
Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Country Report: The Czech Republic

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction: Brief historical insight..... | 3 |
| Contemporary Czech Educational System..... | 4 |
| <i>Structure and recent legislative changes</i> | 4 |
| <i>Czech school external and internal evaluation, and self-evaluation</i> | 5 |
| System of care and the conceptualisation of Special Educational Needs..... | 6 |
| Introductory Notes on the areas of disadvantage in this Project..... | 6 |
| Policy on the Integration of Foreigners..... | 7 |
| The Roma people integration, inequalities and historical background..... | 9 |
| <i>Historical roots of the Roma people's inequalities</i> | 10 |
| <i>The Situation of the Roma after November 1989</i> | 11 |
| A Summary of Educational Disadvantage in the Czech Republic Today | 13 |
| Conclusion | 16 |
| References..... | 18 |
| Appendix: Project Summaries | 20 |
| Appendix: Project overview..... | 21 |

Introduction: Brief historical insight

After the political changes of 1989 and 1993 the Czech Republic has developed a new approach to its disadvantaged citizens which is different from the approach of the totalitarian communist period and the state monopoly. However even the communist regulative procedures had relatively systemic care for people with various kinds of disadvantages, within a relatively transparent allocation plan. The omnipresent communist ideology and political pressures contributed to the tendency to present the policy in a very positive way following the key aim to present the socialist society as the best system to care for the citizens' needs. Nonetheless there were considerable discrepancies between the policies prior to and after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Although the contemporary approach of the Czech Republic to social inequalities has its imperfections, there are noticeable positive shifts proving that the process of transition into a multicultural society has been started in the 1990s.

The centralised system of healthcare, education and social services together with seclusion from the democratic world (strengthened by closed borders) undisputedly influenced such activities as the lower rate of social pathological phenomena and rare statementing of social groups with special educational needs (SEN)¹ in the official statistics and reports. The lack of entrepreneurial activity and fewer places of amusement such as arcades seem to be the cause of fewer gamblers, lower unemployment rates, and fewer economically disadvantaged people etc. Due to closed borders there were almost no immigrants or asylum seekers.

Another specific feature that must be mentioned is the selection and even segregation of disadvantaged people. People with all kinds of physical disadvantages were concentrated in specialised institutions, which were usually located out of cities and towns. Typically, these healthcare and social welfare institutions were isolated and operated under strict and impersonal military-like rules, which in some cases did not respect, or even violated, the basic human rights. The staff were often underqualified, which did not help improve the standard of the care provided.

Only after 1989 did vocational schools and universities open courses to prepare fully qualified experts for work with the disabled² and people who might need their educational needs addressed in particular ways, such as ethnic minorities, immigrants, people with socio-economic and linguistic disadvantages or religious minorities. This shows that although the social policy of the totalitarian establishment was claimed to be for the benefit of all, this assertion did not correspond to reality. All the foregoing was true of provision for adults, children and young people.

Some of the key specific features seem to lie firstly in the structure of the Czech educational system, which is currently undergoing school curricular reform and the introduction of new steps in the system of educational quality maintenance and particularly school self-evaluation. These points and related issues, such as assessment, are the focus of following parts of this report, which also comments also on the current conceptualization of SEN in the Czech Republic.

¹ SEN in this report is used in the sense specified below, for the meaning see pages 5-6.

² The term disabled seems to have its roots in the current stage of terminological development in the field of disability inequalities in the Czech Republic. The term 'disabled' in the Czech context might be replaced by a term such as 'disadvantaged' or 'handicapped', or by expressions such as 'persons with socio-cultural inequalities'. This way of referring to inequalities by using 'inequality attributes' (such as disabled and handicapped) might be seen as attributing inequality to such people, and a rationale for discriminating against 'disabled persons'. But in the Czech context, terms such as disabled and handicapped are used even by persons volunteering in this field of social work and education, often even by experts on special pedagogy etc. Activities that support the inclusion of people with disabilities, such as a sports competition and prizes use the term handicapped/disabled. This usage and the point of view it expresses seem to come from the lack of attention paid to linguistic sensitiveness to these issues. Terms of this kind are used despite the fact that in the field of special pedagogy there is a more supportive, more inclusive and intercultural terms such as 'people with SEN'. These varieties of terminology might be interpreted as an indicator of the persistent view of those people with these inequalities as being people who need help. The terminology in the CZ case study/ies and country report is applied with respect to the contemporary usage in the Czech Republic and in the documents concerning the projects described.

Contemporary Czech Educational System

Structure and recent legislative changes

The current structure of Czech educational system fits within the levels of education used in the *International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 1997*. The Czech educational system has pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Pre-primary education is provided at kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) for children between 4 and 6 years of age. Compulsory education is provided at primary and lower secondary level. Some of the routes for compulsory education are:

- a) 9 year basic school (*základní škola*),
- b) 5 years of first stage of basic school (*první stupeň základní školy*) followed by lower grades of grammar school (*gymnázium*),
- c) 5 years of first stage of basic school (*první stupeň základní školy*) followed by lower grades of conservatory (*konzervatoř*),
- d) special basic schools (*speciální základní škola*).

Primary education is provided by a first stage of basic school (*první stupeň základní školy*) for children between 6 and 11 years of age. The second stage of basic school (*druhý stupeň základní školy*) is for children from 11 to 15. Compulsory education is nine years long, and this is usually achieved by usually by the age of 15, the end of basic school (for more details on upper secondary and tertiary education see the table in the Eurydice database).

