

The Effects of Communist Policies, the Democratic Transition, and EU Accession on
Gender Equality in Germany and the Czech Republic

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A Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of
The Elliott School of International Affairs
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

May 16, 2010

Thesis directed by

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Abstract of Thesis

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Despite the social and economic improvements European Union accession has brought to its member states, gender equality remains a low priority. While the overall impact of the EU in Europe has been positive, women's position may have been better under other regimes. By examining the status of women in the Czech Republic and Germany during communism, the democratic transition, and after EU accession, gender equality during each time period is compared. Several variables, including access to childcare, tertiary education, employment and political representation, are used to determine how effective communism, democracy, and the EU have been at improving the status of women.

This study finds that no regime provided German or Czech women with comprehensive gender equality, but currently women do have more control over their economic and social status. The prospects for achieving gender equality in the future are good provided that the EU and its members recommit themselves to attainable goals such as wage equality and the increased political representation of women.

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1. Introduction

Accession to the European Union (EU) has contributed greatly to the improvement of many lives in Europe, especially those of minorities in former communist countries. The adoption of the *acquis communautaire* has required most countries to address long standing issues of discrimination against minorities. Most of the problems that the EU has required member states to address through the adoption of legislation and norms have involved the status of ethnic and religious minorities in their respective countries. In many candidate countries and member states the transposition of the *acquis* has led to a marked improvement for minorities.

Still, EU accession does not necessarily yield an improvement in equality and position for all minority groups in the member states. Most notably, women in new and old member states have not seen consistent improvement in their positions within society since EU accession. Though the EU promotes equality among all peoples in Europe, it does little to provide for gender equality. In spite of espousing progressive social policies, the EU has failed to develop a comprehensive agenda to expand the rights of women in its member states. In addition to the Copenhagen Criteria which include provisions to eliminate the death penalty and provide rights to national minorities, the EU has also emphasized the necessity for gender equality in the form of equal wages, political representation, and access to education anymore than previous EU legislation. Still, the responsibility to transpose and execute gender equality legislation falls largely on the member states.

The social, political, and economic roles and status of European women have transformed since the Maastricht Treaty created the EU. This change was not wholly due

to the EU, but rather the drastic transition many countries in Europe experienced since the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Under communism, women experienced full employment in the labor force and unprecedented access to social services and education. They were also well represented in the Party. However, these policies did not produce comprehensive equality for women in every area of life during the Communist period, nor would the gains in equality be maintained following the collapse of Communist regimes.

Divergence between the EU member, Germany, and the newly independent state, the Czech Republic, occurred during the early post-communist period. However, since the Czech Republic acceded to the EU, the status of women in both countries has converged again. Still, the minimal attention paid by the EU to gender equality means that this slight convergence is more likely due to general economic growth rather than the EU's direct intervention in gender policy.

Two Central European countries that have experienced this transition from Communism to EU accession are Germany and the Czech Republic. Both the Czechoslovak and East German Soviet regimes were harsh and oppressive. East Germany (the German Democratic Republic or GDR) and Czechoslovakia were ruled by Communist regimes that were closely monitored and controlled by Moscow. Beyond the political similarities, the countries also share similar economic backgrounds. Unlike other Communist states under Soviet influence, the GDR and Czechoslovakia already had developed industrial sectors and had more population concentrated in urban areas than their other communist counterparts. Additionally, following the fall of Communism in both states, transitions to democracy also involved not only the upheaval of the economy

but also of the state, in the form of the Velvet Divorce in Czechoslovakia and *Wiedervereinigung* in Germany.

During the Communist period women in both states have similar levels of legal equality due to the direct control of the Soviet Union, but there are consequences along with the benefits of gender equality. Divergence between the countries is clear in the post-communist period when the reaction to the fall of communism results in different paths for the Czech Republic and a reunified Germany. The divergence that occurs in the 1990s continues today in some areas despite the best intentions of EU legislation. Without a commitment from the EU to push for the implementation of gender equality legislation in member states, I expect that the same differences between Germany and the Czech Republic to be present among other member states, threatening the cohesion of the organization and women's place in Europe.

1.1 Methodology

This work will contribute to the discourse on gender equality by comparing the benefits and consequences of Communist, democratic-market and EU policies on women in two similar European states. Women's experiences will be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. The structure of the paper is chronological in order to communicate the differences and similarities of policies and culture, and the resulting impact on women's lives in Germany and the Czech Republic. For each period I consider the pervading culture and ideology surrounding the status of women and gender equality. Then I examine the impact of culture and ideology on gender equality and women's lives by measuring quantitative variables in the context of women's experiences.

The first variable considered when measuring gender equality in each period is access to social services. The social services category typically includes pensions, housing, and other social goods that are not necessarily gender specific. For the purposes of this study, I have isolated access to abortion and childcare. Access to these two services in particular lead women to make certain life decisions that affect their ability to work, seek education, and may disrupt their home and living situations. An examination of culture and ideology make it apparent that women did and continue to shoulder the consequences of family and child care decisions.

The second variable used to measure gender equality is education. Educational policy along with data on the distribution of women across areas of study and the number of women in tertiary education indicate women's access to education. Also, it is important to compare women's education levels and areas of study with those of men to assess the impact of policies aimed at mitigating gender inequalities. Still, culture and the genuine interests of women will affect these data and areas of study in particular are not a wholly objective measurement of gender equality. However, the concentration of women in certain sectors does change between each period and this provides insight into how the different governments and the changing culture around gender equality impact women's educational choices.

Employment policies and data is the third area I studied. Full employment was the official goal of the Communists, but there are noticeable differences between men and women in their level and sectors of employment. Similar to education, choice is also a determinant in employment, but women's access to some certain jobs, unemployment, wages, and vocational advancement is also greatly influenced by culture and government

policies. Therefore, I compare the differences between men and women in wages, unemployment and sector distribution when investigating gender equality in terms of employment in each period.

The final variable to consider is political representation. To measure political representation it is important to analyze how many women hold seats in representative government in each period, but also determine what kind of power women actually wield. Also, the role of female leaders, specifically the significance of Germany's first female chancellor, Angela Merkel, is important to address.

I utilize information collected by scholars, government statistical offices, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in my analysis. Much of the data I use for the communist and early post-communist periods come from scholars who have been closely studying the issue of gender equality in Germany and Czechoslovakia since before 1989. Marilyn Rueschemeyer and Sharon Wolchik in particular have focused their studies on Germany and Czechoslovakia, respectively, and their works are comprehensive resources for both quantitative data and qualitative analysis.

Finally, I aim to determine a way forward for the Germany, the Czech Republic, and the EU as a whole in the area of gender equality. I found that though EU accession should provide for more opportunities for women in the areas of discussed above; the organization has been ineffective at producing gender equality. After examining the experiences of Germany and the Czech Republic, the EU should develop further mechanisms to ensure the adherence to gender equality norms and legislation among member states.

2. Life under Communism: East Germany and Czechoslovakia

The writing of Marx, Lenin, and other Communist philosophers, emphasize the importance of equality. The equitable division of goods, elimination of class divisions, full employment, and the public control of property were among the goals of Communists. According to Communists, resultant of the abolition of private property and class stratification is the end of all inequalities. Equality was incorporated into every aspect of life under the socialist state and women were told they played an integral part in the future of their countries. In East Germany and Czechoslovakia it was no different. The promises of full employment, greater accesses to childcare, and relief from household burdens made many women feel they were being recognized as full citizens and economic contributors.

However, many of these aforementioned pledges for gender equality did not have the promised effect. The extreme commitment to gender equality in employment led to inevitable changes in lifestyle because women could no longer take care of their children at home. In both Czechoslovakia and the GDR, the Party implemented policies and initiatives in attempts to alleviate women's "double burden" of work at home and work at the factory, school, or otherwise. Building of new kindergartens and paid leave after the birth of a child could not outweigh the lack of cultural change in men's perception of "women's work", i.e. housework and childcare.¹

The expansion of social services to meet women's new needs was not the only policy change implemented by the Party. All over Central and Eastern Europe, women in Communist countries had the opportunity to pursue an advanced education. Women

¹ Jacqui True, *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic After Communism*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003), 38.

were not barred from university education prior to the 1950s, but their representation in higher education increased under the Communists. While still underrepresented in certain areas of study, the increased inclusion of women in university education was a positive contribution of the Communist period.

Full employment was also an expressed goal of the Communist party and women were an instrumental part of the Party's plan to increase economic productivity. Thus, women entered the workforce enmasse. World War II decimated the male population and women filled the labor void.² In Berlin alone the ratio of women to men was 146 females to 100 men, per the 1946 census.³ Still, without equal pay and the disruption of the traditional family, equal unemployment disrupted families and often increased the daily responsibilities of women.

