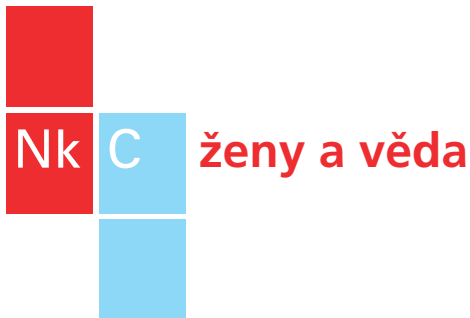


# newsLetter



Dear readers,

After nine years of existence the Czech National Contact Centre for Women in Science (NKC) is launching an English newsletter. By creating this newsletter we wish to provide you with information about developments in the field of gender and science in the Czech Republic, share some of the experience we have battling gender stereotypes and discrimination in science, and build ground for possible future cooperation.

NKC is part of the Gender & Sociology department of the Institute of Sociology of Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. In 2009 we joined the Czech Women's Lobby, a network of non-profit organizations promoting women's rights in the Czech Republic, which is a member of the European Women's Lobby. We also work as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Our activities span from support and awareness-raising through research to lobbying. We speak to various audiences from policy makers and other stakeholders, female and male researchers, early stage researchers to general public and journalists.

In doing so, we hope to contribute to building an internationally shared space for advocating gender equality in Europe.

Everything you need to know about our projects, events and activities, achievements and challenges will be posted in our newsletter twice a year. Enjoy!

Sincerely,  
NKC

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

The National Contact Centre for Women and Science is a passionate pro-feminist project, funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. Of course the word feminism derives controversy when echoed throughout the Czech Republic (and beyond), but we think it is important to keep feminism and its struggles in the picture, in memory of the difficulties women and supporters of gender equality had to overcome when paving the way for women into higher education and the research profession.

Since the Centre's start in 2001, its main focus has been advancing gender equality in the field of science which – unlike some other support projects for women in science – we do not limit to science, technology, engineering and medicine, but understand in the whole range, including humanities and social sciences. NKC does not subscribe to the notion, widespread in most corners of Czech and European societies, that science stands outside social relations and is governed by its own laws. We don't think that science can be easily divorced from the rest of society. It has

a huge impact on people's everyday lives and values as it is influenced by the values extant in the social fabric. When we look at how women are represented according to the field of research, academic rank or position, we see that in science, as in other walks of life, segregation and exclusion do occur. Historically as well as today, we can see a lot of gender bias written into the types of questions researchers ask or the ways they interpret their findings. As Sandra Harding famously wrote: "... whoever gets to define what counts as a scientific problem also gets a powerful role in shaping the picture of the world that results from scientific research." (Harding 1991: 40)

With that in mind, the issues we concentrate on cover a diverse range, including: the functioning of research institutions, science policies and production of knowledge and excellence; promoting measures for women in science and support of young researchers of both sexes; as well as concrete work for the scientific community and increasing awareness of the issue.

# TARGET AUDIENCES

## SCIENTISTS

NKC strives to work at various levels to achieve maximum impact. We care deeply about **raising awareness** and **empowerment** and several of our projects and publications over the years – **Woman of the Month**, the **Talents** and **INFOMAT** – have been aimed at precisely that. Dispelling the suspicions of feminism and issues of women in science, among women scientists themselves, helps to fuel their recognition that some problems they are facing are not personal but structurally embedded in the scientific profession. This awareness plays a crucial role in advocating the issue at the decision-maker and policy levels.

In 2009 the NKC, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports initialled the **Milada Paulova Award** for lifelong achievement in science for outstanding women researchers. The prize is named after the first woman to lecture at a university in the Czech Republic and the first full professor. The aim of the Award is to publicly appreciate and financially support the scientific work of notable Czech female researchers, who are often disregarded in the realm of scientific awards. Visibility of women's work in science is one of the many means to promote gender equality in Czech science as well as a standard that all societies should follow. The award will be given every year in a different field of science – in 2009 it was awarded to Prof. Milena Rychnovska in sustainable development and ecology. In 2010 the award will be given in economics.

## GENERAL PUBLIC

We also run activities for the general public and converse with the media. For five years now NKC has been part of the annual **Researchers' Night** in September and we also take part in the **Science and Technology Week of the Czech Academy of Sciences**. We also strive to promote our activities in the media and address some of the issues in specialized media programmes.

## POLICY MAKERS

We also talk to policy makers. During a meeting with the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, held in July 2010, they stated in the formal resolution their commitment to address the issue of sexual harassment in education. Their response came from the positive reaction to our presentation, on the results of the analysis on sexual harassment in Czech university environments, conducted through our project **Barriers** (for more see below). We also cooperate intensely with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the development and implementation of their ministerial Priorities and Procedures for the Implementation of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women even as such measures do not always successfully pass up the entire hierarchy of the Ministry.

