

CHILDCARE POLICIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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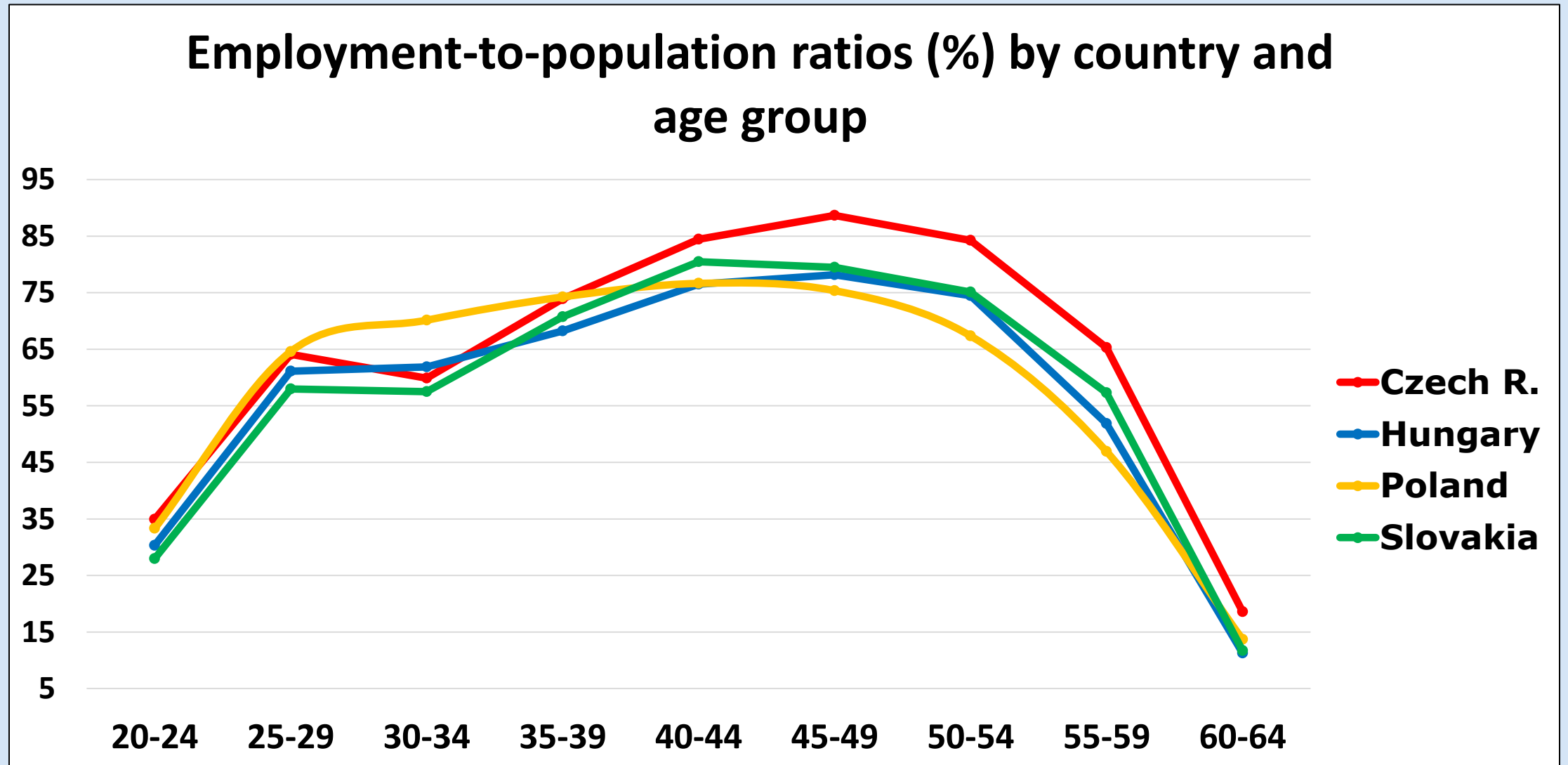
Content and data sources

- Short comparison of contextual data – fertility, mothers' employment, preferences
- Czech system of ECEC and enrolment in formal care and pre-school education
- Problems and dilemmas, deficiencies in the Czech system of ECEC
- Desirable changes of ECEC system and experts' proposals

