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Czech Presidency  
of the EU 2009



Youth  
of the Czech Republic

# Youth of the Czech Republic

Information on children and youth  
in the Czech Republic



Text completed in October 2008

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## Table of Contents

Opening word . . . . . 6

**1 ■ Youth of the Czech Republic . . . . . 8**

- Whom will we talk about mainly? . . . . . 9
- What do we know about Czech youth? . . . . . 9
- What kind of youth do we wish for? . . . . . 11
- Parents, teachers...and the others . . . . . 12

**2 ■ The state and its role in supporting and protecting youth . . . . . 14**

- Themes of the Concept of State Policy for Children and Youth in the Period of 2007 – 2013 . . . . . 16
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports . . . . . 18
- National Institute of Children and Youth of the MEYS . . . . . 19

**3 ■ Non-formal education . . . . . 24**

- Institutions of non-formal education and upbringing . . . . . 26
- Training of leaders . . . . . 36
- Czech specialities . . . . . 37

**4 ■ Useful contacts . . . . . 42**



## Opening word



Dear Friends,

There is no doubt children and youth deserve special attention of policy makers. As surely many of you did, I used to collaborate with kids and young people when I worked in the non-profit sector. Serving my country as the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports I have a unique opportunity to support and contribute to the all-around development of the young generation now. It is my Ministry that is - through the education and leisure time activities - the main referee in this area. That is why I care about quality information on children and youth in the Czech Republic.

The Czech youth described in this brochure is currently facing an important reform of education system. This reform represents an important opportunity to respond to the needs of all parties involved in education processes. Young Czechs need to cope with shifts to more efficient school programs and new trends at schools such as student mobility or volunteer work. We wish to make these tools available to everybody, regardless of social position, experience or achieved formal education.

Our objective is to install and sustain strategies raising competitive individuals who are well prepared for the new century. Knowing how to handle the new challenges is important not only for their own career but also for a harmonious knowledge-based society as a whole. We are aware of this particularly in respect to the Czech presidency in the Council of the EU.

We would like to make use of our presidency to strengthen the European cooperation in the field of youth. We wish to facilitate further dialogue and contribute to the birth of new policies in this field. This booklet was published for this occasion. I hope it will provide you with relevant information about children and youth in the Czech Republic and I am looking forward to the ensuing debates.

**Ondřej Liška**

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports  
of the Czech Republic

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ondřej Liška". The signature is fluid and cursive.

”



# Youth of the Czech Republic

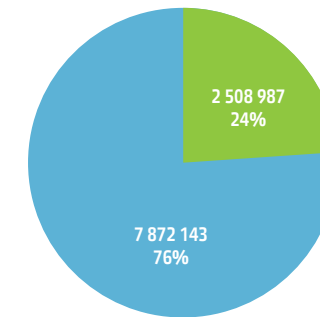
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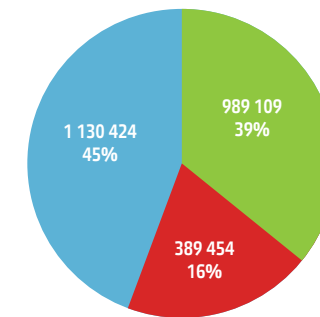
## Whom will we talk about mainly?

In compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child in the Czech Republic (CR) is a person who is less than 18 years old. Youth are people between the ages of 18 and 26. According to the Czech law, an adult (major) is a person who has reached 18 years. However, young people between the age of 16 and 18 are not usually considered children – they do not behave or feel like children. Besides, they are given certain rights and obligations by law but do not have full criminal responsibility.

Source:  
Czech Statistical Office, data as of 31 December 2007



- Number of children and youth (between the ages of 6 to 26)
- Other population of the CR



- Children between the ages of 6 and 15
- Children between the ages of 16 and 18
- Youth between the ages of 19 and 26

## What do we know about Czech youth?

Those who live in the Czech Republic – and maybe even those who have visited or are planning to visit our country – surely have an opinion on what today's young people of the Czech Republic are like. Usually, people form an opinion like that by generalizing some of their partial information and experience. It is no wonder then that there are a lot of opinions that often considerably differ.

Here we would like to provide you with characteristics that are based on long-term surveys of what Czech young people consider important, i.e. their values. What do the surveys tell us about today's generation of young Czechs?

First of all, they are not a compact group, but comprise of groups with different values. These values usually stem from religious (mostly Christian, but not always connected with the church), spiritual or environmental bases and orientations. This group of young people is typically interested in others and in public life.

On the other hand, most young people are set rather explicitly. They are self-absorbed and self-oriented. For them, responsibility for others is less important and so are their self-improvement and the transcendent (spiritual) dimension of life. The inner life of these young people is poor – and it is one of the reasons for the growing interest in drugs.

The mainstream of the young generation is adapted to, and identifies with, society. Mainstream media have become an important current instrument of social conformity. The media engrave more and more things that have nothing or very little to do with reality in the mind and cognition of young people and produce more and more medial and virtual reality. The mainstream young generation is considerably manipulated by media and accepts the opinions and attitudes produced by media.

Material things and leisure time spent according to their interests and hobbies are becoming more important while the importance of "being helpful to others" is diminishing and so is the importance of peace, a good quality environment and charity work. Their trust in democracy is also on the decline as a consequence of their experience with our political system and culture and the citizen's position in this system.

It is important to point out their positive opinion on the army – it is almost certain that behind this change in opinion is both the successful transformation of the army and the army's participation in successful NATO missions. Young people also have a positive opinion on media and schools as well as on the European Union even though its credibility is for them rather less visible.



The children assembly of Svitavy organized an all-day cultural event for children, youth and other citizens at the local square on 27 September 2008. There were Czech champions in different disciplines, different music groups and singers, baton twirlers and belly dancers. "We want to show what we can do and that we are not just some helpless puppets. We want to show everybody that children democracy can move the world, or at least a city, and I hope that we will succeed," says Barbora Hávová, chairwoman of the assembly.

**Young people in 2006 are much more critical of the work of the state as compared to the year of 1998. Young people in the Czech Republic trust the most the president of the CR and the army.** While in 1998 there was a certain percentage of non-satisfied young people, **in 2006 the number of non-satisfied young people prevailed.**

Their negative opinion on employment and housing is a serious problem.

**The government, political parties and church were rated extremely negatively.** During the years of 1998 – 2006, there was a dramatic drop in trust in the government, House of Representatives, deputies, political parties, police and church. Such strict criticism is unusual, and it tells us that young people consider these institutions totally discredited and untrustworthy.

