CHILDicare Policies in the Czech Republic

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Content and data sources

• Short comparison of contextual data – fertility, mothers’ employment, preferences
• Czech system of ECEC and enrolment in formal care and pre-school education
• Problems and dilemmas, deficiencies in the Czech system of ECEC
• Desirable changes of ECEC system and experts’ proposals

Data sources:
• OECD Family Database
• Czech quota sampling surveys of young children’s parents (2006-2014) and qualitative surveys (experts and parents)
Maternal employment rates by age group, 2011

Employment-to-population ratios (%) by country and age group

Czech R.
Hungary
Poland
Slovakia
Age-unemployment profiles (%), 2011
Maternal employment rates by age of the youngest child, 2011
Young children mothers’ employment participation – impact on family structures

Two-parent households, children age 0-14

- Slovak Republic
- Poland
- Hungary
- Czech Republic

- Both parents full-time
- One parent full-time
- Full-time // part-time
- Neither parent in employment
- Other
Young children mothers’ employment participation – impact on family structures

One-parent households, children age 0-14

- Parent working full-time
- Parent working part-time
- Parent not working

- Slovak Republic
- Poland
- Hungary
- Czech Republic
Childcare policy – individual vs. collective care

• Czech Republic – high and stable preferences of personal maternal care of young children

• Long maternity leave – up to 3 years (mandatory reservation of the working place)

• Even longer possibility to take parental allowance – up to 4 years of age since 1995

• Gradual relaxation of the conditions when drawing parental allowance in order to support the work-life balance:

  - unlimited additional part-time income allowed for parents on parental leave (2004),

  - gradual easing of the attendance of children in public childcare facilities while maintaining entitlement to parental allowance
Childcare policy – individual vs. collective care
continuing

• Gradual ‘flexibilisation of Parental Leave’
  - since 2008, parents had been able to choose one of three parental-allowance regimes differentiated by the duration of entitlement (2, 3 and 4 years) and the amount of benefit.
  - since 2012 parents can decide about its duration & leave payment period (19-48 months), when a total sum of CZK 220,000 (approx. 8150 EUR) is distributed in monthly installments.
Within family policy measures towards families with young children - clear preference for benefits before services incl. non-parental childcare

Among the three most important measures mothers of pre-school child include (RZV 2006):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well paid and long parental leave</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well paid maternity leave</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility to work part-time and flexible working hours</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently high child allowances</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good availability of kindergartens</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing for families with children</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good law protection of parents in employment</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good access of facilities for children under three years of age</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of facilities for children in after-school time</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High birth grant</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax cuts for those with dependent children</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of loans to young families</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preferred forms of care by the child’s age (regardless of the real chances) in 2006: the influence of social institutions on the preferred ideal on the example of the Czech Republic and Slovakia
Enrolment in formal care and pre-school by age, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Slovak Republic</th>
<th>EU 27 -average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 3 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 to 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Main reasons for a negligible share of children 0-3 years old in formal care: societal/structural + subjective

• Quantitative and qualitative shortages of the present system of ECEC

• Czech mothers’ preferences of their personal (family) care of children; during parental leave entitlement (up to 3 years of child’s age) they largely take care of the child personally. Mothers usually return to work when children are 3 years old; however, increasingly more interested in non-family care for children aged 2 years and younger (impact of changing economic and social conditions, changing preferences + changing rules for entitlement to parental allowances)

• These intentions are kept back by deficiency of day-care and early childhood education facilities

• If non-family daily care is used for a child aged less than 3, short-time and occasional forms are preferred vs. insufficient supply of individual and „alternative“ collective provisions
System of early childhood education and care in the C.R.

**Kindergartens**
operated according to the Education Act & Listed in School Register
- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
  (Includes COMPANY DAY CARE operated according to the Education Act)

**NON-SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS**
operated under the Trade Act
OR
operated according to the general regulations

- NURSERIES
- COMPANY ON-SITE DAY CARE operated on the basis of generally applicable laws or the Trade Licensing Act
- PLAYGROUPS operated by/in family centres
- OPEN AIR NURSERIES
- CRECHES
- COWORKING CENTRES

**CHILDREN's GROUPS**
operated according to the Act on the provision of childcare services in the children’s group

**Non-profit**

**Commercial**
Offer of day care services for children up to 3 years – capacity and structure of childcare – nurseries, etc.

• “Traditional” nurseries as medical institutions ceased to exist – covered only partly the demand (altogether 44 of them in the CZ) → their legal entity has been changing

• Today, 3 possible forms of providing day care (outside the Education Act):
  - functioning under the general law
  - under the Trade Act
  - as so-called “Children Groups”,

This applies to the "nurseries", (not registered company kindergartens and nurseries, non-commercial day-care services, etc.)