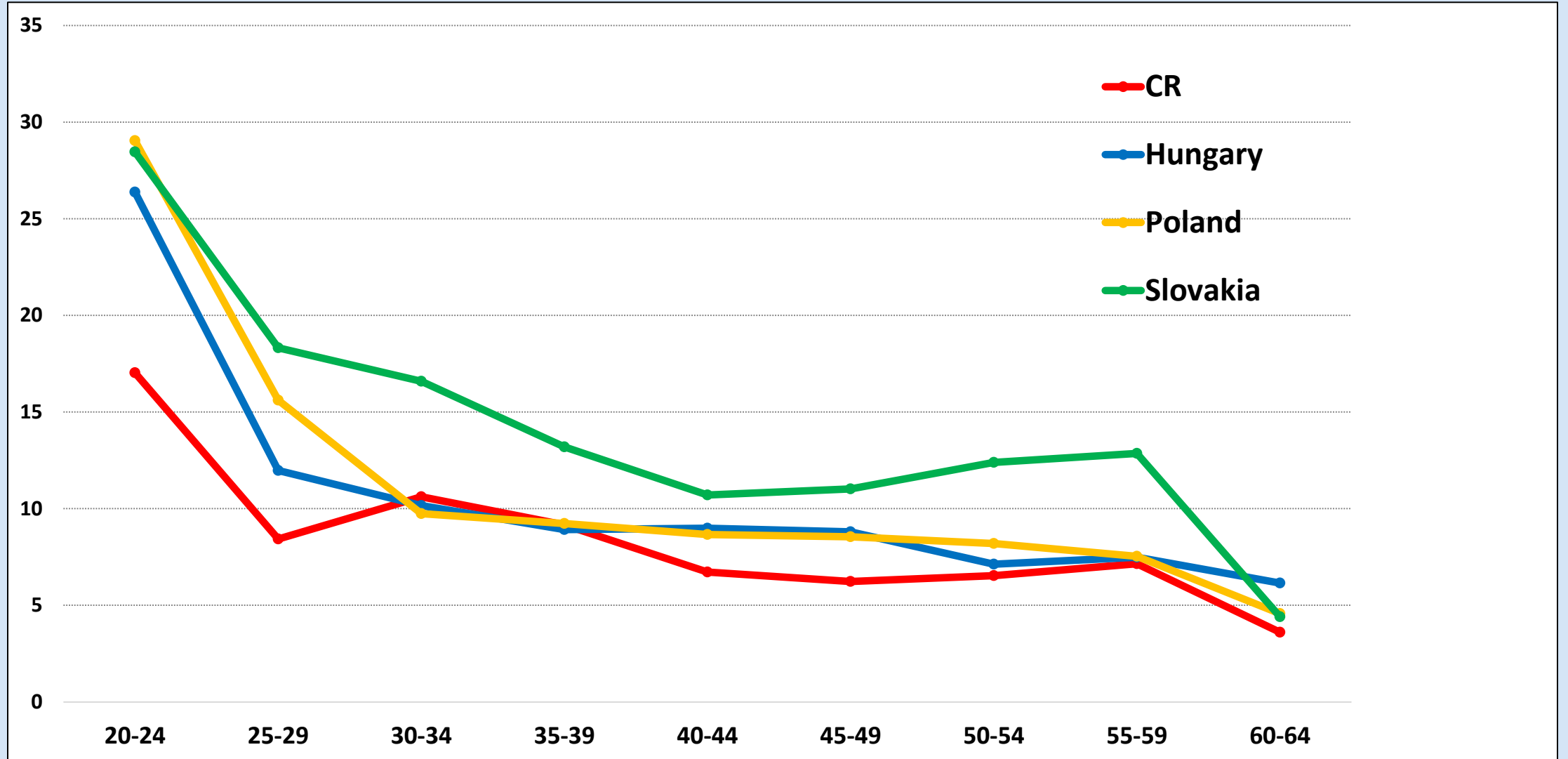
Data sources:

- OECD Family Database
- Czech quota sampling surveys of young children's parents (2006-2014) and qualitative surveys (experts and parents)

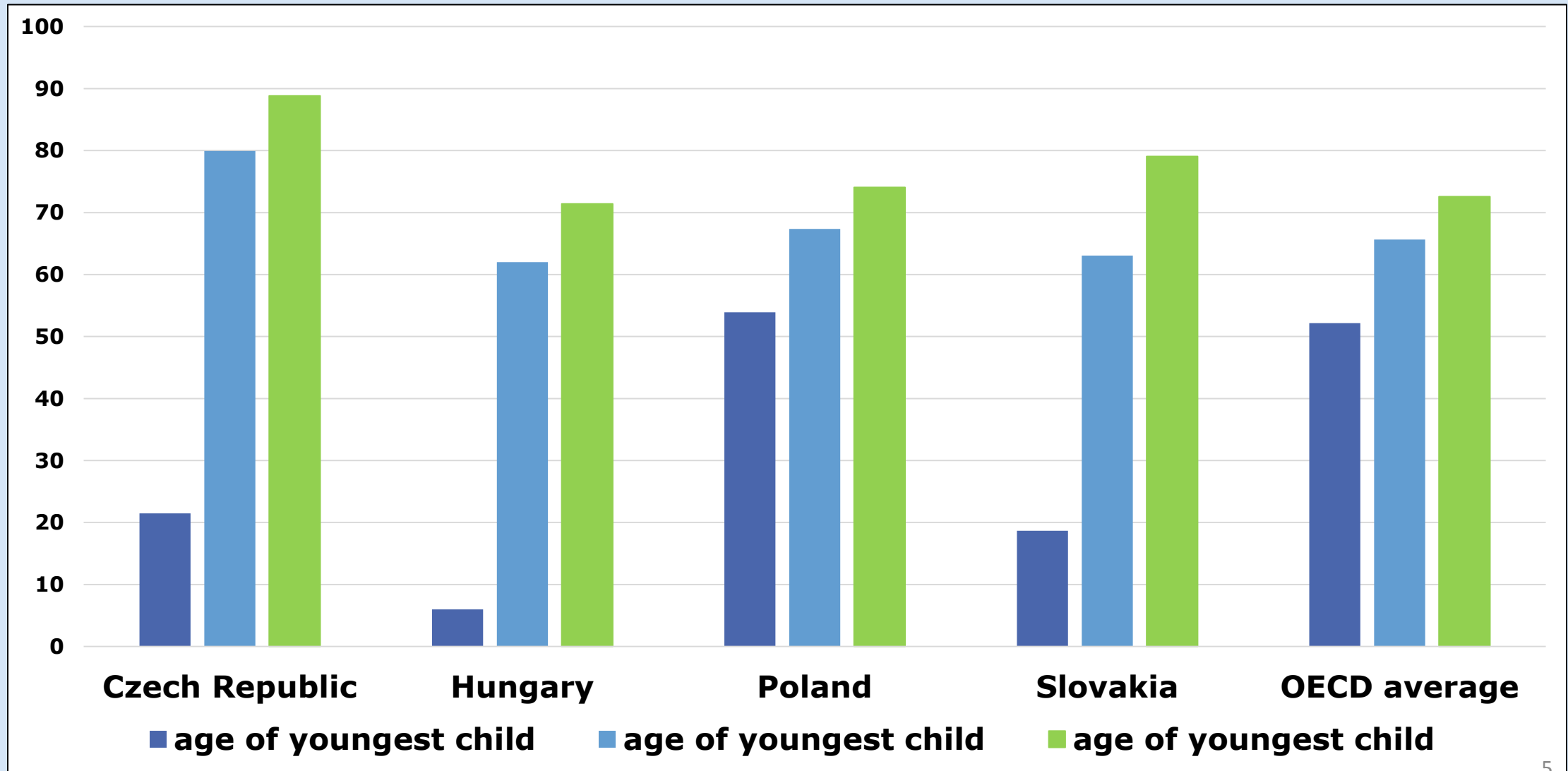
Maternal employment rates by age group, 2011



