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**Philosophical Faculty**

**BACHELOR'S THESIS**

University of Hradec Králové  
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**The development of the Women Rights' local  
groups, the proFem case, during the Czech  
Republic's process of ascension to the EU**  
Bachelor's Thesis

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## Zadání bakalářské práce

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### **Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:**

This dissertation focuses on the impact of the ascension process into the European Union (EU) in the Czech Republic's local women activist groups. The goal is to explore how the implementation of the EU gender policies as part of the ascension requirements affects the local Women Right activists groups discourse, in specific, the proFem NGO group. The main criterion for choosing this particular group was for its presence in the political scene prior to the ascension period, being founded in 1993, and for its major role played during the years of 1996 to 2004. The research will examine the changes of discourse in the proFem annual reports prior, during the ascension period, and as well in selected years after it, with the expected outcome of being able to understand how the discussion of Women Rights in the Czech Republic evolved throughout these years and how we can identify the influence of the EU in this evolution.

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I declare that I have written this Bachelor's thesis independently (under the supervising of the head supervisor of the thesis) and stated all employed sources and literature.

In Hradec Králové 15.04.2022

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## **Annotation**

Tojal de Almeida, A. K (2020) *Vývoj místní skupiny pro práva žen, kauza proFem, během procesu vstupu České republiky do EU*. (Bachelor Thesis) Univerzita Hradec Králové.

Tato disertační práce se zaměřuje na dopad procesu vstupu do Evropské unie (EU) na místní ženské aktivistické skupiny v České republice. Cílem je prozkoumat, jak implementace genderové politiky EU v rámci požadavků na vstup do EU ovlivňuje diskurz místních skupin aktivistek za práva žen, konkrétně skupiny nevládních organizací proFem. Hlavním kritériem pro výběr této konkrétní skupiny byla její přítomnost na politické scéně před obdobím ascensu, neboť byla založena v roce 1993, a její významná role, kterou sehrála v letech 1996 až 2004. Výzkum bude zkoumat proměny diskurzu ve výročních zprávách proFem před nástupem, v období nástupu a také ve vybraných letech po něm, přičemž očekávaným výsledkem bude možnost pochopit, jak se diskuse o právech žen v České republice v průběhu těchto let vyvíjela a jak lze identifikovat vliv EU na tento vývoj.

**Klíčová slova:** Evropeizace, sociální hnutí, ženská práva, analýza diskurzu, feminismus

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

“We will continue to talk about these [Women’s] rights until there is no such thing in our society and we have truly achieved full equality between men and women. With the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union, the non-equal situation of women and men in our society has become much more visible, and the fight against inequality seems to be more 'acceptable,' but the figures on very unequal salaries, inadequate laws and high unemployment of highly qualified women, for example, show us in one of the last places in the European Union. And that is why we are here.” (proFem, 2005)

With the citation above, proFem concludes the Foreword of their 2004 Annual Report. In the year that the Czech Republic was recognized officially as a member state of the European Union, the group acknowledges how this process has highlighted and legitimized their fights in the Czech society, while at the same time, it exposes that there are still shortcomings to be addressed.

There are several questions that arise while reading this citation. If they state that the accession has made the inequalities between women and men “much more visible” and their fight against it “more acceptable”, how did the group perceive those two things prior to the ascension? In which way has the ascension process changed their views? Lastly, as a pro-women non-profit organization founded in 1993-4, have proFem always framed its missions and values under the “equality between men and women”?

Among others, these questions served as inspirations for this dissertation. To answer such questions is needed to understand how the accession process impacted proFem’s discourse, by uncovering the changes in their mission, values and goals. To put it in a broader perspective, to answer these questions is to analyze how the accession process influenced the Women's Rights discourse in the Czech Republic, to observe if



certain issues are understood differently and if we can identify the adoption of EU's terminology on the groups' discourses.

As a process that intrinsically transformed Czech social, political and cultural sphere, the accession process to the European Union has become the interest of several authors. Europeanization is a term that was first heard in 1994, conceptualized by Ladrech. It refers to the impact that this process has upon candidate states and is described as “an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making.” (Ladrech, 1994, p. 69). As the European Union itself develops, so does the term Europeanization. In 2003, Radaelli will use it in a broader sense, including how this process influences “paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs” (Radaelli, 2003) of actors of the national level.

However, when it comes to research on the Europeanization of Social Movements, in particular of the Women's Rights Movement, the literature available rather focuses on the “hard” impact of the accession process reflected on the transformation of resource access, together with an institutional opening for social movement groups to mobilize on the domestic and international level. (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010; Hašková & Krízková 2008) To answer the questions mentioned above, I must shift the focus to the “soft” impacts, namely towards the ways that this process impacts what Radaelli (2003) refers to as “paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs.”

If we circle back to the citation of the 2004 Annual Report Foreword, we can identify that proFem is referring to the “hard” impacts of Europeanization discussed in the literature, for example in regards to how “the EU acted in effect as a certification agency that helped to legitimize the demands of women's groups in the eyes of the local political elite.” (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p 217), but the question that remains to be answered is how proFem is talking about it. Analyzing the way proFem talks or writes about their values, missions and goals will show us their “‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs”, things that Radaelli (2003) stated pruned to changes by Europeanization. To focus on these things is to focus on how proFem is expressing themselves, or simply put, on proFem's discourse.

This discursive approach to Europeanization is the focus of authors such as Ruth Wodak and Caterina Carta. Through Discourse Analysis, these authors brought attention to the construction of European Identities during the process of integration to the European Union. While their work is more towards Policy Analysis (Carta and Wodak, 2015), or the interdisciplinarity between Discourse Studies and European Integration Studies (Wodak, 2018), it indicates that there's an academic interest concerning discursive analysis of the impacts of the integration to the EU.

Aiming to contribute to this discussion, and given that authors looking into the Europeanization of Social Movements, in particular, often do it with a different focal point, I believe that it is pertinent to write this dissertation with the purpose of understanding how the integration into the European Union changed the way profFem, as an actor part of the Women's Right Movement of the Czech Republic, perceives and writes about their mission, values, and goals before, during and after the accession.

To do so, it's imperative that we first understand the historical context of the Women's Rights Movement in the Czech Republic before 1998, the official start of the accession negotiations, laying a base for what is to come. Czech history with the Women's Right movement can be traced back to the creation of the First Republic and its feminist president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. As president, Masaryk "supported education for women, lectured on women's issues and defended their rights as early as in the 1880s - his essays may even be considered the actual beginnings of Czech feminist political writings." (Ferber and Raabe, 2003, p. 411; Lundin, 2008, p. 21) Unfortunately, the years that followed 1935, when Masaryk left the office and his death shortly after, had major setbacks for the feminist movements in the territory. From the German occupation to the Communist Regime, not only did the feminist movement suffer but all forms of political activism were challenged.

The fall of the Communist Regime, marked in Czech history by the Velvet Revolution, "be considered a radical opening of political opportunities for social movement mobilization" (Císař and Vrábliková, 2010, p. 213). Quickly after, amid the turmoil of rebuilding the country's democracy, the Czech government takes its first steps towards integration with the European Union, at the Copenhagen European Summit in 1993, marking the start of the accession negotiations.

However, as a consequence of the communist regime, the Women's Right Movement goes into the accession period carrying a lot of stigma from the media and politicians. (Šiklová, 1999; Lundin, 2008). This stresses the need that if the goal of this dissertation is to answer the following research question: "*How did the process of accession to the EU influence proFem's discourse, and therefore Women's Rights' discourse in the Czech Republic?*" I must break down my analysis into three segments: prior, during, and after the accession, to fully comprehend said influences and their development.

To accomplish this goal, I propose the Discourse Analysis of proFem's Annual Reports. The analysis is divided into two steps: First, I grouped the Annual Reports into three segments (prior, during, and after the accession negotiations), and identified the dominant themes. Subsequently, I exposed how proFem describes these themes differently throughout the years while contextualizing how these changes came to be. That is to say, I do not justify the changes but rather present to the reader how they can be positioned alongside the literature reviews and historical events of the time.