Women were represented in the Communist party and local, regional, and national legislatures in unprecedented numbers in the GDR and Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, this must be juxtaposed against evidence women's participation was essentially symbolic. The legislatures had very little power under Communism because the Party ran so much of the state. At the same time, women were members of the Party in both countries, but they were not given the opportunity to direct policy. More importantly, the presence of women in politics did not affect women's status in either country. Female politicians either did not have the opportunity or desire to utilize their position to advance women.⁴

² Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 27.

³ Moeller, 27.

⁴ Sharon Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, (University of Michigan, Doctoral Dissertation, 1978), 208.

2.1 Social Services under Communism

As discussed above, the Communist ideology promised equality in many forms. Certain changes were needed in order to enact that policy, including support for families when women joined the workforce. Access to social services was critical in recruiting women to work in factories, attend university, participate in party organizations, and take part in other activities outside the home. Thus, in order to ensure full participation in the labor force and the execution of Communist goals, childcare and guaranteed employment were priorities for Communists in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. In spite of these progressive changes in social policy and the addition of new services to mitigate the burden of family and factory on women, many men did not internalize the Communist ideal of equality. As a result, these policies were not effective in changing cultural norms and gender roles.

For their part, East German women were demanding of their spouses while remaining entrenched in traditional gender roles in the home.⁵ German sociologist Helge Pross contended that, “hardly anything has changed since grandma’s time. For this reason, the mass rejection of the role of housewife cannot be anticipated.”⁶ Still, with women entering the work force in the GDR, they required more from the state and their husbands to function on a daily basis. As East Germany women became more accustomed to work outside the home, they became more independent. As a result, women became more insistent upon aid from men and the state.⁷ Women could not have

⁵ Marilyn Rueschemeyer, *Professional Work and Marriage: An East-West Comparison*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 160-161.

⁶ Helge Pross, *Social Report*, in Harry G. Shaffer, *Women in the Two Germanies: A Comparative Study of A Socialist and a Non-Socialist Society* (New York, NY: Pergamon Press, 1981), 137.

⁷ Rueschemeyer, *Professional Work*, 164.

reached this point without the social services offered by the Communist state and was a positive outcome of its policies.

One of the most significant contributions of Communism to women's emancipation was the proliferation of kindergartens. Other childcare facilities were also created but the drastic increase in the number of kindergartens in East Germany was probably the most effective new childcare provider. Table 1 shows the increasing availability of childcare facilities in the GDR under communism.

Table 1: Places Available in the GDR Child Care Facilities (as % of all children in respective age group)⁸

	1955	1960	1965	1970	1974	1976
All childcare facilities for prekindergarteners	9.1	14.3	18.7	29.1	47.8	60.1
Kindergartens	34.5	46.1	52.8	64.5	80.4	89.2

From 1955 to 1976, a span of only twenty years, places in prekindergarten facilities increased six fold. To highlight the significance of this service, compare the 60.1% available places in the GDR in 1976 to the 7.2% availability in West Germany in the same year.⁹ Also, the West German kindergarten and prekindergartens were often private institutions and not full day, making them impractical for working women.¹⁰ In the GDR, there were even sleepover facilities available for infants and children under 3 years-old, but the increased availability of daycare facilities close to home and rendered the sleepover counterparts obsolete.¹¹

Women's improved social and economic independence meant they no longer had to stay in marriages in order to survive and provide for their children. Thus, GDR policy

⁸ *Statistical Yearbook, GDR*, (1978), 35, 36, 284, 295 and 384 in Shaffer, 106.

⁹ *Statistical Yearbooks, FRG*, (1974-1978), in Shaffer, 104.

¹⁰ Shaffer, 104.

¹¹ Shaffer, 105.

also led to a rise in divorce and single motherhood. Single mothers, like all families in East Germany, received assistance for rent, childcare, employment, and food costs.¹² However, early post-communist statistics show that single mothers in the former GDR only earned, “81 percent of the average income per person in two-parent families.”¹³ The perceived and real burden of being a single mother may have contributed to the demand for abortions.

Though abortions were illegal until 1972, except in cases of medical necessity, illegal abortions were pervasive and accounted for over 30 percent of maternal deaths in 1971.¹⁴ In 1972, the “Law on the Interruption of Pregnancy” allowed women to receive abortions in the first 12 weeks of their pregnancy. All expenses were covered by the state and absence from work was treated like any other sickness leave. This was a coup for East German women and was in line with the Communist ideology of equality, but not the pro-natalist policy the Party was also pursuing.¹⁵ However, the enactment of the law legalizing abortion was late when compared to other Communist countries, including Czechoslovakia.

Similar to East Germany, Czech and Slovak women were thrust into the position of carrying a double burden. Joining the work force while still raising a family and maintaining a household produced many of the same challenges. Childcare was the most immediate need for women in Czechoslovakia. In 1950 only 3% of children were

¹² Beate Schuster and Angelika Traub, “Single Mothers in East Germany,” in *Reinventing Gender: Women in Eastern Germany since Unification*, edited by Eva Kolinsky and Hildegard Maria Nickel, 151-171 (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 152-153.

¹³ Shuster and Traub in *Reinventing Gender*, 155-156.

¹⁴ *Familienpolitik*, p. 35 in Shaffer, 51.

¹⁵ Shaffer, 50-51.

enrolled in nurseries and only 26% of children attended kindergartens.¹⁶ In 1948, all kindergartens were nationalized and the government committed to introducing more all-day kindergartens for families with two working parents.¹⁷

However, family continued to play an important role in childcare in Czechoslovakia. Early in the Communist period, only one-third of employed women were dependent on nurseries for childcare, often times looking to older female relatives, like their mothers and grandmothers, to share the childcare burden.¹⁸ In 1962 more children of working mothers under three years old were cared for by family (49.3%) than were placed in nurseries (36.2%).¹⁹

Czechoslovakia failed to reconcile its pro-natalist policies, such as paid maternity leave and interest free loans to young married couples, with the cost of raising a child.²⁰ While the pro-natalist measures introduced in the 1970s produced a brief increase in fertility, the effects were not sustained because state provided childcare was not easily accessible.²¹ Nonetheless, by the fall of Communism in 1989, nearly 90% of Czech children attended kindergarten.²²

The liberalization of abortion laws in 1957 contributed to women's independence in the country. Before the laws were changed, there were about 14.7 abortions per 100

¹⁶ Hana Haskova, Hana Marikova and Zuzana Uhde, "Leaves, Allowances, and Facilities: Childcare Past and Present," in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society: Continuity and Change*, edited by Hana Haskova and Zuzana Uhde, 77-127 (Prague: Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2009), 85.

¹⁷ Haskova in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society*, 85.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 86.

¹⁹ Jiri Prokopec, "Pruzum statni populacni komise o materske dovolene," *Zpravy statni populacni komise*, 1963, no. 6, p. 25 in Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 254.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 96 and Alena Heitlinger, "Pro-natalist Population Policies in Czechoslovakia," *Population Studies*, Vol.30, No. 1, 123-135, (Population Investigation Committee, March, 1976), 134.

²¹ Haskova in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society*, 97.

²² Steven Saxonberg, *The Czech Republic Before the New Millennium: Politics, Parties and Gender*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003), 137.

live births in the country in 1957. Just one year later, the ratio rose to 37.5 abortions for every 100 births.²³ However, the procedure for obtaining an abortion was also widely criticized by feminists. Though abortions were legal, women had to apply for an abortion to a commission in her area. The commissions included doctors, elected officials, and representatives from local organizations including the trade unions. Only women, regardless of their marital status, were required to appear before the commissions and she also paid a fee for the procedure.²⁴

At the same time, only 5% of Czech women and 2% of Slovakian women had access to oral contraceptives in the 1975 while 18% of West Germans and 37% of women in the Netherlands were using oral contraceptives.²⁵ Though it became available in the 1960s, demand for oral contraceptives, like demand for all consumer products under Communism, was not satisfied by supply. Additionally, women were not well educated on the most effective methods of pregnancy prevention and nearly a quarter entered marriages pregnant. Therefore, the reproductive experience of Czech and Slovak women under Communism was complicated. Though abortion was legalized early on, the limited access to safe, reliable contraceptives impeded the realization of gender equality. The dichotomy did not make women's reproductive lives any easier or contribute to their equality and independence.

²³ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 354-356.

²⁴ Alena Heitlinger, "Passage to Motherhood: Personal and Social "Management" of Reproduction in Czechoslovakia in the 1980s," in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe* edited by Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer, 286-304, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 289.

