

A META-GOVERNANCE MODE OF GENDER EQUALITY POLICY ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

Czechoslovakia split into two independent states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, in 1993. Already after the Velvet Revolution and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic moved to a democratic government system. The analysis of this change is important for research, which will be discussed in a comparative aspect with Georgia (as a post-Soviet state, which was declared an independent state at the same time and began to change the government system) within the framework of a wide doctoral research. As the governance system changes, the process of policy planning and implementation changes, and the research will specifically address the issue of gender equality policy. Given the diversity of governance modes, the study will specifically address issues of network governance and meta-governance, and the analysis will be presented in relation to the gender equality policy of the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic is a member state of the European Union since 2004, the result of involvement in the mentioned international organization (as a transnational space with a network governance mode) in relation to gender equality policy will be discussed, through which the main research issue related to the identification of the European Union as a meta-governor in the transnational space and the consequences of inclusion in international networks will be answered.

Keywords

Meta-governance, Network governance, European Union, Gender equality, Policy networks

Introduction

The history of the governance system spans a long period and thus becomes conceptually diverse over the years. As the social background of the world changes over the years, it faces new challenges. The paper specifically focuses on the concept of governance mode, which is newly established in the scientific literature. Governance models are related

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to specific policies, which in the case of this work is presented on the example of gender equality policy. Specific issues are analyzed on the example of the Czech Republic, which is a prominent example as a former socialist state that is a member of the European Union. The European Union as a single, transnational space, in relation to the issue of integration, causes a discussion both in society and in scientific literature. Meta-governance as a governance mode has become popular since the 1990s due to the shortcomings of various governance models. Accordingly, from this period, the scientific literature takes the orientation of the research of the hybrid model and its implementation in the governance system. But the scientific literature still disputes the question of who can be a meta-governor. At the same time, the paper examines the issue of how European integration (In this case, joining the European Union) changes the system of a particular state in relation to the planning and implementation of policies (In this case, gender equality policy). Accordingly, by integrating these issues, the aim of the paper is to research the meta-governance mode of gender equality policy in the Czech Republic, as a result of which the following questions should be answered:

How European integration has changed the Czech system in the direction of planning and implementing gender equality policy?

How the meta-governance mode is implemented in the Czech Republic in relation to gender equality policy?

Does the European Union represents a meta-governor, in this case for one of its member state, the Czech Republic?

Speaking about the concept of Meta-governance, should be noted the Dutch scientist, Jan Kooiman, who represents the mentioned mode as the third order of governance and defines the evaluation of the existing system and its development as its function. Since the 1990s, this concept has been considered as an organization of self-organization (Jessop, 1998), where political networks and self-governing structures are given great importance. Compared to the essence of the concept, until now the scientific literature is not agreed on the question of who can be a meta-governor. Therefore, it can be said that this paper will try to fill the existing gap in the scientific literature on this issue and present a supranational political and economic union (European Union) in the role of a meta-governor on the example of a specific country (Czech republic) and a specific policy (Gender equality policy).

Qualitative research methods are used in the research process. First of all, the paper analyzed the secondary sources regarding the research issues. Based on the fact that the planning and implementation of gender equality policy should consider the involvement of different types of actors (State and non-state), in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of the non-governmental organizations working in the direction of gender equality policy. The paper analyzes the information obtained through in-depth interviews and the analysis of secondary sources, which answers the purpose of the paper regarding the meta-governance mode of gender equality policy in the Czech Republic.

The subsequent change in the public administration system of Czech Republic after disintegration of Czechoslovakia

When talking about the change in public administration, first of all, the issue of territorial organization should be mentioned after the Czech Republic was declared an independent republic in 1993. On January 26, 1993, presidential elections were held, as a result of which Vaclav Havel was elected as the first president of the independent Czech Republic (Luce, 1993).

The first stage of the public administration reform was the solution of problems related to the management of regions and their activities. This role includes creating strategies and setting the overall framework functioning of individual spheres of society.

