



EQUAL CHANCES AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



EQUAL CHANCES AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
SAMPLE FROM THE GUIDE BOOK FOR HR AND LINE MANAGERS IN CHARGE OF HUMAN RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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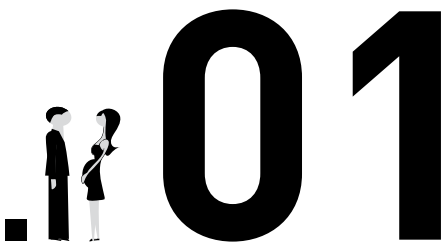
About publication – Equal opportunities as a competitive advantage

Issuing a publication you are holding in your hands belongs among the activities focused on equal opportunities of women and men promotion. Its aim is to provide Czech HR managers with information on why to deal with equal opportunities for women and men, what the processes concerned in practice are, what their benefits for both employees and employers are; and instructions how to successfully implement equality between the sexes to organization practice.

The publication Equal chances as a competitive advantage includes the assessment of practice in the Czech Republic, the description of best procedures used in practice and directions for improving the processes in terms of promoting equality. We have also surveyed the opinions of interesting personages from business sphere on the topic of equality and diversity at workplace for you. Several interesting case studies concerning successful companies at the Czech market and abroad constitute a part of this publication - documenting how equal opportunities for men and women can be successfully applied at workplace.

Hana Velísková, with over a 12-year experience in HR concepts building and the transformation and implementation of key HR processes, is an author of the publication. She used to work for Arthur Andersen consulting company, as a Senior HR manager with GE Capital (nowadays GE Money) and as an HR manager with Allianz insurance company and Raiffeisenbank. At present, she is combining care for her two young children with the work of a consultant and a tutor in HR skills. She has been cooperating with the Czech Society for Human Resources Development on projects aimed at diversity and equal opportunities promotion.

We hope that you will be well inspired by our publication.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN BENEFITS

Considering the needs of labour market and the demographic situation, economical independence of women in Europe is a key issue. It represents a great step towards the equality between men and women. I think that it is important to focus on women and men getting the same pay for the same work or work of same value and thus contribute to the removal of the so-called gender pay gap, meaning the difference in income on the basis of sex. Work should be scheduled in such a way that women and men had the opportunity to uplatnit se both in job and professional life and also family care. Men should be definitely motivated to use the opportunity of parental leave in greater extent. It is vital for the European Commission to support activities reflecting the present reality of our lives, i.e. pointing at systematic gender-conditioned discrimination in all the aspects of life – education, employment, political representation; but also in approach to basic reproductive rights.

Kirsti Kolthoff, European Women's Lobby (EWL)¹

1.1 Labour market

One of the reasons why equal opportunities are a more often discussed issue in economically developed countries is **demographic crisis** arising from the decline of birth rate in the last decade (Czech Republic is not an exception despite the instantaneous increase). Population ageing brings forward pension systems crises **and increasing difficulties with quality employees´ recruitment**. Many employers complain that while they were able to choose from several very good candidates in the past, nowadays they are often grateful for having one candidate meeting the required criteria at least partially. Often they are left with no other option than to train experts themselves and with no little money.

The majority of the EU states is trying to fight the demographic crisis by integrating immigrants from economically less developed countries. The Czech Republic is, however, not doing so well when compared to its western neighbours. Another option is **to better integrate up to now neglected labour forces to labour process – these are not only women with young children but women in general** (for example by improving their representation in management), furthermore disabled citizens, the elderly, graduates without practice etc. These people represent not only unlawfully neglected labour reserves, but also an opportunity to invigorate a team and ensure a desirable diversity within. In addition, majority of them appreciate the chance offered and employers praise their diligence and loyalty. Putting *zažitá* prejudices and stereotypes aside, is a necessary presupposition to increase their share among workers.

1.2 Balanced role division

Exaggerated insisting upon a traditional role division between the sexes in our modern world leads not only to **women being hard-pressed due to “double shifts”**, but also to **discriminating men**, who have decided to sacrifice their careers to a parent role in disharmony with a generally accepted custom; eventually to win recognition in traditionally women’s professions. As Martin Jára, director of a non-profit making organization “Liga otevřených mužů” (League of Open Men), says: “There is a stereotype that men are often, and more often than women, rigid in terms of gender. There is something to it – men care, in general more than women, not to doubt verified elements of their identities. Women are more advanced in this – due to their own efforts. „Manageress” is more often tolerated even among men than “director of infant school”.”²

Equal opportunities at labour market mean for me as a scientist, that only expert quality of a research worker, his/her creative skills and aptitudes to complete the given research should be the only factors playing role when recruiting an employee, his/her career growth and fund-raising. Men must not be given preferential treatment, but women should not be given it either by stipulating various quotas and relation in number of employees or executive employees of the both sexes. I think that women scientists have the same working opportunities as scientists men. In spite of this, they are restricted in their working horizon. The first obvious limit is maternity. Maternity is but so beautiful that no women should be voluntarily deprived of it. The second limit are expectations of the society. The society keeps on expecting that it will be women-mothers, grandmothers who will take greater share of responsibility for the run of family; expectations concerning men-fathers, grandfathers is lower. Equal partnership of two individuals is a prerequisite for developing the full aptitudes in women part of population. And finally, the third limit lies in women as such. They often do not believe in their skills

and so not set ambitious enough targets. The society must support the self-confidence of women – we have enough self-confident men.”³

Helena Illnerová, member of Scientific Board of Charles University, Scientific Board of Masaryk’s University, FGÚ Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Board of National Museum

As the above-mentioned quotes prove **role division according to real preferences and needs of participants and not according to gender stereotypes traditionally *zažitých* in the society would be beneficial to all parties**. Many women would welcome also higher support from the side of state apart from higher participation of fathers in children care and household, both in the area of introducing paternity leave and from the side of ensuring a sufficient number of preschool institutions for children care as infant schools and nurseries.

1.3 Legal norms observance

Both Czech and international legislature have been dealing with the issue of equal opportunities. Concerning the Czech legal standards, there is e.g. Basic rights and freedom act, Labour Code, Employment Act, Inspection Labour Act, Wages Act and Salary Act.

Upon the EU accession, a number of **European guidelines** have been gradually implemented to the Czech legal system **in a form of Labour Code euroamendments**. These are for example the following:

- ▶ Prohibition of any discrimination on the basis of sex
- ▶ Equal pay for equal work principle (a work of identical value)
- ▶ Equal treatment of women and men in terms of special training, job access, promotion and work conditions
- ▶ Closer definition of positive and negative discrimination notions
- ▶ Harassment and sexual harassment

Employees should acknowledge that there is **a risk of legal disputes and sanction from job offices and labour regulatory authorities up to the amount of CZK 500,000** for violating equal opportunities rules. Apart from a penalty for breaching legal norms, the employers with proved discriminating practices suffer **a loss of their good name** by their customers and business partners.

1.4 Benefits for employers

The concept of equal opportunities at work is being usually discussed in the context of social responsibilities of companies, meaning employment ethics. A fact, that exercising equal opportunities rules and the related attempt to balance representation of the sexes at all company levels can be also **a factor helping a company in bringing profit**, is not mentioned often. These are at least conclusions reached by the study of Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity realized by an American organization Catalyst.⁴

The study has monitored 353 companies ranking in Fortune 500 regularly assessing five hundred most productive companies (measured in the amount of gross annual income) in the United States. The findings of the study show that **companies who have higher representation of women at management posts show better financial performance** when compared to those where there are less women in management. The difference in the amount of total shareholders´ revenue was by 34% higher with the first group than with the second group. Higher profitability

with higher share of women on the decision-making and management of the company has been proved also when comparing industrial branches, while the branches where there was higher representation of women in management showed better financial results.

The achievements of successful world companies doing business in the Czech Republic prove that the majority of big corporations have already recognized that **the capacity to implement equal opportunities concept to organization processes shows to be a competitive advantage**. It is logical because it is only when an organization does not discriminate and decides according to objective factors as aptitudes, knowledge and skills of a specific individual are, it can choose and retain the employees of highest quality. Diversity at workplace, given also by balanced representation of both sexes, contributes not only to better atmosphere but also to better ability to solve work problems and realize projects.

Practically, we do not want to be a gentlemen's club which IT industry in the Czech Republic seems to be. There are 26% of women between us which might be good considering the local practice, but we are aware that the representation of women is unbalanced. We would like to have more women between us.

It is due to synergy inside the company and team work. Viewing a problem by more people with different view proves good when solving problems. Women show different approach when solving problems and thus suitably complete procedure selected by their men colleagues.

Petr Draxler, HR Manager IBM Czech Republic⁵

A number of companies started to become aware of the fact that **higher representation of women in organization and management helps in better understanding women-customers**. Companies usually understand how important group women are. Therefore a great part of advertising is aimed at them. Sometimes a question arises still to what extent real understanding of women-customers is displayed in this advertisement and nature of products and services themselves and to what extent they only copy *zabit* stereotypes.

Volvo Cars company from which we bring the following case study is an illustration of creating a women tailor-made product. Their new concept of a car for women proves that equal opportunities concept application in development processes, marketing and sale is not only an ethical obligation of a company but also a very profitable practice.

Case Study: Volvo Cars, Sweden⁶

Volvo Cars is known in the Czech Republic for the emphasis they place on the quality and safety of vehicles they produce. They are, however, also famous for their focus on diversity and equal opportunities in their homeland. A project focused on product development – “Your Concept Car”, abbreviated YCC, is an example.

At the beginning, there was an idea to create a car targeted primarily at the fastest growing group of customers – modern successful women. There would no surprise to an idea like this in the market. There is a number of other automobile companies producing cars primarily targeted at women. Volvo Cars was, however, the first to understand that a customer's wish can be best understood by people having a similar view of the world (in this case a woman-customer). It was therefore a women team who exclusively prepared YCC development, collecting in addition opinions, pieces of experience, and commentaries from other 400 women employees of Volvo Cars.

At the beginning of the idea, there was a workshop led by Marta Barletta, American market analyst and an expert in shopping behaviour of women. Important information was communicated at workshop: if you succeed in meeting women's requirements, you will exceed men's requirements. It was a clear business signal. In relation to the workshop, a group of visionaries started thinking about how to use it correctly. Project leader Camilla Palmertz claims it was not difficult to find support for the project. A group of her colleagues presented their intention to Volvo Cars Managing Director Hans Olov Olsson in June of 2002. He was thrilled by the idea and asked immediately for the project to be submitted and for its timeframe.

Cooperation of a purely women's team was of course possible only due to the fact that there was a sufficient number of women experts in Volvo Cars who could have taken part in car development. Camilla Palmertz, project leader, says: “There was no problem in finding enough qualified women in the company. Nonetheless, a majority of women had been working on different project from which they could not have been released.” Work of a purely female team could have therefore started in the autumn of 2002.

Do you fancy YCC as a small and cute car? You are mistaken! This was the idea of a typically “second” car in a family, serving housewives for shopping and taking children to school. But women roles are changing. When the car was introduced at Geneva fair, many people were surprised that it is a distinctly sports car. Camilla Palmertz comments: “Women nowadays are different from those 20 - 30 years ago. They have children later and they combine a family with a career. They also remain active to a much higher age. Furthermore, the period when children are young represents a relatively short time in life. YCC must reflect an active life style of women today. It must correspond with the requirements of customers (women and men) in long-term time horizon.”

Camilla Palmertz states that women make 54 per cent of Volvo Cars customers. Despite this they are discriminated as a group of customers in terms of meeting their criteria for vehicle functionality. These were produced to meet men's requirements. “Women are interested in a similar style of car as men, at least in terms of design, performance and main functions. Women are however much more demanding in the area of relative details. They want more from their car than to look good and to be stable when turning.”

What makes this new car revolutionary? It has much more practical inner space to be able to create more variants of its use. Women are more demanding in terms of safety and therefore the car is equipped with a system enabling driver to quickly adjust driving position to gain better comfort and view. Pedals are positioned in such a way not to have difficulties in driving with high heels. YCC is more economical than comparable vehicles and increased attention was also devoted to ecology. The car is further distinguished by easier maintenance: hole for windshield water fluid is placed right next to the hole of fuel tank and tyres supervision is not required. The door to baggage hold is opened contactlessly, so one does not make her/his hands and clothes dirty at opening. In addition, it is possible to open the car w without taking the keys to your hand, which will definitely be appreciated by all women having experience with searching all pockets of their purses and at the same time holding an umbrella and shopping bags. And finally, great attention was given to interior. “There are only few people who would like to have the same living room as their car interior,” Camilla Palmertz remarks. “We have therefore tried the opposite approach. We wanted the people to feel in our car more like home.”