Results of the survey Participation of Young People in Political and Social Life – 2006; NICY

## What kind of youth do we wish for?

Personality trait	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably not	Definitely not	I do not know	YES/NO
Hard-working	80	19	1	0	0	99/1
Responsible	80	18	1	0	1	98/1
Tolerant	43	47	6	1	3	90/7
Unselfish	51	41	6	1	1	92/7
Thrifty	45	42	10	2	1	87/12



In compliance with specialists, people in the Czech Republic wish in particular for the following five personality traits (called the Big Five) in children and youth: **intelligence, conscientiousness, openness, emotional stability and agreeableness.** And they would also add mainly **honesty, self-control, inquisitiveness, joy of learning and desire to learn new things, decency and desire to help others.** When Czech citizens were asked about what personality traits children and young people should have, the top five traits were (Survey of the Public Opinion Research Centre, 2005):



## Parents, teachers . . . and the others

The family has a crucial influence on the development of a person - a baby, toddler, preschooler and even pupil. The influence of the family is essential even for shaping a young person's life. This is why everybody recognizes that parents should have the major rights and responsibilities for their children. And almost everybody also recognizes that the entire society should help parents in their difficult task, which is especially pressing in our country since almost half of the families are broken due to parents' divorce and every year tens of thousands of children practically lose one of their parents – usually the father. Moreover, a recent survey (Median for Junák - Association of Scouts and Guides of the Czech Republic) shows that the biggest problem for Czech parents is not having enough time for their children (two-thirds mention it as the main problem).

In the Czech Republic – with the tradition of the European teacher Johannes Amos Comenius and mandatory school attendance since the rule of Empress Maria Theresia at the end of the 18th century – school has become an important partner of parents. In particular after the creation of Czechoslovakia (during the years of 1918 – 1938), school had a great reputation since it was the pillar of the newly created democratic regime. After WW II, school lost a lot of its prestige – it was often used as a tool of ideological propaganda of the communist regime and sometimes also as a tool of coercion and blackmail of parents. Even after almost 20 years following the change in the regime, school was not able to quite rehabilitate its damaged reputation. Yet, Czech schools have many high-quality teachers whose contribution to the healthy development of children and young people is indisputable.



Our children are quite aware of this, which is proven e.g. by the annual competition Golden Amos where students vote for the best teachers. It is rather typical that those who enjoy the trust of their pupils and students are usually such teachers who also spent time with children and young people outside school – as leaders of different clubs, workers at children and youth centres, group leaders in civic associations – i.e. those who have at least “one foot” in the area of education and upbringing that represents the “third pillar” – non-formal education and leisure learning.

It is literally an “army” of tens of thousands of volunteers who, week after week, spend many hours with hundreds of thousands of children and adolescents. It is they who often become their lifelong role models and sometimes not only help the family and school but also “substitute” or supplement what the family or school is unable to do.





## The state and its role in supporting and protecting youth



2



The state also plays its unique role in the upbringing and education of children and youth, which is only by creating conditions for the school attendance system.

The two basic premises of the Czech state policy in this area are as follows:

- acceptance of the state's responsibility for creating conditions for the development of the young generation and for fulfilling the tasks that fall under the state's competency or that the state agreed to undertake in many international conventions;
- recognition and support of the primary responsibility of the family for children and youth and an individual's own responsibility appropriately to his age.

The state's responsibility for youth involves two different levels:

### Support

- solution of problems that imperil young people or prevent their development;
- creation of conditions for the participation of youth in social and political life and motivation of individual groups of young people to comply with the objectives of the state policy for children and youth;
- creation of different special programmes for children and youth;
- support of non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs) that play an irreplaceable role in this area.

### Protection

The state's protection kicks in anytime an individual is not able to cope on his own with a bad environment and negative social influences. In this case, the state either applies its instruments or cooperates with other public administration authorities, cities, NGOs and other institutions and organizations helping children and youth.

An important factor in this area is also foreign cooperation at the state level and at the level of NGOs working with children and youth (EU programmes targeted to youth, etc.).

**State instruments** in protection and support of children and youth are mainly legal regulations, economic instruments, research application, a suitable information system and comprehensive personnel policy (selection, training and further education of people). Specific application of these instruments is detailed in the Concept of State Policy for Children and Youth (the Concept), which is always for 4 to 6 years. The main objective of the 2007 – 2013 Concept is to create suitable conditions mainly for:

- fulfilment of the role of the family
- personal and career development of young people
- support of active citizenship and participation
- promotion of a healthy lifestyle
- protection against negative influences and their consequences



## Themes of the Concept of State Policy for Children and Youth in the Period of 2007 – 2013

16

- 1 Information about and for youth:** To create, expand and improve the conditions and premises for obtaining, transferring and distributing wide-spectrum information in line with the needs and interests of the young generation. To make electronic media technically more accessible and more affordable and to support correct and safe use of electronic media, especially the quality of information spread by electronic media. To provide legislative and socially appropriate conditions for effective use of public media for the needs of children and youth.
- 2 Youth and Europe:** To create conditions for easier access of young people to information about youth in Europe and active participation of young people in transnational organizations. To define strategic conditions for implementation of measures on youth adopted in the EU and to actively participate in spreading the European idea of freedom, stability and prosperity of European youth.
- 3 Youth, leisure time and lifestyle:** To create good social, legislative and financial conditions for quality free time of children and young people that will lead to their healthy lifestyle. To support the development and wide selection of leisure activities of leisure learning school facilities. To support the activity of NGOs of children and youth and NGOs working with children and youth. To motivate these organizations through subsidy programmes to provide quality leisure activities for children and youth.
- 4 Youth, education, upbringing:** To help to shape young people and to support and develop their own personality, talents and interests in line with the needs of society, by supporting education and upbringing activities and focusing on combining *formal, informal and non-formal education*.
- 5 Youth, employment and employability:** To provide quality conditions for preparing

young people for their future career. To create specialized programmes supporting the employment of young people, in particular fresh graduates. To link more efficiently school education fields with the needs of the local and European markets.

- 6 Protection of the rights of children and youth:** To fulfil the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to regularly evaluate its fulfilment. To regularly amend legal regulations in order to reinforce protection of the rights of children and youth. To better motivate educators at schools and school facilities, leaders of children groups at NGOs and other people who work with children and youth to systematically monitor and support the rights of the youngest generation. To teach children and youth that while they have their rights, they also have their obligations.
- 7 Participation of the young generation in social and political life:** To create conditions for, and different ways of, involvement of the young generation in public and social life. To support the creation of children parliaments and to encourage public administration authorities and governments to communicate more with children and youth organizations. To provide more room in children and young people's upbringing for the support of personal development, involvement, independence, the courage to speak up, etc.
- 8 Research on youth:** To create an effective system of regular and permanent monitoring of children and youth through targeted research tasks, surveys, polls and quick inquiries and to popularise their findings. In order to fulfil this objective, to create premises – a coordination network of experts and institutions – for obtaining information about youth as suggested in the EU's Common Objectives for Better Understanding and Knowledge of Youth.

**9 Volunteer work:** To support volunteer work of young people and those who work with them since it represents an important opportunity for non-formal learning and helps to promote solidarity, social cohesion and involvement in society. To start discussions on the legal and social position of volunteers working with children and youth and on the potential recognition of their activity and achieved education.

