical segregation and attempts to equalise the gendered distribution of unpaid care work have moved very slowly in most countries. Equal pay laws and anti-discrimination laws have been crucial for ensuring workers' rights and exist widely throughout the OECD, but in practice, these laws put the onus of equal pay on individual workers and do little to close gender wage gaps more broadly (OECD, 2021[52]). Most OECD countries have clarified the concept of equal pay for equal work and/or work of equal value in national legislation. Those that have not clarified the concept in national legislation have clarified equal pay principles through the courts and case law (OECD, 2021[52]).

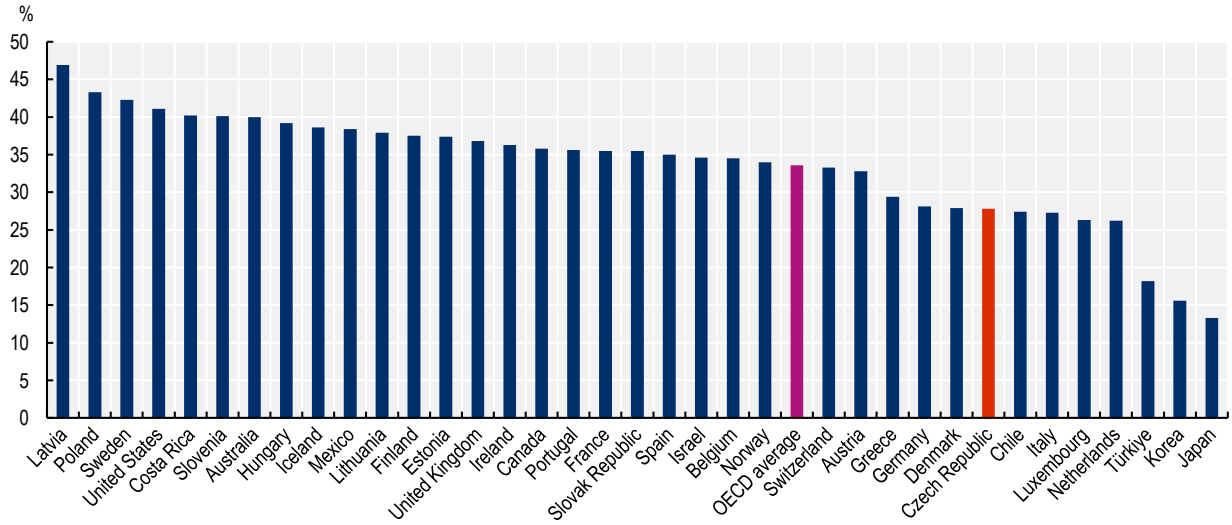
Policies such as pay transparency and wage mapping are gaining momentum to close the gender wage gap. Pay transparency practices can help fight discriminatory practices that contribute to the gender wage gap. About half of the OECD countries require pay gap reporting and/or auditing by private sector firms (OECD, 2021[52]). Yet the Czech Republic has not yet implemented a mandatory gender pay gap reporting and/or pay gap audit system to help police equal pay between men and women. Changes may be expected as the European Commission has proposed a directive to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work between men and women (COM/2021/93 final) (European Commission, 2021[53]). According to various stakeholders consulted, the Czech government has reacted positively to this directive. Other recent advancements in pay transparency come mainly from the implementation of international pilot projects such as pay calculators (for instance through the use of Logib,[4] an equal pay analysis tool available online). However, in the Czech Republic as in many OECD countries, employers are still reluctant to share information on salaries and some employment contracts contain clauses of non-disclosure of salaries.

2.4.3. Women make up a relatively low share of managers and still struggle to make it to the top

The work interruptions and concessions that women make for family reasons often lead to attrition in the number of women who advance to management positions. This so-called leaky pipeline to top jobs has contributed to women making up only about one-third of managers on average across OECD countries. Women make up 28% of managers in the Czech Republic, one of the lowest shares among OECD countries (Figure 2.14). Women are also far less likely than men to sit on boards of private companies or to rise to executive positions: In 2021, women held only 23% of seats on boards of the largest public companies in the Czech Republic, below the OECD average of 28% (OECD, n.d.[54]). The Czech Republic also performs considerably worse than the other Visegrád countries; the share of women on boards of the largest public companies is 43% in Poland, 39% in Hungary and 36% in the Slovak Republic.

Figure 2.14. Almost 30% of managers in the Czech Republic are women

Share of managers that are women, OECD countries, 2020 or latest available year (%)



Note: Data for the United Kingdom refer to 2019 and data for Israel refer to 2017. The OECD average excludes Colombia and New Zealand.
Source: OECD (n.d.[25]), *OECD Employment Database*, http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm.

OECD and other countries have undertaken a wide range of initiatives to promote gender diversity on the boards and in senior management of listed companies. There have been positive results in terms of increasing women's presence on company boards of listed enterprises, but less progress in increasing the share of women in management positions (OECD, forthcoming[55]; 2021[56]). Such measures generally consist of mandatory quotas or voluntary targets for board composition in listed companies. For example, France, Germany and Italy have made some of the biggest gains with the support of both board quotas and disclosure requirements. Currently, in the Czech Republic, no quotas or target systems are in place.

At the same time, evidence suggests that quotas and targets may not be sufficient in and of themselves (OECD, 2020[57]), and it is important to have complementary initiatives to develop the female talent pipeline and to expand the pool of qualified candidates. Complementary initiatives encompass reporting requirements on gender diversity policies women in management and executive positions, and gender pay differentials; public-private awareness raising and advocacy; and government-led incentive programmes as well as private sector-led networks, training and skills development. There is also some evidence that different jurisdictions at different stages of progress may need to adopt differing measures, for example where more emphasis may be required to achieve a cultural shift and receptiveness to women in leadership positions before other measures may be fully successful (OECD, 2022[19]).

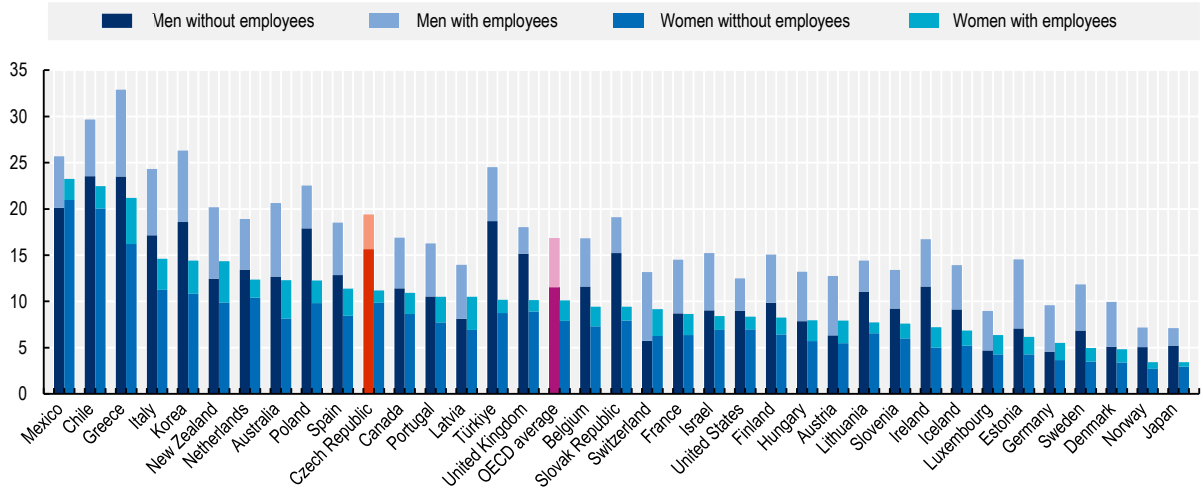
2.5. Gender gaps in entrepreneurship and self-employment

Despite some progress, a gender gap remains throughout the entire entrepreneurship pipeline across the OECD. Women continue to be less likely than men to be working on a new start-up or operating either a new or established business. They are also less like to be self-employed. In 2020, women were about 30% less likely than men to be self-employed across OECD countries. As shown in Figure 2.15, in the Czech Republic, 11% of women in employment were self-employed (slightly above the OECD average of 10.1%) compared to 19% of men in employment (above the OECD average of 16.9%) in 2020. In 2020, 15.6% of men in employment and 9.9% of women in employment did not have any employees (gender gap of 5.7 percentage points, higher than the OECD average gap of 3.6. percentage points), while 3.7% and 1.3%

did (gender gap of 2.4 percentage points, lower than the OECD average of 3.1 percentage points. This indicates that, compared to the OECD average, significantly fewer self-employed people employ other workers in the Czech Republic. This is particularly the case for women, who account for the fifth-lowest share in employment after Japan, Norway, Lithuania and the United Kingdom); the OECD average is 2.2 percentage points (OECD, 2022[9]).

Figure 2.15. Women are less likely than men to be self-employed in the Czech Republic

Population who is self-employed, with and without employees, 2020 or latest available year



Note: Data for Canada, Japan and New Zealand refer to 2021; data for Turkey and the United Kingdom refer to 2019; data for Australia, Chile, Korea and Mexico refer to 2017; and data for Israel refer to 2016. The OECD average excludes Colombia and Costa Rica.
Source: OECD (2022[9]), *Gender Equality - Key charts on Entrepreneurship* (database), https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/entrepreneurship.

These gender gaps in entrepreneurship are due to a range of factors. While all entrepreneurs face challenges in setting up and maintaining their businesses, including low levels of entrepreneurship skills, difficulties accessing external finance, and small and ineffective entrepreneurship networks, overall, these barriers tend to be greater for women entrepreneurs (OECD/European Commission, 2021[58]). These obstacles were further underlined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many women choose entrepreneurship as a way to reconcile work and care commitments as it is thought to provide flexibility in working hours. To meet care commitments, they may also aim to limit the growth of their enterprise but then find that the demands of running a business require even longer hours than full-time employment as an employee. Other important barriers for women entrepreneurs are social attitudes towards entrepreneurship (e.g. gender differences in risk aversion and a fear of failure) and gender bias in the framework conditions for entrepreneurship (e.g. difficulties accessing government support schemes due to selection criteria such as sector, revenue and growth potential or lack of relevance of support offered) (OECD, 2021[59]). While some of these issues are related to decisions about participation in the labour market (e.g. income taxation), many influence the decision to work as an entrepreneur or an employee (e.g. access to maternity and family supports).

An overview of entrepreneurship policies through a gender lens confirms these points, showing that in the Czech Republic, women's self-employment and motivation are increasing. Yet, this increase is particularly strong among women with young children and those of pre-retirement age. This may show that self-employment is not always necessarily the first choice, but it may rather be a decision based on necessity, for instance in relation to flexible working conditions and work-life balance (OECD, 2021[59]). Consultation with stakeholders highlighted that entrepreneurship is indeed used for work-life balance purposes in the Czech Republic and that the kinds of businesses women launch tend to be in different sectors than businesses run by men – for instance, in the field of private childcare provision or in the care sector.

In 25 of the 31 OECD countries for which data are available, the gender gap in self-employment narrowed between 2011 and 2020. This was also the case in the Czech Republic, where the gender gap decreased slightly. Different factors may account for the improvement in the OECD countries, including policy interventions to support women entrepreneurs or the economic cycle, such as initiatives to help women overcome specific obstacles related to skills and access to finance and networks and policies to address bias in the entrepreneurship framework conditions (OECD, 2022[19]). However, one of the most important factors has been a decline in the share of men who are self-employed over the past decade. The gender gap has also closed among self-employed with employees, though to a lesser extent than among those without employees. In the Czech Republic, however, the gender gap among self-employed and employees remained constant over the past decade, highlighting the need for further policy action in this area (OECD/European Commission, 2021[58]). To this end, Strategy 2021+ includes a specific objective to increase female entrepreneurship by supporting projects focused on expanding the entrepreneurship of women and ensuring that close attention is paid to the risk of involuntary self-employment.

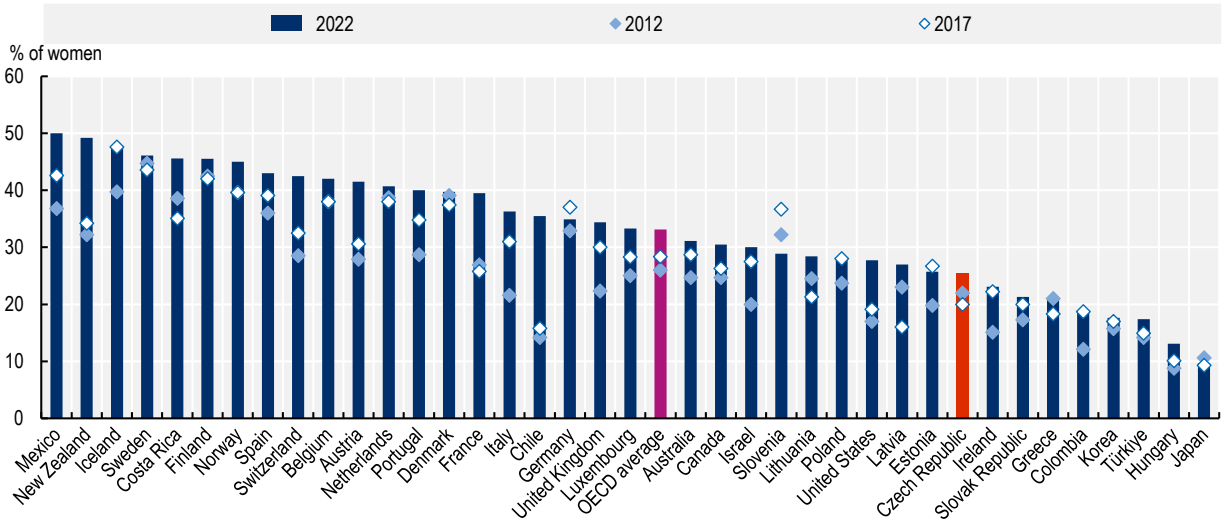
2.6. Gender gaps in public life

Across the OECD, there has been an increase in women's representation in decision-making roles. Nonetheless, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions, though with significant variations across countries. At the parliamentary level, the average share of women in lower or single house in OECD countries reached 33% in 2022 (Figure 2.16). At the ministerial level, women's average representation reached 34% in 2021 (Figure 2.17). The average share of women judges in the supreme courts in OECD member countries that are also members of the Council of Europe increased reached 36% in 2018 (Figure 2.18). For all these indicators, the values for the Czech Republic are lower (26%, 31% and 23% respectively). Still, it is important to stress that the Czech Republic experienced major improvements over the last five years in women's representation in ministerial positions, which rose from 18% in 2017 (compared to an OECD average of 28%) to 31% in 2021 (approaching the OECD average of 34%).

Among the barriers to more women accessing (and remaining in), public leadership positions are work-life balance challenges, prevailing gender stereotypes, lack of family-friendly measures and limited commitment of political parties (OECD, 2022[19]). Fellegi, Kočí and Benešová (2022[60]) note that while the number of female diplomats in the Czech Republic has steadily increased since the "Czechoslovak era" and with improved representation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as of 2021, women's representation in the highest diplomatic positions remains low (14%). While work-family conflicts are a challenge for all diplomats, the authors argue that women appear to be disproportionately disadvantaged due to deeply ingrained perceptions of gender roles, particularly around motherhood. Similarly, Havelková, Kosař and Urbániková (2021[61]) argue that a gendered division of labour, especially at home, is one of the main reasons for vertical gender segregation within the Czech judiciary.

Figure 2.16. Women's representation in the parliament has increased slightly in the Czech Republic

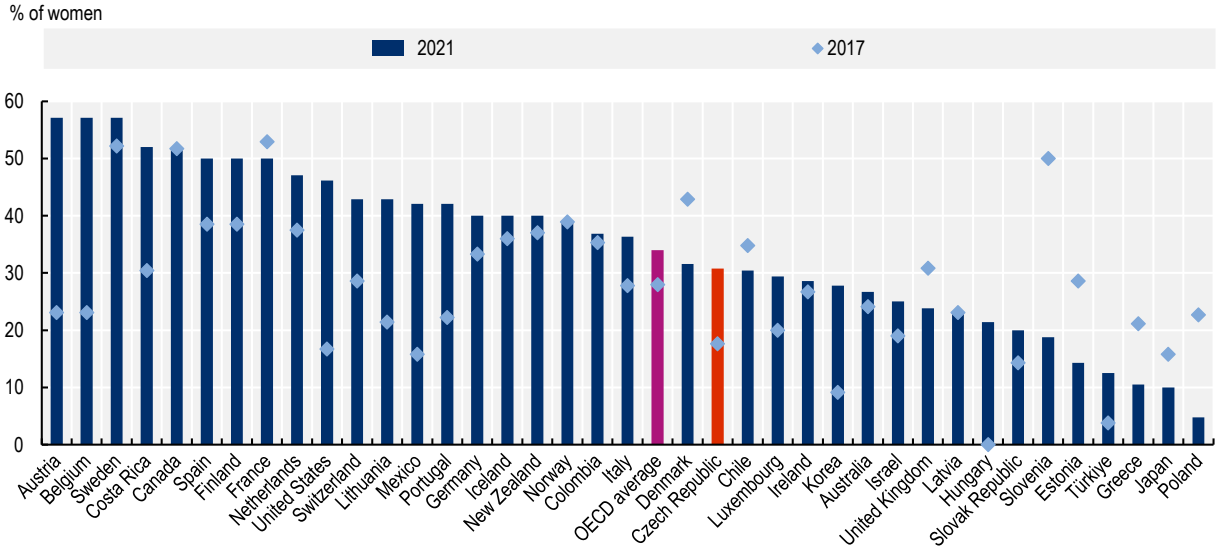
Share of women (%) in either lower house or single house of parliament, 2012, 2017 and 2022



Note: Data for 2022 represents the share of women in lower or single house of parliaments as of 1 January 2022.
Source: OECD (2021[62]), *Government at a Glance 2021*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en.

Figure 2.17. Women's representation in ministerial positions in the Czech Republic has seen a major uptick

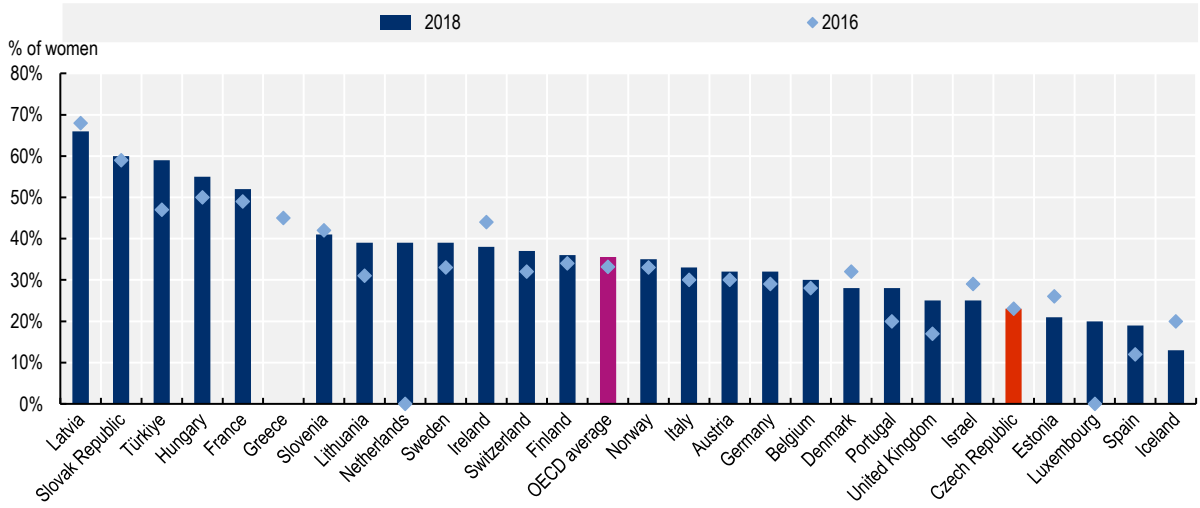
Share of women (%) in ministerial positions in OECD countries, 2017 and 2021



Source: OECD (2021[62]), *Government at a Glance 2021*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en.

Figure 2.18. Representation of women on supreme courts is low in the Czech Republic

Share of women (%), 2016 and 2018



Note: Data on 24 OECD-Council of Europe countries. Because of missing data, the Netherlands has not been included in the 2016 average and Greece has not been included in the 2018 average. The 2016 data for the United Kingdom represent the share of female judges in England and Wales. The 2018 data for the United Kingdom are calculated as a simple average of the share of female judges in England and Wales and Northern Ireland.
Source: OECD (2021[62]), *Government at a Glance 2021*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en.

OECD countries have adopted a number of measures aimed at improving gender balance in leadership positions in public institutions, among them ratios, targets and quotas; mentorship; networking; capacity-building programmes; and active recruitment of women for leadership positions (OECD, 2022[19]). A few countries have also undertaken campaigns to encourage women's leadership and change gender norms and biases. The Czech Republic has reported that it is undertaking measures to promote mentorship and networking programmes or activities for women, implement anti-violence and anti-discrimination policies, and provide work-life balance measures (OECD, 2021[63]). However, in the Czech Republic and indeed across the OECD, more sustained efforts are needed to improve gender balance in leadership positions in public life, including exploring measures aimed at improving transparency in selection, recruitment and promotion processes for senior positions (OECD, 2022[19]).

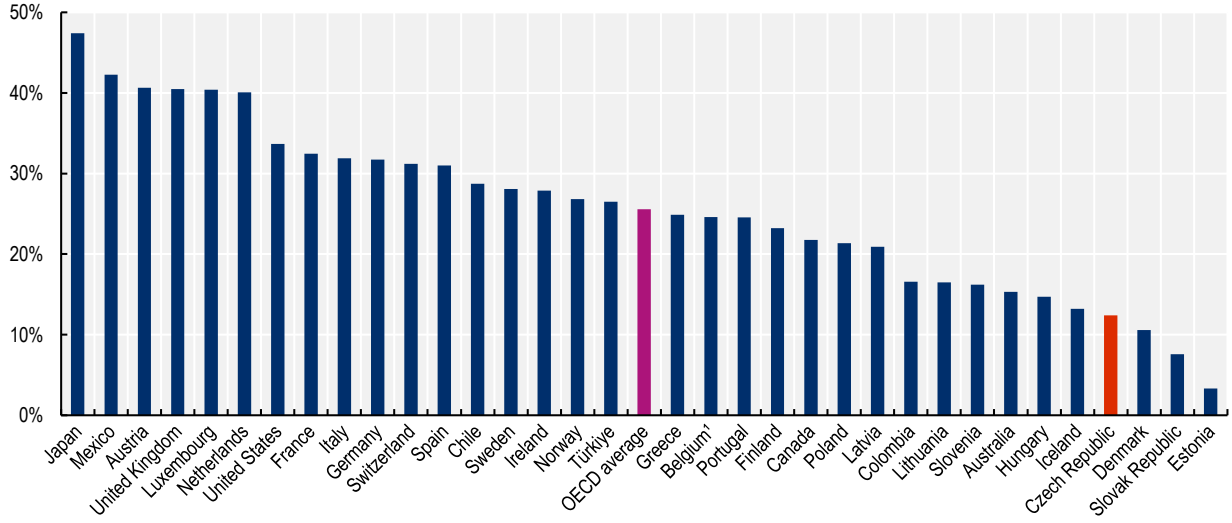
2.7. Gender gaps in pensions in the Czech Republic

A sizeable gender gap in retirement income, wealth and pensions arises after a lifetime of unequal earnings. The gender pension gap – calculated as the difference between the average total retirement income of men and women, expressed as a percentage of men's average retirement income, taking into account both public and private sources of income – ranges from 3% of men's average retirement income in Estonia to 47% in Japan in the OECD area (Figure 2.19). On average in the OECD, women aged 65 and over receive about 74% of the retirement income of men.

In the Czech Republic, the motherhood penalty results in important disadvantages in terms of wage and career progression over a woman's lifetime. This is also reflected in marked differences between men and women in average old age pensions and the higher risk of poverty in old age for women. Yet, due to strong redistributive features of the country's pension system, the gender gap in pensions in the Czech Republic (12%) is comparatively low against the OECD average of 26% (Figure 2.19) (OECD, 2020[22]). Of the Visegrád countries, only the Slovak Republic had a smaller relative difference between men and women.

Figure 2.19. The gender pension gap in the Czech Republic is one of the lowest across the OECD

Difference between the mean retirement income of men and women (aged 65+) over the mean retirement income of men (aged 65+), among pension beneficiaries, latest year available



Note: Calculations are based on the Luxembourg Income Studies (LIS), except for France, Latvia and Portugal, for which the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (HFCS Wave 3) was used, and for Iceland, Sweden and Türkiye, for which results come from the EU's Statistics on Incomes and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Data come from the latest available survey conducted in 2013 for Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and the Slovak Republic; conducted in 2014 for Australia; conducted in 2015 for Hungary and Slovenia; and conducted after 2015 for all other countries shown. Data refer to 2017 for Iceland and to 2018 for Türkiye. The OECD average excludes Costa Rica, Israel, Korea and New Zealand.

1. In Belgium when partner A's pension rights are less than 25% of those of partner B, the pension of A is not paid out and B receives a family pension (calculated at 75% of wages instead of 60%).

Source: OECD calculations based on the LIS and the HFCS; Eurostat (for the EU-SILC).

In most OECD countries, poverty rates are higher among women than men due to these gender pension gaps as well as women's longer life expectancy, which often leaves older women living alone (OECD, 2021[64]). In addition, older women are at greater risk of poverty than older men in most OECD countries. Lower earnings-related pension income and longer life expectancy are among the main drivers of higher poverty incidence among women than among men. The average old age poverty rate in OECD countries is 16.6% for women and 11.5% for men. In the Czech Republic, the rates are 11.5% and 3.8% respectively – one of the largest gender gaps in the OECD (after Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Korea, Slovenia and Poland) (OECD, 2023[65]). Moreover, poverty depth in the Czech Republic is among the lowest, meaning that the average income of elderly persons who are relatively poor is closer to the poverty line income than in countries with high poverty depth (OECD, 2021[66]). This may be the reason why elderly women in the Czech Republic fare relatively worse than elderly women elsewhere in the world even though the gender pension gap in the Czech Republic is small in international comparison (Figure 2.19).

Another major development relates to equalising the retirement ages of men and women. In 2020, gender differences in the normal retirement age existed in nine OECD countries. However, for the generation entering the labour market in 2020, gender gaps were phased out in all OECD countries except Colombia, Hungary, Israel, Poland, Switzerland and Türkiye (OECD, 2021[66]). The Czech Republic is among the few OECD countries that still have gender-specific retirement ages, though a planned convergence of retirement ages between men and women to take place by 2037 (OECD, 2020[67]).

The current government in the Czech Republic is the fifth to deal with the ongoing pension reform. Recently, new working groups have been established and discussions have taken place between the Czech government and other stakeholders. Considering that pensions are very low (especially for some people who worked in communist times), the reform aims to ensure a basic pension for all. Stakeholders consulted for this report underscored that gendered aspects, such as considerations for mothers with children and time taken off from employment for caretaking, are likely to be part of the ultimate reform.