Due to the fact that the first stage of regional arrangement was not decentralized, which was manifested in the limitation of self-government at the local level, the need to introduce the European model of public administration was on the agenda (Bureš et al., 2004). The Ministry of the Interior was granted the authority to carry out the reform of public administration. The highest level of self-government was enacted by the constitutional act no. 347/1997, on the Creation of Higher Territorial Self-Governing Units and on Amendments to Constitutional Act of the Czech National Council, No. 1/1993 Sb., the Constitution of the Czech Republic. Currently, the Czech Republic is divided into 14 regions (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 1997). So, the first stage of public administration reform included territorial reform, which itself comprised the establishment of regions and the transfer of competences from the central state apparatus. The second stage (2002) included the abolition of district offices and the transfer of competences to regions and municipalities. By 2004, the government represented the most important coordination mechanism at the level of the central state administration and played a crucial role in the management of the public sector. But at the same time, the state policy of the Czech Republic was aimed at greater development of horizontal coordination (Bureš et al., 2004).

In 2004, a material titled "Process and main trends of the central public administration reform and modernization" was prepared. Concept of the reform and modernization was adopted by the Government Resolution No. 237 of 17th March 2004. The material reflected the following areas of public administration reform (Nemec and Špaček, 2017):

- Rationalization of the central public administration processes;
- Better management within the central public administration;
- Higher quality of the central public administration;
- Implementation and improvement of civil service within the central administration authorities;
- Rationalization of the central public administration funding (Nemec and Špaček, 2017).

This approach made the state administration system more flexible in relation to the problems existing at the state or global level.

Vertical coordination between the state administration and self-government is carried out at the level so-called regional staffs. Regular meetings are held between the coordinators and the directors of the regional offices together with secretaries of municipalities with extended powers from the territory of the relevant region. Also, meetings are held

between the representatives of the central state administration and the Chief Executives of the regions. Meetings are arranged independently by the Prime Minister, as well as by individual ministers, or cooperatively for certain ministries (Bureš et al., 2004).

The introduction and implementation of a horizontal type of government begins during the policy aimed at building a democratic state, which is excluded in authoritarian states, where decisions are made hierarchically during the implementation of any state policy. For more clarity, horizontal governance is defined as follows: Horizontal governance includes policy development, service delivery issues and management practice approaches. A horizontal initiative can take place at different levels of government, across boundaries between units within a single department or agency or between multiple departments or agencies, the public, private and voluntary sectors. It replaces hierarchical leadership with cooperation, coordination, shared responsibility for decisions and results, and a willingness to work by consensus (Ferguson, Phil and Burlone, 2009).

In connection with its application for EU membership, the Czech Republic undertook to bring its national legislation into line with EU legislation. In 2005 The National Reform Program of the Czech Republic for 2005–2008 was developed, which is also known as the National Lisbon Programme, which aimed to strengthen political accountability for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy (Government of the Czech Republic, 2005). The second National Reform Program was prepared for the period of 2008–2010, which referred to the measures implemented in the economic sphere and employment policy in order to stimulate economic growth and employment in 2008–2010 (Government of the Czech Republic, 2008).

The Czech Republic is a member of the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN), which is an informal network of directors responsible for public administration in EU member states, the European Commission (EC) and observer countries. The Czech Republic is represented in the mentioned network by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic – Civil Service Section.

In summary, the change of the public administration system of the Czech Republic after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, in the first stage, was essentially related to the issue of territorial arrangement, which was manifested in the policy of decentralization. In the middle of the 1990s, when the dialogue on joining the European Union actively begins on the agenda of the state policy, the Czech Republic more actively tries to meet the requirements of the European Union in the direction of the issue of public administration, which implies the greater development of decentralization and the transfer of competencies and functions to local bodies. In relation to the mentioned issue, a number of reforms have been implemented, as mentioned above, but it would be productive to consider specific policy to discuss the existence and in case of existence effectiveness of horizontal coordination. So the paper specifically refers to the policy of gender equality, in connection with which the issue of public administration, in terms of policy planning or implementation, will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

An overview of the planning and implementation of gender equality policy in the Czech Republic before its preparation for and accession to the European Union (1993–1998)

The Constitution of the Czech Republic was adopted by the Czech National Council on December 16, 1992 and entered into force on January 1, 1993. The issue of gender equality is addressed in more detail in the Czech Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the mentioned Constitution. According to the charter: "Everyone is guaranteed the enjoyment of her fundamental rights and basic freedoms without regard to gender, race, color of skin, language, faith and religion, political or other conviction, national or social origin, membership in a national or ethnic minority, property, birth, or other status" (Government of the Czech Republic, 1992);

"Women, adolescents, and persons with health problems have the right to increased protection of their health at work and to special work conditions" (Government of the Czech Republic, 1992);

"Pregnant women are guaranteed special care, protection in labor relations, and suitable labor conditions" (Government of the Czech Republic, 1992).

