

# THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY TRENDS ON THE ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPLEXITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND DIFFICULTY OF WORK

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## Abstract

The assessment, complexity and difficulty of work forms the starting point for the determination of fair remuneration. The so-called Analytical Method for the Assessment of the Complexity, Responsibility and Difficulty of Work, which is composed of twelve assessment aspects, serves for the assessment of the work of employees whose remuneration is paid from the Czech state budget. The aim of this paper is to outline the impacts of a hypothetical change to the Analytical Method and to demonstrate the complicated nature of issues surrounding the assessment of the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work in relation to changes in the objectives and subject matter of the work performed. The testing of the changing of selected aspects of the Analytical Method on a total of nine types of work revealed that even relatively small changes with respect to weighting may exert a fundamental impact such as, for example, shifting the work position to a different remuneration grade. Any change in the application of the Analytical Method in relation to current trends may, therefore, directly affect the remuneration of specific workers. Thus, in order that the principle of equal pay for the same work be respected, it is essential that any adjustments to the Analytical Method be tested on a representative sample of types of work and the various activities performed by employees whose remuneration is paid from the state budget.

## Keywords

Job Evaluation, Research, Occupational Qualification, Fair Pay

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## I. Introduction

The classification of work and the activities thereof based on values determined according to complexity, responsibility and difficulty forms the basis of all regulated remuneration systems and wage protection methods applied in the Czech Republic. Moreover, the independent, transparent, and objective classification of types of work and related activities according to the above criteria enjoys a long tradition in the country, and it is reasonable to state that the system is widely respected by the general public.

Since this classification of types of work and related activities is usually employed both for the differentiation of the greater part of earnings levels and to guarantee the right to a minimum level of remuneration, it acts to ensure a certain level of stability with concern to remuneration and employee protection systems.

The requirement for the evaluation of work on the basis of complexity, responsibility and difficulty is set out in the Czech Republic by Act No. 262/2006 Coll., the Labour Code, article 110 of which states that the same salary, wage or remuneration according to a work agreement must be provided to all a company's employees for the same work or work of equal value.

Furthermore, article 110, paragraph 2 defines what is meant by the same work or work of equal value:

- work that is the same or comparable in terms of complexity, responsibility and difficulty,
- work performed under the same or comparable working conditions,
- work performed via the application of the same or comparable work effort and with comparable work results.

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Currently, the work performance of state employees is assessed on the basis of the so-called Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work in Budgetary and other Organisations and Bodies, the output of which consists of the assignment of work positions to the appropriate remuneration grade.

The development of new technologies (automation, robotisation and digitalisation), the increasing emphasis on the continuous training of employees and the overall demographic development of society are changing the demands placed on work and, therefore, it is necessary that job positions be evaluated via the most appropriate method.

The aim of the paper is thus to present the impacts of a hypothetical change to the Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work and to demonstrate the complicated nature of issues surrounding the assessment of the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work.

Generally speaking, explanatory (mainly theoretical) methods, i.e. principally the decompositional method involving analysis, synthesis and comparison, were selected in order to achieve the desired aim.

### **II. Assessing the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work: starting point and foreign experience**

The assessment of work is a systematic process involving the definition of the relative value or extent of work within an organisation in order to determine internal relationships and to provide the basis for creating an effective wage/salary structure, classifying work positions within that structure and managing the said relationships (Armstrong, 2005).

Further, the assessment of work provides an instrument for systematically determining the relative value and extent of the work or work position in relation to the other work or job positions in the company (Armstrong, 2018). The extent of the work refers to the amount and scope of the work and its importance within the organisation.

The purpose of the assessment of work is, therefore, to determine the relative value of the work as well as internal relationships between individual work positions. Furthermore, work assessment provides the basis for the creation of fair wage/salary levels (Armstrong, 2018). Assessment thus determines the requirements, difficulty, complexity and strenuousness of the work and the contribution of given work positions to the overall performance of the organisation and the achievement of its various objectives. Moreover, on the basis of such assessment, work can be classified and ranked into the form of a hierarchy according to its importance and the benefits it accords. However, work assessment also serves for a number of other purposes, i.e. it can contribute in the following areas:

- the planning of work within the organisation – the organisation and shaping (design) of work;
- the preparation of employees for work and further education (including training, training courses, requalification, etc.);
- the level of remuneration;
- the assessment of the performance and output of employees;
- Employment legislation relations (Říhová, 2017).