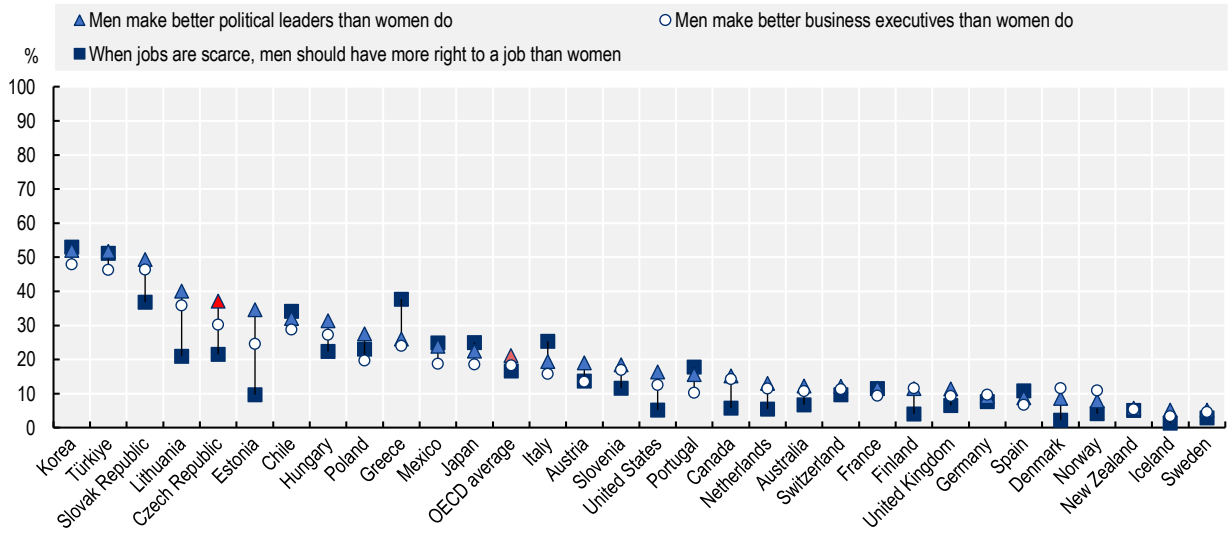
2.8. Understanding how gender inequality shapes and reflects society

2.8.1. In the Czech Republic, attitudes towards gender roles remain fairly traditional

Czechs' attitudes towards gender roles are among the most traditional in the OECD. Almost 40% of respondents to the European Values Study agreed with the statement that men make better political leaders than women (compared to the OECD average of 21%), a finding that could partly explain the low number of women participating in politics. In addition, 30% of respondents think that men make better business executives than women (compared to the OECD average of 18%), and 20% said they agreed with the statement that men should have more rights to jobs than women when jobs are scarce (against the OECD average of 17%) (Figure 2.20). Only Korea, Lithuania, the Slovak Republic and Türkiye have a larger share of respondents with similarly traditional attitudes. The percentages of respondents agreeing with these statements in the other Visegrád countries (Hungary and Poland) also were higher than the OECD average. These findings are extremely relevant as social norms – serving as the unspoken rules of the game and guiding the stereotypical roles of women and men in the society – are often at the root of gender inequalities.

Figure 2.20. Almost 40% of Czechs think that men make better political leaders than do women

Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements, 2018 or latest available year



Note: Data for the Czech Republic, Greece, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and the United States refer to 2017; data for Japan and New Zealand refer to 2019; and data for Portugal and Canada refer to 2020.
Source: World Values Survey Association and European Values Study (2022[68]), *Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2022 dataset (v4.0; Dec 14, 2022)*, https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSEVSjoint2017.jsp.

2.8.2. Violence against women remains a significant issue in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic as in other OECD countries, women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence, stalking and rape. Comparable data on the prevalence of gender-based violence are limited. But survey data suggest that 21% of Czech women who have ever been in a partnership report having suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence, just below the OECD average of 22% (OECD, 2022[69]). According to more specific data from the Czech police from 2017, 25 of the 41 women who were homicide victims that year were killed by an intimate partner (defined as a former or current spouse not necessarily sharing a residence) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021[70]). Furthermore, according to Eurostat data, in 2019, the Czech Republic had the fifth-highest rate of female victims of intentional homicide perpetrated by an intimate partner of 14 EU jurisdictions, at 0.3 per 100 000 inhabitants (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021[70]).

As in other OECD countries, harmful stereotypes about gender-based violence are still present in Czech society. For instance, surveys find that 6.6% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 consider "wife-beating" justified for any one of the following reasons: if the wife burns her spouse's food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations – very close to the OECD average of 7.9% (OECD, 2022[69]). Responses to a public opinion poll in 2018 also confirmed the persistence of harmful stereotypes, with a majority (58%) of the adults polled reporting that they believe there are instances in which a woman is partially to be blamed for being raped (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[2]; Amnesty International, 2018[71]). Nonetheless, an even larger majority of respondents (70%) see violence against women to be a problem in the Czech Republic, and 84% said there should be more focus on prevention (Amnesty International, 2018[71]).

An important dimension of the gender-based violence problem in the Czech Republic is the rise in intimate partner violence among young people and adolescents, confirmed by findings of the police as well as social workers (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[2]). A key characteristic of intimate partner violence among the youth is the prevalence of cyber violence. As is the case with data on gender-based violence more generally, availability of comparable data is limited.

There has been reluctance to address the issue of violence against women, and the Czech Republic is among the last EU countries that have yet to ratify the Istanbul Convention. At the same time, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the #MeToo movement and legislative developments at the EU level, the issue has been getting more attention in the country's policy debates.

Local and media sources suggest that the consideration of gender-based violence at the level of the central administration has been focused on the legislative framework, namely a discussion around the definition of domestic violence and rape also in the context of the European Commission's proposed directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (European Union, 2022[72]). Other developments include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The 2022 Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic, which defines governmental priorities for the duration of its mandate, is the first to mention violence against women, stressing the need to protect victims of sexual and domestic violence (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[12]).
- In 2022, the Government Council for Gender Equality called for legislative changes to better protect survivors and victims of domestic and sexual violence. It also recommended that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs ensure the capacity of social services for the survivors/victims of gender-based violence within the scope of an amendment of the law on social services which is currently under consideration. The preparation of a new action plan for the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence is also being discussed.
- Various conferences and awareness-raising activities have been organised around the issue of gender-based violence, including within the Czech presidency of the Council of the EU.

- In December 2021, the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs of the Czech Republic Chamber of Deputies established a new subcommittee on domestic and sexual violence. Its focus has been on the legislative framework to update the definition rape in relation to the European Commission's proposed directive.
- Since 2020, the Gender Equality Department in the Office of the Government has been running a project that is set to run through 2023 on strengthening capacities and methodological support in the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence. It aims to increase the capacities of the public administration to combat domestic and gender-based violence, increase the ability of police to respond to new forms of sexual violence in cyberspace and sensitively approach victims, improve the prevention of sexual violence among young people through education, and build knowledge about the extent and forms of online sexism within the Czech society.
- The Czech Republic figured among the many OECD countries that adopted extra measures during COVID-19. These include the provision of information, outreach and awareness-raising activities as well as strengthened judiciary support through, for instance, the application of more severe criminal punishment for gender-based violence cases.
- In 2019, the Office of the Government and the Office of the Public Defender of Rights published a handbook on the prevention of sexual violence in the public sector.

Although services to prevent gender-based violence and to assist its victims have improved in the past few years, it is fundamental to ensure the effectiveness of the different policy actions in place to eradicate the issue and tackle persistent barriers. For instance, as noted by the stakeholders consulted for this report, the availability of shelters and social services is still limited. Urgent action is required in this context, especially considering that Russia's large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine led to an inflow of a great number of refugees into the Czech Republic and that the existing centres typically lack the intercultural skills needed to attend to a migrant population (Box 2.3) (OECD, 2023[73]).

Box 2.3. Policy measures supporting Ukrainian refugees

In light of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine and the resulting influx of Ukrainian refugees, the stakeholders consulted for this report highlighted important policy issues and actions undertaken:

- The government of the Czech Republic is providing more and more flexible support to Ukrainian people, for example creating children's groups for Ukrainian children and hiring Ukrainian teachers. In 2022, 173 new children's groups were established through the Operational Programme Employment+ funded by the European Social Fund Plus with the aim of increasing their capacity.
- The government has also launched calls for applications from organisations and entities to provide language courses and run adaptation groups for children of foreigners migrating from Ukraine (European Commission, 2022[74]).
- Social service providers are seeking more training on intercultural care.
- Labour market segregation of female migrants into services, care and domestic work is of concern. Prior to the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic showed that many migrant women are working in healthcare in very precarious working conditions and with very low pay.
- The lengthy process for recognition of foreign qualifications can slow migrants' entry into the Czech Republic labour market.
- There is no bilateral agreement between the Czech Republic and Ukraine on pensions, which poses a problem for older workers and retired people coming from Ukraine.

Source: European Commission (2022[74]), *Czech Republic: New funding opportunities for initiatives promoting the integration and education of children fleeing Ukraine*, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/czech-republic-new-funding-opportunities-initiatives-promoting-integration-and-education_en; consultations with stakeholders.

2.9. Why reinforcing institutions and capacities for gender mainstreaming matters

As noted, gender equality is a key enabler of inclusive growth and national well-being. Despite improvements in gender equality in the Czech Republic, disparities between men and women persist in society and the economy, with gaps remaining in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life and reflected in the prevalence of gender norms and gender-based violence. Similar to the global situation, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these long-standing gender inequalities in the Czech Republic, impacting areas such as women's employment and participation in the labour force.

Yet, it has also presented a crucial opportunity to address these gaps and inequalities through the dual approach of not only adopting targeted measures to remove specific inequalities but also integrating a gender equality perspective across all government action (i.e. gender mainstreaming) to make better and more inclusive decisions (OECD, 2016[75]). This can in turn improve the fairness and responsiveness of policy delivery and outcomes (OECD, 2021[76]). To achieve more gender-equal outcomes, governments need strategic enablers such as strengthened legal, strategic and institutional foundations as well as greater capacities and capabilities for both gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive policy and decision making (e.g. through the use of gender impact assessments, gender-sensitive data and evidence, and gender budgeting). These can, in turn, contribute to increasing public trust, reinforcing democracies and fostering inclusive growth (OECD, 2016[75]; 2017[77]) (OECD, 2017[77]).

Building on this understanding, this report aims to support the government of the Czech Republic's priorities related to the achievement of its national gender equality objectives by strengthening the public administration's capacity, including implementing Strategy 2021+. The following chapters review the strengths, challenges and opportunities of the current legal, strategic, institutional and accountability frameworks in the Czech Republic for gender equality policy as well as the use of gender-sensitive policymaking tools to promote gender equality outcomes. As such, and considering the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women and girls, this report will also contribute to promoting an inclusive recovery pathway. The findings and recommendations presented in the report aim to contribute to the strengthened implementation of Strategy 2021+ through improved institutional design, greater capacity for gender analysis and enhanced awareness in central government and line ministries over the short and medium term as well as improved integration of gender equality in the design and implementation of public policies and budget cycles in the long term.

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Notes

[1] For a discussion on this impact of the EU funding eligibility rules, see https://www.science.org/content/article/it-s-really-about-changing-system-new-gender-equality-rules-take-effect-europe.

[2] Employment protected parental leave in the Czech Republic can be claimed until the child reaches the age of three. Each family is entitled to a total of CZK 300 000 in payments and can decide which parent receives the payment, for how long (at maximum, until the child turns four years of age) and in what amount. However, if at least one of the parents has sickness insurance, the maximum monthly benefit cannot exceed 70% of 30 times the daily assessment base, with a maximum of CZK 42 720. Parents can continue to claim the maximum possible amount until their total allowance of CZK 300 000 is exhausted.

[3] See OECD (2021[51]) for more specific information on the classification of OECD countries according to the state of teleworking regulation in 2020.

[4] For further information, see (Logib, n.d.[78]), https://www.logib.admin.ch/home.

3 Strategic planning for gender equality policy in the Czech Republic

Robust legal and strategic frameworks for the promotion of gender equality can significantly contribute to reducing gender gaps and ensuring the sustainability of gender equality efforts. This chapter provides an overview of Czech Republic legislation related to gender equality and mainstreaming, highlighting good practices and areas for further improvement. It further reviews the country's approach to strategic planning, its current gender equality strategy, the implementation and monitoring mechanisms in place or needed, and the extent to which gender considerations are integrated into sectoral plans. It concludes with a series of policy recommendations to support the government of the Czech Republic to further consolidate its legal and strategic frameworks to advance its gender equality goals and enhance gender-sensitive policymaking.

3.1. Introduction

A robust legal and strategic framework can facilitate addressing gender gaps in the Czech Republic. A country's strategic planning can serve as a frame of reference to achieve its shared vision for gender equality, helping to prioritise and clarify the key areas of focus for government action and identifying objectives and targets for different time horizons for their implementation. A growing number of countries have developed a national gender equality strategy, reflecting a growing recognition of their importance. Over the past five years, at least five OECD countries have adopted a whole-of-government strategic framework for gender equality for the first time (OECD, 2022[1]).

There is consensus across OECD members – as reflected in the adoption of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life – that a stand-alone national gender equality strategy, combined with the integration of gender equality objectives within sector-specific strategies (e.g. education, health, environment, etc.) and broader national strategies (e.g. data, foresight, disaster management, recovery and resilience, etc.), can help accelerate the implementation of gender equality objectives. The importance of this approach has been recognised most recently following the COVID-19 pandemic: The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women's economic and social outcomes triggered an urgent need to ensure that recovery efforts are gender sensitive. Noting this, the European Commission has urged the members of the European Union (EU) to mainstream gender objectives into their national recovery and resilience plans. A vast majority of the respondents (81%) to a 2021 OECD survey that reported having a recovery and resilience strategy in place have integrated gender equality considerations in these strategic plans (OECD, 2022[1]).

This chapter explores the existing state of the legal and strategic frameworks for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the Czech Republic, noting their evolution as well as key success factors and lessons learned.

3.2. An overview of Czech legislation in relation to gender equality and mainstreaming

Legal frameworks focused on gender equality can help counter gender-based discrimination and ensure that gender equality is upheld as an enduring value and ethos of public policymaking, especially in the absence of political commitment. Such frameworks encompass laws that are dedicated, on one hand, to gender equality and, on the other, to the integration of principles that uphold gender equality in other laws (e.g. budget laws, labour codes, procurement laws and civil procedure laws). These latter types of laws can also be referred to as gender-sensitive legislation based on the understanding of their impacts on gender equality outcomes.

3.2.1. Equal treatment is guaranteed by the Anti-Discrimination Act

In the Czech Republic, the principle of non-discrimination is enshrined in the constitution in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. Anti-discrimination provisions, including against discrimination based on gender, is primarily covered by the Act No. 198/2009 Coll., on Equal Treatment and on the Legal Means of Protection against Discrimination (the Anti-Discrimination Act). This act defines the right to equal treatment and prohibits discrimination in matters related to, among others, employment and labour, social security, access to health care, access to education, and access to goods and services (including housing) (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2009[2]). It transposes the relevant EU directives[1] in this area and incorporates the expression "discrimination on the ground of sex". The responsible entity for enforcement of the Anti-Discrimination Act is the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsperson), which is the national equality body responsible for ensuring equal treatment and protection against discrimination (Chapter 7).

Analysis of the Anti-Discrimination Act by the Ombudsperson's office since 2010[2] found that its enforcement has been very limited, due in part to the public's low awareness of the protections against discrimination; weak penalties and damages in proven cases of discrimination; and insufficient state support of non-governmental organisations that provide aid to victims of discrimination (Office of the Public Defender of Rights, 2016[3]). Based on these analyses, the Ombudsperson's office has recommended several amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act including to entitle victims to monetary compensation and to introduce public interest litigation to enable an organisation to represent victims (Office of the Public Defender of Rights, 2020[4]).

While a detailed legal analysis is beyond the scope of this report, provisions and protections related to gender equality can be found in several other laws in the Czech Republic. For instance, Act No. 262/2006 Coll., Labour Code contains important protections related to work-life balance, equal pay and other relevant measures (European Commission, 2021[5]).

3.2.2. The Czech Republic could benefit from a stronger legal framework dealing with gender equality

While the Anti-Discrimination Act provides the legal basis for protection from gender-based discrimination, a more targeted legal framework focused on gender equality could provide a more effective blueprint to proactively guide government action in promoting gender equality for women, men and diverse groups in society. There are examples of gender equality laws across the OECD that, among other things, require ministries to develop gender action plans, introduce requirements for equal pay certification, outline the roles and responsibilities across the administration to consider a gender perspective in policymaking, mandate the collection gender-disaggregated data, or create co-ordination mechanisms for the gender policy. Box 3.1 highlights examples of such legislation from Iceland and the Victorian state government in Australia.

Box 3.1. Examples of comprehensive gender equality laws in OECD countries

Iceland

Iceland's Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender (No. 150/2020) provides the foundation for the prevention of discrimination on the basis of gender and maintaining equality and equal opportunities for all genders in all spheres of society. It establishes the basis for gender and equality mainstreaming in decision making on part of the ministries and public institutions.

The Act aims to advance equal influence for women and men in all spheres of society. It identifies the key areas of work where gender gaps exist such as pay discrimination, reconciliation of work and family life, education, gender-based violence, and gender norms and stereotypes. It also acknowledges the importance of using gender statistics and increasing research in gender and equality studies. It recognises multiple forms of discrimination.

Victoria, Australia

The state of Victoria in Australia enacted its Gender Equality Act in 2020 with the aim of improving workplace gender equality in the public sector, universities and local councils. The law calls on these institutions to undertake positive action towards workplace gender equality and integrate gender equality into their work policies, programmes and services. The act also establishes the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner to provide education, support implementation and enforce compliance of the act. It further requires the consideration of an intersectional perspective by organisations in developing strategies and measures to fulfil their obligations under the act.

Source: (Government of Iceland, 2000[6]; Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, 2021[7]).

3.2.3. Gender mainstreaming objectives could benefit from further clarification and a stronger legal underpinning

Having specific laws related to gender equality is not sufficient to uproot horizontal gender inequalities. Evidence shows that there is a need to review the overall legal landscape to level the playing field for women and men from diverse backgrounds. For example, while men and women are typically taxed under the same rules, their different social and economic characteristics (e.g. income levels or labour force participation) mean that the tax laws can inadvertently contribute to gender inequalities in society (OECD, 2022[8]). This is why gender mainstreaming is the most effective when integrated within the overall legal landscape of a country. Gender mainstreaming helps tackle the deeply rooted nature of structural gender inequalities, gender norms and stereotypes within structural policies, laws and regulations, budgets and procurement processes. As such, it supports governments to make more inclusive decisions to achieve better outcomes for all.

In the case of the Czech Republic, OECD interviews across line ministries pointed out an uneven understanding of gender mainstreaming and its importance, with most government action focusing on targeted actions alone. This uneven understanding is also reflected in the public administration's legal landscape. The key document that formalises gender mainstreaming is the national Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030 (Strategy 2021+). This strategy was adopted through a government resolution,[3] which lends it political weight under the government that put it in place and facilitates its implementation. However, Strategy 2021+ does not provide a legal basis for gender mainstreaming, which makes it more vulnerable to political and economic fluctuations over time. The government's rules regarding regulatory impact assessments also help underpin a formal approach to gender mainstreaming in the Czech Republic The rules cover gender impact assessments (GIAs) for legislative and non-legislative documents submitted to the Cabinet (Chapter 5). But there are important constraints on the effective implementation of this requirement (Chapter 4). Gender considerations are also not mainstreamed in key legal instruments such as the budget law, procurement law or laws that outline the obligations of public servants. Table 3.1 compares legal underpinnings for gender mainstreaming in the Czech Republic and the average situation across OECD countries. This overview suggests to there is scope to introduce gender mainstreaming requirements in both the budget and public procurement laws in the Czech Republic to further align with the growing practice across OECD countries.

Table 3.1. Comparative overview of gender mainstreaming requirements in OECD countries and the Czech Republic

Type of requirement	How many OECD countries report having these in place?	Does the Czech Republic report having these in place?
Laws and binding decisions on gender mainstreaming and gender equality	67%	●
Gender mainstreaming requirements in budget laws	52%	●
Gender mainstreaming requirements in impact assessment laws	39%	N/A
Gender mainstreaming requirements in procurement laws	39%	●
Gender mainstreaming requirements in planning laws	33%	N/A
Gender mainstreaming requirements in economic recovery laws	24%	●
General obligations for public servants to promote gender equality	18%	●
Gender mainstreaming requirements in emergency management or preparedness laws	6%	●

Note: The red dot stands for "no"; the green dot stands for "yes". Responses were received from 33 OECD countries that participated in the Gender Mainstreaming and Governance survey.
Source: OECD (2021[9]), *OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance*.

Gender mainstreaming in laws across the EU and OECD could serve as examples for the Czech Republic. In the past five years, at least nine OECD countries have enacted new laws, regulations or directives (including to complement existing policies) to underpin gender mainstreaming in one or more policy areas (Box 3.2). These legal and statutory frameworks take a variety of forms including laws and/or binding decisions focused on gender mainstreaming; general obligations for public servants to promote gender equality in all actions; and gender mainstreaming requirements enshrined in other key laws related to, for example, planning, budgeting or procurement laws, as shown in Table 3.1 (OECD, 2022[1]).

Box 3.2. Legal frameworks for advancing the dual approach to gender equality

Belgium's gender mainstreaming law

Belgium adopted a dedicated law on gender mainstreaming in 2017 that creates a legal obligation for gender mainstreaming in the development of public policies at the federal level. The law calls for the strategic objectives in gender mainstreaming to be declared when a government is formed and calls on ministries to make annual presentations on the actions and measures taken to this end. Ministries are required to use gender budgeting with each project. Finally, the law prescribes integrating a gender lens through a range of administrative actions such as strategic planning frameworks, data and statistics, and gender-sensitive indicators, among others.

The United Kingdom's public sector equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 established the public sector equality duty, which requires all public bodies to consider and think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. The protected characteristics under the act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The act also requires public bodies to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by or under the act; to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Additionally, public authorities also have specific duties under the Equality Act to help them comply with the public sector equality duty, such as publishing equality information at least once a year and preparing and publishing equality objectives at least every four years.

Source : (Federal Parliament of Belgium, 2007[10]); (IEFH Belgium, 2015[11]); (Ministry of Justice of the United Kingdom, 2012[12]); and Information provided by the United Kingdom, 2021.

3.3. Strategic planning for gender equality in the Czech Republic

3.3.1. Over the past decade, the strategic approach to the promotion of gender equality has improved

The Czech Republic has taken steps to progressively improve its national strategic plans on gender equality over the past decade, drawing on lessons learned from the evaluation of previous strategies. The first step in the development of strategic planning in the area of gender equality was the government's approval in 1998 of an action plan outlining priorities and procedures to promote equal opportunities for men and women (Government of the Czech Republic, 1998-2020[13]). The plan defined the national priorities on gender equality for that year and measures to be undertaken by ministries and other relevant bodies of the public administration. Since then and in each subsequent year until 2014, annual action plans

identified priorities and their implementation was monitored and reported on an annual basis. However, this approach lacked a comprehensive and result-oriented framework to guide such measures and track progress. The adoption in 2014 of the Government Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic for 2014-2020, the country's first medium-term policy framework for gender equality, was a pivotal moment. This 2014-20 Strategy identified eight key areas where gender equality needed to be advanced on the basis of a strategic analysis (Government of the Czech Republic, 2014[14]). However, the annual reporting and monitoring processes remained largely unchanged since 1998, making this a process-related endeavour with very limited focus on results. This is similar to OECD findings on the monitoring of strategic documents in the Czech Republic more broadly (OECD, 2023[15]).

Strategy 2021+ is intended to be an evergreen document underpinned by monitoring and reporting mechanisms

The Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-30 builds on the lessons learned from the previous strategic plans and provides a more ambitious framework for the promotion of the country's gender policy and a longer timeframe. Box 3.3 outlines key areas of focus.

Box 3.3. Key areas of focus of Strategy 2021+

The latest gender equality strategy of the Czech Republic aims to eliminate gender inequalities and in that sense, it builds on existing policies in this area. Its eight thematic chapters focusing on key areas of promoting gender equality:

- work and care - eliminating gender inequalities in the job market and in relation to care
- decision making - addressing the low representation of women in politics and other decision-making positions in the public sphere
- safety - dealing with issues related to domestic and sexual violence and safety in public spaces, including cyberspace
- health - addressing gender inequalities in health care, including issues related to obstetrics and postnatal care
- knowledge - eliminating gender inequalities in education, science and research
- society - eliminating gender stereotypes, reducing gender inequalities in media and culture, and supporting the civil sector
- external relations - focusing on the application of gender equality to foreign policy
- institutions - stressing sufficient staffing in public administration to allow for the effective promotion of gender equality and the implementation of Strategy 2021+.

Each chapter summarises the actual state of gender (in)equality in the area, defines the gaps and sets forth strategic high-level goals. These are further developed in the annex alongside specific goals, particular tasks, measures, indicators, time frames, and responsible and co-operating entities.

Source: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2021[16]), *Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030*, https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/gcfge/Gender-Equality-Strategy-2021-2030.pdf.

Strategy 2021+ provides a solid foundation for implementing gender equality commitments as it sets out high-level goals and complements these with concretely defined measures and corresponding indicators. It identifies roles and responsibilities for entities across the whole of government.

Strategy 2021+ also puts in place an annual reporting and monitoring mechanism that requires ministries and other co-operating entities to report to the Gender Equality Department (the Department) in the Office

of the Government on its implementation. This mechanism consists of self-assessment of the level of implementation by the responsible entities and an assessment by the Department.

This process has been designed in such a way as to foster transparency and provide a platform for discussion of the findings and challenges in relation to implementation. The Department prepares an annual report on fulfilment of Strategy 2021+ in co-operation with and for discussion within the Government Council for Gender Equality and its working groups. Usually, this annual report also undergoes the standard inter-ministerial commenting procedure via the electronic document sharing system eKLEP and is subsequently submitted to the government and the Cabinet (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[16]).

A significant innovation under Strategy 2021+ is a built-in mechanism for flexibility and revision. This allows for a mid-term external evaluation with the possibility to twice revise the strategy, including its measures and indicators, based on progress in implementation and to take into account potential emerging issues and new barriers. As Strategy 2021+ has a ten-year timeframe, such built-in agility can be very valuable, as became clear with the recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic when governments had to adapt urgently in face of emerging challenges. It must be noted, however, that such flexibility can be a double-edged sword in the absence of a committed political leadership: There is a risk of alteration or dilution of the strategy's scope, goals and measures over time, the influence of shorter term priorities and the political context, and the consequences of a possible lack of ownership by subsequent governments. Several OECD members have tested different approaches to mitigate these kinds of risks. In Sweden, for example, overarching gender goals were developed in 2006 and have remain unchanged since then to maintain a long-term vision. It is the responsibility of the Swedish line ministries to identify how these goals are translated within their own line of work, supported by indicators to measure progress.

The Gender Equality Department is well positioned to oversee strategic co-ordination, implementation and monitoring

The Department is the co-ordinating body tasked with fulfilling Strategy 2021+. As the members of the Czech government are ultimately responsible for implementing the strategy, ministers of the line ministries are expected to ensure implementation of the particular measures to be undertaken by their ministry in the prescribed timeframe as are chairpersons of relevant central government authorities such as the Czech Statistical Office (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[16]).

In the Czech administration, responsibility for managing various cross-cutting strategies tends to be located in line ministries, which may limit the overall effectiveness of whole-of-government steering, co-ordination and monitoring of those strategies (OECD, 2023[15]). In relation to gender equality, this responsibility is located in the Department within the Office of the Government, and this may offer an opportunity to more seamlessly steer and co-ordinate work across the government in the implementation of the Strategy 2021+.

Strategy 2021+ reflects a lengthy consultative process

Strategy 2021+ was adopted following a two-year preparatory phase of consultation and engagement within and outside the public administration. Based on a preliminary identification of the strategic areas of focus and a needs assessment, thematic expert groups were created to develop proposals for specific goals and tasks. During the consultation phase, these outcomes were discussed in committees and task forces of the Government Council for Gender Equality and with relevant stakeholders and the public to ensure that the process was participative, consultative and responsive. A proposal of the strategy was also sent to the line ministries to solicit their comments. The submitted comments were then discussed with ministry representatives at eight thematically focused roundtables to try and reach consensus before submitting the final text into the formal interagency commenting procedure (eKLEP) (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[16]). While it is too early to assess the impact of this consultative process, such consultation efforts are expected to help strengthen the implementation of the measures

identified in Strategy 2021+, both by enhancing the ownership of ministries and other co-operating entities of their respective responsibilities and tasks as defined in the strategy and by supporting the document's relevance to the actual needs of the society.

3.3.2. Strategy 2021+ could benefit from greater resourcing and implementation capacity

A prioritisation of actions as short-, medium- and longer-term objectives is needed

Currently, the proliferation of tasks and measures assigned to each line ministry as part of Strategy 2021+ weighs on having an outcome-oriented approach. For example, the Ministry of Education is tasked with implementing over 120 measures, whereas the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is assigned to undertake 162 measures. Though there is no state budget allocated to the implementation of Strategy 2021+, it would be beneficial to opt for sequential budgeting, thus further prioritising the actions set out in Strategy 2021+ going forward. This approach is especially relevant given the tightening fiscal context and the government's stated priority to reduce public spending. Such a prioritisation exercise can also reinforce the business case for allocating state funds for Strategy+, underpinning its stability. Box 3.4 discusses the prioritisation approach taken by Switzerland as an example.

