



SOCIAL WATCH
CZECH REPUBLIC

**CZECH REPUBLIC 2020:
POLITICIANS HINDER
SOLUTIONS OFFERED
BY CIVIL SOCIETY
AND EXPERTS**

SDG Monitoring Report
Social Watch Czech Republic 2020



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SDG Monitoring Report, Social Watch Czech Republic 2020

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Introduction

Five years ago, as part of the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development, all UN member states ratified the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2017, the government of the Czech Republic ratified the strategic document “Czech Republic 2030” whose goal was to improve the quality of life across all the regions and to put Czechia on a path to development which would be sustainable in its social, economic and environmental impacts.

The goal of the Social Watch report is to evaluate the fulfillment of the Czech domestic and international commitments in the field of sustainable development and human rights, with a particular emphasis on mitigating poverty, on the rights of marginalized groups and the position of women. This year’s report is again split into five chapters based on the pre-amble of the UN resolution “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” focused on People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Justice, and Partnership.

Despite the partial gains made, the report is not very optimistic. Although in the Czech Republic we have experts working both within and outside the public sector, their opinions have not been heeded. And one cannot say that the public would not be sensitive to questions of human rights and ecological problems: surveys of public opinion for example show that 84% of the public wish to further support the prevention of violence against women, and 73% of the population consider the loss of water linked to climate crisis as an essential issue. Despite what we are often told, the reason these changes are not being implemented is not the doing of a self-centered and lethargic populace, but rather that of politicians.

Implementing meaningful measures which might ease the onset of the climate crisis or social inequality among people thus continues to rely on provisory initiatives of various people and groups. The wider understanding on the part of politicians and government employees must replace the improvisational methods of civic society.

Magdalena Šipka, editor of the SW



HIV/AIDS issue in the Czech Republic

HIV is a virus transmitted from person to person. Although it is designated an incurable disease, it can be treated very successfully if diagnosed in a timely manner and if all guidelines are adhered to. The disease is transmitted from mother to child, through blood, and through sexual intercourse. If treatment is not followed, the effects on human immunity are destructive, and it will progress to AIDS. AIDS is a combination of several serious diseases which emerge in humans due to impaired immunity.

In 2019, a total of 222 cases were newly diagnosed. According to cumulative data, as of 31 December 2019, there were a total of 3,590 people living in the Czech Republic, of which 674 were AIDS patients, while 311 people have previously died of AIDS (the figure is calculated from 1985, which is when the National Reference Laboratory for HIV/AIDS¹ was founded and statistics started to be followed). Men having sex with men² make up 66% of people living with HIV in the Czech Republic,³ heterosexual men and women comprise 25.2%, while intravenous drug users (men and women combined) form a low 2.7% of patients.⁴ However, the real number of people living with HIV in the Czech Republic is probably higher, as experts agree there are approximately 700 people in the Czech Republic who do not know about their diagnosis.

Prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, HIV testing is relatively accessible to clients in large cities. The number of counselling centres which offer this testing is nonetheless still insufficient. Most frequently, testing is performed free of charge and in an anonymous way. There are brick-and-mortar counselling centres as well as mobile testing places—ambulances. Last year, a self-testing pilot project took place; the Czech AIDS Help Society sent so-called rapid tests directly to applicants' homes. A total of 580 tests were distributed to people in the most at-risk group.

Treatment of people with HIV takes place in eight HIV centres, where medication is dispensed as well. Antiretroviral treatment is fully covered by health insurance for Czech citizens.

1 See: <http://www.szu.cz/tema/prevence/zpravy-o-vyskytu-a-sireni-hiv-aids-za-rok-2020>

2 This group includes homosexual, bisexual, pansexual men, or even predominantly heterosexual men who so-called experiment. This group cannot definitely be labelled collectively as homosexuals. The key in this case is the type of sexual activity, which is not limited to one sexual orientation.

3 This data is especially important for the early diagnosis of the disease, which is crucial for effective treatment.

4 National Reference Laboratory for HIV/AIDS (The National Institute of Public Health – NIPH). Occurrence and spread of HIV in the Czech Republic. Available at WWW: <http://www.szu.cz/tema/prevence/zprava-o-vyskytu-a-sireni-hiv-aids-za-rok-2019>

HIV/AIDS and law

Legislatively, the HIV/AIDS issue is addressed particularly in the Act on Protection of Public Health, which enshrines the principle of informed consent vs. the mandatory testing of certain population groups (specifically: blood, tissue, organ, and semen donors; pregnant women; persons with impaired consciousness or who cannot give consent; and in cases of involuntary treatment). HIV-positive people are legally required to undergo treatment, medical supervision, and necessary laboratory examinations as well as comply with other anti-epidemiological measures, follow doctor instructions, and inform their doctor about HIV before examinations or treatment. They must not perform activities in which the health of others would be endangered by their condition, and they must notify their general practitioner about their personal data, employment data, and changes thereto.

The Czech AIDS Help Society registers patients who face problems related to discrimination in employment in cases where a person living with HIV has been recognized as unfit for work on the basis of his or her diagnosis.

Due to their duty to inform every doctor about their infection before examinations, people living with HIV in the Czech Republic often become victims of discrimination in medical care.

Education

The education system in the Czech Republic has undergone a number of significant changes over the past two decades. The experience of schools and pupils shows that most changes have been for the better. In the context of Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, there has been a noticeable, significant increase in support for the education of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools in recent years. The number of pupils with disabilities who are included in common kindergartens and primary schools is slightly increasing year-on-year, and the overall financial investment of the state in supporting quality and inclusive education is increasing. Unfortunately, the situation is not improving for socially disadvantaged Roma students.

Segregated schools and classes

The placement of Roma pupils in separate, segregated classes and schools is a long-term problem. According to the Ministry of Education,⁵ Roma pupils in the Czech Republic represent less than 4% of the total population of students in primary education. At the

5 MŠMT ČR (the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports - MEYS). Zpráva ke zjišťování kvalifikovaných odhadů počtu romských žáků v základních školách ve školním roce 2016/2017. 2017. Available at WWW: <http://www.msmt.cz/file/39658/>

same time, there are more than eighty schools in which Roma represent the majority of the student body. According to the ministry, in twelve of these eighty schools, only Roma pupils are educated exclusively. NGO experts⁶ and the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency⁷ nonetheless point out that, in fact, the numbers of segregated schools and their Roma pupils are even higher.

This problem mostly concerns children from socially segregated areas and segregation reinforcement by poorly adjusted schools' catchment areas. Prejudice and antipathy towards Roma also play a significant role and lead to the outflow of non-Roma pupils from schools with larger numbers of Roma students.⁸ Some studies⁹ on this topic also show that education in segregated schools is, in some cases, preferred by parents of socially disadvantaged Roma pupils. They are afraid that non-segregated schools will not provide their children with a safe and bullying-free learning environment.

There has also been a long-standing problem with the placement of Roma pupils in educational programmes for pupils with mild mental disabilities. In 2007, the Czech Republic lost a lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights, where it was sued by eighteen Czech citizens of Roma origin for their unjustified placement in special schools. Due to subsequent insufficient efforts at solving this issue, in 2014 the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic with reference to non-compliance with the prohibition of discrimination.