The 2005 *Education Act (No. 561/2004) On Pre-primary, Basic, Secondary and Tertiary Professional Education (Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb. O předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon)* sets the principles and aims of education, establishing a two-level structure of educational programmes and defining the aims of each, and describing the education system to implement them. The education system is composed of schools (which organise education through a framework educational programmes), and school facilities (which provide education and services that complement and support schools). The Act sets the long-term objectives, to be implemented and monitored through annual reports at national and regional level. It sets out the duration of compulsory schooling, entry requirements, the organisation of education and study for different educational levels. It redefines pupils with special educational needs, and prioritises their integration into mainstream classes. The Act also regulates administrative aspects, including the legal status of schools, registration, finance, status and the responsibilities of different levels of administration, eg municipalities, regions, and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, or other relevant ministries (MŠMT).

The two level structure of educational programmes is new in the Czech education system. Each school must define its own *School Educational Programme (Školní vzdělávací program, ŠVP)*, and this must respect the national level educational programme, the *Frame Educational Programme FEP (Rámcový vzdělávací program, RVP)*. This is not a single framework for all types and stages of education: there is a *Framework Educational Programmes (FEP)* for pre-primary education, another for basic education, another for the education proved by grammar schools, and a *FEP* for upper secondary technical and vocational education. These *FEPs* represent the central level of the curricular system and they define educational goals and key competencies as well as educational content necessary for their achievement. The *FEPs (RVPs)* are oriented on pupils' competencies, interdisciplinary teaching, supporting school and teachers' autonomy and self-evaluation.

Other key legislation includes:

- *Act 563/2004 on Educational Staff and on the Amendments of Several Acts*, regulating requirements for performance of educational staff duties, their in-service training and career scheme,
- *Act (306/1999) On Providing Subsidies to Private Schools and Pre-school and School Establishments* replacing the previous government regulation of subsidies,
- *Act on Institutional Education or Protective Education in School Provisions and on Preventive Educational Care (109/2002)* stipulating education of children and adolescents lacking proper family support,
- *The Higher Education Act (No. 111/1998*, amended several times) extending the non-university and private sectors of higher education: as a consequence of this the majority of these are no longer state institutions (with the exception of military and police higher education institutions) but public institutions (subsidised by the state) that manage their own property.

The language of instruction is Czech. Pupils from ethnic minorities are guaranteed the right to education in their mother tongue to an extent appropriate to the development of their ethnic community. Schools for national minorities can function up to the upper secondary school level. With the exception of Poles, these minorities are scattered throughout the republic, so the only minority-language schools are Polish. The State is denominationally neutral, and the freedom of religion is granted. The number of people practising religion is low: 32 percent of inhabitants declare themselves as believers.

Czech school external and internal evaluation, and self-evaluation

Maintaining the quality of education is reflected in the formal long-term objectives of education and in the system of annual reports on the state of the education system. The external evaluation of schools and school facilities is carried out by the Czech School Inspectorate (*Česká školní inspekce*), a key institution of state administration and a state organisational unit responsible to the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for evaluating and monitoring activities in pre-primary, basic (ie primary and lower secondary), upper secondary and tertiary education (with the exception of institutions of higher education) and school facilities (ISCED 1997), in the following areas:

- results of education,
- quality of professional and pedagogical management,
- working conditions,
- teaching materials and equipment for public legal auditing,
- the use of the funds from the state budget and
- the observance of regulations.

The Chief School Inspector (*ústřední školní inspektor*) is appointed by the Minister and subject to the Service Act. The Czech School Inspectorate of 303 inspectors (2004) organises inspections either as part of the annual schedule (proposed by the Chief School Inspector, approved by the Minister) or following complaints or other needs. The inspectorates publish inspection or topic reports, control protocols and an annual national summary report. The Education Act requires schools to carry out a self-evaluation at least once every two years, and these form the background for further evaluation and the annual reports of the Inspectorate. Evaluations of schools and school facilities follow pre-published criteria.

Internal evaluation is a new policy in the Czech system. It is obligatory within a two-year cycle, and the findings must be addressed within the school's curricular reform.

System of care and the conceptualisation of Special Educational Needs

The currently system of care has developed over fifteen years of building a democratic society, and is now closer to the systems provided in societies with much longer traditions of democracy. There are some features particular to the Czech Republic. Apart from services provided by state institutions, there are those run by other civil providers, such as local authorities, foundations, churches, charities and, to a very small extent, by individuals. The state care system starts at the level of Ministries (Healthcare, Labour and Social Welfare, Education and Internal Affairs). There are issues where several of these are involved, for example concerning employment policy and immigration integration issues.

The middle level of the system is provided by 14 regions, whose administrative departments partly mirror the structure of the ministries. The capital city of Prague has the status of a region. At the bottom level of the system are towns and village municipalities, which run individual projects oriented towards various SEN youth and children groups.

Special Educational Needs in the Czech system is based on an individual approach to pupils at the level of teachers, schools and legislation. The main legislation *Regulation No. 73/2005 on Education of Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Pupils with an Extraordinary Talent (Vyhláška č.73/2005 Sb. o vzdělávání dětí, žáků a studentů se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami a dětí, žáků a studentů mimořádně nadaných)*. This defines a child, pupil or a student with SEN as suffering from one of the following:

- **health disability** (mental, physical, health or hearing disability, speech impediments, combined disability, autism, developmental learning and behaviour disorders),
- **health disadvantage** (health disadvantage, long-term diseases, minor health disabilities causing developmental learning and behaviour disorders to be respected during education),
- **social disadvantage** (family conditions with low socio-cultural status, threat of social-pathological phenomena, ordered institutional or protective education, position of an asylum seeker).

This understanding of SEN is reflected in key pedagogical and curricular documents. Pupils are diagnosed by school advisory bureaus (pedagogical-psychological bureaus and special educational centres). 3.6 percent of the population fall outside mainstream education. Attendance at a special school requires both the recommendation of an appropriate authority and parental consent. Special schools are organised from pre-primary to upper secondary level, with a curriculum and qualifications as close as possible to those of mainstream schools. The new Education Act puts stress on integration (Eurydice).