Following on from primary EU legislation that is binding for all Member States, issues surrounding discrimination and fair pay are actively addressed by individual Member States of the EU. In addition to primary legislation, it is necessary to consider secondary legislation such as Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 which established a general framework for equal treatment in employment and professions. It is necessary to point out, however, that this legislation does not necessarily refer to the assessment of complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work according to the wording of Czech legislation.

Following the need for ensuring equal pay for men and women, as early as in 1992 the so-called JEGS assessment system was introduced in the United Kingdom, which includes special arrangements for application in both the state and business sectors. Originally, the system was designed and developed for use in the public service sector in the UK for the assessment of the relative weight of administrative, technical and professional positions; however, the system has gradually been adopted for the assessment of work in private companies (UK Government, 2018).

In Portugal, as in the UK, the importance of gender equality has increased substantially over recent years. As a result, Portuguese organisations and institutions, together with a range of international institutions, worked together to develop a methodology for the assessment of work in the context of the Revaluing Work to Promote Equality project. The methodology was tested with respect to the hospitality industry in 2008 and the authors employed *inter alia* the good practice and experience of specialists from the UK during its creation and application. Although this methodology is primarily intended to eliminate pay differences between men and women, it can also be applied to the assessment of work in general. (Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE), 2018).

A further example consists of the Spanish ISOS work assessment system, although it is important to note that it is not a fully comprehensive methodology (Corominas, Lusa, Martinez, Coves, 2008).

It is clear from the above examples that several countries have attempted to determine a fair remuneration system; however, each state approaches this theme differently based on historical developments, national customs, societal preferences and so on.

### **III. Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work**

The Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work in budgetary and certain other organisations and bodies, which takes into account all the relevant legislative aspects and guarantees the fair assessment of the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work was developed so as to ensure the fair consideration of these characteristics with respect to the work of employees paid from the state budget. The Analytical Method consists of twelve aspects (see Table 1 below) each with its own unique weighting and grading scale.

By assessing work according to the Analytical Method, it is possible to classify all types of work from the least to the most complex, responsible and difficult. At the same time, it is possible to identify work positions with the same levels of complexity, difficulty and responsibility. The results of the work assessment process consist of a number of points according to which a given work position is allocated to the respective remuneration grade.

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**Table 1 Aspects and weightings used in the Analytical Method for the Assessment of the Complexity, Responsibility and Difficulty of Work**

Evaluation aspect	Original weighting
1. Professional training (formal education)	13.0%
2. Type and scope of further education (attestation, certification, ...)	5.0%
3. Practical knowledge and skills (length of professional experience)	6.0%
4. Complexity of the subject of the work and the work process (complexity of the various elements of the work and their mutual interconnection, complexity of the work activity, the degree of specificity or generality of the elements of the work, ...)	26.0%
5. Complexity of work relationships (intensity of professional working relationships, ...)	5.5%
6. Organisational and management complexity and territorial scope (territorial scope, organisational difficulty of the various work processes)	6.0%
7. Liability for damages (according to the degree of probability of the occurrence as well as the extent of the damages, influence of the actions of other persons and the degree of severability)	6.5%
8. Responsibility for health (probability of a threat to health and life)	6.5%
9. Physical burden (skeletal load, working position, weight of items when handling them)	6.0%
10. Psychological and sensory burden (demands concerning memory, imagination, attention, sight, hearing, touch, smell, ...)	10.5%
11. Negative effects of the work (the need to overcome psychological barriers, demands concerning emotional stability, stress situations, ...)	5.0%
12. Extraordinary characteristics and abilities required for the performance of the work (creative assumptions, empathy, ...)	4.0%

*Source: Output from research activities connected with the Assessment of the Complexity, Responsibility and Difficulty of Work project*

### IV. Influences concerning the subject and content of the work

Human society is undergoing continuous development, which is inherently connected with human work and the concepts thereof. Today, Czech society finds itself in a period of transformation from industrially-oriented to post-industrial modernisation (comprehensive modernisation) while at the same time attempting to reduce the cultural-civilisational distance from advanced Western European countries (Potůček and Mašková, 2009).