Age-unemployment profiles (%), 2011

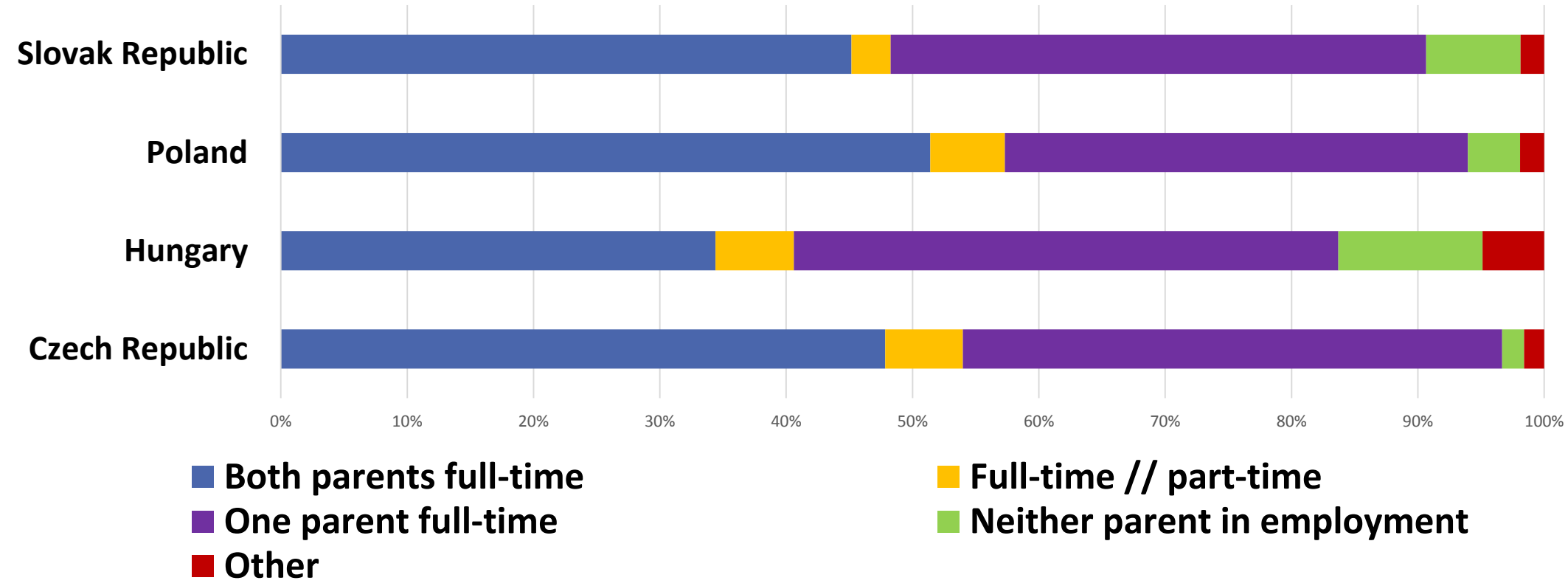


Maternal employment rates by age of the youngest child, 2011

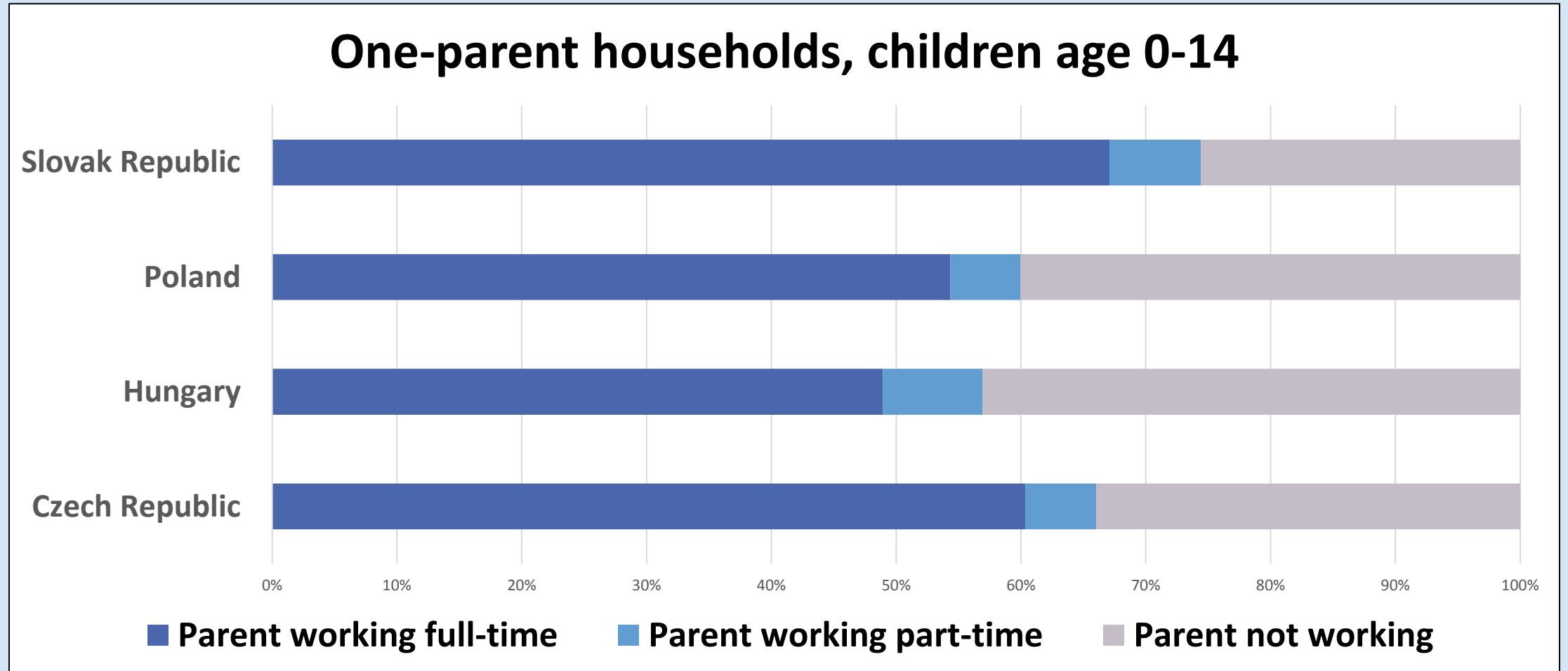


Young children mothers' employment participation – impact on family structures

Two-parent households, children age 0-14



Young children mothers' employment participation – impact on family structures



Childcare policy – individual vs. collective care

- Czech Republic – high and stable **preferences of personal maternal care of young children**
- **Long maternity leave** – up to 3 years (mandatory reservation of the working place)
- Even **longer possibility to take parental allowance** – up to 4 years of age since 1995
- Gradual relaxation of the conditions when drawing parental allowance in order to support the work-life balance:
 - unlimited additional part-time income allowed for parents on parental leave (2004),
 - gradual easing of the attendance of children in public childcare facilities while maintaining entitlement to parental allowance

Childcare policy – individual vs. collective care

continuing

- Gradual ‘flexibilisation of Parental Leave’
 - since 2008, parents had been able to choose one of three parental-allowance regimes differentiated by the duration of entitlement (2, 3 and 4 years) and the amount of benefit.
 - since 2012 parents can decide about its duration & leave payment period (19-48 months), when a total sum of CZK 220,000 (approx. 8150 EUR) is distributed in monthly installments.

