

## **The Europeanization of Social Movements in the Czech Republic: Political Activism of Women's Groups**

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*Abstract: The goal of this paper is to analyze the impact the EU has had on Czech women's groups since the 1990s. The first section debates possible theoretical approaches to the study of Europeanization of political activism. The second section describes the transformation of the Czech political opportunity structure induced by the accession process. The third section focuses on the consequences for Czech women's groups of increased reliance on EU funding. The fourth section analyzes opportunities for transnational cooperation created by the eastward enlargement of the EU. The paper concludes by summarizing its main findings.*

## Introduction

The women's movement in the Czech Republic is formed by a number of various nongovernmental organizations and informal groups which focus on the issue of the position of women and men in society. In spite of the fact that these organizations and groups in the women's movement started to appear directly after the fall of the Communist regime, their more pronounced activation came about only in the second half of the 1990s. The driving mechanism was the beginning of the accession process of the Czech Republic (CR) into the European Union (EU) which demanded certain policy measures in the area of gender equality. The goal of this paper is therefore to analyze the impact of EU influence on the sector of Czech women's groups.<sup>1</sup>

The first section defines the theoretical standpoint of our paper. We take as our starting point the theory of Europeanization which, however, we reformulate in such a way as to develop an adequate theoretical basis for studying the impact of the EU both on the structure of political institutions and on the organizational development and interactions of the chosen group of political actors. The second section describes the shift in the political context – the domestic political opportunity structure in the Czech Republic – in connection with the accession process. The third section is focused on the impact of changes in the funding of women's groups which, since the end of the 1990s, have relied ever more on European financial sources. The fourth section analyzes transnational cooperation, for which new opportunities have appeared with the eastern expansion of the EU. In this section we will be interested in the extent to which Czech women's groups have taken real advantage of these opportunities. In conclusion, we summarize the main findings of this paper.

## Europeanization

Since the end of the 1990s, researchers have taken increased notice of phenomena connected to European integration – Europeanization – both in the member states and in the countries preparing to join the EU. In contrast to the theory of integration, which has studied the causes

of the integration process, the theory of Europeanization focuses on the impact of this process on the European states and actors operating within their boundaries. The research program of Europeanization thus presents a "top-down" view which takes as its dependent variable not the integration process, but rather the changes brought on by it within the national political structures, in policies, and in the interactions of actors operating in the context of member and acceding EU states. According to Radaelli (2003: 30), Europeanization refers to "[p]rocesses of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things', and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies." Based on this approach, the theory of Europeanization, simply put, concerns changes in national polities, policies, and politics induced by the adaptation pressure from the EU.

Other authors define Europeanization as a concrete manifestation of international institutionalization within the European area. Europeanization is understood here as "*the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance*, that is, of political, legal, and social institutions associated with political problem solving that formalize interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules. Europeanization involves the evolution of new layers of politics that interact with older ones." (Risse et al. 2001: 3) Europeanization is thus primarily understood as the development of new – supranational – structures of political decision-making. Similarly to Radaelli, research here is exclusively aimed at the effects this new structure has had in national political contexts. This version, too, preserves the "top-down" view. It studies the EU pressure in member and acceding states. This pressure is observable in individual *policies* as well as in institutional structures (*polity*) and political interactions (*politics*) in EU member countries and countries applying for membership (Schimmelfennig 2002, Börzel, Risse 2003, Grabbe 2003).

This paper takes as its theoretical starting point a critically reformulated model of Europeanization which goes beyond the simple "top-down" conceptual view presented above (see Tarrow 2004, Císař 2005a, 2005b, 2007). According to the reformulated model, the influence of the EU not only changes the domestic rules of the game and redistributes resources available in the domestic political arenas. It also enables particular groups of political actors to expand the scope of their activity and either to enter into direct interaction with European institutions or with EU-supported networks of nongovernmental organizations.