²⁵ Heitlinger in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, 287 and J. Presl, "Vyvoj spotreby peroralnich steroidnich kontraceptiv c CSR a SSR," *Ceskoslovenska gynekologie* 42, no. 7 (August 1977), 543-44 in Heitlinger in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, 287.

2.2 Employment of Women under Communism

Full employment is one of the most important goals for any communist government. In East Germany and Czechoslovakia, there was a drastic increase in the number of women in the labor force. Though the ability to contribute to the economy and become a wage earner was a significant step for women, full employment did not mean equal employment. Disparities between men and women persisted in the form of wage inequality, differences in the type of work available to women, and the double burden of family obligations and work outside the home.

Women in Czechoslovakia were some of the most economically active women in Europe during the Communist period. By 1974 women made up over 47% of the labor force in Czechoslovakia and the GDR. The only country in which women accounted for more of the labor force was in the Soviet Union where women were 51% of the work force.²⁶ Meanwhile, in women were only 38.5% of the labor force in the United States and 36.9% in West Germany.²⁷ International Labor Organization statistics show that the women's share of the labor market in the Czech Republic remained at around 47% through 1990.²⁸ The GDR's statistical yearbook for 1979 reports women as 50.1% of the state's workers.²⁹

²⁶ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 57.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Czech Republic: Employment for detailed occupational groups by sex," *LABOROSTA*, International Labor Organization (Mar 20 2010), <http://laborsta.ilo.org/STP/guest>.

²⁹ *Statistical Yearbook, GDR, 1979*, p. 15 in Shaffer, 57.

Table 2: Women as a Percentage of the Labor Force in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, 1950-1974³⁰

	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1974
GDR	38.4	40.7	40.5	44.6	46.5	48.8
CSSR	38.4	42.7	42.8	44.8	46.7	47.8

In spite of the near equal employment of men and women in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, wage disparities and sector employment discrimination persisted. Female workers were heavily concentrated in services and other “non-producing” branches of the economy while men continued to dominate the high paying skilled labor positions.³¹ In Czechoslovakia, women were more likely to be employed in white-collar and service jobs than men and were also concentrated in the health and social care, trade and food service sectors.³² Czech, Slovak and East German women were under-represented in manufacturing and construction compared to their share of the labor market.³³

These “feminized” sectors paid lower wages and decreased in prestige.³⁴ The highest paying sectors of the economy were those significantly dominated by men, like construction and transportation. During the entire Communist period, the average earnings of Czech and Slovak women did not rise above 80% of men’s wages.³⁵ In East Germany it also remained acceptable that women should work but not out earn their

³⁰ *Statistical Yearbook, GDR, 1979*, p. 15 in Shaffer, 57.

³¹ Irene Doelling, “Culture and Gender,” in *The Quality of Life in The Germany Democratic Republic: Changes and Developments in a State Socialist Society* edited by Marilyn Rueschemeyer and Christiane Lemke, 27-47 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), 35 and Figure 2.3 “The share of women employed in the main sectors of the economy 1948-1985,” in “The Labour Market and Work-Life Balance in the Czech Republic in Historical Perspective,” by Alena Krizkova and Marta Vohlidalova, p. 35-76 in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society*, 42.

³² Krizkova and Vohlindalova in *Women and Social Citizenship*, 44.

³³ *Ibid*, 43-45 and *Statistical Yearbook, GDR, 1977*, p. 93 in Shaffer, 72

³⁴ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 76.

³⁵ Krizkova and Vohlindalova in *Women and Social Citizenship*, 46.

husbands. Therefore, although women could work in traditionally male sectors of the economy, they should by no means earn more than men or advance as quickly.³⁶

Managers continued to use women's familial and domestic labor obligations as an excuse to not employ women in managerial positions or positions which corresponded to their educational levels and experience. Also, women did not necessarily desire to take advantage of the equality bestowed upon them.³⁷ Many women saw work outside their home in purely economic terms, not as fulfillment of something that was otherwise missing from their lives. Almost 80% of Czechoslovak women cited the need for two incomes as their reason for working.³⁸

Despite the myths of equal employment in communist countries discussed above, communist policies did lead to the increased entry of women into the workforce and into formerly male dominated industries. The most significant illustration of this change comes from comparing women in professions in West and East Germany. While in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) women accounted for only 20.2% of physicians, 46% of physicians in the GDR were women. Additionally, only 5% of lawyers in the FRG were women compared to 30% in East Germany.³⁹ Therefore, Communist women were receiving new opportunities.

2.3 Education of Women under Communism

Access to education had a great impact on the employment of women in communist countries. Just as women were moving into the labor market and into new sectors of the economy, the communist state also increased access to all levels of

³⁶ Doelling in Rueschemeyer and Lemke, 37.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Krizkova and Vohlindalova in *Women and Social Citizenship*, 43.

³⁹ *Statistical Yearbook, FRG, 1977 and 1978; Statistical Yearbook GDR, 1977; Die Frau in der DDR; Handelsblatt*; in Shaffer, 76.

education. Women's greater access to secondary and tertiary education is especially evident under communism. However, disparities remained in the type of education pursued by women compared to men.⁴⁰ While men enrolled in vocational training more often than women, women dominated teaching programs at the secondary level and a larger proportion of those enrolled in general education programs.⁴¹

As Table 3 shows, in spite of greater access, educational disparities continued through 1980 in Czechoslovakia. More than half of women did not achieve an education beyond elementary school and though 41.5% continued their education at the secondary level, only about 41% of females in secondary schools completed their required exit exams.⁴² Furthermore, Czech and Slovak women were not equally represented in vocational schools, but overwhelmingly so in teaching programs. This is significant because education and training in male dominated vocational schools led to better jobs and higher wages, in contrast to teaching careers and the education from general programs.⁴³ So, even though women had increased access to education, evidence suggests they were not enrolled equally in the most economically beneficial programs.

Table 3: Czechoslovakia: The highest education level attained 1980 in %⁴⁴

	Women	Men
No Education	0.3%	0.2%
Elementary	54.3	33.8
Secondary without school-leaving exam	24.6	41.1
Secondary with exam	16.9	17.3
University	3.2	9.4

⁴⁰ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 32.

⁴¹ Ibid, 32-33.

⁴² Historical Statistical Yearbook of Czechoslovakia, 1948-1983 in Krizkova and Vohlindalova in *Women and Social Citizenship*, 41.

⁴³ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 31-33.

⁴⁴ Historical Statistical Yearbook of Czechoslovakia, 1948-1983 in Krizkova and Vohlindalova in *Women and Social Citizenship*, 41.

Tertiary education is where the most noteworthy change took place for women's education during the communist period. In both Czechoslovakia and the GDR, women's attendance as a percentage of total students in higher education nearly doubled within 25 years following the end of World War II.

Table 4: Women as a percentage of full time students of higher education institutions⁴⁵

	Czechoslovakia	East Germany
1945	18.5%	N/A
1950	22.4	23.4
1970	40.2	43.3

The comparison of Czechoslovakia and East Germany is even more enlightening when juxtaposed against the enrollment rates in West Germany. By examining the figures in Table 5, the efficacy of communist educational policy is clear. Women in Czechoslovakia and the GDR were more likely to attend university than women in their closest neighboring democracy, West Germany. This is a coup in favor of the argument that women achieved greater equality under communism in these two states. State services aided in removing the financial burden of higher education. This encouraged increased enrollment among both sexes but especially women since, as was the case in West Germany, reasons why women were forced to abandon their studies included marriage, financial burden, and birth of a child.⁴⁶

Table 5: Female Students enrolled in German higher education (% all students)⁴⁷

Year/Country	1949	1960	1970	1978
FRG	17.7	22.4	30.2	35.3
GDR	18.6	25.2	35.4	47.6

⁴⁵ From "Table 12: Women as a percentage of full time students of higher educational institutions, 1945-1970," in Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 42.

⁴⁶ Shaffer, 131.

⁴⁷ From "Table 4.4. Female Students Enrolled in German Institutions of Higher Learning," in Shaffer, 129.

Although more women than ever attended university in Czechoslovakia and East Germany under communist party leadership, inequalities in the treatment of men versus women persisted in higher education. As in employment where sectors of the economy were feminized, the same phenomenon took place in areas of study at the university level. Even as women entered universities in near equal levels as men, they tended to concentrate in humanities, education, and social sciences while men maintained a majority in the fields of engineering and agriculture.⁴⁸ Similar to the labor force, women were thus confined to fields with lower earning potential.