The consequences of discrimination and segregation

The consequences of discrimination and segregation of socially disadvantaged Roma pupils in the education system are significant. Although highly motivated and devoted teachers work in some segregated schools, the environment of these schools does not allow students to completely fulfil their studying potential. Similarly, lower levels of education are also received by Roma students in educational programmes for pupils with mild mental disabilities. This radically reduces their chances of studying at secondary schools and of finding a good job, if any at all. Worse education not only has negative economic effects on the Roma themselves but also on society as a whole. The segregation of Roma pupils in education also has social consequences, strengthening prejudices and

6 Klempar, M. [Spoken announcement at the panel discussion Cesty romských žáků ke vzdělávání – dopady inkluzivní reformy - Paths of Roma pupils to education - inclusive reform impacts]. Praha, 24. 6. 2019.

7 European Union Fundamental Rights Agency. Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected findings. 2017. Available at WWW: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

8 Foreign literature refers to this phenomenon as white flight—the escape of majoritarian pupils from schools in which the minority becomes more numerous.

9 Amnesty International. Chce to více snahy: Etnická diskriminace romských dětí v českých školách. Londýn: Amnesty International, 2015. Available at WWW: https://www.amnesty.cz/data/file/1993-chce-to-vice-snahy_vyzkumna-zprava.pdf?version=1457287650; Čáda, K., Hůle, D. a kol. Analýza segregace v základních školách z pohledu sociálního vyloučení. Praha: Úřad vlády ČR, Odbor pro sociální začleňování (Agentura), 2019. Available at WWW: https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/wp-content/uploads/Analiza_segrecace_2019_1.1.pdf

antipathies between the Roma and the majority society and thus intensifying the overall marginalization of the Roma minority.

Appendix: to the COVID-19 pandemic

As part of the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of the Czech Republic banned the physical presence of students in primary and secondary schools for more than two months; from that day on, teaching switched to a distance learning format. A subsequent survey by the Czech School Inspectorate found that up to 16% of primary school pupils remained without online communication with teachers, and, in the case of several thousand pupils and students, schools failed to establish any communication at all; this concerned especially regions with low socioeconomic status and socially segregated areas.¹⁰ This complicated situation was at least partially resolved only thanks to the extensive and flexible response of non-profit organizations which helped to provide poor children with computers.¹¹ The state failed in its role in educating socially disadvantaged (in this case both Roma and non-Roma) pupils. In places unreached by the activities of the non-profit organizations, socially disadvantaged pupils remained without help yet again.

Gender Equality

Women and poverty

Czech women generally face the threat of poverty more than Czech men. Typical vulnerable groups include single mothers and female seniors.¹² Women's pensions are lower than men's pensions. As of March 2020, the average pension in the Czech Republic amounted to CZK 14,397. While men received an average of CZK 15,781, women only collected CZK 13,141.¹³ This year, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Jana Maláčová submitted the Act on Advanced Child Support to the comment procedure; it would not, however, have

10 Czech School Inspectorate. *Vzdělávání na dálku v základních a středních školách (Topic Report)*. 2020, p. 4. Available at WWW: https://www.csicr.cz/Csicr/media/Prilohy/PDF_el._publikace/Tematick%C3%A9%20zpr%C3%A9vy/Vzdelavani-na-dalku-v-ZS-a-SS-Tematicka-zprava.pdf

11 Open Society Foundation. *Rodinám, které jsou offline, se vzděláváním pomůže síť neziskových organizací, dobrovolníků a firem (Press Release)*. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://osf.cz/2020/05/04/rodinam-ktere-jsou-offline-se-vzdelavanim-pomuze-sit-neziskovych-organizaci-dobrovolniku-a-firem/>

12 Eg. Sýkorová, D., Nytra, G., Tichá, I. (2014). *Bydlení v kontextu chudoby a stáří*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita, FSS.

13 ČSSZ (The Czech Social Security Administration): *průměrná výše sólo důchodu (average height of solo pensions)*. Available at: https://www.cssz.cz/documents/20143/99428/Prumerna_vyse_solo_duchodu_v_CR_v_casove_rade.pdf/a9b4355f-343f-7f3c-aeaf-485a15ec2098.

improved the situation of single parents.¹⁴ The maximum amount of child support is low, starts to be paid out late, and requires the criminalization of the non-paying parent.

The large gender pay gap between men and women, which amounts to 22%, has continued to be an unresolved issue for a long time. Wage inequalities are also reflected in the unequal pensions. One of the main causes of the gender pay gap is the high gender segregation of the labour market, which is preceded by strongly gender-segregated vocational training. Women predominate in professions which are, as a whole, significantly undervalued (education, healthcare, social services), and women are also less represented in higher career positions.

Violence against women

Women are often the victims of violence. According to the FRA agency,¹⁵ 21% of Czech women have experienced domestic violence from a partner. 47% of women have experienced some form of psychological violence.

Unfortunately, systemic solutions are lagging behind. The government is failing to implement its own Action Plan based on the Beijing Declaration.¹⁶ Czech justice is also a problem. The results of a proFem analysis¹⁷ show that the ratio of imposed unconditional sentences to sentences of imprisonment with conditional suspension in final convicting judgements is 50:50.¹⁸ Women who have gone to a shelter with a secret address due to imminent violence are often ordered by courts to hand over their child to a violent person, thereby endangering the safety of these women as well as of other women and children in the shelter. Moreover, the capacity of accommodation facilities for victims of domestic violence is 10% of the Council of Europe's recommendations.¹⁹

14 Sokačová, L. (2020). *Ženy a chudoba in 25 let od Pekingské akční platformy*. Praha: Social Watch.

15 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2014. *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey*. 2014. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

16 Úřad vlády ČR (Government of the Czech Republic). *Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) in the context of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2020*. Available at: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/Beijing-25+-National-Review-english-version_.pdf

17 proFem, o.p.s. 2017. *Jen ano je ano – trestný čin znásilnění ve světle Istanbulské úmluvy*. <http://www.profem.cz/shared/clanky/550/A5-JenAnoJeAno-WEb.pdf>

18 Úřad vlády ČR (Government of the Czech Republic). 2019. *Akční plán prevence domácího a genderově podmíněného násilí na léta 2019-2022*, p. 13. <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/Aktuality/AP-DN--grafikaFINAL.pdf>

19 Analysis available at: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/Analiza-dostupnosti-a-kvality_final_s-opravami_revize-leden.pdf



Sustaining economic growth

Measured through the standard GDP indicator, the economic performance of the Czech Republic in 2019 was above the EU average and GDP growth in 2019 reached 2.4%.¹ The long-term trend of GDP growth, together with the pressure of unions, led to rising wages, and household spending was again a major factor in economic growth, rising by 3% year-on-year.² Nevertheless, the Czech economy still lags behind the EU average in terms of wage level and quality of life, and despite high economic performance this gap has practically remained unchanged.

The open economy of the Czech Republic is particularly dependent on the booming world economy. This factor is further reinforced by the significant share of foreign capital, especially in sectors with the highest added value, resulting over the long run in significant outflows from the national economy at a level of 6–8% of GDP.

Another problem is the strong focus on the automotive industry, which represents a significant risk factor for the future. Structural deformation in fact continues to be supported by the monetary policy of the Czech National Bank (CNB) and its strategy of weakening the Czech koruna.

