

The 55th Session of the Commission on Status of Women 2011

Czech Republic Parallel Event

Political Transition & Gender Equality in Central Europe

On the 24th of February, 2011, the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations, in cooperation with the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, organized a parallel event to the 55th Session of the Commission on Status of Women (22 February – 4 March 2011), entitled “Political Transition and Gender Equality in Central Europe.”

The priority theme of the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women is: “Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work.” Given the fact that the Czech Republic has more than twenty years of experience with the process of building a democratic and open society and with overcoming under-developed gender sensitivity, the aim of the seminar was to share - along with the experiences of Poland and Slovakia - this historical experience in political transition and the promotion of gender equality with regards to the Session’s priority theme.

The seminar was opened and moderated by H.E. Ms. Edita Hrdá, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations. Ms. Pavla Špondrová, Head of the Gender Equality Unit of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, opened an expert panel section of the seminar by discussing theoretic background, communist regimes specifics with respect to equal opportunities, transition period in Czech Republic, new equality legislation. The next speaker, Ms. Martina Janíková, Director of the Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Department at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family from Slovakia, focused on the Slovak transition process in education and gender equality. The Polish experience was presented by Ms. Elwira Gross-Golacka, Director of Economic Analyses and Forecasting at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, whose presentation focused on the transition process in science, research and development from the gender equality perspective.

In the last two presentations, representatives of NGOs, Ms. Míla O’Sullivan (Centrum ProEquality, Open Society) and Ms. Monika Ladmanová (International Gender Policy Network), provided their reflections on the transition process, evaluated women’s civic engagement during transition processes from the Czech perspective and discussed the applied reforms in the Central and Eastern European countries.

After the final presentation, participants had an opportunity to discuss the issue and share their own experiences. The parallel event identified lessons learned from the transition process in Central Europe with respect to the priority issue of the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, underlining the importance of NGO participation in the transition process as well as the sharing of best practices among all relevant stakeholders.