

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of International Studies

Department of European Studies

Master's Thesis

2023

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**The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on meeting the
objectives of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025
in the Czech Republic and Austria**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defence: 2023

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on May 2, 2023

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References

JANČÍKOVÁ, Natálie. *The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on meeting the objectives of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in the Czech Republic and Austria*. Prague, 2023. 86 pages. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of International Studies. Department of European Studies. Supervisor Mgr. Jan Váška, Ph.D.

Length of the thesis: 156 327 characters with spaces

Abstract

This Master's Thesis investigates the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in Austria and Czechia, with a focus on the strategy's goals of freedom from violence and stereotypes, thriving in a gender-equal economy, and equal leadership throughout society. The research adopts Sylvia Walby's theory of gender regimes to provide context, which highlights the role of the state in shaping gender equality outcomes. Austria and Czechia are identified as social democratic and neoliberal gender regimes, respectively. This mixed-methods study employs thematic analysis and comparative case study and combines qualitative data gathered through ethnographic methods and quantitative data from open statistics. The thesis finds that Czechia operates as a neoliberal gender regime, with a limited role of the state in supporting women at risk of gender-based violence. In contrast, Austria's social democratic gender regime has provided robust support during the pandemic, with a centralized system of shelters and a state-wide 24/7 women's helpline. The study contributes to the development of gender regime theory and offers a nuanced understanding of the pandemic's impact on gender equality in different gender regimes. The findings have relevance for ongoing academic debate on the crisis's impact on women and men in the EU.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá dopady pandemie COVID-19 na Strategii rovnosti žen a mužů 2020-2025 EU v Rakousku a Česku se zaměřením na její cíle: (1) osvobození od násilí a stereotypů, (2) prosperitu v ekonomice založené na rovnosti pohlaví a (3) rovné vedení v celé společnosti. Výzkum pracuje s teorií genderových režimů Sylvie Walby, která zdůrazňuje roli státu při utváření genderové rovnosti. Rakousko a Česko jsou identifikovány jako sociálně demokratické a neoliberální genderové režimy. Tato studie využívá smíšenou metodu tematické analýzy a komparativní případové studie, při čemž kombinuje kvalitativní data získaná etnografickými metodami a kvantitativní data z otevřené statistiky. Práce popisuje, jak Česká republika funguje jako neoliberální genderový režim s omezenou rolí státu v podpoře žen ohrožených genderově podmíněným násilím. Naproti tomu rakouský sociálně demokratický genderový režim poskytl během pandemie silnou podporu s centralizovaným systémem pomoci. Studie přispívá k rozvoji teorie genderového režimu a nabízí pochopení dopadu pandemie na genderovou rovnost v různých genderových režimech. Zjištění přispívají do pokračující akademické debaty o dopadu krize na ženy a muže v EU.

Keywords

COVID-19, European Union, gender equality, gender regime theory, gender equality strategy, pandemic, crisis, the Czech Republic, Austria

Klíčová slova

COVID-19, Evropská unie, genderová rovnost, teorie genderových režimů, strategie pro genderovou rovnost, pandemie, krize, Česká republika, Rakousko

Title

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on meeting the objectives of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in the Czech Republic and Austria

Název práce

Dopad pandemie COVID-19 na plnění cílů Strategie EU pro rovnost žen a mužů 2020-2025 v České republice a Rakousku

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Jan Váška, Ph.D. for his guidance throughout the process. His insights, feedback, and encouragement have been invaluable to me. I have great admiration for how quickly he was able to read my texts and always give me good advice. Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to Mitchell Young, M.A., Ph.D., who encouraged me to write a thesis about the topic I was truly passionate about. Thirdly, I send many thanks to the University of Graz, where doc. Libora Oates-Indruchová, Ph.D. introduced me to the field of Sociology of Gender and gave me valuable advice on how to conduct my research. I would also like to thank OeAD-GmbH for giving me the scholarship which enabled me to carry out my research in Austria. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to the twelve participants of my interviews, who generously gave their time and expertise for this research.

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Introduction

The European Union has faced numerous challenges in recent times, with climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic being among the most pressing. One issue that has always been a priority for the EU is promoting gender equality. This core democratic value is enshrined in the EU's institutions, which are responsible for ensuring gender equality across all member states. In this context, in March 2020, the European Commission issued an EU-wide strategy entitled *Union of Equality: Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025*. The thesis sets out to answer the research question: What was the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on meeting the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in two different gender regimes?

According to existing literature, the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching implications for women, particularly in terms of gender-based violence, participation in the labour market, and representation in decision-making. This thesis aims to explore and identify the main effects of the pandemic on gender equality in two countries with distinct gender regimes. Expert interviews and data analysis will be used to examine the extent to which the pandemic impacted the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. The thesis uses a mixed-methods approach, which combines thematic analysis and comparative case study, and employs both qualitative data gathered through ethnographic methods and quantitative data from open statistics.

To contextualize the analysis, this thesis will draw on Sylvia Walby's gender regime theory, which emphasizes the pivotal role of the state in shaping gender equality outcomes. The thesis will compare the responses of two countries with different gender regimes - Austria, a social democratic gender regime, and the Czech Republic, a neoliberal gender regime. By examining these different approaches to gender equality, this study seeks to gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of different gender regimes in providing support to women during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The thesis will focus on the period from the start of the pandemic in 2020 until the end of 2022.

The thesis is structured into four main chapters. The first chapter is a literature review, which discusses gender equality and its relationship to crises, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic. The second chapter introduces the gender regime theory and how it applies to the Austrian and Czech Republic contexts. This chapter also outlines the research framework used in the thesis. The third chapter explores the European Union's role as a gender regime and its Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025. The final chapter of the thesis presents a detailed analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality in these two countries.

Overall, this thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality. By examining the effects of the pandemic on two different EU member states, the study should provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by different gender regimes in meeting the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. The findings will be relevant for ongoing academic debate about the impact of the crisis on women and men in the EU, as well as contributing to the development of gender regime theory.

1 Debating gender equality in the times of crisis

1.1 Gender equality and crisis

Crises of all kinds had been in the past a catalyst for change in the European societies. They underline structural inequities and problems in the systems and have the power of transforming the established social and political order. The economic and financial crisis was one of the causes of the Great French Revolution, which spread throughout Europe the ideas of egalitarianism and produced one of the first works debating the equality of women and men, Olympe de Gouges's *Declaration of the Rights of Women and Female citizens* from 1791.¹ The aftermath of the First World War brought to women universal suffrage in most of the European states: Austria in 1918 and Czechoslovakia in 1920.² Moreover, a recent study of Andriana Bellou and Emanuela Cardia documented a positive link between the severity of the Great Depression and the female employment, meaning that in the states which were hit by the economic crisis the most, women increased their participation in the labour market, which in 1930s and the upcoming years made them more independent on their husbands.³

The majority of existing literature on gendered consequences during crisis is focused on the economic and financial crisis. The essence of the current crisis is very unique and it is hard to find a precedent in recent history. Notwithstanding, the coronavirus pandemic has greatly affected the European economy and analysis of the gender impact of the previous economic and financial crisis can also bring a light on what women and men are experiencing today. Robert Blanton and his colleagues analysed in their article how the financial crisis affects gender inequality, and especially women's well-being. They use data from 68 different countries in the time period from 1980 to 2010 and describe how those financial crises negatively undermined women's participation in the formal workforce, their presence in politics, their educational attainment, and their health outcomes. They especially point out that the gendered structure of the labour force and the economy leads to a different experience of women and men during the crisis.⁴ Aslanbeigui and Summerfield connect the economic crisis

¹ Albert Goodwin, *The French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1953), 10-15; Marlene LeGates, *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 155.

² LeGates, *In Their Time*, 285.

³ Andriana Bellou and Emanuela Cardia, "The Great Depression and the rise of female employment: A new hypothesis", *Explorations in Economic History* 80, n. 1 (April 2021), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0014498320300851> (accessed November 20, 2022).

⁴ Robert Blanton, Shannon Blanton and Dursun Peksen, "The Gendered Consequences of Financial Crises: A Cross-National Analysis", *Politics & Gender* 15, n. 4 (2019): 944, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/gendered-consequences-of-financial-crises-a-crossnational-analysis/D1AC21136BC81F7EAE7710379CE06A44> (accessed April 2, 2023).

to globalization due to the inequalities rise and the negative consequences are disproportionately borne by women. They describe the paradoxical position women find themselves in in the middle of the crisis. On the one hand, they have a higher risk of losing their work, lower wages and are abused physically. On the other hand, they become indispensable as surrogates for the social safety net.⁵

Nevertheless, some texts did focus on the epidemic crisis and their different effects on the women and men. In the analysis of the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa Nkangu et al. described that since women were the majority of caretakers and health workers, their chances to be infected by the virus were higher than among men.⁶ Moreover, during the 2015-2016 Zika outbreak women faced inequalities in sexual and reproductive health with an inadequate access to health services such as safe abortions and lack of information about the outbreak.⁷ Simba and Ngcobo included in their research paper the two above mentioned epidemics, but also the deadliest pandemic in the world's history, the 1918–1919 influenza, pointing out the persistent female caregiving role during the health crises, but also the fact, that the labour shortage in 1920s caused by both the influenza pandemic and the post-war crisis, started a socioeconomic transformation with more women entering the labour market to fill the labour gaps.⁸ Finally, all of the mentioned texts on gender effect of health crisis stated the problem of male dominated decision making of crisis planning and creating strategies as one of the main contributors to the unequal impacts of the pandemics. According to the research of John et al. these are the “lessons never learned” in the crisis management.⁹

⁵ Nahid Aslanbeigui and Gale Summerfield, “Risk, Gender, and Development in the 21st Century”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 15 (2001): 14, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1011184220863> (accessed September 12, 2022); Claire M. Renzetti and Vivian M. Larkin, “Economic Stress and Domestic Violence”, *National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women* (September 2009): 1-15, https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/materials/files/2016-09/AR_EconomicStress.pdf (accessed December 2, 2022).

⁶ Olufunmilayo I. Fawole et al., “Gender dimensions to the Ebola outbreak in Nigeria”, *Annals of African Medicine* 15, n. 1 (2016): 7-13, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5452690/> (accessed December 2, 2022); Miriam N. Nkangu et al., “The perspective of gender on the Ebola virus using a risk management and population health framework: a scoping review”, *Infectious Diseases Of Poverty* 6, n. 135 (2017): 1-9, <https://mednexus.org/doi/full/10.1186/s40249-017-0346-7> (accessed December 4, 2022).

⁷ Luz J. Forero-Martínez et al., “Zika and women's sexual and reproductive health: Critical first steps to understand the role of gender in the Colombian epidemic”, *Int J Gynecol Obstet* 148, n. 2 (2020): 15-19, <https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1002/ijgo.13043> (accessed December 4, 2022); Carol Vlassoff and Ronald St. John, “A human rights-based framework to assess gender equality in health systems: the example of Zika virus in the Americas”, *Global Health Action* 11, n. 3: 25-36, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16549716.2019.1570645> accessed January 10, 2023).

⁸ Hannah Simba and Silindile Ngcobo, “Are Pandemics Gender Neutral? Women's Health and COVID-19”, *Front. Glob. Womens Health* 1: 1-4, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fgwh.2020.570666/full> (accessed March 2, 2023).

⁹ Neetu John et al., “Lessons Never Learned: Crisis and gender-based violence”, *Dev World Bioeth* 20, n. 2: 65-68, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7262171/> (accessed March 4, 2023).

1.2 Gender-based violence and COVID-19

According to WHO violence against women is one of the most widespread but at the same time the least reported human rights abuse.¹⁰ From the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, many member states of the EU, including the Czech Republic, have declared a state emergency at least on certain territories or cities of the country. The state emergency allowed the national governments to use a restrictive measure on free movement and directly prohibit leaving places of residence, with a few exceptions, such as trips to work or for necessary purchases. Politicians and experts appealed to all citizens to stay safe at home with their families.¹¹ However, being at home is not synonymous with safety for everyone. Victims of domestic violence have been imprisoned with their aggressors in the same household for several months, and the help they receive have not always been sufficient.¹²

Blaskó, Papadimitriou and Manca state in their policy report that the problem of gender-based violence “is rooted in unbalanced gender power relations, social norms and gender stereotypes that make the promotion of respectful relationships between women and men, or girls and boys since early age”. Their text explains how the pandemic lockdowns disabled victims to have a phone conversation because the perpetrator is nearby as abusive partners often monitor the phones of their victims. Aggressors might leverage the pandemic for fear, isolation from friends and relatives and manipulation.¹³ Furthermore, Usher et al. mention reports of misinformation used by abusive partners related to the extent of quarantine measures or deterrence from visiting a doctor for fear of contracting COVID-19.¹⁴

The research paper of Solórzano et al. describes how the situation of social isolation in many cases has worsened relationships between couples and increased fighting and aggression. The authors of the paper frame the problem of domestic violence as a public health issue. Their dataset is composed of numbers of new gender-based violence reports from the 2020 lockdown,

¹⁰ “Violence against women: Strengthening the health response in times of crisis”, World Health Organization, 23 November 2018, <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/violence-against-women> (accessed April 1, 2023).

¹¹ Maria Diaz Crego and Silvia Kotanidis, “States of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis: Normative response and parliamentary oversight in EU Member States during the first wave of the pandemic”, *European Parliamentary Research Service* (April 2020), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_STU\(2020\)659385](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_STU(2020)659385) (accessed April 1, 2023).

¹² Brad Boserup, Mark McKenney, and Adel Elkbuli, “Alarming trends in US domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic”, *American Journal of Emergency Medicine* 38 (2020): 2753–2755, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7195322/> (accessed July 11, 2022).

¹³ Zsuzsa Blaskó, Eleni Papadimitriou, Anna Rita Manca, *How will the COVID-19 crisis affect existing gender divides in Europe?* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020), 13-14, <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC120525> (accessed July 11, 2022).

¹⁴ Kim Usher et al, “Family violence and COVID-19/ Increased vulnerability and reduced options for support”, *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing* 29 (2020): 549–552, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7264607/> (accessed January 22, 2023).

looking at an increased number of crimes such as rape, physical abuse, sexual abuse or sexual harassment.¹⁵

Bradbury-Jones and Isham call the consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence “the pandemic paradox”. On the one hand, staying at home and social isolation saves lives due to the slowdown of the virus spread through mitigation and containment, on the other hand, the number of domestic homicides has increased. In the United Kingdom, approximately two women are killed every week by their current or ex-partner and in 2020 the reporting of these deaths has risen.¹⁶ According to UN Women survey, globally, 4 in 10 women felt more unsafe in public spaces due to the pandemic, 1 in 4 women said that violence in their households became more frequent and 7 out of 10 women reported that verbal or physical abuse from their partner became more common. The UN study was done in 13 countries covering more than 16,000 female respondents.¹⁷ Arenas-Arroyo et al. presented their data from an online survey conducted in Spain, which suggested that both the curfew and the economic distress caused a significant increase in the level of intimate partner violence within the couples, with 14-16% in the case when both members of the couple were locked together in one household and even higher number of 25-33% increase when both members suffer economic distress.¹⁸ Similar data were analysed in the several different EU member states with an increase in calls on hotlines and in email consultations. During the first week of lockdown in France the number of emergency calls reporting intimate partner violence have increased by 30 %.¹⁹ Women from an economically less stable background and with previous experiences of intimate partner violence become the most likely victim of increased violence during the COVID-19 crisis.²⁰

Nianqi Liu et al. have also described the general higher pressure of the pandemic on female mental health. Their study following the COVID-19 outbreak in China found that the

¹⁵ David Solórzano, María Rodríguez Gamez and Osvaldo Corcho, “Gender violence on pandemic of COVID-19”, *International Journal of Health Sciences* 4, n. 2 (2020): 10-18, <https://sciencescholar.us/journal/index.php/ijhs/article/view/437> (accessed November 24, 2022).

¹⁶ Caroline Bradbury-Jones and Louise Isham, “The pandemic paradox: The consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence”, *Wiley Public Health Emergency Collection* 29 (2020): 2047–2049, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7262164/> (accessed March 18, 2023).

¹⁷ Caroline Bradbury-Jones and Louise Isham, “The pandemic paradox: The consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence”, *Wiley Public Health Emergency Collection* 29 (2020): 2047–2049, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7262164/> (accessed March 18, 2023); “Measuring the shadow pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19”, UN Women, 2021, <https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Measuring-shadow-pandemic.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2023).

¹⁸ Gunes A. Asik and Efsan Nas Ozen, “It Takes A Curfew: The Effect of Covid-19 on Female Homicides”, *Economic Research Forum* 1443 (2020): <https://ideas.repec.org/p/erg/wpaper/1443.html> (accessed January 13, 2023).

¹⁹ Gebrewahd, T. Gebremeskel et al., “Intimate partner violence against reproductive age women during COVID-19 pandemic in northern Ethiopia”, *Reprod Health* 17, n. 152 (2020), <https://reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12978-020-01002-w#article-info> (accessed July 28, 2022).

²⁰ Daniel Wijk et al., “The impact of COVID-19 on intimate partner violence in Europe”, *Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region* (2021): 1-13, <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/180277/> (accessed September 2, 2022).

level of post-traumatic stress syndrome was 7% higher in the case of women (21.9%) than in the case than men (14.6%).²¹ Nevertheless, the mental health issue of all citizens, men and women, is connected to the problem of domestic violence and it was noted by several other studies, that COVID-19 and the pandemic lockdowns had a negative impact on psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances or the above mentioned PTSD.²² Factors such as alcoholism, which is often a consequence of mental health problems, tend to lead to higher occurrence of gender-based violence in the households.²³ Some studies from the United States suggest that alcohol consumption in response to the pandemic and stay-at-home orders increased.²⁴

Research on cyber-violence received increased attention during the pandemic. The threat of the rise of online harassment and bullying was also warned about in the reports by women's organizations, including the UN Women.²⁵ Research article by Roser Almenar delves into the issue of cyber-violence against women and girls in the digital age. The author highlights that this form of gender-based violence has spread rapidly due to the increasing use of social networks as a new form of socialization. Women are no longer safe from violence and discrimination, even in the virtual world. This has become more alarming during the COVID-19 pandemic, where online gender-based violence has become a more frequent trend. Almenar stresses the need for specific laws and legal recognition of cyber-violence against women as an

²¹ Nianqi Liu et al., "Prevalence and predictors of PTSS during COVID-19 outbreak in China hardest-hit areas: Gender differences matter", *Psychiatry Research* 287 (2020),

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S016517812030545X?via%3Dihub> (accessed September 4, 2022);

Jonathan Kopel et al., "Racial and Gender-Based Differences in COVID-19", *Frontiers in Public Health* 8, n. 418 (2020): 3, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2020.00418/full> (accessed September 4, 2022).

²² Ivan W. Ch. Mak et al., "Long-term psychiatric morbidities among SARS survivors", *Gen Hosp Psychiatry* (2009): 318-326, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19555791/> (accessed July 10, 2022); Jie Zhang et al., "The differential psychological distress of populations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic", *Brain Behav Immun* 87 (July 2020): 49-50,

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7156946/> (accessed July 10, 2022); Jianyin Qiu et al., "A nationwide survey of psychological distress among Chinese people in the COVID-19 epidemic: implications and policy recommendations", *Gen Psychiatr* 3, n. 2 (2020), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7061893/> (accessed July 15, 2022); "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people: Policy responses in European countries", European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2022, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/be9b29b1-4ae1-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> (accessed March 26, 2023).

²³ Ken Leonard, "Alcohol and intimate partner violence: when can we say that heavy drinking is a contributing cause of violence?", *Addiction* 100 (2005): 422-425,

https://www.academia.edu/2124264/Alcohol_and_intimate_partner_violence_when_can_we_say_that_heavy_drinking_is_a_contributing_cause_of_violence (accessed July 16, 2022).

²⁴ Carolina Barbosa et al., "Alcohol Consumption in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States", *J Addict Med* 15, n. 4 (2021): 341-344, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8327759/> (accessed July 15, 2022); Melissa Cyders et al., "Here's how Americans coped during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic", *The Conversation* (April 2020), <https://theconversation.com/heres-how-americans-coped-during-the-beginning-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-135525> (accessed July 15, 2022).

²⁵ "COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls", UN Women, 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls> (accessed January 10, 2023).

urgent matter that needs to be addressed.²⁶ Donald F. Malanga's study revealed that women and girls faced various forms of cyber-violence, such as online stalking and harassment or hate speech, as a result of restricted movement and social isolation measures. They coped with this violence by using individual measures such as confronting and blocking attackers or leaving the online platform.²⁷

The pandemic had underlined the existing lack of prevention of gender-based violence in certain EU's member states, such as shortage of places in women's shelters or untrained police officers and medical staff. It is important to note that gender-based violence usually occur in the family setting of home, where the most common perpetrators are male intimate partners or former partners. Majority of rape and sexual assault victims are women, but large number of such cases remain unreported.²⁸ Moreover, physical violence is only "tip of the iceberg" followed by emotional and economic abuse or controlling behaviour.²⁹ The COVID-19 crisis shined a light on the importance of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The convention is the first legally binding agreement, which deals with gender-based violence, victims' protection, and ending the impunity of perpetrators.³⁰

1.3 Gender gap within the labour market and COVID-19

Gender gaps can be observed in several areas of the women's participation in the labour market, as are the employment rates itself, but also salaries or the amount of unpaid work done. Perhaps the mostly used practise to evaluate the gender inequalities in society is by looking at the data of the gender wage gap (sometimes also referred as the gender pay gap), which is measured by comparison of the difference between wages earned by men and women. In every country of the European Union women earn less than men. There are several reasons for the gap's existence. One of them is the fact, that women are over-represented in sectors with lower wages, such as care work or public services. On the contrary, men are generally employed in

²⁶ Roser Almenar, "Cyberviolence against Women and Girls: Gender-based Violence in the Digital Age and Future Challenges as a Consequence of Covid-19", *Trento Student Law Review* 3, n. 1 (2021): 167-230, <https://teseo.unitn.it/tslr/issue/view/81> (accessed November 3, 2022).

²⁷ Donald Malanga, "Tackling Gender-Based Cyber Violence against Women and Girls in Malawi Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic", *SSRN* (August 2020): 1-12, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3926493 (accessed January 16, 2023).

²⁸ Callie M. Rennison, "Rape and Sexual Assault: Reporting to Police and Medical Attention, 1992-2000", Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings (2002), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/rsarp00.pdf> (accessed January 16, 2023).

²⁹ Daniel Wijk, "The impact of COVID-19 on intimate partner violence in Europe", *ASPHER* (October 2021), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356378301_The_impact_of_COVID-19_on_intimate_partner_violence_in_Europe (accessed July 1, 2022).

³⁰ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, *Council of Europe Treaty Series* No. 210, 11. 5. 2011, <https://rm.coe.int/ic-and-explanatory-report/16808d24c6> (accessed July 16, 2022).

better-paid sectors such as technology or banking. The different nature of the female and male jobs is referred to as sector segregation. The effects of the specific crisis vary depending on which sectors were hit by the crisis the most. The sectoral job segregation regarding gender documents the article of Coskun and Dalgic. Their text uses the theory of economic cycles and maps that men tend to predominantly work in procyclical industries such as construction, manufacturing or financial services, while women will more likely work in counter-cyclical sectors like education, health services and government administration.³¹

Castellano and Rocca analysed the European labour market during the Great Recession through the gender lens. What they found is that men's jobs were hit more by the 2008 economic crisis since men are overrepresented in sectors, which was especially hit during the eurozone crisis in Europe, for example the financial sector, and due to the eurozone crisis the gender pay gap in the EU decreased.³² This trend has been referred by several economists as "mancession". According to the Bonacini et al. the COVID-19 crisis is more likely to become a "shecession", meaning that pandemic will have a severe effect on the women's economic participation.³³ Their data from Italy on gender wage gap present a step back in the equal payment for women and men. In their research, they use the most common method for analysis of discriminatory behaviours on labour market proposed by Oaxaca and Blinder and found an increase of gender wage gap. They point out that the increase is influenced by several factors. For instance, the effects are reported differently for married couples. Among single employees the gap appears much smaller than that among employees in marital status.³⁴

Based on surveys in 129 countries from the International Labour Organization and analyses of employment patterns by OECD the current pandemic is likely to negatively impact women's salaries and employment more than men's salaries. In the accommodation and food services sector, which have been severely affected by the lockdowns and travel restrictions, more than half of the workers are women. Moreover, women stand in the frontline, fighting the

³¹ Sena Coskun and Husnu Dalgic, "The Emergence of Procyclical Fertility/ The Role of Gender Differences in Employment Risk", *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn - Universität Mannheim* (2020): 1-37, <https://www.crctr224.de/en/research-output/discussion-papers/archive/2020/DP142v2> (accessed November 4, 2022).

³² Rosalia Castellano and Antonella Rocca, "The dynamic of the gender gap in the European labour market in the years of economic crisis", *Quality & Quantity* 51 (2017): 1337-1357, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11135-016-0334-1> (accessed November 4, 2022).

³³ Luca Bonacini et al., "Will it be a shecession? The unintended influence of working from home on the gender wage gap related to the COVID-19 pandemic", *GLO Discussion Paper Series* 771 (2021), <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/229149> (accessed February 11, 2023).