**10 International cooperation and mobility of children and youth:** To support international cooperation and mobility of children and youth and to create conditions for their development. To help to create conditions for bigger involvement of youth in international activities, for more exchange programmes for groups of children and youth, for studying and study and learning programmes abroad and for acquiring and passing on new knowledge, experience and contacts. To create conditions for promoting European and national priorities of the Youth in Action Programme.

**11 Youth from national minorities, young migrants and refugees:** To create conditions for the integration of minority children and youth in the regular life of the majority society. To promote targeted upbringing, education and further education of this group of population.

**12 Youth and housing:** To adopt such state measures to make housing for young people and families affordable and to encourage cities to make their own housing policies.

**13 Youth and culture:** To support all generally recognized cultural activities helping to bring up and educate the young generation. To create conditions for learning about culture and cultural traditions and to support activities promoting the active development of cultural and cultural-educating activities that

lead to the personal development of young people.

**14 Youth and media:** To support regular information about positive examples from the life of children and youth in mass media. To create a legislative framework for providing more and better quality information about youth. To create more room for the youngest generation in public media.

**15 Youth and family policy, support and protection of family:** To continue to adopt legislative, economic and material measures that are to promote the trust of young people in marriage, to support young families, to teach responsible parenthood, to protect young families, etc.

**16 Youth and health:** To keep creating legislative, economic and material conditions for protection of the health of the young generation in all its modifications. To teach a healthy lifestyle as part of education activities. To support preventive healthcare measures. To inform children and youth about different health risks in normal and extraordinary situations, to provide them with skills and behaviour patterns (decision-making) that would protect or improve their health and to teach them the responsibility for their own health and the health of others.

**17 Youth and the environment:** To promote all the activities that systematically teach the young generation to protect and create a healthy environment. To support meaningful activities of young people regarding the environment.

**18 Youth, socially pathological behaviour and social prevention, social integration:** To teach children and youth a healthy lifestyle, positive social behaviour and personal development.

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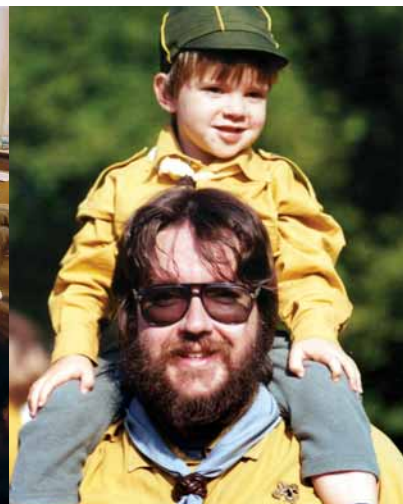
## Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

To encourage the young generation to create and strengthen moral values, to improve social competencies of children and youth, to further develop the skills that will help them to say no to different types of self-destruction, aggressiveness and law breaking. To permanently and systematically support all activities that promote the meaningful involvement of young people in different leisure activities and take them away from "escape" types of behaviour.

**19 Non-formal education of children and youth:** To support lifelong learning as one of the crucial factors of our country's ability to compete. The investment in lifelong learning must be viewed as the most important development investment. To keep stressing the importance of non-formal education and informal learning in different media. To support partnership in civic society and the division of responsibility among the state, employers, cities, civic associations, etc.

According to the Competency Act of the CR, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Training (the MEYS) is the public administration authority with the basic responsibility for children and youth. It is responsible not only for education at elementary and secondary schools and universities but also for the overall welfare of the young generation. The conditions and directions of this activity are set in the Concept. Other governmental departments also participate in its realization, but the MEYS is in charge of most of the tasks, which are always specified for every two-year period. **The Action Plan of the State Policy Concept for Children and Youth for the Period of 2008-2009** was adopted by the CR government in April 2008. Support of non-governmental, non-profit organizations (see below) and awarding the certificate "Organization Recognized by the MEYS for Working with Children and Youth" is part of the plan. As of today, 28 organizations have received this certificate.

The Youth Department of the MEYS is directly responsible for work with children and youth.



## National Institute of Children and Youth of the MEYS

It has the specialized organization, the National Institute of Children and Youth, (see below) at its disposal.

**The Chamber of Youth** is a central, coordinating, youth policy authority. It represents non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs), leisure learning school facilities, representatives of central public administration authorities and specialists for work with youth. The mission of the Chamber of Youth is to analyze legislative, methodological and other materials and documents that concern youth and comment on them. The Chamber of Youth submits its own initiatives and recommendations to state and local authorities while playing the role of an advisory body of the minister of education, youth and sports.

In cooperation with the National Institute of Children and Youth, the MEYS issues its electronic magazine INSPIROMAT that informs children and youth organizations and the general public about current affairs, provides methodical materials and serves as a forum for exchanging experiences.

The National Institute of Children and Youth of the MEYS (the NICY) is a specialized organization of the MEYS for the state support and protection of youth. It focuses mainly on leisure learning and non-formal education and provides support to those involved in this type of learning and education.

The NICY helps to

- draft the state concept for children and youth;
- draw other analytical, conceptual and methodological materials based on research, information, verification and other specialized activities;
- prepare, draft and verify legal standards and methodological regulations and recommendations of the MEYS regarding non-formal education and leisure learning.

It provides methodological support to non-governmental, non-profit organizations, leisure learning school facilities, schools and regional offices, informs about events and activities in this area and cooperates with the Czech Council

The MEYS is actively involved in international cooperation concerning youth. Through its Youth Department, it has its representatives in the Youth Working Party of the European Council, the Steering Committee of the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission and the European Steering Committee for Youth of the European Council. Its representatives work in different ad hoc groups of experts of the European Commission. In cooperation with European institutions, the Youth Department co-organized the Summer School of the European Council for new members of the European Steering Committee for Youth (August 2007), the European Workshop for Recognition of Non-formal Education Results (June 2008) and the International Conference for an Intercultural Dialog (December 2008). The MEYS is responsible for the realization and continuation of the activities of the all-European campaign for youth "All Different – All Equal."

of Children and Youth, the Association of Workers of Children and Youth Centres in the CR and many other organizations and institutions.

### NICY's specific activities

**National Children and Youth Research Register.** It includes research studies, polls, surveys and other research and information documents about children and youth. The register also has its English version, is available to the public at [www.vyzkum-mladez.cz](http://www.vyzkum-mladez.cz) and its findings are provided for free.

**Accredited education** of professional and non-professional workers in leisure learning, non-formal education and other leisure activities, including local and foreign training, meetings, seminars, internships, lectures and other

specialized events. Every year, it realizes 150 educational activities on average for about 2,200 participants.

### Activities for gifted pupils and students.

In this area, the NICY

- organizes the yearlong project TALNET, which is an interactive Internet network with many different activities for children interested in natural sciences and for natural science teachers;
- coordinates every year, together with the MEYS and regional offices, about 115 competitions in over 300 different fields;
- realizes 15 centrally organized competitions and shows, mostly Olympiads in different subjects, and prepares comprehensive documentation;
- helps to organize international seminars and

conferences on gifted children and youth (in 2008, it was e.g. the European Council for High Ability – ECHA);

- helps with organizing the participation of Czech delegations at international competitions – EUSO (European Union Science Olympiad); in 2008, students from the CR won two silver medals in the European Union Science Olympiad.