As already pointed out by the theory of multilevel governance in the mid-1990s, the political process in the EU is characterized by the interconnectedness of subnational, national, and European institutions that enable political actors at different levels to interact and establish various types of coalitions (Rucht 2001, Helfferich, Kolb 2001, Martin, Ross 2001, Greenwood 2003). According to the proponents of the theory, the European multi-level polity has made new political opportunities available which allow for collective action (or interest group pressure) on various levels. The EU level interests us here. Similarly to national social movements that emerged in response to the development of the modern nation state, some authors anticipate the development of "transnational social movements" in response to the development of the European multilevel polity (Marks, McAdam 1999).

Others claim that the complexity of the European governance does not allow for authentic European social movements, at the same time active on the European level and embedded in domestic social networks, to emerge (Imig, Tarrow 2001, Greenwood 2003: 272, Tarrow 2004, Císař 2004). However, this does not mean that European politics would remain outside the influence of organized interests and social movements. The currently developing governance structure of the EU provides various opportunities for political action. According to S. Tarrow (2004: 53), "the map of Europe today offers the potential for coalition building, political exchange, and the construction of mechanisms of alignment and conflict among social actors across states, sectors, and levels of decision making. These can take horizontal as well as vertical form. Regional governments, political parties, and even social movements are reaching across and above their territories to exercise leverage against other actors, national states, and supranational authorities."

European institutions provide unique opportunities for active advocacy strategies of various interest groups and social movements. As a result, they Europeanize their activities. However, Risse and his collaborators fail to understand this dynamic. The effects of the integration process – Europeanization – are much more complex than suggested by the original models of Europeanization. Because of their research perspective, these fail to take into account a particular type of interactions which may theoretically be enabled by Europeanization. Europeanization does not influence the dependent variable (states and actors operating within their institutional framework) only in one dimension, on the domestic level, but also brings into the picture a new dimension, that of opportunities for transnational action. These, then, represent the second side of the Europeanization process.

In this paper we focus on the Europeanization of women's agenda on two levels. On the one hand, we will follow changes in the domestic political context (*polity*) in this policy

area induced by the EU pressure on the Czech Republic during the accession process. Using the terminology of the theory of collective action, we will analyze interactions between domestic and European political opportunity structures and indicate how the EU has gradually opened political opportunities within the domestic structure (see also Sikkink 2005). We will further analyze expressions of Europeanization in the dimension of political interactions (*politics*). Here we will focus on the impact of Europeanization on the organizational development of women's groups, which in the second half of the 1990s was heavily influenced by a changed context of their funding. The EU started to play an ever greater role in their budgets as compared to the situation of the early 1990. We will also take into account the transnational action of Czech women's groups, both with regard to their interaction with EU institutions and their cooperation with nongovernmental networks supported by the EU. This paper thus does not focus only on the direct impact of the accession process, but also analyzes further fundamental changes, which this process and the subsequent entry into the EU have brought along.

#### Context

Political opportunities for actors advocating equality between men and women in the Czech Republic were closed up to the end of the 1990s. The question of equality between men and women was not regarded as a relevant political problem by the political elites. Moreover, as a response to the formation of the right-wing coalition government in 1992 institutional opportunities closed for all nongovernmental advocacy organizations (see Frič 2001). A change in the configuration of political opportunities in the area of women's rights thus did occur only after the accession process had started. When the CR started accession negotiations, the so-called Fourth Action Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, planned for the years 1996-2000, was underway in the EU.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the CR agreed to adopt the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in 1995 in Beijing.<sup>3</sup> It was thus pressure from international organizations, chiefly the EU, which, in the area under study, brought along and opened political opportunities in the CR.

The Czech government started to deal with the women's agenda in September 1997, when the Interdepartmental Commission for the Position of Men and Women was established (Marksová-Tominová 1999). In the beginning of 1998, coordination of these policies was entrusted to the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, while all ministries were simultaneously obligated to start cooperation with nongovernmental women's organizations.

The necessity for harmonizing legal regulations between the CR and the EU resulted in further institutional steps: the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs set up a Department for the Equality of Men and Women, which prepared and presented a governmental proclamation entitled "The Government Priorities and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Equality of Men and Women". It was the first official document focused in any way on the women's agenda (Musilová 1999). Representatives of nongovernmental women's organizations took part in the preparation of the document, which the Czech government used as part of the accession negotiations for entry into the EU.

