

Family support & COVID.  
Vulnerable families

# Single but Strong: Empowerment of Single Parents in the Czech Republic

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# Aperio: Why and what

## Why:

Parenting should be a joyful experience for both men and women – and valued by the society.

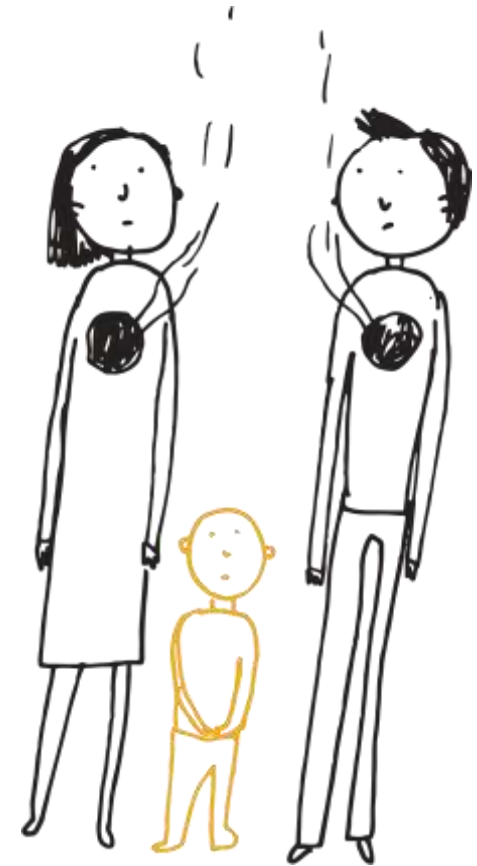
## What:

- Guidance and childbirth education for expectant parents
- Legal and psychosocial counselling for parents (in relation to employment, social benefits, family crises)
- Support programmes for single parents and for divorcing/separating parents



# Single parents in the Czech Republic

- 300,000 single parent families,  $\frac{4}{5}$  of them headed by a woman
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  of all families with children
  - 22 % of all children live with one parent only
  - Every year, 23,000 children experience their parents' divorce (+ children of unmarried couples)



# Single parents in the Czech Republic

- both under- or overemployed
  - when employed, single parents often work more hours than parents with a partner
  - unemployment caused by a mix of specific disadvantages (lower education, socially excluded regions, lack of support for work-family combination, discrimination)
- highest risk of material poverty and working poverty of all household types
  - ½ cannot afford an extra expense of 400 EUR
  - ½ either socially excluded, or working poor



# Single parents in a psychosocial perspective

Decreased well-being due to chronic stress and exhaustion

Decreased self-esteem and self-efficacy

Conflict with ex-partner

Primary family support either higher or lower than for two-parent families (either dependent or dysfunctional support)

Impacts - lower chances of finding a well-paying job; poverty and depression influence negatively their parenting practices, with poorer outcomes for their children



# Single parents in the Czech Republic: Covid-19

- income gap between one- and two-parent households has grown
  - $\frac{1}{3}$  of one-parent households vs. 6 % of two-parent households are at risk of income poverty
- gender care gap - 75 % of parents using the sick kid benefit were women - has doubled women's unemployment and risk of work discrimination
- well-being has plummeted - higher risk of depressive/anxious symptoms for mothers of children <14 due to closed schools, even higher for single mothers



# What single mothers say

*But it's more... how just the **nerves** are like strained, because you work, you had to cook every day when the kids were home, and do school on top of that, and I've just watched myself yell really on any excuse. So I thought, really, even for these kids, it must be quite hard to put up with me. (Pavla)*

*But I have to say that sometimes you struggle with those feelings of **anger**, yeah, that I just get angry at times, well. I think to myself that the system is not friendly towards us at all. (Hana)*

*It's a terrible **strain**, for the psyche. Like I'm not the kind of person who believes that if I run out of **money**, it's going to fall out of the sky. Like I just know people like that, I admire them, I guess, their commitment and their faith, but I'm not like that unfortunately. So I can't let go of that. (Claudia)*

*I don't know, well, I don't know what I would see as positive about it. I guess nothing. Because really, as far as the **school** system goes, I think it's hurt a lot of kids. And the worst thing is that nobody's really sort of addressing that, what's going to happen to those kids because like de facto they're going to miss almost a year of school, which is quite a lot for those kids, and nobody's saying when they're going to make up that year. (Nela)*

# What single mothers say

*Well, it seems to me that now these single moms, now that the crisis is on, it's worse. As soon as you don't meet something a little bit, or you need to drive half an hour longer in the morning, with the idea of staying half an hour longer in the afternoon, somehow those **employers** don't really want to accommodate that now. (Anna)*

*And on top of that, we're still on **the front line** there, by going to work every day, so anybody can...I'm not saying like straight out get sick, but you can go into quarantine just because of that contact with somebody who reports you. Which, yeah, immediately means sixty percent of the income. We've been quarantined like this for ten days. And even the people with no symptoms, we were all just, we were all herded for tests, and that's what I'm afraid of, that it could happen again at any time. (Hana)*



# Single, but Strong: Support for single mothers

Single parents programmes since 2009

Further development inspired by support programmes from the UK and Ireland (OPFS, One Family)

Current programmes:

- Take a Breath - education
- Single but Strong - education and mentoring

Theoretical background:

- Self-efficacy theory
- Solution-focused approach



# Single, but Strong: Support for single mothers



# Single, but Strong: Support for single mothers

## Framework:

- Group meetings (approx. 40 hours; we always start with a 2-day session, then variable)
- Optional e-learning

## Additional tools:

- Counselling (legal, psychological)
- Coaching and individual mentoring
- Providing organizational support (childcare or travel subsidies)

# Single, but Strong: Support for single mothers



# Resources

PALONCYOVÁ, Jana, et al. Neúplné rodiny. (One-parent Families.) [online] VÚPSV, vvi, 2019. [https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz\\_469.pdf](https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz_469.pdf)

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DUDOVÁ, Radka. Dopady opatření proti pandemii COVID-19 na sólo matky – 2. vlna (Impact of Covid-19 pandemic measures on single mothers - 2nd wave). [online] Aperio - Společnost pro zdravé rodičovství, 2021. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DMeWATOsTCwbiuNy9SotjiMoidflb4Yz/view?usp=sharing>

# Thank you for your attention

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