In harmony with the original idea that women are more demanding customers than men, the YCC project has had ambitions to

address a wide group of new customers. Volvo Cars supposed that tailor-made cars for women will be simply better and therefore popular also with men. Soon it was shown that this estimate was right. Also during the project, it was very difficult for the members of staff to keep on reacting to extraordinary demand of media for current information. "And after the premiere at car fair in Geneva, we gave 200 within during two days!" Camilla Palmertz describes an enormous interest new car invoked. "YCC popularity has many times exceeded our most courageous expectations," she added.

Notes:

¹ Rovné příležitosti patří i do rukou mužů. Zpravodaj Rovné příležitosti do firem 9/06 – <http://zpravodaj.genderstudies.cz>

² Klíčovým tématem nejbližší budoucnosti je ekonomická nezávislost žen. Zpravodaj Rovné příležitosti do firem 11/06 – <http://zpravodaj.genderstudies.cz>

³ Co si myslíte o...? Zpravodaj Rovné příležitosti do firem 10/05 – <http://zpravodaj.genderstudies.cz>

⁴ Catalyst. Online: <http://www.catalystwomen.org>

⁵ I my vnímáme zavádění rovných příležitosti jako běh na delší trať. Zpravodaj Rovné příležitosti do firem 10/05 – <http://zpravodaj.genderstudies.cz>

⁶ Diversity as Driving Force. Collective of Authors. Stockholm. 2005

A stylized illustration of two people in business attire, one slightly taller than the other, standing and talking. To their right is a large, bold number '02'.

02

IMPLEMENTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CONCEPT PROCEDURE

If organizations do not actively – an in some cases also aggressively – apply equal opportunities system at workplace, they do so at their own expense and they cause a real damage to themselves. Customer service is weakened, innovation, information spread among people. Teams which would be diverse enough to help to greater effectiveness and work productivity are not developed.

Firms without equal opportunities in management both middle and top, they produce products and services ignoring the needs of the half of citizens are in a certain “rigor mortis”. The same applies also for public administration and legislative institutions are parliament and senate. Arriving young generation, joining the labour market in the following several years, is, however, more “enlightened” and more demanding in their expectations and requirements on career growth opportunities.

Rostya Gordon-Smith, People Impact, ¹

If an organization decides to assert equal opportunities, wishes and words are not enough. Apart from an expressive incorporation of equal opportunities concept to corporate code of ethics, it is required to review existing processes and to make sure that all employees have learned to operate with them.

2.1 Analysis

A detailed analysis of current situation in organization including all the available measurement helping to identify the main problematic areas and gaps should precede the creation of equal opportunities policy. The outcomes of this analysis may be used as an important persuasive argument for negotiations with the management members and for communicating their intentions to line employees.

Key indicators for investigating the level of equal opportunities at workplace are the following:

- ▶ Number of men and women at various organization levels
- ▶ Employees age structure
- ▶ Percentage representation of physically disabled, national minorities and foreigners
- ▶ Comparing the number of women and men being promoted in the years passed
- ▶ Internal alignment of pays between men and women
- ▶ Number and nature of internal complaints of vexation, sexual harassment and unjust treatment from the side of supervisors
- ▶ How employees value equal opportunities observance in company

Within the range of this phase of analysis, the organization should also obtain models of best procedures available, which can help to assess the level of their own processes and to set the targets they will want to achieve in future.

2.2 Proposal for measures

On the basis of outputs from the phase of analysis, it is possible to formulate **proposal of ideal future state and implementation plan** which will help the organization to introduce equal opportunities concept. It is necessary to set a realistic timeline since usually it is an important cultural change in the life of organization which cannot be achieved in a month.

Design phase includes also preparation of internal and external documents supporting equal opportunities. First of all, these are corporate key communication tools or values, missions and visions. **The majority of companies have also rules for equal opportunities observance summed up in a separate internal regulation**, called equal opportunities policy, eventually diversity policy (or variety which is a wider concept beyond the range of legal standards on equal opportunities).

Equal opportunities policy is more than an internal written document. It represents a publicly expressed company obligation, revealing itself distinctly on the relationships with employees, customers and suppliers.

Equal opportunities policy should include the following:

- ▶ Explanation what equal opportunities are and why an organization deals with them separately
- ▶ Clearly defined avowal to equal opportunities concept at workplace
- ▶ Description how to assert equal opportunities in corporate procedures

- ▶ Instruction how to prevent discrimination treatment and exercising prejudices at workplace
- ▶ Communication plan preparation
- ▶ Complaint solving process description

2.3 Implementation

Implementation plan for asserting equal opportunities at workplace must count with the aforementioned time- demand of a project. Employees however usually expect quick results and it would be a shame to lose their confidence by delay. Therefore it is advisable to think of measures bringing fast positive effect.

Since PricewaterhouseCoopers is a global company, equal opportunities promotion in mother and Czech branch is at the same level. We cooperate mutually, relate to current activities and share information about new projects. Both the mother as well as the local companies apply equal opportunities in the areas of recruitment, career growth, education, personal development, work performance assessment and employees compensation. Code of Ethics – describing apart from others corporate equal opportunities – is a global tool used in branches worldwide. A team diversity (according to experience, sex, age, education, nationality etc.) question is very recent today, at all levels - local and regional, as well as global.

Ivana Machková - HR Manageress, PricewaterhouseCoopers²

Implementation phase including three basic areas of activities:

- ▶ Creating implementation team issuing regular reports on procedure and outcomes of project
- ▶ Incorporating equal opportunities rules into organization processes
- ▶ Edification, meaning employee training how to observe equal opportunities rules.

With respect to an extensive project (for example in big organizations, or when a company starts with equal opportunities concept from the scratch), it proves beneficial to test proposed measures first in a pilot project. The outcomes of pilot project assessment just as the decisions on modifications need to be announced not only to company management, but also to line employees within the range of maintaining their interest in project and obtaining their support for the changes carried out.

It is, nevertheless, also necessary to reckon with personal stereotypes and prejudices which can hinder measures adopted in practice. If an organization senses that employees approach equal opportunities concept in a reserved way and in practice continue in unfair, selective decision making and communication, it is necessary to support measures adopted by trainings, personal coaching etc.

The following measures can help in asserting equal opportunities:

- ▶ incorporating equal opportunities into educational process, particularly into entry and management trainings
- ▶ cooperation with trade union in control of observing equal opportunity rules
- ▶ creating a post of ombudsman defending the interests of employees
- ▶ nominating the so-called diversity champions (people doing edification, coaching and control)
- ▶ identifying managers that might serve as personal models
- ▶ introducing a separate diversity management process (variety) at workplace

If a company decides to implement an equal opportunities programme, I recommend perceiving this problem more broadly as Hewlett-Packard does. HP is a company which tries to create equal opportunities not only for women and men, but also for people of various age, physically handicapped, of various affiliation and sexual orientation in a long-term and consistent manner. The reasons leading our company to attend to this area are very pragmatic and closely tied to business needs. A diverse team enables better understanding of the market and meeting the needs of our customers in a more addressed way, in obtaining the most talented people and in retaining experienced experts. Diversified teams are usually more innovative, creative, more experienced. Diversity means secure and pleasant working environment and generally greater competitiveness. And by this, a greater profit for our shareholders.

I know many examples from practice how a programmed creating of equal working environment can be beneficial for a company. If a company retains an experienced sales woman, leaving for maternity leave (for example by enabling her to work part-time from home), relationship with customers will not be endangered, costs for recruitment will be saved and this person's loyalty, as well of her colleagues who see that a company is willing to meet capable people half way. A problem of reconciling personal and professional life does not concern women only. If flexible organizations of labour and home office are introduced, it will help all employees.

Alexandra Lemerová, Central and Eastern Europe Consulting & Integration Sales Manager, Hewlett-Packard⁹

Notes:

¹ Jana Trnková. Rovné příležitosti jako součást společenské odpovědnosti firem. Business Leaders Forum. 2006

² Co si myslíte o...? Zpravodaj Rovné příležitosti do firem 10/05 - <http://zpravodaj.genderstudies.cz>

³ Source: Personal interview

A large, bold, black number '03' is the central focus. To its left, there is a small illustration of two stylized human figures, a man and a woman, standing side-by-side. The man is on the left, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt. The woman is on the right, wearing a dark dress. A small black square is positioned to the left of the figures.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ORGANIZATION PROCESSES

Companies being aware that the lack of women is rather a disadvantage for the efficiency of working teams are trying to ensure diversity – both in team and management positions contexts by means of specific programmes. Their goal is to increase the share of women in management or overcome gender stereotypes embedded in corporate culture and to obtain really talented employees – men and women. Gender stereotypes are the ones assigning men and women certain characteristics and are responsible for flat evaluation of employees' aptitudes, they restrict the range of capable and talented people suitable for certain posts.

Linda Sokačová, Gender Studies ¹

Research reports listed in the previous chapter have shown that stereotype division of labour roles still persists in the Czech Republic. Image that certain jobs are more suitable for women and different for men is still being exercised despite the fact that there is no more to it than habitual justification in a number of cases. Hospitals look for men-nurses who could handle the physically difficult manipulation with patients better than women in vain, while some for example technological companies have been dealing with a significant lack of women.

The experience of companies, which succeed in asserting the diversity concept at workplace and in building balanced team, prove that it is not possible to rely on the change arriving all of a sudden. It is necessary to set the internal company processes in such a way to aid the balanced representation of women and men at all company levels. Both the tools ensuring objective people evaluation and measures aimed at increasing the chances of the sex with insufficient representation in the company (or its senior management levels) contribute to this. It is very often a whole summary of activities aimed at increasing the possibilities of reconciling family and work life.

We have offered ALLV HVB Bank employees the opportunities of flexible working time. Meaning a fixed part (from 9 am to 3 pm) when all the employees are obliged to be at workplace and a flexible part (from 6 to 9 am and 3 to 8 pm) chosen by each of the employee herself/himself. Introducing flexible working time has not been as easy as it seems at first sight. There has been also "educative management part" of the type "how to ensure control over the work of my subordinates when I am not at workplace myself" A small project has been the introduction of the so-called home office, and this project has been managed also due to our close cooperation with our IT department. The technical solution given for connecting to mail outside our office has been only the first step to the implementation preparation. Bank management fully accepted the whole solution after completion of legal provisions (internal regulation, amendments to employment contract, letter of authorization) or security measures (security certificate). And it was from security reasons that we introduced home office in two phases. At first, we offered only work with e-mails, in the second phase we have offered also the work with attachments and an access to some bank applications.

Štěpánka Zdvoráková, HR Manager HVB Bank (currently HR Manager HYPO stavební spořitelna a. s).²

3.1 Working conditions

Achieving equal opportunities for men and women at workplace can be significantly influenced by an offer of flexible working conditions. Reconciling personal and professional life is being discussed more and more. Many employers have begun to understand that this term which is used more and more these days is not only a moral appeal but can also represent a significant labour market competitive advantage. If it accustoms to individual situation of an employee, they can get and retain much more capable and successful experts.

"Work-life balance is no longer just a management concept or theory – in an increasing number of work places it's a reality. To me as an employer, it's about businesses realising there are significant bottom-line benefits to be gained from allowing employees greater flexibility in their working patterns. But to me as an individual, it's about being able to manage what I need to do at work with the responsibilities and interests I

have outside work. If work-life balance policies are introduced in a structured way – and if they are well managed – then everyone can profit. Because it's competitive out there. If employers want to attract and retain their staff, they have to offer something extra to be attractive. And work-life balance policies can often be that extra policy detail that appeals to staff looking to strike more of a balance in their lives."

Peter Ellwood, Chief Executive Officer, LloydsTSB³

There is a number of people who cannot fit the classic scheme of fixed working time due to their momentary life situation. It is mothers on maternity or parental leave in particular, but also fathers taking care of young children, workers taking care of their ill parents, or broadening their qualification by further studies etc.

Flexible working conditions represent the opportunity to adjust their working time, eventually the place where they do their work according to their personal possibilities.