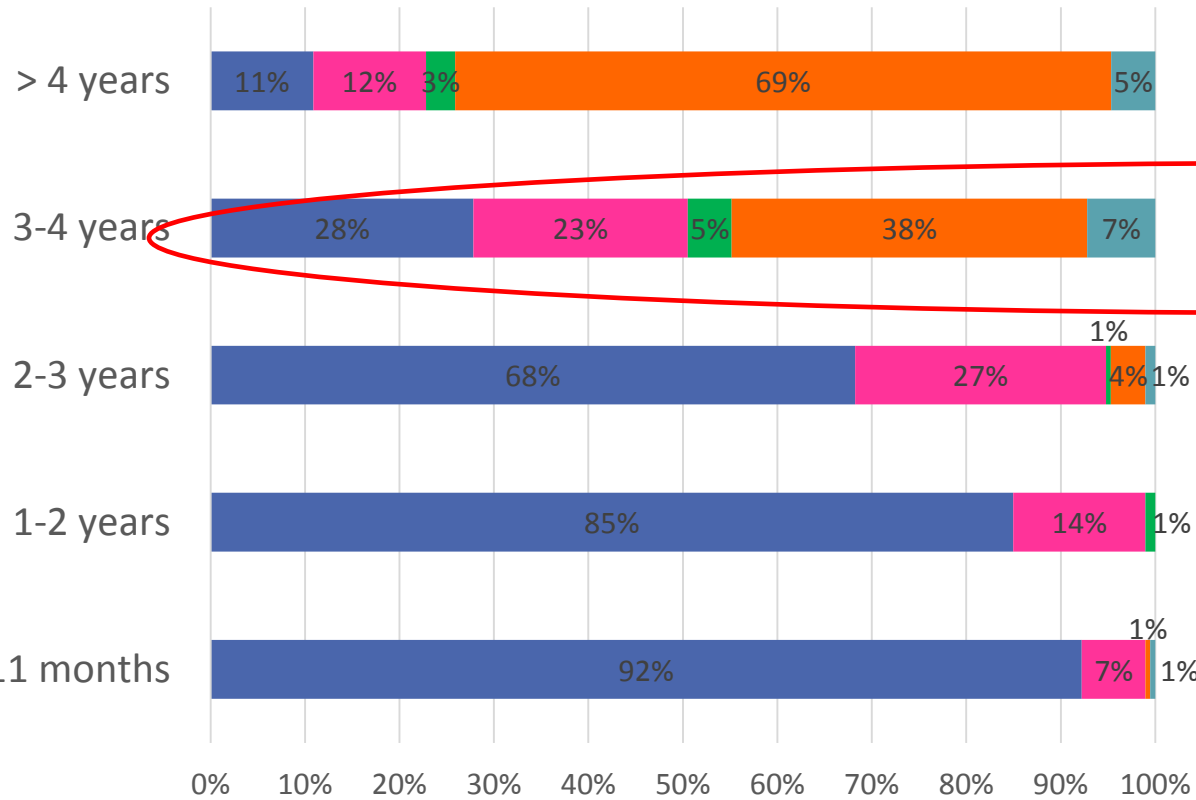
Within family policy measures towards families with young children - clear preference for benefits before services incl. non-parental childcare

Among the three most important measures mothers of pre-school child include (RZV 2006):

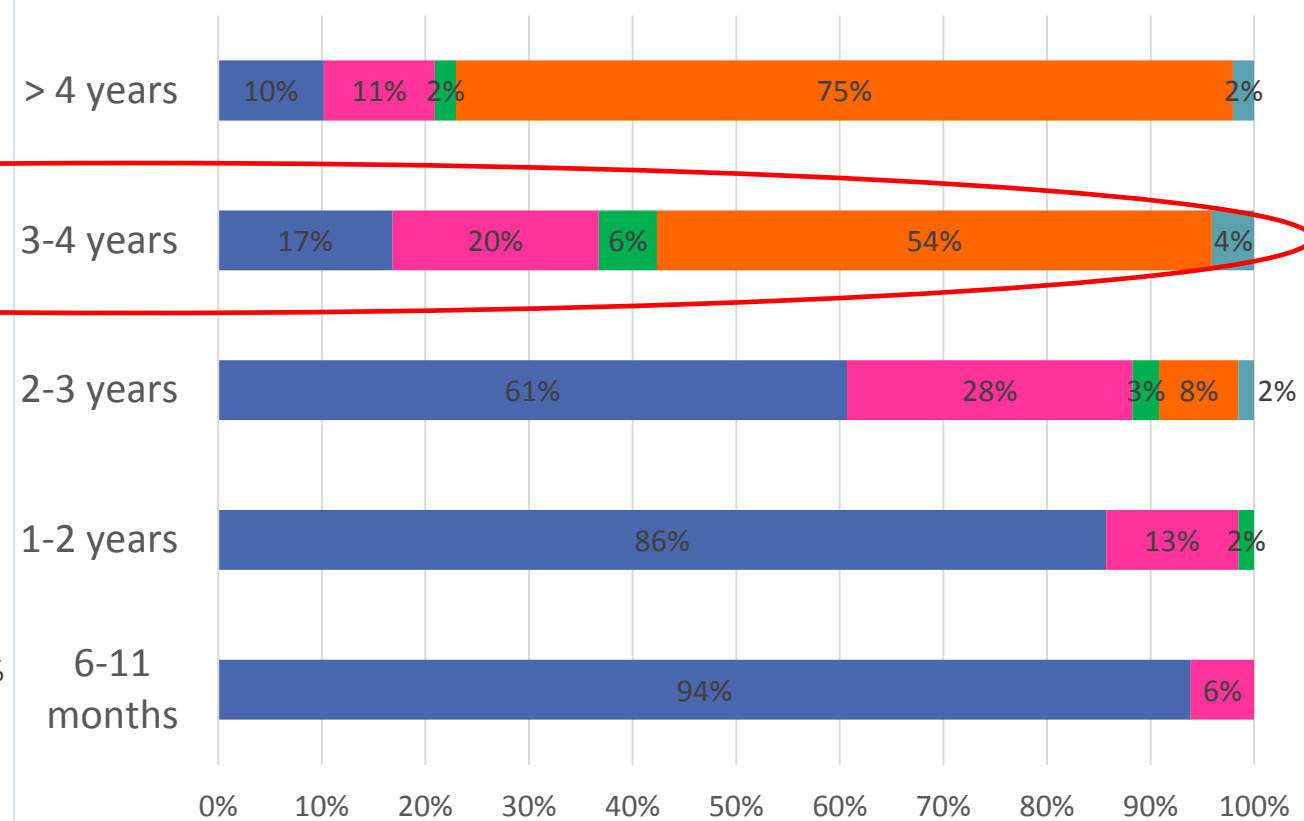
	Czech Republic	Slovakia
Well paid and long parental leave	16%	17%
Well paid maternity leave	16%	19%
Possibility to work part-time and flexible working hours	13%	7%
Sufficiently high child allowances	12%	13%
Good availability of kindergartens	10%	11%
Affordable housing for families with children	9%	9%
Good law protection of parents in employment	5%	3%
Good access of facilities for children under three years of age	3%	2%
Availability of facilities for children in after-school time	3%	3%
High birth grant	3%	3%
Tax cuts for those with dependent children	3%	3%
Possibility of loans to young families	2%	2%