Introductory Notes on the areas of disadvantage in this Project

Of the seven areas investigated in the EPASI Project, two areas of potential disadvantage stand out as being of particular significance in the Czech context: the integration of foreigners and their children, and situation of the Roma people. The list of project summaries in the Appendix gives many examples: [CZ164](#), [CZ165](#), [CZ169](#), [CZ170](#), [CZ171](#), [CZ172](#), [CZ173](#), [CZ175](#), [CZ176](#), [CZ178](#), [CZ180](#), [CZ181](#), [CZ183](#), [Case Study 1](#), [Case Study 2](#), [Case Study 4](#). Integrating these two groups concerns disadvantages related to ethnic, socio-economic and linguistic minorities, in particular.

Issues concerning linguistic minorities have also grown in importance in recent years (eg [CZ170: Open School](#), [Case Study 1](#)), largely because of the increase in immigrants and foreigners in the Czech Republic. Many of the Ministry of Education focus on linguistic minorities support. Projects and grants aim to provide support for the Roma language. However, the Roma language is not the

only target language. There are other projects designed to support languages such as Polish, [Ukrainian](#), Greek, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Slovakian.

Projects for disabled children are designed carefully, following a long tradition of special education for children with visual and hearing impairments and disabled children (see project summaries [CZ163](#), [CZ169](#), [CZ170](#), [CZ174](#), [CZ177](#), [CZ179](#), [CZ182](#) in Appendix and [Case Study 3](#)). The Czech Republic is also working its way up to the same level in the field of care for mentally handicapped people.

Gender issues and religious minorities projects are not common. Gender issues have not yet been treated systematically or in detail in the Czech Republic (despite some recent positive moves). The topic should attract more attention in the near future, both from the media and the serious press, as well as expert journals and publications. Some projects are found about women and work after maternity leave, but this initiative comes mostly from civil associations. However, recently national education policy has focused on the problem of the foreign language education for women over fifty years of age and for women after maternity leave, which is a positive step. Gender issues are slowly becoming more prominent in society (see for example, CZ167: [Gender Issue at School](#), CZ168: [Breaking the Waves](#), CZ169: [Social Service Community Plan](#) and CZ183: [Gender Studies Summer School](#)). Issues of disparities in salaries for women, arguments for/against positive discrimination both at work and in politics are gradually becoming more mainstream in public and political discussion.

Religious minorities are not widely spread in the Czech society and there are few projects targeting this area. Czech society is deeply atheistic in general (the most atheistic in Europe), and is tolerant as well as indifferent to denominations, churches and religious groups.

Indigenous minorities appear to be difficult to identify in the Czech Republic.

For these reasons, the following country report focuses on the educational integration of foreigners and Roma people. The projects analysis shows policy and educational activities aimed at ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic and disability groups/minorities.

Policy on the Integration of Foreigners

There were 254,294 foreigners in the Czech Republic in 2004 (approximately 2.4 percent of the population) and the number continues to increase quite rapidly. In particular Ukrainian citizens have recently formed about 40 percent of recent migrants (of the 13,000 newcomers in first six months of 2007). Traditionally, high numbers have also come from Slovakia and Vietnam. By mid 2007 there were 356,014 foreigners who were legally resident in the Czech Republic (approximately 3.5 percent of the population) (ČSÚ 2007).

International migration is a common phenomenon in most developed countries and EU member states. There are major differences between individual EU member state's integration policies, partly due to different historical experiences of migration from different countries, partly due to the different origins of immigrants, and partly due to different legal systems. Nevertheless, integration policies do share some common features, and the Czech Republic follows the contemporary EU policy. The government has prepared and approved key documents and strategies such as *Foreigner Integration Principles of the Czech Republic (1999)*, *Foreign Integration Policy of the Czech Republic (2000)*.

Key objectives of this policy:

1. To make the status of legally long-term resident foreigners the same as the legal status of a citizen of the Czech Republic, protecting their human rights and freedoms (including political, economical, social and cultural rights), implementing principles of equal treatment and opportunity, particularly in the areas of legal status and protection, employment opportunities, living conditions, culture, religion and language, education, healthcare, public and political participation.
2. To influence and guide positively what is currently rather spontaneous and uncoordinated integration processes for these foreigners, providing conditions for integration process and appropriately supporting the integration process.
3. To support the long-term and systematic realisation of this policy, developing theoretical and practical mutual cooperation.
4. To develop legal support systems for illegal immigration and other related issues, to lower security risks related to migration and its effects (*Foreign Integration Policy of the Czech Republic, 2005, 2006*).

The most important insufficiency in the earlier policy was that while it successfully defined foreigners' rights, it pays little attention to supporting processes of their social integration. The revised policy includes specific legislative and other measures to meet key integration principles. Successful integration allows the individual to maintain their relationships with other members of society, to care for their own needs (or with the help of their family), and to identify with the core values of the society they are living in. These concepts formed the basis of establishing key criteria for successful integration in the Czech Republic:

1. Knowledge and competency in the Czech language

to reinforce knowledge of the Czech language among the target group, through legislation requiring knowledge of Czech in order to obtain permanent residence.

2. Economic self-sufficiency

to support economic self-sufficiency through simpler administrative procedures in the labour market, and by effective use of integration programmes for groups with disadvantages.

3. Orientation in society

to improve awareness of Czech society, its values and the working of Czech institutions among foreigners.

4. Relations between foreigner and the majority community

to encourage relations between foreigners and members of the majority society members, informing the majority society about aspects of the foreign presence in the Czech Republic.

The Roma people integration, inequalities and historical background

The Roma ethnic minority in the Czech Republic are among the socio-economic disadvantaged group, and also in part fall into the category of foreigners³. The number of the Roma people in the Czech Republic cannot be determined in detail (only about a fifth of the Roma population officially declare their nationality to be Roma, while the estimated total number of Roma is between 200,000 and 250,000 citizens).