Economic productivity level

Neither in terms of concrete results nor in terms of funds allocated to this area is the Czech Republic doing well. A long-term and challenging objective of developing the strategic direction of the state requires the broad cooperation of all stakeholders, which has long been lacking in the Czech Republic. In 2019, the government adopted the Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic,³ which steers the development in the Czech Republic towards innovative and progressive economic activities. The government also discussed the so-called National Investment Plan.⁴ If at least the sub-goals of the Innovation Strategy

1 Český statistický úřad (Czech Statistical Office). HDP v roce 2019 vzrostl o 2,4 %, 14.2.2020. Available at WWW: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/cri/predbezny-odhad-hdp-4-ctvrtleti-2019>

2 Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs). Analýza vývoje příjmů a výdajů domácností ČR v roce 2019 a predikce na další období, 24.4.2020. Available at WWW: <https://www.mpsv.cz/analiza-vyvoje-prijmu-a-vydaju-domacnosti-cr-v-roce-2019-a-predikce-na-dalsi-obdobi>

3 Inovační strategie České republiky 2019–2030. Available at WWW: https://www.vlada.cz/assets/urad-vlady/poskytovani-informaci/poskytnute-informace-na-zadost/Priloha_1_Inovacni-strategie.pdf

4 Národní investiční plán České republiky do roku 2050. Available at WWW: <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/urad-vlady/poskytovani-informaci/poskytnute-informace-na-zadost/Priloha-c-1---Narodni-investicni-plan.pdf>

are successfully implemented, especially the accelerated implementation of innovative solutions, positive effects on the country's economy can be expected—no earlier than 2025, however.

Development and economic policy

An unsatisfactory situation from previous years remains in this area. This is mainly due to the long-term shaping of the economic structure but also the important role of the banking sector and its focus on large corporations. There have been no new incentives significantly supporting or facilitating basic 'bottom-up' economic activities, i.e. at the level of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or cooperatives, whether of a production, consumer or housing nature. Difficult access to capital remains a major obstacle for SMEs.

The trend in hiring foreign workers for less attractive and low-paid jobs, which is deeply connected with the grey economy, continues. Aside from negative fiscal effects, this phenomenon also weakens pressure to create decent pay and working conditions.

Use of global resources

Due to the significant connection of the Czech Republic's economic growth to the manufacturing sectors, its environmental impacts are objectively much higher than in countries with a bigger share of non-manufacturing sectors. The improvement in environmental parameters in recent periods has been largely the result of the reduction in production capacity and, at the same time, due to the introduction of high environmental standards in key sectors.

The objectives of sustainable consumption and production have remained scattered across sectors and policies and are not covered by a homogeneous framework programme. The field of environmental protection happens somewhat spontaneously, through many small separate battles, but it does not have a significant effect on the direction of the state. Perhaps the only exception is the 'fight against drought', which may become another significant risk factor for the future prosperity of the state.

Productive and full employment

The positive development of total employment in previous periods was also reflected in the improvement of some parameters of this goal, mainly in the improvement of working conditions for most employees. Pressure from unions has led to an increase in the minimum wage, an increase in guaranteed wages,⁵ and an overall increase in wages and salaries. The problem, however, is the increase in short-term contracts and illicit employment.

5 aktualne.cz. Minimální mzda pro rok 2020, 27.1.2020. Available at WWW: <https://www.aktualne.cz/wiki/finance/minimalni-mzda-pro-rok-2020/r~a02230c01a9111ea8d520cc47ab5f122/>

Domestic financial institutions

The domestic banking sector is practically entirely owned by foreign capital and focuses its activities primarily on large companies of the production type or large conglomerates of a financial nature. Citizens are their second interest. This creates a supply gap for small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups as they are unable to meet the standardized requirements of most banks. The government and legislators have done virtually nothing to improve their situation during the monitored period. In addition, this area is, by law, the domain of the CNB, which focuses fully on its own selected objectives—in particular, on complying with inflation criterion. The broader economic context continues to be ignored.

Precarious forms of work—an ignored part of the grey economy

The Czech Republic regularly shows a large proportion of ‘traditional’ labour relationships, that is, employment relationships with fixed working hours. In the first half of 2019, 83.1% of workers were in the position of employees. ‘Precarious forms of work continue to exist in the Czech Republic. Although these may not always mean lower earnings for employees, they almost always bring lower levels of social security and lower overall security associated with gainful activities. This came to light during the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic this year. Precarious work also means an outflow of funds from public budgets. When associated with foreign workers or the so-called poverty business, it is rather commonly connected to corruption and organized crime.

A symptomatic form of precarious work is false self-employment, also known as the so-called Švarc System, named after the construction entrepreneur Miroslav Švarc, who, in the early 1990s, started using this form of employment in the Czech environment.⁷ It appears as a cooperation between two seemingly self-employed persons—an entrepreneur-employer and a self-employed person as an ‘employee’. Since 2012, the Employment Act has defined this as a form of illegal work which can be penalized.

Other forms of precarious work are agency employment or work outside of an employment relationship, based on short-term contracts. It is also not uncommon to see low-wage employment connected with additional ‘under the table’ payments, which are exempt from taxes and compulsory insurance contributions.

Information on illegal work is insufficient. Data from the State Labour Inspection Office only confirms that this phenomenon is not uncommon in our country. In 2018⁸ and 2019,⁹

6 Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs). Analýza vývoje zaměstnanosti a nezaměstnanosti v 1. pololetí 2019. Praha, 2019. Available at WWW: <https://www.mpsv.cz/web/cz/situace-na-trhu-prace-rok-2019-1-pololeti>

7 Štětka, Jan. Ten, který rozjel švarcsystém a skončil na dlažbě. Ekonom.iHNed.cz. Praha, 2011. Available at WWW: <https://ekonom.ihted.cz/c1-52306170-ten-ktery-rozjel-svarcsystem-a-skoncil-na-dlazbe>

8 Státní úřad inspekce práce (State Labour Inspection Office). Státní úřad inspekce práce v roce 2018 uskutečnil přes 28 tisíc kontrol a uložil více než 4 tisíce pokut v souhrnné výši téměř 300 milionů korun. Opava: 2019. Available at WWW: <http://www.suip.cz/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/statni-urad-inspekce-prace-v-roce-2018-uskutecnil-pres-28-tisic-kontrol-a-ulozil-vice-nez-4-tisice-pokut-v-souhrnne-vysi-temer-300-milionu-koron/>

9 Státní úřad inspekce práce (State Labour Inspection Office). Státní úřad inspekce práce zrealizoval v 1. pololetí

more than half of the inspections focused on this issue of detecting illegal employment.

Although it is certainly not possible to label all work conducted in the above-described methods as semi-legal or illegal, for at least some forms, it is possible. In other situations, illegal work can be determined in a relatively simple manner on the basis of specific circumstances. Especially in some forms of freelancing and outsourcing, the boundaries between the Švarc System and legitimate business cooperation can be blurred. Furthermore, it is no secret that awareness of working forms and their legal regulation is not high. Many participants in the Švarc System may not even be aware of being involved in something illegal.¹⁰

In the case of short-term contracts and the Švarc System, the state loses a relatively significant part of its tax, health, and social insurance contributions. It is also disadvantageous for employees who have lower guarantees and security and lower benefits in the event of illness, parenthood, unemployment, or retirement. During the coronavirus pandemic especially, it turned out that, in these forms of employment, it is possible to terminate cooperation very quickly and without any entitlements. Certain life situations of such employees are not even taken into consideration by insurance and social legislation. In this context, some situations had to be addressed through special appeals, as was, for example, the case of a 'nursing subsidy' for the self-employed, who otherwise are not entitled to a family member's care benefit even if they (voluntarily) pay sickness insurance.