After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic was recognized as a full member of the United Nations at the renewed 47th session of the United Nations General Assembly on January 19, 1993 (Roušar, 2006) and automatically accepted all obligations under the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Convention, which Czechoslovakia signed on July 17, 1980 in Copenhagen.

In the 1990s, existing women's civil unions avoided cooperation with the Czech Women's Union, which was a communist organization, as well as western feminists, and also differed from each other in themes, ideologies and organizational structures. Their activities were mostly fragmented and disjointed because they could not unite around a common theme. For example, they were united in relation to the issue of religion and political orientation. Religious women's organizations did not form coalitions with non-religious women organizations, but created their own umbrella organizations, e.g. Clubs of Christian women. An umbrella organization of left-wing women's clubs was also established in 1992. Until 2005, more than 70 clubs were registered under it (Hašková, 2005).

Another political initiative, the Democratic Alternative founded 1996 (according to Eva Vesinova-Kalivodova) or 1993 (according to Hana Hašková), wanted to create a political force out of various women's interest groups, and thus enter into a political dialogue on women's and broader social issues with the Parliament and with the all-male government. The Democratic Alternative platform supported right-wing parties that engineered the transformation of Czech society, but despite its loyalty, it was not recognized as a political partner. The Democratic Alternative tried unsuccessfully to take over the role of the Czech Women's Union, but failed to articulate any vision or implement any attitude towards the role of women in social transformation (Vesinova-Kalivodova, 1998).

In the first half of the 1990s, Czech women's civic groups joined and developed supportive networks with foreigners and international women's organizations rather than developing lobby networks within the country with government and party structures or organizations of a permanent nature (Hašková, 2005).

In the 1990s, an important event in the direction of gender equality policy was the Beijing World Conference held in 1995, and its practical outcome was a platform for action (Government priorities and procedures for the enforcement of the equality of men and women). Women's non-governmental organizations started jointly controlling the compliance of government policies with the ideas contained in the document (Hašková, 2005).

"Here was several NGOs, who was active in the specific gender issues (fulfill gaps in the areas where state wasn't much active). These non-governmental organizations analyzed and evaluated gender equality issues, on the other hand government and public people didn't believe so much in gender disbalance or people didn't understand how gender influence disbalances in society" (Interview with respondent N2, 12.10.2022).

Not long after the declaration of independence, the issue of joining the European Union was on the state agenda of the Czech Republic. Accordingly, to assess the issue of gender equality policy planning and implementation in this period, mainly non-governmental organizations were represented, whose main basis was legislative records. In this period, the active role of the state is not visible, and it can be said that the active discussion of gender equality policy starts from the period of preparations for joining the European Union (discussed in the next chapter), which also brought the necessary value for the effective implementation of this specific policy.

Changes in the planning and implementation of the Czech Republic's gender equality policy in preparation for and after accession to the European Union (1998-present)

Regarding EU membership, Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus filled out an application on January 23, 1996 in Rome. Czech Republic was represented by the government during the prime ministership of Josef Tošovský at the Czech-EU bilateral conference On March 30, 1998, which established Accession Partnership as a new framework for Czech-EU relations and further Czech adoption of the *acquis*. The accession negotiations started in March 1998 (Hanley, 2002).

In 1998, the Czech government approved the main program document Priorities and Procedures of the Government in Promoting Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in terms of accelerating change in the situation of gender equality (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021).

Czech Republic introduced ombudsman in 2000 (Millard, 2007), which summarizes the most important findings and recommendations regarding rights, discrimination, etc. in the annual report of the organization's activities and presents it to the Chamber of Deputies.