The three basic reasons why the Roma people do not claim Roma nationality are:

- 1) fear of being kept in a status leading to difficulties,
- 2) misunderstanding the term 'nationality' (not distinguishing 'nationality' from 'citizenship'),
- 3) fear of suffering discrimination if registered as being of Roma nationality.

The status of most Roma people in the Czech Republic is low, because of several reasons. Firstly, most Roma are unemployed and live on social benefits, many not seeking employment. Secondly, Roma communities have poor material living conditions, often close to poverty, and they thus form kinds of ghettos on the outskirts of towns. The local urban authorities often have neither financial resources nor motivation to improve the situation of these Roma groups. There is also Roma resistance to integrated into Czech society. Families, often with small children, lack basic facilities such as running water, heating and electricity⁴. About a quarter of Roma people live below the poverty line. Children in these conditions may not attend school, or if they do, then irregularly. Apart from these socio-economic disadvantages, these children also have an inadequate knowledge of the Czech language, which prevents them from achieving better school results: this is one reason why Roma children are frequently enrolled into special schools and classes. Poorer living conditions increase the risk of infectious and other illnesses. Research shows that the state of health of Roma people is worse than that of the majority. The yearly medical report (2000) shows a rate of tuberculosis of 12 per 100,000 over the Czech Republic as a whole, but a rate of 1,200 per 100,000 among the Roma population (*Ke zlepšení zdraví Romů* 2005).

The Roma issue is frequently discussed and actions taken by the government and municipal and regional institutions and authorities. Many policies and programmes have tried to address the situation of the Roma community. In 2000 the Czech Republic government policy was approved (see above), and has since then been updated three times. In 2005 the government brought the Czech Republic into the international initiative "The 2005–2015 Decade of the Roma Inclusion", which involves eight countries in central and southeast Europe.

In the field of Roma education, the following policies have been repeatedly attempted:

- enriching professional teaching skills, to enhance proper and effective communication with the Roma community,

³ This follows the legislation of the new Czech Republic in 1993, in particularly law 40/1993 (the Citizenship Act). This resulted in the majority of Roma resident in the Czech Republic becoming foreigners and not Czech citizens, because many of them did not achieve Czech citizenship (often because of their functional illiteracy. Many of these Roma people still do not have Czech citizenship. (Nečas, Miklušáková 2002)

⁴ Ministry of Health projects included a Study of Roma population health between 1999–2001, which identified specific health problems that might be related to such factors as individual health style, self-valuing health, social position and educational level. The study concluded that there were no issues related to lack of accessibility or the quality of medical care provided to Roma; in other words, there was no difference in the level and quality of care provided to Roma and non-Roma citizen. But more attention to primary and secondary prevention was required, particularly in areas such as vaccination and children's diet. One outcome was the identification of Roma health assistants to facilitate primary prevention. The project found that broadening the functions of these assistants was valuable: parents' interest in their children's health improved (leading to better diet, regular prophylactic check-ups with children at general practitioners and paediatricians, and an increased interest in vaccination. Cooperation with general practitioners and paediatricians also improved (Council for Roma community issues 2008).

- opening preparatory classes, to help Roma children develop linguistic, social and hygiene skills,
- applying an individualised approach to Roma children, through smaller class sizes,
- using more Roma teaching assistants in kindergarten and primary education⁵.

The underlying long-term problem is fact that most Roma children (60 – 80 percent) are placed in ‘special schools’, which are intended to care for the needs of mentally handicapped children. Most Roma children would be able to cope with the standard school attendance without difficulty if particular circumstances taken into account.

One solution that proved successful has been a government project to increase the number of secondary school Roma graduates through two basic measures: establishing special Roma secondary schools and launching a financially supported programme ‘Support for Roma Secondary Education Students’ (Podpora romských žáků středních škol). Both steps helped increase the number of successful Roma secondary graduates.

Another significant improvement has been the *2004 Education Act*. This enables national minority members to receive education in the language of the minority, if there are more than eight children in a kindergarten class, or more than ten children in a primary class. The Act guarantees children with special education needs to have their education adjusted to their needs as far as possible.

The Act also defines the establishment of preparatory classes. Such a class can be opened if there are at least seven pupils enrolled. There is also free pre-school education provided in the final kindergarten year and in preparatory classes. And this also leads to more effective enrolment of Roma children into pre-school education.

The Roma are a minority suffering from triple-discrimination: linguistic, ethnic⁶ and socio-economic. These disadvantages are targeted through national policy, NGO activity and political discourse, and at the level of educational practice through intercultural education. These issues of the Roma people living in the Czech Republic are subject to both Czech and European discourse. This triple disadvantage of the Roma has both historical and psychological bases. The historical roots of discrimination are given here by an historian and female-counsellor for Roma issues.

Historical roots of the Roma people’s inequalities

The greatest persecution of Roma in the Czech land was after 1697, when the Roma were placed outside the law by Imperial decree. Anyone could kill Roma without this being considered a crime. The persecution of the Roma in the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance belongs to the darkest pages in European history. Europe never really accepted them, because of their difference and also partly to the stealing of provisions, which was used as justification for persecution. Initially, migration to new regions where they were not yet known dissipated the ill will they generated amongst locals. The persecution of the Roma ended in the mid 18th century by decree of Maria Theresa of Austria, intended to assimilate the Roma ethnic group. The realisation of the extent of the enormous differences in living standards between Roma and non-Roma led to programmes that attempted to tie them to the soil. Nomadic life and the use of the Roma language were forbidden, only official marriages were permitted, they were forced to wear different clothes, and children were taken away and placed with non-Roma families for re-education. Maria Theresa's

⁵ Particularly in the field of health prevention, supporting the activities of medical assistants (Ke zlepšení zdraví Romů, 2005, Council for Roma Community issues, 2008).

