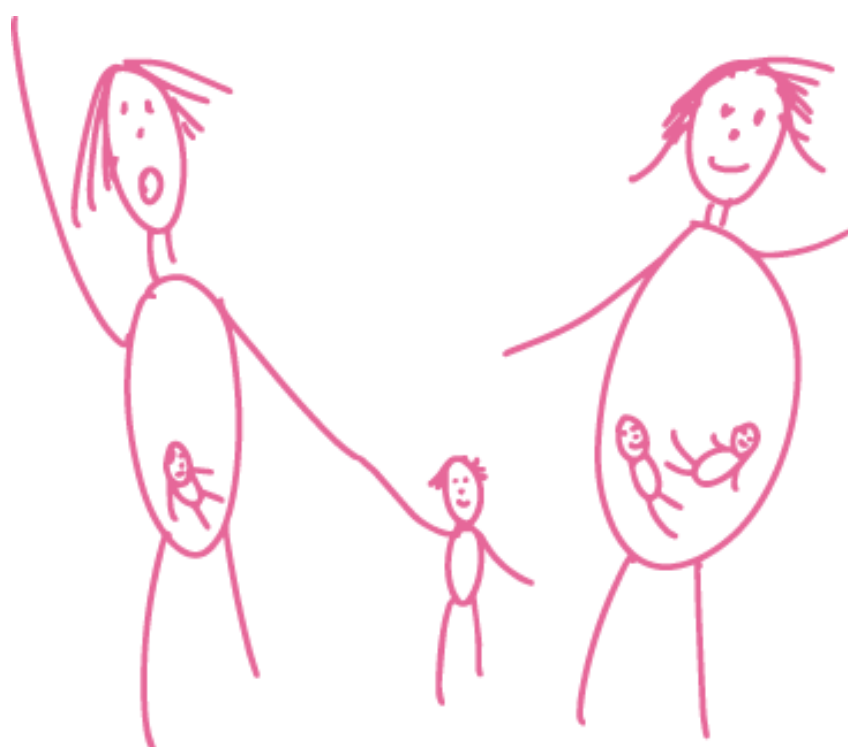


CZECH REPUBLIC

NATIONAL REPORT TO ENCA

10/2021 - 10/2022



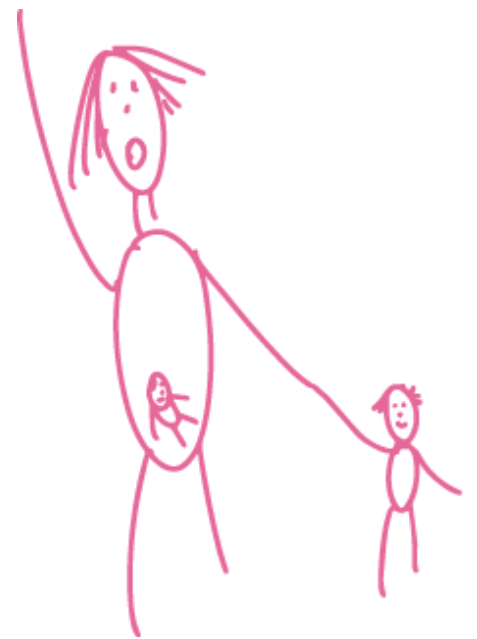


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Introduction



We perceive the period between autumn 2021 and 2022 as quite active, although as Petra Sovová from HAM (Hnutí za aktivní mateřství – The Active Motherhood Movement) recently publicly stated, changes for the better in Czech obstetrics have taken 'an embarrassingly long time'. In the Czech Republic, several NGOs that are focusing on reproductive rights, each from their own perspective, are cooperating very nicely together. Most of them meet regularly via the Working Group on Obstetrics of ČŽL (Česká ženská lobby – Czech Women's Lobby). In this national report, we have also included moments that are not purely activities of HAM and Aperio (Společnost pro zdravé rodičovství – Healthy Parenting Association) but are a part of a more comprehensive report.



The situation around Covid

In many regions, the presence of doulas in labour/maternity wards was restricted as a result of measures related to the Covid epidemic. In several regions, the situation was very unfavourable for many months. On the other hand, there are also hospitals that perceive doulas as a member of the team, and where our doulas were welcomed throughout the year. It is worth mentioning the interesting pilot project of the Bulovka hospital, where doulas are part of the operation of the labour/maternity wards without the need for the pregnant women to book them privately.

The situation around the accompaniment of community midwives in maternity hospitals did not change much during Covid – these accompaniments are still not possible without the midwife being an employee of the maternity hospital.

"There is still a general problem in ensuring that both parents are seen as legal guardians."