2.4 Women's Role in Politics

Women were first given the right to vote in many Western countries following World War I. Women's suffrage in Czechoslovakia and Germany was granted at this time as well, but women's active participation in politics was not a policy of the state until the Communist period. Under the Party, women became members of the national legislatures and active participants in the local Party organization. At the same time, women in both countries also joined opposition movements.

It seems intuitive that women would participate more politically in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, along with other communist countries. It was an expressed obligation for communist men and women to join the Party organization and union related activities. Political and trade organizations were part of everyday life. Every aspect of life was politicized and symbolic of the communist lifestyle.⁴⁹ Even though pressure was placed on citizens to participate, scholars have found that women

⁴⁸ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 42.

⁴⁹ Dorothee Wierling, "Youth as Internal Enemy: Conflicts in the Education Dictatorship of the 1960s," in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, edited by Paul Betts and Katherine Pence, 157-182. (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 166.

did not dedicate the same amount of time to political activities as men.⁵⁰ Women had other obligations outside of work, such as family, children, and housework. Being politically active was a luxury.

Still, women were more represented in political positions in communist countries than in Western Europe and the United States during the same period. Comparing the number of female delegates as a percentage of national legislatures in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and West Germany, it would seem that women are much more politically active in either of the communist countries compared to West Germany. Also worth noting is there were more women in the Bundestag during periods of the Weimar Republic than in West Germany in the 1970s.⁵¹ The democratic European country in which women had the highest share of national parliament seats in 1972 was Finland with 21.5%. In the United States there were only 12 female members of the House of Representatives in 1972, comprising of 2.8% of the body.⁵²

Table 6: Women as percentage of representatives to national legislatures⁵³

Year/Country	CSSR	GDR	FRG
CSSR 1948-50 GDR/FRG 1949	7.1	16.1	7.1
CSSR 1960-64 GDR/FRG 1949	19.4	26.5	9.4
All 1976	28.6	33.6	6.7

In addition to the differences in female representation between these two countries and the West, the backgrounds of the delegates were also dissimilar. In West Germany, for example, female delegates to the Bundestag were older than East German Volkskammer delegates. Also, while the West German female delegates largely

⁵⁰ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 42.

⁵¹ Shaffer, 84-85.

⁵² *Informationen fuer die Frau* 1972 in Shaffer, 84.

⁵³ *Zwischenbericht*, p. 52; Gast, p. 165; Kurhig, p. 144; *Statistical Yearbook/GDR*, 1978, p. 427 in Shaffer, 85.

described themselves as housewives, the East German women were mostly workers and students.⁵⁴ So, younger, childless women were more politically active than married women with children.⁵⁵

In reality the Czechoslovak and East German legislatures were mere symbols of popular participation in the political process in countries where the Party was the most powerful governmental institution. Of course Communist Party membership was also open to women in both countries, but they were rarely appointed to positions on the Politburo or other positions of power. By the 1970s, women represented over 25% of Communist Party membership in Czechoslovakia and East Germany.⁵⁶

In the GDR there was one early exception to the rule of female exclusion from powerful positions. Elli Schmidt was a high-ranking Politburo member. She was an activist within the Party and was assigned to handle consumer issues in 1953.⁵⁷ As a communist woman Schmidt struggled to find her identity. She was both a communist who believed in the socialist planned economy and a woman concerned with the shortage of consumer goods.⁵⁸ In letters to Schmidt women “appealed to her not only as a high-ranking party official but also as a woman.”⁵⁹ For her part, Schmidt criticized the planned economy when it failed to produce a higher standard of living for East Germans. Unfortunately, her expertise as a consumer and a woman worked against her when she spoke out against Party policy and she was demoted from her position.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Shaffer, 85.

⁵⁵ Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 132.

⁵⁶ FN 19 in Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 116.

⁵⁷ Katherine Pence, “Women on the Verge: Consumers between Private Desires and Public Crisis,” in *Socialist Modern*, 287-322, 289.

⁵⁸ Pence in *Socialist Modern*, 297.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 296.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 308-11.

Czech and Slovak women were almost entirely excluded from the country's government elites. In 1964 only 2 of the 24 members of the Council of Ministers were women and in 1971 there were no women represented on the Council.⁶¹ Women did find an outlet in communist opposition. Nearly one-third of the original signatories of Charter 77 were women. Women with children were among the dissidents thrown in prison for their participation in the human rights group. Of those who publicly signed the document there were five housewives, five workers, a chemist, a gardener, and a pensioner.⁶² So, they were not only single writers, professors, or activists who had few worries beyond their fight against the establishment. Still, men continued to assume that women had no interest in or understanding of politics, thus women had more of a voice in the private, underground world of dissidents than in public politics.⁶³

Conclusion

In the area of political representation, women are more equally represented than in Western democracies, but women's political participation does not match their new equality in the labor force. But, similar to the trends witnessed when examining women's role in labor, education, and society, the communist promise for equality falls short of real gender equality. In some areas they had less control over how their gender-neutral policies would play out. Education is one example where students generally choose their discipline and women tended to stay within the humanities, social sciences, and medicine. Still, socially the communists did not effectively combat the feminization of fields of study or certain sectors of the economy. As a result, men in feminized fields and

⁶¹ FN 53 in Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology, and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe*, 131.

⁶² Barbara W. Jancar, "Women in the Opposition in Poland and the Czechoslovakia in the 1970s," in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, edited by Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer, 168-185 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 172.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 49-51.

industries were somewhat stigmatized, lost prestige, and were out earned by men working in other sectors.

There were positive changes in the status of women under communism. Using the communist period as a foundation, it is now necessary to examine the impact of democratic transition and subsequent EU accession on the status of women in both countries. The question remains whether democratic governance and EU membership has improved the status of women in either country compared to their experience under communism.

3. Democratic Transition: The Effects of the Communist Legacy

The stories of gender equality in Germany and Czechoslovakia diverge with the end of the Communist regimes in 1989. While up to this point, the two countries shared a similar history under strict Communist governments that were controlled from the center of the Soviet sphere in Moscow and often used as examples of how to and not to operate; following the end of communist rule, one country reunites with its other half while the other goes out on its own for the first time since the interwar period. Both German reunification and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, have profound effects on women. These upheavals along with their communist legacies shaped gender equality policies and practices into the 21st century.

Czechoslovakia's transition to democracy began in 1989. Longtime leader Gustav Husák resisted Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts at democratic reforms throughout the 1980s. Husák and the new leader as of 1987, Milos Jakes, were well aware that a reformist in Moscow could hurt their unchallenged leadership in the country.⁶⁴ Still, the

⁶⁴ Joseph Rothschild and Nancy M. Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 187.

Communist Party successfully utilized coercion and took advantage of the intellectual dissidents' disorganization in order to retain control over the country. Following the brutal police break-up of demonstrations on International Students Day in Prague, mass demonstrations in opposition to the regime broke out in late November 1989. In Prague nearly 1 million participated and organizations like the Civic Forum, founded by longtime intellectual dissident Václav Havel, and the Public Against Violence recruited worker participation.⁶⁵ The Communist regime fell in December when Husák resigned and Havel was elected president on December 31, 1989, with new elections for the legislature scheduled for the following June.⁶⁶

The collapse of communism in East Germany was also marked by anti-reformism. The GDR was under Erich Honecker, an orthodox adherent to neo-Stalinism. Like Czechoslovakia, East German elites refused to recognize the reforms coming from the center and remained committed to the dogmatic enforcement of the socialist model. The rationale was that Soviet leaders had originally put them in power to stop such changes.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, this strict adherence led to the development of illegal organizations, including women's groups.⁶⁸ It was the opening of the East Germany's border with Hungary and mass demonstrations that caused the resignation of the Politburo and the cabinet.⁶⁹ The fall of the Berlin Wall was the German's referendum in favor of democracy.

⁶⁵ Rothschild and Wingfield, 190.

⁶⁶ Sharon L. Wolchik, "The Czech and Slovak Republics: Two Paths to the Same Destination," in *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy*, edited by Sharon L. Wolchik and Jane L. Curry, 191-214 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 197 and Rothschild and Wingfield, 190.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

⁶⁸ Saxonberg, 9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

Ultimately, the failure of both Czechoslovakian and East German elites to accept liberal reforms meant they were utterly shocked by the collapse of their regimes. Therefore, the aftermath of the fall was chaotic and the reactions disorganized. The effects of the subsequent democratic and free market transitions and political upheavals were especially acute for women. While the Czech Republic had to decide how to start over again as a sovereign country, the East Germans went from one motherland, the Soviet Union, to another as part of the reunified Federal Republic of Germany.