## INSTITUTIONS

Research institutions, universities and various research councils in the country are another target for our efforts, as awareness of gender equality issues is lacking. Even today, this reflects on the persistence of discriminatory rules, which we work on eliminating. On this front, we initiated a change in rules of the Grant Agency of Czech Republic. First, in 2005 the NKC lobbied for the elimination of age limits for postdoctoral grants (which at that time were 35 years of age) and not including the period of parental and maternity leave in the age limit. In 2010, in response to a petition lodged by an early stage female researcher, the NKC called on the Grant Agency to modify its rules for postdoctoral grants. Postdoctoral grants could be awarded only once and there were no provisions concerning pregnancy and parenthood; we believed, and this was later confirmed, that such practice constitutes indirect discrimination. Thanks to this motion and examples from other EU countries it is now possible for pregnant researchers and parents to request an interruption or postponement of a research grant. We are happy to say that the first extension of grant implementation was given to the original petitioning post-doctoral fellow. We will now turn to other research grant awarding bodies to ensure that this change reaches all corners of the research funding system in the country.

# SOME OF NKC'S PROJECTS

THE NATIONAL CONTACT CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND SCIENCE HAS DEVELOPED A STRONG SENSE OF SELF DURING THE COURSE OF ITS NUMEROUS PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. NKC HAS LAID OUT THE FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE WITHIN THEIR FAMILIAR HOME BOUNDARIES AS WELL AS REACHING OUT AND COLLABORATING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. HERE WE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT TWO RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS THAT CONTINUE TO INFORM OUR RESEARCH AND LOBBYING EFFORTS ON OUR HOME TURF.

## INTERNATIONAL

From 2006-2008 NKC coordinated the Framework Programme 6 international research project Knowledge, Institutions and Gender: an East-West Comparative Study (**KNOWING**, <http://knowing.soc.cas.cz>) which was funded by the European Commission. The project involved five European countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. One of the outputs of this project, was the publication *Knowing and Living in academic research, convergence and heterogeneity in research cultures in the European context*, from 2009 (the publication is available for download on the project website). This book explores the multiple articulations of knowledge, institutions and researchers in changing academic research environments. How researchers encounter, transform and oppose these changes and how they create epistemic living spaces sufficiently attractive and spacious is the focus of analysis. Developing and using the concept of epistemic living spaces makes readers alert to the social, material and symbolic dimensions of living in research. Selecting three perspectives which addressed the issue of implicit and explicit orders at work in research, of the multiple ways in which researchers work together while always having to be apart simultaneously and of the multilayered time logics which governed researchers' lives makes it possible to tackle many of the burning issues facing researchers today. The analysis takes readers through different national contexts, research fields, places, institutional structures, social interactions, time regimes, and value systems. It makes us aware of the omnipresent, in part contradictory imaginaries about research and the role it should play in contemporary (knowledge) societies.

The Czech team also published a monograph edited by Tereza Stöckelová titled *Akademické poznávání, vykazování a podnikání: Etnografie měnící se české vědy [Making, administering and enterprising knowledge in the academy: An ethnography of Czech science in flux]* exploring the shifts in the organization of Czech research landscape in terms of funding, research assessment and gender. This was followed by a discussion seminar "Science and Science Policies in Action" organized under the auspices of Senator Alena Gajdůšková in the Senate of the Czech Parliament to discuss the implications of the newly implemented research assessment in the country. If you are interested you can look at our website to get the whole scoop.

## NATIONAL

The research project **Barriers** (2008-2009) was focused on the barriers encountered by students and early-stage women and men researchers, aiming at making research positions more attractive for women and promoting equal opportunities in research and development. The project made use of the collected data and analyses of stereotypes observed in scientific disciplines and existing barriers to develop new processes supportive of integrating women in R&D. The project had 3 main parts: 1) developing and establishing the frame for a **mentoring program** for high school students interested in university studies of technical and natural sciences and engineering (the fields where women are strongly underrepresented in the Czech Republic), 2) analysis of experiences and perceptions of **sexual harassment at the university level** and 3) analysis of barriers encountered by early-stage researchers entering the phase of postgraduate studies, with a special focus on **mobility**.

The project is finished and we can proudly discuss its results. The mentoring program, which was piloted in the Barriers project, developed into a full fledged program that extends beyond the frontiers of Prague. We have increased the number of mentors and mentees, improved the process as a whole, and managed to build contacts with other relevant institutions. Our vision is to stimulate and help universities to build their own mentoring programs for girls there, where it is needed most.