As a pro-women non-profit organization, proFem was founded by activists interested in the Women's Right Social Movement. To fully grasp proFem's discourse transformations over time and during the accession process, it's important to first understand the history of the movement, what struggles and historical events could have motivated the foundation of a pro-women non-profit organization in the 1990s. With that in mind, the next section will present a brief contextualization of the Women's Right Social Movement in the Czech Republic.

## 2. WOMEN'S RIGHT MOVEMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Women have been key actors in several historical political moments of Czech history. Early Czech Egalitarian thinking can be traced back to the 15th century, when the Hussite movement promoted that everyone should be educated to read and understand the Bible, including women. (Lundin, 2008) This was the starting point to a longstanding tradition of recognizing the importance of women's education in the territory. During the Czech National Revival, in the 18th century, women were actively shaping the country's history. One of the most well-known figures of the Revival was

Božena Němcová, author of the novel *Babička*, considered one of the masterpieces of Czech literature, that fuelled the sense of community in the territory, by cherishing Czech traditions and language. As mentioned in the previous section, Czech Egalitarianism culminates with the creation of the First Republic and its feminist president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

However, between Masaryk's presidency and the accession to the European Union, historical events resulted in major setbacks for the Czech Women's Right Movement groups. In order to elaborate on the possible impact that the accession to the EU had on these groups, in particular on the proFem group, we must first understand the reality of such groups prior to 1998. A great starting point for the analysis is the Velvet Revolution in 1989, 40 days of non-violent public protests that led to the end of a one-party government in Czechoslovakia, the subsequent dismantling of the command economy, and conversion to a parliamentary republic. It should be noted that although these demonstrations rebirthed opportunities for political activism in the country, this opening did not include all groups and issues in the same proportionality.

As a matter of fact, since demands for Human Rights were squashed during the Communist regime, certain debates of that time might have skipped countries under its influence. "The emancipation of women related to the Second Wave of feminism in the West was perceived as bourgeois ideology, hostile to a Marxism that promoted the rights of the genderless working class above all groups of interests." (Linková, 2003, p. 31). The Second Wave of Feminism, which from the 1960s to 1980s focused on the political, legal, and domestic sphere, can be identified as one of the debates which Czechoslovakian politics lacked. However, this does not mean that the communist regime itself did not incorporate policies that held certain proximity to the feminist demands.

According to Celia Donert, around the time that the Second Wave of Feminism was getting traction in the USA and Western Europe, "women in most socialist countries enjoyed equal educational and employment opportunities, childcare facilities, access to abortion and extended maternity leave." (Donert, 2017, p. 399). Donert mentions that it's easy to point to the gap between the rhetoric and reality of women's liberation under the regime. The "genderless" approach of the government does not result in gender equality. "Women were equal in the sense that they were in the labor

force at an almost equal level to men, but they received less money and had less access to higher-level positions.” (James, 1996, p. 51)

To which extent these socialist policies can be identified as “feminist” is a question that gave rise to many debates among political scientists during the Cold War and continues to do so today. (Donert, 2017). Regardless of whether one can name these policies as “feminist” or not, the end of the regime meant for many women “a loss of social rights as well as an era of tantalizing new freedoms, among them the possibility of establishing organizations that explicitly identified as ‘feminist.’” (Donert, 2017, p. 399)

In the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution of 1989, modern feminist thinking de facto arrives in the Czechoslovakian territory. It is essential to notice how is then perceived this modern feminist thinking arrival. As Madeleine Lundin (2008) described in her study of gender-oriented organizations in the Czech Republic, given the decades of Communist media manipulation and prejudication of Western values, the late arrival of modern feminist ideas faced stereotypical shortcomings, bluntly disregard of its theoretical and political claims. Simply put, most Czechs were not familiar with feminism. They were not aware that it was not one single ideology, and would often summarize it as a war of women against men, led by anti-family, anti-men, and anti-feminine leaders. (Šiklová, 1999; Lundin, 2008)

Lundin will then expand on the fact that Western Feminism felt unfitting for the few Czech sympathizers, the main reason being that its universal ideology of how these issues would be handled did not resonate with the post-communist context of the territory. Rallying cries like “sisterhood is international” remind them of the Communist discourse and the slogans they used to hear about the working class. (Šiklová, 1999) At the same time, even the wording has its impact: being feminism an “-ism” leads to negative connotations due to the country’s experience of both Communism and Nazism (Sloat, 2005; Lundin 2008).

It was clear that gender-specific issues, such as the equality between men and women, were seen as part of the previous regime’s ideology, remnants of discourse and policies of the Communist Party, which aimed at standardization between the sexes. As a result, Women’s Rights groups were not regarded as relevant political actors across the

political spectrum during this period, having their agenda commonly condemned as Communist propaganda in disguise. (Heitlinger, 1996; Císař & Vráblíková, 2010)

Although they firmly renounced being feminist groups, after the Velvet Revolution, there were more than 70 women's NGOs in the Czech Republic (Chaloupková, 2006). These organizations had a broad spectrum, from self-help groups to groups oriented around health, family, or professionalization. Some also dabbled in the academic area, but one feature was shared among all: they unequivocally refuted any connection to feminism, going as far as denying being political at all, as if fearing prosecution or invalidation of their ideals. (Heitlinger, 1996; Lundin, 2008)

Many of these groups were very small and dependent entirely on voluntary work. By mid-1990, these organizations were down to approximately 30 groups. Those who did survive the lack of support frequently became dependent on financial endorsement from the West, except for organizations connected to churches or political parties, as well as the Czech Women's Union. (Hašková, 2005).

The start of the accession to the European Union in 1998 drove a lot of changes in how such groups operated in the Czech Republic. From the need to adapt national legislation to EU standards, the country strengthened its anti-discrimination and gender equality legislation by introducing its equality directives. The accession process compelled the Czech government to finally address several issues that Women's Rights groups had been rising since the Velvet Revolution, especially when it came to domestic violence.

Linková (2003) will then argue that the EU enlargement process primarily sets in motion institutional mechanisms that contribute to changing the gender equality debate and, consequently, Women's Rights. Ondrej Císař and Katerina Vráblíková will expand on it and claim that "the integration of the Czech Republic (CR) into the EU brought about significant changes in three dimensions: resource access and organizational structure of the groups, the national context they operate in, and opportunities to mobilize at the international level." (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 209)

In short, according to these authors, in the first half of the 1990s, institutional access was closed, and cultural conditions were not in favor of Women's groups in the Czech Republic. However, given the accession process, in the second half of the 1990s,

the EU empowered Women's groups vis-a-vis the local political elite. (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010), providing them legitimacy and political recognition.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. Social Movements

When a group of people organizes themselves to pursue a goal or a set of goals, that can be defined as collective action. (McLean et al., 2003). Collective action is at the core of social movements definition. Social movements as a concept is a broad term; hence, it is necessary to identify which definition I refer to when utilizing it.

In the past, a social movement was seen as groups of protestors or “challengers,” which focused for the most part on the class cleavage in Europe, with more informal and unregulated organizational structures. (della Porta & Diani, 2006) After the 1960s, a new idea of what social movement consists of was created, mainly due to the addition of new pursuits, for example, women's, environmental, LGBTQ+ and animal welfare agendas, together with a higher level of organization of social movements, represented by “new social movement” concept, composed of “social movement organizations” (SMOs). (della Porta & Diani 2006; McLean et al. 1, 2003; Lundin, 2003).

The definition adopted by this dissertation follows Tarrow (1998), who defines social movements as “collective challenges to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes, by people with common purposes and social solidarities” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 4). When referring to the social movement as organizations (SMOs), I refer back to the definition of SMOs as interest groups, pressure groups, and non-governmental or non-profit organizations. (Lundin, 2003; McLean et al., 2003).