3.1 The Effect of Political Change on Social Services

The aid given to citizens under communism was unsustainable in a market economy, especially an economy just transitioning to capitalism. Both Czechs and East Germans saw a decrease in their benefits following the collapse of the communist regimes, but there are differences in how their lives changed as a consequence. Along with the political and economic changes occurring at the time, a social transition was also taking place in both countries. The communist definition and treatment of the family was no longer accepted. Former East Germans conflicted with the West over the future of family and social ideology. At the same time, embittered Czechs rejected communist social policies and ideologies in favor of conservative values, such as an emphasis on the family and a return to traditional gender roles.

In order to facilitate the transition to a market economy, Czech political leaders placed greater importance on the private lives of their citizens. This shift combated the communist legacy while also making people less dependent on state services.⁷⁰ Early in the transition childcare and abortion facilities were privatized. In just two years after the collapse, the availability of places in nurseries dropped from nearly 80,000 in 1989 to

⁷⁰ True, 60-61.

17,210 in 1991.⁷¹ The state forced Czech families to look elsewhere for childcare solutions and at the same time women were becoming increasingly unemployed. Well aware of the immediate effects a harsh transition to the market economy would have, the state's change in social policy was not only a matter of ideology but also survival.

The government also encouraged women to stay at home longer following the birth of a child by increasing maternity leave and maternity allowance, but without the guarantee her former job would be available if she took advantage of the longer leave period. These new benefits combined with drastic decrease in available childcare led more women to stay at home to take care of their children. These trends had a detrimental effect on women's labor market participation. For the first time since the 1950s, a majority (64%) of Czech women were staying home for more than two years after the birth of their first child.⁷² Throughout the 1990s and into the present, reentering the labor market was extremely difficult for mothers. Sources indicate that 10% of women who wanted to return to work after maternity leave remained unemployed.⁷³

The Czech government also tightened restrictions on access to abortions in the 1990s. This policy change was meant to prevent an influx of Polish women seeking free or cheap legal abortions, increase fertility among Czechs, and decrease the burden on the state to provide subsidized abortions. The cost of procedures went up dramatically, to the equivalent of nearly a month's salary.⁷⁴ In spite of reforms to promote the family and fertility in the Czech Republic, the policies resulted in a stark decrease in the fertility

⁷¹ Czech Statistical Office 1992 in True, 60.

⁷² Haskova in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society*, 102-104.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 105.

⁷⁴ True, 61.

rate.⁷⁵ The explanation for this lies in the many changes for society and women during the 1990s.

Overall the climate for starting a family was quite unstable during the decade considering the high levels of unemployment and general economic uncertainty. Moving from a highly regimented private and public life under communism, women in former communist countries felt unsure of how they could provide for a family if work and childcare were not guaranteed.⁷⁶ This issue is highlighted by the difference between West and East German fertility rates. While the West Germany fertility rate was maintained at 1.4 births per woman from 1989 to 1994, the fertility rate for East German women fell sharply from 1.6 to .8 births per woman.⁷⁷

Like the Czechs, East Germans held the family in high regard. In a country where under communism one could not speak freely outside of their own home, the maintenance of the family unit was important. The disparities between GDR and FRG family and maternity benefits in 1990 are very telling. Not surprisingly, women with children in the GDR received more supplemental benefits than West German women.

Table 7: Women’s Benefits in GDR and FRG in 1990⁷⁸

Policy	GDR	FRG
Maternity leave	20 weeks	8 weeks
Childcare	80% of children under 3	4% of children under 3
Kindergarten	94% of 3-6, full time	70% of 3-6, up to 3hrs/day
Contraceptive	Free, including abortions	None free

⁷⁵ True, 66-68.

⁷⁶ Marina A. Adler, “Social Change and Declines in Marriage and Fertility in Eastern Germany,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), 40.

⁷⁷ From Table 1, “The Demographic Profile of the Former Federal Republic of Germany, the Former German Democratic Republic and East and West Germany,” Adler, 41.

⁷⁸ From “Vergleich der familienpolitischen Massnahmen in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik,” in Eva Kolinsky, “Gender and the Limits of Equality in East Germany,” in *Reinventing Gender: Women in Eastern Germany since Unification*, edited by Eva Kolinsky and Hildegard Maria Nickel, 100-127 (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 106.

In light of these cultural and policy differences, GDR women had a difficult time adjusting to motherhood without the benefits which allowed them to continue working. As in the Czech Republic, young women began to postpone marriage and motherhood in order to hold onto their jobs during the unstable unification period. As a result, the birthrate in eastern Germany declined to significantly lower levels and in 1995 the percentage of women with children under 25 years old dropped to around 7%, close to the West German level of 5%.⁷⁹

The effect of the policy and ideology changes in the Germany and the Czech Republic in the 1990s was a decrease in the already low birth rate. More importantly, these changes caused women to augment their life plans. The decreased access to childcare combined with poor economic conditions influenced women to delay marriage and pregnancy. Though the decrease in state assistance was necessary in light of the move from a socialist to a market economy, the “family centric” changes ultimately took control away from women. Women were no longer required by law to work but the democratic state still operated indirect control over their reproductive choices.

3.2 Shock Therapy: Women Leaving the Labor Force

Women were the demographic most affected by the shift from a planned to a market economy in the 1990s. Unemployment rose in the former communist countries and women as a whole were unemployed at higher rates than men. In the Czech Republic, President Vaclav Klaus determined that a swift transition to a market economy was best for the country. The cuts in government programs, rising prices, and privatization were accompanied by a jump in unemployment.⁸⁰ The gender

⁷⁹ Kolinsky in *Reinventing Gender*, 120-121.

⁸⁰ Wolchik, in *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy*, 207-208.

unemployment gap that existed under communism persisted through the democratic transition. Czech women maintained an unemployment rate one-third higher than that of men since the early 1990s.⁸¹ Regardless, in 1995 Marie Cermakova contended that women remained an integral part of the Czech work force, continuing to contribute nearly 45% of the labor for the country.⁸²

The largest change in female participation was witnessed in the jump in women exiting from work at an earlier age. Though both men and women took early retirement as a result of the “shock therapy,” women were more likely to do so earlier.⁸³ True argues that “women’s level of participation in the work force has not been greatly altered by the transition, the forms of their participation have.”⁸⁴ However, simultaneous with the change in forms of participation were higher unemployment levels among women and increasing wage inequalities.⁸⁵ In 1998 the wage gap was smallest in the typically male sectors of agriculture, transportation, and construction, with women making about 80% of men’s wages. Discrimination against feminized professions, such as the new positions in finance, continued and wages in those professions remained lower than in masculine professions.⁸⁶

Czech women were also more likely than men to work part-time and of those who did work part-time, almost 20% were doing so because they could not find full-time employment. Of the men working part-time, on the other hand, less than 8% said it was

⁸¹ Krizkova and Vohlidalova in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society*, 49-50.

⁸² Marie Cermáková, “Women in the Czech Society: Continuity and Change,” in *Women, Work and Society*, edited by Marie Cermáková, 1-17 (Prague: Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 1995), 8.

⁸³ True, 78.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 79.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 78-83.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

because they could not find full-time work.⁸⁷ Due to the social and cultural shifts taking place during the 1990s, women made up the gap in the lack of childcare by accepting part-time employment.

By the end of the 1990s, the unemployment rate in former East Germany was twice that of former West Germany, 9.6% in the West and 18.8% in the East.⁸⁸ Women's unemployment at the close of the decade was 27% but a greater proportion of Eastern women were employed than Western women. Eastern women with at least one young child had an employment rate of 30%, while West German women had a rate of 15%.⁸⁹ This speaks to the legacy of the communist period. While the Chancellor Helmut Kohl and West German politicians believed women in the new federal states would welcome the opportunity to become housewives, women in the East were largely uninterested.⁹⁰ Whether the reasoning was cultural or purely economic, women from the former GDR maintained their desire to work.

Like the Czech Republic, some East German women chose early retirement over navigating the new labor market. Other reasons for leaving the work force were closure of companies and a failure to find a new job. Additionally, gender discrimination persisted in some sectors. While in the mid-1990s 40% of apprenticeships in the former East were closed to women, the proportion increased to 70% male only positions by the end of the decade.⁹¹ Clearly this prevented women from entering careers in skilled labor and manufacturing.

⁸⁷ Krizkova and Vohlidalova in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society*, 67.

⁸⁸ *Sozialreport 1999*, 156 in Helen J. Frink, *Women After Communism: The East German Experience* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 38.

⁸⁹ Rachel A. Rosenfeld, Heike Trappe and Janet C. Gornick, "Gender and Work in Germany: Before and after Reunification," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 30, (2004), 113.