**European cooperation.** The NICY realizes and organizes international cooperation in education, information activities, exchange programmes for children and youth, methodological and study stays of people working with children and youth and represents the CR in the European Association of Institutions for Leisure Time Institutions of Children and Youth (EAICY) and in the European Network of Youth Centres (ENYC). Through the *Czech National Agency Youth*, it realizes the *Youth in Action Programme* in the CR that offers

exchange programmes for youth, volunteer work, local community support, involvement in democratic projects, training and seminars for people working with youth, cooperation with EU partner states and other interesting activities. The NICY also operates the European information network Eurodesk.

**Information.** The NICY focuses on systematic provision of information to children and youth in compliance with the provisions of the European Youth Information Charter and operates the National Information Centre for Youth. The website of the National Information Centre for Youth – [www.icm.cz](http://www.icm.cz) – is visited by almost a quarter of a million people every month.

The NICY represents the Czech Republic in the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency.

### NICY's educational activities

- *Management education* for managing employees of schools and school facilities that is provided in the modules – Successful Principal, Very Successful Principal and Principal – Manager;
- *Pedagogics education* is provided in the modules – Pedagogics, Leisure Pedagogue and Educator. It is very much sought after thanks to its interactive teaching, the instructors' approach and knowledge and the change to compare theory with practice;
- *Continuing education* – during the first semester of 2008, the NICY organized a total of 51 courses on legislation, management, teambuilding and for snowboarding, biking, river rafting and skiing instructors; training was provided to a total of 775 educators;
- *Professional training of people working with children and youth* – it is training for senior leaders of summer camps and other people working with children in NGOs and leisure centres. In 2008, 97 people were trained in 6 different courses, 33 people took the course for team leaders of summer camps and 18 people took the pedagogic minimum course.



**Projects.** In cooperation with the Youth Department of the MEYS, the NICY works on the national project that is called **Development of Key Competences in Leisure Learning and Non-Formal Education – LIFE KEYS** and focuses on targeted system support of leisure activities of children and youth, on development of individual areas of education and contents of leisure learning and non-formal education in compliance with the strategic documents of the CR and the EU, on current needs of society and target groups taking into consideration the new Education Act and on the state policy concept and school education programmes of leisure learning.

#### Objectives of the project

- to prepare thorough analyses of the environment and need of current education programmes;
- to create new or innovated education programmes that recognize, define and evaluate key competences;
- to innovate the system of education of educators and people working with children and youth, with a focus on the school curriculum reform;
- to standardize and evaluate organizations working with children and youth;
- to recognize non-formal education ;
- to implement information systems for youth.



#### We open with a key

Ondřej Malík, 6<sup>th</sup> grade

*With a key, we open almost everything.  
For example, the key to a fairy tale is a book,  
the key to a poem is a voice,  
the key to acting is a body and lots of other things.  
That's why I would like to know what is the key to love?  
There are lots of possibilities.  
But I think that it is the heart.*

From the competition Europe at School, 2006



## Non-formal education



3



Non-formal education means any systematic education outside school attendance (i.e. formal education) and the actual *upbringing* in the family. Czechs typically distinguish between upbringing that focuses on forming opinions and personality traits and *education* that mainly helps to develop intellect and memory. It could be simplified as a maternal approach (*behaviour*) and a paternal approach (the process that *aims high* to big goals and tasks). This clearly shows that to form a man, it takes both – upbringing and education.

### Principles and methods of non-formal education

First of all, it is optional and is based on the partnership between the provider of the education process and its participants. It focuses on both individual and group learning, and therefore sharing experience within the group, which is often intergenerational, plays an important role. Self-motivation and the willingness of the participants to engage in interactive exercises where they can develop their key competences is important for the process of learning. A big benefit of non-formal education is that it usually focuses on forming opinions, learning life skills and training for active citizenship.

Another typical feature of non-formal education is its creativity and flexibility: specific activities can be adapted to the current needs of the participants and to the environment in which they are carried out. The goals of the education process and the programme are always set, but the methods of achieving these goals are very different and variable. The right to make mistakes and to learn from them, for example by reflecting on or analysing the given situation, is also a typical feature of non-formal education. A great ambition regarding non-formal education is

to make it available to everybody, regardless of social position in society, experience or achieved formal education.

It is important to say that not all non-formal education providers apply this approach in their activity; sometimes their teaching methods are rather similar to those that we all know very well from school. On the other hand, non-formal education methods and principles are being used more and more also by many schoolteachers in the Czech Republic. The in-progress school reform and the implementation of framework education programmes in schools and leisure learning school facilities gave a big boost to this mutual fructification. The main goal of these changes is to obtain and develop key competences that are crucial for personal and career growth of every one of us. Thanks to the school reform, non-formal and formal education should systematically blend together. This opens the chance for recognition of non-formal education results as part of the evaluation of study and work competencies.



## Institutions of non-formal education and upbringing

The selection of non-formal education in the CR is very wide, especially in large cities. The situation is more difficult in rural regions where the opportunity is rather limited as to choice and accessibility.

As to legal form, non-formal education and upbringing is provided by public institutions founded by the state, region, city, church, institutions founded by the state, region, city or church, different types of non-governmental, non-profit organizations and private organizations.



### Leisure Learning School Facilities

**A school facility** is a legal entity, allowance organization or organizational entity of the state that provides services and education that supplement, support or relate to school education or provides institutional and protective upbringing or preventive upbringing. In the CR, non-formal upbringing provided by school facilities is known as leisure learning.

For leisure learning school facilities it is typical that education is provided by paid professional teachers. This does not mean that volunteers cannot work there (there are many of them in leisure centres), but the professional background of the educators is what mostly distinguishes school facilities from non-profit organizations specializing in the upbringing of children and youth.