Since my focus in this thesis is on Czech Women's Rights organizations, here referred to as well as groups, it's essential to clarify how I define what consists of a Women's Rights group. For that, I look into Women's Rights groups as part of the definition given by Jana Chaloupková:

“Pro-women non-profit organizations include: 1. organizations that provide women with professional powers of various types (e.g., legal, economic, social); 2. women's self-help associations;

3. organizations focusing on the promotion of women's rights and gender equality. Some of these organizations focus exclusively on women or gender issues; others create projects to support women within their broader thematic focus (e.g., focusing on human rights, supporting minorities, or helping groups of socially disadvantaged citizens). At the same time, some of them may themselves adopt the designation of women's organization, or perceive themselves as a feminist organization.” (Chaloupková, 2006, p. 29)

The author points out that by the end of the year 1990, there were 27 women's groups that fit the description above. Already in the mid-1990s, this number was closer to 70 organizations. Since that moment and up to the publishing date of Chaloupková's research, the total number of non-profit organizations registered in the country's databases has not changed significantly. (Chaloupková, 2006; Hašková & Krízková 2008). This almost three times increase in numbers can be seen as a result of the changes brought up previously in this dissertation, namely the “rebirth” of political activism initiated with the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the beginning of the accession negotiations, and its official start two years later, in 1998.

Narrowing the subject of study to one specific pro-women non-profit organization was done keeping in mind Chaloupková's definition but also the political changes of the time. For those reasons, I chose proFem, a self-proclaimed non-governmental and non-profit organization, founded in 1994 as “proFem (Central European Consultation Center for Women's Projects),” with the mission of “helping victims of domestic violence, sexual or other gender-based violence by providing legal and social counseling and preventing violence against women through education, as well as political and legislative lobbying.” (proFem, 1994).

By focusing on this particular group, my goal is to contribute to the discussion on the Europeanization of Social Movements by studying how Social Movements, but more specifically proFem as a Women's Rights group in the Czech Republic, were impacted by the accession process from a discursive perspective.



### 3.2. Europeanization and Social Movements

One of the earliest conceptualizations of the term Europeanization is by Robert Ladrech, in 1994, where he defines it as “an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making.” (Ladrech, 1994, p. 69). In the years that followed Ladrech’s first definition, not only the term was given different interpretations but also European Union itself underwent significant changes, such as the Eastern Enlargement, further fueling the scholars' debate on what does Europeanization exactly stands for, how it can be measured and how does it impact current and future member states. While there is no consensus on its definition, some will argue that the attempts to narrow the concept down to one demarcation have back-fired and thinned it out to a too vast range.

This dissertation will utilize from here forward the definition given by Radaelli (2003), in which Europeanization is described as “processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies.” (Radaelli, 2003, p. 30) That is to say, Europeanization can be seen as a top-down approach to explaining the process of integration to the European Union, conceptualized here as the accession process, and its impact on the national level.

While analyzing the said impact, one could focus on all the “hard” tangible changes that Europeanization brought upon the territory, things we can easily quantify: public policy and political structures changes, the institutionalization of formal rules, and procedures, to name a few. This dissertation will focus on the “soft” side of this impact, stated in Radaelli's definition as the construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of “paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things, and shared beliefs” which are, via the Europeanization process, incorporated onto the “domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies.”; my emphasis is on the domestic discourse, more specifically on the changes in the local Women’s Rights groups'

discourse, aiming to recognize if those changes are linked to the Europeanization effect of the accession process.

When mentioning discourse, I will be referring to the Foucauldian approach to conceptualize it, but as a method, I'll use Potter and Wetherell's linguistic approach to Discourse Analysis. That is to say, my understanding of discourse as a concept is aligned with how in the Archeology of Knowledge, Foucault (1972) refers to discourses as systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs, and practices that systematically construct the subject and the worlds of which they speak. Looking at how Císař and Vráblíková assert that "the EU acted in effect as a certification agency that helped to legitimize the demands of women's groups in the eyes of the local political elite." (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p 217), it's possible to recognize the role of discourses in this process by looking at how Foucault traces that role as part of "wider social processes of legitimation and power, emphasizing the constitution of current truths, how they are maintained and what power relations they carry with them." (Foucault 1972 in Lessa, 2005, p. 285).

By using discourse as my focal point, I hope to spotlight the "soft" impacts of Europeanization, a side of it which other authors, such as Císař, Vráblíková, and Hasková, alluded to but, at the same time, constructed their research with somewhat more considerable attention to the "hard" tangible repercussions of Europeanization of Women's Right groups in the Czech Republic during and after the accession to the EU.

Following Císař and Vráblíková's research paper "The Europeanization of social movements in the Czech Republic: The EU and local women's groups" (2010), I start with identifying the "hard" impact of the accession process reflected on the transformation of resource access, together with an institutional opening for social movement groups to mobilize on the domestic and international level. While the focus of this dissertation is on the "soft" impacts, starting with the "hard" ones will allow me to showcase the pressures and transformations that the women's groups underwent externally, as emergent players in the political sphere, to then investigate the internal shifts, changes to their core values and goals, that might have been a result of said pressures and transformations.

### 3.2.1.1. Resource access

As the first instrument of “hard” Europeanization introduced by Císař and Vráblíková, resource access becomes a clear and visible indicator of the institutionalization and structural changes mentioned in Radaelli’s definition of Europeanization. When analyzing the resources available to Women’s groups before the accession negotiations, the authors identified that “they [women’s groups] lacked access to nationally-disbursed subsidies. The only way for them to mobilize resources remained volunteering and, most importantly, international patrons.” (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 212).

According to Hašková’s research, the funding obtained by bilateral agreements with private foundations or international organizations, up to that moment, was flexible in terms of how it was spent. Meaning the money could be applied to different projects or towards the organization's development. Once the negotiations started, the primary funding source shifted to EU programs and Czech foundations that would redistribute EU grants. For the women’s groups, this shift meant that “long-term, flexible and all-inclusive financial support (that could be used not only for specifically defined (project) activities but also the development of women’s civic groups in the region as such) diminished rapidly in the region.” (Hašková, 2005, p. 1094) Without the financial support, these groups found themselves having to adapt to the EU “project-based” funding approach, which meant “an entire series of changes in terms of the groups’ organizational structure, their goals, and the general functioning of Czech women’s organizations as a sector” (Hašková, 2005; Hašková & Krízková, 2006, p. 95; Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 212).

The drivers for the structural changes came from the formal criteria and requirements an organization must fulfill to be eligible for EU funding: the organization needs to be formally registered, have stable organizational and financial facilities, and employees under contract; subsequently, the majority of Women Rights groups went through a professionalization process to meet such requirements. (Hašková, 2005; Hašková & Krízková, 2006, p. 93)

While this professionalization process allowed many women’s groups to employ members at least part-time, rent offices, and work with bigger budgets for their projects

(Císař & Vráblíková, 2010), it also meant that for groups that were unable or unwilling to match the EU requirements for these project-oriented fundings, they became marginalized, “have been shut out completely, while other NGOs have moved to become more involved in the issues, activities, and strategies that are supported and more or less away from other issues.” (Hašková, 2005, p. 1098).

For those who adapted well to project-oriented funding, and all the changes that came along with it, the accession to the EU resulted in the formal legitimization of their agendas on the domestic political structure, a factor that Císař and Vráblíková describe as institutional opening.

### 3.2.1.2. Institutional opening

The introduction of Women’s Rights groups’ agenda as relevant claims in the political sphere is explained by Císař and Vráblíková when working with Koopmans and Statham term “discourse opportunity structure,” where the main idea is that “the context of political mobilization is not only shaped by formal political institutions but is also formed by prevailing interpretative schemata that makes some ideas and claims generally acceptable, “sensible,” “realistic,” and “‘legitimate’ within a certain polity at a specific time” (Koopmans and Statham, 1999; Císař & Vráblíková, 2010).

Generally acceptable or legitimate is perhaps not how one would describe the national perspective of the Women’s Rights agenda at the time. When putting together the general animosity towards gender-specific issues, reminiscent of their communist past, and the “then-Prime Minister Klaus (1992–1997), whose neo-liberal discourse postulated the democratic transition as a purely economic project, with explicit aversion towards all potential political demands by post-materialistically-oriented and hence Western-inspired interest groups such as environmentalists and feminists” (Saxonberg 2001, in Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 214), what you get is a “closed-doors” scenario for Women Rights groups.