The social democratic government continued in the same direction when it entered power after the 1998 elections. Its equal opportunity policy was understood to be a component of human rights policies. When in December the Council of the Government of the CR for Human Rights was established, its activities in monitoring and evaluating respect for human rights also expressly included evaluating the fulfilment of international commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In January 2000, one of its advisory sections was renamed as the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was composed of representatives from nongovernmental women's organizations, as well as representatives of the relevant ministries and experts.

A similar development took place at the end of the 1990s in Parliament. In September 1998 a social democratic Member of Parliament, with the active participation of the Czech Union of Women (CSZ), initiated the establishment of a parliamentary Subcommittee for Equal Opportunities and Questions of the Family under the Committee for Social Policy and Healthcare. Aside from parliamentary representatives, the subcommittee also included representatives of nongovernmental women's organizations (Marksová-Tominová 1999).

Governmental Decree 456/2001 further obligated each ministry to name a single state official to serve the ministry as coordinator for equal opportunities in the area of activity of the ministry. The institutional anchoring of EU law in the Czech context culminated in October 2001 in the establishment of the independent Government Council for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, where representatives of the ministries were seated side-by-side with representatives of nongovernmental women's organizations, along with employers' delegations and the Czech Statistical Bureau (Linková 2003). An important ally in implementing the women's agenda was the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and later Premier, V. Špidla. In spite of the negative stance of his fellow party members, he brought the Council of Government for Equal Opportunities into existence.

The basis for European equal opportunities policy is so-called *gender mainstreaming*, which refers in practice to the systematic integration of equal opportunities and the principle of equality into all policies, programs and projects of the member states (Musilová 1999). The EU champions certain concrete issues in this area. Issues of discrimination on the basis of *gender* in the workplace, domestic violence and questions related to balancing the professional and family lives of women and men have been, thanks to the EU pressure, introduced at the national level and recognized within the Czech context as relevant political problems. Only as part of the accession process did they acquire political meaning, even though local women's groups had been advocating these issues throughout the 1990s. In the context of the accession process, the issues of domestic violence and wage discrimination on the labour market lost their "feminist" label and began to be seen as "social problems". Other issues like the asymmetrical power structure (the introduction of quotas for management positions) and other questions arising from the mobilization for women's rights were seen by the state administration as insubstantial or, in the case of sexual harassment, even caricatured (Linková 2003).

Drawing on the preceding discussion, we conclude that the EU acted in the CR during the 1990s as a "certification agency" (not just in the context of policies of equality for men and women), whose policy determined which particular political demands would be recognized or not recognized as actually relevant. This top-down action of Europeanization may be described by means of the causal mechanism of "certification". In line with the contemporary theory of collective action, we understand certification to be "an external authority's signal of its readiness to recognize and support the existence and claims of a political actor" (Tilly, Tarrow 2007: 215). Czech women's groups acquired access to the political system only on the basis of the pressure exerted on the relatively closed domestic political opportunity structure by the most important external agency in the region – the EU.

### Organizational Development

In addition to the influence the EU had over the state institutions, which shaped the context of Czech women's groups political action, there was also direct influence on the organizational development of these actors. Similarly to other sectors of political activism (e.g., environmentalism), Czech women's groups had been dependent upon external funding from various foreign institutions since they emerged in the beginning of the 1990s. (Another crucial resource was volunteering.) While in the beginning of the 1990s women's organizations had been funded primarily from the sources of American foundations and individual European

states, by the end of the 1990s, when the CR began to be seen as a consolidated democracy on the path to the EU membership, these foundations closed down or severely cut back their programs (see Mareš et al. 2006). It was at this moment that the dominant potential source of funding became the EU and its programs. This brought with it an entire series of changes, not only in terms of funding strategies, but also in the organizational structure of the groups themselves, in their goals, and in the general functioning of the sector of Czech women's organizations (Hašková 2005).

The original organizational form of most groups, which was determined by the ways of their funding in the 1990s, did not attain a high level of formalization. The organizations chiefly comprised small groups of 10 or 20 people, with sometimes as few as two active members. Thanks to the flexibility of projects funded from foreign sources, which supported not just concrete projects, but also provided funding directly for organizational development, these women's groups were capable of obtaining the funds for their operation (ibid.).

