



# The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

## Synergies between gender equality and climate action


The Netherlands, 21-22 February 2024

Comments paper – Czechia



Ein Unternehmen der ÖSB Gruppe.

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*This publication is supported by the European Union Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).*

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# An Invisible String: Gender (In)Equality & (Un)Just Transition in Czechia

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## Abstract

The sluggish progress of the Czech Republic in reducing gender inequalities has been, unsurprisingly, also reflected in climate action and the just transition. The main obstacles in designing climate responsive policies and implementing them include the lack of political leadership, the lack of gender-disaggregated data and accountability across resorts, as well as the overall long-term ignorance of the importance of gender equality, gender-inclusive policymaking and gender-differentiated impacts of phenomena such as decarbonisation. However, new entry points emerge that may help gender mainstream the just transition. If handled well, gender-responsive policies and measures could be reflected in the funding conditions linked to energy communities, the Social Climate Fund, or the Operational Programme Just Transition.

## 1. Blank Space: No Data, Debate, Decisions

The beginning of 2024 finds Czechia affected by several supranational phenomena, with the Russian war on Ukraine and its economic implications being the most prominent. Based on the Government's Office's initial analysis prepared for the update of the [Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030](#) (Government's Office 2021), the rise in prices of energy and inflation, which in Czechia has been one of the highest in the EU, lead to the precarious economic situation affecting mostly one-woman households, i.e. single women, single mothers, and senior women living on their own.<sup>1</sup> In this context, the topic of decarbonisation and just transition is only slowly penetrating the public and expert debate. However, whether the topics linked to climate action, including just transition, and gender equality, will be synergetic remains questionable: both are seen as unpopular and have not been systematically spearheaded by any political authority. The OECD's [complex overview](#) of how Czechia is faring in terms of government capacity for gender sensitive and inclusive recovery in 2023 noted that the overall progress has been "sluggish" (OECD 2023b).

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<sup>1</sup> At the same time, [over 70 % of women were working in 2023](#), the highest number since Czechia was founded (in 1993). Reasons for this include the pressure from inflation and rising living costs, the transforming labour market and increasing opportunities to combine work and family care. The unemployment rate was at [3.7 % in December 2023](#), with especially women on parental leave having difficulties to find part-time work, also due to unavailable child care facilities for children under 3 years.

## 1.1 Wildest Dreams: Pursuing Gender Equality from Bottom Ranks

Nonetheless, both climate change and gender inequality are highly relevant matters. Concerning greenhouse gas emissions, Czechia's [9.3 t CO<sub>2eq.</sub> per capita \(without LULUCF, 2022\)](#) ranks above the EU average (6.2 t CO<sub>2eq.</sub> per capita) (Ritchie et al. 2023) and reflects the historically prominent role of industry, in terms of gross value added as well as employment. In this regard, more than [EUR 40 bn](#) from various EU sources are allocated for economy-wide decarbonisation from 2021-2030 (“Zelená transformace” 2024). However, gender-disaggregated data linked to just transition are not collected by the official statistical authority, the Czech Statistical Office. In fact, decarbonisation and climate-related gender-disaggregated data in general, as well as their analyses, are mostly lacking.<sup>2</sup> Recent exceptions include publications from the [OECD](#) (2023a), the think-tank Association for International Affairs (Březovská and Syslová 2022) and academia (e.g. Volejníčková Marková et al. 2016), often emphasising alarming conclusions. For instance, a [countrywide analysis](#) of heat- and cold-related mortality trends in Czechia showed that the heat-related mortality of women is 400 % higher than that of men (Janoš et al. 2023).<sup>3</sup> The OECD report called “Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2023: Czechia” stresses that women accounted for 22% of workers in green-task jobs in 2021 (OECD average 28.3%). As women are “drastically underrepresented” in green jobs in Czechia, especially in the Northwest (16.7%), “a new gender divide” has been created (OECD 2023a).

On the national level, gender-disaggregated data on labour market workforce in specific sectors, linked to digitalisation or STEM, for instance, are more available. In light of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution and the recognition not to have women miss out on its benefits, the number of women employed in the IT sector has been officially monitored. Based on the [latest data](#), only 10.9% of employed ICT specialists in Czechia in 2022 were female, which is the lowest score in EU MS (EU average 18.9%) (Eurostat, 2023a). Interestingly, this is a lower percentage than in 2013, since when the data have been collected. In research, women researchers made up only [27.2%](#) of all researchers from the business, government and higher education sectors in 2019, again ranking last place in the EU (EU average 32.9%) (CZSO 2021). STEM-wise, women in science and technology comprise only [48.6% \(2022\)](#), one of the lowest share in the EU (Eurostat 2023b). In the energy sector, gender-disaggregated data are not easily available. Based on EIGE 2023 data (EIGE 2024b), women employed in energy in Czechia make up 18% of the work-force (EU average 24%). Another source providing insights, prepared by the Boston Consulting Group and the Hungarian non-profit Women in Energy, is called [Women in Energy 2.0: Gender Diversity in the CEE-SEE Energy Sector](#) (Beck and Pánczél 2023). According to this study, 20% of the workforce of the largest CEE energy companies in Czechia in 2022

