

Czech Republic

Context

Schools in the Czech Republic have less favourable disciplinary climates in science lessons compared to other OECD countries, according to students' reports in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015, with an index of disciplinary climate of -0.24 (the average index value was 0.00). However, student truancy was among the lowest in the OECD: 8.1% of 15-year-olds reported skipping at least one day of school in the two weeks before the PISA 2015 test, compared to an average of 19.7%. Students in the Czech Republic were less likely, though, to report that their science teachers adapt their instructions more frequently than the OECD average, with an index of adaptive instruction of -0.16 (the average index value was 0.01) (OECD, 2016_[1]).

The PISA 2015 index of instructional educational leadership (measuring the frequency with which principals report doing leadership activities specifically related to instruction) was 0.04, which was higher than the OECD average of 0.01 (OECD, 2016_[1]). At 35.9%, the proportion of lower secondary teachers aged 50 or over in 2016 was similar to the OECD average of 35.4%. In 2017, teachers in the Czech Republic had fewer net teaching hours for general programmes than their peers in other OECD countries. Teachers annually taught 617 hours at both primary and lower secondary levels, compared to OECD averages of 784 and 696 hours, respectively (OECD, 2018_[2]). According to school principals' self-reports in PISA 2015, schools in the Czech Republic have higher levels of autonomy over curriculum than on average across the OECD: 94.9% of principals reported that the school had primary autonomy over curriculum, which was above the average of 73.4% (OECD, 2016_[1]).

In 2016, lower secondary teachers earned 61% of the average salary of a full-time, full-year worker with tertiary education, which was below the OECD average ratio of 91% (OECD, 2018_[2]). According to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018, 74% of teachers in the Czech Republic said that if they could choose again, they would still become a teacher; this was close to the OECD average of 75.6% (OECD, 2019_[3]).

According to school leaders' reports in PISA 2015, school leaders in the Czech Republic are more likely than average to conduct self-evaluations of their schools (96.7% of students were in schools whose principal reported this, compared to the OECD average of 93.2%) but less likely than average to undergo external evaluations of their schools (61.2% of students were in schools whose principal reported this, compared to 74.6% on average) (OECD, 2016_[1]). However, teacher appraisal levels, as reported in the earlier cycle of TALIS 2013 were higher than average: 89% of all teachers had reported then having received a teacher appraisal in the previous 12 months compared to the TALIS 2013 average of 66.1% (OECD, 2014_[4]). The share of students enrolled in secondary schools whose principal reported in PISA 2015 that standardised tests are used to make decisions on students' promotion or retention was just 3%; the OECD average was 31% (OECD, 2016_[1]).

In 2017, school autonomy levels over resource management (allocation and use of resources for teaching staff and principals) were higher than the OECD average: 38% of decisions in the Czech Republic were taken at the school level, compared to the OECD average of 29%.

Annual expenditure per student at primary level in 2015 was USD 5 207, which was lower than the OECD average of USD 8 631. At secondary level, the Czech Republic spent USD 8 476 per student, compared to the OECD average of USD 10 010, while at tertiary level (including spending on research and development), the Czech Republic spent USD 10 891 per student, compared to the OECD average of USD 15 656. Between 2010 and 2015, the relative proportion of public expenditure on primary to tertiary education decreased by 4.2 percentage points, compared to an OECD average fall of 1.3 percentage points. During the same period, private expenditure in the Czech Republic fell by 6.4 percentage points, compared to an OECD average increase of 10.6 percentage points (OECD, 2018^[2]).

Evolution of key education policy priorities

The Czech Republic's key education policy priorities have evolved in the following ways over the last decade (Table 8.6).

Table 8.6. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Czech Republic (2008-19)

