



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

2010 Edition





# **CZECH REPUBLIC**

**APRIL 2010**

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

In 2008, the number of people aged between 0-29 was 3 609 369 (34.48 % of the total population of 10 467 542). The number of children of compulsory school age (from 6 to 15 years old) was 842 030 (8.04 % of the population). The official language of instruction is Czech. Only the Polish minority is so populous and concentrated to have its own schools. In 2009/10 there were 25 nursery schools, 21 basic schools (providing comprehensive compulsory schooling) and 3 upper secondary schools (1 general and 2 technical) teaching in Polish.

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

In 2009/10 most pupils in compulsory and post-compulsory (non-tertiary) education attend public-sector schools (98.0 % and 83.8 %).

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, the Czech education system has been operating on the base of new acts: Education Act that regulates education from pre-primary to upper secondary and tertiary professional education and its public administration, and Act on Educational Staff that regulates teacher profession on the same levels. The Higher Education Act with 19 amendments regulates higher education since 1999.

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

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports preserves the integrated state educational policy by formulating long-term policy objectives of education and development of the education system every four years; then they are submitted to the government. For higher education, long-term plans are formulated now for 2006-2010, and updated annually.

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

- is responsible for the conception, state and development of the education system;

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

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

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

All schools have the status of legal entities since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003. School heads were given full responsibility for the quality of educational process, for financial management of the school, for appointing and dismissing teachers and for relations with the community and the public. By law, the school organising body must establish the School Council enabling parents, pupils, educational staff (except for the school head), and the public to participate in the administration of the school. Organising bodies appoint school heads on the basis of a tender; they can be dismissed only for reasons defined by law.

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

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

Private schools have been established since 1990 (at university level since 1999). The schools are mostly non-confessional; the usual legal form is a for-profit or non-profit grant-aided organisation. Both private and denominational schools represent 2.4 % of the total number of basic schools and 1.3 % of their pupils; for upper secondary schools it is 25.7 % of schools and 15.8 % of pupils; for tertiary professional schools it is 32.6 % of institutions and 32.0 % of students in 2009/10; for universities it is 63.4 % of institutions and 14.5 % of students in 2009/10. The funding of private schools is based on the same per capita principle, as for public schools. Basic subsidies (50-80 % of the amount granted to similar public institutions, according to the type) can be raised to 80-100 % if the school meets a set of criteria. Denominational schools receive the same funding as public schools directly from the MEYS. Private Higher Education Institutions must be non-profit-making to be eligible for a state grant.

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

### 3. Pre-primary education

*Mateřská škola* (nursery school) is a part of the education system with a long tradition. The pre-primary education is based on the Framework Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education, which was approved by the MEYS in 2004 and it is obligatory for schools from 2007/08. Attendance is not compulsory; nevertheless it covers approximately 85 % of the total age group (3-6 years), 92 % in the pre-school year. The year prior to compulsory schooling is free of charge and children have a legal right to attend it. Parents can be asked to pay a maximum of 50 % of the running (not educational) costs covered by the community.

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

For socially disadvantaged children, preparatory classes may be established during the year prior to their starting compulsory schooling at *základní školy* (basic schools).

### 4. Compulsory education

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

#### (i) Phases

Education (institution)	Typical age	ISCED level
<i>Základní škola</i> (single structure)		1+2
– primary education	first stage: 6-11;	1
– lower secondary education	second stage: 11-15	2
Lower stage of multi-year <i>Gymnázium</i> (general lower secondary education)	11/13-15	2
<i>Taneční konzervatoř</i> – dance conservatoire	11-15	2

#### (ii) Admission criteria

Catchment areas are defined, but the choice of schools is free. Pupils can leave single structure *základní škola* after successfully completing the fifth year (for the eight-year *gymnázium*) or the seventh year (for the six-year *gymnázium*). The enrolment proceeding usually includes the entrance examination set by the school head. There are 11 % pupils of the age group (between 11 and 15 years old) attending *gymnázium* (2009/10). The enrolment proceeding for education at conservatoire is held in the form of an examination proving particular abilities of an applicant. There are only some 0.07 % of pupils between 11 and 15 fulfilling their compulsory school attendance at eight-year dance conservatoires <sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> For more information on eight-year conservatoires see chapters 2 and 5 of Eurybase. ([http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/CZ\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/CZ_EN.pdf)).