#### After-school activities at school – after-school activity centres and school clubs

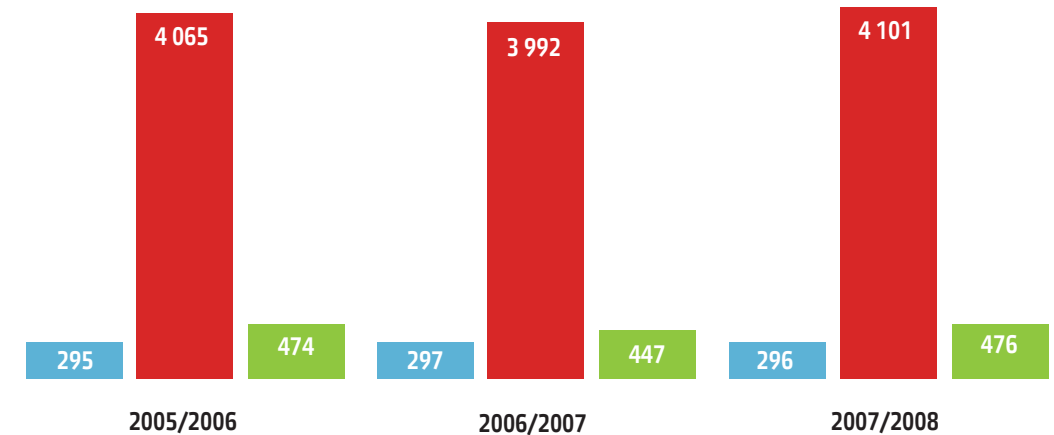
Nowadays, almost every school has its own **after-school activity centre** – i.e. a place where mostly children registered for regular,

i.e. everyday, school attendance go. It provides education, upbringing, recreation and sports and leisure activities to pupils outside school classes. It can also provide other educational or recreational activities for children, youth or their parents and other people. It is primarily designed for the youngest pupils (1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, i.e. for children between the ages of 6 and 10). If it has sufficient space and personnel, it can also take pupils from higher grades. It is not for free, but the fee is rather symbolic.

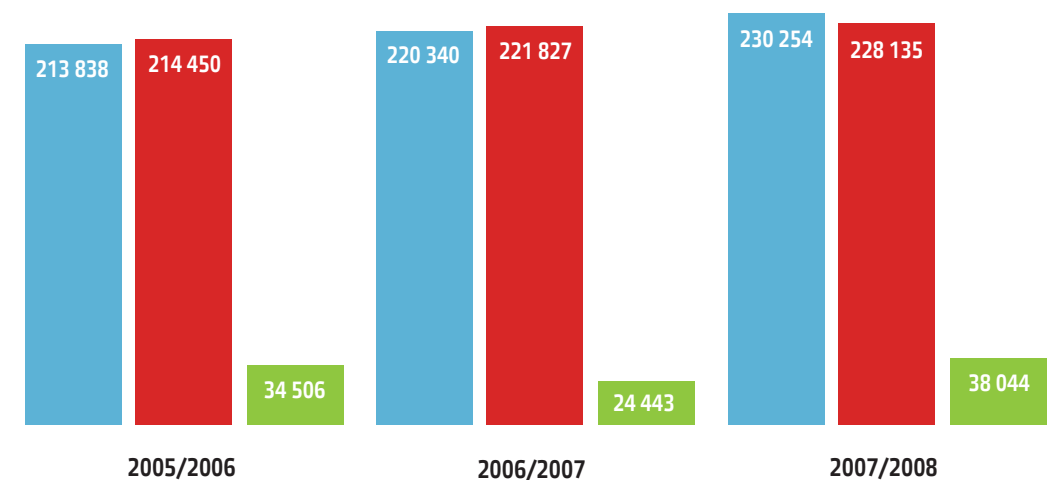
Some schools also have **school clubs** that are designed for elementary school pupils. It is now being discussed whether school clubs should be also created at secondary and vocational schools, in particular at locations with no other leisure facilities. School clubs are open to any pupil regardless of which school he/she goes to. School clubs can also provide other educational or recreational activities for children, youth or their parents and other people in their leisure time. Volunteers (mainly as group leaders) can work in a school club. It is not for free, but the fee is rather symbolic.

The following charts show selected statistical data on leisure centres:

Number of facilities



Number of regular pupils and students



Source: Statistical Yearly Bulletins of Education, Institute for Information in Education

- Leisure centres
- After-school activity centres
- School clubs



### Leisure centres

These are school facilities for leisure learning that are legal, allowance entities. They can be founded by the region, the city, the church or a private entity. As compared to other leisure learning entities (after-school activity centres and school clubs), leisure centres provide comprehensive services in a place that is not where children and youth go to school. Leisure centres represent a less formalized environment that is created by the participants. They also provide almost an unlimited time for different types of activities throughout the day, week and year. They are usually open also on non-school days.

There are two types of leisure centres:

- children and youth centres that provide activities in several areas of leisure learning;
- leisure activity stations focusing on one area of leisure learning (science and technology, nature, clay-modelling, environment protection, etc.).

The activity of leisure centres is designed mostly for school-age children and youth, i.e. between

the ages of 7 and 18. Now more than ever, leisure centres should organize activities for youth in particular between the ages of 14 and 18. It is expected that leisure centres will also organize other activities for other people, in particular for adults.

The goal of these facilities is to motivate, support and guide children, youth and adults toward personal development and key competences, in particular quality leisure time, through a wide selection of activities in a safe environment with a professional team. Leisure centres provide leisure learning through regular, occasional, spontaneous, camp and stay activities, provided information and individual work.

In addition to classical courses, events and camps, there is a big interest in spontaneous activities, open clubs, education, involvement of children and youth in what is happening in the city, education programmes for schools that follow up on themes of school education programmes and adaptation programmes as part of the prevention of socially pathological influences.

It concerns mostly occasional events, activities realized through short-term courses or spontaneous activities. This loosening of activities naturally follows up on the all-society trend of departure from organized activities and corresponds with the free lifestyle of society and ideas of older children and youth in particular.

Leisure centres also focus on community planning, participation, prevention, education of teachers, creation of information centres, etc. Most of them have already become the centre of social life in the city. They are involved in different regional, state and European projects and organize exchange and foreign stays and internships. In many activities, they cooperate with the NICY, in particular in education, foreign

cooperation, competitions and shows, and work together on the methodological support in participation, prevention, etc.

Leisure centres play a standard role in organizing competitions and shows organized and co-organized by the MEYS. They provide assistance in working with talented and gifted children, pupils and students, helping them to deepen their knowledge in different science fields through cooperation with other specialized organizations. In many cities, they provide support for Bambiriáda (see below). Leisure centres can also provide methodological, professional and material assistance to leisure learning participants, schools and school facilities.