On the basis of Government Resolution No. 1033 of October 10, 2001, the Governmental Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was established, which today represents a permanent government advisory body in the field of creating equal opportunities for women and men.

Since 2004, the Czech Republic has been a member state of the European Union. Joining the European Union as a transnational space, of course, implies a certain modification of the governance system. Unification in the international political or economic space means uniting around a common goal, introducing best practices and adapting the state political system to the governance system of the transnational space. As mentioned above, after the declaration of independence of the Czech Republic, a horizontal governance approach was introduced in the state policy.

Multilevel governance refers to the joint engagement and negotiation of policy makers and stakeholder groups on a given issue at multiple levels. In the dominance of multilevel governance, policy makers pay more attention to vertical coordination, which involves communication with people at all levels, than to horizontal coordination. Communication is not limited to officials working at the same or adjacent levels. Moreover, international, national, regional and local officials in a given sector form their own policy networks that interact at all levels. The resulting networks resist hierarchical political control (Hague and Harrop, 2010, p. 271–272).

Accession to the European Union also involves the formation of political institutions, in the form of new agencies or coordination procedures or policy exchanges (Grabbe, 2007).

The first factor that appeared during the period of accession to the European Union was the source of funding, which influenced the active involvement of organizations involved in the planning or implementation of gender equality policies.

“Joining the EU was a good time for possibility to ask for subsidies. At that time we received big grant from European Commission, called Breaking the Waves and we associated with other NGOs in Czech Republic about different topics. It was about the pay gap, field of education, gender-based violence. This project was an umbrella for non-governmental organizations in the Czech Republic. We started to set up the agenda in this project, we created certain number of methodologies how to implement gender agenda on local level, government, companies, in the educational system. Due to the fact that gender equality is one of the important values of the European Union, it was necessary to talk about this topic” (Interview with respondent N2, 12.10.2022).

“A source of funding and large projects for non-governmental organizations appeared. It was a flourishing period for organizations working on gender issues. The distribution of funds received from the European Union is not systematic, which reduces funding for non-governmental organizations. The state budget is less focused on gender equality policy.” (Interview with respondent N3, 18.10.2022).

Also, during the period of joining the European Union, as mentioned above, in 2001, the the Governmental Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was formed, which is one of the platforms in the process of lobbying and advocacy of gender equality issues. Therefore, the method of cooperation with the state has also changed, which in some cases is successful, in some cases unsuccessful, but most importantly there is a space for negotiation and discussion.

“We are cooperating with government, now there is commission care about women and babies under the ministry of health, our president is member of commission. We gather around a common table with gynecologists, pediatricians and jointly discuss

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the issue of care. Some politicians support us in the lobbying process, some of them do not want to have an official chamber of midwives in the Ministry of Health" (Interview with respondent N1, 11.10.2022).

"Government council has fixed membership, there are representatives of various ministries, state institutions, trade unions, employers' union, NGOs, academic experts. Each of them attends meetings. Depending on the difficulty and need of the issue, regardless of status, any person whose presence is important to resolve the issue is invited. Government council has some committees, which is focused on specific agendas. Government council is definitely open and reason is transparency. Whatever progressive policy in the field of gender equality discussed in the council it is very likely to pass resolution, but problem is when this resolution comes to government. They have different opinions about the resolution, but when the government is more right wing or conservative they are not willing to deal with this issue. Government council was also responsible to prepare government strategy of gender equality (I–2014–2020, II–2021–2030). Various actors were involved in its preparation. The mentioned strategy was written correctly and well, but the problem is its reflection only on paper, there is no force which would translate this strategy into reality. The communication with the government council is different, professional, open, discursive" (Interview with respondent N3, 18.10.2022).

A number of issues related to gender equality policy, such as the anti-discrimination law, the recognition of professional education qualifications, pay gap, gender-based violence, were put on the agenda of the state policy. In 2009, the Czech Republic adopted anti-discrimination legislation that guarantees the right to equal treatment and prohibits discrimination in various areas (Government of the Czech Republic, 2009).

"In 2004–2005, attention was focused on the implementation of midwives' education. The education is now in line with EU legislation, this has been a great success, also reflected in the fact that there is now a bachelor's degree in Midwifery" (Interview with respondent N1, 11.10.2022).