Preferred forms of care by the child's age (regardless of the real chances) in 2006: the influence of social institutions on the preferred ideal on the example of the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Czech Republic - ideal type of care



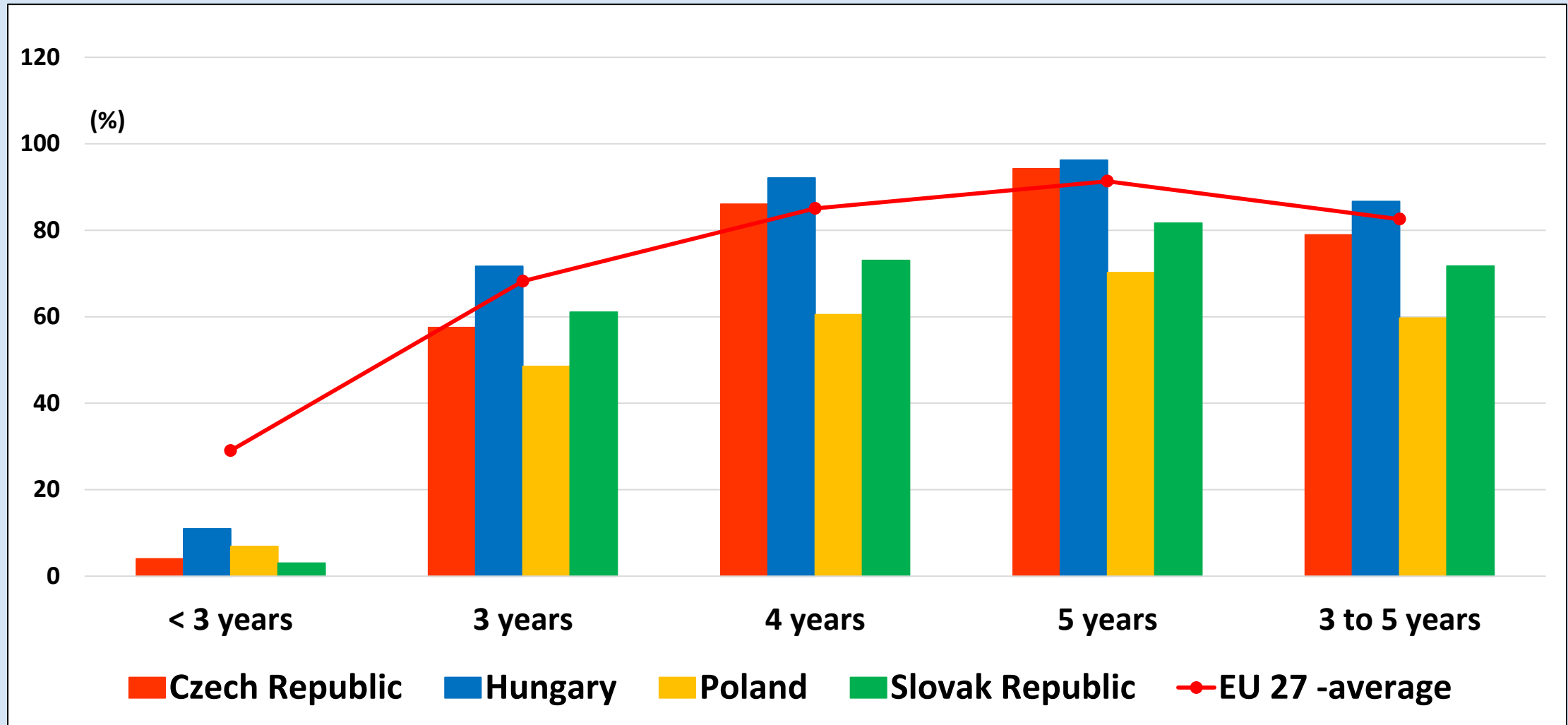
Slovakia - ideal type of care



■ mother
■ other family member
■ individual care outside the family
■ colective (nurcery, kindergarden)
■ other