The following table shows selected statistical data on leisure centres:

Year	Number of LC	Number of courses, etc.	Regular members	Number of events	Number of camps	Camp participants
2007	296	19 739	230 254	52 384	1 907	61 773
2000	289	17 353	219 194	41 240	2 969	92 452
1991	327	14 188	201 108	50 562	2 528	77 299

### List of activities provided by the leisure centre Lužánky, Brno, all year long

*Science and technology:* Clay-Modelling • Computers • Photography, Video, Film • Other Technology  
*Natural science:* Animals • Plants • Stays in Nature  
*Drawing and crafts:* Drawing • Ceramics • Crafts • Girl Clubs  
*Music and theatre:* Theatre • Dance • Music • Singing  
*Social science:* History • Languages • Tutoring • Games  
*Yoga and health:* Yoga • Health  
*Sports:* Skiing • Gymnastics • Aerobics • Martial Arts • Other Sports  
*Preschool activities:* Babies • Preschoolers • Daycare Maceška



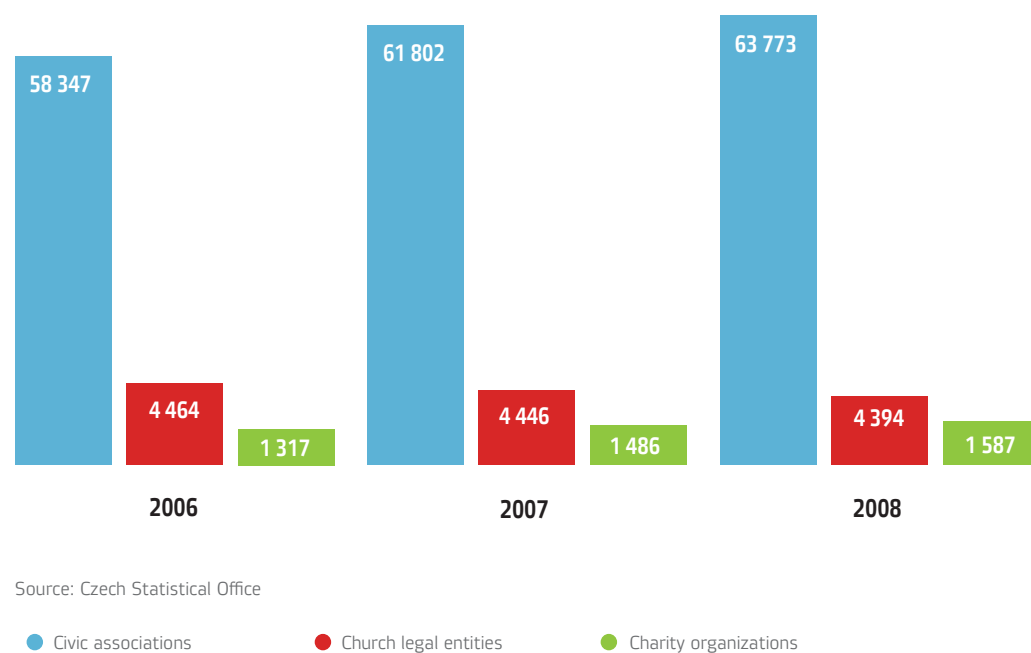


## Non-profit organizations – the domain of volunteers

As one needs both legs to walk, non-profit organizations working with children and youth are needed to complement leisure learning school facilities and leisure centres. Their unique contribution is mainly in providing children and young people with long-term, strong personal relations; many of them for life. Thanks to this, many organizations do not provide only leisure activities but also real, long-lasting formation of a child's personality.

Life in a good group of people represents for many not only five, eight or twelve years of life with great friends but also lifelong direction based on a stable and well-reflected value system and many skills and knowledge that are very valuable for orientation in the current difficult world. One of the most important experiences that young people have in these organizations is that the most valuable things in human life cannot be bought and that "for free" does not mean at all "of no value."

There are many non-governmental, non-profit organizations in our country since their tradition goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when associations were an important part of the movement that led to the creation of independent Czechoslovakia. The following chart shows the current situation:



Here we should add that in the CR there are about 650 civic associations that primarily focus on the upbringing and education of children and youth, with their operation exceeding the local level.

The work and activity of NGOs are supported by the state to a large extent. The support of NGOs is included in the already mentioned Concept of State Policy for Children and Youth for the Period of 2007 – 2013. In compliance

List of the twenty largest associations working with children and youth:

Name of association	Number of members
Mládež Sdružení hasičů Čech, Moravy a Slezska (Association of Fire-fighters of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia)	46 537
Junák – svaz skautů a skautek ČR (Junák - Association of Scouts and Guides of the CR)	44 470
Pionýr (Pioneer)	17 800
Folklorní sdružení ČR (Folklore Association of the CR)	13 780
Asociace turistických oddílů mládeže ČR (Association of Youth Tourist Groups of the CR)	9 060
Zálesák – svaz pro pobyt v přírodě (Union for Stay in Nature)	7 895
Česká tábornická unie (Czech Camping Union)	7 047
Asociace křesťanských sdružení mládeže (Association of Christian Youth Associations)	4 928
Duha, sdružení dětí a mládeže pro volný čas, přírodu a recesi (Duha - Association of Children and Youth for Leisure, Nature and Fun)	4 566
YMCA in the CR	4 534
Asociace středoškolských klubů ČR (Secondary School Clubs Association of the CR)	4 150
Moravská hasičská jednota (Moravian Volunteer Fire-fighters' Association)	3 683
Asociace víceúčelových ZO technických sportů a činností ČR (Association of Technical Sports and Activities of the CR)	3 602
Sdružení Mladých ochránců přírody ČSOP (Association of Young Environmentalists of ČSOP)	3 338
Asociace mládeže pro vědu a techniku – AMAVET (Association of Youth for Science and Technology – AMAVET)	3 000
Klub Pathfinder (skauti při Církvi adventistů sedmého dne) Pathfinder Club (scouts by the Church of the 7 <sup>th</sup> Day Adventists)	2 486
Salesiánské hnutí mládeže (Salesian Youth Movement)	2 258
Asociace malých debrujárů ČR (Association of Young Debrouillars of the CR)	2 130
Mladí konzervativci (Young Conservatives)	1 053
Hnutí Brontosaurus (Brontosaurus Movement)	1 030

with the Concept, MEYS declared State Support Programmes for Non-Governmental, Non-Profit Organizations of Children and Youth for 2006 – 2010. To these programmes, NGOs submit every year their projects for the support and development of their own activity and other activities for the public. The MEYS evaluates these projects and funds them if they are good. Every year, over 200 million CZK are paid to NGOs and 350 to 400 NGO projects are supported. However, this amount does not fully cover the needs of NGOs. They have to generate at least 30% of their funds through their activity.

Out of the entire spectrum of non-profit organizations in the CR that work with children and youth, we would like to talk about three typical groups:

#### Traditional associations of children and youth

If you are thinking about scouts and guides, young hikers or pioneers, you are on the right track. We can also add woodcrafters, campers, young fire-fighters and YMCA members. These associations typically have general orientation, in which all types of games, camping and stays in nature play the key role. They have their local units around the entire CR - e.g. scouts and guides have over 2 200 troops, pioneers have around 700 troops. What is also typical for them is that they are based on some kind of law, code, principles, etc., which expresses the ideal that they would like to reach. Another thing that is typical for them is that educators – leaders, guides, instructors – do it for free and it often actually costs them money. Most of them have a connection to international or worldwide movements. And finally the typical aspect of these associations is that their events are attended only by their members (except for special events organized for the public) who participate in the regular yearlong activity.

This activity usually consists of weekly meetings, monthly trips and a camp during spring and summer vacations. In the past ten years, this regular activity concerned about 5 to 6% of children and 2 to 3% of young people. This is not much (although it is in line with the European average), but the interesting thing is that these people later on represent a much higher percentage among active members of civic activities, social workers, good teachers and specialists in other fields.