This changes when the start of the accession negotiations also coincides with the advent of the EU’s Fourth Action Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000) and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), creating

then “pressure from international organizations, chiefly the EU, which, in the area under study, brought along and opened up political opportunities in the Czech Republic” (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 214).

We can point out two instances of the changes in institutional access linked to the accession process: the creation of the Department for the Equality of Men and Women, and later on, the Government Council for Equal Opportunities. The necessity to harmonize legal regulations between the Czech Republic and the European Union was the sole purpose of creating the Department for the Equality of Men and Women. It became a symbol of the “EU-dependency” of gender equality in the Czech Republic. (Pavlík, 2006, Císař & Vráblíková, 2010). According to Musilová (1999), the document created by this department, the proclamation entitled “Government Priorities and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Equality of Men and Women”, was the first official document focusing in any way on the women’s agenda up to that point in time. (Musilová, 1999, Císař & Vráblíková, 2010)

The Government Council for Equal Opportunities, created in 2001, is another institutional body highlighted in Císař and Vráblíková’s study as a milestone in the “institutional anchoring” of EU gender policy implementation: it was an independent governmental body “where representatives of the ministries were seated side-by-side with representatives of non-governmental women’s organizations, along with employers’ delegations and the Czech Statistical Bureau” (Linková, 2003; Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 214).

Seeing how the transformations in institutional access are driven by external factors, being those the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) or the EU accession guidelines, it becomes then possible to discuss how these transformations could be seen as part of strategies, intentionally or unintentionally, applied by social movements to drive change on the national scope.

### 3.2.1.3. “Crossed-influence” strategies

In the book “Social Movements and Europeanization,” Della Porta (2009) described “the European level [...] as an additional lever for movement organizations,

offering channels of access (or at least *voice*) to those actors that are weaker at home.”. (della Porta & Caiani, 2009, p. 12) Going one step further, the author identifies that social movements will often employ a “crossed influence” strategy. To put it another way, these groups will either pressure the national level to push their agenda at the European level or use the pressure from the European level to push their agendas on the national level. This strategy is then broken into two paths: A strategy of domestication versus externalization.

A strategy of domestication is, simply put, exercising pressure onto the national public and institutions to push their agendas upon the supranational institutions, such as the EU. These groups “might, in fact, contest EU decisions but remain at the national level, targeting their national governments, to push them to resist those decisions.” (della Porta & Caiani, 2009, p. 15) On the other hand, a strategy of externalization is defined by social and political actors at the national level calling upon European institutions to pressure their governments directly. Regarding the usage strategies of externalization, the author mentions that:

“In these cases, actors that feel weak at home might try to mobilize allies at the supranational level: protest addresses EU institutions to push them to intervene upon domestic governments. This strategy has been used above all by movements that perceive the challenges as supranational, and have in fact appealed to the kinds of discourse and identity legitimized at the European level.” (della Porta & Caiani, 2009, p. 15)

The social movement groups that adopt this “crossed influence” strategy, whether that is of domestication or externalization, seem to adapt to multilevel governance while not losing their roots at the national level, they simply learned to link local, national, and EU policy-making when defining their targets and framing their issues. (della Porta & Caiani, 2009)

della Porta & Caiani’s research does not refer to Women’s Rights groups directly. Neither discusses if these strategies are deliberated processes thought out by

the social movement groups or an indirect outcome of more significant processes in which these groups find themselves inserted. For this reason, a question that stands out to me is if the accession process is bringing Europeanization upon the Women's Rights groups in the Czech Republic, not by the groups themselves calling out to European institutions to pressure and shape the policy-making of their national government but rather by the EU being a set of institutions capable of providing resources and legitimization so strongly with the limitation that they must fit EU's agenda in order to be eligible for said resources and legitimization, that these groups subject themselves to cores changes, not only terms of professionalization or organizational structure already discussed in this dissertation, but also terms of their values, goals, and essentially, their discourse.

These more intangible changes become the focus of the next section in this work. It's with a better understanding of how women's groups were affected by what I call "hard" impacts of Europeanization as a consequence of the accession process that we can now look into the "soft" side of this phenomenon, namely, how the accession to the European Union reflects in the way these groups identified themselves, the topics discussed or the approaches taken during the years that followed the start of the negotiations.

#### 3.2.1.4. Gender mainstreaming

Although there is not a lot of research on specifically how the accession to the EU changed the discourse of social movement groups, the key authors for this dissertation (Hašková, Císař, and Vráblíková) address the shifts in the groups' agendas as a byproduct of implementing the eligibility requirements for EU funding and legitimacy:

“In order to ensure their survival and to ensure they get EU grants, they must fulfill EU requirements not only in terms of their organizational format but also in terms of the agenda they follow. Thus their projects must be designed around particular

issues corresponding to EU priorities in the area of equal opportunity, which in the current period means the *gender mainstreaming* program” (Hašková & Krízková, 2006, p. 95; Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 213).

Circling back to Koopmans and Statham’s (1999) concept of “discourse opportunity structure,” it’s possible to frame gender mainstreaming as “prevailing interpretative schemata” that legitimated and backed up Women’s Rights groups at the time. Gender Mainstreaming, according to the definition of the Council of Europe, is “the (re) organization, improvement, development, and evaluation of policy processes. So that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and all stages, by all actors normally involved in policy-making” (Council of Europe, 1998, p.15). As explained by Hašková (2005), those groups whose agendas didn’t fit into this “schemata ” of gender mainstreaming, and/or were reluctant to adjust their agenda together with their organizational structure, became marginalized or ceased to exist.

Based on the literature presented, we can conclude that the accession process to the European Union impacted the Social Movement groups regarding their funding opportunities, organizational structure, and institutional openness within the national scope. Still, it also left its mark on a much deeper level, one that cannot be easily quantified and in which research is still scarce; that is, it brought in changes in the groups' discourse, and consequently, how the groups formulate their goals, and agendas. This dissertation proposes the discourse analysis of a particular Women’s Rights group’s agenda during the time frame of the accession process in the Czech Republic to contribute to the discussion on the Europeanization of Social Movements from a discursive point of view.

## 4.METHODOLOGY & DATA

As stated in the title of this dissertation, my object of study is the Women’s Rights groups in the Czech Republic, but more precisely, one specific group: proFem. The previous section mentioned that there were approximately 70 Women’s Rights



groups in the Czech Republic during the time frame of the accession process, which matched Chaloupková's definition of a pro-women non-profit organization. This heterogeneity alone brought in the need to select one particular group for the empirical analysis. Beyond the essential condition that the group must fit Chaloupková's definition, the selection was made based on three main requirements: the starting date of the group activities, the relationships between the group and both international and local actors, and the availability of data regarding their activities.

Recognizing the Copenhagen European Summit in 1993 as the start of the accession negotiations, the Luxembourg Summit in December 1997 as the acceptance of the candidacy, March 31st, 1998 as the official start of the accession process, and May 1st, 2004, as the completion of this process; the ideal women's group for analysis would have been active since 1993 and for the years that followed, including those after 2004, so that it is possible to correlate any changes in their agendas to the milestones in the accession process and its aftereffect.

According to their "Who we are" statement, proFem started its activities in 1993. Their first Annual Report dates the official registration of proFem as a non-profit organization on February 3rd, 1994, after three months of preparation. This puts the start of their activities in the same period as the beginning of the accession negotiations.

Drawing still from their first annual report in 1994, we can identify how the organization cooperated with international and local actors since its debut. As one of their foundation goals, proFem states their desire to "cooperate in the public sphere with other organizations with a similar focus from the Czech Republic, as well as from abroad" (proFem, 1994). As part of that year's activities, it mentions the organization of multi-day seminars with women from other Eastern and Central European countries, self-defense workshops with German female trainers, projects in collaboration with Dutch and Polish organizations against Women's trafficking, among other similar projects.

Another aspect of proFem's relationship with international actors that influenced the decision to work with this group is the financial support received. Hašková's research showed us that the funding obtained by women's groups before accession originated from bilateral agreements with private foundations or foreign states organizations, a circumstance well visible in the proFem case.