⁶ The Roma people are regarded as an ethnic minority, not as an indigenous minority. The first rather uncertain references to the Roma people in the area of the Czech lands come from the 13th and 14th centuries. Occurrences of the Roma people in the area of the Czech Republic is granted in 1417 (Nečas, Miklušáková 2002).

decree was inhumane by today's standards, but she established the recognition of the Roma as an existing element of the population of the country. In the period of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, a sizable number of Roma settled predominantly in Czech Lands (also in Slovakia) or passed through in a semi-migratory way of life. Those who settled were mostly bricklayers, tinkers, blacksmiths, trough-makers, road-menders and musicians, or followed whatever occupation the community allowed (Nečas and Miklušáková 2002).

At the end of the 19th century differences between the Roma and Czechs began to increase. Compulsory education and factory work was changing social attitudes, while the Roma remained as they were. From being a society of able craftsmen and fine musicians, they found themselves unable to adapt to the advance of industrialisation, resulting in a socially backward population. Before WWI, nearly all Roma were illiterate and, faced with the discrimination they felt in *gadje* society, had little motivation to educate themselves, as even with an education they would have difficulty finding a place in society. But the greatest tragedy for the European Roma was World War II, during which they were considered by Nazi racial theories to be an inferior race as were the Jews (Nečas and Miklušáková 2002).

The first anti-Roma measure in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was an edict of the Ministry of the Interior in 1939, which ordered all Roma to settle and give up their migratory way of life. Anyone not complying with this could be put in work camps - in Bohemia there was a camp in Lety u Pisku, and in Moravia at Hodonin, near Kunstat. With the Decree on the Preventive Fight against Criminality (1942) the government introduced police detention along the German Reich model, which took place in detention camps at Lety, Hodonin, Prague-Ruzyne and in Pardubice, or in the concentration camp at Auschwitz I. The original 'Czech' Roma were almost wiped out, and many Roma came to Czechoslovakia after the war from Hungary and Romania. Roma from settlements in Eastern Slovakia started to migrate to the evacuated Czech frontier regions and were dispersed as a light work force throughout the industrial areas of Bohemia and Moravia. The overestimation of financial factors (starting with the assumption that simply improving material conditions would change the mentality and psychology of the Roma) produced results far short of what was intended. In fact, the results did more to degrade Roma society, because of the abrupt disruption of community life with the transfer of the Roma to unfamiliar conditions, resulting in the disintegration of traditional norms and values of the Roma and the erosion of traditional family life. Gradual dissolution of the traditional Roma ways of life and population growth also deepened the levels of poverty and social backwardness of the Roma, and thus the growth in the crime rate. The 1950s and 60s were decades of legislation to permanently settle migrating persons, to make migratory people change to a settled lifestyle. In 1965, a further law required the dispersing the Roma population, and those from eastern Slovakian Roma villages had to move to Bohemia to work. Roma were being moved from dirt-floored cabins to flats with hot water, flushing toilets and doors. In state social policy, the Roma were dealt with as a socially backward group of the population, and the state's remedies were confined to various forms of social support, which helped the Roma survive, but also taught them to rely completely on the state, and not on their own devices. These various forms of state support, which in many cases favoured the Roma, led to further grudges against and condemnations of the Roma by the majority, and thus increased their dependence and their inability to resolve their affairs on their own, increasing still further their dependence on the state (Nečas and Miklušáková 2002).

The Situation of the Roma after November 1989

Along with all of Czech society, life for the Roma changed drastically after November 1989. Some of the Roma began to search for their identity and to open up their culture. They started to publish Roma periodicals and works of original Roma literature, and to speak of the Roma as a distinct ethnic minority with the right to education in their mother tongue. But the post-November developments had another side, as the Roma have faced high unemployment (as a consequence of

their low skill levels and the prejudice they face from many employers), the loss of the social safety net with which the socialist state ensured their submission (as well as that of the rest of Czech society), and most of all, the rapid rise in acts of physical violence towards the Roma. The legislation of the newly originated Czech Republic included law No. 40/1993, that is the Citizenship Act, by which the majority of Roma resident in the area of Czech Republic became foreigners, non-citizens in the Czech Republic, because many of them did not manage to achieve Czech citizenship, often because of their functional illiteracy. Many still do not have citizenship. Illegal foreigners are regarded as criminals. Along the transformation to a free-market economy, the often-unqualified Roma people become marginalised again. Unemployment of the Roma, often due to unsatisfactory level of education, and sometimes because of covert racism, is around 75 percent, and in some places even reaches 95 percent. Because of this, one of the key priorities of both the Roma and non-Roma governmental and non-governmental organisations is education. It is necessary to support teachers' awareness of Roma people, their history and culture. It is also necessary to support the Roma-oriented content of teaching instruction, so that Roma children have the opportunity to learn more about their own culture at school, so that they did not learn only about the culture of the majority society, which is rather distant from their point of view (Nečas and Miklušáková 2002).

Since 2005 the Czech Republic has participated in the Decade of Roma Inclusion (together with eight other Central and Southeast European countries). According to the DecadeWatch, a monitoring report prepared by teams of Roma civil society leaders by 2007, the Czech Republic now ranks the fourth highest score 1.76 (maximum: 4, minimum: 0)⁷ (DecadeWatch 2007).

A current insight into the social exclusion of the Roma is provided by the society People in Need and the research project Čikatar Het. This research is published in *Kdo drží Černého Petra* (Who is Left Holding the Baby): it focused on four localities of the Czech Republic, each with a different specific kind of social exclusion: Ústí nad Labem, Liberec, including Chrastava, Plzeň (BROŽ *et al.* 2007).

