



**National summary sheets on  
education systems in Europe  
and ongoing reforms**

2008 Edition



# **CZECH REPUBLIC**

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## **1. Education population and language of instruction**

In 2007, the number of people aged between 0-29 was 3 631 236 (34.98 % of the total population of 10 381 130). The number of children of compulsory school age was 867 082 (8.35 % of the population). The official language of instruction is Czech. Only the Polish minority is so populous and concentrated to have its own schools. In 2007/08 there were 24 nursery schools, 22 basic schools (providing comprehensive compulsory schooling) and 3 upper secondary schools (1 general and 2 technical) teaching in Polish.

## **2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education**

In 2007/08, most pupils in primary and secondary education attend public-sector schools (98.8% and 84.7%).

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, the Czech education system has been operating on the base of new acts: Education Act that regulates education from pre-primary to upper secondary and tertiary professional schools and its public administration, and Act on Educational Staff that regulates teacher profession on the same levels. Individual measures of the Education Act come in force subsequently. The Higher Education Act with 16 amendments regulates higher education from 1999.

Schools are administered in the frame of general administration. The responsibility is distributed between the central government, regions (which are 14) and communities. Regions are given a high degree of autonomy.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports preserves the integrated state educational policy by formulating long-term policy objectives of education and development of the education system, which it submits to the government every impair year. For higher education, long-term plans are formulated now for 2006-2010, and updated annually.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) above all:

- is responsible for the conception, state and development of the education system;
- determines the content of education: approves framework educational programmes (developed till the ISCED level 3) which are the base for the development of school educational programmes; accredits educational programmes for tertiary professional schools and for higher education institutions;
- is responsible for the state financing policy in education – for drawing up of the education budget and for determining of principles of its allocation;
- is in charge of the school register which has a constitutional meaning: only a registered institution has a right to provide recognized education and receives public resources;
- is an organizing body of institutions for in-service training of teachers and facilities for institutional care.

Regions are responsible for education on their territory. Regional authorities formulate long-term policy objectives for their territory every pair year, in compliance with national objectives. Regions are organizing bodies for upper secondary and tertiary professional schools.

The communities are responsible for compulsory schooling. They establish and administer basic schools and nursery schools which are not compulsory.

All schools have the status of legal entities since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003. School heads were given full responsibility for the quality of educational process, for financial management of the school, for appointing and dismissing teachers and for relations with the community and the public. By law, the school organizing body must establish the School Council enabling parents, pupils, staff (not the school head), and the public to participate in the administration of the school. Organizing bodies appoint school heads on the basis of a tender; they can be dismissed only for reasons defined by law.

The funding of schools comes from two sources: capital and running costs are funded by the organizing bodies (regions and communities from regional/communal budgets), educational cost (salaries and teaching aids) are allocated from the state (central) budget by the MEYS via regional administration. The funding is based on the per capita principle. For schools, the per capita amount is determined at the central level for 4 age groups corresponding to respective levels of education (ISCED 0-3, 5B) and distributed to regions according to number of pupils in the respective age. Regions determine per capita amounts of different schools.

Higher education institutions receive funds from the state budget both for running and capital costs; the proportion was 75:25. Running costs are funded mainly on the per capita principle: institutions are financed mostly on the basis of their performance which is determined by extent of per capita amounts (annual unit costs of study in a study programme) and number of persons that undergo the study. Funding of R&D is allocated mostly on contractual principle. Regulation is adjusted every year which make it possible to influence activities of Higher Education Institutions in accordance with developmental priorities.

Private schools have been established since 1990 (at university level since 1999). Schools are mostly non-confessional; the usual legal form is a for-profit or non-profit grant-aided organization. Both private and denominational schools represent 2.4 % of the total number of basic schools and 1.2 % of their pupils; for upper secondary schools it is 25.2 % of schools and 15.3 % of pupils; for higher professional schools it is 33.4 % of institutions and 35.4 % of students in 2007/08; for

universities it is 60.3 % of institutions and 9.8% of students in 2006/07. The funding of private schools is based on the same per capita principle, as for public schools. Basic subsidies (50-80 % of the amount granted to similar public institutions, according to the type) can be raised to 80-100 % if the school meets a set of criteria. Denominational schools receive the same funding as public schools directly from the MEYS. Private Higher Education Institutions must be non-profit-making to be eligible for a state grant.

The Czech School Inspectorate (*Česká školní inspekce*) is a central control body under the direct supervision of the MEYS. It is responsible for monitoring of schools and school facilities: their educational conditions and results, the quality of management, the efficiency of using funds and complying with binding regulations, at all levels except for higher education institutions.