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

The school year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year. In 2009/10, the school year comprises 196 days of teaching. Lessons of 45 minutes are spread over five days a week. The timetable is 18-26 lessons at the first stage, 28-32 lessons at the second stage (gradually). In 2006/07 it was enlarged by 5 hours. Education is running mostly in the morning. Apart from education, schools offer their pupils all-day care and interest activities in school facilities.

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

The number of pupils per class is between the minimum of 17 and maximum of 30. In 2009/10, the average class size is 20.0. The co-educational classes are made up of pupils of the same age. Small communities can organise schools (primary stage only) with one or more classes of mixed age. At the first stage, the same teacher generally teaches all subjects.

**(v) Curricular control and content**

The binding document for education in *základní škola* as well as in lower stage of multi-year *gymnázium* is the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (FEP BE) approved by the MEYS in 2005. On the basis of the FEP BE schools prepare their school educational programmes (SEPs): in 2009/10 schools are providing instruction according to their SEPs in most grades. (See also curricular reform section 9.)

The FEP BE defines nine main educational areas consisting of one or more educational fields, cross-curricular topics, complementary educational fields and key competences of a school leaver. It specifies the curriculum of the fields, i.e. the recommended content and expected outcomes at the end of every period (the first stage is divided into first and second periods: years 1-3 and 4-5).

The educational areas are Language and language communication, Mathematics and its application, ICT, People and their world, People and society, People and nature, Art and culture, People and their health, People and the world of work. The cross-curricular topics comprise Personal and social education, Education for democratic citizenship, Education towards thinking in the European and global context, Multicultural education, Environmental education, and Media studies.

The SEP BE divides the curriculum into particular years (or other compact parts, e.g. modules) and into subjects and specifies syllabus. One educational field can form part of one or more subjects or the educational content of different fields can be integrated in an 'integrated subject'. Schools profile themselves through the SEPs. Teaching of a foreign language starts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, but the school head can include it in the 1<sup>st</sup> year if pupils are interested and parents agree.

Teachers can choose their own teaching methods, within the scope of the proposals or recommendations articulated in the educational programme and according to the general policy of the school. Each school is free to choose textbooks.

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

The general principles of assessment of pupils' educational results are set by the Education Act. The rules of pupils' assessment are defined by each school in the School Code respecting the MEYS's degree and curriculum. The continuous assessment is provided by teachers, most often a 5-point scale is used. The results of continuing assessment are summarized in a school report at the end of each semester. According to the MEYS degree, the 5-point scale, verbal assessment (authorized at all educational levels since 2005) or combination of both may be used in the school report. Since 2005/06 school issues an output assessment to leavers of compulsory schooling.

Final school reports are issued with proof that the required level of *základní vzdělání* has been reached.

There are neither exams at the end of a year, nor any nation-wide testing of pupils' performance.

Pupils who have not succeeded in all compulsory subjects (except subjects focusing only on educational care) can repeat a year once on every stage. Meetings with parents are organised to discuss their children's progress. Approximately 93 % pupils complete successfully basic education and continue in education on higher level.