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the Summary Research Report on Options and Preferences of Retraining in Sectors at Risk of the Low-Carbon Transformation of the Energy Sector, published in 2023 and focusing on just transition, does not cover the gendered impacts of decarbonisation at all (see Černý et al. 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Another recent study investigating the associations between daily temperatures and mortality in Czechia in light of a sex and gender perspective is written by Chloé Vésier and Aleš Urban (2023).

were female, while female board members made up 16%. Overall, despite the growing pressure on the private sector “to advance gender diversity and create inclusive workplace cultures”, Czechia – similarly to other CEE countries – lags behind in this context. On the international or global climate scene, the Czech Republic has not reached any outstanding achievement in terms of gender-responsive action.

## 1.2 Delicate: Lack of Time, Power and (Clean) Energy

Based on [EIGE 2023 data](#) (EIGE 2024a) Czechia’s overall ranking in gender equality is one of the lowest in the EU (24<sup>th</sup> out of 27). It is below average in the domains Money and Knowledge and at the bottom of the ranks in the domains Work (24<sup>th</sup>), Time (26<sup>th</sup>), and Power (25<sup>th</sup>). Ranking low in “[Power](#)” is indicative as women have been lacking in decision-making positions across the political, economic and social spheres, and the situation seems to be the same in the energy and just transition sectors. For instance, many boards of the biggest companies supplying energy or of the entities<sup>4</sup> active in modern energy are all male, with few exceptions. The ministries most active in the field of just transition (the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of the Environment) are currently all led by male ministers. A comprehensive map of women and men in green decision-making in the public sector is not available. However, many directors of NGOs covering just transition are women.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. 1 Step Forward, 3 Steps Back: Policy Debate

The debate on climate action, just transition, and gender inequality in the Czech Republic is unexplored, while at the same time inherently politically charged and clashing with deeply engrained gendered stereotypical views. It thus has the potential to be very conflictual, if not managed well. One current indicator of the societal atmosphere towards gender equality and women is the failure of the Czech Senate to ratify, on January 24, 2024, the European Treaty on Violence Against Women (ICTJ 2024).

From the perspective of gender equality, climate action and just transition have so far been rather under the radar. For instance, in the Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030 and the initial analysis prepared for its first update, terms such as “just transition” or “decarbonisation” are not mentioned in the strategy or the analysis at all, despite the EU funding allocated to society-wide decarbonisation and its implications. Only one target in the strategy mentions climate change directly, and that is “to increase expert knowledge in the field of climate change impacts in terms of gender inequality”. In this context, there is no indicator on just transition per se or gender-disaggregated data in terms of climate change impacts (Government’s Office 2021).

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<sup>4</sup> Author’s analysis (February 2024)

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, Centre for Transport and Energy, Greenpeace Czech Republic, Association for International Affairs etc.

As to various climate and energy strategies and plans, gender equality has not been mainstreamed. However, awareness is rising about the societal implications of climate mitigation policies and measures. So far, though, the current long-term [Climate Protection Policy of the Czech Republic](#) (to be updated in 2024) (Ministry of the Environment 2017) and the [updated Adaptation Strategy of the Czech Republic](#) (Ministry of the Environment 2021) do not reflect the gendered dimension of adaptation and mitigation and do not propose gender sensitive or responsive measures. The Territorial Just Transition Plan of the Czech Republic also does not cover gender but does stress energy poverty as a challenge to many living in the three most underdeveloped regions of Czechia ([Ústecký, Karlovarský, Moravskoslezský](#)) (Ministry for Regional Development 2021). On the other hand, several relevant Operational Programmes do mention gender inequality in various contexts<sup>6</sup>. Still, overall, the fragmented approach towards gender equality in climate documents shows a clearly missing systemic approach to the issue, without which gender-responsive measures cannot be designed or implemented.<sup>7</sup>

Quite recently, in January 2024, the [update of the Czech National Energy and Climate Plan](#) (NECP) (European Commission 2023b) was recognised by the [European Commission](#) (2023a) to be one of “only four plans to refer to gender equality in energy policy and include related commitments and measures”. In the updated [draft NECP](#), gender equality was very briefly mentioned in the context of the National Recovery Plan as one of the dimensions in line with the principle of equal opportunities necessary to take into account when establishing energy communities. It was also noted that “in 2018 Czechia participated in the Clean Energy Technology Cooperation Programme (C3E TCP) to strengthen cooperation with international partners and to develop and improve data collection on gender diversity.” Any implications from this programme for policies in 2024 are missing.

More recently, as the topic of just transition and gender equality becomes more pronounced, three areas with real life implications are slowly emerging in expert discussions.

