



U-shape link between education and childlessness in Hungary - a new Central European phenomenon

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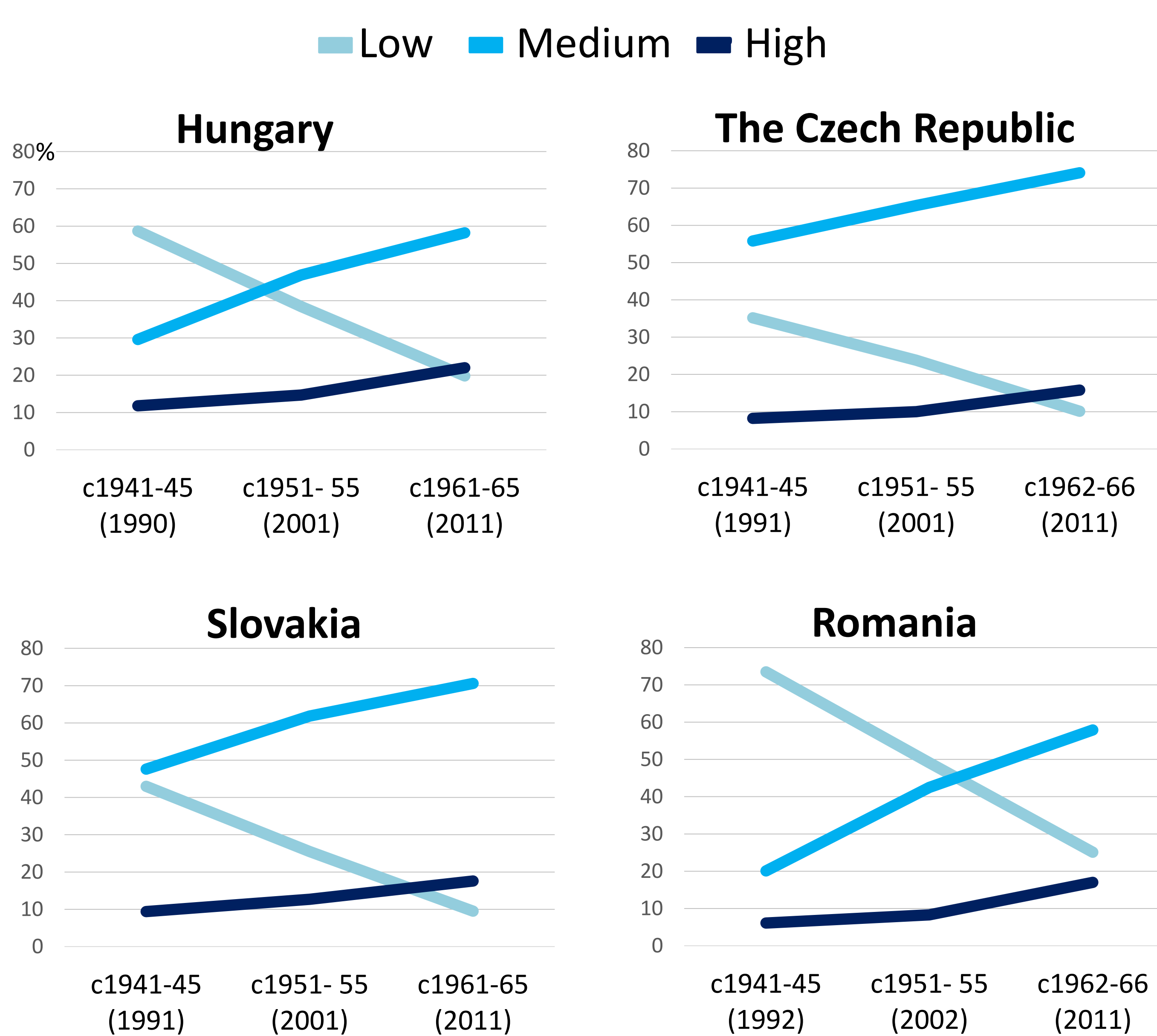
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Introduction

Childlessness is more prevalent among highly educated women than among less educated ones in Western and North European countries.¹ The educational gap in childlessness between high and low educated women has narrowed in the past 20 years, however, because low and medium education was converging.² Continuous expansion of secondary and tertiary education in this period can be observed.³ This educational expansion and the increase in women's labour force participation, economic development and more effective birth control play leading roles in increasing the number of women who remain without children at the end of their childbearing age.