Research into sexual harassment at universities was one of the first Czech studies of this phenomenon in the country. Results show that sexual harassment of students from teachers is a common problem that a considerable proportion of students have to face during their studies. Our research led into several papers and a publication summarizing our findings as well as recommendations for teachers and university management for dealing with this problem in a university environment. After a successful presentation at the meeting of the Czech Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (mentioned above) our next step is to address the Ethical Commission of the Council of Higher Education Institutions of the Czech Republic in September 2010. The part of the project concerned with mobility issues focused on the gendered and gendering nature of academic movement. The research was based on an analysis of relevant policy documents and interviews with scientists who have spent part of their academic path abroad and returned back to the Czech academic environment or with Czech researchers who still work abroad. Mobility at the early stage of the research career has become a normal part of an academic career path especially in the highly competitive field of biosciences. This is accompanied with new challenges and re/configurations related to biographies of academics and their partners and families. It was primarily this intersection of professional and private life that constituted the main field of interest in this research.



# PUBLICATIONS

OVER THE PAST EIGHT YEARS NKC DEDICATED THEIR TIME TO RESEARCH, LOBBYING ACTIVITIES, AND PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN SCIENCE, AND SOME OF OUR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO PUBLICATIONS. THESE NORMALLY STEM FROM THE FOUNDATION OF VARIOUS PROJECTS THE MEMBERS WORK ON, AND IN TURN, DEVELOP INTO CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND GENDER EQUALITY IN SCIENCE. HERE WE DECIDED TO PRESENT THOSE AIMED AT INCREASING VISIBILITY AND RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH A SERIES OF PUBLICATIONS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH RESEARCHERS – OUR FIRST PUBLICATIONS WERE SPECIFICALLY WITH WOMEN BUT, AS OF THIS YEAR, WE INCLUDED THEIR PARTNERS, WHO ALSO WORK IN THE REALM OF SCIENCE. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE FAMILIAR WITH OUR PUBLICATIONS, BE SURE TO STAY TUNED, AND FOR THOSE WHO HAVE YET TO READ THEM WE HOPE YOU WILL FIND THEM AS INTERESTING AND THOUGHT PROVOKING AS THE PEOPLE WE INTERVIEWED.

## A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN: 10 VIEWS



“OK, so give me the names of women who made major discoveries in the past, women who invented something!?”

Have you ever heard something like this? This is a frequent reaction we meet when talking about women and their role in science.

Women have the same talents as men –

despite the fact that their names were, at first, overlooked by the scientific community and the public eye – and today outstanding women scientists' names continue to be veiled behind the Czech generic masculine 'researcher', yet these women always were and still are growing in numbers.

“I wanted to liberate myself from the provincial environment that constrained me...”

This obscuration led us, in 2002, to begin the project **Woman of the Month**. We presented, on our website every month, one prominent Czech female researcher who achieved recognition nationally and internationally. But the goal wasn't only to give visibility to their names, we wanted to do more – to show their life stories and strategies that brought them to the top and in the process inspire and support students and young researchers in partaking in science; to give them role models. Throughout the project it was interesting to see the ways in which female researchers reflected on the topic of their own success and the functioning of science. With this project we hoped to provide gripping narrations about following one's own dream and overcoming obstacles that were often related more to the hindrances posed by the socialist regime and less to gender issues. This was one of the reasons why we decided, in 2004, to collect the interviews and turn them into a publication. We titled it with a direct reference to Virginia Woolf's book **A Room of One's Own: 10 Views**.

## THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT: THE LAUNCH OF A RESEARCH CAREER



After focusing on scientists who achieved scientific recognition we wanted to research the experiences and attitudes of another generation of women scientists – researchers at the beginning of their careers. We called them, and the whole project, **Female Talents**. We referenced talents, even though we know it is not enough just to have talent;

a chance to nurture and develop it is equally important. We engaged with early stage women researchers over the course of two years and asked them how they came into science, what worries them about science, how they feel as women-researchers and whether they have encountered any inequalities. It was interesting to hear their stories, which were as varied as the fields they work in, yet at the same time similar, when speaking about the satisfaction and fulfilment which scientific work brings them. One of the major topics was motherhood, an obstacle to their work but also an inspiration – a key moment which could end their scientific paths or open up new dimensions. The output of the project developed into a publication in 2007. Titled **The Queen's Gambit: The Launch of a Research Career**, it is a vivid yet natural narration depicting the trials and tribulations of what life is like for early-stage women in science.

“There can be a long string of various influences and ideas that have caught your eye, and then you say to yourself I can do it better!”

