

Current Affairs - European Contact Group fighting for gender equality

[2009-10-21] By Ruth Fraňková

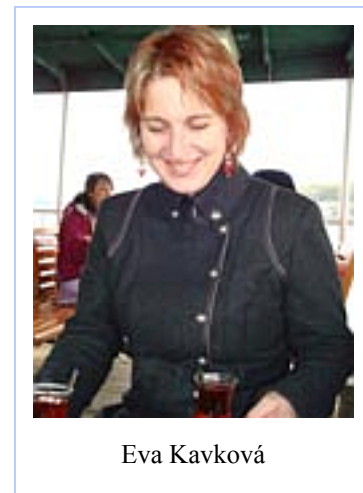
Mum behind the wheel of a truck, while dad stays at home to look after the children. While this concept might seem completely normal to most kids, Czech children may still find the idea shocking, at least according to the European Contact Group, a non-profit organization that promotes equal opportunities for men and women. Within a broader effort to break that stereotype they have produced special work sheets to help teachers in kindergartens and primary schools address the issue.

The collection of work sheets by the European Contact Group is called “Adame, dneska už neva, že letadlo řídí Eva,” or “Adam, today Eve is piloting the plane”, and as the title suggests, it addresses the topic of gender equality at the workplace. Children cut out paper planes and trucks with women drivers and pilots and learn that men can work as nurses and hair dressers. Eva Kavková of the European Contact Group explains the reasons behind the project:



“Our society is still very traditional and we have deeply ingrained stereotypes concerning gender roles: what men should do and what women should do. It is really important to start at a very early age, even when kids are still in kindergarten, because this is the time when stereotypes are already constituted. That’s why we have published these work sheets.”

Eva Kavková says the situation is even worse than it used to be some twenty years ago and women with small children, who want to go back to work find themselves in a difficult situation. *“There are not as many kindergartens as there were 20 years ago and grandparents are usually very busy. They are still working and they cannot babysit grandchildren as much as they used to in the past. I can see some kind of antifeminist mood in the society. All the gender organisations that are trying to promote equal rights for men and women are considered hostile.”*



Eva Kavková

The European Contact Group has already published a colouring book which addressed the topic of equal opportunities and a fair division of roles in the family, attempting to eradicate stereotypes on male and female roles. There was a reprint due to a huge demand for it in schools: *“There is a lack of such materials for little children. There is not a wide variety of choice and the materials we publish are quite creative, so kids can play with them and can discuss them with teachers. And this is our aim, to initiate a debate and critical thinking.”*