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

### (i) Types of education

Secondary education	Levels of education	Length (years)	ISCED level	Theoretical age
Secondary education completed with <i>maturitní zkouška</i> examination ( <i>střední vzdělání s maturitní zkouškou</i> )	Upper secondary general education at <i>gymnázium</i> secondary school	4	3A	15-19
	Upper secondary technical education at secondary school			
	Art education at conservatoire <sup>(2)</sup>	4	3A	15-19
Secondary education leading to apprenticeship certificate ( <i>střední vzdělání s výučním listem</i> )	Upper secondary vocational education at secondary school	2/3	3C	15-17/18
Secondary education ( <i>střední vzdělání</i> )	Upper secondary general and vocational education at secondary school <sup>(3)</sup>	1-2	2C/3C	15-16/17

Post-secondary non-tertiary education <sup>(4)</sup>	Levels of education	Length (years)	ISCED level	Theoretical age
Post-secondary education completed by <i>maturitní zkouška</i> examination	technical follow-up study ( <i>nástavbové studium</i> ) at secondary school	2	4A	18+
	technical shortened study ( <i>zkrácené studium</i> ) at secondary school	1-2	4A	18+
Post-secondary education leading to apprenticeship certificate	vocational shortened study ( <i>zkrácené studium</i> ) at secondary school	1-2	4C	18+

Upper secondary education is also provided in conservatoires.

<sup>(2)</sup> Pupils at conservatoires may also complete education by the *maturitní zkouška* examination (ISCED 3A), however not earlier than after the fourth grade, in case of eight-year dance conservatoires after the eighth grade. Nevertheless, studies at conservatoires are usually completed by an *absolutorium* at conservatoires (ISCED 5B).

<sup>(3)</sup> Pupils acquire secondary education through successful completion of an educational programme lasting for one or two years. Pupils can attend *Praktická škola* courses (1-2 years; ISCED 2C) or *Odborné učiliště* courses (2 years; ISCED 3C). For more information see also section 7 "Special needs".

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

## (ii) Admission criteria

Prerequisites for acceptance in upper secondary education are completing a compulsory education and successfully meeting entrance requirements set by the school head of *střední škola*, who also decides on admission of a pupil. The requirement may include the entrance examination (possibly the aptitude test) organised by the school. The enrolment proceeding for education at conservatoire is held in the form of an examination proving particular abilities of an applicant. Pupils can apply for three schools of their choice. Those who were not enrolled can participate in the other round of enrolment proceeding at schools that have a free capacity.

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

## (iii) Curricular control and content

In the 2009/10 school year, most pupils already follow the new educational programmes approved by the MEYS (see curricular reform – section 9).

The Framework Educational Programme for Upper Secondary General Education (*Gymnázium*) stipulates 8 educational areas, 5 cross-curricular subjects and also the key competences of school leaver. The number of lessons per week must be between 27 and 35 in each year. The school head determines the optional subjects as well as the use of the disposable lessons. The minimum number of lessons per study is 132, although the school head can increase it up to 140.

The framework educational programmes for technical end vocation education include general as well as technical/vocational education areas, cross-curricular subjects, key and specific competencies<sup>(5)</sup>.

There are specific framework education programmes for follow-up courses (ISCED 4A level), programmes of shortened study (4A or 4C) are based on framework education programme for appropriate upper secondary course.

Conservatoires provide artistic education. It can be acquired through studies in dance, music, singing and musical-dramatic art courses. Framework educational programmes (FEP) for courses at conservatoire are scheduled to be completed in 2010. The structure of these FEPs is similar to that of FEPs for upper secondary vocational education.

## (iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Upper secondary schools use both continuous assessment and final assessment of pupils in a school report. The results of a pupil's education may be expressed by a mark, a verbal assessment, or by a combination of both. There are no exams at the end of a year, nor any nationwide testing of pupils' performance.

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<sup>(5)</sup> The proportion of general subjects and vocational ones in the newly created school educational programmes for the technical courses (ISCED level 3A) is about 60:40 (practical education excluded). In the newly created school educational programmes for the vocational courses (ISCED level 3C), the proportion (on an average) is varying between 19 % in two-year courses and 34 % in three-year courses (practical training included).