Flexible working conditions include many possible modifications of work organization, for example:

- **flexible working time** (including annual accounts of working time etc.)
- **shortened working time** (e.g. for 4-6 hours, 4 days a week etc.)
- **part time** (e.g. for mornings only, two days a week, one week in month etc.)
- **project load** (a worker works only on one or more selected projects – it is a specific part time in fact)
- **home office** (a worker is not in his/her office for 100% of their time, but in the agreed time they work at the place where they live)
- **teleworking** (work on the phone from the place where they live)
- **sharing work position** (when two people share one work load)

Flexible working time arrangement does not require any great investment. Important is the energy invested into the system. Both the problem with confidentiality (some managers are afraid whether their employees working from home really devote their time to their work duties) and also a more complicated coordination and work organization are the barriers in practice.

A female informant HR people needs research:

Managers cannot work with the fact that they have their female employee at work only for half a day, three days a week... In my opinion, the main problem of work organization is leadership, it is what we totally lag behind and where I see the problem why women cannot work part-time, flexi-time... I wanted to open a part-time position in my department; I wanted to try what it is like to lead a person like this. I have a post of an assistant there, for six hours a week, it wasn't easy, but on the other hand, I have an excellent assistant... At first, it was a demanding management. I have to set assignment for her a day before, I have to schedule it. It is a problem for people who have problem with work organization..."⁴

Flexible work organization is more demanding with respect to management skills of supervisors. Accomplishments control is easier when introducing a target-oriented quality management system where employees are not assessed according to the number of hours they work but according to a proved completion of their assignments. Good planning and regular communication in particular help work organization.

Case study: Commerzbank, Germany⁵

A German financial company **Commerzbank**, with its 32 thousand employees (out of which 25 thousands are in Germany) belongs in the **European scale to the top 20 greatest banks**, is an illustration of a company devoting its time to equal opportunities in the long run.

"Women in modern banking" launched numerous activities for female employees and co-workers of the bank aimed at achieving equal opportunities. This project was changed to "Consens" in 1998 because an increasing interest of men in the equal opportunities question from the mid 90s. In the interest of both men and women, involvement of men in family work is massively encouraged so that gradually the topic of "Men and family" supplement the existing conceptual contemplation on reconciling professional and family life. The times when family questions were perceived as private family matters or a matter of state in German corporations are gone. Commerzbank is exercising a targeted pro-family personal policy being aware of the fact that more and more women strive for reconciling professional and family life. Both mothers and fathers therefore need individual and flexible working time saving the money and time both the employers and the employees. Numerous measures to come back to work after parental leave from the beginning of 90s pursue the same goal – equal opportunities. The opportunities of flexible supports for parents at the time of bringing up their children have increased significantly from the mid 90s.

With the emphasis on these targets, Commerzbank supports parents by means of:

1. **flexible working model and work at home** (Telearbeit)
2. **come back to work program** Comeback Plus
3. **company supported children care** (by using Familienservice, financial allowances for children care, allowances for care for the ill etc.)

Flexible working arrangement

Teilzeit project – part-time work started in 1993. At the time, 9.8 % of employees were using it, after ten years already 18% of employees. There are many possibilities from the classic model, i.e. half-time work, while the bank enables its employees to divide it on the same number of hours a day, on several days a week or on the business week rhythm, holiday week, when condition of regularity is preserved. In case of employees sharing one working place (it must be the same working assignments which can be processed independently on a specific person), it is job-sharing. Part-time job shorter by a free day in a week is used mostly by employees with further education or need more time for themselves. Commerzbank enables its employees also a more long-term free time when they want to educate themselves or maybe to go on their dream holiday. In this case, an employee can save his/her time by a longer work and then take a free time off in a block.

Commerzbank introduced part-time home office in 1998 - Telearbeit, from the time it also enables a gradual leave for retirement by decreasing the loads to employees older than 55 years, eventually a leave to premature retirement to employees older than 60 years, while the bank contributes to pension insurance of its employees.

Reconciling family and professional life

Reconciling professional and family life has become the "classics" of equal opportunities problematic. Taking care of the family

means, in the majority of cases, reducing or even interrupting their professional life for a certain period of time for parents. Disadvantages are obviously associated with longer work interruption, or expressed in a different way – employees working without interruption have better prospects of professional growth. From this reason a program was introduced already in 1990 for those who want to stay in touch with a bank also in the "family phase". Its goal was to make reconciliation of professional and family life easier. Commerzbank started "Comeback Plus" program in 1998 concerning gradual incorporation of mothers and fathers returning from parental leave to working process. This program concerns all the parents on parental leave whose child was born after 1 May, 1998 and is a part of corporate agreement. The opportunity of parental leave was prolonged to three and half years. It depends on each parent how fast they want to come back to work. HR department invites mothers to planning interview after nine months from childbirth; next meeting is scheduled six months prior to the planned end of parental leave.

The bank offers a special program for parents who want to join their career and family. Its goal is a fast comeback – if they wish and it is possible for the bank – for part-time work load. Experience shows that coming back to the same professional level is the easier the sooner a working contact is established. Employees take over a representation in the amount of minimum 160 hours a year in the second year, and in the third year it is 200 hours. Their working time adjusts to their wishes in this period of time; they are the ones to set their rhythm of work, either daily or on some days, weekly etc.

Bank-supported care for children: using Familienservice, financial allowances for children care, allowances when taking care of ill children, ensuring children care in emergency situations.

Family service department (Familienservice) – mediates information about infant schools in the neighbourhood, about vacancies in them, the employees also help when searching for baby-sitters (a nanny, an au pair), chosen on the basis of recommendation. The department also takes care of various events and feasts for children organized by the bank, finds out information about the possibilities of stays and activities for children during their holidays. This consultancy is free of charge for all employees of the bank, costs for infant schools or baby-sitters are paid by parents, they can, however, get a financial allowance for them. There are no corporate infant schools in Commerzbank.

In the event of child's illness, parents (a mother or a father) employed with Commerzbank are entitled to 10 free days a year for taking care of an ill child up to 12 years of age, mothers breadwinners for 20 days a year which is more than enabled by law. If necessary, parents may stay at home longer or take a holiday or unpaid holiday. Family services department employees solve financial issues with parents individually and financial support is also possible.

An exemplary contribution to equal opportunities and reconciling family and work is Kids and Co. – Children care in emergency situations project, introduced by bank headquarters in Frankfurt by the end of 1999. Children from 1 to 12 years of age can spend all day, exceptionally also at weekends their time in specially designed areas in the centre not far from the bank headquarters in Frankfurt under the supervision of tutors. Parents use this service in the event of unexpected work deadlines, seminars and further education courses, in the event when somebody from a family taking regular care of the child is not available all of a sudden, in situations of personal crisis, divorce, illness and death. Hadn't it been for this facility, more than a third of parents would have to cancel the unexpected work terms or either not do the work or postpone it for later, simply could not have been at

the employers disposal or only in a limited way. When they know that good care has been taken of their child, they can concentrate on their work better; the outcome is decline of mistakes and increase in work quality. Klaus Müller-Gebel from Commerzbank HR department stresses out that investment similar to Kids and Co. pays: It pays when parents do not have to stay at home with their children when for example an au-pair is ill. And when the parents do not have to worry about their children, they approach their working tasks with greater assignment and involvement.

In Commerzbank, they derive from presumption that company success depends to a great extent on the satisfaction of its employees. And assignment and motivation of employees is in direct proportion to their relationship to customers. Assignment flexibility is influenced by family and company need of time. So alleviation to family is immediately related to the fact that parents are more at the disposal to company: for additional work, weekend and holiday work, working overtime, longer business trips, stays abroad or training beyond business hours. Parents appreciate it as a significant benefit from their employer.

The higher the qualification the faster the individual spiral goes. This applies especially for women with high qualification. Parents using the Kids and Co. services belong usually among the middle class with good earnings. Paradoxically, these parents are both career and family oriented.

More and more expert studies show that work performance depends more on social context rather than working conditions themselves.

Controlling questions:

- Does your company offer flexible working time?
- Do you enable your employees to work part- or shared-time?
- Do you enable your employees, if their work nature permits, to work from home?
- Is working time offer in your organization flexible enough to really help the employees in reconciling personal and professional life?
- Is there a target-based management system supporting the use of flexible working time?
- Do you train or coach managers in the area of effective work organization to be able to lead a team working in flexible regime?

3. 2 Maternity and parental leave

A number of companies have reacted to the present birth rate growth in the Czech Republic and works on the enforcing the contact with mothers (eventually fathers) on maternity and parental leave. At the same time they try to make their comeback to work easier or faster. Not only through **invitations to company gatherings** but also to **trainings** and **language courses** or **by getting them involved in company projects**. It proved good when important information about the events and changes in company was sent and also the **regular communication of HR staff, eventually supervisors, with parents** being at home with their children. The thing is that employees do not lose contact with organization and their field. Companies with a well processed maternity and parental leave planning are well aware that it is financially more advantageous to be able to retain their experts rather than search, *zaučovat* and train new.

Maternity and parental leave do not have to mean a long-term interruption of contact between employee and employer. Regular communication with parents on ML/

PL helps in maintaining the qualification and loyalty to employer and makes the reinvolvement into working process easier.

Coming back to working life after parental leave is necessary to be planned in such a way for the organization to be able to provide (as required by law) mothers and fathers with relevant work position. It is necessary to take into account that the length of maternity and parental leave tends to be individual and does not always correspond to the time estimated in advance. That is why the above mentioned regular contact with employees-parents is essential. **An earlier come back is easier due to the afore mentioned flexible working time**, part-times or project work loads, job sharing, home office and family-oriented employment benefits (e.g. infant school at workplace, babysitting allowances etc.).

In case that the parents of young children cannot come back to their original work from some reason, organization should be able to provide them with **compensatory work position** better meeting their needs or, eventually, **an adequate financial compensation**, if the reason for it is at employee's s (e.g.: the position has been cancelled due to reorganization). Creditable companies in such cases offer their companies also the so-called outplacement, or a **professional help when looking for a new job**.

Case study: Staropramen Breweries, Czech Republic⁶

Staropramen Breweries is the second biggest beer producer in the Czech Republic and is a part of InBev, the greatest world brewing company whose beer making tradition dates back to 1366. As one of few organizations in the Czech Republic, it has a fifty per cent representation of women in top management because when recruiting a new employee it considers taking a man or a woman to have gender balance in a team and incentives from both of the sexes were not missing.

Staropramen Breweries started dealing with equal opportunities of women and men gradually; it was a gradual change in the acceptance of equal opportunities concept and spreading the changes from department to department or across management levels. It was not a realization of whole projects, but more the gender aspect has been gradually taken into consideration within the range of every day problems.

One of the exceptions, when a complex project has been realized, was an initiative called "Reintegration of women after maternity and parental leave" whose target would be elimination of related risks and costs. A six-month maternity leave usually transferring to a parental leave up to three years of age, is often prolonged by a unpaid year off to 4 years of child's age. A relatively long absence and the loss of continuity with the development in a company bring problems when mothers come back to company. Managers show unwillingness to integrate women after maternity and parental leave back because they are afraid of increased absences due to child's illnesses, unwillingness to work overtime, go on business trips and of qualification and knowledge erosion during maternity and parental leave. There is also the stereotypical presumptions that women come back to work for financial reasons – self-realization, professional ambitions and career are often considered unimportant with women.

Mirka Kroupová, Rewards and Benefits Manager for Staropramen Breweries, is convinced that no matter how understandable this argumentation is in the short-run, in the medium and long-run it is a narrow-minded perception of the employed women significance for the society. "Companies often argue that asserting equal opportunities is expensive, ineffective and suitable only

for big companies, maybe. In my opinion, it is the other way round – with a little bit of good will, models of solution can be found that cost almost nothing and bring a considerable effect,” she says.

Staropramen Breweries therefore decided within the range of “Reintegration of women after maternity and parental leave” project to accept the following specific solution:

1. Do not forget mothers and fathers during their maternity and parental leaves:

- ▶ “Output” interviews with women leaving for maternity leave – the women are informed of their rights and claims during ML and when coming back, cooperation opportunities during ML and their interest concerning comeback are being investigated
- ▶ Social contact with company encouragement – e.g. participation in company gatherings, sports and social events
- ▶ Work continuity also at parental leave – short-term substitutions for ill colleagues, analyses, translations, organization help when hosting company events etc. Other possibilities are shortened job loads (from 1 day a week) and their gradual growth depending on the development of family situation and company needs.
- ▶ Development and education – women on maternity, parental leave are enabled to access company training activities also during parental leave, e.g. those where cost for other participant are not required.
- ▶ Benefits offered – including those work performance unrelated. Parents are enabled to participate in common cultural and sports events, discounts for employees etc.
- ▶ Sending information about essential changes in the company – changes in owner, organization structure etc.