Box 3.4. Switzerland's prioritisation approach to implement its Gender Equality Strategy

Switzerland's Federal Council adopted the country's first-ever national strategy dedicated to gender equality in 2021. The Gender Equality Strategy 2030 focuses on four key areas: promoting equality in the workplace, improving work-life balance, preventing violence and fighting discrimination. It contains a general objective and several specific objectives for each of these areas aimed at achieving equality between women and men. Notably, the strategy adopts a prioritisation approach for the measures proposed, identifying the priority measures for 2021-23 that need to be adopted or implemented during the current legislative period (i.e. by the end of 2023). It also envisages a mid-term review at the end of 2025.

Source: Federal Council of Switzerland (2021[17]), "Federal Council adopts national gender equality strategy", https://www.ebg.admin.ch/ebg/en/home/the-foge/nsb-news_list.msg-id-83294.html.

Further efforts are needed to enhance the autonomy and ownership of government bodies to implement Strategy 2021+

In the Czech Republic, cross-cutting strategies have typically been prepared as a response to EU requirements that condition funding for the development of such strategies (OECD, 2023[15]). These requirements are the enabling conditions for EU funds allocated to the Cohesion Policy that set up the general and sectoral framework to ensure the effectiveness of EU support and must be met by EU member states during the whole programming period of the funding. Moreover, most cross-cutting strategies are not connected with other sectoral strategies, negatively impacting line ministries' ownership of cross-cutting strategies. While Strategy 2021+ was also adopted as a response to the enabling conditions for the programming period 2021-2027, that called for recipients of EU funding to have in place a national strategic framework for gender equality.[4] The Czech Republic's Gender Equality Department also undertook significant efforts to improve the institutionalisation and implementation of its gender equality strategy.

That said, there is scope to enhance autonomy and ownership of Strategy 2021+ among line ministries and other implementing entities in the Czech government. While the strategy has adopted critical horizontal measures, including to advance gender budgeting and collection of gender-disaggregated data, OECD research has found that the roles and responsibilities for these measures fall overwhelmingly on the

Department. In this regard, it would help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of other designated co-operating bodies (e.g. Ministry of Finance, Czech Statistics Office) to strengthen their engagement. Box 3.5 describes an example from the Colombian ministries of environment and transport to strengthen gender mainstreaming within the transport sector.

Box 3.5. How government ministries in Colombia worked together to advance gender equality

The Ministry of Transport as head of the sector, led the establishment of the Sectoral Committee to co-ordinate the implementation of national public policy on gender equity in the transport sector. The committee aims to align the needs and capacity of women in plans, programmes, projects and strategies in the sector.

The Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Environment, in a joint effort, developed a guide to help incorporate a gender perspective in projects, programmes, plans and policies of the transport sector. This document builds on previous work relative to gender and climate change. The guide is a tool for public entities and includes a checklist, examples, good practices and recommendations for integrating gender considerations into their plans or programmes, especially in projects to mitigate climate change in the transport sector. By reviewing all the steps of the cycle of projects, from background and design up to implementation and evaluation, the guide provides orientation to stakeholders relative to gender mainstreaming.

Source: (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Government of Colombia, 2021[18]; Ministry of Transport of the Government of Colombia, 2019[19]).

Increasing sustainability of gender equality commitments with firmer linkages to the budget process can boost implementation

Overall, OECD analysis points to limited links between the policy planning and financial planning processes in the Czech Republic, as financial costs of the measures and allocation of expenditures on priority measures are insufficiently discussed between the ministry authoring the strategy and the Ministry of Finance and before policy documents are submitted to the inter-ministerial commenting procedure and to the Cabinet (OECD, 2023[15]).

To support its implementation, Strategy 2021+ identifies both national and EU sources (i.e. EU funds and European Economic Area (EEA)/Norwegian funds) of financing. In this context, it is important to highlight that Strategy 2021+ defines three types of measures. First, there are measures that do not have direct expenses, for example, legislative changes. Second, there are measures that could be funded by EU Cohesion Policy funds, particularly the European Social Fund Plus + (e.g. the Operation Programme Employment+ and Johannes Amos Comenius Programme).[5] Finally, there are some measures that have a direct impact on the state budget (namely, measures entailing an increase of some existing subsidy programmes). Yet, as noted by the interviewed authorities, in view of the limited state financing, Strategy 2021+ relies heavily on EU funding (particularly on the previous Operational Programme Employment). To this end, the Czech Republic is encouraged to consider strengthening the formal links between the implementation of Strategy 2021+ and the budget process (Chapter 6), particularly in the context of promoting a gender-inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

3.3.3. There is scope for greater integration of gender mainstreaming objectives in sectoral policy planning

In addition to Strategy 2021+, other key strategic frameworks briefly discuss issues and measures related to the gender equality agenda. For example, Czech Republic 2030, the country's long-term strategy, outlines a pathway for its social, economic and environmental development and forms the basic strategic framework for other national and regional strategic documents. This strategy refers to prevailing gender inequalities in society, stating that:

> *"Czech Republic will reduce gender inequalities in various areas of social life, in particular the low participation of women with young children (under 15) in the labour market and the high gender pay gap and pensions (gender pension gap). The state will also focus on the low representation of women in politics and decision-making positions and the high degree of vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market. It will vigorously combat violence against women (domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment or cyberviolence) and direct discrimination based on sex, which is significantly more common for women than men. The negative role of gender stereotypes, which support the perpetuation and replication of gender inequalities, must be considered." (Government of the Czech Republic, 2017[20])*

The Policy Statement of the government of the Czech Republic approved in 2022 does not explicitly reference either gender equality or the Strategy 2021+. However, it mentions issues that are closely related to gender equality, among them increasing the capacity of childcare facilities, supporting affordable housing for single parents, and increasing the pensions for people over 85 (who are predominantly women) (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[21]).

As discussed, OECD's dual approach to strategic planning for gender equality emphasises the importance of aligning national and sectoral strategic planning with cross-cutting national gender strategies to ensure coherent implementation of strategic plans across the government. If gender-related goals are not fully integrated into government action and mirrored in other broader country strategic documents, they risk being marginalised and not fully implemented (OECD, 2018[22]). In this regard, and despite the brief references to gender equality in the Czech Republic's cross-cutting strategic documents, there is further scope to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the country's strategic development framework and Policy Statement of the government.

While Operational Programmes developed with European Union funding include specific goals related to gender equality, scope remains for further gender mainstreaming

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, funding from the EU, notably from the European Social Fund and European Social Fund Plus, has made and continues to make a crucial contribution towards the Czech Republic's gender equality goals. The Czech Operational Programmes (strategic documents developed by EU countries to apply for EU funding that list objectives, priorities and actions) under these funding mechanisms outline gender equality-related contributions as relevant. Notably, the Operational Programme Employment (2014-2020) (Czech Republic Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2014[23]) supported the strengthening of institutional mechanisms for gender equality within some line ministries (among them, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Transport) as well as projects dedicated to tackling the gender pay gap and improving childcare facilities.

Following the introduction of criteria for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development of Operational Programmes, contained in relevant EU legislation for accessing EU funding, the Department provided suggestions to mainstream gender in the Operational Programme Employment Employment+) (Czech Republic Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021[24]). However, as reported in Strategy 2021+, only a small set of these suggestions – specifically those pertaining to reinforcing childcare arrangements through expansion of children's groups (Chapter 2) – were included in the final Operational Programme submitted. Operational Programme Employment+ also contains allocations for improving gender equality

in the labour market (e.g. through tackling horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market, reducing pay inequalities and work-life balance).

Similarly, there has been no direct focus on gender equality in the Integrated Regional Operational Programme, funded by the European Regional Development Fund, during either the 2014-20 or the 2021-27 programming periods (Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[25]); (Government of the Czech Republic, 2014[26]). However, the programme aims to address the insufficient capacities of childcare facilities in the Czech Republic and improve the current situation by funding the development of relevant infrastructure, thus indirectly dealing with gender gaps in labour market.

There is scope to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Czech Republic's National Recovery and Resilience Plan

As discussed in Chapter 1, the COVID-19 crisis widened existing gender gaps in several socioeconomic areas including employment, globally and in the Czech Republic, illustrating the need to consider gender equality in formulating recovery and resilience plans. If these impacts on women's employment are not considered in designing and implementing recovery plans, for example, financial aid and welfare benefits may not be sufficiently directed to women-dominated sectors and businesses, which could worsen economic gender gaps.

Several OECD countries, recognising the importance of an inclusive recovery, have reported integrating gender equality considerations in the development of their recovery and resilience plans. As of 2021, 81% of OECD countries that reported developing a strategic plan in response to the COVID-19 crisis (including for recovery and resilience) also reported integrating gender equality considerations either by including targeted actions and/or stating gender equality as cross-cutting pillar. The EU regulation establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility states that member states should mainstream and promote objectives relating to gender throughout the design and implementation of their National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs). The Czech Republic's NRRP sets forth various measures that are expected to have a positive impact on gender equality outcomes, particularly by increasing women's labour market participation. This objective would be supported over the long term through investment in childcare facilities for children under the age of three and by amending legislation to ensure sustainable financing and regional availability of low-age childcare (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[27]). While such targeted measures are important, the dual approach of targeted actions accompanied by gender mainstreaming would be essential to encourage a gender-inclusive recovery (OECD, 2021[28]).

In official interviews, it was reported that while the Czech Republic's NRRP might have been an opportunity to channel resources towards the promotion of gender equality, time constraints and other considerations (such as the availability of other EU funds channelled towards the promotion of gender equality) prevented gender considerations from being fully integrated into the final NRRP. For instance, the NRRP notes that gender-based violence, gender inequalities in education and gender stereotypes are dealt with under other interventions such as through the next operational period of EU funds or EEA/Norway funds. Similar challenges had been reported across the OECD in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic: Only 42% of countries reported analysing the gender-related impacts of emergency measures. However, having systematic and well-established gender mainstreaming systems is reported to have facilitated governments' use of gender analysis to help inform decision making at the onset of the pandemic (OECD, 2021[28]).

While the window of opportunity in which to carry out a comprehensive *ex ante* gender impact assessment to inform the development of the Czech Republic's NRRP has closed, there is considerable scope to make its revision and implementation more gender inclusive. As a start, the NRRP could benefit from an assessment to better estimate the expected impact of the funding measures on gender equality and more particularly on women's labour force participation as a high priority issue. These findings could feed into the revision of the NRRP and inform the implementation of programmes going forward. There is also room

to better align the objectives of NRRP to the selected goals of Strategy 2021+ to further strengthen implementation of the strategy. Box 3.6 describes an example from Italy that could provide insights.

Box 3.6. Italy's approach to integrating gender equality in recovery plans

One of the recommendations of the European Commission's Country-specific recommendations for Italy 2019-20 was that it adopt measures to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and integrate a gender lens in the preparation and the implementation of its NRRP. In response, Italy has conducted a gender assessment in its NRRP.

The Italian government used several tools to integrate a gender perspective into the performance framework. These included setting milestones and targets for each reform and investment proposal as well as specific measures to support female entrepreneurs and promoting gender procurement for projects financed by the Italian NRRP. In addition, "Strengthening growth potential and social cohesion, explaining the contribution to gender equality" is one of the core criteria for a positive evaluation of the measures outlined in the plan.

The Italian government also assessed the impact of its NRRP on women's employment. The assessment suggested a growth of 4 percentage points in women's employment by 2026 and also identified the components more favourable to men's employment (e.g. renewable energy investments, railway investments) against those favourable to women's employment (e.g. education and health investments, employment policies, digitisation). According to the assessment, the plan could help Italy earn five more points in the European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Equality Index, which measures the progress of gender equality over time. The extra five points would push Italy above the current index average of 67.9.

Source: (Government of Italy, n.d.[29]; Government of Italy, 2021[30]).

Integrating gender objectives within the ministerial-level strategies can support policy alignment and implementation

OECD research points to significant scope to strengthen gender mainstreaming in strategic documents at the ministerial level in the Czech Republic. In line with the 2014-20 gender equality strategy and its annual action plans, several ministries put in place their own ministerial-level strategies. The gender equality strategy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports focused on internal processes and policymaking. Yet, there is an absence of systematic inclusion of gender equality in sectoral priorities. Currently, the allocation of tasks appears to be relatively siloed, with insufficient institutional responsibility for implementing gender mainstreaming in ministries. In most cases, the responsibility falls almost exclusively to the respective gender focal points (GFPs), who often do not have the required mandate or capacities for the tasks. Developing a systematic approach and guidance for ministries to incorporate gender-related objectives as a part of their sectoral strategies can play a key role in achieving horizontal alignment and implementation for gender equality. Strategic alignment and harmonisation across national and sectoral strategies is more generally an issue in the Czech Republic (OECD, 2023[15]). The Ministry of Regional Development has developed templates and models for strategic documents in this regard, which could include gender-related objectives and references to gender equality.

3.4. Policy recommendations: A roadmap for the Czech Republic

- There is a need to further level the playing field for women and men from diverse backgrounds within the legal landscape of the Czech Republic. Stronger legal underpinning for gender equality can future-proof it as a core value and embed gender mainstreaming as a core government process. The Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030, which was adopted through a government resolution, can carry political weight under the government which adopted it, facilitating its implementation. However, in the absence of a legal basis for gender mainstreaming, its implementation could be vulnerable to possible political and economic fluctuations in the future.
- Resourcing and capacities across the administration for the implementation of Strategy 2021+ could be enhanced:
    - An important first step could be the prioritisation of actions as short, medium and longer-term objectives. Such a prioritisation exercise can also help reinforce the business case for allocating more sustainable funds for Strategy+ to underpin its stable implementation within the tightening fiscal context.
    - There is scope to increase sustainability of the implementation of gender equality commitments by strengthening linkages to the state budget process since implementation of Strategy 2021+ relies overwhelmingly on funding from external sources such as the EU. While this financing mechanism has crucially provided impetus to institutionalise Strategy 2021+, it a sustainable and regular resource allocation hat can ensure continuity and impact in the medium and long term.
- Further efforts are needed to gradually enhance the autonomy and ownership of ministries and co-ordinating bodies for the implementation of Strategy 2021+. It would be helpful, for instance, to clarify the roles and responsibilities of other designated co-operating bodies' such as the Ministry of Finance and the Czech Statistical Office to strengthen their engagement.
- It is important to further strengthen the links and alignment between Strategy 2021+ and key government strategies, particularly the Policy Statement of the Government, to increase political support and ensure that the Prime Minister's Office and the whole of government address gender as a higher priority on the government agenda.
- There is scope to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the NRRP including through better alignment with Strategy 2021+ goals and an impact assessment to better estimate the expected impact of the funding measures on gender equality and specifically on women's labour force participation. These findings can feed into the revision of the NRRP and inform its implementation.
- Developing a systematic approach and guidance for ministries to incorporate gender-related objectives as a part of their sectoral strategies can play a key role in advancing the goal of horizontal alignment and implementation for gender equality. For instance, this guidance can be reflected in the strategic templates and models prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development.

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Notes

[1] These are as follows: Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000, implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation; Council Directive of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security; Council Directive 86/378/EEC of 24 July 1986, on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes; Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004, implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services; Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006, on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast); Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women who are self-employed; and Directive 2014/54/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014, on measures facilitating the exercise of rights conferred on workers in the context of freedom of movement for workers.

[2] The Ombudsperson has issued two reports. The first, covering 2010-14, related to barriers to justice for victims of discrimination in the Czech Republic, available at https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/CZ_Diskriminace_v_CR_vyzkum_01.pdf. The second, spanning 2015-19, looked at court cases on discrimination; see https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ESO/CZ_Diskriminace_v_CR_vyzkum_01.pdf and https://www.ochrance.cz/dokument/rozhodovani_ceskych_soudu_o_diskriminacnich_sporech_2015_2019/2020-vyzkum_judikatura-dis.pdf.

[3] The strategy was approved through the Government resolution No. 269 of 8 March 2021, available at https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/IHOABYYHHZTI.

[4] The draft general regulation for EU funding for the 2021-27 programming period of 2021-2027 (for the EU Regional Development Fund), European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Border Management and Visa Instrument, and the Internal Security Fund) includes having in place a “national strategic framework for gender equality" as one of the enabling conditions for EU funds.

[5] The operational Programmes Employment+ (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) and Jan Amos Comenius (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) are frameworks for EU funds for the 2021-27 programming period.

4 Getting institutions right in the Czech Republic

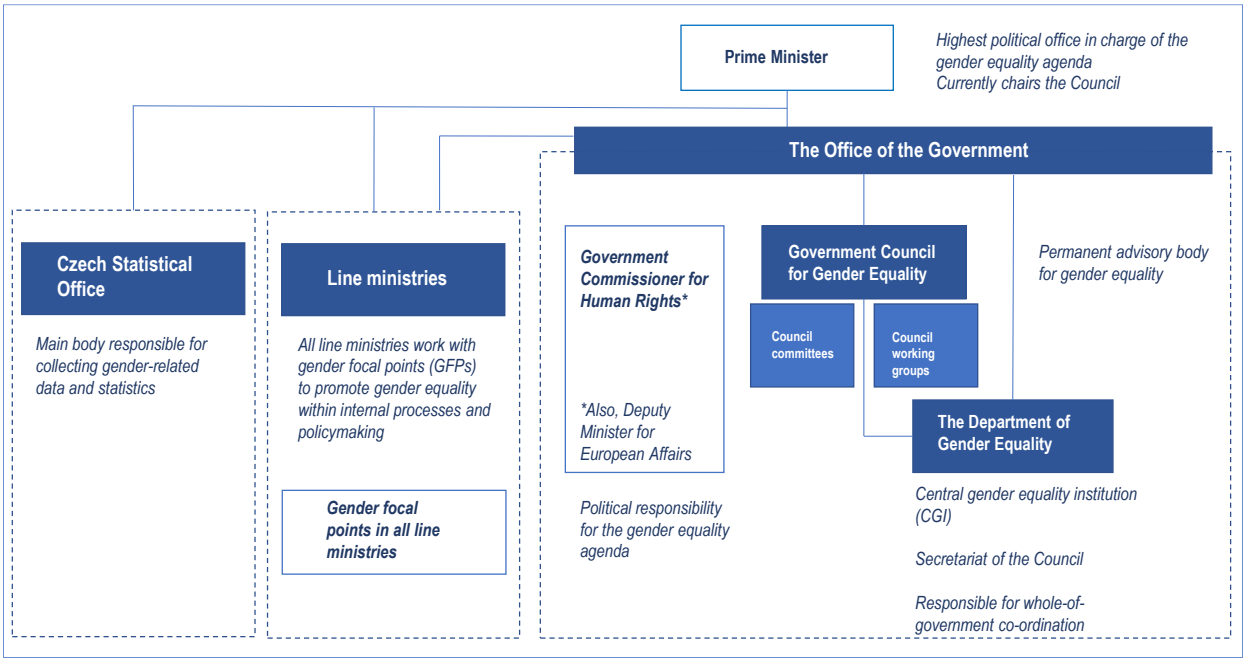
Establishing sound institutional arrangements for the delivery of gender equality policy, including clear roles and responsibilities and adequate capacity and resourcing, is key to tackling gender inequalities. The Czech Republic has taken some steps to strengthen its institutional architecture for gender equality in recent years, but further efforts could be envisaged to promote a co-ordinated approach across the government. This chapter first presents an overview of the whole-of-government institutional framework for gender equality and mainstreaming in the Czech Republic. It then analyses the roles, responsibilities, capacities and capabilities of the institutional actors tasked with promoting the country's gender equality agenda at the national level and assesses challenges and scope for improvement. It concludes with a set of targeted policy recommendations to reinforce the existing institutional set-up, with the aim of supporting the Czech Republic in achieving its gender equality goals.

4.1. Introduction

Tackling gender inequality is a complex public policy issue. It necessitates a robust institutional set-up within the public administration with adequate capacities and capabilities. Tackling gender inequality is also a cross-cutting public policy challenge that affects many areas throughout a person's life cycle. For example, domestic violence can also have critical impacts on women's labour force participation outcomes and housing, among others. If ministries across the public administration work in an isolated manner, these critical linkages might be missed, potentially resulting in additional costs for the public administration due to overlaps in programmes and expenditures and provision of less-efficient public services. In the context of a tightening fiscal situation and its commitment to efficient public spending, the Czech government would benefit from a well-developed and co-ordinated institutional approach to its gender equality policy. The national Gender Equality Strategy 2021-30 (Strategy 2021+) also considers strengthening the institutional set-up as one of the country's overarching goals. OECD analysis of the current strategic institutional set-up and processes in the Czech Republic, especially for cross-cutting policy issues, suggests that these have not been conducive to the sound co-ordination and implementation of strategies. In particular, the lack of strategic steering capacities and alignment from the centre have led to the multiplication of strategies and an absence of consistency and implementation across policies (OECD, 2023[1]). Such factors might also hamper the needed institutional set-up for gender equality in the country. A whole-of-government approach to gender equality implies that the institutional responsibilities for advancing gender equality goals are, ideally, distributed among the centre of government (e.g. the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Finance); a central gender equality institution (i.e. a body tasked with promoting, co-ordinating and facilitating the gender equality policy in a country at the central or federal level); line ministries and agencies (across all policy areas); data-collecting and producing bodies; and independent oversight institutions as well as public administrations across various levels of government (OECD, 2019[2]).

This chapter presents an overview of the institutional set-up for gender equality in the government of the Czech Republic including roles, responsibilities, capacities and capabilities of various public institutions engaged in advancing the country's gender equality agenda. Figure 4.1 gives a snapshot of this institutional set-up.

Figure 4.1. Institutional set-up for gender equality in the Czech Republic, 2023



Source: OECD elaboration.

4.2. Political responsibility for the gender equality portfolio

4.2.1. There is scope to strengthen the institutional set-up for the promotion of gender equality in the Czech Republic

The highest political authority in charge of the gender equality agenda is the Prime Minister, who chairs the Government Council for Gender Equality (the Council) and submits to the government any legislative and non-legislative materials dealing with gender equality. In addition, the Government Commissioner for Human Rights (the Commissioner) within the Office of the Government fulfils a key political role to promote gender equality. The Commissioner supports the Prime Minister in promoting gender equality at the cabinet level and is responsible for developing long-term frameworks for gender equality at the national level, designing measures to achieve gender equality, assessing materials of a legislative and non-legislative nature concerning gender equality (via the interagency commenting procedure in the eKLEP), and implementing and reporting on international commitments in this area. The Commissioner serves as the Vice-Chair of the Council as well as other relevant government advisory bodies dealing with human rights, the Roma minority, national minorities, non-profit organisations, and people with disabilities and is responsible for the agenda related to these areas (Government of the Czech Republic, 2023[3]). In carrying out the mandate of this position, the Commissioner co-operates closely with the Gender Equality Department (the Department).

The Commissioner, while fulfilling a key function, is not a member of the government and the role does not have the mandate to make direct submissions to the Cabinet. Importantly, political responsibility for the gender equality agenda in the Czech Republic has shifted between different ministries over the past decade and since 2018, there has been no dedicated Cabinet Minister holding political responsibility for gender equality agenda.[1] At the time of writing this report, a recent development was the appointment of the Commissioner as the Deputy Minister of the Minister for European Affairs. Such overlaps in institutional responsibilities could, however, risk dividing the attention dedicated to the promotion of gender equality.

Having the gender equality agenda within the Prime Minister's portfolio can give it strong political momentum. But this also poses a risk that the gender equality agenda could be sidelined amid conflicting priorities on the Prime Minister's often-overcrowded agenda. This is especially the case in times of crisis such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic or in cases where gender equality has not been explicitly identified as a government priority.

Going forward, the necessary institutional and political impetus for the advancement of the gender equality agenda could be created by systematically institutionalising the Commissioner's role through strengthened links with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Cabinet and/or appointing a dedicated minister with access to the Cabinet and the mandate to propose or challenge cabinet submissions in relation to gender equality. Instead of ad hoc arrangements, systematic cabinet representation for the gender equality agenda – consistent with the set-up in a majority (56%) of OECD countries –may encourage its consideration at the epicentre of political decision making and signal its importance to both public and private actors (OECD, 2022[4]). Similarly, a stronger role for the PMO – for instance by appointing a counterpart of the Commissioner in the PMO or ensuring regular meetings with the Prime Minister within the Council or at its preparatory meetings – can help follow and steer the gender agenda. Box 4.1 presents examples from several OECD countries that have established dedicated cabinet ministerial responsibility for the gender equality agenda and, as is the case in the Czech Republic, a central gender institution to lead the policy work in the CoG.

Box 4.1. Dedicated ministerial portfolios with gender equality institutions in the centre of government in OECD countries

As of 2022, the Australian Government has a standalone portfolio for gender equality, led by the Minister for Women. The current minister also leads the portfolios on finance and public service. The Minister is supported by the Office for Women, Australia's central gender institution, located in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Since 2022, Austria has a Federal Minister for Women, Family, Integration and Media (who previously led the combined portfolios for women, family, youth and integration) in the Federal Chancellery. At the policy and administrative level, the Division for Women and Equality, a part of the Federal Chancellery since 2018, undertakes this work.

As of 2022, political responsibility for the gender equality agenda in the United Kingdom lies with the Minister for Women and Equalities. The work on policy relating to women is led by the Government Equalities Office in the Cabinet Office of the United Kingdom.

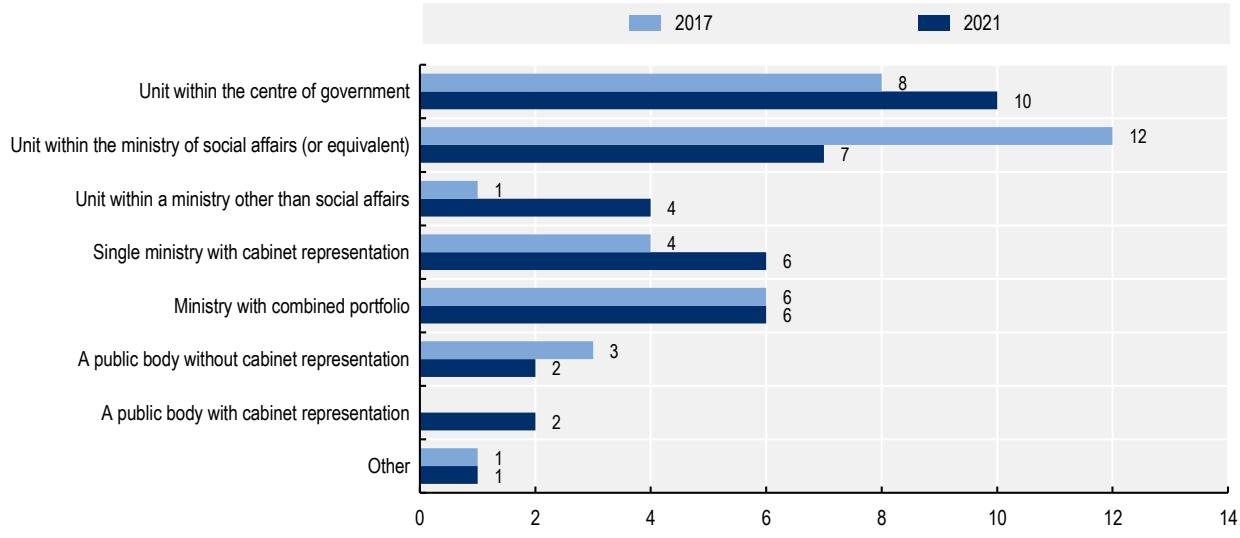
Source: (the Australian Government, n.d.[5]; Federal Chancellery Republic of Austria, n.d.[6]; Government of the United Kingdom, n.d.[7]).

4.3. Central Gender Equality Institution in the Czech Republic

Across the OECD, there is no homogenised set-up for promoting the gender equality agenda due to variations in the wider administrative and institutional structures. However, every OECD member has established a central gender equality institution to advance overarching gender equality goals at the national or central level. Figure 4.2 shows the commonly used institutional arrangements for CGIs in OECD countries as of 2021 (OECD, 2022[4]). Typically, CGIs carry out functions such as delivering specific programmes for women's empowerment, co-ordinating for the gender equality agenda, developing guidelines or toolkits to support line ministries in gender mainstreaming, implementing gender equality-related programmes and policies, and making policy recommendations (OECD, 2019[2]). COVID-19 and its emergency response were reminders that CGIs play a unique and vital role in ensuring that gender equality is not sidelined in government action. In Switzerland, for example, the Federal Office for Gender Equality collaborated with the national taskforce for COVID-19 to mainstream policies that promote gender-inclusive considerations; while Mexico's National Institute for Women facilitated a gender-inclusive emergency response by ensuring co-ordination and collaboration among secretariats of the federal government and local governments.