³⁴ Ronald Oaxaca, "Male-female wage differentials in urban labor markets". *International Economic Review* 14, n.3 (October 1973): 693-709, https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/media/_media/pdf/Reference%20Media/Oaxaca_1973_Discrimination%20and%20Prejudice.pdf (accessed January 22, 2023); Alan S. Blinder, "Wage discrimination: Reduced form and structural estimates", *Journal of Human Resources* 8, n. 4 (1973): 436-455, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/144855> (accessed January 22, 2023).

virus as essential health workers. Approximately 70% of jobs in the health sector are held by women, mainly nurses. They are also largely overrepresented as support workers, such as cleaning and laundry staff, which is exposing them to a greater risk of infection by COVID-19 in the workplace.³⁵

The stay-at-home orders created a divide between jobs in the sectors that allows telecommuting and those that do not. People with higher education and the ones working in for example business services had only minor problems to adapting to the new situation. The pandemic has had a large impact on sectors like manufacturing or transport, where working online is simply impossible. Alon et al. describe the divide in the ability to telecommunicate from the perspective of male and female workers. Their dataset suggests that more men than women have been able to adapt to the changing work environment during the crisis. Around 28% of male workers compared to 22% of female workers are employed in occupations that allow teleworking. Subsequently, more women have faced a loss of jobs and income.³⁶ Baert et al. from the IZA Institute of labour economics published a study, that has shown that more than 80% of employees believe that digital conferencing and teleworking will continue be used in the labour market for a long time after the pandemic ends.³⁷ Nevertheless, there remains a large digital gender divide between women's and men's digital skills. UNESCO report describes that men continue to dominate the digital space due to persistent gender stereotypes for example in the education of computer skills, IT and math among girls and boys.³⁸

Linda L. Carli stresses that the COVID-19 crisis is projected to be the deepest global recession since the Second World War. It has caused a rapid and unprecedented loss of work hours worldwide. Moreover, the loss of employment that is observed more in the female-dominated sectors than in the male ones leads to the future reduction of income. Losing a job during a recession has a greater cumulative effect on earnings than job losses at other times.³⁹ Especially vulnerable are during the pandemic the women-owned small businesses.

³⁵ "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Second edition", International Labor Organization, 2020, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_740877.pdf (accessed March 2, 2023); "OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis", OECD, 2020, https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/?mod=article_inline#section-d1e418 (accessed April 13, 2023).

³⁶ Titan Alon et al., "The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality", *National Bureau of Economic Research* (2020): 1-37, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26947> (accessed November 3, 2022).

³⁷ Stijn Baert et al., "The COVID-19 Crisis and Telework: A Research Survey on Experiences, Expectations and Hopes", *IZA DP* 13229 (May 2020), <https://docs.iza.org/dp13229.pdf> (accessed April 3, 2023).

³⁸ Mark West et al., "I'd blush if I could: closing gender divides in digital skills through education", *EQUALS Skills Coalition* (2019), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367416> (accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁹ Linda L. Carli, "Women, Gender equality and COVID-19", *Gender in Management* 23, n. 1 (2020): 647-655, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346102698_Women_Gender_equality_and_COVID-19 (accessed January 20, 2023).

Businesswomen in general focus more on services such as education, personal care and health. These kinds of women-led businesses usually involve face-to-face services, which were shut down by the pandemic government measures.⁴⁰

Closely collocated with the fact, that women generally earn less than men, is the gender distribution of unpaid work. As unpaid work, we understand all of the work, which is done by women or men without getting any salary. That could be for example taking care of children, older relatives, cleaning, cooking, or laundering. Finding an ideal work-life balance can be especially hard for women in the conservative model of the family, where the man is considered as the main breadwinner and the woman as the main caregiver (of children, household, etc.).⁴¹ As Bičáková shows in her research based on data from various EU member states, the birth of children fundamentally changes the female labour force participation resulting in a higher unemployment gender gap. Women's work-life balance is strongly affected by institutional childcare, maternity leave and support of flexible forms of work (such as part-time work or flexible working hours).⁴² Kleven et al. find that the arrival of children to the family creates a long-lasting gender gap in wages with mothers earning around 20% less than childless women. They also estimate that around 12% of women with children will more likely than men be employed in the public sector as a result to parenthood.⁴³

According to Hupkau and Petrongolo women provide on average about 60 % of childcare needs in households. The pre-existing inequalities of parental roles of a mother as the main caregiver and a father as the main breadwinner is widening. Most of the countries, including the Czech Republic and Austria, has closed the school and nursery for several months during the crisis. That increased women's care burden of the children, which can lead to longer-lasting inequalities such as reduced labour market involvement.⁴⁴ The negative effect of education sector closures has been emphasized also in the Czech Government's strategy, which is supposed to tackle gender inequalities.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Alexander W. Bartik et al., "How are small businesses adjusting to covid-19? Early evidence from a survey", *National bureau of economic research* (2020): 2-35, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w26989/w26989.pdf (accessed February 2, 2023).

⁴¹ Castellano, "The dynamic of the gender gap", 1344.

⁴² Alena Bičáková, "Gender unemployment gaps in the EU: blame the family", *Journal of European Labor Studies* 5, n. 22 (2016): 1-31, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40174-016-0072-3#citeas> (accessed January 22, 2023).

⁴³ Henrik Kleven et al., "Children and Gender Inequality: Evidence from Denmark", *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 11, n. 4 (2019), <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/app.20180010> (accessed June 12, 2022).

⁴⁴ Claudia Hupkau and Barbara Petrongolo, "Work, Care and Gender during the COVID-19 Crisis", *Fiscal Studies* 41, n. 3 (2020): 623–651, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1475-5890.12245> (accessed December 7, 2022).

⁴⁵ "Strategie rovnosti žen a mužů na léta 2021 – 2030", Úřad vlády ČR, 2021, p. 11, https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovnost-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/Strategie_rovnosti_zen_a_muzu.pdf (accessed December 8, 2022).

During COVID-19 lockdowns women with caring responsibilities have been given an excessive burden that can cause real damages to their wellbeing and labour market prospects.⁴⁶ The research paper of Alon et al. give another perspective on the issue of women's work-life balance during the pandemic. While women are largely overrepresented in sectors that have continued operating during the crisis in the offline mode, such as workers in hospitals, grocery stores and pharmacies, many men have ended up at home alone with children since their jobs can be often managed via teleworking. In such families, men have inevitably turned into the main caretakers of children. The authors of the paper suggest that this "reallocation of duties within the household is likely to have persistent effects on gender roles and the division of labour".⁴⁷ According to Craig and Churchill some gender differences narrowed in terms of work-life balance, since fathers became more involved with the children caretaking.⁴⁸ On the other hand, some studies suggest exactly the opposite, such as the survey from Del Boca et al., which finds that even though the fathers became somehow more involved with the care-work and for example home-schooling of the children, women spend more time with housework than before the pandemic and the gender gap within the couples even deepened.⁴⁹

A comprehensive study by Clare Wenham on the gendered impact of the COVID-19 crisis, that have been requested by the FEMM committee of the European Parliament, focuses also on the mono-parental families, which have been disproportionately hit by the school closures. Wenham stresses the fact that 85% of all single parents in the EU are women, who have had no ability to share the care burden with anyone during the lockdowns. Compared to 32% of single fathers, around 48% of single mothers are at risk of poverty. This risk has been highlighted by the COVID-19 when working from home and house teaching of the children have become an insurmountable obstacle for many women.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Blaskó, *How will the COVID-19 crisis*, 9.

⁴⁷ Alon, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality", 3.

⁴⁸ Lyn Craig and Brendan Churchill, "Dual-earner parent couples' work and care during COVID-19", *Gender, Work and Organization* 28, n. 1 (January 2021), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/gwao.12497> (accessed December 18, 2022).

⁴⁹ Daniela Del Boca et al., "Women's and men's work, housework and childcare, before and during COVID-19", *Review of Economics of the Household* 18 (2020): 1001–1017, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11150-020-09502-1> (accessed December 18, 2022).

⁵⁰ Clare Wenham, "The gendered impact of the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period", *Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs* (2020): 34-36, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658227/IPOL_STU\(2020\)658227_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658227/IPOL_STU(2020)658227_EN.pdf) (accessed March 10, 2023).

1.4 Female representation and the COVID-19

Women have been largely underrepresented in the position of power. Only 7,4% of CEOs in European companies are female (2020).⁵¹ National parliaments of the EU's member states account for around 31% of female representatives.⁵² Out of 193 countries in the world, only 22 have a female head of state or government.⁵³ That creates a lack of gender balance and gender lens in decision-making, which also includes the important decision taken concerning the COVID-19 crisis. Although 70% of all world's healthcare staff are women, 72% of executive heads in global health are men. Blaskó et al. argue that this imbalance in decision-making processes impacts the degree to which women's specific needs are taken into consideration.⁵⁴

Kim Robin van Daalen et al. conducted a large-scale study of the gender gaps in COVID-19 decision-making analysing data of global and national executive bodies of all UN Member States in relation to the health crisis. They argue that the pandemic governance followed “the usual modus operandi” of gender biased decision-making, despite the global and national promises to gender-mainstreaming principles. In the 115 COVID-19 task forces identified in their study, only about a 3,5% had the gender parity, meaning around 50% of both women and men, while around 85.2% were ruled by a majority of men. They call this lack of representation as “symptom of a broken system” in global health governance, where women's specific needs are overlooked, when the response policies are created and approved, and therefore the crises effect women disproportionately.⁵⁵

Despite these disproportionalities, the current crisis highlighted female national leadership. Fisher and Ryan emphasize that the recent studies on leadership during the pandemic showed that countries with women as leaders fared better in the early stages of the

⁵¹ “Largest listed companies: CEOs, executives and non-executives”, Gender Statistic Database (EIGE), https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_bus_bus_wmid_comp_compex/line/year:2003-B2,2004-B2,2005-B2,2006-B2,2007-B2,2008-B2,2009-B2,2010-B2,2011-B2,2012-B1,2012-B2,2013-B1,2013-B2,2014-B1,2014-B2,2015-B1,2015-B2,2016-B1,2016-B2,2017-B1,2017-B2,2018-B1,2018-B2,2019-B1,2019-B2,2020-B1,2020-B2/geo:EU28/EGROUP:COMP/sex:W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:CEO/NACE:TOT (accessed April 15, 2023).

⁵² “National governments: ministers by seniority and function of government”, Gender Statistics Database (EIGE), https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_gov_wmid_natgov_minis/line/year:2020-Q1,2019-Q1,2018-Q1,2017-Q1,2016-Q1,2015-Q1,2014-Q1,2013-Q1,2012-Q1,2011-Q1,2010-Q1,2009-Q1,2008-Q1,2007-Q1,2006-Q1/geo:EU28/sex:W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:MEMB_GOV/EGROUP:GOV_NAT/BEIS:TOT (accessed April 15, 2023).

⁵³ Rachel B. Vogelstein and Alexandra Bro, “Current Female Heads of State or Government”, *Council on Foreign Relations* (March 2021), <https://www.cfr.org/article/womens-power-index#chapter-title-0-2> (accessed February 2, 2023).

⁵⁴ Blaskó, *How will the COVID-19 crisis*, 15.

⁵⁵ Kim Robin van Daalen et al., “Symptoms of a broken system: the gender gaps in COVID-19 decision-making”, *BMJ Global Health* 5 (2020), <https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/5/10/e003549.full.pdf> (accessed February 11, 2023).

crisis than countries with male leaders.⁵⁶ According to dataset of 194 countries from Garikipati and Kambhampati, female-led states had an advantage during the pandemic with respect to number of deaths and clear and decisive communication.⁵⁷ Windsor et al. point out how New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern attracted initial attention as a female leader, who remained very successful in mitigating the deleterious effects of the pandemic. Women have been assigned traits such as “good listening skills, the tendency to seek input and counsel for major decisions, the ability to provide a big-picture overview of a situation, and proficiency in risk management”.⁵⁸

Johnson and Williams describe in their article Donald Trump's mismanagement of the pandemic as a “potential masculinity fail”. Their paper suggests that COVID-19 has “provided unusual opportunities for women leaders to display forms of protective femininity”. After all, women are usually characterized as caring and empathetic in times of trauma. Both national and international media have largely portrayed women leaders positively in their effective responses to the pandemic.⁵⁹ On the other hand, male leaders have been described as those who prioritized the national economic performance over human life.⁶⁰

Researchers Michelle Ryan and Alex Haslam introduced to the debate on female leadership and crisis the term “glass cliff” effect, which refers to the phenomenon where women are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions during times of crisis or turmoil when the probability of failure is higher. Their quantitative data found that women were more likely to be appointed to positions of power when a company was experiencing difficulties, such as declining profits or public scrutiny. This is often seen as a form of tokenism, where women are given leadership roles in difficult circumstances where the likelihood of success is lower, making them more likely to fail and perpetuating stereotypes about women's leadership abilities. Ryan and Haslam's article on the “glass cliff” phenomenon is a follow-up to the debate

⁵⁶ Alexandra N. Fisher and Michelle K. Ryan, “Gender inequalities during COVID-19”, *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 24, n. 2 (2022): 237–245, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1368430220984248> (accessed February 11, 2023).

⁵⁷ Supriya Garikipati and Uma Kambhampati, “Leading the Fight Against the Pandemic: Does Gender ‘Really’ Matter?”, *SSRN* (November 2022), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3617953 (accessed March 1, 2023).

⁵⁸ Leah C. Windsor et al, “Gender in the time of COVID-19: Evaluating national leadership and COVID-19 fatalities”, *PLoS ONE* 15, n. 12 (2020): 1-2, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0244531> (accessed March 1, 2023).

⁵⁹ Carol Johnson and Blair Williams, “Gender and Political Leadership in a Time of COVID”, *Politics & Gender* 16 (2020), 943–950, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/gender-and-political-leadership-in-a-time-of-covid/AA1F58784763322255949D9BD0FB5BC> (accessed January 3, 2023).

⁶⁰ Garikipati and Kambhampati, “Leading the Fight Against the Pandemic”.

on the “glass ceiling”, which have heavily researched since the 1980s as the invisible barrier for women, who are “trying to climb the corporate ladder”.⁶¹

2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

2.1 Gender regime theory

Drawing on the theory introduced by a British sociologist Silvia Walby, this thesis observes the pandemic’s impact on gender equality in Austria and the Czech Republic through the lens of the gender regimes theory. The concept of the gender regimes challenges the traditional reduction of gender to a family system. Walby builds her theory on the complexity theory, which she believes offers in contrast with the classical realist and postmodern theories powerful new ways of developing a social theory.⁶² She describes the gender regimes as highly complex system, which are “constituted of multiple institutional domains across the society”.⁶³ The number of these domains remains the subject of the academic discussions, however usually they usually include violence, polity, economy and civil society. The gender regime as Walby characterises it is never limited to only one institutional domain.⁶⁴

The theory is named after two concepts: “gender” and “regime”. Both concepts are today well established in social science disciplines. The concept of gender was introduced as a separate term from the biological sex by John Money in 1955.⁶⁵ He described gender as “all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively”.⁶⁶ In other words, gender refers to the socially constructed roles that society expects from men and women, while sex refers to the biological characteristics of men and women.⁶⁷ Money was a sexologist, nevertheless since the beginning of 1970s the concept of gender became used among feminist scholars such as Ethel Tobach, who differentiated “biological sex” from “societally assigned human gender” while warning against

⁶¹ Michelle K. Ryan and S. Alexander Haslam, “The Glass Cliff: Evidence that Women are Over-Represented in Precarious Leadership Positions”, *British Journal of Management* 16 (2005): 81–90, https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2017/VPL457/um/62145647/Ryan_Haslam_The_Glass_cliff.pdf (accessed November 1, 2022).

⁶² Sylvia Walby, *Globalization and inequalities: complexity and contested modernities* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009), 47-50.

⁶³ Sylvia Walby, “Varieties of Gender Regimes”, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 27, n. 3 (2020): 430, <https://academic.oup.com/sp/article/27/3/414/5899531> (accessed February 4, 2023).

⁶⁴ Walby, *Globalization and inequalities*, 260.

⁶⁵ John Money, “Hermaphroditism, gender and precocity in hyperadrenocorticism: psychologic findings”, *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital* 96, n. 6 (1955): 253-264, <https://eurekamag.com/research/024/781/024781775.php> (accessed October 10, 2022).

⁶⁶ David Haig, “The Inexorable Rise of Gender and the Decline of Sex: Social Change in Academic Titles”, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 33, n. 2 (April 2004): 87-96, https://web.archive.org/web/20120615160110/https://www.oeb.harvard.edu/faculty/haig/Publications_files/04InexorableRise.pdf (accessed October 10, 2022).

⁶⁷ “Gender, women and health”, World Health Organization, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170130022356/https://apps.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/> (accessed October 10, 2022).

using the concept of sex as a term of evolutionary biology to justify “retaining human societal gender traditions”, which are unfair and unequal towards women.⁶⁸

The concept of regime became used in the theory of international relations by theorist of neoliberal institutionalism Robert O. Keohane in the 1980s. Keohane describes regime as a set of institutionalized norms and decision-making procedures, which affect the international relations between state actors within the global order.⁶⁹ In the context of the gender regime theory the application is wider than the issue of politics and states. Perhaps the closest to the Walby’s understanding of regime is the Esping-Andersen’s concept of welfare state regimes, which defines the system of social welfare policies and provisions within one state in terms of how they influence the country’s general social structure.⁷⁰ However, it is important to note that the Esping-Andersen’s typology has been criticised by several feminist scholars for its male bias.⁷¹

This thesis applies the gender regime theory due to its great complexity and inclusion of several different institutional domains. The gender regime theory is a multi-dimensional model, which research the whole system of aspects influencing gender equality in a polity. However, in the academic debate about gender inequality are significantly present also other models of understanding the gender relations in a polity, which I believe should be mentioned. Important example of a theory dealing with gender relations is the breadwinner theory, arraying the threefold typology of “male breadwinner”, “dual earner” and “dual earner/dual carer” models.⁷² The “male breadwinner” model is based on gender specialisation with women having primary responsibility for care-work and household, while men are devoted to work and earning money for the family, while the “dual earner/dual carer” model is the family where both partners are equally involved in the labour market and care giving activities.⁷³ The model in-between is the “dual earner”, where female employment rate is similar to the male one, yet the amount of

⁶⁸ Ethel Tobach, “Some evolutionary aspects of human gender”, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 41, n. 5 (1971): 710–715, <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2013-40831-004> (accessed November 21, 2022).

⁶⁹ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemon: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 148-155.

⁷⁰ Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 1-9.

⁷¹ e.g. Singrid Leitner, “Varieties of familialism: The caring function of the family in comparative perspective”, *European Societies* 5 (2003): 353–75, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1461669032000127642> (accessed July 30, 2022).

⁷² Colin Creighton, “The rise and decline of the ‘male breadwinner family’ in Britain”, *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 23, n. 5 (1999): <https://academic.oup.com/cje/article-abstract/23/5/519/1677128?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=false> (accessed September 12, 2022); Isabella Buber, “Childrearing in Austria: Work and family roles”, *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* 5, n. 2 (2015): 121-146,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290496943_Childrearing_in_Austria_Work_and_family_roles (accessed April 30, 2023); Kimberly J. Morgan, “The Political Path to a Dual Earner/Dual Carer Society: Pitfalls and Possibilities”, *Politics & Society* 36, n. 3 (2008): 403–420, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0032329208320569> (accessed November 3, 2022).

⁷³ Rosemary Crompton, *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment: The Decline of the Male Breadwinner* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5-31.

unpaid care work is not distributed in the partnership equality.⁷⁴ In the context of this theory Isabella Buber defines Austria as a unique case, which due to the high number of Austrian mothers working part-time creates a special model of “modernized male breadwinner”.⁷⁵ Gender regime theory challenges the breadwinner theory for its focus on the family, while it sees the structure on the gender inequalities in a broader system and acknowledges that gender roles are socially constructed and that they are shaped by political, economic, and cultural factors.⁷⁶

Sylvia Walby introduced the concept of domestic and public form of gender regime in her book *Theorizing Patriarchy (1990)*.⁷⁷ In this text, she analysed the change of gender regimes in the past decades and states that the shift towards modernization does not necessarily lead to reducing the gender equality in the society, but created two different forms of modern gender regimes with different degree of inequality. This transformation was affected for example by increased female representation in the polity, the state regulation/legislation of domestic violence or the socialization of domestic labour.⁷⁸ Walby further developed this theory in her later book *Globalization and Inequalities: Complexity and Contested Modernities (2009)*, where she labelled the two modernized gender regimes as neoliberal and social democratic forms of public regime. The processor of public gender regime is labelled as domestic gender regimes.⁷⁹

Table 1 outlines a framework for analysing the gender regimes by Walby.⁸⁰ The typology identifies primary two models of the regimes ‘domestic’ and ‘public’, which represent two ideal types. However, in reality each gender regime of country is different and vary between these poles. In the domestic gender regime, gender roles in the society are defined by a strict division of labour in the household, where women are responsible for most or all of the unpaid work, especially the care for children, and men are responsible for paid work outside of the home. This regime is characterized by the primacy of the family as the site of gendered roles and relations, which can restrict women's opportunities to participate in the public sphere and limit their access to economic resources and political power. In the public gender regime,

⁷⁴ Janet Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers, “Creating Gender Egalitarian Societies: An Agenda for Reform”, *Politics & Society* 36, n. 3 (2008): 313-335, <https://www.lisdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/janet-bio/gornick-meyers-ps-2008.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2022).

⁷⁵ Buber, “Childrearing in Austria“, 121-130.

⁷⁶ Sylvia Walby, *The Future of Feminism* (London: Polity, 2011), 100-110.

⁷⁷ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, (Cornwall: T. J. Press, 1990), <https://files.libcom.org/files/Theorizing%20Patriarchy%20-%20Sylvia%20Walby.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2022).

⁷⁸ Ibid, 1-24.

⁷⁹ Walby, *Globalization and inequalities*, 367-425.

⁸⁰ Walby, “Varieties of Gender Regimes“, 421.

gender roles are defined by the political and economic structures of society, which can create opportunities or barriers for women's participation and advancement. This regime is characterized by the ways in which gendered structures of production, reproduction, sexuality, and violence are organized in the public sphere, including employment policies, social welfare programs, and political representation.⁸¹

Table 1 : Typology of gender regimes by Silvia Walby

Institutional domain	Variety of gender regime			
	Domestic	Public	Neoliberal	Social democratic
	Excluded from the public	All Segregated but not excluded	Unequal, thin democracy	Less unequal, deeper democracy
Economy (domestic, state, market, capital)	Women's livelihood structured under domestic relations in the home	Women's livelihood from free wage labor	Little regulation of working conditions	Regulation by polity for equality and balanced use of time
Polity (national state, local state, polity organized religion)	No democratic participation	Some democratic participation	Thin democracy: suffrage	Deeper democracy: presence and breadth
Civil society (sexuality and intimacy, projects and movements, education)	Confined to domestic	Not domesticated	Unequal; commercialized; thin	Reciprocal; mutual; thick
Violence (interpersonal, intergroup, state-individual, interstate)	Violence by domestic perpetrators unregulated by state	State claims a monopoly of legitimate violence	High levels of violence, though criminalized; security state	Violence criminalized by state and welfare to support victims; welfare state

source: Walby, "Varieties of Gender Regimes", 421.

Among public regimes two ideal types of neoliberal and social democratic gender regimes can be identified. Under the public neoliberal gender regime, the market is the dominant mechanism for organizing economic and social life. This regime is characterized by the deregulation of markets and a focus on individual choice and responsibility. In the neoliberal regime, social welfare programs are often minimal, and there is a limited role for the state in regulating the economy or providing social services. Women's opportunities for paid work and political representation may be increased in this regime, but there is also a risk that gender inequalities will be exacerbated by market forces. On the other hand, under the public social democratic gender regime, the state is more actively involved in regulating the economy and providing social welfare programs. Social democratic regime is defined by a greater emphasis on gender equality and social justice, and is often associated with policies that support work-life balance and childcare provision. Women's opportunities for paid work and political

⁸¹ Sylvia Walby, *Crisis* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 144-161.

representation is increased in this regime, and there is greater recognition of the value of unpaid care work in the home.⁸²

To identify if the gender regime is either a domestic or public, and then to distinguish between neoliberal and social democratic type Walby lists several indicators:⁸³

1. Women in the workforce
2. Gendered inequality in employment
3. Equality legislation
4. Childcare use
5. Childcare public expenditure
6. Gendered education
7. Women in parliament
8. Women in trade unions
9. Gendered civil liberties

⁸² Walby, *Globalization and inequalities*, 304-330.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 303.

The range of both institutional domains, indicators and types of regimes have been debated by several authors. Shire and Nemoto argue that Walby's framework needs to include a conservative modern regime as a type of gender regime, which challenges the distinction between the domestic and public gender regimes and reconsiders the location of the family.⁸⁴ Valentine Moghadam suggests extending the model of the public gender regime in the MENA region by adding categories of neopatriarchal and conservative corporatist, with a focus on the family.⁸⁵ Ece Kocabicak proposes a distinction between premodern and modern forms of domestic patriarchy, linked to the significance of the property.⁸⁶ Lombardo and Alonso argue that Walby's theory should acknowledge the importance of the local and multiple levels of politics in decentralized states.⁸⁷ Finally, Hearn et al. contend that violence needs to be recognized as a crucial element of gender regime theory.⁸⁸

2.2 Gender regimes of Austria and the Czech Republic

In pursuit of my thesis, I decided to stick to the Walby's original typology, using the institutional domains used in Table 1. For identifying the types of gender regimes of the Czech Republic and Austria I decide to apply the Gender Equality Index developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which is an autonomous body of the EU, founded with the aim of advancing and reinforcing the advocacy of gender equality. The Gender Equality Index serves as a tool for measuring the advancement of gender equality within the EU. The index consists of six core domains that reflect the key areas of gender equality: work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health. The work domain focuses on gender gaps in the labour market and in employment, including issues such as gender

⁸⁴ Karen Shire and Kumiko Nemoto, "The Origins and Transformations of Conservative Gender Regimes in Germany and Japan. Social Politics", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 27, n. 3 (2020): 432–448, <https://academic.oup.com/sp/article/27/3/432/5899529> (accessed November 17, 2022).