Considering the psychological, pedagogical and sociological aspects of social exclusion and exclusion from education, particularly higher education, useful insights are given by another empirical research study of Roma children's and youth's attitudes and educational needs (NROS, 2007). Ivan Gabal, director of the agency GAC, concluded that girls stand half the chance of passing the whole basic school when compared to non-Roma girls of the same age and in the same class (passing basic school means neither going to special schools nor failing the year). Roma boys' chances of completing compulsory school attendance at the mainstream basic school are one-third that of the rest of the population. This suggests that non-Roma children have a three times greater chance of completing compulsory school attendance at a basic school. The main reason for Roma children repeating a year in basic school, or for leaving basic school for a special school (usually after the first, third or sixth form) is a non-intentional transmission of social exclusion from their parents' generation. School has a discriminating effect, or rather is not able to find a way to cope with children from socially excluded conditions (*Analýza postojů* 2008).

⁷ DecadeWatch assesses governments' actions in introducing measures in the four Decade priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing, as well as institutional arrangements and anti-discrimination legislation. Country reports were prepared by Roma civil society alliances, and then countries were ranked on indicators on a scale from 0 to 4, with 0 capturing no action and 4 best practice. The report looks at government inputs, not outcomes, as the Decade was only launched in 2005. The country rankings not only track progress but also identify areas where countries can benefit from one another's experience. Hungary is the most advanced country in terms of institutional arrangements and policies, but each country excels in a particular area, for instance Romania with its health mediator program and Macedonia's employment data collection. DecadeWatch Ranking by Country Rank Country Scores: first Hungary 2.29; second Bulgaria 1.84; third Slovakia 1.82, fourth Czech Republic 1.76, fifth Romania 1.72, sixth Croatia 1.70 seventh Macedonia 1.37, eighth Serbia 1.24, ninth Montenegro 0.63 (DecadeWatch, 2007).

From the psychological view of Roma children's education, Roma children show low educational aspirations (also found in the NROS's research). The Roma children in the research mostly talked about jobs that required a vocational apprenticeship certificate (car-mechanic, hairdresser, visagiste, bricklayer), and only in a few cases suggested occupations that needed matriculation examinations or university education. The children with higher aspirations stated their wish to be a teacher, a teacher's assistant or a social worker, influenced by their experience of meeting people with these jobs (Gabal, in *Analyza postojů* 2008).

A Summary of Educational Disadvantage in the Czech Republic Today

Although the Czech Republic since the Velvet revolution in 1989 has made a considerable shift in its passage towards a democratic society, and has increasing respect for various minorities, there are still quite a few observable disadvantages that these minorities must face. This EPASI project focuses on a set of indicators to show whether or not a particular minority suffered educational disadvantage: these seven indicators are:

- exclusion/expulsion rates,
- attainment levels of education,
- continuing in post compulsory education,
- participation rate in higher education,
- evidence of social exclusion, being bullied etc.,
- literacy levels, reading literacy in particular,
- employment rates.

However, despite much effort by the writers to locate and consider these indicators, and to discuss systemic educational disadvantage relating to minorities, it must be recorded that conclusive and/or reliable data for particular disadvantaged groups was not always available for these indicators. In some cases it is possible only to deduce outcomes from statistics that have been collected rather generally, rather than for minorities. The biggest difficulties, apart from the indigenous minority being viewed as a socio-economic, linguistic or ethnic minority, appeared in relation to the ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Because of these issues around some of the indicators (and because some other are not available at all) we here introduced characteristic features of the Czech Republic as a whole, and not for minorities.

From the indicators of inequalities that are observable and demonstrable in the Czech Republic, there seem to be some of crucial importance. Some indicators are presented and discussed together, while others are omitted (where there is little reliable data available).

Generally - and with relevance to these indicators - both on the basis of the structure of educational pathways or possible educational routes, and on the basis of statistical findings, the Czech Republic is one of those countries that have a highly stratified education system. This stratification has significant links to social and educational exclusion (the Czech Republic has quite high exclusion/expulsion rates) and to the lower attainment levels of post-compulsory education amongst the socio-economic minorities.

As the OECD noted in its recent work on the Czech Republic, the Czech system of secondary education provides a limited number of places for study in its secondary education system that prepare students for entry to tertiary education. The supply of grammar school and secondary technical study places, that provide the bulk of opportunities for entry to tertiary education, is constrained - relative to both student demand and to student ability. As Koucky (2004) and Münich (2005) show, access to multi-year grammar schools, viewed as a privileged vehicle to university access, appears to be more closely linked to family background than academic ability. Detailed

analysis of PISA results by München (2006) reveals that the mismatch between the preferences and abilities of secondary students and the supply of study places that would prepare upper secondary students for higher education has both a strong gender and regional dimension. The proportion of secondary graduates holding a secondary school leaving certificate (the *maturita* or matriculation examination certificate), has increased from less than 45 percent in 1995 to more than two-thirds in 2005. However, for those who do obtain the *maturita*, a place to study in tertiary education may not be available. While the number of places in both public and private higher education institutions have expanded in recent years, the Czech system of tertiary education is different to that of some OECD member states, and the rate of admission to higher education institutions is low, approximately 58 percent. The rate for public universities (55 percent) is much lower than that for private higher education institutions (88 percent). Equally important, the rate varies widely by field, ranging from less than 20 percent (eg law) to 72 percent (in technical fields). The rate of admission to tertiary professional schools (*vyssi odborné školy*) is about 65 percent. Whether the expansion of study places in private higher education institutions and tertiary professional schools, in combination with the expansion of public university enrolment capacity, will fully meet demand cannot be told. This requires integrated student-level application and admission data for all public and private higher education institutions and tertiary professional schools, which are presently unavailable (File and Weko 2006:36).

An important issue in pluralistic and democratic societies is equity of access to higher education. Access is typically described in terms of what percentage of the relevant population participates in higher education. According to File and Weko (2006:34) the question of equity of access relates more to the question of differences in participation rates among groups of students – by gender, ethnicity, and most frequently, socio-economic status of students and their families.