Figure 4.2. Units within the centre of government are the most common arrangements for central gender equality institutions in OECD countries

Number of countries, 2017 and 2021



Source: Information collected by the OECD based on desk research and data from (OECD, 2021[8]), *OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance*.

4.3.1. The Gender Equality Department is the central gender equality institution in the Czech Republic

The Gender Equality Department (the Department) fulfils the role of the central gender equality institution (CGI). While formally located within the Office of the Government, the Department falls under the authority of the Government Commissioner for Human Rights. It is led by the Director of the Department, who reports to the Government Commissioner for Human Rights and the Head of the Office of the Government. Box 4.2 synthesises the Department's mandate.

Box 4.2. Mandate of the Gender Equality Department in the Czech Republic

Under the organisational rules of the Office of the Government and an internal directive defining its mandate, the Department is responsible for a range of activities. While this list is not exhaustive, the responsibilities include, among others:

- creating and evaluating national framework, strategies and priorities for promoting gender equality
- fulfilling and monitoring of the international commitments and commitments ensuing from membership in the EU in the area of gender equality
- filling the role of secretariat of the Government Council for Gender Equality
- co-ordinating the gender equality agenda throughout the public administration and non-governmental sector
- gender mainstreaming in legislative and non-legislative documents as part of the interagency commenting procedure

- conducting gender analyses, awareness-raising activities and training in relation to gender equality
- monitoring and evaluating the current state of gender equality in the Czech Republic
- providing methodological support to line ministries.

Source: (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[9]); (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[10]).

As the CGI of the Czech Republic, the Department co-ordinates the development, implementation and monitoring of Strategy 2021+. Additionally, it develops various analytical materials, provides methodological support for the Gender Focal Points and other public officials across the public administration, conducts trainings and awareness-raising activities, and represents the Czech Republic on various international platforms, among other tasks. Department also serves as the Secretariat of the Government Council for Gender Equality.

4.3.2. While the Department has a central location, it could benefit from a stronger mandate and capacities

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Department is well placed within the Office of the Government to carry out a strategic co-ordination role for the cross-cutting gender equality policy. Through the CoG's convening power, the Department has the authority to engage line ministries and other public entities in mainstreaming gender considerations in their work. The importance of having CGIs placed closer to the CoG is increasingly recognised across the OECD. As shown in Figure 4.2, while the most common configuration in the OECD for the CGIs was to place them within the ministries of social affairs (or equivalents) in 2017, this trend has recently been shifting with the growing number of countries making a shift towards units in the CoG in the past five years (OECD, 2022[4]).

There are several important gaps, however, that could create uncertainty and pose a potential risk to the Department's fulfilment of its role. First is the absence of a legislative framework that clearly outlines the mandate and location of the Department as the central gender equality institution in the country. The Act No. 2/1969 Coll., on the Establishment of Ministries and other Central Bodies of the State Administration (the Competency Law) states that the Office of the Government is responsible for issues related to ensuring that activities of government bodies are fulfilled. However, the law does not explicitly entrust responsibility for the gender equality goals to any organ of the central administration. The absence of a legislative framework covering responsibility for the gender equality objectives has an impact on their implementation and leads to it being significantly dependent on the willingness of the government in power to deal with this issue.

A related challenge is the limited clarity of the Department's mandate. Strategy 2021+ names the Department as the main entity responsible for gender budgeting, in co-operation with the Ministry of Finance. To effectively fulfil this role, it would be important to strengthen the Department's expertise in matters of budgeting as well as the broader resource base (Chapter 6). Additionally, although it does not have a formal oversight role and therefore lacks corresponding capacities, the Department also has the opportunity to comment on the adequacy of gender impact assessments (GIAs) conducted for legislative and non-legislative proposals before they are submitted to the government via the interagency commenting procedure, eKLEP. Similarly, while its role in this regard has not been defined, the Department closely collaborates with the Czech Statistical Office regarding gender statistics (Chapter 5).

Another gap stems from the uncertainty around the Department's location within the institutional set-up as well as its nature. In the past, the work on gender equality was undertaken by a unit and not always by a department. Furthermore, the team working on the gender equality policy was relocated several times between the Office of the Government and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Stakeholders

consulted for this report identified that these changes posed additional barriers to the continuity of the gender equality policy. In line with the objectives of Strategy 2021+ and as part of the Competency Act, strengthening the legal basis for the responsibility for the promotion of gender equality within the government, and thus the mandate and location of the Department as part of the CoG can help the Department future-proof its mandate and underpin the continuity of the gender equality as a cross-cutting and complex public policy.

As noted throughout this report, there is significant scope to strengthen the sustainability of the funding model as currently, only two positions within the Department that are funded by the state budget, with the rest funded by external sources.

Finally, while the Department benefits from its location in the CoG, its size is rather small, which can limit its capacity to support the public administration through research and analysis on gender. OECD countries facing similar issues have tried to overcome this challenge by introducing agencies with complementary mandates or by ensuring adequate staffing (Box 4.3).

Box 4.3. Additional analytical capacities can support small centre of government teams

Iceland has established not only a Department of Equality within the Prime Minister's Office to co-ordinate the equality agenda but also a special institution under the administration of the Prime Minister called the Directorate of Equality to oversee matters related to equality legislation. Similarly, in Sweden, the smaller team of the Division for Gender Equality under the Ministry of Employment works with the Swedish Gender Equality Agency on the gender equality agenda. On the other hand, governments can also take efforts to ensure adequate staff capacities for a CGI that is located in the centre of government. For example, the Australian Office for Women within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet currently has approximately 75 staff members, also supported by seconded officials from other departments.

Source: (Government of Iceland, n.d.[11]); Information provided by the Government of Iceland in 2021; (Government of Sweden, n.d.[12]); (Government of Sweden, n.d.[13]); Information provided by the Australian Government in 2022.

4.4. The role of the centre of government

The centre of government can be defined as the highest-level support structure of the executive branch of government that generally supports the activities of the head of government. Across the OECD membership, CoG performs key co-ordination functions, primarily for cabinet meeting preparations, policy co-ordination and strategic management. In a broader sense, CoG extends beyond the bodies reporting directly to the head of the government to also include bodies or agencies such as ministries of finance or planning that also often perform cross-cutting government functions at the national or central level (OECD, 2017[14]). With regard to gender equality goals, the CoG can play a key role to ensure government-wide implementation by clarifying the roles of the line ministries, holding them accountable through mechanisms such as performance management frameworks, and ensuring adequate integration of a gender lens in their work (OECD, 2019[2]).

4.4.1. There is room to strengthen the decision-making capability of the Government Council, the main advisory body for gender equality in the Czech Republic

Established by a Government Resolution, the Government Council for Gender Equality, attached to the Office of the Government, is the permanent advisory body on gender equality. Box 4.4 explains its mandate and how it operates.

Box 4.4. Mandate and functioning of the Government Council for Gender Equality

The mandate of the Council entails:

- monitoring national fulfilment of the Czech Republic's international commitments on gender equality (including the commitments from the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women)
- identifying current problems in the area of gender equality and co-ordinating the main directions of ministerial policies regarding gender equality
- discussing and recommending the key conceptual directions of the government's progress in promoting gender equality to the government, especially through the processing of proposals regarding policies in various areas of gender equality and proposals for measures and initiatives to improve gender equality
- monitoring the implementation of strategic documents in relation to gender equality and evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken towards t achievement of gender equality.

The Council usually meets four times a year, and the chair is obligated by statute to be present at least twice. The Council can establish and dissolve committees dealing with specific issues regarding the Council's area of competence. There are currently four committees dealing with the participation of men and women in decision-making positions, domestic and gender-based violence, gender equality in the job market, and the institutional framework for gender equality.

The Council also establishes working groups as needed to deal with particular issues based on the mandate, focus and agenda as determined by the Council. Currently, three task forces or working groups cover the following themes: obstetrics, the role of men in promoting gender equality, and evaluation of projects in the subsidy programme of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic that are targeted to the non-governmental sector for the implementation of the (previous and current) national strategies on gender equality. A fourth working group on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality was established with the aim of studying the proposed response measures and their impact on gender equality as well as formulating recommendations to the Commissioner or other line ministries regarding measures under the scope of their policy particular area.

Source: Government of the Czech Republic (2022[10]), Mandate of the Government Council for Gender Equality. https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Statut-Rady-2022.pdf.

The Council has 42 members. Its chair is the member of the government responsible for the gender equality agenda – currently the prime minister – who also appoints (and dismisses) the members of the Council and two vice-chairs (chosen among the members) discussion by the Council. The members include representatives of the line ministries, ideally at the level of the Deputy Ministers, or, in certain cases a State Secretary of a given ministry nominated by the relevant ministers. Other members include representatives of central organs such as the Czech Statistical Office and the Office of the Public Defender of Rights), representatives of the non-governmental sector, and experts. The Department, as the

secretariat, co-ordinates the activity of the Council and its committees and working groups. The secretary of the Council (who is the director of the Department) participates in Council meetings in an advisory role and may submit proposals and comment on matters discussed (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[10]).

In practice, however, the line ministries are most frequently represented by their respective State Secretaries. On one hand, representation at this senior level is positive as it enhances the ability of the Council members to translate its decisions into action within their line ministry. On the other, given that State Secretaries in the Czech Republic often oversee the Departments of Human Resources and those related to the Public Servant Act, this can risk linking or even confusing the broader gender equality agenda with more narrowly defined issues of gender equality within human resources management. In matters related to gender mainstreaming in policymaking, the representation of Deputy Ministers or Directors-General within the Council could be more effective in terms of translating the recommendations of the Council to action in line ministries.

Its mandate also requires the Council to publish an annual report on the government website (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[10]). As part of the reporting exercise, there is scope to strengthen the Council's mandate and capacity to monitor and follow up on the implementation of recommendations that it provides to the government with a view to further consolidate the impact of the Council's work (Chapter 7). For instance, the Council's role could be expanded to have stronger links with decision-making bodies in the executive, namely the PMO and/or the Cabinet.

4.4.2. There is scope to engage other units within the Office of Government to fulfil key gender equality functions

Beyond the key role played by the Department, different units located within the Office of the Government have the potential to accelerate the achievement of national gender equality objectives. The Office of the Government has two main organisational sections: the economic and technical section in charge of preparing government sessions and the legislative section in charge of the expert and legislative content of government sessions (e.g. preparation of draft legislation, etc.) (OECD, 2023[1]). As noted in Chapters 5 and 7, the legislative section (including the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) Unit and the RIA Board) can potentially play an important role to strengthen compliance with Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) methodology and GIA oversight. Additionally, the newly established Government Analytical Unit (VAU) could also provide the necessary methodological checkpoint for conducting GIAs. An important first step is to ensure the availability of gender expertise within these structures (Chapter 7).

4.5. Gender focal points across the Czech Republic's public administration

4.5.1. Gender focal points have been established to support gender mainstreaming in line ministries

Engaging line ministries is essential to ensure effective gender mainstreaming across the government, as they can play a key role in integrating gender considerations within their routine functioning, decision-making processes and management structures. Recognising this need, the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life stresses the importance of adequate capacities and resources of public institutions to integrate gender equality perspectives in their activities (OECD, 2016[15]). These can be developed through, for example, establishing dedicated institutional mechanisms; training; promoting collaborative approaches with knowledge centres to produce gender-sensitive knowledge, leadership and communication; ensuring the collection of gender-disaggregated statistics in institutions' areas of responsibility, and providing clear guidelines, tools, communication and expectations across all public institutions.

The Czech Republic has undertaken efforts to establish institutional structures for advancing the gender equality agenda in all ministries. The position of gender focal point (GFPs) was established by government resolution in 2001, and its scope was expanded subsequently in 2017.[2] All line ministries are required to institute this position on at least a part-time basis to promote gender equality within their internal processes and policymaking.

4.5.2. Efforts should be taken to ensure that GFPs are fit-for-purpose

In practice, there are inconsistencies in the scope and mandate of the GFPs across ministries and in their ability to integrate the gender perspective into the routine functioning of the line ministries. GFPs face a number of barriers to ensuring that GIAs are systematically and meaningfully conducted, while no role has been envisaged for GFPs in the process of gender budgeting (Chapters 5 and 6).

4.5.3. GFP Standard could be strengthened to support fulfilment of the mandate

Noting an insufficient fulfilment of the government resolution on GFPs, the Office of the Government (i.e. the Department) in co-operation with the Committee for Institutional Framework for Gender Equality and existing GFPs developed a Standard of the Position of Gender Focal Points (Standard) to consolidate the position; the government approved this in 2018. The Standard defines seven factors relevant to the position of GFP (and 22 indicators) and considered crucial to the effective promotion of gender equality: organisational placement, job description in an internal directive, competencies, qualification requirements, deepening of knowledge, and the extent of the working time and key rules for the establishment and functioning of the ministerial working groups and task forces for gender equality. The Standard imposes a duty on the department to monitor and evaluate implementation of the standard every year, propose an update if needed, and report the results of the monitoring in the Annual Report on Gender Equality (Government of the Czech Republic, 2023[16]). However, the standard serves only as a recommendation and is non-binding in nature, leading to inconsistencies in its take-up across line ministries.

The 2021 reporting on the implementation of the Standard indicated that only six of 14 ministries had established a GFP as a full-time position. In the remaining line ministries, it was a part-time (mostly half-time position) and in a few ministries, even less than half time. For instance, the gender focal point in the Ministry of Culture devoted between 0.1 and 0.4 of the full-time equivalent (FTE)[3] to work related to gender equality; the Ministry of Justice 0.5 of the FTE (however the person has to deal with all issues related to human rights agenda too). In previous years, a few line ministries received EU funding (Operational Programme Employment) for projects focused on promoting gender equality that enabled increased capacities dedicated to this work. An example is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which devoted 2.5 FTE personnel for promotion of gender equality between 2017 and 2020. However, the added capacity was a temporary change as the positions were dismissed once the given projects ended.

In an effort to sustain gender capacities in line ministries, the Department provides methodological support to ministries to apply for funding for work related to gender equality, and thus GFP positions, through the new Operational Programme Employment+. However, this is a temporary solution that is not able to provide a more sustainable response to the challenge of low personnel capacities to support gender mainstreaming. Given the uneven application of the GFP Standard, strengthening its status and scope could be considered so it is consistently applied across line ministries.

4.5.4. An updated standard can better define centre of responsibility and centre of expertise for gender mainstreaming within line ministries

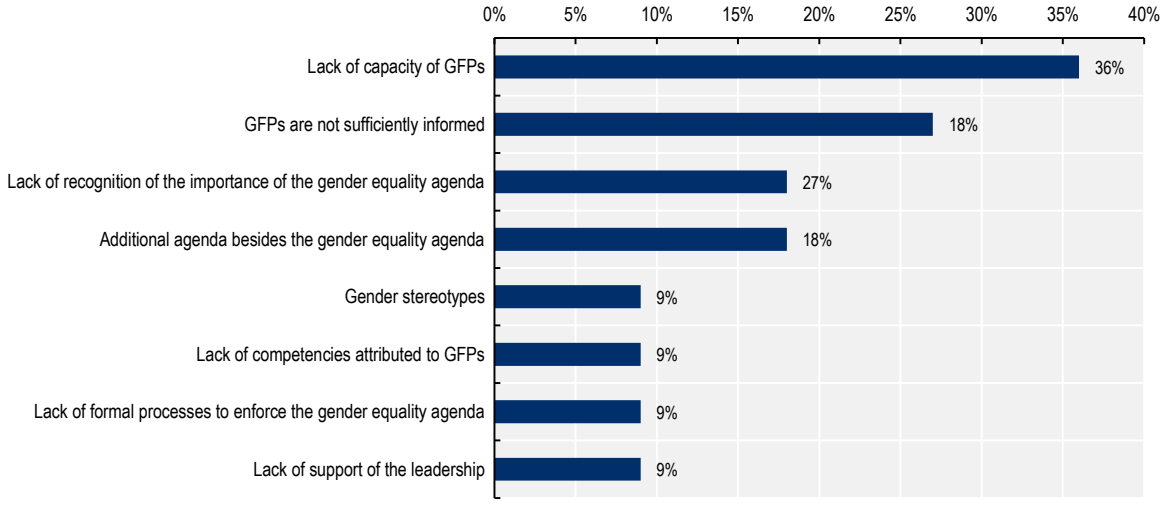
Annual reporting on implementation of the GFP standard, suggests that GFPs face several challenges in supporting the integration of a gender perspective into all policy documents. For instance, the position was located in the human resources (HR) department in 10 of the 14 line ministries. As discussed above in the

case of the State Secretaries of the ministries, locating GFPs in HR departments could risk having the position interlinked, or even confused with the HR agenda and sometimes overly focused on gender-based discrimination in employee-related matters. In addition, some GFPs have to deal with various aspects of the human rights agenda. The low personnel capacities for the GFP position, coupled with its location in HR departments without adequate representation or mandate related to departments in charge of policymaking, make it difficult for GFPs to support the integration of the gender perspective into policy documents.

Adding to these challenges is the fact that GFPs are not formally involved in the policymaking cycle.[4] For instance, as discussed in Chapter 5, the 2021 annual reporting on the implementation of the GFP Standard revealed that the GFP is formally included in the internal comment procedure for the review of legislative and non-legislative documents under development in only four line ministries. In other line ministries, GFPs sometimes have informal access to this procedure. However, even if a GFP has an opportunity to informally make comments or support gender mainstreaming in documents, they do not have the ability to ensure that their suggestions are taken into account. GFPs often struggle with a lack of information as usually they are only present at the management meetings of their respective unit should the meeting agenda have an item related to gender equality. This is the case for meetings of various advisory bodies or working groups as well. This lack of access and information hinders GFPs from systematically mainstreaming gender in policy documents and participating in gender impact assessments (Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[17]). Furthermore, several GFPs have reported facing resistance, persistent gender stereotypes or absence of leadership support as additional barriers in their work (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Lack of capacities and information are the most commonly reported barriers by Gender Focal Points

Percentage of line ministries, 2022



Source: OECD (2022[18]), Questionnaire on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance in the Czech Republic.

Another challenge is the absence of minimum qualification requirements regarding gender expertise or awareness for the position of GFP, which raises concerns about the adequacy of the gender focal points' knowledge and expertise to perform the role. Relatedly, only four line ministries require a public servant exam in the area of human rights; in these ministries, the exam is required within the first year of employment or public service.

In light of these challenges, the Standard itself could be updated to better define the roles, responsibilities and location of the GFPs in relation to other actors within line ministries in a way that ensures the systematic involvement of GFPs in the policymaking process, as well as to reinforce personnel capacities devoted to the co-ordination of the gender equality goals and gender mainstreaming. Introducing minimum qualification requirements for GFPs can go a long way towards facilitating the fulfilment of the gender mainstreaming agenda in line ministries. Developing trainings and other guidance materials for GFPs also is extremely vital to the execution of their function.

It is important to note that in line with the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life, GFPs help provide gender mainstreaming expertise and support to the line ministries in which they are located. They should not be expected, however, to act as the main or sole responsible actors to deliver on the ministries' gender equality objectives. The following sections discuss the resourcing and capacities across the government to support gender mainstreaming efforts. Identifying senior-level civil servants who can champion and steer the gender equality-related goals of the ministries could provide an impetus to this work.

4.6. The state of resources and capacities for gender mainstreaming across the Czech Republic government

4.6.1. Greater investments would be needed to strengthen the implementation of the gender agenda

Greater investments in gender equality agenda have the strong potential to bring social and economic gains, especially during times of slowing growth (Chapter 1). Given that the COVID-19 crisis deepened existing structural gender inequalities in the Czech Republic and the current economic, fiscal and humanitarian context threatens inclusive recovery (Chapters 1 and 2), the country could greatly benefit from ensuring that the existing capacities and resources deliver the best value for the promotion of gender equality objectives.

The United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has previously noted the low personnel capacities and lack of finances dedicated to the gender equality agenda at the level of the state administration as a key barrier to the effective pursuit of gender equality policy in the Czech Republic (UN, 2010[19]). As noted, there is limited funding for personnel within the Department, for GFPs in line ministries and for other bodies of public administration such as the Czech Statistical Office or the Office of the Public Defender of Rights. This limits, in turn, the overall personnel capacities devoted to promotion of gender equality throughout public administration.

Some public administration activities in relation to gender equality are funded through the budgets of the individual bodies or ministries – for example, the position of GFP. However, ministries do not allocate specific finances to promote gender equality within their budgets (OECD, 2022[18]). Chapter 6 discusses the opportunities offered by gender budgeting to support advancements in this area. As discussed in Chapter 3, there are important financing opportunities for public administration activities relating to gender equality under programmes from EU funds and EEA/Norwegian funds (e.g. Operational Programme Employment). An evaluation of the Czech Republic's 2014-20 gender equality strategy by the Gender Equality Department noted that ministries that applied for such funding options showed higher level of the fulfilment of this strategy. However, reliance on EU or EEA/Norwegian funds for financing positions for regular perennial tasks, instead of financing short-term needs, creates a lack of sustainability and continuity.

To close gaps in the implementation of the Strategy 2021+ and speed up progress towards the Czech Republic's ambitious gender equality goals, sustainable and alternative financing mechanisms can be considered. In times of fiscal consolidation when increasing budget allocation may not be a viable option,

alternative solutions can be tested based on lessons from across the OECD. For example, the Czech government could consider options such as pooling and sharing resources across ministries or a refocusing of existing resources. Promoting staff mobility through secondment could also help overcome resource constraints, though the possibility for this option does not exist currently within the country's public administration. Box 4.5 describes the United Kingdom's approach to joint financing.

Box 4.5. Joint financing arrangements in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, joint financing arrangements have been extensively explored in the health sector and at the local level. For instance, the statutory basis for the operative framework of the National Health Service (NHS) allows NHS bodies (i.e. primary care trusts, mental health trusts and care trusts) and local authorities (i.e. London and metropolitan borough councils, county councils, and unitary authorities) to delegate functions to one another to meet partnership objectives and create joint funding arrangements with ease. An example is the formal agreement between the Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Primary Care Trust for the commissioning of services with a pooled fund for integrated services for children and young people and services for disabled children. The pooled fund covered the commissioning of all local authority services outside the dedicated schools grant as well as community health services, child adolescent mental health services, sexual health and contraceptive services, and maternity and community paediatric services. The agreement was coupled with another partnership agreement for integrated services in 2008 that allowed for the secondment of 200 staff from NHS Swindon to the Council.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Department of Communities and Local Government) in the United Kingdom also published a guide for local governments in England on pooled and aligned resources to further awareness of these options and their technical aspects. This guidance document highlights how aligned or pooled budgets can help overcome constraints in public finances and help deliver efficient and effective services.

- Aligned budgets involve two or more partners working together to jointly consider their budgets and align their activities to deliver agreed aims and outcomes, while retaining complete accountability and responsibility for their own resources.
- A pooled budget (or fund) is an arrangement whereby two or more partners make financial contributions to a single fund to achieve specified and mutually agreed aims. It is a single budget, managed by a single host with a formal partnership or joint funding agreement that sets out aims, accountabilities and responsibilities.

Source: (Communities and Local Government, 2010[20]; Audit Commission, 2008[21]).

4.6.2. There are no systematised or routine trainings related to gender equality for civil servants

The Czech Republic has a decentralised training system for public officials as each ministry or agency is responsible for carrying out needs analysis and establishing an annual training plan. In its capacity of implementing the Civil Service Act, the Ministry of Interior co-ordinates trainings administratively, issues recommendations on training and provides the overall framework for service authorities to carry out training. However, at present, there is no strategic framework guiding the development of trainings. Nor is there a centralised body (e.g. a national school of government or dedicated training ministry) conducting these efforts. Managers in the Czech Republic's public administration are required to identify learning needs of their subordinates. This suggests an overall ad hoc nature of trainings, which risk being ineffective and duplicating efforts in cases of transversal policy issues such as gender equality (OECD, 2023[1]).

Based on OECD findings, public servants receive very brief information about the gender equality objectives and goals during the initial entrance training. Later, more detailed training is not provided systematically and when it is provided, it is usually of a sporadic nature. For example, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Environment reported that they provided training to public servants in policymaking departments and other key public servants. Some public servants, such as officials of the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports underwent training focused on gender impact assessments. At the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance, trainings dealing with sexual harassment were held.

Going forward, the government could consider solutions to remedy these gaps, for example by developing systematic training modules for this purpose that can be used across the government. These could be made mandatory in a staggered manner, given resource constraints. There is scope to consider measures to ensure at least one public servant within every relevant unit would receive adequate training in gender mainstreaming tools and/or gender equality topics in the given policy areas. As noted, while these opportunities are currently unavailable to Czech public servants, introducing mobility opportunities within the public administration, for example through secondments or job shadowing to facilitate skills transfer, could also be an option. Box 4.6 presents examples from OECD countries in this regard.

Box 4.6. Examples of country practices to improve staff capacities

Australia's secondment arrangements

The Australian Public Service Act has introduced the possibility of secondment transfers for public service employees, allowing them to transfer between an Australian Public Service (APS) entity to another APS entity or to a state or territory government entity, private company, or community organisation. The assignments usually range from 3 to 12 months, and short assignments of 6-12 weeks are also available. These mobility opportunities are in place to develop the employee's skills but can also be offered to support a critical need at the host entity. Secondment provides the opportunity for employees to learn about gender-focused policymaking from a practical perspective and to become more sensitised about the issue once they are back at their home institution by joining institutions focused on gender equality such as the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

The three types of secondment transfers, including their financial arrangements, that are possible for Australian Public Service employees are as follows:

- Temporary transfers: The host entity employs the seconded employee temporarily and pays the employee's salary and on-costs. The employee may retain an ongoing position at the home entity.
- Secondments free of charge: The employee remains employed by the home entity during the transfer. The home entity continues to pay the salary of the employee and covers on-costs that will not be reimbursed by the host entity.
- Reimbursed or recovery arrangement covered secondments: The employee remains an employee of the home entity, which continues to pay the employee's salary and on-costs but the employee seeks reimbursement of said costs from the host entity.

Several tools and programmes have been put in place to facilitate employee transfers. One of these is a mobility jobs board where Commonwealth employees can search for temporary assignments, including secondment arrangements, open in all national institutions and in all states.

Finland's Gender Glasses in Use project

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, responsible for gender mainstreaming in the country, provides training and guidance across the central government on operational gender equality and non-discrimination. In support of gender mainstreaming, the ministry has prepared a handbook to develop methods and orientation training related to gender mainstreaming. This is practical guidance on gender impact assessment, drafting legislations, and planning of ministries'' operations and finances. It was drawn up in 2009 as part of the national gender mainstreaming project, Gender Glasses in Use. The handbook and project aimed to equip national administration staff with a basic "understanding of gender mainstreaming principles and how to evaluate the gender impact of policymaking".

The Gender Glasses project consisted of three phases:

- Phase one consisted of large-scale seminars to raise awareness of the issue. In addition, a background brochure on gender mainstreaming was prepared that provided tools, a checklist and key questions are useful when integrating the gender perspective into the work of ministries.
- Phase two consisted of holding thematic seminars for members of the equality working groups in each ministry.
- Phase three consisted of training and consulting services provided to three specific ministries (education, social affairs and health. And interior). The training sessions were designed based on the consultation with the ministries on their needs.

In a self-evaluation exercise, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health highlighted the positive feedback received from participants as well as some key factors that contributed to the success of this programme and lessons learned. Among these were the following:

- The training sessions were short.
- Training sessions were designed in a progressive manner, with basic concepts covered in the first phase (e.g. gender mainstreaming) followed by advanced training sessions tailored to each ministry's needs.
- Training in gender mainstreaming in national administrations must attract senior officials and those directly drafting budgets, laws and programmes to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into the policy cycle.
- Training programmes on gender mainstreaming must take into account the evolving needs of participants.
- Gender training benefits from including practical examples, which should be linked as closely as possible to participants'' work.