The Financial Report section of the 1994 Annual Report states, “Foreign contributions of the Frauen-Anstiftung Foundation, Germany” and in the years that followed, the reports include other foreign organizations' funding, such as from KAP-Fund (today known as Netherlands' Fund for Regional Partnerships (NFRP)/Matra) and the Austrian Cultural Institute in Prague. In late 1995, we see the addition of their first European Union-related project funding: the La Strada project ‘Prevention of Trafficking of Women in Central and Eastern Europe’ financed by the PHARE Programme of the European Union.

As studied by Hašková, once the accession process started in 1998, it's discernible in proFem's Annual Reports the decrease in bilateral funding agreements and the increase of state and EU project-oriented grants: The German foundations (Frauen-Anstiftung and Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung), partners since 1993, were no longer mentioned in the Financial Report already in 2003, and its place, we see mentions of EU project-oriented grants such for the AdvoCats for Women project, or Czech state grants from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Ministry of Health.

Lastly, proFem is an organization that started its activities during the timeframe of the accession and underwent the same processes as the groups analyzed by Císar, Hasková, and Vrabliková, but also places all its Annual Reports available online, dating back to 1994. The availability of data for analysis contributed to selecting this particular group for the empirical analysis section of the dissertation, as the Annual Reports describe all their activities that reflect the group's agenda. Put it in another way; it demonstrates its mission, goals, and discourse.

Through the analysis of proFem's Annual Reports, the goal is to answer the following research question: *How did the process of accession to the EU influence proFem's discourse, and therefore Women's Rights discourse in the Czech Republic?*

By focusing on this question, I aim to contribute to the discussion on the Europeanization of Social Movements by studying how the accession process impacted women's rights groups in the Czech Republic from a discursive perspective. By bringing this discursive perspective, I hope to add to the discussion on the subject, since, as far as I can tell, other authors have not focused on this particular approach, not at least towards the same object of study.

#### 4.1.1. Discourse Analysis

The method chosen to answer the research problem is Discourse Analysis. Discourse Analysis (DA) falls within a social constructionist orientation to knowledge. Social constructionism works with the notion that multiple versions of the world are legitimate, meaning that texts are open to various readings. In that sense, DA can help us examine those textual constructions of meaning. (White, 2004) While we can find different approaches to Discourse Analysis (Potter, 1996; Wheterell et al., 2001; White, 2004), there's often a consensus regarding the relationship between language as a vehicle of creation and diffusion of discourse and the formation of regimes of truth. Simply put, DA theorists "explore ways in which, through discourses, realities are constructed, made factual and justified, bringing about effects." (Lessa, 2005, p. 286)

Granted that the term "discourse" in itself can have different interpretations, it's used in this dissertation from the Foucaultian definition, where discourse is seen as systems of thoughts composed of beliefs, courses of actions, and practices. (Foucault, 1972). This definition does not disconnect DA from its linguistic approach, but rather allow us to inspect speech/writing as means of constructing 'regimes of truth,' 'ways of doing things' or plainly 'understanding,' as Robert White explains:

"These discourses or frameworks of meaning are evident in the speech/writing, actions, and products of the human social world. They are seen as the result of human effort; they are 'constructions' of meaning. [...] Hence 'discourse analysis' as a research method examines human speech/writing, actions, and products (texts) to identify and analyze these 'ways of understanding'" (White, 2004, p. 9)

Hence why I propose the analysis of proFem's Annual Reports examining how the organization's discourse changed as a consequence of the accession process. The intention is to answer how the integration into the European Union changes how specific topics are regarded in the national political sphere of candidate countries. This

means identifying that if the discourse changed, we could conclude that the way of perceiving and understanding Women's Rights in the Czech Republic also changed.

Going one step further, Radaelli's definition of Europeanization as "processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of [...] paradigm, styles, 'ways of doing things,' [...] which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics, and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse [...]" (Radaelli, 2003, p. 30), we can establish that these changes, if any, are the result of the Europeanization of Czech's Women's Rights groups. The way I will go about identifying these changes is by closely reading the Annual Reports and identifying themes, "connotations, allusions, and implications which the text evoke" (Parker, 1992, p. 13), related to proFem's mission, goals, and activities.

#### 4.1.2. The Data

There are some considerations and delimitations regarding working with proFem's Annual Reports. First and foremost, there's the matter of the language in which the Reports are written. Although proFem collaborates with international actors in many of its projects and has several sections of its website available in English, the Annual Reports themselves are only available in the Czech language, a language which I, as the researcher, am not fluent in but rather only familiar with.

Given that this is qualitative research that seeks to study discourses, it's important to point out the language barrier and the implications that working with translated material might bring upon the results of my empirical analysis. In a paper titled "Language differences in qualitative research: is meaning lost in translation?" the authors Fenna van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, and Deeg point out that:

"Because interpretation and understanding meanings are central in qualitative research and text is the 'vehicle' with which meaning is ultimately transferred to the reader, language differences generate additional challenges that might hinder the transfer of meaning and might result in loss of meaning and thus

loss of the validity of the qualitative study.” (van Ness, et.al, 2010, p. 314)

Therefore, this disclaimer intends to consider that when analyzing the Annual Reports translated from Czech into English for this dissertation, cultural contexts might need to be explained in order for the work to be fully understood and not have any loss of meaning during analysis. Where doubts regarding the meaning of the translations rise, I consulted with my Czech native peers that my understanding of said word or phrasing is in accordance with theirs.

Lastly, there's the question of which structure I will work with this data. The proFem website has available all Annual Reports from 1994 until the present times. Some of the reports do not refer to one specific year but rather group 2 years, such as the reports for 1994-5, 1996-7, and 1999-2000.

For the sake of the analysis, I organized the Reports into three blocks: 1994 up to 1997, reflecting the period before the accession and up to the official start of the process; 1998 up to 2004, the period when the Czech Republic underwent a series of political and legislative transformations to meet the EU's requirements for the accession; 2005 to 2008, to bring to the analysis the angle of Women's Rights groups in the Czech Republic as a member state rather than a candidate.

## 5.PROFEM'S ANNUAL REPORT ANALYSIS

Two dominant themes emerged in the analysis: I. *proFem's goals and mission statements*, and II. *The woman question (ženská otázka) in the Czech Republic*. With the first theme, I observed how the group defines its goals and what is at the core of its mission. The second theme introduces how proFem perceives the “woman question” in the Czech political sphere, which refers to topics related to the women population and their demands. As a pro-women organization, proFem is inserted in the Czech “woman question” scope, being directly impacted by how it is received in the Czech society.

The research question in mind, I propose the analysis of these two themes over the three-year groups mentioned in the section above. Having identified the changes in

the proFem's Annual Reports over the years, it is clear that the ways the group perceived specific topics have developed.

The adoption of particular terminologies, and the alterations done over the years in descriptions of the same issues, can be used to understand how proFem interacted with external influences in their discourse. For this reason, it is also important to clarify in which context some of those changes came to be.

### 5.1.1994-1997: proFem's developmental years

#### *I. "proFem's goals and mission statements"*

Regarding their first year, proFem states that "our work efforts focused on identifying the basic areas of problems and creating our own workplaces." (proFem, 1995). These "basic areas of problems" were then included in their mission statements as:

"The mission of the proFem - Central European Consultation Center for Women's Projects - is to support Czech and Central European women's organizations, women's centers, and groups in creating their own organizational structures, finding financial resources, and helping to gain contacts with foreign organizations with a similar focus." (proFem, 1995)

With this passage, it's clear that proFem's goal in 1994 is working with "Czech and Central European women's organizations, women's centers and groups," solely focusing on being a pro-women organization concerned with supporting other pro-women organizations of the region. Still in the Annual Report of 1994, proFem hints at the fact that they plan to go beyond only supporting the "creation," "financial," and "networking" of pro-women organizations, but also to involve themselves with broader topics:

"At the same time, women's groups and organizations that work in the so-called social areas, such as the prevention of violence against women and children,

women's health, as well as women's economic self-sufficiency and independence, deserve increased attention.” (proFem, 1995)

“Prevention of violence” will then become another pillar of proFem’s mission statements. In the Annual Report that followed, dated 1994-95, a new section is added to the Report, titled “proFem thematically: prevention of violence against women.” It details how the group approaches the topic:

“Our foundation is working on this issue from two sides, and both sides are about prevention: prevention of trafficking in women and prevention in the form of a special self-defense for women, Wen-Do.” (proFem, 1996)

The group continues to expand its mission statement in the Annual Report of 1996-97, where for the first time, they use terms such as “framework of human rights” and “equality between women and men”:

“Our plans for the future include, in addition to the activities already established, training programs for lawyers relating to women's rights within the framework of human rights, namely the topic of violence against women and children. We will talk about these rights until truly full equality between women and men is achieved in our society.” (proFem, 1998)

Here we can see how at the end of the period between 1994-97 and consequently right before the official start of the accession negotiations, proFem starts to position itself as an organization that is part of a broader thematic. While they do not neglect the goal of supporting women’s organizations, they extend to achieving “full equality between women and men.” Additionally, they frame their mission, the prevention of violence against women, under the “framework of human rights.”