At the end of the 1990s, practically the only source of funding became the EU. This brought about a marked change in the functioning of Czech women's groups. Money from the EU is tied to particular issues; there are time limitations and precisely defined objects for spending. Furthermore, attainment of these grants is conditioned by the existence of formal statutes on the part of applicants (Hašková 2005, Hašková, Křížková 2006: 93). The organization must fulfil a wide range of formal criteria and accommodate EU requirements in various dimensions: for example, the form of organizational structure, goals, cooperation with other organizations.

Concretely, this has meant the groups have had to professionalize and "projectify" their activities in order to qualify for "European money". Only formally registered groups with adequately developed organizational capacity (stable organizational and financial facilities, employees under contract) may consider funding from the EU. This organizational capacity at the same time makes it possible for them to accommodate themselves to the demands of European grants. Organizations require continual funding, but all they have at their disposal is funding for individual projects. This makes it necessary to cover costs not related to any particular project by placing them in the project budget as well. The administrative demands for EU projects are thus much greater than had been the case with the American foundations. Their results, however, are comparable (Interview 2).

The EU pressure is not limited, as has already been noted, only to the organizations' management activities, but also concerns the goals they pursue (Hašková, Kolářová 2003). In order to ensure their survival, i.e., to ensure they get EU grants, they must fulfil EU



requirements not only in terms of their organizational form, but also in terms of the agenda they follow. Thus, their projects have to be designed around concrete issues corresponding to the EU priorities in the area of equal opportunities, which in the current period means the *gender mainstreaming* program. Organizations which were either unwilling to or incapable of adapting their agendas ceased to exist. Those, which have survived, either had worked on these issues already before or adapted themselves: they have transformed their agenda, have employed more people, brought in professional fundraisers, and focused on grants and networking with state administration which redistributes these funds (Hašková, Křížková 2006: 95).

The financial mechanisms of Europeanization pressure have not globally transformed the organizational structure of Czech women's groups, but have introduced dividing lines into the sector. Alongside gradually professionalizing organizations groups have remained which did not wish to follow the path of change demanded by the EU or, for capacity reasons, were unable to do so. These are primarily groups whose thematic focus falls outside the issues supported by the EU, including ecofeminist groups (see Kapusta-Pofahl et al. 2005) or organizations lacking adequate organizational capacity, e.g., Information Centre NORA (see Císař, Vráblíková 2006). On the other hand, thanks to the formalization of the majority of existing organizations, completely new groups and initiatives have emerged which reject this trend programmatically. These are informal or radical feminist groups which do not wish to apply for large grants and cooperate with the state administration. These groups are small, unregistered and less official, with a smaller number of employees or volunteers. They are not project-oriented and work with small budgets (mostly of volunteer origin or financed from their own activities). In contradistinction to groups who started out similarly in the beginning of the 1990s, groups emerging at the turn of the century, e.g. the Watch Bitch and the Anarcha-feminist group, categorically reject the above-described formalization trend and the accompanying changes in the funding formula. EU funding in this sector of political activism acts as a differentiating factor dividing, on the one hand, formalized organizations capable of obtaining funding and simultaneously getting involved in the political process from, on the other hand, groups with no access to these resources. The latter do not cooperate with the state administration and their strategic repertoire concentrates rather on direct action (Kolářová 2004, Vráblíková 2007).

There has also been restructuring of the Czech women's group sector at the level of sectoral cooperation. During the 1990s, Czech women's groups did not create umbrella organizations as was the case in other sectors (e.g. SOHO in the gay and lesbian movement).

