

EDITORIAL

Midwifery – how are we doing in the Czech Republic with the regulation of the profession?

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Midwifery is a regulated profession, the conditions for the education and performance of which are clearly defined in national law based on legislation of European Union (EU) and on basic documents of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) (WHO, 2016; EU, 2013; Ministry of Health CR, 2022 Law No. 96/2004; ICM, 2017). In the case of midwifery, it is clearly established to what extent and under what conditions graduates are qualified to practice the profession. It is particularly important to educate students and qualified midwives in the use of Evidence Based Practice, to focus on practical teaching, and to encourage them to develop hard and soft skills and to continue lifelong learning.

The Czech Chamber of Midwives is one of three professional organizations for midwives in the Czech Republic. The existence of professional organizations is one of the prerequisites for the unification and development of education in midwifery, and for the control and evaluation of the performance of the profession.

The competencies of midwives are clearly defined (Ministry of Health CR, 2022, Decree No. 55/2011); however, the actual performance of them is less unequivocal. The development and fulfilment of all competencies in the provision of continuous care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period are complicated by several shortcomings, both in terms of the system of care for the mother and child but also in the related legislation. Unfortunately, much of this is also down to us – the midwives and other professionals involved in such care. Finally, a certain role is also played by the social image of midwifery and the image of birth as such, which in this country (and not only here), have been altered and distorted from normality (Sandall et al., 2016).

Precisely due to the focus of the profession, its pitfalls, and the way it is taught, a midwife needs clearly defined rules for the performance of the role, lifelong learning, and other parameters that positively

affect the profession. This is the case in a number of countries, from which we can draw inspiration (e.g., Baird et al., 2018). Recently, with the participation of professional organizations of midwives in the Czech Republic, a law was prepared in which the Chamber of Midwives would be legally anchored. Unfortunately, these efforts were disrupted by various factors. Nevertheless, it is necessary to return to this subject and reopen it, in order to establish a legally anchored chamber. It is clearly essential to comprehensively lay down the rules of the profession (including a clearly and firmly established system of lifelong education), to maintain control over the provision of care and, finally, to develop midwifery as a scientific field. At the same time, the establishment of a legislatively anchored chamber of midwives can be seen as an opportunity to become a strong and united partner for all negotiations related to the development of the profession and the care that midwives provide. The Chamber of Midwives is not the entire solution. However, it could help to develop the profession and improve the level of care provided, enshrining, clearly, the care of the midwife in the system, and, finally, increasing professional pride.

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