⁸⁵ Valentine Moghadam, "Gender regimes in the Middle East and North Africa: The Power of Feminist Movements", *Social Politics* 27, n. 3 (2020): 467–85, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345321176_Gender_Regimes_in_the_Middle_East_and_North_Africa_The_Power_of_Feminist_Movements (accessed November 19, 2022).

⁸⁶ Ece Kocabicak, "Why property matters? New varieties of domestic patriarchy in Turkey", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 29, n. 3 (2022): 812–830, <https://academic.oup.com/sp/article/29/3/812/5900786?login=false> (accessed July 4, 2022).

⁸⁷ Emanuela Lombardo and Alba Alonso, "Gender regime change in decentralized states", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 27, n. 3 (2020): 449–66, <https://academic.oup.com/sp/article/27/3/449/5899528?login=false> (accessed November 9, 2022).

⁸⁸ Jeff Hearn et al., "Violence Regimes: A Useful Concept for Social Politics, Social Analysis, and Social Theory", *Theory and Society* 51, n. 4 (February 2022): 1–30, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358422357_Violence_Regimes_A_Useful_Concept_for_Social_Politics_Social_Analysis_and_Social_Theory (accessed September 24, 2022).

segregation, pay gaps, and work-life balance. The money domain covers aspects of economic power and gender gaps in economic resources, including poverty and income inequalities. The knowledge domain examines gender gaps in education and skills, as well as gender differences in fields of study opportunities. The time domain measures the unequal distribution of care and domestic work between women and men. The power domain looks at the representation of women and men in decision-making positions in public and private spheres. Finally, the health domain considers gender differences in health outcomes, access to health services, and the prevalence of violence against women.

As you can see in Table 2, I applied the domains developed by EIGE to the Walby's institutional domains, because I believe the Gender Equality Index at least partly follow the Walby's originally proposed indicators. However, I have crossed out the domain of violence, since there is lack of comparable EU-wide data on this domain. According to the Gender Equality Index published by EIGE in 2022, Austria ranks higher than Czechia in terms of gender equality. In the overall index score, Austria ranks 10th among EU member states with a score of 68,8 out of 100, while Czechia ranks 23st with a score of 57,2. Austria is 0,2 points above and Czechia 11,4 points below the EU's score. I adapted the EIGE domains to three gender regime theory domains of economy, civil society and polity listed in Table 1.⁸⁹

Based on the data presented in Table 2, it is likely that the Czech Republic is rather public than domestic regime, since the public and private domains of life are already separated. Czechia falls more into the neoliberal gender regime category, as it scores higher in domains such as female work participation and lower representation of women political, economic and social power, which are characteristics of the neoliberal gender regime. Moreover, the utilization of childcare services in Czechia for children aged 0-2 years is one of the lowest in the whole EU, with only 2% of parents of small children using them.⁹⁰ Zykanová and Janhubová describe that the reason behind is the lack of state nursery care for young children as significant number of applications for state care for small children are rejected. This leads in the case of Czechia to privatisation of childcare and emergence of so-called 'private-based child groups'.⁹¹ However, it is important to note that gender regimes are complex and

⁸⁹ "Gender Equality Index", EIGE, 2022, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/> (accessed April 24, 2023).

⁹⁰ Kristina Koldinská, "The Policy on Gender Equality in the Czech Republic", *European Parliament: FEMM Committee* (2015): 18-25, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/510009/IPOL_IDA\(2015\)510009_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/510009/IPOL_IDA(2015)510009_EN.pdf) (accessed April 24, 2023).

⁹¹ Tamara Zykanová a Kristýna Janhubová, "Analýza dostupnosti zařízení péče o děti v předškolním věku", *Oddělení evaluací MPSV* (2020): 19-44,

multifaceted, and in some aspects, such as the domain of health, Czechia lean more towards the social-democratic gender regime, but generally should be considered to be more aligned with the neoliberal type.

Austria scores better on gender equality indicators than the Czech Republic and can be classified as a public social-democratic gender regime, with relatively high levels of gender equality in many areas, including segregation and quality of work, female political representation, participation of women in education, as well as significant public investment in childcare. In contrast with Czechia, Austria enrolment-rate of small children below 2 years is 29,1%.⁹² Policies supporting work-life balance and childcare provision are well-established in Austria. As I have already mentioned in the context of the modernized male breadwinner theory, Austria has a high part-time employment rate, which is especially favourable for mothers with young children.⁹³

Table 2: Gender equality index developed by EIGE in Czechia and Austria from 2022

	Czechia	Austria
<i>Economy</i>		
<i>Financial resources</i>	64,2	82,5
<i>Economic situation</i>	97,1	92,8
<i>Work participation</i>	83,5	83,0
<i>Segregation and quality of work</i>	53,8	71,7
<i>Civil society</i>		
<i>Care activities</i>	56,8	62,7
<i>Social activities</i>	57,7	59,7
<i>Participation in education</i>	65,3	72,7
<i>Education segregation</i>	53,1	56,4
<i>Health</i>	84,8	91,3
<i>Polity</i>		
<i>Political power</i>	45,4	78,9
<i>Economic power</i>	19,1	30,6

http://www.dsmpsv.cz/images/ke_stazeni/Analýza_dostupnosti_zar%C3%ADzen%C3%AD_p%C4%99e_o_p%C4%99ed%C5%A0koln%C3%A0_D_d%C4%99ti.pdf (accessed January 8, 2023).

⁹² “Day-care centres”, Statistics Austria, 2022, <https://www.statistik.at/en/statistics/population-and-society/education/day-care-centres-child-care> (accessed December 8, 2022); “Child Care in Austria”, Federal Chancellery Republic of Austria, <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/en/agenda/family/child-care-in-austria.html> (accessed December 8, 2022).

⁹³ “Gender Equality in the Labour Market and Socioeconomic Equality”, Federal Chancellery Republic of Austria, https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/en/agenda/women-and-equality/gender_equality_in_the_labour_market.html (accessed January 28, 2023).

<i>Social power</i>	30,2	57,2
<i>Gender equality index</i>	57,2	68,8

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality

Through the lens of the theory of gender regimes, Austria and the Czech Republic offer an interesting case for comparison. Austria as a more social-democratic regime and Czechia as a more neoliberal regime went through modernisation and share the public character, but different policy approaches. Comparing these two cases provides a unique opportunity to explore how different policy approaches impact gender equality outcomes in public gender regimes due to the pandemic crisis.

2.3 Methodology

In this thesis the research design incorporates a mixed-method approach. The methodology involves a combination of thematic analysis and comparative case study, mixing is a qualitative data gathered through ethnographic methods and quantitative data from open statistics to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 objectives in the Czech Republic and Austria. The research design includes conducting semi-structured expert interviews with women's organizations in the Czech Republic and Austria. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed using coding to create themes that were afterwards confronted with data from quantitative data sources such as statistics of Eurostat, EIGE, annual reports of the organizations, and other studies done in the Czech Republic and Austria. The use of multiple sources of data will help to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.⁹⁴ The data used for this research were up to the end of the year 2022.

Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis that involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns, themes, and concepts within data. It involves a systematic approach to analysing data by breaking it down into meaningful segments and then grouping those segments into overarching themes or patterns. Thematic analysis is often used in social science research to identify patterns and trends within qualitative data.⁹⁵ In this thesis, thematic analysis was used for work with the interview transcripts.

⁹⁴ Nicole M. Deterding and Mary C. Waters, "Flexible Coding of In-depth Interviews: A Twenty-first-century Approach", *Sociological Methods & Research* 50, n. 2, 708–739, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118799377> (accessed January 28, 2023).

⁹⁵ Michelle E. Kiger and Lara Varpio, "Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131", *Medical Teacher* (2020): 1-9,

Ethnographic methods refer to a set of research techniques used in anthropology and other social sciences to study human behaviour and culture. These methods involve immersing oneself in a specific cultural context in order to gain a deep understanding of the people, practices, and beliefs within that culture. Ethnographic methods can include a range of techniques, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. This thesis uses the technique of semi-structured expert in-depth interviews.⁹⁶

Semi-structured expert interviews are a specific type of interview technique that combines structured and unstructured questioning. The interviewer had a set of pre-determined questions, but was also endorsed for open-ended discussion to allow the participant to share their experiences and insights. Semi-structured interviews are often used in qualitative research to gather rich, in-depth data on a specific topic. The interviews for the purpose of this thesis were conducted either in-person in Austria and Czechia or remotely via platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom or Webex. The interviews were always recorded for later transcription and coding, which was used by the thematic analysis.⁹⁷ The languages of the interviews were Czech, German or English. In the case of Czech-led and German-led interviews, the transcripts were translated into English. Questions asked in the semi-structured interviews are attached in the Annex of this diploma thesis.

Table 3 provides the list of eleven expert interviews, which were made for the purpose of this thesis between June 2022 and February 2023. Six of them were made in Austria, five in the Czech Republic, nevertheless, it is important to note that the number of women's organization in Austria is higher than in the Czech Republic. For example, the Czech Women's Lobby (*Česká ženská lobby*) is an umbrella organization for 37 organizations, while the Austrian Women's Lobby (*Österreichische Frauenring*) unites 50 organizations.⁹⁸ All of the organizations interviewed were chosen for their renowned name in the field of women's support in Austria and Czechia based on their availability and willingness to voluntarily participate in the research of this thesis. All of the interviewees

https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/18/18247/Kiger_and_Varpio__2020__Thematic_analysis_of_qualitative_data_AMEE_Guide_No_131.pdf (accessed January 28, 2023).

⁹⁶ Kathleen M. Adams, "Ethnographic methods", in *Handbook of research methods*, ed. Larry Dwyer et al. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012): 339-351, <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/26968/1/147.Larry%20Dwyer%2C%20Alison%20Gill%20and%20Neelu%20Seetaram.pdf#page=354> (accessed March 4, 2023).

⁹⁷ Eleanor Knott et al., "Interviews in the social sciences", *Nature Reviews Methods Primers* 2, n. 73 (2022): <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43586-022-00150-6> (accessed March 12, 2023).

⁹⁸ "DER FRAUENRING", Der Österreichische Frauenring, <https://www.frauenring.at/frauenring> (accessed March 12, 2023); "Kdo jsme", Česká ženská lobby, <https://czlobby.cz/cs/kdo-jsme> (accessed March 12, 2023).

were female experts, which may raise suspicions of gender imbalance in this research, however, the field of women’s support organizations is heavily gendered with the vast majority of employees being women.

The selection of the two countries was based on their similar size as EU states in Central Europe and different gender regime types, as well as the author's experience in doing an AKTION research exchange at Graz University in the Sociology of Gender in Styria, where were conducted several of the expert interviews with organization focused on women and gender equality. Furthermore, the author is a student of Charles University in Prague, which again help in conducting the expert interview on the ground in the Czech Republic. The comparative case study approach will enable the identification of similarities and differences in the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender equality in the two countries. Overall, this research design will provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on meeting the objectives of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy in the Czech Republic and Austria.

Table 3: List of experts from the women’s organizations interviewed

State	Organization	Interviewee	Date	Type of organization
Austria	Mafalda	Birgit Hofstadler	15.6.2022	Mafalda in a non-profit organization, which supports and accompanies girls and young women in all areas of their lives, fighting for gender equality and providing free educational, social, and psychological services.
Austria	Verein Frauenhäuser Steiermark	Michaela Gosch	20.6.2022	The <i>Verein Frauenhäuser Steiermark</i> is a non-profit organization, which operates two women's shelters in Styria (Graz and Kapfenberg). ⁹⁹
Austria	Danaida	Marianne Hammani-Birnstingl	22.6.2022	Danaida is a non-profit organization that offers literacy courses for female migrants, focusing on personal and knowledge development, process orientation and women-specific themes. ¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ “DER VEREIN”, Frauenhäuser Steiermark, <https://www.frauenhaeuser.at/ueber-uns/der-verein.html> (accessed March 12, 2023).

¹⁰⁰ “Über uns”, Danaida, <https://danaida.at/index.php/ueber-uns/> (accessed March 12, 2023).

Austria	Gender equality unit of the City of Graz	Priska Pschaid	21.6.2022	Gender equality unit of the City of Graz is responsible for coordinating and implementing gender equality measures within the city administration, as well as monitoring the progress of the equality action plan. ¹⁰¹
Austria	Der Österreichische Frauenring	Klaudia Friebe	10.2.2023	The <i>Österreichische Frauenring</i> is an umbrella organization of Austrian women's associations with more than 50 member organizations, representing indirectly about one million women, and working to uphold women's rights and gender equality. It is part of the European Women's Lobby. ¹⁰²
Austria	Gewaltschutz-zentrum Oberösterreich	Nicole Freudenthaler	22.2.2023	The <i>Gewaltschutz-zentrum Oberösterreich</i> offers active contact, and empowerment through advocacy, confidential support, and free counselling to victims of violence in the federal state of Upper Austria. ¹⁰³
Czechia	Česká ženská lobby	Jana Radovanovičová	7.2.2023	<i>Česká ženská lobby</i> is a network of organizations that defend women's rights in the Czech Republic, aiming to address real issues facing women and influence laws to improve women's conditions in society. It is part of the European Women's Lobby. ¹⁰⁴
Czechia	ProFem	Jitka Poláková	31.1.2023	ProFem is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the situation of domestic and sexual violence, advocating for a more sensitive and intolerant society towards all forms of violence against women, and providing support to victims through increased expertise, efficiency, and accessibility of the help system. ¹⁰⁵
Czechia	Konsent	Zuzana Rathouská,		Konsent is a non-profit organization focused on preventing sexual violence and harassment through

¹⁰¹ "Internes Gleichstellungsmanagement", Graz, https://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10322772/7748776/Internes_Gleichstellungsmanagement.html (accessed March 12, 2023).

¹⁰² "DER FRAUENRING".

¹⁰³ "Prinzipien", Gewaltschutzzentrum Oberösterreich, <https://www.gewaltschutzzentrum.at/ooe/ueber-uns/#prinzipien> (accessed March 12, 2023).

¹⁰⁴ "Kdo jsme", Česká ženská lobby.

¹⁰⁵ "Kdo jsme", ProFem: Centrum pro oběti domácí a sexuálního násilí, <https://www.profem.cz/cs/o-nas/kdo-jsme> (accessed March 12, 2023).

		Karolína Kolářová	30.1.2023	campaigns, workshops, and advocacy efforts, targeting different environments such as nightclubs, schools, workplaces, and online spaces. Konsent also runs a self-help group for female victims of sexual violence. ¹⁰⁶
Czechia	Gender Studies	Anna Kotková	28.2.2023	Gender Studies is a non-profit organization that provides information, consultation, and education on gender issues and operates a library with materials related to feminism and gender studies. ¹⁰⁷
Czechia	Zakroužkuj ženu	Anna Hrábková	27.2.2023	<i>Zakroužkuj ženu</i> is a volunteer initiative aiming to increase the political representation of women by encouraging voters to choose qualified women candidates in their districts. ¹⁰⁸

3 EU and gender equality policy

3.1 EU as a gender regime

According to Sylvia Walby's theory, the European Union is by its unique and complex nature of a transnational body an exclusive gender regime. She classified EU member states as either more social democratic or more neoliberal gender regimes as was described in the previous chapter, however, in the text *The European Union and Gender Equality: Emergent Varieties of Gender Regime* she challenges her own theory and comes to the conclusion that the European Union should be classified a new kind of "regulatory gender regime". Walby argues that the EU has developed a unique form of gender regime that is public in nature but shaped by its regulatory policies. These policies not only aim to close gender gaps in paid work and pay levels but also promote gender equality more broadly, but are different from the social democratic and neoliberal gender regime's approaches. The regulatory nature of the EU's gender regime means that member states are required to comply with EU regulations and directives aimed at promoting gender equality. The EU cannot be placed in the traditional Walby's categories of the social democratic and neoliberal regimes, because it has a very unique structure of a political transnational

¹⁰⁶ "O nás: boříme mýty o sexu a sexuálním násilí", Konsent, <https://konsent.cz/o-nas/> (accessed March 12, 2023).

¹⁰⁷ "Kdo jsme", Gender Studies, <https://genderstudies.cz/kdo-jsme> (accessed March 12, 2023).

¹⁰⁸ "Co chceme?", Zakroužkuj ženu, <https://zakrouzkujzenu.cz> (accessed March 12, 2023).

organization and more importantly, it has a restricted capacity to restrain the authority of national governments. Therefore, the European Union does not achieve its goals in terms of gender equality through direct interventions as national states such as Austria or Czechia, but through regulations.¹⁰⁹ Example of the regulatory gender regime policy can be also the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

The European Union has several institutions responsible for promoting gender equality across its member states. The Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) is responsible for coordinating gender mainstreaming and gender equality policies in the European Commission. The Gender Equality Unit within DG JUST is responsible for policy development and strategic work related to gender equality, as well as the operational tasks related to planning, monitoring, coordination, and central reporting of gender equality and gender-mainstreaming activities. The unit also chairs the inter-service group on gender equality, bringing together representatives from all the Commission's directorates-general. The Advisory committee on equal opportunities for women and men and the High-Level Group on gender mainstreaming, consisting of high-level representatives from EU member states, are the two bodies that support the gender equality work under the coordination of the Commission.¹¹⁰

In the European Parliament, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM Committee) is the principal political body responsible for advancing women's rights and gender equality. The FEMM Committee also coordinates the Parliament's Gender Mainstreaming Network, which is composed of the chair or vice-chair of each parliamentary committee, appointed to implement gender mainstreaming in the work of their committee and share best practices in different policy areas.¹¹¹ The Council of the European Union addresses gender equality in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO).¹¹² The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is explicitly assigned to support the EU in the area of gender equality and shares every year the Gender

¹⁰⁹ Sylvia Walby, "The European Union and Gender Equality: Emergent Varieties of Gender Regime", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 11, n. 1 (2004): 4-29, <https://academic.oup.com/sp/article-abstract/11/1/4/1654404> (accessed February 4, 2023).

¹¹⁰ *Beijing + 25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020), 24-25, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states> (accessed February 4, 2023).

¹¹¹ Sophie Jacquot, "A Policy in Crisis. The Dismantling of the EU Gender Equality Policy", *Gender and the Economic Crisis in Europe* (February 2017): 38, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313932743_A_Policy_in_Crisis_The_Dismantling_of_the_EU_Gender_Equality_Policy (accessed March 2, 2023).

¹¹² *Beijing + 25*, 24-25.

Equality Index of all EU member states.¹¹³ Lastly, a whole network of non-governmental organizations focused on gender equality support the EU in its efforts to promote gender equality, for example, the European Women's Lobby.¹¹⁴

3.2 Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

On 5 March 2020, the European Commission issued a communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled Union of Equality: Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025. In the strategy, Ursula von der Leyen's Commission sets out policy objectives and measures for the upcoming five-year period regarding gender equality.¹¹⁵ In the strategy's introduction is stated that the progress in the field of gender equality is slow, as the gender equality index has hardly changed since 2005 and gender gaps continue to persist, especially in the areas of employment, care and power. Improvement in the action against gender-based violence and sexism also remains rather slow if any.

The strategy puts forwards six main goals: 1. Being free from violence and stereotypes, 2. Thriving in a gender-equal economy, 3. Leading equally throughout society, 4. Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies, 5. Funding actions to make progress in gender equality in the EU, 6. Addressing gender equality and women's empowerment across the world. This thesis will focus on the first three objectives in the Czech Republic and Austria with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first goal of the strategy focuses on ending gender-based violence and challenging gender stereotypes. It demands to end and prevent gender-based violence in the EU and to support the victims. It emphasizes that a one third of the European women have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. For every EU Member state should be the key benchmark the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence – the so-called Istanbul Convention. The effective prevention of violence, which includes education of boys and girls

¹¹³ Agnès Hubert and Maria Stratigaki, "The European Institute for Gender Equality: A window of opportunity for gender equality policies?", *European Journal of Women's Studies* 18, n. 2, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=f0f745915bdaff5f0b76842440cd466a9f782a4e> (accessed March 2, 2023).

¹¹⁴ *Beijing + 25*, 24-25.

¹¹⁵ Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, *European Commission*, 5 March 2020, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en (accessed March 2, 2023).

about gender equality and a multi-disciplinary approach among professionals such as the police, is seen as the key of ending violence. Moreover, the strategy mentions the importance of bringing together stakeholders and provide funding for training, capacity-building and services focused on the prevention gender-based violence. Online violence targeting women is also mentioned as one of the problems regarding violence, which needs to be tackled in the EU. The strategy points out the lack of comprehensive and updated data on the gender-based violence. As a root cause of the gender inequality in the society are identified the lingering stereotypes, which limits women's and men's freedom, aspirations and choices.

The second goal states the aspiration to close gender gaps in the labour market by increasing the female employment rate, achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy, addressing gender wage and pension gap and closing the gender care gap. The strategy states that despite the fact that more women than man graduate from the university in the EU, women will more likely remain in the low-paid jobs and sectors, while men become the higher paid professionals. The document identifies as one of the reasons of this inequality in the labour market is the gender digital gap. While majority of job opportunities today require basic digital skills, women represent less than 20% of people in the information and communications technology (ICT) field. The equal pay principle has been enshrined in the Treaties since 1957, nevertheless, women still face discrimination and the accumulated lifelong lower pay and employment rates result in lower pensions and a higher risk of poverty. The gender care gap and unequal distribution of unpaid work is stated as one of the key factors of the remaining wage and employment gap. The strategy states that in order to close the gender gaps in the labour market, the Barcelona targets for the provision of early childhood education and care needs to be met in all Member States. The targets aim to cover institutional childcare for one third of children under three years and 90% of children under primary school-going age.¹¹⁶

The third goal aims to achieve gender balance in politics and decision-making. It states that although the numbers of women in higher leading positions such as CEOs and members of legislative and executive bodies are slowly rising, the representation in decision-making positions in the EU remain far from the gender parity. The document argues that

¹¹⁶ Revision of the Barcelona targets on childcare to increase women's labour market participation, *European Commission*, 7 September 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13107-Revision-of-the-Barcelona-targets-on-childcare-to-increase-women's-labour-market-participation_en (accessed January 12, 2023).

more inclusion and more diversity is needed in order to create and bring forward new ideas and approaches in the decision-making processes. All EU citizens from different backgrounds, including women, should participate in the decision and policy-making as it is the essential precondition for a well-functioning democracy.

The remaining three goals, which won't be covered in this thesis, deal with the gender mainstreaming and addressing intersectionality in the EU policies, funding and external action. These goals are aimed at the whole-EU approach and actions of the EU institutions and agencies such as the European Commission, European Parliament or the Council, and not at the EU Member State. Therefore, I will analyse the impact of the pandemic only at the goal 1, 2 and 3, since I will zoom at the COVID-19 effects on the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy in the Czech Republic and Austria.¹¹⁷

4 Case study of the Czech Republic and Austria

4.1 General COVID-19 trends

The World Health Organization (WHO) declaration of a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, prompted countries around the world to implement exceptional measures aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19.¹¹⁸ The pandemic led to widespread lockdowns, school closures, economic disruption, and a sharp increase in remote work and digital communication.¹¹⁹ The quick spread of the virus highlighted the importance of strong healthcare systems.¹²⁰ EU Member States have adopted a wide range of emergency measures in response to the pandemic, but their constitutional and legal frameworks differ widely as regards the procedures and requirements to adopt emergency measures.¹²¹ Austria did not declare state emergency, because the country's national constitution does not provide the option to declare it.¹²² Czechia declared the state emergency due to a health threat in

¹¹⁷ Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

¹¹⁸ Maria Diaz Crego and Silvia Kotanidis, „States of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis: Normative response and parliamentary oversight in EU Member States during the first wave of the pandemic”, *European Parliamentary Research Service* (2020): 1, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/659385/EPRS_STU\(2020\)659385_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/659385/EPRS_STU(2020)659385_EN.pdf) (accessed January 23, 2023).

¹¹⁹ Thomas Hale et al., “Variation in government responses to COVID-19”, BSG Working Paper Series (2020): 4-20, <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/BSG-WP-2020-032-v14.1.pdf> (accessed November 6, 2022).

¹²⁰ Andrea R. Migone, “The influence of national policy characteristics on COVID-19 containment policies: a comparative analysis”, *Policy Design and Practice* 3, n. 3 (May 2020): 259-276, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741292.2020.1804660> (accessed January 30, 2023).