Their activities were fragmented and wider coalitions were established only on the basis of concrete issues, or based upon ideological goals. Only as a result of the accession process the Czech women's groups sector gave rise to platforms established in order to represent various organizations. The first response to the opening opportunities in the Czech political system under the EU pressure (see the Context section) was the umbrella organization Association for Equal Opportunities (APR). The organization formed in 1998 in an attempt to present a unified partner for political representation (Marksová-Tominová 1999). It more or less played this role for a certain period of time in relation to the Council of Government for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. This umbrella organization, however, did not include all the important players in the sector. The Czech Union of Women (CSZ)<sup>4</sup> and the Union of Catholic Women (UKZ) were not among its members. For reasons of inadequate organizational capacity, the APR was not able to achieve its goal of effectively advocating the interests of Czech women's groups and thus remained essentially a "dead" organization. The role of umbrella organization passed to the member organization of the European Women's Lobby – the Czech Women's Lobby (CZL). In contrast to the APR, the CSZ and the UKZ are both key members in the CZL.

In accord with the reformulated model of Europeanization, we thus maintain that the pressure, or rather "attractiveness", of opening opportunities at the European level resulted in the creation of the first actual umbrella organization of Czech women's groups. Thank to this "pressure" or "attractiveness" of opening opportunities, groups which had spent the 1990s marking off territory from each other rather than seeking ways to unite, came together in a single platform. This dimension of Europeanization will be the subject of the next section.

### Transnational Ties

Europeanization did not make itself felt exclusively in the two above-discussed forms. New opportunities for cooperating at the European level for nonstate actors in the EU member states have brought along changes in the pattern of these groups' political action. In the policy area of gender equality, these opportunities are primarily provided by the European-wide platform called the *European Women's Lobby* (EWL). It was founded in 1990 as the result of a combination of "bottom-up" mobilization and the activism of the European Commission in this policy area (Interview 1). At the present time, the organization claims 4000 women's groups as members and acts as their representative in European affairs. The goal of the organization is "to achieve equality between women and men, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, to ensure that women's human rights are respected and to

eradicate violence against women and finally, to make sure that gender equality is taken into consideration in all European Union policies." (EWL 2007). The organization considers its greatest success to-date to be its lobbying campaign before the conclusion of the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), thanks to which the resulting document contained important provisions in the area of equality between men and women and discrimination against women outside the labour market. Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty served to anchor the above-mentioned *gender mainstreaming* (for an analysis of the campaign, see Helfferich, Kolb 2001).

The EWL membership consists on the one hand of national platforms (National Coordinations) and on the other hand of European organizations like the *European Federation of Business and Professional Women*, *European Disability Forum* and the *International Alliance of Women*. The members meet once a year in General Assembly, in order to decide on the strategic program of the EWL and its funding. The assembly elects the Board of Administration every two years. The board meets four times a year and takes tactical decisions. Every two years, the board elects the EWL executive, consisting of a president, three vice-presidents and a treasurer. This body meets regularly, takes decisions necessary for the everyday management of the organization, and represents the EWL externally. The activity of the organization is coordinated by its Brussels Secretariat, which prepares position papers, runs the information service for the members, keeps contacts with European institutions, manages projects, and prepares publications and information materials (this paragraph is based on EWL 2007). The remainder of the section will be focused primarily on the activities of the EWL as they concern Czech women's groups.

To a large extent, the political activities of the EWL depend upon its capacity to coordinate its member groups. The Brussels Secretariat of the organization was made up of 11 persons in July 2006 (Interview 1). The organization is 80% funded by the EU. Its resources, however, are fairly limited. It is for precisely this reason that its activity, as already indicated, is focused only on monitoring and influencing European institutions and the information service for its member organizations. The European office is unable to support a robust lobbying campaign from its own funding sources. As demonstrated by the relatively successful campaign before the conclusion of the Amsterdam Treaty (Helfferich, Kolb 2001) along with several less notable activities (Interview 1), the core of its political work remains, also due to the importance individual states continue to play in European politics, at the national level. When it comes to lobbying campaigns, EWL coordinates a "multi-level strategy": the Brussels office makes use of its contacts primarily in the European Commission, while member organizations at the national level focus on influencing "their

own" political institutions and members of the European Parliament elected in their countries. According to the former acting General Secretary of the EWL, Cécile Gréboval: "we have a kind of module letters which our member organizations may use [for appeals] to their own people as well as to members of the European Parliament and their own governments; they can translate them and inform these various individuals at various levels about the position [of the EWL] ... we try to create this synergy between the national level, the European level, individual members of the European parliament, etc." (ibid.).