### 3. Pre-primary education

*Mateřská škola* (nursery school) is a part of the education system with a long tradition. The education is based on the Framework Educational Programme which was approved by the MEYS in 2004 and it is obligatory for schools from 2007/08. Attendance is not compulsory; nevertheless it covers near 90 % of the total age group, 95.8 % in the pre-primary school year. Parents can be asked to pay a maximum of 50 % of the running (not educational) costs covered by the community.

Institution	Typical age	ISCED level
<i>Mateřská škola</i>	3-6	0

### 4. Compulsory education

School attendance is compulsory for nine years, usually from the ages of 6 to 15. All pupils start in a comprehensive single structure institution called *základní škola*, during second stage it is possible for them to proceed to *gymnázium* – secondary school providing general education.

Preparatory classes for socially disadvantaged children may be established at compulsory education schools. The school head decides on the inclusion of a child on the request of the legal guardian and on the written recommendation of guidance centre.

#### (i) Phases

Institution	Typical age	ISCED level
<i>Základní škola</i> (single structure; primary and lower secondary)	first stage: 6-10; second stage: 11-15	1+2
<i>Gymnázium</i> (general lower secondary)	11/13-15	2

#### (ii) Admission criteria

Catchment areas are defined, but the choice of school is free. Pupils can leave single structure *základní škola* at the end of the fifth year for the eight-year *gymnázium* or at the end of the seventh year for the six-year *gymnázium* after passing the entrance examination set by the school. There are 10.4 % pupils of the age group studying at *gymnázium* (2007/08).

#### (iii) Length of the school day/week/year

The school year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the next year. In 2007/08, the school year comprises 193 days of teaching. Lessons of 45 minutes are spread over five days a week. The timetable is 20-26 lessons at the first stage, 29-31 lessons at the second stage (gradually). In 2006/07 it was enlarged by 5 hours. Education is running mostly in the morning. Apart from education, schools offer their pupils all-day care and interest activities in school facilities.

#### (iv) Class size/student grouping

The number of pupils per class is between the minimum of 17 and maximum of 30. In 2007/08, the average class size is 20.6. The co-educational classes are made up of pupils of the same age. Small communities can organize schools (primary stage only) with one or more classes of mixed age. At the first stage, the same teacher usually teaches all subjects.

#### (v) Curricular control and content

Until the end of 2006/07, the national teaching standards set the objectives and the basic curricula content. To achieve them three national educational programmes were approved by the MEYS. In September 2007/08 all *základní školy* started teaching in the 1<sup>st</sup> year (the first year of ISCED 1) and the 6<sup>th</sup> year and in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of eight-year *gymnázium* (the first year of ISCED 2) according to the school educational programmes (SEP) which they prepared themselves on the basis of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (FEP BE). The FEP BE defines nine main educational areas consisting of one or more educational fields, cross-curricular topics and supplementary educational fields. It also specifies the compulsory content of the fields, i.e. the curriculum and expected outputs at the end of every period (the first stage is divided into first and second periods: years 1-3 and 4-5). The educational areas are Language and language communication, Mathematics and its application, ICT, People and their world, People and society, People and nature, Art and culture, People and their health, People and the world of work. The cross-curricular topics comprises Personal and social education, Education for democratic citizenship, Education towards thinking in the European and global context, Multicultural education, Environmental education, and Media studies. The SEP BE divides the curriculum into particular years (or other compact parts e.g. modules) and into subjects and specifies syllabus. One educational field can form part of one or more subjects or the educational content of different fields can be integrated in an 'integrated subject'. Through the SEP school profiles itself. Teaching of a foreign language starts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, but the school head can include it in the 1<sup>st</sup> year if pupils are interested and parents agree.

Teachers can choose their own teaching methods, within the scope of the proposals or recommendations articulated in the educational programme and according to the general policy of the school. Each school is free to use textbooks (from a list approved by the MEYS).

#### (vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Pupils are assessed by teachers on the basis of written and oral work and homework on a 5 point scale. The results of continuing assessment are summarized in a report at the end of each semester. Verbal assessment is authorized at all educational levels since 2005. Pupils in difficulty can be made to repeat the year once on every stage. Since 2005/06 school issues a final evaluation to leavers of compulsory schooling. Meetings with parents are organized to discuss their children's progress. More than 96 % pupils complete successfully basic education and continue in education on higher level.