## *II. “The woman question (ženská otázka) in the Czech Republic”*

During their formative years of 1994 and 1995, proFem identified the root cause for the challenges, or “problem,” of being a pro-women organization in the Czech Republic were due to “latent and open antifeminism.” In the upcoming report for 1996-97, these challenges are again mentioned:

“The proFem Foundation has had its third and fourth years of existence. [...] Of course, it has had to continue to struggle with a number of challenges - not least because proFem is a women's organization and for women.” (proFem, 1998)

The use of the wording “not least” in this passage implies that proFem being an organization composed of women and for women, is the reason for the challenges faced since its formation. As a group that embodies the “woman question,” we observe how that the “woman question” itself is met with a lot of resistance from the Czech political sphere. This is further justified on the manner the group describes the understanding of American feminism in the country:

“The ghost of American feminism was and still is in our young democracy the favorite plaything of the mass media, but also of the clever strategists of Czech industry and politics.” (proFem, 1998)

Consider the way proFem, in the 1994-5 Annual Report, states the cause of their main foundation problems to be rooted in the “open and latent antifeminism” in Czech society, together with how in the 1996-97 Report, the group describes feminism as being a “plaything” of the media, and a “clever strategy” of politicians of the time. If we circle back to authors such as Šiklová (1999), and Heitlinger (1996), we can identify how proFem’s description fits with the one brought up in the literature.

Šiklová (1999), and Heitlinger (1996) discussed how once Western/American feminism arrives in the Czech territory, it was stained by years of communist media manipulation, where feminism was portrayed as a stereotypical manner and often reduced into a “war of women against men”. Not only have the media misrepresented feminism, but in the national political sphere, the then-Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus (1992-1997) pushes a neoliberal discourse with “explicit aversion towards all potential



political demands by post-materialistically-oriented and hence Western-inspired interest groups such as environmentalists and feminists” (Saxonberg 2001, in Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 214). In a way, Klaus’ stance on the integration into the European Union reflected his general political discourse, described as a “combined conservative ideology in cultural and societal issues with the rhetoric of economic liberalism” (Hloušek & Kaniok, 2014, p. 40). That is to say, general support for the economic development that the ascension would bring to the country, but an aversion to any political and social changes that might accompany it, including “Western-inspired” feminism.

Additionally, in another passage of the same 1996-97 report, proFem explicitly indicates their understanding of how the public perceives the “woman question.” It states:

“The woman question, like many other inequalities in our country, is one of the primary issues in the degree of democracy in our country, even if public opinion is not in a positive light.” (proFem, 1998)

Thus, based on the quotes above, it’s visible that in the period between 1994 and 1997, proFem interpreted the “woman question” as an “inequality” in which the public opinion regarding its demands was not in a “positive light,” those that represented it often met “challenges”, like those described by Šiklová and Heitlinger. This is the national context in which proFem founds themselves on the years that precede the accession process. As a lengthy and transformatory process, the accession brought in changes in the political, social and cultural structures of the Czech Republic. For proFem, and in general for Women’s Right Social Movements, this meant adjustments in their resource fundings, institutional opening and organization structure (Císař and Vráblíková, 2010). The next year group will highlight how these adjustments influenced proFem’s discourse.

## 5.2.1998-2004: “Women’s rights are human rights”

The second-year group is, not surprisingly, where most of the changes are located. The start of the accession negotiations of 1998 had a profound impact on the social movements of the Czech Republic. In the Theoretical Framework chapter, we reviewed this impact from two perspectives: the “hard” tangible changes, such as its repercussions on resource access and institutional opening for Social Movements groups, and the “soft” discursive changes, which have yet to be explored in depth.

Being the main focus of this dissertation, when it comes to the “soft” impacts of the accession, we can see how it translated into the proFem’s reports since 1998 in 3 aspects: the need to adjust their mission, their understanding of Women’s Rights, and their perception of the woman’s question in the Czech Republic. The analysis of the two themes will highlight said changes:

#### *I. “proFem’s goals and mission statements”*

In addition to the previous years' definitions, proFem continues to expand its mission statement beyond simply supporting women’s rights. The group included in every Annual Report foreword from 1998, 1999, and 2000s, the following affirmation:

“proFem, an organization originally founded to provide structural support to women's and gender NGOs, is increasingly finding its next path in the political lobbying of human rights violations because "human rights are women's rights."  
(proFem, 1999)

As highlighted in the citation above, between the years 1998 and 2000, proFem claims to be moving away from being an organization exclusively focused on providing structural support to other women’s groups to also being an organization inserted in the “political lobbying space” with the goal to “address the issue of human rights violations" because they adopted the statement that “humans rights are women’s rights”.

This alteration to how proFem defines its mission in comparison to before 1998 is very important to the analysis because it shows us that the organization is positioning itself as part of the international discourse on Women’s Rights, but also indicates how they took in that discourse as their own. A manifestation of this phenomenon is in the

citation above, of how the group since 1998 justifies the shift in its path using the popular phrasing “Humans rights are Women’s rights”, also known as the name of a speech given by Hillary Clinton, the First Lady of the United States, at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995.

In many ways adopting the UN discourse as their own can be understood as a sign of proFem becoming more “Europeanized”, as the European Union itself often shares similar values and goals as the United Nations, especially in regards to the protection of Human Rights. (Zamfir and Fardel, 2020) This similarity partially comes from the EU adding articles of the UN Charter in the Preamble to the treaties establishing the organization, such is the case of the Treaty of Rome of 1957, which established the European Economic Community and directly mentions the adoption of the UN Charter of Human Rights as one of the resolutions of the treaty.

Adopting the phrasing “Humans Rights are Women's Rights” and overall inserting themselves in that “political lobbying space” was aimed at closing the gap between the political importance given to Women’s rights violations in comparison to Human Rights violations. From there on, proFem becomes the “conduct” of that international debate inside the Czech territory. We can see that happening in the 1999 description of their AdvoCat project:

“Together with other women's organizations and associations, we are seeking to not only draw attention to the need for legislative changes in one or another area that affects women's rights but by developing an entire programmatic base from the non-profit sector and publicizing it internationally, to force the current and future governments of the country to take their commitments to the world community seriously, including on the issue of women's and children's rights.”  
(proFem, 2000)

By highlighting the shortcomings of Czech politics and publicizing those internationally, proFem is seen as seeking not just the legitimization of their demands nationally but also pursuing to bring international pressure onto the Czech government to “take their commitments seriously”, namely the commitments done by the government in adopting the recommendations of the UN Fourth World Conference on

Women in Beijing, or the directives of the Fourth Action Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, planned for the years 1996–2000, which was underway in the EU and were a requirement for the accession.