Currently, the handbook of the Gender Glasses project is available online to support the work of ministries on gender equality. Moreover, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, jointly with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and the government digital learning environment eOppiva, developed an online training session on gender mainstreaming. This is intended for personnel of the central government. Its purpose is to train government staff on the importance of gender equality and equity. It is free and open on the eOppiva website.

Source: (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, 2022[22]; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, 2013[23]; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022[24]; Department of Finance, 2021[25]; Australian Public Service Commission, 2021[26]).

4.7. Policy recommendations: A roadmap for the Czech Republic

- Further institutionalising the role of the Government Commissioner for Human Rights and/or a dedicated minister on gender equality with access to the Cabinet and with the mandate to propose or challenge cabinet submissions in relation to gender equality can provide the necessary political impetus for the advancement of this agenda. Strengthening the links between the Commissioner and the Prime Minister and Cabinet, through regular meetings, for instance, could also support the steering of this agenda.
- While the Gender Equality Department strongly benefits from its location within the centre of government, further legal consolidation of its mandate and positioning can reinforce its effectiveness. In line with the objectives of Strategy 2021+ and as part of the Competency Law, strengthening the legal basis of the responsibility for the promotion of gender equality within the government – and thus the mandate and location of the Department as part of the centre of government – can help the Department future-proof its mandate and underpin the continuity of gender equality as a cross-cutting and complex public policy.
- As the Department fulfils a key function, its analytical capacities could be further strengthened to co-ordinate the government-wide gender equality policy and to carry out research to support the whole of government. Further clarification of its mandate should be backed by correspondingly adequate resources. There are various ways to improve the department's capacities including during times of fiscal consolidation. These could include, for example, pooling and sharing of resources, refocusing available resources, or staff mobility opportunities.
- There is room to strengthen the decision-making capability of the Government Council for Gender Equality, the main advisory body for gender equality. To further consolidate the impact of the Council's work, its mandate to monitor and follow up on the implementation of recommendations that it provides to the government could be strengthened. There is scope to better integrate the Council and its work into decision-making processes by strengthening the link and submitting decision points to the Prime Minister and Cabinet meetings. Enhancing the representation of Deputy Ministers or Directors-General within the Council could also be more effective when it comes to translating the recommendations of the Council into action in line ministries.
- Beyond the Department, other units within the Office of Government do not have a formal role in gender equality and yet can potentially fulfil key functions going forward. The Legislative Section (e.g. the RIA Unit) can potentially play an important role to strengthen compliance with GIA methodology and GIA oversight. Likewise, the new Government Analytical Unit could provide the necessary methodological checkpoint for conducting GIAs. An important first step is to ensure the availability of gender expertise within these structures (Chapters 5 and 7).
- The GFPs system supports gender mainstreaming but efforts should be made to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Given the uneven application of the Standard for GFPs, strengthening its status and scope could be considered to allow for consistent application of the standard across line ministries. An updated standard can better define centre of responsibility as opposed to centre of expertise for gender mainstreaming within line ministries, with reinforced personnel capacities devoted to the co-ordination of the gender equality goals and gender mainstreaming.
- Sustainable financing mechanisms that can help ensure continuity of the gender equality policy can provide the necessary medium to long-term perspective to advance on removing deeply rooted gender inequalities. Options include the pooling of resources across teams with responsibilities to support the advancement of the gender equality agenda.
- Developing systematic training modules on gender mainstreaming can help overcome the limitations related to low capabilities across the government to implement this strategy. There is scope to consider measures to ensure that at least one public servant within every relevant unit receives adequate training in gender mainstreaming tools and in gender equality topics in the given

policy areas. Introducing mobility opportunities within the public administration, for example through secondments or job shadowing to facilitate skills transfer, could also be an option.

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Notes

[1] Between 2007-10 and then from 2014-17, the position of Minister for Human Rights was vested with the responsibility for gender equality portfolio. During 2017-18, this responsibility was covered under the portfolio of the Minister for Justice.

[2] The first was Government Resolution No. 4569 in May 2001; the second was Government Resolution No. 414 of May 2017.

[3] Full-time equivalent or FTE is a unit to measure of the number of hours a full-time employee works for an organisation.

[4] In the Czech Republic, the internal comment procedure is one of the key moments in the policymaking cycle that offers an opportunity to integrate a gender perspective in the development of a legislative or non-legislative documents by line ministries. This can be done by ensuring adequate gender expertise of the ministry personnel who are involved in the design of the document, or through the involvement of the GFP. However, the GFP also can comment on it through informal processes or with the agreement of the GFP's superiors once the document is approved.

5 Informing gender-sensitive policymaking in the Czech Republic

By helping policymakers identify the gender-specific impacts of policies, programmes and budgets on women, men and other population groups, gender impact assessments (GIAs) are a key government instrument for delivering better gender equality outcomes. Involving non-governmental stakeholders and citizens in the gender equality policy cycle also can greatly improve the quality of policymaking for gender equality. This chapter examines the scope of application of GIAs in the Czech Republic as well as the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data and evidence to inform gender-sensitive policymaking. It also assesses the extent to which the government of the Czech Republic adopts a consultative approach to gender equality policymaking. The chapter concludes with recommendations for a policy roadmap to strengthen the use of GIAs as a government tool for gender mainstreaming, reinforce the country's evidence base and enhance citizen participation in policymaking to deliver greater gender equality.

5.1. Introduction

Gender inequalities are pervasive and due to deeply rooted gender norms, stereotypes and biases, they can seep into the baseline of laws, regulations, policies and government action (OECD, 2019[1]). Such laws, regulations, policies and actions can then unknowingly perpetuate societal gender inequalities. Even a seemingly gender-blind output of public policy, by not considering the potential needs and challenges of women, can inadvertently aggravate gender inequality (Chapter 1). Gender-sensitive policymaking requires reflecting on and representing the needs and realities of diverse groups in society, including groups facing particular barriers to representation and participation in public life and potential discrimination, among them women. These needs should be considered across all policy sectors at every stage of the decision-making process – for example, policy and budget design, funding decisions, service delivery, and programme evaluations – in order to help democracies deliver on people's expectations. Policymakers dispose of a wide range of tools to support gender-sensitive policymaking (Box 5.1).

This chapter focuses particularly on gender impact assessments (GIAs), the main tool available in the Czech Republic. It also looks at the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data to underpin gender-sensitive policymaking. (Gender budgeting, another key tool, is discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Finally, the chapter discusses the extent to which the Government of the Czech Republic adopts a consultative approach to gender equality policymaking.

Box 5.1. Examples of tools for gender-sensitive policymaking

- **Gender impact assessments:** GIAs are a policy tool for the screening of a given policy (programme, budget) proposal and to identify and assess its likely differential impact or effects on women and men from diverse backgrounds. This is known as *ex ante* assessment. GIAs may be also measuring programmatic impacts (i.e. results within the framework of public sector performance) rather than impacts at the level of societal change. These assessments can also be undertaken after the implementation of a given policy, programme or budget at the evaluation stage to understand its gender-specific impacts, which are also known as *ex post* assessments.
- **Gender budgeting:** Gender budgeting refers to the systematic application of analytical tools and processes as a routine part of the budget process in order to highlight gender equality issues and to inform, prioritise and resource gender-responsive policies.
- **Integrating gender into regulatory governance:** Various aspects of the regulatory cycle can be leveraged to greater advantage in the achievement of more substantive levels of gender equality. These can include, for example, decisions on where regulations are needed; *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations of the impact of regulations including the implementation and enforcement, on gender equality; stakeholder engagement; and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of regulatory practices. One of the approaches through which countries can conduct GIAs is by integrating these assessments as a part of regulatory impact assessments.
- **Gender-inclusive public procurement:** Gender-inclusive public procurement involves the introduction of gender requirements and considerations into public procurement policies and practices to use public procurement as an instrument to advance gender equality.

Source: (OECD, 2021[2]; OECD, 2019[1]; OECD, 2021[3]).

5.2. Understanding the gender-related impacts of public policies and decisions

GIAs are one of the most widely used public management tools for gender-sensitive policymaking among OECD members. Such assessments are a tool to help analyse any given policy or funding decision throughout its lifecycle in order to identify and assess its (potential or actual) gender-specific impacts. As of 2021, 76% of OECD Members report having a formal requirement to conduct GIAs and at least six reported having new and/or revised requirements.[1] Gender impact assessments can be performed at the design or development stage (*ex ante* GIA) or at the evaluation stage (*ex post* GIA). The survey of OECD countries found that the former are significantly more commonplace (used by 77% of respondents) than *ex post* GIAs (15% of respondents).[2] GIAs can be conducted for a variety of government documents, as highlighted in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Gender impact assessments are generally required for various types of documents across OECD countries include the Czech Republic

Type of document for which there is a GIA requirement in place	Do OECD countries report having it in place?	Does the Czech Republic report having it in place?
Primary legislation	89%	●
Subordinate regulation	81%	●
New policy proposal	63%	●
Budget proposal	56%	●
Government programmes and initiatives	56%	●
Modified policy proposal	52%	●
Crisis recovery plan	44%	●
Strategic plan	37%	N/A
Public procurement	15%	●

Note: Results are based on 27 respondent countries.
Source: OECD (2021[4]), *OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance*.

5.2.1. Ex ante *gender impact assessment has been introduced as a binding requirement in the Czech Republic*

While there is no law in the Czech Republic requiring GIAs to be conducted, such a requirement has been introduced through a Government Resolution on General Principles for Regulatory Impact Assessments that represents a binding decision of the government.[3] Under this Resolution, GIA is conceived as part of the wider regulatory impact assessment (RIA) process (e.g. environmental impact assessments, impact assessments on the business environment, etc.) conducted by ministries and pertaining to the submission of materials of a legislative and non-legislative character to the government (i.e., ex *ante* GIAs). The GIA requirement only applies to submissions that concern physical persons. The requirement also calls for the use of sex-disaggregated data when conducting GIAs.

Under the national Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-30 (Strategy 2021+), undertaking GIA is included as a part of the broader gender mainstreaming goal for the preparation and implementation of legislative, conceptual and strategic materials of all ministries.

It is important to note that while there is a requirement to perform GIAs in government submissions, the same rule does not apply to the submission of primary legislation documents submitted to the Parliament of the Czech Republic by the members of the parliament and regional assemblies. More specifically, Act No. 90/1995 Coll. On Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of the Deputies in Section 86 (3) stipulates requirements of an explanatory memorandum for parliamentary bills, which does not include GIA. In

practice, however, an assessment of the gender-related impacts is done in some cases directly by the member of parliament proposing the parliamentary bill. Chapter 7 discusses the important role that the Czech parliament can play both as a legislature and in its role to oversee the progress of the government in the area of gender equality policy. Therefore, expanding the requirement to perform GIA in all legislative materials, including those initiated by members of parliament, can further underpin gender-sensitive policymaking and the ability of the Czech Republic to make progress in its gender equality objectives. Box 5.2 outlines Austria's approach to GIA in the context of legislation and government procurement.

Box 5.2. Austria's approach to conducting gender impact assessments

Since 1 January 2013, all new or amended laws and regulations in Austria as well as major government investment or procurement contracts on the federal level must include a mandatory *ex ante* impact assessment on gender equality along with other assessments of potential socioeconomic and environmental impacts. Quantitative and qualitative thresholds ensure the proportionality of these efforts in relation to the respective law or regulation. The Ministry of Finance and the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport, therefore, provide content-related and technical assistance. The impact assessments are disclosed for consultation and parliamentary discussions. *Ex post* evaluations of the impacts are to be performed by ministries within five years and are to be reported to the parliament in the Annual Report on Impact Assessment submitted in May.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Austria.

5.2.2. While a methodology for conducting gender impact assessments, there is scope to link it to the formal regulatory impact assessment requirement

The Gender Equality Department (the Department) provides methodological support to line ministries for the implementation of GIAs. Notably, the Department issued a handbook outlining a methodology for GIA applicable to materials submitted to the government of the Czech Republic (GIA Methodology), which was approved by a government resolution in 2015.[4] The resolution recommended that all relevant stakeholders use the GIA methodology presented throughout the conceptual, decision making and evaluative processes that can impact people. The GIA Methodology itself provides a detailed description of how to perform GIA (Box 5.2), presenting examples of concrete legislative and non-legislative documents. It is intended for the needs of analytical, legislative, and other units in public administration. It also serves as a helpful tool for gender focal points (GFPs) across line ministries (Government of the Czech Republic, 2015[5]).

One of the key challenges in the take-up of this methodology by the policymakers stems from the fact that the Government Resolution on General Principles for Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIA) does not establish a formal methodology on how to perform GIA (see subsequent sections for other challenges). For broader RIAs, for instance, there is a formally established methodology explicitly specified in the aforementioned government resolution, RIA Principles (Government of the Czech Republic, 2016[6]). The Department has plans to update the GIA Methodology in 2023, following its last update in 2017. This provides an opportunity to ensure that the updated methodology is annexed to the RIA Principles, standardising how GIA is performed across the Government. Such an update can also help the current government uphold its commitment – as part of its Policy Statement – to "carefully consider every new regulation based on the analysis of expected impacts" (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[7]). Furthermore, this update could improve the guidance provided in the methodology to include information regarding skills and competencies needed to conduct GIAs, as well as the types of data needed to feed into GIAs, as this information is currently missing.

Box 5.3. Methodology of assessing the impact on gender equality for materials submitted to the Government of the Czech Republic

The Department has developed a handbook containing the recommended methodology for conducting GIA (GIA Methodology). It aims to clarify and improve the process of assessing impacts related to gender equality of legislative and non-legislative materials submitted to the government. As such, the handbook provides methodological guidance for a range of stakeholders.

It identifies four target groups:

- Line ministry units responsible for preparing such materials
- Gender Focal Points (GFPs)
- The Department
- Other entities including other public administration organs, local authorities, higher education institutions, enterprises and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The GIA Methodology describes the specific steps to be taken when conducting a GIA, including preparatory questions which should be asked. First, it suggests that authors of a legislative or non-legislative draft document consider its target groups and thus if the proposal concerns people. If the response is "no," the GIA is not needed. However, the draft should be analysed carefully as materials may target people indirectly. If the response is "yes,", the author should consider if the situation of women and men in the related area is equal. An analysis should be done. After assessing the current situation, the last question to be asked is what impact the material has on the current state of gender equality in that particular area. In all the described stages of the assessment, the GIA Methodology recommends using relevant data, studies or consultations with experts.

According to the GIA Methodology, GFPs should be included in the preparation of the material. Subsequently, GFPs should be included in the intra-ministerial comment procedure, when they should focus on whether the gender equality perspective was taken into account during the preparation of the material, if the impacts of the material on gender equality were identified and if these were adequately assessed. Moreover, it is recommended that GFPs can proactively check whether necessary data disaggregated by sex are available and thus could be used for GIAs.

The Department evaluates all materials submitted to eKLEP for the interagency commenting procedure. The process is very similar to that used by GFPs during the intra-ministerial comment procedure. If the Department finds GIA inadequate, it can submit an essential comment that must be taken into account by the author of the material.

Other entities such as other public administration organs, local authorities, experts or NGOs working with legislative and non-legislative materials can use the handbook as a methodological tool, too.

The Handbook also includes concrete GIA examples.

Source: Špondrová et al. (2015[8]), Methodology of assessing the impact on gender equality for material submitted to the Government, Office of the Government, Prague, retrieved from: https://www.vlada.cz/cz/-138748.

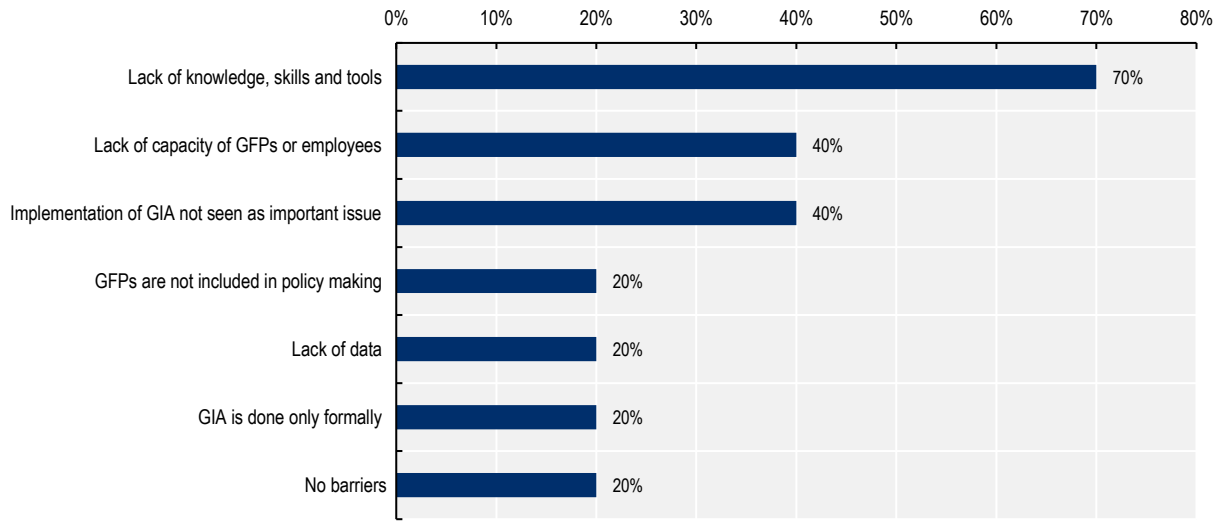
5.2.3. Despite active efforts, the implementation of gender impact assessments remains very limited

The Department undertook two studies to monitor the implementation of GIA between 2017 and 2021in line with the GIA Methodology. This is an important first step towards increasing scrutiny and transparency regarding the implementation of the requirement for GIAs. The analyses showed that the uptake of GIAs remains very limited and that when they are performed, their quality remains uneven. For example, one study of 180 materials submitted to the Cabinet over four months in 2017 found that GIAs were conducted for only 44% of these. The vast majority of those GIAs concluded that the proposal assessed had no impact on gender, with the result that a full assessment was not carried out. Only 15 of the 180 documents presented (8%) were identified as having an impact on gender equality, and only 3 of the 15 included a complete GIA that followed the GIA Methodology. The 2021 analysis reached similar findings: Only nine cabinet submissions included a detailed GIA and only three assessments followed the GIA Methodology (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[9]).

In a recent short questionnaire circulated to 11 ministries in the Czech government, the OECD inquired about specific roadblocks for GIAs. Seven of the 11 ministries reported a lack of awareness and skills to conduct GIA. Policymakers' lack of gender expertise is also one of the most commonly reported barriers across the OECD countries (OECD, 2022[10]). Other barriers reported by the Czech Republic ministries surveyed include the lack of capacity of gender focal points to support a GIA process (40%) and inadequate prioritisation of the GIA requirement by the ministry (40%) (Figure 5.1). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening the overall institutional design and capacities across the government, in line with Chapter 4. Many barriers that hamper the implementation of GIAs also influence how RIAs are performed. Stakeholder interviews cited broader barriers such as limited analytical capacities, time and expertise to perform RIAs as well as lack of data and evidence. This indicates that efforts to remove barriers to GIA can have a positive impact on how regulatory impact assessments overall are implemented across the Czech government administration.

Figure 5.1. Line ministries report several barriers to implementing gender impact assessment in the Czech Republic

Percentage of ministries, 2022



Source: Information collected by OECD based on a questionnaire sent to 11 ministries of the Czech government.

Stakeholders consulted for this report noted that the GFPs, who are usually expected to act as the central repository of gender expertise within line ministries, are often excluded from the GIA process, when and if such assessments are performed at all. Five of the 11 surveyed ministries (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Industry and Trade; and Ministry of Regional Development) reported that, in the absence of formal procedures, individual GFPs have proactively made use of internal comment procedures for cabinet submissions to provide opinions. However, the internal comment procedure only comes into play once a submission is nearly in its final form, leaving little room for the GFP's input to meaningfully inform the submission. In six other surveyed ministries, GFPs reported being fully excluded from the process. None of the surveyed ministries reported that they had consulted the Department to seek guidance on GIAs though the Department offers expertise and training (albeit with very limited resources).

Furthermore, there is increasing pressure on policymakers to consider a broad range of impacts in regulatory proposals (e.g. impacts on sustainability, children, youth, families, environment, etc.). Lack of streamlined processes may exacerbate tension among different priorities, with some issues easily overlooked or implemented as a tick-the-box exercise. Indeed, interviews showed that societal impacts usually side-lined in comparison to economic impacts and cost-benefit analysis in the implementation of RIA more broadly in the Czech Republic. It is important to communicate both social and economic value added of GIAs and clarify expectations from line ministries about its implementation in order to make progress on national gender equality goals and broader economic goals. Box 5.4 describes Canada's approach to evaluating gender-related impacts of sector-specific policies, including through the use of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus).

The Department has taken important steps to respond to the low rate of GIA uptake across the administration. Although undertaken on an ad hoc basis at the beginning of the legislative cycle, the Department short-listed a number of priority legislative proposals with potentially high impact on gender equality. Subsequently, the Department sent formal letters to the relevant ministries encouraging a full GIA on these priority proposals. While the initial impact of this initiative was limited, prioritisation exercises can be systematised for each legislative cycle as part of a gradual approach to implementing GIAs. Such exercises can also help better communicate the value added of GIAs based on emerging good practices across ministries.

In parallel, the Czech public administration could consider engaging in broad-based consultations to support the identification and understanding of potential issues faced by women of diverse backgrounds (with an intersectional approach) in the Czech Republic. Specifically at the sectoral level, evidence-based needs assessments and analyses could be developed to outline sector-specific policy issues related to gender equality. These foundational exercises can facilitate GIAs by creating a readily available knowledge base to feed into the GIA process, thereby reducing the implementation burden.

Finally, it is important to note that the minister of the line ministry authoring the regulatory proposals is the determining authority for whether RIA, including GIA, should be conducted. This affords the Minister significant discretion in determining whether RIA – and hence GIA – will be required for any given regulatory proposal (OECD, 2023[11]). To strengthen GIAs, consideration could be given to further strengthening the political mandate for the gender equality agenda: A minister who is responsible for gender equality can help make a stronger case to other ministers in the Cabinet about the importance of implementing GIAs.

Box 5.4. Canada's approach to sector-specific gender impact assessments

The Canadian government recognises that gender, diversity and intersectionality are important aspects to consider in policymaking and decision making. For this reason, Canada has implemented legal requirements to integrate gender mainstreaming in sector-specific laws.

Since 2001, under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, must include GBA Plus analysis in its reporting to the parliament on immigration. Furthermore, the department generates extensive disaggregated data by gender and other intersectional factors such as age and country of citizenship as a means to better support evidence-based analysis and decision making.

With regard to the environment, the Impact Assessment Act, enacted in 2019, provides the Minister of Environmental and Climate Change with the discretion to designate projects not included in the regulations if these may cause either adverse effects within federal jurisdiction or adverse direct or incidental effects or if public concerns related to those effects warrant the designation. The Act also notes that the minister may consider adverse effects on Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women, as it requires that the assessment of a designated project take into consideration the intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors.

Source: Information provided by the government of Canada as part of the 2021 OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance.

5.2.4. There is scope to strengthen current institutional responsibilities for gender impact assessment implementation, quality assurance and oversight

In light of these reported gaps and barriers, there is scope to consider how institutional responsibilities for ensuring meaningful implementation of GIAs can be consolidated. Within the Office of Government, the RIA Unit provides methodological support to the public administration for conducting RIAs. It is also tasked with supporting the RIA Board – an independent watchdog responsible for overseeing the quality of RIAs produced by individual ministries and other agencies – in reviewing the quality of RIAs. While GIAs are required to be carried out as part of RIAs, the RIA Unit and the RIA Board do not provide methodological support and quality control to GIAs in practice. This support is currently provided by the Department, though to a limited extent in view of capacity constraints.

The OECD (2016[12]) Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life stresses the need to "integrate evidence-based assessments of gender impacts and considerations … at early stages of all phases of the policy cycle". In the absence of *ex post* GIA, policymakers may lack the information to understand whether laws, policies and budgets serve intended goals and whether they benefit men and women equally (OECD, 2019[1]). Yet, currently, very few countries in the OECD area conduct continuous or *ex post* GIA. Box 5.5 presents an example from Canada. The government has pledged to focus on enhancing evaluations, As part of its Policy Statement, the Czech Republic has identified evaluations as a priority, which could present a window of opportunity to introduce *ex post* GIAs (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[7]). These could be gradually introduced, starting with some pilot programmes with high-impact potential.

Ensuring that the requirement to conduct GIA extends beyond just key documents and covers the whole range of government decision making is essential for comprehensive gender mainstreaming. As illustrated in Table 5.1, more than half of OECD countries have requirements to conduct gender impact assessments during the development of government programmes and initiatives. The Czech government could consider expanding the scope of its GIA requirements to also cover a wider range of government programmes and actions.

Box 5.5. Government of Canada's guidance on integrating Gender-based Analysis Plus in evaluations

The Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada in consultation with Women and Gender Equality Canada has developed a primer for evaluators on how to integrate Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) into every stage of government evaluations to support commitments and directions. The guide outlines a list of questions that policymakers can use across the stages of evaluation to integrate GBA+ according to the nature of the policy, programme or service and on the type of evaluation. These are oriented along the following areas:

- Reviewing the logic model and theory of change (e.g. do any aspects of the policy, programme or initiative have potential gender considerations?)
- Performance measures – e.g. are there potential biases in the way current indicators are framed?
- Relevance – e.g. is the policy, programme or service equally relevant to different target population groups?
- Design and delivery – e.g. are there particular target population groups that are not being reached with this policy, programme or service?
- Effectiveness – e.g. have outcomes differed across diverse target population groups and if so, what accounts for the differences?
- Efficiency – e.g. what are the administrative costs of the policy, programme or service for each target population group?

Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2019[13]), Integrating Gender-based Analysis Plus into Evaluation: A Primer, https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/evaluation-government-canada/gba-primer.html#eg-1.

5.3. Data and evidence for gender-sensitive policymaking

High-quality, readily accessible gender-sensitive and intersectional data and evidence are the foundation of gender-sensitive policymaking. These are also a strategic asset for the government of the Czech Republic, which identifies evidence-based policymaking as one of its current priorities. Yet the limited availability and use of gender-disaggregated data remain a significant barrier to gender-sensitive policymaking.

5.3.1. There is no legal obligation to produce data disaggregated by gender in the Czech Republic

There is no legal obligation to collect and use data disaggregated by gender – an important loophole according to the stakeholder interviews – leading to limited availability of crucial evidence to inform gender-sensitive policymaking across various policy sectors. Since 2016, the Government Resolution on General Principles for Regulatory Impact Assessments, which formalised the requirement to conduct GIAs, tasks the government with taking necessary measures for the segregation by sex of all collected data within ministerial statistical systems and providing them to the Czech Statistical Office (CSO).[5] As in the case of GIAs, however, enforcement of this requirement remains very limited.

5.3.2. The collection, availability and use of gender-disaggregated data across the Czech administration is uneven

There is no legal obligation to collect and use data disaggregated by gender – an important loophole according to the stakeholder interviews – leading to limited availability of crucial evidence to inform gender-sensitive policymaking across various policy sectors. Since 2016, the Government Resolution on General Principles for Regulatory Impact Assessments, which formalised the requirement to conduct GIAs, tasks the government with taking necessary measures for the segregation by sex of all collected data within ministerial statistical systems and providing them to the Czech Statistical Office (CSO).[6] As in the case of GIAs, however, enforcement of this requirement remains very limited.

5.3.3. The collection, availability and use of gender-disaggregated data across the Czech administration is uneven

The CSO is the main body responsible for collecting gender-related data in the Czech Republic. It plays the role of the national co-ordinator on methodological and technical aspects to ensure continuity, reliability and validity of collected statistical data and to process data collected by ministries to produce national statistics related to gender equality. The CSO co-operates with various stakeholders, including line ministries, in collecting gender-disaggregated data. Since 2001, the CSO has published an annual comprehensive publication called *Focus on Women and Men*, which presents the latest statistical data on women and men in various spheres (Box 5.6). However, stakeholder interviews revealed capacity constraints within the CSO to support the production of gender-disaggregated data.

Box 5.6. Focus on Women and Men 2022: The latest edition of the Czech Statistical Office's annual compendium of gender statistics

The 2022 edition of the Czech Statistical Office (CSO) 's annual publication, *Focus on Women and Men*, presented gender statistics in ten key areas. These are: population, families and households; health; education; labour and earnings; social security; justice and crime; public life and decision making; science, research and innovation; information technologies; and transport. The data are publicly accessible on the website of the CSO.