## 5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

### (i) Types of education

Institution	Type of education	Length (years)	ISCED level	Theoretical age
<i>Gymnázium</i>	Upper secondary general	4	3A	15-19
<i>Střední odborná škola</i> <i>Střední odborné učiliště</i>	Upper secondary technical or vocational	4	3A	15-19
		3	3C	15-18
		2	3C	15-17
		1-2	2C/3C	15-16/17
All upper secondary schools	Post-secondary non-tertiary	1-2	4A/4B	18-21

### (ii) Admission criteria

Prerequisites for acceptance in upper secondary education are completing a compulsory education and successfully meeting entrance requirements. The content of the entrance examination (written and oral) is determined by the school. Pupils can apply for three schools of their choice. Those who were not enrolled can participate in the other round of entrance examination at a school that has a free capacity.

Prerequisites for acceptance in a post-secondary programme is completing a secondary programme depending on the education pathway and successfully meeting entrance requirements.

### (iii) Curricular control and content

The MEYS laid down educational standards determining the aims and content and approved curricula, which is very flexible.

At *gymnázium*, there are 33 lessons weekly. The number of hours prescribed for obligatory subjects is decreasing (29-21) in respective years. The school head determines the optional subjects according to the school profile and can add 2 supplementary hours.

At technical programmes (ISCED 3A), the total number of lessons is 33; the proportion of general subjects and vocational ones is about 40:60. Some lessons are optional. At the vocational programmes (ISCED 3C), there are 33 lessons too; the proportion of general subjects, vocational subjects and practical training is varying. Practical training in three-year courses (a prevailing type) can take 30-45 % of lessons.

Leavers of upper secondary education can enlarge or change their qualification in three types of post-secondary programmes: two-year *nástavbové studium* (follow-up study) providing leavers of three-year vocational programmes 3C with general and theoretical subjects of the studied area to achieve level 4A, and two types of shortened study providing leavers of general or technical programmes 3A either with knowledge of another field to achieve level 4A or with skills to achieve level 4B.

### (iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

All upper secondary schools organize their own final examination:

- the *maturitní zkouška* in general or technical four-year courses (ISCED level 3A), in two-year *nástavbové studium* or in shortened study (ISCED level 4A); leavers are awarded the

*vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce* which opens the possibility to enter a higher level of education;

- the *závěrečná zkouška* in three-year (prevailing) or two-year courses (ISCED level 3C), where a part of the examination is practical; the leavers are awarded a *výuční list* – a certificate which proves their skills in a given field; this certificate can also obtain leavers of 3A level in shortened study (4B);
- the *závěrečná zkouška* in two- and one-year courses which are only technical (ISCED level 3C), the school leavers are awarded the *vysvědčení o závěrečné zkoušce*. (Leavers represent a very small part of all leavers. Nevertheless, this pathway is important for the unsuccessful leavers of basic education.)

Leavers with the *maturitní zkouška* (in general or technical fields) represent over 70 % of all leavers of upper secondary education. Leavers of *gymnázium* (i.e. general education – a half of them already enrol during the second stage of the basic school to 6-year or 8-year *gymnázium*) represent 28 % of holders of the *maturitní zkouška* and almost 20 % of leavers of upper secondary education.

Leavers of the *nástavbové studium* represent some 10 % of those who achieve the *maturitní zkouška* in the traditional pathway. Shortened study has been a new type of study since 2005/06.

## 6. Tertiary education

### (i) Types of institution

Institution	ISCED level	Length (years)	Theoretical age
<i>Vyšší odborná škola</i> (tertiary professional school)	5B	3 (3.5)	19-21/22
<i>Vysoká škola</i> (higher education institution, university and non-university type)	5A	3/4/5/6	19-22/26
<i>Vysoká škola</i> (university type) – Doctoral studies	6	3-4	-

Tertiary professional schools provide students with advanced technical knowledge. Their curriculum is prepared by the school and accredited by the MEYS. From 2005/06 the accreditations are awarded only to 3-year programmes (3.5 in the health branches). The proportion of general, basic vocational and specific vocational subjects is about 20:40:30.

Higher education institutions are either of university (in 2008, 28 institutions – 26 public, 2 state) or non-university types (46 private institutions). The study programmes are prepared by individual institutions/faculties and approved by the MEYS on the affirmative standpoint of the Accreditation Commission.

### (ii) Access

The *maturitní zkouška* certificate is the minimum entrance qualification for all tertiary education. Each institution determines its own admission criteria and the content of the entrance examination.

### (iii) Qualifications

Final examination taken on completion of tertiary professional schools is the *absolutorium*. The graduate is called the *diplomovaný specialista* – DiS. (specialist with a diploma).