All upper secondary schools organise their own final examination:

- the *maturitní zkouška* <sup>(6)</sup> in general or technical four-year courses (ISCED level 3A) <sup>(7)</sup>, in two-year follow-up study or in shortened study (ISCED level 4A); leavers are awarded the *vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce* which opens the possibility to enter a higher level of education;
- the *závěrečná zkouška* in three-year (prevailing) or two-year courses (ISCED level 3C) or shortened study (ISCED 4C level) where a part of the examination is practical; the leavers are awarded the *vysvědčení o závěrečné zkoušce* and the *výuční list* – a certificate which proves their skills in a given field;
- the *závěrečná zkouška* in two- and one-year courses which are general or vocational (ISCED level 2C/3C), the school leavers are awarded the *vysvědčení o závěrečné zkoušce*. (Leavers represent a very small part of all leavers.)

## 6. Tertiary education

### (i) Types of institution

Institution	ISCED level	Length (years)	Theoretical age
<i>Konzervator</i> – art education	5B	2	17-19
		2	19-21
<i>Vyšší odborná škola</i> (tertiary professional school)	5B	3 (3.5)	19-22
<i>Vysoká škola</i> (higher education institution, university and non-university type) – Bachelor and Master's studies	5A	3-4/5/6/7	19-22/23/24/25/26
<i>Vysoká škola</i> (university type) – Doctoral studies	6	3-4	-

Tertiary professional schools provide students with advanced technical knowledge. Their curriculum is prepared by the school and accredited by the MEYS.

Higher education institutions are either of university (24 public, 2 state, and 3 private institutions in 2010) or non-university types (2 public, 42 private institutions). The study programmes are prepared by individual institutions/faculties and approved by the MEYS on the affirmative standpoint of the Accreditation Commission.

### (ii) Access

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

<sup>(6)</sup> Leavers with the *maturitní zkouška* (in general or technical fields) represent over 72 % of all leavers of upper secondary education (day form of education; follow-up and shortened study included). Leavers of *gymnázium* (i.e. general education – almost a half of pupils already enrol during the second stage of the basic school to 6-year or 8-year *gymnázium*) represent 29 % of holders of the *maturitní zkouška* and 21 % of all leavers of upper secondary education. Leavers of the follow-up study represent some 9 % of those who achieve the *maturitní zkouška* in the traditional pathway. Shortened study has been a new type of study since 2005/06.

<sup>(7)</sup> Also pupils of conservatoires may complete education by the *maturitní zkouška* examination (ISCED 3A), however not earlier than after the fourth grade, in case of eight-year dance conservatoires after the eighth grade.

### (iii) Qualifications

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

On the completion of study at higher education institutions students take a state examination generally including a defence of a thesis. The graduates of the first cycle courses (3-4 years) are awarded the degree of *bakalář* – Bc. (Bachelor). The graduates of the second cycle courses continuing after Bachelor (1-3 years) or long-type courses (4-6 years) are mostly awarded the degree of *magistr* – Mgr. (Master) <sup>(8)</sup>. On the completion of doctoral studies (3-4 years) students take a state doctoral examination and a defence of a thesis and are awarded the degree of *doktor* – Ph.D. (Th.D. in theology).

## 7. Special needs

Special schools exist from pre-primary to upper secondary level. Their curriculum and qualifications are as close as possible to those of mainstream schools, the methods are appropriate to the specific educational problems (mainly mental, physical, visual or hearing disability).

At compulsory level, the *základní škola speciální* can be established for pupils with medium and severe mental disabilities and multiple mental disabilities and *základní škola praktická* for pupils with mild mental disabilities. These pupils can continue their education in courses at *praktická škola* (ISCED 2C) or *odborné učiliště* (ISCED 3C) – two secondary schools set up for pupils with lesser study prerequisites – or in other special vocational courses at upper secondary level (ISCED 3C) for pupils with mild mental disabilities and for those who have not successfully completed lower secondary education.