⁹⁰ Frink, 38.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 38-39.

The experiences of women in both countries were very similar when considering the labor force. This was an area in which joining an already thriving capitalist country did not give East German women a clear advantage over women other former communist countries. Although, it is significant to highlight that East German women were more employed than West German women at the time. Also, in spite of the government policies to combat the communist legacy, both East German and Czechoslovak women were nostalgic for the time of full, guaranteed employment. Nonetheless, women chose to work either for fulfillment or economic need. Therefore, although the economic transition was most difficult for women, it was a necessary step in providing them with more choice and freedom.

3.3 Women's Access to Tertiary Education

The collapse of communism's most significant effect on education was the decrease in financial support from the state. Like all other government programs, supplemental support that many students depended on to pursue university degrees decreased. A positive outcome of the transition to democracy was the elimination of state control over what disciplines students entered. Under the new democracies, women and men were free to enter into study the fields they were interested in or they felt would be the most profitable. The planned economy no longer dictated the educational paths of citizens.

Regardless of some positive changes, differences in the representation of men and women remained into the 1990s. Though women continued to make up over 45% of university students, the negative disparities of the communist period remained with

women continuing to be under represented in traditionally male disciplines like mathematics and engineering.

Table 8: Women as percentage of all students in each discipline 1998⁹²

Women in Discipline	EU-27 Total	Czech Republic	Germany
Tertiary education (total)	52.8	48.1	46.5
Mathematics, Sciences, Computing	40.6	29.2	31.4
Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction	21.6	20.1	16.6

Still, the more significant indicator of equality was percentage of women as tertiary institution students. In both countries women were almost 50% of all university students. Additionally, in the Czech Republic, the percentage of women with university degrees rose to 7.1% in 2001, quickly approaching men’s 10.8%. This was a coup because the percentage of women with tertiary education was increasing faster than men. In 1991, 9.4% of men and only 5.1% of women attended university.⁹³

The same enrollment disparities present in the Czech Republic were also evident in Germany during the 1990s. While German women made up almost half of university students, they were not equally represented in math, sciences, and engineering. In fact, as shown in Table 8, German women pursued these disciplines less than the average female EU student. Still, it is important to recognize that the statistics for Germany are now aggregated for new and old federal states. For example, in the early transition period,

⁹² “Share of women among tertiary students; Women among students in ISCED 5-6 - as % of the total students at this level; Total - science, mathematics and computing - engineering, manufacture and construction (%),” *Eurostat*, Education and Training, (25 Mar 2010), http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/main_tables.

⁹³ From Czech Statistical Office in Krizkova and Vohlidalova in *Women and Social Citizenship in Czech Society*, 41.

women in the former GDR accounted for over 30% of engineering graduates, while in West Germany women were less than 10%. This amplifies the continuing effects of communism.⁹⁴

Women's role in academia is not limited to life as a student. Naturally women also have the opportunity to hold positions on the faculty. This is an area in which the Czech Republic has maintained greater gender equality than Germany. Though still not equal, 34% of the Czech university faculty is women. German women, on the other hand, only accounted for 20% of the faculty at German universities.⁹⁵ So, in spite of the Czech emphasis on familial roles, women maintained a strong presence in academics in keeping with communist precedence; while in Germany, the reunification may have contributed to at least a temporary decrease in female faculty.

3.4 Women in Politics in the New Democracies

As mentioned when discussing women under communism, the level of female participation in politics before the democratic transition are misleading. Though women contributed 30% of the delegates to both the Czech and East German national legislatures, these bodies had little governing power. The real political and economic decision-making took place in the Party where women were less represented and held almost no high-ranking committee positions. Thus, women were starting anew with the democratic transition and attempting to forge a legitimate place in their new governments. So, even though the number of women in both the Czech and German parliaments is low in comparison to the communist period, women were becoming increasingly politically active during the transition.

⁹⁴ Jerry A. Jacobs, "Gender Inequality and Higher Education," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 22, (1996), 168.

⁹⁵ Jacobs, 158.

When the first free elections were held in the Czech Republic, the percentage of women in the national parliaments fell to 10.7%.⁹⁶ In 1996, women's share of the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Czech parliament increased to 15.5%, but there were no female ministers in the newly formed government.⁹⁷ Among the women elected were professionals, professors, and doctors.⁹⁸ But, despite their education and election, women failed to address women's issues during the early transition period. This could be attributed to the inability for women's movements to reorganize following the rapid collapse of the communism.

Havel dismissed feminism and female dissidents because they could not take the same risks as men as women were constrained by family commitments.⁹⁹ Gender equality and women's issues were pushed aside with the promise to return to them once the market economy and democracy were well established. This backlash against extreme egalitarianism was not unique to Havel or the Czech Republic. In both the Czech Republic and Germany, the transition reopened the discourse of gender differences and appropriate roles. Current statistics regarding women's representation in the Czech and German legislatures reveal the long-term effects of this backlash.¹⁰⁰

Unlike the Czech Republic, Germany established a quota system for female representation early in the democratic transition. West German parties were already moving toward a quota before unification after activists and female party members

⁹⁶ Sharon Wolchik, "Women in Parliament in the Czech Republic," in *Women In Power in Post-Communist Parliaments*, edited by Marilyn Rueschemeyer and Sharon L. Wolchik, 111-130 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2009), 112.

⁹⁷ Sharon Wolchik, "Women and the Politics of Transition in the Czech and Slovak Republics," in *Participation and Democracy East and West: Comparisons and Interpretations*, 116-141, 120-121.

⁹⁸ Wolchik in *Participation and Democracy*, 122.

⁹⁹ True, 49.

¹⁰⁰ True, 52.

pushed for a fairer allocation of party seats.¹⁰¹ By 1998, the female share of the Bundestag reached 30%, twice that of the Czech Republic. There were differences in the style and enforcement of the quotas within parties. Predictably, the seats of the leftist parties including the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens were held by more women than the Christian Democrats' (CDU). 57% of the Green Party's seats were held by women, while only 18% of the CDU's were represented by women.¹⁰² Scholars, such as Matland, have also attributed the success of women in German elections to the proportional representation system because it gives the party more control over who is seated in legislatures.¹⁰³

Conclusions

There were negative and positive outcomes of the democratic transitions in Germany and the Czech Republic. On the whole, the collapse of the communism was positive for women's positions in both countries, but in the 1990s this was not yet apparent in both countries. Though there was dissension between the East German and West German ways of governing, German women came out of the unification better off than they were going in. Of course there was high unemployment, continued wage disparities, and some other gender equality issues, but this was not unexpected. The German government made an effort to mitigate the effects of the transition on women in the new and old federal states and they were more successful than their Czech counterparts.

¹⁰¹ Marilyn Rueschemeyer, "Women in Politics in Post-Communist East Germany," in *Reinventing Gender: Women in Eastern Germany since Unification*, edited by Eva Kolinsky and Hildegard Maria Nickel, 231-249, (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 239.

¹⁰² Rueschemeyer in *Reinventing Gender*, 239.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 241-242.

The Czech Republic had a more challenging democratic and economic transition. The ideological turn around in the country was drastic and caused new daily obstacles for women wishing to raise a family and/or join the work force. The Czech government enacted policies to deter women from seeking full-time employment and the negative aspects of communist policy, such as the disparities in industry and pay, continued. Still, though Germany made more rapid strides in the political representation of women, women in the Czech Republic were still more represented than in many western democracies. And, in both countries, women in the national legislatures were more educated, qualified, and had more real governing power than during the communist period. In the end, the policies pursued following the collapse of communism in both countries, and the nature of their transition, continue to affect the level of equality enjoyed by women.

4. The Effects of EU Accession

The differences in the gender equality in the Czech Republic and Germany following the collapse of communism may partly be explained by the timing of their admission into the European Union. Germany entered the EU in 1992, when it was created by the Maastricht Treaty but the FRG was a member of the European Community, the precursor of the EU, since its conception. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, did not join until 2004. The EU was created as a free trade organization with no specific focus on gender equality, but as membership has grown, so has its jurisdiction and areas of concern. Ultimately, many of its economic and social policies either explicitly or indirectly address gender equality in the member states.

When the East German state unified with the FRG, they were forced to catch-up with German and European standards in economic and social areas. As a result, German laws, which were already meant to be compliant with EU norms and legislation, were adopted in the new federal states in the 1990s. Since the Czech Republic did not join the EU until 2004, it gradually adopted chapters of the *acquis communautaire*, the collection of EU legislation, and transposed these laws into their national laws. The goal of EU gender laws is to combat direct and indirect discrimination, and harassment, while utilizing positive action to ameliorate gender differences and discrimination.¹⁰⁴

Because the Czech Republic was followed closely during its accession process and the EU utilized coercion, such as funding, to promote the adoption of EU legislation, a significant change should be witnessed in the status of women in the Czech Republic. Still, it is not clear that adoption of EU legislation leads to real policy or ideological change. Comparing the Czech Republic and Germany now that they are both members of the European Union will demonstrate how effective EU gender equality norms and legislation have been in new versus old member states.

