



# **Factors contributing to the decline in childcare services for children under the age of three in the Czech Republic**

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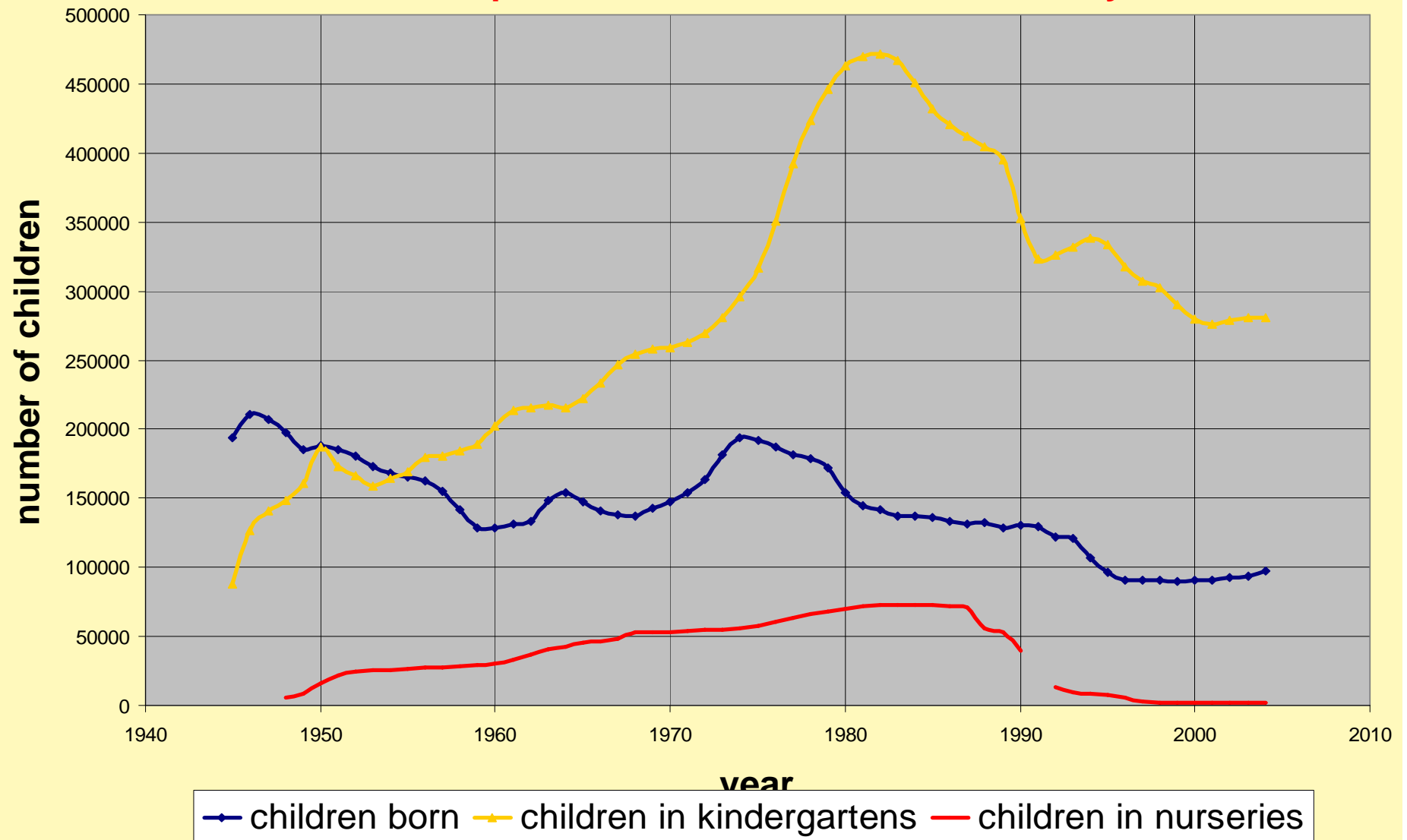
# Introduction

## Post-1989 development in CEE

- decline in childcare services
- lowest access to childcare services for children under 3
- highest negative impact of motherhood on women's labor market participation

**Why CEE region became the one with the lowest share of children under 3 in formal daycare in Europe? (case of the Czech Republic)**

