

# Looking Back Facing the Bright Future

## Project of the NGO Birth House Stork for 2026

This year, the NGO Birth House Stork is working on a project called **Looking Back Facing the Bright Future**. The project will culminate in an international conference of the same name.

The NGO Birth House Stork was founded in 2003 with the aim of building and running a free-standing birth house run by midwives. The key intention was to safely guide a woman through pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum time and to support everything that is healthy during these key periods in a woman's life. For more information about the history of the NGO Birth House Stork, see

<https://www.pdcap.cz/Texty/Historie/Historie.html> .

However, in 2012, Decree No. 99/2012 on the minimum requirements for the staffing of healthcare facilities came into force. This decree requires that a doctor be present at the place where a normal birth is taking place within 5 minutes. Although this sentence sounds quite friendly, it put an end to all efforts to open and run a free-standing birth house in the Czech Republic.

We therefore focus our attention on the second mission for which our NGO Birth House Stork was established, i.e. education and awareness in the field of supporting healthy pregnancy, healthy natural birth and the postpartum period and safe care provided by midwives. An overview of educational events in the table here:

<https://www.pdcap.cz/Texty/OPS/AkcePDCAP.html> The participants of our conferences and courses have been spreading information throughout the country. In this way, without exaggeration, the NGO Birth House Stork contributes to changes in mother-baby care in the Czech Republic.

We would like to point out the following key steps:

### **A. Publication of books:**

ŠTROMEROVÁ Z., **The Informed Choice** - Where Can I Bring My Baby to the World?  
Prague, Argo, **2005**, ISBN 80-7203-653-X

ŠTROMEROVÁ Z. et al., **Becoming a Midwife Step by Step: A Practical Guide for Midwives (and Curious Parents)**, Prague, Argo, 2010, ISBN 978-80-257-0324-3

## B. Organizing conferences

**2014** International conference **Home Birth, What Do We Know About It?** At a time when both women who chose this option and midwives who assisted them were prosecuted for giving birth at home. Speakers came from 13 countries around the world and home birth began to be discussed with less tension, but rationally.

**2016** International conference **Home-like Hospital Birth** was organized at a time when the option of choosing a birthing position and support for a healthy natural birth in the maternity hospital were still rare.

**2018** Conference **PorodNICE 5P** (*translation hardly possible*), held under the auspices of the Mayor of Prague in the large meeting hall of the City Hall, presented a proposal for what care in a maternity hospital supporting healthy natural childbirth could look like. The first realistic visions have been presented here – plans for the Midwifery Center at the Na Bulovce Hospital, a report on the first months of operation of the reconstructed maternity hospital in Rakovník, and plans for the reconstruction of the maternity hospital in Kroměříž, Moravia.

Publications on this topic:

ŠTROMEROVÁ Z., DVOŘÁKOVÁ M. PorodNICE 5P (Natural Birth Support Rooms in Maternity Hospitals, Vision 2019-2022. Prague. NGO Birth House Stork with financial support from the City of Prague from the AKCE 2019 program. ISBN 987-80-270-6453-3

Midwifery Centres today operate in many maternity hospitals throughout the Czech Republic, and the support of healthy natural childbirth is not an unknown concept.

**Since 2022**, we have been paying more attention to postpartum care. Seminars covering this topic have also been organized under the auspices of the Mayor of Prague.

Publications on this topic:

ŠTROMEROVÁ Z. and colleagues. **Guide to postpartum care for midwives in a community setting.** Prague, Porodní dům U čápa, o.p.s., 2023. ISBN 978-80-11-03572-3 (printed version). ISBN 978-80-11-03573-0 (online pdf)

Today young women take as granted the possibility of freely choosing the place and way of care in childbirth, as well as the choice of care provider. They often do not realize, the same as many young midwives and many doulas don't, that certain rules and natural laws must be followed to provide the safe and effective care.

Since its existence, the NGO Birth House Stork has influenced the development of mother-baby care in the Czech Republic in many ways.

- The topic of informed choice and homebirth ceased to be taboo.
- Midwifery centres began to emerge.

- Some maternity hospitals (e.g. Zlín, Rakovník) began to offer women the possibility of supporting natural childbirth, even the breech birth.
- Intensive discussion about postpartum care provoked during our seminars in 2022–2024 contributed to the fact that women after giving birth in maternity hospitals receive a voucher for care provided by a midwife in the home environment after discharge from the maternity hospital.

What the 2026 project consists of:

- We will prepare a guide to safe midwife care
- We will translate and publish a children's book **Pupík** (Bellybutton in English, **Pepek** in the Polish original), explaining to children how they came to this world. A tool for parents.
- We will organize an international conference, Looking Back Facing the Bright Future mapping the changes in obstetrics in the last 25 years, appreciating the progress that is visible in many maternity hospitals and presenting a vision for the future.