It is not possible to omit the gender dimension of this issue. The project 'Self-employment as precarious work and the prevention of further disadvantage to women on the labour market'¹¹ of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, drawing upon experience shared in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' project 'Equality of women and men on the labour market with a focus on the (un)equality pay of women and men',¹² as well as (not only) my own work experience, show that many self-employed women do not necessarily become freelancers because of their desire to start a business, but because they cannot find a suitable job in certain life situations. It is most often after the end of parental leave or after losing a job shortly before the possibility of retirement. Women returning from maternity and parental leave are also often employed through short-term contracts instead of having part-time employment.

Another problem is the lengthy and demanding enforcement of the law. Litigation in cases of a Labour Code violation, unpaid invoice recovery, etc. are time consuming and essentially unfeasible without professional legal assistance. For the injured party, legal enforcement is associated with entry costs and court proceedings, which may take months or years. On the one hand, this does not ensure the satisfaction of the claim at the time when it is most needed, but it also reduces confidence in the rule of law in general.

2019 přes 12 tisíc kontrol a uložil 2 tisíce pokut v celkové výši přesahující 185 milionů korun, Opava: 2019. Available at WWW: <http://www.suip.cz/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/statni-urad-inspekce-prace-zrealizoval-v-1-pololetu-2019-pres-12-tisic-kontrol-a-ulozil-2-tisice-pokut-v-celkove-vysi-presahujici-185-milionu-koron/>

10 Uhlová, Saša. V krizi se ukazuje prokletí švarcsystému. A2larm.cz. Praha, 2020. Available at WWW: <https://a2larm.cz/2020/03/v-krizi-se-ukazuje-prokleti-svarcystemu/>

11 Compare with <https://www.soc.cas.cz/projekt/osvc-jako-prekerni-prace-aneb-zabranme-dalsimu-znevychodneni-zen-na-trhu-prace>

12 Compare with <https://www.rovnaodmena.cz/>



Unsustainable urban life

According to the Global Peace Index, Czechia belongs to the ten safest countries in the world. The crime map shows a slight increase in the crime rate at the end of 2019 in comparison to the long-term average; however, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it fell sharply.¹ Czech cities are characterized by a high-quality, extensive, and affordable network of public transport and a relatively high proportion of green areas. With 57% green space, Prague even ranked first in the Green Cities Index² in 2018. The vast majority of Czech urban dwellers live within walking distance of urban greenery. There is also a very dense network of playgrounds, most of which, however, are designed for young children. Publicly accessible places for youth leisure activities are much less available.

One of the most fundamental negatives of Czech cities is the declining affordability of housing, which is currently one of the most expensive in the European Union. The index of actual sales price of flats in Prague and regional cities increased by 66% between 2014 and 2020, whereas, in the last quarter of 2019, the price increase was 4.3%.³ Real wage growth in the same period was 3.6% but did not concern all by far. Housing affordability has declined not only for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, or single parents, but even for the middle class.⁴ Currently, the situation has slightly improved, especially in Prague, where a large number of flats which used to serve as short-term rentals became vacant as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has also enacted a law which allows for better control of short-term leases.⁵ However, there has been no progress in legislation tackling social and affordable housing. The government is trying to resolve the situation with the help of investment incentives, in which municipalities show little interest, partly due to the uncertain development of the housing benefit system. The current minister of labour and social affairs, Jana Maláčová, is pushing for the abolition of the so-called housing supplement, which is a material need benefit.⁶ There was no significant factual progress in solving the issue of ending homelessness; however, municipalities have become aware of the possibility of introducing the Housing First concept, which can be funded via the Operational Programme Employment.⁷ A significant change occurred in the context of the pandemic, during which some municipalities provided homeless people with temporary shelter.

1 Compare with <https://www.mapakriminality.cz/>

2 Compare with <https://www.pragueconvention.cz/hot-news/prague-ranked-the-worlds-greenest-city#:~:text=Dutch%20holiday%20agency%20TravelBird%20published,their%20man%2Dmade%20green%20locations>

3 Compare with <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/cz/Documents/real-estate/CZ-Real-index-4Q-2019.pdf>

4 Compare with <https://arnika.org/krize-bydleni-se-prohlubuje-zatimco-zisky-developeru-rekordne-rostou-praha-po-nich-musi-pozadovat-vystavbu-dostupneho-bydleni-a-sama-zacit-stavet>

5 Compare with https://www.irozhlaz.cz/ekonomika/airbnb-ubytovani-praha-turismus-pronajem-koronavirus_2005140852_tkr

6 Compare with <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/29780-lide-na-ubytovnach-maji-do-tri-let-prijit-o-davky-na-bydleni-planuje-malacova>

7 Compare with <http://www.dvs.cz/clanek.asp?id=6766524>

A very unfavourable development is persisting or even worsening in the area of inclusive and sustainable urbanization. In many cities, construction is promoted which does not respect the interests and needs of the local people and disrupts the local cultural heritage as well as the cities' resilience to climate change.

There has also been no significant improvement in participatory planning, which most often takes the form of simply informing citizens or even manipulation—or more precisely, creating the illusion of a participatory nature in the planning process. Improvements in this area have occurred only in some municipalities, where a significant number of civic candidates or representatives of some more progressive political parties (the Green Party, Pirates, etc.) have entered the political leadership.

The climate crisis is not reflected in the vast majority of cities. Cities neither prepare for it nor introduce any mitigation measures. Only two municipalities, specific Prague city districts, have declared a state of climate emergency. The capital city of Prague has established a so-called climate commitment and is currently preparing a strategy to meet its targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions. However, the city continues to be significantly burdened by a large amount of smog, mainly from individual car traffic, which is not yet regulated in the inner city.

In the vast majority of Czech cities, there are no targeted efforts to reduce emissions, make energy savings, or regulate car traffic, not even in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made the issue of urban air pollution more obvious.⁸

Sustainable development lacks future vision

Progress is being made in this area, which is important, but only partially. This includes the replacement of domestic boilers or the placement of rainwater tanks. Basic trends are nonetheless not good. The use of valuable raw materials in Czechia is worse than the European Union average, and recycling is stagnating. The development of the use of renewable energy sources is lagging behind. Our land is drying up due to climate change and poor agricultural and forestry management. The government focuses on expensive and pointless plans, such as building a water canal into which water would have to be imported or a nuclear reactor, again dependant on the import of fuel. Discussions about a coal phaseout have barely begun.⁹

Incomprehensible climate policy

At the beginning of December 2019, Andrej Babiš threatened to block European negotiations on climate protection.¹⁰ Subsequently, at the December summit of leaders of union countries, he confirmed the Czech Republic's commitment to become climate neutral by

8 Compare with <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/31151-svetove-metropole-po-koronaviru-ozeleni-ulice-ceska-mesta-noveho-nechystaji-nic>

9 Compare with https://www.mzp.cz/cz/news_20190730-uhelna-komise

10 Houska, Ondřej. Babiš zablokuje boj EU proti změně klimatu. Přece se nevrátíme do jeskyní, prohlásil a od Bruselu žádá peníze i podporu jádra. Hospodářské noviny. 4. 12. 2019. Available at WWW: <https://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-66688770-babis-bude-blokovat-boj-eu-proti-zmene-klimatu-prece-se-nevratime-do-jesky-napsal-do-bruselu-a-zada-penize-na-jadro>

2050 and no longer harm the Earth's climate system. In April, he again categorically called for the European Union to abolish its key instrument for helping Member States finance their efforts to meet this commitment.¹¹ In May, Minister Brabec announced on behalf of the government that our country continues to keep its commitment and definitely needs money from Europe.¹² However, he agreed with his government and party bosses that the Czech Republic needs to use less renewable energy sources and that the Czech economy can be more wasteful than what the EU proposes. Immediately after, Andrej Babiš together with Viktor Orbán rejected the financial support programme from the European Union.¹³ The manoeuvring of the Prime Minister of the Czech (and Hungarian) government thus threatens not only the climate but also the solution to the coming economic crisis.¹⁴

We are drying up

In the meantime, the Czech landscape continues to dry up. As early as April, more than twenty municipalities had to limit water consumption within their territory.¹⁵ An amendment to the Water Act being discussed currently is intended to strengthen this emergency instrument even further. The state also subsidizes the interconnection of water supply systems or the deepening of wells.