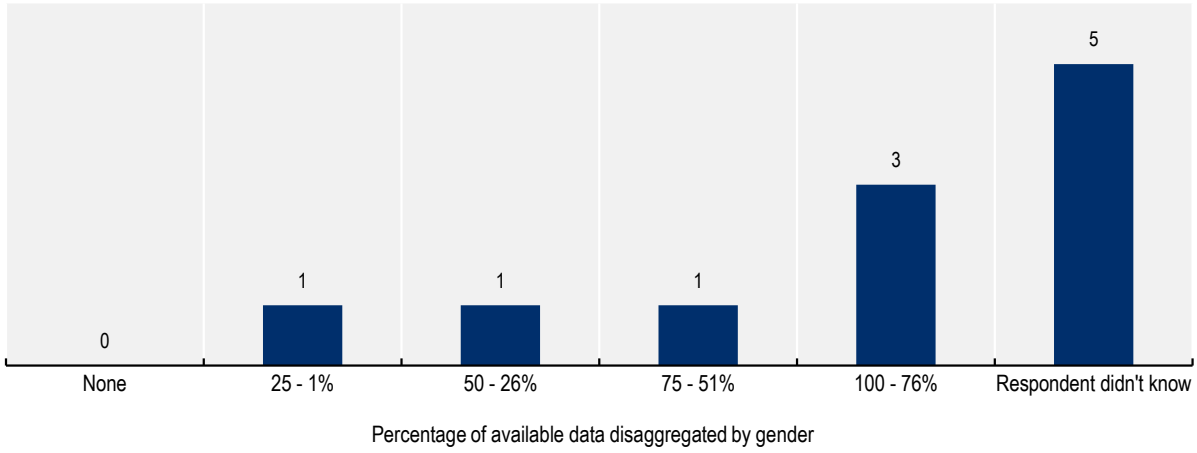
In 2021, an editorial board was created with representatives from relevant ministries and partner institutions to prepare the publication.

Source: Czech Statistical Office (2022[14]), Focus on Women and Men 2022, https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/focus-on-women-and-men-2022.

Evidence and stakeholder interviews point out the uneven availability and use of gender-disaggregated data across different policy sectors in the Czech public administration which is also the status quo among many OECD members (Figure 5.2). Responses to the OECD questionnaire circulated to 11 ministries in the Czech government indicate that more than half of the available administrative data collected was disaggregated by sex in four sectors only (namely defence, interior affairs, labour and social affairs and justice). In the culture and transport sectors, less than 50% of the data collected was disaggregated by sex.

Figure 5.2. Availability of data disaggregated by gender is uneven across the Czech administration

Number of ministries, 2022

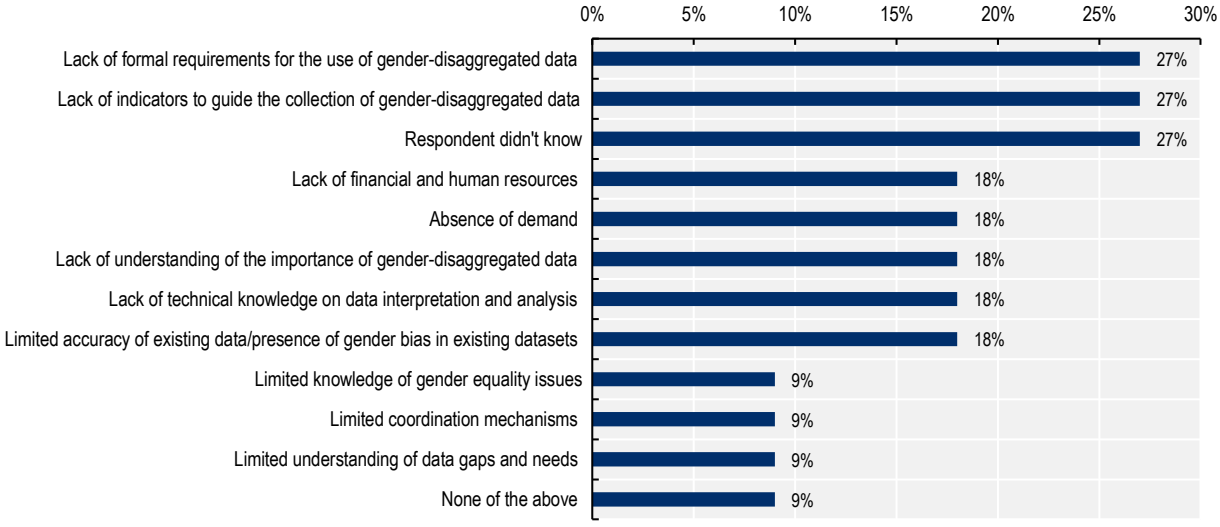


Source: Information collected by OECD based on a questionnaire sent to 11 line ministries of the Czech Republic public administration.

A number of barriers explain this uneven situation. These include the lack of formal requirements for the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data (as noted in the previous section and consistent with 21% of OECD countries), lack of indicators to guide the collection of gender-disaggregated data and limited accuracy of existing data (OECD, 2022[10]). Figure 5.3 shows the barriers reported by the gender focal points across the 11 line ministries surveyed. Alongside these specific barriers are more general challenges within the Czech Republic's public administration related to data sharing, lack of data interoperability and very limited capacities in general for evidence-informed decision making (OECD, 2023[11]).

Figure 5.3. Line ministries report several barriers to ensuring systemic collection and use of gender-disaggregated data

Percentage of line ministries, 2022



Source: Information collected by OECD based on a questionnaire sent to 11 ministries within the Czech administration.

To address similar challenges, OECD members have undertaken various measures to boost the collection, accessibility and availability of gender-disaggregated data. Box 5.7 presents examples of efforts to improve collection and use of gender-disaggregated data from Iceland, Portugal and Switzerland.

Box 5.7. Country examples of practices to improve availability and use of gender-disaggregated data

Iceland has developed an interactive dashboard that shows the progress made on individual indicators of its Gender Equality Action Programme 2020-2023 based on data. In 2019, Statistics **Portugal** launched the National Statistics System on Gender Equality, a project to review, update and enhance the content and coverage of the Gender Database (GDB), to make a more comprehensive system of gender statistics and information on various dimensions of equality and inequality between women and men available for policymakers and public. In 2021 in **Switzerland**, as part of the Federal Council's 2019-23 Open Government Data Strategy, the Swiss National Statistical Office and the Federal Office for Gender Equality, organised a roundtable on gender statistics. The roundtable served to foster dialogue among different on the use of data and statistics in the public sphere in the field of gender equality. It also provided a platform to share information on the use and analysis of existing data and review possible improvements to suit the needs of all end users, leading to tailored measures by the Swiss government to meet this objective.

Source: (Government of Iceland, n.d.[15]); (Government of Switzerland, n.d.[16]); Information for Portugal was provided by the Government of Portugal in 2021.

Gender-sensitive data and evidence are needed at key decision-making moments in the policy cycle and during government action, for example for priority setting, policy formulation, resource allocation, implementation, and evaluation of performance and policy impacts. Enabling inclusive government action requires that the right actors involved in a decision or action have access to the necessary data at the right time. These actors may be policy analysts in line ministries who need these data to inform policy design on a substantive policy area such as agricultural reforms. Another key actor would be the centre of government that may need such data to track the executive's performance on the government's gender-related goals or to approve a policy proposal taking into account GIAs. Building a portfolio of gender-sensitive data and evidence can be especially crucial during times of crisis or emergencies when it is important to mobilise the policy process on the basis of existing, accessible data to underpin gender-sensitive policymaking.

For gender-disaggregated data to flourish across the Czech administration, there is considerable scope to enhance analytical capacities to identify where data are needed and to produce and use these data to underpin analysis. For example, data on gender-based violence and time use is crucial to closing key gender gaps, but these are not yet systematically available. As a key starting point and in line with the government's commitment to evidence-based policymaking, an audit of gender-disaggregated data mapping to identify where data are available or lacking can contribute to an informed assessment of the most critical gaps. As the next step, developing a gender-disaggregated data strategy can help focus efforts to improve the extent to which official statistics and administrative data provide insights into gender gaps. In recent years, several OECD countries have carried out such data audits and developed targeted strategies to enhance the availability of gender statistics (Box 5.8).

Box 5.8. Examples of data audits and action plans to promote gender-disaggregated data

In its Budget 2021, the **Government** of Canada announced the Disaggregated Data Action Plan to produce better and more detailed statistical information for policymaking. Among other objectives, the action plan aims to expand disaggregated data on diverse populations (such as women, Indigenous Peoples, racialised populations and people living with disabilities) at various levels of geography, improving access to such data and increased analytical insights on diverse groups of people.

In late 2017, the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics initiated an audit of available data sources and publications that are available to better understand inequalities in the country, including outcomes for all nine of the protected characteristic groups (age; sex; race and ethnicity; religion or belief; disability, sexual orientation; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; and pregnancy and maternity) covered by the Equality Act 2010. The audit highlighted the need to improve transparency and accessibility, coverage, granularity, and harmonisation and comparability of data, as well as the inclusiveness of the collection and reporting processes.

Source: (United Kingdom Office for National Statistics, 2018[17]; Statistics Canada, 2021[18]).

5.4. Citizen participation in gender equality policy in the Czech Republic

The ability of non-governmental stakeholders and citizens to participate in the gender equality policy cycle can underpin accountability by facilitating that policy meets the needs of the population it aims to benefit (OECD, 2020[19]). This is especially important when formulating policies for groups facing potential barriers and discrimination such as women, people with disabilities and others. Evidence also suggests women tend to face more challenges in accessing government information than men, which impacts their ability to hold governments accountable (Amnesty International, 2018[20]; OECD, 2021[21]).

5.4.1. There is scope to enhance citizen participation and engagement in policymaking, including in the area of gender policy

OECD analysis finds there is a vibrant civil society landscape in the Czech Republic, with resurging advocacy through stronger capacities and determination to be involved in public decision making (OECD, 2023[11]). Responses to public opinion surveys suggest that Czech citizens care about gender equality as a moral imperative: According to the 2017 Eurobarometer survey, an overwhelming majority of Czech citizens agree that promoting gender equality is an important value personally[7] (Eurobarometer, 2017[22]). A public opinion survey by the Office of Government found that 77% of respondents thought that the public administration has primary responsibility for working to eliminate gender-based discrimination (Government of the Czech Republic, 2016[23]). On the other hand, another survey reaffirms the presence of gender-related stereotypes as a significant cause of gender inequality (CVVM, 2020[24]).

These figures further illustrate that there is a fertile ground to engage civil society in gender-sensitive policymaking and promoting gender equality.

The level of stakeholder consultation remains low, but some good practices emerge from the Gender Equality Department

Despite this vibrant backdrop, the Czech Republic scores comparatively low on international indicators in the field of citizen and stakeholder participation. According to the 2021 OECD Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance, it scores lower than the OECD average for stakeholder engagement in the

development of primary laws and subordinate regulations, (OECD, 2023[11]). Moreover, while the inter-ministerial commenting procedure, eKLEP, makes it possible to consult citizens and civil society actors, there is scope to use it proactively as it is currently not used in practice. Recent work by the Department highlights some emerging good practices that could also inspire line ministries in their endeavour to implement Strategy 2030+ (Box 5.9).

Box 5.9. Stakeholder participation and citizen engagement around gender equality policy in the Czech Republic

In response to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender-based violence, in 2020 the Department broadcast necessary information for survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence on TV, released a movie on domestic violence for streaming, and published leaflets and posted information on social networks on the topic.

In 2019, the Department organised two international conferences on the themes of representation of women in politics and gender-based violence in the context of ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The Department also led a panel discussion on feminism at the Ji.hlava film festival in co-operation with the Office of the Public Defender of Rights and the NGO Open Society. The Department also organised a conference on gender equality that included a workshop on measures that municipalities can adopt to promote gender equality. In addition, the Department runs a campaign called "It is equality!" through a Facebook page, a YouTube channel, a website.

Moreover, the Department took important efforts to consult citizens during the development of Strategy 2021+, affording citizens the opportunity to comment on the strategy online between 18 February and 18 March 2020. The Department received 195 comments.

Source: (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[25]; Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2020[26]; Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[27]).

Efforts have been undertaken to include civil society perspectives, but consultation channels remain underused

Civil society organisations have a strong representation in the Government Council for Gender Equality, and the Department co-operates with them regularly. However, the first annual monitoring of Strategy 2021+ revealed that co-operation between the public administration and external expert organisations is very limited and often on ad hoc basis. Moreover, most ministries do not make sufficient use of the outputs of public research institutions and NGOs. Some promising practices have also emerged from this reporting exercise, as described in Box 5.10.

Box 5.10. Examples of collaboration of line ministries with academia in 2021

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Centre for Gender and Science

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports collaborates with the Centre for Gender and Science of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences through the implementation of the CZERA project 2021-2027, which is funded by the ministry. The key activities are especially focused on support and capacity building in the area of gender equality in science. Its goal is to increase the preparedness of Czech research-performing organisations and research teams for international collaboration within

Horizon Europe and also to implement national and international commitments to gender equality in science. The Centre provides:

- consulting, trainings and workshops for the Czech research-performing organisations
- expert and analytical support to the public administration in the form of consultations, analytical reports, comments, and organisation of public events and awareness-raising activities
- participation in various advisory boards and working groups.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institute of International Relations

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs collaborates with the Institute of International Relations through the project on gender equality in Czech foreign policy and development assistance, which aims to implement gender mainstreaming in Czech development aid, create an institutional framework for promoting gender equality in Czech foreign policy, and eliminate vertical and horizontal segregation at the institute, the ministry, and the Czech Development Agency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Within this project, gender audits were carried out at the institute and the ministry as well as several studies and publications dealing with gender equality and foreign affairs were prepared; these are available online.

Source: (Government of the Czech Republic, n.d.[28]; IIR, 2022[29]; IIR, 2022[29]).

Given these promising practices, there is scope to further formalise consultation and participation channels across line ministries for the engagement of civil society organisations in gender-sensitive policymaking. Beyond offering formal channels, it is also important to build civil society organisations' capacity to meaningfully contribute to policymaking. While some resources are allocated from the European Union initiatives to increase their capacity, further consideration should be given to finding more stable mechanisms to sustain civil society organisations' capacity, for example through state funding mechanisms.

5.5. Policy recommendations: A roadmap for the Czech Republic

5.5.1. Strengthening gender impact assessments

- Pursue efforts to strengthen the systematic implementation of GIAs. The Department has plans to update the GIA methodology in 2023, and this would be an opportunity to ensure that the updated methodology is annexed to the government resolution on RIA, standardising how GIA is performed across the government. Such an update can also help the current government uphold its commitment – contained in its programme statement – to carefully consider every new regulation based on the analysis of expected impacts. This update could also improve the guidance provided in the methodology to include information regarding skills and competencies needed to conduct GIAs as well as the types of data needed to feed into GIAs, as this information is currently missing.
- Improving the institutional set-up for GIAs through systematic involvement of GFPs in the RIA process could bring the needed gender expertise to improve the effectiveness of GIAs.
- To minimise potential tension among different social and economic impact assessments when it comes to the implementation of RIA in the Czech Republic, it is important to communicate both the social and economic value added of GIAs and clarify expectations from line ministries in its implementation to make progress on national gender equality and broader economic goals.
- The Department has taken important steps to respond to the low rate of GIA uptake across the administration, including identifying priority legislative proposals with potentially high impact on

gender equality to undergo full GIAs. In the short term, pursuing such a prioritisation can provide important impetus for the institutionalisation of GIAs as part of a gradual approach. Such an exercise can also help better communicate the value added of GIAs based on emerging good practices across ministries.

- In anticipation of the GIA requirement for cabinet proposals and before policy proposals are developed, policymakers in line ministries – with the support of GFPs – can carry out evidence-based needs assessments and analyses to outline sector-specific policy issues related to gender equality; these could be done once every few years, for instance. In doing so, these policymakers could consider engaging in broad-based consultations to support the identification and understanding of potential issues faced by women at the sectoral level that relate to their mandate. These foundational exercises can facilitate GIAs by creating a readily available knowledge base to feed into the GIA process, thereby reducing the implementation burden.
- The Czech Parliament has an important role to play as a legislature and in its oversight of government progress in the area of gender equality policy. Therefore, expanding the requirement to perform GIA in all legislative materials, including those initiated by the Chamber of Deputies, can further underpin gender-sensitive policymaking and the ability of the Czech Republic to make progress in its gender equality objectives.
- The RIA Unit and the RIA Board can potentially play an important role to strengthen compliance with GIA methodology and GIA oversight. To strengthen the institutionalisation of GIAs, there is a clear window of opportunity and scope to consider a formal role and mandate for the Minister of Legislation, the RIA Unit and the RIA Committee to provide oversight for GIAs in co-ordination with the Department. To operationalise this, an important first step is to ensure the availability of gender expertise within these structures.
- The Office of Government and the Ministry of Finance – as the key centre of government entities in the Czech Republic – could also provide a checkpoint to ensure that new and modified policy proposals as well as budget proposals include a GIA.
- Collaboration with experts in academia and NGO as well as citizen accountability for GIA could be further strengthened through their more active participation in inter-ministerial commenting procedure in eKLEP.
- There is scope to expand the use of GIAs to cover the full policymaking cycle, including the *ex post* phase, in line with the government's Policy Statement that commits to evaluate laws, decrees and bylaws on a five-year rolling basis.

5.5.2. Data and evidence for gender-sensitive policymaking

- For gender-disaggregated data to flourish across the Czech public administration, there is important scope to enhance analytical capacities to identify where the needs are and to produce and use these data to underpin analysis. For example, the availability of data on gender-based violence and time use is crucial to closing key gender gaps, but these data are not yet systematically available.
- As a key starting point, and in line with the government's commitment to evidence-based policymaking, an audit of gender-disaggregated data mapping where data are available and where they are lacking can be beneficial to an informed assessment of the most critical gaps. As the next step, the development of a gender-disaggregated data strategy can help focus efforts to improve the extent to which official statistics and administrative data provide insights into gender gaps.

5.5.3. Citizen participation in the gender equality policy

- There is scope to further formalise consultation and participation channels across line ministries for the engagement of civil society organisations in gender-sensitive policymaking. While the possibility to consult citizens and civil society actors as part of the inter-ministerial commenting procedure (eKLEP) exists, there is scope to use it proactively as it is currently not used in practice.
- Beyond offering formal channels, there is scope to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to meaningfully contribute to policymaking. While some resources are allocated from the European Union initiatives to increase their capacity, further consideration should be given to finding more stable mechanisms to sustain this, for example through state funding mechanisms.

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Notes

[1] Data taken from the 2021 OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance. 26 out of 34 Respondents reporting having a formal requirement for GIAs in place as of 2021.

[2] In the 2021 OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance, 20 of the 26 respondents (77%) to the specific question reported that they have requirements to conduct *ex ante* GIAs while just 4 (15%) reported they have requirements to conduct *ex post* GIAs.

[3] A government resolution is a binding decision of the government on the basis of existing legislation and regarding important national issues. To be approved, a majority of Cabinet members must agree. The resolution on GIAs covers Cabinet ministers, ministries and other central organs of public administration.

[4] The GIA Handbook was approved through the Government resolution No. 542 on 8 July 2015.

[5] An earlier resolution, No. 542 of 8 July 2015, had already ordered members of the government to begin the preparation of measures necessary to segregate data by sex.

[6] An earlier resolution, No. 542 of July 8, 2015, had already ordered members of the government to begin the preparation of measures necessary to segregate data by sex.

[7] According to Eurobarometer public opinion survey, 78% of Czech citizens totally agree or tend to agree with the statement “Promoting gender equality is important for you personally”.

6 Gender budgeting in the Czech Republic

Gender budgeting is a key public governance tool that governments can use to encourage, identify and fund measures aimed at tackling gender gaps, and its use is increasing across the OECD. As the Czech Republic does not yet implement gender budgeting, this chapter assesses instead the adequacy of the current strategic framework for introducing it. It also considers potential implementation tools and the general enabling environment for facilitating the adoption of gender budgeting in the country. It concludes with a series of policy recommendations for the government of the Czech Republic for the short, medium and longer term aiming to pave the way for a staged approach to the introduction of effective and sustainable gender budgeting practices.

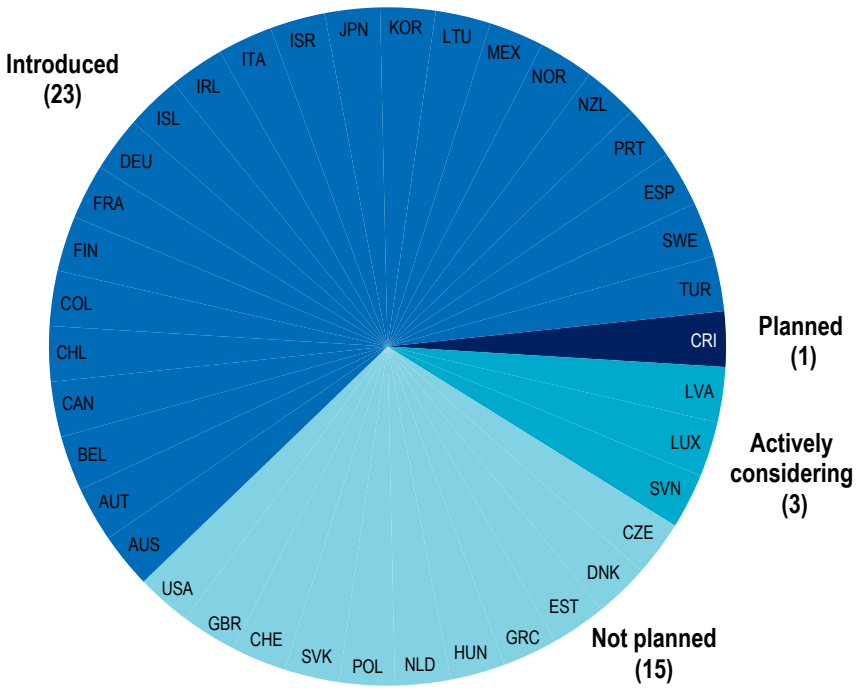
6.1. Introduction

Governments increasingly recognise that the budget process is a powerful tool for delivering on national policy goals. Given the power of the purse, as it were, dealing with horizontal policy objectives such as gender equality as part of the budget process offers an opportunity to influence government-wide policymaking and deliver outcomes in a way that might not otherwise be feasible.

In this context, gender budgeting is increasingly introduced as an initiative to ensure that gender equality considerations are systematically taken into account in tax and spending decisions. Data for 2022 show that 61% of OECD countries now practice gender budgeting (Figure 6.1) compared with just 44% of OECD countries in 2016.

Figure 6.1. The number of OECD countries that practice gender budgeting has increased

Number of countries, 2022



Note: Data are provisional.
Source: OECD (forthcoming[1]), OECD Survey on Gender Budgeting 2022.

Several factors are thought to be driving the increased interest in gender budgeting over the last six years. These include the "#MeToo" social movement; increased recognition of the potential social, economic and fiscal gains that can be achieved through closing gender gaps (Nicol, 2022[2]); and a growing interest in how priority budgeting tools such as gender budgeting can be used to help achieve greater progress towards high-level goals.

The Czech Republic is one of 15 OECD countries that still do not implement gender budgeting. Indeed, some stakeholders point to active resistance to the idea of implementing gender budgeting, with the Ministry of Finance preferring a traditional approach to the budget.

Central budget authorities often have an inherent culture of conservatism that, while well suited to the rigours of sound fiscal management and delivery of the annual budget, is in tension with the requirements

for deep-seated social change. However, the budget is the central policy document of the government. Given the central role that the budget plays in determining how resources are allocated to deliver outcomes, it is appropriate to consider cross-cutting priorities such as gender equality, which has important social and economic implications, as part of the budget process.

The OECD Recommendation on Budgetary Governance recognises the potential for modern budgeting to move beyond a traditional technocratic exercise, stating that it can help show "how annual and multi-annual objectives will be prioritised and achieved" (OECD, 2015[3]). Applying this in support of gender equality and also reconciling this modern role with the traditional priority of effective budgetary management is a key challenge of gender budgeting.

Fear that gender budgeting will mean that more has to be spent on gender equality can drive resistance to gender budgeting. Yet, in practice, gender budgeting is not a separate budget for policies for women. Rather, gender budgeting aims to incorporate gender equality concerns in the decision-making process by:

- raising awareness that many budget proposals have implications for gender equality (whether or not their primary objective is gender-related)
- encouraging the tabling of gender-sensitive budget proposals
- using the budget process to ensure there is adequate resource allocation for pursuing national gender equality goals.

There are significant potential economic and fiscal gains that can be achieved by ensuring budget policy is more effective at closing gender gaps. For example, greater gender equality in the labour market offers the opportunity to increase employment and productivity. Increasing employment and income brings additional tax revenue and social security contributions. It can also reduce demand for public finance transfers and welfare benefits. Together, these impacts help improve the outlook for fiscal sustainability.

In addition to the economic and fiscal case for closing gender gaps, other benefits of gender budgeting include an improved evidence base upon which resource allocation decisions can be made and greater transparency on the impact of budget policy.

A 2019 article for the OECD *Journal on Budgeting* sets out a framework for designing and implementing an effective and enduring gender budgeting practice. The framework includes the following elements:

- **Strategic framework** - the political commitment and governance arrangements for gender budgeting, including the legal framework, institutional roles and responsibilities and national gender equality goals.
- **Implementation tools** – the tools that are used to apply a "gender lens" at various stages of the budget process – *ex ante*, concurrent and *ex post*.
- **Enabling environment** - the supportive elements which help ensure a more effective gender budgeting practice, including gender-disaggregated data, capacity building and parliamentary oversight (Downes and Nicol, 2020[4]).

This chapter reviews information related to the adequacy of each of these elements as it concerns the introduction of gender budgeting in the Czech Republic.

6.2. Strategic framework for gender budgeting in the Czech Republic

The strategic framework for gender budgeting outlines why it exists, what it aims to achieve and how it is implemented. In assessing the adequacy of the current strategic framework for the introduction of gender budgeting in the Czech Republic, this section looks at the extent to which gender budgeting would be

underpinned by clear national gender equality objectives, political commitment and legal foundations, and strong institutional arrangements.

6.2.1. Objectives in the Czech Republic's gender equality strategy could guide gender budgeting

It is important that gender budgeting is guided by clear gender equality objectives. These provide clarity on what gender budgeting is aiming to achieve and help decision makers ensure that budgetary policy is supporting overarching government objectives. Just over half of OECD countries that implement gender budgeting (52%) have a national gender equality strategy or national gender equality goals to guide gender budgeting efforts (OECD, forthcoming[1]).

In the Czech Republic, national gender equality objectives are set out in the 2021-30 Gender Equality Strategy (Strategy 2021+). The 26 objectives span eight key thematic areas (see Box 3.3 in Chapter 3). For each objective, there are indicators to help assess progress, measures to support implementation, and timelines. The institution responsible for the implementation of each objective is also identified, alongside any co-operating entities.

The Strategy 2021+ and the objectives set out within it would provide a solid foundation for the introduction of gender budgeting in the Czech Republic. Implementing gender budgeting can help guide decision making on the national priorities that gender equality policy should help achieve; it is also in line with OECD best practice.

6.2.2. Strategy 2021+ cites gender budgeting as a strategic objective, mandating its introduction

Political, legal and societal support for gender budgeting ensures that the practice is both viable and sustainable. In almost two-thirds of OECD countries that implement gender budgeting (61%), it is underpinned by legal foundations (OECD, forthcoming[1]).

A key challenge in the Czech Republic is the common perception that gender equality is not a political priority. There is no mention of either gender equality or gender budgeting in the Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022[5]). Nor is there a legal underpinning for gender budgeting in the Czech Republic. However, as noted in Chapter 4, there are structures within the government that exist to support gender equality policy. These include the Government Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government Council for Gender Equality, comprised of state secretaries.

Importantly, Strategy 2021+ includes a strategic objective relating to gender budgeting. Specifically, under Strategic Objective 3 for "sufficient, effective and transparent funding of the agenda" (OECD, forthcoming[1]), the following measures are envisaged:

- Conduct an analysis of the state budget in relation to gender equality and the possibility of applying the principle of gender budgeting (between January 2023 and December 2024).
- Support the exchange of foreign good practices in the field of gender budgeting (between January 2021 and December 2030).