2. Continuous preparation for a mother’s comeback in cooperation with managers:

- ▶ Managers are sent information about the presupposed or announced comeback of mothers a year in advance – in June and in December - so that their comeback could be taken into account in the budget
- ▶ Internal recruitment – with respect to the qualification and interest of mothers, the company offers places internally occupied places also at the time when mothers do not announce their comeback. The reason is to give women a chance to consider the attractiveness of an offer and to reconsider the time of comeback eventually.
- ▶ Managers are continually informed of current requirements of mothers, their qualification
- ▶ Company is in touch with mothers and realistically informs them about their possibilities of job with the company

3. Prior to coming back to work:

- ▶ Parents are presented with the offer of places at infant school
- ▶ They are again enabled to participate in entry training, event, other lawful and other trainings, like when a new employee comes, for better orientation and re-adaptation

4. If comeback is not possible (e.g. when the post has been abolished and there is no other suitable, a woman does not want to commute etc.):

- ▶ Sensitive approach and eventual financial compensation when ending employment
- ▶ Consulting services, outplacement

Mirka Kroupová is convinced that the adopted Reintegrating mothers and fathers after maternity and parental leave program-

me requires minor costs and brings forward many advantages, on the contrary: “Positive company supporting family image prevents turn over and makes recruiting new employees easier. A company supporting family is an attractive employer,” she states. “Unwelcome attitudes to mothers reflect in corporate culture in a negative way: inadequate behaviour to a group of people is anticipated as a tendency to treat others similarly. This is manifested in dissatisfaction, lowered loyalty and motivation of employees, and it can have a negative effect on customers. Our programme also prevents the corporate know-how drain, where there is a risk that our sources and knowledge is gained by our competitors. Financial factors are also important, as elimination of costs for compensation money, for new staff recruitment, training and development of new labour force. It is a valuable investment put into adaptation, training and development of women prior to maternity leave. And the last but not least, I would like to mention improvement of relationships with employees and trade unions,” she added.

Reintegrating mothers and fathers back to work was evaluated as successful by Staropramen Breweries both in the approach of managers to mothers, but also in the minds of parents. Certain fears of management do relate to near future with the consequences of present baby boom in the combination with the lack of places in infant schools with inflexible and limited opening hours. “It will be necessary to look for new possibilities to eliminate barriers.” Mirka Kroupová anticipates.

Controlling questions:

- ▶ Does your company do interviews with parents leaving for maternity/parental leave to be informed of the cooperation opportunities during ML/PL (maternity and parental leave) and when coming back?
- ▶ Do you keep in touch regularly with parents on ML/PL and do you keep them posted of what goes on in the company and of changes?
- ▶ Do you offer the parents on ML/PL an opportunity to take part in corporate social or sports events and trainings?
- ▶ Do you provide parents on ML/PL with at least some employee benefits?
- ▶ Is there a possibility to place children in a corporate infant school?
- ▶ Do you lead your managers to be able to plan opportunities for the eventual work integration of parents both during ML/PL and their comeback to work?
- ▶ Do you help parents who cannot come back to their original job after ML/PL with searching for a new job?

3. 3 Competence model

Apart from programmes targeted at reconciling personal and professional life, it is crucial for equal jobs of women and men at all company levels to have an objective system of people assessment both when recruiting from the outside, or when assessing the performance and potential of the existing employees and when selecting candidates for promotion.

A possibility to lean upon fixed and generally known norms is very important. The so-called competence model or a **set model of required employee’s behaviour** in corporation also belongs to them. Term is derived from an English term competency denoting a skill or capability.

By means of competence model, an organization informs its employees how to act at work to get positive assessment.

Competence model does not replace more elaborate documents describing valid internal norms as are for example labour code or code of employee's behaviour. Its aim is to clearly and briefly remind of basic working values. Companies aiming building their corporate culture, use the competence model as a **unifying basis of other personal processes**. By this they significantly help to objectively assess potential and existing employees, for the competence model reminds all the assessors at all times what the rules are.

Competence model is a backbone of the majority of HR processes. The selection of new employees is governed by it, just as evaluation career planning and rewards. Furthermore, it is an important communication tool inside and outside. By means of it we inform our employees, customers and business partners according to what rules we work and what behaviour we value.

Tereza Kožuská, Senior HR Manageress GE Money⁷

Competence model encouraging balanced jobs of women and men should:

- ▶ Contain competences traditionally attributed rather to women (communication skills, diplomacy, empathy, participative leadership)
- ▶ Encourage variety at workplace
- ▶ Promote open culture and constructive atmosphere

An excerpt from management competence model encouraging equal jobs of women and men:

Competences	Behaviour
Participative leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ delegates decision-making competences and shares information ▶ motivates team members via providing opportunities for professional and personal growth ▶ coaches team members to develop their unique potential to the best of their abilities
Visions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ sets the right direction of future development ▶ looks for new opportunities in various spheres ▶ provides an opportunity to team members to take part in visions and strategy formation
Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ shows empathy when dealing with others, can listen ▶ adjust his/her communication style to make mutual cooperation easier ▶ can naturally gain interest and respect of others

Case study: Microsoft, Czech Republic⁸

Microsoft was established in 1975 and is a world leader in providing software, services and solutions helping people and companies worldwide to fully realize their potential. Czech branch of Microsoft Corporation started its business in 1992.

In Microsoft, it is believed that the diversity in nation, affiliation

and opinions regardless of sex increases the work assignment of employees and enriches company products and community where Microsoft operates. "We are proud of supporting equal chances", Martina Šmidochová, Personnel Manager of Microsoft says. "We do not distinguish whether it is a woman or a man, whether they are single or have a family. For each our employee we try to create environment where he/she can work easily and which offers a balance between their professional and personal life as well as the opportunity of further growth and his/her potential development. Global Diversity Committee takes care of ensuring the diversity and pleasant working environment. Our pursuit to understand the differences and to be able to appreciate their benefits, grow with changes in global market environment and the perception of needs of the whole society."

Permanent growth of Microsoft globally and also within the range of the Czech branch is related to fundamental emphasis on the support of personal employees growth who have their greatest share on the overall success of the company and the excellent position of the Czech branch and its public perception. Microsoft offers its employees a job with one of the most acknowledged companies of the world, but at the same time provides them with quality rear and the possibility to take care of the family or do charity. Microsoft sets an example to its employees both globally and in the Czech Republic, where it supports apart from others also "Computers against barriers" project. It is not an accident that Microsoft belongs among the most looked up employers in the Czech Republic and the whole of Central and Eastern Europe region⁹.

Microsoft globally acknowledges values directly predetermining open and non-discriminating approach to employees and supporting self-confidence of individuals and the whole of society:

- ▶ Honesty and frankness
- ▶ Enthusiasm for customers, partners and technology
- ▶ Openness, respect for others
- ▶ Willingness to accept and manage great challenges
- ▶ Self-criticism, curiosity and lust for personal growth
- ▶ Responsibility for obligations, achievements and quality

On the basis of these values and responsible approach to business and the society where Microsoft operates, partial projects for promoting equal opportunities within the range of corporate culture are issued.

The society has long-term perceived information technology as men's domain. Microsoft is trying to change this perception by its approach. "When recruiting new employees, we like offering technical positions also to women and we offer rewards to agencies that we use for searching suitable candidates," Martina Šmidochová says. Currently, women participate in Czech representation of Microsoft management at 20 per cent. Women in Microsoft manage for example personnel policy area, marketing, or business relations with governmental agencies. They can exchange their experience on international level at regular meetings of Microsoft women.

Microsoft also devotes great support to parents on maternity and parental leave. "Arrival in a family of an employee is a beautiful event for Microsoft," Martina Šmidochová smiles. "Not to be spoilt by concerns of career interruption, we enable our employees to come back to work without violating their professional status, so if it is possible they come back to the same post they had prior to their leave for parental leave." If parents want to come back to work, they must have an active communication with company. Their reintegration into working process, the way of this reintegration and eventual selection of a new position or a decision about coming back to original post are a question of mutual agreement.

It is important to understand that Microsoft is a very fast changing company. “We live in information technology environment, which develops very fast and Microsoft flexibly reacts to this development,” Martina Šmidochová points out. “We help the mothers and fathers on parental leave during the pregnancy and parenthood to keep in touch with colleagues and we offer them to work from home, part-time or take part in trainings. Parents keep access to company net and to e-mails. This active approach increases the parent’s self confidence who do not feel excluded from the regular working life; and the demanding period of child care does not lower their capacity to weather in practice. On the contrary, care for children and household provide the parents with new experience and management skills, they can use for their work successfully.

Parents will have websites at their disposal from July 2007 with tips how to join working duties and other parts of life, relaxation, entertainment and family.

Microsoft acknowledges that a satisfied employee is a greater asset to company than a tired overworked person. The company therefore cares for balancing the work load of its employees and their personal interests and needs. Microsoft employees are enabled to work a few days a month from home and in the event of taking care of a close person the employees can use a special holiday. Supporting professional development by means of training, stays in various Microsoft branches and participation in expert conferences worldwide is a part of Microsoft programme for reconciling professional and personal life.

Microsoft supports healthy lifestyle of its employees and focuses on the satisfaction of their families. Microsoft entertains the families of its employees every year by a number of cultural and sports events to unite the families by common experiences and at the same time introduce the nearest of it employees to internal culture and operation of the company.

Microsoft believes that everyone has the potential to achieve something. People sometimes need the means that help them discover and use their potential. Microsoft therefore tries to help to discover the hidden potential of people who are for some reason in an unfavourable state by means of Potential without borders program. Microsoft at the same time encourages its employees to devote three days of their work to charity according to their choice.

Microsoft in the Czech Republic in cooperation with Charta 77 foundation focuses on the support of Computer against barriers program. The aim of this project is to help disabled citizens to find their place in life by means of information technologies which can remove a number of physical and psychological barriers. Microsoft for the duration of the project gave financial means and software in the amount of more than 78.5 million of Czech Crowns. The money was used for building 14 learning centres in the whole of the Czech Republic. Thanks to this specific help more than 1,400 handicapped people were trained, out of which 111 found jobs.

Controlling questions:

- **Does your company have a stipulated competence mode reflecting corporate values?**
- **Does your competence model promote equal representation of women and men at all company levels?**
- **Is your competence model connected with other management and people development processes (recruitment, evaluation, development etc.)?**
- **Can your employees name main competences without preparation?**
- **Do you regularly measure the behaviour of line managers with competence model?**

3. 4 Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection belong among the processes where discrimination most commonly occurs despite the high financial sanctions at stake, if proved to an organization. Both HR staff and recruitment agencies confirm that prejudices survive in number of people’s minds – most often against candidates of higher age, physically disabled and mothers with young children. Usually there is the attempt to explain these prejudices in a “logical” way – for example some managers state that they hinder from recruiting young women because “they can leave for maternity leave”. In fact, this “logic” is wrong – for example the probability that a woman leaves for maternity leave within two years is much lower than that any employee leaves for competitors (regardless of the fact that it is not known how long the maternity leave would be).

A correctly designed recruitment and selection process is a key means for the organization to have the right people for the right jobs. Therefore it is fundamental for objective candidate prerequisites for work performance to be assessed. Only when an organization does not discriminate, it is able to recruit really the best.

Due to illogical exercise of stereotypes, some professions are still divided on “women” (for example wages accountant, assistant, nurse etc.) and “men” (driver, programmer, production manager), although there is no justification for it in practice. Stereotypical division of jobs is ongoingly supported by some advertisements by anticipating the suitability of a sex – despite the fact it is illegal. There is, unfortunately, sometimes an opinion that women are not interested in career, they lack decisiveness in managing positions (or any other characteristics attributed more often to men), or a woman is not a suitable supervisor to predominantly men’s team. Nevertheless many successful top manageresses in practice prove it is the other way round!

Women nowadays achieve the same education as men and therefore it is right for them to have the same chance to use their potential. They can do anything they like. Criteria for success are skills, performance and will and not affiliation to a nation, race or sex. It is an undeniable fact that women’s and men’s approach to problems and thus management is different. To watch how people influence each other at work is very interesting. Apparently both men and women have a completely different way of thinking. For me it is important, however, to reach the right conclusion. I look up people with talent – regardless of being a man or a woman, people with enthusiasm and who help the company to make a step forward. If you watch a working group of people, it is interesting to monitor how people arrive at their conclusions. It is here that it is revealed how absolutely different ways lead men and women to the same goal.