Identified by	Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-19 ¹	Evolution of responses collected by the Education Policy Outlook, 2013-19 ²
School improvement	The OECD identified the low social status of teachers as an issue to be addressed. Another challenge identified was organising the working environment of schools to allow teachers the space for collaborative groups and safe forums to discuss. Further identified aspects that the Czech Republic could strengthen included the decisions on the appointment, appraisal and remuneration of school principals. The need to strengthen pedagogical leadership for school leaders was also identified. [2016]	The Czech Republic reported the prevailing challenge of a lack of systemic support to ensure teachers' and school leaders' capacities to address diverse student needs and provide more inclusive education, with policy undertaken later on to help tackle this. Another ongoing challenge is the implementation of a pay-scale-based teacher and school leader career progression system, although measures are being taken in this regard. [2013; 2016-17]
Evaluation and assessment	Some of the challenges identified included the absence of both teaching standards and a national framework to make school-based practices consistent, as well as of mechanisms to ensure that each teacher receives adequate professional feedback. Also, external school evaluation was found to focus on compliance with legislation, rather than improvement. The national monitoring system for school education was found, too, as in need of national data on student performance. [2012]	The Czech Republic reported an ongoing challenge in integrating an evaluation and assessment framework across the system that includes developing national standardised tests while limiting possible negative effects. A recently reported challenge is that of developing a system of key competence monitoring. [2013; 2016-17]
Governance	As of 2012, no curriculum framework or staff guidelines had been in place for staff working with children aged 0-3 years. Regional level governance of upper secondary vocational education and training (VET) needed more transparency and accountability mechanisms to ensure a match between labour market demand and student choice, and to meet national quality standards. Another challenge found was having VET career guidance under the responsibility of two ministries, which could contribute to system fragmentation. More recently, the OECD identified a need for better support and effective implementation of the Strategy 2020, particularly to ensure sufficient funding. [2012; 2016]	More recently, securing quality in tertiary education provision was identified as a need by the Czech Republic, with policy efforts prioritising this area. [2016-17]

Identified by	Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-19 ¹	Evolution of responses collected by the Education Policy Outlook, 2013-19 ²
Funding	According to OECD evidence, the vast majority of grants and transfers to sub-national governments are earmarked, which is a challenge as earmarking is generally associated with lower efficiency and limits regional and municipal governments' abilities to match services provided to local needs. The OECD also identified the challenge that regions' responsibilities for pre-schools and basic schools have created an additional layer of decision making between the state and the municipality, creating difficulties for the assessment of the equity and effectiveness of education finance. In addition, regions' legal obligation to define and implement a very large number of normatives for secondary schools according to a very detailed methodology of different educational programmes were found to leave very little room for a flexible budgeting process at the regional level. [2016]	Ongoing priorities for the Czech Republic include improving the efficiency of overall school funding and transparency within the system, as well as promoting better financing of education for disadvantaged students. [2013; 2016-17]

Notes:

1. See Annex A (OECD publications consulted).
2. See Reader's Guide (years and methods of collection).

Institutions*Selected education policy responses***School improvement**

- In the Czech Republic, the Metodika I and II (Methodology, 2006-12) project aimed to improve the quality of the teaching profession. It was implemented by the National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers (Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, školské poradenské zařízení a zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků, NÚV). It focused on: 1) systematic support of teachers in teaching methodology and didactics; 2) developing learning communities; and 3) effective ways to educate (RVP, 2018_[148]). One of the main outputs is a free, online methodological portal for teachers (Metodický portál, 2012), which provides theoretical and practical support to teachers. Users can add tests and teaching materials. The supervision of the portal is with the NÚV. The project was linked with the implementation of the Framework Educational Programme (FEP, 2007), which decentralised the education system.

Progress or impact: The web page of the Methodological Portal at rvp.cz was one of the tools that helped teachers get acquainted with the Framework Educational Programme and now helps to follow it (National information reported to the OECD). Further government information states that the portal is accessible for teachers and is actively used by them. As of 2019, the portal is the main methodological and didactic online support for teachers and school heads, with 31 000 registered users. The specific outcomes are nearly 8 000 new methodical contributions and over

10 000 digital teaching materials; a system of modern tools (Web 2.0); e-learning courses and webinars; and presentations for the professional public, including the articles and digital teaching material modules. According to further evidence reported by the government, the portal is undergoing an innovation process in co-operation with the PPUČ project (a teachers' work support project) to improve usability and implement new modules into the portal's structure, as of 2019.

- An amendment to the Education Act (2012) was introduced to modify the appointment and dismissal of school leaders and introduce a six-year appointment period. School founders hold the authority to start a selection process or renew a school principal's appointment automatically by an additional six years. The Czech School Inspectorate (ŠI) and the school council (*školská rada*) can establish a deadline for the appointment by the school founder. Legal regulations (i.e. the Act on Education Staff No. 563/2004 and Decree No. 54/2005) further clarify specific parts of the selection and appointment process, e.g. the composition of the selection panel. School founders are recommended to consider the selection panel's judgement on the most qualified candidate. Yet, there is no legal obligation to heed the recommendation, and school founders are free to make their own decisions about final appointments (OECD, 2016_[149]).