¹²¹ Crego and Kotanidis, „States of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis”, 1-4.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 19.

connection to the COVID-19 on 11th of March 2020.¹²³ Nevertheless, both Czech and Austrian governments imposed school closures and lockdowns in March 2020, which lasted with interruptions the whole year 2020.¹²⁴ There were some partial lockdown closures in 2021 in both Czechia and Austria, but 2022 was already a year with a normal regime.¹²⁵

4.2 Gender-based violence

4.2.1 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is violence, which usually takes place behind closed doors at home. The most common subcategory of domestic violence is intimate partner violence (IPV).¹²⁶ The definition used by the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) considers as domestic violence “all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim”.¹²⁷

It was suggested in the literature, that in the shadow of the pandemic, there was more room for aggressors to manipulate and control the victims.¹²⁸ Due to the lockdowns, freedom of movement became very restricted for everyone, including for the victims of domestic violence, which tend to be predominantly women. Birgit Hofstadler from the Austrian organization Mafalda described that for girls and young women were the limitations of the freedom of movement often much stricter than for boys and young men. She noted that some of the young women even stated as “feeling in prison at home”. According to Jitka Poláková

¹²³ Usnesení vlády České republiky o vyhlášení nouzového stavu pro území České republiky z důvodu ohrožení zdraví v souvislosti s prokázáním výskytu koronaviru, *Sbírka zákonů ČR*, 12 March 2020, https://www.valasskeklobouky.cz/assets/File.ashx?id_org=17631&id_dokumenty=471455 (accessed November 5, 2022).

¹²⁴ Mimořádké opatření 10576/2020, *Ministerstvo zdravotnictví*, 10 March 2020, https://www.valasskeklobouky.cz/assets/File.ashx?id_org=17631&id_dokumenty=471458 (accessed November 5, 2022); Verordnung: Vorläufige Maßnahmen zur Verhinderung der Verbreitung von COVID-19, *Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, 15 March 2020, https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2020_II_96/BGBLA_2020_II_96.html (accessed November 5, 2022).

¹²⁵ “Measures adopted by the Czech Government against the coronavirus”, Government of the Czech Republic, 9 February 2022, <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/measures-adopted-by-the-czech-government-against-coronavirus-180545/> (accessed March 25, 2023); “Up-to-date Information on the Coronavirus Situation”, The Official Travel Portal, 1 March 2020, <https://www.bmk.gv.at/en/service/entry-requirements.html> (accessed March 25, 2023).

¹²⁶ Lorena Sosa and Sara De Vido, Criminalisation of gender-based violence against women in European states, including ICT-facilitated violence (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021): 7-12, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/25712c44-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1> (accessed January 30, 2023).

¹²⁷ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, *Council of Europe*, 12 April 2011, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ddb74f2.html> (accessed January 30, 2023).

¹²⁸ See chapter 1 “Debating gender equality in the times of crisis”

from ProFem in Czechia the women became often trapped in their homes with abusers, since the Czech police was not able to practice restrictions orders during the lockdowns.

Home as a prison

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p data-bbox="293 562 751 927"><i>“They lost the free space they had, some of them told us they felt as in prison at home. I have the feeling that some kinds of freedom they have experienced before is now gone. They lost the control again and it takes time until to gain it back.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="485 958 751 994" style="text-align: right;"><i>Hofstadler, Mafalda</i></p> <p data-bbox="293 1025 751 1196"><i>“Women didn't have the opportunity to flee like when the man goes to work and that's why domestic violence increased.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="440 1227 751 1263" style="text-align: right;"><i>Frieben, Ö. Frauenring</i></p>	<p data-bbox="879 562 1342 882"><i>“I think that terrible things happened in those households, that the families were under pressure and that the police didn't know where to oust the abusers, so it really didn't happen in many cases.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="1091 913 1342 949" style="text-align: right;"><i>Poláková, ProFem</i></p> <p data-bbox="879 981 1342 1196"><i>“Lockdowns had significantly pressed down on victims of domestic violence, who no longer had a chance to be alone or leave their homes.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="1075 1227 1342 1263" style="text-align: right;"><i>Rathouská, Konsent</i></p>

Both Austrian and Czech women’s organizations recognized the importance of providing victims with communication and support tools during these difficult times of lockdowns. To ensure that victims could access support and advice from their homes, organizations shifted towards a remote service delivery model using tools such as helplines, mobile phone apps, and instant messaging services. The use of technology has played a crucial role in providing a safe and confidential environment for victims to receive the help they need, and the focus has been on delivering services remotely to ensure that victims can access support without leaving their homes. Czech organization ProFem states for example that they increased the usage of chat counselling on their website, Austrian organization Verein Frauenhäuser offered a WhatsApp chat for victims of gender-based violence.

Digital transition

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p data-bbox="292 297 754 757">“As soon as the COVID-19 started, I think three weeks later, we offered WhatsApp chats, because we thought probably it's hard for people to get in contact, because if they are home all the time, the perpetrators are there all the time as well. We thought we might offer some low-level contact ability possibilities.”</p> <p data-bbox="373 786 751 819" style="text-align: right;"><i>Gosch, Verein Frauenhäuser</i></p>	<p data-bbox="882 297 1342 517">“We started, for example, chat counselling much more, although we had it already before, during the pandemic we used it to a much greater extent.”</p> <p data-bbox="1091 546 1337 580" style="text-align: right;"><i>Poláková, ProFem</i></p>

Overall, in both Austria and Czechia the organization providing consultations report an increase in the number of contacts with their clients. In the Czech Republic organization ROSA counted in 2021 overall increase in demand for professional counselling for victims of domestic violence of 88% compared to 2019. ROSA employees processed and answered in 2021 a total of 2,407 phone calls and questions via e-mail, chat and Facebook messenger.¹²⁹ High increase of 40-60% state also other NGOs promoting awareness about this issue of gender-based violence and gender inequality in the Czech Republic (Konsent, Česká ženská lobby, Amnesty International, Ženy v právu), which are part of the coalition *Hlas proti násilí* (Voice against violence).¹³⁰ According to ProFem internal materials the increase in contacts, mainly via calls, increased from 75 contacts in 2019 to 113 contacts in 2020, while the numbers of care for long-term clients remained the same.¹³¹ A less significant increase states in its statistic the organization *Bílý kruh bezpečí* (White circle of safety), which supports both female and male victims of domestic violence. While in 2019 the number of telephonic consultations with clients was 13,178, it increased by 10% to 14,506 in 2021. The number of written consultations via emails and letters was 5,493 in 2019 and increased to 6,082 in 2021.¹³² *Bílý kruh bezpečí* also provides a 24/7 helpline for victims,

¹²⁹ “Výroční zprávy za rok 2021”, ROSA - centrum pro ženy, 2021, <https://www.rosacentrum.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/VYROCNI-ROSA-za-2021-FIN.pdf> (accessed October 14, 2022).

¹³⁰ „Fakta o skutečném stavu v Česku“, Hlas proti násilí, <https://www.hlasprotinasili.cz/pistepolitikum> (accessed October 14, 2022).

¹³¹ Blanka Nyklová a Dana Moree, *Násilí na ženách v souvislosti s COVID-19* (Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2021): 15, <https://www.soc.cas.cz/publikace/nasili-na-zenach-v-souvislosti-s-covid-19> (accessed January 5, 2023).

¹³² Numbers of consultations for 2020 were not published.

which in 2019 received 5,656 calls, in 2020 it increased by 17% to 6,612 calls. The number of calls to the helpline decreased in 2021 compared to the first pandemic year to 6,221 calls.¹³³

In Austria organization *Gewaltschutzzentrum* (Violence protection centre) in Styria also observed an increase in demand for their consultation services during the pandemic, while the in 2019 the number of their clients was 2,993 in 2021 it was 3,286, which is a 10% increase in demand. The centre in Styria tracks its statistics down to 1997 and the 2021 becomes the higher number so far.¹³⁴ The organization *Gewaltschutzzentrum* operates separately in each federal state, which means each of the branches disposes of their own statistics. Nevertheless, in the case of Upper Austria, we can observe a similar trend of a slight increase. The newest data from Upper Austria are from 2020, when the number of calls to the helpline was 14,125 compared to 13,447 in 2018, which is a 5% increase between these two years.¹³⁵ Organization *Autonome Österreichische Frauenhäuser* (Autonomous Austrian women's shelters), which provides the one state-wide women's helpline in Austria called *Frauenhelpline gegen Gewalt* (Women's Helpline against Violence), states in its statistics in 2019 the number of 9,487 contact regarding consultation about domestic violence, which in the first pandemic year 2020 increased by 14% to 10,814. The contact via online services increased from 258 in 2019 to 559 in 2020. Notwithstanding in 2021 the number of contacts slightly decreased to 10,434, while the number of consultations via internet increases to 726, making it almost three times more used way to access the consultation services than in 2019.¹³⁶

It is hard to compare different data from different organization, however, none of the Austrian women's organization reported such a high increase in demand for consultation services during the time of pandemic as the Czech organization such as ROSA, Hlas proti násilí or ProFem. International organization Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) mentions in its 2021 report the case of Czech Republic as a country with one of the highest

¹³³ "Výroční zprávy", Bílý kruh bezpečí, <https://www.bkb.cz/o-nas/zakladni-udaje-o-organizaci/vyrocní-zpravy/> (accessed January 5, 2023).

¹³⁴ "Tätigkeits Bericht 2021", Gewaltschutzzentrum Steiermark, 2021, https://www.gewaltschutzzentrum-steiermark.at/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/gsz_taetigkeitsbericht_2021_web.pdf (accessed January 5, 2023).

¹³⁵ "Tätigkeits Bericht 2020", Gewaltschutzzentrum, 2020, https://www.gewaltschutzzentrum.at/ooe/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Taetigkeitsbericht_Einzelseiten.pdf (accessed January 5, 2023).

¹³⁶ "AÖF-Statistik", Autonome Österreichische Frauenhäuser, https://www.aof.at/images/04a_zahlen-und-daten/AOEF-Statistik_2019.pdf (accessed January 5, 2023).

reported increase in demand for special women’s services during the pandemics.¹³⁷ However, if we only compare the two nation-wide helplines for victims (*Linka* and *Frauenhelpline*) the increase between years 2019 and 2020 the numbers of 17% (Czechia) and 14% (Austria) are similar.

It is important to note the difference of Austrian and Czech gender regime in regards to gender based violence consultation services, because while in the Czech Republic there is no here is no national helpline, regional or general helpline for female victims, which would work 24/7 and free of charge. Instead, there is a generic helpline for all victims of violence and crime *Bílý kruh bezpečí - Linka Pomoci Obětem* (White Circle of Safety - Victims Helpline), which unfortunately lacks a specialised approach focused on gender-based violence that would meet the standards of the Istanbul Convention.¹³⁸ Austria on the other hand has its one state-funded women’s helpline called *Frauenhelpline gegen Gewalt* (Women’s Helpline against Violence), which offers support for all forms of gender-based violence addressed by the Istanbul Convention. Moreover, the Austrian national women’s helpline provides multilingual support in Arabic, English, Romanian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and German.¹³⁹ Additionally, there are six regional helplines supporting survivors of domestic violence in Austrian federal states.¹⁴⁰ In the Czech Republic survivors of gender-based violence can contact the helplines operated by women’s NGOs such as ROSA and ProFem, nonetheless these helplines are not available 24/7, but only in certain working days and hours.¹⁴¹

Change in numbers

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<i>“The pressure in those families of course increased, for example, as children were not in schools and there was much greater need for care-work, so we had an increase in numbers.”</i>	<i>“All of our member organizations that work with victims of gender-based violence, absolutely all of them said, that the demand for their services has increased a lot.”</i> <i>Radovanovičová, Č. ženská lobby</i>

¹³⁷ Elena Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021* (Vienna: WAVE, 2021), 35, <https://wave-network.org/wave-country-report-2021/> (accessed September 11, 2022).

¹³⁸ Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021*, 22, 187.

¹³⁹ “Über Uns”, Frauen Helpline, <https://www.frauenhelpline.at/de/ueber-uns> (accessed April 11, 2023).

¹⁴⁰ Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021*, 76.

¹⁴¹ “Infolinka”, ProFem, <https://www.profem.cz/cs/kontakty/kde-nas-najdete> (accessed April 11, 2023); “Telefonická krizová pomoc”, Rosa, <https://www.rosacentrum.cz/nase-sluzby/telefonicka-krizova-pomoc/> (accessed April 11, 2023).

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Freudenthaler, Gewaltschutz- zentrum ÖÖ</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>“There was the direct line between the pandemic and the extreme increase in domestic violence.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kotková, Gender Studies</i></p>
<p><i>“They reported in Austria rise in numbers as well. I just have to say it wasn't true, at least not for us. I think hardly any shelters had more.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Gosch, Verein Frauenhäuser</i></p>	<p><i>“I think the police failed completely. They didn't really use the temporary restraining order during the pandemic.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Poláková, ProFem</i></p>

According to Michaela Gosch, which is the director of the Women’s shelters of Styria (*Verein Frauenhäuser Steiermark*), the COVID-19 pandemic also had an opposite effect on the numbers related to domestic violence. Styria’s experience with the pandemic showed that the number of women seeking accommodation in the shelters for female victims of domestic violence decreased. The drop in the number of women in shelters during the lockdowns, when the women’s helplines announced higher demand for their services than ever before, was a surprising trend observed in the whole of Austria (viz Graph 1). However, this data cannot be adequately compared with the case of the Czech Republic, since the gender regimes are different. While there are 30 women-only shelters in Austria, in the Czech Republic are run only three shelters with a gender-specific approach.¹⁴²

The Austrian female shelter system is well-established with facilities located in major cities of all nine federal states. These shelters offer 791 beds for women and their children, and most of them provide 24/7 access. Women who have enough financial means are expected to pay a small monthly fee according to their possibilities, while women without their own income can stay in the shelter for free. Usually, the women’s shelters also provide victims of gender-based violence services such as legal advice, casework or counselling. In Austria, the female shelter system is financially funded mainly by the state.¹⁴³

In comparison, Czechia has a much smaller system of women's shelters. There are only three women-only shelters in the country offering approximately 90 beds, located only

¹⁴² Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021*, 95-96.

¹⁴³ Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021*, 76-77.

in the two biggest cities in the Czech Republic, the capital city of Prague and Brno. This means that according to the European standards for victim protection embedded in the text of the Istanbul Convention, 92% of beds for female survivors of gender-based violence are missing. Moreover, all women are required to pay for their accommodation at approximately 5 EUR/120 CZK per day and only one of the three women's shelters can be accessed 24/7. Nevertheless, the shelters in Czechia are funded by the state, predominantly through EU funds. One of the primary reasons why shelters turned away requests for accommodation in Czechia was according to the 2021 WAVE report the shortage of available space or resources to assist the survivors. Additionally, it is important to mention that there are 15 additional shelters with a total number of 175 beds that offer housing for anyone in need, including the victims of domestic violence. However, these shelters do not have a particular focus on supporting victims of violence against women and do not adopt a gender-specific or feminist approach, which are the basic standards required by the Istanbul Convention. Instead, their primary focus is on addressing the general housing needs of individuals.¹⁴⁴

In Austria, there are two main women-only shelters networks, which apply a gender-specific approach: The Autonomous Women's Shelters Network (*AÖF - Verein Autonome Österreichische Frauenhäuser*) with 15 facilities, and the Association of the Austrian Women's Shelters (*ZÖF – Zusammenschluss Österreichischer Frauenhäuser*) with 11 facilities.¹⁴⁵ The Women's shelters of Styria are part of the ZÖF network.¹⁴⁶ The remaining four shelters are not part of these two main networks and are run by organizations like Caritas.¹⁴⁷ In the Czech Republic, the three women-only shelters with a gender-specific approach are run by women's NGOs such as ROSA.¹⁴⁸ The shelters in Czechia, which do not need the Istanbul Convention standards, but still are providing help to women and children endangered by domestic violence, are typically run by faith-based organizations or the city municipalities.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021*, 95-96.

¹⁴⁵ "Statistiken der Autonomen Österreichischen Frauenhäuser", AÖF, <https://www.aof.at/index.php/statistikenderaof> (accessed April 11, 2023).

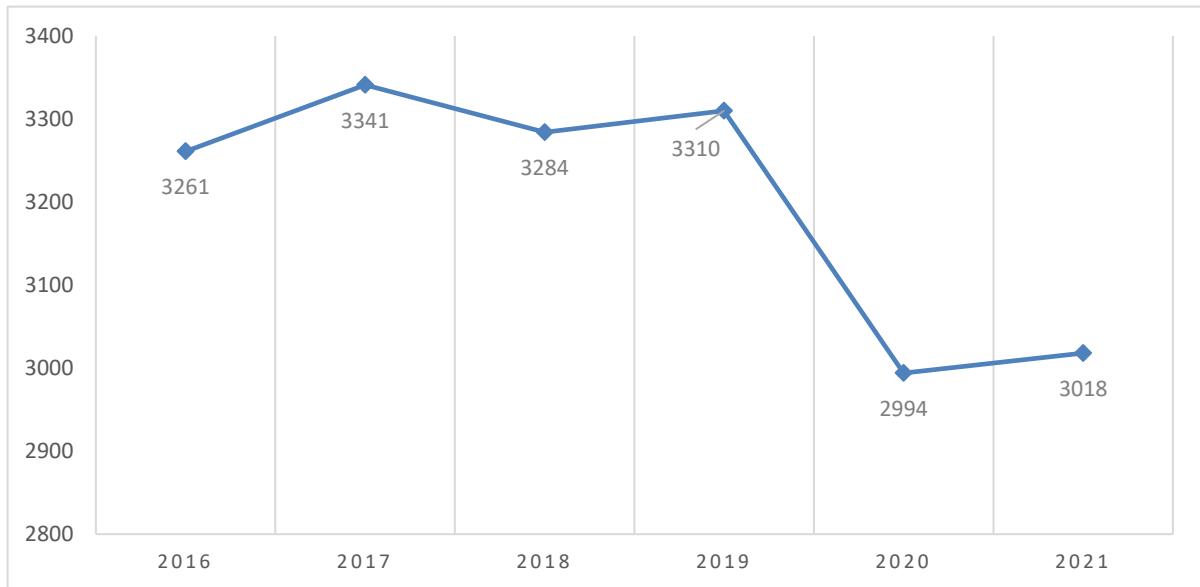
¹⁴⁶ "Über uns", Frauenhäuser Steiermark, <https://www.frauenhaeuser.at> (accessed April 11, 2023).

¹⁴⁷ "Wirkungsbericht 2021", Caritas Österreich, <https://www.caritas.at/ueber-uns/medienservice/wirkungsberichte> (accessed April 15, 2023).

¹⁴⁸ "Naše poslání", Rosa, <https://www.rosacentrum.cz> (accessed April 11, 2023).

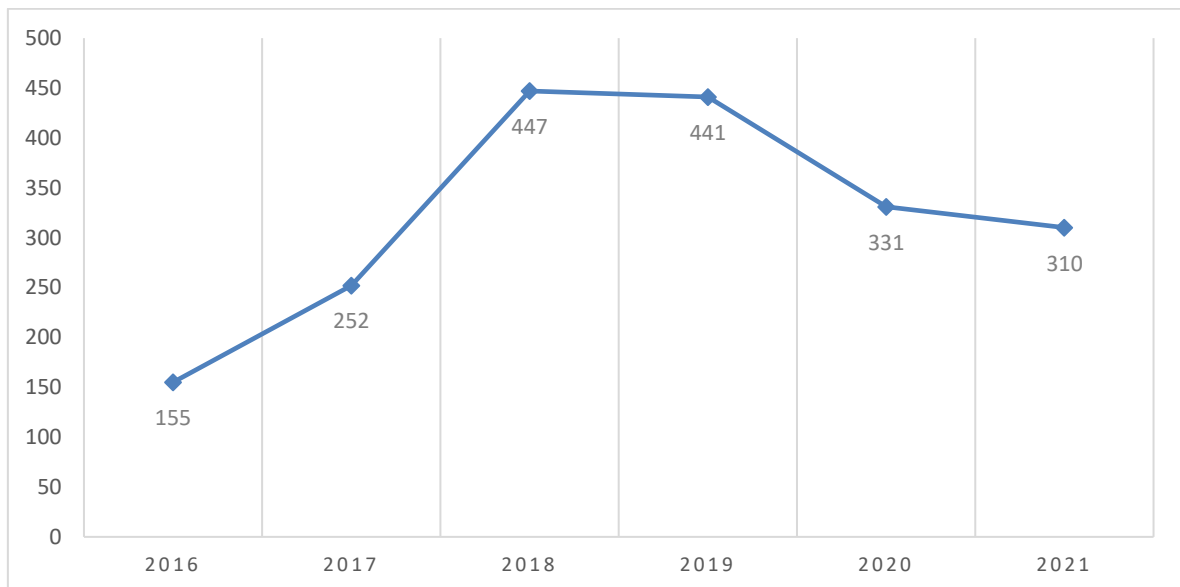
¹⁴⁹ Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021*, 95-96.

Graph 1: Number of women and children accommodated in the Austrian shelter system of AÖF and ZÖF



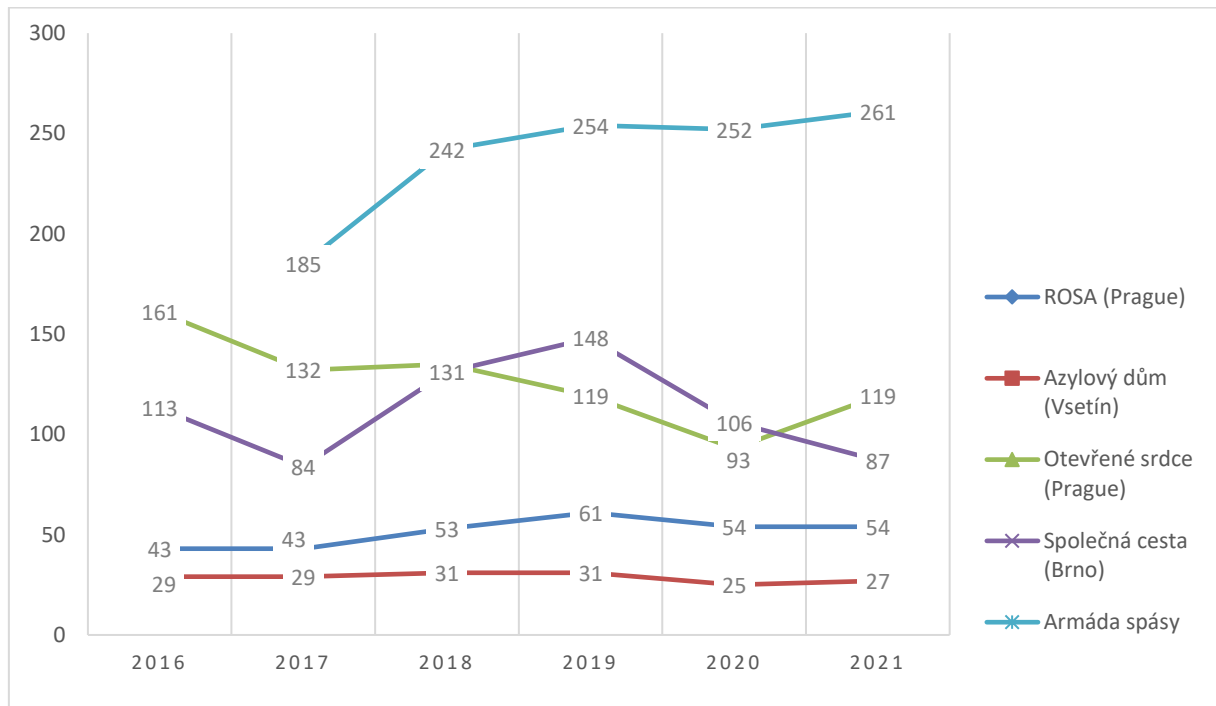
source: AÖF, ZÖF/ visualisation: author

Graph 2: Number of women and children accommodated in the Austrian shelter system of Caritas



source: Caritas Österreich/ visualisation: author

Graph 3: Number of women and children accommodated in the Czech shelter system of various autonomous organizations



source: ROSA, Azylový dům, Otevřené srdce, Společná cesta, Armáda spásy/

visualisation: author

Graph 1 shows the data for Austria of the Autonomous Women's Shelters Network (*AÖF*) and the Association of the Austrian Women's Shelters (*ZÖF*), which are shared every year in their annual reports. The data show a number of women and their children, which are accommodated in shelters of AÖF and ZÖF. Graph 1 displays the same trend of decrease in numbers with the beginning of the pandemic, which was described also by Michaela Gosch in the interview. While in 2019, there were 3,310 women and children accommodated in the shelters, in 2020 the number decreased by 10 % to 2,994 women and children.¹⁵⁰ Similar trends can be observed also in the case of Austrian shelters provided by the catholic humanitarian organization Caritas. Graph 2 shows the drop from 441 accommodated women and children in 2019 to 331 in 2020, which is a 25 % year-on-year decline in demand.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ "Statistiken der Autonomen Österreichischen Frauenhäuser", AÖF.

¹⁵¹ "Wirkungsbericht 2021", Caritas Österreich.