#### “New Wave” associations

Many different associations, the focus and style of which reflected much more the expected developments in children, society and technology, have been created in our country after the year of 1990. There has been also a much higher interest in ecology, social work and lately also in inter-culture. The typical representatives of these associations are Duha, ASF, Association of Young Debrouillars, LATA or AMAVET. What is typical for them is not only use of modern technology (the traditional associations use it too now) but their interest in the latest technology, which is their programme objective. They also promote modern pedagogical trends – experimental pedagogy is a matter-of-course. Members and non-members often mix together – most of their events are open to the public; actually, the number of their members is considerably lower than that of the main traditional associations. They engage in intensive international cooperation. They often cooperate with professionals and different specialists.

#### Associations connected with political parties

Due to the experience with the abuse of children and youth by the totalitarian political regime, associations of children and youth were very weary of any connection to political institutions after the year of 1990. However, influenced by newly



created political parties and movements, youth organizations with political orientation – conservatives, liberals, social-democrats and christian democrats – were founded toward the end of the 1990s. They have between 500 to 1 000 members. There is also a small youth organization that claims communist orientation, but has problems with registration since it promotes ideology that is prohibited by our laws.

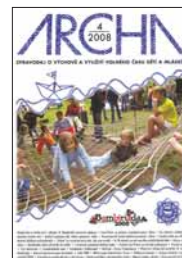
## Czech Council of Children and Youth

Ten years ago, associations working with children and youth created its representative for dealing with state institutions and foreign partners and for getting support in the commercial area. Even the largest association understood that on its own it did not stand much chance in negotiating better conditions for its activity and that it would be better to forget all the conflicts in the past and work together with others. Currently, almost all large organizations and many small organizations working with children and youth are members of the Czech Council of Children and Youth (CRDM). Today, it has 98 members.

*The mission of the CRDM is to promote conditions for quality life and overall development of children and young people. The CRDM fulfils its mission by supporting non-formal education and activities of its members, especially by creating legal, economic, social and cultural conditions suitable for their activities. The CRDM represents the interests of its members toward home and foreign authorities, organizations and institutions.*

(By-laws of the CRDM)

The MEYS considers the CRDM its natural partner and consults with it all necessary measures that concern children and youth. The CRDM considerably helped with drafting the Concept for the Period of 2007 – 2013. The CRDM is the driving force behind Bambiriáda and successfully lobbies in the Parliament and abroad on behalf of associations of children and youth. In 2008, it started working on the project of prevention of sexual abuse of children and adolescents called “It Is About Us.” It publishes Archa Bulletin on education and leisure that is designed for VIPs involved in political and social life. The CRDM also operates the portal [www.adam.cz](http://www.adam.cz) that focuses on children and youth and the information database on European youth for Czech youth at <http://evropa.adam.cz/>.



## Regional Councils of Children and Youth

During the years of 2000 – 2008, children and youth associations were founding in regions so-called Regional Councils of Children and Youth. Some of them have become members of the CRDM (currently, there are six such organizations registered in the CRDM). Well-functioning Regional Councils of Children and Youth are an important partner of the region in creating a regional youth strategy. In some regions, successful negotiations of Regional Councils of Children and Youth helped to create new subsidy programmes and increased the interest of authorities in this issue. The development of Regional Councils of Children and Youth depends quite a bit on the activity of enthusiastic volunteers who are able to convince others that associating children groups under “umbrella” organizations is beneficial and necessary in the future.

## National Parliament of Children and Youth

At the all-state level, the National Parliament of Children and Youth (NPCY) represents the top authority of all parliaments, assemblies and other organizations of children and youth in the CR. It is a non-political organization that, however, would like to have some influence on public life.

It organizes round tables and discussions with experts on different issues and informs young people about their rights and obligations. Through this mutual communication, it contributes to public discussions and thus has a partial influence on matters regarding children and youth at the national level. Through its many projects, it focuses also on different groups of youth and their problems. It also provides consultations to the already existing parliaments or helps young people

to establish new parliaments and thus expand the structure. It cooperates with foreign partners and parliaments from which it receives valuable information that it then conveys to Czech youth.

## Youth Information Centres

Youth Information Centres play a specific role in the support system of children and especially youth. They are walk-in-type places that are open to the public. They provide information classified by a certain key and consultations for free. Youth Information Centres and their services are designed not only for the young generation, especially non-organized children and youth, but also for people working with children and youth, teachers, parents and others.

The provided information mainly concerns education, short-term and long-term jobs, travelling, leisure, socially pathological phenomena, information from the region and many other things.

Currently, there are 37 Youth Information Centres. They are usually founded or operated by NGOs and leisure learning school facilities. The National Information Centre of Youth, which is part of the NICY, is the centre of work with information and the coordinator of this activity. The activity of Youth Information Centres is funded by the MEYS.



## Training of Leaders

Of course, people want to know whether those to whom parents entrust their children are sufficiently qualified for such responsible work. Unfortunately, there often prevails the opinion that what is free of charge and done by volunteers is non-professional, in short, it is not as good. Thus, the quality of leaders is the major premise for credibility of those who provide services in the upbringing and education of children and youth. The fact is that both professional employees of school facilities (after-school activity centres, clubs, leisure centres) and volunteers in associations of children and youth are not allowed to work independently until they show that they have the required qualifications.

For school facilities, the National Institute of Children and Youth is the guarantor that organizes regular courses. We discussed this in detail when describing the NICY; however, the National Institute of Children and Youth also provides professional training for camp leaders and other leaders. Every year, there are about ten courses with over 150 participants who obtain basic knowledge in pedagogics and psychology, including practical skills for application of personality and social upbringing, experimental pedagogics, legal minimum and other areas necessary for a leader.

Most of the large associations of children and youth have their own system of training of their leaders. It is usually a course that takes several weekends or one week during the year and more days during summer vacations (e.g. more demanding scout courses usually take twenty or more days). The courses usually teach disciplines important for upbringing – pedagogics, psychology, methodology, troop leadership – as well as many other practical “subjects” such as law, management, camping, physical training, nature and ecology, etc. Moreover, every leader must have medical training. Every year, hundreds of leaders in our country take such courses

(in their associations). The MEYS provides the associations that have shown good-quality work throughout the years with a statement of accreditation for work with children and youth.

It is clear that no training can guarantee that once in a while there will not be some mistakes or conduct that can harm children and adolescents. Every time something like this happens, it becomes a great piece of information for media that create an impression that there are often different injuries, sexual abuse or any other danger during non-formal education and upbringing. However, the actual data about injuries or abuse of children show just the opposite: such things happen much more often at home. Yet, those who work with children and youth as part of non-formal activities keep searching for ways of how to minimize the danger of children and youth who were entrusted to them. As a result, a long-term project on prevention of sexual abuse of children and adolescents, which is sponsored by the Czech Council of Children and Youth, has been started.