Czech participation rates in tertiary education have lagged behind most OECD countries. Despite rapid increases in enrolments in the second half of the 1990s (of roughly 6 percent per year) the Czech Republic ranked well below the average participation for OECD countries at the turn of the century. For example, of Czechs 25-64 years of age, only 12 percent had tertiary education qualifications in 2001 (*OECD Education Indicators 2005*). This was half the rate for OECD countries, with the Czech Republic ranked 26th of 30 OECD countries. For the population 25-34 years of age, 12 percent of Czechs had tertiary qualifications, compared to 29 percent for OECD countries (29th of 30). Even with rapid increases in student enrolments since 2001 - with average annual increases of roughly 8 percent - Czech participation rates still lag behind those in most other OECD countries. Given the comparatively limited participation in tertiary education, how equitable or inequitable is the Czech tertiary education system? Data from the 1998 Second International Survey of Adult Literacy, which permitted examination of the relationship between father's occupation and tertiary study, show that persons with fathers from a professional background were 3.1 times more likely to have participated in tertiary education by the age of 35 (Matějů, et al, 2004). More recent data from the European Social Survey (ESS 2) confirm the persisting inequality of the Czech educational system. (File and Weko 2006:34)

Notwithstanding the substantial expansion of enrolments in Czech tertiary education over the past decade, the relationship between social background and tertiary enrolment remains strong. For example:

- About 82 percent upper secondary graduates whose parents are also upper secondary graduates aspire to tertiary study, while only 50 percent of those whose parents did not obtain a secondary school certificate shares this study aspiration.
- The rate at which applicants gain entry to tertiary education is also highly correlated to social background. Among students of “high aptitude,” 80 percent of those whose parents had

completed higher education were admitted, while 62 percent of those whose parents had less than a secondary school leaving examination were successful.

- Those who are from the lowest socio-economic quintile comprise less than 10 percent of higher education students, while those from the highest socio-economic quintile comprise 35 percent of all higher education students (Matějů *et al.* 2004:34-35).

In addition to concerns about equity with respect to social background, concerns about equity have also been raised with about people with physical disabilities, young persons from Roma families, and women. While the government has funded projects directed at physically disabled students, it is not possible to characterise the state of access, or analyse or evaluate these initiatives, given the absence of data and research with respect to physically disabled students. Only a trace of those students enrolled in the Czech higher education system - an estimated two hundredths of one percent of total enrolment (0.005 percent) – is comprised of Roma students. The near-absence of Roma students from tertiary education is rooted in the fact that less than 5 percent are estimated to complete secondary studies.

Finally, equity with respect to gender in the Czech Republic presents a mixed picture. Female participation rates in upper secondary and tertiary study are higher than those of males. However, women's advancement into senior academic ranks and into higher education administration is quite limited when compared to that of many OECD member countries. However, the bulk of attention has focused on equity with respect to social class, to which we now turn (File and Weko 2006:35).

In more generalised terms, inequity with respect to social background has been rooted in two characteristics of educational policy in the Czech Republic: 1) limited opportunities, relative to both ability and social demand, to enter both secondary courses that qualify students for tertiary entry and to tertiary study itself; and 2) the limited financial and social support systems that are currently available for students from underrepresented groups who seek to enrol in tertiary study. On the other hand it is apparent that the contemporary Czech tertiary system is approaching a mass system of education, but with persisting inequality so far (File and Weko 2006:35).

As for the literacy of Czech pupils and students, it appears lower if compared to other European countries. Czech pupils and students prove to have more knowledge (especially in the field of science). On the other hand the Czech pupils and students have difficulties applying the knowledge in practical everyday life situations. The instruction at secondary schools and universities is still very academic. However, despite quite systemic literacy level surveys, the Czech results are not studied or compared from the perspective of the EPASI minorities and their inequalities.

The last indicator is employment rates: the Czech Republic employment rate is quite low especially from the long-term perspective (about 5 per cent of the employable population). Nevertheless, the occurrence of unemployment varies distinctly round local and regional aspects (for example, a high unemployment rate in northern Bohemia). The unemployment rate is also very high among the Roma population. In some local regions there are more than 80 per cent of Roma people suffering from long-term unemployment. This state seems to be basically caused by the low qualification of Roma people (also in relation to low attainment of post-compulsory education, see above), which makes the Roma people's search for better-paid and qualified jobs difficult.

Conclusion

This EPASI country report views the Czech Republic from the perspective of inequalities and educational activities oriented on persons with inequalities/disadvantages. The report tries to reflect on issues of integration, on opportunities for persons with various disadvantages, and how they are provided for in the structures of the educational system, as well as at the level of non-governmental initiatives, projects and educational activities. We also comment on reserves in the field. These conclusions highlight some of the findings based on key documents, and on the analysis of inequality-oriented activities (see Appendix), supported by four case studies. The conclusions also point to the existence of equal opportunities for all diverse groups of people with inequalities as an indicator of a long-term process of democracy and diversity implementation into the general social awareness, culture, policy, politics and legislation started in the Czech Republic only after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. The conclusion focuses on linguistic, ethnic, disability and gender inequalities with a brief comment on the indigenous and religious minorities. The conclusion also discusses the procedure of gathering data for the project analysis and discusses the reasons for Roma inequalities in the Czech Republic.

On the basis of the projects analysed and the arguments presented in this discussion, we conclude that in elementary and secondary education there are numerous projects and efforts to minimise the social exclusion of pupils with one or a combination of linguistic, ethnic and socio-economic inequalities. There are also projects to support educational inclusion through the use of social workers, health assistants, 'zero' (preparatory) classes, extra afternoon classes in community centres, and so on (see the examples in the appendix of projects analysed). The main focus for improvement concern the intergenerational transmission of social exclusion from parents to children, low aspirations, and attempt to coordinate a systemic national approach. Among the activities and projects there are activities addressing Roma women, ie. double discrimination, for example at the level of tertiary education (the project CZ183: [*Summer School of Gender Studies for Roma University Female Students*](#), by the Czech-Slovak Women's Fund: this also illustrates close cooperation with Slovakia).

