

## Abstract

This thesis adopts three stepwise perspectives to look at earnings inequality. It applies Czech data from two surveys, Microcensus and Living Conditions, covering the period 1988–2008, and European dataset EU-SILC 2008 and 2009 for international comparisons.

The first essay “*Personal Earnings Inequality*” analyzes personal earnings distribution in the Czech Republic since the early transition from communism, using relative distribution method. The trend of “hollowing of the middle” was confirmed in the early transition, but this phenomenon later subsided. Earnings polarization was apparent for all sex and education subgroups between 1988 and 1996. In international comparison, earnings of men and highly educated are more homogenous than earnings of their counterparts in most analyzed countries.

The second essay “*Gender Wage Gap*” quantifies the structure of gender wage gaps in four Central-East European countries (CEE), using the Heckman regression model and Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition. The observed gender wage gap is substantially higher in the Czech Republic and Slovakia than in Hungary and Poland. A relatively small but positive part of the observed gender wage gap can be explained by gender differences in characteristics in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with a high contribution of job characteristics. In Hungary and Poland, working women have on average even better characteristics than working men, mainly in terms of individual characteristics.

The third essay “*Earnings Inequality within Couples*” examines within-couple earnings distribution in four CEE countries and two countries in Western Europe. Women, on average, contribute less to a couple’s income than men. The Czech Republic with its relatively high within-couple earnings inequality in various aspects resembles more the two West European countries than the remaining three CEE countries. In all CEE countries with the exception of the Czech Republic it is true that if in dual-earner couples the woman is better educated than the man, the couples (almost) reach earnings equality.

Although all the three essays focus on different aspects of earnings distribution with a special emphasis on gender, one message keeps repeating: Regardless of the analyzed perspective the position of Czech women seems to be the worst of all analyzed countries.