1. How did the level of childlessness change in the past two decades in Hungary and Central-Eastern European countries?
2. Does this change follow the same pattern for low, medium and highly educated women?

Educational composition for selected Central-Eastern European countries (women aged 45-50, cohorts born in 1941-66)⁴



The ratio of women born in 1961-65 who completed secondary education outnumbered those with low education, their ratio becoming the highest one by 2011 in all countries.

The ratio of low and highly educated women born in 1961-65 have inverted in all countries except Romania, but the trends in Romania are similar.

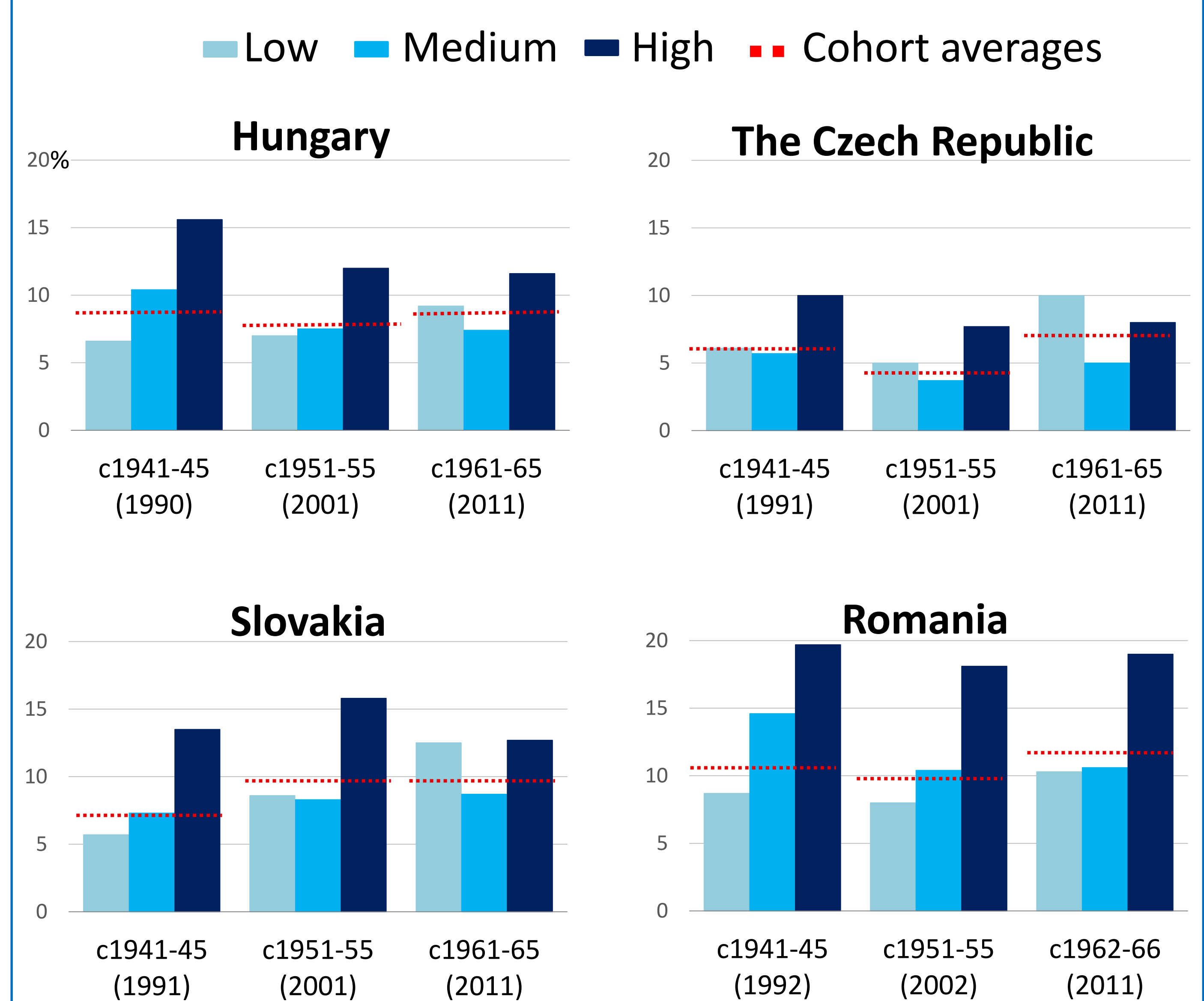
The ratio of the lowest educated women born in 1961-65 becoming the lowest one by 2011 in all countries except Romania.