"We are an active member of the Government Council, we cooperate with them quite closely. For example, we have created a gender audit methodology that is used in universities, in the academic sector, because in order to receive subsidies from the European Commission, it is necessary to submit a gender equality strategy or an action plan. Therefore, it is necessary to create a gender audit. Gender equality strategy and methodology are also used by companies and this was our success" (Interview with respondent N2, 12.10.2022).

On the agenda of the Czech Republic, there are still a number of issues that have not been implemented, such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the law on mandatory gender quotas, gender balance on the corporate board.

"You can have a very good law, but if you don't have the right implementation, not much changes. For example, the gender pay gap still exists. For instance, there is an institution that is supposed to monitor fairness in companies and institutions regarding employees, but they do not deal with these cases" (Interview with respondent N2, 12.10.2022).

"We were promoting directive regarding gender balance on corporate board. It was never actually passed. Problem is that companies have less women on their board. We need measure to push state and private companies to do something in this case. Also regarding

the directive on equality between women and men in the field of decision-making, the government has said that they do not want this directive which limits the free market" (Interview with respondent N3, 18.10.2022).

Finally, to assess the role of EU accession in the change of Czech state policy in relation to gender equality policy and to answer one of the research questions on how European integration has changed the Czech system in the direction of planning and implementing gender equality policy, it is clear that significant changes have been made in the direction of state governance. First of all, a number of institutions or structures were created, cooperation between state and non-state actors changed.

"Accession to the European Union had a positive impact on public administration. New institutions were created, including the Gender Equality Council, which in turn encourages local gender equality policy organizations to be actively involved in lobbying and advocacy" (Interview with respondent N3, 18.10.2022).

Czech legislation has adapted to EU legislation, which in turn has had an impact on the governance and administration model. The state focused on specific problematic issues in the direction of gender equality, choosing the method of horizontal coordination with the involvement of actors of all types and at any level. Nowadays, there are a number of issues on the agenda, the implementation of which faces a problem from the side of the state or society, but the current situation in the direction of gender equality is the result of the membership of an international organization, in this case the European Union, followed by more subsidies, the introduction of a new governance mode in the form of network governance (discussed in detail in the next chapter) and the sharing of international practices due to the global nature of the problem.

The concept of Meta-governance and the European Union in the role of Meta-governor in relation to gender equality policy

Before talking about the Meta-governance mode, it is interesting to discuss the network governance mode, the main pillar of which is policy networks. A network governance perspective implies the involvement of multiple actors. Regarding the operation of the networks, the German political scientist Fritz Scharf notes that the networks are embedded in a hierarchical structure and the government has the right to approve or disapprove the results of negotiations. Often the government creates the networks or the procedures on which these networks operate. He considers this approach as a shadow of hierarchical authority (Scharpf, 1994). Policy outcomes are not the product of central government actions. The center may make a law, but then it interacts with the local government, private sector, etc. Accordingly, the mentioned actors also interact with each other. All actors in a particular policy field need each other. Everyone can include relevant knowledge or other resources. No one has a completely relevant and comprehensive knowledge or resources for policy work (Rhodes, 1996).

In terms of network governance, in the period of preparations for and after the accession to the European Union, the existence of policy networks at the national level was actively introduced in the Czech Republic, as well as the practice of involvement in international, transnational networks. Based on the fact that the research is specifically related to gender

equality policy, it will be interesting to discuss the existing networks at the national level and the involvement of specific organizations in international networks.

Currently, the Czech Women's Lobby (36 organizations are its members) is functioning in the Czech Republic, which is an umbrella organization for local organizations working in the direction of gender equality. There is also a European women's lobby at the European level, of which the Czech women's lobby has been a member since 2005.

It is an interesting question how coordination between different types of actors (state, non-state) takes place at the national or international level.

"In the Czech women's lobby, we have working groups in a specific direction (group on gender-based violence, implementation of the gender agenda). Organizations that are not members of the Czech Women's Lobby are also invited to the groups" (Interview with respondent N2, 12.10.2022).