While Strategy 2021+ was formulated under the previous Czech government, the current government still has responsibility for its implementation.

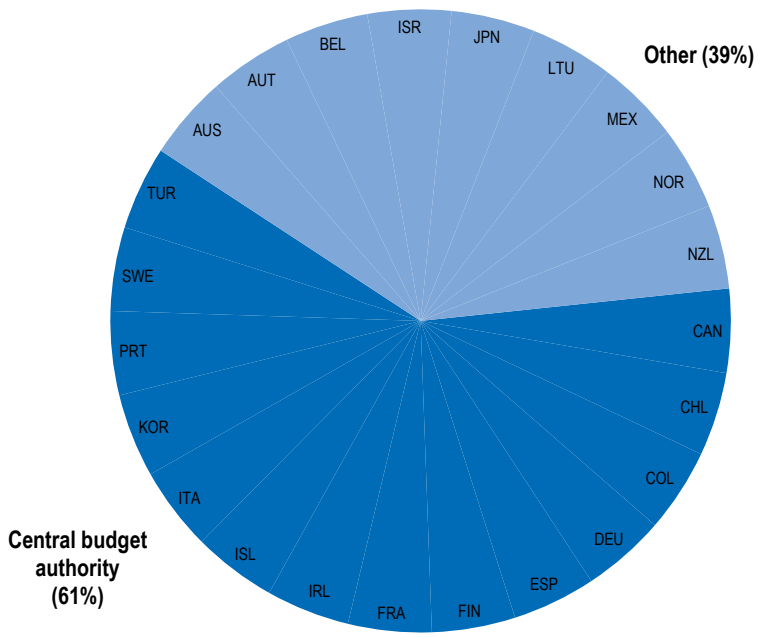
Overall, although political support for gender equality and gender budgeting could be more prominent, the measures set out in the strategy do provide a mandate for the introduction of gender budgeting in the Czech Republic. The timeline of Strategy 2021+ (until 2030) also provides some policy stability in the medium term.

6.2.3. The Ministry of Finance should have the lead role in implementing gender budgeting

The central budget authority leads the implementation of gender budgeting in most OECD countries (Figure 6.2). It is best placed to design an approach to gender budgeting that builds on the strengths of the existing budget process. Where the central budget authority does not lead on gender budgeting, there is a risk that this authority is not bought into the initiative, and thus implementation is weak in practice.

Figure 6.2. The central budget authority leads gender budgeting in most OECD countries

Percentage of countries, 2022



Note: Data are provisional.
Source: OECD (forthcoming[1]), OECD Survey on Gender Budgeting 2022.

The Gender Equality Department is identified as the stakeholder in the Czech Republic with lead responsibility in relation to the gender budgeting measures in Strategy 2021+, with the Ministry of Finance having a co-operating role.[1]

While the Gender Equality Department has significant expertise in the area of gender equality, it does not have expertise in relation to budgeting, and its limited resources are already spread very thin. At the next revision of Strategy 2021+, planned for 2023, the Ministry of Finance should be given the lead role in implementing the measures relating to gender budgeting. This would align with good practice across the OECD countries and ensure that the Czech Republic is in a stronger position for the introduction of gender budgeting.

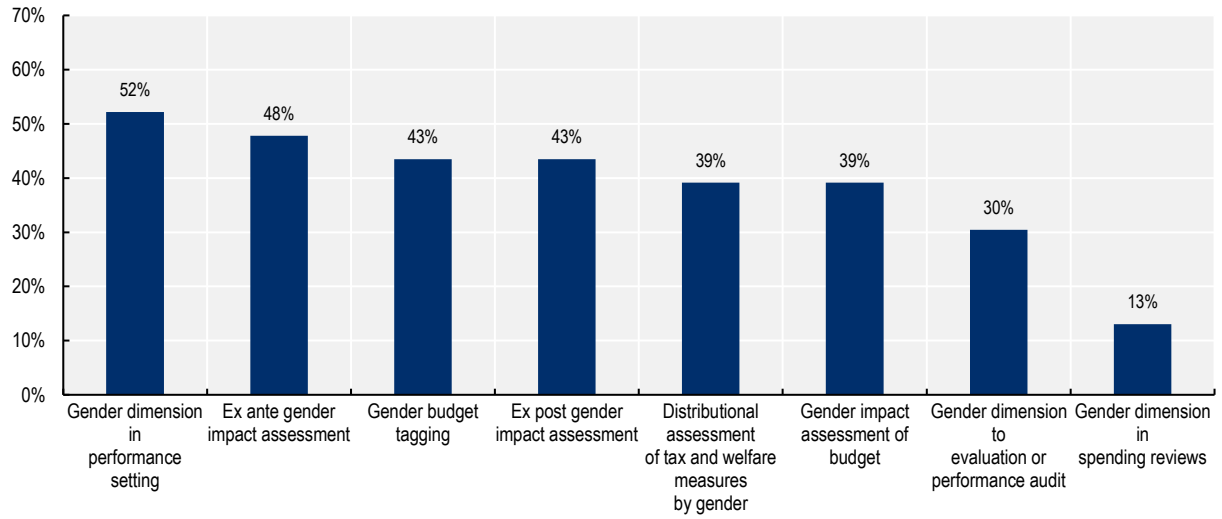
6.3. Implementation tools for gender budgeting

Gender budgeting tools can be used to systematically embed gender considerations within the overall context of the planning and budgeting process. Across OECD countries, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to gender budgeting. Instead, countries select gender budgeting tools that build on the strengths

of their existing budget framework. Some of the most common tools include requiring gender information to accompany budget proposals, including a gender dimension in a performance setting, gender budget tagging, gender impact assessment (GIA), and distributional assessments of tax and welfare measures by gender (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3. OECD countries use a range of gender budgeting tools

Percentage of OECD countries practising gender budgeting using each tool, 2022



Note: Data are provisional.
Source: OECD (forthcoming[1]), OECD Survey on Gender Budgeting 2022.

The concept of gender budgeting was first introduced in the Czech Republic in 2004 when there was a strong political commitment to pursue gender equality goals. At the recommendation of the Committee for an Institutional Framework for Gender Equality, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Affairs (where the Gender Equality Office was located at the time) developed a gender budgeting methodology.[2] Although the Ministry of Finance still sends the methodology to line ministries each year as part of the budget process, it is not implemented. There is thus an opportunity to revisit the gender budgeting methodology and redevelop the approach so that it is appropriate for the current budget process. This section looks at the gender budgeting tools that would be most appropriate to bring a gender lens to the current budget process in the Czech Republic.

In revisiting the methodology, there are a number of gender budgeting tools that could be considered for inclusion. These include gender budget tagging, gender impact assessments and a gender dimension in spending reviews.

6.3.1. The introduction of gender budget tagging as a tool could be considered

Budget tagging is a tool that can be used to help identify how budget measures contribute towards high-level objectives. It gives insight into the adequacy of policy action to advance these objectives and also helps identify policy action that is detrimental to progress. This information can be used internally to help support better budget decision making and externally to facilitate greater transparency and oversight.

In the Czech Republic, budget tagging is already in place in relation to certain cross-cutting priorities such as spending on the Roma population and green spending within the Resilience and Recovery Fund (post-

pandemic European Union recovery funds). Both examples of budget tagging are undertaken in response to recommendations from the European Commission. The amount of the budget related to the Roma population is included in the supplementary information presented alongside the budget. Any changes to Roma-tagged budget lines cannot be made without the approval of the relevant parliamentary commission.

Gender could likewise be added as a cross-cutting area for budget tagging. At a basic level, budget items could be tagged according to their impact on gender equality. The OECD DAC gender marker is a commonly used tool for this purpose (Box 6.1).

Box 6.1. The OECD DAC gender equality policy marker

The DAC gender equality policy marker is a type of gender budget tagging used to qualitatively track the financial flows that target gender equality. The three-point scoring system is as follows:

- **Principal** (marked 2) means that gender equality is the main objective of the project or programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results. The project or programme would not have been undertaken without this objective.
- **Significant** (marked 1) means that gender equality is an important and deliberate objective but not the principal reason for undertaking the project or programme, which is often explained as gender equality being mainstreamed in the project or programme.
- **Not targeted** (marked 0) means that the project or programme has been screened against the gender marker but has not been found to target gender equality.

Source: OECD (2022[6]), *DAC gender equality policy marker* (webpage), https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm (accessed in February 2023).

A more advanced system of gender budget tagging could tag budget items that help contribute to one of the 26 objectives set out in the Strategy 2021+. An example is the system of budget tagging in place in Colombia (Box 6.2).

Box 6.2. Gender budget tagging in Colombia

Colombia undertakes gender budget tagging using what is called a budget tracer for women's equity. Its purpose is to identify public funds being used to support women's equity and can show how much of the budget is allocated to the promotion of gender equality across different areas and levels of the government.

In the first stage, the user identifies actions, programmes or policies that help support women's equity. In the second stage, the user identifies the resources associated with the activities identified in the first stage and their source of financing. In the third and final stage, users identify the specific goal that these resources are targeted towards.

The budget tracer for women's equity is the core gender budgeting tool in Colombia. There is a clear methodology in place, with good alignment between the categories in the tracer and the gender equality goals in the National Policy on Gender Equality.

Each year, the Budget Bill includes an annex with information from the budget tracer on spending targeted towards women's equity. Overall, the use of the tracer has raised awareness across the government of actions that are being taken to help close gender gaps.

Source: OECD (forthcoming[7]), *OECD Review of Gender Equality in Colombia*.

Gender budget tagging helps sensitise policymakers on how different areas of the budget impact gender equality. It also strengthens transparency and accountability on financing for gender equality. However, it is important that gender tagging does not become an end in itself. The information gathered through tagging should be used in decision making to get full added value from the exercise. Gender budget tagging provides useful evidence for decision makers on the extent to which different areas of the budget prioritise gender equality. Box 6.3 describes how Canada uses budget tagging to inform resource allocation.

Box 6.3. Gender budget tagging to inform resource allocation in Canada

In 2018, Canada introduced a government-wide Gender Results Framework as a whole-of-government tool to measure progress in Canada in relation to gender equality and to help identify where the greatest gaps remain. Under this framework, the federal government has identified six key areas, where change is required to advance gender equality, portrayed in this illustration:

Each goal has several associated objectives and indicators. During the preparation of the budget, the Gender Results Framework provides a useful framework for policy discussion and helps guide ministerial decision making in relation to resource allocation.

Source: Government of Canada (2022[8]), *Gender Results Framework* (webpage), https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-results-framework.html (accessed in February 2023).

Budget tagging is most effective where programme budgeting – as opposed to line item budgeting – is in place. Line item budgets provide information on expenses but little information on what will be achieved with the money, e.g. staff costs. Where budgets are presented on a programme basis, budget information is presented according to its purpose, e.g. support for women and families fleeing violence. This makes it easier to identify the programme's impact on gender equality. The budget in the Czech Republic is currently presented on a line-item basis. Over time, moving to a programme basis will support an improved understanding of how the budget intends to support outcomes, including gender equality, and make budget tagging much easier.

6.3.2. A requirement could be introduced for gender impact assessments to accompany new budget proposals

Several OECD countries use gender impact assessments as a central tool of gender budgeting, specifying that GIAs must accompany new budget proposals. These assessments provide useful insights on how different budget proposals could be used to help close gender gaps and facilitate the consideration of gender equality objectives in resource allocation. Examples of GIA as a tool for gender budgeting in OECD countries are shown in Box 6.4.

Box 6.4. Examples of OECD countries using gender impact assessments as a tool of gender budgeting

Sweden

The Swedish government introduced gender budgeting as a strategic tool in the budget process in 2014. The Ministry of Finance issues specific instructions on gender budgeting in its yearly budget circular. These instructions specify that an *ex ante* GIA is mandatory at the initial drafting stage of reforms and policy proposals. If a budget proposal is deemed to have a possible impact on gender equality, the GIA must be presented to the Ministry of Finance alongside the budget proposal. The budget circular also calls for a gender impact assessment when policy results are presented in the Budget Bill. Additionally, a GIA is required when the government presents a new policy to the parliament in the Budget Bill.

A specific and tailor-made methodology has been developed to support the implementation of gender impact assessments. In addition, the Gender Equality Division conducts trainings on gender budgeting across the government administration.

Spain

The Spanish government started gender budgeting in 2008 but recently introduced a new "3Rs" methodology that includes three stages of analysis: reality, representation, and resources and results. In this third stage, ministerial departments must submit reports to the Secretariat of State for Budgets and Expenditure analysing the gender impact of their spending programmes.

A working group comprising representatives of the Ministry of Equality, the Secretariat of State for Budgets and Expenditure, the Directorate General for Budgets and the Directorate General for Personnel Costs uses the gender impact assessments from ministerial departments to prepare the final draft of the Gender Impact Report, which accompanies the preliminary draft of the General State Budget Law.

Source: OECD (forthcoming[11]), *Gender Budgeting in OECD Countries - 2022 Update.*

As highlighted in Chapter 5, GIAs have been a mandatory element of regulatory impact assessments in the Czech Republic since 2015 and must be provided when the government presents primary legislation (except budget legislation) to the parliament. This requirement is underpinned by a government resolution,[3] not legislation. However, GIAs are not always undertaken and when they are, the quality is uneven. In some cases, the GIA is just a sentence within the overall regulatory impact assessment. As a result, information from GIAs is rarely used in the design and implementation of policy.

Requiring GIAs to accompany new budget proposals in the Czech Republic could help spur a renewed focus on the gender impact of government policy. The most effective approach is for the Ministry of Finance to not consider new budget proposals unless they are accompanied by a GIA and to use the information

from GIAs in resource allocation decisions. This provides the greatest impetus for departments to increase the quality of the information provided within their gender impact assessments. Implementation is also associated with greater effectiveness where it is accompanied by guidance and training for departments in how to undertake good-quality gender impact assessments. The use of this gender budgeting tool in the Czech Republic would be timely, given that the methodology for gender impact assessments is soon to be updated.

A requirement that GIAs must accompany new budget proposals would also provide useful information for the Ministry of Finance to use in fulfilling the forthcoming requirement for a gender impact assessment of the budget as a whole.[4]

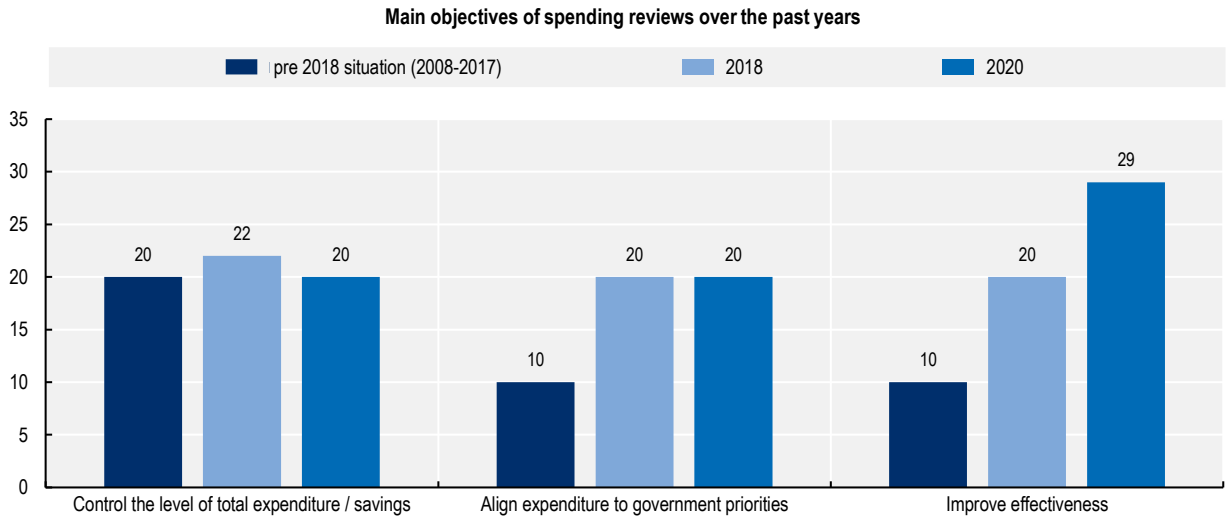
6.3.3. A gender perspective could be added to ongoing spending review reforms

OECD countries are making greater use of spending reviews in recent years and using a wider variety of spending reviews. Spending reviews help governments assess and reprioritise existing spending. The objectives of such reviews vary across countries. As shown in Figure 6.4, such objectives have ranged over the past ten years from improving spending efficiency to realigning spending towards government priorities.

The application of a gender perspective to spending review has the potential to ensure that spending reprioritisation has a positive impact on gender equality goals (Nicol, 2022[9]).

Figure 6.4. Objectives of spending reviews in OECD countries have evolved over recent years

Number of countries, 2008-20



Source: OECD (2020[10]), OECD Spending Review Survey.

The Czech Ministry of Finance has initiated ongoing reforms to introduce spending reviews. A pilot spending review is being undertaken as part of a gradual approach to see what benefits spending reviews could bring to the government at both political and management levels. It is envisaged that the Czech government will initially undertake annual selective spending reviews. Once the administration becomes more familiar with the spending review process and builds up the required capacities, it is likely to gradually expand the coverage and scope of spending reviews and embed these into the existing budgetary system.

As part of these ongoing reforms, the Ministry of Finance could integrate consideration of gender equality into the overall objectives of spending reviews. This would allow spending review to fulfil parallel objectives of creating fiscal space for new policy initiatives, improving expenditure efficiency through better spending, and ensuring expenditure supports high-level policy objectives, including those relating to gender equality. Examples of how other OECD countries have integrated equality considerations in spending review are provided in Box 6.5.

Box 6.5. Examples of OECD countries integrating equality considerations into spending review

Spain

Spending reviews in Spain were introduced in 2017 and undertaken as a three-year project broken into phases. The Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility (AIReF), an independent fiscal institution, conducted the reviews. The project aimed to evaluate significant public expenditure programmes.

The second phase of spending reviews included an evaluation of four policy areas including tax benefits policy. Although other spending reviews did not include consideration of the impact of the policy on women, this particular spending review did in recognition of the impact of tax benefits policy on labour market participation. Indeed, the spending review found that joint income tax has a negative impact on women participating in the labour market and social deductions have a positive effect on women's labour market participation. AIReF used this information to make recommendations to the government on how tax benefit policy could be modified to help close gender gaps in the labour market.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom government undertakes comprehensive spending reviews that collect departmental budget proposals. Ministers assess these proposals and then put forward a final package of measures as part of the government's budget.

The most recent spending reviews were undertaken in 2020 and the third quarter of 2021. Ministerial decisions related to these spending reviews were informed by evidence provided by departments to HM Treasury on the effect of policies on those with protected characteristics such as age, disability and sex. This is in line with the government's legal duties set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty. In addition, in making decisions as part of these spending reviews, the government considered the impacts of budget measures on the government's commitment to full, genuine gender equality. HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs also published Tax Information and Impact Notes for individual tax measures in the budget that include assessments of their expected equalities impacts.

The result was that the final package of spending included in these reviews included measures likely to disproportionately benefit women, including an increase to the National Living Wage and new funding to increase the hourly rate paid to childcare providers.

Source: (Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility, 2020[11]; HM Treasury of the United Kingdom, 2020[12]; HM Treasury of the United Kingdom, 2021[13]).

6.4. Enabling environment to support gender budgeting in the Czech Republic

Gender budgeting is most effective where there is a supportive enabling environment. Elements such as guidance, training and capacity development, good availability of gender-disaggregated data, opportunities for oversight and civil society engagement, and a modern budgetary framework all help create a supportive enabling environment conducive to good gender budgeting. In assessing the enabling environment for gender budgeting in the Czech Republic, this section looks at the extent to which these elements are in place.

6.4.1. Guidance, training and capacity development are crucial for successful gender budgeting

Guidance, training, and capacity development for both the Ministry of Finance and line ministries are crucial factors to increase understanding of gender budgeting methods and support its implementation by officials.

The development of guidance, training and capacity development will be particularly important in the Czech administration, where stakeholders reported limited capacity in the line ministries in relation to gender mainstreaming in general. A priority will be to update the current gender budgeting guidance, which dates from 2004. New guidance would benefit from covering aspects such as:

- the purpose of gender budgeting in the Czech Republic
- roles and responsibilities of different government stakeholders
- the revised approach to gender budgeting (tools and methods)
- detailed instructions for line ministries, with practical examples
- where to go for more information.

Information on gender budgeting requirements and a link to the gender budgeting guidance should also be included in the Czech budget circular, issued in June.

The roll-out of the revised guidance should be supported by workshops or training sessions, both within the Ministry of Finance and in line ministries. The gender focal points in each line ministry already have an important role in relation to delivery of Strategy 2021+. Given sufficient resourcing, they could also have an important role in capacity development and the effective implementation of gender budgeting, providing support to colleagues when needed.

6.4.2. Availability of gender-disaggregated data is also crucial for gender budgeting purposes

An important foundation of gender budgeting is the availability of gender-disaggregated data. Good data provide the evidence for more robust assessments of the gender impact of different budget programmes.

The availability of gender-disaggregated data in the Czech Republic is currently very limited. As the new methodology for GIAs is rolled out and this develops as a policy tool, the situation will hopefully improve. Data collected by institutions such as the national statistics bureau should be supplemented by departmental data collection, for example, on service users or on those who benefit from government programmes. This will provide a stronger evidence base that will support better-informed decisions as part of the budget process.

A number of OECD countries recognise the importance of good data in underpinning an effective gender budgeting practice and so have invested in building better-quality gender-disaggregated data alongside the roll-out of gender budgeting. Box 6.6 describes how Canada uses gender-disaggregated data.

Box 6.6. Investment in gender-disaggregated data to support gender budgeting in Canada

When the Canadian government introduced gender budgeting, it recognised the need to improve access to gender-disaggregated data. To do so, it introduced a series of measures including the creation of a new Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics.

The centre, which opened in May 2019, aims to address gaps in the availability of information by gender, sex, and other intersecting identity factors, such as disability status, Indigenous identity (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), and other ethno-cultural characteristics. It aims to enable users to easily access and analyse a wealth of statistical information relevant to the evaluation of programmes, policies and initiatives from a gender, diversity and inclusion perspective.

Improved availability of gender-disaggregated data aims to better inform GIA and consequently enrich policy development across the Canadian government.

Source: OECD (2018[14]), *Gender Equality in Canada: Mainstreaming, Governance and Budgeting*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264301108-en.

6.4.3. Oversight and engagement with civil society can promote the credibility of gender budgeting

Accountability institutions such as the parliament and the supreme audit institution are responsible for holding the government to account publicly for its policies and their implementation. As part of this, these institutions should ideally also seek to hold the government to account for its actions on gender budgeting – for example through examining any gender information published as part of or alongside the draft budget. Effective oversight of this information promotes the integrity, quality and credibility of national budgeting.

The Budget Committee of the Czech Parliament has shown interest in engaging with any gender information presented by the government alongside the budget. Box 6.7 presents examples of how parliamentary budget committees in selected other OECD countries engage with gender information presented alongside the budget.

Box 6.7. Oversight of gender budgeting by budget committees in OECD countries

Ireland

The Irish parliament (Oireachtas) holds the government to account for its actions in relation to equality budgeting. Specifically, part of the mandate of the Committee on Budgetary Oversight is to monitor and oversee the implementation of equality budgeting. As such, the committee considers performance information presented on equality budgeting during the budget cycle. It also undertook a standalone inquiry into gender budgeting. Its report put forward recommendations to allow the committee to develop its capacity to monitor and oversee budget practices such as gender budgeting.

The Oireachtas Parliamentary Budget Office supports the Committee on Budgetary Oversight in its role overseeing equality budgeting, including through the provision of research briefings assessing relevant information provided by the government.

Austria

In Austria, the Budget Committee provides analysis of the budget, including performance objectives set for each budget chapter. Each budget chapter must include one gender-related performance objective.

The Austrian Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) supports the Budget Committee in its analysis. Specifically, the PBO provides the parliament with analyses of government documents related to gender budgeting and gender equality. In undertaking this role, the PBO provides clear guidance for members of parliament on all the gender-related performance objectives, measures and indicators shown in the different budget chapters. Its budget analysis discusses key issues such as the quality of the information provided, the level of ambition of the objectives, and the suitability and development of relevant indicators (including an international comparison), the availability of gender-disaggregated data, and levels of co-ordination between ministries.

This oversight framework helps stimulate the parliamentary debate on gender issues. It has resulted in greater awareness of gender budgeting and gender equality and has generated discussions of gender objectives in the Budget Committee and in the plenary sessions.

Source: (Downes and Nicol, 2020[4]; Nicol and Güven, 2019[15]).

6.4.4. A modern budgetary framework will help support the implementation of gender budgeting

The effective integration of a gender perspective in the budget process benefits from a strong budgetary framework that can support the government's fiscal and policy objectives. In countries where there are strong links between medium-term priorities and budgeting, there are already mechanisms in place to align spending with overall government objectives and an outcome orientation to the budget process. Such mechanisms enable governments to link planning, allocations and outcomes and more broadly to answer the question of how the allocation of public resources is achieving policy objectives in the short, medium and long term.

The budgeting system in the Czech Republic is similar to a traditional input-based budgeting system. While budget documents include output targets alongside financial allocations in a dedicated part of the budget document, there is in general limited focus on performance and outcomes.

The budget classification is based on input for each chapter (administrative units), while the relationship of budget expenditures to government's priorities is reflected in an internal document which is used by the Prime Minister's Office. While line ministries may have a range of policies or strategies, these are not generally costed and there is no requirement for a comprehensive line ministry strategic or operational plan. The Ministry of Finance suggests that there may be over 200 strategies in place across the public sector, but these do not appear to be costed or prioritised across the government.

Tools such as performance budgeting (Box 6.8) and gender budgeting help align different expenditures to the priorities of the government and to ensure the most important priorities are reflected in the budget. Modernisation of the Czech budget framework, and an increased outcome orientation of budgeting through tools such as performance budgeting, would help support the implementation of gender budgeting.

Box 6.8. Developing an outcome orientation to budgeting: Examples from the OECD

Estonia

Performance budgeting was introduced in Estonia to address concerns that there was too much attention on inputs in budget planning and not enough consideration of how budgeting linked to long-term strategic objectives. In response, a new performance framework created a direct link between budgets (resources) and long-term outcomes across different performance areas, where the performance area identifies the overall long-term objective, sub-goals, performance indicators and the policy instrument through which the goals are achieved. Budget programmes are based on the sub-goals identified in the performance area, and there is a linear connection between programmes and performance areas.

Iceland

A key document in relation to strategic planning is Iceland's Fiscal Strategy Plan, which shows the budget appropriations across the 35 areas of expenditure for the next five years. Each area covers specific tasks, such as the activities of the universities or hospitals. The plan also sets out the objectives of budgetary policy and provides information on how these objectives are to be achieved. Ministries, as part of the budget process, are required to identify how each area of expenditure is linked to a government priority target (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals or gender equality goals).

Source: OECD (forthcoming[16]), Introducing Spending Reviews in the Czech Republic: Stocktake Report.

6.5. Policy recommendations: A roadmap for the Czech Republic

This chapter highlights where the strengths and challenges lie across the key pillars underpinning an approach to effective and sustainable gender budgeting. Based on these insights, the following suggested steps outline a path forward for gender budgeting in the Czech Republic in the short and medium to longer term.

A staged approach to the introduction of gender budgeting in the Czech Republic recognises the need to develop buy-in from the Ministry of Finance over time. It also recognises the limited available resources and the importance of embedding practices over time as institutional buy-in and capacity grow.

6.5.1. Short term (over the next one to two years)

- In the short term, given limited buy-in and leadership from the Ministry of Finance, it would be of most value to focus on strengthening the capacity for GIA across the government as a whole and piloting approaches to gender budgeting in select line ministries.
- Steps to strengthen the capacity of GIA will help provide a more secure foundation for gender impact assessment to be used as a tool of gender budgeting in the future. The forthcoming update of the methodology for GIAs will be helpful in this regard, as well as workshops and training to support implementation. Strengthened capacity for GIAs across government will mean that the Ministry of Finance has the option – at some point in the future - to introduce a requirement for line ministries to provide GIAs alongside budget proposals.
- In parallel, piloting approaches to gender budgeting in select line ministries (one or more) will be helpful in testing institutional capacity, building momentum for gender budgeting and gaining insights that will support its more widespread implementation in the medium to longer term.