## 2.1 (Not) Ready for It? Ambiguity as Gender Meets Green Jobs

The unclarity of how terms such as “green jobs”, “gender mainstreaming” or “gender mainstreaming in just transition” are defined is at the crux of the cumbersome expert discussion on how the matter should be handled, implemented, enforced, or evaluated. This is a key obstacle that further makes it difficult to specify gender-responsive concrete policies in a societal set-up that has been perceiving the topic as somewhat ungraspable and irrelevant in today’s quest to balance economic efficiency, geopolitical resilience, and the green transition. What’s more, as various sources of information use different methodologies linked to “green jobs” or

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. Programme Just Transition 2021-2027, Operational Programme Employment 2021-2027, Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský

<sup>7</sup> The policy paper “[Gender \(in\)equality in Czech climate policies](#)” (in Czech) by Březovská and Syslová covers this topic in more detail

“environmental goods and services sector”, the varying results can already cause further confusion among stakeholders, even if the gender dimension is omitted.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 Anti-Heroes: Energy and Transport in Transition

The recognised gendered impacts of decarbonisation policies are present in the energy and transport sector, which is especially relevant in light of the ongoing discussions on ETS 2 and the Social Climate Fund (SCF). As women use more public transport, have different needs in terms of heating, and are at higher risk of energy and transport poverty, it remains to be seen whether gender will be discussed in one of the [thematic working groups](#) set up for the preparation of the SCF and whether these differences will translate into specific measures (Ministry of the Environment 2024). This debate could be interesting to follow using the gender lens, for instance, on whether priority will be given to public transport over private transport (e-cars). Anecdotally, during a discussions on the Just Transition Fund in the European Parliament in 2020, [a Czech MEP](#) was dismissive of mainstreaming gender into support for miners who would lose their jobs as, from his perspective, only miners—typically men, and not their partners, should be able to be requalified. The main argument for this was anchored in the gender stereotypical view that men as breadwinners should obtain re-trainings and not “wait at home for their wives” as this is something the miners themselves would not allow (Parlamentní listy 2020).

## 2.3 Clean Energy: New (Missed) Opportunities?

With the Czech legislation on low emission energy slowly evolving, an opportunity to have more women represented in the energy sector arises, for instance in energy communities or as energy managers in cities. However, critical questions need to be addressed. For instance, based on [an overview](#) of German energy cooperatives, most members were found to be men (representing 80%) and not representatives of vulnerable groups (Yildiz et al. 2015). Also, in terms of providing support for female energy managers who are key in helping municipalities to decarbonise, critical questions on fairness arise, such as why women should be provided more support in obtaining a green job compared to other groups, including immigrants from Ukraine, for instance.

## 3. Begin Again: Good Practice Examples

**Public sector:** A new initiative called the [New Green Savings – Light Programme](#) was set up in 2023 to provide immediate financial support for seniors and recipients of invalidity pensions, and since 2024 also for households with lower incomes, to help with simple and quick home insulation and solar water heaters. The programme has

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, the [Twin transition skills dashboard](#) (Gotti et al. 2024) shows that the demand for „green jobs“ in Czechia is very low. On the other hand, shares of green employment in total employment in Czechia were found to be average by [the European Environment Agency](#) (2023). Although the results are not mutually exclusive, the portal [Euractiv.cz](#) brought attention to these discrepancies, and sent mixed messages on the state of affairs. See Zachová and Pištorová 2024 for the article.



become very popular and has so far provided over 50 000 subsidies (Czech Television, 2023). Gender-mainstreaming is not a part of the programme explicitly but basic gender disaggregated data collected on recipients show a 50/50 female-male ratio.<sup>9</sup>

**Academic sector:** Every year the Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering (Czech Technical University in Prague) prepares a [special day](#) for high school female students to introduce to them the fascinating world of science.

## 4. End Game: Conclusion & Recommendations

- As notable gender gaps in the field of gender-disaggregated data exist, a set of unified and clearly defined indicators could be prepared at the EU level to help the systematic collection of data at the MS levels. This could ensure that a list of climate-related indicators is at hand during the preparation of various documents and that individual officers not trained in gender equality policies will not be responsible for initiating gender-mainstreaming in their fields of expertise. Clear indicators can serve as a good basis for enabling the design of gender-transformative policies. Complex recommendations from the existing OECD reports on gender equality (2023b) and on “bridging the great green divide” (2023a) should be discussed and synergistically implemented.
- Regarding green and just transition, it is necessary to reflect the importance of gender equality in the design of appropriate funds, programmes, etc. Such discussion is currently relevant in terms of setting-up of the SCF or the Operational Programme Just Transition 2028+. One specific example where data is lacking could be in the field of incomes between genders in coal mining regions and a targeted analysis exploring the needs of locals in these regions, serving as a basis for the design of policy measures.
- In response to the unsupportive environment for gender equality, trainings for municipal energy managers or energy community actors could be targeted not only towards women, but also at other underrepresented groups. Targeted partnerships with energy experts, excluded regions, think-tanks etc. can engage a broader community in the green transition and help to promote female leadership.

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<sup>9</sup> Author’s personal communication.



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