Kimberly J. Lewis, General Manager, Mediate1⁰

Prejudices have green light particularly in organizations where they leave job candidates assessment on line managers only. A number of studies show that such selection embodies 30 per cent error rate! Deceitfulness of judgment at first sight can be best acknowledged on the example of film actors: one and the same person can be once charming and the other time repulsive – it depends only on their momentary mask and role. Similarly, when recruiting on the basis of a superficial interview, amateur actors often win. They can look self-confident and sell their stilted stories about success at work. Reality then often shows after their coming (if worse after probation period is due),

when it shows that the originally promising candidate does not have declared skills and his/her performance is a brake to team.

Subjectivity of selection and exercise of stereotypes and prejudices distinctly restrict well-processed processes, which guarantee the transparency of decision-making process when objective qualification and skills of candidates are being judged, and not unimportant factors like sex, marital status or age. The main important signs of quality recruitment and selection system are described in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 External recruitment

At recruitment focused on equal jobs of women and men support, it is particularly necessary **to find ways of blocking the greatest number of candidates as possible**. It is not enough to make the advertisement public, but it is necessary to address the suitable candidates in an active way.

The aim of external recruitment is to ensure that the highest possible number of suitable candidates apply for a job vacancy.

In a number of professions at labour market, the supply of employers exceeds the demand. To find suitable external candidates for job vacancies is thus more and more difficult. An even more difficult situation is being solved by companies doing their business in sectors which are perceived as rather “for women” (e.g. education) or “for men” (for example technological or automobile companies) and which thus feel the need to harmonize the prevalence of one sex at recruitment to achieve the desirable diversity at workplace. The same problem is felt by the majority of organizations when recruiting managers because men prevail in such positions. The examples of procedures that work at recruitment targeted at women are listed in the following points:

The following proves good for increasing the number of women candidates:

- To aim addressing on fresh school graduates (women prevail among them)
- To use masculine and feminine forms of profession names or supplements with feminine endings in advertisement texts (looking for a manager – manageress, programmer/ess)
- To stress out that the position is also suitable for women in the wording of adverts
- To present the faces of women in advertisements, internal materials and commercial presentations
- To send successful women – specialists and manageresses to represent the company when cooperating with media
- To cooperate with women organizations
- To take part in activities and projects targeted at equal opportunities
- To disclose offers for job vacancies in women magazines (or websites targeted at women)

3.4.2 Internal recruitment

Apart from external recruitment for job vacancies, it is necessary to elaborate also the internal recruitment. It tends to be very important for increasing the number of women in management in particular, while there is a phenomenon of the so-called “glass ceiling” in the majority of organizations; meaning the situation when the number of employees of both sexes is balanced at the base level (or women prevail), there are men predominantly at senior posts. There is a rule that the higher the level of mana-

gement, the fewer women there are. General manageresses are an exception not only in the Czech Republic, but in the whole of the world.

Internal recruitment supports the internal development of career because it ensures that information about a job vacancy gets across to all company employees and, at the same time, to have a clear procedure how to apply for the post.

An expressively communicated support of management for internal recruitment is important, or corporate culture must encourage the open information sharing, personal development, work flexibility and team cooperation. A frequent barrier of internal recruitment is often the unwillingness of managers to release the key people to positions in other departments (they have to then train somebody else); and related concerns of employees to apply for job vacancies (what if this irritates the current boss).

Our company has a very dynamic culture promoting change and rapid personal growth. Employee transfers across the company also on the international scale are a common part of career development since we believe that it is a way for people to learn to much better understand how the company works. It also helps the cooperation between various teams. All posts are therefore advertised also internally and everyone has the chance to enrol in the tender. Naturally we also have an elaborate programme of young talents development, which is based on an individually processed plan of personal development. Its inherent part are also internal rotations for 3-6 months, participation in projects (both local and also international), internal mentoring process and external coaching. We also offer the opportunity of international rotations to real talents.

Tereza Kožuská, Senior HR Manageress GE Money¹¹

3.4.3 Job descriptions and ideal candidate specification

In order to achieve objective evaluation of candidates for vacancies, certain recruitment and selection process formalization is necessary. **It is fundamental to set in advance what person I am looking for, not only in terms of professional knowledge but also in terms of personality**. The selected criteria are then binding to all employees taking part in the selection, both the personnel clerks and line managers.

Managers should produce the following for each job vacancy:

- List of requested competencies
- Job description
- Ideal candidate specification

Ideal candidate specification includes the specification of required experience, skills and knowledge essential for job performance.

Skills, experience and knowledge need to be tested with utmost accuracy. Competence interviews, assessment centres or psychological and skills test are used for this. Using **comparative assessment forms** should be a rule. These enable unbiased comparison of candidates (in addition they represent a significant evidence of process seriousness, if suspicion occurs that there is recruitment discrimination).

Example of comparative assessment form for the selection of education specialist:

Criterion	Candidate 1	Candidate 2
University degree	✓	✓
(preferably adult education or psychology)	✓	×
At least 2 years of practice	×	✓
Communicative English	✓	×
Excel and Powerpoint	×	✓
Communication skills	✓	✓
Planning and organization skills	×	✓
Team work	×	✓

It is apparent that if there are uniform and obligatory assessment criteria, the space for subjective assessment is distinctly limited. It is proved that companies which use job descriptions and specifications at recruitment are better at diverse teams building and at increasing the share of women at senior management levels.

3.4.4 Psychological tests

Psychological tests significantly **make the conclusions of HR specialists** from assessment interview **more accurate and deeper**. Priceless are in particular when **estimating the candidates potential**, where current practical experience cannot be relied upon.

Psychological test enable to assess the candidates personality on the basis of his/her responses to a determined set of questions or on the basis of his/her preferences when selecting various options .

It is necessary to emphasize, however, that using psychological tests belongs to the hands of a **trained psychologist** exclusively. Their interpretation is very demanding and requires high expert knowledge and experience, for the achievements to correspond to reality and not to do harm rather than help. Nowadays all things can be done via an **external agency using the internet**: a candidate completes the test on the screen, submits and an external psychologist processes the results to a report of several pages which he/she then hands over to an employer.

3.4.5 Competence interviews

Competence interviews are not demanding in terms of organization and at the same time they are an effective method of deeper recognition of candidate qualities. **By well-targeted questions, a trained experienced HR specialist can “see through” and find out what a candidate really knows** and what he/she only pretends.

Competence interview (sometimes also called behavioural interviews) are structured selection interviews when a candidate is tested for competences selected in advance (as was already explained above, these are skills or more expressed models of behaviour not powers).

Competence interview is based on three steps:

- ▶ Determining competences substantial for quality work performance
- ▶ Laying down questions for testing competences
- ▶ Consistent verification and testing of information truthfulness

Fancy you need to find out whether a candidate can solve conflicts. When you ask him/her, they will probably answer yes. But can you rely on his/her words? Most people exaggerate at interview. Hardly anybody admits to their prospective employee that they are conflictful or, the other way round, that they avoid all conflicts. Competence interview will provide you with a technique to get under candidate's skin and arrive at truth.

Hana Mikynová, Soneco – consulting and training company representative¹²

Competence interviews method is not as accurate as psychological testing, but **its advantage is that it focuses on the behaviour of a candidate in practice and can be quite easily learned**. It basically requires only a several day training and then refining the skills obtained in every day practice.

3.4.6 Assessment centres

The assimilated English term “assessment centre” (used in Czech as well) denotes a very effective assessment tool, which can be especially recommended together with psychological testing when choosing graduates, where it is not possible to truly rely upon their work history. When recruiting to senior positions, assessment centres should be a rule.

Assessment centre method is based on monitoring the behaviour of people in various situations by several observers.

Assessment centre is built on 3 principles:

- ▶ More observers
- ▶ More situations
- ▶ Changes in time

The above mentioned three principles ensure **the view of a candidate from various points of view**. Pre-selected case studies are used for behaviour testing. These often look more like a game but at the same time reveal **various features and styles of candidate personalities**.

Philip Morris ČR, a.s. exercises equal approach to employees when filling vacancies. We try to achieve the greatest process objectivity possible, therefore the team doing selection proceedings is composed of a HR department representative who is in charge of selection proceedings, then a manager of the department at stake with vacancy, and a direct supervisor. The goal is to choose the most suitable candidate meeting requirements for the post from technical/expert and personal point of view, and who will at the same time adequately supply the working team.

In some cases defined by an internal guideline, we use assessment centre method when selecting. The selection is conducted by a team of trained internal assessors (HR and other department members) and an assessor from external consulting company who is in charge of psychodiagnostics and feed back to assessment participants. This work proved good, HR processes are transparent and a greater number of assessors ensure objectivity when assessing participants. The so-called positive discrimination as defined by Labour Code was used at selection proceedings in cases where it can be applied.

Zuzana Kavanová, Employee Relations Executive, Philip Morris ČR¹³

Case study: Sveriges Television ¹⁴

Sveriges Television is a Swedish public television company broadcasting since 1966, now on 6 broadcasting channels and financed from compulsory television fees for the ownership of a TV set. Being one of the principal public media in Sweden, it focuses very strongly on equal opportunities area and diversity, reflected in internal corporate culture and set processes (in the area of HR in particular), and also in the composition of broadcasted programs and the selection of people composing them and appearing on the screen.

Maud Gran Markkanen, HR manager, says: “Our company serves heterogeneous viewers, since the Swedish population today is far from being homogenous. Approximately 20% of our viewers come from culturally or ethnically distinct environment. We try to offer them programs of their interest and at the same time be an integration element in the society, meaning to broadcast programmes targeted against various prejudices and stereotypes. This is reflected in programmes for children in particular, for whom positive education models are very important.”

Observing diversity rule in Sveriges Television is grounded in internal diversity policy derived from ethical principles of the society. It presupposes respect to individual contribution of various individuals regardless of their sex and mutual differences. Sveriges Television places particular emphasis upon the variety of employees in terms of gender, culture and nationality. Women faces as well as a text that “Sveriges television wants to reflect all the aspects of the society and therefore is interested in employees representing wide scale of life style and personal background” is therefore often shown in job vacancy advertisement. The advantage is experience or understanding other cultures and religions and they have the knowledge of foreign languages. “Cultural competences” (knowledge or experience related to different environment, culture, religion etc.) questions are included in application forms for job vacancies, while the candidates able to prove some additional cultural competences are preferred.

Sveriges Television places emphasis on the recruitment quality. Therefore one of the partners of the project is FAIR (Future Adapted Inclusive Recruitment) sponsored by the European social fund. The goal of the project is creating recruitment and selective process in such a way to be diversity-oriented and to refrain from any discrimination. The so called competence-oriented recruitment is a key element. The whole process is based on identifying key competences (models of behaviour) necessary for successful performance of a post given, subjective stereotypes when assessing candidate are thus eliminated. SVT created a new process of recruitment and selection consisting of 11 essential steps within the range of competence-oriented recruitment:

1. job vacancy
2. updating job description (work goals, responsibility areas, main working tasks)
3. creating competence profile (requested short-term and long-term skills, assessment criteria for these skills)
4. recruitment decision
5. planning recruitment (recruitment channels, roles division, determining timeline, selection techniques)
6. search for candidates (internal advertising first)
7. selection of people conducting interview (on the basis of assessment criteria)
8. competence interview (structured process, equivalent questions)
9. references and tests (consulted with candidates)

10. selection of best candidate (on the basis of assessment criteria)

11. concluding contract

Representatives of trade unions and Sveriges Television line managers have closely taken part in the new recruitment and selection proceedings apart from HR specialists. A thorough training of all people conducting the interview in competence interview technique has been a part of the project.

Diversity means more than only national variety to Sveriges Television. “Diversity is a notion going ideologically further than exercising equal opportunities,” Maud Gran Markkanen explains. “When creating working teams, we therefore try not only to give space to women and people from ethnically or culturally distinct environment, but we also see to a psychological composition of people in teams in such a way to have all the fundamental characteristics represented for project solution. We also try to pull down stereotypes concerning physical appearance of people appearing on the screen. We do not want only young and slim types, one of our very corpulent presenters, for example, gained popularity. A fleshier figure is not a handicap! Only some fashion designers adore anorectic models and together with slimming producers built their business on the slenderness ideal. But the majority of women in the real world look different and for some people even more interesting.”

As mentioned before, diversity is distinctly reflected in programme composition prepared and broadcasted by Sveriges Television. Maud Gran Markkanen believes that it is the minor opinions that are most attractive to viewers. “It is not necessary to talk about what most people think. We know it. But how the people with different life experience view the same thing? Why they think something different? It can be very inspiring to find out. A number of people correct their behaviour or opinions after being in someone else’s shoes. And educating the society to greater mutual understanding is an important mission of our television,” she concludes.