Progress or impact: In accordance with a 2015 amendment to the Education Act (Act No. 561/2004, Paragraph 166, Metodika novela ŠZ 82-2015), school principals no longer have fixed terms, but permanent contracts (OECD, 2016_[149]). At the same time, the six-year mandate and the appointment process continue to be valid (OECD, 2016_[149]). After five and a half years, the founder can still open the appointment process to select a new principal (National information reported to the OECD). If the current principal does not win the selection process, the former school leader can remain an employee at the school and work as a teacher.

Evaluation and assessment

- The Strategy of the Czech School Inspection (2014-20) aims to strengthen external evaluations for school improvement as well as support building linkages between external and internal evaluations (schools' self-evaluations). Before the strategy, the Czech School Inspectorate finalised the National System of Inspection Evaluation of the Education System in the Czech Republic project (NIQES, 2011-14).

Progress or impact: According to the Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI), adequate methodology and tools are not available in several areas, while in other areas methods, procedures and tools are still to be supplemented (Česká škola, 2017_[150]). The Complex System of Evaluation (2017-22) project aims to address some of these shortcomings. The development of new methods, procedures and tools to assess key competencies also intends to identify and consider the socio-economic and territorial background of students as well as the school level. By monitoring the level of equity in education, the aim is to effectively prevent inequalities (Česká škola,

2017^[150]). Also, according to the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 (2014-20), education systems should, among others, support methods of evaluation that stress the progress of each student (MŠMT, 2014^[151]).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

School improvement

- To move towards a more inclusive education system, the 2015 Education Act was amended in 2016. The amendment included a revision of the Framework Educational Programme (FEP) and a modification in education delivery, particularly with regard to inclusion and the support of children with special educational needs. Based on the FEP, every school has to develop its own school educational programme that must comply with the FEP. Schools can apply for funding. According to national information reported to the OECD, it also includes specific training measures for teachers to improve inclusive education. Teachers may choose from a wide range of measures, including assistance for pupils with special needs or tutoring. By 2018, it was found that while the change in legislation brought about improved support for children with special needs in mainstream education, there were other challenges, including, among others, the administrative burden put on schools and the need for teachers to be trained to be able to meet the aims of the change in legislation (European Union, 2018^[152]). Though, as of 2019, the overall impact has been positive, the impact was found to be modest concerning the participation of children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds in mainstream education (European Commission, 2019^[153]). In late 2018, the Czech government put forward a proposal to amend Decree No. 27/2016 Coll. on the education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs. Though this proposal may advance towards greater inclusive education as it proposes to allow special schools to open classes for children without mental disabilities but with behavioural/learning difficulties, which can according to the evidence lead to new forms of social segregation (European Union, 2018^[152]). In addition, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights expressed major concerns with the proposed legislative changes and called on the Czech government to proceed with its work towards more inclusive education (Council of Europe, 2019^[154]).

Evaluation and assessment

- Full-cohort, national, standardised tests at Grades 5 and 9 (2011) in the curricular areas of the Czech language, foreign languages and mathematics take place every four years. The Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI) is in charge of it. While originally, the tests were planned to also serve as a possible basis for enrolment at a higher level of education, it was decided that they shall only serve for low-stakes purposes for students. The tests aim to evaluate the work of schools and provide information to parents about their quality. Test results also support the monitoring of the performance of the Czech school system and identify differences in regional performance. The latest test took place in 3 700 basic schools and multi-year general academic schools (*gymnázia*) in 2017. As of the 2016/17 school year, a new unified entrance examination for upper secondary schools was put in place

(European Union, 2016_[155]). At the end of upper secondary school, common state components of the school leaving examination continue to remain in place (Matura) in 2019.

Systems

Selected education policy responses

Governance

- The National Institute for Education, Education Counselling Centre and Centre for Continuing Education of Teachers (NÚV, 2011) was established following the merger of three institutions run directly by the MEYS: the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NÚOV), the Research Institute of Education (VÚP), and the Czech Institute for Educational-Psychological Guidance (IPPP ČR) (NÚV, 2018_[156]). The institute is directly funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and its missions include enhancing continuing development of general, vocational, art and linguistic education; and supporting schools in their pedagogical-psychological, educational and career counselling, as well as in the methodology used in the continuing education of teachers (Shewbridge et al., 2016_[157]). Current activities of the NÚV include co-ordinating the project, “Supporting capacity building for the development of basic pre-literacy in pre-school and primary education, Supporting Teachers’ Work” (Vladimíra, 2018_[158]). In addition, NÚV is working on the revision of the Framework Education Programme (RVP) for nursery, elementary and secondary schools, after the approval of a document on the revisions of the RVP by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Vladimíra, 2018_[158]). Based on the revisions, NUV put forward the first draft version of expected outcomes on student information and communication technology (ICT) and digital literacy at the end of primary, lower and upper secondary school at the end of 2017.