"Czech women's lobby is member organization of European women's lobby and also the member organization of the European Women's Lobby should be an umbrella organization at the national level. We can participate in the activities of the European Women's Lobby. In order to avoid chaotic communication, communication with the European Women's Lobby is done through the Czech Women's Lobby" (Interview with respondent N3, 18.10.2022).

Organizations working in the direction of midwives' rights are also actively represented in international networks, such as the European Association of Midwives (EMA).

"The European Association of Midwives (EMA) holds a general meeting once a year, gathering midwives from member countries and discussing important issues. If we have any kind of problem in the organization, we can ask this association for help" (Interview with respondent N1, 11.10.2022).

Based on the existence and need of the network governance mode, at the same time, the need to discuss a new type of hybrid form of governance mode was on the agenda.

Meta-governance is a new concept that has been discussed in the scientific literature since the 1990s. The 1980s and 1990s are important to note because of the problems that existed during this period, such as the failure of the state-market combination and the decline of social integration in advanced capitalist societies. This has been reflected in such considerations as governmental overload, a crisis of legitimacy and governance. This has led to theoretical and practical interest in the potential for coordination through self-organizing heterarchical networks and partnerships and other forms of reflexive collaboration. Governance in this period refers to the structures and practices involved in the coordination of social relations marked by complex, reciprocal interdependence. And meta-governance, in turn, implies the coordination of these structures and practices (Jessop, 2011).

One of the authors most often cited as the originator of the term meta-governance is the Dutch scientist, Jan Kooiman. He introduces the concept of the third order of governance in the scientific literature. First-order governance is involved in solving day-to-day problems and creating opportunities and second-order governance is concerned with institutional governance conditions. Meta-governance is like an imaginary governor teleported to a point "outside" and casts the entire experience of governance in a normative light. The main function of meta-governance is the assessment of the existing system

and serves the development of norms and criteria in accordance with the assessment of existing practices. It also suggests new directions, examines existing goals, and creates and pursues new ones (Kooiman, 1993). From the concept, an interesting question is who can govern the governor to which Kooiman responds as follows:

"In meta governing interactions, governors and governed alike "take each other's measure" in formulating the norms and criteria by which they want to judge each other and measuring itself" (Kooiman, 1993, p. 170–172).

The internationalization of policy regimes includes the extension of domestic state actions to the level of the international context and a wide range of transnational factors and processes. In this process, the role of the state remains as an important political factor, and Bob Jessop also sees its role as a meta-governor, whose functions include coordinating different governance systems and ensuring a minimum sequence between them (Jessop, 1997). States (act as a 'court of appeal') have a key role here, as the main organizer of dialogue between policy communities, as an institutional ensemble tasked with ensuring a certain coherence between all subsystems, as a source of regulatory order through which they can pursue their goals, and as a sovereign power responsible for "last resort" compensatory actions where other subsystems fail (e.g. markets, unions or the science policy community) (Jessop, 1998).

Heterarchy should also be noted here, as a mechanism that enhances the state's ability to achieve political goals by sharing power with forces outside the state and/or delegating responsibility for specific goals to partners operating in the shadow of the hierarchy (or other heterarchical arrangements). Bob Jessop presents the concept of meta-governance as 'organization of self-organization', which includes the design and vision of institutions that can facilitate not only self-organization in different fields, but also the relative coherence of different goals, spatial and temporal horizons, actions and results of different self-organizing arrangements. In relation to heterarchies, it creates a context within which heterarchies can be formed, rather than developing specific strategies and initiatives for them (Jessop, 1998).

The paper considers the European Union as a meta-governor in relation to the Czech gender equality policy. It can be said that the European Commission, as the executive body of the European Union, plays the role of a meta-governor at the international level, which is expressed in recommendations and directives for the Czech Republic, as well as for other member states. Gender equality is one of the main values of the European Union, which is adapted into its legislation and is a requirement for the member states. Regarding issues of gender equality, various directives and recommendations were issued to the Czech Republic, among which was DIRECTIVE 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, which was implemented in the Czech law.

"Regarding educational qualifications, we have a record in the law, but we can't use it in practice" (Interview with respondent N1, 11.10.2022).

While the Czech Republic has enacted anti-discrimination legislation, including the Equal Pay Directive, the extent to which it is implemented in practice is a matter of dispute. Regarding the formal or practical implementation of the directives, control is carried out at least on a formal level, the extent to which each recommendation or directive is implemented.