As it was described in the previous paragraphs, the shelter system in the Czech Republic is not as robust as in Austria and is also much more fragmented into various autonomous shelter organizations, which are not always meeting the Istanbul Convention criteria. Graph 3 shows data from five different shelters, which provide accommodation to parents with children in need. The organizations were picked up based on the availability of their annual reports online. There is no larger aggregated data about women in shelters for Czechia such as the ones provided by AÖF and ZÖF in Austria. The largest shelter system for parents with children operating in five cities in the whole Czech Republic is run by The Army Salvation (*Armáda spásy*), which did not report an increase or decrease in the numbers in the first pandemic year 2020.¹⁵² The rest four Czech organizations all noted a decrease in numbers in 2020. The two larger shelters *Otevřené srdce* in Prague and *Společná cesta* in Brno marked noticeable decreases compared to 2019. In the case of the shelter *Společná cesta* it was a decrease of more than 25 % of women and children and in the shelter *Otevřené srdce* more than 15 %.¹⁵³ Even the smaller shelter with the hidden address and gender-specific approach for victims of domestic violence run by the women's organization ROSA reported a decrease from 61 women and children in 2019 to 54 in 2020.¹⁵⁴

It is important to note that the data from the Czech Republic and Austria are the case of shelter system's data so much different in their quality and quantity that it is not possible to do a proper comparison. However, the fact that the shelter accommodation did not observe an increase in numbers same as the helplines for victims of domestic violence did is an obvious trend in both cases Czechia and Austria. Especially in Graph 1 for the case of the whole of Austria, it can be stated that the drop in the numbers in the first pandemic year was a significant general trend, which occurred with COVID-19. In the case of Czechia (viz Graph 3), it cannot be stated that there was a general decrease in the number of women seeking accommodation due to the lack of data on shelters and the unavailability of beds in the Czech shelter systems for women with children.

The question of why neither Czechia nor Austria reported an increase of women and children in shelters after the beginning of the lockdown period when the domestic violence

¹⁵² "Výroční zpráva 2021", Armáda spásy, https://armadaspasy.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Armada_spasy_2021_web_komprim.pdf (accessed December 8, 2022).

¹⁵³ "Výroční zpráva 2020", Společnou Cestou, <https://www.spolcest.cz/spolecnou-cestou/vyrocní-zpravy/> (accessed December 17, 2022); "Výroční zpráva 2021", Otevřené srdce, <https://www.otevrenesrdce.cz/vyrocní-zpravy> (accessed December 17, 2022).

¹⁵⁴ "Výroční zprávy", ROSA, <https://www.rosacentrum.cz/vyrocní-zpravy/> (accessed December 5, 2022).

according to the numbers in helplines increased, was asked in the interviews for the purpose of this thesis. Michaela Gosch (*Verein Frauenhäuser Steiermark*) said that their organization doesn't know the reason behind the decrease and is actually trying to figure out why it happened. However, she expressed the possibility that the level of stress in some families could have decreased because everyone had to stop for a while and reduce the amount of daily activities. Jitka Poláková (ProFem) mentioned that the Czech shelters had a big problem with the COVID-19 measures in relation to preventing the spread of infection and sometimes could not accept clients right away, because they would endanger the clients who were already living in the shelters. This apprehension of women's shelters being potentially risky places for COVID-19 outbreaks has been studied in the text of A. P. Vallejo-Janeta et al. Their paper suggests that female victims of gender-based violence are a high-risk group for COVID-19 because in the women's shelters, where everyone has only limited space and often shared areas such as kitchens or bathrooms, the infection spread more quickly than among other population groups.¹⁵⁵ This can be one of the reasons why women were more afraid to come to shelters during the pandemic.

Another possible explanation is the already mentioned problem of "home as a prison", which was mentioned in several of the interviews, that due to the lockdown measures, the victims of violence have been confined in their homes together with their abusive partners. As a result, it has become increasingly challenging for them to reach out to shelters and flee from the aggressors. According to the research of Lapierre et al., this has led to a decrease in the number of women who seek accommodation in shelters, while they still search for help via helplines or online tools provided by the organization that provided advice for victims of domestic violence.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, Blanka Nyklová and Dana Moree describe in their research paper focused on the violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Czechia that when the lockdowns started, some of the victims were more afraid to seek help, because they felt that when the whole society dealt with the crisis, they can wait with the decision as moving into a shelter until the situation gets back to the normal state. The experts on domestic violence and social

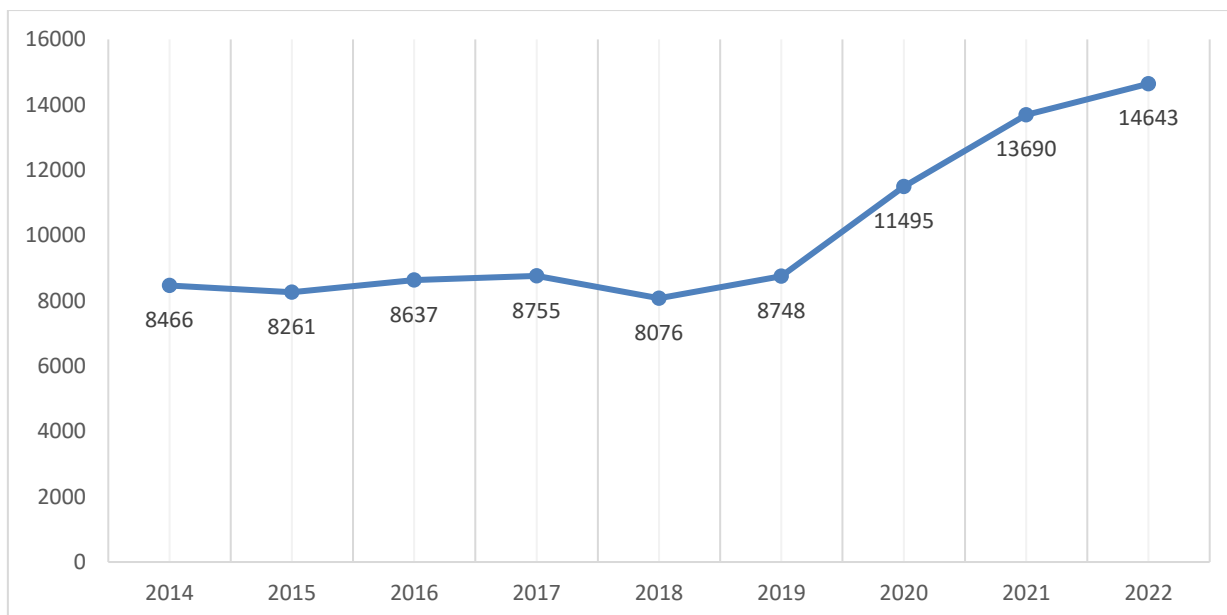
¹⁵⁵ Alexander P. Vallejo-Janeta et al., "COVID-19 outbreaks at shelters for women who are victims of gender-based violence from Ecuador", *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* 108 (2021): 531-536, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1201971221005014> (accessed January 11, 2023).

¹⁵⁶ Simon Lapierre et al., "'We have tried to remain warm despite the rules.' Domestic violence and COVID-19: implications for shelters' policies and practices", *Journal of Gender-Based Violence* 6, n. 2 (2022): 331-347, <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/jgbv/6/2/article-p331.xml> (accessed January 13, 2023).

workers expressed their belief that the victims only decided to move or call the police in the cases when they really felt that they did not have any other option. Nyklová and Moree suggest that the fall in numbers can indicate that the threshold for help-seeking raised, rather than that domestic violence decreased in the households.¹⁵⁷

This argument of the increased threshold for help-seeking can be also applied in the case of the number of temporary restraining orders. However, this data differs in the case of the Czech Republic and Austria as you can see in Graph 4 and Graph 5.

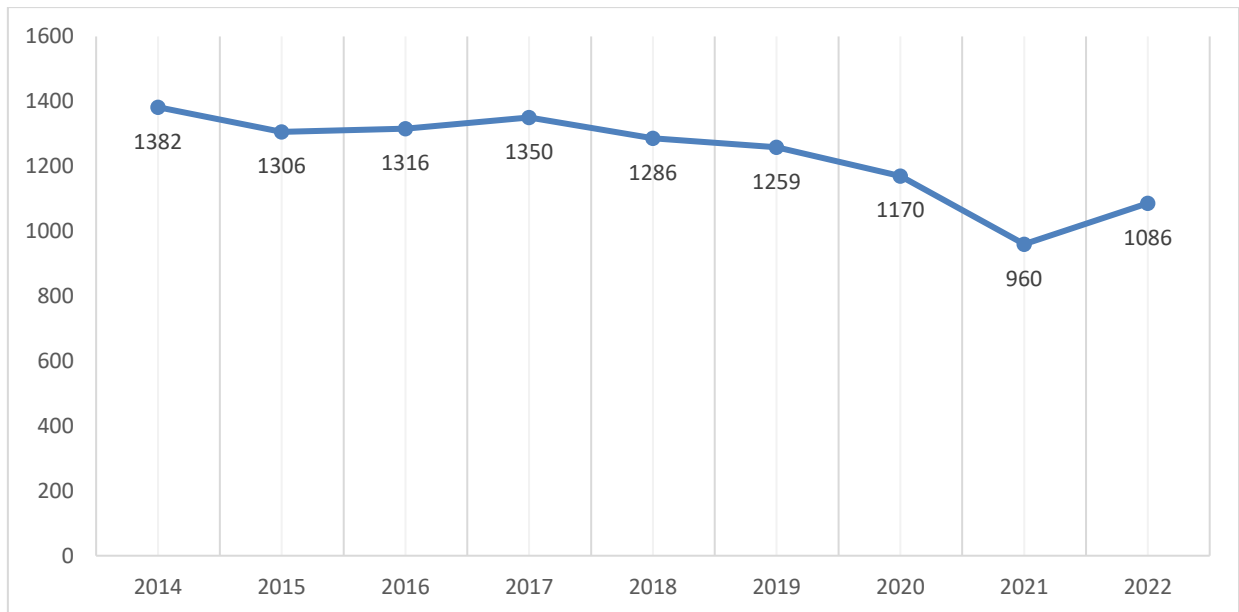
Graph 4: Number of temporary restraining orders (*Betretungs- und Annäherungsverbote*) in Austria



source: AÖF/ visualisation: author

¹⁵⁷ Nyklová a Moree, *Násilí na ženách v souvislosti s COVID-19*, 16-20.

Graph 5: Number of temporary restraining orders (*Vykázání*) in the Czech Republic



source: Bílý kruh bezpečí/ visualisation: author

Graph 4 and Graph 5 both show the official Czech and Austrian police data shared as a number of temporary restraining orders.¹⁵⁸ In Austria the temporary restraining order is called "*Betretungs- und Annäherungsverbot*" and in the Czech Republic is used the term "*Vykázání*". Both measures aim to protect victims of violence by prohibiting the perpetrator from approaching or entering the victim's home, workplace, or other specified areas. The measure of a temporary restraining order in both countries by the police authority. In Czechia, the prohibition from entering the shared dwelling and its immediate surroundings of the victim's home ordered by the police lasts for a period of 10 days. Victims of domestic violence can seek civil court protection through a preliminary injunction, which can order the perpetrator to leave the shared home and not contact the victim for one month and can be extended for up to one year if legal proceedings have begun.¹⁵⁹ In Austria, the prohibition from getting near the victim ordered by the police is limited to 14 days. If the endangered

¹⁵⁸ „Zahlen und Daten - Gewalt an Frauen in Österreich“, AÖF, <https://www.aof.at/index.php/zahlen-und-daten#:~:text=2022%20wurden%2014.643%20Betretungs%2D%20und,%2C%20Tätigkeitsberichte%202014%2D2020> (accessed October 9, 2022); „Přehled o vykázání za březen 2023“, Bílý kruh bezpečí, <https://www.domacinasili.cz/rubrika/statistiky/> (accessed October 9, 2022).

¹⁵⁹ „Domácí násilí - institut vykázání a další informace“, Ministerstvo vnitra ČR, <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/domacinasili-institut-vykazani-a-dalsi-informace.aspx> (accessed January 13, 2023).

person files an application for an injunction with the court within these two weeks, the ban on entering and approaching is extended to a maximum of one month. In addition, the perpetrator must contact the Violence Prevention Center (*Beratungsstelle für Gewaltprävention*) within five days of a temporary restraining order being issued in order to arrange an appointment for counselling. This session, in which the perpetrator must actively participate, lasts at least six hours.¹⁶⁰

According to the data in Graph 4, the number of temporary restraining orders in Austria started to rapidly rise during the pandemic and continues to rise until now. This fact has been debated in the Austrian press (e. g. *Die Presse* or *Der Standard*),¹⁶¹ but also among domestic violence experts and social workers. In January 2023 a conference organized by *Gewaltschutzzentrum* on the topic of the increasing number of temporary restraining orders in Austria. According to the conference's conclusions, the rising numbers during the pandemic does not have to mean that the violence increased, but that the awareness about support for victims of domestic violence and legal possibilities in Austria increased.¹⁶² On the contrary in the Czech Republic it can be observed in Graph 5 that during the pandemic the number of temporary restraining orders significantly decreased from 1170 in 2019 to 960 in 2020. Moreover, the number of temporary restraining orders is several times higher in Austria than in Czechia. While in 2022 in Austria were the perpetrators ordered to stay away from the victim in 14,643 in the Czech Republic which was in only 1086 cases the same year.

The arguments behind the differences in both changes in numbers and the height of the numbers can be the awareness about the possibility of protection through temporary restraining orders among the general population, but also the police approach towards the topic of gender-based violence. The acting of the police during the COVID-19 outbreak has been among the interview respondents described the opposite in the case of Austria and Czechia. While Nicole Freudenthaler from the Austrian organization praised the cooperation

¹⁶⁰ "Sofortiges Betretungs- und Annäherungsverbot zum Schutz vor Gewalt", Bundesregierung, https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/gesundheit_und_notfaelle/gewalt_in_der_familie/5/Seite.299420.html#ZusaetzlicheInformationen (accessed January 13, 2023).

¹⁶¹ "Gewaltschutz: Betretungsverbote sprunghaft gestiegen", *Die Presse*, 12.07.2022, <https://www.diepresse.com/6164514/gewaltschutz-betretungsverbote-sprunghaft-gestiegen> (accessed December 9, 2022); "Gewaltschutz: 14.643 Betretungs- und Annäherungsverbote im Jahr 2022", *Der Standard*, 19 February 2023, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000143706645/gewaltschutz-14-643-betretungs-und-annaehungsverbote-im-jahr-2022> (accessed February 20, 2023).

¹⁶² "Die Gewaltschutzzentren Österreichs vereinen sich", OTS, 27 January 2023, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20230127_OT0125/die-gewaltschutzzentren-oesterreichs-vereinen-sich-bild (accessed February 20, 2023).

of the police together with the centres for victims of domestic violence on the matter of restraining orders, passing on information and training for work with gender-based violence victims, Jitka Poláková from Czechia described the communication between the police during the pandemic and the women’s organization as dysfunctional and insufficient. According to Poláková the drop in the number of temporary restraining orders in Czechia in 2020 was not due to the decrease in violence in the families, but due to the lack of action on the side of the Czech police

Work with the police authorities

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p data-bbox="293 837 751 1155"><i>“Yes, the number of the temporary restraining order is increasing, but also thanks to the police and our cooperation... We have a lot of training for the police and by working so closely together, the whole system is improving.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="360 1184 751 1267"><i>Freudenthaler, Gewaltschutzzentrum ÖO</i></p>	<p data-bbox="882 837 1340 1391"><i>“Unfortunately, we were tied to various institutions, such as the police, and there the paralysis was unbelievable, we really couldn’t get in touch with anyone... There, the continuity of the information is extremely important in cases of domestic violence. So, of course, we urged the public that when you have a problem, you can seek the services of the police. But the police didn't act...”</i></p> <p data-bbox="1094 1424 1337 1458"><i>Poláková, ProFem</i></p>

4.2.2 Istanbul Convention

The COVID-19 has shined the light on the importance of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, known also as the Istanbul Convention. The Convention is an international treaty, which sets up both general standards and binding instruments aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.¹⁶³ It establishes comprehensive framework to be taken by states to prevent and combat the gender-based violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators. The Convention encompasses a wide range of measures, which can

¹⁶³ Council of Europe Convention, *Council of Europe*.

include promoting awareness about gender-based violence, data collection, as well as enacting laws that criminalize various types of violence. It defines the different types of violence against women, which include physical, sexual, and psychological violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, stalking, forced marriage, forces abortion or sterilization.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, it safeguards victims by mandating that governments establish specialist support services, such as a free national hotline with gender-specific or feminist approach, women's shelters, and counselling for victims.¹⁶⁵

In the context of Czechia and Austria, the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention are crucial in addressing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality. The Czech Republic signed the Istanbul Convention in 2016, but its ratification has been met with controversy and opposition from conservative groups. Zuzana Fellegi connects the insufficient help for victims and unclear definition of gender-based violence in the Czech Republic to the non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention. She describes in her research paper the polarized debate of the political parties about the Convention, which uses arguments that are not based on text of the Convention or statistically proven data and facts, but instead use the strategy of creating an external, non-existent enemy in the form of the so-called gender ideology.¹⁶⁶ In contrast, Austria ratified the Convention in 2013 and has taken steps to implement its provisions, such as the establishment of specialist support services for victims of violence.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Council of Europe Convention, *Council of Europe*.

¹⁶⁵ Rosamund Shreeves, "The Istanbul Convention: A tool for combating violence against women and girls", *European Parliamentary Research Service* (November 2022), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/738222/EPRS_ATA\(2022\)738222_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/738222/EPRS_ATA(2022)738222_EN.pdf) (accessed March 14, 2023).

¹⁶⁶ Zuzana Fellegi, „Proč ratifikovat Istanbulskou úmluvu aneb mezinárodní lidskoprávní smlouvy jako český národní zájem“, *Analýzy ÚMV: České zájmy v roce 2019*, https://czlobby.cz/sites/default/files/news_download/ceske_zajmy_2019_web.pdf (accessed November 22, 2022).

¹⁶⁷ Katrin Lange, "Violence against Women: On the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Austria", *Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments Europe* (July 2020), <https://beobachtungsstelle-gesellschaftspolitik.de/f/32b9b45d10.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2022).

Framework of the Istanbul Convention

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p><i>“I would say that it gives us a complete legal basis to our work and it clearly defines all crimes and misdemeanours. It simply defines when and where it is violence and where it is not and how it should be prevented and dealt with.”</i></p> <p><i>Freudenthaler, Gewaltschutzzentrum ÖÖ</i></p>	<p><i>“It turned out that if the Istanbul Convention had been ratified, it would have been possible to help those victims much more effectively... If we have ratified the agreement and met its standards, the entire network of support would improve. For example, now, the victims go through all the trauma unnecessarily several times, just because they have to testify to the police several times over and over again... The Istanbul Convention does not apply to just one measures such as the shelters, but to the entire system of support.”</i></p> <p><i>Radovanovičová, Č. ženská lobby</i></p>

In the interviews was described the Istanbul Convention as one of the basic components of the state’s gender regime in regards to gender-based violence. The fact that Austria has Istanbul Convention ratified for already 10 years and used its framework in these past years was according to Nicole Freudenthaler crucial for being able to prevent violence during the pandemic, but also to defend and provide help to the victims in the cases, where the violence took place. In Czechia on the other hand Jana Radovanovičová saw the non-ratification of the Convention as one of the main obstacles, why the whole system of help and prevention of the gender-based violence did not work for the victims during the COVID-19 crisis as it could, if the standards of the Convention would be meet. This can be in the case of the Czech Republic the non-existent gender-specific free 24/7 helpline for victims, same as the alarming fact that 92 % of beds in shelters, which would meet adequate European standards, are missing for the victims of violence.¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, it is crucial to

¹⁶⁸ Biaggioni et al., *Wave Country Report 2021*, 51.

acknowledge that ratifying the Istanbul Convention does not represent the sole avenue towards enacting the vital measures required to tackle gender-based violence. Rather, the cases of Austria and Czechia exemplify the efficacy of establishing a comprehensive EU-wide framework, such as the Istanbul Convention’s measures, that effectively prevents and addresses such violence.

4.2.3 Media attention

It was mentioned in both Austrian and Czech interviews, that the media attention to the topic of gender-based violence increased due to the pandemic.

Increased media attention

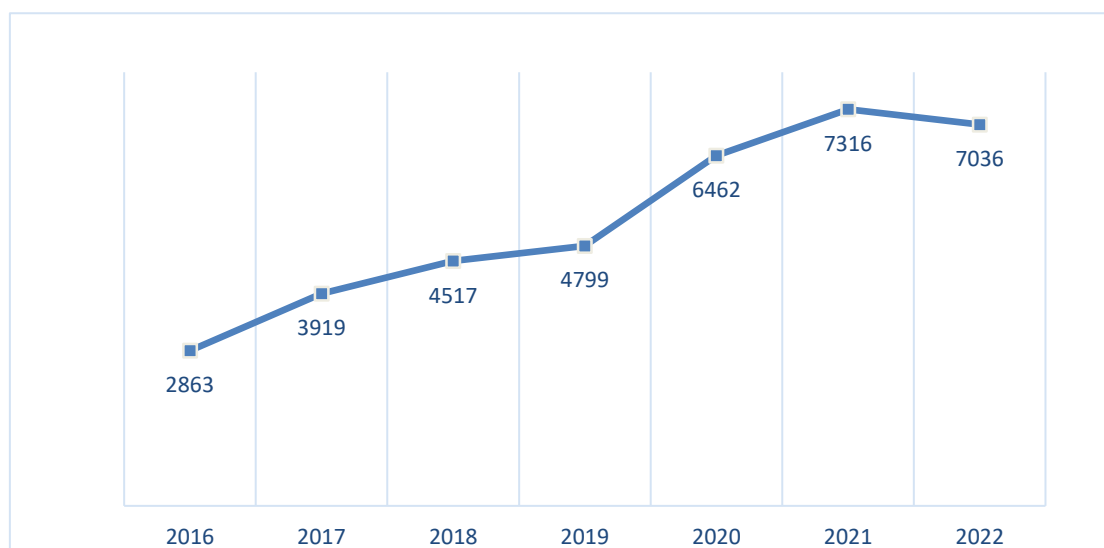
<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p data-bbox="292 887 772 1111"><i>“I think it was interesting because the newspapers reported here as well. You would read it every week that the violence is increasing and so many calls...”</i></p> <p data-bbox="395 1140 772 1173"><i>Gosch, Verein Frauenhäuser</i></p>	<p data-bbox="903 887 1383 1061"><i>“We gave a whole series of interviews, people asked us about statistics, I think that is why the awareness actually increased here.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="1134 1093 1383 1126"><i>Poláková, ProFem</i></p>

According to the data of the Media Affairs, which is an expert agency dealing with the analysis of media coverage in Austria, the topic of the violence against women became since the pandemic the most accented female-political topic present in the Austrian media space. The study done by Maria Pernegger analysed six most read printed media outlets in Austria: Kronen Zeitung, Österreich, Heute, Der Standard, Die Presse and Kurier. Pernegger finds that in 2021 the topic of gender-based violence attracted the same amount of attention as all the other 19 identified female-political topics such as women’s participation at labour market, sexism, stereotypes or women’s quotas. While in 2018 the most debated female-political topic was the women wearing a veil in public, since 2019 the main topic became the violence against women. However, these data uncover that the trend started already before the pandemic, it continued during the pandemic years 2020 and 2021. It states that the topic of domestic violence gained the importance as the main female-political topic in

Austrian media, due to the reason that it is a non-conflicting topic on which it is easier to find the cross-party solidarity despite different ideological orientations.¹⁶⁹

For the evaluation of the media coverage of the topic of gender-based violence in the Czech Republic, I used the data from Newton Media, which is one of the main providers of analysis of the Czech media scene using artificial intelligence for data mining. Newton Media analyses both printed and online media sources same as the audio-visual channels such as TV and radio. The Graph 6 reflects the number of occurrences of the key-word “domestic violence” in the Czech media. The topic of domestic violence became significantly more present in the Czech Republic with the first pandemic year 2020. While in 2019, the topic was mentioned 4799 times, in 2020 the year-over-year increase was 35%, with the peak in 2021 when the topic occurred 7316 times.¹⁷⁰

Graph 6: Number of occurrences of the topic of domestic violence in the Czech media



source: Newton Media/ visualisation: author

4.2.4 Cyber-violence

The COVID-19 crisis has significantly contributed to increasing our everyday reliance on digital technologies. In light of the pandemic internet access became viewed as a new fundamental human right. More people were spending time online as a result of lockdowns and social distancing measures, which provides more opportunities for cyber-

¹⁶⁹ “Jahresstudie 2021”, MediaAffairs, Mai 2022, <https://www.contentadmin.de/contentanlagen/contentdatei18392.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2022).

¹⁷⁰ Author’s own calculation from the data of Newton Media; “Archive”, Newton Media, <https://newtonone.newtonmedia.eu/cs-CZ/archive/2558/search/7007277/page/1/first> (accessed March 14, 2023).

violence.¹⁷¹ The issue of cyber-violence spreading under the shadow of the COVID-19 crisis described also the publication of the United Nations, which noted that women and girls were particularly vulnerable to cyber-violence during the pandemic.¹⁷² The trend of an increase in gender-based violence, bullying and harassment in the online space became one of the topics of the interviews.

Threat of the online harassment

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p><i>“Home schooling was a big issue during the pandemic. Some girls told us that they were told to do sports lessons in front of the camera... To force a young woman in the age from 12 to 16 to do sports in front of a camera, when everybody can do a screenshot, is a problem. With the shift to digital world, the lack of training for this transition of the teachers for example.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Hofstadler, Mafalda</i></p>	<p><i>“It is very difficult to create a safe environment in the online space... You never know when someone might take a picture of it, record it somehow etc.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Rathouská, Konsent</i></p>

Birgit Hofstadler from the Austrian organization Mafalda shared in the interview her concern about the challenges of home-schooling during the pandemic. Hofstadler noted that the shift to the digital world has exposed young girls to the risk of sexual harassment and bullying online as well as highlighted the lack of training for teachers to adapt to the threat of cyber-violence. Zuzana Rathouská from Konsent echoes Hofstadler's concern about the dangers of the digital space, where it is difficult to create a safe environment. She warns about the risk of pictures or recordings being taken without consent, which can have severe consequences.