Attendance at a special school requires a recommendation from an appropriate authority and parental consent; 2.7 % of the population falls outside mainstream education. The new Education Act puts stress on integration.

## 8. Teachers

Four-year teacher training for pre-primary education is in general organised at the upper secondary level; there are also courses at tertiary education level.

Would-be teachers of theoretical subjects at other levels of education must obtain a university qualification at Master's level. Different types of lower vocational qualifications (from non-tertiary education) are sufficient for practical education teachers. The educational training of teachers of general subjects is mostly concurrent, for technical/vocational subjects it is usually consecutive. Teachers (except of those of primary level) are specialists. Teachers do not have a civil servant status.

The 2004 Act on Educational Staff regulates the prerequisites for the performance of the profession, their further education and the career scheme.

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<sup>(8)</sup> For some branches, there are specific degrees: MgA. (Master of Art), Ing. (for technical and economic branches), Ing. Arch. (in architecture). In medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine – after the exam *státní rigorózní zkouška* – there are degrees: MUDr. (medicine), MDDr. (dentistry), and MVDr. (veterinary medicine). For holders of Master's degree, there is a possibility to be awarded the degree: JUDr. (in law), PhDr. (in humanities, education and social sciences), RNDr. (in sciences), PharmDr. (in pharmacy), ThDr. (in theology) – after the exam *státní rigorózní zkouška*.

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## 9. Current reforms and priorities

### (i) Reforms

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

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

FEPs have been approved for ISCED levels 0, 1, 2, almost whole ISCED level 3 and partially ISCED 4. All FEPs for upper secondary technical and vocational education are scheduled to be completed at the end of 2009/10 school year.

- *Mateřská škola* (ISCED 0) works already in accordance to the FEP.
- In the 2007/08 school year, teaching according to the FEP at *základní škola* started in 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades and is being gradually introduced in other grades since then.
- In September 2009, teaching according to the FEP for upper secondary general education started in 1<sup>st</sup> grades of *gymnázia* and will be gradually introduced in other grades.
- The FEPs for upper secondary technical and vocational education are prepared simultaneously with the new National Qualification Framework which defines some 270 fields of education instead of former 800. Programmes are being approved in four phases (2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010). In two years following the approval, schools must prepare their own school educational programmes and start teaching on their basis.

**Evaluation processes** are stressed. From 2006/07 all schools are obliged to self-evaluate. All final exams are being revised: until now only schools have been responsible for their content and organisation. New *maturitní zkouška* will consist of common and profile parts of two levels of difficulty. Common part will consist of three centrally organised examinations, profile part of the *maturitní zkouška* will consist of examinations organised by school in compliance with the Framework Educational Programme. The introducing of the new *maturitní zkouška* intended for 2008 was postponed to 2011. A similar measure is being prepared for the 3-year vocational programmes. The pilot projects of a common *závěrečná zkouška* were carried out on a sample of schools in 2008. A follow-up project (2009-2012) is aimed at the nation-wide implementation.

The Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results (approved in 2006, in force since 2007) makes it possible to attain a recognised qualification acquired by continuing education or practice without passing formal education. The Act set up the National Qualification Framework (a public register of all entire and partial qualifications recognised in the Czech Republic), amended the Education Act and stressed the concept of lifelong learning through all education system.

### (ii) Current discussions

In 2009 public debates on the draft project by the Work Group for Standardization of Professional Activities of Teachers started. The Professional Standard of Teacher Quality is regarded as a framework of necessary competences and requirements for the activities of teachers.

At the end of 2008 the White Paper on Tertiary Education was acknowledged by the government. The document provides a long-term vision of further development and identifies the main objectives

of tertiary education reform. Individual steps should be specified on the basis of continuing expert debate.

In relation to the Act on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results, initial works on preparation of the National Qualification Framework of Tertiary Education have started.

*Unrevised English*

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