The Ministry of the Environment subsidizes various small measures such as the capture of rainwater in households,¹⁶ but, together with the government, it is unable to manage systematic measures to retain water in the landscape. When amending the Water Act, the Ministry of the Environment yet again did not propose increased fees for water abstraction, which results in its waste, especially on the part of large companies.

The Ministry of Agriculture is pushing for the redirection of huge funds to the construction of several large dams, which, however, will not bring the water to the fields and forests. Due to poor agricultural management, soil is losing its ability to retain water. New European rules are coming into force in the coming years, but according to experts they will not be sufficient in solving the problem. At the same time, the Czech government is pushing for the loosening of even these insufficient regulations and their postponement to a later date. Looking at the dying spruce and, in some places, also pine monocultures, even a layman can see that our forests are not managed sustainably either.

11 Babiš chce, aby EU zrušila Green Deal. Brusel prý plánuje likviduje ekonomiku a průmysl. Byznysnoviny.cz, 16. 4. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://www.byznysnoviny.cz/2020/04/16/babis-chce-aby-eu-zrusila-green-deal-brusel-pry-dohodou-likviduje-ekonomiku-prumysl/>

12 Houska, Ondřej. Brabec v dopise pro EU napsal, že se Česko hlásí k boji se změnou klimatu. Navzdory původní Babišově kritice. Hospodářské noviny, 22. 5. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-66767230-brabec-v-dopise-pro-eu-napsal-ze-se-cesko-hlasi-k-boji-proti-klimatu-navzdory-puvodni-babisove-kritice>

13 Houska, Ondřej. Babiš a Orbán společně proti Bruselu: Česko a Maďarsko jako jediné rovnou odmítly plán Evropské komise na oživení ekonomiky, Hospodářské noviny, 29.5.2020. Available at WWW: <https://zahranicni.ihned.cz/c1-66770610-babis-a-orban-spolecne-proti-bruselu-cesko-a-madarsko-jako-jedine-rovnou-odmitly-plan-evropske-komise-na-oziveni-ekonomiky>

14 Compare with <http://zelenykruh.cz/eu-investuje-750-miliard-eur-do-zelene-a-digitalni-obnovy-ekonomiky/>

15 Kvůli suchu už letos přes 20 obcí vyhlásilo omezení odběru vody. Další se přidávají od května. ČT24, 1. 5. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/3087878-kvuli-suchu-uz-letos-pres-20-obci-vyhlasilo-omezeni-odberu-vody-dalsi-se-pridavaji-od>

16 Compare with <https://www.dotacedestovka.cz/>

Harmful affairs

Clear long-term rules in the form of new zoning have been introduced, which has helped nature conservation in national parks. In practice, we still encounter nature destruction, e.g. the poisoning of specially protected species, such as eagles.¹⁷ Last summer, experts and the public rose up against the Ministry of Agriculture's efforts to enforce the extensive spreading of Stutox poison on Czech fields.¹⁸ The affair was repeated again this spring.¹⁹

For the third year in a row, the public has been excluded from objecting to the environmental impacts of a vast majority of projects, such as shopping malls, parking lots, or large administrative buildings, which might, for example, be built in parks. A minority of proceedings are represented by projects such as motorways or incinerators, where an EIA usually takes place, and public participation is therefore still guaranteed thanks to European directives. The Chamber of Commerce has prepared new building legislation for the government which would dramatically weaken the ability of municipalities and relevant state authorities²⁰ to protect these public interests.

Halfway measures for raw material utilization

A draft of new waste legislation limiting landfilling and promoting recycling was submitted to the government as early as 2009.²¹ The package of laws on waste management is only now being discussed by MPs.²² Recycling was not supported. There is therefore a risk that a substantial part of sorted packaging will end up in the incinerator. The Ministry of the Environment has also unexpectedly opposed the intention to make beverage bottles and cans returnable. Some manufacturers and traders are therefore voluntarily trying to support recycling on their own.²³

17 Ochránci roky střežili orlí pár, nyní byl i s mládětem otráven. Idenes.cz, 30. 4. 2020. Available at WWW: https://www.idnes.cz/brno/zpravy/mrtvy-orel-morsky-pole-bzenec-otrava.A200430_132009_brno-zpravy_krut

18 Reakce MŽP na rozhodnutí ÚKZUZ k plošné likvidaci hrabošů rodenticidem Stutox II. Ministerstvo životního prostředí, 8. 8. 2019. Available at WWW: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/news_20190808_hraboši_stutox

19 Svoboda, Petr. Proč je nařízení o plošném rozhazování přípravku STUTOX II nezákonné? Ekolist.cz, 6. 4. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://ekolist.cz/cz/publicistika/nazory-a-komentare/petrn-svoboda-proc-je-narizeni-o-plosnem-rozhazovani-pripravku-stutox-ii-nezakonne>

20 Kolínská, Petra. Bez dohody bude nový stavební zákon jen škodit. Stavebníkům nejvíce. Ekolist.cz, 17. 6. 2019. Available at WWW: <https://ekolist.cz/cz/publicistika/nazory-a-komentare/petran-kolinska-bez-dohody-bude-novy-stavebni-zakon-jen-skodit.stavebnikum-nejvice>

21 Štátná, Jarmila. Nový zákon velí k vyššímu podílu recyklace. Odpady, 12. 3. 2009. Available at WWW: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/articles_odpady090312novy_zakon

22 Sněmovna přes kritiku podpořila nový odpadový zákon. České noviny, 31. 1. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/snemovna-pres-kritiku-podporila-novy-odpadovy-zakon/1848840>

23 Adamcová, Pavla. Za použitou PET tři koruny. Mattoni rozjždí vrácení lahví, neproplatí ovšem každou. Aktualne.cz, 8. 1. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/finance/nakupovani/vratne-lahve/r~4ae11822305a11eab259ac1f6b220ee8/>

Istanbul Convention (reduction of violence)

The Czech Republic has not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention, which aims to reduce the number of cases of violence usually committed against women (so-called domestic violence). By adopting the convention, the state would commit to providing increased protection to victims of violence, to the rigorous prosecution of perpetrators of such violence, and to act preventively to thwart such violence.