Moving forward on the analysis of this theme, while the reports from 1998 to 2000 state that the organization “is increasingly looking for its next path,” wording that leads us to assume this is a course of action done deliberately by the organization itself, the exact phrasing appears slightly different in the upcoming years. Consider the quotations below:

“proFem, an organization originally founded to provide structural support to women's and gender NGOs, *has been forced* to increasingly find its next path in the political lobbying space, to address the issue of human rights violations because "human rights are women's rights." (proFem, 2002)

“proFem, an organization originally founded for the structural support of women's and gender NGOs, *has therefore already been forced* in the past to look increasingly for its next path in the space of political lobbying, to address the issue of human rights violations, because "human rights are women's rights." (proFem, 2003)

In both passages, the first being from 2001 and the second from 2002, the use of the word “forced” implies that the changes in their mission, or “path in the space of political lobbying,” were not so willingly done by the organization, but rather through pressures regarding the need to address women’s rights as a human rights violation. All Annual Reports of this years-group further elaborated on this topic in a dedicated section titled “Women’s Rights,” where the opening paragraph reads:

“Women's rights are human rights - which in the ears of average educated Central Europeans sounds like a commonplace, even a banality. However, in Czech society, the fact that they are not respected is almost neglected.” (proFem, 1999)

While the adoption of “Women’s rights are human rights” phrasing is a big turning point in proFem’s discourse, as it shows how they are adapting their values to be aligned with the UN and EU’s, when taking into consideration the citations above altogether, a question that arises is in which terms this adaptation was done. When proFem mentions “been forced” to look elsewhere for their “next path in the space of political lobbying”, it is not clear whether the pressure was internal or external.

Lastly, still within this same year group, proFem introduces two additions to its mission: Starting in 2000, the section titled “Mission and goals of proFem” includes the goal of supporting “independent women’s project,” moving their previous scope of “Czech and other Central European women's organizations, centers and groups” only. In 2001, the group widened its mission to accommodate the “current political situation in the world” and highlighted the “need to inform about alternative voices seeking solutions in wartime conflicts.” A project that will be named “Women’s Voices Against War”.

## *II. “The woman’s question (ženská otázka) in the Czech Republic*

The theme of how proFem perceives the woman’s question underwent significant development compared to the previous years’ group. Up to 1998, the woman’s question was understood as a women-only issue. It is often related to women-only topics such as the “challenges” that proFem faces, “not least because proFem is a women's organization and for women.” The foreword of the 1998 Annual Report and all reports up to 2004, how proFem defines the “woman’s question” is revised.

Here’s how proFem phrased it in the 1996-97 Annual Report:

“By striving to eliminate prejudices (towards feminism, the women's movement or the so-called woman's question) in the form of information, education, publications - simply by raising awareness - but also by direct support and help.”  
(proFem, 1998)

From 1998 forward, the exact phrasing is amended:

“By striving to eliminate prejudices (towards feminism, the women's movement, or the so-called woman's question, *which we consider to be fundamentally also a male issue, i.e., society as a whole*) in the form of information, education, and publications - simply by raising awareness - but also direct support and help.” (proFem, 1999)

This change then becomes another important aspect of the 1998-2004 Annual Reports analysis, that is, viewing how proFem starts to adopt terminologies that were not part of their discourse prior to 1998. Not only can we refer to the “Humans Rights are Women's Rights” phrasing, but another prime example is how the group expanded the description of their perception of the woman's question in the Czech Republic to also include the “male issue”. This amendment inserts the group into the gender equality discussion by not viewing the inequalities between sexes as a woman-only issue but rather something that affects the entire society, and therefore should be a conjunct concern.

Yet, this is not the only passage to receive a modification that reflects the changes of this year's group. Since 1996 the foreword of all Annual Reports states the following:

“The woman's question, like many other inequalities in our country, is one of the primary issues in the degree of democracy in our country, even if public opinion is not in a positive light.” (proFem, 1997)

Yet, in the 2003 Annual Report, this is rearticulated into:

“The so-called woman's question in the Czech Republic is somewhat shyly hidden behind the term "equal opportunities for men and women" and is, like many other inequalities in our country, is one of the primary issues of the degree of democracy in our country. This is despite the fact that public opinion is still not in a positive light.” (proFem, 2004)

Previously proFem acknowledged how the woman's question is a term that includes the "male issue" as an issue that encompasses the "society as a whole." In the 2003 Report, the assumption that woman's question is "hidden" behind the "equal opportunities between men and women" initiative calls attention to how it is not being directly addressed but rather put under this umbrella term. The context of proFem adopting a gender equality approach, as in linking it to "equal opportunities between men and women", to refer to the woman's question, the primary motivation for its goals and mission, is connected to the accession process beyond the law harmonization but as a process that brought the EU as an actor capable of legitimization of proFem's missions locally.

In the Annual Report of 2004, the year when the Czech Republic was officially granted the status of a member state of the European Union on May 1st, the Foreword acknowledges these impacts of the accession while highlighting that there are yet several shortcomings to be addressed:

"With the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union, the non-equal situation of women (and men) in our society has become much more visible, and the fight against inequality seems to be more 'acceptable,' but the figures on very unequal salaries, inadequate laws and high unemployment of highly qualified women, for example, show us in one of the last places in the European Union. And that is why we are here." (proFem, 2005)

Although the group's statement agrees with the literature when it comes to how the EU provided legitimization to their fight, referred to in the passage above as making it more "acceptable", 'by making it "more visible", and in the literature referred by Císař and Vráblíková, when stating that "the EU acted in effect as a certification agency that helped to legitimize the demands of women's groups in the eyes of the local political elite" (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010, p. 217). It also calls attention to that, in practical terms, the accession did not erase all inequalities among men and women in the territory.

### 5.3.2005-2008: “returning to our roots”

#### *I. “proFem’s goals and mission statements”*

In the years that followed the accession to the European Union, proFem’s goals and missions did not undergo many changes. The Annual Reports of 2005 up to 2007 present the same goals and missions as the previous year's group, with the addition of a few new focuses: women in the labor market and “enlightenment” of the society regarding the woman’s question.

While the topic of women in the labor market is not new for proFem, it was put in the background while the group focused on Women’s Rights and the prevention of violence against women. This is mentioned in the Annual Report of 2006 forward as:

“In the last year, we have been returning to our roots: In cooperation with the Acorus civic association, we run courses for women who have experienced violence, with a focus on improving their situation in the labor market.” (proFem, 2007)

Another way that proFem returned to its “roots” is by creating the gitA project. This project started in September 2006. It is described as an “independent, autonomous organization providing gender information throughout the Czech Republic, including the introduction of the gender emblem into the Czech media scene.” Furthermore:

“In the gitA project, we are building an independent, grassroots news agency dedicated to sourcing and disseminating information with a gendered context, in order to offer an alternative to mainstream news sources.” (proFem, 2007)

To conclude the analysis of this theme, I would like to highlight proFem’s description of its goals and missions for the duration of all year groups observed here (1994 to 2008), summarized in the Annual Report of 2008 as:



“Fifteen long years of work aimed at improving the rights of women and children, whether in the field of violence against women - domestic violence, or in the information policy on unequal opportunities for women and men in the Czech Republic compared to Europe or in the field of direct support for women disadvantaged (by violence, age, motherhood, ethnicity) in the labor market.” (proFem, 2009)

## II. “The woman’s question (*ženská otázka*) in the Czech Republic”

Similar to its goals and missions, the Annual Reports of 2005 to 2008 did not present significant changes in how proFem perceives the woman’s question in the Czech Republic. All reports offer continuity to their previous statements, with a single exception in the Annual Report of 2005 forward: an amendment to the closing paragraph of the Foreword.

Up to 2004, the last section voiced:

“We will continue to talk about these rights until there is no such thing in our society and we have truly achieved full equality between men and women. With the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union, the non-equal situation of women (and men) in our society has become much more visible, and the fight against inequality seems to be more 'acceptable,' but the figures on very unequal salaries, inadequate laws and high unemployment of highly qualified women, for example, show us in one of the last places in the European Union. And that is why we are here.” (proFem, 2005)

However, from 2005 forward, this same paragraph is rephrased into:

“We will talk about these rights until truly full equality between women and men is achieved in our society. *We are in favor of so-called positive measures in this area, which means that we consider, for example, temporary quotas and other measures to be absolutely essential if the goal of eliminating all forms of*

*discrimination against women is to be taken seriously. With the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union [...].” (proFem, 2006)*

The adjustment of this statement is here to include their support towards the “so-called positive measures” that were put in place during those years, granted that said measures would be towards more “seriously” eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. The usage of the wording “so-called positive” when referring to these measures leaves room to interpret how proFem views these measures, as “so-called” is an expression defined used to refer to how something is commonly named or relates to something that is “alleged,” “feigned” or “supposed.”