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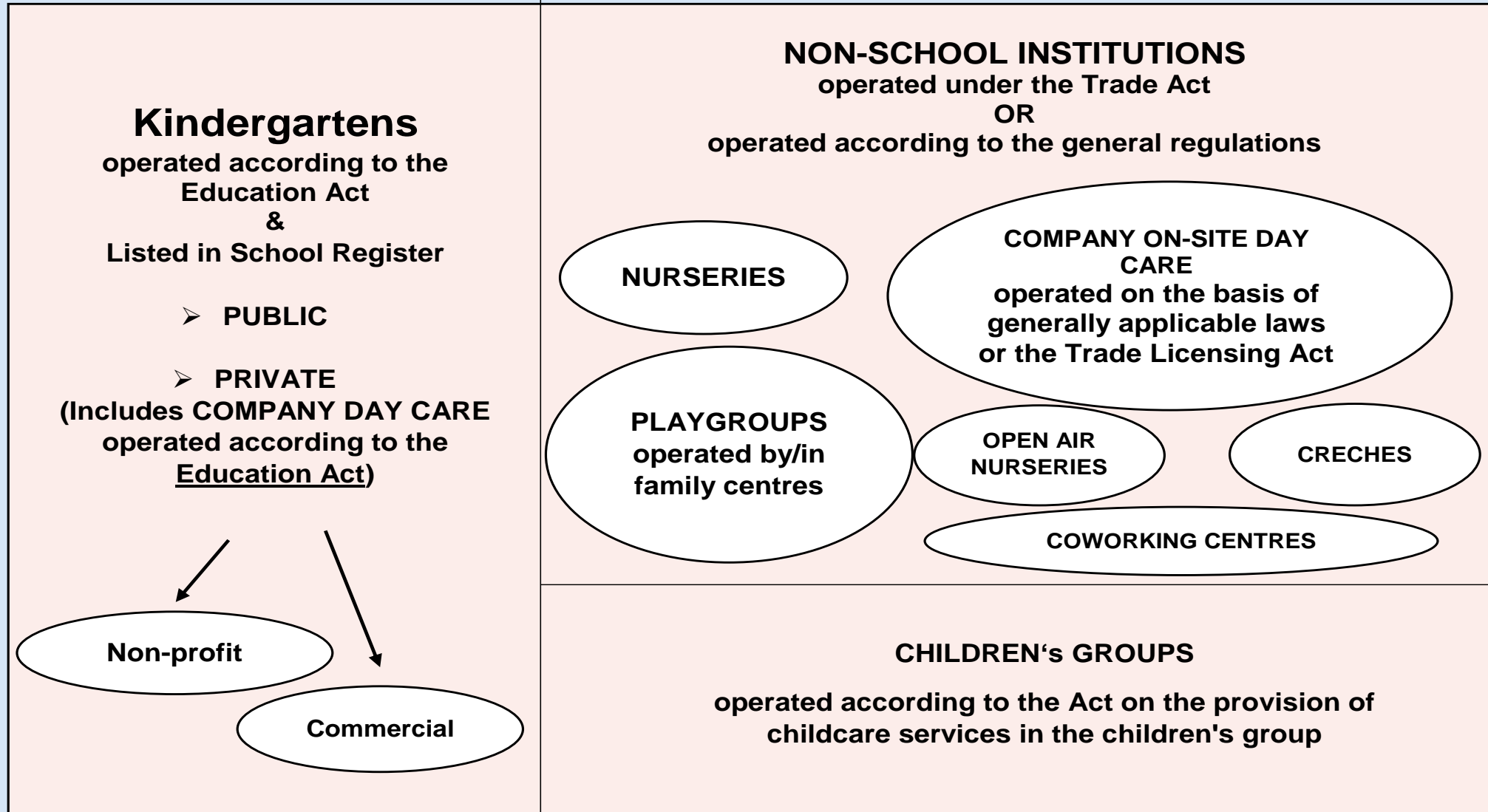
Enrolment in formal care and pre-school by age, 2010



Main reasons for a negligible share of children 0-3 years old in formal care: societal/structural + subjective

- Quantitative and qualitative **shortages of the present system of ECEC**
- Czech **mothers' preferences** of their personal (family) care of children; during parental leave entitlement (up to 3 years of child's age) they largely take care of the child personally Mothers usually return to work when children are 3 years old; however, increasingly more interested in non-family care for children aged 2 years and younger (impact of changing economic and social conditions, changing preferences + changing rules for entitlement to parental allowances)
- These intentions are kept back by **deficiency of day-care** and early childhood education facilities
- If non-family daily care is used for a child aged less than 3, short-time and occasional forms are preferred vs. **insufficient supply** of individual and „alternative“ collective provisions

System of early childhood education and care in the C.R.



Offer of day care services for children up to 3 years – capacity and structure of childcare – nurseries, etc.