Following its signature (2 May 2016), the Czech Republic was to ratify the convention by September 2018, which has not yet happened.¹ The debate surrounding the adoption of the convention has been accompanied by many myths and misinterpretations, resulting in low political will to ratify it. No political party has put its ratification on their political agenda, and only a small number of individual political personalities have advocated for it. The convention was also opposed by several churches, including the Czech Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church.² On the contrary, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren has supported its ratification.³

A public opinion poll conducted in 2018 shows that 70% of respondents think that the current situation in the field of violence against women is a problem, and 84% of respondents believe that prevention needs to be strengthened.⁴

Physical punishment of children (violence and torture)

In 2015, the European Committee of Social Rights stated that the Czech Republic violated Article 17 of the European Social Charter by not explicitly enshrining a general prohibition against the corporal punishment of children in the legal system.⁵ Meanwhile, a working group for the prevention of violence against children was established in 2008 and several strategic documents were adopted, such as the National Strategy of Preventing Violence against Children for the Period 2008-2018. The government also implemented the STOP Violence Against Children campaign in 2008. In recent years, however, all activities in this area have stopped and nothing has changed in the legislation.

1 Compare with <https://www.amnesty.cz/news/4354/proc-potrebuje-ceska-republika-istanbulskou-umluvu?>

2 Compare with <https://www.cirkev.cz/temata/istanbulska-umluva>

3 Compare with <https://www.amnesty.cz/news/4354/proc-potrebuje-ceska-republika-istanbulskou-umluvu?>

4 Compare with <https://www.amnesty.cz/news/4354/proc-potrebuje-ceska-republika-istanbulskou-umluvu?>

5 Compare with <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng/?i=cc-96-2013-dmerits-en>; <https://www.justice.cz/web/msp/preklady-vybranych-nazoru-vyboru1>

National human rights institution (NHRI)

The Czech Republic still does not have a so-called National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in the sense of the Paris Principles.⁶ As a result, there is no independent institution which protects, monitors, and promotes adherence to fundamental rights in a systemic and comprehensive way. Among other things, this deficit became the subject of recommendation during the third Universal Periodic Review in November 2017.⁷ In September 2019, a round table was held in the Senate of the Czech Parliament on the possibility of establishing an NHRI but without any specific publicly-known results.⁸

Prisons

Czech prisons have long suffered from overcrowding. The prison population index is one of the highest in the European Union. In the last year, for the first time in many years, there has been some success in somewhat reducing the number of prisoners. As of 31 March 2020, the prison population index in the Czech Republic was 197 (i.e. the number of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants). For comparison, in 2016 it was 213 and, in 2018, it was 203 prisoners. In relation to the officially stated capacities, Czech prisons were filled to 105% as of this date. The issue of prison overcrowding was also addressed by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture during its last visit.⁹

Courts

Statistics show that the functioning of the judicial system has somewhat improved in recent years. In particular, the length of civil proceedings has shortened, although relatively large differences exist between districts. In 2018, the average length was 276 days. On the contrary, the length of criminal proceedings has grown by one day in the same year, lasting an average of 202 days. Also in regional courts, the length of civil proceedings has decreased while the length of criminal proceedings has increased.¹⁰ The longest deadlines are in the administrative judiciary, which is unfortunately very understaffed.¹¹

6 The so-called Paris Principles were developed at an international workshop of national human rights institutions in Paris in October 1991. They were later adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly in Resolution 48/134 of 1993. The principles define the status and functioning of national human rights institutions.

7 Compare points 24-27 here: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rlp/dokumenty/zpravy-plneni-mezin-umluv/univerzalni-periodicky-prezkum-58715/>

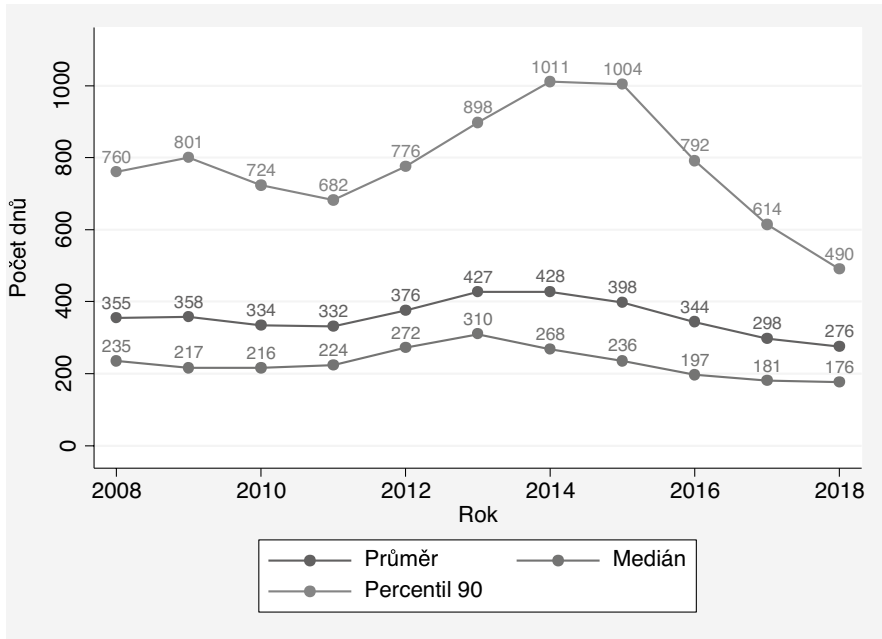
8 Compare with <https://www.senat.cz/cinnost/galerie.php?aid=25497>

9 Compare with <https://rm.coe.int/168095aeb2>

10 Compare with https://www.justice.cz/documents/12681/719244/Ceske_soudnictvi_2018_vyrocní_stat_zprava.pdf/7a0eb503-6fd7-4b70-b31f-882398651520

11 Compare with https://www.irozhlaz.cz/zpravy-domov/nss-nejvyssi-spravni-soud-michal-mazanec-zatizeni-soudu-predseda_1910081044_luk

Graph 1: Length of civil proceedings at district courts in 2008–2018¹²



In principle, the independence of the courts is not questioned; individual failures—such as judges Jiří Berka,¹³ Ondřej Havlín¹⁴, or Ivan Elischer¹⁵—are not understood as systemic, and there seems to be a will to prosecute these failures.

In recent years, there has been an intense debate in the judicial and legal community about the need to publish all court decisions, if possible, and on the selection rules for the appointment of judges. In terms of this, the Ministry of Justice is preparing an amendment to the Act on Courts and Judges.

Constitutional lawsuit against the president

In 2019, the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic approved a constitutional

12 Compare with <https://justice.cz/web/msp?clanek=vyrocní-statistická-zpráva-o-stavu-ceskeho-soudnictví-zárok-2018-prinasi-pozitivni-uda-1>

13 Compare with https://www.idnes.cz/usti/zpravy/soud-soudce-jiri-berka-plat-zprosten-vykonu-soudcovske-funkce-nastoupil-do-vezeni.A190411_115555_usti-zpravy_pakr

14 Compare with <https://www.novinky.cz/krimi/clanek/soudce-havlin-odsouzeny-za-korupci-opustil-vezeni-40295918>

15 Compare with <https://www.novinky.cz/krimi/clanek/soudce-elischer-si-v-kancelari-prepocitaval-statisice-koron-40303308>

lawsuit against the president of the republic for gross violation of the constitution.¹⁶ The core of the lawsuit were proven interventions of the president and employees of the Castle into the judiciary. In the Senate, the required three-fifths majority (48 out of 75 senators present) voted in favour of the lawsuit. However, a three-fifths consent of the Chamber of Deputies is also required to file a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court, and the lawsuit did not obtain it.