Progress or impact: The expected student outcomes for ICT include: data, information and modelling; algorithmisation and programming; information systems; computers and how to control them. For digital literacy, topics include: man, society and digital technology; digital content production; and information, sharing and communication in a digital society (Vladimíra, 2018_[158]). The NÚV also offers access to online resources for students, teachers and the public. An online database (www.infoabsolvent.cz) provided by NÚV offers information related to the higher education sector (schools, programmes and professions), career guidance, information for disabled students and prevention and intervention mechanisms to reduce the number of school dropouts (Project Goal, 2018_[159]). Through the NÚV, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports manages an online portal that is open to all teachers to store and share their digital learning resources (articles, discussions) with others. This archive contains almost 10 000 learning materials (Vladimíra, 2018_[158]).

- The Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 (2014) guides education policy making. It defines the purpose of education through its four

primary objectives: 1) personal development that is conducive to the quality of human life, 2) the preservation and development of culture as a system of shared values; 3) the pursuit of active citizenship as a prerequisite for the development of society, based on solidarity, sustainable development and democratic governance; and 4) preparation for employment. The strategy's priority areas are: 1) reducing inequalities in education; 2) supporting quality teaching and teachers as the key prerequisite for quality teaching; and 3) governing the education system in an accountable and efficient manner (MEYS, 2014_[160]). The European Commission's Operational Programme for Research, Development and Education makes up one of the principal funding streams for the implementation of the specific measures of the strategy (Eurydice, 2018_[161]).

Progress or impact: To establish responsible and effective management of the education system, the Czech School Inspectorate began assessing schools in 2015/16 by focusing on new criteria, conditions, courses and the results of education (Czech School Inspectorate, 2016_[162]). Since 2015/16, as part of its annual report, the Czech School Inspectorate included overviews of the development of the implementation of the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic (Czech School Inspectorate, 2016_[162]). For example, the participation in pre-school education had reached 91.8%, moving closer to the minimum target of 95% of enrolment by 2020. The government had also made amendments to make the last year in pre-primary school compulsory by 2017. At the same time, the Inspectorate considered “problematic” the level of literacy identified in 6th grade of primary school and in the first year of selected secondary schools, according to an Inspectorate's survey.

The government set the goal of having no more than 5.5% of the population with education ISCED 2 (lower secondary education) as their maximum attainment and outside of the formal education system (the rate was at 5.4% in 2014). The government also set the goal of increasing the number of teachers below the age of 36 by 2020, which was 23.1% in the 2013 Strategy.

Besides the Inspectorate, further evidence shows that achievements have been made as regards the goal to foster partnerships between schools and employers (European Union, 2017_[163]). In 2016, a standard procedure for contractual relationships was established to encourage employers to uphold quality standards in practical training (European Union, 2017_[163]). Although the goals related to each priority have not yet been achieved, the conclusions of the 2017 external evaluation of the 2020 Strategy confirm the persisting relevance of its three priorities (MŠMT, 2017_[164]). The review recommends improving communication between education stakeholders as well as improving the quality of administration at all educational levels. If the ministry decides to create a new strategy or update the 2020 Strategy, it should reflect on the concept of education in the digital age or the update of its educational objectives and content (Eurydice, 2018_[165]).

- The Long-term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System (Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky na

období, 2015-20) was implemented, following up on the strategic aims and criteria of the previous plan (2011-15). It is also based on the 2020 Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 (2014). These plans have aimed to improve the quality and efficiency of the education system by targeting a wide array of areas, including early childhood education and care, vocational education and training, and evaluation and assessment. Measures of the new plan include increasing access to pre-school education, providing more resources for students in secondary vocational education, enhancing school facilities and increasing teaching profession standards (MŠMT, 2014_[151]). The MEYS formulated some priorities outside of the 2020 Strategy based on challenges at the time of implementation (MŠMT, 2017_[164]). These include introducing elements of polytechnic education into the kindergarten curriculum and using a similar index of social, economic and cultural status (ESCS) for testing students of the 5th and 9th years of elementary education. The plan must be evaluated every four years before the preparation of a new long-term plan (MŠMT, 2015_[166]).