4.1 Social Services under the European Union

The first inclusion of gender policy in a European organization was Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, the treaty that established the European Coal and Steel Community in 1957. Since then the legislation and scope of the EU in this area has grown and evolved. Though the members of the EU maintain sovereignty, the EU does have jurisdiction in some areas of governance. However, implementation is inconsistent. In the case of gender equality, national laws differ but there are principles that members are

¹⁰⁴ Sacha Prechal and Susanne Burri, "EU Rules on Gender Equality: How are they transposed into national law," (European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Aug 2009), 4-5.

meant to uphold. For example, Germany's constitution includes a provision regarding gender equality while the Czech Republic's does not, but the Czech Republic is should pursue wage equality.

The EU has issued multiple directives in the area of social welfare and gender discrimination. In order to protect the rights of pregnancy and maternity leave, the Pregnant Workers Directive was adopted in 1992.¹⁰⁵ This directive requires countries to allow for 14 weeks of maternity leave following the birth of a child, but soon this may be changed to 20 weeks.¹⁰⁶ All member states have complied with this and implemented different policies in conjunction. While Germany only provides for the minimum of 14 weeks leave, it is at full pay. In the Czech Republic, the leave time remains longer at 28 weeks.¹⁰⁷ Thus, it appears that the Czech Republic has done little to change its family centric policies since EU accession. Between 1997 and 2008 Czech women's fertility rate increased from 1.17 to 1.5 children. In 2008 the German fertility rate was 1.38 children, still behind the EU wide average of 1.53 in 2006.¹⁰⁸

Both the Czech Republic and Germany also provide for parental leave.¹⁰⁹ This along with children's enrollment in pre-kindergarten could contribute to more freedom for women to rejoin the work force following the birth of a child. Enrollment in pre-primary education increased over 10% in the Czech Republic and Germany in a decade.

¹⁰⁵ Prechal and Burri, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Tran, "EU plans maternity leave increase," *The Guardian* (24 Feb 2010), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/feb/24/eu-plans-maternity-leave-increase>.

¹⁰⁷ "Maternity Leave in the Czech Republic and Germany," European Commission, Employment and Social Affairs, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/missoc/db/public/compareTables.do;jsessionid=Lpzndpdgr7GvDhVgLJ1TJdt1TnsdBrT8CWPKbZkGJxjQpX4HLbMN!1865910713.

¹⁰⁸ "Total fertility rate - number of children per woman," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdde220&plugin=1>.

¹⁰⁹ "Maternity, Paternity, and Parental Leaves in the OECD Countries 1998-2002," (Columbia University: The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies University), <http://www.childpolicyintl.org/issuebrief/issuebrief5table1.pdf>.

This indicates that the countries are less dependent on other sources of childcare like family members. This is a promising indicator that women are free to return to the workforce more easily today than before EU accession, especially in the Czech Republic.

Table 9: Percentage of 4 year olds enrolled in pre-primary education¹¹⁰

Country	1998	2007
All EU	79.7	88.6
Czech Republic	76.9	87.8
Germany	83.7	94.2

4.2 EU and Employment: Equal Pay and Pensions

Equal pay has been the most important goal for the EU in the area of gender equality. It was a founding principle for the ECSC in 1957 and since then many EU directives have focused on closing the economic gap between men and women. Still, wage disparities persist in all EU countries. Unfortunately, in both Germany and the Czech Republic the gender wage gap is increasing rather than decreasing. In 2002 Czech women earned on average 22.1% less than men's wages and by 2008 the gap climbed to 26.2%. In Germany women earned 22.7% less than men in 2003 and 23.2% less in 2008. To put it in perspective, the EU wide wage disparity for all 27 countries was 18% in 2008.¹¹¹ The persistence of feminized sectors with lower wages contributes to the wage disparity.

The unemployment rate is an area where there is convergence in both countries. As shown below, both countries had an unemployment rate lower than the EU wide rate. In the Czech Republic, the female unemployment rate is almost two points higher than the men's rate. The opposite trend is occurring in Germany where the unemployment

¹¹⁰ "Four-year-olds in education - Participation rate (%)," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00053&plugin=1>.

¹¹¹ "Gender pay gap in unadjusted form - in % (Structure of Earnings Survey source - 2002 and 2006 onwards)," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsiem040&plugin=1>.

among women is lower than the country's total unemployment and the men's unemployment rate. It seems like EU policies to promote gender equality EU wide are successful but in individual countries there are still issues contributing to gender related difference in the labor market.

Table 10: Unemployment rate in percentage by gender 2009¹¹²

Gender	EU 27	Czech Republic	Germany
Total	8.9	6.7	7.5
Men	9.0	5.9	8.0
Women	8.8	7.7	6.9

About a decade ago, the World Economic Forum began issuing an annual report entitled the *Global Gender Report*. In the 2009 report, the World Economic Forum found that in the area of economic participation and opportunity, the Czech Republic ranked 70 and Germany ranked 37. The rankings are determined by taking the female to male ratio of labor force participation, estimated earned income, and other factors.¹¹³ In spite of what may seem like low rankings due to the wage disparities and differences in labor participation, both countries ranked highest in the area of professional and technical workers.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the policies in place in each country are successful at promoting the recruitment of women into professional and technical careers, but wage disparity continues to be a challenge in the Czech Republic especially.

Currently the EU is following the Czech Republic because of issues with its pension policy. The Czech Republic continues to allow women who have raised children to receive a pension at an earlier age than men. Even if men are single fathers, the lower

¹¹² "Unemployment rate by gender in %," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tsiem110&language=en>.

¹¹³ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2009* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2009), 5.

¹¹⁴ Hausmann, et al, 91, 104.

pensionable age does not apply to them.¹¹⁵ Because this discrimination is in the area of statutory social security, the EU does not have jurisdiction, but is placing pressure on the Czech Republic to equalize pension benefits.¹¹⁶ Germany also had a problem with discriminatory benefits in the past but is in the process of fazing them out. Regardless of this seeming an advantage for women, men and women in both countries exit the labor market at the average age of 60.¹¹⁷

4.3 EU Accession and Education

In the area of education both countries have done well. A greater proportion of women are enrolled in tertiary education now than during the communist or post-communist period. The Czech Republic was ranked first in educational attainment in the 2009 *Global Gender Gap Report*. This indicator includes the ratio of females to males in literacy and enrollment in various levels of education, including tertiary. Germany achieved a near perfect score from the World Economic Forum, as well.¹¹⁸ Women continue to maintain a strong and growing presence at the tertiary level, forming 54.7% of total students in the Czech Republic in 2007 and 49.7% in Germany.¹¹⁹ But, similar to the democratic transition and under communism, women are not equally represented in the science and technology fields of study. While more women are graduating with degrees today, the fields are still dominated by men.¹²⁰ Also, the high number of women

¹¹⁵ Prechal and Burri, 19.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ "Average exit age from the labour force by gender," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tsiem030&language=en>.

¹¹⁸ Hausmann, et al, 91, 104.

¹¹⁹ "Women as percentage of total tertiary students," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00063&plugin=1>.

¹²⁰ "Science and technology graduates by gender age 20-29," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tsiir050&language=en>.

in university leads to fears that education is becoming feminized and thus undervalued, especially in the Czech Republic.

In February 1976, the European Economic Community (EEC) passed a directive on the equal treatment of men and women with regards to employment and vocational training. Despite the adoption of Council Directive 76/207/EEC, disparities remain in enrollment in vocational schools.¹²¹ Men continue to lead in vocational education in Germany and the Czech Republic. This is not to say that there is discrimination taking place in vocational school enrollment, but rather that traditional gender norms prevent women from entering vocational training at the same rate as men. The percentage of secondary school students enrolled in vocational school in the Czech Republic is significantly higher than the EU wide total. Also, the percentage of women enrolled in the vocational track is decreasing faster than the percentage of men.