COVID-19 pandemic

Since March 2020, the Czech Republic, like virtually all countries in the world, has been facing an epidemic, which the WHO later declared a pandemic. With a brief glance at how different countries responded to the pandemic, it seems that the Czech Republic was not exceptionally different from other European countries. Nevertheless, it is important to assess this situation from the perspective of the principles of a democratic state governed by the rule of law, mainly due to the extraordinary measures taken and which interfered with fundamental rights, and because the state structures and society as a whole faced a situation they had not encountered in the past.

It turned out that the Czech legal system has the tools to react, and the government used them. The Constitutional Act on the Security of the Czech Republic is included in Czech constitutional order, and takes into account various situations, including threats to life and health.¹⁷ This makes it possible to declare a state of emergency both for the territory of the entire republic and, for example, at the regional level. The Constitutional Act is followed by an implementing law,¹⁸ which defines the competence and authority of state bodies and bodies of territorial self-governing units and the rights and obligations of legal and natural persons in connection with a crisis situation. An important legal instrument is also the Public Health Protection Act,¹⁹ which includes a number of measures which public health authorities can adopt in the event of an epidemic.

Despite some hesitation in the early days of the epidemic/pandemic, major measures were taken relatively early. A state of emergency was declared in accordance with the Crisis Act and other measures in accordance with the Public Health Protection Act.

Widespread bans on many activities—cancelled school attendance, imposition of a partial curfew and restrictions on free movement (including restrictions on social contacts), and bans on cross-border movement—have proved to be effective, as in other countries, and have helped to gradually overcome the pandemic. All these measures are, of course, infringements of fundamental rights, and although they serve a legitimate objective, it is always necessary to ask whether they are adequate and unavoidable. This question can only be answered by a court. The Czech courts have also been critical of several issues in this regard.

16 Compare with <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/2878169-senat-schvalil-navrh-ustavni-zaloby-na-prezidenta-zemana>

17 See Constitutional Act 110/1998, on the Security of the Czech Republic.

18 Act 240/2000, on Crisis Management and on amendments of certain acts (Crisis Act).

19 Act 258/2000 Sb., on public health protection.

For example, the legal senate of the Municipal Court in Prague annulled four measures of the Ministry of Health for exceeding its scope of action as it was not entitled to issue such measures. The court did not question the content and scope of the measures but stated that they went beyond the powers given to the ministry by the Public Health Protection Act. Only the government as a whole is entitled to such substantial interference with fundamental rights on the basis of a crisis law. The court gave the government a period of several days to adopt the same or similar measures in accordance with the law.²⁰

One of the emergency measures during the state of emergency was also a ban on leaving the Czech Republic. After a certain period of this ban, its constitutionality began to be publicly discussed. It is clear that the travel ban did not have a sufficient legal basis. Several constitutional lawyers have publicly expressed their doubts about the constitutionality of the regulation, so the harshest form of the ban was eventually repealed by the government itself.

It can be stated that the measures taken by the Czech government were mostly similar to those taken in a number of European countries. If it chose processes which are procedurally incorrect from the perspective of the constitutional order, the administrative courts functioned and fulfilled their role as guardians of constitutional principles. It is a pity that the Constitutional Court did not comment on the measures as such. So far, all discussed constitutional complaints have been rejected for procedural reasons.²¹

Despite a certain chaos, it can be said that the government basically reacted in time in terms of widespread restrictions and, as a result, the epidemic did not have as many casualties as in some other European countries.

Problematic arms exports

The Czech arms industry did well in 2019. According to the estimates of the Defence and Security Industry Association, the export of Czech weapons reached a value of 17 to 18 billion crowns, which is an increase of up to three billion compared to the previous year.²² At the moment, it is not known where the weapons ended up because the official statistics for 2019 have not yet been published. They will probably not be published until the summer of 2020. However, we know from the data of previous years²³ that Czech weapons and so-called military material all too often end up in countries which are undemocratic and/or controlled by dictatorial regimes (Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt) or facing armed violence (Mexico, USA). The export and import of weapons to/from Israel, which has been occupying Palestinian and Syrian territories for several decades, is also growing.

20 Compare with https://www.justice.cz/documents/14569/0/14+A+41-2020+%28Dostál_mimořádná+opatření%C3%AD%29_final2A/0c4f37b8-fd5f-4670-a306-0c5fedaa568b

21 The fact that the decisions of the Constitutional Court are themselves controversial is also evidenced by the number of dissenting opinions attached to them.

22 Compare with <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/export-zbrani-loni-stoupl-na-17-az-18-mld-kc/1856465>

23 Compare with <https://www.mpo.cz/cz/zahranicni-obchod/licencni-sprava/o-licencni-sprave/vyrocní-zpravy-o-kontrolě-vyvozu-vojenskéo-materialu--rucnich-zbrani-pro-civilni-pouziti-a-zbozi-a-technologie-dvojho-uziti-v-cr--247454/>

In 2019, however, two events stand out, thanks to which the exports of Czech weapons were also challenged in the public debate. The first is the case of Česká zbrojovka, when the American daily The New York Times²⁴ revealed an unexpected finding, according to which the company's rifles are widely used by poachers in the national parks of South Africa. Česká zbrojovka's rifles were even supposed to make up an incredible 90% of all weapons found among poachers in Mozambique and South Africa. According to the daily, Česká zbrojovka stopped exporting weapons to the area only after US authorities threatened to add the company to their blacklist.

Česká zbrojovka was one of the official partners of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, with the ambiguous motto 'We love shooting'. At first glance, it looks like a perfect slogan, but in connection with a company which equips the Egyptian junta²⁵ or whose weapons contribute to the extinction of rhinos, the impression is disgustingly cynical. Dozens of artists²⁶ opposed the partnership between the festival and an armory, which opened a debate on the ethics of sponsorship by armament companies as well as the ethics of the arms industry as a whole. It was a very important moment, because until then the company was successful in building an image as a 'traditional Czech company', producing 'state-of-the-art products' demanded 'all over the world'.²⁷

A more positive case from last year was the suspension of Czech arms exports to an increasingly authoritarian Turkey due to the October invasion of the Turkish army against the Kurds. Although the Czech Prime Minister supported the invasion and arms exports,²⁸ increasing domestic²⁹ and EU pressure resulted in the Czech government eventually condemning the invasion and stopping the arms exports.³⁰

According to statistics³¹ released by the Netherlands in June 2020, 10 million cartridges for pistols and rifles made in the Czech Republic were exported from the port of Rotterdam. This was in April 2020, that is, six months after the termination of Czech arms exports to Turkey! It has not yet been determined who exported them and from whom they received the license.