Controlling questions:

- **Do you advertise job vacancies in such a way that there is a chance that as diverse candidates as possible apply?**
- **If you have been dealing with prevalence of one sex in some positions, do you target the recruitment to catch the interest of as many applicants of the other sex as possible?**
- **Do you have a well-processed system of internal recruitment for the employees to have a chance to grow professionally regardless of their sex, age, etc.?**
- **Do you use job descriptions and ideal candidate specifications to achieve objective assessment of candidates when selecting candidates?**
- **Do you use comparative assessment forms?**
- **Do you use methods making the objective estimate of candidates more precise (competence interviews, assessment centres, psychological tests etc.)?**
- **Do you keep recruitment statistics including also the success of estimate and the capacity of various recruitment managers to hire diverse employees?**

3. 5 Education and career development

Ambitious women, in my opinion, like working with men colleagues. I am not sure, however, whether all men like working with ambitious women. A woman is usually very practical and effective. Apart from work - where she must be able to lead

teams of colleagues, set their targets, assign and assess their work, motivate them, develop them - she has to usually do the same in her own family. A woman in leading position is actually a double manager and therefore she needs to "get things moving" and she does not have, and does not even need to have, time for contemplating long. I have met many women in senior positions who had very tough performance standards with respect to their colleagues but themselves too. Potential absence of women in company management can be, in my opinion, best told by the way a company develops and motivates its employees. Women are often more artful in defining the needs of their colleagues - they can sense that something can be done in a better way and they can also put it in words, discuss openly with a colleague and agree on development in such a way that the other does not perceive it as his/her failure but the other way round, as an opportunity. Therefore I believe that increasing the number of women in executive positions can have a very positive influence on the achievements and corporate culture.

Jana Riebová, HR Manageress, HVB Bank¹⁵

Career growth is another area where women have lowered chances when compared to men, based on conclusions from conducted researches. Organizations that can prove a harmonized number of women and men at all management levels are rare, not only in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, as was already mentioned in Equal opportunities benefits for women and men, **there are studies proving that increasing the share of women in management has a positive influence on the performance of the whole organization.** The cooperation of both sexes brings a more complex representation of fundamental management skills and, in addition, the companies that can give space to women and men are able to better choose really the best. It is necessary to refer to an explicit direct proportion between the quality of people working in executive positions and achievements of the company.

Just as in case of recruitment and selection proceedings, also in **the process of development, it is necessary for its quality to be transparent and to include policies preventing the exercise of prejudices and stereotypes** at decision-making process. All the successful world companies have a process of edification and career planning elaborated in such a way to be objective. Only then it can become a strong tool for increasing the motivation and loyalty. Such system is in addition economical because it is much more effective financially, if an organization is able to identify and educate the people for executive posts from their own resources, rather than spending considerable money for external recruitment.

3.5.1 Succession programmes

Succession programmes are a part of career planning, where managers appoint their **representatives** or **successors**. These then go through special preparation including non-standard training, shadowing of managers, work on significant projects, internal stays etc.

Within the range of succession programmes, managers appoint employees, who can eventually replace them in their position. The "successors" identified are devoted non-standard support in the area of development to be ready for promotion in the best possible way.

Succession programmes help to get people's promotions from own resources in a company moving, and by this to increase chances for the career of women working at lower posts. At the same time,

they create pressure on management quality and understanding that management position does not mean only power but at the same time also responsibility for the development of members of a trustee team.

Unbiased selection is ensured by process control from the side of HR department, comparing the selected names with the results of employees' assessment and eventually independently verifying the quality of selected candidates for promotion (development centres, psychological tests, 360° assessment methods, panel interviews etc.). **Within the range of this control, an emphasis should be placed on gender aspect particularly when there is the so-called "glass-ceiling",** or a situation when at lower levels works sufficient number of women but men are mostly selected to executive positions.

3.5.2 Development centres

An even more effective method of ensuring objectivity at selecting people for promotion are the so-called development centres (even in Czech using the English term development centres). They are both organizationally - and also financially, if external assessors take part - a more demanding method for support development, but the time and investment devoted is returned in higher motivation and retention of employees.

Development centres are analogy to assessment centres, their goal is not however candidate selection for job vacancies, but determining potential and areas for developing talented employees.

The output from development centre is a detailed report describing the skills ascertained on the basis of employees' behaviour in various situations. The report serves as one of the basis at career planning and personal development plan making. Its goals are discussed both with the employee himself/herself and his/her employers. Line supervisor can take part in a development centre as one of the observers. The main **assessment must be done by an unbiased expert**, preferably an experienced psychologist to ensure objectivity.

To increase equal chances in development centre, it is also essential to choose a complex range of skills in such a way not to suit only one sex (sometimes it happens that an emphasis is placed only on skills traditionally ascribed rather to men, as are resolution, ability to put through one's opinion, natural authority etc. and forgotten are the skills which women tend to be better at: empathy, diplomacy or the ability to motivate and develop others). It is also necessary to plan the composition of candidates in a tested team in advance, for the eventual aversions and sympathies between them not to limit the opportunities of candidates to reveal naturally.

It is **owing to the fact that they enable to assess the skills and potential of employees in an unbiased and complex way, the development centres are ranked among the most effective tools for equal chances support** when planning personal development.

3.5.3 Mentoring, coaching and educative programmes for women

A number of global companies solve the lack of women in management by introducing special mentoring, coaching or, eventually, educative management programmes for women. **These tools help talented women employees to balance the disadvantage that they operate in predominantly men's environment, and thus they miss models they could imitate.**

Mentoring and coaching are methods where promising employees are being helped in development by a more experienced colleague or a trained internal or external coach.

Mentoring and coaching have the same goal: to help employees in their personal growth. They differ in method: while coaching is based on a dialogue of an employee and a coach with activation questions, when the emphasis is placed on the person's understanding his/her own potential and to use it to his/her best; mentoring shifts employees forward thanks to the opportunity to get better acquainted with the working style of a successful manager. The following example demonstrates what value mentoring or coaching can bring for the development of an individual.

Gerri Elliott, Corporate Vice-president of Microsoft, used to be your mentor. What was your relationship like and how did your cooperation work?

Gerri is in charge of a division dealing with projects introducing Microsoft technologies to public administration, education and healthcare worldwide. Her team heads approximately one thousand employees residing in all the US states, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and Southern, Central and Northern America. Getting to know Gerri Elliott has been wonderful experience for me. Gerri is a beautiful woman and a great personality. She can look very womanly and elegant even in this very technical environment. She is at the same time unbelievably hard-working woman and a mother to two maturing children and a loving wife to her husband who partly gave up his career for her. I could have never imagined that to manage something like this is possible if I had not seen in with my own eyes.

A greater part of my program in Redmond consisted of the so-called shadowing which means that I could have been with Gerri in the whole of her working day like a "shadow", i.e. silently and unobtrusively. The day started very soon, for example after 6 am by a morning teleconference with European teams and ended rarely before eight o'clock. And what did I learn? Actually nothing else than what I was witnessing for the whole time spent with Gerri: enormous work efforts, absolute consistency and reliability, great enthusiasm, Gerri starts new projects with and an adorable interest in her fellow workers at their work but also in private life.

I am very grateful to Gerri for enabling me to get to know her and her working style. It is very unlikely that I could ever pay her back in such an extent, so I will at least try to spread the idea of mentoring on and enable other women to get similar opportunity, though in smaller scale. Because within the range of mentoring I have gained something one does not learn at school or read from books and does not find out at any seminar. It is very personal unique experience.

Ivana Šabatová, chairwoman South-Bohemian Association of Businesswomen and Manageresses¹⁶

Mentoring and coaching proved good as a means for breaking the so-called "glass ceiling", which prevents women from progress onto higher posts. This phenomenon is not apparent at first sight but usually the fact that there are enough women at basic level but only a few succeed in career growth shows it. There are more causes of it but often it is because of prejudices that women are not interested in career growth, eventually do not have good management skills or that they do not have authority with men subordinates. A series of successful women in practice prove the other way round.

Not many people are aware that the glass ceiling is not only a factor decreasing the motivation of women employees but that it can also represent a futile financial load.

An example of financial savings when breaking the "glass ceiling":¹⁷

"The problem concerned the lowest organization level where there worked approximately 500 employees, majority of them young secondary school graduates (women) with a brief practice. They did quite a stereotypical and financially not well-awarded work and thus they naturally were interested in a better place. When a candidate for a superior position to them was searched, he/she was always selected externally. HR department decided to intervene in the problem.

It seemed impossible not to find at least one suitable candidate for a post of junior manageress among almost 500 administrators," HR manageress of the company describes the situation then. "Therefore we initiated a project whose goal was to increase their chances of promotion. By means of assessment centre, ten talented women were selected who went through a complex annual education programme including also mentoring."

The result exceeded expectations: all the selected employees achieved an interesting post at higher level of company ladder within a year! And the specific financial contribution? First of all, the need of external advertising for top (higher) management posts and then the cost for administrators recruiting decreased owing to lower employee turnover because the people at the lowest management level got a signal that there is a space for personal growth. "In total, we saved half a million Czech Crowns a year and in addition we achieved higher motivation of employees in line posts," HR manageress concludes.

International **women corporate nets and ladies clubs** also help increasing the chances of women in their careers; owing to them talented women employees can contact more experienced women colleagues and learn from them. Special education courses also proved good, in particular in sectors traditionally dealing with lack of women as are, for example, some productions or technological companies.

Special education courses for women are often misunderstood in the Czech Republic with the objection that it is positive discrimination. However, if we approach the matter from the view of a company who is trying to increase the share of women in their own lines and obtain thus all the benefits derived from higher reconciliation and diversity of working team (higher performance, opinion plurality, better atmosphere at workplace etc.), we find out that the pressure on higher productivity is the motive, not an effort to unjustly favour somebody.

Personality development of women with distinct management potential from Czech Telecom and Eurotel is to be ensured by WOW - Winning Opportunities for Women programme. The main goal of this program is to achieve higher representation of women in management and to remove the disproportion between men and women at the top company levels of management. 35 women employees were included in WOW programme in 2005. These women attend workshops "Business Skills for Women". The participants of the course were chosen from the total of 2,471 women working in the company. Individual seminars are targeted not only at topics related to business skills (corporate life, top management team, communication, how to take on and keep responsibility, marketing – image building etc.), but also to the sexual harassment issue – faced by women in some situations.¹⁸

Case study: Citibank, Czech Republic¹⁹

Citibank, a.s. belongs among the greatest promoters of diversity and equal opportunities in the Czech Republic. Diversity concept is one of the fundamental pillars of worldwide policy of Citigroup financial group where Citibank belongs. Milan Ruttner, HR manager, says: "Diversity is a fundamental value that we revere, kind of Citigroup mantra. It is not only about equal opportunities for example in relation to women and men but it is a holistic concept of diversity in our company. The concept unambiguously defines our equal approach to sex, religious affiliation, origin and skin colour. I dare say there is no other company in the world where so many races religions and cultures mixed as in Citigroup."

They acknowledge in Citibank that diversity is not only a principle of ethics that needs to be respected within the scope of worldwide corporate policy, but that it means great practical contribution for the company. The principal motive is that Citibank thinks about its employees and they want to choose the best. "Our main efforts are targeted at management work, active communication and constant dialog on how to improve current situation," Milan Ruttner says. "If I am perceived as an employer who actively works on diversity solving and improving, I am able to attract the best talents. Not only to attract but mainly to retain them and develop them. What does it really mean? More detailed planning and more time of a manager devoted to this issue, which undeniably has a direct effect on increasing the productivity, clearly influences the achievements of the company and decreases the company costs for recruiting new employees."

Citibank strategy is based on four principal goals – to be a respected employer, services provider, business partner and a citizen. With respect to the employer's role, the company focuses on four key areas. First is manager's responsibility where diversity promotion should go without saying for all management members. The second area is getting the talents – the goal of Citibank is to look up capable and talented workers regardless of any personal factors. The third area is the development of labour force and, the last but not least, the bank focuses on working environment, while they feel the duty to ensure working conditions in the corresponding quality and at a corresponding level

Since more than half of all Citigroup employees are women, represented at all management levels, the company started a worldwide activity in 2000 called Citigroup Women's Initiative. Since then, women's organizations are formed (27 to date) throughout all countries with the goal to support equal opportunities. The intentions of these groupings are to use the experience and knowledge of women throughout the whole of organization, to create models, leaders and mentors and identify talents and encourage their development. Support of women coming back from maternity leave has been in force in Citibank ČR for more than 10 years. Specifically, the women are provided with financial aid for babysitting and are offered the opportunity of working flexi- or part-time. This system includes four basic opportunities. One of them is flexible working time (it means the shift of the beginning and the end of working time in the range of one or two hours to meet the requirements of Labour Code). Other possibility is a condensed business week when an employee can substitute one free working day in remaining four or more working days, and then use the claim incurred for the necessary day off. Citibank also offers job sharing among two employees with part-time work.