¹⁷¹ *Combating Cyber Violence against Women and Girls* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022), 7, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/combating-cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls> (accessed March 14, 2023).

¹⁷² “Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19”, UN Women, 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/brief-online-and-ict-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls-during-covid-19> (accessed March 14, 2023).

According to Eurobarometer marking International Women’s Day 2022, 16 % of Austrian and Czech women reported that they know a woman in their circle of friends or family, who has experienced online harassment or cyber-violence since the COVID-19 pandemic started. The data were reported the same in both of the countries and are also exactly identical to the EU’s average.¹⁷³ This Eurobarometer survey gathered unique women's opinions on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and therefore it is not possible to compare the data with surveys from recent years before the pandemic. However, the last EU-wide survey on gender-based violence from 2014 states that around 11% of women have faced cyber-harassment since the age of 15 and 5% in the 12 months before the survey, which marks a long-term increase in the trend.¹⁷⁴

Cyber-violence and the pandemic

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p><i>“The cyber-violence is kind of a side effect of the normal violence... But I don't think that it went up during the pandemic, because this is something that we experience all the time.”</i></p> <p><i>Gosch, Verein Frauenhäuser</i></p> <p><i>“I think it is a problem all the time and I do not know if it got any worse with the pandemic. It is a big topic, cyber-mobbing etc.”</i></p> <p><i>Hofstadler, Mafalda</i></p> <p><i>“I think cyber-violence is increasing all the time, but I don't know if it's because of Covid or just because of how society and digitisation are</i></p>	<p><i>“We currently have a project on cyber-security and prevention of cyber-violence, it is now one of our main topics... but I am not in a position to assess whether cyber-violence has increased due to the pandemic. I'm guessing that when domestic violence, in general, became more widespread, it was reflected on the Internet as well.”</i></p> <p><i>Kotková, Gender Studies</i></p> <p><i>“I would say that it is a trend of recent years, not even of the pandemic as such, and the trend is increasing. We, as women’s organizations, learned how to recognize it, name it, and create</i></p>

¹⁷³ Philipp Schulmeister et al., “Women in times in COVID-19”, *EP Eurobarometer Flash Survey* (March 2022): 24, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2712> (accessed March 22, 2023).

¹⁷⁴ *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015), 104, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf (accessed March 22, 2023).

evolving in general. It has been really changing in the past years, we already have legal framework for it and it's more real..."

*Freudenthaler, Gewaltschutz-
zentrum ÖÖ*

some tools to prevent it, but it's not easy. Legislation in the Czech Republic hardly addresses this at all. Yes, these situations are rather hard to grasp, but the trend is there. It seems to me that in society, at least, it has started to be discussed more.

Poláková, ProFem

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cyber-violence in Austria and Czechia is unclear, with varying opinions from experts from women's organizations. Some argue that cyber-violence has always been prevalent, while others believe that it has been increasing in recent years, possibly due to the evolving nature of society and digitization. According to Michaela Gosch from women's shelters in Styria cyber-violence is a side effect of normal violence, which is something that they experience all the time, and they do not believe it has gone up during the pandemic. Similarly, Birgit Hofstadler from Mafalda thinks that cyber-violence is a problem that they face constantly and they are uncertain if it has become worse during the pandemic. On the other hand, Nicole Freudenthaler from *Gewaltschutzzentrum* and Jitka Poláková from ProFem both believe that cyber-violence has been on the rise, but are unsure if this trend is a result of COVID-19 or simply a reflection of society's increased reliance on digital technologies.

Moreover, the legal framework for cyber-violence differs between Austria and Czechia, as noted by Poláková and Freudenthaler. In the Czech Republic, the legislation hardly addresses cyber-violence, making it more challenging to recognize, name and prevent it. In contrast, Austria has already established a legal framework to tackle cyber-violence. Freudenthaler stated that they already have measures in place addressing the cyber-violence in the digital space. Despite the existing framework, even in Austria cyber-violence remains a pressing issue.

4.2.5 Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has notably impacted gender-based violence in both Czechia and Austria. Through the lens of the gender regime theory of Silvia Walby, we can understand the different ways in which the pandemic has impacted women's experiences of

gender-based violence in these two countries, given their different gender regimes. In the Czech Republic, a country with a neoliberal regime, the pandemic has highlighted the shortcomings of the system supporting women at risk of gender-based violence. In contrast, Austria, a country with a social-democratic regime, has provided to the victims of gender-based violence during the pandemic an organized and robust system of support. Nevertheless, in both countries was the first goal of “Being free from violence and stereotypes” of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 affected rather negatively. The EU’s strategy mentions the issue of lacking comprehensive and updated data on gender-based violence, which is also one of the obstacles of this thesis. There is no annual survey on gender-based violence in either Austria or Czechia. Nevertheless, this thesis tried to explore the quantitative data available as well as the outcomes of the expert interviews made for the purpose of this thesis.

While the research paper of Blaskó et al. states that the pandemic lockdowns disabled victims to have phone calls, because the perpetrator was always nearby and often monitored their devices, there has been a reported rise of number calls to the women’s helpline in both of the countries.¹⁷⁵ Demand for professional counselling for victims of domestic violence significantly increased, reaching in the Czech Republic in one case even an 88% year-on-year change in numbers.¹⁷⁶ In Austria the increase was less significant with the most relevant number of a 14% increase in calls to the *Frauenhelpline gegen Gewalt*, which is the one state-wide women’s helpline in Austria.¹⁷⁷ However, comparing numbers of 88% for Czechia and 10% would not be right, because the providers of support to victims in Czechia are much more fragmented than in Austria. While Austria does provide the victims of violence the one 24/7 helpline with a specialised approach focused on women according to Istanbul Convention standards, there is no such helpline in Czechia. This illustrates the difference between the two gender regimes. The support to victims, which was during the pandemic in Austria provided by the state, was in Czechia subsidized by the smaller women’s NGOs, which faced a significant increase in demand with the pandemic.

¹⁷⁵ Zsuzsa Blaskó, Eleni Papadimitriou and Anna Rita Manca, *How will the COVID-19 crisis affect existing gender divides in Europe?* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020), 13-14, <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC120525> (accessed March 22, 2023).

¹⁷⁶ VÝroční zpráva ROSA 2021”, ROSA.

¹⁷⁷ “AÖF-Statistik 2020”. AÖF, https://www.aof.at/images/04a_zahlen-und-daten/AOEF-Statistik_2020.pdf (accessed January 7, 2023).

The difference between the Czech and Austria gender regimes could have been observed also in the number of beds available for victims during the pandemic. The Czech Republic never ratified the Istanbul Convention, therefore there were during the pandemic 92% of beds in shelters missing for gender-based violence victims, which would be in line with the European standard. The shelter system in the Czech Republic is similarly to the helplines very fragmented and it is hard to track down the relevant data. However, various smaller Czech shelters reported a slight decrease in the number of clients in 2020. In Austria, the drop in the number of accommodated women and children in shelters was very noticeable even on a large sample of national data provided by two main women-only shelter networks. This can be called the “pandemic paradox” mentioned by Bradbury-Jones and Isham, because pandemic lockdowns and social isolation probably lead to an increase of domestic violence, which is suggested by the increase of calls to the helplines, but on the other hand, discouraged the victims from physically moving away from the abuser to the shelter.¹⁷⁸

The increase in violence is also evidenced by the fact that the number of temporary restraining orders in Austria rose in 2020 by 30% compared to the previous year. Czechia on the other hand observed a decrease in the police’s statistics. However, according to the expert interviews, the reason behind the divergence in the statistics in Czechia and Austria is the difference in gender regimes. While in Austria the cooperation between the police and women’s organization providing help to the victims of gender-based violence is established for many years and worked well also during the pandemic, in Czechia, the women’s organizations described the police reaction to COVID-19 as paralysis and therefore the numbers of temporary restraining orders in Czechia decreased.

The lack of training of the police officials may also be the problem of non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the Czech Republic. While Austria ratified the Convention already 10 years ago and uses its standardized system of preventing and combating gender-based violence, Czechia is lacking it. According to the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, every EU Member state should be the key benchmark of the Istanbul Convention, however,

¹⁷⁸ Caroline Bradbury-Jones and Louise Isham, “The pandemic paradox: The consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence”, *Wiley Public Health Emergency Collection* 29 (2020): 2047–2049, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7262164/> (accessed November 4, 2022).

the Czech Republic did not ratify the Convention even in light of the reports on the increase in domestic violence during the pandemic around the globe.¹⁷⁹

Raising awareness that gender-based violence is a problem may have been an interesting side-effect of the pandemic. It was mentioned by both Austrian and Czech experts, that journalists became more interested in the topic of domestic violence. In both countries, the media analysis showed that the number of occurrences of the topic of domestic violence is on the rise. While in the Czech Republic, the increase can be observed exactly with the start of the pandemic, in Austria the trend started already earlier. Nevertheless, the topic of gender-based violence remained present in the public media debate in both countries even after the start of the pandemic.

Furthermore, the EU's strategy mentions the problem of cyber violence targeting women. Cyber-violence received attention also from the researcher, who noted that gender-based violence in the digital space spread rapidly due to the increasing use of social networks during the pandemic lockdowns. The latest EU survey on the impact of the pandemic stated that one in six Austrian and Czech women know a woman in their circle of friends or family, who experienced some form of cyber-violence. This marks in comparison with the last EU-wide survey from 2014 a long-term upward trend. According to the expert interview, it is evident that cyber-violence during the pandemic remains a complex and multifaceted issue that requires ongoing attention and solutions from both policymakers and society as a whole, however, none of them was able to confirm the assumption that the cyber-violence increased during the COVID-19 crisis. Nevertheless, their comments suggest that video calls during the pandemic have brought to light in both Austria and Czechia the need for better guidelines to ensure safety online.

In conclusion, further research into gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary to better understand the impact of gender regimes on women's experiences of violence and the effectiveness of support systems. The lack of comprehensive and updated data on gender-based violence is one of the major obstacles to this research, highlighting the need for annual surveys in each country. Moreover, the difference in gender regimes between the Czech Republic and Austria has resulted in different outcomes for victims during the pandemic, particularly in terms of the availability of support systems.

¹⁷⁹ “Europarlament vyzval k ratifikaci Istanbulske úmluvy. V Česku se zatím nedočkala ani přijetí, ani pochopení”, Euroactiv, Barbora Pištorová, 16. 2. 2023, <https://euractiv.cz/section/aktualne-v-eu/news/europarlament-vyzval-k-ratifikaci-istanbulske-umluv-y-v-cesku-se-zatim-nedockala-ani-prijeti-ani-pochopeni/> (accessed March 30, 2023).

Future research should investigate the relationship between gender regimes and support systems in more detail, including the impact of the non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention in the Czech Republic. Finally, the long-term increase in cyber-violence highlights the need for more research into gender-based violence in the digital space.

4.3 Gender gap within the labour market

4.3.1 Teleworking

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a sudden and massive shift towards teleworking, a phenomenon that became fully present in European society during the lockdowns and mandatory quarantines. In 2019, around 11% of dependent employees worked from home at least some of the time, while just 3.2% usually worked from home in the EU-27.¹⁸⁰ In the Czech Republic 10% of workers teleworked from home before the pandemic in 2019, in Austria it was 22% of workers.¹⁸¹ In 2020 the number for the whole EU more than doubled to 25% of workers in European companies with 50 or more employees reported teleworking at least some of the time.¹⁸² According to the Eurostat data, the Austrian capital Vienna with a 15% increase became one of the EU regions with the highest number of people working from home after the start of the pandemic, while in Prague the increase was 8.5%.¹⁸³ Furthermore, research has shown that individuals who engage in regular teleworking are more prone to holding part-time, low-paid jobs, and may often undertake multiple employments. These employment arrangements are commonly associated with women, rather than men.¹⁸⁴ The quick transition to digital space was experienced by most of the office-based workers in service sectors including the NGOs working with women, which was described in the interviews.¹⁸⁵

The shift towards the digital world in the labour market brought new challenges for gender equality. Despite the significant expansion in the information and communications technology (ICT) industry in the past few decades and a great need for individuals with ICT abilities in the job market, women are largely underrepresented among ICT specialist and

¹⁸⁰ Matteo Sostero et al., *Teleworkability and the COVID-19 crisis: a new digital divide?* (Seville: European Commission, 2020), 8, <https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-07/jrc121193.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2022).

¹⁸¹ Jakub Grossmann et al., "Práce z domova: možnost, nebo nutnost?", *IDEA CERGE EI* (March 2021): 7, https://idea.cerge-ei.cz/files/IDEA_Studie_3_2021_Prace_z_domova/IDEA_Studie_3_2021_Prace_z_domova.html#p=4 (accessed July 24, 2022).

¹⁸² Oscar V. Llave et al., *The rise in telework: Impact on working conditions and regulations* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022), 12, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef22005en.pdf (accessed January 15, 2023).

¹⁸³ "Working from home across EU regions in 2020", Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210923-1> (accessed June 9, 2022).

¹⁸⁴ Sostero et al., *Teleworkability and the COVID-19 crisis*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ Abi Adams-Prassl et al., "Work Tasks that Can Be Done from Home: Evidence on Variation within & Across Occupations and Industries", *CEPR Discussion Paper No. DP14901* (June 2020): 4-16, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3638005 (accessed September 11, 2022).

graduates.¹⁸⁶ While in both Czechia and Austria a comparable number of women and men use Internet (with slightly higher number of men of approx. 80% and 75% for women), women make up to only 15% of ICT graduates in Czechia and 16% in Austria. Latest survey on digital divide by EIGE from 2020 suggests that women in Austria make up only 20% of ICT specialists and in Czechia this number drops to 11%.¹⁸⁷

Nevertheless, according to a study conducted in the Czech Republic by Grossmann et al., teleworking was during the COVID crisis especially praised by the women who had children under the age of 12 due to the benefits of time flexibility and increased contact with family.¹⁸⁸ Study by Bachmayer and Klotz found that Austrian women in general judged the effects of teleworking on their own work organization in the home office much more positively than men.¹⁸⁹ These studies indicate that teleworking in both Czechia and Austria had positive effects on women's work organization. Women tend to have a more favourable view on the work from home, which could be linked to their greater involvement in household and childcare responsibilities. This was endorsed in the interview by Anna Hrábková, who founded during the pandemic in the Czech Republic the women's project *Zakroužkuj ženu* that originated from a volunteer initiative mainly due to the fact that teleworking enabled greater flexibility of cooperation within the project co-creators.

Digital transition

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<i>“It was definitely a big change in the internal functioning. We all got laptops, worked from home and started very intensive phone contact with clients... We are now more flexible in terms of time and our work in the region has increased as it is now more</i>	<i>“The transition to the online space is probably one of the positives that the pandemic brought, because of course we are dependent regionally on Prague and the Central Bohemian Region. But we are often approached by clients from various corners of the Czech Republic, and now if the services are not there we</i>

¹⁸⁶ *Gender Equality Index 2020: Digitalization and the future of work* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020), 15-17.

¹⁸⁷ “Gender Equality Index 2020 country factsheets”, EIGE, <https://eige.europa.eu/areas/gender-equality-index-2020-country-factsheets> (accessed September 11, 2022).

¹⁸⁸ Grossmann et al., “Práce z domova”, 3-20.

¹⁸⁹ Wolfgang Bachmayer and Johannes Klotz, “Homeoffice: Verbreitung, Gestaltung, Meinungsbild und Zukunft”, *Bundesministerium für Arbeit* (March 2021): 33, <https://www.bmaw.gv.at/Presse/News/Homeoffice-Studie.html> (accessed September 11, 2022).

common to provide consultation online..”

*Freudenthaler, Gewaltschutz-
zentrum ÖÖ*

“After two or three months, we had all these offers for online seminars. We just educated all our colleagues and employees so that they were able to offer video call counselling on telephone counselling...”

Gosch, Verein Frauenhäuser

can provide them with for example online therapies or consultation.”

Poláková, ProFem

“We have learned to work with new online tools... I would say that it is very beneficial for us because many of those apps we use even today.”

Rathouská, Konsent

“COVID-19 and working from home also played a role in the fact that people actually had the time to do something next to work... we made a Facebook group people started adding people and suddenly we had about 500 volunteer and it all happened in one month.”

“We got used to working through online tools and actually everything was handled via Slack or Messenger.”

Hrábková, Zakroužkuj ženu

The pandemic also brought a major change in both internal and external functioning for women’s organizations in Austria and Czechia, with the adoption of remote work and increased online and telephone consultations with clients. This transition has resulted in improved flexibility and an increase in work throughout the region. The adoption of new online tools has also been beneficial and is continuing to be used today. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, women’s organizations have been able to adapt and innovate, leveraging technology to continue to work and provide vital services to support gender equality even during the pandemic.

4.3.2 Work-life balance and unpaid work

There is evidence from various EU member states that the shift to home-office work has resulted in greater flexibility in working hours. This has included starting work earlier or later, working late into the evening, and even shifting work to the weekends. These changes

have often been made in response to the personal needs of teleworkers themselves.¹⁹⁰ In the Czech Republic, a study by the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), presented a survey in which a significant majority of teleworkers (70%) reported having the freedom to determine their own working schedules.¹⁹¹ Similarly, in Austria, both employees (52%) and employers (47%) reported that telework practices during the pandemic had led to more flexible working hours. This deviation from traditional working hours was widely accepted by the vast majority of employees and employers.¹⁹² These findings suggest that the shift to home-office work has enabled workers to better balance their personal and professional responsibilities.

Czech expert Anna Kotková from the organization Gender Studies shared in the interview the assumption that while men stayed at home during lockdowns, they became more exposed to the amount of unpaid work done by women. This exposure may lead to a higher share of care work and housework within the couple being taken on by men. This has been researched in Austria by a study of Derndorfer et al., that found that men's participation in childcare increased only in the case when their female partners could not telework. Similar change in the male behaviour in the partnership was observed in the case of housework, when men only increase their participation in cleaning and cooking during the lockdowns in those cases, when they were left at home office alone without their female partners.¹⁹³

The Flash Eurobarometer from 2022 called "Women in time of COVID-19" showed that 40% of Czech women agreed that the pandemic had a negative impact on their work-life balance compared to 54%, who disagreed.¹⁹⁴ In Austria, only 35% of women disagreed that COVID-19 had a negative impact on their work-life balance, while 49% agreed that the crisis influenced them negatively in terms of balancing their careers with their personal

¹⁹⁰ *Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2020), https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_751232.pdf (accessed September 11, 2022).

¹⁹¹ Dominika Sladká and Martin Kreidl, "Práce z domova, konflikty mezi prací a rodinou a kvalita partnerství v době pandemie covidu-19", *Czech Sociological Review* 58, n. 4 (2022): 373-399, <https://ggp.colectica.org/item/int.ggp/983989e8-da1a-4c4d-84c9-c14ac12f1ed6/4> (accessed November 28, 2022).

¹⁹² Bachmayer and Klotz, "Homeoffice", 16-20.

¹⁹³ Judith Derndorfer et al., "Home, sweet home? The impact of working from home on the division of unpaid work during the COVID-19 lockdown", *PLoS ONE* 16, n. 11 (November 2021): 2-24, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356017957_Home_sweet_home_The_impact_of_working_from_home_on_the_division_of_unpaid_work_during_the_COVID-19_lockdown (accessed November 28, 2022).

¹⁹⁴ "Women in times of COVID-19", EP Flash Survey, 2022, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2712> (accessed December 2, 2022).

life.¹⁹⁵ This suggests that women in Austria seem to have faced more significant challenges in balancing work and personal life during the pandemic than their Czech counterparts.

Unpaid work

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p data-bbox="292 488 751 954"><i>“A lot of the colleagues, who thought that they were in an equal partnership, found out during the lockdowns that they can do their work only in the early morning and late evenings because they had to take care of the kids and cook and do the housework while their husband did home office from eight to four...”</i></p> <p data-bbox="352 981 751 1016"><i>Pschaid, Equality unit of Graz</i></p> <p data-bbox="292 1043 751 1413"><i>“The biggest problems during the lockdowns had women with small children. The school children had their own tasks, but the little kids were bored at home and needed attention and disturbed the women's concentration all the time.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="352 1440 751 1476"><i>Hammani-Birnstingl, Danaida</i></p> <p data-bbox="292 1503 751 1780"><i>“... it didn't mean necessarily that shared lockdown redistributed the work in the household. Sometimes women just worked from home and did all the childcare and housework themselves anyway.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="371 1807 751 1843"><i>Gosch, Verein Frauenhäuser</i></p>	<p data-bbox="879 488 1342 808"><i>“The fact that children could not go to school and all the responsibilities piled up on women. They probably had just as much work as their men, but they still had to take care of the children at home.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="978 835 1342 871"><i>Hrábková, Zakroužkuj ženu</i></p> <p data-bbox="879 965 1342 1285"><i>“The inequality was definitely determined by the fact that in those households, where two people appeared at the home office, it was mainly the women, who had to take care of the children and household.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="1090 1312 1342 1348"><i>Poláková, ProFem</i></p> <p data-bbox="879 1485 1342 1664"><i>“I think a lot of fathers when they stayed at home with the families, they suddenly finally saw the daily functioning, what it really entails.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="1013 1691 1342 1727"><i>Kotková, Gender Studies</i></p>

The interviews conducted in Austria and Czechia revealed comparable observations about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's work-life balance. In both

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

countries, women faced a disproportionate burden of household and caregiving responsibilities during lockdowns. While men were able to work from home, women had to juggle their work with taking care of their children, cooking, and doing housework. This affected their productivity and ability to focus on their paid work. The closure of schools and childcare facilities added to the workload, with women having to provide full-time care for their children while also working from home.

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) gathered in June and July 2021 EU-wide comparable data by a one-off online survey questionnaire on how the division of unpaid labour during the pandemic in households looked like. Table 3 shows similar data on the division of care for small children aged 0–11 years in Czechia and Austria. On average, men spent less time than women on childcare and housework. Almost 60% of women in Austria and Czechia believe that childcare was completely or mostly on them during the crisis. That is in both countries above the EU-27 average. Yet it can be observed that while almost half of the men report sharing childcare equally, women disagree and report only 24% of equal childcare in Czechia and 29% in Austria. Striking gender differences emerge when we focus on high-intensity childcare. In both Austria and Czechia, around 40% of women and 20% of men spent at least 4 hours a typical weekday on the childcare of young children. Similar trends of inequality can be observed in the case of housework. Above 60% of both Czech and Austrian women reported that during the pandemic they were taking care of the whole household on their own.¹⁹⁶ This supports the claims also mentioned in the interviews, that even though unpaid work during the lockdowns mainly due to the school closures increased,

¹⁹⁶ *Gender Equality Index 2022: The COVID-19 pandemic and care* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022), 60-65, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2022-covid-19-pandemic-and-care> (accessed January 8, 2023).

women still carried an unequal portion of childcare and housework together with their regular paid work.

Table 3: EIGE’s survey on the division of unpaid labour in the couples (%) during the COVID-19 pandemic (2021)¹⁹⁷

	Czechia		Austria		EU-27	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Childcare (0-10 years)						
Between 1 and 4 hours	51	63	51	54	50	65
More than 4 hours	41	21	40	20	40	21
Equal	24	45	29	49	32	44
Completely or mostly me	58	11	59	11	52	23
Housework						
Between 1 and 4 hours	75	76	71	70	69	70
More than 4 hours	14	7	18	7	20	12
Equal	22	44	23	43	22	40
Completely or mostly me	65	8	68	15	66	20

This finding supports also the article of Hašková et al. aimed to understand how Czech parents of children under 12 coped with increased unpaid work such as childcare and housework and how their strategies of adaptation to the new situation either deepened or reduced gender inequalities in the couple. Their analysis of interviews from spring 2020 did not confirm the new time availability or the exposure to the need for unpaid work necessarily lead to an increase in fathers' participation in childcare and housework. Couples who shared responsibility for unpaid work equally before the pandemic continued to do so during the lockdown, but the pandemic deepened the division of labour between couples with unequal gender roles. Couples who adopted more gender-neutral practices during the pandemic reported greater satisfaction with their crisis management, and practices leading to a more equal division of labour were more resilient in the face of long-term crises. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the gendered work division culture in the Czech Republic and its

¹⁹⁷ “Gender Equality Index – Austria”, EIGE, 2022, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/covid-19/country/AT> (accessed January 8, 2023); “Gender Equality Index – Czechia”, EIGE, 2022, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/covid-19/country/CZ> (accessed January 8, 2023).

impact on individual and societal resilience, but the study has limitations in terms of the sample and time period to show if the pandemic actually has changed the pattern of division of unpaid work between men and women.¹⁹⁸

A similar trend of the pandemic describes also two studies from Austria. The research paper of Hauer and Moritz focuses on how jobs have shifted from offices to private households, where unpaid work was mainly performed by women. The authors highlight the issue of Austria's gendered division of labour in families, where women work part-time to provide care and men work full-time to provide economic stability for the family but are therefore financially independent. According to Hauer and Moritz's data, the state pandemic aid was not distributed equally in Austria between men and women, with only 43.5% of the 26 billion euros of government support benefiting women.¹⁹⁹ A qualitative study of interviews from Vienna finds that men in the couple took on some new minor tasks during the lockdowns. One of the mostly mentioned minor task was grocery shopping, because men left the house during the lockdowns more often for work than women. Some male partners also newly supported women in weekly cleaning or cooking, but unlike their female partners only outside of their working hours and primarily on weekends. On the other hand, men were not very involved in childcare and in most cases hardly got involved in home-schooling.²⁰⁰

4.3.3 Employment and the gender pay gap

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on employment and wages worldwide. Unlike some previous crises, the pandemic's impact on employment and pay is multifaceted and depends on a variety of factors. Two critical factors that have influenced the employment and pay situation during the pandemic are whether a sector was affected by stay-at-home orders and whether teleworking was allowed. Sectors that rely on physical presence, such as the hospitality and tourism industries, have experienced employment losses due to mandatory closures and restrictions. Conversely, sectors that allowed teleworking have seen a smoother transition to remote work, with some companies even

¹⁹⁸ Hana Hašková et al., "Gender and Changes in the Division of Labour in Households with Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic", *Czech Sociological Review* 58, n. 4 (2022): 427-455, https://sreview.soc.cas.cz/artkey/csr-202204-0003_gender-and-changes-in-the-division-of-labour-in-households-with-children-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.php (accessed January 8, 2023).