24 Compare with <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/25/us/politics/rhinos-poachers-south-africa-czub.html>

25 Compare with <http://zpravy.e15.cz/byznys/prumysl-a-energetika/cesi-dodaji-egyptske-policii-desitky-tisic-pistol-1061249>

26 Compare with <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/kultura/film/ceska-zbrojovka-vary-festival/r~f03db8129b3511e9ab10ac1f6b220ee8/>

27 Compare with https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/evropska-unie-zbrane-sef-zbrojovky-zakaz.A170227_2308590_domaci_hro

28 Compare with <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/premier-babis-a-ministr-havlicek-podporili-v-turecku-zajmy-ceskych-firem-175990/>

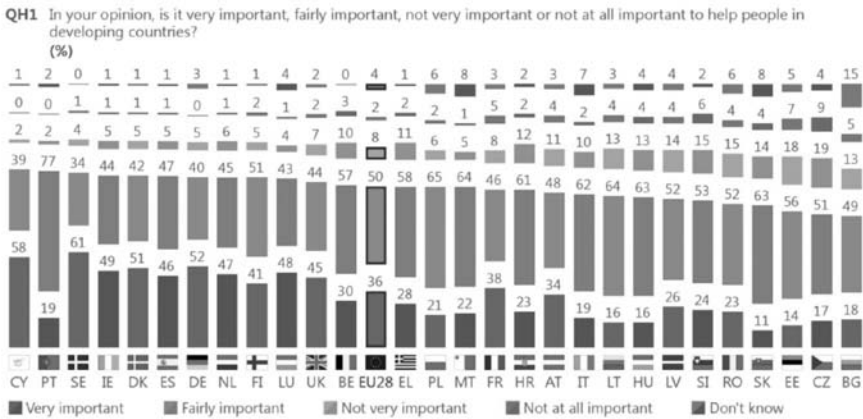
29 Compare with <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/30270-babis-podporil-turecky-plan-bez-znalosti-reality>

30 Compare with <https://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/turecka-invaze/clanek/cesko-zastavilo-vyvoz-zbrani-doturecka-40299840>

31 Compare with <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/exportcontrole-strategische-goederen/documenten/rapporten/2016/10/01/overzicht-doorvoer-militaire-goederen>

According to Eurobarometer research, in 2019 67% of people in the Czech Republic thought it was important or very important to help people in developing countries.¹ It thus remains the majority opinion, but, in comparison to other EU countries, it had the second lowest result. Moreover, the percentage decreased compared to 2018 when the same question was answered positively by 78% of respondents.²

Graph: Question: In your opinion, is it very important, quite important, not very important, or absolutely unimportant to help developing countries? Source: Special Eurobarometer 494.



This trend of declining support is highlighted by Social Watch on a regular basis. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czech Development Agency are directly responsible for the declining support of development cooperation and international solidarity. The two institutions have decided to radically reduce their programmes for informing the public and educating about international issues. As a result, fewer and fewer citizens understand the reasons for international cooperation. Unfortunately, this is also reflected in the work of a large part of the media, whose information is distorted, which, of course, may be due to the interest of the media owners.

1 Special Eurobarometer 494. "EU citizens and development cooperation", European Union, 2019.
 2 Special Eurobarometer 476. "EU citizens and development cooperation", European Union, 2018.

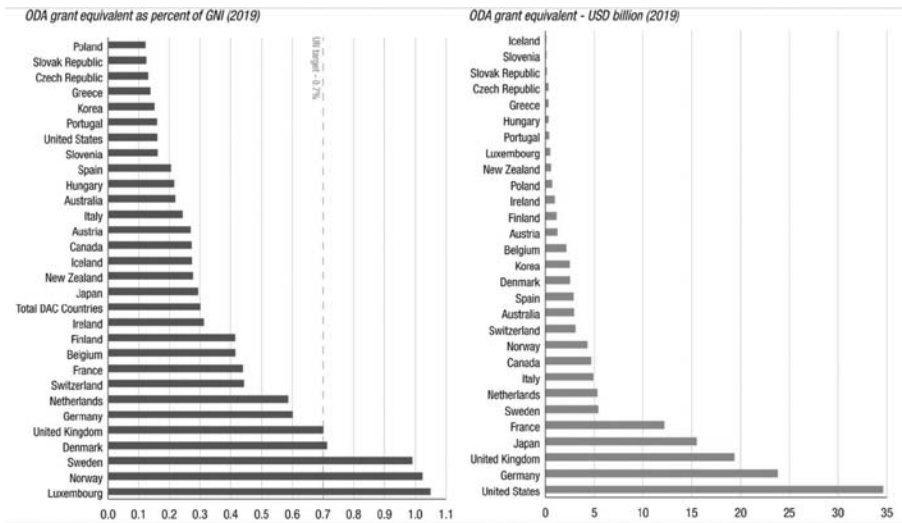
Cooperation with developing countries

In May 2015, the European Council³ reconfirmed its commitment to achieving common development assistance in the amount of 0.7% of gross national income.

The contribution of the Czech Republic is only 0.13% of GNI, which is the third lowest share among OECD countries.⁴ Only Poland and Slovakia give less—0.12% of GNI. In total, this means USD 310 million, with only Slovakia and Iceland giving less, but the latter’s contribution is 0.27% of GNI. The slight increase in 2019 was mainly due to an increase in the contribution to the World Bank.⁵

A bigger part of the money for development cooperation goes to so-called multilateral support. These are mainly contributions to UN agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the like.

Graph: OECD official development cooperation as a percentage of GNI in billions of USD.



- The European Council consists of the highest representatives of the individual states of the European Union, determines the basic direction of the EU and, together with the Council of the European Union, is one of the most powerful decision-making bodies in the EU.
- OECD, DAC. Official Development Assistance 2019 – Preliminary Data. Interactive chart online, 2020. Available at WWW: <https://tabsoft.co/2X6Ej6n>
- OECD. Aid by DAC members increases in 2019 with more aid to the poorest countries. Paris, 16. 4. 2020. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2019-detailed-summary.pdf>

Czech bilateral development cooperation is fragmented, and funds are distributed without an obvious conception. Given the overall small, direct contribution to developing countries, we can talk about neither the effectiveness nor the efficiency of the funds spent.

The Czech government has refused to participate in resolving the refugee crisis within the EU, referring to its own security and saying that the Czech Republic would help directly in the countries which refugees come from.⁶ However, statistics show that none of the affected countries actually received any significant support. The exception is Turkey, whose support is a long-term political calculation to keep refugees outside the EU's borders, even at the expense of human rights violations.⁷

6 ČTK. Soud EU: Odmítáním uprchlických kvót porušily země své povinnosti. 2. 4. 2020. Available at WWW: <https://www.ceska-justice.cz/2020/04/soud-eu-odmitanim-uprchlickych-kvot-porusily-zeme-sve-povinnosti/>

7 AIDA. Country Report: Turkey, 2019. Update. ECRE, 2020. Available at WWW: <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey>

About Social Watch

Social Watch is an international network of citizens' organizations in the struggle to eradicate poverty and the causes of poverty, to end all forms of discrimination and racism, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. We are committed to peace, social, economic, environment and gender justice, and we emphasize the right of all people not to be poor.

Social Watch holds governments, the UN system and international organizations accountable for the fulfilment of national, regional and international commitments to eradicate poverty.

Social Watch will achieve its objectives through a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, awareness-building, monitoring, organizational development and networking. Social Watch promotes people-centred sustainable development.

Social Watch Czech Republic

The coalition Social Watch Czech Republic has been established informally in 2008 as a network of NGOs, academia, and experts from different fields of social science.

Since 2015 the coalition is established as a formal organization. Currently, its members are:

- ADEPTTs
- Alternativa Zdola
- EDUCON
- Ekumenická akademie
- EUROSOLAR
- Fórum 50 %
- NESEHNUTÍ
- Svět bez válek a násilí
- Trast pro ekonomiku a společnost
- Wontanara

The coalition Social Watch Czech Republic is supported by its individual member organizations and individual members. Some activities are covered by contributions from individuals, organizations or projects.

Further information and publications can be found at www.socialwatch.cz and www.socialwatch.org

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