It is only logical that, with the expansion of the EU, the EWL also expands its network and integrates groups from the new member states into its structure. This strategy was undertaken in the 1990s with varying degrees of success in the Eastern European candidate countries, including the Czech Republic. The expansion of the EU for EWL has also meant the enlargement of its own network. In the case of the Eastern expansion, this process occupied roughly two to three years. The EWL first collected information "about the existence of organizations, in order that we may meet them, rally them and inform them about the EWL, and find out how they might be organized ... we went there [to the candidate countries], organized international meetings or training sessions..." (ibid.). Generally, the goal of the EWL is to motivate the creation of broad national platforms which would include the greatest number possible of existing women's groups. Formally, this process is concluded by the signing of a protocol of cooperation and the election of national EWL representatives. These representatives number four in all; the national platform of the women's lobby elects three delegates for the General Assembly and one individual for the EWL Board of Administration (ibid.).

In the CR, the establishment of the national EWL platform started to be discussed in 2004, when the foundations of the *Czech Women's Lobby*, CZL were laid.<sup>5</sup> The integration of Czech women's organizations into the lobbying structure of the EU was conditioned, as has already been said, upon the creation of the broadest possible platform. Within this framework organizations thus came together which, up to that point, had not been unified: alongside the Union of Catholic Women (UKZ) and Gender Studies o.p.s. sat the heretofore excluded Czech Union of Women (CSZ). CSZ, in spite of its political past that was originally unacceptable to the other organizations, remained, thanks to its large membership and organizational facilities, one of the strongest players in the Czech women's sector. While establishing a national platform, it was thus no longer possible to ignore it. The first chairperson of the informal CZL grouping was R. Boháčová from the UKZ. At the outset, the

platform had only observer status with the EWL; with growing membership, in 2005 CZL became a fully entitled member with all rights and duties.<sup>6</sup>

Any Czech organization focused on women's issues and identifying itself with the EWL goals, i.e., declaring itself a more or less *feminist* organization, may become a member of the CZL. A new organization is accepted into the CWL if its application is agreed to by the existing member groups. At the present time, the platform is made up of 21 organizations and their composition is varied. Aside from the groups mentioned above, there are, for example, groups of Roma women, organizations which aid prostitutes, initiatives assisting victims of domestic violence, and an association of women's entrepreneurs (Fórum 50% 2007). Every two years, representatives of the member organizations elect a chairperson and her deputies, to represent the CZL at the EWL level.

Since the informal CZL platform has no legal status, its manoeuvring capabilities are limited. The platform faces funding deficits and from an organizational standpoint exists only as an "appendix" of the woman's organization in which the chairperson works. It was first the UKZ, then Gender Studies o.p.s., and now Forum 50%. Funding for the organization is provided by member contributions and participation fees at the general meeting. The only project which the CZL has brought to fruition so far was coordinated by the EWL and aimed at prostitution. In this case, Europeanization of the agenda of the organization in the form of diffusion (Tarrow 2005: 104) of EWL priorities to the national level took place since, as the ex-chairperson of the CZL noted, the issue itself was not felt to be a priority in the CR: "Because, of course, the goal of the EWL is the criminalization of the demand side of prostitution, which wasn't entirely in line with our goals and actually provoked a kind of discussion about the issue, about the women and so on, and it was actually the only project which [CWL] brought into existence..." (Interview 2). Aside from this, as a national platform the CZL is included in the regular information service of the EWL (five to 10 e-mails a day) and participates in the preparation of EWL position documents, even if its capabilities for systematic political work are limited due to insufficient resources. To put it in the terms of the theory of collective action, although opportunities exist (to participate in the European political process through the EWL), the national platform lacks the organizational capacity to actually take advantage of these opportunities.