- **“Traditional” nurseries as medical institutions ceased to exist – covered only partly the demand (altogether 44 of them in the CZ) → their legal entity has been changing**
- **Today, 3 possible forms of providing day care (outside the Education Act):**
 - **functioning under the general law**
 - **under the Trade Act**
 - **as so-called “Children Groups”,**
This applies to the "nurseries" , (not registered company kindergartens and nurseries, non-commercial day-care services , etc.)
- **Offer and utilization are not monitored, there is no register and no obligation to register → Not known how demand is met, the quality is very diverse, different prices (often restricting affordability)**

Offer of day care services for children 3-6 - nursery schools (kindergartens)

- 5085 Kindergartens (363,6 thousand children) in 2013/14 - 291 were private or religious, others were run by municipalities (or counties or MŠMT)
- **Insufficient supply of kindergartens** - despite growing numbers of children the **demand is not met** - growing numbers of unsuccessful applications (however it is not possible to distinguish the number of multiple applications); regional differences; decreasing fertility makes for decreasing demand
- For children in the **last year** (usually 5-year-olds) the **attendance is free**, these children have a right to attendance – municipalities' duty to provide/ensure access
- Growing interest in attendance to kindergartens for **younger children** (less than 3), it's difficult to satisfy due to lack of places (they are not eligible for kindergarten) + the mentioned municipalities' obligation → Problem of **acceptance criteria** – in excess of demand, there is the problem of discrimination (discrimination criteria – ombudsman)
- In public kindergartens relatively low fee → **unequal conditions** within the whole system of ECEC

Problems, dilemmas, deficiencies in early childhood education and care system

- **Unjustified division – pre-school education (3 to 6) vs. day-care for children younger than 3 years**
 - Differences between nursery schools (kindergartens) registered in the school register and other types of institutions: a clear and legally binding rules set vs. incoherent, inconsistent, inconsistent "rules" usually concerning individual aspects
 - recognized quality and high demand vs. varied quality → uncertainty of parents and providers, parents distrust
 - Other divisions: /not/having special legal basis, for-profit/non-profit services
- Transformation period for **nurseries in their traditional (legal) form** - they **are not sufficiently replaced** by other forms
- System does not **cover the needs quantitatively** – regional differences

Problems and dilemmas - continuing

- Mechanisms **guaranting the desired quality** of day care in all its extracurricular forms are not sufficiently developed - 3 basic institutional elements, which would provide it = quality standards, ensuring quality (education and care), unified information system (registr of providers)
- **Unequal conditions** for day-care services and early childhood education for children of different age, social background, place of living etc.
- **One-sided orientation to collective forms** of non-family care (and specifically to kindergartens) – individual forms of non-family care have insufficient legal and systematic bases

Dilemmas of the desired variability of ECEC system

Variability and flexibility	vs.	Guarantee and quality
Accessibility for all	vs.	Quality guarantee, common basic standards
Extending the spectrum of services	vs.	Ensuring common basic rules, norms, standards
Ensure the right to education (from what age?)	vs.	Meet child's needs, individual development since early ages
Distinguish special needs by age (with boundary of 3 years of age)	vs.	Respect individual differences; different needs of families concerning childcare
Variable spectrum of services	vs.	Unified conditions for different types of facilities/services
Unified register for all types of child-care services (for quality guarantee and information)	vs.	Variety of providers (approaches), incl. individual/independent competences of government departments

Solving problems and dilemmas 1

Act on services of child-care provided in children's groups

- Besides already mentioned deficiencies the system still does not react with sufficient flexibility to **diferenciated and changing needs of children**, parents, families – **child care in the children's group** is supposed to be the remedy (enacted in November 2014 – Act on services of child-care provided in children's groups ...)
- This Act states:
 - basic rules and norms differentiating for groups of different size and age of children (from 1 year of age up to 6)
 - common qualification requirements, obligations concerning educational goals
 - formal and administration rules
 - non-profit basis of the services; principles of charging fees; tax reductions
- Introduction of the Act into practice meets problems coming from: restrained acceptation of „novelty“; not-satisfied expectations (costs, rules), heterogeneous needs (parents + providers), optional registration

Solving problems and dilemmas 2

Proposals of the working group for ECEC by the Expert Commission for Family Policy (appointed by the MoLSA CR in 2015)

- Create an **integrated model of ECEC** operated by the ministry of education youth and sports
 - **Open kindergartens for children younger** than 3 years – state a legal entitlement for ECEC for children of statutory age; (contemporary proposal accepted by the ministry of education is to progressively reduce boundary up to 2 years, while not for free for all /now for 5-years-olds/)
 - Create conditions for caring of and **education of very young children** in different alternative types of facilities
 - Guaranteed **financial affordability and space accessibility** for all children (from stated age) – special attention is given to families with higher number of children at pre-school age (reduce fee to enable them attendance)
 - Guaranteed **quality** care (children/carer ratio; educational plan; individual approach etc.)
 - Enable **flexibility of forms and freedom of choice**

Proposals of the working group for ECEC by the Expert Commission for Family Policy cont.

- **Improve parents' participation/involvement within the system of ECEC and decision-making at day-care/educational facilities (kindergartens)**
 - Introduce school councils of parents (and other participants) at kindergartens
 - Improve interrelationship between kindergartens (day-care/educational facilities) and community (e.g. for social integration purposes)
- **Inclusive education**
 - every child and family should be valued equally and should deserve the same opportunities and experiences beginning at early childhood

Thank you

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