### Recognition of non-formal education results

Recognition of non-formal education results is a topic that is now being discussed in our country as well. It seems more and more that even though achieved education is important for our employability and further personal growth, experience from abroad, prior work experience and skills acquired through leisure learning can be as important. In order to obtain, show and prove these other abilities and practical skills achieved through non-formal learning, national and international instruments for recognition of all types of education are being created. In the Czech Republic, a non-formal education work group that helps to implement the National Qualifications Framework is in charge of this matter.

## Czech specialities

In the Czech Republic, there are many institutions that provide children and youth with non-formal education and upbringing, but they considerably differ e.g. in their programmes offered to children and adolescents, people who take care of children and youth, size, scope of

activity, type of funding and legal form. However, almost all of them have two things in common: they meet at Bambiriáda and they organize summer camps.



## Bambiriáda

For 10 years now on the last weekend of May, we can get a taste of what is happening in leisure upbringing and non-formal education in our country. This festival of ideas and inspirations is organized by the Czech Council of Children and Youth as a four days long fair in the open air, where children, young people and their parents can "taste" the offer of activities of NGOs and leisure time centres. In tens of cities around the entire CR (in about 30 cities during the past several years), different organizations that have something to do with children and youth come together as co-organizers and participants. Thousands of volunteers are behind this festival and welcome hundreds of thousands of people (in 2008, there were over 230 000 visitors).

The major contribution of Bambiriáda is not only that it brings together different types of institutions that provide leisure activities and long-term upbringing to children and young

people but also that it makes local governments, regional media and commercial entities cooperate and being aware of the contribution of volunteers in youth organisations to the society. In particular outside Prague, Bambiriáda has become a small festivity of civic belonging. Lately it even crossed the Czech borders – to Slovakia and Poland. Each year it has a common special motto which unifies all the participating towns.

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*"To me, Bambiriáda is an excellent event that merits all-around support, i.e. also state support. I think that it should keep growing and expanding to other cities. We should also come up with new ideas and new inspiration and get more and more people involved."*

Jaroslav Tuček, director of the Youth Department of the MEYS, October 2004

### Bambiriáda's earth in Brno

*In Lužánky, Brno, 13 thousand visitors could walk across the entire earth. From Russia to India, Israel, Egypt, Spain and Scotland, Finland, Norway, Austria, the CR and all the way to the USA and the Caribbeans or Peru... In every country, the traveller had to do some tasks, games and contests – cable cars, crafts, mazes... In Egypt, you could wrap yourself as a mummy and write hieroglyphs in the sand, in Russia you could try bowling, in Scotland you could learn Scottish national dances, throw a rock or blow up a half-meter bubble, in the Caribbeans you had to slalom around the islands, in America you could join in the construction of Manhattan, travel by the Pacific Express or speculate on Wall Street... All this was prepared by volunteers from different children and youth associations from Brno, Ivančice or Vyškov and many others. Volunteer fire-fighters demonstrated a fire attack, the police came with dog handlers and horses, there were tens of music and theatre groups, martial arts groups and fashion shows.*

Martin Kříž – Martás, Geographical Society Moravia

## The "Harbour" Award

It is rather usual to criticize politicians. But it is much less usual to award them, especially when the award is not given by other politicians but by children and young people. The award is called the HARBOUR Award, as it symbolizes a safe place for boats, and it has been announced by the Czech Council of Children and Youth already seven times. Children and youth associations, children and youth centres, leisure centres, after-school activity centres or school clubs nominate politicians who help a lot children and young people at the local level. The award is usually handed over at Bambiriáda by the minister of education together with the chairman of the CRDM and the representative of the main sponsor of Bambiriáda.

## Camps

Although actual camps are not a Czech specialty, their position in the life of Czech children and young people is certainly unique: a summer camp

is part of the vacation activities of most of them. There are camps where children sleep in tents, tepees, cottages or larger brick houses, there are three-week, two-week or one-week camps, there are camps in the forest or by the lake, there are land camps or river rafting camps. There are camps with Internet and English courses or camps without any of this, but with going back to the Middle Ages or Ancient Egypt or travelling to a Fantasy World through a all-camp game. Every year, there are thousands of them. Almost all of them are organized by the organizations mentioned in this brochure: non-formal education providers from the public and non-profit sectors. Camps in our country are popular, which is demonstrated by the fact that commercial organizations successfully operate in this area.

In camps, children can experience something that they could hardly experience somewhere else – to experience moments of thrill and crazy joy, to fight against themselves and nature and to win, to watch fire and the sky full of stars, to start lifelong friendships.



### Camp game called Asterix and Obelix

#### Basic characteristics:

The game is designed for summer camps but it could be changed to a long-term game by having the teams win individual parts of the magic during the year.

#### Legend:

One day Druid Panoramix goes crazy. He shreds his book of magic to pieces, which he then spreads around the forest, and enchants the forest with a magic formula. Then he lays down for a long sleep. After he finally wakes up, he finds out that he does not remember anything – the magic, the recipe for making the magic potion, or how to lift the enchantment of the forest. As soon as Malobonum, the commander of the Roman camp, receives this news, he decides to quickly act. He sends a request to Rome for reinforcement (just to make sure) so that he could finally conquer the last free Gallic village. There is not much time left before the village is seized....

#### Tools:

Buttons (Asterix, Obelix, Panoramix), 50 clothespins, candies, cones, a stick, a scarf, a plastic bag, pebbles.

#### Division of participants:

It is played in threes (Panoramix, Asterix, Obelix). The leader picks captains (the most experienced players) who then pick their team. And each team member becomes one of the characters - Asterix, Panoramix and Obelix.

#### Basic game description:

- 1) In each phase of the game, teams receive pieces of the magic. Team 1 and team 2 receive 5 pieces, team 3 and team 4 receive 4 pieces of magic....
- 2) After each phase in which the team competes together, each team member goes to do a different task.



### CVZ - Nationwide experience exchange

Every fall, there is a several-day meeting of more than 1000 officials, leaders and regular members of NGOs and leisure learning school facilities in the CR. Its mission is to exchange experience, to provide information about new trends and methods of work and to try different activities that could be done with children and adolescents in their organizations. Representatives from the MEYS and other central public administration authorities, managers of the NICY, the CRDM and many other guests regularly participate in the all-state experience exchange.

### Czech-German Youth Exchange Coordination Centre TANDEM

TANDEM Plzeň has been established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport



of the Czech Republic, and is administratively connected to the University of West Bohemia. Its partner organisation is TANDEM Regensburg (Germany). The mission of Tandem is to support youth exchange between Czechia and Germany. It does so through facilitation of contacts, fundraising counselling, and providing information on any relevant issue from intercultural education in classrooms to volunteering opportunities for young people. Tandem offers seminars to a broad spectrum of its target groups, runs a website containing all the useful information from the area of Czech-German youth cooperation, publishes books, leaflets and a monthly newsletter. Tandem offers tailor-made support to both experienced organisations and newcomers in the Czech-German youth arena.



## Useful contacts

# 4



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