Milan Ruttner goes on to describe: "We offer women on maternity leave to work on short-term projects or to come back to work from maternity leave for a predefined number of hours a week. Today

we have a number of examples when employees with completed maternity leave came back to work for part-time (usually 12-24 hours a week). In relation to the nature of work and personal possibilities, they usually combine home office with work at bank HQ. This way of joining work and parental leave is considered very advantageous both from the view of an employee and the employer. Owing to this opportunity, an employee is in constant touch with the company, he/she knows what goes on, and therefore is not exposed to greater stress as is often the case when one comes from parental leave after two or more years." All women on maternity leave are sent a bulletin called CitiMums World apart from an internal corporate magazine called CitiNews, they are invited to all social and annual events and also informal gatherings of women on maternity or parental leave with top management are organized where they can take their children with.

Concerning women career support, glass ceiling phenomenon is often discussed. Neil Cockroft, Senior Vice President from Citigroup Centre in London, who is also in charge of diversity and talents in group edification says: "Although the term glass ceiling has been created 20 years ago, almost nothing has changed in the situation of women – it means that there are still very few in higher posts and top management. It is necessary to emphasize that women did not get to higher posts by "osmosis" only due to the fact that there are enough at junior posts." Neil Cockroft mentions also the less known term "glass reef": "Glass reef can be defined as using women in top management in situations when company is in crisis and it is necessary to lead it out of it effectively. A woman is in such case and advantageous alternative, somewhat last choice – when she does not succeed, i.e. does not lead the company to growth in short horizon, she leaves and the company thus loses her talent forever."

Neil Cockroft makes clear that the effect of glass reef can be avoided by continuous monitoring of women talents at the level of middle management and to shift them within a company. At the same time it is necessary to introduce a term of "glass reef" to HR terminology inside the company – so that it was not mentioned for the first time on the day when it is decided about a leave of a specific woman from top management position. "I can definitely name an example of Citigroup, clearly defining the criteria for success (on the basis of talent and performance, not sex), organizing regular quarterly performance assessment and providing a specific coaching to women," Neil Cockroft concludes.

An effort to enable the employees to make personal and professional life reconciliation easier is also related to diversity. Milan Ruttner claims: "Many young people still grow up in the environment of relative well-being, but also for them the values are gradually changing, it is not a hunt for money and career at all cost anymore. The price of free time, time spent with family, friends or spent just for oneself is priceless. We therefore have to continue working on solving the problem of reconciling professional and personal life both for women and men." The banks cares for relaxation of its employees via CitiClub owing to which they have the opportunity to use the offer of cultural and sports facilities, pick up tickets or passes at workplace, in more favourable conditions.

Citibank asserts diversity not only in its internal processes, but they also take part in organizing conferences and seminars on diversity and they cooperate with associations realizing projects within the scope of Equal initiative. It is apparent that diversity is a real part of business for Citibank. "Diversity is not perceived as a policy but more like day-to-day obvisosity and part of our lives. All our initiatives in this area are a clear response to constantly changing social trends which must be not only accepted but principally worked with. Employees must see examples in public life where we, however, have still lot to do," Milan Ruttner concludes.

Controlling questions:

- Do you have succession programmes in your organization that help career development of women?
- Do you use development centres for career planning?
- Do you include also the so-called “women” competences in development centres testing?
- Do the talented women employees in your organization have the chance to use a mentor or a coach?
- Is there a ladies club or other contact network for successful women?
- Do you prepare education programmes for the development of women -manageresses?
- Do you regularly assess the satisfaction level of your employees with the system of career development?

3.6 Compensation

I see the main barrier in a certain resignation of women but also men to taking part in public matters. Many women try to deal with problems by themselves without contacting trade unions at their workplaces or, eventually, establishing them! All is related to all: it is necessary to negotiate more for the sake of reconciling professional and personal life to achieve equality in compensation and to promote woman's self-confidence for women to pay to strive for executive posts. Collective negotiation is a matter of trade unions and employers and a mutual will to come to agreement is necessary. In a project, we have further opportunity to process and specify the several times mentioned guide with respect to the conditions of the Czech Republic. The development is slow but apparent. The most interesting for future will be the changing attitudes of young people, men in particular and their readiness to accept new roles in public and private spheres. I will never personally put up with discrimination in wages. I will therefore do everything I can to have same pay for same work both for men and women.

Dušan Martínek, HR and Project Department Manager, Czech-Moravian confederation of trade unions

3.6.1 Equal pay

In previous chapters, it has been referred to the fact that there is a distinct disproportion between the compensation for the work of women and men in the Czech Republic. A report from Centre for economic research and PhD. Studies of Charles University called Relative position of women in labour market in the Czech Republic: summary of research²⁰ states that **wages difference between men and women in the Czech Republic reaches thirty per cent**, out of which only approximately one third can be explained by women having rather low-income jobs. **The remaining two thirds of salary difference, meaning 20% have no other explanation than wage discrimination of women.** The highest wage differences between the sexes are in business sphere; while in budget sphere the wage injustice is a bit smaller.

“Wages inequality differs according to the areas where men and women work. In general, it can be traced that the differences grow bigger in attractive areas while the less attractive, i.e. feminized areas, are characterized by income homogeneity. But also in feminized fields applies that men achieve executive posts much more often which can be visibly declared in education sector where almost 78% of employees are women, but in the management of basic and secondary schools, there

are approximately only 17%. The greatest difference in wages is in financial and insurance field where the difference is up to 52%. The same differences are in public pensions – the biggest share of men get a pension in the amount of 7,000 – 7,500 CZK while women get in average 1,000 CZK less. In long-term effect, the differences in wages of men and women deepen in relation to education. The most “afflicted” group are women university graduates, whose monthly wage is by 12,000 CZK lower than with their male counterparts (from 1997, this difference grew deeper by further 5,000 CZK). With decreasing education, the differences decrease to 4,000 CZK with achieved basic education, generally the gap grows wider with all education categories. The same relation can be observed also with respect to position at work, the higher post, the greater the difference in salary. In the top category of executives, the difference is up to 55%.²¹”

A similar corporate practice represents a dangerous time-bomb. What influence will it have on her (being a successful employee) motivation and loyalty, if she finds out that her man colleague gets one third higher pay at the same post with much lower performance? Information leak on wages can be never completely prevented. Furthermore, there is a risk that people in the Czech Republic will address court more and more in such cases, as is the case abroad. **For each organization which cares for motivation and retention of employees, same pay for same work should become a binding standard.**

There is a natural wages equality between men and women in Česká pojišťovna. It would never occur to us to give somebody more or less money depending on their sex. Fairness in compensation is ensured by a fixed structure in which our basic salaries are graded based on the rank in the company, while people doing the same job get the same basic salary. Eventual longer work experience, broader qualification or better skills are taken into account by personality part in executive positions – provided in addition to the basic salary. Nonstandard work performance is then at all posts compensated by performance part which is with some employees (for example assessors or call centre staff) influenced by their performance in teams.

Zdeněk Šimek, HR Manager, Česká pojišťovna

The first step to ensure compensation equality must be an analysis of the current state, meaning a detailed comparison of women and men at all posts taking into account individual experience and performance. If wages disproportion is found out, it is advisable to stipulate a plan for improvement.

Every experience compensation manager confirms that **change will be a long-term issue**, because not many organizations will be able to find funds for the immediate balance of unjust differences. **Utilizable reserve can be sometimes exploited in the budget for flexible compensation components** (bonuses, extra benefits etc.). If these are changed, savings can be achieved. Usually the fundamental way of achieving fairness of wages is a mechanism of annual wages adjustments which takes into account not only the comparison with external market but also internally in company. It is naturally a long-term issue. **Verified and elaborate methods can be used, for example Hay system implementation**; it is however necessary to judge whether such solution corresponds to corporate culture strategy.

Three pillars aid in ensuring the objectivity of compensation:

1. **objective data**, or a reliable and up-to-date internal and external pay research
2. **mechanism of regular pay adjustment**, taking into account:

- a. company achievements
 - b. comparison of post at stake with other posts within a company
 - c. experience, knowledge and work performance of an individual
3. **optimum setting of fixed and flexible part of pay system**, or a quality system of bonuses leading to performance increase and motivating the best employees.

I was taken by surprise by the negativistic approach of many company representatives to equal opportunities because I think that with respect to costs it is not something which could not be handled for a company. The problem is in long-term practice v zaběhanosti, indolence and unwillingness to change stereotypes. Losses, these will it definitely not bring. I, myself, was not brought up in modern equal opportunities approach asserted today, but I think it is a part of politeness and humanity for all employees to have the same conditions... Women in our publishing house are equal to men concerning their positions in the company and their pay – manageress, editor, secretary and marketing manager are women. Manageress has the same salary as company director; the salaries of Marketing Manageress and Distribution Executive are also balanced.

František Honzák, Editor – in – chief, Libri publishing house²²

3.6.2 Employee benefits help in reconciling personal and professional life

Reconciling personal and professional life has been already mentioned several times in the chapter on working conditions and maternity and parental leave. This is key for reconciling the chances of women in labour market. As indicated by the given case studies, a significant role is played by the willingness of an employer to provide its employees with working benefits supporting family and care for it.

The following belong among the so-called family benefits:

- infant school at workplace
- allowances for babysitting or care for impotent persons
- a paid holiday from family reasons, e.g. in case of children's illness (tends to be limited by a number of allowed days)
- summer and winter camps and events for children's leisure
- help with selecting health care
- corporate recreation facilities
- home office etc.

A very good practice with respect to this is **plan of flexible bonuses**, or “cafeteria,” providing employees with free hand when choosing benefits.

Flexible bonuses plan or “cafeteria offers its employees the opportunity to choose such employee benefits that best meet their current personal, family or health situation.

In a flexible system of benefits, a young childless manageress, for example, chooses a pass to fitness centre, her colleague with three children a contribution for babysitting, and other colleagues choose non standard health care, or a contribution for day care for the elderly. **In a system like this, people really appreciate employee benefits owing to the fact that they can co-decide about them.** Costs spent are then returned to the employer in higher motivation and loyalty.

Case study: Lloyds, TSB, Great Britain²³

Lloyds TSB Group, a British company, was formed in 1995 by a merge of a major bank – Lloyds Bank, established in 1765, with TSB bank, business activities dating back to 1810. It therefore belongs among companies with a proud history of more than two hundred years. It is not a tower of conservative traditions, but belongs among flag-ship firms on Great Britain with the equal opportunities concept and diversity.

The following information can be found at their website: “At Lloyds TSB, diversity is an integral part of our business. As a large employer and service provider, we actively seek new ways to better understand the diverse communities in which we operate. We understand that our customers and employees have different needs and aspirations, and that they operate in different locations and industries. With more than 16 million customers and nearly 70,000 employees, understanding that difference is very important to us.

For us, valuing equality and diversity is about much more than ‘tick box’ compliance.

Our aim is to go beyond legislation in our employment and customer offers, by getting

close to communities and employees, to truly understand and meet their diverse needs.

To build this understanding, we have established very strong links with several

organizations active in this field, such as Business in the Community's Race for

Opportunity, Opportunity Now and the Employers' Forum on Disability. We also regularly

seek feedback and ideas from the staff and our customers.

For promoting the diversity and equal opportunities, Lloyds TSB realized a number of projects and programs. One of was a project aimed at achieving the equality of pay between men and women. At the beginning of 2002, Lloyds TSB carried out three pilot pay reviews. The bank followed the five-step methodology of the Equal Pay Review toolkit recommended by British Equal Opportunities Commission. The goal was producing a report presenting key findings for senior management and HR, on the basis of which it would be to go through the data found, providing explanation for differences that are justifiable and to carry out adjustment where unjustifiable difference will be identified.

From the beginning it was necessary to solve several problems. One of them was allocating a sufficient number of employees to make the analysis feasible, and the other data comparison when it was necessary to show how local data can be used for the whole group.

It was found out that many inequalities have their root in prior pay reviews from the past. Formal explanation of logic having influenced the current pay setting could have been obtained only for the year past, so it was often impossible to trace back what had led to the decision of pay on an concrete individual.