## ACADEMIC COUPLES

In 2009-2010 we follow up with a project titled **Academic Couples**, which consists of interviews with Czech academic couples working in the fields of science, technology, and academics. The goal is to show the issue of dual career partnership in the specific field of science and to point out the distinctive yet problematic issues associated with building two demanding careers. The interviews include people from different academic fields, various ages and in diverse stages of the life cycle or carrier path – some began their career during the communist era, while some after the 1989 revolution. Others spent part of their life abroad, while some wish to include that in their future plans. The numbers of perspectives are rich with colour! The interviews will be published in book at the end of this year, so stay tuned.

## EIGHT

The newsletter does not allow enough space for us to discuss all of our projects and publications, so if you want to get to know more about our past you can look at our anniversary publication called **Eight**. It was published to commemorate the eight years since NKC began, in 2001. This publication includes NKC's projects, achievements and challenges. In five chapters the book presents how we think and go about our work. In the introductory chapter, we set the issue of women in science in a wider framework of the contemporary changes in research and development and higher education. We come to terms with the criticism that feminism does not belong in academic work, but show that feminist approaches have their place in academia. We present concrete projects aimed at the academic community, development of theoretical research in (feminist) science studies, the general public, and science policies at home and abroad.

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

In the fall issue of the newsletter we will provide more information about our mentoring program and how it works in its first official year. We will keep you updated on the development of the sexual harassment agenda at Czech universities – how the Government Council keeps its promises and how the universities react. Also, we will be presenting information about the 2010 Milada Paulova Award in economics and the 2010 Researchers' Night. And if there are any new developments in terms of policy or outcomes of our lobbying we will be sure to bring them as well.

## THE NKC CREW

### Marcela Linková: project co-ordinator



Marcela joined the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in 2000, and has coordinated NKC since its launch in 2001. She is currently a PhD candidate in sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. Her focal point of research interest involves transformations of academic work and analysis of science policies from a gender

perspective. She is most interested in genderings of research careers, excellence and research assessment. Marcela can't imagine her life without dancing, gets major inspiration from David Bowie, Radiohead and PJ Harvey, and is addicted to movies. Thanks to her husband, quite late in her life, she is learning to sing.

### Alice Červinková: research assistant



Alice has worked on research and support projects at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences in the Czech Republic as of 2002. After being invited to join the NKC, on behalf of her concentration in gender studies, she has taken a special interest in science and technology studies. She concentrates on academic paths, gender and academic mobility. Currently she does field work in the field of molecular biology. Her research primarily involves the

establishment of an academic path and academic mobility. She likes taking pictures and walks with her dog. She practices ashtanga vinyasa yoga.

### Hana Tenglerová: research assistant



Starting off as an intern for the centre in 2006 then joining the team in 2008, Hana is especially interested in gender policies and the tools needed to promote gender equality. She has graduated in Public and Social Policy at the Faculty of Social Sciences and in Gender Studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Public, through Charles University. Her participation at the Centre includes communication with research and development institutions, working on proposing measures to

improve gender equality, coordination of the Milada Paulova Award and monitoring of gender equality in Czech science. She enjoys the sun, beer, biking around Prague, and spending quality time at her cottage in Brdy.

### Marta Vohlidalová: research assistant



Graduated in sociology from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague where she is currently doing her PhD in sociology. She joined the Gender & Sociology department in 2005 and since 2008 she has been working on the NKC project. In her work she focuses on the sociology of family and private life, gender inequalities on the labour market, sexual harassment in education and family policy. Within the

NKC project she is interested in dual carrier academic couples and the incompatibility between Czech social and family policy and the needs of the majority of young women scientists. She cannot imagine her life without travelling, salsa dancing and jazz music.

### Kateřina Cidlinská: research assistant



She is currently finishing her Masters in Gender Studies at the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University in Prague. She is dedicated to the study of state gender policy and family policy. In January 2009 she joined the NKC where she is in charge of the mentoring program for high school female students and of the communication activities. She loves dancing, film marathons and canoeing but without sport discipline!

### Alena Ortenová: research assistant



In the 1980s graduated in the film production from Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. In the 1990s she began to be concerned with gender studies and feminism. In 2010 graduated in Gender Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University. During her study (2006-2007) worked as a trainee at the NKC; she joined the team in

May 2010 to work on communication activities and contribute to the Czech newsletter. Research-wise she deals with sociology of family and private life from a gender perspective and qualitative research from the feminist position.

### Halley Shriber: intern



Working on her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology through the College of Social and Behavioural Sciences and a Minor in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. After Studying abroad in Prague at Charles University for a semester she decided to extend her stay into the summer and was fortunate to become part of NKC. Her duties involve revising the

English version of the website, helping put together the first English newsletter for the international community, and holding interviews for a project involving foreign post-doctoral researchers; gathering information about their work-life balance in the Czech Republic. She loves too many things, but to list a few...food, learning new languages, dancing, travelling, chai tea, people watching, getting lost in a good book, and the beach!

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