Youth Policy in the Czech Republic

**State policy towards Children and Youth in the Czech Republic is a traditional field and focus of the public sphere** with many variations in the time, political regime and social climate.

First discussions on overall Act on Youth started in the year 1986, still during the time of Socialists Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, as a complex field in the time of many social and political changes (Velvet revolution 1989, transformation to the liberal democratic country in the 1990s, joining the EU in 2004, economic crisis...), no specific overall Youth Act was accepted and since 2006, there is anymore no discussion on this issue.

Since the end of the 1990s, State Concepts on Children and Youth Policy (Youth Strategy) were in place. Current Youth Strategy for supporting Young people is for period 2014 – 2020 (for details see Chapter 1.3 [1]).

Since 2001, the **public governance structure is quite decentralised on self-governing regional, and local level** with state delegated competences and state service. That has an impact on the Youth Policy and Youth Issues in public policymaking. However, there is a central state authority in the field of Youth - the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports with the coordinative role by its Youth Department (more on the decision-making structure see Chapter 1.4 [2]).

The Youth Policy is cross-sectorial with the strong position of each sector and public policy as Education, Culture, Public Health Protection, Employment, Social Issues... (for details see Chapter 1.5 [3]).

An effective overall cross-sectoral coordination of the Youth Policy and Youth Issues seems to be to some extent as the bigger challenge, as in many other countries. One of complicating aspect is that within a particular sector, there are no policy structures focused primarily on young people and young people are only one of the target groups. (With the only exception of the administrative unit on Hygiene of Children and Adolescents within the Public Health Protection Policy at Ministry of Health).

Generally, **Young people are seen as a specific vulnerable group within public policies**, as well as it was in the Governmental programme statement 2013 – 2017. However, **present Governmental Programme statement from June 2018** [4] does not focus on Youth specifically.

Issues related to Children and Youth are still present in the statement as follow:

- Lowering taxis on Childcare services
• Support for functioning families with the normality of working culture

• Ensuring pretension of care of the Child older than two years of age in public facilities

• Special protection of Children in dept environment

• Supporting programmes of movement literacy for the public and Youth

• Supporting talented sports Youth in their training

Youth policy coordination became less important in the light of other state-wide and societal priorities. One significant reason is that each sector traditionally has its own mechanisms targeting young people to some extent and its own experts in the field, who have a lower level of knowledge of the youth field and more limited capacities to follow new developments of the state youth policy (more on the evidence issue in Chapter 1.6 [5]). Another aspect could be a general perception that young people after reaching the age of 18 years become adults with full enjoyment of rights and duties as the rest of the population.

However, it seems that there is a gradual development from the point of the Youth Policy view, even if there are many mistakes and inconsistencies at all levels. The latest edition of the state Youth Strategy for the period 2014-2020 was an important step towards improving governance and youth policy performance, even if some coordination and monitoring mechanisms showed to be ineffective. Only a limited group of experts with insights into the whole portfolio of public youth issues and policies is available. The Youthwiki project can also be a small, but nevertheless important stepping stone on the path to overcoming these challenges.

We thus invite all readers to critically read and work with the following chapters. The authors would also appreciate any feedback, comments and updates on particular issues from all sectors and thematic fields concerning young people.

You can contact the authors on the e-mail youthwiki@crdm.cz [6].

Thank you for your cooperation and we wish you an inspiring reading.

The team of the Analytical centre of the Czech Council of Children and Youth