- A suggested first approach to test would be gender budget tagging. Piloting gender budget tagging will provide insights into the ease with which line ministries can tag budget items, the support and guidance that they need, and the effectiveness of budget tagging in sensitising policy managers to the impact of their programmes on gender equality. Pilot line ministries could identify how each of the programmes funded through the budget impact gender equality, e.g. along the lines of the three-point scoring system used by the DAC OECD Gender Policy Marker. In selecting line ministries to pilot approaches to gender budgeting, the Gender Equality Department should liaise with ministries to identify where there is both appetite and capacity.
- Alongside the pilot exercise, the Gender Equality Department and the Ministry of Finance can co-operate to organise seminars that help increase awareness of gender budgeting and highlight different approaches for consideration in the medium to longer term.

6.5.2. Medium to longer term (year three and beyond)

- In the medium to longer term, the Ministry of Finance should ideally become the designated lead actor for implementing the measures related to gender budgeting in the national gender equality strategy and in gender budgeting more broadly.
- A first priority will be for the Ministry of Finance to update the Gender Budgeting Methodology, taking into account the gender budgeting tools highlighted in this chapter – gender budget tagging, GIA and a gender dimension to spending review - as being particularly suitable for the Czech budget framework.
- If gender budget tagging is helpful in sensitising line ministries to the gender impacts of their programmes, then the methodology can be further developed, and it can be rolled out more broadly. A more sophisticated approach could tag programmes that help achieve the objectives set out in the gender equality strategy. This would allow for the presentation of summary information (quantitative and qualitative) alongside the budget that shows how the budget is advancing overarching gender equality priorities each year, providing useful evidence to inform budget decisions and promoting both greater transparency and accountability.
- Strengthened capacity for GIAs will allow the Ministry of Finance to introduce a requirement for line ministries to provide GIAs alongside budget proposals. Ensuring that any budget proposals without a GIA are rejected would increase the likelihood that GIAs are undertaken, helping ensure that gender needs are considered in policy design. In addition, GIAs for individual budget proposals will provide evidence that will help the Ministry of Finance fulfil its forthcoming requirement to undertake a GIA of the budget as a whole.
- An additional gender budgeting tool in line with ongoing budget reforms could be the introduction of a gender perspective to spending review. This would incorporate consideration of whether expenditure helps contribute to overarching objectives set out in the gender equality strategy as part of the overall spending review process.
- Developments to modernise the Czech budget framework and strengthen the link between planning and budgeting will help support a more effective approach to gender budgeting in the longer term. For example, transitioning from line item to programme budgeting would greatly facilitate gender budget tagging. In addition, developing performance budgeting could help bring to the fore consideration of how the budget is linked to long-term strategic objectives, such as those set out in Strategy 2021+. When the Czech Republic is at this stage, it will be easier for information from gender budget tagging and GIAs to provide evidence for better budget decision making.

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Notes

[1] The strategy itself does not define a co-operating role.

[2] See https://www.mfcr.cz/cs/legislativa/metodiky/2004/metodika-rozpoctovani-genderova-politika-13111.

[3] Rules of Procedure of the Government /Article IV (7) (c)/ and Legislative Rules of the Government /Article 9 (2) (b)/. The legislative rules state that regulatory impact assessment is a mandatory part of the Czech legislative process (and regulatory impact assessment guidelines also require that a gender impact assessment is conducted – with the exception of certain cases).

[4] This requirement is set out in Strategy 2021+ and the timescale for it to be fulfilled is between January 2023 and December 2024.

7 Fostering accountability for gender equality policies in the Czech Republic

Robust, government-wide accountability and oversight mechanisms can play an important role in the achievement of a country's gender equality goals. These mechanisms help identify needs, gaps and challenges around achievement of specific gender-related objectives, evaluate impacts, and provide redress and recourse options. As such, they can foster the implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming strategies and promote monitoring and reporting on progress and remaining gaps. This chapter assesses the mechanisms for public sector oversight and accountability that exist in the Czech Republic for the promotion of gender equality at the managerial and ministerial level as well as at the level of Parliament and independent institutions. It concludes with a series of action-oriented recommendations to further enhance the potential of these accountability and oversight mechanisms to support evidence-based, gender-sensitive policymaking and improved gender policy results in the Czech Republic.

7.1. Introduction

Better outcomes for citizens have a greater chance of being achieved if they are supported by robust accountability mechanisms across the government (OECD, 2021[1]). They can serve as catalysts for achieving gender equality goals by helping to identify needs, gaps and challenges; evaluate the impact of efforts by different government actors; provide redress and recourse options. For the purposes of this chapter, accountability refers to the democratic responsibility and duty of the Czech government, and the overall state system, to inform citizens about the decisions they make regarding gender equality and to provide an account of their activities and performance related to the achievement of gender equality objectives. For accountability mechanisms to be robust, they need to exist government wide and at multiple levels, and this applies to accountability and oversight provided at senior managerial level within public administrations, at the ministerial level, and at the level of parliaments and other independent oversight institutions such as national audit institutions, ombudspersons and the judiciary.

This chapter looks at the established and potential scrutiny mechanisms in the Czech Republic related to the government's actions and commitments around gender equality.

7.2. Oversight and accountability mechanisms for gender equality within the executive branch

7.2.1. The Government Council for Gender Equality monitors the implementation of gender equality goals

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Gender Equality Department (the Department) is the main co-ordination body for gender equality at the government level. It reports to the chair of the Government Council for Gender Equality (Council) and its vice-chairs, especially to the Government Commissioner for Human Rights (the Commissioner). As the Department is located in the Office of the Government, its director reports to the head of the Office of the Government. In this regard, it should be noted that this is not the case for other departments, which report instead to the respective deputy ministers.

In parallel, the Council, together with its committees and working groups, monitors the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030 (Strategy 2021+) and fulfilment of the government's international commitments in the area of gender equality. The Council and its bodies include both government and non-governmental representatives, which provides an additional layer of scrutiny to evaluate the efforts of the Czech government in promoting gender equality.

Notably, with regard to Strategy 2021+, the Department in co-operation with the Council annually prepares the Report on Gender Equality; and the Report on the Fulfilment of the Strategy 2021+ as its appendix (Box 7.1).

Box 7.1. Reporting procedure for Strategy 2021+

Strategy 2021+ has put in place an annual reporting on progress made in its implementation. The Gender Equality Department under the direction of the Government Commissioner for Human Rights gathers information from all ministries, the Office of the Public Defender of Rights, the Czech Statistical Office, non-profit organisations and other relevant stakeholders (including academia). The reporting adheres to a predefined structure (through an Excel sheet) that the Department provides to all stakeholders, who report progress on implementing all tasks they are responsible for and the standard pertaining to the gender focal point position, against its indicators. Annual reporting also tracks, on the implementation of the Action Plan on the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence and Strategy 2021+, which focuses on increasing the number of women in leadership positions within the public administration and state-owned companies.

The Annual Report on Gender Equality and the Report on the Fulfilment of the Strategy 2021+ follows the structure of the chapters of the Strategy 2021+.

The Council (or its committees) discuss the findings and the subsequently drafted report. Once approved by the Council, the annual report goes through the standard inter-ministerial comment procedure via eKLEP and it is ultimately submitted to the government.

Source: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2021[2]), *Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030*, https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/gcfge/Gender-Equality-Strategy-2021-2030.pdf.

Challenges around the decision-making power of the Government Council for Gender Equality limits accountability

As discussed in Chapter 4, there is scope to strengthen the Council's mandate to follow-up on its recommendations to the government in the area of gender equality, to monitor their take-up and implementation. The lack of authority to follow-up poses an important limitation to the potential impact the Council can have in accelerating the implementation of the national gender equality objectives.

7.2.2. The Government Legislative Council and Regulatory Impact Assessment Board can potentially play key roles in overseeing gender-sensitive legislation

As noted in Chapter 4, the Government Legislative Council and the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) Board can potentially contribute to strengthening gender impact assessments (GIAs). The Government Legislative Council is an advisory body of the Czech government located in the Office of the Government, under the authority of the Minister for Legislation. Most members of the Council are lawyers and experts from outside the government; currently, only 5 of the 30 members are women. The Council chair is the Minister for Legislation, a member of the government and Cabinet member. The RIA Board, located under the Legislative Council, has 14 members including the chair; presently, only one of the members is a woman.

The two bodies assess legislative proposals, including regarding whether an assessment of the impacts of a regulation was carried out in accordance with the General Principles for Regulatory Impact Assessment. The Legislative Council also provides opinions on legislative proposals. As part of its assessment of the government's proposed Legislative Work Plan for the following year, the RIA Board also suggests which legislative proposals should be accompanied by RIA. In addition, the RIA Board can provide consultations on RIA to the line ministries and other central organs of the public administration (Government of the Czech Republic, 2011[3]).

Currently, neither the Legislative Council nor the RIA Board evaluate whether the gender-related impacts of legislative drafts have been assessed. Given that a government resolution requires GIAs and that and Strategy 2021+ outlines the objective to develop gender-sensitive legislation, there is a significant potential for the two bodies, supported by the RIA Unit within the Office of Government, to play a more active role in reviewing legislative proposals from a gender perspective (Chapter 4). It is also recommended that the gender-balanced composition of these structures be pursued alongside a strengthening of their gender expertise, for example through training and capacity building of the members.

7.2.3. Establishing managerial accountability mechanisms can accelerate progress towards gender equality objectives

If achieving gender equality-related objectives is not part of the regular performance objectives of civil servants, including at the senior management level, there may be limited incentives for civil servants to consider these tasks as part of their daily work and the risk of further marginalisation of the gender equality agenda.

Under the Act no. 234/2014 Coll. on Civil Service of the Czech Republic, every civil servant is subject to regular service and performance evaluation, which is generally carried out once a year. The appraisal process includes evaluation of their knowledge and skills; their performance of the service in terms of correctness, speed and independence in accordance with the set individual goals; their behaviour; and attendance at and impact of trainings. At present, there are no requirements to consider gender-related performance goals, and most often, civil service performance is not assessed on this basis. However, in some ministries, internal directives and organisation rules provide a solid basis to gradually introduce a gender angle in performance appraisal systems. For example, within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the organisational rules state that each section of the ministry is responsible for a gender equality agenda within their section (Box 7.2).

Box 7.2. Organisational rules of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports related to gender equality

The organisational Rules of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports specifies that “each section of the ministry is responsible for the gender equality agenda within the section and for fulfilling the ministerial and government commitments and priorities at the national and international level”. They further notes that the Human Resources Unit “covers the activity of gender focal points, serves as a consultation point for the gender equality agenda in relation to the ministry’s agenda and applying a gender perspective, especially in preparation of strategic documents, conceptions, subsidy or funding programmes and projects with impact on people; and assess impacts of legislative and non-legislative materials in internal and inter-ministerial standard comment procedures”.

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (n.d.[4]), Organisational Rules of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Annex no. 1: The content of the activities of the ministry's organisational units. Retrieved from: https://www.msmt.cz/file/58107/.

Some OECD countries have introduced performance reviews of managers and senior leaders as a line of managerial accountability that builds gender equality or diversity targets directly into the performance agreements for top managers (Box 7.3). In this regard, gender equality-related performance targets could be introduced for managers in the Czech administration as a part of the revised Strategy 2021+. For instance, there is scope to include such targets as a part of the annual public service assessment exercise for civil servants, including managers.

Box 7.3. Examples of managerial accountability in OECD countries

Canada

The Public Service Commission (PSC) in Canada, along with the Treasury Board, has broad accountability for overseeing equity in all appointments under the Public Service Employment Act. The Employment Equity Act requires the PSC to identify and eliminate barriers and to institute positive policies and practices in the public service appointment system to achieve a representative workforce, focusing on four designated categories: women, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities and visible minorities. The PSC oversees the gender equality commitments through the Management Accountability Framework and Performance Management Agreements of managers in departments and agencies and holds them accountable for maintaining their departments in a state of audit readiness.

Furthermore, the prime minister of Canada issues mandate letters to outline the policy priorities for ministers to accomplish as well as the pressing challenges they will address in their role, thereby creating a ministerial accountability mechanism. In recent years, the government has publicly released ministerial mandate letters as part of its plan for open and transparent government for Canadians. In January 2021 and later in December of that year, the letters included commitments for all ministers to apply Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in their decisions and consider public policies through an intersectional lens to address systemic inequities.

Australia

The Australian Public Service Commission oversees the progress and reporting of the Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategies. The 2021-26 Gender Strategy by the Public Service Commission in Australia also includes leadership and managerial accountability for the pursuit of gender equality in public institutions among its six priority actions and suggests specific key performance indicators for senior leader performance agreements.

Source: Information provided by the government of Canada and government of Australia to the OECD in 2022; (OECD, 2014[5]); (Government of Australia, 2021[6]); 2021 OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (2021 GMG Survey).

7.3. Accountability for gender equality through the parliament and independent institutions

7.3.1. Greater capacity can help the Office of the Public Defender of Rights to more effectively fulfil its mandate

The Office of the Public Defender of Human Rights (the Ombudsperson's Office) is the national equality body responsible for equal treatment and protection against discrimination in the Czech Republic since 2009[1] (Chapter 2). The Ombudsperson's Office is further mandated to protect people against misconduct by public authorities or institutions. Among others, the Ombudsperson's role is to protect people from discrimination, provide victims of discrimination with methodological assistance, conduct research on discrimination and issue recommendations to promote equal treatment. Upon receiving a complaint from a citizen, the Ombudsperson's Office can initiate an assessment if it is deemed to be within the office's jurisdiction. Based on the assessment, the Ombudsperson's Office prepares a report that is sent to the concerned public authority. In case the Ombudsperson's Office finds the behaviour of the public authority as discriminatory, they demand its rectification. While the Ombudsperson does not have the power to

enforce such a demand, it can bring it to the attention of the superiors of the concerned authority if the authority does not apply relevant measures to correct its behaviour. The Ombudsperson's Office also lacks the power to litigate or turn to the Constitutional Court with a proposal for constitutional review of allegedly discriminatory statutory laws. In this regard, there is scope to strengthen the powers of the Ombudsperson to enforce corrective measures.

The Ombudsperson's Office is limited in its ability to fulfil its mandate in a number of ways. One is the low rate of discrimination-related reporting. Stakeholders consulted for this report suggest that only about 11% of discrimination cases are being reported. Noting this, the Ombudsperson's Strategic Plan outlines helping citizens to report cases of discrimination as one of its goals (Public Defender of Rights, 2016[7]). In 2020, the Ombudsperson's Office dealt with 51 complaints alleging discrimination on the grounds of gender, of which 37 were new complaints received in 2020. The most common forms of gender-based discrimination reported in recent years are in the field of work and employment especially related to hiring, working conditions, unequal pay, and bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment in the workplace (Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[8]).

Its limited staff capacity is a further challenge to the office in effectively carrying out its mandate: only 3 of the 16 personnel work on gender equality. Strategy 2021+ highlights limited competencies as an additional constraint on the ability of the Ombudsperson's Office to adequately perform its role related to gender equality (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[2]).

The 2018 Recommendation on the Standards for Equality Bodies adopted by the European Commission (EC) lays out a set of guidelines for Member States' equality bodies, e.g. the need for adequate resources (human, financial and technical) especially a sufficiently large and adequately qualified staff. The guidelines also include indicators to evaluate the degree of fulfilment of these standards. In accordance with the EC recommendation, Strategy 2021+ includes as one of its objectives to maximise the effectiveness of the organisational structure of the Ombudsperson's office, including finding ways to ensure sufficient capacities to carry out its mandate (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021[2]). Strategy 2021+ foresees an evaluation of the competencies, functioning and staffing capacity of the Ombudsperson's Office. In December 2022, the EC also introduced a new legislative initiative to set minimum standards for the functioning of equality bodies, which could pave the way for reinforcing the Ombudsperson's Office (European Commission, n.d.[9]). Box 7.4 describes the mandates and functioning of ombudsperson offices in Norway and Spain.

Box 7.4. How ombudsperson offices function in different countries

Norway

Norway's Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (*Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet*) in 2006 to represent the interests of those who are discriminated against. Its main task is to promote equality and fight discrimination based on "gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and age". This independent agency, with tribunal, promotional and litigation faculties, actively engages in public hearings, provides comments on laws and public plans, engages in public debates, and provides information to the media. The Ombud is free from instructions from the government, as it is obliged to monitor Norway's human rights fulfilment and offer guidance to individuals, employers and organisations – all in accord with the vision of contributing to the creation of a society where "power and influence are equally distributed, freedom is available to all, and dignity is inherent to each individual".

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud was established in January 2006 by an act of Parliament and is a result of the merger of the former Gender Equality Ombud, the Gender Equality Centre, and the Centre for combating ethnic discrimination. The Ombud's mandate has been broadened throughout

the years to include a wider range of discrimination grounds such as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Spain

Spain's ombudsperson (*Defensor del Pueblo*) is the high commissioner of the parliament and is responsible for defending citizens' fundamental rights and civil liberties by monitoring the activity of the administration and public authorities. The office is an independent institution that performs its duties with independence and impartiality, does not receive orders or instructions from any authority, and performs its duties with discretion. It reports to the parliament and is included in the general state budget within the parliament's budget.

Citizens can request the intervention of the ombudsperson free of charge to investigate claims of irregular action. By virtue of the office, the ombudsperson also is able to intervene in cases that come to its attention despite the lack of a formal complaint. In the area of equal treatment, it carries out actions "in relation to any type of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, disability or any other personal or social condition or circumstance". In its 2021 annual report, the ombudsperson strongly highlighted failures and shortcomings related to the attention given to the issue of violence against women.

Source: (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, 2022[10]; El defensor del Pueblo, 2022[11]; El defensor del Pueblo, 2022[12]).

7.3.2. The role of the Parliament and parliamentary committees could be strengthened

As the gatekeepers of the legislative agenda and oversight institutions for the work of governments, parliaments (and parliamentary committees) can play an important role in the gender equality agenda. By reviewing existing and draft legislations and monitoring the activities of government through reviews and inquiries, parliaments can strengthen the overall commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming (OECD, 2019[13]).

The Parliament of the Czech Republic can further contribute to the oversight of the government's gender equality policy

The Standing Committee for Family, Equal Opportunities of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic (Standing Committee) is the working group of the Parliament that is responsible for the gender equality agenda. It monitors the fulfilment of the Czech Republic's international obligations in the field of gender equality and national minorities, in particular the obligations arising from the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It also analyses the current situation of families and seniors in the Czech Republic and deals with specific measures to improve this. In addition, the Standing Committee analyses current societal issues, including those related to families, and monitors the preparation and implementation of family policies, strategic documents related to gender equality and legal instruments for the protection of national minorities. In particular, since 2021, it has focused on the work related to relevant EU directives, including the implementation of the work-life balance directive (European Union, 2019[14]) and the position of the Czech Republic to the pay transparency directive (European Union, 2022[15]). The Standing Committee has 16 self-nominated members, on the basis of self-nomination by the members of the Chamber of Deputies. Representatives from the Department, the Ombudsperson and non-governmental organisations are regularly invited as guest participants. Another mechanism is the Subcommittee on Domestic and Sexual Violence of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, which focuses on legislation on this issue, also in relation to the Directive of the European Parliament and of the European Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence (European Union, 2022[15]).

Relative to the general OECD practice, there is room to consider further strengthening the role of the Czech parliament and its Standing Committee with regard to gender equality scrutiny and oversight. For instance, the Standing Committee does not have any specific role related to the requirements to identify potential impacts of draft or existing legislation on women and men from diverse backgrounds. Nor are there mechanisms for ministerial accountability to the Parliament in matters of gender equality, particularly those related to the government resolution approving Strategy 2021+ and the responsibility of ministers to enforce it. the government also is not required to report to the parliament on gender equality goals, including the submission of the Annual Report on Gender Equality that is prepared by the Department to the Parliament. In this regard, parliamentary scrutiny of gender equality commitments and goals can be formalised through the work of the Standing Committee by considering a systematic review of GIA requirements as well as putting in place annual reporting mechanisms whereby the Standing Committee could consult and discuss the Annual Report of Gender Equality or the implementation of Strategy 2021+.

There is also room to gradually consider a gender perspective in the work of other standing committees and commissions of the Parliament as a cross-cutting matter. Box 7.5 provides a few examples from OECD countries in this regard. The oversight role of parliamentary committees can also be strengthened by adopting inclusive approaches when collecting evidence, calling in witnesses from diverse backgrounds and undertaking committee hearings on a variety of policy matters.

Box 7.5. Examples of parliamentary accountability mechanisms for gender from OECD countries

Austria

As gender equality is a cross-cutting policy field various mechanisms have been established to co-ordinate the dialogue among ministries, supreme organs, agencies, and subnational governments. One important mechanism is the inter-ministerial co-ordination for gender-related performance budgeting by the Federal Performance Management Office in the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport, in which all ministries and supreme organs participate in. The efforts undertaken and the progress made due to this co-ordination are reported to the Parliament and the public in the Annual Report on Outcome Orientation.

Additionally, the Austrian Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) was established in 2012 to support the Austrian Parliament in the budgetary process and in consulting and enacting budget laws. Key tasks of the PBO are supporting the Budget Committee in form of written expertise, analysis and short studies on budgetary documents published by the government according to the Federal Organic Budget Act; preparing information briefs upon request of members of the Budget Committee; supporting other parliamentary committees regarding impact assessment of new legislation; and consulting the Parliament on performance budgeting concerning equality of women and men (gender budgeting). PBO studies address the progress towards gender equality in the framework of performance budgeting; the PBO also publishes recommendations for enhancement of the framework itself.

Ireland

In December 2021, the Irish Parliament (Oireachtas) established a Joint Committee on Gender Equality consisting of members from both Houses of Parliament. The Joint Committee is tasked with considering the recommendations in the Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality and is to report to the Parliament within nine months of its first public meeting. The key functions of the committee are related to reviewing draft legislation, monitoring the work of government departments and advising on policy issues related to gender equality. Among its powers is the power to invite submissions, hold hearings with the Minister for Justice; Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and

Science; Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth; and Minister of Health. It is also empowered to hold hearings with diverse stakeholders and publish reports.

Sweden

The Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) introduced gender mainstreaming in 1994. This means that the Riksdag and its committees should consider gender equality in all scrutiny of the executive branch. All new legislation should be accompanied by an analysis of the impact it will have on men and women. Thus, when parliament committees are examining legislation, they are able to take into account its impact on men and women and use this information to make a more informed decision when they vote on the proposal. Gender has also been mainstreamed into budget scrutiny, with the Committee for Finance examining the annual budget for gender equality aspects as a matter of course.

Source: Information provided by the government of Austria to the OECD in 2022; (OECD, 2018[16]; OECD, 2022[17]).

The Budget Committee could play a critical role to implement gender budgeting

In countries where gender budgeting is practised, parliamentary budget committees can fulfil the key function related to accountability. As discussed in Chapter 6, gender budgeting is not currently implemented in the Czech Republic. However, during the OECD interviews, the Budget Committee of the Parliament of the Czech Republic has shown interest in engaging with any gender information presented by the government alongside the budget. Taking account of this interest, a dedicated role for gender budgeting accountability can be considered for this committee.

The Senate could take on a more active role in providing oversight for gender equality

While the Czech Senate does not have any dedicated responsibilities related to monitoring progress on gender equality in the Czech Republic, its proactive involvement can provide essential scrutiny. For example, recently, the Senate of Canada, more specifically its Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which convened a series of meetings inviting ministers, experts, representatives from various sectors to discuss the role of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) in the policy process (Senate of Canada, 2022[18]).

7.3.3. The Supreme Audit Office can help accelerate the implementation of the gender policy through formal oversight

Supreme audit institutions and offices can help identify needs, gaps and challenges in fulfilling a country's gender equality goals as they evaluate the impact of efforts taken by various government actors and foster greater accountability. Across the OECD, supreme audit institutions are playing an increasingly active role in monitoring the fulfilment of gender equality objectives. In the past five years, these institutions in at least ten OECD member countries have conducted an audit of gender-related initiatives, compared to only three in 2017. Box 7.6 provides an example from the European Court of Auditor's recent audit of gender mainstreaming in the EU budget.

Box 7.6. European Court of Auditors: Gender mainstreaming in the EU budget

In 2021, the European Court of Auditors published an audit that assessed whether the European Commission has made use of gender mainstreaming in the EU budget to promote equality between women and men. More specifically it assessed the extent to which:

- gender mainstreaming had been applied in the EU budget to promote equality between women and men from 2014 onward
- the Commission's framework for supporting gender mainstreaming was appropriate
- the EU's budget cycle took gender equality into account
- gender equality had been incorporated into five selected EU funding programmes.

Source: European Court of Auditors (2020[19]), *Audit Preview: Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Budget*, https://www.eca.europa.eu/fr/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=53149.

Currently, Czech Republic's Supreme Audit Office (SAO) does not play any explicit oversight role related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This is to be expected as its mandate mostly relates to auditing the financial management and resources (including auditing the use of subsidies earmarked for projects related to gender equality) and not the implementation of government policies and how these progress on strategic priorities. However, going forward and noting recent practices across OECD, such an engagement could be envisaged, as appropriate and with adequate gender expertise within the SAO.

7.4. Policy recommendations: A roadmap for the Czech Republic

7.4.1. Strengthen oversight and accountability mechanisms for gender equality within the executive branch

- The Government Council for Gender Equality monitors the implementation of gender equality goals through regular reporting by the Gender Equality Department. It also makes recommendations to the Cabinet in the area of gender equality, though the Council has a limited mandate to follow up on its recommendations. As an important first step to strengthen executive accountability, the government could consider having a member of the government responsible for the gender equality policy (e.g. either a standalone minister or the Government Commissioner for Human Rights) systematically participate in the Cabinet to facilitate the implementation of the Council recommendations (Chapter 4).
- Considering the gender impact assessment requirement via the government resolution and the objectives of Strategy 2021 + to develop gender-sensitive legislation, there is a strong potential for the Legislative Council and the Regulatory Impact Assessment Board to play a more active challenge and oversight role in reviewing legislative proposals from a gender perspective (Chapter 4). Strengthening the gender expertise within the composition of these structures and pursuing a more gender-diverse composition of their members can help underpin these efforts.
- Establishing managerial accountability mechanisms within line ministries can help making progress on gender equality objectives. For example, gender equality-related performance targets could be introduced for managers in the Czech administration in line with the Civil Servants Act.

7.4.2. Accountability for gender equality through the parliament and independent institutions

- The Office of the Public Defender of Rights can benefit from greater capacities to promote reporting of discrimination and to effectively fulfil its mandate to protect people from discrimination. In particular, there is scope to strengthen the powers of the office to enforce its corrective measures as well as to conduct strategic litigation and abstract constitutional review.
- As the gatekeepers of the legislative agenda and oversight institutions for the work of the government, the Parliament can play an important role in the gender equality agenda. In this regard, parliamentary scrutiny for gender equality commitments and goals can be formalised through the work of the Standing Committee by considering a systematic review of GIA requirements and introducing mechanisms for the government to report annually to the Committee. There is also room to gradually consider gender perspective in the work of other Standing Committees and commissions of the Parliament as a cross-cutting matter.
- The Parliamentary Budget Committee is well-positioned to play a leading role in advancing gender budgeting in the Czech Republic.
- In the medium term and noting the trend across OECD members, the Supreme Audit Office in the Czech Republic can help accelerate the implementation of the gender policy through formal oversight and audits, as appropriate.

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Note

[1] The scope of the office's duties was broadened in an amendment to the Public Defender of Rights law (Act No. 198/2009 Coll.) in 2009.

Gender Equality in the Czech Republic

STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE RECOVERY

Despite recent progress to improve gender equality in the Czech Republic, several gender gaps persist in different areas of the society and economy. Based on growing evidence on how gender-sensitive policymaking can underpin inclusive growth and resilience, this OECD review has been developed to help the government of the Czech Republic strengthen its capacities for implementing and mainstreaming gender equality across the whole of government. It assesses strategic enablers such as legal and strategic frameworks, the institutional set-up, and accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in the country. It also examines the tools and practices that can be used to inform gender-sensitive policymaking in the Czech Republic. Drawing upon promising practices across OECD countries, it offers evidence-informed recommendations, tailored to the Czech context to improve governance and capacities for accelerating progress in gender equality.

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