The process of globalisation makes up one of the key processes underway in contemporary society and it can be assumed that the internationalisation of markets, goods and labour will continue to influence global developments into the future. The fundamental features of globalisation include the expanding economic integration of geographically, politically and ethnically diverse areas, which further enhances the importance of properly assessing the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work across the whole of society.

The overall development of society is being accompanied by the rapid development of technology. Automation, robotisation and digitalisation are fundamentally changing the processes and content of work and the qualifications required of employees as well as transforming the role of workers, etc. Automation and optimisation processes will lead to the disappearance of many simple, routine and repetitive work positions and, conversely, the creation of new, yet undescribed types of work. Although the professional expertise exists concerning the prediction of the number of new professions

(OSTEU, 2015), with respect to the assessment of work it will be more important to identify demands concerning the performance of new types of work and work whose character has changed fundamentally.

As part of the assessment of work, therefore, it is important to consider the skills likely to be required, and not only with respect to computerisation, i.e.:

- computer literacy, communication skills with machines,
- intellectual abilities such as the rapid processing of information, problem solving and creativity,
- social abilities such as communication with co-workers and customers, teamwork,
- flexibility, the ability to learn, adaptability to new practices.

The work of the accountant provides a specific example of work whose subject matter and work demands have been fundamentally transformed in recent years. While thirty years ago, accountants could not rely on accounting software, the situation today is completely different, and it is questionable whether the technology used today, in this case accounting software, renders the work of the accountant more or less complex. On the one hand, the work has been simplified to some extent due to the application of advanced technologies while, on the other, demands have increased in terms of communication with the software.

A further example consists of the regular maintenance and repair of automobiles. In this case too, the content of the work is diametrically different from that of several decades ago. Accelerating technical progress requires that workers adopt an intensive approach to lifelong learning - the obtaining and regular updating of qualifications forms a prerequisite for the performance of work for which workers receive remuneration.

It is important to emphasise that the impact of digitalisation and robotisation cannot be simply assessed in terms of the profession alone. Every profession consists of a structured system of sub-activities and activities that involve computerisation. The ongoing acceleration of technical and technological progress will lead to changes in the workload of many professions and the need for new skills rather than the complete disappearance of professions.

In addition to the transformation of current work activities, it is currently, and will continue to be a major challenge to fairly assess the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of new work positions, a good example of which concerns the work of virtual reality programmers. As revealed by the Cross Video Days 2017 event in Paris, virtual reality programmers are in high demand. For example, it is expected that virtual reality will increasingly be used in the field of education where it will make a significant contribution to training in both the technical and medical sectors. However, the employers of virtual reality programmers have no idea as to whether the work of these experts involves more complexity, responsibility and difficulty than that of e.g. security systems programmers. As a result of technological development, therefore, it can be assumed that similar dilemmas will be faced by employers such as governments, ministries, local municipalities, etc. in future years.

It is also necessary to consider the potential replacement of humans in the workplace by robots, which will particularly affect easily algorithmised activities. That said, Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborn (2013) in their study "The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerization?" make particular mention of certain activities that are hindered and limited by computerisation:

- perception and manipulation - finger agility, dexterity, cramped working environments requiring specific positions, e.g. the work of gardeners in small gardens,
- creative intelligence - originality, the ability to think up unusual or clever ideas, creative ways of solving problem situations, e.g. the work of lawyers will be very difficult to automate,

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- social intelligence – awareness and understanding of the reactions of others, the ability to negotiate, i.e. to create harmony between people, to eliminate contradictions, to combine different opinions and attitudes, to persuade, to help and to care for others; people will continue to favour interaction with other people, e.g. with concern to personal services such as hairdressers and personal assistance and medical care providers.