¹⁹⁹ Gerline Hauer and Ingrid Moritz, "(K)eine Krise wie jede andere. Corona und die Folgen für Frauen", *L'Homme* 32, n. 2 (2021): 127-136, https://wien.arbeiterkammer.at/service/studien/Frauen/Hauer_Moritz_L-Homme_2021.pdf (accessed January 12, 2023).

²⁰⁰ Ulrike Zartler et al., *Frauen in Wien und COVID-19: Studie im Auftrag des Frauenservice Wien* (Wien: Universität Wien, 2021), 25-40, <https://www.digital.wienbibliothek.at/wbrup/content/pageview/3140011> (accessed March 25, 2023).

deciding to implement it as a permanent work arrangement. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of sector-specific factors when it comes to employment impacts and underscores the need for flexibility and adaptability in the workforce.²⁰¹

Sectors and occupations that are considered "essential," including state administration, healthcare, education, and food production, are predominantly composed of female workers, emphasizing the crucial role of women in sustaining these critical services.²⁰² Health sector, which had critical importance during the COVID-19 crisis is heavily gendered in all EU countries with most of the workers being women. According to the figures collected in the third quarter of 2020 through the EU Labour Force Survey, in the Czech Republic, women make up 84% of health workers, while in Austria it was 76,1%. These health jobs include mainly doctors, nurses, personal care workers and midwives.²⁰³ On the one hand, being an essential worker meant having a secure job during the crisis, on the other hand, the amount of workload and risk of infection by the deadly virus increased for women more than for men.²⁰⁴

Women as essential workers

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>
<p><i>“We now know that it was precisely women who were needed by society during the pandemic. The nursing system of healthcare professionals, food production... Many women are employed there and their work is essential, but they are still not valued as socially and financially as they should be....”</i></p> <p><i>Frießen, Ö. Frauenring</i></p>	<p><i>“Women were generally more affected than men because they work in the sectors that we needed the most. Typically, services and healthcare. There was a lot of pressure on women in the health sector and they had to stay there in the hospitals, but they had nowhere to put the children, for example...”</i></p> <p><i>Kotková, Gender Studies</i></p>

²⁰¹ Alon et al., “The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality”, 2-21.

²⁰² Sanna Nivakoski et al., COVID-19 pandemic and the gender divide at work and home (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022), 8-11, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef22010en.pdf (accessed April 5, 2023); *Gender Equality Index 2022*, 28.

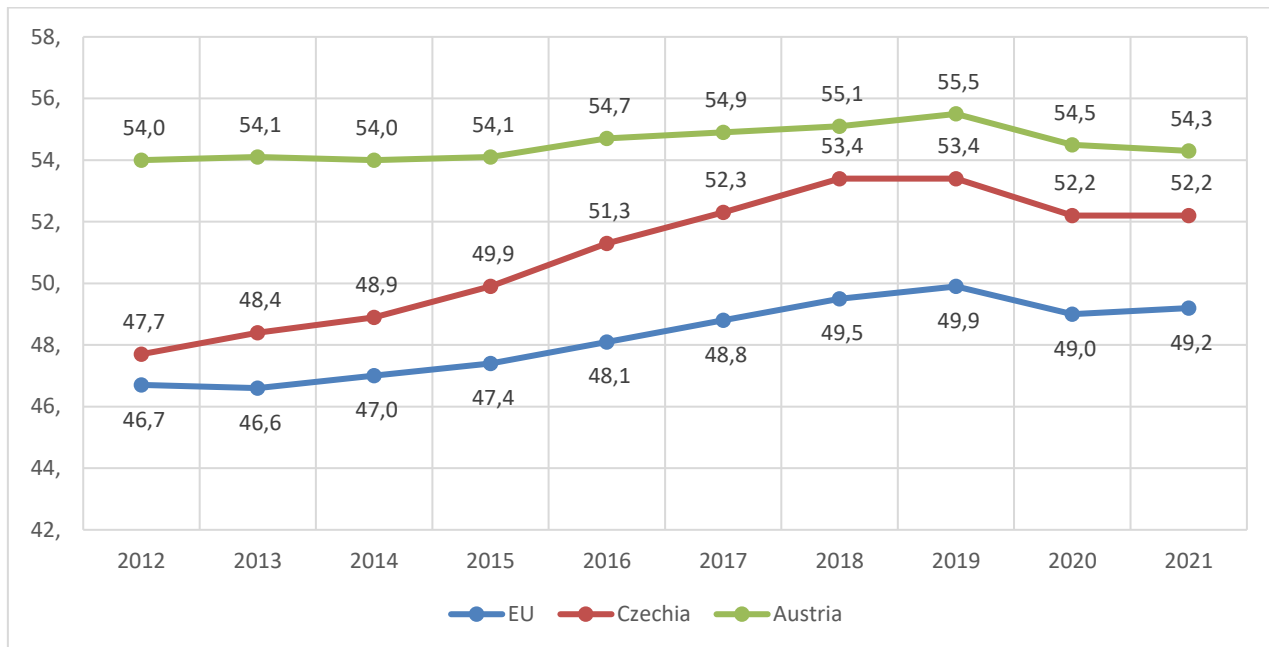
²⁰³ “Majority of health jobs held by women”, Eurostat, 8 March 2021, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20210308-1> (accessed February 11, 2023).

²⁰⁴ Rosemary Morgan et al., “Women healthcare workers’ experiences during COVID-19 and other crises: A scoping review”, *Int J Nurs Stud Adv* 4 (December 2022), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8801061/> (accessed February 11, 2023).

The average employment rate in the EU declined with the start of the pandemic in 2020. Graph 7 and 8 show the changes in the employment rate over the years for women and men. The impact of the pandemic on employment data differs in Austria and Czechia. In Austria, the employment rate for women decreased by 1% from 2019 to 2020, but the employment rate for men decreased even more by 1.5%. On the contrary, the employment rate for Czech women decreased by 2.2% from 2019 to 2020, but for men decreased only by 0.7%. These data suggest that women were disproportionately hit by the pandemic in terms of employment rates only in Czechia. However, it is worth noting that the extent of the decrease in employment rates for both men and women was relatively small, especially in Austria, where the decrease was less than 2% for both genders. Moreover, the gender gap in

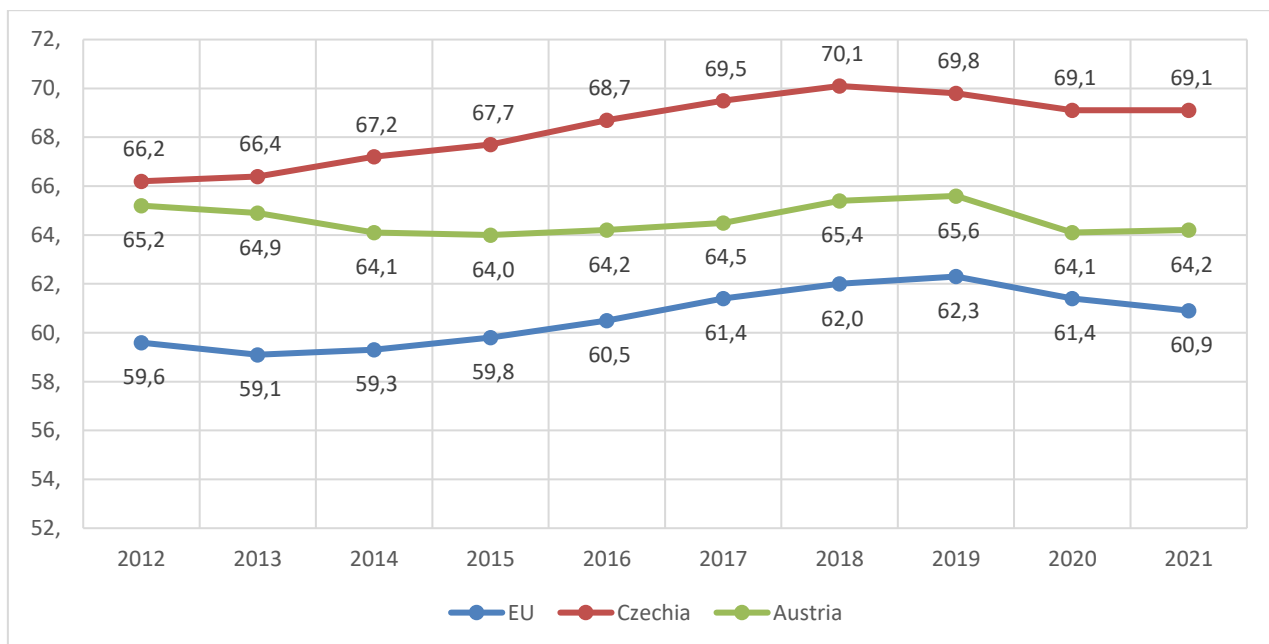
employment rates is relatively larger in Czechia (16.9%) than in Austria (9.9%).²⁰⁵ To sum up, in terms of employment a minor “shession” was only observed in Czechia.²⁰⁶

Graph 7: Female employment (%)



source: Eurostat/ visualisation: author

Graph 8: Male employment (%)



source: Eurostat/ visualisation: author

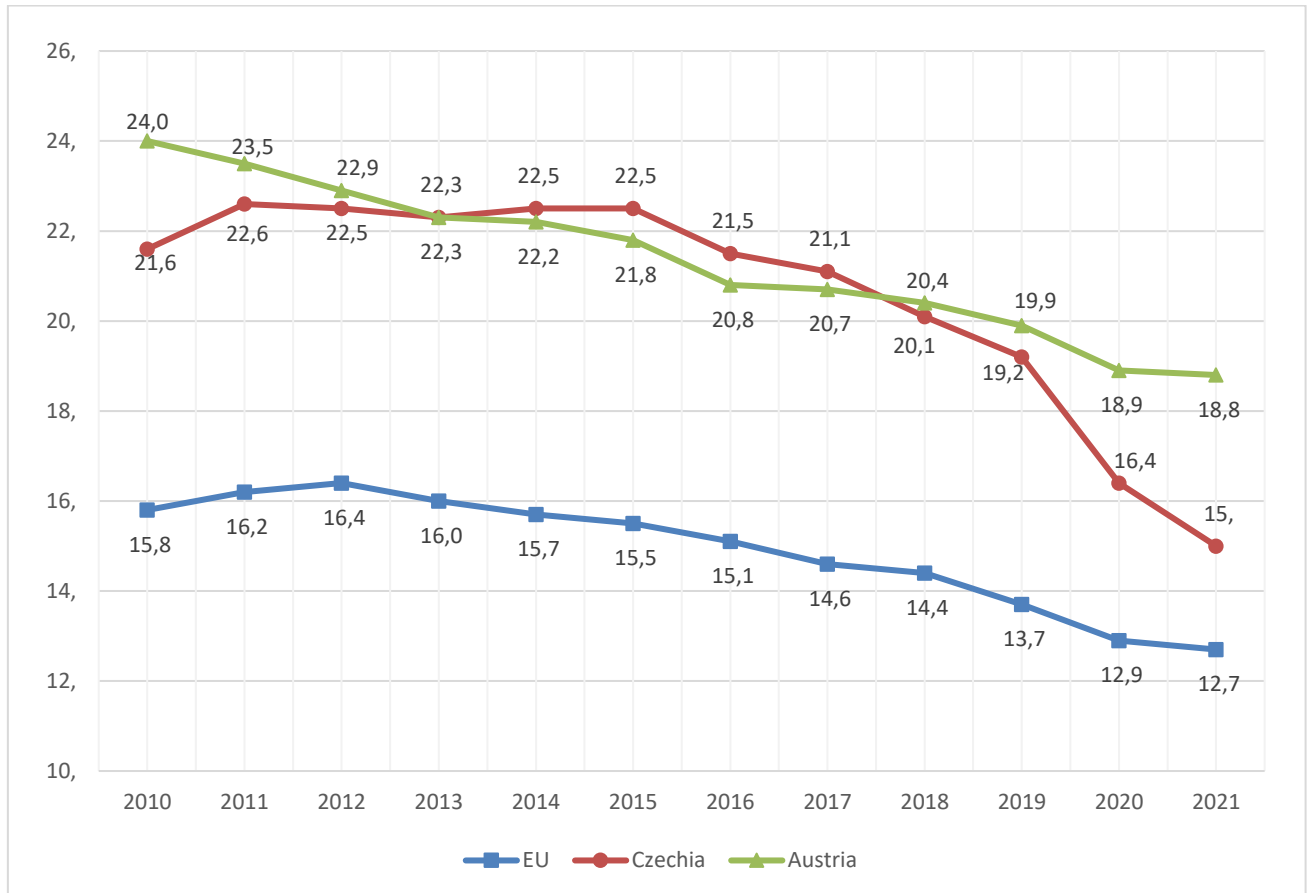
On the other hand, through the perception of the gender pay gap illustrated by Graph 9, the pandemic seems to have a positive impact on closing the gap sharply in Czechia. While before the pandemic in 2019, Czech women earned 19.2% less than men, after the start of the crisis in 2020 the gender pay gap dropped to 16.4% and continued to decrease in 2021 to 15%. The slow closing of the gender gap is in the EU a trend of the past decade since 2012. Austrian data show that with the pandemic the decrease in the gender gap was likewise more significant than in any previous year with a fall from 19.9% in 2019 to 18.9% in 2020.

²⁰⁵ "Employment rate by sex, age groups, educational attainment level and household composition (%)", Eurostat Data Browser, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFST_HHEREDTY/default/table?lang=en&category=labour.employ.lfst.lfst_hh.lfst_hh_e (accessed March 1, 2023).

²⁰⁶ "Gender employment gap", Eurostat Data Browser, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESEM060/default/table?lang=en&category=tepsr.tepsr_eo.tepsr_eo_hi (accessed March 1, 2023).

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that in both Czechia and Austria, the gender pay gap remains one of the highest in the EU.²⁰⁷

Graph 9: The gender pay gap



source: Eurostat/ visualisation: author

4.3.4 Discussion

The literature review suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic would have a significant impact on the way people work, with teleworking becoming more prevalent. This expectation was met in both Austria and Czechia, making Vienna one of the EU regions with the highest number of people working from home after the beginning of the pandemic. Studies have shown that more men than women were able to adapt to the changing work environment during the crisis, due to male employment in occupations that allow teleworking more likely and female underrepresentation among ICT specialists and graduates. This has been also identified as one of the reasons for gender inequality in the

²⁰⁷ "Gender pay gap in unadjusted form", Eurostat Data Browser, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_05_20/default/table?lang=en (accessed March 1, 2023).

labour market by the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. The incorporation of online tools into everyday work helped to maintain operations and support from the women's organization for their clients during the lockdowns but also increased their flexibility and availability even in peripheral regions until today. Women who teleworked during the crisis also valued the benefits of time flexibility and increased contact with family in both Czechia and Austria. The data show that is crucial to promote digital literacy and upskilling for women and men alike, to bridge the digital gender divide and ensure a fair and inclusive future of work for all even after the pandemic.

The analysis highlights the disproportionate burden that women faced during lockdowns in Austria and Czechia due to the closure of schools and childcare facilities. This situation affected women's productivity and ability to focus on paid work. The pandemic has brought attention to gender inequalities in society, particularly in the unequal distribution of unpaid work, where women carry a more significant burden. This inequality deepened for couples with unequal gender roles during the pandemic, while gender-neutral practices led to greater crisis management satisfaction. The pandemic's effects on gender roles and the division of labour may have a long-lasting impact, as noted by Alon et al., however, they have not been documented as somehow significant if at all in the studies of Austrian and Czech society.²⁰⁸ There is evidence that the shift to home-office work has resulted in greater flexibility in working hours, enabling workers to better balance their personal and professional responsibilities. This finding is supported by Bičáková's research, which highlights the importance of flexible forms of work in supporting women's work-life balance.²⁰⁹ However, the analysis findings suggest that women in Austria reported more significant challenges in balancing work and personal life during the pandemic than their Czech counterparts. Austria, as a social democratic regime, has a stronger tradition of state support for childcare, which may have made the transition to homeschooling more challenging for Austrian women than for their Czech counterparts. In contrast, Czechia's neoliberal regime places less emphasis on state intervention and support for care work,

²⁰⁸ Alon et al., "The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality", 1-37.

²⁰⁹ Bičáková, "Gender unemployment gaps in the EU", 1-31.

which may have made women there more accustomed to managing caregiving responsibilities on their own during the lockdowns.

The second goal of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 states the aspiration to close gender gaps in the labour market. The impact of economic crises on gender gaps has been studied extensively in recent years. Castellano and Rocca's analysis of the European labour market during the Great Recession found that men's jobs were more affected due to their overrepresentation in sectors that were hit the hardest, such as the financial sector.²¹⁰ Therefore, the eurozone crisis led to a decrease in the gender pay gap in the EU. This trend was referred to as "mancession" by several economists. The COVID-19 crisis was predicted to be more likely to become a "shecession," as pointed out by Bonacini et al. In spite of this prediction, the gender pay gap has decreased in Czechia and Austria, and especially in the case of the Czech Republic was the year-to-year decrease with the start of the pandemic relatively sharp and the gap continues to reduce even in 2021. The reason behind the decrease in the gender pay gap in Czechia and Austria has not been researched in the literature and studies in the future should focus on finding the cause of this drop, especially in Czechia, where this trend was very significant. Nevertheless, findings on the loss of employment are mixed for both countries and genders. While in Czechia female workers experienced considerably higher losses in employment than their male colleagues, in Austria the employment rate decrease was comparable in the case of women and men with male workers experiencing a slightly higher decrease.

Walby's theory of gender regimes in the case of the labour market in Austria and Czechia did not provide an ideal framework for the explanation of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, since the data show mixed or very similar results for these two cases of different gender regimes. Austria as the social-democratic gender regime traditionally prioritizes gender equality policies, such as equal pay, flexible work arrangements, and gender mainstreaming in public policy. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the shortcomings of the Austrian welfare state, particularly in terms of the unequal distribution of care responsibilities between men and women. Women's disproportionate responsibility for caregiving, coupled with the closure of schools and childcare facilities during the pandemic, has led to significant challenges for women's paid work and work-life balance. Austrian women even reported a higher negative effect of the pandemic on their work-life

²¹⁰ Castellano and Rocca, "The dynamic of the gender gap in the European labour market", 1337-1357.

balance than Czech women. In Czechia, neoliberal gender regime, the pandemic underlined women's higher vulnerability to job loss in Czechia with women facing a higher unemployment year-to-year drop than men. Notwithstanding, the analysis findings on the gender pay gap and work-life balance show similar trends in both Austria and Czechia even though they are different gender regimes. Therefore, more research is needed ideally with a longer time frame in order to evaluate the effect of a pandemic on female paid and unpaid work in different gender regimes or these particular two cases.

4.4 Female representation

4.4.1 Women in the decision-making

Previous chapters have described how the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women through increased unpaid work and the threat of domestic violence. On the one hand, women were on the frontlines of healthcare workers during the pandemic, on the other hand, they were underrepresented in the decision-making on how to deal with the crisis and how to respond to it.²¹¹ Neither in Austria nor in Czechia was the government led by women during the pandemic from 2020 to 2022.²¹² In the case of the Czech Republic, a woman has never stood at the head of the government during its 30-year existence.²¹³ The domain of EIGE's Gender Equality Index that assesses gender balance in decision-making positions across the political, social, and economic spheres shows the greatest difference between Czechia and Austria compared to all other domains. While in the 2022 edition, Austria scored 51.7 points in the domain of power, Czechia did only 29.7 points.²¹⁴

Male-dominated decision-making

<i>Austria</i>	<i>Czechia</i>

²¹¹ "Women, Peace & Security Women In Decision-Making: Covid-19 And Beyond", UN Women, 2021, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEA/Docs/Publications/2020/10/ap-wps-Women-in-decision-making-during-and-post-COVID-9-OCT.pdf> (accessed February 2, 2023).

²¹² "Bundeskanzlerin und Bundeskanzler seit 1945", Bundeskanzleramt, <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/bundeskanzleramt/geschichte/kanzler-seit-1945.html> (accessed February 2, 2023).

²¹³ "Historie minulých vlád", Vláda ČR, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/historie-minulych-vlad/prehled-vlad-cr/1993-2007-cr/> (accessed February 2, 2023).

²¹⁴ See (2.2) Gender regimes of Austria and the Czech Republic, Table 2.

“The pandemic was a very male-dominated crisis management. Sometimes the measures did not reflect that the crisis was something totally different for women and men, especially during the lockdown. Women were told to stay at the home office with the kids and no school.”

Pschaid, Equality unit of Graz

“Measures were constantly implemented, at the workplace, in the schools, but often no one was dealing with how specifically women will be affected by it.”

Frieben, Ö. Frauenring

“The schools and kindergartens closed all of the sudden and the idea was that the mothers will sort it out, we'll just throw it at them and it'll be fine. We were quite extreme, in other countries the schools continued in some limited mode, but here it was really mismanaged...”

Kotková, Gender Studies

“In our campaign, we received the best response to those arguments of the female life experience, that we want women in politics, because their life experience is simply different from the men's, which was showed very clearly during the pandemic...”

Hrábková, Zakroužkuj ženu

The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a magnifying glass, highlighting the pre-existing gender inequalities in decision-making in Austria and Czechia. As the crisis unfolded, it became clear that women were disproportionately affected by the measures put in place. As Priska Pschaid from the Gender equality unit of the City of Graz pointed out, the crisis management during the pandemic was heavily male-dominated, which led to measures that did not consider the unique challenges faced by women, especially during the lockdowns. Similarly, Klaudia Friebe from the Austrian branch of the European Women's Lobby pointed out that measures were implemented without considering how they would specifically affect women, which exacerbated existing inequalities. In Czechia, Anna Kotková from Gender Studies noted, the closure of schools and kindergartens was sudden and put the burden of childcare solely on mothers without them being part of the decision-making about the closers.

In the Czech Republic, a new initiative called *Zakroužkuj ženu* was established during the pandemic. *Zakroužkuj ženu*, can be translated to English as “circle women”, which refers to the possibility of choosing preferences by so-called “circling” (*kroužkování*) on the candidate's lists during Czech elections, and the main aim of the initiative is to increase the

number of Czech women in decision-making. Anna Hrábková, who is one of the main founders of the project, was a respondent in the interview for this thesis. She stressed that the pandemic highlighted the importance of having more women in decision-making roles because it has shown the different life experiences women have, especially as mothers and carers. She stressed that having a diverse range of voices in decision-making is essential to ensure that policies take into account the different impacts on women and men.

As Graph 10 illustrates, in both Austria and Czechia fewer women than men are seated in the national parliaments. Unlike Austria, Czechia is below the EU average percentage of women represented in the parliamentary bodies. In both cases of Austria and Czechia, the number of women in parliament arose since 2010. Austria and Czechia have a bicameral legislature system, in Czechia the chambers are called *Poslanecká sněmovna* (Chamber of deputies) and *Senát* (Senate), in Austria *Bundesrat* (Federal Council) and *Nationalrat* (National Council).²¹⁵ In Czechia number of female members of Parliament increased after the 2022 parliamentary elections when the number of female members of Chamber of Deputies increased from 22% to 25%.²¹⁶ In this election was also particularly active the initiative *Zakroužkuj ženu* and women received 1.2 million preferential votes (circles), which is 87% more than in the previous election.²¹⁷ In Austria were the last elections to the National Council in 2019 before the pandemic.²¹⁸ However, in 2021 were held regional state elections in Upper Austria, slightly increased the number of women in the Federal Council.²¹⁹

Moreover, Graph 11 shows an interesting change in Austria with the beginning of COVID-19. While in 2019 only 38% of Austrian ministers were women, in 2020 the percentage surpassed 50% with Austria becoming one of the few countries in the world with a female-majority government.²²⁰ Despite the fact that Austrian women have “slowly been

²¹⁵ Petra Ahrens et al., *Gender Equality in Politics: Implementing Party Quotas in Germany and Austria* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2020), 11-16; Astrid Lorenz et al., *Politický systém Česka* (Brno: Centrum pro stadium demokracie a kultury, 2019), 5-17.