On the completion of study at higher education institutions students take a state examination and defend a thesis. The graduates of the first cycle courses (3-4 years) are awarded the title *bakalář* – Bc. (Bachelor). The graduates of the second cycle courses continuing after Bachelor (1-3 years) or

long-type courses (5-6 years) are mostly awarded the title *magistr* – Mgr. (Master); for some branches, there are specific titles: *magister umění* – MgA. (Master of Art), *inženýr* – Ing. (for technical and economic branches), *inženýr architekt* – Ing.Arch. (in architecture); in medicine and veterinary medicine (and after the exam *státní rigorózní zkouška*) the title *doktor* – MUDr., MDDr., MVDr. For holders of mastery, there is a possibility to be awarded the title JUDr., PhDr., RNDr., PharmDr., ThDr. after the exam *rigorózní zkouška*. On the completion of doctoral studies (3-4 years) students take a doctoral examination and are awarded the title *doktor* – Ph.D. (Th.D. in theology).

## 7. Special needs

Special schools exist from pre-primary to upper secondary level. Their curriculum and qualifications are as close as possible to those of mainstream schools, the methods are appropriate to the specific educational problems (mainly mental, physical, visual or hearing disability). Attendance at a special school requires a recommendation from an appropriate authority and parental consent; 2.7 % of the population falls outside mainstream education. The new Education Act puts stress on integration.

## 8. Teachers

Four-year teacher training for pre-primary education is organized in general at the upper secondary level; there are also university courses at a Bachelor or Master levels (three or four years). Would-be teachers at other levels of education must obtain a university qualification, generally Master level (for which study lasts usually four or five years). Teachers (except of generalists on the first stage of basic school) are specialised usually in two fields. The preparation of teachers of general subjects is mostly concurrent, for technical/vocational subject is consecutive. Teachers do not have civil servant status. The 2004 Act on Educational Staff regulates the prerequisites for the performance of the profession, their further education and the career scheme.

## 9. Current reforms and priorities

### I. Reforms

The gradual implementation of the **Education Act** (2004) is focused on the curricular reform and evaluation.

**Curricular reform** is based on the Framework educational programmes (FEPs) that represent a central level of the curricular system and define educational goals and key competencies as well as educational contents necessary for their achievement. On the basis of the FEP schools will prepare their own school educational programmes in determined terms. The system is progressively verified in pilot schools. FEPs are in different phases of development.

- FEPs were approved for ISCED 0, 1 and 2 except for special education. *Mateřská škola* (ISCED 0) works already in accordance to the FEP.
- *Základní škola* started teaching according to the FEP in 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades from the school year 2007/08 (for more see 4.(e)).
- The FEP for upper secondary general education was approved in August 2007. In the following two years, schools must prepare their own school educational programmes to start with from September 2009.
- The FEPs for upper secondary technical and vocational education are prepared simultaneously with the new National Qualification Framework which defines some

200 fields of education instead of former 800. Till July 2007 FEPs for most frequent fields (32 for ISCED level 3A and 29 for ISCED 3C) were approved. All FEPs are scheduled to be completed by August 2009. In two years following the approval, schools must prepare their own school educational programmes and start teaching on their basis.

**Evaluation processes** are stressed. From 2006/07 all schools are obliged to self-evaluate. All final exams are revised: till now only schools have been responsible for their content and organisation. New *maturitní zkouška* will consist of common and profile parts of two levels of difficulty. Common part will consist of three centrally organised examinations, profile part of the *maturitní zkouška* will consist of examinations organised by school in compliance with the Framework Educational Programme. The introducing of the new *maturitní zkouška* intended for 2008 was postponed to 2010 and 2012. In 2008 the legislation is under preparation. The pilot projects of *závěrečná zkouška* in 3-year vocational programmes (70 fields) will be completed in 2008 and the implementation will follow.

The Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Outcomes from 2006 is implemented from 2007. It set up National Qualification Framework, amended the Education Act and stressed the concept of lifelong learning through all education system.

## II. Current discussions

In 2007 discussions on amendment of the 2004 Education Act started. At the beginning of 2008 the discussion was extended to the amendment of the 2004 Educational Staff Act.

In the half of 2007 an expert team started the work on the White Paper on Tertiary Education with the aim to prepare a reform of this educational level and a new Tertiary Education Act. In relation to the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Outcomes initial works on preparation of the National Qualification Framework of Tertiary Education have started.

*Unrevised English*

For more detailed information on the education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE ( <a href="http://www.eurydice.org">http://www.eurydice.org</a> )
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