Another inequality that is widely targeted is disability. The disability category includes two particular groups: people with health disabilities (mental, physical, health or hearing disability, speech impediments, combined disability, autism, developmental learning and behaviour disorders) and people with health disadvantages (health disadvantage, long-term diseases, minor health disabilities causing developmental learning and behaviour disorders to be respected during education). From the project analysis it seems that most projects focus on technical support for the education of these people. Special pedagogy focuses on issues around educating those with SEN, and also issues of integration and inclusion. These aims are of key importance in the post-communist special pedagogy development in the Czech Republic. But parallel special pedagogy points to the need to focus on the potential integration at the individual level, not at the universal level, as an automatic solution.

The greatest omission in educational policy in the Czech Republic appears to be gender discrimination in education. Though there are some activities by private or non-profit organisations, they seem to be even fewer of these than are found in Slovakia. Despite some improvements in recent years, little attention is paid to linguistic sensitivities (in the Czech language, the masculine plural noun form includes the female). It is only in recent years that women have started - very slowly - to realise that this linguistic sensitivity might have deeper psychological impact. In political and economic discourse, questions of equality between women and men's salaries is evident, and also issues of accessibility to higher positions and equality in the care for the family. There are more books and published items on this topic in periodicals. Gender issues are being targeted by the Czech Republic

in cooperation with Slovakia (see the activity of Czech-Slovak Women's fund addressing combined inequality gender-Roma inequality, the project CZ183: [*Summer School of Gender Studies for Roma University Female Students*](#)).

During the criterion-based analysis there were a number of difficulties, the principal ones being:

- Insufficient attention to the systemic evaluation of past and ongoing projects.
- Activity and project materials are not surveyed, coordinated or monitored systemically.
- There needs to be legislation to support these areas, and this should more closely address the experience and recommendations of project organisers and NGOs.
- There is insufficient coordination between project organisers.

Despite many shortcomings in the educational approach to people with inequalities in the Czech Republic, one must view the situation holistically, and with understanding that implementing social inclusion is itself a process of diversity. The implementation of democracy only started in 1989 after a long period of policies of seclusion and segregation. This must be kept in mind: this report should be viewed as a commentary on the continuous improvements being made since the Velvet Revolution, as well as a basis for further improvement.

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Appendix: Project Summaries

| Theme | Project | Database code | Subsidiary themes |
|---|--|---|-------------------|
| Minority ethnic groups | Summer Integrational Camp Rohozná 2007 | 165 | S L |
| | Open School: Intercultural Education for Social Equality | 170 | D L |
| | Amaro Phurd | 178 | S |
| Socio-economic | Practical Support for Media, Multicultural and Global Education at School Educational Frameworks of Prague Secondary and Vocational Training Schools | 180 | S L D G R |
| | All-day School Programme for a School with a Majority of Pupils from Socio-cultural Surroundings [Case Study ①] | 164 | E L |
| | Social Service Community Plan | 169 | E L G D |
| | Low-threshold Centre for Children and young people 'Klídek' | 171 | |
| | Low-threshold Club Exit | 172 | |
| | Safe Classroom [Case Study ④] | 173 | |
| | Learning with the Police I. [Case Study ②] | 175 | |
| | Learning with the Police II. [Case Study ②] | 176 | |
| | Low-threshold Club Blue Orange | 181 | |
| | Disabilities | Support Centre for students with special educational needs (foundation and operation) | 163 |
| Steering-wheel | | 174 | |
| Ophthalmic-service - services for people with visual impairments [Case Study ③] | | 177 | |
| Kovadlina | | 179 | |
| Ophthalmic Classroom - Muscular Simulator for Children with Visual Impairments | | 182 | |
| Start Learning Ukrainian | | 166 | |
| Linguistic minorities | | | |
| Gender | Gender Issue at School | 167 | |
| | Breaking the Waves | 168 | |
| | Summer School of Gender Studies for Roma University Female Students | 183 | E L |

Key: **E** ethnic minorities; **S** Socio-economic disadvantage; **R** religious minorities; **L** linguistic minorities; **D** disability; **I** indigenous minorities; **G** gender

Appendix: Project overview

| Project | target age range | | | | | Target theme(s) | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------|--------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------|
| | pre-school | primary | secondary | higher | working life | minority ethnic | Socio-economic | religious minority | linguistic minorities | disability | indigenous minorities | gender |
| Summer Integrational Camp Rohozná 2007 | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| Open School: Intercultural Education for Social Equality | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Amaro Phurd | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| Practical Support for Media, Multicultural and Global Education at School Educational Frameworks of Prague Secondary and Vocational Training Schools | | | ✓ | | | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| All-day School Programme for a School with a Majority of Pupils from Socio-cultural Surroundings [Case Study ①] | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| Social Service Community Plan | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Low-threshold Centre for Children and young people 'Klídek' | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ | | | | | |
| Low-threshold Club Exit | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ | | | | | |
| Safe Classroom [Case Study ①] | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ | | | | | |
| Learning with the Police I. [Case Study ②] | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ | | | | | |
| Learning with the Police II. [Case Study ②] | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ | | | | | |
| Low-threshold Club Blue Orange | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ | | | | | |
| Support Centre for students with special educational needs (foundation and operation) | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓✓ | | |
| Steering-wheel | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓✓ | | |
| Ophthalmic-service - services for people with visual impairments [Case Study ③] | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓✓ | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Kovadlina | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ |
| Ophthalmic Classroom - Muscular Simulator for Children with Visual Impairments | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓✓ |
| Start Learning Ukrainian | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓✓ | |
| Gender Issue at School | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓✓ |
| Breaking the Waves | | | | | ✓ | | ✓✓ |
| Summer School of Gender Studies for Roma University Female Students | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓✓ |

✓✓Indicates main theme addressed,
 ✓Indicates additional themes also addressed