

# Leave policies within the family policies in the Czech Republic

Jiřina Kocourková, Ph.D.

Department of Demography and Geodemography

Faculty of Science

Charles University in Prague

# Outline of presentation

1. Changes in family policy after 1989
2. Leave policies after 1989
3. Attitudes of Czechs towards recent policies
4. Conclusion

# Family policy system before 1990

- **Support to start family:** advantageous loans and family-friendly housing policies
- **Support for child-rearing:** direct and indirect financial compensation of expenses with upbringing and education of children
- **Support to reconcile work and family:** full-range system of child-care facilities for both pre-school and school children

# Family policy in the Czech Republic after 1989

- Shift from the state socialist model towards **refamilialization**
  - Reduction in family benefits
  - Implementation of extended parental leave
  - Abolition of childcare services for children under 3 years
- These policies **negatively influenced the possibilities for parents (mothers) to balance work and family life.**
- **Well-being of children under 3 years was given preference**
- **Impact on family situation:**
  - women are expected to leave the labour market for long period and women with children have a hard time finding jobs after returning to the labour market
  - Decrease in standard of living due to the absence of women's income
- **Macro-level impact:**
  - Fall in employment rate of women with young children
  - Drop in total fertility rate

# Maternity leave

- 28 weeks (since 1987)
- 90% of gross wage until 1992
- 69% of net wage in 1993-2008
- 70% of net wage since 2009
- Latest change:
  - Since 2009 mother could alternate with her husband in the care. It could start since the 7th week after childbirth

# Introduction of Parental leave (1)

- „Additional maternity leave“ before 1990
  - Introduced since 1970 as paid childcare leave and was available only to women with at least two children
  - Since 1987 a woman with at least two children could take this leave until her youngest child was 3 years old
- In 1990 „additional maternity benefit“ was renamed „parental benefit“ and all parent became entitled to this benefit for a period of 3 years irrespective of the number of children they had
- In 1995 the leave was extended until the child reached the age of 4 years

## Introduction of Parental leave (2)

- Leave was opened up for men in 1990, however it continued to be called an „additional maternity leave“ until 2001 when equal conditions for both parents were introduced
- Inconsistency in law related to parental leave and parental benefit still exists:
  - Parents can take leave until the child´s 3rd birthday
  - Parental benefit is granted until the child´s 4th birthday

# Increase in parental benefit

- By 40% in 2004
  - The flat rate in 2004 was equivalent to 20% of average gross earnings
- In 2007 to double the level by increasing the benefit to 40% of average earnings



# Improvements in flexibility of use

- Since 2001 parents can place a child under 3 years in a childcare facility for up to 5 days a month without losing parental benefit
- Since 2004 parents can work full time while receiving parental benefits
- Since 2006 parents can place a 3-year old child in kindergarten for up to 4 hours each day without losing benefit

# Reform of parental leave system since 2008

- The "three speed system" was introduced to give parents the possibility to make choice as regards the length of parental leave: until their child reaches 2,3 or 4 years of age - the shorter the period the, the higher the amount paid.
- flat-rate parental benefit can be received until the child is
  - two years old (CZ 11,400=€450) or
  - three years old (CZ7,600= €300) or
  - four years old: (CZ7,600= €300 until the child is 21 months and then CZ3,800= €150)

# Formal childcare arrangements

- After 1990 the government sharply reduced support for nursery schools
- Lack of access to daycare for children under 3 years
- The EU requirements for childcare are viewed as renewing the „forced“ pattern of combining female employment with childcare outside the family

# Attitudes of Czechs towards recent policies

- **Contradictory** attitudes = combination of all three ideological attitudes
  - (1) **Liberal** attitudes – support for cash benefits to decide how to use them rather than support for public institutions
  - (2) **Conservative** – preference for individual care of small children to institutional care, and support for traditional gender roles (majority oppose legislation that would force the father to take 2-4 months of parental leave)
  - (3) **Social-democratic** – believe in the need for generous state support

# Conclusion (1)

Parental leave arrangements in the Czech Republic:

- support women to stay at home rather than to reconcile work and childcare
- have failed to involve fathers in the childcare (share of men on parental leave is negligible)

# Conclusion (2)

- The Czech Republic has become the „outsider“ as regards the improvement of policies towards better reconciliation of work and family
- Refamilialization as a result of contradictory public attitudes
- No clear evidence of change towards defamilialization in the near future
  - Political instability
  - Limited state budget