The likelihood of the computerisation of a profession is determined by the extent to which such obstacles exist to the given work performance. A team of experts from the EU Strategies and Trends department of the Office of the Czech Government (OSTEU) employed the above-mentioned criteria when modelling the impacts of the 4th Industrial Revolution by means of the application of the so-called digitalisation threat index to the Czech labour market. They also added difficult-to-define working environments, the impossibility of describing the work and other factors to the various barriers defined (team of authors from the EU Strategies and Trends department of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2015). According to published results, in the time horizon of the next 10 to 20 years, for every 5 job positions lost as a result of digitalisation and robotisation, 2 new positions will be created. However, the authors also draw attention to the emergence of new jobs as a result of the growing operating surplus and the consequent increase in investment. It is also worth mentioning here the probable future need to address labour shortages brought about by population ageing.

Opinions on the impact of digitalisation and the proportion of threatened and newly-created professions varies depending on the methodology applied; a number of examples are provided in the following table.

**Table 2 Overview of estimates of the creation and termination of work positions**

Author (year)	estimate
Frey, Osborne (2013)	47% of work positions under threat in the USA
Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2015)	ratio of threatened to newly-created work positions 5: 2 (Czech Republic)
Davos Forum (2016)	ratio of threatened to newly-created work positions 7:2 (developed countries)
Arntz, Gregory, Zierahn (2016)	ratio of threatened to newly-created work positions 7:6 (Germany)

*Source: National Training Fund (2016)*

It is, however, already possible to state that fundamental changes with respect to the workload due to the development of technology and the resultant considerable impact on the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work will concern principally the following professions:

- technical and professional staff,
- office personnel,
- workers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries,
- craftsmen and repair workers,
- operation of machinery and equipment, assembly staff,
- auxiliary and unskilled workers.

As can be seen from the preceding paragraphs, the development of technology brings with it a whole range of questions. Many of these questions are of a philosophical character and the answers to them are not easy to determine. One such philosophical question consists of whether work should, in fact, be assessed on the basis of its importance for society.

Furthermore, it is necessary to point out the threat of an increase in the casualisation of work with all the associated negative impacts. According to the ILO, the casualisation of work is defined by the presence of objective and subjective uncertainty with concern to various aspects, in particular the

duration of employment, unclear employment conditions, a lack of access to social security and other benefits usually associated with employment, low wages and barriers to trade unionism and collective bargaining (ILO, 2012).

New forms of work are not anchored in legislation. Workers are open to the potential loss of employment and social protection rights and, in particular, they do not have the guaranteed right to fair remuneration. Since atypical forms of work are, in the main, associated with tax evasion, it is difficult to determine approaches via which to protect the rights of the state, workers, customers or even employers. Partial attempts in this direction, particularly with respect to the self-employment sector, have been made in a number of advanced market economies in Europe and the US.

The atomisation of work into individual activities and the creation of new activities is a continuous process fuelled by scientific and technological progress which is directed towards technical and socio-economic production. In this respect it is important not to overlook the demographic development of Czech society (Beran and Godarová, 2017) and other globalisation factors such as migration (Schebelle and Kubát, 2017).

Thus, in order to preserve the principle of fair remuneration for work performed, there will be an increasing need to accurately assess the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work and to verify the correctness of the settings of the Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work.

#### V. Impacts of weighting changes concerning physical, psychological and sensory stress

It is essential that the Analytical Method reflects the technical, technological and social trends evident in the labour market and which affect the nature of work, thereby preserving the principle of the same remuneration for the same work.

The results of research as well as individual expert meetings (Říhová and Szabo, 2018) revealed a certain pressure to reduce the importance of the physical demands of work and to increase that of the psychological and sensory demands and responsibility associated with risks to human health and liability for damages. The following text present the impacts of a hypothetical change to the Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work aimed at demonstrating the complications involved in assessing the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work.

It is necessary to mention that this is merely a hypothetical change and that it does not represent the final findings of the research conducted in the context of the Assessment of the Complexity, Responsibility and Difficulty of Work project.