Accompaniment of fathers in maternity wards was already possible, but not in many postpartum wards. There is still a general problem in ensuring that both parents are seen as legal guardians to whom the child is automatically entitled to be accompanied, and not just a visitor subject to the visiting regulations. At the beginning of the pandemic, we saw a significant increase in interest in home and outpatient births. As a result of the continuing unfavourable situation not only around visits to the postpartum wards it appears that the option of an outpatient birth (a birth where a woman and her baby leave a hospital earlier than 72 hours) has become significantly more common.

In the first wave of Covid during spring 2020, UNIPA (Unie porodních asistentek – Union of Midwives) launched the Rodím v klidu (“I Give Birth in Peace”) project, a telephone helpline to support women in times of pandemic. In addition to the phone line, an email and chat counselling service is currently in place to provide women with quality, expert and respectful information from midwives.

Projects, events and initiatives

International Week for Respecting Childbirth 2022

In May, as a part of the IWRC, HAM organised another yearly edition of the Pregnancy, Childbirth and Parenthood Festival (“Festival o těhotenství, porodu a rodičovství”). The organisers moved it to a new location in the centre of Prague, to a spacious hall that was barrier-free and easily accessible by public transport. HAM offered around 70 lectures, workshops and discussions to the parenting public. Entrance to the festival premises is always free, only selected lectures are paid. Weekday mornings are attended by school excursions, for which lectures are given by the ČAD (Česká asociace dul – Czech Association of Doulas). ČAD, UNIPA and Aperio were all part of the afternoon program at the festival with their counselling sessions. Regional organizers (maternity centres, doulas, etc.) organized many smaller events and lectures all over the Czech Republic.



All the photos in
this report were
taken during IWCR
2022 in Prague



We Enjoy Active Motherhood!

In November 2021, HAM organized an autumn mini online festival We Enjoy Active Motherhood! (“Aktivní mateřství nás baví!”) as a reminiscence of the 2020 edition of the Pregnancy, Childbirth and Parenthood Festival (“Festival o těhotenství, porodu a rodičovství”) that was moved from the spring to autumn 2020 and eventually held online due to Covid. HAM is keen to keep this autumn celebration of motherhood as a new tradition.



Enough!

The initiative Enough! (“Už dost!”) that is focusing on obstetric violence was first presented at the the Pregnancy, Childbirth and Parenthood Festival (“Festival o těhotenství, porodu a rodičovství”). The initiative consists of a team of lawyers, midwives, activists and women who raise awareness about what obstetric violence is and who suggest ways to prevent it. UNIPA is part of this initiative.

Website: www.uz-dost.cz.

Healthy Adolescence

HAM has a team of certified sex education lecturers who offer interactive and fun lectures to kindergartens, primary and secondary schools via the Healthy Adolescence (“Zdravé dospívání”) program. These lectures are in great demand.

Website: www.zdravedospivani.eu.

Academy for Antenatal Educators

Year-long programme to improve the skills of antenatal care lecturers has been completed by 15 more women. In January 2023, Aperio is launching the next run of the training programme.

Guide to Maternity Hospitals

Aperio has compiled and published a data analysis of data from 5,000 questionnaires of women who gave birth in a maternity hospital in the previous five years.

Interesting results from 2021:

- most women (81.7%) gave birth in a separate delivery room with a shower and toilet,
- 77.5% had the baby on their stomach or chest immediately after birth,
- half of the new-borns are formula-fed in maternity hospitals and at discharge 75% are breastfed, 20% are breastfed and formula-fed and 5% are formula-fed.

More can be found here:

<https://www.aperio.cz/clanky/jak-se-rod-v-ceskych-porodnicich>

Let Them!

HAM and other childbirth associations have joined the initiative Let them! (“Ať můžou!”) to support community midwives. They are struggling to provide care in the Czech Republic and the initiative is working to change legislation and support the development of the midwifery profession.

“... half of the new-borns are formula-fed in maternity hospitals and at discharge 75% are breastfed, 20% are breastfed and formula-fed and 5% are formula-fed.”



Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of ČAD

Czech Association of Doulas, the oldest Czech organization that brings together and educates doulas, celebrated its 20th anniversary. The celebration took place in Brno in the garden of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in September 2021. On the occasion, ČAD introduced a new award called Doula friendly personality („Dula friendly osobnost”).

Outputs from International Projects

Completion of two follow-up ERASMUS-2 projects od Aperio in cooperation with RODA (Croatia), ADRESAM (Spain), Rumina (Slovenia) and Kapcsolódó Nevelés Egyesület (Hungary). The outputs are free to distribute not only in Czech but also in English, Spanish, Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian:

- [E-book Pregnancy](#) – kindly, respectfully and practically (“Těhotenství – laskavě, s respektem a prakticky”)
- App for pregnant women and their partners: [Expecting](#)
- App for parents of children aged 0 to 3 years: [Growing App](#) programme.