"You have some deadlines for implementing directive, The need for annual research and survey is on the agenda. The European Union also conducts various surveys on how a number of directives are implemented in the member states. In case of non-compliance, the state pays a fine" (Interview with respondent N2, 12.10.2022).

In the Czech Republic, there is a party quota, the same as a voluntary one, when the political parties voluntarily consider the gender quota in the lists. Also, the European Union actively implements directive about the gender balance on corporate board.

"We were promoting directive regarding gender balance on corporate board. It was never actually passed. Problem is that companies have less women on their board. We need measure to push state and private companies to do something in this case. Also regarding the directive on equality between women and men in the field of decision-making, the government has said that they do not want this directive which limits the free market. We still have a recommendation regarding the gender quota" (Interview with respondent N3, 18.10.2022).

In summary, the European Union can be seen as a meta-governor, which through various practices (policy networks, recommendations, directives, etc), plays the role of coordinator in the direction of implementation of various policies. Membership of the transnational space implies certain obligations, which are carried out independently, firstly at the national level through the coordinating role of the state (which certainly does not imply sole control) and then with the recommendations and assistance of a supranational organization (in this case, the European Union). Accordingly, a meta-governor can be any type of organization, depending on what level (national or international) we are considering. In this case, it was discussed at the international level on the example of a specific country, which reveals the role of the EU as a meta-governor in the implementation of the Czech gender equality policy. In terms of effectiveness, it can be said that the degree of implementation of directives and recommendations is not perfect, but the background that the Czech Republic maintains today demonstrates the role of European integration in the effective implementation of gender equality policy, because the issue, due to its global nature, requires the sharing of international practices, which also require a common transnational space and its effective governance approaches, which lies between the network governance mode and the need to have a hybrid approach for greater coordination efficiency.

Conclusion

The first chapter of the paper discussed the issue of public administration changes in the Czech Republic after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the declaration of the Czech Republic as an independent republic. The mentioned period was mainly devoted to the issue of territorial organization, which was manifested in decentralization and the transfer of certain functions to local bodies. The fact of joining the European Union is an important stage in the history of the Czech Republic, which affected the state governance processes. Due to the fact that the paper specifically focuses on gender equality policy, the planning process of gender equality policy was discussed in different periods, such as the process of preparation for EU accession and the post-accession period.

As a result of the research, an important factor of joining the European Union was revealed, which consisted in the formation of new institutions, the mobilization of funding and, in general, the planning and implementation of public policy. First, organizations and institutions were formed that were actively involved in the planning and implementation of gender equality policy, including the Gender Equality Council and the Office of the Ombudsman. The mentioned process was important for non-governmental organizations, as non-state actors, which, through EU funding, implemented important projects and initiatives in the direction of gender equality policy.

One of the main issues of the research was the changes in the direction of public governance and the current approach. The expansion of supranational organizations was accompanied by the introduction of a certain type of governance system, one of the prominent examples of which is the implementation of governance processes through policy networks. The European Union, as one of the supranational organizations, in terms of political relations with its member states, considers the involvement of various actors (state, non-state) from a particular state. A similar type of approach leads to a network governance mode that can be implemented both nationally and internationally. But along with the development of the network governance mode, the question of the effectiveness of self-governing networks coordination came up on the agenda of the scientific literature. Accordingly, the research revealed that meta-governance in the Czech Republic is implemented at the national level, through the state as a meta-governor, because there are not many networks working on gender equality issues at the national level, in which the communication and discussion of the involved organizations or stakeholders is provided by the Gender Equality Council, which is an advisory body of the government. As for the international level, local organizations are involved in international networks, and the European Union participates in the design or implementation of policies, as a meta-governor, with non-traditional hierarchical intervention, but as a coordinator that regulates the interaction of different structures (through recommendations or directives). Finally, it can be said that the accession to the European Union has significantly changed the governance system of the Czech Republic in relation to gender equality policy, which clearly shows the importance of membership in the transnational space, the main result of which is the sharing of governance practices, so that the state maintains its independence at the national level and at the same time implements the state policy in a progressive manner.

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