Because of the breadth of work and work activities that the analytical method evaluates, the updating process is time-consuming and will be the subject of research work in 2019. The individual aspects and the impact of their possible changes must be tested and discussed with individual departments of a ministries. The final new form of analytical method will be certified by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

**Table 3 Aspects and weightings used in the newly-tested Analytical Method for the Assessment of the Complexity, Responsibility and Difficulty of Work**

Evaluation aspect	Original weighting
1. Professional training	13.0%
2. Type and scope of further education	5.0%
3. Practical knowledge and skills	6.0%
4. Complexity of the subject of the work and the work process	26.0%
5. Complexity of work relationships	5.5%

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6. Organisational and management complexity and territorial scope	6.0%
7. Liability for damages	<b>7.5%</b> ↑
8. Responsibility for health	<b>7.5%</b> ↑
9. Physical burden	<b>3.0%</b> ↓
10. Psychological and sensory burden	<b>11.5%</b> ↑
11. Negative effects of the work	5.0%
12. Extraordinary characteristics and abilities required for the performance of the work	4.0%

*Source: Findings from own research connected with the Assessment of the Complexity, Responsibility and Difficulty of Work project*

For experimental reasons, nine examples of work positions in various fields were selected for the testing of the impact of the hypothetical change; examples of both manual (cleaner) non-manual work positions (general nurse, social worker) were included in the sample. It is important to point out that the research concerned examples of work positions rather than the assessment of whole professions. Definitions of the tested work position examples are provided in Table 4.

Obviously, in Table 4. is selected sample of works. The outcome of the assessment of complexity, responsibility and workload is a pivotal tool for classifying a job in the appropriate grade, it is a very sensitive topic. For individual work activities, we see a change in subject or work content or another transformation that can fundamentally influence the outcome of the evaluation. It is important to note that verification of the evaluation takes place, inter alia, in the National Commission for Evaluation of Works. Evaluating and verifying the correctness of the evaluation of one example of a work is relatively time-consuming and organizationally challenging, but for the demonstration of selected issues, the number of nine works appears to be sufficient.

**Table 4 Definitions of the tested work position examples**

Example:	Definition of work activities
1.06.06 CLEANER	Normal cleaning, sweeping, dusting, ventilation of rooms, rubbish removal, cleaning of furniture and equipment, vacuum cleaning of carpets, mopping of PVC and tiled floors.
2.04.14 ATTENDANT AT A CULTURAL FACILITY	Confirmatory work including the checking of tickets.
2.05.02 COOK	Production of technologically demanding hot meals or cold specialties.
2.03.01 LIBRARIAN	Independent running of a library with a universal book fund and regional scope.
2.05.03 WAITER	Independent taking of orders, seating and care of customers, payment of bills.
1.02.02 PAYROLL CLERK	Calculation of the amount of salaries, ensuring the payment of salaries and salary settlement, salary compensation payments, sickness and other benefits payments, calculation and implementation of wage deductions, calculation of the reimbursement of increased living expenses, the settlement of the income tax from dependent activities agenda and social and health insurance premiums, predominantly for employees with a regular workplace abroad.
1.02.03 ACCOUNTANT	Independent accounts management of a unit or section of a large accounting entity, including the resolution of breaches of obligations under the Accounting Act with the competent authorities.
2.19.13 GENERAL NURSE	Organisation and coordination of the activities of non-medical health workers and the ensuring of inter-disciplinary cooperation, ensuring the quality of care and patient safety within an organisational unit. The ensuring and implementation of the lifelong education of health workers including specialised training for respective professions.
2.08.02 SOCIAL WORKER	Independent provision of social-legal counselling and social work with concern to families or individuals in crisis situations. Professional activities in drug and other addiction centres.