Thanks to the ideological heterogeneity of the organizations which make up the CZL and the decision procedure, which is consensus-based, decisions are made within the Czech platform by seeking the lowest common denominator. If no consensus may be found on the CZL level, the organization abstains from voting on the European level. Examples would be

the issue of reproductive rights and the question of same-sex pairs, in which the CZL representatives refrained from voting at the General Assembly (Interview 2). Organizations which nevertheless wish to support the issue for which agreement cannot be found in the CZL framework may choose the path of individual support and get involved individually in particular transnationally coordinated campaigns. An example of this would be the campaign of the Portuguese platform against the criminalization of abortion in Portugal. The platform sought to obtain support from other member organizations in the EWL. Czech groups who wished to support the campaign were aware that consensus would have been impossible within the CZL framework, and chose to send lobbying letters for the individual organizations rather than in the name of the CZL (ibid.).

Czech organizations have likewise turned to the EWL for support. An example of such an attempt to actively use the EWL membership is the campaign by Gender Studies o.p.s. for supporting the International Day of Gender Equality, in which it counts on support from EWL member groups in other EU countries.

## Conclusion

This text has focused on the manifestations of Europeanization in the activism of women's groups in the CR. We have first noted a certain limitation in the dominant theory of Europeanization and proposed to reformulate it so that it may be used to analyze not only the impact of Europeanization at the national level, but also the consequences of the domestic groups' engagement in the European policy process. We consider changes in the political action strategies of local groups to be an integral part of the impact of Europeanization. In the remainder of the text, we have analyzed Europeanization in two policy dimensions. |First, we have focused on changes in the institutional context (*polity*). Second, we have studied changes in the action of women's organizations as a result of changed funding mechanisms and the opening of opportunities for the establishment of transnational ties at the European level (*politics*).

In the contextual dimension, we have observed a gradual opening of the domestic political opportunity structure as a result of demands placed upon the CR by the EU in the course of the accession process. The result has been the opening of several access points into the political system through which women's organizations have managed to really enter the policy process. At the same time, the EU has acted as a certification agency whose influence has helped to legitimize the demands of women's groups in the eyes of the local political elite.

The effects of Europeanization have also been observed as a result of the growing importance played by the EU in the funding sources of local organizations. This pressure has led, on the one hand, to the professionalization and formalization of the organizations interested in being included in the policy process. On the other hand, it has resulted in increasing marginalization of those groups which have not accepted the pressure for formalization.

The EU has not influenced Czech groups only in terms of the demands it made upon state institutions and because of grants it distributes. The expansion of the EU has brought for women's groups new opportunities in the form of the possibility for them to enter the European policy process through the EWL. The membership requirements for this European-wide network of women's organizations has introduced into the domestic women's activist field motives for cooperation. Groups, which had previously been competitors, started to cooperate under the umbrella of the CZL. Membership in the EWL further provides opportunities to make use of the support of women's organizations from other member states in the EU for the initiatives of local organizations. This potential is, however, for the time being tapped to a limited extent. The reason is the limitations of organizational resources of Czech groups.

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## Notes

1) This paper makes partial use of and further develops previously published articles (see Čisář 2005a, 2005b, Vrábliková 2007). The source of new information was primarily the interviews with representatives of the organizations under study, using the technique of *elite interview*.

2) On the policy of gender equality in the EU and the CR before 1999, see Musilová 1999.

3) The action platform of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing approved the strategy of *gender mainstreaming* (see further) (Musilová 1999).

4) The CSZ was the subject of a hands-off policy by other organizations throughout the 1990s for political reasons, in that those other organizations looked upon it as a "communist child" born posthumously (Marksová-Tominová 1999).

5) An indicator of the strength of the Europeanization pressure is without doubt also the fact that some women's organizations (especially Gender Studies o.p.s.) helped bring into existence the Karat Coalition in 1997, an international coalition of Central European women's groups, which was to a certain extent seen as a competitor to the EWL. Karat was not, however, capable of establishing itself as an influential international organization. Nor were its member groups able to stand the tide of Europeanization and were "forced" to accede to unification within the EWL framework.

6) The chief duty of the member organizations is to pay yearly dues. Fulfilment of this requirement is not an easy affair for organizations since, as mentioned in the foregoing section, most of them are financed through the EU-supported projects which have precisely defined funding goals. Organizations thus essentially have no free funds from which these dues could be paid.



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