## 6.CONCLUSION

This dissertation opens the discussion on the development of the Women Right’s local groups, the proFem case, during the Czech Republic’s process of accession to the EU by quoting proFem’s Annual Report Foreword from 2004, the year of the accession. In that particular moment, I presented a series of questions that led to this study, such as if the usage of specific terms in that quote were present before the accession process started, and if not, then could we identify the adoption of it as one of the impact of said process? Or if how proFem was framing their mission in 2004 would compare with the years before the accession. In other words, I questioned how had the accession process impacted the Women Right’s groups discourse in the Czech Republic, by putting one specific group into the spotlight.

As a process that required a deep transformation of the candidate states’ social, political and cultural sphere, the accession process to the European Union has become the interest of several authors. Although other authors have investigated the impact of said process on Women Right’s groups of the territory, they had a different approach to it. Namely, authors such as Císař, Hašková, Krízková and Vráblíková focused their analysis on the “hard” impacts: how the EU altered the funding opportunities for these groups, their organizational structure and how open national or even international institutions were to their demands. Yet, to answer the questions that the opening quote

from proFem's 2004 Annual Report presented, I had change the focus of the analysis towards the more "soft" impacts, specifically highlighting changes in their discourse. That is to say, the changes in how proFem envisioned their mission, values and goals.

While a singular pro-women organization does not reflect the entire feminist movement in the territory, focusing on one group allowed me to dive deeper into the analysis of how their discourse, the way they perceived certain concepts, or their way of doing things, has changed throughout the years of the accession process. The results of the empirical analysis show us how proFem's discourse has, indeed, developed during these years segments, visible mainly in how they adopted terminologies that were not used in their reports before the accession process, the subtle manner in which they adapted their mission and goals to frame themselves as part of a "bigger debate" and how the way they understood the woman question in the Czech Republic has changed.

Among others, two aspects of this development stood out during the analysis: the adoption of the phrasing "Women's Rights are Human Rights", and the inclusion of the "male-issue" in the definition of woman question. The first shows us how in 1998, proFem aimed to position itself as part of the international discourse on Women's Rights, indicated on how they took in that discourse as their own when adopting Hillary Clinton's famous phrasing at UN World Conference on Women: "Women's Rights are Human Rights". That was a big turning point for proFem's discourse, right at the start of the official beginning of the accession process. From there on, the organization can be seen as part of "something bigger" and is able to utilize on the national level the legitimation that international actors, such as the UN and the EU, provide when SMOs have the agendas aligned with theirs.

Secondly, the inclusion of the "male-issue" in how proFem defines the woman question from 1998 forward acts in similar way, as it again represents a development in how the group perceived such topic, and their insertion into the Gender Equality discussion by not viewing the inequalities between sexes as a woman-only issue but rather something that affects the entire society. This is something that will allow the group to frame themselves as part of the gender-mainstreaming program, part of the requirements to benefit from EU grant and support.

If we take a step back and compare these two aspects with the literature, we can fit proFem in the debate of how at that time, the manner in which a group defines its

missions, values and goals was intrinsically connected to the European Union, or more specifically, to whoever was its main financial donor. Since the accession negotiations started, for most SMO's the main donor switched to be the European Union. The literature shows us how groups that benefited from EU grants, as we saw to be the case of proFem, needed to fit one specific requirement:

“In order to ensure their survival and to ensure they get EU grants, they must fulfill EU requirements not only in terms of their organizational format but also in terms of the agenda they follow. Thus their projects must be designed around particular issues corresponding to EU priorities in the area of equal opportunity, which in the current period means the gender mainstreaming program” (Hašková & Krízková, 2006, p. 95, Císar & Vrablíková, 2010, p. 213).

The fact that legitimization needed to be seen as a relevant actor and the resources to keep their organizations afloat is so interconnected with what agenda the groups were pushing at the time, which needed to be within the EU mold, created a power dynamic between the groups and the European Union itself. To put it in another way:

“The relationship between the donors (who are also the decision-making institutions), that is, the EU and the state, and women's civic groups is not equal. The donors decide and select who their expert NGOs are to be and the range of NGO activities they support. [...] donors have the power to delineate the scope of topics, approaches, activities, and strategies of those who are dependent on their funding.” (Hašková, 2005, p. 1097)

Recognizing the power dynamic in this relationship brings us back to how Foucault defines discourse and its connection to power. Suppose we understand discourse as ideas, beliefs, and “ways of doing things.” In that case, it's possible to

visualize how Europeanization as a product of the ascension process can, in Radaelli's words, produce, institutionalize, and diffuse its own discourse onto (future) member states, and by proxy, onto the social movements of the territory.

Going one step further and taking proFem's experience as a door to look into the Women's Rights Movement of the Czech Republic, the question of how does the accession impacted the Women's Right in the Czech society, as in how did it influenced the way Women's Rights are understood in the territory, if and how "political structures and public policies", in Radaelli's words, de facto changed by the integration of the country into the European Union, is the target of criticism by other authors.

As an example of such criticism, we see in Hašková's research on the impacts of the Czech accession to the EU on women's civic groups, how the author states that this process:

"[...] brought about positive changes for women's civic groups in the region, in that some of their claims were heard and some of the channels for making an impact on the decision-making process were slightly opened, even though many of the processes introduced at the decision-making level (pushed by the EU) were more a form of window-dressing and had little impact on the real promotion of gender equality in the country." (Hašková, 2005, p. 1107)

While Hašková emphasizes that there was a positive impact for pro-women organizations in the country, when it comes down to concrete improvements on gender equality, the accession process came up short. The same positioning can be seen in proFem's closing statement of the 2004 Annual Report foreword, where it reads:

"We will continue to talk about these rights until there is no such thing in our society and we have truly achieved full equality between men and women. With the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union, the non-equal situation of women (and men) in our society has become much more visible, and the fight against inequality seems to be more 'acceptable,' but the figures on very unequal

salaries, inadequate laws and high unemployment of highly qualified women, for example, show us in one of the last places in the European Union. And that is why we are here.” (proFem, 2005)

Furthermore, Bretherton's work brings up that the EU Commission adopted a minimalist approach during the accession negotiations in regards to gender equality. Despite the promotion of Gender Mainstreaming as one of the EU priorities at the time, Bretherton argued that the EU focused on the social, political, and economic pressures of the enlargement process, neglecting whether the candidate country fully implemented the gender acquis throughout the process. (Bretherton, 2002) Additionally, research on gender mainstreaming has shown us that in regards to Eastern Enlargement, “the topic [equality between men and women] has not been mentioned at all outside the field of employment and social policy” (Steinhilber, 2002, p. 2).

These critics open a series of questions regarding the efficacy of the accession process in terms of the promotion of Women's Rights, or, broadly speaking, gender equality policies. A future research proposal would be the investigation of whether the other countries of the Eastern Enlargement had similar experiences, answering where the similarities and differences of their experiences originate. Likewise, one could put into perspective not only how Social Movements in the countries of the Eastern Enlargement were affected by the accession process, but also how their experiences compare with Social Movement groups from Western countries that ascended into the Union after its foundation. That is not to mention the impact of the enlargement itself on the promotion of Women's Rights and gender equality among the current member states and future candidates.

Lastly, while this dissertation focused on the discursive repercussions of the European Union accession process on pro-women organizations, there's the opening to further investigate how other actors could influence these organizations during the same process. For example, more could be explored on the private sector, the relationship between the European Union and the United Nations in regards to the promotion of Women's Right. This relationship could be analyzed in terms of which organization is influencing the other, especially when it comes to the promotion of said rights and the production of discourse surrounding the topic. Both, the private sector and other

international organizations, might have contributed to the changes in how pro-women organizations define their missions, values, and goals.

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