Leave policies within the family policies in the Czech Republic

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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
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)
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