“ ... symbolism for the need to overcome obstacles and bring about necessary changes... ”

Open-air Childbirth Assembly

Another informal working meeting called Open-air Childbirth Assembly (“Porodní slet pod širým nebem”) took place this summer. This time, the organizers also included a powerful ritual of breaking arrows and bending steel bars as a symbolism for the need to overcome obstacles and bring about necessary changes in Czech obstetrics.

Commission for Obstetrics

In the autumn of 2021, a commission was established at the Czech Ministry of Health to develop a Concept of Care for Women during Pregnancy, Childbirth and Postpartum based on interdisciplinary cooperation. In addition to this commission, UNIPA has representatives also in the Working Group on Obstetrics of the Czech Government Council for Gender Equality.



Teatime with Doula

In March, as a part of World Doula Week, and throughout the whole year, online and offline meetings Teatime with Doula (“Čaje s doulou”) were held.

Picnics with Midwives

In May, Picnics with Midwives (“[Pikniky s porodními asistentkami](#)”) took place across the Czech Republic.



Birth houses and midwifery centres



The situation surrounding birth houses in the Czech Republic is still not entirely transparent due to the need for a change in legislation.

In Prague, the (controversial) Vysočany maternity hospital was opened, bringing with it many question marks and hopes. As a result of unmanaged internal processes and the resulting staffing situation, it was closed in October 2022.

On the other hand, the establishment of midwifery centres at maternity hospitals is slowly succeeding. For example in October 2021, a midwifery centre was established at the Brno University Hospital (<https://www.porodnicebrno.cz/centrum-porodni-asistence>) where they also organized a conference for midwives in May 2022.

Interesting documents and press releases

- In 2021 ČŽL in cooperation with UNIPA published [a shadow report on the state of midwifery](#) (in Czech and English language)
- Aperio provides analysis of data from the 2022 Guide to Maternity Hospitals – [How to give birth in Czechia](#) (“Jak se rodí v Česku”).
- In February, [an open letter](#) was sent to the Czech Minister of Health to prevent conflicts of interest in connection with the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative.
- In April, the Czech Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was [called upon to end cooperation with the organization Movement for life](#) (“Hnutí pro život”) which expressed its strong opposition to allowing abortions for women affected by the war in Ukraine.
- In May, [an appeal was sent to the Czech government](#) regarding the situation of midwives and their provision of care to women before, during and especially after childbirth.
- In June, [an open letter](#) was sent to the president of the Police of the Czech Republic regarding the inappropriate assignment of one of the stations (Barborka) at the training of surveillance units. Thanks to this, in the summer of 2022, UNIPA was able to establish a cooperation with the Police of the Czech Republic on training in communication and legal skills in relation to midwifery.

Other achievements and interesting moments

- UNIPA managed to establish [interdisciplinary cooperation](#) with maternity hospitals within the Perinatal loss project.
- UNIPA received significant grants to support the prevention of obstetric violence and the support of health professionals in caring for families with perinatal loss.
- UNIPA, HAM, Aperio and ČAD – within the framework of ČŽL – received support in the form of advocacy consultations from Open Society Fund which is used for the development of a strategy to ensure affordable 24/7 care of midwives covered by health insurance.
- Over the course of the year, several interesting meetings of maternity hospital employees with doulas took place: In March, an online meeting of ČAD with representatives of the Ostrava maternity hospital (FNO) – MUDr. Ondřej Šimetka, Ph.D., MBA and physiotherapist Mgr. Marika Bajerová. In September, Ostrava Municipal hospital Fifejdy Open Day. In October, a meeting with doulas at the hospital in Frýdek-Místek.
- The Working Group on Obstetrics of the Czech Government Council for Gender Equality approved [the initiative for the 40th anniversary of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes](#). Following that, Czech Government Council organized in cooperation with SpoKojení [an expert round table](#) with interested ministries and other state authorities, while in March 2022 trained supervisory authorities (regional trade offices).

Interesting figures from the statistics of ČAD

- In 2021, doulas from ČAD accompanied 37% more Czech women when giving birth comparing to 2020.
- 2.3% of ČAD accompaniments were planned caesarean section deliveries.
- 90.8% of ČAD accompaniments of deliveries that started vaginally were also completed vaginally, only 9.2% ended in a caesarean section.
- The success rate of VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Caesarean) with a ČAD accompaniment was 85.1%.

Acknowledgements

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