*Source: Own selection of work positions taken from the Public Services and Administration Catalogue: Administrative Activities Catalogue: The Classification of Employees and Civil Servants according to Remuneration Grades (Tomší and Alinče, 2015)*

Following the definition of the changes and the testing of work position examples, the following text outlines the implications of such a change with concern to the weighting of the afore-mentioned aspects. Selected changes are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 Impacts of the analysed changes on the tested work position examples**

Example:	Absolute differences in the assessment of work compared to the original situation (in %)	Initial remuneration grade	New grade	remuneration
1.06.06 CLEANER	- 27.04% ↓	1.		1.
2.04.14 ATTENDANT AT A CULTURAL FACILITY	- 21.43% ↓	2.		1. ↓
2.05.02 COOK	- 3.51% ↓	5.		5.
2.03.01 LIBRARIAN	- 2.07% ↓	8.		8.
2.05.03 WAITER	- 1.98% ↓	4.		4.
1.02.02 PAYROLL CLERK	- 0.94% ↓	9.		9.
1.02.03 ACCOUNTANT	- 0.94% ↓	9.		9.
2.19.13 GENERAL NURSE	+ 0.44% ↑	11.		11.
2.08.02 SOCIAL WORKER	+ 4.00% ↑	10.		11. ↑

*Source: Own model results*

The above table illustrates that although only a seemingly minor change in the weighting of the various aspects of the assessment of work was tested, the evaluation of work changed in all the tested cases. It is clear from the column “Absolute differences in the assessment of work compared to the original situation” that the level of complexity, responsibility and difficulty of most of the work positions decreased with respect to the absolute assessment following a reduction in the weighting of the physical demands of work. The situation is particularly evident with concern to the work of cleaners and waiters, the performance of which clearly requires a certain level of physical fitness; however, in the case of attendants at cultural facilities and librarians, the reason for the shift in these job positions may not be obvious at first glance. In the case of librarians, the physical demands of their work is clear, for example, the need for the carrying of heavy objects (printed materials, publications etc.) which also applies to accountants and payroll clerks. Attendants at cultural facilities also face increased physical work demands with concern to the handling of heavy objects which is often exacerbated by long-term strain on certain groups of muscles.

Conversely, an increase in the overall assessment of the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work was indicated with respect to general nurses and social workers. It is also important to note that a shift in remuneration grades occurred concerning two of the nine work positions tested. The position of social worker was shifted to a higher pay grade and that of attendant at a cultural facility to a lower grade. These shifts clearly demonstrate to what extent the assessment of complexity, responsibility and difficulty is directly reflected in the remuneration of employees who are paid from the state budget.

It is necessary to point out that the testing process concerned the analysis of changes in the weighting of individual aspects; however, in practice it will also be necessary to update the grade levels of individual aspects. The testing conducted thus confirmed the need for the comprehensive loading of the method employed for assessing the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work based on long-term scientific knowledge.

#### IV. Conclusion

The assessment of the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work forms the starting point for determining fair remuneration. The Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work, consisting of twelve assessment aspects, serves in the Czech Republic for the assessment of the work of employees whose remuneration is paid from the state budget. Each assessment aspect has, moreover, is accorded its own grade level.

Currently, the content of work is undergoing fundamental transformation due to the influence of social, technical and technological factors which is creating the need to update the method by which the performance of work is assessed. The aim of the paper was to highlight the impacts of introducing a hypothetical change to the Analytical Method for the Assessment of Work and to demonstrate the complicated nature of issues surrounding the assessment of the complexity, responsibility and difficulty of work.

The study involved the testing of the impacts of a change to the weighting of selected aspects, i.e. physical, sensory and psychological load, potential liability for the payment of damages and responsibility for human health. The weighting of physical load was reduced by three percentage points, while that of liability for damages, responsibility for human health and sensory and psychological load was increased by one percentage point for each individual aspect. The reason for the adjustment consisted of the rebalancing of the importance of physical load suggested by a range of experts in the field. The weighting change was tested on nine work positions selected from a variety of areas.

The test results revealed that a relatively small weighting change exerts a number of significant impacts such as shifting a work position to a different remuneration grade. With respect to the testing of the position of social worker, the shift was one grade higher while in the case of an attendant at a cultural facility, the shift was one grade lower.

Considering that the remuneration grades of all state employees in the Czech Republic are determined by the Analytical Method, it is essential that any potential update of the Method be tested on a sample of at least several hundred work positions. Only then will it be possible to obtain a truly fair assessment of work performance.

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