²¹⁶ “Poslanecká sněmovna PČR”, Fórum 50%, <https://padesatprocent.cz/cz/statistiky/zastoupeni-zen-a-muzu-v-politice/poslanecka-snemovna> (accessed February 2, 2023).

²¹⁷ “Co chceme?”, *Zakroužkuj ženu*.

²¹⁸ “Rückblick auf vergangene Wahlen der Jahre 2013 bis 2023”, Bundesregierung, https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/leben_in_oesterreich/wahlen/4.html (accessed February 2, 2023).

²¹⁹ Harald Stöger, “Regional election in Upper Austria, 26 September 2021”, *Groupe d'études géopolitiques 2* (2021), <https://geopolitique.eu/en/articles/regional-election-in-upper-austria-26-september-2021/> (accessed January 12, 2023).

²²⁰ “Austria swears in first female-majority Cabinet”, Deutsche Welle, 1.7.2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/austria-swears-in-first-female-majority-cabinet/a-51915301> (accessed April 24, 2023).

climbing the political ladder”, Lore Hayek et al. note that female politicians are less likely to become chancellors, presidents or party leaders than men. According to their findings, the problem is the virtual absence of women from the Austrian media, which leads to women politicians being less recognized by voters and receiving less support than men.²²¹ In Czechia the number of women in government continued to be at the same numbers since 2019 to 2021 with a significant reduction of female ministers after the 2021 elections and introduction of the new government of the prime minister Petr Fiala.²²²

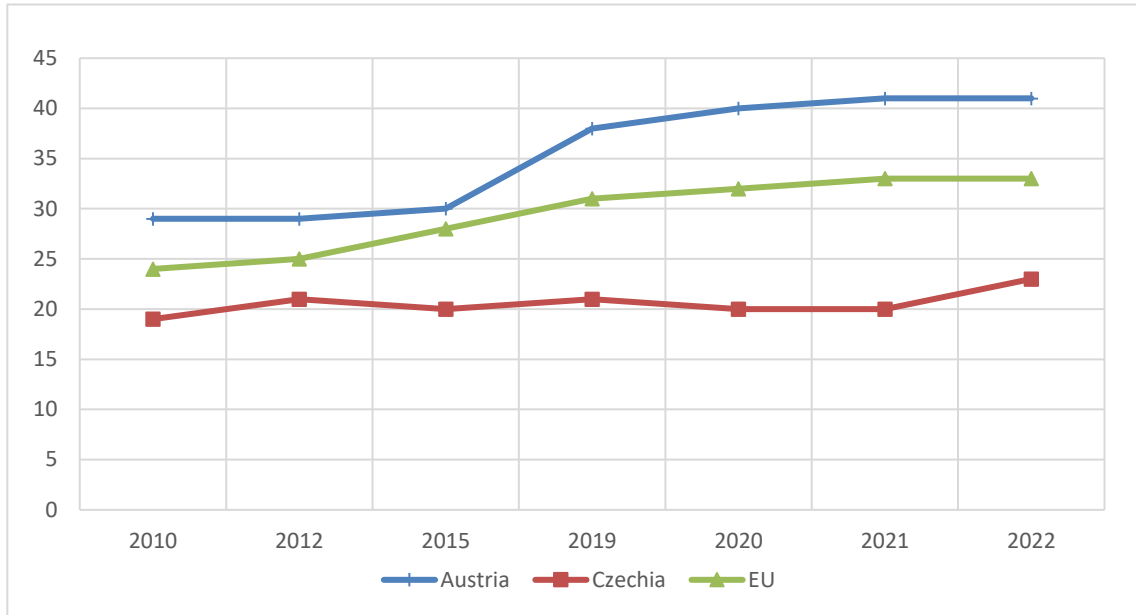
Graph 12 presents the number of women in business decision-making. The share of female members of boards in the largest quoted companies, supervisory boards or boards of directors is on the rise in Austria since 2010. On the contrary, the numbers in Czechia are significantly below the EU average with a slight increase in 2022. Nonetheless, if the

²²¹ Lore Hayek et al., “Women politicians in Austria: Still not breaking the media ceiling”, *Communications* (December 2022), <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/commun-2021-0128/html?lang=en> (accessed April 18, 2023).

²²² “Členové vlády”, Vláda ČR, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/vlada/>, (accessed April 24, 2023).

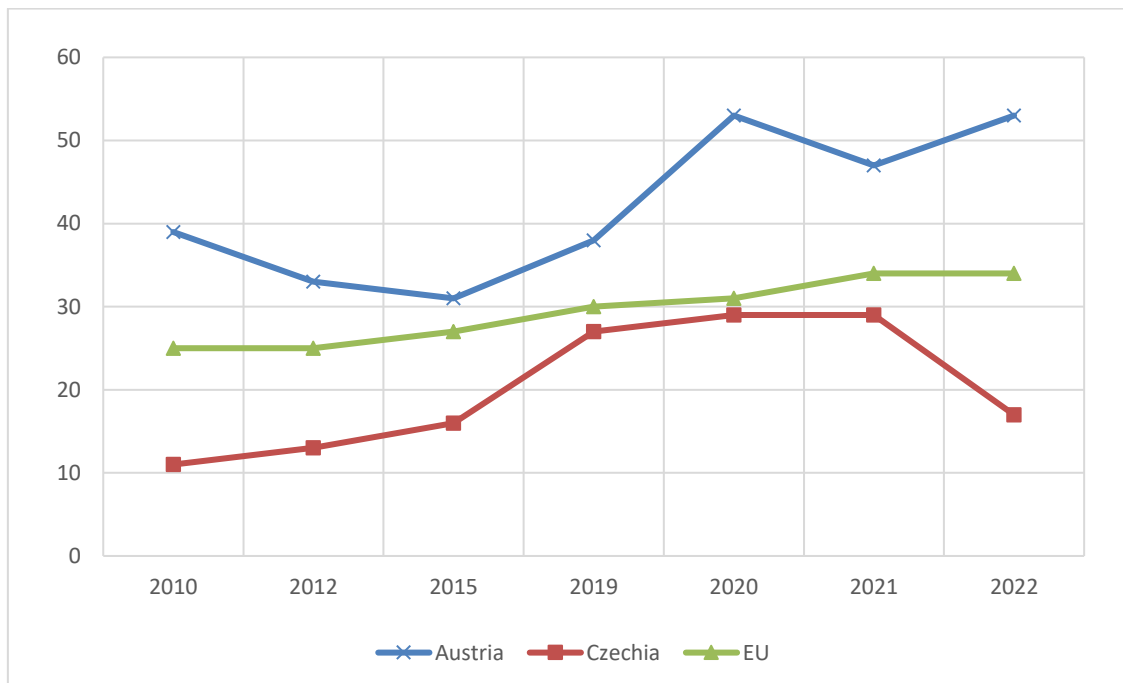
pandemic had any effect on the number of women in private sector decision-making, it can be observed only in Austria with 3% year-to-year increase from 2019 to 2020.

Graph 10: Share of female members of parliament (%)



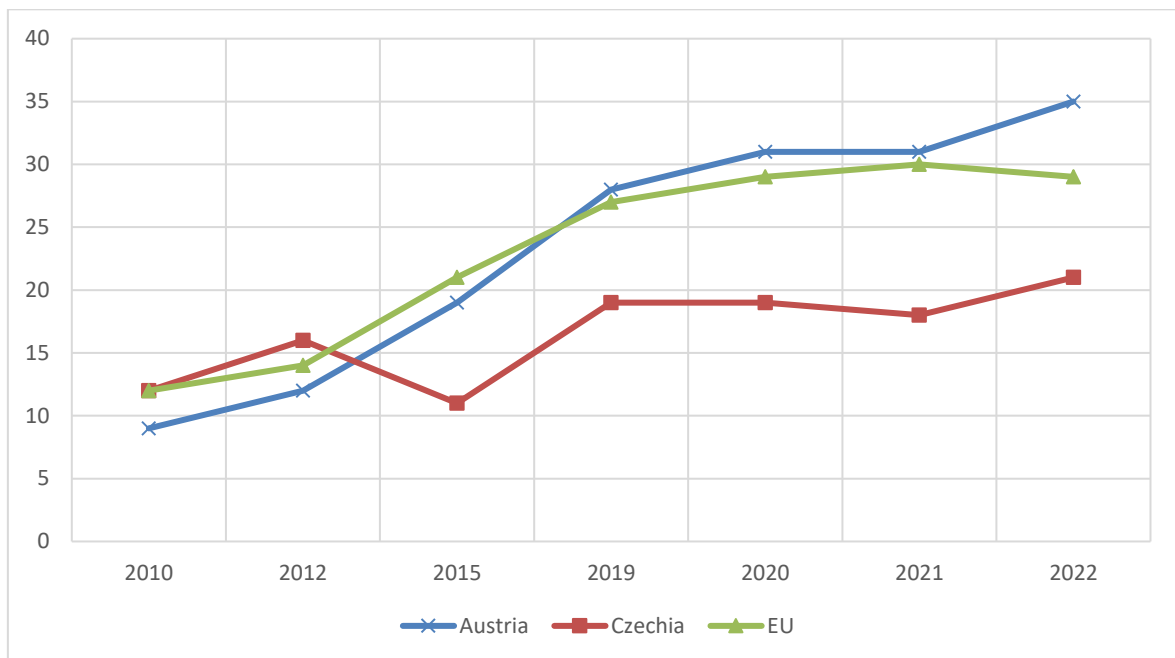
source: Gender Equality Index of EIGE; visualization: author

Graph 11: Share of female ministers (%)



source: Gender Equality Index of EIGE; visualization: author

Graph 12: Share of female members of boards in largest quoted companies, supervisory boards or boards of directors (%)



source: Gender Equality Index of EIGE; visualization: author

4.4.2 Discussion

The third goal of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 aims to achieve gender balance in decision-making. In terms of female representation in policymaking related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the difference between Austria and the Czech Republic is unambiguous. While Czechia as a neoliberal gender regime created the pandemic response in the political system where only one-fifth of the members of parliament are women, in Austria, it was above 40% of women in the parliament. The number of Austrian female ministers rose to 53% in 2020, when the pandemic started. This increase could be explained by the "glass cliff" effect described by Ryan and Haslam, who refer to the phenomenon when women are being more likely to be appointed to leadership positions in times of crisis or turmoil.²²³ Despite the fact that Austria had a high number of women in decision-making positions during the pandemic, experts from the Austrian women's organization interviews

²²³ Ryan and Haslam, "The Glass Cliff".

still referred to the pandemic as failed male-dominated mismanagement with women's needs being ignored or overlooked.

Women were on the frontline as health workers and carers during the COVID-19 pandemic, making up a majority of healthcare workers in both Austria and the Czech Republic. In this context, it is crucial that women's voices are heard in decision-making related to the pandemic response, as they have unique insights into the challenges posed by this health crisis. The underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions in the Czech Republic is therefore particularly concerning, as it means that women's perspectives and experiences may not be adequately taken into account in the pandemic response. In contrast, the higher number of women in decision-making positions in Austria during the pandemic may have contributed to a more gender-inclusive response to the crisis, which is crucial for ensuring that policies and practices are responsive to the needs of all members of society, including women. However, more research needs to be done in order to evaluate if the fact that more women were included in decision-making in Austria lead to a more intersectional response than in the case of the Czech Republic. The need to fulfil the goal of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 for female representation was highlighted by the crisis. Finally, the number of women in decision-making did not decrease on average in the political, social and business spheres in either Czechia or Austria since the beginning of the pandemic.

Conclusion

This thesis examines the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in Austria and Czechia. The research aimed to examine the extent to which the Strategy's goals of (1) freedom from violence and stereotypes, (2) thriving in a gender-equal economy, and (3) equal leadership throughout society have been impacted amidst the pandemic. Drawing on Sylvia Walby's theory of gender regimes, Austria and Czechia are identified as social democratic and neoliberal regimes, respectively. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining thematic analysis and comparative case study, and leveraging a blend of qualitative data gathered through ethnographic methods and quantitative data from open statistics. The findings of the research are based on the analysis of eleven semi-structured expert interviews with women's organizations and quantitative data. The thesis's main findings reveal a nuanced picture of the COVID-19 crisis's impact

on the Gender Equality Strategy, shedding light on the intricate interplay between the pandemic and gender equality in different gender regimes.

The available data suggest that Czechia operates as a neoliberal gender regime, where the state's role in supporting women at risk of gender-based violence is limited. The increase in demand for support from smaller women's NGOs highlights the lack of government support in addressing gender-based violence. Furthermore, the fragmented shelter system and shortage of beds for those affected by gender-based violence indicate a lack of investment in the welfare system. The inadequacy of legislation to address cyber violence against women also reflects the neoliberal approach to gender issues in Czechia. Overall, the pandemic has exposed the limitations of the Czech welfare state in protecting women from gender-based violence, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to women's safety.

In Austria, the robust support during the pandemic provided to victims of gender-based violence is indicative of the country's social democratic gender regime. This is evident in the centralized system of shelters and the state-wide 24/7 women's helpline, which are both state-run initiatives. Additionally, the effective cooperation between the police and women's organizations during the pandemic further highlights Austria's commitment to addressing gender-based violence. However, while Austria's support system is more organized than Czechia's, the drop in the number of accommodated women and children in shelters could be seen as a potential shortcoming. It is also important to note that the specific situation of being afraid of infection may have played a role in this decrease, but further research is necessary to determine the cause. Overall, while there are areas for improvement, Austria's social democratic gender regime is apparent in its strong and centralized support for victims of gender-based violence.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, studies have shown that men were more able to adapt to the changing work environment due to male employment in occupations that allow teleworking more likely and female underrepresentation among ICT specialists and graduates. In contrast, Czech women faced considerably higher losses in employment than their male colleagues, probably due to the closure of schools and childcare facilities, which affected their productivity and ability to focus on paid work, nevertheless, this trend needs more research to be done. However, studies have shown that women who had home offices during the crisis valued the benefits of time flexibility and increased contact with family. The notable difference between Czechia and Austria was that Czechia saw a relatively sharp

decrease in the gender pay gap with the start of the pandemic, and the gap continues to reduce even in 2021.

Compared to Czechia, Austria has a higher prevalence of teleworking after the pandemic, with Vienna being one of the EU regions with the highest number of people working from home. However, this thesis has indicated that similar to Czechia, men were more able to adapt to the changing work to teleworking. Closure of schools and childcare facilities during the pandemic also affected women's productivity and ability to balance work and personal life, with women in Austria reporting more significant challenges than their Czech counterparts. This can be caused by the fact that in Austria, which is a social democratic gender regime, women are used to the state support of childcare and the change to home-schooling was harder for them than for Czech women. Nevertheless, the pandemic has also exposed women's disproportionate responsibility for caregiving, which has led to significant challenges for women's paid work and work-life balance. Additionally, the gender pay gap decreased during the pandemic in Austria, although the reason behind the decrease has not been researched in the literature, and the loss of employment is comparable for women and men, with male workers experiencing a slightly higher decrease.

In the Czech Republic, only one-fifth of the members of parliament are women, resulting in a neoliberal gender regime. This underrepresentation of women in policymaking related to the pandemic may mean that women's perspectives and experiences are not being adequately considered. In contrast, Austria, a social democratic gender regime, has over 40% of members of parliament being women and a number of women in government became the majority during the pandemic. The higher number of women in decision-making positions in Austria during the pandemic may have contributed to a more gender-inclusive response to the crisis. Experts have pointed out that the pandemic highlighted the consequences of male-dominated mismanagement and the need for more inclusive decision-making. Further research is necessary to determine if the inclusion of more women in decision-making in Austria led to a more intersectional response compared to the Czech Republic.

The findings of this research suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on meeting the objectives of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in the Czech Republic and Austria. The analysis of gender regime theory highlights the critical role of the state in shaping gender equality outcomes. While Austria's social democratic gender regime has provided more comprehensive and centralized support for women during the pandemic, Czechia's neoliberal gender regime has exposed the limitations

of the welfare state in protecting women from gender-based violence and in terms of decision-making representation. Nevertheless, both countries still face challenges in promoting gender equality and addressing the gendered segregation of employment and work-life balance. Therefore, further research on gender equality outcomes in the post-pandemic era is needed.

Resumé

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá dopad pandemie COVID-19 na Strategii genderové rovnosti 2020-2025 Evropské unie v Rakousku a v České republice. Výzkum měl za cíl zjistit, do jaké míry byly cíle strategie, kterými jsou (1) svoboda od násilí a stereotypů, (2) prosperita v genderově vyrovnané ekonomice a (3) rovné vedení ve společnosti, ovlivněny během pandemie. Výzkum zahrnoval přístup smíšené metody, který kombinoval tematickou analýzu a komparativní studii případů a využil jak kvalitativní, tak kvantitativní data. Výsledky ukazují, že pandemie COVID-19 má v obou zemích komplexní vliv na genderovou rovnost, který odráží různé genderové režimy. V Rakousku je robustní podpora obětem genderově podmíněného násilí, což odpovídá sociálně demokratickému genderovému režimu. Naopak v České republice, která je neoliberalistickým genderovým režimem, je omezená podpora ze strany státu pro ženy, které jsou v ohrožení genderově podmíněného násilí. V průběhu pandemie COVID-19 však v České republice došlo ke snížení tzv. *gender pay gap*. Rakousko i Česká republika zažily v průběhu pandemie nárůst počtu lidí pracujících z domova, což mělo specifické dopady na ženy například v podobě navýšení neplacené práce a péče o děti. Rozšíření home-officů také zdůraznil již existující digitální nerovnost mezi muži a ženami v obou zemích.

Pandemie COVID-19 odhalila limity českého sociálního státu v ochraně žen před genderově podmíněným násilím a ukázala i nedostatky systému v kontextu neratifikace Istanbulské úmluvy. Na druhé straně v Rakousku sociálně demokratický genderový režim poskytl ženám výraznější a centralizovanější podporu. V otázce rovného zastoupení žen a mužů v rozhodovacích procesech bylo obzvláště znatelné, že ČR v oblasti reprezentace žen značně zaostává. Ženy se tak o to méně mohly účastnit rozhodování týkajících se pandemických opatření a státní podpory. Rakousku naopak během pandemie získalo ve vlada nadpoloviční většinu ministryní. Práce popisuje, že stát hrál klíčovou roli při utváření výsledků genderové rovnosti, přičemž rakouský sociálně demokratický genderový režim se

ukázal jako efektivnější než český neoliberální režim. Obě země však stále čelí významným problémům při prosazování rovnosti žen a mužů, jako je řešení segregace v zaměstnání a sladování pracovního a soukromého života. K pochopení dopadu postpandemické éry na rovnost pohlaví je nezbytný další výzkum.

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List of Appendices

Annex 1: Semi-structured interview questionnaire

1. How has the pandemic affected your work, and have any COVID-related trends persisted to this day? Additionally, have there been any positive outcomes stemming from the pandemic, such as increased media or political attention?
2. In your opinion, what has been the impact of the pandemic on women, and have you observed any increases in customer numbers for your organization?
3. During the pandemic, what are the most significant issues you have observed with Austrian/Czech legislation, particularly regarding gender inequalities? Where have the measures to address these shortcomings fallen short?
4. Do you believe that Austria is providing sufficient support for civil society and the public service in preventing and combating gender-based violence and gender stereotypes, including with the help of EU funds, as outlined in the EU Gender Equality Strategy? Furthermore, do you anticipate any changes to this support as a result of the pandemic?
5. Have you noticed any increase in gender-based violence occurring in digital spaces during the pandemic?
6. To what extent has Austria's ratification/Czech's non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention impacted your work, and if so, how?
7. How do you collaborate with other organizations at the Austrian or EU level, and do you believe that a uniform approach across Europe is necessary for your work?

ZÁVĚREČNÉ TEZE MAGISTERSKÉ PRÁCE NMTS
Závěrečné teze student odevzdává ke konci Diplomního semináře III jako součást magisterské práce a tyto teze jsou spolu s odevzdáním magisterské práce do SIS předpokladem udělení zápočtu za tento seminář.
Jméno: Natálie Jančíková
E-mail: 54054275@fsv.cuni.cz
Specializace (uved'te zkratkou)*: ES
Semestr a školní rok zahájení práce: LS 2020/21
Semestr a školní rok ukončení práce: LS 2022/23
Vedoucí diplomového semináře: prof. JUDr. PhDr. Ivo Šlosarčík, Ph.D., LL.M.
Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jan Váška, Ph.D.
Název práce: The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on meeting the objectives of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in the Czech Republic and Austria
Charakteristika tématu práce (max 10 řádek): This diploma thesis presents a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on European societies. With a particular focus on the Czech Republic and Austria, this thesis examines how the pandemic has influenced gender equality and shifted existing problems of different realities between men and women. Through an assessment of the current data and an analysis of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, this thesis aims to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on fulfilling the policy objectives and actions towards a gender-equal European Union by 2025. The thesis focuses on three main goals of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: gender-based violence, female participation in the labour market and women's representation. The thesis uses the theory of gender regime developed by Sylvia Walby. Overall, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the gendered impact of the pandemic and provides insights into the challenges of gender inequality in the post-COVID-19 era.
Vývoj tématu od zadání projektu do odevzdání práce (max. 10 řádek): The original aim of the diploma thesis was to analyze the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Czech Republic and Austria, focusing on four main areas of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. The thesis intended to compare the national strategies, measures, and responses of the two countries concerning gender-based violence, women's representation, gender pay gap, and work-life balance. However, the thesis's final outcome shifted its focus to examining the COVID-19 crisis's impact on three main goals of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: (1) freedom from violence and stereotypes, (2) thriving in a gender-equal economy, and (3) equal leadership throughout society. The thesis adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining thematic analysis and comparative case study, to draw on Sylvia Walby's theory of gender regimes, identifying Austria and Czechia as social democratic and neoliberal regimes, respectively. For the purpose of this thesis was interviewed twelve Czech and Austrian experts from women's organizations. Despite the changes in the focus of the thesis, it remained anchored on examining gender equality, albeit with a different approach.
Struktura práce (hlavní kapitoly obsahu):

<p>Introduction</p> <p>(1) Debating gender equality in the times of crisis (2) Theoretical framework and methodology (3) EU and gender equality policy (4) Comparative case study of the Czech Republic and Austria</p> <p>Conclusion</p>
<p>Hlavní výsledky práce (max. 10 řádek):</p> <p>The thesis explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in Austria and Czechia. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining thematic analysis and comparative case study, to examine the extent to which the Strategy's goals have been met amidst the pandemic. The findings reveal a nuanced picture of the pandemic's impact on gender equality in different gender regimes. Austria, which has a social democratic gender regime, provided robust support during the pandemic to victims of gender-based violence. In contrast, Czechia, which has a neoliberal gender regime, has limited state support for women at risk of gender-based violence. The pandemic also highlighted women's disproportionate responsibility for caregiving, which has led to significant challenges for women's paid work and work-life balance. The thesis concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on meeting the objectives of the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in the Czech Republic and Austria.</p>
<p>Prameny a literatura (výběr nejpodstatnějších):</p> <p>Walby, Sylvia, <i>Globalization and inequalities: complexity and contested modernities</i> (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009).</p> <p>Walby, Sylvia, "The European Union and Gender Equality: Emergent Varieties of Gender Regime ", <i>Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society</i> 11, n. 1 (2004).</p> <p>Nyklová, Blanka a Dana Moree, <i>Násilí na ženách v souvislosti s COVID-19</i> (Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2021).</p> <p>Biaggioni, Elena et al., <i>Wave Country Report 2021</i> (Vienna: WAVE, 2021).</p> <p>Fellegi, Zuzana, „Proč ratifikovat Istanbulskou úmluvu aneb mezinárodní lidskoprávní smlouvy jako český národní zájem“, <i>Analýzy ÚMV: České zájmy v roce 2019</i> (2019).</p> <p><i>Violence against women: an EU-wide survey</i> (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015).</p> <p>Blaskó, Zsuzsa, Eleni Papadimitriou and Anna Rita Manca, <i>How will the COVID-19 crisis affect existing gender divides in Europe?</i> (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020).</p> <p>Derndorfer, Judith et al., "Home, sweet home? The impact of working from home on the division of unpaid work during the COVID-19 lockdown", <i>PLoS ONE</i> 16, n. 11 (November 2021).</p> <p><i>Gender Equality Index 2022: The COVID-19 pandemic and care</i> (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022).</p> <p>Simba, Hannah and Silindile Ngcobo, "Are Pandemics Gender Neutral? Women's Health and COVID-19", <i>Front. Glob. Womens Health</i> 1.</p>

Etika výzkumu:**		
Jazyk práce: angličtina		
Podpis studenta a datum 3.5.2023		
Schváleno	Datum	Podpis
Vedoucí práce		
Vedoucí diplomového semináře		
Vedoucí specializace		
Garant programu		

* BAS – Balkánská a středoevropská studia; ES – Evropská studia; NRS – Německá a rakouská studia; RES – Ruská a eurasijská studia; SAS – Severoamerická studia; ZES – Západoevropská studia.

** Pokud je to relevantní, tj. vyžaduje to charakter výzkumu (nebo jeho zadavatel), data, s nimiž pracujete, nebo osobní bezpečnost vaše či dalších účastníků výzkumu, vysvětlíte, jak zajistíte dodržení, resp. splnění těchto etických aspektů výzkumu: 1) informovaný souhlas s účastí na výzkumu, 2) dobrovolná účast na výzkumu, 3) důvěrnost a anonymita zdrojů, 4) bezpečný výzkum (nikomu nevznikne újma).