• Offer and utilization are not monitored, there is no register and no obligation to register → Not known how demand is met, the quality is very diverse, different prices (often restricting affordability)
Offer of day care services for children 3-6 - nursery schools (kindergartens)

- 5085 Kindergartens (363,6 thousand children) in 2013/14 - 291 were private or religious, others were run by municipalities (or counties or MŠMT)

- **Insufficient supply of kindergartens** - despite growing numbers of children the demand is not met - growing numbers of unsuccessful applications (however it is not possible to distinguish the number of multiple applications); regional differences; decreasing fertility makes for decreasing demand

- For children in the last year (usually 5-year-olds) the attendance is free, these children have a right to attendance – municipalities’ duty to provide/ensure access

- Growing interest in attendance to kindergartens for younger children (less than 3), it’s difficult to satisfy due to lack of places (they are not eligible for kindergarten) + the mentioned municipalities’ obligation → Problem of acceptance criteria – in excess of demand, there is the problem of discrimination (discrimination criteria – ombudsman)

- In public kindergartens relatively low fee → unequal conditions within the whole system od ECEC
Problems, dilemmas, deficiencies in early childhood education and care system

- Unjustified division – pre-school education (3 to 6) vs. day-care for children younger than 3 years
  - Differences between nursery schools (kindergartens) registered in the school register and other types of institutions: a clear and legally binding rules set vs. incoherent, inconsistent, inconsistent "rules" usually concerning individual aspects
    → recognized quality and high demand vs. varied quality → uncertainty of parents and providers, parents distrust
  - Other divisions: /not/having special legal basis, for-profit/non-profit services

- Transformation period for nurseries in their traditional (legal) form - they are not sufficiently replaced by other forms

- System does not cover the needs quantitatively – regional differences
Problems and dilemmas - continuing

• Mechanisms **guaranting the desired quality** of day care in all its extracurricular forms are not sufficiently developed - 3 basic institutional elements, which would provide it = quality standards, ensuring quality (education and care), unified information system (registr of providers)

• **Unequal conditions** for day-care services and early childhood education for children of different age, social background, place of living etc.

• **One-sided orientation to collective forms** of non-family care (and specifically to kindergartens) – individual forms of non-family care have insufficient legal and systematic bases
Dilemmas of the desired variability of ECEC system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variability and flexibility</th>
<th>vs.</th>
<th>Guarantee and quality</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility for all</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quality guarantee, common basic standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending the spectrum of services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring common basic rules, norms, standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure the right to education (from what age?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet child’s needs, individual development since early ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguish special needs by age (with boundary of 3 years of age)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Respect individual differences; different needs of families concerning childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable spectrum of services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unified conditions for different types of facilities/services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified register for all types of child-care services (for quality guarantee and information)</td>
<td>vs.</td>
<td>Variety of providers (approaches), incl. individual/independent competences of government departments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solving problems and dilemmas 1
Act on services of child-care provided in children’s groups

- Besides already mentioned deficiencies the system still does not react with sufficient flexibility to **differenciated and changing needs of children**, parents, families – **child care in the children's group** is supposed to be the remedy (enacted in November 2014 – Act on services of child-care provided in children’s groups …)

- This Act states:
  - basic rules and norms differentiating for groups of different size and age of children (from 1 year of age up to 6)
  - common qualification requirements, obligations concerning educational goals
  - formal and administration rules
  - non-profit basis of the services; principles of charging fees; tax reductions

- Introduction of the Act into practice meets problems coming from: restrained acceptation of „novelty“; not-satisfied expectations (costs, rules), heterogeneous needs (parents + providers), optional registration …..
Solving problems and dilemmas 2
Proposals of the working group for ECEC by the Expert Commission for Family Policy (appointed by the MoLSA CR in 2015)

> Create an **integrated model of ECEC** operated by the ministry of education youth and sports

  - **Open kindergartens for children younger** than 3 years – state a legal entitlement for ECEC for children of statutory age; (contemporary proposal accepted by the ministry of education is to progressively reduce boundary up to 2 years, while not for free for all /now for 5-years-olds/)
  - Create conditions for caring of and **education of very young children** in different alternative types of facilities
  - Guaranteed **financial affordability and space accessibility** for all children (from stated age) – special attention is given to families with higher number of children at pre-school age (reduce fee to enable them attendance)
  - Guaranteed **quality** care (children/carer ratio; educational plan; individual approach etc.)
  - Enable **flexibility of forms and freedom of choice**
Proposals of the working group for ECEC by the Expert Commission for Family Policy cont.

- Improve parents’ participation/involvement within the system of ECEC and decision-making at day-care/educational facilities (kindergartens)
  - Introduce school councils of parents (and other participants) at kindergartens
  - Improve interrelationship between kindergartens (day-care/educational facilities) and community (e.g. for social integration purposes)

- **Inclusive education**
  - every child and family should be valued equally and should deserve the same opportunities and experiences beginning at early childhood
Thank you

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