Initial research did suggest certain anecdotal evidence enabling the organization to draw some preliminary conclusions what had led to eventual inequalities in pay – for example:

- Maternity leave and family duties career break influencing the women's pay
- Starting pay of women and men were sometimes inconsistent (while it was suggested that it was owing to tougher attitude of men at initial pay negotiation)

- ▶ Furthermore premia for previous experienced perpetuated also long after the differences in performance occurred
- ▶ Line managers were not willing to stop pay rises with long-serving employees not even in cases when their pay did not correspond to their contribution
- ▶ Average salary was skewed in favour of women at the lowest company level: at all other levels men were salary favoured while the difference was the greater the greater was the level. The reason was that a number of women had served for very long at the basic level and the pay merited their experience
- ▶ Pay gap between men and women through Lloyds TSB was even greater due to the fact that men prevailed at more senior posts.

Analysis brought that the problem is not only unequal pay between men and women, which was clearly revealed, but that there is pay unfairness in general. The project concluded that the current pay setting favours the length of service rather than work performance. It was apparent that local dealing with individual differences between men and women will not tackle the injustice of pay, but that it is necessary to overwork the whole system.

What were the specific changes? First of all, it was decided to make "a fresh start" with a new pay structure in the whole of company. The aim was not only to reduce the unjustifiable inequalities between individuals, including the gender inequalities, but to create a logical and transparent system where all the employees would know what influences their pay and what they are expected to do, if they want their pay to progress.

The new system introduced three pay zones – primary, market and high performance zones. Newly appointed people were to grow in primary zone based on the growth of their work experience and skills – the size and complexity of their work role was thus taken into consideration. As soon as they reached the market zone, their pay rose within the range of this zone provided stable performance. Their pay could have reached the high performance zone assuming they had sustained superior performance, to the maximum ceiling denoting the zone.

Pay equality concept was the basis for the whole new system. The principles accepted were transferred to all the related HR processes: assessment, recruitment etc. and all the line managers must be governed by them.

Lloyds-TSB was aware that they will have to proceed carefully when transferring the pays of existing employees into the new system and take equality and good relations between employees as well as financial imperatives into account. The people whose salaries had been lower than primary zone have all immediately moved (in two phases for the company to spread the costs) and owing to the new pay structure there was a clear timeframe when and under what conditions will their salaries get to the market and high-performance zones.

The pays of employees exceeding the market zone due to long company service were not reduced but in the long run they will be managed in such a way to catch up over a time. Company management is aware of the risk that these individual cases will represent disturbance of pay equality, but they are convinced that it is meaningful to spread equal justice to a long-term timeframe, and not to reduce the motivation and loyalty of long-serving employees.

The last measurements indicate that the number of employees who reached the high-performance zone has slightly increased lately and it will be subject of further investigations to make sure that this growth is supported by work performance. The maximum stipulated in the high-performance zone proved to be effective while the numbers remained stable. New pay system will

continue being monitored and eventually adjusted to make sure that it will continue being just and motivating.

Controlling questions:

- ▶ Do you provide the same pay for the same work regardless of the sex in your organization?
- ▶ Does your company find out current data about the wages level at labour market?
- ▶ Have you introduced an elaborate pay order including comparison of work posts and stipulated payment bracket for individual posts?
- ▶ Do you carry out regular salary adjustments leading to the fairest work assessment possible based on the value of working post and current performance?
- ▶ Do you offer your employees the opportunity to choose employee benefits based on their preference within the frame of flexible system of benefits?
- ▶ Do you provide the so-called family benefits (allowances for babysitting or the ill, infant school at workplace, days off for family reasons, camps and ski trips for children, recreation facilities for families of employees etc.?)

3. 7 Complaints solving

I don't like the word compromise, I have to admit. You see, compromise is often presented as an ideal solution, in practice it is often a loss for both sides. Neither is able to assert what he/she wanted. Of course, it is necessary to listen to other people's opinions and it would be definitely nonsense to insist on something if you are not right. But if I am hundred percent sure that my way is right, I will not compromise! You cannot act different in diversity management: imagine what it would look like if I was to argue with managers which of their prejudices are too much and where we can wink. You cannot let anyone discriminate just a bit!

Paki Holvander, Diversity Manager, Norrtälje Kommun, Sweden²⁴

When observing equal opportunity rules at workplace, it is necessary to ensure that all employees respect the compulsory rules and to have a functioning process of discrimination, chicane or sexual harassment based complaints solving in the organization. It can happen in any company that somebody will breach the standards and act unethically.

A valid organization order stipulates the rules of behaviour and communication at workplace in the majority of organizations. Equal opportunities should be its part, eventually a separate internal regulation (or a policy) should be devoted to them. It should not be just a paper in a drawer but all the employees should be acquainted with it ideally at an introductory entry training where they get their own copy or information where they can find the info in electronic form. **The process of employee complaints solving is usually a part of organization order or equal opportunities policy.**

Formal process of employee complaints solving serves as a prevention of eventual discrimination, chicane, sexual harassment at workplace etc.

Process of complaints solving sets concrete steps to be taken if you personally or as a witness encounter with a breach of valid rules, meaning who you can address (usually a superior or HR department) and how to submit a complaints) with more serious cases, it is necessary to make a complete record) etc.

In our society, the issue of sexual tends to be unfortunately derogated. In interviews, carried out by Gender centre in Brno with the representative of Czech businesses, references to “good working atmosphere” appeared where “transient smacking the buttocks” also appeared. A very common is also the idea of a woman-complainer, exaggerating innocent joking or revenges on a former adorer. Numerous examples from abroad however prove that employees usually do not complain about little thing or ambiguous situations. For a victim to be able to undergo lengthy trial or other dealings concerning the whole issue must be usually driven by a strongly degrading, offensive or repeated harassment.²⁵

It is also necessary to take into the account a fact that employees may fear to complain in person. **A box for anonymous incentives and complaints** to be investigated by HR department or agents of trade union should be therefore placed visibly. An elected **ombudsman** is sometimes at disposal to employees of companies where there are no trade unions or boards of employees. He/she has an unbiased approach to all comments. All these tools enable the company to solve eventual case at its origin, prior to the time when it gets to press or court. And if it happens eventually, the existence of tools for solving the complaints of employees is important evidence that a company tries to actively prevent problems.

Negative phenomena such as discrimination, chicane, and sexual harassment at workplace appear particularly in organization where they do not place emphasis on **proper behaviour of managers. Leading role should be perceived as a responsibility for performance, motivation and team development and not as power over others.** Therefore it is necessary to place emphasis on participative leading style at trainings for management and to introduce mechanisms enabling echo testing of manager’s ethics (360° feed back, researches on employee’s satisfaction etc.). The aim is not to limit management and decisive competences of super, but preventing their abuse owing to process transparency.

Working environment does not have to be friendly but should be fair. To create a fair working environment is an art, maybe skill to lead people. A manager should have a certain kind of education, character and, above all, reliability. I believe it is responsibility that today’s managers lack. Manager can be a cool expert, but if he/she is not realizing the responsibility for a group of people, then it is not a person at right place. Manager should be able to listen, responsibly evaluate and should not get carried away, “get angry”, if criticized. Unfortunately, managers take any criticism as an attack at my person and that is the most frequent reason for bossing.

PhDr. Pavel Beňo, co-founder of Work and Relation civil association²⁶

Complaint solving is a complicated and very sensitive process. It is often difficult to recognize who is right because various emotions can permeate into the case – long term friendships or animosities. The methods of organization and accepted measures must be objective and just. Employees in charge of complaints solving and deciding in cases of work discipline beach should find out as many details about the whole matter as possible at all times and if these are really serious matters they do not see their way, it is **appropriate to consider whether the case should not be handed over to external authorities for investigation**, as are for example relevant employment office or Police of the Czech Republic.

Controlling questions:

- **Does your company have a valid organization regulation stipulating rules of behaviour at workplace?**
- **Is there a separate policy or an internal regulation devoted to keeping equal opportunities?**
- **Are all the employees familiar with basic valid standards of behaviour at workplace?**
- **Is there a formal process of complaint solution from the side of employees?**
- **Do your employees have the opportunity to drop their anonymous complaint to a designed box?**
- **Are trade unions or board of employees a partner of management when solving complaints from employees?**
- **Do your employees elect their ombudsman?**
- **Do you check whether your managers exercise participative leadership style and do not abuse their management competences?**
- **Do you keep detailed documentation for the eventual complaints on chicane, sexual harassment or other breach of work ethic?**

Notes:

¹ Linda Sokačová. Ženy v řídicích pozicích. HR Forum. Červenec/srpen 2006

² Štěpánka Zdvořáková. Maminkovská čísla a jak na ně. HR Forum. Červenec/srpen 2006

³ The CEO who gave his bank balance. People Management. Online: <http://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk>

⁴ Štěpán Jurajda, Věra Kuchařová, Kateřina Machovcová a kolektiv (2006). Kariéra - Rodina - Rovné příležitosti. Gender Studies, o.p.s.

⁵ Source: Pavla Frýdlová. Programy rovných příležitostí v německé Commerzbank. Speciální vydání elektronického zpravodaje Rovné příležitosti do firem. Gender Studies o.p.s. 2006

⁶ Source: Mirka Kroupová. Sladování kariéry s rodinou. HR Forum. Listopad 2006

⁷ Hana Velišková. Rovné příležitosti v HR procesech. HR Forum. Červenec/srpen 2006

⁸ Source: case study provided by Martina Šmidochová, HR Manageress, Microsoft

⁹ 5th position in Hewitt Best employers 2006 chart (Czech Republic), 17th position in Hewitt Best employers 2006 chart (Central and eastern European region), 4th position in Most requested employer of 2005 (Credit Suisse Award, Employer of the year 2005)

¹⁰ Source: Personal interview

¹¹ Source: Personal interview

¹² Source: Personal interview

¹³ Zuzana Kavanová

¹⁴ Internal materials provided by Sveriges Television and information from personal interview with Maud Gran Markkanen, HR Manageress, Sveriges Television

¹⁵ Personal interview

¹⁶ „...v rámci mentoringu jsem získala něco, co člověka nenaučí ve škole, co nevyčte z žádných knížek a nedozví se na žádném semináři...” Zpravodaj Rovné příležitosti do firem 1/07 - <http://zpravodaj.genderstudies.cz>

¹⁷ Hana Velíšková. Rovné příležitosti – dobrá nebo špatná investice? HR Forum. November 2006

¹⁸ Příležitosti pro ženy v Českém Telecomu. Zpravodaj Rovné příležitosti do firem 2/06 – <http://zpravodaj.genderstudies.cz>

¹⁹ Článek Milana Ruttnera z časopisu HR Forum, červenec/srpen 2006 a informace z internetového magazínu Rovné příležitosti do firem společnosti Gender Studies

²⁰ Štěpán Jurajda, Věra Kuchařová, Kateřina Machovcová a kolektiv (2006). Kariéra - Rodina - Rovné příležitosti. Gender Studies, o.p.s.

²¹ Jana Bartošová, Diskriminace žen na trhu práce. Online: <http://www.socioweb.cz>

²² Nina Bosničová. Genderová rovnost je otázkou lidské slušnosti. HR Forum. Listopad 2006

²³ Source: Equal Opportunities Commission. Online: <http://www.eoc.org.uk>

²⁴ Manažer diverzity musí mít kuráž. HR Forum. Listopad 2006

²⁵ Lenka Prčíková. Online: <http://www.financninoviny.cz>

²⁶ Topic: Chicane at workplace. Online: <http://www.jobpilot.cz>.

Gender Studies, o.p.s.

Gender Studies, o.p.s. is a non-governmental non-profit organisation that has performed the function of an information, consultation and education centre in the area of relations between women and men and their position in society. The goal of the organisation is to gather, analyze, work with and disseminate further information related to gender-relevant issues. Via specific project, GS actively influences change concerning equal opportunities in different areas such as institutional mechanisms, labour market, women's political participation, information technologies etc. GS also runs a library covering variety of publications and materials related to feminism, gender studies, women's and men's rights etc.

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Czech Society for Human Resources Development

The Czech Society for Human Resources Development (ČSRLZ) is a professional, non-profit organisation founded in 1993 with the aim of bringing together experts and increasing public awareness of the procedural operations of companies in the personnel field. ČSRLZ is an association of companies which currently numbers approximately 300 organisations. ČSRLZ is a member of the European Association for Personnel Management (EAPM) and the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations (WFPMA).