Table 11: Percentage upper secondary students enrolled in vocational stream by gender¹²²

Country	Men 1998	Women 1998	Men 2007	Women 2007
All EU	59.3	49.8	56.8	46.0
Czech Republic	82.5	76.8	80.1	70.4
Germany	69.0	59.4	63	51.2

Of course, the proportion of men and women pursuing vocational training does not have to be exactly the same. There are economic and lifestyle considerations that men and women must weigh when choosing a profession and education. Regardless of that decision, the EU is seeking to ensure equal economic independence for men and women. And though the EU distances itself from member states' educational policy, the

¹²¹ Council Directive 76/207/EEC, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31976L0207:EN:NOT>.

¹²² "Pupils in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational stream by gender," *Eurostat*, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00055&language=en>.

indicators discussed above are important to monitor since education surely affects women's economic independence. Still, as discussed in the previous section, greater access to education has not resulted in wage convergence between men and women, an expressed goal of the EU.

4.4 Women in Politics under the EU

Another goal of the EU's gender equality initiative is to promote the participation of women in the decision-making process. Though the organization cannot effect national elections, they are actively promoting this policy with the creation of a "Men and Women in Decision-Making" database.¹²³ This program aims to track the representation of men and women in national and regional legislatures, political organizations, and EU bodies, including the European Commission. As of February 2010, one third of the 27 European Commissioners were women.¹²⁴ The Commission does not control the gender of commissioners member states appoint so the organization's success cannot be measured by the proportion of female commissioners. Still, the campaign at least seeks to monitor the changes in female representation across member states, thereby recognizing comparisons between them.

The participation of Czech women in politics has not improved much since the democratic transition. When considering party affiliation, women were the most represented in the Communist and Green Parties in 2006. The Czech Statistical Office reports that the two largest parties, OSD (Civic Democrats) and CSSD (Social Democrats), each had 9 female deputies corresponding to 12 percent of the party seats,

¹²³ "Women and men in decision-making: highlights (First quarter 2010)," European Commission: Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=739&furtherNews=yes>.

¹²⁴ "Women and men in decision-making: highlights (First quarter 2010)," European Commission: Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

the Communist Party's 8 women represented a 30 percent share of the party's seats.¹²⁵

Still the female share of the Chamber of Deputies hovers around 15 percent. The women are qualified, educated and feel fulfilled by their work with citizens, but display little interest in uniting as a "female coalition" to fight for gender equality.¹²⁶

There is a trend toward increasing women's role in the governing coalition but the change is slow. Czech women can be found in ministerial positions, though often in the areas of sport, tourism, agriculture, and other "feminized" areas. However, the current Minister of Health and the Deputy prime minister are women.¹²⁷ Also, in a speech in 2008 Vice President of the European Commission, Margot Wallström, recognized that the Czech Republic was the only new member state with a female leader of Supreme Court.¹²⁸ But, Wallström also acknowledged that gender equality remains a marginal issue for the Czech government. So, Czech women do have more real political power than during the communist period, but their situation has not improved since the 1990s. EU membership has not expanded Czech women's political participation and beyond monitoring the situation, the EU does not have any actionable plans to push for further improvements.

The role of German women has grown since the end of communism. The quota system has definitely aided in the inclusion of women in the federal government. The latest election took place in September 2009 and 204 of the 622 Bundestag members are

¹²⁵ From Czech Statistical Office in Wolchik, "Women in Parliament in the Czech Republic," 116.

¹²⁶ Wolchik, "Women in Parliament in the Czech Republic," 124.

¹²⁷ "Female Ministers of the Czech Republic," *Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership*, (October 15 2009), http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Czech_Ministers.htm and Wolchik, "Women in Parliament in the Czech Republic," 118.

¹²⁸ Margot Wallström, "Czech women and European politics: a new year for action," Meeting with the Czech Women Lobby to discuss 50-50 Campaign for Democracy, Prague (Jan 8 2008).

now women.¹²⁹ In 2005, Germans elected their first female chancellor. Angela Merkel was originally elected leader of the Christian Democrats (CDU) in 2000.¹³⁰ She remains chancellor today, having been re-elected in September 2009. Merkel is from the former GDR, has a doctorate in physics, and was elected to the Bundestag in 1990. These credentials would make her the perfect caricature of a female politician in Germany, but her election to the chancellery has nothing to do with her gender. Like former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Merkel is a strong fiscal conservative. She does not fashion herself as a “woman’s politician” and is, like Thatcher, seen as a strong leader first and a woman second.

Still, although Chancellor Merkel would probably not require the quota system to be elected, it has brought more women into the Bundestag who may not have been elected otherwise. Also, and interviews would be required to confirm this point, more women could be pursuing political office in Germany because they are more likely to be seated than in other Western countries without a quota system. Regardless, Germany is benefiting from the input of more women in the Bundestag and this may lead to more opportunities for women in politics and other areas in the future.

Conclusions

At present, the experiences of women in Germany and the Czech Republic are not drastically different. Unemployment rates for women are generally consistent with

¹²⁹ “The New German Bundestag,” *Magazin-Deutschland*, (Nov 3 2009), http://www.magazine-deutschland.de/en/artikel-en/article/mdissue/096.html?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=9285&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=75&cHash=3b25a7a63b&tx_ttnews%5Bissue%5D=096.

¹³⁰ Marilyn Rueschemeyer, “East German Women in Unified Germany,” in *Women In Power in Post-Communist Parliaments*, edited by Rueschemeyer, Marilyn and Sharon L. Wolchik, 131-160 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2009).

men's, though in Germany it is actually lower than the male unemployment rate. Also, in both countries, equal pay for men and women has not been achieved. Rectifying this problem has been a goal of the European Union and its preceding organizations for at least forty years but it remains out of reach in both old and new member states. EU accession has also had little effect on educational equality in both countries. Since the democratic transition began, the proportion of women in tertiary education in either country has not changed much.

The most notable conclusion is though women in the Czech Republic make up a greater percentage of university students than men, but the wage disparity remains. German women do not out represent men in tertiary education, but again, men out earn women by about 20 percent. This is a trend witnessed all over Europe and the EU has not successfully addressed the issue by pressuring new or old member states to enforce directives requiring equal compensation. To be fair, these figures are aggregated across the countries' entire economies. A more in depth study of a wide range of occupations would be needed in order to determine whether the disparity is due to women's choice to pursue lower paying occupations or if the phenomenon is witnessed in every sector.

Germany has made a commitment to gender equality by including it in the Constitution, while the Czech Republic is still holding on to family centric policies. The differences are recognizable in several areas. German women are provided with greater access to state funded, pre-elementary education. Czech women are still dealing with some of the same attitudes that affected family policy after the fall of communism, but more childcare is available than during the early democratic transition. This change has

more to do with women returning to the work place as the economy improved since the 1990s, and less to do with pressure from the EU.

5. The Future of European Gender Equality

Currently, both countries are members of the European Union. Through each period discussed, similarities and differences between women's status in either country are recognizable. While the countries are most similar during the communist period, after diverging during the 1990s, today it looks like gender equality is on generally the same path in Germany and the Czech Republic. But, the same path is still an imperfect one and other aspects of equality have witnessed more progress than others. The most glaring examples of areas that need attention from the domestic governments and the EU are wage disparities in both countries and the under-representation of women in Czech politics.

Ultimately, the convergence between the Czech Republic and Germany in some areas, like the labor market and education, but not in others, like political representation, show that the EU has not played a consistent role in gender equality. Although women are more equal in Germany, per the parameters I chose, early EU membership was not the defining contributory factor. The changes that occurred in the Czech Republic since the democratic transition are more likely attributed to a growing economy and the freedoms provided by capitalism and democracy, rather than intervention by the EU. The EU has not taken much action in the area of gender equality, and with the one issue the organization does have an expressed interest in, closing the gender wage gap, nothing has improved in either country. The gender wage gap in Germany is only slightly smaller than the Czech Republic's and this is not attributable to pressure from the EU.

EU membership has surely strengthened the economies of Germany and the Czech Republic, thereby contributing to greater job growth and increased government revenue. Job growth has allowed women to move back toward full employment and increased government revenue has provided states with the income to increase social services. Still, outside of rhetorical overtures, the EU has not explicitly promoted gender equality in the member states examined. Legislation has been drafted but norms have not been constructed or adopted organization-wide.

Moving forward the European Union will need to work with member states to ensure that legislation is not only transposed into national law, but also implemented. The lack of execution is detrimental to the EU's efforts to ameliorate the aspects of gender discrimination over which it has jurisdiction. The EU should focus on addressing the gender wage gap by determining in which sectors it is more pronounced and what tools countries with smaller disparities have used to solve the problem. Narrowing this gap could contribute to the increased enrollment of women in traditionally male disciplines and occupations. Wage equality may also provide women with more freedom and confidence to pursue political careers, increasing women's presence in politics and possibly further improving women's place in Europe.

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