Progress or impact: The following measures have been reported as completed: optimising the network of secondary and vocational education schools; defining new monitoring measures for quality; reducing bureaucracy to lessen administrative burdens on schools and school facilities; and improving equitable conditions in schools to promote inclusive educational practices. At the same time, some of the goals have not been reached, such as to reform funding mechanisms to increase effectiveness and participation in adult education and learning (including the creation of a National Qualifications Framework and links to the European Qualifications Framework). As a follow-up to the 2015-20 Long-term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System, a long-term intention of education and educational system development was under development at the time of writing of this report (National information reported to the OECD).

- The National System of Occupations (NSO, 2004) and National Register of Qualifications System (NRQ, 2006) are linked to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to better align requirements of occupations with those of the qualifications under the NRQ and better respond to the changing needs of the labour market. The development and implementation of NRQ were finalised in 2015, and funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the state budget.

Progress or impact: The Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 (2014-20) outlines measures to ensure the compliance of the education programmes with the National Register of Qualifications System (NRQ). For example, several actions address an update of the Framework Educational Programmes for Secondary Vocational Education, in line with the descriptions of professional qualifications as specified in the NRQ (MŠMT, 2014_[151]).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

Governance

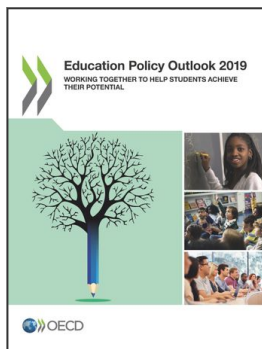
- The Czech School Inspectorate launched the Complex System of Evaluation (Komplexní systém hodnocení, 2017-22) project for the evaluation of the quality of education services and facilities with the overall aim of building on the methods, procedures and tools developed by the National System of Inspection Evaluation of the Educational System (NIQES, 2011-15). The Inspectorate is developing new tools to be used to support schools (e.g. sharing examples of good practices linked to inspection evaluation criteria), to build stronger linkages between schools' external and internal evaluations and to better understand schools' socio-economic backgrounds. The implementation of the first tools will start in 2020. Once the project is finished, the Inspectorate will use the updated evaluation instruments, such as new mechanisms to assess key competencies, to validate learning outcomes and to ensure that socio-economic and territorial considerations do not negatively influence school conditions and students' access to educational pathways and education outcomes. Overall funding is CZK 248.7 million (Czech School Inspectorate, 2017_[167]).
- The Amendment of the Higher Education Act in 2016 also addressed the improvement of quality assurance in the Czech Republic through improved accreditation mechanisms. The new National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB, 2016) replaced the previous Accreditation Commission Czech Republic (ACCR) and was assigned new responsibilities, i.e. to “not only issue expert statements on applications for accreditation, but also to grant accreditation and apply sanctions” (the Ministry of Education had previously been in charge of this). Further tasks include higher education evaluations and audits of compliance with legal provisions. With the 2016 legislative change, higher education institutions can now also apply for institutional accreditation alongside programme accreditation.

Funding

- The Czech Republic's Operational Programme for Research, Development and Education (Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání, OP VVV, 2014-20) supports projects that address key challenges in education and research. It is a multi-level topical programme led by the MEYS. In the scope of this project, funding can be taken from European structural and investment funds (ESIF) (National information reported to the OECD). The programme is led by the MEYS and has so far supported 9 100 projects focused on capacity for high-quality research, development of universities and human resources for research and development, and equal access to high-quality pre-school, primary and secondary education (MEYS, 2018_[168]).
- In 2017, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) proposed an education funding reform concerning funding streams to regional and municipal schools. This includes public VET schools, while private and church schools are not included in the reform. The previous system based funding on the number of students in a school, resulting in large funding gaps between schools and across regions (CEDEFOP, 2017_[169]). The overall aim is to improve the equality of funding to similar schools within different regions. The parliament approved the

reform through an amendment of the Education Act in mid-2018. The new reform shifts the funding system from schools receiving financial allocations based on student numbers in the classroom to pedagogical work (number of teachers) or hours taught (European Union, 2018^[152]). Schools request financial resources from the state budget according to the number of teachers, pay scales and salaries, and the ministry assesses these claims and allocates funding according to the amount defined by the regional legislation (CEDEFOP, 2017^[169]). According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), the government anticipates that the reform will also allow schools to provide higher-quality training for its teaching staff. In terms of teachers' salaries, the new system will also take into account average class repletion and the share of students with special educational needs (CEDEFOP, 2017^[169]). Implementation takes place in two steps. As of 2019, financial support is provided to “divide the lessons, balance differences between schools in regions and adequate staffing in nursery schools”. Full implementation is to be completed by 2020 (Eurydice, 2018^[170]).

More information is available at <http://www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm>.



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