## Number of children born, number of children in kindergartens and number of places in nurseries in Czech society



# Theoretical background

## Path dependency

previous policy decisions and institutions influence today's policy decisions

- structurally
- culturally (cognitively)

## **Important institutional changes after WWII**

### **Moving kindergartens to the Ministry of Education in late 1940s**

- international organizing of kindergarten employees
- demand on integration kindergartens into education system

### **Moving nurseries to the Ministry of Health in early 1950s**

- Soviet model applied in CEE countries
- institutional healthcare for the smallest babies because care activities were to gradually externalize to the maximum possible extent so that mothers could work

### **Other preschool facilities were supposed to decline**

- **education** to preschool children **from the age of 3** by teachers
- **healthcare** to children **under the age of 3** by nurses

### **Consequently**

- **children under 3** believed to be in need of care while **children above 3** in need of preschool education and training

# Critique of nurseries

**Medical discourse** from 1950s

**Psychological discourse** from 1960s

**New models** of childcare for children under the age of 3 tested since 1960s

- micro-nurseries
- joint facilities of nurseries and kindergartens

but

the **legacy of institutional and conceptual separation** of childcare of children under the age of 3 and children from the age of 3 blocked new models to develop

# **'The path' of prolongation of maternity leaves since 1960s**

**No more high labor shortage**

**Demographic discourse**

**Introduction of additional maternity leave and idea of its gradual prolongation up to 3 years so that lower demand on nurseries**

- prolongation of **'maternity leave'** in 1964, 1968 and 1987
- introduction and prolongation of eligibility period and extension of beneficiaries of **'financial aid in pregnancy and motherhood'** for mothers (usually on 'maternity leave') in 1964, 1968, 1987 and 1988
- introduction and prolongation of **'additional maternity leave'** in 1964, 1970 and 1989
- introduction and prolongation of eligibility period and extension of beneficiaries of **'maternity allowance'** for mothers (usually on 'additional maternity leave') in 1970, 1971, 1985 and 1987

**Reproducing gender roles**

**2 'full-time' incomes in a family but wages of women only 66-68% of men's wages**

**Continuous men's professional carrier and interrupted carrier of women**

## Number of years Czech mothers spent 'on leave' with their 1<sup>st</sup> child according to the year the child was born (in %)

Child born	Max 1 year	More than 1 max 2 years	More than 2 max 3 years	More than 3 years
1960-1969	61	15	17	7
1970-1979	44	34	17	5
1980-1989	25	30	37	8
1990-2002	5	17	51	27

Sources: ISSP 2002.

# Gender conservative 1990s

Fertility decline and postponement of childbearing

Unemployment expected to grow

**The policy path of prolongation of maternity allowance continued** – parental allowance prolonged up to child's age of four (for a full-time parent)

Responsibility for childcare facilities given to local governments - decline in childcare facilities – nurseries expensive and almost ceased to exist - Ministry of education gave subsidies to kindergartens only - **the legacy of institutional and conceptual separation of childcare** of children under 3 and older

**Legacy of defining childcare for children under 3 as healthcare blocked development of alternative forms** of non-family care for such small children

**Kindergartens compensated for the drop in the number of nurseries** – the share of two-year-olds in kindergartens rose

Women's groups uninterested in the issue of childcare facilities

Self-help groups of mothers established maternity centers for full-time mothers

# Since the end of 1990s

Long-term unemployment of mothers experienced a steady rise

Fertility reached its historical minimum and started to increase due to babyboom generation born in 1970s

Number of declined applications to attend kindergartens growing

Women's groups started to lobby for changes in childcare policies

**Reforms concerning paid parental leave - in order to enable mothers to return to the labor market more quickly**

but

**discrimination of nurseries (making them too expensive) contributed to their further decline**

and

**legislation on private child-minders still in flux**

# Conclusion

- Importance of **path dependency** in influencing current childcare policies
- **Historical institutional arrangements** influenced current **attitudes** and practices of formal care of preschool children
- **Policy path of prolonging** „additional maternity leave“ up to 3 years continued in 1990s
- Drop in the number of nurseries – the **legacy of institutional separation**
- Post-1989 consequences to mothers´ labor market participation
- **Reproduction of gender and socioeconomic inequalities** in **gender conservative** environment, trend to **privatization of care** and impacts of market economies on private lives