Data and Methodology

Our analysis is based on the national population censuses from Hungary 1990, 2001, 2011 and Romania 2011; the EURREP Cohort Fertility and Education database; the UN Demographic Yearbook, Population Censuses' Datasets.

Women aged 46-50 are selected as those who are at the end of their childbearing years and a three-category classification of completed education: low (ISCED-97 levels 0-2), medium (levels 3-4) and high (levels 5-6) is compared to answer the research questions.

Childlessness by educational level for selected Central-Eastern European countries (women aged 46-50, cohorts born in 1941-65)⁴



U-shape can be observed in the education-childlessness nexus for the 1961-65 cohort in Hungary:

The level of childlessness is the lowest among medium educated women, the highest among highly educated women and is in between among low educated women.

This U-shape can be observed for the 1951-55 and 1961-65 cohorts in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and a similar pattern can be expected for Romania as well:

The share of low educated childless women converged to the share of middle educated ones in Romania and even exceeded it in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Moreover, the share of low educated childless women already exceeded the share of high educated childless women in the Czech Republic.

Discussion and Conclusions

The share of highly educated childless women decreased, while the share of low educated childless women increased in all four countries between 1990 and 2011. In all but Slovakia, the share of middle educated childless women decreased as well in this period. Selection effect offers one possible explanation for the trend of the low educated, as women with low education became less and less numerous in these countries and in Europe in general.

Another hypothesis could be a social - economic one. Hungarian national census data from 2011 drew our attention to a bipolar aspect of childlessness. The level of childlessness was high not only among highly educated and women living in the capital city, but also among those women who live in insecure economic and housing conditions. Additional work is needed to check if this bipolar aspect of childlessness seen in Hungary is present in other Central European countries as well.

References: [1]. Andersson, G. et al. (2009). Cohort fertility patterns in the Nordic countries, *Demographic Research*, 20(14), 313-352; Berrington, A. et al. (2016). Childlessness in the UK. Forthcoming in: M. Kreyenfeld and D. Konietzka, eds. *Childlessness in Europe: Patterns, Causes and Contexts*. Springer. In press. [2] Beaujouan, E. et al. (2015a). *Childlessness trends in Twentieth-Century Europe: Limited Link to Growing Educational Attainment*. Vienna Institute of Demography. Working Papers, 6; Bujard, M. (2015). *Is there a reversal of the childlessness trend among highly educated women in Germany? Has the educational gradient been overestimated?* Paper presented at VID International Conference, Vienna, December 2015; [3] OECD (2014). *Education at a Glance*. OECD Indicators.

[4]. Own calculation using the following sources: National Census Hungary 1990, 2001, 2011; National Census Romania 2011, EURREP Cohort Fertility and Education Database; UN Demographic Yearbook, Population Censuses' Datasets; Beaujouan, E. et al. (2015b). *Childlessness trends in 20th-century Europe: limited link to growing educational attainment*. VID International Conference, Vienna, December 2015.